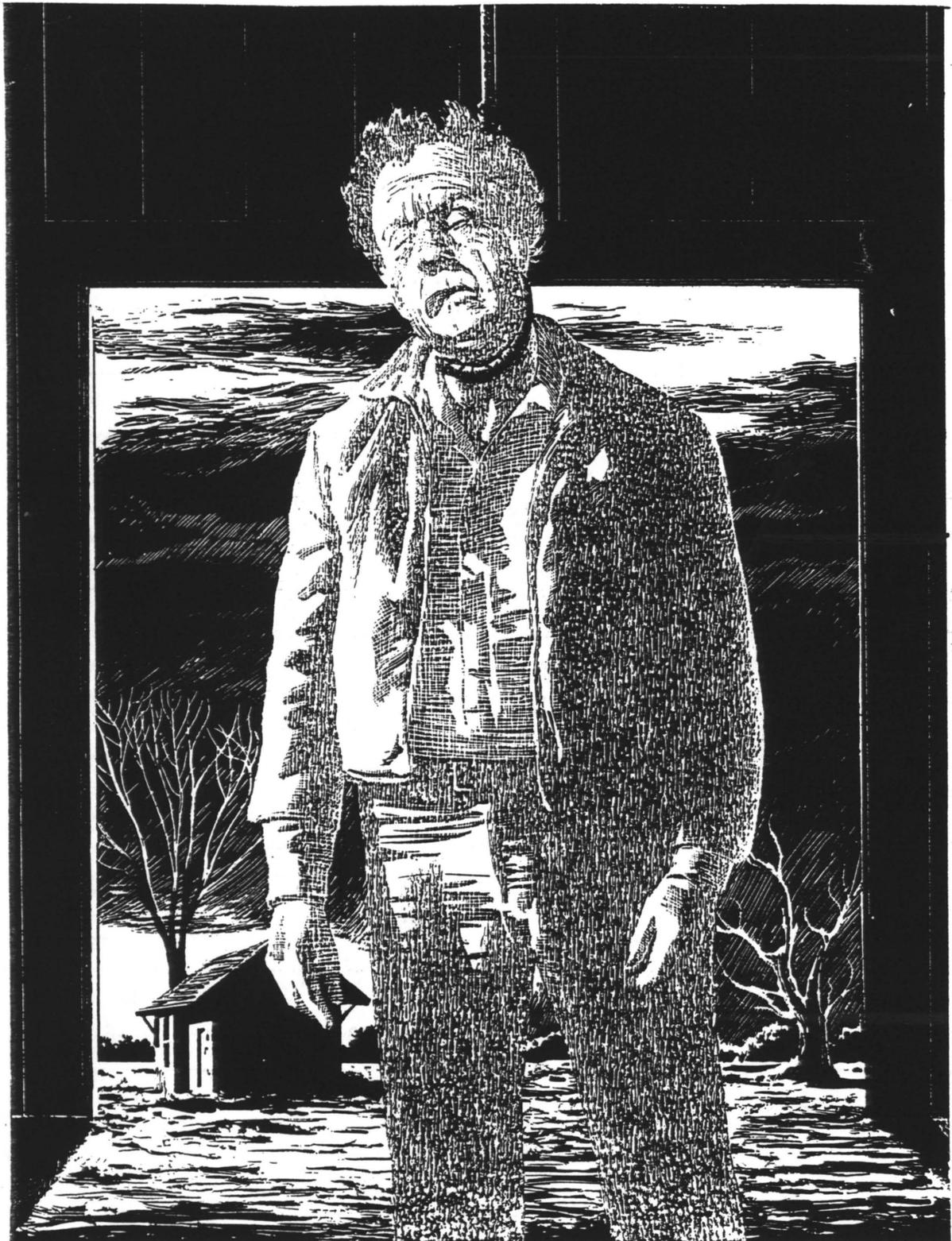


DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE

Issue 15 April/May 1998 Price £2

Ghosts And Devils Over Merseyside



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

<u>Ghosts And Devils Over Merseyside: A Warning To The Curious: The Rise And Fall Of The New Ferry Ghost Club.....</u>	Page 3
<u>Never An Absolution - The Legend Of Birkenhead Priory.....</u>	Page 8
<u>A Nightmare On Seel Street: The Haunting Of A Printer's In Liverpool City Centre.....</u>	Page 9
<u>Evil In The Heart Of Everton: Poltergeist Phenomena In Sackville Steet.....</u>	Page 11
<u>Hostelry Horrors: Ghosts In The Adelphi, Hoylake, And The Albert Dock.....</u>	Page 12
<u>Bidston Hill -Birkenhead's Window Area</u>	Page 13
<u>Dibbinsdale's Phantom Hitch-Hiker</u>	Page 14
<u>The Frankby Phantom</u>	Page 15
<u>Evil Spirits In The King Arms.....</u>	Page 16
<u>Local (Ghost) Girl In The Photograph</u>	Page 17
<u>Witchcraft And Demonolgy In The World Today: Hexes And Blessings, Fears Of A New Witch Hunt, Plague Of The Zombies.....</u>	Page 18
<u>Religious Phenomena: Miracle Cures The World Over.....</u>	Page 20
<u>Revolt Of The Animals: Inebriated Elephants, Kamikaze Camels, Super-Rodents, Belligerent Bees, And Truly Mad Cows.....</u>	Page 22
<u>Big Cat Fever: Roy Kerridge Takes A Personal Hike Into The Scottish Highlands In Search Of Alien Big Cats.....</u>	Page 23
<u>Alien Animals Update: The Return Of The Tasmanian Globster.....</u>	Page 26
<u>Chupacabra On The Prowl Once More</u>	Page 28
<u>Where The Wild Things Are: The Latest Alien Big Cat Reports From Across Britain....</u>	Page 29
<u>Mystery Animals: Matthew A. Bille Relates Classic Tales From The World Of Cryptozoology.....</u>	Page 30
<u>Lizard People Lurk Beneath The City Of Angels:</u>	Page 32
<u>Keep Watching The Skies!!! UFO Update: The Coming Of The Moonlights; Jonathan Dillon Looks At The History Of Anomalous Lunar Lights.....</u>	Page 33
<u>Along The Sundown Trail: The Proposed People's Rally At Area 51.....</u>	Page 35
<u>And Now The Screaming Starts: The Abduction Mythos Rolls Ever On And On...Thanks To Philip J. Imbrogno.....</u>	Page 36
<u>UFO Snippets: UFO's Over Costa Rica And Pensacola, Florida.....</u>	Page 37
<u>An Uninterrupted Journey: Kevin McClure Presents A Rational Overview Of Recovered Memory And Hypnosis.....</u>	Page 38
<u>More UFO Snippets: UFO's Over Kent, Great Balls Of Fire, The Hammer Of The Gods....</u>	Page 40
<u>Strange Human Behaviour: Real Life House Of Wax, Mingebug's Of The Highest Order, Not-So-Great Escapes, Relationships Founded In Hell, Total Over-Reactions, Four-Eyed Willy, The Trapped Nun, Dodgy DJ's, And The Plinky Spoon Swallower.....</u>	Page 42
<u>Weird Crime: Another Host Of Hopeless Burglars, Thieves And Robbers.....</u>	Page 44
<u>The Cosmic Joker Strikes Again: Ashes To Ashes, The Call Of The Cows, Keepin' It In The Family, What Are The Chances Of That Happening, eh? When Fate Truly Turns Its Back.....</u>	Page 48
<u>Strange Deaths.....</u>	Page 49
<u>Out Of The Desolation Of The North: The Supernatural And The Titanic.....</u>	Page 50
<u>Dark Visions: Fortean TV Programmes One And Two In The Series Reviewed.....</u>	Page 53
<u>Exchange Mag Reviews.....</u>	Page 58
<u>Stop Press: Spontaneous Combusting Knickers, The Phantom Lumberjack, Teleportation, Icefall In Louisiana, Mystery Bowling Balls, Lair Of The Longest Worm, Frog Fall In Croydon, Earthquakes Rock Scotland.</u>	

DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE: Editor Lee Walker. Contributors: Jason 'Big Cheese' Dignam, Janet 'Milky Bar Tea' Lawrence, Tommy 'Head Forward' Brown, Ray 'All The Best To You And Your's' Nelke, and others too numerous to mention.

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GHOSTS AND DEVILS OVER MERSEYSIDE A Warning To The Curious

Every town, in every county, it seems, has somewhere within its environs, both natural and artificial, a whole host of what, for want of a better term, we call *'Haunted Places.'*

It's like a national law or something, and although it's a pretty safe bet you'll never find reference to this tenet in any of the worn, leather-bound volumes of statutes that line the shelves of the Civic Centre Library, that doesn't diminish its power or make it any less 'legally binding' than say, the laws which govern the motor-way speed limit, or the age of sexual consent.

Put simply, it's much the same edict that decrees that every town, in every county *must* have its fair share of places where, whatever the season, the air is filled with gusts of carefree laughter and the celebration of a relationship's early days. Places where people gather to share the latest gossip, plan the next gang fight, or arrange to meet the date of their dreams, and where the older generation congregate to remember the Fallen of Two World Wars.

Places where, if the need arises, you can hide, forget your troubles awhile and lie flat on your back, gazing into a sky so unnaturally blue it looks about ready to shatter into a million pieces...Or where the rich, salty smell of the ocean can fill you with a strange kind of longing and a vague, bittersweet nostalgia.



That these places exist is inarguable. And so too, by the same token, are their undeniably places that reflect the other side of the same endlessly spinning coin...Places where it's considered unwise to walk alone after dark.

You usually find them (and perhaps sometimes *they* find you) situated at the furthest, least populated outskirts of the city, the cheesy depths of the ghetto, or the neglected corner of some farmer's field...

But on occasion, they are so disconcertingly close, you can feel their presence, like the chill breath of a cruel, January wind, raising the hairs at the nape of your neck.

Places where the starlit gloom seems alive with gibbering shadows.

Places to ride by on the way to somewhere bright..

Godforsaken places.

Haunted places....

One

The fair county of Merseyside, where I was born and raised, although justifiably more famous for its achingly picturesque river front, its football teams, and the time-enduring tunes of *'Four Lads Who Shook The World,'* has nonetheless as rich a vein of ghostly lore as just about anywhere else in these spirit-infested Isles...

The briefest of glances through the pages of any work dealing with local folk tales, superstitions and legends, will reveal literally hundreds of stories concerning such phenomena.

I remember when I was still at school, I devoured such tales at such a prodigious rate it often seemed my head would literally burst with what *'HAL,'* the super-computer in *'2001,'* would doubtless term 'Sensory Overload.'

I was entirely captivated (not to say, deliciously frightened) by the subject of ghosts from a very early age. I can recall with near perfect clarity my uncontained excitement at being given a copy of Guy Underwood's *'GAZETTER OF BRITISH GHOSTS,'* as a special reward for obtaining a good school report during my fourth and final year at Church Drive Junior, hiding behind the sofa midway through the screening of the BBC's terrifying adaptation of the M.R. James classic; *'A WARNING TO THE CURIOUS,'* and listening with wide-eyed wonder when on long winter evenings, my father spun spooky, fireside stories that he often boasted would *'likely scare the halo off an angel!!!'*

I recall too, spending countless weekends huddled in the tree-house my dad had built at the bottom of our garden, compiling lists of 'must visit' reputedly haunted venues, along with several like-minded childhood friends (including the former assistant editor of this humble magazine), whilst a Sunday rain, light and oddly comforting, pattered on the plastic roof.

It is one of my very deepest regrets that we never got to visit *any* of the places contained on these constantly up-dated lists as children. Although I want you to understand that this was never due to any lack of enthusiasm on our part. Nor were we too afraid to make the pilgrimage (with the possible exception of Ian Crossley - a first-rate coward, who the six regular members of the 'New Ferry Ghost Club,' had christened 'Bus,' due to the fact that he was exceptionally large for his age. Big and fat, not to put too fine a point on it, and he looked quite capable of carrying roughly the same number of passengers upon his considerable girth as an MPTE double-decker!!!)

I guess the truth of the matter is that back then, we simply believed *every* decrepit, deserted -looking building we set eyes upon was very likely crawling with forlorn, eternally wandering spirits or hideous spectres with burning eyes and flat faces....

So what was the point in traipsing up and down the county (or beyond) when in the street where most of us lived, there were at least two such houses just waiting to be discovered?

One of these *'Gateways To The Other Side'* (as we liked to think of them) stood at the bottom end of Woodhead Road, and came complete with a set of cracked, grime-encrusted windows through which, it was said, a toothless old crone could sometimes be seen gazing out at the world from the comfort of a rickety rocking chair.

The other, just around the corner from my house on Bolton Road East, was even more ill-favoured. It certainly looked the part. Its whole facade seemed to have decayed, gone bad from within, like an apple that's rotten to the core. It was hard to shake the notion that anyone had set foot in the place in decades.

The fact is though, that only a few months before it began to fall into its then current state of terminal decline, it had been home to an elderly couple by the name of Murphy. Mr John Murphy, a carpenter by trade, was held in high regard by just about every kid in the district, mainly because he loved making beautiful, hand-crafted wooden toys which he gave away to all and sundry, usually at Christmas, or upon the occasion of some kid's birthday, but more often than not, he'd hand them out for the simple reward of seeing a child's face flushed with pure delight.

When his wife, upon whom he doted with an affection that bordered on worshipfulness, passed away whilst an in-patient at Clatterbridge Hospital however, his whole personality underwent the most dramatic of changes. He became something of a recluse, he stopped making toys, and I remember, (being far too young to understand or appreciate the profound sense of heart-breaking grief that follows in the wake of a loved one) asking my parents why kindly old Mr Murphy hadn't returned my wave whilst I was walking home from school that afternoon. My dad had looked at me thoughtfully for a moment, as if trying to decide how best I could conceive of death's awful inevitability, and after bidding me put down my satchel and my homework assignment, he'd taken me out into the back garden and said in an uncharacteristically soft voice; 'You know Mr Murphy's wife died a few months back, don't you, Lee? He loved her very, very much. She meant the world to him. And now she's no longer here, he misses her terribly. You're wondering why he didn't wave back? I think maybe the truth is he didn't even *see* you. Her passing has left him empty...and I'm afraid the light's gone out in his eyes, son.'

He asked me if I knew what he meant, and I told him that I did but only because I was sure that's what he wanted to hear. I've always regarded my father as being a highly articulate man, but as far as my understanding the extent of Mr Murphy's grief and how it had transformed him into a veritable zombie....He might as well have attempted to explain the mechanics of the Word Processor I'm writing this on to some newly discovered tribe deep in the Amazonian Rainforest.

But if my comprehension of true sorrow and heartache remained beyond the pale of a twelve-year-old mind then you can well imagine how I felt when I heard, just a few days later, that 'kindly old Mr Murphy' had placed a photograph of his dear departed wife in the centre of the dining room table, climbed onto one of his intricately carved, hand-made chairs, tied a length of good strong rope into a noose, slipped it around his slender, frail neck, and kicked out the chair from under him.

He wasn't found until a week or so later when his neighbour's became aware of a terrible stink, like rotting fish, emanating from the house next door...

Nobody told me any of this, of course. I only gleaned the ghoulish details when I had to go to the toilet in the middle of the night, and I overheard my parents discussing the tragedy in the supposed secrecy of their darkened bedroom. It sounds awfully callous when I think about it now, but I could hardly wait to tell my friends what I'd learned the next day. You have to realise I was young kid, who numbered amongst his main ambitions (along with playing for Liverpool F.C and 'copping off' with Jo Grant from *'DR WHO'*), the opportunity to come face to face with a genuine ghost. *Surely,* I thought, with Mr Murphy having killed himself in such a melodramatic fashion, his former premises would now be home to his unquiet spirit. so this was a major, red-hot news headline....

And sure enough, following its 'broadcast,' the New Ferry Ghost Club (which at that time comprised my brother Grant, Philly Bennett, Stevie Gee, Michael Cartwright and the aforementioned 'Bus'), spent the very next weekend, at the height of the summer holidays, assembled outside the empty Murphy residence, daring each other to be the first to go inside.

Two

In the end, we all went in together.

But only after we'd each armed ourselves with all the 'necessary Ghost Hunting Caboodle,' which amounted to a set of white candles my mum had bought at the height of the electricity worker's strike, and the resultant series of black-outs. A silver plated crucifix, Philly Bennett had had borrowed from his sister's dressing table. A packet of salt (which my *'FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND: EXORCIST SPECIALI'* reliably informed me was a sure-fire protection against all kinds of evil spirits), and a primitive cassette recorder in case the opportunity arose for us to tape a 'message from the other side.'

The front door of the house was locked and of the windows were entirely boarded up, but refusing to be deterred, and kidding ourselves that we were a bunch of budding Professor Van Helsing's, we walked in single file around to the rear of the building. The garden was wildly overgrown with high, rank smelling leaves, all but obscuring any obvious point of entry, and I remember it was stiflingly hot. The sweat of high noon was rolling off me in waves as we made our way through a jungle of choked and twisted vegetation where crickets creaked unconcernedly. I think it was Mikey who finally located the half-open window, (presumably overlooked by the estate agents who had not yet placed the house back on the market), and its discovery sparked an immediate mad dash scramble to be the first to 'step across the threshold.'

So wrapped up were we in accomplishing our Great Mission, the idea that there was anything even remotely illegal about us gaining entry in this manner, never once sprang to mind. It was only later that evening, tucking into a box of 'Smarties,' as I watched my favourite TV cop show; *'STARSKY AND HUTCH,'* hot on the trail of the bad guys, that I'd felt a sudden lurching in the pit of my stomach and had nearly choked on one of the sugar-coated sweets. The realisation had belatedly dawned that, if we'd been caught in the Murphy house by an adult, we might well have been reported to the police. We could then have been arrested and charged with burglary, and whisked off to court before you could say; 'You're nicked, son.' I'd found myself struck with a disconcertingly vivid image of each of us being locked up in a row of solitary confinement cells, miles from home, for years without end, like Stewart Granger in *'THE PRISONER OF ZENDA.'*

Come to think of it, the bathroom into which we'd climbed on that long-ago summer afternoon, in many ways resembled my childhood conception of a prison cell. The floor was caked in filth and the air hung heavy with a vast array of nose-wrinkling odours, the most readily identifiable of which were mildew, dry-rot, and age-old human sweat. A pile of dead leaves that looked as though they'd lain there since the previous autumn, were heaped beneath the chipped and cracked porcelain sink, the bath was crawling with fat, hairy spiders, and adjacent to the toilet bowl, a cloud of bluebottles swarmed busily above the mutilated corpse of small furry mammal, possibly a rat, though none of us were too keen to investigate further.

We had gotten out of there pretty quick, wrenching at the door that opened onto to a tiny porch and the bare, empty kitchen beyond. We had no business with these rooms, and we scarcely afforded them a second glance. The oppressive silence of the house was broken only by the sound of our footsteps echoing hollowly on the uncarpeted wooden floorboards. On we strode, towards what we assumed would be the lounge...The room where John Murphy had killed himself barely two weeks earlier...

The door to our objective was standing slightly ajar, and Philly was the first to reach it. He pointedly ignored 'Bus's' pleas that maybe this whole thing wasn't such a great idea after all, and instead favoured us with what he liked to call his 'Philly-sophical smile.'

There was no going back now, that smile said.

And before any of us could open our mouths to argue differnetly, he'd turned to raise his hands to push it all the way open.

I remember feeling a perverse stab of disappointment when it failed to creak on its rusted hinges the way doors always did in those countless *'HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL'* type horror movies. And this sense of anti-climax grew the second we stepped, somewhat fearfully, into the lounge.

I'm not at all sure what we were expecting to find exactly.

But it turned out, we sure as hell didn't need any of the 'Ghost Hunting Caboodle' we'd brought with us. We didn't even need to light the candles. There were gaps in the boards that shuttered the windows, allowing numerous slabs of sunlight to pierce the sad, dusty corners. The room had been stripped clean of everything. All of its furniture (including that 'intricately carved, hand-made chair' which Mr Murphy had used to launch himself, spinning and kicking into the next life) had been removed.

There was nothing to see, and still less to feel

There were no inexplicable 'cold spots.'

No pervasive atmosphere of sorrow and regret.

No whispering suggestion of a ghostly presence.

Nothing...

Except...

Except for the dusty collection of papers stacked haphazardly upon the front window sill.

Upon closer inspection we found that these papers were actually letters, all of them without envelopes. All of them written in the same delicate, sloping hand. And all of them addressed to the same person...The late Mrs Jean Murphy.

Ordinarily, the contents of an old man's scribbles to his beloved wouldn't have interested me in the slightest, but partly out of frustration at having had our hopes of acquiring any evidence of the paranormal dashed, and partly out of a kind of morbid curiosity, I grabbed a fistful and began to read the first few lines.

It was the ever-observant Mikey Cartwright who first recognised the significance of the dates at the head of each letter. I'd assumed John Murphy had written to his wife whilst she was ill in hospital and had then, for some reason, decided against sending them. But what Mikey had noticed almost immediately, was that the earliest of the notes was dated April

17th, 1976, and they went right on through to mid-June of the same year. This was indeed rather strange, because you see, his wife had passed away the previous March!!!

'The old man must have lost his marbles, when he lost his missus,' Steve had muttered, shaking his head in bewilderment.

'He was still penning letters to her three months after she'd popped her clogs!'

These words had barely fallen from his lips before we, each of us, heard the thud of an unmistakably heavy object striking the floor directly above our heads.

It could have been anything.

A precariously placed bedside lamp that had been teetering on the brink for God knew how long. A picture frame that hadn't been affixed to the wall correctly. A shelf laden with thick, hard-backed novels that had finally collapsed under their combined weight...

ANYTHING.

But the fact is, those twin bedfellows; The Completely Sane and the Entirely Rational are notoriously difficult to grasp a tight hold of in such a nerve-jangling situation. Fear of the dark, the pools of shadow in a sunlit room, the cubby-hole under the stairs, or the crooked laneway that leads through the centre of the wildwood, are fears that are every bit as innocuous as they are irrational, but that doesn't make them any less terrifying to their percipient if the mood is right.

And at that precise moment in time, it's my opinion you'd have been hard pressed to find *anywhere* this side of Castle Dracula, where the mood was more suited to the immediate abandonment of the sane and rational in favour of boarding the not-so-good ship 'TOTAL AND UTTER PANIC.'

Almost as one, we turned and raced for the exit, and it seemed that no matter how fast we tried to run, we moved in dream time slow motion just the same. The sensation was doubtless illusory, although it may have had something to do with the fact that 'Bus' was, predictably, at the head of the fleeing rabble, whilst your's truly was caught bringing up the rear. Either way, an eternity passed before we reached the bathroom window and could set about making good our escape.

Being last in line, in a purportedly haunted house, was not an experience I'd choose to repeat any time soon. I was quite literally jumping up and down in frustration as I watched my friends take their turn to hurl themselves out into the weed-infested garden below, and when there was only Stevie Gee left in front of me, I had to grit my teeth to keep from losing control completely and shoving him headfirst out onto the tangled mass of knee-high grass that passed for a lawn.

It was just as I was about to climb onto the edge of the none-too-safe-looking sink that, that I heard the strange sounds coming from somewhere behind me...

I hesitated for a second, curiosity once more overcoming my fear, and struggled to identify its source. It wasn't anything like the crash we'd heard a few moments earlier. Rather it was a warm, lullaby sound. A gentle creaking that brought to mind images of a grandfather's favourite rocking chair or a wooden sailing ship adrift on calm waters...

Or a length of 'good strong rope,' hung from a rafter, suspending a literal dead weight...

This last thought, coupled with the fact that the noises appeared to be coming from the direction of the living room, got me moving faster than I'd ever moved in my life, and I all but dived through the bathroom window, hit the 'lawn' running, and didn't slow down until I'd reached the blessed sanctuary of the 'Ghost Club Headquarters' at the bottom of my own back garden.

Three

I was soon joined by the other members, all of whom were quite naturally anxious to know what had happened to have me racing past them down the street like all the devils of Hell were at my heels. And the strange thing is, I really *wanted* to share with them that which I thought I'd heard back there in that damned house, but something prevented me from doing so. Perhaps my reluctance to relate my 'experience' was born of uncertainty as to just ~~what~~ ^{what} I had heard. . .

The sun shone in peerless blue skies for the remainder of that afternoon, and if there is any greater dispeller of even the darkest of fears then I've yet to see it. Pretty soon, I'd succeeded in convincing myself that I must have imagined those noises. Or maybe, given the rather panicky circumstances, I'd mistaken the perfectly ordinary for the supernatural.

Yeah. Those explanations had begun to make perfect sense viewed in the long green light of a July afternoon, when all seemed right with the world and everything was in its place. And so I told my friends that I'd just gotten a trifle spooked at having been 'the last man out,' and that was all there was to it.

I'm not sure whether they truly believed me or not, but no one actually spoke up to say that they never, so I guess I must have come across as being fairly convincing. Thinking about it now though, I'm not at all sure Mikey Cartwright was taken in. As I said a little earlier, he saw a lot of things other people wouldn't have picked up on with a pair of super-powerful field glasses. He seemed to be blessed with an uncanny intuition. He could see right through people like Ray Milland in 'THE MAN WITH X-RAY EYES.' He could suss out a liar or a phoney within mere seconds of them uttering their first sentence.

He could also see that I was still clutching the pile of letters I'd grabbed from the Murphy's lounge...The ones the old man had composed to his dead wife...Like the vain prayer of an agonised heart.

'You'd best take them back, Lee.' Mikey had warned, his voice low and ominous. 'You know what will happen tonight, if you don't?'

And oh yes, I'd known very well what he was referring to.

It one of those peculiar beliefs, exclusive to the lore of children. Like smelling dandelions makes you wet the bed, tread on an ant and it's sure to rain, stare into a mirror and repeat the Lord's Prayer backwards, and the Devil will appear grinning, over your left shoulder.

Or, steal the property of the dead and you will be visited in the wee small hours before dawn by the angry spirit you've offended.

I was aware of the risks, but my friends would have had to have dragged me kicking and screaming to get me to go back into that house, just then.

'Thanks for the warning, but I think I'll take my chances,' I said, lowering my eyes to avoid the doubtful stares of my friends. 'I'll put them back tomorrow. I'm too hot to care, right now'

'Well, it's your funeral,' Mikey whispered softly, as if speaking to himself. And that was the last word on the subject.

Four

We whiled away the rest of the afternoon engaged in the type of pursuits enjoyed by most other kids our age, and the subjects of ghosts and haunted houses were banished to the furthest corners of our minds.

When the time finally came around for my friends to head for their respective homes, however, and the twilight brought with it the promise of coolness and the certain threat of night, I called Philly to one side and asked him if he could loan me his sister's silver crucifix. He readily agreed and when I hit the sack that night, I placed the cross beneath my pillow and offered up a prayer for God's protection.

And the combination seemed to work just fine, because, contrary to expectation, I slept like the proverbial log.

Until the 'wee hours before dawn,' that is...

Then it was that I experienced what I can only describe as a 'waking dream' (though perhaps 'waking nightmare' would be a damn sight nearer the mark).

It began with a pristine white clipper ship sailing into some South Sea harbour, and a sailor with a grizzled, weather-beaten face, smoking a pipe as he rocked slowly back and forth in his chair...

And then the scene suddenly dissolved, switching back to my bedroom, where the air was filled with the sleepy/dreaded sound of a soft and gentle creaking, and the scent of something just past ripe.

I had my face to the wall, and for a single endless moment I refused to turn around to see the thing that I knew was waiting for me in the black. But even as I strove to ignore the presence, I found myself craning my neck to gaze upon its countenance.

And, sure enough, hanging from a thick length of twisted rope was the body of John Murphy, his head down, as though he were staring at the floor beneath his feet. I had time to study the way the moonlight shone upon his balding pate, illuminating it like one of my 'Aurora' Glow-In-The-Dark Model Monster Kits, before he suddenly raised his head to mine, grinned mirthlessly, and opened his eyes...

His features were hideously bloated. There were flecks of white foam on his wormy lips, and live things crawled in what remained of his hair. As I watched in horrid fascination, a maggot, the size of a small mouse emerged from his right nostril and dropped to the floor with an audible plop...

And when he spoke, as I knew he eventually must, it was with a voice that brought to mind images of a tomb door, swinging shut forever on gritty rusted hinges, or the sound of those dead leaves, piled beneath the sink in the Murphy's bathroom, blowing free across an empty playground.

He pointed a bony finger in my direction and croaked menacingly; 'Give me back what's mine!!! Give me back what's mine!!! Give me back what's mine!!!!....' over and over, gradually slowing down like one of those old gramophone records....Until it stopped completely. And then his tongue lolled out, impossibly long and covered with sores. He ran it over his stubby chin, and began somehow, to move towards me...

Ice settled deep in my throat, and I woke up screaming, drenched in a pool of sweat...

And slept with the light on till dawn.

The terrifying power of that nightmare had me leaping out of bed to a chorus of bird song, and after I'd thrown on my jeans and T-shirt, I ran round to the Murphy's house, sneaked up fearfully to the bathroom window, and chucked in the notes (I'd earlier tied them together with a piece of red ribbon). I never dared peek in to see where they'd landed.

And I never set foot on the property ever again.

Five

In the days and weeks that followed, my friends noticed a profound change in my attitude towards ghostly phenomena.

For the space of several months, I was never able to view the subject with quite the same degree of, well, *innocence* is I guess, the word I'm looking for. I still retained an interest. But it's true to say, I confined my 'investigations' to simply reading about phantoms and such in books and magazine articles. I never told any of my mates the reason for this sudden change of attitude. They never knew that I'd been so badly frightened by that awful dream of John Murphy's vengeful spirit, I simply couldn't face ever setting foot inside any other reputedly haunted house.

I didn't even tell them that I'd *had* the damn dream...It was something that I'd kept very much locked away like some dirty secret hidden in the darkest depths of the wine cellar..

I've never spoken of it...

Until now.

And *why* now? you may well ask.

The reasons are as numberless as the stars at night, but I think I'll settle for the one that is perhaps the most simple and readily explainable. Although, that doesn't make it any less relevant in my eyes.

Its namely this: 'The New Ferry Ghostclub' disbanded within a mere fortnight of its members leaving Church Drive and moving on to different secondary and grammar schools. Despite the pledges of undying allegiance and promises to always stay in touch, we predictably wound up going our separate ways. Further evidence, if it were needed, that even the very best of childhood friends can all-too quickly lose sight of the magic times they spent together, it remembrance fades with each passing day, until it becomes nothing more or less than an attic memory.

Perhaps this drifting apart was the direct result of my sudden loss of enthusiasm and stubborn refusal to become involved in further 'field trips,' and if that is indeed so, then I can't help but feel a stab of sadness and regret that I simply sat by and allowed such a thing to happen.

The irony is, over the space of the next decade or so, long after the sickening fear had subsided, my interest (some would say; obsession) with all things ghostly was rekindled anew, so that it was stronger than ever before. I spent a good deal of my spare time in the Civic Centre Library, studying and making copious notes on all manner of local weirdness. I uncovered a whole pile of little-known works containing whole chapters of largely forgotten folklore, pored through

stacks of pamphlets and magazines, and searched through countless reels of old newspaper clippings preserved on microfilm until my eyes felt like they were on stalks.

It was almost as though I were doing a penance. Trying in vain to make up for the wrongs committed in a time to which I could never hope to return.

It seems to me now, that the very least I can do is attempt to chronicle the information I gleaned during those endless days as I made the typically awkward journey from boyhood to (so-called) adulthood.

The following series of articles, contained here and in subsequent issues, are therefore intended as a fitting tribute to the former members of 'The New Ferry Ghost Club.'

Wherever they may be....

Lee Walker, New Ferry, Merseyside. March 24th, 1998

'Never An Absolution' - The Legend Of Birkenhead Priory

Perhaps it should come as no great surprise to learn that the recently restored ruins of Birkenhead Priory, one of the oldest Monastic buildings in the whole of Britain, (erected circa 1150 A.D.) is reputedly haunted by a whole bunch of ghosts.

Local legend maintains that during the time of King Henry VIII's infamous (not to say, ruthless) Dissolution, the Abbots had decreed that all of the treasures of the Priory should be safely hidden away in a network of caves and tunnels that were said to exist beneath the imposing edifice. These underground chambers, a labyrinth-like construction, were reputed to run far below the surface of acres of green fields and woodland, themselves long since buried by the sadly redundant '*Cammell Laird Ship Yard*.'

The untold riches, including much gold and silver, were duly stashed away for safekeeping, out of sight, out of mind, but unfortunately, several of the monks fell victim to one of mankind's oldest vices...Avarice.

Whilst they were meant to be guarding the hoards of treasure from King Henry's equally greedy henchmen, they set about instead attempting to line their own cassocks with as much booty as they could possibly carry. Divine Retribution was close at hand, however, and no sooner had they laid their thieving hands upon the treasure, than a large slab of rock, which had previously stood for years beyond counting as a natural supporting central pillar, suddenly collapsed, with catastrophic consequences for the men caught in the tunnels.

They were all killed, either instantly by the resultant cave-in, or else with agonizing slowness due to starvation or lack of oxygen.



(Above): The spartan ruins of the Priory's Cloisters, the monks' former sleeping quarters, and the setting for many a merry meal for the weary traveller who would have once been made more than welcome by the Brotherhood.

No trace of either the tunnels, caves, or fabulous riches have ever been uncovered, but the legend endures, not least because the spirits of the eternally damned monks are said to still wander the grounds of the Priory, most frequently on the anniversary of the underground disaster..Seeking in vain an Absolution for their sins..

There have been several recent sightings of the ghostly, black-clad figures, heads bowed, cowls obscuring their features. The 'Ghostly Monk' is, of course, is an oft-reported motif in encounters with supernatural beings. They appear to be every bit as popular as the 'Brown, Grey or White Lady,' 'The Vanishing Hitchhiker' (who we'll be meeting up with pretty soon in the course of this article) or the 'Hideous Crone.'

The famous hauntings of Borley, Ponterfract, Beachy Head, and countless others, feature similar-looking phantoms, and in fact, a previous issue of this very magazine dealt with the manifestations of 'Holy Ghosts' at various locations across Britain, ('DON #9), and how they frequently appeared standing at the end of the percipient's bed, etched against the inky blackness by the baleful beams of a demon moon...

The Haunting Of 'Mockbeggar Hall'

The above title refers to the 're-christening' of the once majestic Leasowe Castle, following its fall from grace sometime in the 17th Century. It was originally built in 1593 for the Earl of Derby, smack in the middle of Leasowe, on the Wirral Peninsula but over a period of years was somehow allowed to crumble into an abject state of disrepair and a consequent sully of its reputation.

It was used for various purposes, including private residence, a hostel for shipwrecked sailors, and, ultimately, its current function; namely, that of a hotel.

The stories of its being haunted originated with its tenure as a public hotel, with various frightened guests reporting to the staff that they had encountered the presence of at least two ghosts.

One particular visitant told of how he had awoken in the middle of the night to see a forlorn-looking man and boy stood at the foot of his bed, despite the fact that he had booked in alone, and the guest-room door was locked. Several other guests also complained that they had heard strange, inexplicable noises, including the unmistakable sound of footsteps ascending the stairs behind them, even though there was never anybody there when the witness turned around to look.



(Above): Leasowe Castle, as it appears today. Once a true Castle, in every sense of the word, it has changed hands on numerous occasions, and numbers amongst its inhabitants, a couple of dolorous spirits, doomed to linger in the room where they met their deaths many years earlier.

The once-thriving hotel suffered another financial set back (though whether the resident ghosts could be blamed for the sudden downturn in fortune is not recorded), and the place was forced to close down. The building's chequered history underwent a further change when it was bought up by the 'Railwaymen's Convalescent Home. For a while, all was quiet. Certainly, there were no fresh reports of anything remotely unusual emanating from the Hall.

At the time of writing, the building has once more transformed itself into a grandiose hotel, and if the accounts of ghostly phenomena have been rather in short supply of late, there has sprung up a legend that may have some relevance as to the origin of the two sorrowful-looking spirits described earlier.

Local folklore dictates that some time in the dim and distant past, Leasowe Castle was at the centre of a bitter family feud. A father and son were taken prisoner as leaders of one side of the feud, and were subsequently locked up in one of the Castle's many rooms (perhaps the very one that the terrified guest awoke in to be confronted with their spirits). The twin Medieval delights of hellish torture and, (assuming they survived that), a lifetime's imprisonment, were their only prospects and so, the father, rather than subject themselves to such horrors, killed first his son, and then himself by smashing his head repeatedly against the stone walls until his brains were exposed. *(I can think of easier ways - Ed.* Their spirits are said to walk the rooms of the former Castle, ever since.

A Nightmare On Seel Street

An old printer's in one of the little side 'jigger's' in Liverpool City Centre has, allegedly been the location for several brushes with 'other-worldly' phenomena, according to various members of staff at 'SWIFTPRINT.'

As long as ago as 1979, a man named Jeff Moores, was pottering about the works kitchen in the company of a colleague. Their conversation turned from the usual subjects of footy and girls and nights out on the ale (although not necessarily in *that* order) to a general discussion about the age and history of the building. Jeff was informed by the other man, who had been employed by the firm 18 months earlier, that the current building was erected about 120 years ago. In the city's great seafaring past, the place had been used as a sail-making factory.

Jeff casually stared out of the window as his friend chatted away merrily, and as he did so, he allowed his gaze to wander around where there was once a sort of courtyard. He at once noticed the rather obvious signs of alteration to the original structure. He could clearly see the hoists that once used to feed materials to each of the buildings four floors. Windows had since replaced these hoists and an elevator had been installed.

It was when reference was made to the lift, that the unnamed colleague told Jeff about the ghost that haunted the site.

'I laughed myself silly at first,' Jeff later confided to Stevie Gee (erstwhile member of both 'The New Ferry Ghost Club' and the team behind this magazine). 'But then I listened as he explained that somebody had died on the premises, either by falling down the lift shaft, or by hanging themselves in it.'

At the time, Jeff worked right on the top floor, and his duties were such that he very often had cause to slave away long after the rest of the staff had traipsed off home. Sometimes, he would still be on site as late as way past midnight. He was at pains to point out however, that working the late shift never held any fears for him. He pretty soon forgot all about his workmate's story, and he was not one to spook easily, anyway.

That is, until one particular night, when his whole concept of what passes for reality, was well and truly shaken to its core...He heard the by now, familiar sound of his colleague slamming the front door of the printer's firmly shut, and the hollow sound echoed through the now totally empty building. Though he didn't believe in ghosts, he readily conceded that being left alone in the old, dark factory, performed wonders for the blacker side of human imagination. On this particular occasion, though without any obvious source of suspicion, it became impossible to shake the feeling that he was being watched by some invisible presence. As the minutes ticked by, he grew more and more nervous, until eventually, he reached the point where he could no longer ignore the insistent voice in his mind that bade him to '*Sod this for a lark. Why don't you just head for home?*'

Decision made, he rose to his feet and began shutting down the printing machines. As he pulled the plug on the very last one, he was startled by the sound of the lift moving down to the third floor, and a dreamy terror floated into the dark hollows of his body. He knew that the factory was empty. He'd distinctly heard his friend leave over an hour and a half earlier. That was the only entrance and he couldn't have missed the noise of that door re-opening, even if his colleague had returned for some unknown purpose. The hinges on the door hadn't been oiled in God alone knew how long, and as a result they screeched like a thousand jagged fingernails grating down the surface of a blackboard.

And hot on the heels of that realisation came another, equally unattractive; the lift was one of those quaint old-fashioned ones that in order to get it moving, you have to keep your finger on the push-button inscribed with the floor number that you require. Take your finger off, and the lift stops...Simple as that!

When the lift juddered to a halt on the top floor, Jeff forgot all of his earlier scepticism and turned and ran, taking the stairs two or three at a time as he legged it out of the building. He didn't stop to look back, once.



(Above): 'Swiftprint' on Seel Street in Liverpool City Centre: the haunt of a suicide...Or something infinitely worse???

The following day, he mentioned the incident, (which had by now taken on something of a dream-like, fairytale quality) to his workmate, and was told that various other unexplained incidents had been occurring on the premises with increasing regularity. For example, the in-house phones had frequently been engaged - the lines jammed with white noise - when there was evidently nobody else on site, and there had been reports of '*certain smells*' permeating the air in the printer's dark room. These odours were variously described as being either sweet, like a woman's perfume, or else bad, like rotting flesh. In one incident, a fellow worker had inhaled the perfume aroma and promptly wheeled round, fully expecting to find a female standing there...But there had been no one. Shrugging his shoulders, he went back to his piece he was working on and found that written on the previously blank sheet of paper were the words; '*HELPME.*'

Other reported disturbances included weird electrical problems, for instance, the switchboards flashing on and off for no apparent reason, and the factory lights flickering intermittently.

By far the most terrifying testimony to emerge thus far however, is undoubtedly that proffered by Paul Ward, who works in the building's 'Creative Services Section.'

According to him, at around 7pm one evening, he was working with a friend in the studio, and was about to accompany him into the dark room to develop some photographs, when Paul's attention was drawn to a sudden movement which he just caught sight of out of the corner of his eye. Alarmed, he turned to face it full on, and was scared out of his wits by the distinct outline of a small figure, crouching in the far corner of the studio. The face was obscured in silhouette, but he could just make out the glinting teeth of a leering, dwarf-like entity...It stared malevolently at him from across the room, and badly frightened, Paul glanced at his colleague, anxious for confirmation of what he was seeing. By the time Paul had gotten his attention and looked back to point out the hideous figure, it had disappeared from sight...

Bidston Hill - Birkenhead's Window Area

Bidston Hill, overlooking the predominantly flat Wirral Peninsula, affords a panoramic view of the diverse mixture of green countryside and urban city-scape; the derelict dockyards and the heart of Liverpool's industrial heartland, the distant Welsh mountains and the endlessly shifting seas...

That the hill is ancient, and steeped in history, is irrefutable.

Neolithic Man has left his mark in the shape of various Prehistoric carvings and etchings on the damp, sandstone, all but concealed these days, by overhanging trees and bushes, but in common with other purported 'Window Areas,' the place was (is?) venerated and regarded as being sacred by the worshippers of Pagan deities.

When I visited the site on a dull Winter's afternoon, it was impossible not to be struck by the ominous atmosphere that hangs about the place like a dark, all-pervasive shroud..It was difficult too, to shake the feeling that you were being watched by something that preferred to remain unseen, hidden from view...

It's certainly not hard to see why Bidston Hill has acquired such a sinister reputation over the passage of the years. Especially amongst the local people, who on wild, windwsept nights, whisper in hushed tones, tales of phantoms and Witchcraft...

Although the majority of reported phenomena is UFO-related, it could be said that there are sufficient ghostly occurrences to warrant its inclusion in this article.

An astronomer on Bidston Hill reportedly encountered strange, inexplicable slivers of light that illuminated the sky and surrounding trees, and reportedly had a diverse affect upon the delicate instruments within the hill's resident observatory, by causing them to vibrate.



(ABOVE): The Bidston Hill Observatory. Situated at the very summit of the hill, it is afforded a unrivalled view of the Heavens and its vast canopy of stars. The building is just a part of a research complex that wouldn't look out of place on the set of an episode of either 'DR WHO' or 'QUATERMASS'

Lest you still be of the opinion that I've made something of a departure away from Merseyside's ghosts and apparitions, just let me quickly add that coincidental with the appearance of the anomalous lights, the unnamed astronomer also told of how he'd frequently heard unusual sounds in the air all around him. He described these noises as being like 'low murmurs.' He further stated that he noticed mirage effects on the plain between the windmill (which along with the observatory, dominates the hillside) and the research site. 'They caused the air to be teeming with ghostly shapes superimposed on the slopes of the hill and appearing like thousands of glow-worms.'

The witness suggested that the phenomena might well have some sort of electrical origin, due to the fact that throughout the experiences; 'It was as though some electric current, throbbing, palpitating, were at play.'

Jenny Randles, in her excellent book; '*MYSTERIES OF THE MERSEY VALLEY*,' makes reference to '*a curious Guardian that seems to have stood by the hill as if nocturnally protecting the M53, and the housing estates around Upton.*'

To illustrate this curious supposition, she recounts how, on 1st May, 1980, Gareth Hughes was travelling home in the early hours of the morning when the normally busy motorway was exceptionally quiet. He was driving towards the bridge that leads across to the railway station on the opposite side of the carriageway. He had a clear view of Bidston Hill over to his right, and as he passed Junction 3, his attention was suddenly drawn to '*a dark, foreboding object.*' silhouetted against the contours of the hill, in a position south of the research complex. He was astounded at its incredible size and the fact that it seemed to sit astride the closed down railway station. As he passed under the bridge, he wound down his window to afford himself a better look at the object, and reduced his speed to little more than a crawl. He was able to see that the object was, to all intents and purposes, studying him with an equal degree of intensity!!!

The black mass (no pun intended), was hanging so low in the sky that it all but obscured the stars in the heavens. It was reminiscent of 'two artillery shells placed side by side, but angled downwards so that the front part pointed into the ground and the curved ends pointed skyward. The overall effect was not unlike a giant pair of binoculars trained onto the motorway. From the front, two beams of light, like headlamps, were shining towards the earth. They were strong, but cut-off sharply in mid-air before reaching the hillside. Two small pink or red flames were also visible at the back of the tubes, flickering slightly into the sky.'

There was no sign of any other traffic on the road. He decided it would be a good idea to acquire other witnesses to this unbelievable sight, and so drove to his mother's house as quickly as he possibly could. Although she lived less than five minutes drive away, the object, whatever it was, had disappeared by the time he and his mother returned to the location. Similar objects have been sighted both before and since this report was made public...

Most notably, on December 27th, 1985, when Nicola and Jack Limb were returning to Wallasey, on the same stretch of the M53 as Gareth Hughes, five years earlier. Again, both witnesses expressed great surprise at the total lack of other traffic on this normally hectic stretch of road. They suddenly noticed a 'triangle of lights, with two bright white ones at the front and a blob of red at the rear and top.'

It was hovering over the same railway line as in the previous account, directly at the foot of Bidston Hill. The object was ominously silent. They kept it in view until they passed Junction 2. The object was still hovering beneath the hill when they lost sight of it as the motorway curved to the west...

And finally, (for now, at least), 'Spud,' a taxi-driver friend of the Editor, penned a rather lengthy letter to 'DON,' concerning an unnerving experience he had whilst travelling along Boundary Road (a fairly busy lane that rubs directly alongside Bidston Hill).

According to Spud's letter, he was returning home on foot, on a freezing cold winter's evening, together with one his friends. There'd been a fairly heavy snowfall earlier that day, and they were both understandably eager to be indoors. They walked along the road as quickly as the conditions would allow, and both remarked upon the unusual absence of streetlighting. However, there was a full moon, so it wasn't so dark that they couldn't make out where they were headed. As they approached Taylor's Wood, just off to their left, with the sadly obsolete Flaybrick Cemetery on their right, Spud was filled with a sudden feeling of unutterable dread, and was about to suggest that they should turn back and take another route, when his friend shouted 'What's that?'

He followed his companions pointing finger and distinctly saw a pair of glowing red eyes 'that shone like bright rubies in the pale moonlight,' peering at them from out of the wood. At that precise instant, the air was filled with a terrifying growling noise, and the bushes on the other side of the road began rustling violently. The 'glowing eyes' suddenly appeared to be much clearer and at a greater height than before, as though whatever was crouching in the trees had raised itself on its haunches...and was slowly crawling in their direction...

The cabbie decided something indescribably evil was fast approaching and began beating a hasty retreat. His friend, who had seemingly been intent on investigating further, followed reluctantly in his wake.

As they walked, they both recalled a fire-side horror story some mutual friend had once told them over a few beers. A story about a Demon that was rumoured to haunt the area around Bidston Hill: a creature that was said to be half human/half animal, with cloven hoofs, horns on either side of its head and glowing red eyes...They had understandably scoffed at the tale...Who in their right mind, and in this day and age, wouldn't???

As they tried to resist the temptation not to break into a panic-stricken run on a bone-chilling night in the dead heart of winter however, that 'crazy old rumour-monger's' solemn words carried a weight that could crush even the most valiant of spirits, as easily as an autumn leaf grabbed in a pair of rough, uncaring hands.

And when they heard the sound of twigs and branches snapping in the dark wood right beside them...And a low, guttural growling, edging closer, ever closer... You better believe they *did* take to their toes!!!

They ran, slipping and sliding through the recently-fallen snow.

They ran and didn't once look back.

They ran as if their very souls depended on it.

And hell, who knows, perhaps after all is said and done, that's not so very far from the truth.

Dibbinsdale's Phantom Hitch-Hiker

A lonely stretch of road that runs between the middle-class suburbs of Spital and Bromborough, has long been attributed with the reputation of being haunted by the ghost of a young woman, most commonly described as being dressed in the garb of a nun.

According to local legend, the spirit is that of a girl who had set out from nearby Poulton Hall, to make her way to the nunnery. She never arrived there however, because she was raped and then murdered by an unknown assailant as she crossed Dibbinsdale Bridge.

Over the years, the bridge has become synonymous with the appearance (and rapid disappearance) of a Vanishing Hitch-Hiker, which may, or may not, be connected with the sightings of the aforementioned nun.

Several people have reported encountering the ghostly entity as they drove towards the bridge that fords the Dibbinsdale Brook. The author spoke to another of those highly-reliable taxi-drivers who, after requesting anonymity, related how he'd been travelling through the area, after dropping off a fare in Bromborough, during the early hours of the morning. It had been raining heavily, and as the lane is devoid of streetlighting, he was driving very carefully and at a reduced speed. Just as he was approaching the bridge he saw, illuminated in the glare of the headlamps, the figure of a woman, clad entirely in a black, hooded cloak, standing at the edge of the road. She had her head bowed, as though she were seeking to protect herself from the relentlessly driving rain. The cabbie took pity on her, caught out there in such Godawful weather, and he pulled up alongside the bedraggled woman, wound down his window and offered her a lift. Her head remained

bowed, and she made no reply, so the driver repeated his offer on a couple more occasions...Still the woman didn't give the slightest indication that she was even aware of his existence, and he'd just about decided that she was either stone deaf, simple-minded, or both, when the cowed figure raised its head, smiled sadly at him, and then promptly vanished!

The cabbie stared for a second in frank disbelief...And then he put his foot down, suddenly anxious to be away from the place.

He confided to me that there is no way he would take that route into Spital ever again...Not for all the tips in the world. And his is not the only such account on record. In 1970, there were two very similar incidents, both involving people unwittingly offering a lone woman, dressed in black, a lift, only to have the 'person' disappear from sight in a split second...



(Above): The winding, twisting road that runs through the tiny village of Dibbinsdale, is the reputed haunt of a phantom nun and/or a 'Vanishing Hitch-Hiker.'

Whatever the truth of the tales, the place is undeniably spooky. The trees that surround the lane on all sides, stand like silent sentinels; The Eternal Watchers...They perceive the comings and goings of man, the constant ebb and flow of traffic, and the rich, woodland wildlife.

And who knows, perhaps something else...

Something from beyond the realms of scientific acceptance...

Something that craves human companionship, but which is doomed by its very nature, to forever walk alone.

The Frankby Phantom

According to reports humming down the wires from local Merseyside newspaper; *'THE WIRRAL NEWS'*, a secluded area of Frankby, known as The Nook, has recently attracted an outbreak of paranormal phenomena.

The initial account was included in the December 17th, 1997, edition of the paper, and concerned a milkman by the name of John Hollywood. He was carrying out his delivery round at 5 in the morning, a good hour and a half or so before sunrise at that time of year. As he turned into The Nook itself, the headlights of his milkfloat illuminated the darkened lane, and something else... something out of a nightmare.

John, who hails from Moreton, slammed on the brakes as he came face to face with an entity that he described as being; *'six or seven feet tall. It looked like the Abominable Snowman.'*

Unable at first to believe his eyes, he hesitated for a moment to gaze at the *'strange white figure'* as it ran pell mell towards him. Then fear slithered into his skin and he hurriedly reversed and shot back the way he'd come, as fast as he possibly could: *'I just put my foot down. The bottles were jangling I was going so fast.'*

John, who'd been so terrified by the incident that he actually felt his hair stand on end, has since refused to continue his round in the area during the hours of darkness.

The brief article concluded with a plea for further information regarding any similar encounters and a tantalising reference to the locale's eerie reputation...*'He's not the first to report a Frankby Phantom; the area is ancient and is reputed to be a hotbed for sightings of strange phenomena.'*

We were further intrigued when, a month later (14th January, 1998), the same paper arranged for a psychic to visit the location to see if she could tap into the atmosphere and sense any ghostly presence responsible for the haunting of The Nook. Maureen Platt, from Tranmere, described how she *'grew queasy'* as she reached the bottom of the lane. *'My stomach began churning. I sensed that the lane had been the scene of a brutal murder.'*

Typically, (not to say frustratingly), she couldn't be any more specific, except to say that she believed that a man may have been killed as a direct result of a lover's tiff some 120-150 years previously.

Just to add to the aura of mystery, the latest article also made mention of a Hoylake resident named Albert Spencer, who claimed that his father had seen the Phantom on several occasions during the 1930's. Albert was quoted as saying;

'He often spoke of a white figure sitting on the fence by Frankby Stiles. I recall on one occasion my father being a little shaken when the figure disappeared in a flash, and this lessened his visits to Frankby Stiles.'

There was speculation too, that the 'spirit' may have a 'female companion.'

The Nook's 'Half-Inn House' has gained a local notoriety for being haunted by the ghost of a *'lady in crimson walking through the rooms carrying a goldfish bowl,'* although the present owners were quick to point out that they have lived there for nigh on 30 years, and they have never seen anything remotely unusual.

The house, originally built in 1675, certainly has an ancient history (something of a prerequisite for reputedly haunted houses) and was once on the main road linking Monks Ferry with Hoylake. It was known as 'The Lincoln Inn' back then, and was utilised as a stop-off point for changing horses.

On 28th January however, came news that a local farmer had put forward a rational, if somewhat prosaic explanation for the mysterious apparition...Namely, a pure white Charolais cow!!!

Clyde Beck, of Well House Farm proffered the theory after hearing of John Hollywoods' ghostly' encounter, and remembered that on the morning in question, one of his cows, Bess, had managed to escape from its shed and had wandered in a very confused state down that very same lane of The Nook.

Clyde was quoted as saying; *'Bess had calved the night before and so we kept her in the shed. She must have wanted to join the rest of the herd because she broke open the shed door, opened the gate and went off down the lane.'*

'She must have remembered her calf and come charging back up, which would have been when the milkman saw her.'

Sounds perfectly feasible to us...But that didn't stop several more witnesses braving ridicule to register their encounters with what they, at least, regarded as the *real* 'Frankby Phantom.'

A couple from Greasby were keen to make people aware that they believed they had sensed the presence long before the current news story broke and made the local press.

The incident occurred sometime around 3am, when Gill Westerman and her boyfriend - a policeman, who not surprisingly, given his profession, requested anonymity, were walking home after a night out when they elected, for some unknown reason, to take a detour down The Nook.

Gill takes up the story; *'When we got to the bottom I began gasping for breath. I felt absolutely gutted. It doubled me over and I burst out crying.'*

'It was an overwhelmingly sad feeling.'

Her boyfriend, who has been in the force for over 13 years, was equally affected by the strange feeling of melancholy, and also sensed an invisible presence.

Gill was further quoted as saying; *'I went back one morning and it was even more powerful. I couldn't walk away. I had to stand still until it let go.'*

'THE WIRRAL NEWS' were quick to point out that Gill had described to them the location where she claimed to have had the experience, and it turned out to be the exact same spot where Maureen - their voluntary psychic - had reported feeling an all pervasive feeling of deep sorrow.

And Gill could have had no way of knowing the precise position of Maureen's psychic impression, as the paper did not release those particular details.

Coincidence? Lucky guess? Maybe, but it certainly makes you wonder...

And finally, (for now at least), there was a letter in the 18th February, 1998, issue of the very same paper which purported to be from a local reader by the name of Mrs Elisabeth Bamber from Prenton in Tranmere. The

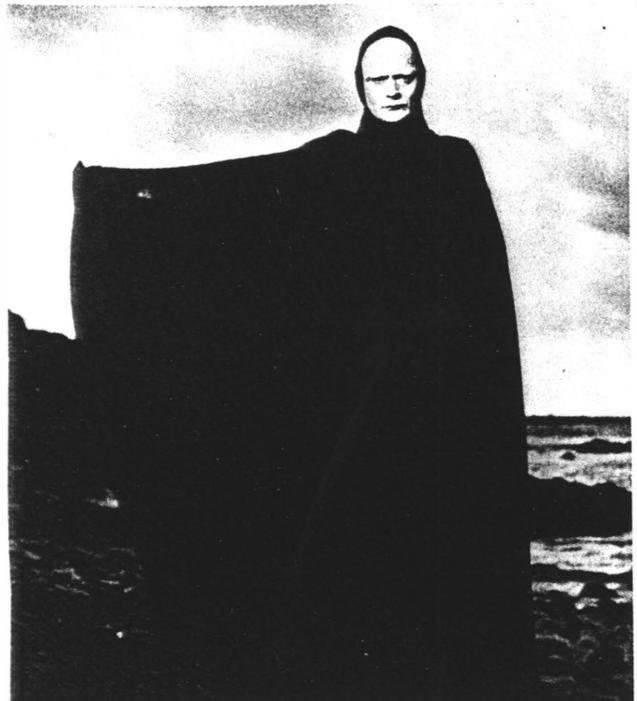
decidedly brief missive contained precious few details, but did make reference to a possible encounter with the mysterious entity...Whether anthropomorphic denizen of the spirit world or constantly wandering cow.

Elisabeth states that late one mid-winter's afternoon, she'd been to Frankby Cemetery to visit a friend's graveside. Having paid her respects, she turned to follow the path down to the main gate, and suddenly came face to face with *'a white floating figure.'* Not surprisingly, she was not too keen to hang around and investigate further. Instead, she elected, in her own words to *'beat a hasty retreat and hurriedly make my way back to the bus stop and home.'*

We'll bring you more on this developing story when and as we get it...

17th December, 1997 - 18th February, 1998. Frankby, Merseyside. *'THE WIRRAL NEWS'*

GHOSTS AND DEVILS OVER ELSEWHERE...



Evil Spirits In The Kings Arms

The above-named pub, smack in the middle of the Lake District, seemed like the idyllic location for Peter and Dawn McCulloch to set up a profitable business...but within days, they had begun to regret ever having set foot in the place.

One morning, Dawn, 39, walked into the kitchen to discover a 12-inch, lethal-looking knife firmly embedded into the wall.

That was bad enough, what was worse were the phenomena that followed. Taps kept turning themselves on of their own accord, causing water to first overflow, and then cascade all over the pub floor. Ovens kept switching on and off despite the fact that they were very often not plugged in. The couple were soon at their wits end, and decided to take a short holiday in Italy, hoping that a break might give them some much-needed breathing space. After they returned however, they awoke one night to hear the sound of the presents they'd brought back for their family and friends being opened by toothy hands.

In the ensuing weeks beer glasses began spontaneously exploding on an almost daily basis, and a barman was left in a state of panic when a pair of heavy cellar doors slammed shut behind him, leaving him trapped.

Peter decided to research the history of the place and discovered that the pub in Egremont had once been an 18th century death row for prisoners waiting to be hanged. What has since been regarded as the most sinister event of all occurred after Dawn took to wearing a Celtic cross to ward off the evil spirits that she believed were infesting the place...

Apparently, she still bears the imprint of its shape after the cross somehow began burning into her skin. Equally bizarre was the discovery of an imprint of the cross marked in salt down in that dreaded cellar.

'It was the most frightening thing of the lot,' Peter was later quoted as saying. 'The chain became so hot around her neck it was unbearable. When our cleaner took it off she could barely hold it.'

'Then the cellarman went downstairs to find a beer pump overflowing - and alongside it, drawn in salt was a kite shape with a cross in it. It was identical to the chain - and there is no salt (normally regarded as a protection against all things evil, due to its preservative properties - Ed) ever kept in the cellar because of the beer.'

'We can't explain any of these things. Many of our customers wonder how we stay here - but it's funny what you can learn to live with.'

'I've chatted to the last landlord and nothing happened to him, so it must be us they've got it in for.'

Not that the resident spirits are *entirely* given over to malicious behaviour...In common with the age-old folktales of mischievous Brownies, Elves and other household sprites, the 'Kings Arms' entity has on occasion done the couple a good turn...Pints of beer have been known to mysteriously appear upon the top of Peter's computer when he's been engaged in doing the stock checks.

A lakeland historian, Gerry Arbon, was asked for his opinion as to the origin of the hauntings, and had this to say; 'The pub dates back to the 18th century when it was the local court house before being turned into a pub. The stone cellars were holding cells for prisoners waiting to come to the bench for offences ranging from murder to petty pilfering.'

'Some of these undoubtedly were hanged - and it may be that their spirit has been recently disturbed.'

'That would explain some of the unpleasant things which have happened to the new tenants.'

3rd August, 1997. Lake District. 'SUNDAYMANC.'

The Gambling Spirit

The 'Plume And Feather's public house at Weedon, Northamptonshire, seems to have been plagued by the restless ghost of a gambling-addict, who isn't about to let anything as trivial and inconsequential as death get in the way of his habit...

Regulars at the pub believe the phantom is a certain George Wallis, a well-known gambler with an eye for the ladies, who died nearly 80 years ago. Alterations to the design of the place seem to have disturbed the previously quiet, relaxed atmosphere, and has inspired spirit manifestations of the type witnessed initially by cleaner Jackie Cook-Walker (*no relation-Ed*). She described hearing a the sound of the fruit machines paying out a big win and actually saw the reels spin - even though there was no hard cash crashing into the trough.

Later that same evening, she was confronted by an apparition standing near to the machine:

'He was playing the fruit machine and there was a shadow over it. I was out like a shot, it was terrifying.'

The pub's landlord; Paul, a real regular (ahem) master of wit, was quoted as saying; 'We had no problems until we started knocking walls down. From that point we noticed lots of inexplicable happenings.'

'He ('George The Ghost') does seem to be a bit addicted and it may be time to call in 'Ghost Gamblers Anonymous' The spook was also being blamed by Paul for interference with the pub's lighting...

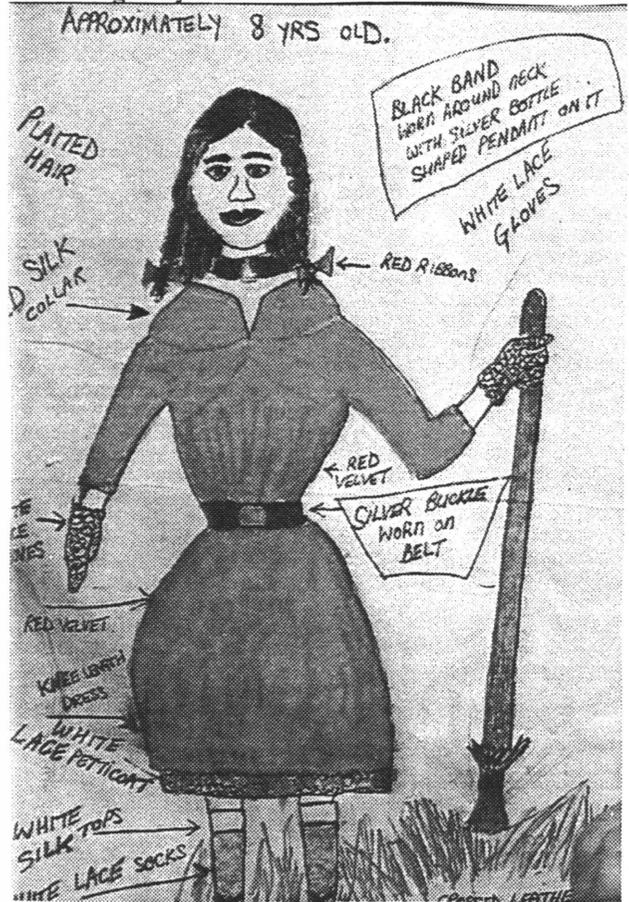
'When I flick a switch the light will either refuse to come on or flicker off.'

2nd November, 1997. Weedon, Northants 'THE SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

Local(Ghost)Girl In The Photograph

Twelve-year-old Daniel Geraghty, was returning home from a fishing trip near Silkstone Common, Barnsley, when he saw coming towards him, a little girl dressed in 'old fashioned clothes, surrounded in mist'

Aside from the mysterious 'mist' one might be forgiven for thinking that there was nothing too strange about that, but the fact that the 'little girl' then unaccountably vanished right before his eyes, takes the incident well into the realms of ghostly lore.



(Above): Ken Geraghty's sketch of the 'ghost girl' sighted by his son, Daniel, in a quiet lane near Silkstone Common.

Daniel's father, Ken, 48, was, it seems, not your usual sceptical parent, and when his son informed him of the encounter, he was so intrigued that he drew up a detailed sketch of the 'ghost' based on Daniel's description.

He then decided to embark upon a one-man crusade to uncover its identity by delving into archived records, all to no avail. Until, that is, he instigated the publication of his son's account and the attendant sketch in the local paper.

A few days later, he was contacted by 68-year-old Jean Maloney, who claims she recognised the drawing as

bearing an uncanny likeness to Emily Whitely, Jeans's auntie who had died near Champney Hill Farm, aged 11, back in 1908. Emily was killed when a shotgun accidentally went off as it was in the process of being cleaned.

To add weight to her contention that the spirit was indeed that of Emily, Mrs Maloney produced a faded photograph of the girl and allowed Daniel to view it firsthand.

'*That's the girl I saw,*' he was reported as saying the moment he laid eyes on the picture.

According to Daniel's detailed description, the girl had been wearing a black choker, white lace gloves, and a knee-length red velvet dress. She was said to have been carrying a stick or a broom.

The old family photograph showed a girl wearing similar clothes - including matching choker...The one appreciable difference was the hairstyle - shorter with a fringe in the photograph and parted down the middle whilst the girl in the sketch appears to have ringlets. Jean Maloney had an explanation for this apparent discrepancy however, she claims that the picture was taken three years before Emily's death.

She said; '*The lane where the boy spotted her is the place where Emily used to play as a child. I have always been sceptical about ghosts but I am convinced it was my aunt.*'

Daniel's father, who as we have already seen, is considerably less-than sceptical, was planning, at the time of going to press, to have the lane blessed by a priest.

12th November, 1997. Sidstone Common, Barnsley. 'DAILYMAIL'

Witchcraft And Demonology In The World Today



A Spell Of Ritual Sacrifice

The World often stands aghast at the actions of certain individuals who, even in the midst of late 20th century society, resort to the most ancient of rituals to procure impossible wealth, good fortune or conquest over death itself...

One such person was a Witchcraft-practising grocery clerk in Ventura, California. Diana Huan, 36, was convicted of first-degree murder and kidnapping after she killed her lover's wife in a bizarre human sacrifice ritual. She later claimed that she performed the ceremony as a special birthday gift for her boyfriend.

27th September, 1997. Ventura, California 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

***And an unnamed man in India, decided last November (1997), to hack off his own son's head before offering it to a Hindu Goddess in the belief that a human sacrifice would earn him divine favours...

5th November, 1998. India. 'LIVERPOOLECHO'

Of Hexes And Blessings



From Miami, Florida, comes news that a funeral home vigil was interrupted by a group of men who began performing Santeria rituals, threw the dead man's relatives out, and subsequently inspired a shootout with police.

The drama began when three women were holding a vigil at the Rivero Funeral Home in Miami, when about ten strangers suddenly burst in just before dawn.

'*These men started performing Santeria acts on the body of the deceased,*' police Lt. Bill Schwartz was quoted as saying. '*They put some ash in the form of a cross on his forehead...then they ordered the family members out!*'

Followers of Santeria practice a form of Afro-Caribbean religion that melds Roman Catholic Saints and rituals with animal sacrifices, hexes and blessings.

The men may have been drinking, Schwartz said later, but he didn't know if they were mistaken about the identity of the deceased man, a Philadelphia resident whose body had been brought to Miami for burial.

4th October, 1997. Miami, Florida, USA. 'ST LOUIS POST-DISPATCH.'

*** A jury in Los Angeles, USA, convicted Jae Whoa Chung, 44, and missionary Sung Soo Chol, 42, of involuntary manslaughter for pummeling Chung's wife to death during an exorcism in July, 1996.

17th April, 1997. Los Angeles, USA. 'USA TODAY'

*** And staying in America, Thomas Passmore, who sawed off his own hand in the belief that it was possessed by an evil spirit, lost his lawsuit against the doctor who obeyed his request not to reattach the hand in the emergency room...

Jurors deliberated for half an hour. before rejecting all the claims in Passmore's \$3 million lawsuit against Tad Grenga at Norfolk General Hospital in Virginia.

11th September, 1997. Virginia, USA. 'USA TODAY.'

*** And in Budapest, The Alliance Of Hungarian Witches has been forced to go on trial to refute charges of not paying taxes on proceeds from its services. The group,

which numbers approximately 8,300 in its membership, registered as a religious denomination in 1992.

26th November, 1997. Budapest, Hungary. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

*** Meanwhile, villagers in South China, were resorting to digging up women relatives and storing the bodies in a bid to prevent would-be snatchers from selling them as 'Ghost Brides.'

According to reports coming out of the area, corpses are constantly being secretly 'wed' to men who die bachelors - a dishonourable fate in the traditions of that region.

7th January, 1998. South China. 'DAILY SLUR.'

*** And in Zaire, police have taken a duck (yes, that's right, a *duck*) into custody and charged it with sorcery. The bird was apparently arrested for its role in the mysterious shattering of a minibus windshield. Passengers called the boys in blue, insisting that the duck was evil.

March, 1998. Zaire, Africa. 'FHM MAGAZINE'

Fears Of A New British Witch Hunt

Seven Years ago, an inquiry into the so-called Satanic Ritual Abuse of children proved beyond the doubting of all but the most credulous, that there was no hard evidence whatsoever to substantiate the claims of obsessed care workers.

The whole scare was found to be nothing more than a dangerous, paranoid fantasy, that tragically, split asunder previously close families and sowed seeds of suspicion and mistrust where once there had been harmonic innocence.

Never again would this sorry state of affairs be allowed to rear its ugly head in the midst of a civilized society.

Or so it seemed.

'THE MAIL ON SUNDAY' however, has recently claimed that the once-abandoned Witch Hunt may be soon be well and truly back on again, with all the misery and heartache that such a scourging of family life will inevitably bring.

The February 1st article claims it has uncovered 'damning new evidence that social workers are once more being urged to take seriously the myth that Satanic Abuse is widespread in Britain.'

It cites various worrying examples that have contributed to the paper's concerns that the dreaded spectre may be about to stalk the lives of the blameless, including:

* 'Dangerous, cranky beliefs originating in the United States - and dismissed by two eminent judges who investigated child sex abuse in Rochdale and Orkney - are already gaining ground again.'

* 'Trainee care workers at university are being encouraged to study the theories (of Satanic Ritual Abuse), along with a book that sparked off the Satanic Abuse scares.'

* 'Sordid tales of Devil worship and children being subjected to almost unimaginable sexual torments are discussed regularly at conferences all over the country.'

* 'Training videos for rape counsellors feature a former social worker who led a team severely criticised for creating a false impression that Satanic Abuse was rife.'

The article makes mention of Virginia Bottemley's (Health Secretary at the time of the original scare back in 1991), apparent horror at the prospect of a return to those dark, suspicion-riddled days:

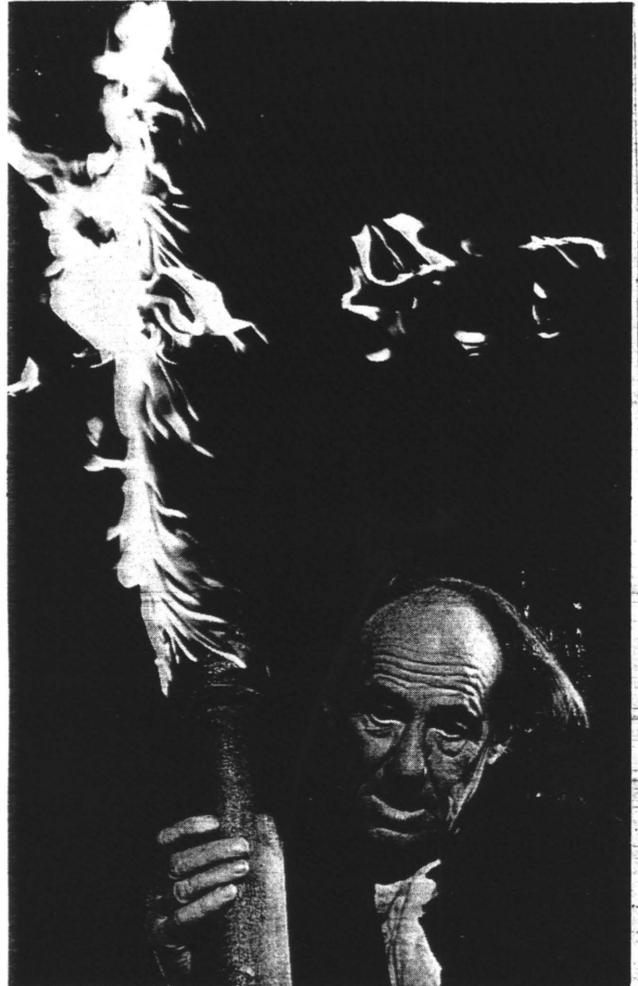
'It is a form of abuse in itself when social workers invent their own fantasies and pursue their own obsessions to the detriment of children. It's a social worker's job to protect a child's interests.'

Even more worrying, for the Editor of this magazine at least, is the 'revelation' that our very own Liverpool

University is said to be at the heart of serious allegations concerning the resurgence of the Satanic Abuse phenomenon.

The article predicted that by the beginning of March this year, a team of women researchers were expected to deliver the results of an extraordinary survey in which questionnaires were sent out to 100,000 addresses at random.

Somewere posted through letter boxes... others merely came with the local newspaper. And one question in particular was to horrify some of the recipients in the Seflon area of the city. It asked baldly; "Would you describe the sexual abuse you experienced as a child as ritualistic sexual abuse (Satanism, Occult/Religious Cult)?"



The paper states that it made contact with the head researcher; Jane Groves, who was said to be 'biased about the survey...and admitted that she had no evidence of Satanic Abuse.'

She merely stated that "it tends to be more mainstream than people think." She had heard "whispers," and victims had to be protected.

This is disturbing enough. What is perhaps even more galling is the news that the trainee social workers at the university have been asked to study manuals highlighting Satanic Abuse. And these 'do-it-yourself' guides are frighteningly similar to those already dismissed as being irrelevant during the notorious Rochdale and Orkney cases in 1991.

Students on the social work diploma course have been using a book written in 1995 by lecturer Guy Mitchell to identify symptoms of Ritual Abuse.

And, wouldn't you just know it, the (ahem) eminent Mr Mitchell has urged his students to analyse the infamous ol' potboiler 'MICHELLE REMEMBERS' (Sphere), written by Michelle Smith and Lawrence Pazder M.D.

Despite being discredited here in the U.K., the book was instrumental in sparking the first wave of Witch Hunts in '91, and, if Mr Mitchell has his way, may well do so again.

The reputed growth of Satanic Abuse has recently been discussed at a conference that took place at Warwick University, and was organised by the Ritual Abuse Information Network and Support, a secretive group that vets members and professionals before they attend.

The national press were therefore banned from attending, but our admirably persistent 'MAIL' succeeded in uncovering the fact that nearly every speaker and every workshop featured Satanic Abuse.

Of even greater concern is the disconcerting news that at a meeting in Westminster Central Hall in London, during May, 1997, three of the eight speakers talked openly of Ritual Abuse - including some who had been fiercely criticised over their views on the subject.

They included Judith Dawson-Jones, who led the social worker's team investigating alleged child abuse in Nottinghamshire in 1989. The team was castigated for turning a case that involved multiple incest into something even worse...'*A Demonic Satanic frenzy that involved ritualistic murder.*'

Not surprisingly, you may feel, a subsequent inquiry failed to find any evidence that the story had any basis in reality. Instead, they concluded that the allegation had been created by a combination of poor interview techniques by both social workers and parents.

Ms Dawson-Jones remains steadfast in her belief that there was indeed Satanic Abuse existent in the Nottinghamshire case, and continues to insist that her work was "pioneering" and is now a child consultant. She's even produced her own training video for would-be counsellors and social workers investigating SRA cases.

And, according to the article, *the believers are also moving into mainstream jobs where they can influence young professionals.*

Maureen Davies, an Evangelical Christian seen as a prime mover in spreading the disturbing theories, now lectures in North Wales.

And a British Psychological Society report showed recently that 13 per cent of 800 psychologists who answered a survey had worked with clients who claimed they were victims of Satanic Ritual Abuse' - and they actually believed them.

The paper winds up its thought-provoking, not to say intensely disquieting report by calling on Jean La Fontaine, emeritus professor of anthropology at the London School of Economics - whose book exposing the Satanic Abuse myth is to be published in the near future - was quoted as saying that no investigation in Britain, or indeed abroad, had uncovered any evidence of it.

'The kind of manuals used at Liverpool University refer to Satanic Abuse as though it was established beyond doubt' In common with the bane of abductees, Kevin McClure, she has very little confidence in '*recovered memory techniques*' and hypnotherapy used on victims to help remember 'Abuse.'

'Something has to be done or there will be new Witch Hunts, devastating innocent people and children.'
1st February, 1998. General 'MAIL ON SUNDAY'

Plague Of The Zombies

According to reports coming out of Haiti - the self-styled hotbed of Voodoo - accounts of the soulless undead Zombie may not merely be the stuff of legend and George A. Romero horror movies.

The explanation being proffered has more to do with victims of mental illness and/or brain damage rather than some arcane Voodoo ceremony, however. After studying case histories, visiting Voodoo temples and actively speaking to two local practitioners, Professor Roland Littlewood, from the Department of Anthropology and Psychiatry at University College in London, together with local 'expert' Dr Chavannes Douyon, from the Polyclinique Medicia in Port-au-Prince, have put forward the theory that these 'Zombies' are little more than cataleptic mental defectives, to be pitied rather than feared.

They cite, by way of an example, the case of one 30-year-old 'Zombie,' a woman who had apparently died and was later found wandering near to her home village three years later. After being studied by medical authorities, it was concluded that she was suffering from catatonic schizophrenia which rendered her mute and immobile.

Another example concerned a 26-year-old man who also turned up after being buried in a family tomb. He too was suffering from brain damage and epilepsy whilst another woman who had 'died' following a fever had a severe learning disability.

The researchers proclaimed their findings in the highly respected medical journal; 'LANCET': '*People with a chronic schizophrenic illness, brain damage, or learning disability are not uncommonly met when wandering in Haiti, and they would likely to be identified as lacking volition and memory - characteristics of a Zombie.*'

17th October, 1997. Haiti 'DAILY MAIL'

Religious Phenomena

'I Believe In Miracles...'



The popular press have recently featured several accounts of apparent 'Miraculous Cures' amongst their daily diet of sex, scandal, political point-scoring, and character assassination...

Here are just three examples.

A paralysed British woman, unnamed in the accounts we came across, had to be physically carried into the shrine of St Mary Goretti, south of Rome, but was able to discard her crutches and walk unaided after just an hour's ardent prayer.

The 50-year-old woman's cure was witnessed by other members of her party who had embarked upon the pilgrimage to Italy from a Catholic church in London. Bishop Domenico Pecile, 75, who has been appointed as chief investigator of the case, was quoted as saying; *'The fact that a woman who was apparently paralysed could walk after praying at the shrine is absolutely true. But we are trying to assess whether it was indeed a miracle.'*

'The woman prayed at the spot where Mary Goretti, 11, was fatally stabbed in 1902. The girl forgave her killer as she lay dying. She sat where the child was martyred. She suddenly arose, left her crutches, and moved towards everyone saying, "I can walk! I can walk!"'

22nd October, 1997. Shrine Of St Goretti, Italy. 'DAILY EXPRESS'

*** And just a month or so later, a devout Catholic by the name of Pat English, was claiming her cancer had been cured after twice visiting the holy shrine at Lourdes.

She had been diagnosed as having no more than three months to live, but decided to make a last gasp pilgrimage to Lourdes, assuming she had nothing to lose. She bathed in the shrine's famous grotto, alleged to have been blessed with incredible healing powers, and brought back several vials of Holy Water to drink each day as she edged closer to death.

Amazingly, just weeks after returning from her second visit, Pat found that she was cured. You may not be too surprised to discover that, as a result, she is now a firm believer in miracles; *'Visiting Lourdes was a last wild hope. Now God has granted me the miracle of seeing my first grandchild. My faith kept me going. I was never frightened of death and didn't even cry when I was told that I was going to die. But when doctors said the cancer had disappeared, I wept for the rest of the day.'*

Pat's remarkable story begins twelve months earlier when she suffered a malignant tumour in her right breast. The breast was subsequently removed at Newcastle General Hospital. But by April of that year, the cancer spread to lymph nodes in her right arm.

Two months further down the line, despite intense chemotherapy, the dreaded Big C was fervently attacking her liver. Pat was told the terrible news that the disease was now at such a stage as to be inoperable.

That awful revelation came just days after daughter Theresa, 31, said she was pregnant with her first baby.

Pat's initial indifference to the prospect of death underwent a profound change in the light of this news, planning her own funeral whilst the knowledge that she would never live to see her grandchild weighed heavy on her heart.

She travelled from her home in Washington, Tyne and Wear, to visit family and friends around the country to say her final farewells. And yet, she remained determined to fulfil her dying wish to make the pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Warm-hearted workmates managed to raise the £1,000 needed to fund the trips, and Pat was able to make her first visit in July and, despite her health falling rapidly, made a second journey in the autumn.

When she returned, she visited her doctors for a routine check-up and very nearly collapsed with shock at being told that the cancer had unaccountably disappeared. Pat said; *'The radiographer was astonished. He thought his equipment might be faulty because he couldn't see anything. I went back the next week and he confirmed that there was nothing there. I just burst into tears.'*

'I wanted to go to Lourdes hoping it would help me in some way. But I didn't think I'd be worthy of a miracle. Now I'm fighting fit when everyone thought I'd be dead.'

'Doctors say I could live for months or years. I'm grateful for whatever I get.'

And just weeks after the successful scan, granddaughter Rebecca was born.

Pat added; *'If I was to die next year I've had the joy of holding her.'*

Her husband, Mick, who's faith isn't as strong as his wife's, was moved to say; *'This has really made me stop and think.'*

The Imperial Cancer Research Fund were predictably more prosaic in their explanation for the 'miracle cure.'

'Spontaneous cancer remissions do happen - but only very rarely.'

30th December, 1997. Lourdes. 'DAILY MIRROR'

*** Surpassing even the previous tales, however, is surely the case of another unnamed woman who claimed that she could hear voices in her head frantically trying to warn her that she had a brain tumour.

And after undergoing a successful operation, these same voices returned to tell her; *'We are pleased to have helped you.'*

This bizarre story began with the woman, who was happily married, in her forties, and with no history of psychological problems - suddenly becoming aware that a disembodied voice was speaking in her head whilst she was reading.

The voice reassured her that there was no reason for her to be afraid, that it was a friend that wanted only to help her. She, perhaps not surprisingly, initially suspected that she was suffering from mental illness, and immediately went to see her doctor. London consultant psychiatrist Ikechukwu Azuonye, who treated the woman, said she appeared to be cured after receiving counselling and medication.

But while she went abroad on holiday, the mysterious voice returned, and this time it seemed to have a companion. They warned her to return to England immediately because there was something drastically wrong with her.

Upon arriving back in London, the voices gave her an address to go to - the brain scan department of a large London hospital.

The woman, who it seems had undergone a radical change of attitude toward the reality of the voices, persuaded her husband to drive her to the hospital. Mr Azuonye, of the Adult Mental Health Unit, Lambeth Healthcare NHS Trust, London, later wrote about the case in the British Medical Journal; *'As she arrived there, the voices told her to go in and ask to have a brain scan for two reasons - she had a tumour in her brain and her brain stem was inflamed.'*

The patient, who was afterwards referred to only as 'AB,' saw the specialist the very next day and was in a state of acute distress. To reassure her, he arranged for the scan, even though there was no evidence of a tumour.

But, astoundingly, the voices were later proved to be right in their warnings...and 'AB' has since made a full recovery.

As she regained consciousness after the operation to remove the tumour she claims she heard them for what proved to be the last time; *'We are pleased to have helped you. Goodbye.'*

A flabbergasted Mr Azuonye writing up his notes on the case had this to say; *'This is the first and only instance I have ever come across in which hallucinatory voices sought to reassure the patient of their genuine interest in their wellbeing, offered her a specific diagnosis (there were no clinical signs that would have alerted anyone to the tumour) directed her to the type of hospital best equipped to deal with her problem, expressed pleasure that she had at least received the treatment they desired for her, bid her farewell, and thereafter disappeared.'*

I am willing to accept that this was paranormal. The experiences saved her life.

6th January, 1998. London. 'DAILY MAIL'

Revolt Of The Animals

Inebriated Elephants, Kamikaze Camels, Super-Rodents, Belligerent Bees, Giant Spiders And Truly Mad Cows

Ernie the Camel had been preparing for a live Nativity scene last Christmas in Chester, Maryland, USA, and whilst his handlers were busy changing their outfits, the 600-pound, 6-foot animal broke free of his tether and made for the highway.

Vincent Mody thought the animal lumbering towards his car on Route 50, along Maryland's Eastern shore, might be a deer or a horse. He tried to avoid it, but wound up colliding with the animal.

Ernie's owner, John McQueeney, who had bought the animal for \$5,000, along with other performers in the Nativity show, somehow managed to drag the camel's carcass off the road as Mody tended to his injured wife.

They were both later treated for minor injuries, at the local hospital.

25th December, 1997. Chester, Maryland. 'ST LOUIS POST-DISPATCH'

*** Over the past four months or so, the countries of both Chile and Vietnam have been the latest to have been plagued by an invasion of two foot-long 'Super Rats.' They have reportedly attacked barnyard animals and have devastated rice fields. In Santiago, the private Orbe News Agency said Mauricio Barraza, president of the Ecological Council believed that the rodents had grown so large because they fed on the droppings of hormone-fattened poultry.

And meanwhile, closer to home, in Bridport, Dorset, taxi driver Jason Rawcliffe's pet rats tucked into his corpse after he had died from a self-induced drug overdose.

The 28-year-old druggie's body was found by one of his worried friends, Richard Taylor. He broke into Jason's flat after he hadn't seen him for two days. He told an inquest at Dorchester that 'large chunks' of the dead man's face had been eaten.

Then there was the case of Robin Goldforth's £40,000 Ferrari, which was damaged to the tune of £3,000 by a family of mice.

They nibbled the convertible's soft top in order to build a nest inside the car for their seven babies.

7th December, 1997. Santiago, Chile. 'ST LOUIS-POST DISPATCH'/20th February, 1998. Vietnam. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'/3rd October, 1997. Bridport, Dorset. 'DAILY MANC.'/12th December, 1997. 'DAILYSLUR.'

*** A huge netful of herring began swimming for their lives when they were captured by a boat off the coast of Norway.

Their frantic thrashing was so forceful it succeeded in sinking the boat, and they made good their escape.

17th January, 1998. Norway. 'LIVERPOOLECHO'

*** A man was killed by a herd of stampeding cows and calves whilst walking his dog in a field near the village of Gilcrux, Cumbria.

Frank Winthorp, who was in his 50's, was found dead with head injuries. The cattle were suddenly startled by some unknown something....

17th January, 1998. Gilcrux, Cumbria. 'DAILYSLUR.'

*** And a cow fell through the garage roof in the garden of Harry Reynold's house, completely wrecking his car.

The heifer had run down a slope behind the garage before crashing through the roof to land smack on his G-red Austin Montego. The animal was unhurt, but the car was a write-off.

Henry, 49, from Newport, West Wales, was quoted as saying; 'Luckily we are insured,' whilst an oh-so-witty spokesman for the Co-op Insurance Company, which is dealing with the claim, said; 'We've heard of it raining cats and dogs but never cows.'

24th November, 1997. Newport, West Wales. 'DAILY SLUR'

*** Beekeeper Mikos Papadopolous thought it might be a good idea to have his bees at his funeral. However, it all went sour when the insects became angry and attacked mourners after they were (abem) stung into fury by the priest waving incense over the coffin.

12th September, 1997. Pylos, Greece. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'

*** A herd of 25 drunken elephants managed to flatten an entire village in Bangladesh. The animals were attracted by the aromatic smell from a distillery near Jamalpur and smashed their way in before guzzling down the contents.

They subsequently ran amok, forcing terrified villagers to flee for their lives as buildings were brought crashing down.

28th December, 1997. Jamalpur, Bangladesh. 'DAILY MAIL'

*** Britain's spider population soared last Autumn, due, 'experts' say to the exceptionally warm weather at the height of the 'dying season.'

Unusually large numbers of overstzed webs appeared all over the country in an attempt to catch some of the plethora of flying insects that were also featuring in record numbers.

Dr Geoff Oxford, geneticist and spider 'expert' at York University, said; '1997 has been a fantastic year for the Garden Spider. There are extremely large numbers of big females around. It has certainly been the best Autumn for them for the past several years, and they are around in greater numbers. Many of them have a two-year life cycle, so it's not easy to say exactly why there are so many. It could have been the conditions this Summer, or it might have been down to the mild weather in January, when the current crop of mature spiders were young.'

And whilst the Garden Spiders were the most noticable species to appear especially prolific, other types of arachnid were doing equally well, including the tiny Money Spider. And just to reiterate the bad news for all you arachnophobes out there, Dr. Oxford was quick to remind us; 'Most spiders go about their business without people being aware. In just one acre of grassland, there can be as many as five million spiders.'

10th October, 1997. Britain. 'DAILYMAIL'

*** But it wasn't a spider indigenous to these shores that was responsible for an attack on warehouse worker Malcolm Haigh, aged 47, in Wakefield, Yorkshire.

A West Indian Banana or Huntsman Spider, eight-inches long, leaped from the darkness of a box of fruit Malcolm was in the process of moving at the warehouse.

'I felt something extremely large over my face and initially I could not see what it was. All of a sudden I realised that a giant spider was attacking my face. It was so huge that it blocked my vision totally, making everything dark. The spider then bit me on the left cheek and I ended up with a banana box hitting me in the mouth, causing damage to my teeth.'

11th October, 1997. Wakefield, Yorkshire. 'DAILYMAIL'

Big Cat Fever

Among the Scottish animals beautifully mounted in the museum at Inverness, the capital of the legend-haunted 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 at nearby 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 the 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 mist-shrouded 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 thin legs, with a demonic snarl and large angry eyes. It resembles nothing more than a Witch's cat portrayed in a cartoon. Naturalist and cat expert Di Francis kept two Kellas Cats in captivity, named 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 at Elgin, North Scotland. It was shot near Logie Farm in Moray, a place where many stories of eerie Wildcats 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 sixty acres of forest and farmland, with the beautiful River Findhorn running through them. Over the telephone, Mrs Hilleary had told me of the "Kellas Cats" on her estate. It soon became apparent that some wires, or cat whiskers, had been crossed somewhere. Kellas Cats, as stated earlier, are like Witch's 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, '95', 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 it was the size of a cat's paw-print?'

Oh no. It was 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 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.'*

And so, in September, 1996, I made the long 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 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 informed me. 'I must inherit my love of animals from my grandmother the Duchess of Hamilton, who campaigned successfully for the use of humane killers 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 that big black cat that night.

It never really gets dark here in Summer, and on that night in June, six years ago, at half past ten, there was this strange light, as clear as day. I was on my knees just in front of the house (she had 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 part 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 was pressed beside the wire fence on the verge of the road. He opened the 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 work of the cat. Paul Jackson, whose house faces onto Dava Moor, saw one on 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's screams,' I observed. 'But Pumas are sandy coloured, not black...'

'Well, now I come to think of it, I did see a strange, sandy-coloured animal back in the 'seventies. 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 fawn-coloured animal sprang past as if in a 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 '94?

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. Then one day the Earl was walking in Darnaway Forest with his

daughter's 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 though it were afraid. He looked up, and there on the bank was a big black cat glaring at him and snarling. In a moment, it spun round and disappeared. So now, the Earl's very much a believer, and his son John Doune 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 is 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 'seventies, they would have been brown, like the animal you saw. Now that several generations have been reared 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 generally less elusive than wild 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 the cats are an undiscovered British Big Cat! Time alone 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 has 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 an achingly 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 such creatures on nine separate occasions, 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 world ridicule her stories in the desperate manner of men who fear that ridicule might be directed against themselves.

She believes that 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 the wild in Britain, she has succumbed to Big Cat Fever. The only cure for this malaise 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 such earthly vanities, and only seeks the Truth. Single-handedly, she follows up all the Big Cat stories and reports for miles around, and is currently engaged in restoring her house, as well as running a Rare Breeds Farm. In 1997, the farm was due to open to the public, along with a Big Cat Exhibition, to earn the money to fund 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. I had been told a Big Cat had been seen near a distillery, and I saw it from the train window as I was on my 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 had seen them. Most of these men hadn't told each other about the Cats, let alone anyone in authority. Reported sightings are just the tip of the iceberg - even sightings are the tip of the iceberg, compared to the amount of Cats that remain unseen. There are thousands if such Cats in Britain, wherever forestry offers them cover. Sheep, deer, rabbits - there's no shortage of food for them. It's pure 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 the males have strange bull-necks and thick jowls, like a beast that's half dog and half cat. No, it's an undiscovered species that's lived in Britain all along.'

Awed by Di Francis's fervour, I scarcely demurred. Privately, like all victims of Big Cat Fever, I stuck to my own theories. Why should the unknown British Big Cat first reveal itself to the public at large in the 1970's, in the form of the Surrey Puma? An indigenous wild animal that had retreated to obscure mountain fastnesses and then begun 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 puma's in the early '70's, seems more like a starting than a finishing 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 Chestahs 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 Francis'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 ancestor, 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. Di Francis proudly pointed out some seaweed-eating sheep from the island of North Ronaldsay. In their native haunts, these sheep lead 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 Francis seems to have reared a strain of grass-eating, seaweed-eating sheep.

'I have eighty sheep, sixteen ponies, three goats and seven pigs.' Di counted. She seemed more worried about possible attacks from her neighbour's 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 on sheep at Gardiston, near Aberdeen. Apparently, farmer Stanley Windsor saw three big black Cats, feeding on a dead sheep. He actually shot one, a big bull-necked, pug-nosed male, of the sort Di Francis had described. The wounded beast retreated into a field of corn and lay low. Arriving on the scene, Di Francis 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 Francis's idea of a male Cat with a thick jowly dewlapped head and a female of Panther-like proportions is not so strange when you think of the difference between the huge ungainly bull sealion and the sleek female sealion usually seen at safari parks. Di believes that the British Big Cat can be black, brown or even striped.

We moved into the house, as 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 referred to the Cat as 'The Beauty.' First of all he saw her back 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 black Panther-like animal with a long wavy tail. The letter was dated: '15/8/94'

While I was revelling in this exquisite pen-portrait, Di Francis sprang her first surprise 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 must have resembled an unusually vigorous Bengal Tiger.

'In 1988, two teenage boys found the skull by the side of a Dartmoor lane,' Di Francis explained. *'Some years before that, almost at the same spot, a motorist hit 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 sign of the body. The Cat must have crawled off to die, and this may be 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 the jaw width exactly fitted the marks on the lamb. The skull is from Devon, but the lamb was killed at Keith in Scotland. These Cats are country-wide!!!'

Di's second surprise was to produce, with a flourish, a stuffed Kellas Cat more frightening even than the one I had 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 is 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 to 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 greatest discovery so far - the Dufftown Rabbit-Headed Cat! Compared with the skulls of wild and tame cats, the Rabbit-Headed's headbone was long,

with huge eardrums, a clamping jaw and what anthropologists would 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 so far are confounded by this, and can only burble incoherently.

At last it was time for me to say goodbye to Scotland and its amazing Cats, and Di Francis saw me off on the train. While we waited on the platform, she gave a sudden predator-like sniff and explained '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 dead a Big Cat in 1995?

Roy Kerridge. September, 1996.

*** (This article originally appeared in 'DON' # 10 in a somewhat deformed state. We re-print it here for the sake of completeness...And not least because it's a damn fine piece of writing.

***Di Francis's latest book, 'My Highland Kellas Cats', was published by Jonathan Cape in 1993

Alien Animals

Update:

THE RETURN OF THE 'TASMANIAN GLOBSTER'

Back in August, 1960, a strange, unidentified carcass was washed up on the shore of a remote Tasmanian beach following a heavy storm.

Three local ranchers were the first to stumble across the 'Globster' (a name coined by the highly-respected author and researcher Ivan T. Sanderson), and thought the grisly remains so unusual that they took the time to produce a few sketches of it for posterity, doubtless anticipating a rapid response from scientists far and wide.

They were to be sorely disappointed however. Not a single investigator could be bothered taking the effort involved in getting up off their collective butts to take even the most cursory of glances at the carcass.

The three cattle-men were however, sufficiently intrigued to set about estimating the size of the remains, and came up with the following figures. It was reported to be 28ft long and 18ft wide. Its surface was covered with a coarse, hair-like substance and there seemed to be a total of six 'gill'-type structures' and four 'lobes.' In between these 'lobes' was what appeared to be a mouth and a row of spiny protuberances ran along the base of the form.

The resultant series of sketches were duly despatched to local scientists and zoologists. They were to be frustrated in their efforts to promote news of their find, however, and were instead met with a wall of bland

indifference. No one, it seemed, was interested in the potential discovery of a species new to science.

It wasn't until a full two years later that someone deemed it worthwhile to pay a visit to the site and view the mysterious object firsthand.

Bruce Mollinson of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), finally made the journey to the locality of Temma in March, 1962. He was astonished to find that the carcass, whatever it was, had not significantly decomposed, despite the prolonged exposure to the harsh elements on the Tasmanian beach. Mollinson actually made two trips to the island, and after taking a selection of skin samples, very quickly came to the conclusion that 'it wasn't a fish, fowl, or fruit. It wasn't whale, sea elephant or squid.'

Neither did it resemble any other conventional dentzen of the ocean. Therefore, he was left with little option but to surmise that what he was dealing with here, was a species unknown to science, that had, perhaps due to the severity of the storm, crawled up from some deep subterranean cavern only to die on that barren stretch of coastline known as Sandy Cape.

The 'experts' at CSIRO however, did not rush to agree with Mollinson's findings. On the contrary, they were openly sceptical, and upon analysing the samples of rubbery flesh that Bruce had brought back with him, they stated that the pieces were far too small for any positive identification to be made.

Undeterred, back to the island went Mollinson, taking with him an axe which he used to hew great chunks of flesh from the still mostly undecomposed carcass.

After wrapping them up in plastic for safekeeping, he headed back to CSIRO headquarters, convinced that this time there would be no room for doubt.

Predictably, he was to have his great expectations cruelly dashed....The minute he arrived back he was shocked to discover that the whole world seemed suddenly to have taken an interest in the 'Tasmanian Globster.' Journalists had been whipped up into a state of high excitement, and following the Royal Prince Albert Hospital's announcement that they couldn't identify the new flesh samples, (and amidst stories of similar Tasmanian carcasses being washed ashore as long ago as 1936), a full-blown, CSIRO field trip suddenly became imperative.

The hand-picked team, including a leading mammalogist, were flown in by helicopter, and they quickly established a temporary lab site within yards of the carcass.

At the end of a tiring day spent closely studying the remains, the team announced that their initial findings were inconclusive, although they were fairly certain it was not any known species.

Before anyone could get *too* carried away, however, by the end of the official investigation, the conclusion was reached that the carcass was actually nothing more than a couple of 12-foot husks of decomposed whale blubber. (Now, where have we heard *that* before, I wonder).

And there the matter would doubtless have been laid to rest if it hadn't have been for the diligent research of the aforementioned Ivan T. Sanderson.

He was highly suspicious of this prosaic explanation, and put forth his doubts in his excellent book; 'INVISIBLE RESIDENTS.'

'Alledged samples of the 'beast' were said to have been analysed on the mainland by first the wheat and then the wool technologists of CSIRO. The reports of these two departments conflicted and also contained a number of seemingly illogical and irrelevant statements. The minister of the federal government in charge of the Navy (and, incidentally, of CSIRO) turned up unannounced in a town called Launceston on the northern coast of Tasmania. This official immediately clamped a complete ban on anybody -

even a special representative of the American National Geographic Society, going near the Sandy Cape area.

The ban was imposed for fifteen days after the official pronouncements, made on the original party's finding, had stated that a very high-echelon team of scientists, including heads of departments from Canberra, was flying in to conduct a thorough investigation on the spot, which was expected to take them at least three weeks. (Actually, they were back in one day!)

The whale blubber story was said to have been confirmed by CSIRO, 'despite the fact that the same laboratories had failed to identify the first specimens in over two weeks. No reports of these later analyses were ever issued or published, and - except for the ban - the matter was thunderingly dropped. Careful analysis of literally hundreds of firsthand reports and correspondence at the time brought to light some further extremely odd facts. First, the general gobbledegook published was so much worse and asinine than that of even the biggest case of a sea monster scare, that it clearly looked as if the facts had been deliberately scrambled.

Second, one sensible newsman did manage to get to the original corpse (or whatever it was) and holding a cigarette lighter to its edge, noted in print that the 'flesh' withdrew precipitately from the flame, but then returned to its previous contour.

Third, the material that the official team dug up from the sand and collected - and possibly analysed - was not from the original object but came from the north side of Sandy Cape nearly twenty miles away.

Fourth, even this material was slashed in a government power-plant compound, behind an electrified fence and under guard, overnight, before being trucked to Hobart the next day.

Fifth, the official announcements on the whale-blubber composition of this material was issued before that truck had time to arrive in Hobart.'

Whatever the truth of the matter, this, as we have already hinted with our allusion to 1936, is by no means an isolated incident. Far from it, in fact.

Consider, if you will, the following accounts from our files.

In October, 1808, the remains of some sort of creature were found at Stronsay in the Orkney Islands, just off mainland Scotland.

It was at first assumed to be the remnants of a 'giant sea snake' but subsequent examination 'proved' to the 'experts' satisfaction at least, that the 55ft carcass was nothing more than the decomposed remains of a Basking Shark.

However, it was later pointed out that the main bulk of the carcass had been smashed to smithereens by local storms well before any real investigation could be undertaken.

In March, 1883, 'The New Zealand Times' reported that the remains of a forty-foot long, 'unknown monster' was washed ashore on the coast of Queensland. The precise details are somewhat sketchy, but it was described as having 'what must have been an enormous snout, about eight feet long, in which respiratory passages are yet traceable.' (See the report in opposite column for a strikingly similar case).

During November, 1896, a mysterious carcass was found lying on the beach at St. Augustine, Florida, USA.

The chief investigator, Dr Dewitt Webb, examined the remains and subsequently declared them to belong to that of a giant octopus.

On the morning of November 1st, 1922, Hugh Ballance was staring out to sea from the beach at Margate, Natal, South Africa, when his attention was drawn to a commotion in the water.

He assumed at first, that he could discern several whales engaged in a life or death struggle, but upon peering more intensely with the use of binoculars, he saw that although he was correct in his assumption that whales were involved, they appeared to be fighting some unknown type of sea monster, which closely resembled a giant polar bear.

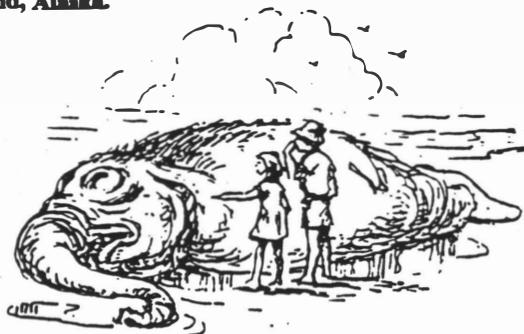
According to a statement he later made to a local newspaper, Ballance said; 'This creature I observed to rear out of the water, fully 20ft long, and to strike repeatedly with what I took to be a tail at the two whales.'

The battle continued for several hours, much to the amazement of a crowd that soon gathered on the beach to stare in open-mouthed wonder at this battle of the giants. Eventually, the whales gained the upper hand and moved on leaving their adversary which was now floating lifelessly on the surface. Later that night, the corpse drifted ashore onto a beach known as Tragedy Hill. The body was said to be colossal, its girth estimated to be 47ft long, 10ft wide and 5ft high. It also had a 10ft-long tail, matched at the other end by a curious trunk-like appendage.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about the carcass however, was the fact that it was covered in a thick, matted fur or hair covering 8 inches long 'and exactly like a polar bear's, and snow-white.'

Curiously, there was no sign of any wounds or bloodstains, and for ten whole days the body lay there, until the stench of decomposition became well-nigh unbearable. A team of 32 oxen failed to move it any further than the water's edge and in the end it was simply abandoned to be reclaimed by the very same sea which had spawned it.

In 1930, 'The New York Sun' carried an account in its November, 28th issue, of the carcass of a 24ft long monster equipped with what appeared to be a 'snout' itself over 3ft long, which was found preserved in ice on Glacier Island, Alaska.



It was said to have been covered with a thick layer of fur, rather like a Woolly Mammoth. (See artist's impression of the creature above).

And even as recently as March 24th, 1965, these mysterious unidentified carcasses were being reported from right across the globe.

A 'mystery mass of flesh and hair' was described as being discovered on Muriwai Beach, Auckland, New Zealand, according to an account in 'The Townsville Bulletin'. The newspaper related the following report; 'Officials are puzzled over a huge, shapeless mass of flesh and hair which has appeared on the sand at Muriwai Beach.'

The "thing" was first sighted a week ago by a Marine Department officer. Then the hairy blob of flesh was 30ft long and 8ft high. It is slowly being swallowed by the sand but more than 20ft of it was still showing yesterday.

Auckland University's zoology department head (Professor J.E. Morton) said: "You can rule out whales because of the hair, and you can rule out sea elephants and sea cows because of its size."

The object has a tough quarter-inch thick hide. Under this is what appears to be a layer of fat, then solid meat. Hair

four to six inches long covers its length. Cut from the hide and washed clean, the hair has a soft, woolly texture. A senior forestry officer who tentatively prodded the mass of flesh said he had first thought the blob might be a dead whale. "But have you ever seen a whale in a fur coat?" he asked.

Later analysis 'identified' the creature as being nothing more than some sort of humpback whale.

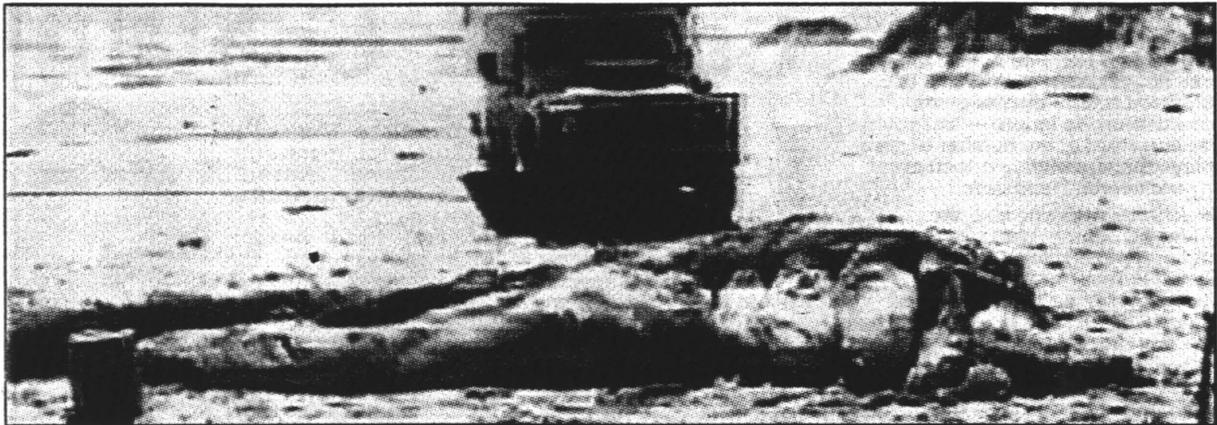
Or so it was said...

To bring the whole phenomenon bang up to date, just last year, (1997), pictures were published in this humble magazine of a 'Globster' that was stumbled upon by Louise Whitts, at Benbecula Beach, in the Scottish Western Isles, back in 1992. (See 'DON' # 10) and now, we have the very latest case, back at the site where we began this mini article... Tasmania.

Four Mile Beach was the precise location for the discovery of a 20ft-long, six-legged, carcass, that appears also to have a couple of flippers.

The anomaly has been described by a local fisherman, Maurice Linfoot, (and you may experience a slight case of déjà vu here, Constant Reader) as being '*eerily unique - It's the strangest creature I've ever seen. It's like a repulsive-looking blob (one wonders if there is such a thing as an 'attractive-looking blob'), like a big monster. When we first turned it over, it was pure white and covered in white hair. I've seen deformed sharks and deformed types of other fish, but I just can't identify or relate to this. When its hair dries out, it becomes like rawhide leather. It either comes from out there in the sea, or up there in the sky...but let's hope it comes from the sea.*'

Equally familiar were the initial comments of the 'experts' lining up to try their hand at identifying the darned thing. Oliver Crimmin, a zoologist from the Natural History Museum, attempted to formulate several theories, but was finally forced to accept defeat.



(Above); *The latest anomalous carcass washed up on the shore of Four Mile Beach, Tasmania. The tabloid press had a field day at the expense of the scientist's initial inability to identify the creature. Some reporters even speculated that the remains were extraterrestrial in origin. They speculate that the creatures may have fallen to earth from some distant planet, and may represent man's first encounter with an alien lifeform... Maybe that's not so original, or even crazy-sounding, though... Ivan T. Sanderson was suggesting just such a possibility back in the early 1970's, after all*

It was first assumed, not surprisingly, given these type of things track record, that the corpse was the decomposed remains of that classic ol' Number One fave; the Basking Shark. This particular 'Blobster' however, has far too many 'gills' and the bristles are reported to be too long for it to be comfortably identified as such. Newspaper accounts also included a reference to a distinct lack of a cartilage backbone - a necessary requirement for a Basking Shark.

Other possibilities were forwarded, and just as quickly discounted; a squid, whale blubber, giant turtle, the biggest dolphin in the world...None of these met all of the criteria of that mystifying corpse resting on the Tasmanian beach.

At the time of going to press, the fair and open-minded Mr Crimmin was as thoroughly flummoxed as was poor old Bruce Mollinson back in the early Spring of 1962; *'I am afraid no one here can make head or tail of it. All we can say is that it looks like some kind of fibrous mass, but there are too few identifiable features to pin it down.'*

9th January, 1997, Four Mile Beach, Tasmania. 'DAILY EXPRESS,' 'DAILY MAIL'

Chupacabra On The Prowl Once More

According to the latest reports coming out of Puerto Rico, the fabulous '~~God-Sucker~~' has been taking a break from its usual diet, and has chosen instead to mutilate the feline population of La Parguera...

The village, which lies on the southwest corner of the island, on Highway 119, round about 55 miles southwest of San Juan, has suffered three domestic cat deaths, whilst a fourth unfortunate moggy is said to have disappeared in '*mysterious circumstances*'

The local police have concluded that the killings took place during the early hours of 26th January, this year (1998), and a spokesman for the force was quoted as saying; *'One of the cats had its skin severed by a precise, bloodless incision. Sr. Melvin Rosado (the name of the man who first alerted the officials) noticed that the three slain felines had identical incisions on their heads and backs. No one in the Rosado household heard any unusual sounds during the night.'*

Rosado too, was predictably, at a loss as to explain the untimely demise of the cats...

'The cats weren't attacked by dogs, because our house has gates, and no dog would be able to reach the cats where they were.'

Perhaps not surprisingly given the current climate, people have been quick to judge that the ubiquitous Chupacabra was in some way involved with the mutilations, although there are no reports, so far as we know, of any strange entity being seen actually carrying out these attacks.

27th January, 1998. La Parguera, Puerto Rico. 'El Vocero'

Where The Wild Things Are....



As 1997 wound its less-than-merry way into 1998, sightings of Allen Big Cats roaming that rapidly diminishing bastion of wilderness, the Great British Countryside, have shown no signs of decreasing. Indeed, reports have become so frequent, that one zoologist in particular, the wonderfully named Quentin Rose, has taken it upon himself to issue a warning that it may only be a matter of time before one of these exotic creatures attacks and maybe kills somebody.

Quentin was convinced of the reality of the threat when, as he stated in the press, during the past six years he had identified a total of 27 reports of leopards and 32 of pumas, along with 18 smaller members of the wild cat family.

He believes they are descended from former pets that have since been released into the wild by their owners when they became too large to handle.

Mr Rose, who one would presume is something of an 'expert' (or at least as much as *anyone* can be in what is, after all, a particularly enigmatic field), worked at the Zoological Society of London, and went out on a limb to state that '*numbers could be out of control within 20 years, and people are going to get killed sooner or later. There have been many sightings in the West Country, the Midlands, Wales, East Anglia and Scotland.*'

6th January, 1998. Britain. 'DAILYMANC'

*** Mr Rose's fears may very well have been given a touch of added credence by the following accounts....

Calls for the 'Beast Of Bodmin' inquiry to be reopened grew increasingly louder after five sheep were killed in mysterious circumstances not far from where a Puma had allegedly been sighted. The attack took place in St Austell, North Cornwall, and the local Liberal Democrat MP Paul Tyler sought to claim that whilst the mid-90's probe had failed to turn up any evidence concerning the reality of the ABC phenomenon, neither had it produced anything that even the most hard-nosed of sceptics could regard as proof positive that there is nothing to the reports. He was quoted as saying; '*There are growing concerns about attacks on livestock and potential danger to the public.*'

One of the best photographs we've yet come across depicting an alleged puma, was snapped by an anonymous man in the St Austell area. What appears to be a couple of sandy-coloured Big Cats, one sleeping, one standing majestically in the foreground, are featured, and a branch crossing the standing creature's back was later utilised to provide some degree of perspective. The branch was duly measured as being 2ft off the ground.

Nigel Taylor, a local vet, subsequently examined the photo and declared it to be '*sensational.*' After studying the picture with the aid of a powerful magnifying glass, he was moved to comment; '*There is no doubt about it. That's a puma or puma-like animal. If you're telling me that the picture was taken in the St Austell area, it is the clearest evidence yet of the existence of Big Cats in our countryside. This is the best picture I have seen. All the other pictures said to be of Big Cats are unconvincing. This is spot on.*'

The pair of pumas have reportedly been seen on several occasions by both the photographer and his wife. The man, whose reasons for remaining nameless are entirely noble (he wants above all to protect the animals from those who would seek to exploit them) was quoted as saying; '*The cats are very shy. Nobody here would like to disturb them. We do not want to attract gun gun or camera shooters. My wife and I first saw the creatures on Christmas Day last year.*'

We saw them again two weeks later and several times afterwards, until they disappeared with the arrival of holidaymakers around Easter this year.

At all times they appeared around an hour or two after daybreak on cold, sunny mornings. They seem to use the area for a bit of sunbathing.

I mentioned these animals to other people and, comparing sightings, it does seem these two animals have been spotted four or five miles away. They have certainly been seen in their sunbathing spot for at least three years.'

16th November, 1997 - 19th January, 1998. St Austell, Cornwall 'DAILY EXPRESS/DAILY MAIL'

*** A wild beast said to have resembled a tiger approached three young boys from the midst of a clump of bushes, and was only prevented from a potential closer-than-comfortable encounter by the enraged barking of their Alsatian dog, Tess.

Matthew Brown, 10, Stuart Palmer, also aged 10, and Jamie Harris, 11, were out walking through a relatively isolated area of South Wales called Garnswilt, Mid-Glamorgan, when, according to Matthew; '*The cat suddenly appeared after Tess went into some bushes. It was about three feet tall and was ginger with dark streaks. It was looking at us from ten feet away. It had a big head and its fur was hanging loose from its body. It looked wet through and very hungry. I was really frightened.*'

Tess started barking at it and we threw a stone to scare it off. Matthew's mother was quick to point out that her son related to her that what he'd seen looked 'like a tiger. If it hadn't been for Tess, I dread to think what might have happened.

She (the dog) was scared too because her hair was standing on end.'

A police helicopter was duly despatched to the vicinity and whilst they never actually spotted the mystery Big Cat, they did locate some interesting-looking paw-prints... '*We took plaster casts,*' an officer stated. '*The paws (said to have measured five inches across-Ed) were a lot larger than our police dogs.'*'

14th January, 1998. Garnswilt, Mid-Glamorgan, Wales. 'DAILY SLUR/DAILY EXPRESS'

*** And finally, to bring things right up to date, police in Essex announced in late February, that they may have obtained '*positive evidence*' of some sort of Allen Big Cat...

Warily, I allowed myself to attain a state of half-excitement, past experience of this sort of valiant claim preventing me from reaching for the loud-hailer and pronouncing the good news, just then. And of course, this reluctance to accept the grandiose headline was well-founded. This 'proof' was predictably (not to say disappointingly) less than incontrovertible. It amounted to little more than the admittedly, terribly mutilated remains of a goose, snatched from the North Weald garden of a retired engineer named Michael Thurgood.

Another goose had been disposed of in its entirety and Alyson Mountney, of Essex police volunteered the information that '*an expert veterinary pathologist examined one of the bodies and identified the claw marks as those of a Big Cat, probably a Black Leopard, sometimes known as a Panther.*'

The memory of a sighting of just such a creature by one Constable Paul Richards, a few years back, had cause to resurface in the minds of the locals...PC Richards had been made the butt of many a leg-pulling wind-up in the wake of his report that whilst out on patrol in Matching Tye near Harlow, he had clearly seen a large black cat crouching in the undergrowth at the side of a remote country lane.

Suddenly, no one was sullying derisively behind cupped hands at the good constable any more.

'*We think it is one and the same animal,*' admits Miss Mountney, somewhat ruefully. '*We now have concrete evidence that a Big Cat killed two geese on a farm near North Weald, next to the M11.*'

The forces of law and order have been advised not to waste their time and energy seeking to hunt the creature, (*'the Panther Of Pilgrim's Hatch'*) down however... '*We are informed that it will have adapted so well to its habitat that searching for it would be pointless. An animal like this can cover 40 miles in a single night.*' The police were at pains to point out though that should anyone stumble upon the Big Cat, they should remain as calm as possible. '*Panicking, screaming or running away (all of which sound like sensible reactions to me - Cowardly Ed) would only encourage it to retaliate. We are advised that as long as the animal is left alone, it is not a danger. It will be more frightened of people than they are of it.*'

According to reports in the popular press, a positive ID of the claw marks made by the animal that savaged Mr Thurgood's geese, had been made by Dr. Richard Munro. '*The claw marks were much bigger than the domestic cat. That would make me believe the cat was the size of a European Lynx. They must stand as high off the ground as a Labrador.*' The aggrieved Mr Thurgood meanwhile, maintains that '*I knew straight away that they (the geese) had not been attacked by a fox. Two 12lb birds had been carried over a 4ft fence, and a fox couldn't have done that.*' Agreed. But you can't help thinking the Ministry Of Agriculture, to say nothing of Britain's conventional zoologists, will regard such '*incontrovertible evidence for the existence of Alien Big Cats*' as being nothing more than fanciful rumour....

19th February, 1998. North Weald, Essex. 'DAILYMAIL'

Mystery Animals: The Classic Mysteries

Matthew A. Bille. Editor of 'EXOTICZOOLOGY'
(Available from 3405 Windjammer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO, 80920, USA.)

In the voluminous files of Cryptazology, a handful of cases stand out. These are the reports of strange animals that cannot be easily dismissed, yet have never been solved

("solved" meaning either the animal was inconclusively identified or a subsequent hoax was proven).

They are mysteries.

And some perhaps always will be.

The best example is probably Georg Wilhelm Steller's '*Sea Monkey.*' Steller, a German naturalist sailing for Russia, was in the Gulf of Alaska in 1741. on board the '*Sabot Peter,*' under the leadership of explorer Vitus Bering. In daylight, in ideal weather conditions, Steller observed a strange sea mammal. The creature was said to be about 5ft long. The pelt appeared '*reddish and cow coloured.*' The animal had erect ears, drooping whiskers, a shark-like tail, and no visible front flippers. No one has ever been able to identify beyond a reasonable doubt, the animal involved in this sighting. Indeed, some aspects of Steller's description make no sense. There are no known sea-going mammals without front flippers, and none with a shark-like tail. According to the fossil record, there *never* have been. And yet, this account cannot be easily dismissed. Steller was one of the great naturalists of his day, and he kept meticulous records.

Steller's major biographer, Dr. Leonard Stejneger, suggested the creature was a young fur seal (*Callotaria ussua*). There are however, several problems with this identification. One is that, while Steller may never have seen a fur seal before, members of his crew had. Another is that Steller later wrote about fur seals in great detail without ever identifying this species with his mystery creature.

Aside from one report of what could have been a similar animal in 1965, Steller's Sea Monkey has been in the proverbial limbo ever since.

One Cryptozoologist, Dr. Roy Mackal, (author of, amongst others, '*The Monsters Of Loch Ness*') suggests that Steller saw a young specimen of an unknown Arctic Seal similar to the Leopard Seal of the Antarctic. This species was presumably rare when Steller saw it and may now be extinct (although Mackal believes it could still exist).

Another interested Cryptozoological researcher, Chris Orrick, has conducted an exhaustive investigation of this problem and now proposes a new theory....

Orrick suggests that Steller saw a very lost individual of a known species (known to us, not to Steller), the Hawaiian Monk Seal (*Monachus schauinslandi*). It would have been about the right size, and its behaviour matches the inquisitive, playful animal Steller described. Ocean currents exist that that could have assisted the wayward seal to the Gulf of Alaska.

This theory does assume that Steller made several errors in his observations. (In addition to the problems posed by the forelimbs and tail, the Hawaiian Monk Seal has no external ears). However, any solution to this mystery, excepting the possibility of an unknown species, must make similar assumptions. While Steller wrote that the animal was so close '*We could have touched it with a pole,*' Orrick notes that the actual distance was probably a minimum of 16ft, depending on where onboard the '*Sabot Peter*' he was standing.

Orrick has accomplished the most thorough reinvestigation possible at this late date, contacting 'experts' on everything from ocean currents to the algae that might have affected the Hawaiian fur seal's normal grayish colour (Orrick's thought was that algae sometimes found on Hawaiian seals, could have died in colder waters, imparting a brown shading to the seal's coat).

Orrick's conclusions may well be correct. Without physical evidence though, no investigation conducted centuries after the fact can be considered definitive. Unless a specimen of some new type of Arctic sea mammal is obtained, the status of Steller's Sea Monkey will always be something of a mystery.

Sometimes, that kind of evidence does surface. An example, noted in the last issue of 'EXOTIC ZOOLOGY,' was the so-called 'Beast of Gevaudan,' which terrorised a French village until 1767, when it was shot - and apparently lost. Two hundred and thirty years later, a sample of its fur was found in a museum collection, allowing the animal to be identified as a Hyena. What it was doing in France will probably never be known, but the Cryptozoological portion of the mystery has been solved.

What other cases do we have listed in the 'Classic File?'

The 1905 'sea serpent' sighting, obtained at close range by the well-qualified British naturalists Nicoll and Meade-Waldo, probably qualifies. One may search the archives in vain for any authoritative report, before or since, that describes an identical creature. The result is a frustrating case as difficult to ignore as it is to explain.

The 'Yeti' footprints photographed by Eric Shipton in 1951, are another long-lived conundrum. No one has ever suggested this eminent mountaineer and explorer was a hoaxer. Attempts to explain the broad, five-toed footprints as bears, goats, or composites of human tracks are all unsatisfactory. Yet, in four-and-a-half decades of Yeti-hunting, no one has ever brought back a photograph or cast of a track that definitely has the same origin - whatever that origin may be.

All Cryptozoologists can do in these cases is review the original evidence and look for overlooked clues might point to a solution. New theories can be propounded, as with Orrick's idea of a seal or Richard Ellis's suggestion of a partly-surfaced squid in the Meade-Waldo case. Often, the end result is fruitless arguing over the unprovable. While that is part of the fun of Cryptozoology, it does not greatly advance the cause of science. It may be that these cases, in the absence of new evidence, should simply be filed away to let Cryptozoologists spend their money on more promising pursuits. However, Cryptozoologists are an inexhaustibly curious tribe. Human nature being what it is, the 'Classic Cases' may well remain mysteries, but it's highly unlikely that they'll ever be forgotten.

Sources: Chris Orrick, 1997: *Personal Communications*/ Burton, John and Bruce Pearson, 1987/ *The Collins Guide To Rare Mammals Of The World*, Lexington, MA.: Stephen Greene Press/ Mackal, Roy, 1980. *Searching For Hidden Animals*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday/ Haynal, Michael, 1997, *Personal Communication*/ Napier, John, 1972, *Bigfoot*, New York; Berkeley/ Ellis, Richard, 1994, *Monsters Of The Sea*, New York; Alfred H. Knopf.

The Maiden Of The Sea With A Real Sting In Her Tail

An aquarium in East London, South Africa, was attacked by a mob of hugely disappointed customers after they discovered that the 'Mermaid' that was advertised as being on display, was in fact a fake.

Amazingly, a crowd of over 350 people had turned out lured by the promise that what they were about to see was the real



Various depictions of the imaginary Mermaid. The Maiden of The Sea is a well-established icon amongst the folklore of many nations..



McCoy...A preserved specimen of a creature right out of the pages of folklore. A Mermaid.

When it was all - too predictably revealed that the maiden of the sea was entirely the product of a man-made hoax, the assembled masses resorted to throwing heaps of tin cans at the offending object.

The local head of tourism, Craig Nancarrow, was understandably taken aback by the whole furore...He was quoted as saying; 'I thought it was a well-known fact that Mermaids don't exist.'

6th January, 1998. East London, South Africa. 'DAILY MAIL'

Lizard People Lurk Beneath The City Of Angels

According to reports emanating from both the American press, and on the pages of various Web Sites on the Internet, a well-to-do neighbourhood in downtown Los Angeles, has been attracting a great deal of attention from paranormal researchers.

Brentwood, LA, hometown to both Nicole Simpson and Ronald Goldman (the victims of a double murder that led to the trial, and subsequent - some would say dubious - acquittal of O.J. Simpson), has been featuring in the news due to the fact that the father of Monica Lewinsky (Will Bill's bit on the side - allegedly), currently resides in the same area. And whilst America's mass media, in all its multifarious guises, descended upon Brentwood, old-timers exchanged knowing smiles across beer-laden tables as they recounted tales of another time, long-since forgotten by the majority of the townsfolk....

Back in January, 1934, there were some increasingly wild claims being made about the area along with a somewhat mysterious disappearance.

G. Warren Shufelt, a rather unorthodox and distinctly unconventional inventor/mining engineer, visited the suburbs of LA in an attempt to promote some degree of interest in what he termed his 'Radio X-Ray Device' that was billed as a primitive kind of subterranean sonar.

Shufelt elected to test his prototype in the midst of Brentwood, at the time a new post-World War One subdivision. Whilst he was carrying out his experiments, he accidentally stumbled upon a series of underground tunnels running in a southerly direction towards Santa Monica and the ocean beyond.

Tunnels, that according to the city planners simply shouldn't be there.

If that wasn't strange enough, he subsequently discovered another series of equally anomalous tunnels twisting away beneath the Dodger Stadium, the Central Library and Fort Moore Hill, currently the site of the LA Unified School District Headquarters.

According to reports on "(UASR)" "Perry" on the WWW: 'to understand his find, Shufelt said he took his secret to Arizona, to a famous Hopi Indian leader known as Chief Greenleaf.'

'The Hopi tale the chief told him begins about 3,000 B.C. with a highly advanced race known as the Lizard People. According to legend, after a fire or meteor nearly destroyed their culture, the mysterious race built three underground cities along the Pacific coast.'

'The capital of this underground world was said to be beneath downtown Los Angeles. (Another city was under Mount Shasta, and nobody knows where the third city was). Caverns and tunnels housing a thousand families were supposedly created with an unknown chemical solution that melted bedrock. Tunnels and rooms were said to be filled with gold - then a symbol of long life rather than wealth - and lined with cement superior to to any known to modern man.'

'The legendary lost city of tunnels was built in the shape of a lizard, also a Hopi symbol for longevity.'

The Internet snippet went on to speculate that the so-called 'Brentwood Tunnel' ran parallel to Sunset Boulevard, turning south beyond Bundy Drive, crossing San Vicente Boulevard and passing underneath the Brentwood Country Club, before heading out to Santa Monica.

'THE LOS ANGELES TIMES' on 29th January, 1934, carried a report that stated that Shufelt planned to excavate the reputed 'Temple Room' under Fort Moore

Hill. The article goes on to say that 'the city gave Shufelt permission to drill down to 1,000 feet, but after only reaching 350 feet, drilling stopped for fear of a cave-in. Breathless newspaper accounts were never followed up, and Shufelt disappeared.'

'A local psychic of the 1930's, Edith Elden Robinson of Paco Rivera, said that she had a vision of "a vast city...in mammoth tunnels extending to the seashore," with a few running under Brentwood.

4th-5th February, 1998. 'NEW YORK POST'/'USA TODAY' and "UASR" "PERRY" WWW.SITE

Monsters Of The Great White Wastes And The Deep Heart Of The Ocean

Late Summer last year saw a spate of zoological discoveries in the midst of what are commonly regarded as number one amongst the most inhospitable sites on the planet; the dark depths of the sea and the freezing snow-covered landscapes of Antarctica...

Firstly, back in August, an outcropping jutting out from the floor of the Gulf of Mexico, originally investigated on 15th July, proved to be quite literally crawling with a bizarre collection of pastel pink animals, between one and two inches long.

Charlie Fisher (an appropriate name for a marine researcher, you might think), was aboard the first submersible able to afford a real close-up look at the creatures. He was so gobsmacked by the vision of flat, segmented worms known as *polychaetes* splayed out before him that he could only be quoted as saying; 'We were astonished.'

Back on dry land, researchers were soon busy studying several samples of the retrieved worms, that actually appear at first glance, to have more in common with centipede. It was later claimed that what have since been christened Hydrate Worms, may in fact be fairly populous, they've likely just been hidden under the sediment.

***A bunch of Scientists from the British Antarctic Survey were equally keen to report that they'd made some remarkable discoveries the following September...

Nature, it seemed, was quite literally running wild in Antarctica. Newspaper articles carried sensational descriptions of woodlice growing to a length exceeding six inches, mussels and oysters twice their normal size and a nine foot worm that is capable of swallowing its unfortunate prey in a single gulp.

Addressing a meeting of the British Association in Leeds, Dr Lloyd Peck propounded his theories as to how it could be that such creatures could grow to this immense size in the intense cold; '*Gigantism is related to the low temperature. At such temperatures, it costs less to keep a given amount of tissue alive, because the metabolism runs more slowly. You can get bigger on the same amount of resource. You can also live longer.*'

He went on to describe a creature called a brachiopod, which resembles an oyster or a mussel, aside from the fact that they are double their normal size. And the snake-like worms can grow up to 9 feet in length, and are equipped with poisonous snouts or massive, flesh-rendering jaws.

Other, equally Lovecraftian-type nasties that have made their home here include enormous sea spiders and 10 foot tall sponges, as well as isopods, which look a whole pile like the pesky woodlouse...Except that they are very nearly seven inches long.

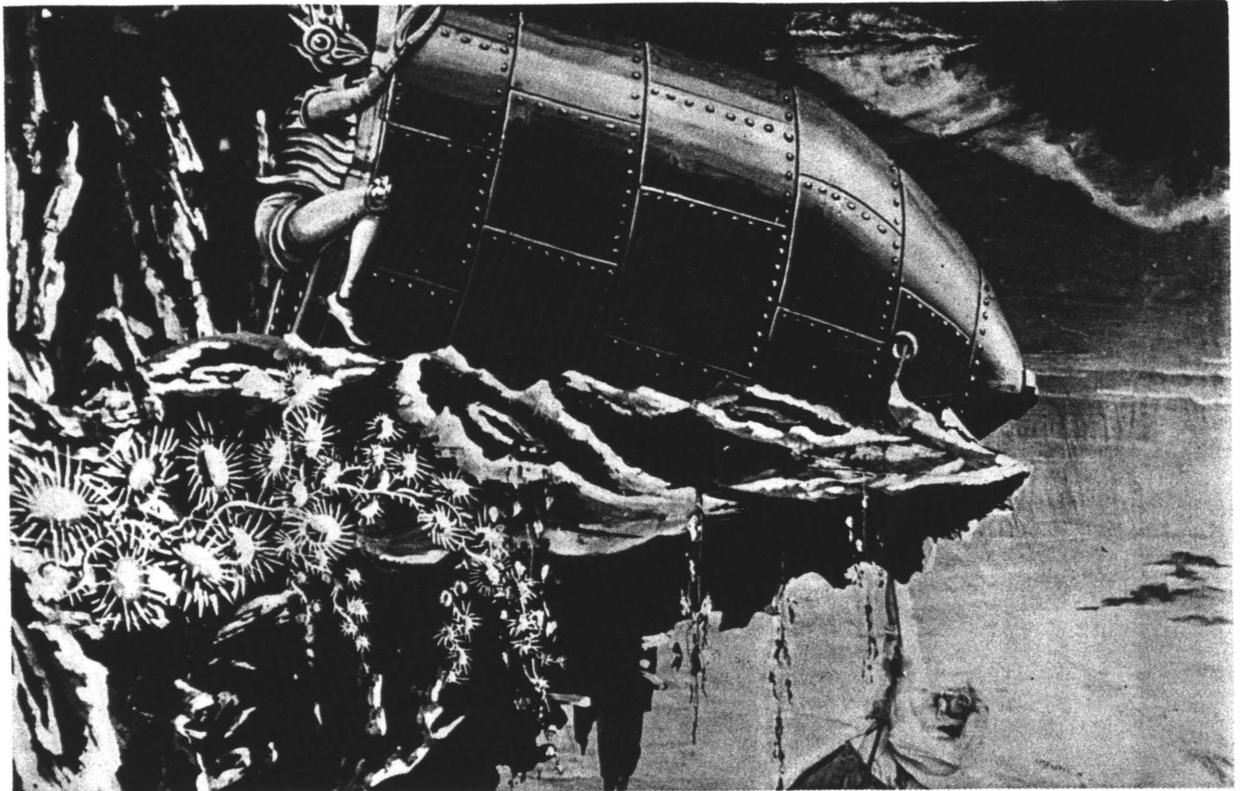
9th August -9th September, 1997. Gulf of Mexico/Antarctica 'SCIENCE NEWS'/'DAILY MAIL'

KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!!!

UFO UPDATE

THE COMING OF THE MOON LIGHTS

At the time of going to press, (March, 1998), media interest in our nearest celestial neighbour; the Moon, was at its highest peak since the last manned mission to cavort, somewhat clumsily across its pock-mocked, dust-covered surface. The full story concerning the potential discovery of water at the Moon's North and South Poles is related elsewhere in this issue, but the renewed sense of curiosity concerning all things Lunar seemed to me like an ideal opportunity to dig out the following article sent to me a couple of years back now, by a former contributor to this humble magazine; Jonathan Dillon. He has since moved on to (one assumes) greener pastures, writing as he does for the glossy, sensation-seeking publications that clutter the shelves of even the most conservative newsagents, but I reprint it here to highlight just a single example of the type of enigmatic stories that have sprung up over the years concerning the Moon....
Make of it what you will....



The 'Moon Light's have managed to successfully bewilder the world's astronomers ever since they first trained their optical instruments on the silver-coloured satellite. These unidentified lights have been reported to move across the lunar surface in erratic motions -quite often when the Moon comes closest to the Earth each and every month. The winking lights, emitting flashes of bright red and pink, have been calculated to cover an area approximately ten miles wide, and are visible for periods in excess of twenty minutes. They have been reportedly sighted in at least five different locations, and at least so far as conventional science is concerned, they do not fall within the parameters of known Lunar phenomena.

One of the first astronomers to sight the anomalous lights was a Russian by the name of Nikolai A. Kozyrev of the Pulkovo Observatory at Leningrad.

In 1958, he reported that he had witnessed 'a rosy eruption' emanating from the centre of the Aristarchus region, which lasted for nigh on half an hour. Intrigued by the mysterious flashes, Dr Kozyrev used a spectroscope to discover that the light, whatever it was, seemed to have been produced by radioactive, pressurised vapour. Scientists have since speculated that the lights may well originate from natural gases leaking through fissures in the Moon's surface. However, proof positive that such gases even exist on an apparently lifeless, chunk of rock, has never been proven - at least so far as we know. And you can add to that the fact that the lights flash on and off with a frequency not normally associated with an entirely *natural* source.

It may sound like the paranoid ramblings of an 'X-FILES'-obsessed Ufologist, but it has been whispered in certain circles, that the lights bear more than a passing resemblance to some sort of intelligent signal...A message being flashed to the people of Earth from the surface of the Moon.

Yeah, it may well sound as crazy as a bedbug to suggest such a fanciful notion, and yet, despite the fact that Man has walked on the Moon (or at least, it is widely accepted that he has - certain conspiracy theorists might very well beg to differ), we can hardly claim to know a *great* deal about our nearest neighbour in space.

Granted, we are told by the scientists that it is approximately one-quarter the size of the Earth, and that its gravity is about one-sixteenth of our planet's. Because of this weak gravity pull, no atmosphere can exist there, and so it follows that there can be no weather...No rain, wind, and so far as we know, no trace of life.

During the Lunar day, the surface of the Moon reaches the temperature of boiling water, whilst at night, it drops down to way below zero. Our most powerful telescopes have succeeded in mapping more than 32,000 craters on the Moon, the direct result of huge chunks of space debris smashing into the helpless satellite over a period of millions of years. One of the largest of these craters is called Clavius, and is about 146 miles in diameter. The size and depth of Clavius indicates that an object weighing approximately 200 billion tons once struck the barren Lunar crust.

Because both the Sun and the Moon dominate Earth's skies, as well as the cycles of nature, mankind as a race, has since time immemorial, worshipped them as Gods. Acting as an entirely natural timepiece, the Moon goes through a dependable series of phases throughout each and every month, as it orbits the Earth every 29.5 days. The ancient Babylonians were the first to formalise this knowledge, some 5,000 years ago, and duly shaped the course of their lives around the movements of the planets and stars that traverse the heavens in a rich and varied tapestry. Astrology is still very much with us today of course, but whether or not human fate can be foreseen by the parallelism of distant constellations is open to debate.

Superstition says that it is lucky to view the crescent of the new Moon over one's left shoulder, but scientific fact decrees that it is impossible to actually see it. This is because the new Moon occurs only when the Moon is between the Earth and the Sun, its golden rays only lighting up its far side. This is the half of the Moon that is perpetually turned away from the Earth, the somewhat mysterious half that we never get to see. At least until the Apollo astronauts managed to photograph that which has become popularly known as the 'dark side,' during its orbit of the Moon. Judging from the pictures that were sent back for study, the barren, almost featureless terrain is, to all intents and purposes, pretty much the same as the visible near side.

George Darwin, son of the famous evolutionist Charles Darwin, propounded the theory that sometime in the dim and distant past, the Moon was once so close to the Earth that the two bodies had made momentary contact. Other serious-minded researchers went even further and suggested that the Moon may very well have once been a part of the Earth that broke away in some almost unimaginable cataclysm.

Still others speculate that the Moon was formed from certain materials cast off from the Earth, or from space gases and other debris captured for eternity in our planet's gravitational field. Whatever the truth of the Moon's origin, it stubbornly refuses to reveal its darkest secrets. For example, soil samples brought back from the Lunar surface by U.S. astronauts seem to indicate that they were only about 4,600 million years old, much younger than the Earth.

When Apollo 11 finally landed in the Sea Of Tranquility in 1969, Neil Armstrong (after pausing to utter those now immortal words about Mankind, Small Steps and Giant Leaps), revealed to a breathless world that the Moon was covered with a thick layer of dust, and that its surface was so compact it was like stepping on a damp beach at ebb tide.

Sadly, none of the imaginative fancies of the great science fiction writers (Jules Verne, H.G. Wells et al) were

realised, but the astronauts were surprised to find that the soil on the surface was, in varying degrees, made up of tiny glass beads.

It has been widely rumoured at numerous Ufological conventions and in the pages of various books and magazines on the subject, that NASA technicians didn't reveal the *full* truth about the anomalies that confronted the astronauts at the height of that historic event. To this day, the bulk of the astronauts, though long since retired, refuse point blank to confirm or deny these persistent, not to say chilling rumours.

And, as we know from experience, in Ufological circles, a rumour not categorically denied, is a rumour that's destined to grow and grow....

News of these 'anomalous events' were apparently never intended for public consumption, but were nonetheless leaked out in later years by former NASA officials and ex-employees, not to mention attentive news reporters and ham radio operators.

Ufologists maintain that there exists documented evidence that on their way to that very first Moon landing back in the Summer of '69, astronauts Armstrong, Collins and Aldrin were buzzed (*shurely no pun intended - Ed*), by two archetypal, disc-shaped UFOs, and by a large, shiny, coil-shaped object that hovered overhead. After the Lunar Module successfully landed inside a crater, two more (or maybe the same) UFOs emerged on the valley rim and then promptly vanished from sight.

Buzz Aldrin managed to maintain the presence of mind to snap several pictures of the unexplained objects but, predictably, (and just like the legendary 'Dr. McCrae Definitive Proof Photographs' of the Loch Ness Monster, hidden away in some bank vault), the prints have never been made available to ordinary members of the public.

Maurice Chatelain, one of those 'former NASA official's,' suffered an attack of conscience, however, and is now engaged on a 'The Truth Will Out' crusade for the sake of all humanity. He was quoted as saying; *The encounter was common knowledge in NASA. But nobody has talked about it until recently. To Armstrong, the object looked like "interconnecting rings." Collins said it was like a "hollow cylinder" and Aldrin thought it looked like "an enormous, half-opened book."*

'NASA has never set free the photos that they took but there were certainly alien beings there. The official record is silent about it.'

The less-than-reliable Charles Berlitz (*an author, who though nowadays regarded with almost as much a degree of contempt as the works of Erich von Daniken and George Adamski, is still, sad as it may seem, one of the main reasons I got into this type of stuff in the first place - One might almost say, if it hadn't have been for Charlie, Erich, et al, I might never have experienced those "true glimpses of magic in the midst of everyday reality" and you'd likely not be holding this very magazine in your hands right now - Ed*), writes in his book *'THE ROSWELL INCIDENT'* how 'ANGLIA TV' in London owns a 'deleted' segment of a conversation that took place between Buzz Aldrin and NASA Ground Control, apparently confirming that UFOs were 'escorting' the Lunar Module as it prepared to land. The now oft-repeated segment of conversation goes something like this;

ALDRIN: *'What was it?...What the hell was it. That's all I want to know.'*

MISSION CONTROL: *'What's there? (Garbled malfunction)...Mission Control calling Apollo 11...'*

ALDRIN: *'These babies are huge, sir. Enormous. Oh God, you wouldn't believe it...I'm telling you there are other*

spacecraft out here...lined up on the far side of the crater edge. They're on the Moon, watching us.'

Of course, there is no hard evidence of which I am aware that can prove such a conversation actually took place. NASA spokesman John McLeish later dismissed as nonsense the alleged transmissions, although he did admit that such transmissions are, as a matter of NASA policy, both abridged and subject to 'a slight delay in transmission.'

Whatever the truth of the matter, there were further rumours that as the Apollo 11 astronauts were in the process of orbiting the Moon, NASA requested them to personally investigate the crater Aristarchus, a primary source of the so-called 'Moon-Lights.' Apparently, back on Earth, a 'brightening effect' could clearly be seen as the Lunar Module approached the crater.

'I'm looking north up towards Aristarchus now,' Commander Neil Armstrong was reported to have said in response to Mission Control's orders. 'There's an area there that is considerably more illuminated than the surrounding area. It just seems to have a slight amount of fluorescence to it.'

This particular transmission ended soon after, without any further details being recorded. If Armstrong saw any more than that, then the broadcast lies firmly under lock and key in some top-security NASA safeplace.

The current establishment theory for the phenomenon is that gas escaping from fractures and fissures in the Lunar surface contrived to blow dust into the air, and the sunlight reflecting off it caused the resultant cloud to glow accordingly.

Given the apparent evidence however, one might be forgiven for thinking that the scientific world would at least entertain the idea that something a tad more exotic may have occurred. Predictably, the scientists reject the notion that anything other than a safe, prosaic explanation is applicable here.

Reports coming out of the former Soviet Union however, suggest that the scientific fraternity there at least, is a little more open to the possibility of Extra-Terrestrial visitation....

Dr. Sergei Bozhich, a space scientist based at Moscow University, was recently quoted as saying; 'It's my opinion that other civilisations learned of the proposed Moon landing by intercepting radio signals from the Earth. Undoubtedly, their objective was to learn what they could about the extent of Earth's latest technological know-how.'

If there's any truth to this notion, then the pioneering of the Moon may well become more urgent than ever. At least if we intend, as seems likely, to claim it as property of the Earth.

And if you think that this may seem a trifle alarmist in these post 'INDEPENDENCE DAY' times, consider the fact the Rand Corporation, (a top 'think tank' - though some might well refer to them as 'a top asshole tank' - that regularly reports on future trends for the U.S. Government) , feels that the Moon is ideal for a permanently manned military space station, which would in effect rule the Earth. Plans have already been drawn up by Rand, say the conspiracy theorists, complete with construction details and a working eco-system. The object is not conquest, of course, but to enable the good ol' , trigger-happy US of A to act as World Police by keeping a beady eye on the warmongers, and seeking to deter them with the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation should they step out of line.

Whilst there is no hard evidence that the 'Moon Lights' indicate an extraterrestrial civilisation, one feels that there are undoubtedly questions that need to be answered.

As Leonard Stringfield of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) has been moved to say; 'If the Government released just one little bit of what happened on the Moon, it would be the story of the century.'

For further reading concerning 'Moon Lights,' check out 'ALIEN AGENDA' by Jim Marrs, (Harper Collins: 1997), which features a round-up of accounts, including the following;

*** On March 15th, 1587, a 'star' was seen within the body of the crescent Moon 'directly between the points of her horns.'

*** November 12th, 1671 a small white 'cloud' was seen on the Moon by French astronomer Gian Domenico Cassini, at the time, the Director of the Paris Observatory.

*** May 18th, 1787, flashes of light were seen on the surface of the Moon by two astronomers, and were later explained away as being nothing more than lightning....Regardless of the fact that on an airless world lightning could not occur.

*** During March and April 1787, Britain's Sir Frederick William Herschel, a pioneer of the reflecting telescope, and the discoverer of Uranus, stated that he sighted three 'bright spots,' four 'volcanoes,' and 'lights moving' above the Moon.

*** In July, 1821, a German astronomer reported sighting 'brilliant flashing light spots.' His account was only one of several similar reports of flashing or blinking lights seen on the Lunar surface.

*** February, 1877, a line or streak of light was witnessed stretching across Eudoxus Crater. This light was observed for somewhere in the region of an hour, seemingly discounting the possibility that it was merely a meteorite striking the landscape of the Moon with a flash.

*** April 24th, 1882: moving shadows were seen in the Aristotle area of the Moon.

*** 23rd April, 1915; a beam of light was sighted in the aforementioned Clavius Crater.

*** 14th June, 1940, two streaks of medium-intensity light were recorded in the crater Plato, a location where reports of lights have numbered in the thousands.

*** 24th May, 1955: 'Glitter,' similar to an electrical discharge was seen near the Moon's South Pole.

*** September 13th, 1959; something blocked the view of the Littrow area , and on June 21st, 1964, something equally mysterious and dark moved across the Moon's surface near the Ross D. area. This anomalous dark mass was observed for over two hours.

*** And finally, on September 11th, 1967, a 'black cloud' surrounded by violet colour' was seen in the Sea of Tranquility by Canadian astronomers.

Jonathan Dillon. Winter 1995

ALONG THE SUNDOWN TRAIL

The People's Rally At Area 51

The calls for a so-called 'People's Rally' to take place on June 6th, 1998, at the the very edge of the restricted boundary line on Groom Lake Road, seem to be increasing by the day.

'USENET' on the WWW, have issued a clarion call to all and sundry join up for 'a legal, public assembly on legal,

public land, to hold a spontaneous, peaceful gathering of concerned citizens.'

The event, if that's what it turns out to be, (and the chances are, it will be well-attended), is aimed at raising public awareness of the plight of the former Groom Lake workforce, some of whom are said to be suffering from illnesses caused by long-term exposure to highly toxic chemicals without their prior knowledge during their time at Area 51 (makes a change from blaming ol' bogey-man Saddam Hussein, dontcha' think).

Those who have called for the rally are at pains to point out that there are no specific organisations behind the event. A press conference has already been arranged for the eve of the rally on Friday, June 5th, whilst the occasion itself has been set to start at 6am (*the sixth hour of the sixth day of the sixth month: 666....There wouldn't be anything of occult significance in that would there, chaps. No? Oh, that's alright then - Ed*), at the edge of the restricted boundary.

The potential for hassle must be fairly high given that if, as expected, large crowds gather and attempt to make their way onto U.S. Government property to try and get a closer look at the secret military installation. I can just picture the scene if some 'concerned citizen' takes it upon his or herself to seize the chance for some personal glory and winds up getting themselves shot by a security force made itchy-finger trigger-happy by the presence of some many would-be trespassers....

We therefore await the occasion with a due sense of scarcely concealed dread.

22nd February, 1998. Groom Lake, Nevada, USA.
'GroomWatch@aol.com'

...AND NOW THE SCREAMING STARTS

According to the latest 'final, definitive' book on the UFO phenomenon, written by a former military intelligence operative named Phillip J Imbrogno and titled '*CONTACTS OF THE 5th KIND*,' the fiendish silent invasion by the ET's is already over.

Spouting the same old claims that he has stumbled upon the incontrovertible evidence that has succeeded in eluding the most diligent of researchers since (at least) 1947.

Several examples of this 'evidence' were served up in the tabloid press last November, and we include a couple of slices of it here for your own consideration....

Imbrogno makes a big play of his assertion that he served with U.S. Special Forces in Cambodia on a secret CIA operation called (in true '*X-FILES*' speak) 'Shadow.'

He has apparently used this contact to verify much of the information that has come his way. One such authentication was very much required when Phillip was considering the case of a couple by the name of George and Maria. One day, their two-year-old daughter brought out her doll and curiously, asked her mother to open up its head. Somewhat perturbed by the request, Maria asked her child where she had seen something like that performed before. The little girl chilled her to the bone with her answer; '*They do it to Daddy at night.*'

It emerged that the two-year-old had 'witnessed' beings resembling 'aliens' abducting her father in the dead of night. That's *some* incontrovertible evidence, alright.

As Bob Mortimer might say; *how persuasive a baby can be, Vlc...!*

Phillip held several meetings with the couple and, according to him, subsequently uncovered a whole chain of events that *'will stun the world.'*

He says he has followed up several more alleged abductees and has discovered a series of remarkable similarities, including the apparent 'coincidence' that each and every member of the 'Abduction Club' has shared the very same blood group.

Digging out a map, Imbrogno plotted out the abductions and to his amazement, found all that they all formed straight lines that pointed to the Hudson Valley outside New York.

The discovery was made hot on the heels of the revelation from a former CIA colleague.... '*The invasion is over. All we are waiting for is the screaming.*'

Imbrogno is convinced that those selfsame screams will start at the location where UFOs were first spotted prior to the outbreak of the Abduction Epidemic; the towns that nestle in the midst of the Hudson Valley.

The alleged invasion had its origins in the most unlikely of places...The Head of a Middle School, Douglas Harlow, arrived at the office early to find that every single clock in the school was ten minutes fast. '*I couldn't figure it out,*' stated Harlow. It turned out however, that it wasn't merely the school clocks that had inexplicably gained ten minutes. Like the plot of a 1950's sci-fi movie, every electric clock in the town was similarly ten minutes fast. A spokesman for the Connecticut Light and Power Company laid the blame squarely on a power surge - despite the fact that shift supervisor Phillip Gervais said that there had been no such surge.

Not long after the anomaly with the clocks, witnesses began coming forwards with tales of strange aerial phenomena in the skies above the town. Mrs Diane Duont, aged 40, was driving her car when she saw a large boomerang pattern of lights moving slowly across the night sky. '*I watched as these lights approached and I was surprised that I heard no sound at all.*

The object then passed directly over my car and as I looked up I saw a dark mass blocking out the brighter night sky.'

The police and local radio station were literally inundated with similar reports of a slow moving flying wing with red and white lights traversing the heavens.

One witness, Arnold Sprinster, described how a giant triangular object, the size of a football pitch, took ten minutes to pass over his car.

'It looked like one of the spaceships in the science fiction movies, but this was real.'

The local police chief Herbert Peterson was quoted as saying; '*If this thing can come here and do this, I want to know where the hell are our country's defences?'*

Imbrogno of course, believes it's already too late to call out the National Guard or look to Washington for military assistance - '**THE ALIENS ARE ALREADY HERE - THE WAR IS OVER.**'

Doomsday Phillip's interest (though 'interest' may not be the right word in this. Perhaps we should consider it a euphemism for paranoid fear), began with a general meeting in a valley town called Pine Bush.

He requested that people write down any UFO-type experience that they may have had and was suitably astonished when 40 per cent of the people who were present claimed that they had been '*in contact with aliens.*'

Bill, a 32-year-old computer programmer who, not surprisingly, did not wish to reveal his surname, stated that he saw the giant UFO above the Hudson Valley as he drove home late at night. He witnessed the object pass over his car but remembered nothing else about the incident until he incurred the wrath of Kevin McClure (and all other sensible, serious-minded Ufologists) and underwent hypnosis. Bill 'relived' his ordeal on the hypnotist's couch and the following 'memory' was recorded;

'There is someone standing in the road and he's walking towards the car. Who are you?'

The alien replied: *"Do not be fearful. We need you. You have been selected."*

Bill said; *'I feel strange, like I'm floating on air. It's all dark. I am now on this table and these guys are all around me.*

They have large heads with long black eyes, the eyes are so black that I can't see any pupils. They look like shark eyes. The one that is near my head is moving some type of thing up and down the side of my head. It looks like a portable vacuum cleaner.

He is moving it closer and it's making my head vibrate. It feels like a drill going through my head. Stop, stop, it hurts. They are looking for something and they've found it. I can't hear them speak, but I know what they're saying.

He is telling me that they come from a place which is very ugly compared to ours and that they would like to live here, but they cannot.'

Bill's next conscious recollection is that of finding himself back in his car one hour later than the last time he had looked at his watch.

Imbrogno's apocalyptic fears were given further foundation, at least in Phillip's mind, by the words of yet another CIA source who assured him that an alien craft had crash landed at an American air base shortly after the Second World War. (Roswell, perchance?).

His source trundled out the same tired old story that's now so familiar it's become something of a cliché in Ufological circles. The aliens, who were apparently facing extinction, struck up a deal with the US Government in which they would exchange technology for permission to abduct certain humans with a view to infusing fresh genetic material into their species.

When Imbrogno obtained blood samples from the alleged abductees, he was amazed to discover that 95 per cent had the rare B-negative blood type.

And from this correlation, Phillip was able to conclude that *'People with B-negative blood may be off-shoots of the hybrid race that the aliens are trying to create.'*

Why do I not think that your local hospital is about to be inundated with patients keen to have their blood types checked in case they may be aliens, themselves???

Another abduction article appeared just a month later, the crux of which dealt with the apparent fact that over 1,500,000 people claim to have been abducted by aliens. Two UFO conferences, one in Mexico, the other in Brazil, were busily debating the abduction issue in late December. Helping to promote the alien/human hybrid mythos, with its tales of implants buried in the ear lobes, repeat abductions, and even women impregnated by the ghastly Greys, were Graham Birdsall (who was also claiming to have heard further evidence of a massive government cover-up) and our old friend Mr Budd Hopkins.

The choice quotes though, were attributed to Brazilian UFO 'expert' Ademar Gevaerd...

'The governments know much more than they are admitting about UFOs. Most countries have programmes of official UFO research. This information is being kept from people.'
2nd November, 1997. Hudson Valley, New York, USA.
'SUNDAY PEOPLE' 9th December, 1997. Brazil, Medco.
'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

UFOs FILMED OVER

COSTA RICAN AIR-SPACE

The Itar-Tass News Agency reported that on 22nd December, 1997, UFOs were sighted in the skies above Costa Rica. A team of TV cameramen from two local

television channels filmed what appeared to be at least a dozen 'flying saucers' in the south of the capital. There were several hundred witnesses to the phenomenon, and they watched as the objects made bizarre zig-zag maneuvers in the skies for several minutes.

Flight controllers of the International Juan Santamaria Airport counted 'approximately fifty thousand traces' of their movements. Some car drivers stopped on the motorways to watch the anomalous objects. Scientists have so failed to come up with any rational explanation for the sightings, although local Ufologist Carlos Vilchez had his own theories, of course. He expressed the view that an influx of UFOs could now be expected in the area within the next couple of years. He did not elaborate though, as to his reasons for reaching this conclusion...

22nd December, 1997. San Jose, Costa Rica. *'ITAR-TASS'*

Three Day UFO Flap Over Pensacola, Florida

According to reports humming down the wires from MUFON, a red spherical UFO appeared on three consecutive nights over the Gulf of Mexico.

Beginning on the evening of Thursday, January 29th, 1998, Roy and Elsie Pollock of Florida first sighted a 'typical red light, "Bubba"' (coining the horrible Americanism beloved of used car salesmen, smarmy game-show hosts and failed politicians - not to mention UFO spotters in Gulf Breeze). *'It appeared approximately halfway between the horizon and the zenith, and gradually moved north and rising until it was roughly the same elevation in the sky as the Moon. It moved perhaps 15 to 20 degrees to the west and then changed direction to an east/southeast movement.'*

The object was mostly brilliant at times - a red light - it pulsed from very bright to mediumly bright and occasionally disappeared completely. Pulse rate was about 7.5 times per second...It hovered, rotating silently over the Shoreline Park area.'

The following night, Anne Morrison and her fellow skywatchers set up camp at Pensacola Beach on Highway 399, just south of the city.

'We were at the Beach, at the water's edge by the Dune's Hotel at 6:07pm,' she later reported. *'Looking to the northwest at approximately 30 to 40 degrees elevation.'*

As we watched, it very slowly moved higher in the sky, pulsing randomly. It was slowly coming towards the beach and took about eight to ten minutes to come directly over our heads. Then it moved to the east of us...and disappeared.'

The 12 skywatchers then witnessed a further UFO; *'another steady red object in the east, but only five to seven degrees above the horizon and over the Gulf of Mexico.'*

It remained in this position for about three minutes and then disappeared. There were 12 witnesses, eight of whom have a great deal of experience seeing the 'Gulf Breeze Red Object.'

And finally, on the third night, Saturday, January 31st, at 6:27pm, the skywatchers decided to hike out to the last public parking lot on Fort Pickens Road in Pensacola Beach.

'We had barely arrived there when we saw a steady red light to the north/northwest at about seven degrees above the horizon. The red light made a long arc above us and was not as bright as the night before.'

The object remained in sight for approximately 22 minutes. It moved very slowly, appearing higher in the sky and heading in an easterly direction.

Source: Anne Morrison of MUFON - 'UFO ROUND-UP' Mastinaigan Productions. WWW Vol2 Number 49.

AN UNINTERRUPTED JOURNEY

A Rational Overview Of

Recovered Memory And Hypnosis

If I'm right, and there never has been a single, physical, enforced act of abduction of a human being by an alien, non-human being, the belief in abductions has left some very confused people out there. For some, the confusion will arise from a belief that aliens intervene in our lives for our benefit. They will be depending on an alien presence for love, support, care, even rescue. Even if they feel they have been abducted and used for physical, sexual purposes, and have minimal control over what is happening to them, they will have faith in the good intentions of their unseen benefactors. A sort of Stockholm Syndrome, with invisible captors.

For others - apparently the great majority - the confusion will have more serious implications. Because of their belief in the reality of abduction, many groups and individuals have changed their way of life. Many believe that they have been abducted to be inseminated by aliens, have become pregnant with a hybrid foetus, and have been abducted again to have that foetus removed so that the child can be raised on board a spaceship. They recount their memories of these supposed events during hypnotic regression and they, and others, live in fear that the next time they are regressed they will discover that they have, once again, been abducted and abused. They will have concluded that they are not in control of their own lives, and that compliance is the limit of their range of choices. They will be deeply involved in listening for explanations of their perceived experiences, in sharing their experiences with other abductees. To borrow a term from the *'Courage To Heal'* movement, they will be sharing much of their lives with other abduction 'survivors'. They believe that because abduction is 'generational' - an often suggested possibility - if they have children, they, too, will become abductees. They might not want to have children.

A thorough look at 'UFO Close Encounter' reports before Hopkins' *'MISSING TIME'* appeared in 1981, shows that claims of physical, involuntary abduction were exceedingly rare. They had none of the really unpleasant elements - the repeated interference with children, the gynaecological and rectal examinations, the implanting and removal of foetuses, the maternal visits to alien nurseries. Until these concepts were introduced from 'recovered memory' material, and they received wide publicity, they scarcely occurred in published accounts. Researchers as wide-ranging as John Keel, Jerome Clark, D. Scott Rogo, Brad Steiger and Jacques Vallee found it possible to believe in, and write about, all kinds of phenomena. But they simply found no evidence for the type of abduction experience which, by the time Whitley Strieber's *'COMMUNION'* came out, had become the standard. The alien abduction mythos had appeared from somewhere, by some means, and it has appeared surprisingly suddenly. How has this happened?

It is increasingly clear to me that the alleged 'physical' evidence that we were told would validate the claims that the abduction experience is real is all, simply, worthless. Implants continually disappear prior to investigation, except for those 'obtained' by Derrel Sims which are somehow never fully analysed, however much time passes. 'Cup and scoop marks' could well be anything, and are almost certainly ordinary abrasions, wounds and scars. There is no evidence whatsoever that they were made by

aliens. The alleged UV fluorescence resulting from 'alien handling' has been shown to be quite literally a hundred and one things - but none of them 'alien handling.' There is not a shred of medical evidence of alien involvement in 'missing' or interrupted pregnancies. Indeed, there is no medical, or even simply objective and tangible, evidence to suggest that aliens interact with human beings at all.

Which leaves only three possible sources for the increasingly widespread belief in the reality of abduction by aliens. The 'memories' recovered through the use of memory enhancement techniques, primarily regression hypnosis; the assertions of the researchers, investigators and authors involved in arranging the use of those techniques that the accounts so obtained arise from real events; and those who are so convinced by those assertions that they come to believe that they, too, may have been abducted. At which point they will often find themselves being regressed by the investigators and authors, thus completing the cycle, confirming their own beliefs and those of the researchers, and themselves becoming full-fledged abductees.

I suggest that, without the use of 'recovered memory' techniques, there would be no alien abduction phenomenon. The line of development of the abduction mythos in the U.S. is clear. From the freak example of the Hills, to Hopkins, Jacobs, Mack, Carpenter, Boylan, Sims and their various acolytes and assistants, all can quote cases - a handful of cases - which have first presented themselves from supposedly conscious recall. But none of these has ever been shown not to derive from the key, media-friendly, 'recovered memory' accounts of which anyone with an interest in the subject is inevitably, unavoidably aware. And all these researchers resort to 'recovered memory' techniques to further explore these consciously-presented cases. Similar approaches prevail in the UK. Recovered memory techniques are utilised by Tony Dodd of Quest International, who has consistently refused to disclose who his hypnotists are, or what appropriate qualifications they may have, if any. Malcolm Robinson of SPI (see *Malcolm's response to Kevin's criticisms in the Nov/Dec Issue Of 'DON'*), became convinced of the reality of abductions through the famous 'A70' case, although all its abduction connotations arose through hypnosis. He says that he only uses a qualified hypnotist, but has repeatedly failed to reveal what that qualification actually is. Other researchers who publicise material obtained only through the use of recovered memory techniques include John King, Philip Mantle, Jon Downes, Matthew Williams and Peter Hough, none of whom have dealt satisfactorily with the question of why regression and hypnosis need to be used if the memories are actually of *real* events, when *real* events are so seldom forgotten.

Increasingly, the evidence regarding the use of 'recovered memory' techniques suggests - *strongly* - that they are wholly un-dependable. That what is produced is likely to be an impenetrable melange of fascination, misapprehension, remembered real experience, misremembered real experience and the 'rememberer' wanting to please those he knows to be present, or interested in, the 'memories' that are recovered. And there is pretty much no evidence that material obtained in this way is actually true.

To me this suggests, if I understand it right, that those whose lives are being affected and interfered with by their belief in their abduction experience are victims of abuse. Not, maybe, abuse that is committed or caused deliberately, but abuse that arises from the strong, utterly mistaken, personal beliefs of those who propagate the abduction myth. It isn't real abuse like that which humans regularly, persistently inflict on each other. But it is

nevertheless, abuse, and it hurts, and it damages people just the same.

I think we would be right in seeing 'alien abductees' as victims, who we have a duty to inform and assist.

Unfortunately, much of the vital evidence about the reality of recovered memory techniques is drawn from the field of real, human to human, abuse. There is strong, indeed overwhelming evidence that 'recovered memory' can produce accounts which are wildly, tragically, untrue. But I want to emphasise that nothing I say here belittles or doubts the horrors of the *real* abuse of children by adults, which is one of the unforgivable failures of our society. It is not those who are abused or hurt who are at fault, but those who take on responsibilities for therapy and, for establishing the truth, in circumstances which they are totally incapable of handling.

It has become undeniably clear that the use of techniques for hypnosis and regression can have disastrous consequences for therapists, patients and their families. Across the USA, courts and juries are awarding huge amounts of damages to patients whose therapists have led them to believe, through using these techniques, that they were the victims of hideous physical, sexual and psychological violence, including what became known as Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA). When it became clear that the 'memories' they had produced were not of real events, the therapists and their therapies were closely investigated, and found to be tragically flawed.

\$5.8 million was awarded in one case alone in Texas in August, 1997, where a patient had been led to 'remember' that her family had 'practised murder, cannibalism, sexual abuse and incest.' Courts awarded two patients of a Minnesota psychiatrist sums of \$2.67 million and \$2.5 million, because 'under hypnosis and sodium amytal, and after being fed misinformation about the workings of memory, they had come to remember horrific abuse by family members.'

A church counsellor in Missouri settled out of court for \$1 million because it was found that the memories developed during therapy, which her patient had been convinced were accurate, could not have been. Her father had resigned his post as a clergyman because of the accusations. A Wisconsin psychiatrist who implanted demonstrably false memories, and attempted to exorcise her patient too, settled out of court for \$2.4 million.

In some of these cases, families had been broken up, lives had been ruined. But though greed - in obtaining money from medical insurances - played its part in the exploitation of unwitting patients, most of the therapists involved sincerely believed that the information they extracted was true, and a recollection of actual events. They believed they could help their patients by telling them to accept the reality of these 'memories', and to challenge their supposed abusers, who are commonly close family members. Now we are considering a much more unlikely phenomenon for which there is absolutely no objective evidence, where the abusers are extraterrestrial. Yet what research and investigation there is, is often conducted using very similar techniques. The claims of alien abduction are, perhaps, even more outrageous and incredible than those of SRA, and even less likely to be true.

There is minimal medical or scientific support for the belief that 'hidden' or 'forgotten' memories can be accurately recovered or restored through hypnosis or other regression techniques. Such techniques are seldom used by the police, and, increasingly, courts will not accept testimony recovered through regression unless there is separate, independent corroborative evidence to support what has been 'recalled.'

It is rare for regressions involving abduction by aliens to be conducted by anyone other than amateurs, well-meaning or otherwise.

Where professionals are involved, they are generally already believers themselves, and bring to the scene of the regression all their own beliefs and preconceptions. It's not hypnotising people that's difficult, it's having the sense and knowledge to understand what you should, and should not, do with a person's mind once trance has been induced. And how what you do might affect their lives, and the lives of those around them.

Plenty of professional research results, and advice and opinion, at the highest level, is available to those considering exploring supposedly hidden memories. Any therapist willing to make the effort should have no trouble finding out about the unreliability of hypnotic regression. A statement by the Research Council of the American Medical Association in 1985 said that;

'Memories obtained under hypnotic interventions contain confabulations, pseudomemories and inaccuracies. Self-report, alone, cannot be used to determine the reliability of true from false memories.'

THE COMPREHENSIVE TEXTBOOK OF PSYCHIATRY (Kaplan & Sadlock 1985), had this to say;

'Hypnosis not only fails to produce more accurate memories but also increases the patient's willingness to report unclear memories as facts. Confabulations, distortions, fantasies and cued responses all add to the potential unreliability of such memories.'

Phil Mollon, the Head of the Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy Service at Lister Hospital, Stevenage states in *'CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY FORUM'* that;

'Experiments show that false memories, including those of past lives and abduction by aliens, can be implanted through hypnosis. Hypnosis can elicit both true and false memories, but with enhanced belief in their accuracy.'

'THE GUIDELINES RELATED TO RECOVERED MEMORIES' of the Australian Psychological Society state that;

'Memories that are reported either spontaneously or following the use of special procedures in therapy may be accurate, inaccurate, fabricated, or a mixture of these.'

Even experimental hypnotists themselves, commenting in *'THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CLINICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL HYPNOSIS'* (January, 1996), on the use of hypnotically elicited recall as legal testimony, list a number of problems with hypnotically induced memory. These include the likelihood that suggestibility increases; confabulation increases; confidence in the memory increases; critical review of the memory decreases; sources of the memory are confused; reconstruction increases as a result of new in-puts; fantasy development may increase; practitioner's beliefs may influence the patient. Comments of this kind are the rule, not the exception, and continue to emerge as the seriousness of recovered memory problem becomes apparent. I'll try to update you in future issues of *'ABDUCTION WATCH'* (see Exchange Mags Review section of current 'DON' for details of subs, etc) whenever important new findings appear.

Although there are hundreds of academic and professional studies, books and journals about the problems of the recovery of memory in therapeutic situations, I haven't yet seen one which regards recovered memories as always being even half-way dependable, let alone completely accurate. Not only is recall under hypnosis widely recognised as being unreliable, and has been repeatedly proved to be so, but it is very unusual for people *not* to remember, consciously and often repeatedly, a severely

traumatic event that happened them either recently, or many years ago.

I understand that memory blocks are very rare, because that isn't generally how memory works. So, if a detailed, vivid, exotic account of supposed events emerges during regression, there is a high probability that the exotic elements of the account will have no objective reality at all. This is where the common argument that because some truthful material will emerge from regression, regression should be used regardless of the known risks, fails miserably. It's an argument born of desperation, which defies rational thought in accepting that the most plausible 'recovered memories' are also the most likely to be true.

Those who want, strike that *need*, to defend the myth of alien abduction protect their belief by claiming that conscious recall of abduction is rare, and regression necessary, because the aliens deliberately confuse abductees and block out their memories of what they have suffered. This stupid and unprovable suggestion is remarkably arrogant - Brave Hypnotist Defeats Sly Aliens - but it can serve to lead people away from the reasonable, logical conclusion that where the only evidence for an event is the product, direct or indirect, of recovered memory techniques, then it is highly likely that the evidence results from the techniques, and not from memories locked away by aliens. The near-Victorian idea that the brain is a series of little storage facilities, some locked, some not, is particularly popular among those who want to be seen to have the power to do the unlocking, but I am now confident that the secret lies in the process and circumstances of regression, and not in the hidden memory of the person being regressed. Regression is not a magic key to unlock limitless hidden truths, but that is certainly a valuable illusion for an unscrupulous investigator - or therapist - to maintain.

So, what separates those who 'recalled' being victims of Satanic Ritual Abuse from those who recall being the victims of complex abductions and medical procedures at the hands of aliens?

Only one factor, in my opinion.

That the 'experiencers' of alien abductions have not yet questioned the validity of the experiences that they have said that they have had. They have not yet started fighting back.

With SRA, the accusations were made against human beings, who could in some cases, start their own legal actions, provide their own information about what had been recalled. They could prove that they didn't chop the heads off babies, didn't perform sacrifices to Satan. They could prove that they were in another state, another country, at a time when their son or daughter said they were at home abusing them. They could show that the accusations of abuse, the supposed memories, had never existed before the therapist became involved. They were able to prove that while their accusers had not told deliberate lies, the hypnosis, the regression, the therapy, were all deeply flawed.

The aliens - should they actually exist - have no such opportunities. They can't take the abduction investigators to court for leading people into having false memories, or being persuaded of horrible abuses they never really suffered. The aliens are compliant, silent, ideal bad guys who can never say anything to defend themselves.

It will, in the long run, be down to the abductees to begin to realise that they've been led into making reports for which there is no substance, through the use of recovered memory techniques that are known to be inaccurate and unreliable, if not actually dangerous. Ten years from now, I doubt that new abductees will be coming forward, and many current abductees will, by then, be deeply

embarrassed by what they have reported. Even now, I'm sure that some of those who have reported extraordinary events to their repressors must, sometimes, wonder why on earth they ever did so. But they must be afraid of looking foolish, or gullible, or just plain ill. It's not like SRA, where your family can forgive you and welcome you back with open arms. There is little for an abductee to gain by recanting, saying it never happened, saying they were wrong. And there are scarcely any examples for them to follow.

Despite all the adverse publicity, some investigators, researchers and therapists may still not know the important effects about seeking recall through regression. They may not realise what they are doing. For me the first tenet of therapy, of helping people in any way, is 'above all, do no harm,' but great harm is being done. There is clearly a need to stop the abduction mythos causing any more damage to those it has already taken in, and to prevent it taking in any more than is absolutely unavoidable. Then, beyond that, there is the important task of enabling those who have become convinced they have been abducted, with all that entails, to realise that they have been misled. To enable them to realise that, simply, they are not abductees, and that they don't have to deal with those problems any more.

And nor, as investigators, do we.

Kevin McClure. Winter 1997

Shadowed By UFOs Over The Heart Of Kent

The hugely reliable, always to be trusted, bastion of paranormal reporting; 'CHAT MAGAZINE' carried the following account of a former hard-nosed sceptic turned full-on UFO believer...

Dave Strudwick, a retired engineer now aged 63, experienced his first encounter with something out of the proverbial ordinary in mid-1964.

He was quoted as saying; *'I lived in the East End of London and was walking home when I saw a great big blob of light overhead. It sped off just as I was thinking "What the hell's that?" At the time I thought nothing more of it.'* (As you do - Ed)

The hard-to-convince Mr Strudwick would doubtless have consigned the memory of that particular sighting to some dim corner of his mind marked 'Irrelevance' if it hadn't have been for a second incident some 30-odd years later. Dave and his wife Lesley, 55, were sitting out in the back garden in Meopham, Kent, one idyllic mid-Summer evening simply admiring the trees and flowers, when Dave happened to gaze up at the clear blue sky;

'As I looked up, to my amazement I saw what I looked like a classic flying saucer about 2,000 feet overhead. It was metallic, and travelling from north to south. I yelled in surprise and Lesley saw it as well. She has flown light aircraft and we both knew that whatever we were looking at was no plane. Because of my job I was intrigued at what the craft looked like and how it was constructed more than anything.'

Dave was handed a second opportunity to study the characteristics just two years later, when he saw his third UFO, and in the wake of that sighting he felt able to announce to the world that the material seemed to be far in advance of anything he was aware existed in mankind's current technology.

'I was on the patio, dozing off, when there was a bright light overhead. It was brighter than anything I had ever seen before and was about 40,000 feet above me.'

'Amazingly, there was then another bright light which stopped to let the first one catch up. They then merged and vanished together.'

Dave's major concern now, it seems, is to attempt to alert air traffic control and see what, if anything, they make of it. *'We want to see what the authorities' response is. I've worked out our position to identify us to air traffic control. The only problem is waiting for another UFO to turn up.'*

With three sightings already under his belt (three more than the majority of us manage in a lifetime), the chances are he won't have to wait that long. His optimism concerning the authorities' is a tad touching in its wide-eyed innocence, however.

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26th October, 1997. Naples, Italy. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE'

*** Equally hopeless in the bank-robbing stakes was Fritz Bretter, who was caught after being entirely unable to resist his own sense of humour.

Whilst he was in the process of escaping from Austria to Mexico, he was asked by customs if he had anything to declare. 'Only a bomb,' he replied with a grin. The attempt at humour, juvenile as it was, resulted in Bretter having his luggage searched and officers discovered £85,000 - the proceeds of the robbery - lining the bottom of his cases.

5th October, 1997. Mexico. 'SUNDAYMANC'

*** Police in Missouri, USA, were trying to track down a incredibly polite bank robber who had struck on four occasions, at the time of going to press, but who allows customers to go ahead of him whilst waiting patiently in the queue prior to reaching the counter and issuing the classic line; 'This is a stick up.'

16th November, 1997. Missouri, USA. 'SUNDAYMANC.'



*** Various stores in the city of Zurich were being plagued by a robber who had struck up to 16 times armed only with a handful of slimy worms with which he threatened queasy customers.

23rd November, Zurich, Switzerland. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'

*** Police finally caught up with a serial shop window smasher after a total of 271 panes of glass were shattered in one area of Foggia, Italy.

They arrested one Giulio Zucchi - the salesman who originally sold the stores new panes of glass every time a brick was thrown through their display windows.

23rd November, 1997. Foggia, Italy. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE'

***An armed robber was in the middle of carrying out a supermarket raid when he absent-mindedly put down the gun he had been training upon the terrified customers and staff, in order to tie them up as hostages.

One of the braver patrons grabbed hold of the weapon and managed to hold the hare-brained robber at gun-point until the police arrived on the scene.

30th November, 1997. Jacksonville, Florida. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'

*** Hopeless shoplifter Brenda Coleman was rushed to hospital after she hit upon the decidedly-less-than-brilliant wheeze of smuggling a frozen chicken from a New York store by placing it under her hat. Predictably, the intense cold was enough to make her pass out as she stood waiting at the check-out counter. The doctors later diagnosed potential brain damage.

30th November, 1997. New York, USA. 'SUNDAYMANC'

*** Remaining in the less-than-good-ol' US of A, police in Michigan, raided an unnamed man's house and found over a hundred items of underwear...The discovery has left them feeling pretty confident that they have been successful in their hunt for a thief who has been pilfering women's panties off washing lines for the previous 16 years.

28th December, 1997. Michigan, USA. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE'

*** In deepest darkest Bolivia, meanwhile, Hector Calazandes, aged 36, and originally from Chile, was engaged in a bout of whisky smuggling to avoid paying the duty on it. 'I wore a special rubber suit,' he later explained to the customs officials. 'I then poured all the whisky inside it. From the outside, it just looked as though I were exceedingly fat.' He managed to successfully negotiate his way through Chilean customs without any problems, but things went rapidly downhill when he alighted from the plane in Bolivia. 'A dog began sniffing around me. I tried to shoo it away but it leapt up and bit my rubber belly and the whole thing just burst. There was whisky everywhere.' Not surprisingly, his proffered excuse that he wasn't intending to smuggle the whisky for drinking purposes but rather to insulate him on his journey, wasn't treated with any degree of seriousness. He was duly fined \$3,000.

Dec, 1997. Bolivia. 'THE BIG ISSUE'

*** A burglar in Australia broke into a sleeping woman's house and performed the despicable crime of gluing his own foot to the side of her face.

Police were said to be stuck for a motive (you're fired - Ed) February, 1998. Australia. 'THE VIRGINIAN MAGAZINE'

REVENGE IS NOT SO SWEET

*** Following a blazing row with her one-legged boyfriend, the revenge-minded Christina Mack decided to smear greasepaint all across the landing floor at the couple's home in Illinois, USA.

She was doubtless hoping that her 'beloved's' disability would cause him to slip and, at the very least, injure himself. Unfortunately for her, she fell victim to her own spiteful plan of action when she herself skidded on the grease, fell down the stairs and was knocked unconscious. When she finally came around, she found herself staring up into the faces of the local police who promptly arrested her. March, 1998. Peoria, Illinois, USA. 'FHM MAGAZINE'

The Cosmic Joker Strikes Again



Ashes To Ashes...

Myra Scarfe, 80, set out on an epic pilgrimage to the great white wastes of Antarctica in order to carry out her husband's dying wish...He had wanted his ashes sprinkled across the pristine snows to be blown to the four winds in the Earth's last true wilderness.

With a heart-rending example of marital loyalty she duly picked up the casket containing the cremated remains and funded the expedition by re-mortgaging her house for \$6,000.

During the journey by passenger ship, Myra suffered from bouts of acute sea-sickness, and almost from the moment she arrived, she managed to get herself lost in a full-blown blizzard and was chased by a killer polar bear....

Despite all of these life-threatening hardships, she did succeed in scattering the ashes, and she was able to return home, incredibly weary and footsore, but nonetheless 'with my heart at peace.'

As soon as she stepped back onto dry land however, she was informed by an embarrassed crematorium director that what had actually been allowed to dissipate in the midst of Antarctica wasn't her husband at all, but a tin of lousy wallpaper paste which had somehow had been handed to her instead.

Mrs Scarfe, somehow managed to maintain her sanity long enough to be quoted as saying; 'I hope that damned polar bear gets to eat them and falls sick.'

24th June, 1997. New Zealand, via Antarctica. 'THE BIG ISSUE'

'The Call Of The Cows'

A farmer by the name of Derek Smith was battling to save his livestock against the vicious elements, including icy sleet and driving winds, along the cliff-tops of Durlston Head, near Swanage, Dorset.

As he struggled up the coastal path, he had no alternative but to cup his hands and bellow a familiar call to his cattle; 'Hup, hup, hup.'

A few minutes later he stared in amazement as a Sea King helicopter hovered overhead. Not long after, teams of coastguards and two cliff-rescue crews came swarming over the Head intent on helping in what they assumed was a life or death emergency...

Mr Smith's discordant cries had sparked a full-blown rescue operation after a woman out walking her dog had mistaken his calls for 'Help, help, help.'

She had promptly rushed to a nearby country park office to raise the alarm.

Ranger Gloria Price, of the Durlston Country Park, was quoted as saying; 'The terrain here is very rough. We are often called to help people who have broken ankles or whatever. The weather was atrocious, and we knew that if someone was injured out there they would need help as quickly as possible.'

It was about 30 minutes later that we put two and two together, and thought it may have been Derek talking to his cows. We eventually confirmed that it was him. He was a bit bemused by the whole thing.'

The operation cost thousands of pounds, but the would-be rescuers were not in the slightest bit bitter. A spokesman had this to say; 'We do not mind being called out in good faith. We sometimes get reports of cries for help caused by the shrieks of seagulls.'

19th December, 1997. Durlston Head, Dorset. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'

Keepin' It In The Family

When Bulgarian student Veneline Vassilevi sought to introduce his mother to his blushing new bride, Marieta, he was astounded when instead of wishing them all the happiness in the world, she screamed like an irate harpy before fainting dead away.

It transpired that darling Marieta was in fact, the twin sister Veneline never knew he had. Many years earlier, the poor mother had found herself unable to cope with the prospect of twins and so she had sent his sister to an

*** Sergei Mosin decided to take an overdose of sleeping pills to protest against ambulance delays in the midst of the Ukraine. Mosin then had to wait for a total of two whole days for one to come to his own rescue...And he very nearly died as a result.

9th November, 1997. Ukraine. 'USA TODAY.'

*** Also unlucky where ambulances are concerned was a patient in Nîmes, France. Police towed away an ambulance which had been left in a 'No Parking' zone - leaving the mercy crew with little option but to carry the unfortunate man a whole mile to the nearest hospital.

24th November, 1997. Nîmes, France. 'DAILY SLUR'

*** A runner by the name of Zafar Khan, 37, trained for seven long months in order to be fit for a marathon...But when he turned up to run the race of endurance, he discovered that he was a whole week late.

Zafar had run a total of 2,000 miles in training and shaved off all his hair for the run in China.

But when he reached the Far East he was stunned by the news that the race had been unexpectedly brought forward.

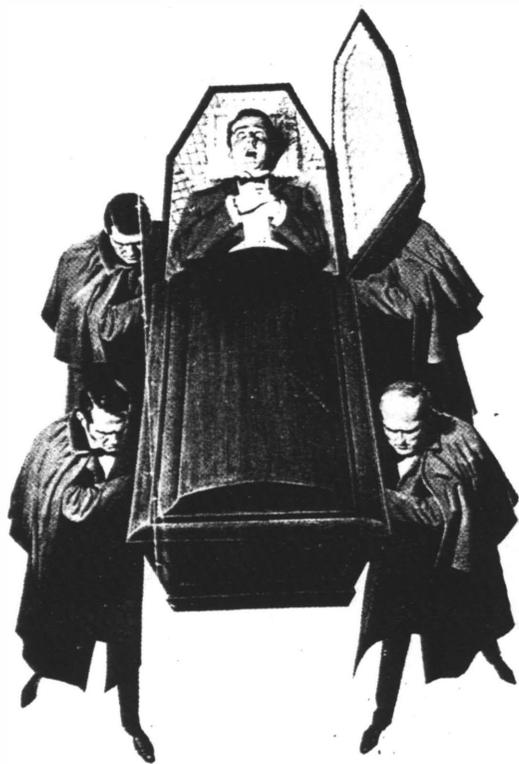
Zafar, who lives in London, was quoted as saying; 'I am lost for words. The organisers were very apologetic. I did a bit of sightseeing.'

1st December, 1997. China. 'DAILY SLUR.'

*** A wife in Holland elected to throw out her husband's old and battered clogs without realising that he had chosen to hide their life savings, totalling £15,000 inside them.

2nd January, 1998. Holland. 'DAILY SLUR.'

STRANGE DEATHS



In Shepherd, Montana, USA, a 3,000lb wrecking ball rolled off a flatbed truck, bounced down the highway and smashed into an oncoming car, instantly killing the driver.

Police were called to investigate just how the killer ball managed to break loose.

19th July, 1997. Shepherd, Montana, USA. 'ST LOUIS POST-DISPATCH'

*** A gun fanatic in California (aren't they all - Ed), named Bob Shovestall, was busy showing his wife just how

safe his 70 weapons were, when to prove their trustworthiness, he held a pistol to his chin, fired it, and shot himself dead.

11th August, 1997. Glendale, California, USA. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

*** And the same fate almost befell another outspoken gun control opponent...Randy Youngman, was taken to hospital after he accidentally shot himself in the leg while teaching a firearms safety course.

October, 1997. Calgary, USA. 'THE VIRGINIAN MAGAZINE.'

*** When your number's up, there seems to be very little point in attempting to avoid the swishing blade of the Grim Reaper...You want proof? Consider the following couple of examples;

A pilot who by some miracle managed to cheat death when his helicopter crashed, subsequently fell from the army chopper that rescued him. A major search had to be initiated in a bid to locate his dead body.

October, 1997. South-Western Colombia. 'THE VIRGINIAN MAGAZINE.'

*** In an attempt to cure his patient's fear of heights (would that be a touch of the old 'HIGH ANXIETY' - Ed), psychiatrist Ed Cabrillo took her up to the very top of a 20-storey building to prove that there was nothing to be afraid of.

After walking around the roof, he told her to get into the lift and make her way back down...She did so, and promptly fell to her death. Neither of them had noticed the signs warning that the lift was being repaired.

October, 1997. New York, USA. 'THE VIRGINIAN MAGAZINE.'

*** And meanwhile, in Curitiba, Brazil, Eleana Rokier, 37, alighted from her car without so much as a scratch after it had crashed and somersaulted a total of five times.

Then a police car that was speeding to her rescue, knocked her down and killed her instantly.

9th November, 1997. Curitiba, Brazil. 'THE DAILY MAIL.'

*** A cheese-hurling festival being held in Eger, Hungary, ended in tragedy when Tadu Koblicki killed his own father with a badly-thrown Edam.

16th November, 1997. Eger, Hungary. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** While attending his wife's funeral in Prague, dentist Pariek Brosky suffered a fatal heart attack. To save time, a doctor at the funeral issued a death certificate...And the mourners held a joint cremation service.

23rd November, 1997. Prague. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** A Stag Night in Frankfurt, Germany, wound up ending in tragic-comedy when a stripper crash-landed onto the head of the prospective groom; Otto Heriman, killing him instantly.

21st December, 1997. Frankfurt, Germany. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** A German-born bride named Amy Weitz was unaware that it was an old tradition in Australia for newlyweds to smear wedding cake on each other's faces.

When her husband, Chas, duly pushed a slice into her face at their reception in Brisbane, she lost her temper, hit him over the head with a wine bottle, and killed him outright.

October, 1997. Brisbane, Australia. 'WOMAN.'

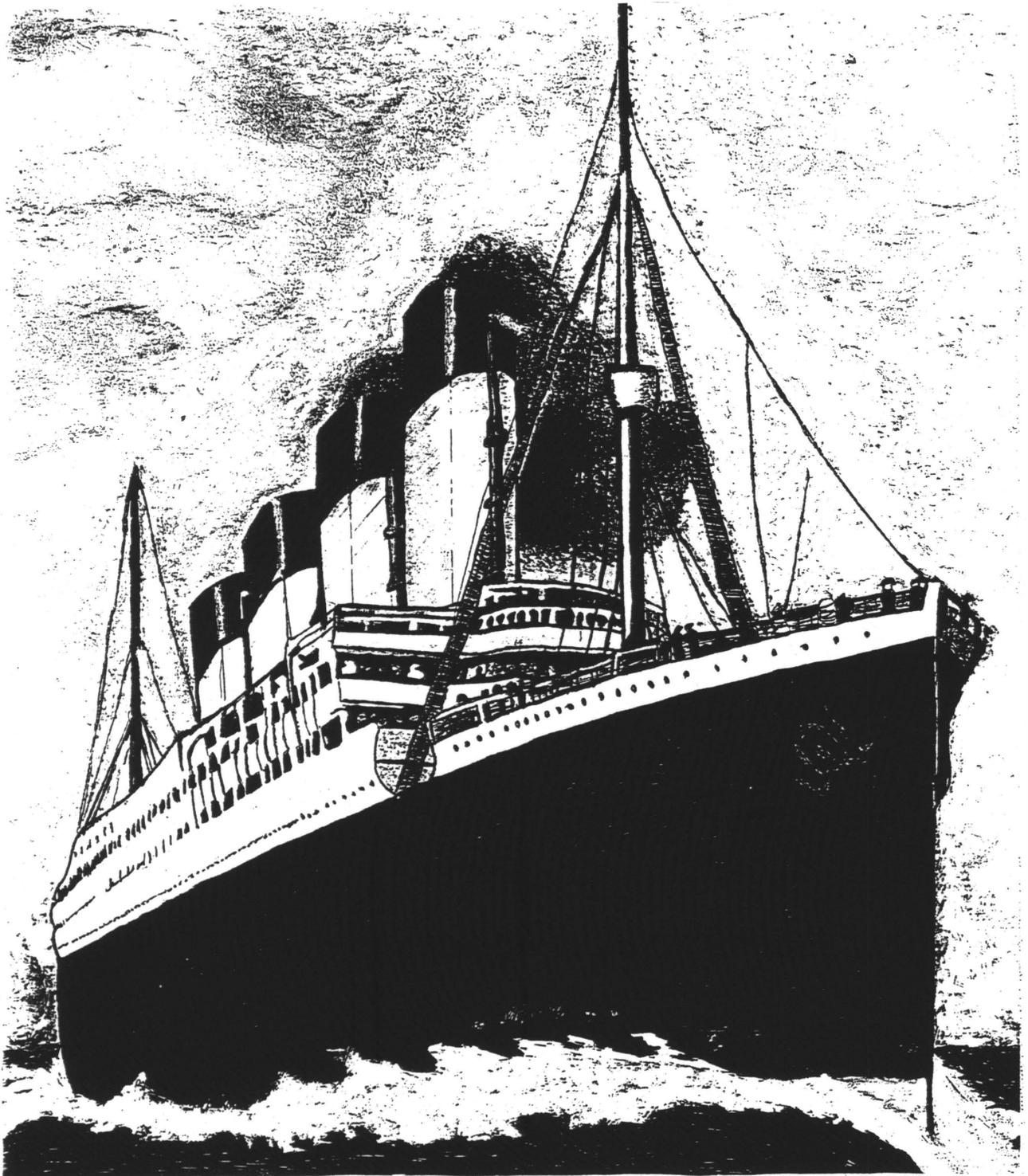
*** Two teenagers lost their balance and fell to their deaths in Tokyo, Japan, after they attempted to settle a bet over who could stand the closest to the edge of a 110ft cliff.

18th January, 1998. Tokyo, Japan. 'DAILY SLUR.'

'Out Of The Desolation Of The North'

The Superntural And The Titanic

There can be few more enduring tales of human tragedy and disaster than that surrounding the sinking of the Titanic on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York, one freezing night in April, 1912. The James Cameron movie (which, almost *despite* the media hype and its virtual hogging of the recent Academy Award nominations, is, in this humble author's opinion, still the greatest film ever made), has without doubt helped to perpetuate the story which has since almost passed into the misty realm of myth and legend.



The historical facts are pretty much well-known. I won't seek to bore you here with yet another rehash of how man's dismissive arrogance in the face of the infinitely more powerful forces of nature, resulted in a calamity that cost the lives of more than 1,500 men, women and children. As tempting as it is to dwell upon the bitter ironies that saw the proud boasts concerning one of man's greatest technological achievements (up to that time) irreparably torn apart by the jagged edge of some lurking, unseen enemy....

A full fourteen years prior to the launching of the great 'unsinkable' 'Titanic,' the story of its one and only voyage and the ultimately dreadful fate that awaited the vessel off the coast of Newfoundland, seems to have been somehow presaged in the plot-line of a short novel written by a little-known American author named Morgan Robertson.

In 1898, the 36-year-old Robertson published a novelette called *'THE WRECK OF THE TITAN OR FUTILITY.'* It did not, by any means, trouble the bestseller lists or anything, but nevertheless, it *did* feature a storyline uncannily similar to that of the 'Titanic.' The briefest of glances at the work, reprinted in 1996, by the Historic Society of Massachusetts, reveal the following incredible parallels between the twin ships of fact and fiction...

As well as the startlingly similar nature of their names, both the Titan and the Titanic were British vessels on their maiden voyage. Both ships collided with the submerged portion of an iceberg in the North Atlantic off Newfoundland Banks, 1,000 miles off the coast of New York, their intended destination.

Both disasters occurred on a bone-cold April night in mirror-like seas. Both Titan and Titanic were speeding when they struck their nemesis, both (allegedly) attempting to set speed records.

In both cases the threat of icebergs had been well broadcasted beforehand, and both ships were holed on their starboard side.

Even the dimensions, the top speed and equipment aboard the two vessels were strikingly similar, and both were owned by a steamship company whose main stockholder was a rich American. The Titanic was of course, part of the White Star Line, based in Liverpool, but whose principal stockholder was the wealthy American; J. Pierpont Morgan. Both were passenger liners which claimed to be the largest and most luxurious afloat. Both were hailed as being entirely unsinkable.

Although Robertson neglected to quote any precise date for the launching of his ship, he was clearly describing not-too-distant future technologies in the make-up of the Titan. The author gave it 19 watertight compartments and bulkhead doors which automatically closed of their own accord at the merest hint of water. The Titanic had 15 similarly sensitive compartments. The Titan had three propellers...The Titanic was the first ever ship to be equipped with three propellers. Also disturbingly alike were the two vessels 24-25 knots top speed, and their 3,000 passenger capacity...with only enough lifeboats to save half of that number.

Born in September, 1861, Morgan often claimed he was assisted in his writing by a 'spirit guide' He was quoted as saying that he often heard '*whispered orders from a master in the great silence beyond.*'

He believed too, that this controlling spirit entity had somehow taken possession of his body for the purpose of imparting golden nuggets of wisdom to an increasingly troubled world. As a result, he penned '*FUTILITY*' to warn humanity of the fact that the shipping companies seemed to care more for profits than passenger safety.

Initially, Robertson only wrote for his own amusement, and it wasn't until he hit 36, that he became convinced that he was being slowly possessed by the 'controlling spirit.' He took to locking himself in his rented room in Mount Vernon to pace the floors like a frustrated artist desperately seeking inspiration. On such occasions, he could clearly be heard pleading with his otherworldly entity to send him messages. It's not to be wondered at that many of his contemporaries thought him quite mad. But though he voluntarily entered the New York Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, he emerged a month or so later with a certificate vouching for his sanity, which he never tired of waving in the direction of all who assumed he was crazy as a bedbug.

Sometimes he'd wrestle with what he termed his '*mind states*,' for weeks on end, and then, suddenly, all would be quiet, save for the '*snack-snack-snack*' of his ancient typewriter, as he worked for days producing several stories, one after the other, without pause.

His spell of prophetic writing didn't end with his eerie prediction of the Titanic disaster...He (or perhaps we should say his 'Spirit Guide') also penned a tale about a war between Japan and the USA, initiated by a surprise attack by the Japanese on American naval vessels. Not only does the story foretell Japan's assault upon Pearl Harbour during World War II, but it also apparently captures the social climate prevailing in 1941.

In his non-fiction works, he correctly predicted that battleships would eventually be succeeded by increasingly advanced submarines and that sea battles would be superseded by land battles because of the power and efficacy of the underground sub.

He passed away on March 23rd, 1915, in a New Jersey hotel room. He was found standing bolt upright with his hand resting on the side of an oak dresser. He'd apparently drifted away to that '*great silence beyond*' whilst staring out at the mighty Atlantic through an open window.

His last recorded words were imparted to a close friend named Bazeman Bulger...

'I am a sailor who has been transformed into a writer and an inventor. From the deck I was put at a desk, from the desk I was shoved into a laboratory, and now I feel myself going back to the sea where I belong.'

Robertson never profited from the prediction/coincidence regarding the Titan/Titanic tragedies...

William Thomas Stead was another writer with an interest in the paranormal.

The once-Editor of the '*PALL MALL GAZETTE*,' delighted in writing articles that championed causes both great and less-than-laudable. But of especial interest to us is the piece he wrote in the 22nd March, 1886 issue, which was entitled; '*HOW THE MAIL STEAMER WENT DOWN IN MID-ATLANTIC, BY A SURVIVOR.*'

The unnamed steamer sinks after colliding, not with an iceberg, but with another vessel, the similarity to the Titanic disaster being that many people aboard were lost as there were too few lifeboats. He wound up the article with the notation; '*This is exactly what will take place if the liners are sent to sea short of boats.*'

W.T. Stead also wrote a 123-page story in the Christmas 1892 edition of a periodical called '*REVIEW OF REVIEWS.*'

The novelette, entitled '*FROM THE OLD WORLD TO THE NEW*,' featured Stead's description of a visit to Chicago's World's Fair in 1893. During the fictional Atlantic voyage (occurring in early May, aboard the White Star liner *Majestic*) a clairvoyant passenger has a vision of survivors from the wreck of the vessel *Ann And Jane*, which had foundered after striking an iceberg.

In 1912, Stead found himself disregarding his own warnings and embarking on a sea journey from the Old World to the New. From Southampton to New York, to be precise...aboard the Titanic.

All uncannily synchronistic enough, you might feel. But it doesn't end there, sports fans. Not yet. Not quite. Let us consider first the even more bizarre coincidence of another similarly-christened ship; *The Titanian*...

One cold, starlit April evening in 1935, crewman William Reeves was taking his stint on the nightwatch as the ship was making its coal-run from Newcastle to Canada.

He began to be filled with an increasingly acute sense of dread as the vessel approached the spot where the Titanic had met her doom 'from out of the desolation of the north.'

The feeling of dark foreboding became unbearable when he suddenly remembered that he had been born on the

very day of the Titanic disaster, and any uncertainties he may have entertained about stopping the ship on the strength of a mere funny feeling were well and truly placed on the back burner.

'*Danger ahead!*' he shouted down to the bridge as if his life depended on it. The words had barely had the chance to leave his mouth and puff to clouds in the brittle air before an iceberg loomed up out of the darkness like some ravenous white beast.

William's warning had been uttered just in time. The ship just managed to avoid a collision.

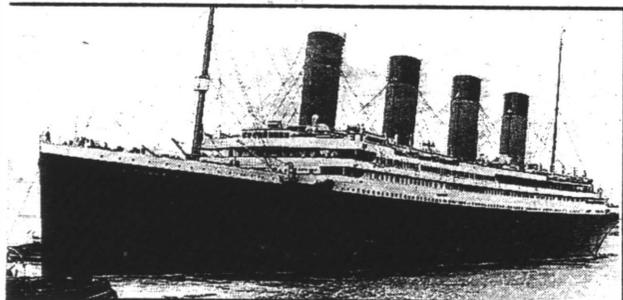
But it's not just premonitions and alleged clairvoyance-related stories that have become associated with the Titanic...

There have been at least two cases that we know of that feature a so-called past life experience. Reincarnation, not to put too fine a point on it.

The first concerns the undeniably tragic Donald Wollam, a man who, according to press reports, endured death by drowning, not once but twice.

His mother, Sue Heron Wollam, initially became aware of her son's fear of water when she was giving her then new-born baby, his first bath. He began screaming in sheer terror, and it was all she could do to remain in control of him.

'*I thought he would outgrow his inordinate fear of water,*' she said, speaking years later. '*But he remained terrified of it all his life.*'



In later years, when Donald was growing up fast, a Cubmaster tried to push him off the diving board at the local swimming pool. Donald frantically grabbed the master and they both wound up falling into the deep end.

In the wake of that incident, the boy began to display a decidedly unhealthy obsession with the Titanic, and by the time he reached the age of six, he had an almost encyclopedical knowledge of the subject.

One day he blurted out to his astonished mother; '*No one should have drowned. They should have had 48 lifeboats to save everyone.*'

'*It was the White Star Line's fault they did not have enough.*'

On another occasion, he also described how two children used to play all day long in an empty room aboard the ill-fated ship.

'*It was so cold. When you swallowed the water it was icy and salty and it made you choke. It was freezing and there was nothing to hold onto.*'

When Donald was just 19, he drowned in a quarry whilst he was on a camping trip. Two months later his grief-stricken mother was watching the TV when a documentary came on about the Titanic. One survivor stated that: '*My brother and I were children then. We used to play all day in an empty room.*'

Her blood ran as cold as that chillsome North Atlantic sea water in her veins as another survivor said that 48 lifeboats had been needed rather than a mere 16.

'*When Donald had talked of the water it was as if he knew first-hand. Is it possible that he drowned twice?*'

*** The second case concerns Deborah Proud, 23, a stockbroker who suffered years of nightmares about drowning. From the age of ten, these increasingly vivid dreams became so frequent that she almost suffered a complete nervous breakdown. As it was she was left feeling deeply depressed, and plainly at her wits end.

Each of these dreams were more like some endlessly resurfacing personal memory...She felt she was being constantly flung into bone-freezing water, trying desperately to swim for her life, but ultimately drowning anyway.

She'd read somewhere about hypnotic regression, and with no one else to turn to, she visited a hypnotist, who was only too-willing to tell her dreams were actually the reliving of past life in which she drowned whilst on a sea voyage. She wasn't at all specific about which ship she'd been on when she met her fate.

Predictably, Deborah only 'remembered' that the Titanic was the vessel in question after she'd been to see Mr Cameron's epic movie. She was quoted as saying; '*It always seemed so incredibly real, as if I was actually drowning.*'

'*I would wake up in a cold sweat and find my bed clothes*

soaked and dripping wet.' Deborah, who shares her two-bedroomed flat in Linslade, Bedfordshire, was quick to add; '*For years I didn't even dare discuss it.*'

'*Then I opened up to a couple of friends and one suggested visiting a professional hypnotist.*'

'*It was such a revelation. The hypnotist gradually worked out that in a former life I died on a boat voyage.*'

'*She told me my name was Rosemary Cilne and I travelled a lot this century.*'

'*But she was unable to identify exactly which boat I was on.*'

The name of this hypnotist was Sandy Marks, and Deborah maintains that she made her first visit to see her in January of this year. It wasn't until she went to see the aforementioned film together with her boyfriend Paul that the '*full truth hit her.*'

'*As I was watching the film I just came over all cold.*'

'*Parts of the ship that had been recreated accurately had appeared in my dreams. I sat there petrified - instead of enjoying the film I was seeing a series of flashbacks.*'

'*The part of the dream that came back to me the strongest was the ship's main stairway with the clock hung on the wall.*'

'*But I found myself almost turning away from the screen when the film showed people jumping into the water as the ship sank.*'

The (ahem) 'celebrated' hypnotist, Sandy, 45, stated; '*Deborah was a very intriguing case. She kept saying, "I'm drowning. I'm drowning," so I asked her where and after a while she said at sea.*'

'*She was able to describe the ship. It was clear she'd been on a large passenger liner.*'

Even more bizarre is the news that Deborah and Paul intend to marry later this year in outfits which date back to the 1912 period when the Titanic sank.

Paul echoes the views of all sane, rational people, when he states; '*It (the Titanic) has almost become an obsession. Deborah even checked the passenger log.*'

'*Rosemary Cilne isn't listed - but the hypnotist did explain that it was a maiden name (well, she would wouldn't she - Sceptical Ed) and she could have travelled under a married name.*'

'*But Deborah is so passionate about what is effectively a part of her past that it's very easy to believe her.*'

Sources: 9th November, 1997 'SUNDAY PEOPLE' 23rd March, 1998. 'THE SCUM'

Dark Visions

FORTEAN TV: The Series Reviewed

PROGRAMME ONE:

The second series of Channel Four's '*Celebration of the mysterious, the miraculous, and the downright weird*' kicks off with the appropriately eccentric Reverend Lionel Fanthorpe, replete with priestly dog collar and leather biker's jacket, feeding a bunch of swimming penguins at the zoo. As a prelude to outlining the programme's contents, he quotes Arthur C Clarke (in a less-than-convincing American accent);

'When a scientist says that something is possible, he's probably right. But when he says that it's impossible, he is most certainly wrong.'

'The Miracle Scratching'

With these wise words (of which ol' Charlie Fort Himself would doubtless be proud) hanging in the air, the good Reverend dons his Tibetan visionary outfit to proclaim that the faithful who are constantly engaged in searching for 'signs from God,' may very well be looking in all the wrong places...

Wildly different forms of what we term Religious Phenomena, seem to occur in the most unlikely of surroundings as we have seen in the pages of this very publication. The programme however, initiates its investigations into '*Messages from Above*' in the type of place you'd expect to experience such events, (if you were lucky enough to experience them at all) namely, the Cathedral city of Coventry.

We are introduced to Aaron Dodgson, a stocky, denim-shirted individual, who emerges from a red-bricked terraced house somewhere in the city centre. He relates the story of '*his very own, deep-fried miracle*.'

'On the day it happened, I was feeling a bit low. I'd just split up from a long-term relationship, and I just went out to drown my sorrows with a couple of friends.'

We follow him into his local (the extremely enticing 'Royal Oak') After wolfing a packet of pork scratchings washed down with a few pints, Aaron leaves the pub, and if his sorrows weren't yet entirely drowned, they'd at least been given a damn good soaking. He still had a scratching or two left in the bag and he decided (doubtless aware that hot on the trail of '*I got the scratchings*' is the inevitable march of '*I got the munchies*') to eat the last of them on the way home. He reached inside the bag and pulled out an exceptionally large scratching that seemed, to Aaron anyway, to contain the shape of a human face. The more he looked at it, the more he became convinced that it bore more than a passing resemblance to The Virgin Mary and The Christ Child.

A portrait, showing the BVM and her Holy Infant is super-imposed over the admittedly bizarre image, and, like the more notorious 'Nun Bun' and the images of Arabic writing inside various fruit and vegetables (see previous issues of 'DON') the similarity is fairly convincing.

What is more newsworthy however, is the rather incredible series of coincidences(?) that surrounded the discovery of the simulacra...He first clapped his eyes on the '*Miracle Snack*' whilst he was stood directly opposite '*Gabriel's*' chippy. In common with the Biblical tradition of The Holy Trinity; there were a total of three people, including Aaron, in the pub that night. (okay, so the pub isn't *that* enticing then, after all) 'The Royal Oak' is known locally as 'The Chapel' and some of the seating includes 400-year-old church pews. The advice of a local Methodist Minister, Pauline Warner, is sought by the programme makers, and she has this to say; '*I don't think we should be surprised at the idea that Jesus could appear in a pub. If He was alive today, then he'd probably be more likely to spend his social life down at the pub than in the church. That's what He was doing when He was alive in Jerusalem, 2,000 years ago.*'

Father Fanthorpe then goes on to tell us that since the news of Aaron's discovery of the 'Holy Scratching' broke in the pages of the local, and later national press, his home has, perhaps not surprisingly in these 'PMT Times,' become a place of pilgrimage. One of these would-be pilgrims is self-confessed BVM apparitions-hunter, Mrs Beryl Cheetham from Derbyshire. A kindly-faced lady aged somewhere in her mid-sixties, she views the image, now proudly displayed in a glass cage surrounded by brightly coloured flowers and flickering candles; '*I first began documenting the apparitions of Mary five years ago. It appears there have been quite a few appearances. I do think there must be some deep reason. I think there are so many apparitions of Mary now because we are reaching the conclusion of an Age. Not just this decade or century or Millennium - a much bigger cycle of time. In God's Time.*'

The final word is left to Aaron, who is moved to say, as he prays over the enshrined image, '*If the pork scratching was sent as a message, and has got any powers that can grant me any wishes at all, I just wish that it allows me to continue to be happy. I've got to be looking to make sure to preserve it and make sure it keeps its shape, but if anyone wanted to come down and take a look at it, that would be fine obviously. The more people who see it the better.'*

The Green-Eyed Spirit

*** We then move speedily on, courtesy of the type of POV camera shots beloved of John Carpenter in films like '*HALLOWEEN*,' to consider the ghostly story of a Huddersfield couple involved in a 200-year-old love triangle.

The segment begins with a letter being typed out on a word processor to everybody's favourite Reverend, by a very concerned-looking individual, named Kelvin, who it transpires, is complaining about otherworldly interference in his own personal love life.

The incidents seem to have started when was attempting to kiss his wife, Kay in their bedroom. Just as they were about to pucker up, Kay felt a force come in between them, an invisible something *'with icy cold hands'* that angrily pushed her away.

Later that night, whilst the couple were lying in bed, the 'entity' made its presence felt once more, striving to prevent them from engaging in any sexual shenanigans. The 'jealous spirit' repeated its separation tactics over a lengthy period of time (though exactly how long isn't specified), and understandably, the couple grew more and more frustrated as the days and weeks rolled by.



Eventually, Kelvin gets to witness a physical manifestation of the entity haunting their bedroom, glimpsed only briefly as a transparent spirit in the dramatised recreation. Kelvin takes up the story of what happened next...

'Not long after that I was in bed with Kay. It was a full moon. Well lit up. Suddenly, the bedroom went dark. Something grabbed me. Picked me up to the side of the bed. Then it dropped me so hard it winded me.'

By now, Kelvin had decided things had gone far enough. Contrary to the advice of spiritualists, the clergy, and just about everyone with any interest in the paranormal, he elected to make a Ouija Board and use it to contact the green-eyed spirit.

Sensibly inviting a few friends around before embarking upon the venture, Kelvin describes how, after the assembled company had each placed their fingers upon the glass, it began spelling out a message. The 'Spirit' claims that its name is Rosilinda, and that 'she' was Kelvin's wife in a previous existence in 1745. Even more startling than this revelation, is the 'Spirit's' announcement that Kay was pregnant and that she would give birth to a little girl on August 28th, that year. Amazingly, the couple's daughter, Laura, was born on precisely that date.

According to Kelvin, the 'haunting's' haven't stopped there. 'Rosilinda' seems to prevent the couple from *'having nookie'* (Kelvin's charming colloquial phrase for experiencing sex) by using Laura everytime either of them feel a tad horny.... *'You can guarantee she (Laura) is going to awaken and wind up in our bed with us. As a matter of fact, now she won't sleep anywhere else. People say she's a natural contraceptive.'*

Real-Life 'Ghost-buster's'

Next up, it's 'back to school' for our slug-a-bug compere who rises from his bed dressed in an outfit that 'Wee Willie Winkle' would kill for....

Switch to a 'Yellow Pages'-type directory advertising, of all things, Britain's only 'Ghostbusting' organisation, run by a 58-year-old grandmother named Shirley Wallace.

Lionel goes back to school, as Shirley, looking like the perfect, archetypal head teacher, instructs her classes on all things ghostly.

She hands Lionel a small jar containing some sort of white substance, and asks him what he thinks it is. After smelling it, Lionel hands it back to her with the comment that its *'very unpleasant'*

As well he might, because Shirley then reveals that the substance is actually urine. Whilst we sit and wonder why the Good Father has to take a whiff of somebody's age-old pee., Lionel moves on to inform us that *'to determine whether a foul-smelling spook is friend or foe, Shirley teaches a variety of methods, including peripheral vision, the use of Dowsing Rods, crystal pendulums, and a sprinkling of Holy Water. But the most potent weapon for any Ghostbuster is the human voice, and a curious technique known as "Toning."* (The class all join in making an infernal racket, a sort of high-pitched hum that would drive any self-respecting spirit bananas).

Shirley is the first to admit however, that none of the aforementioned tools would be in the slightest bit effective if it was for her very own protective 'poltergeists.'

'I have a team. In fact, everybody on Earth has their own guides and spirit helpers, whether they're aware of them or not.'

Hoping against hope that Shirley's smack on the mark with *that one*, we next join up with the happy, candle-carrying band inside the dark confines of 13th Century Bowden House...A reputedly haunted domain.

The owners of the rambling mansion had called in the team to help rid the premises of these decidedly unwelcome 'guests.' Lionel gets to embark upon a search of the house armed only with a candelabra and a notepad. *'It's estimated that a thousand people have met their Maker within these walls,'* he informs us as he walks the winding corridors, his shadow capering madly on the lavishly decorated walls. *'And not surprisngly, it didn't take long for the "Apprentice Ghostbuster's" to pick up some strange vibrations.'*

One of the young ladies in the team senses the presence of a female spirit who somehow lost her footing at the head of a staircase, and fell to her death. Shirley later identifies the presence as 'Alice' - a girl who died in tragic circumstances way back in 1765. Prior to any *human* sensing of this restless spirit however, the Dowsing Rods were the first implements to detect the presence. Whilst Shirley asks questions of the assembled group, one of older women is so overcome by the pervasive aura of overwhelming sadness, she collapses in tears and has to be comforted by her fellow members. *(This sensing of deep-rooted sadness is a fairly common reaction when visiting the site of traumatic events - see The Franky Phantom story, elsewhere in this issue for comparison).*

In a bid to rid the house of Alice's ghost, the team gather up their courage, struggle with their emotions and stand at the head of the staircase emitting that annoying high-pitched hum, in a bid to drive the spirit to its place of final rest. We are not told whether or not they are one hundred per cent successful in their efforts, but there have apparently been no further sightings of Alice's ghost since the 'exorcism.'

Lionel later beckons the team to sit around a table where, once seated, he assures them that *'I have no doubt at all, that those of you who are sensitive and perceptive, are giving us a fair account of what you yourselves have seen and felt and heard. What I'm not sure about is, when I see these pictures coming into my own mind, am I seeing something psychic, or am I just being a creative writer. I don't trust my own imagination. Personally, I found the whole episode quite eerie. But Shirley insists there is nothing to fear.'*

He then asks Shirley what risks, if any, he faces should he choose to be a 'Ghostbuster.'

'With me, on this course, none. Because we learn how to protect ourselves, and that is the most important thing. But above all, I think Ghostbusting is busting the idea that there's anything to fear.'

An (ahem) Very Fishy Cure

Next we move on to Hyderabad, India, to view vast crowds of people milling around a series of placards and posters that proclaim *'Free Asthma Treatment'*

This, we are told, is an annual event in the Indian calendar, when huge sections of the population seek a miracle cure for the breathing disorder. This tremendously efficacious remedy is reputed to be secured by swallowing a live sardine stuffed with a secret herbal paste. We see various unfortunates, including young children, doing just that. Placing these wriggling creatures into their mouths in the hope that their rapid movement will clear all congestion in the lungs.

One satisfied customer claims that his condition has improved by nearly 40 per cent, and even if it has no real effect, the 'miracle cure' is dispensed free of charge, so no hopeful patients have very little to lose...Except maybe when they blow their last meal.

Lionel informs us the *'saffron-based formula (which, according to those that dish it out, has a 90 per cent success rate) has a highly-secret ingredient, passed down through generations for nearly 200 years.'*

The people of the city have the Gaud family to thank for this cure, and the head of the household; Harinath Gaud, is quoted as saying; *'Other medicine's are only temporary, but ours is permanent. Some doctor's are trying it elsewhere and are passing it off as a Hyderabad Fish Medicine. But the cure only works once a year, and only in this place.'*

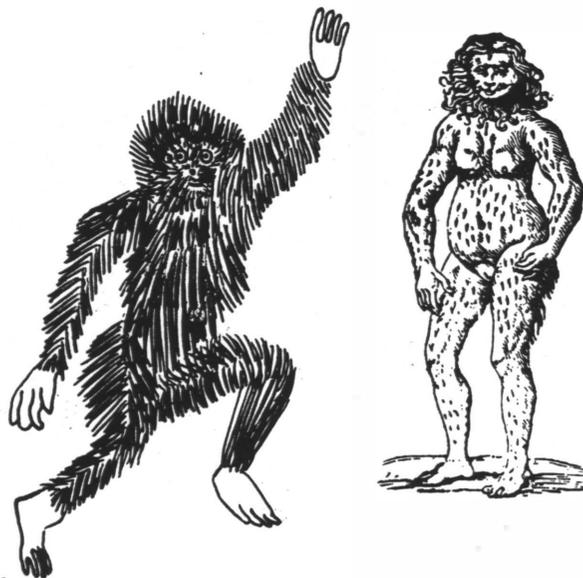
Lionel wonders whether swallowing a live fish can actually be in any way beneficial to one's health and seeks the advice of an 'expert'. Step forward, Professor Tom Sanders...

'If you swallowed a fish it goes straight down in your stomach, which is very acidic, and it would start to get digested in the stomach straight away. My guess is that it would probably only last five minutes, possibly fifteen minutes at the outside. The herbs may well have drug-like properties, there's no reason why this should actually be delivered in a fish. There's no benefit at all from sticking a live fish down your throat or up your bottom, for that matter.'

Whatever the truth of the matter, the Gaud family, despite being approached by a pharmaceutical company, maintain that the cure only remains effective if it is not aimed at making a profit.

The Yeti Caught On Video?

Time for a brew up at Lionel's house where, in company with a Chimpanzee, he settles down to review the latest video evidence for the existence of the Himalayan Yeti.



The recent footage from Nepal, in common with the infamous Patterson film of an alleged Bigfoot, shot at Bluff Creek in 1967, is typically vague and inconclusive. A hairy biped is shown crossing a snow-covered hillside, the distance obscuring detail to the point where it is little more than a blurred image.

Lionel reminds us that the legend of the Abominable Snowman has been seen by many serious-minded zoologists as providing the 'Missing Link' in man's evolutionary scale.

We get to see a clip from the 1925, silent version of *'The Lost World,'* (featuring Missing Link-type creatures, as well as the marvellous creations of the great Willis O' Brien) as well as artists impressions of the beast adorning the covers of various magazines.

Mike Dash (assistant editor of the excellent 'Fortean Times' and long-time subscriber to this very publication -

now that's what I call a man of impeccable taste), is then asked to give us the benefit of his, not inconsiderable knowledge regarding the Yeti.

Holding a somewhat battered copy of Bernard Heuvelman's classic work; *'On The Track Of Unknown Animals,'* Mike tells us that *'there are four main ways of explaining Bigfoot and Yeti sightings; firstly, the could be survivals of Neanderthal Man (an illustration of a massively hairy creature, bearing a striking resemblance to Oliver Reed in 'Curse Of The Werewolf', is shown), secondly, some sort of unknown, giant prehistoric ape, thirdly, misidentifications of various sorts, from feral humans to bears and other wild animals. And fourthly, that many or all are hoaxes.'*



Amidst more comic-book-type drawings, people dressed in fur body suits and faked footprints in the snow, Lionel informs us that there have been many such hoaxes and human-inspired pranks, aimed at hoodwinking the scientific fraternity, and certainly helping to discredit belief in the existence of such a creature.

The aforementioned Patterson film is given yet another airing, its authenticity still open to the same degree of speculation. (I've never been able to decide one way or another, and I suspect most Fortean will feel pretty much the same way...).

We then head out to the Darwin Museum in Moscow, a typically ominous-looking building of the sort that

predominate the Russian capital. Researchers here have been studying the Yeti phenomenon for over forty years. They have been formulating the opinion that the creature is indeed real and is in their opinion an extinct species of man they have classified as some kind of undiscovered hominoid.

Two of these resident researchers; Doctors Dimitri Bayanov and Igor Bourtsev are then interviewed as to their views on the value of the new Yeti video evidence; *'The footage is very, very impressive, because the creature that it shows has all the characteristic features of a relict hominoid, such as a cone-shaped head, a hairy body, very massive limbs and trunk/torso.'*

'It's not possible, it's not a man.'

The Darwin Museum 'experts' have made it their life's work to study the creature(s)). They are shown handling some of the evidence collected in their search, including various plaster casts of giant, ape-like footprints and hair samples that they claim differ markedly from that of humans and known apes.

A photograph of an alleged Yeti excrement, a curiously banana-shaped sample that has the 'experts' scratching their heads in barely concealed wonderment.

'The human bowel could be a maximum 36 centimetres. But this length is 50.'

You might be forgiven for thinking that there could be no more unusual piece of evidence than what may amount to, when all is said and done, yeti-shit, but not a bit of it...

Russian folklore has many stories of Yeti/human hybrids. 'Zana,' the legendary captive wild woman of the 19th Century was said to have been half-human and half-Yeti. (Curiously, a picture of the Chinese Wildman is used to illustrate this moment in history). The two doctors managed to discover the grave of one of her descendants, and in doing so excavated a skull that resembled that of a species of man thought by anthropologists to have been extinct for thousands of years.

Doctor Bayanov voices his opinion on the recovered skull and that which it may portend; *'The idea of hybrids is possible because these relict hominoids, by all evidence they have very close affinity to humans. They are probably closer to humans than Zebras are to horses.'*

We then switch back to merrie olde England, Camden to be precise, where we meet up with Peter Elliot, the creator of the gorilla in the movie *'Greystoke.'* Peter has earned the somewhat distinction of being regarded as the leading ape impersonator in the world, (with the possible exception of Roy Keane).

He proves his simian-prowess to the astonished viewers by lolloping around the back garden of his home like a refugee from *'Play School.'*

We later get to see him in a more relaxed mood, when the 'primate behaviour 'expert' is asked to give his views on the new Yeti-footage...

'This footage I find highly convincing. When you see it stand and turn, the wrist movement seems to come out, and it seems to throw it forward in a very fluid way, that seem to have some side to side movement in, which is very very difficult to achieve...In fact, virtually impossible.'

The possibility that the hirsute individual in the film (assuming it's definitely *not* a man in a costume) is maybe a conventional gorilla is discussed with Ian Redmond, a primatologist; *'The only hard facts I can get from this film are the relative leg measurements, and this gives us what is called the intermembral index, which for a human is about two thirds, so that the arms are about two thirds of the length of the legs.'*

And, on one point of this video where I could measure the arm and leg lengths and compare them, it turned out to be about two thirds. So it's not a Great Ape'

So, does Ian actually believe in the existence of the Yeti? *'People don't realise today, perhaps, that it was only 1902, when the Mountain Gorilla was discovered by science. Perhaps at the end of this century, we've got one more large zoological surprise lurking in the Himalayas'*

And with Lionel's pretty little ditty about the Yeti, in accompanied by his good friend, Alf, the programme draws to a close.

PROGRAMME

TWO:

We open with our esteemed Host taking an open-air bath on some deserted dock-side, yellow rubber duck and back-scrubber provided. Brushing his imaginary hair, he invites us to *'take a dip in the surreal waters otherwise known as 'FORTEANTV'*

Intrigued (how could we seriously be anything but?), we don our waders and plunge in...



A Matter Of Time

Looking every bit as surreal as one of those paintings by Salvador Dalí (the ones with the trains coming out of gothic fireplaces and human heads nestling in the branches of fruit trees), this section opens with an old grandfather clock standing upright in the middle of a pile of rusted ship's anchors and green-coloured chains.

The strange story of Peter Satherthwaite of Plymouth, is then related by way of a letter written to the programme's producers.

Whilst on holiday in the USA, Peter awoke one night convinced that his mother, who had previously been in the best of health, was suddenly about to pass away. He couldn't shake the dreadful notion, despite him repeatedly telling himself that it was all in his head. He chose to fly back to visit his parents, both of whom, it turned out, were perfectly alright. In the reconstruction, we see a charming, white-haired old lady seated in a chair, sipping tea with her son.

He left their house at 2:30 that same afternoon, another unsettlingly surreal image of a wristwatch superimposed over his mother's face, flashes briefly on the screen, and then we hear the tragic news that at 3:30, exactly an hour after leaving the house, Peter's mother has suffered a heart attack and has subsequently died.

His mother was buried ten days later, again at 3:30 in the afternoon!!! Peter returns to his father's house after the funeral, and it's while they are seated sharing their cherished memories of the woman they'd both loved, that they notice that the clock on the mantelpiece - the one that hadn't dropped a second in over forty years - had suddenly stopped ticking at exactly 3:30; *'The time my mother died, and the time of my mother's funeral'*

'The clock never moved again. It stayed at three thirty for four years. And it wasn't until one afternoon that I noticed the mechanism had started moving again, and the clock's hands had moved and were now stuck on ten-thirty. The next day, at ten-thirty, my father, while out shopping, took a short-cut through a park...Sat down on a bench...Had a heart attack, and died...At ten-thirty...The exact time the clock was showing.'

The most disturbing image so far; a clock-face that seems somehow to give the impression that it's grinning, looms up out of the darkness, until it completely covers the dying man ...

Not surprisingly, Peter began to feel that the whole business with the clock and its uncanny ability to record the times of the death of his parents, was more than mere coincidence.

'Some years after my father's death, I actually sold a car to a Spiritualist lady, who in the course of a conversation told me that Spirits were always around everybody. She also mentioned that at that very moment, I had an elderly man standing behind me wearing a beige cardigan (another of those archetypal transparent figures duly appears in the background as Peter sets about selling his car). She described my father exactly, down to the cardigan that he wore in his later life.'

'It hasn't frightened me. In fact, it's very much comforted me. As long as I have that clock, they'll be with me.'

He has the sense to add though, that which we are all thinking at this point...Especially as that smug, too-knowing clock-face flitters in out of the picture, as portentous as a graveside flower nodding confirmation of our own mortality.

Stuck at ten-thirty...

Waiting to start up again..

Dying to tick...

'I suppose I'm a little bit wary that if the hands move again on the clock it will predict a further death, or a further tragedy...'

(and here he pauses to swallow an audible click in his throat)

...Or even my own death.

But it still hasn't moved and I feel very good about it.'

'And then for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff frozen as they stand.'

'The Masque Of The Red Death' Edgar Allen Poe.

The Weeping Elvis

The good Reverend, tucking into a bag of popcorn, informs us of his ambition to be an honest-to-God pop star. Judging from the Elvis outfit he wears as he clambers up into a church pulpit, he sees himself as a latter-day 'King Of Rock'n'Roll.'

All of this is aimed at introducing the next item, which features, of all things, a weeping icon of 'Elvis 'The Pelvis' Himself.

The small town of Derne in Holland, as it seems, host to an unremarkable white statue of Elvis that is said to cry *'miracle tears.'* A man with the quite marvellous name of

Toon Nieuwenhuisen, is interviewed through a translator, and has this to say; 'I was given a present by a neighbour across the street from where I live, who knew I was an Elvis Presley fan. And he said; "I have a beautiful porcelain statue of The King that I want to give to you."

Last year, (1997), a few days prior to the anniversary of Elvis's death, Toon reckons he first witnessed, firsthand, the so-called 'miraculous tears' falling from the milky-white eyes of the statue.

'The statue began to weep between the 8th and 10th of August. I noticed the tear, so I took my glasses off, and tasted it. And it was salty.'

We then switch scenes from Toon's private shrine to Elvis, where the statue, naturally has pride of place, to the bland surroundings of an airport terminal. There we meet Madeline Wilson, the founder member of the 'Elvis Gospel Ministries.' Madeline is intercepted by 'FORTEAN TV' as she embarks on a pilgrimage to view the 'weeping statue' for herself.

The organisation she represents, believes wholeheartedly that Elvis's talents were quite literally, God-given, and that he was on a heavenly crusade to spread the Gospel to a largely un-believing World.

Madeline, enters the curiously English-looking council home of Mr Nieuwenhuisen, and stepping into the Elvis Shrine in one of the bedrooms (one can't help being struck by that achingly embarrassing scene when Alan Partridge meets his biggest fan in that room packed to the gills with Partridge memorabilia - alongside a few snaps of David Copperfield, of course. I half-expected Madeline to turn right round and about - from a safe distance - "You're a mentalist!!!"), she has this to say....

'I think my immediate reaction now, just thinking about it a little bit, is that this room is proclaiming that in fact, Elvis is dead. But Jesus is alive!!!'

Toon, nodding in agreement, claims that over a period of six months, the bust of Elvis has cried tears on a total of five separate occasions. And, not unlike the home of Aaron Dodson and 'The Miracle Scratching,' (see previous programme), the self-erected shrine has become a place of pilgrimage for desperate believers in both Christ and The King. Madeline is quick to help bolster the validity of the phenomenon; 'God works in mysterious ways and I believe he may be using the statue to communicate to Elvis fans, who might not otherwise be touched by more conventional methods of communicating the Gospel. And we are nearing the **'END OF THE WORLD'** (and though she doesn't about it, or give in any special emphasis, you can tell she intends those words to hit you in block capitals, like the banner headline on the cover of one of those old 'Marvel Comics'), and God does want to communicate His message to all of Mankind, and this maybe one of the ways that He's doing it.' Perhaps most bizarre of all however, is the news that Toon has released a record aimed at informing the World of his Weeping Elvis. Sounding pretty much like you'd expect it to, i.e.; a redundant Eurovision Song Contest entry that not even Father Ted or Doagal would touch with a barge pole, it features such wonderful, thought-provoking lyrics as...

*'The whole World knows my Elvis is crying,
My famous crying statue...'*

We shake our heads (but maybe not our hips, and we wonder...)

The Gwan, The Corgi-Weiller And The Resurrection Of The Moa

The programme then moves mercifully on to the picturesque surroundings of Marist Convent, in Ascot, where the discovery of a brand new species of swan is making ornithological (ahem) waves.... Two nuns, Sister Stan and Sister Camilla, are interviewed and both speak in

a soft Irish brogue; 'One day about three years ago, these two black swans were given to us and put on the lake. (said black swans, beautiful creatures with mostly ebony plumage and orange beaks, hove into view). 'They were very normal-looking on the water. They were a bit ungainly when they came out of the water, but then swans usually are.'

One of the two swans however, suddenly began to behave in a manner that can only be described as decidedly un-swan-like.

'Instead of being a quiet doerzen of our lakes and lawns, he became this aggressive thing that we couldn't handle anymore. So we called the sanctuary, and they came to collect him.'

One of the nuns is shown making a call to The Swan Lifeline Sanctuary in Berkshire, and the obstreperous bird is duly examined by one of the 'experts' at the centre, Trisha Kirkham.

'As soon as I saw him, I realised there was something rather strange, because although we were expecting a black swan, it doesn't have the red bill that you'd expect a black swan to have, with the little white stripe over. The pigmentation in the eyes is a goose-type pigmentation. I've never ever seen a black swan with the colour eyes that that one has got.'

Scientists were later able to confirm that the bird was actually a hybrid between a goose and a swan. Something unique in the realms of Ornithology. And, as the good Father is quick to remind us, (to the maddeningly jolly strains of Johnny Morris's 'ANIMAL MAGIC') 'experts' had previously thought this combination to be genetically impossible.

The bird has the neck and body of a swan, but the nasty, kick-ass attitude of a goose.

'We've called it a "Gwan"' Trish is quoted as saying. 'I don't know quite what else you'd call it, because obviously there has never been anything like it before.'

*** We are next confronted with a signpost announcing the entrance to Ramahaw Rescue Kennels in Darlington.

Kate Wilson, the owner of the refuge for stray dogs, We are taken on a journey along the lines of unfortunate animals and reminded that Kate encounters all kinds of breeds and sometimes highly unusual specimens.

One dog in particular proved to be of a very strange pedigree.

Seated before a roaring log fire, Kate describes the story of Jasper, a dog that looks, at first glance, to be a thoroughbred Rottweiler. Closer inspection though, soon proves that this just isn't so....

'If all stops at about his chest. Then he's got the leg's of the Corgi and is very short. I mean, he's actually a Rottweiler in a Corgi's body He was so fifty-fifty it was amazing.'

Lionel informs us that Jasper, the (ahem) 'love puppy' of two such wildly disparate (and, one would have thought, incompatible) breeds, is the only known offspring of such a bizarre coupling.

The cross-breed to end all cross-breeds has confounded those who anticipated that it would inherit all the viciousness with which the traditional Rottweiler is normally associated. In fact, as is shown on film, Jasper seems like an extraordinarily well-behaved dog as it's taken for a walk around the rain-soaked streets of Darlington.

The potential for equally fantastic progeny may well be greater than you would be forgiven for thinking... Kate predicts that somewhere in the locale, there is a Corgi with a weird taste in female partners. And there may well be a cross between a German Shepherd and Corgi about to see the light of day.

Our next port of call is Dunedin, New Zealand, where scientists are attempting to give nature 'a helping hand' in

creating a super-breed of Ostrich (now widely considered to be a culinary delicacy) by merging the modern-day bird with the extinct Moa.

The Moa has officially been extinct for over four hundred years, but as reported in previous issues of 'DON', egg-headed boffins are attempting to use genetic engineering methods to recreate the species...Thereby prompting talk of 'JURASSICPARK' technology.

By extracting samples of DNA from the dried bones of long-dead Moa's, and then injecting them into a recently fertilised Ostrich egg, the scientists hope to create a 'new' species they have already thought to christen (predictably enough) a 'Mostrich'

Some might see this as attempting to play God with the forces of nature, but Dr Scott Terbutt of Otago University, is interviewed (with a model of a bright orange Brontosaurus lurking on the shelves in the background - a hint of things to come?) and has this to say in defence of the project;

'The similarities between the Ostrich and the Moa are such that despite obvious differences such as the total lack of wings in Moa's, (actually, Ostrich's do have wings) the similarities are sufficient enough for us to proceed with the experiment.'

An ordinary Ostrich chick is shown hatching in an incubator whilst Lionel predicts that the first Mostrich will be born in about ten years time...Assuming the project maintains its present course. As to what characteristics such a creature would possess, well, know seems know quite what to expect. Will it live to be a hundred years old, as opposed the ordinary Ostrich, which lives to the reasonably ripe old age of eighty? Will it lay an egg a day? Will it be docile or inherently savage? Only time, and the machinations of scientists will tell...

Stigmata - Proof Of Sainthood?

For a complete change of pace, we head for the pious surroundings of magnificently ornate cathedral, whilst Lionel relates a brief history of stigmata, starting with the very first acknowledged stigmatic; St Francis of Assisi. Various religious paintings and statues of Christ in agony on the Cross are flashed across the screen, whilst word of the Vatican's moves towards the full canonisation of Padre Pio - '*the most famous Twentieth Century stigmatic*' - is proclaimed.

Ted Harrison, author of one of the definitive works on the phenomenon, '*Stigmata*,' is subsequently interviewed;

'Throughout history, and the phenomenon has been known about since the 13th Century, my calculation is that there have been about 400 people who have carried the marks, and about twenty five to thirty of them are alive at the moment.'

Switch scenes to a man lying spread-eagled on a bed, his arms outstretched as though he'd been crucified where he lay. This ordinary-looking man, dressed in a jumper and a pair of modern slacks, is we are told, 77-year-old Albino Reale, the world's most famous living stigmatic.

Through the voice of a translator, the Italian has this to say '*I first started bleeding on the first of March, 1987. It was on the Feast Of Saint Albino. Wounds (and here we see curious cross-like scars on the back of Albino's hands) opened up on my hands and my feet, and I began to bleed. There was blood everywhere. I sent for the doctor immediately, and he said these wounds are stigmata.'*

A bunch of pilgrims limb from a coach in Frosinone, Italy, to visit Albino's home. Initially viewed with extreme scepticism, many disciples now revere him as a fully-fledged Saint.

Albino's house has also (in common with the finders of 'The Holy Scratching' and 'The Weeping Elvis') become something of a shrine, with pilgrims hanging on his every word.

Sceptics however, believe that the wounds are not Heavenly in origin, but are in fact self-inflicted...

Enter Dr Adriano Paulini, the Vatican-approved investigator, who was instructed to find out the truth behind Albino's stigmatic claims.

Again, speaking through a translator, the Doctor (who bears more than a passing resemblance to Herbert Lom in the role of Dr Sam Weizak in David Cronenberg's movie of *The Dead Zone*) has this to say; '*It is not possible for these stigmata to be caused by any kind of psychosomatic impetus, no matter how strong. He could never create the tissue lesions.'*

A woman enters Albino's bedroom with a photograph of a man who is afflicted with some illness or other. She places it in Albino's crucifix-scarred hands, and gently rubbing the surface of the photo with a piece of cotton wool, he duly blesses the picture, believing that he can cure the ailment thanks to his gift from God.



Tiziana Bergamaschi, one of Albino's notable successes, is then brought before the cameras. She had, before meeting the stigmatic, been diagnosed as having a malignant brain tumour...

Now, looking sprightly and full of health, she briefly recounts how it was she was cured.

'We came to Albino for help, and he started praying for me. Soon after that, in June, 1966, I had the last scan at the local hospital. It revealed that even the part of the tumour that the doctor's had left inside me, had completely disappeared.'

Somewhat awed, we come to consider an even more popular stigmatic...Amidst scenes straight out of a Revivalist Meeting somewhere in the Deep South of the US, we are introduced to Giorgio Bongiovanni. This luminary is regarded with such reverence that he was even granted a meeting with former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov. The two of them are seen shaking hands in a cordial manner, surrounded by crowds of well-wishers. He even gets to exchange greetings with several Cosmonauts aboard the Mir space station. Giorgio's scars are exceptionally livid-looking, the most obvious of which is the cross-shaped wound in the centre of his forehead. They look extremely sore and are seen to be weeping blood on film. The medical profession are at a loss to explain how the blood, which seeps afresh every morning, can coagulate so rapidly on exposure to the air.

Giorgio claims his stigmata was triggered back in 1989, by a vision of The Blessed Virgin Mary at the holy site of Fatima in Portugal.

Giorgio, seated before a large painting depicting Christ and a host of disciples, and what appear to be UFO's hovering in the sky overhead, then relates the quite incredible message given to him by the BVM nigh on eight years ago...

'I saw a vision of the Madonna, and I saw two luminous rays coming out of the Madonna's breasts. They hit my hands, and my hands started to bleed. In the message of Fatima, the Madonna says that we will make contact with people from otherworld's.'

Like a latter-day George Adamski, he now claims to be in regular contact with Aliens who have issued those familiar warnings to mankind concerning our race's final self-destruction, unless we mend our ways, and stop poisoning the planet.

'For the first time, the Virgin Mary has revealed a message that relates to the whole Universe. When I talk about beings of light and extraterrestrials, this does not contradict The Bible. When The Bible speaks about silver spheres and chariots of fire, they are references to these otherworldly beings. They come from the stars and have visited the Earth many times.'

Of course, the cynics would point to Giorgio's subsequent money-making enterprises directly related to his stigmata and holy visions.... We are shown Giorgio's very own Web Site and inevitable magazine, a glossy, well-produced affair called *'We Are Not Alone.'*

He hasn't been slow to jump on the video bandwagon either, and has generated a whole series of tapes which purport to show *'incontrovertible proof'* that UFO's exist as nuts and bolts alien craft.

Unfortunately, Giorgio's beliefs are in direct opposition to those of Albino....

'The Madonna gave me a very specific message that these UFO's are false icons. They're from The Devil, and are sent to confuse people. I know this to be true. I've been receiving my messages for over thirteen years.'

Ted Harrison, the stigmata 'expert' is wheeled on once more to add his views on those who believe implicitly in the phenomenon.

'These days, people don't just believe in standard Christianity, and a whole lot of new mythology has grown up around stigmata, some of it to do with UFO's and aliens and so on. There are significant numbers of people who believe these are important religious events, and their lives have been changed as a result. Now that makes it genuine'

The programme ends with three Lionel Fanthorpe's, each emerging from inside a heavy-looking trunk to proclaim that next week he'll be back with another edition when they'll once more set off to (in the immortal words of Charlie Fort; *'skate on that thin crust known as "reality."*

The remaining programmes in the series will be reviewed in issue 16 of 'DON'

Exchange Magazine Reviews

FORTEAN TIMES #108

The granddaddy of 'em all maintains its usual, truly excellent standard with well-written, in-depth features on Ghostly E-Mail From The 17th Century, Bearded Women, Are UFO's All In The Mind? and Bizarre Medicine. Add to that the consistently comprehensive Strange Days news section and all the regular features, and you have the

definitive Fortean publication that all others seek to aspire to.

Subs: 12 issues for £30 (incl p&p) Box 2409, London, NW5, 4NP.

3RD STONE #30

'The Magazine For The New Aniquarian' is well up to its usual high standard of both production and quality of writing.

The latest issue features articles on the experience of ancient sites, Visions Of Prehistory, The Archaeology Of The Undead, a synopsis of the continuing legacy of The Great God Pan, plus all the regular news items and correspondence. Excellent value.

Subs; £10 for 4 issues. PO Box 961, Devizes, Wiltshire. SN10 2TS.

MAGONIA #62

One of my favorite publications, the latest issue deals in its consistently succinct manner with, among other things, The Birth Of The Greys, a critical overview of the death of the ETH, and analysis of the delusion that led to the tragic suicide of members of The Heavens Gate cult. Indispensable stuff.

Subs; £5. Available from 5, James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB

COVER UP #10

David Colman's well-written magazine is, essentially, the mouthpiece of the Scottish Unexplained Phenomena Research organisation; (SUPR), and the latest issue includes thought-provoking articles on subjects as diverse as 'The Secrets Of Fatima,' the weird circumstances regarding the death of Willie Macrae, UFO encounters in the skies over Perth, and a critical overview of the current UFO scene in Scotland.

Sample Issue: £1:25. From 49, Limefield Crescent, Bathgate, W.L. Scotland EH48 1RF

LOCH NESS NEWSCLIPPING

SERVICE Vol 3 No. 4

Andreas Trotman's essential collection of the latest 'Nessie' sightings, the personalities involved in the search for evidence, local environmental issues and all kinds of assorted trivia from the Lochside, is an absolute must for anyone even remotely interested in the subject.

Available from; Les Pretresses, 1586, Vallamand VD, Switzerland.

NORTHERN UFO NEWS # 178

Jenny Randles comes up trumps once more with another excellent issue of the best UFO-related magazine around. The latest edition includes a sceptical reappraisal of the Rendlesham Forest case, UFO-conspiracy theories, the purported 'flying saucer' over Michael Howard's home, and lots more besides.

For a rational/balanced overview of all things Ufological, you simply cannot better this publication.

Subs from 1, Hallsteads Close, Dove Holes, Buxtom, High Peak, Derbyshire. SK17 8BS £6 for six issues.

PHENOMENA SCOTLAND #1

Malcolm Robinson's new publication is, in reality, a resurrection of the once (sadly) defunct 'ENIGMAS.'

Thus the 'new' magazine is a thankfully familiar mixture of SPI case studies, paranormal book reviews, and fascinating articles on UFO's, ghosts and the 'greenhouse effect.'

Nice one, Malcolm. It's good to have you back on the scene!!!

Available From: 29, Kent Road, Alloa, Clackmannanshire, Scotland FK10 2JN. Samplecopy; £2

EXOTIC ZOOLOG Vol 5 No. 1

'The Bimonthly Magazine of Cryptozoology' is an excellent round-up of all the very latest news and views from the eternally fascinating world of animal anomalies.

The latest issue features the exciting discovery of new species from various far-flung corners of the globe, and an excellent piece on Classic Mystery Animals (re-printed in the the very magazine that you're currently reading). An essential publication for anyone remotely interested in the subject.

Available from Matthew A. Bille, 3405, Windjammer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920, USA. Subs: \$17 for 5 issues.

ABDUCTION WATCH # 4

Kevin McClure's superb publication is the perfect antidote to all those news stand potboilers who constantly assist in perpetuating the Abduction myths. 'Remembering That Very Few Wardrobes Lead To Narnia,' deals very succinctly with hypnotic regression and its use(?) in recovering the hidden memories of so-called abductees.

Absolutely essential reading, the standard of writing is first class (as you can doubtless determine from the article re-printed here in 'DON').

Available from 3, Claremont Grove, Leeds, LS3 1AX. Subs: £5 for five issues.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE # 2

A new addition to the paranormal fold, and an excellent one at that. 'Mystery Magazine' is very similar in content to your very own 'DON,' in that it deals with all manner of strangeness. A commendable selection of weird news clippings dominate the text, but there are also features on Pet Food Conspiracies, 101 things you need to know about ghosts, and Men In Black. You would be well advised to check this one out.

Available from: 48a, Bridge Street, Killamarsh, Derbyshire. S21 8AJ.

TEMS NEWS #18

Lionel Beer's nicely produced and well-written newsletter is rapidly becoming one my most eagerly awaited exchanges...

The latest issue includes articles on Margate's Mysterious Lost Shell Grotto and Mysteries Of The Air (a look at Ken Llewelyn's talk on ghost flyers and flying-related premonitions), as well as an excellent selection of the latest weird news clippings and book reviews. And all for only 60p an issue.

Available from: 115, Hollybush Lane, Hampton, Middlesex, TW12 2QY

ANIMALS AND MEN #15

As regular readers are doubtless aware, this outstanding magazine is my favourite publication dealing as it does, with a subject that is particularly dear to my heart; cryptozoology.

Editor Jon Downes is to be hugely commended for producing such a highly literate, well-produced journal, and the latest issue includes articles on Loch Ness, The Waspman of Lancashire, Bigfoot Murders, Wolverines In Wales and a re-examination of the evidence for the existence of Migo - the Lake Dakataua Monster.

Available From 15, Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter, Devon Ex4 2NA Subs: £8 for four issues.

NETWORK NEWS #11

'The Diabolical Earth Current Issue' maintains the same high standard I've come to expect from this fine publication.

Beast Gods News, The Cult of (Princess) Diana, Earthlights and Earthquakes. and lots more besides make

this a most fascinating read and well worth the £1:25 cover price.

Available from; *Earthy Delights PO Box 2, Lostwithiel, Cornwall, PL22 0YY*

RATTLER'S TALE

Another (hugely welcome) new addition to the exchange mags fold, this publication is a quite extraordinary mixture of fact and fiction. The latest issue includes articles on Gala, Phantom Incomes and Reincarnation, as well as four, original short stories that deal with everything from bullying to the dilemma of a real mummy's boy.

Excellent stuff, this mag comes highly recommended.

Available from; 2a Coronation Road, Walsall Wood, West Midlands, WS9 9NG. Subs: £4 for four issues

STOP PRESS

The Latest Examples Of The Magic That Surrounds Everyday Life

A TRULY BUM DEAL

Melanie Thompson, 25, was left with a severely scarred bottom after her knickers somehow spontaneously combusted whilst she was working as a checkout girl at a Lancashire Co-op.

Scientists later admitted they were stuck for an answer as to what might have caused the blaze, as were 'experts' at 'Marks And Spencer' who actually sold the self-destructing knickers. Curiously, the remainder of Melanie's clothing was completely unharmed.

December, 1997. Lancashire. 'DAILY EXPRESS'

The Phantom Lumberjack

An unidentified vandal who for some unknown reason cut down 60 trees at a golf club in Wales, struck again last December, sawing down more than 69 in the space of a single night.

Officials at the Maesteg Golf Club in Mid Glamorgan, South Wales, have duly doubled the reward for information leading to the arrest of the mystery tree feller.

11th December, 1997. Mid Glamorgan, South Wales. 'DAILY MAIL'

Teleportation For Real

According to reports in the tabloid press, scientists have succeeded in teleporting light for the first time in history... Assuming of course that this is true, could this be the first step towards the teleportation of human beings to previously arranged locations around the world?

The Austrian scientists who've stumbled upon the discovery were reportedly planning to use quantum teleportation to move initially tiny atoms, before moving on eventually to molecules.

15th December, 1997. Austria. 'DAILYMANC'

The Snake In Santa's Beard

A terrified Santa Claus was forced to flee in blind panic from his grotto when a runaway snake emerged from his snowy white beard.

Paul James, 46, gave it toes after he felt the 1m long orange yellow and brown corn snake sliding over his skin. The snake had chosen the traditional costume whiskers as a refuge after escaping from a tank at a country centre in Sedgely, England.

21st December, 1997. Sedgely, England. 'AUSTRALIAN SUNDAYMAIL'

Icefall In Louisiana

No matter how bad you may think the weather has been so far this Spring, spare a thought, if you will, for the people of central Louisiana, USA.

Chunks of hail more than a half-foot in diameter smashed windows and dented cars as thunderstorms produced nearly constant lightning. Frances Breland stated that her daughter-in-law's car had to be towed to a repair shop because of shattered glass and a busted grill, and her husband brought in one regular hail stone that measured seven inches across. Near Rogers, about 180 miles northwest of New Orleans. Another witness, Billy Crawford said that the hail that pounded his home and yard - punching a six-inch hole in his porch roof - fell during the last 10 or 15 minutes of a storm that produced nonstop thunder and lightning.

8th March, 1998. Louisiana, USA. 'ST LOUIS POST-DISPATCH'

The Mystery Bowling Balls

People in Hannibal, Missouri, USA, discovered a set of unusual Christmas surprises on their doorstep...Bowling balls with Christmas decorations and holiday greetings.

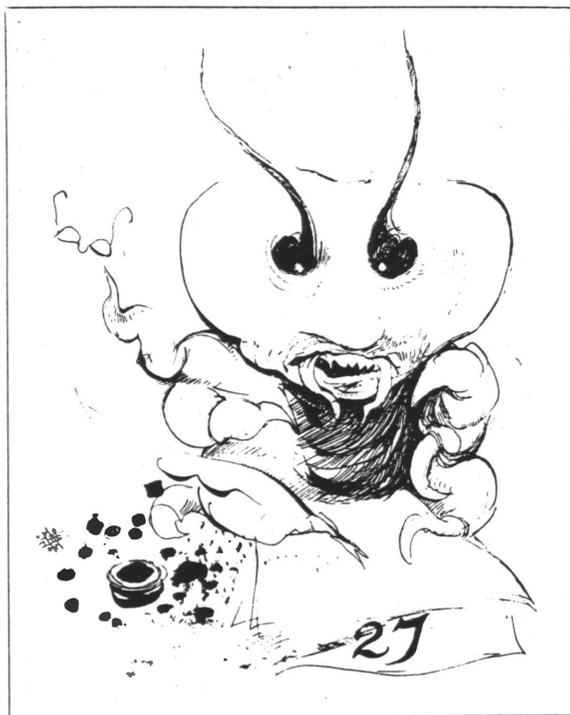
No one knows who the mystery giver is. Each of the balls has a number. Radio station KHMO found one labelled 'Number 19 of 34' outside a station door.

One Hannibal resident found a bowling ball on his front porch with 21 candles painted on it and a message that said; 'hope we make your Christmas a little brighter.'

The Head of the Chamber of Commerce got bowling ball number 27. That one said; 'Hang on tree very carefully.' 25th December, 1997. Hannibal, Missouri, USA. 'ST LOUIS POST-DISPATCH.'

The Lair Of The Longest Worm

A boatyard worker by the name of Ivor Fazzey has discovered Britain's largest earthworm that is said to be an amazing 5ft 4 inch-long specimen.



Ivor, 51, lives aboard a boat on the Cannock Extension Canal in Staffordshire. One day he was walking his dog along a towpath when he stumbled upon the worm. The previous biggest specimen found in Britain measured 3ft 8 inches, so Ivor, is claiming a place in the Guinness Book of Records.

He was quoted as saying; 'The worm was the same diameter as a normal earthworm but it just seemed to go on forever. I measured it out of curiosity and now I'm keeping it coiled up in a flower pot.'

5th March, 1998. Cannock, Staffordshire. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

Frog Fall In Croydon

In late March this year (1998), amidst a batch of strong winds, the local Met Office was contacted by an hysterical woman who claimed that frogs were falling from the sky. She informed an incredulous Derek Hardy of the inquiry desk; 'They're all over my garden, my neighbour's garden and the road.'

Derek himself was quoted as saying; 'I laughed and she became extremely upset so her husband came on the line.'

'He'd just returned from a walk with his dog and the pet kept trying to eat the frogs and spitting them out. The woman, from Shirley, Croydon, wanted to know what I was going to do about it but in all honesty, what could I do? They were both so insistent. She also said to me, "Do you think I would ring you long distance in the morning if I had made this thing up?"'

Derek eventually became convinced enough of the couple's sincerity to inform the BBC's Suzanne Charlton. A proponent of that classic ol' chestnut; the selective whirlwind theory He said; 'I have seen fish fall out of the sky in Australia, associated with a tornado. A strong squall line did go through Croydon at breakfast time and you do get strong convective currents associated with these storms.'

'The frogs may have been sucked up by a whirlwind and then fallen in the rain.'

I asked her if she lived next to a pond but she said her house was on top of a hill.'

Late March, 1997. Croydon, Southern England. 'DAILY MAIL'

Earthquakes Rock Scotland

A couple of fairly severe earth tremors shook first the Great Glen faultline in December, 1997, and then, just three months later, the west coast of Scotland.

On December 10th, 1997, the residents of Fort Augustus and Invergarry reported that they heard what were described as muffled underground rumbles which sounded like 'the roaring of thunder followed by a sharp clap.'

The quake measured 2.3 on the Richter Scale. Robert Scott, proprietor of Invergarry Stores commented that his wife Marie was awoken by the quake; 'She described it as being like a heavy lorry travelling at high speeds over corrugated metal.'

Glenn Ford, a seismic 'expert' with the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh, confirmed the tremor as being the sharpest since a quake registered at 2.4 on the scale at Fort William in 1988.

The epicentre was said to be on the dark hills above Loch Tarff, (where the Editor of this magazine thought he caught a fleeting glimpse of something resembling 'a black moon' hovering between the peaks one Summer), three miles south-east of Fort Augustus.

There had previously been fairly noticeable tremors around the villages of Dourne and Blackford in Perthshire in the months preceding this latest quake.

The area around Oban was hit by a 2.7 quake during March, 1998. Lisa Clarke, manager of the Argyll town's Royal Hotel, was watching the TV when she felt the tremor; 'At first I thought it was a lorry going past. My dog was going crazy, but it didn't make the ornaments shake or anything like that.'

There were no reports of any damage to property or injuries to the people affected.

Mr Ford, who was again quick to add his tuppence worth of opinion regarding the quake, stated that the Oban tremor was likely to feature among the top ten seismic occurrences in Britain this year.

We shall see.

Sources: 10th December, 1997/March, 1998. Scotland 'DAILY MAIL/DAILY EXPRESS'