



# DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE

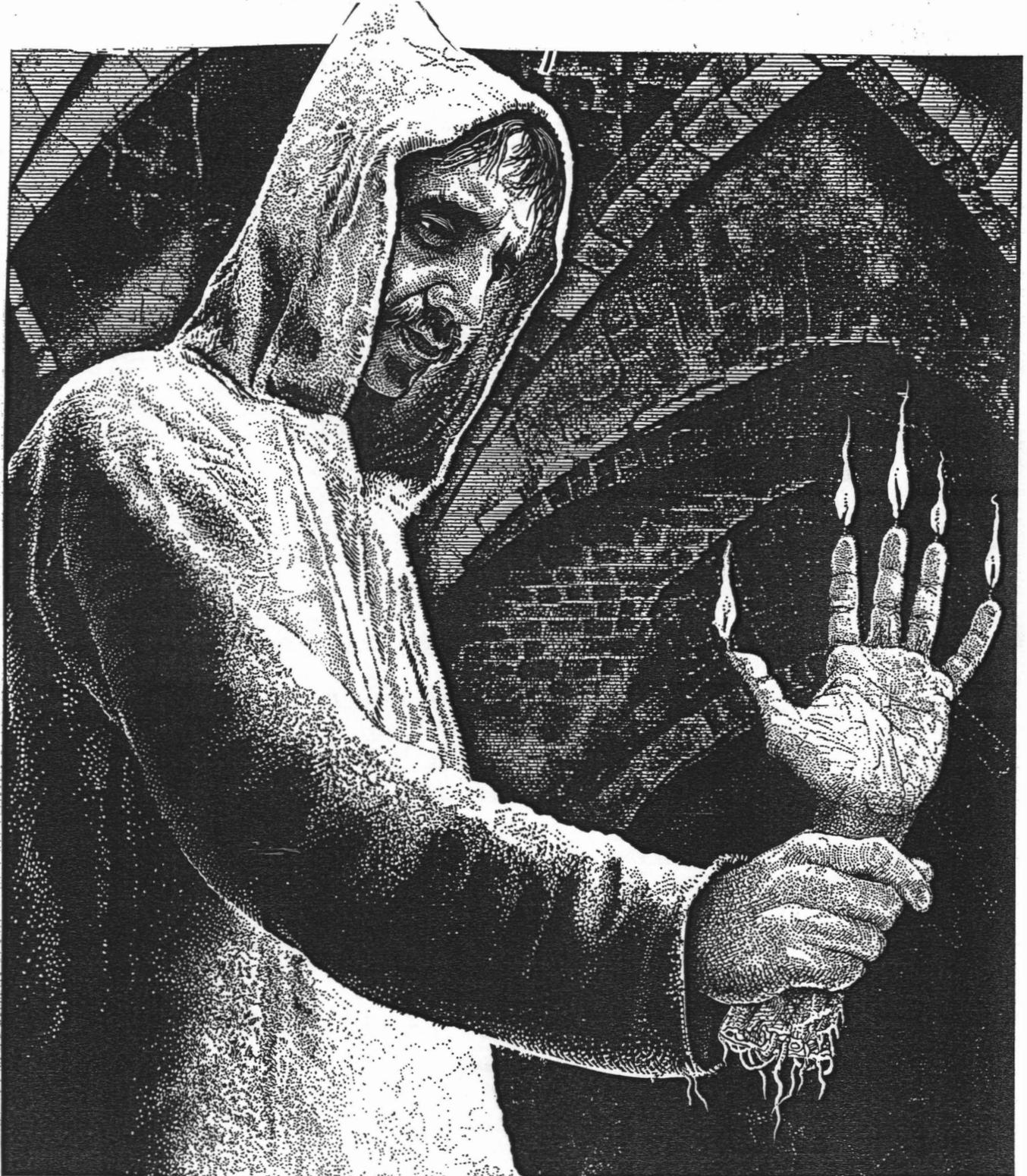


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**DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE**

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# NOW THERE COMES A DARKER DAY



Death, when it came to the cities of America, chose to visit on a bright Tuesday morning in mid-September.

There was no awful fanfare to presage its arrival. No blazing comets or sequence of blood-red moons. No ominous build-up of thunderheads gathering on the horizon.

Instead, it crept from the shadows to plunge without warning from the flawless beauty of an Indian Summer sky.

Later, many of the inhabitants of Washington, Pittsburgh and New York, would agree that the obscenity of encountering Death beneath clear, blue skies and with blades of Autumn sunlight lancing between the trees, only served to intensify the horror of its calling.

That, and the mind-numbing shock that came with the realisation that the world had irrevocably changed for the worse...and that no one could ever feel truly safe again.

Even now, with the benefit of (dreadful) hindsight, it seems hard to believe that anything as remotely terrible as the events that were to overtake us all in due course, could possibly have occurred in the midst of such bustling normality.

Not that anyone's pretending bad things never happen in America, you understand.

'The Land Of The Free' has more than its fair share of skeletons; some hanging in musty-smelling closets, others lying in shallow graves, buried just beneath the semi-respectable surface.

And sometimes, (and perhaps not quite so rarely as its citizens may like to think), these rattling bags of bones will shuffle out of the imitation-oak wardrobes, or else rend the earth with claw-like fingers to emerge kicking and screaming into plain view...

Nevertheless, the assumption that America would always remain blessedly free from any of the real horrors stalking the world beyond its shores had remained constant. If anything, it had probably strengthened as the sun rose over the Eastern Seaboard on the morning of September 11th. Spirits were buoyed by the spell of glorious weather and people,

whatever their age or social status, were doubtless determined to make the very best of it.

Even those who, as a rule, dreaded every second spent on the nine to five treadmill, very likely walked to work with a spring in their step as they planned on spending their lunch break sat around the old bandstand in Madison Square Gardens, while the boys from *The NYPD Choir* performed passable renditions of *Darrry Boy* and *Sally MacLemane*.

Perhaps they'd simply lounge in their favourite shady retreat, losing themselves in the pages of a good book or else perch on the city's dockside letting their feet dangle at the water's edge as the merchant ships and tankers drifted down the misted river hush.

At the very least, they'd maybe told themselves, here was an opportunity to spend a few precious moments stuffing the cares of the everyday into some heavy-duty trunk hidden away in the darkest recess of their minds.

There they'd lie forgotten. For the space of that single stolen hour, anyway.

And so, who knows, maybe they'd whistled a merry tune as they entered the towering office blocks that form the Manhattan skyline..

Maybe they shared a corny joke or two with their colleagues as they took the lift up to the 82nd floor.

Maybe they sat at their desks, dreamy smiles lighting up their faces as they considered God was in his Heaven and all was right with the world..

*Maybe.*

But then Death chose to visit on a bright Tuesday morning in mid-September...

\*\*\*\*

I guess in the years that (hopefully) lie ahead, everyone will be able to recall precisely where they were when they first heard the news of the terrible tragedy that befell the United States.

For me, the horror began while I was round at my brother's house, having taken the afternoon off to get into town early for the Liverpool v Boavista Champions League tie at Anfield. It was our first game proper in the European Cup since the dreadful events at Heysel in 1985, and we were hoping to meet up with some Portuguese fans in the area around Mathew Street to swap scarves, have a few drinks and indulge in a bit of banter (God, how incredibly trite that all sounds, now).

Just before we left Our Grant's house, he dug out a video of *The Foo Fighters* appearance at this year's Reading Festival, and accidentally pressed *BBC 1* on the remote.

And I trembled at the impossibility of the image that suddenly filled the screen. The twin towers of The World Trade Centre, instantly recognisable from countless movies and TV programmes, were aflame, smoke billowing like a cloud of blowflies totally obscuring the sun.

The newscaster was babbling so excitedly, it was difficult to make sense of what he was trying to say. But if the live commentary was difficult to understand, the text running across the bottom of the screen made it all too clear what had happened; *Two planes have crashed into the World Trade Centre. The FBI have confirmed that this is the result of a terrorist attack. It is feared that there will be many casualties.*

The words began to blur as I felt the hot, slithery sting of tears under my eyelids, and I hoarsely begged my brother to turn off the TV.

It seems strange, looking back now, but I was suddenly anxious to get out of the house, to step into the fresh air, to set off for the match as we'd arranged. It was almost as if by refusing to acknowledge something awful beyond words had occurred, I could somehow deprive it of its reality.

This tactic proved so effective, that by the time we'd gotten off the train at James Street, I'd all but managed to convince

myself that maybe things weren't as quite so bad as they'd first seemed.

A few seconds after stepping into *The White Star*, a pub famous for the quality of its guest ales, I found I was one hundred per cent correct. Things weren't quite as bad, they were a thousand times worse.

I guess I should have realised as much the moment Grant and I stepped into the bar and were hit by a wall of caught-breath silence. The pub was fairly packed with men and women of all ages, and ordinarily the air would have been thick with bar room conversation.

But not here.

Not on *this* afternoon.

Instead, the only sounds were the squeak of the handpumps, the refilling of glasses, and the sombre voice of the *CNN* anchorman as he confirmed that a third passenger plane had hit The Pentagon, causing extensive damage and serious loss of life, and that several other aircraft were unaccounted for.

'Jesus Christ, is this really happening, or is it some kind of wind-up?' a middle-aged man murmured incredulously as I half-whispered a couple of drinks in. I didn't bother answering.

We both knew, despite the surreality of the pictures beamed live from across the Atlantic, this was not the trailer from some big budget Hollywood blockbuster. This was not an attack led by 15-mile wide alien spaceships, or deadly shards of an ELE meteorite. It wasn't the destructive rampage of a 50-foot ape or a 400-foot high, fire-breathing lizard. It wasn't even an ex-cop yelling 'Yippe ki-yay, motherfucker!!!' as he dodges the spectacular explosions and single-handedly defeats the terrorists.

And if we needed any proof that this was no celluloid fantasy, it was provided in spades when first one, then the other tower of The World Trade Centre came crashing to the ground in a thick, choking cloud of dust and I was struck by the impression of a sickly grey shadow falling across the surface of some bright shining dream.

'You know what, Eddie, I'm not one for making predictions, like' an owd fella in a cloth cap shouted across to his mate, and I sighed wearily, knowing full well that this was the prelude to him making a prediction. 'But I wouldn't put it past that Texan balloon in the White House, to declare World War Three after this.'

'Well, yer'd better get the ale in quick, then' Eddie replied, sparking a ripple of nervous laughter.

I had to chuckle, too, but it caught fast in my throat, when I found myself staring at the row of paintings that hung on the far wall. Each one featured a huge ocean liner plowing a path across turbulent seas, the *White Star* banner (after which, of course, the pub was named) fluttering proudly from every masthead.

Foremost among them was the most famous liner of all, *THE TITANIC*, and the sight of that magnificent but ultimately doomed ship sailing unawares towards its date with destiny, caused a whole slew of nasty coincidences/correlations to go swirling through my mind at a sickening speed.

We could have been standing in any pub, but for some reason we'd chosen *The White Star*. There was the picture on the wall of *TITANIC* leaving Southampton water bound for, of all places, New York (and incidentally, almost colliding with another liner, *THE NEW YORK*, as she did so). The date disaster struck *THE TITANIC*, was April 15th, eerily, the exact same date as another TV-relayed tragedy, Hillsborough, (a nightmare experience from which my brother and I had emerged as very lucky survivors). The fact that now, as then, we'd set out on a gloriously sunny day with the intention of supporting Liverpool FC in an 'important' football match, but had wound up instead being confronted with scenes of unimaginable horror.

And perhaps most poignantly of all, a line of dialogue that director James Cameron cut from the script of his 1998 movie, *TITANIC*, just before shooting began...

At the film's conclusion, Old Rose was to have admonished the entrepreneurial Brock, "There's another iceberg out there. Mr Lovett. I don't know what it is...But I do know the force driving us towards it."

On September 11th, in the space of a single Godforsaken afternoon, I guess we finally got to see both the shape of that 'iceberg' and the fanatical driving 'force' behind it, too.

\*\*\*\*

We left *The White Star* a little after 3:30pm, just as news began to filter through that another hijacked plane was rumoured to be heading for Camp David, the US Air Force had been given orders to shoot down any suspect aircraft and that in the tinderbox that is the Middle East, Israel had put its forces on the highest state of alert.

We'd been sure we'd find at least some degree of refuge from the atrocities in 'Flanagan's Irish Bar' at the far end of Mathew Street, but we were to be sorely mistaken.

Once again the pub was packed, but not with the usual noisy, colourful array of both local and out-of-town Liverpool fans mixed with a healthy smattering of foreign supporters. There were some people present who were obviously going the match, sure, but they stood mutely amidst the crowds of shoppers, office workers, and members of the general public, staring at the huge screen that illuminated the dingy, wooden-floorboarded bar room. The systematic destruction of the Twin Towers was replayed over and over again, one hopes for the benefit of those who hadn't yet witnessed the shocking sequence of events rather than to seek to exploit the horror as a means of ensuring good viewing ratings.

The surround-sound speakers, which normally blasted out Irish folk music, instead amplified the voices of the newscasters, the discordant screaming of emergency vehicles, and the wracked sobs of those searching desperately for their loved ones.

The only time that the speakers were drowned out was during the awed chorus of 'Aaaaahs,' (a sound reminiscent of children gazing up at the Firework Display in Mayer Park, every November 5th), everytime *SKY NEWS* showed the second plane crashing into the side of the South Tower.

I'd like to think that the murmured anti-American comments I heard from certain individuals stood nearby, were 'inspired' by a few too many pints of Guinness and the less-than-comforting performance of George Dubya, when giving his initial reaction to the attacks, ('We're gonna track down the folks responsible,' indeed). There's no doubt that the US President - the leader of the most powerful nation on Earth, faced with its gravest crisis since Pearl Harbour, displayed all the charisma of a rusty shoe on a rain-swept beach. But I'm not sure if that can excuse the spiteful words of a couple of boneheads in their early-thirties, stood within earshot of me and Our Kid;

'I reckon the Yanks deserve it. Look what they did to Belgrade and Grenada.

'Yeah, and look what they're still doin' to Iraq!'

Oh aye. Maybe now, they won't be quite so 'andy supportin' the IRA!'

'Is right, lad!'

So saying, they raised their glasses as though they were toasting the unveiling of some great immutable truth, and whilst I can never claim to be any great supporter of American foreign policy, (to use one of their own beloved phrases, it more often than not 'sucks big time'), to voice such sentiments at that particular moment, when thousands of innocent men, women and children, had met their deaths, displayed a lack of compassion that does not bode well for the future of humanity.

Sickened, we downed our pints and made our way over to probably the only pub in town without a TV. *The Grapes* is one of those classic old Liverpool alehouses that probably hasn't changed a jot in a hundred years or more. Aside from the barmaid's insistence that 'yer can only come in if yer 'aven't gorrany bombs on yer,' there were no further references to what was happening in America.

It was some kind of bliss to be able to sit beneath the gaudy portrait of *Spring Heeled Jack*, (cackling wildly as he leapt across the rooftops of the terraced houses on William Henry Street, where me Grandad used to live), and listening to the hits of *THE BEATLES* playing over and over on the news-free speakers.

I think it's fair to say, I would have quite happily sat there till closing time, gotten rotten drunk, stumbled home and phoned in sick for work the following morning.

It was only the thought of not letting me other brother, Dale and good mate, Graham, down that prevented me from doing just that. They'd forked out for the match tickets, and we'd arranged to meet them in *'The Albert'*, just outside the ground. We couldn't just not turn up.

Nevertheless, it took a supreme effort of will to force meself out into the street to hail a cab to take us to Anfield. The conversation in the taxi was virtually nonexistent. The radio was playing only sad songs. The mood was as sombre as if we were heading for a funeral.

I remember as we drove along the top of Everton Brow, I looked across at the Liverpool waterfront. It was just coming down dusk and the sunset was was that achingly beautiful balance of stillness in which the sun seemed to hover like a red balloon....And as it finally disappeared from sight behind a block of flats, I was reminded of the impermanence of things. The way nothing lasts. Even that which we value most and prayed would last forever.

\*\*\*\*

You may not be surprised to hear that the match itself bore all the relevance of a half-arsed cabaret show at the end of a seemingly endless day.

The minutes silence was perfectly observed, but both the atmosphere and LFC's performance were understandably flat. For the record, the match ended in a 1-1 draw, but to be honest, the commentator on the *ITV HIGHLIGHTS* summed up the mood perfectly when he said at the conclusion of the minutes silence: *'On a frightening day for the world, there follows a football match.'*

I had tried to tell myself that attending the game might prove to be somewhat cathartic, but in the event, I left the ground feeling as though all the bright lights of the world had been dimmed.

And it was going to take more than a mere game of footy to re-ignite them.

\*\*\*\*

In the days that have passed since September 11th, amidst all the predictable cries for bloodthirsty revenge and massive retaliation, the economic meltdown, the racist attacks on innocent Muslims in Western cities and the obvious reluctance of anyone to board a plane, people have resorted to peering through the gap in the curtain that separates accepted reality from that which is ordinarily dismissed as being groundless superstition.

Proof once again, that in dangerously uncertain times, even the most level-headed of persons can find themselves seeking answers to why a particular event occurred and guidance as to what it's immediate aftermath might be, in the realms of shadowy conspiracy and the outright paranormal.

There may be an increase in reported instances of religious phenomena, for example, the stories of the appearance of the Angels of Mons during the British Expeditionary Force's

chaotic retreat in 1914, the Christ-In-The-Clouds photograph shot over Korea at the height of the 1950-53 war, and the visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the early eighties at Medjugorje, in the former Yugoslavia.

There may be talk of New World Order/Illuminati Conspiracies like those proposed in the wake of the assassination of JFK and the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

There may be much poring over passages in The Bible (especially the oft-quoted *Book of Revelations*) fuelling talk of Armageddon and Second Comings, Antichrists and false prophets. Signs and portents and the ominous conjunctions of distant planets.

The media will be filled with rumours and counter-rumours and urban legends will spring up from out of nowhere, (though a friend of a friend may be able to tell you the source).

Those who are perceived as being our enemies will be, quite literally, demonised, to the point where they become less a flesh and blood human being, more a larger than life bogeyman, one that's capable of scaring the hell out of grown ups just as well as children.

Most wars and rumours of war provide plentiful examples of some of the above.

The terrorist atrocities in the USA however, provided plentiful examples of just about all of them.

A mere two days after the WTC attacks, the words of the semi-redundant prophet of doom, Nostradamus were back in fashion (the accuracy of his Quatrains had been called into question big time after his one of his few specifically dated predictions concerning July, 1999, and the appearance from the skies of 'The Great King Of Terror', failed - unless he was merely two years and a couple of months out, of course).

Attention was drawn to a Quatrain which featured the following vision;

*'At forty five degrees, the sky will burn. Fire approaches the new city.*

*Garden of the world, near the new city. In the path of the hollow mountains. It will be seized and plunged in the vat'*

An academic by the name of John Hogue, who has, it seems, spent the last twenty years translating the works of Nostradamus, chooses not to reveal which of the prophets works contains this Quatrain, but proves more than keen to share his interpretation as to its true meaning.

*'I've always taken "hollow mountains" to mean skyscrapers.*

*The reference to 45 degrees may well refer to New York, as it is close to the 45 degree parallel.*

*'The Garden of the World could refer to New Jersey, known as the Garden State.'*

But if you think this prediction is more than a little vague, you can always plump for the too-good-to-be-true fakes littering the Internet.

One of these stated;

*In the City of York, there will be a great collapse,*

*Two twin bother torn apart by chaos,*

*While the fortress falls the great leader will succumb.*

*Third big war will begin when the big city is burning'*

Needless to say, I've not been able to locate anything resembling this Quatrain in any of the books I have concerning Nostradamus. As Mr Hogue told reporters; *'I would urge people to be sceptical and investigate the original.'*

Nevertheless, many of the nation's bookshops have reportedly sold out of the French seer's works, many people believing, rightly or wrongly, that his prediction of a Third Antichrist may well be a reference to Osama bin Laden, (the other two, presumably, being Napoleon and Adolf Hitler).

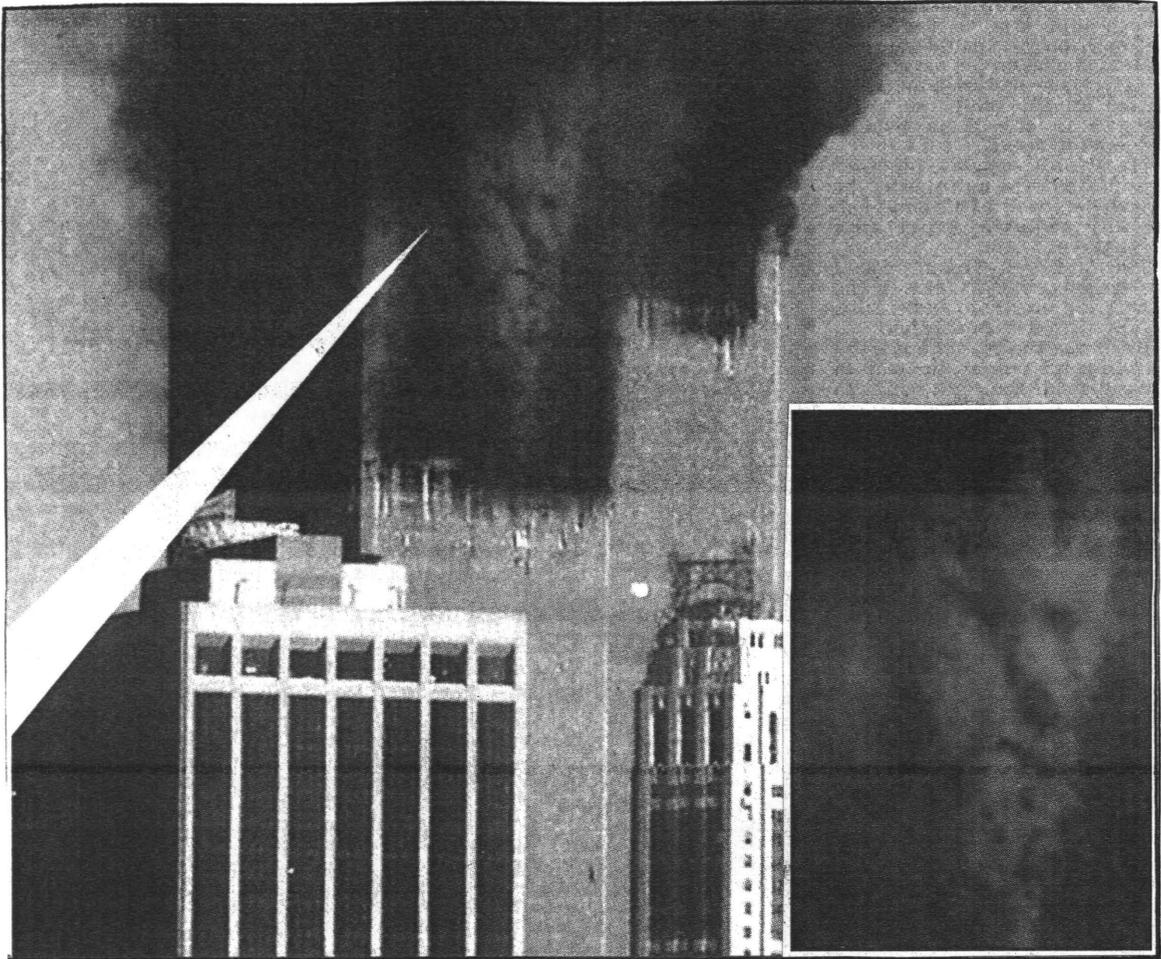
Strangely, no one seems to be the slightest bit interested in the fact that even if Nostradamus really could see the future, his

prophecies stated that the world wouldn't end until 3797, so we've got a the best part of another two millemiums to go before the sounding of the Final Trumpet.

On the same day, *THE DAILY MANC* published a picture of a quite extraordinary, not to say chilling, simulacra. Assuming the photograph hasn't been enhanced in some way, the image of a 'demonic' face materialising in the midst of the plumes of smoke pouring from the North Tower of the WTC, can clearly be seen.

Some witnesses claim it bears an uncanny resemblance to the prime suspect for the attacks, Osama bin Laden, while others believe it's a representation of the Devil Himself.

According to the paper that carried the story, dozens of readers had contacted their reporters about the picture. One reader, Karl Southall, was quoted as saying; *'Me and my friends noticed the image - It's spooky,'* whilst Paula Shrimpton added, even less helpfully, *'In the smoke there is a face of what looks like a man with a beard.'*



(Above): *'The Demonic Face In The Smoke.'* (with enlarged inset) This decidedly evil-looking image is typical of the type of 'visions' said to appear before the eyes of the confused and badly frightened at times of international crisis

One thing in particular, worries me about this picture, though

I'm not about to suggest that any newspaper, even a sensation-seeking tabloid, would stoop so low as to seek to create a suitably eerie image just help sell a few more papers in the wake of such an appalling loss of life, but I am a little puzzled when the reporter who wrote up the story claimed that the photo was taken after the first jet flew into the tower. It's quite clear however, that *both* towers are aflame. So, either it's a misprint, the writer's made an honest mistake, or someone's looking to make a profit at the expense of the gullible (not too mention the thousands who perished).

But if it is a genuine example of simulacra, I'm bound to wonder whether there is any connection between a disconcertingly similar Satanic image that appeared amongst the clouds overlooking the Statue of Liberty, back in December 1990 (see overleaf). The photograph was taken by one of two tourists from Ballymena, Northern Ireland, named Clifford Scullion and Denise McNinch.

According to the couple, neither of them noticed anything unusual when they took the snap, and as they were both using the same camera, they have no idea who was responsible for capturing the image.

Meanwhile, returning to the prophetic angle, astrologer Steve Judd, was busy making claims that he had successfully predicted a catastrophe between American and *possibly* (oh, that's such a get-out-clause word, don't you think?) Afghanistan, nearly six weeks before the attacks.

According to the newspaper for which he works, (hello, it's *THE DAILY MANC,* again), Judd had made the prediction on August 6th. This is what the paper had to say;

*The key was the opposition of two planets, Saturn in Gemini and Pluto in Sagittarius. Judd said that this occurred every 35 years, from last night (September 11th) until May 2002.*

*'He wrote; "The opposition hits the US horoscope powerfully and immense changes in American political, financial and even constitutional circles are more than possible - even probable."*

*'Judd, who specialises in charting the fortunes of nations, warned the world to expect "an intensification, and hopefully resolution of religious conflict worldwide (Israel, Northern Ireland and Afghanistan etc)...while extremism will rise in the short-term."*

Judd himself was quoted as saying; *'I knew as early as 1994 that something cataclysmic was going to happen. There was an intensification in America's chart from 1999 to 2002.*

*'A similar picture was apparent just before Vietnam and when the US entered the Second World War.*

*'On Tuesday, I was appalled that astrologers are not taken seriously. I believe there is even worse to come in the next six or seven months, with stability to follow from the end of May, 2002.'*

*(14th September, 2001 'DAILYMANC')*

Another astrologer and author, E. Alan Meece, wrote back in 1996, that due to a *'Saturn-Pluto opposition and a stationary Mars, during the Summer of 2001, Uncle Sam will be feeling righteous again in a big way, eager to show other nations the truth.(the war on terrorism?) Religious issues (Islamic Fundamentalism?), and trade embargoes (the sanctions against states who continue to harbour terrorists?) will be involved.'*

If that sounds just about bang on the button, however, what are we to make of the Meece's other predictions that a nuclear accident can't be ruled out and that *'it may sound strange, but it's not impossible that ET's may be contacted or involved somehow in the events of this year!'*

He goes on, *'We may also see the first use of "Star Wars" technology, or else electronic communications may be used in historic new ways to defuse the conflict.*

*'Turning points in the confrontations come near November 2nd and December 22nd, 2001. After the December date, the US could suffer losses in a serious naval engagement. Another eclipse aligned with Saturn and Pluto in May and June 2002, indicates another decisive moment. Danger to the President is shown, too. After October, 2002, the outlook for peace starts to improve.'*

Incidentally, a very good friend of mine, who's something of an amateur astrologist, himself, told me the other day that he'd read somewhere (and yes, I know this sounds like the beginnings of a typical FOAF-tale, but I swear it's true) that an unnamed prophet had predicted the exact date President Bush would die by assassination; 27th October, 2001. I guess you'll know the accuracy of that one, by the time you read this, Dear Constant Readers.

A couple of weeks later, emotions had cooled sufficiently enough for it to be announced that a remarkably prescient novel which featured Osama bin Laden as the guilty party behind a plot to blow up the White House (coincidentally, the second hi-jacked plane, which eventually hit the Pentagon, was rumoured at first to be heading for the White House, forcing a full scale evacuation of the building), is to be made into a movie. The author, Andy McNab, was said to have been more than aware of the potential insensitivity of the project, and you have to admit it does seem in bad taste, but I was more interested in the apparent similarities between the book, *CRISIS FOUR*, and the real events in America. The novel was first published in 1999, and tells the story of Sarah Greenwood, a beautiful British woman who recruited by bin Laden to infiltrate American security and get into the White House with the intention of blowing it up and killing the President. The hero is Nick Stone, like McNab a former SAS man, who has the task of hunting down bin Laden's representative. *'Many people have bought the book since September 11th, because of the coincidences,'* McNab told reporters. *'It shows you don't have to have a beard and turban to be working for bin Laden.'*

*DAILY TELEGRAPH' 27th September, 2001*

I don't know about you, but I can't quite shake the feeling that an insidious Evil has crept into the world of late, turning a strife-torn, but still-somehow optimistic planet into a madly spinning ball of black sorrows. And it all seemed to start at the height of the summer that never was, right here in Britain, with a host of rancid examples from the bout of race rioting in the northern cities of Oldham, Burnley, Bradford, and elsewhere, the sickening sight of nine-year-old schoolkids running the gauntlet of sheer religious hatred outside the gates of Holy Cross in Northern Ireland, the beating half to death of an elderly war veteran by teenagers for a dare, the smashing to pieces of the Hillsborough Memorial in Port Sunlight Village, in the centre of Merseyside, all revealed hearts as black as midnight in a coalmine.

Such an atmosphere provides fertile ground for the springing up of 'I-Swear-It's-True' Urban Myths, and the main one doing the rounds at the time of going to press, runs along the lines of the following;

A friend of a friend, out shopping in the city centre of Liverpool, Chester, Birkenhead, or wherever, is standing at the check-out counter of a major department store, directly behind a man of indeterminate age, with swarthy skin and a foreign accent. He's paying for a couple of items, but announces shamefacedly that he's a few pence short of the marked price. Taking pity on him (what's a few pence, after all?) the cashier decides to let him off and before the astonished eyes of the FOAF, the 'Middle-Eastern' man leans forward and says, 'You've been so kind I would like to give you some advice. Don't take the tube next Monday/Don't be in the centre of town on Tuesday/Don't be near the Army Recruitment Building on Derby Square on Thursday afternoon,' (the implication being that a terrorist attack may be imminent in the locale)

The FOAF is concerned enough about this conversation that they feel it worthy of reporting it to the police. They boys in blue it so seriously that they call the FOAF in for in-depth questioning. During the subsequent interview, the police show the person a series of photographs of known terrorists operating in Britain, and the FOAF promptly identifies the mystery shopper from one of the snaps.

Even the rich and famous aren't immune from such stories...Supermodel Jodie Kidd states that she was told the tale by a friend who had received an e-mail and warned the model to avoid London's Leicester Square.

She told reporters; *'I think people are scaremongering. There's no way to avoid an area like that. You can't live your life in constant fear. I was in New York after the attacks and there were 95 bomb scares in one day.'*

The police have little option other than to continue to investigate any such reports, however, and it's likely this particular Urban Myth will spread and spread as the military retaliation against bin Laden and the Taliban got underway.

*8th October, 2001 'MAIL ON SUNDAY'*

And it's the contemplation of this pessimistic outlook that has resulted in a veritable baby boom as Americans seek respite from the horrors by indulging in what has been variously labelled, 'terror sex, 'post-disaster sex,' or 'end of the world sex.'

According to reports in *'THE LOS ANGELES TIMES',* *'Americans are turning to sex to soothe feelings of fear, vulnerability and sadness. University of Washington sociologist Pepper Schwartz told reporters; "The act of sex is a very elemental, primal feeling of being alive and connected to somebody.*

*"Sex is a part of a life force. When asked, "How do you want to die?" a lot of people say, "Making love or having an orgasm."*

*'What they're saying is "I want to be most alive the moment before I'm dead."*

*to be most alive the moment before I'm dead." One unnamed New York record executive told the newspaper: "Every one has been through a shared experience and people's defences are down.*

*"People are vulnerable and that can be attractive. It's biology at work - gotta procreate if the world is coming to an end.'*



*(Above): The skies above America, 1990: A vision of Evil cackling with Demonic glee at the Western Symbol of Liberty? Or a ghastly presage of the events of September 11th, eleven years down the line? In the cold light of day it may seem ridiculously irrational, not to say, paranoid, but in the dark watches of the night ..... Oh, it seems so perfectly logical.*

*Especially when you compare it to the recent photograph of Abdulaziz Alomari, one of hideously grinning World Trade Centre terrorists, caught on CCTV cameras at a Wal-Mart store, the day before the atrocity. Logic dictates it may not have any relevance whatsoever, but I find the similarity between the two images, chilling.*



# THE HOUSE WHERE THE DEAD SCREAM



One of the most terrifying stories I've come across since, er, the last issue of 'DON,' concerns another of those 'real-life Amityville' type houses, where in the wake of a quite horrific spate of murders, the property has gained (if that's the right word) a reputation for being haunted by the restless spirits of the don't-know-they're-dead-yet.

The following reads like the plot-line for a typical horror movie, but it's infinitely more scary because it purports to be true. And after all isn't that precisely what makes films like 'THE EXORCIST,' 'THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE,' and the aforementioned 'AMITYVILLE HORROR,' so popular. The premise that they're meant to be at least partly based on fact, means that, even as the final credits roll, and you get up to leave with your date or your group of friends, (let's face it, who goes to horror films alone?) and prepare to leave the safety of the auditorium, there's no comfort to be had from telling each other 'Well, that was bloody scary. Thank God it was only a movie!!!'

That particular charm seems to quickly lose its fear-banishing efficacy when the gibbering shadows beyond the lights of the cinema car park may truly conceal a flesh-eating maniac, an ancient Babylonian Demon or a phantom pig with glowing red eyes and with blood dripping from its open maw....

So, when I first came across the following account, in 'THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE,' you can be sure even your friendly neighbourhood Editor, veteran of a hundred thousand similar accounts of purported paranormal phenomena, had himself a

week's worth of nightmares and sleepless nights. And so, a word of warning. As the old poster ads for those classic UNIVERSAL horrors of the 1930's and 40's, used to proclaim; 'Do not view if you're of a nervous disposition!!!'

\*\*\*\*

Sometimes, places that become synonymous with fear and loathing have been christened with such cheery, innocent-sounding monikers.

The holiday resort of Keddie, in Plumas County, is surely a case in point.

The resort was founded back in 1910, and as recently as 20 years ago, Keddie was a hugely popular destination for both locals and tourists from further afield. It was the ideal venue for a carefree get-away-from-it-all break. All you had to do was rent one of the 33 rustic cabins or a room in the hand-crafted, two-storey lodge, to secure an escape from the nine-to-five treadmill, the mundanity of day-to-day existence.

At least for a little while.

The Keddie Lodge Restaurant was frequently packed with customers who drove from as far away as San Francisco.

It seemed as though the resort was destined to be successful well into the next millennium, and the site owners must have been rubbing their hands in scarcely-concealed glee at the prospect....

And then, one humid night in mid-April, a black pall of evil descended upon Keddie, forever tainting the area and turning the very earth upon which the resort was built sour.

Whatever your view concerning the reality of the supernatural or otherwise, the hard forensic facts are these; On 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1981, sometime between and 10pm, 15-year-old John Sharp and his good friend Dana Wingate, aged 17, decided to hitchhike from the town of Quincy to Keddie, where John had been living with his 36-year-old mother, Glenna Sharp, for the previous few months. They'd hired Cabin #28, and John had obviously invited his friend to spend the night there.

It is not known whether the two boys were picked up by a couple of psychopaths and offered a lift to Keddie, or whether the killers were already lying in wait at the site, but what is for sure is that the moment the boys stepped through the door of Cabin #28, the obscene cycle of violence began.

The three victims were tied up with duct tape and electrified wire by the maniacs and rendered helpless. To make matters even worse, John's 13-year-old sister, Tina turned up and found herself being tied up, too.

They were all systematically tortured for the next ten hours, the killers utilising all manner of equipment to inflict injury, including steak knives and a claw hammer. The end results were as godawfully horrific as you can doubtless imagine (though, quite frankly, I'm sure you'd rather not), leaving the victims virtually unrecognisable.

'Whoever did this stabbed the victims so violently they bent one knife totally double from the sheer ferocity of the attack.' Sheriff Patrol Commander Rod DeCrona, said at the time. 'They stabbed and pounded everything in sight, The walls, the people, the furniture, everything. There was blood sprayed

everywhere. You know, right away you are involved with a psychopath.'

The terrible carnage was discovered the following morning by John's 14-year-old sister, Sheila, who'd been at a sleepover next door. Amazingly, (and here's another chilling echo of the infamous Amityville murders) no one in the next cabin had heard a thing, despite the close proximity of the respective cabins, investigating officers couldn't believe, given the viciousness of the attack, that there hadn't been a high level of noise that would have been clearly audible from a fair distance away, never mind the cabin right next door.

Then again, during the night of Ronnie DeFeo decided to blow his whole family away in that damned house on Ocean Avenue, with a 12 gauge shotgun, no one, not even the closest neighbours, claimed to have heard a thing.

Equally perplexing was the fact that Tina's body could not be found at the murder site, despite the fact that the pathologist was of the opinion that the girl had been killed at the scene, Her severed head was discovered three years later by a workman, at the foot of a waterfall, 50-odd miles away.

And then there was the mystery of the three very young children, (two of whom were brothers of John Sharp), who had been sleeping in the next room, and who had emerged from the ordeal completely unharmed.

At least physically.

This latter of course begs the question; Why would these seemingly psychotic killers, who had not displayed even the slightest inclination towards mercy in their dealings with any of their other victims, allow these three kids, who could presumably have identified them, to live?

Indeed, one of the kids, a friend of the Sharp brothers, remembered enough details of the slaughter to enable the police to compose a sketch of the two killers. Unfortunately, the boy was so tender in years, the accuracy of the picture was regarded as being less than reliable.

Thousands of potential leads and likely suspects were picked up in the wake of the killings by deputies, FBI agents and state investigators, all to no avail. To this day the odd tip still comes in, but it seems no one's holding out any great hopes for a breakthrough.

'Usually in a crime like this,' De Crona was quoted as saying, 'the killers get sloppy and leave more clues behind. I wish it were that simple. We have no motive. No suspects.'

Gary Wingate, the father of Dana, told reporters; 'Nobody has the slightest idea who killed my son, so I long ago had to let this thing go or it would have eaten me alive. I don't think about it. I don't go to that ghost town, though I have no idea if ghosts truly exist there.'

'But I do know this. There is Evil in the world. And Evil was in that house, that night.'

And some people believe the Evil still very much dominates the area, even today.

Ashley Conte, certainly believes so. Twelve months or so ago, she ran screaming from Cabin #28 and the 'unexplainable dark things' she claims to have witnessed there. 'Anyone with brains will never set foot in that building again,' she avers. 'You can

never change what happened inside. The house should be ripped down. It's haunted. And everybody knows it.'

You can perhaps understand her reaction when you consider that she claims to have witnessed (along with other unspecified witnesses) chairs and bodies floating in mid-air and carvings appearing and disappearing on the cabin walls. Little wonder then that people soon began to shun the resort and that within a year, the whole site was deserted. Even the local police have confessed they do not like stepping inside the house.

The former owners were left with no other option than to seek to sell the place, back in 1984, for a piffling \$1.8 million but, they were unable to find anyone willing to take up the offer.

Over the space of the next decade or so, the site fell into a sad state of disrepair and became nothing more than a refuge for the less discerning (and, one presumes, less-superstitious) squatters and hobo's. Eventually, the local council felt compelled to condemn the buildings, although the last couple of years saw the longtime owner of the site, Gary Mollath, has made strenuous efforts to restore the resort to its former glory. In this, at least, he appears to have succeeded. Apparently, it now looks every bit as good as it did during its halcyon period prior to the tragic events of April, 1981, with one notable exception; there are very few people willing to spend their holiday there.

And no one in their right mind is likely to want to stay in the notorious Cabin # 28, no matter how low the rental charge.

Consequently, this building has been left to fall into ruin. The doors are nailed shut. Yellow-white paint flakes from its walls. Its cracked, curtainless windows seem to absorb rather than reflect light. And yet, despite the frequent suggestions that it should be demolished, it continues to stand, mockingly defiant, the object of teenage dares at Halloween.

One of these 'damn fool kids,' was the aforementioned Ashley Conte, the step-daughter of Gary Mollath. On the occasion that she, along with a couple of friends, gained entry to the building, Ashley said she saw indescribable murky forms moving about the black heart of the house (sounds positively Lovecraftian) as well as rocking chairs rocking of their own accord (sounds positively Amityvillian). There was also a pitchfork move through the air, and the word 'NO' carved itself into kitchen door.

Other locals, including 22-year-old Forest Jones, claimed to have heard unexplained moans, doors slamming and footsteps echoing through the empty house.

Gary Mollath's solution to the haunting problem of Cabin # 28 is identical to that which his step-daughter has constantly suggested;

'That house has been such a negative point for so long that I intend to tear it down and put a park there. Then I'm going to open the place back up and cater to groups. With people travelling a lot closer to home now, I think the timing will be just right.'

'I want people to come and say "Wow!" when we start up again, not be scared!'

I'm not at all sure whether Mr Mollath has seen his fair share of horror films or not, but he should be aware that it might not just be the source of the Evil might not be confined to the bricks and mortar of the house. It may be that the very ground itself has been literally drenched in malefic forces...

Annette Martin, a psychic who regularly advises the police on unsolved murder cases across America, appears to agree with this pessimistic line of thought;

*'The trouble in Keddie is that because the mayhem was so abhorrent, the victim's ghosts are probably in shock and don't know they're dead. So even if the house is demolished, they'll still be there, hanging out.'*

*'We often see this type of Poltergeist activity in cases like this, especially if people were chopped up. My guess is that the 'No,' the girl (Ashley) saw, was the victims still trying to say 'No' to their killer. There is unresolved business there.'*

*'The only way to cleanse the area of spirits is to have someone spiritual perform a healing ceremony after the house is gone.'*

*'Otherwise, whatever is in its place will be haunted. And it will stay haunted.'*

27<sup>th</sup> May, 2001 Keddie, 'SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE'

## GHOSTS AND DEVILS OVER MERSEYSIDE: After Dark In The Playing Fields

The following investigation was undertaken by those redoubtable lads 'n' lasses at the Merseyside-based ParaScience (see last issue for a full feature on the work of this hard-working group for whom I have the utmost admiration).

I am deeply indebted them for divulging the details of the vigils they held at an unnamed temporary Council school in Birkenhead, Merseyside, during the springs of 1999 2000.

The school was apparently officially opened by the Birkenhead Education Committee in April 1908. The original buildings were added to the sit in 1911, and these encompassed the erection of wholly separate Infants and Senior Boys and Girls departments. Despite the fact that there were further changes to the building in the days following the Second World War, the Infants school remained at the site, sharing it with the so-called Modern School for Girls, until it was finally closed in July 1956.

The modern accounts of strange phenomena were first reported in August, 1999, when a series of interviews with alleged witnesses took place. The bulk of the accounts seemed to indicate that most of the paranormal incidents had occurred on the building's first floor corridor. The reported phenomena included the eerie sound of invisible children running

along the corridor, unexplained footsteps, doors opening and closing of their own accord, various bangs and thuds, furniture moving around, knocking and scraping upon the office walls and doors, and the strains of music wafting throughout the building, before suddenly being cut off in mid-note.

One witness states that he had seen a figure of a man with a beard dressed in a chequered shirt, standing behind the doors near the Conference Room on the first floor, the figure has apparently been seen on three separate occasions.



There has also been extensive Poltergeist-type activity including, objects being moved from office to office without any apparent human agency, and there have been unaccountable smells near the gent's toilets (the aroma of a ghost taking an, ahem, number two, now there's novel!!!) and a perception of an invisible presence in the ladies.

There are also accounts second-hand stories reported by the interviewees such as a former member of staff leaving the ladies toilets only to feel the presence of the spirits of children surrounding her. The chilling sound of young kids giggling has also been heard. And you can add to this the account of a cleaner encountering the figure of an infant girl on the first-floor corridor, as well as the sound of a piano playing in one of the school rooms.

According to local legend, (as far as I am aware there is no factual basis for the story) there was

a fire at the school and one of the teachers either committed suicide or was burned to death in some unspecified accident.

There have been at least three further events since the *ParaScience* investigation got underway. One member of staff reportedly saw a figure standing in the left cubicle of the ladies toilets on the first floor whilst he was in the right cubicle only to find nothing out there when he came out. There was also the case of a painter who was on-site when he found that there was an unidentified male in the in the gents on the first floor who followed him up the stairs leading to the corridor and disappeared.

So far, the group have held 18 vigils between August 1999 and April 2000, the majority being shorter vigils of 3-5 hours duration. The equipment used during the vigils included sound recording both analogue and digital, video recording including standard, digital and infra-red, still photography both digital and conventional, electronic temperature monitoring, magnetometer/electro-static monitoring and, of course, personal observation.

The first vigil took place on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2001, and was made up of four volunteers.

The group had only just arrived when the faint, but distinct strains of a piano chime echoed along the first floor corridor. Unfortunately, this was not picked up by the recording equipment as the group was still in the process of being set up.

The sessions started around 9:15pm, and throughout the night many incidents were both witnessed and recorded. These phenomena included a groan, a doorslam, cold draughts, various thuds and bangs as well as other unspecified sounds. There were two major incidents said to have occurred during the vigil...The first took place at 11:53pm, during session three.

There was a recorded temperature drop of 4.9 degrees centigrade within 3.5 minutes, as the temperature started to rise again, the sound of footsteps were witnessed by two members of the group. These sounds were just about picked up by Digital MiniDisc. Based upon computer enhancement and interpretation, the footsteps were reminiscent of female shoes clicking on a tile or stone surface and can be heard to scrape the floor as though they were rotating or swivelling before continuing down the stairwell. The second incident occurred at 2:18am, just after Session four. One of the group members was entering the gents toilets on the first floor when he reached out to turn on a light. He was startled to see the solid figure of a man dressed in dark black trousers and a white shirt. The figure was on his right

hand side and it moved towards him and rotated clockwise before vanishing when the light eventually came on. The whole incident lasted no more than a couple of seconds. There was also a possible sighting of a black figure on the stairwell during the first session.

There were six people present at the second vigil. At 7:16pm, the video camera operator heard that piano sound - 'a low-key melody' which lasted approximately eight seconds.

Once again, during the session, there were various unaccountable bangs and thuds as well as the sounds of a male and female voices. There were also more temperature drops and various lights throughout the building turned themselves on and off on fairly regular basis throughout the night.

On the occasion of the third vigil, (25.9.99) the group elected to invite some of the interviewees, this was done in order to demonstrate to them how the investigation was being carried out, as well as to answer any questions that they might have. During the vigil, there was the, by now, usual outburst of apparently paranormal phenomena, although this time, there was also the added bonus of an unexplained musky perfume-like aroma permeating the air. Even more interesting were the sounds, heard by at least five members of the group; the whoops and screams of children at play, like they'd been let loose at break time. This incident lasted for about nine minutes and was recorded by the majority of the equipment that was set up in the building.

In the October of that year, there were a total of six shorter vigils, each lasting from between 10pm-12:30am. The number of attendees ranged between three and five. The highlights included the sound of heavy footsteps marching along the ground floor corridor. They appeared to travel towards and past a certain member of the group, suggesting that we are dealing with an interactive entity, as opposed to a mere (?) recording-type ghost. And during the now obligatory door slam, the video camera trained on the door seemed to pick up 'a white vortex of energy.'

The details of the phantom footsteps were related by Steve, the head of the group, during the lecture he gave last October (see last issue of 'DON').

*'I was standing on the ground floor corridor 11:23pm, when I heard the sound of footsteps coming towards me. Originating from the corridor centre doors, they began moving towards the reception. There was a loud bang accompanying these footsteps. My perception was of footsteps moving towards my position. They then passed down my right side, right through an 18 inch gap between me and the door to the Living Options Unit. They then continued into the reception area and sounded like they brushed against some plastic*

plants in a floor level planter opposite the reception office.'

There were a further five visits to the school in December, the undisputed highlight of which was the sighting of a black, motionless figure at the top of the stairs by the ladies toilets. This was seen on at least three separate occasions by three different group members.

And during the last set of vigils, there was some quite spectacular success in the capturing on video camera of an anomalous image.

For further details on the potential contents of the footage, see the next issue of 'DON'

## *The Phantoms of Everton Heights*

Oops, it's confession time, Dear Constant Readers...I actually received the details of this account (by virtue of a letter sent to me by a good friend, Mr Ian Doyle), several years ago, and which I'd filed away for inclusion in a future issue.

Unfortunately, the letter somehow wound up being misplaced and all-but forgotten amidst a pile of old NME's and 'SHOOT' magazines, round about the same time I temporarily lost touch with Doyle. So apologies to everyone concerned, but without further ado, here's an interesting tale from 30 odd years ago...

*One Boxing Day, at the end of the 1960's, sometime around noon, my nan and granddad were at home recovering from the previous evening's festivities. They lived, at the time, on the top floor of a maisonette, in the Everton area. There was a knock at the door, and when my granddad went to open it, he was surprised to see a couple of strangely dressed ladies, aged somewhere between 60 and 70. He did not recognise either of them, but they called him by his childhood name, Willy. They asked for his wife by her first name, so it was pretty obvious they thought they knew the couple from way back.*

*Assuming that my nan must have known the pair, he invited them in, and as he was heading off the pub for the a pint (hair of the dog, and all that) he left them with her.*

*As things turned out however, my nan didn't have the slightest clue as to their identity, but doubtless caught in that potentially embarrassing scenario of not wanting to admit as much to people who plainly thought they knew her, she did her best to make them feel welcome.*

*She duly gave them a meal of Christmas Dinner leftovers, including turkey and mince pies, and they engaged in conversation about the 'good old days' and the old neighbourhood where my nan and granddad used to live. Their was also talk of old friends and neighbours and the two women also described how my grandmother was dressed in a particular outfit when she was a little girl, and this proved to be something that she did in fact herself recall.*

*The old ladies wore their hair in ringlets wore lace mittens and matching hats. They were also wearing*

*what appeared to be Victorian dresses and equally old-fashioned shoes.*

*After the meal, they both said they had to go and visit someone else in the neighbourhood, so she wished them Happy New Year and gave them half a crown each. They thanked her politely and duly left. My grandmother escorted them out and stood at the landing rail to see them leaving what was the only exit out of the flats.*

*But they never came out at all.*

*They had simply vanished.*

*Yet, as she was later to discover, the two strange women did in fact visit this other person they had said they were going to see, who lived a few roads away. Once again, it seems, the two women claim to have known the lady they visited, but that she hadn't the slightest idea who they were.*

*My nan discussed the incident with the bemused woman a few days later, she claimed the ladies were dressed in exactly the same clothes as those my grandparents had described.*

*When my granddad had returned from the pub that day, he immediately enquired of my nan; 'Who were them old spirits?'*

*Perhaps he had never spoken a truer word...*

Ian Doyle 1997

## *The Ghost Chasers*

*The following piece was penned by Andy Owens, (author of, among others, 'THE COMPLETE VISITOR'S GUIDE TO LOCH NESS'). Seeing as how he was kind enough to send it me during the sodden spring of this year, I felt the least I could do was include it here for you delectation....*

*8:30pm. FRIDAY 16<sup>th</sup> MARCH, 2001*

Chingle Hall is a large white detached house at the end of a very long, leafy lane and on the night we arrived the wind was howling banshee-like through the trees.

It couldn't have been any spookier if Count Dracula himself had been welded to the car windscreen.

The Hall is reputed to be the most haunted house in England, so I booked a room to stay overnight there, together with my sceptical friend Chris Ellis. His wife and kids had let him out for the evening on good behaviour.

And I had done my fair share of research. Chingle really is ancient. Built in 1260, the first owner was one Ughtred Singleton – the building was presented to him as a gift for his services to the monarchy. The owners for the last six years have been Trevor and Judy Kirkham.

Everything, it seems, has happened at Chingle. For Chingle Hall is Roswell Incident equivalent of ghostly lore. Phantom priests, monks, Romans, cavaliers, green and grey ladies, Poltergeist activity...you name it and someone has reported it. But just how much of it, if any, is true?

As Trevor Kirkham came to greet us, I suddenly had second thoughts. The day before, I had been seriously worried about my appearance. I didn't want to look like your typical ghost-hunter. You know, a sort of supernatural train spotter. With the anorak and the eyes set too close together.

I voiced my concerns to Chris. Always a mistake. He nearly fell to the floor laughing.

'But you're wearing an anorak! You've worn an anorak ever since I've known you. It's like a second skin to you. I was surprised when you actually took it off. A Thursday afternoon it was. About three years ago.'

Panicking, I rushed to town, drew out what little savings I had and bought a smart new leather jacket. Now, no one could accuse me of looking anything but normal.

I showed Chris the next day. Did a catwalk routine for him. Displayed the smooth texture, the smart inner lining, the whole ambience which the garment exuded.

He grinned at me.

'I was just kidding about the anorak.'

Gee, thanks a lot.

'What about the eyes being set too close together?'

'Oh don't worry. They're set too far apart if anything.'

Gee, thanks a lot.

It was the eve of the departure and too late for plastic surgery so I decided to bluff my way through.

Trevor didn't bat an eyelid. He led us over the stone bridge which crossed the old moat and in through the porch.

According to one book I read, the first room through the porch is The Great Hall. Well, it's certainly nice. Though I wouldn't describe it as being great. I was expecting a grand medieval banqueting room of Baskerville Hall proportions, but it had more in common with a medium-size lounge with an oak table in the middle of it.

The first thing that occurs to you when talking to Trevor for a while is that many basic points you may have read about Chingle Hall are grossly inaccurate.

The Hall is set in the Viking village of Gossenargh, near Preston, Lancashire, right? Wrong. Chingle is located in the village of Whittingham, which is actually next door to the Viking village of Goosenargh.

The two most haunted rooms are the John Wall Room and the Priests Room, right? Wrong. The John Wall Room is the Priests Room and the Priests Room is called the Lady Eleanor Room (*Seems Shirley Jackson's heroine got tired of walking alone at Hill House – Ed*).

The Franciscan Monk, the Blessed St John Wall, was born in the Priests Room, right. Not necessarily. An ancient document states that he was born 'somewhere in Lancashire,' but there is no evidence that he ever visited Whittingham or Chingle.

So his skull is not buried in the garden after all, then? It may be, but it sounds just like one of those hand-me-down stories, which are mis-interpreted by one writer, recorded as being the factual truth, then merely re-hashed by everyone who follows.

Trevor led us upstairs and along the 'Haunted Corridor' which connects the two aforementioned rooms. The floorboards are so old that they creak and sink when you tread on them with gaping cracks in them through which you can clearly see the room below.

Other interesting features are evident, too. The priests hide where Catholics hid away safely during

the Reformation. The cupboards in one room, overlooking the moat, which used to contain the chain mechanism operating the old drawbridge. The 13<sup>th</sup> century oak door in the porch with its rare sanctuary knocker. And the chair legs or banister railings wedged into the ceiling of the Chapel, presumably used as makeshift rafters.

There are many disconcerting stories of homeowners altering the internal structure of a house – knocking a wall down or replacing a staircase – which then results in paranormal phenomena.

When I wrote a book called *YORKSHIRE STORIES OF THE SUPERNATURAL*, I found several such local tales, including Long Can at Wheatley, where odd things happened after building work, and a cottage in Brighouse which suffered a similar fate.

This made me wonder how many spirits have been roused from their unearthly slumber through interior decoration by people such as *ITV's* Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen. And let's face it, with that ruffle collar and ridiculous jacket, he kinda looks like a ghost himself.

Back in the Great Hall, the three of us sat at the oak table, sharing the bottle of wine Chris had thoughtfully brought, while Trevor recounted the few things he and his wife Judy have experienced.

The sound of giggling coming from the staircase when there was no one else in the house; the sound of a phone ringing, also heard in the company of neighbours, before the electricity had been connected; and the unmistakable sound of footsteps pacing the 'haunted corridor', directly above the Great Hall.

During the relating of the latter, Chris and I kept darting glances up at the cracked floorboards directly above us, but there was nothing to be heard. While Trevor retired for the night, we stalked the house from top to bottom to get a feel for the place. Then we returned to the Great Hall and organised the essentials; The camcorder and the tea and bikkies.

We set up the equipment and everything was quiet, apart from the strong winds lashing the window with occasional rain. And we kept glancing at each other and moving from room to room, in the hope of spotting something.

The tiny red light on the camcorder winked at me, and I promptly winked right back.

The atmosphere was electrifying, the suspense overpowering, and the silence the loudest it had been all night. We anticipated that shortly we would be experiencing a great sense of anticipation.

Chris was peering through the video's viewfinder.

'Do you think we'll see anything?' I whispered.

'No'

'Why not?'

'Cos ghosts don't exist. The real world beckons.'

'Then what the hell are we doing here?'

Quit moaning and keep watching. I may be wrong.'

Chris Ellis – wrong? Perish the thought.

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There are two display cabinets in the Great Hall featuring photographs which previous guests have taken and sent in to Trevor and Judy. For this is not only the haunt of ghosts and ghouls, but

ambulancemen, nurses and the like who spend the night here in sponsored ghost hunts in aid of local charities.

A surprising number of these photos show similar shapes – most photographed in this very room. There did not appear to be faults on the exposures. Each was a distinct cylindrical shape, with a sort of strange internal spiralling effect, not seen at the time, and probably quite difficult to fake.

The photos were taken in areas of the room where the occupants had experienced sudden and inexplicable chill – a drop in temperature often reported in hauntings.

I lit a cigarette to calm my nerves.

'I thought you'd stopped smoking,' said Chris.

'I have.'

'What's that then?'

'Withdrawal symptoms.'

Chris blew a long, low whistle.

'You know. It seems to me you smoke more fags now than you did before you kicked the habit. Why not start smoking again and save the money?'

We crouched by the cameras and waited.

Perhaps we would see something.

This filled me with both excitement and dread. Excitement because I've never seen a ghost. And dread because I am a complete coward.

Trevor had said that the two of us would be allowed the whole run of the house. We took this to mean that if anything frightening appeared then we could run away from it in any direction.

Suddenly, and quite without warning...Precisely nothing happened whatsoever.

And then...Before we had time to blink and act accordingly...It didn't happen again.

And again.

And again.

In fact nothing continued to happen with such alarming regularity that we were rapidly becoming disillusioned with the whole project.

It was a long, uneventful night. The odd creak on the stair or the wind blowing a tree branch against the e bay window where the only events of 'note.' But that was all.

At 4am, we drained the last dregs of wine, packed up the equipment and set off back to deepest, darkest Halifax. We had braved the Witching Hour and nothing even remotely paranormal had occurred.

Although we hadn't been (ahem) spooked, we certainly didn't regret our stay. It had still been an interesting and informative night, and in such a lovely old building.

As we sped back down the M52, we knew that one thing at least was one hundred percent clear.

If there are ghosts at Chingle Hall, then they obviously have something to better to do on Friday nights.

And it's a sad fact of life that we don't.

*Andy Owens May 2001*

## Whispers In The Dark

That redoubtable paranormal investigator Mr Tom Slemen, was back in the local news recently when 'THE LIVERPOOL ECHO' carried a piece to coincide with his latest opus 'HAUNTED LIVERPOOL 5'.

The article carried the following snippet from the publication, including the incident early in Tom's childhood years that may well have had a huge bearing upon his subsequent fascination for the supernatural.

It seems that when Tom was only five years old, his mother witnessed the appearance of a phantom at the family home on Myrtle Street, Liverpool. She attempted to prevent her son ever finding out about the spirit but, as kids often do, he eavesdropped upon a conversation between his mother and some friends, and he discovered that the ghost of a Victorian maid (*any relation to one of the 'old spirits' Ian Doyle's grandparents encountered back in the late 1960's, we wonder?*).

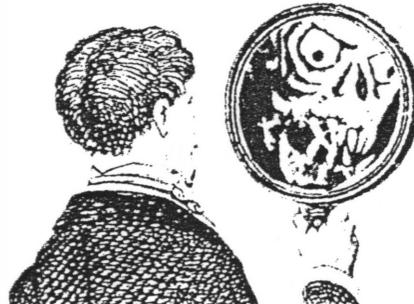
Tom later found out, after investigating the history of the house, that the building had once been part of the Myrtle Street Orphanage, during the Victorian era.

*'I never saw the ghost as a child, but my mother eventually told me that she had seen a woman in long, rustling skirts walk across the bedroom, and straight through both her and the wall!*

*'It was discovering another link with the orphanage that made me so interested in ghosts.*

*'I wrote my first book in 1995, and now I receive around 100 e-mails, letters and phone calls a week from people telling me about their supernatural encounters.'*

You want some examples; Try these for size;



Back in February 1977, in the wonderfully named Knotty Ash district of the city, a housewife by the name of Chrissie Bradley, purchased a beige three-piece suite from the Household Goods column of 'THE LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

Not long after she had installed the items in her living room, strange things began to happen. It began with her 12-year-old daughter sitting on the sofa one morning when she suddenly began complaining that her back had gone unaccountably damp. She quickly rose from the seat and was horrified to discover that there were fresh bloodstains on her plain white school shirt. That was bad. What was even worse was the incredible sight of beads of blood congealing on the settee.

She hurriedly set about cleaning the sofa, at a loss as to how to explain the stains, but next morning they were back. It was almost as if, as crazy as it sounds, the settee were somehow bleeding.

On subsequent occasions, there appeared on the back seat covers, the unmistakable print of a human hand.

Not surprisingly, she got rid of the bargain sofa not long after, but later found out that the previous

owner had bought it from a woman whose husband had committed suicide on the very same settee, by slashing his own throat.

\*\*\* The next case concerns a particularity unusual 'hallucination' of a psychiatric patient, called 'Mister Bill.'

At least the psychiatrists assumed it to be a hallucination. The fact is, other people claimed to have seen the same, or very similar entity, including an entire family in Liverpool.

The apparition was described as looking a like a demented Mr Punch (although, judging from the descriptions of eyewitnesses, 'he' also bears a more than passing resemblance to the popular image of our old friend 'Spring Heeled Jack). He apparently wore a black, tight-fitting garment, not a million miles removed from a body-stocking, replete with a balaclava-type headpiece. The facial characteristics included a prominently hooked nose, and 'black-bordered eyes.'

He was supposed to have appeared on a family photograph taken on Christmas Eve, 2000 by a 45-year-old man, named in the article simply by the Christian name, Jimmy.

They noticed nothing unusual when the picture was taken, but when it came back from the developers, there was a clearly recognisable figure that shouldn't have been there, all dressed in black, standing in the hallway.

Understandably, Jimmy and his wife elected not to show their eight-year-old son Danny, the photo due to its frightening content. However, not long after they'd received the picture, Danny (*no relation to Mr Torrance junior, we presume*), began to start wetting the bed in fear after as seeing a 'horrible man in black' standing at the end of his bed.

When he was asked to draw the man, the resultant portrait bore an uncanny resemblance to the ghostly figure that had appeared in the photograph, but which Danny had never seen.

Just to add to the sense of mystery, a local window cleaner also reported seeing a man dressed in black sitting on the living room sofa, while doing his rounds.

\*\*\* In a story that has more than a little in common with the case of *The Cursed Doll* featured in the last issue of 'DON,' Mr Salmon relates of how a three-foot-tall doll with dressed in black and replete with human hair and a pair of disturbingly realistic bright blue eyes was found in a barber's shop in Landlord Avenue, Liverpool. This was back in 1959, and the doll was given to young girl by the name of Elaine. Unfortunately for her, the day she received the doll, she was knocked down and instantly killed. The doll was found lying on the ground near to the body.

Elaine's mother, apparently not affected by superstition, gave the doll, christened with the name Mona, to her niece, Jane. Somewhat predictably, a mere week later, Jane's father was found dead with that accursed doll lying at his feet.

Jane's mother, who it seems was the only one capable of sussing out that there was something decidedly eerie about the doll, promptly threw it out. Unfortunately, as is so often the case with these quite literally damned objects, it had a nasty habit of turning up once more unlooked for. This time, a

little girl in the area where it had been slung picked it up and was later murdered. The snippet didn't mention how or when this occurred.

The doll was, as far as is known, last sighted in Liverpool at a Primary School raffle sometime during 1979.

So, if you should happen to come across a doll with human hair and too-bright eyes, all dressed in black, you know what to do...Get rid of it quickly, And for God's sake, bury it deep...

\*\*\* On a decidedly lighter note, there was an *ANGELS OF MONS*' type sort doing the rounds back in the 1970's. Apparently, a benevolent force intervened directly to save scores of schoolchildren from death.

The incident occurred at St. Anne's Roman Catholic Primary School in Edge Hill, on a bitterly cold Winter's day in 1973. There were sheets of treacherous black ice outside the school, a potential death trap in the making.

Strangely, the school lunchtime bell which always sounded at 11:30am, failed to toll with the result that the (presumably) pedantic teachers carried right on taking their scheduled lessons at 11:35.

All of a sudden, the classroom hush was shattered by a terrible crashing noise which shook the school to the very foundations. Two juggernauts had had collided as a result of the black ice and smashed into the school playground through the gates.

If the bell had rung out on time, there would have been dozens of children running around the playground, with almost inevitable tragic consequences.

Later on that day, the school bell worked perfectly normally and an electrician who examined the wiring could offer no explanation for the its 'miraculous' lunchtime failing.

\*\*\* Next up, we have the story we featured in a very early issue of 'DON,' namely the Queensway Tunnel Hitch-Hiker.

Tales of this entity have been circulating for years beyond counting, but Tom has divulged details of some recent accounts between November 2000 and January of this year.

There were apparently, numerous reports of a Phantom Hitch-Hiker in the classic tradition, haunting the Mersey Tunnel, near Crosshall Street.

All of the witnesses described the female apparition as being somewhere between 20-25 years old with long, sandy hair.

Included amongst the witnesses were a police officer, a motorcyclist named Liam, who said he actually stopped to pick the girl up, and that she even spoke to him. She told him to take her to Huyton.

When he finally emerged from the semidarkness of the tunnel, he found to his astonishment that she had vanished from the pillion seat, and the spare helmet she had put on was back on the motorcycle rack.

\*\*\* And finally, back in 1942, in the midst of a humdinger of a German air raid, a heavily-pregnant woman who hailed from Toxteth, by the name of Edna Jenkins, was huddling in a gloomy shelter and was horrified to see a rat run over her stomach, and she instinctively lashed out with her handbag causing to scurry into the darkness.

When the time came for her to finally give birth, she was amazed to discover that her newborn baby girl had a strange birthmark on her back... It was shaped exactly like the silhouette of a rat!!!  
30<sup>th</sup> June, 2001 LIVERPOOL ECHO'

## The Ghosts Of Many Yesterdays

Scientific confirmation, of sorts, that Mediums can speak to the dearly departed, was forthcoming, this spring, much to the amazement of yours truly.

An experiment was conducted at the University of Arizona involving a group of spirit Mediums, and, if the reports in at least one national newspaper are to be believed, it was at least partly successful.

They asked a total of five psychics to attempt to contact the dead relations of two volunteers who they had never previously met. In the first experiment, each medium spent an hour with one of these volunteers, with a screen erected to prevent any visual contact with each other.

The sitter was allowed to respond to questions from the Mediums only with 'yes' or 'no' answers. The information provided was analysed for accuracy at the end of each session.

On average, the Mediums produced around 80 pieces of information about deceased relatives, ranging from pretty ordinary stuff like names, to rather more detailed data like the circumstances of their deaths. Overall, the Mediums were judged to have got an average of 83 per cent of the facts correct. One even achieved an astonishing 93 per cent accuracy rate.

In a particularly extraordinary example, one Medium recited a prayer a volunteer's dead mother had read to her regularly as a child.

To counter claims that the Mediums were simply making educated guesses, (and let's face it, that's often the accusation levelled at these people) the scientists asked a panel of 60 non-Mediums to attempt to come up with similar information.

The average 'hit rate' was eye-opening enough, only 36 per cent, with the most successful guesser achieving 54 per cent (and who's to say that person wasn't a Medium unaware of his or her psychic abilities?)

Reporting in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, the scientists conclude; *'Highly skilled Mediums are able to obtain accurate and replicable information.'*

Professor Gary Schwartz, who led the research insisted all possible precautions had been taken to rule out cheating.

*'The bottom line is that there is a class of highly skilled Mediums who are doing something extraordinary,'* he told journalists from the magazine.

*'All the data gathered so far is consistently in accord with survival of consciousness after death. It suggests that Mediums are in direct communication with the deceased.'*

Oh, but here comes our old friend, Dr Richard Wiseman, who we'll be meeting again later, in a far less sceptical mood, to debunk and offer up

maddeningly rational explanations for the results of the experiment.

*'I am not very impressed with what I have seen so far,'* he was quoted as saying.

*'We know "yes" or "no" answers can offer up a lot of clues. You can guess age, accent and how enthusiastic the tone of voice is to suggestions. I also think the way they have set their control group is wrong.'*

*'I am currently conducting my own experiments on Mediums, and I think it is misleading to ask volunteers to assess the accuracy of the information provided.'*

*'They say something like: "Your father had walking problems," which is a very ambiguous statement. If you want to believe in Mediums you will think back and if he had a limp in old age or once hurt his leg, you will say that is accurate.'*

Cheers, Richard. That's a fine forensic analysis of the phenomenon. We may as well call for the halting of the experiments now. Richard has all the answers, it seems.

Or maybe he doesn't.

See elsewhere in this section...

5<sup>th</sup> March, 2001 University of Arizona 'DAILY MAIL'



\*\*\* Meanwhile an article in the very same paper, written by Dr Peter Fenwick, a neuro-psychiatrist, concerning the potential reality of Near Death Experiences, caught our eyes, and so here, despite the very real risk of being dragged bodily before the courts for nicking the crux of the article for our very own publication, we present the 'highlights, for your perusal....' *'For many years I, a neuro-psychiatrist, thought that accounts of NDE's were the nonsensical outcome of the Swinging Sixties, when a mixture of drugs, wishful thinking and a suspension of rational thought enabled otherwise intelligent people to make the most outrageous assertions in good faith. Now I am not so sure.'*

*I had been taught at Cambridge University and then at St Thomas's Hospital, London, where I completed my medical studies, to accept without question the supposedly scientific view of consciousness.*

*'The "mind," we have learned, is merely a product of the brain and it cannot act independently of it. How could any rational person accept that you could die, experience some small portion of it, and then come back to this world?*

*But after years study, I am not surprised by the new findings.*

*'The 63 survivors of cardiac arrest whose experiences are described in the latest issue of the scientific journal RESUSUCITATION, all died – in a clinical sense, at the Southampton General Hospital. They had no pulse. No respiration. And they had fixed, dilated pupils – an indicator of clinical death.*

*'According to conventional science, the brain no longer functions at this point. How could it? And if your brain has ceased to work, then you are dead. But seven of the 63 who came near to death recalled emotions and visions during their unconsciousness. They claim that they experienced feelings of peace, joy, of time speeding up and of a lost awareness of the body.*

*'There were also reports of bright lights, encounters with mystical beings or deceased relatives and of coming to a point of no return (now there's an unfortunate choice of phrase, if ever there was one).*

*'Dr Sam Parnia, who co-authored the study, claims that the recollections were not like normal hallucinations. They were, he says, too clear and structured for that.*

*'He also points out that the conventional understanding of cardiac arrest involves rapid loss of activity in the brainstem – the central trunk of the human brain which controls our basic life support systems – which should make it impossible for those who do survive to have such rapid and lucid memories.*

*'His conclusion, and it is one that I agree with, is that there is enough evidence now to justify a definitive study into whether the mind continues to exist after the death of the body and the closing down of the brain.*

*'According to Dr Parania, "If our results are replicated, it would imply that the mind may continue to exist after the death of the body, or that there is such a thing as the afterlife."*

*'As I have said, I was once deeply suspicious about the claims that ordinary people had Out of the Body Experiences – of only because so many of them seemed to originate in the wilder reaches of California in America where all manner of strange cults and beliefs flourished.*

*'Then I met a British patient, Peter Thompson, who was being treated for a severe heart condition. An improperly inserted cardiac catheter had brought him almost to the point of death – and there this down-to-earth salesman went through tall the classic symptoms of a Californian-style OOB. He found himself floating against the ceiling of the theatre, he experienced feelings of peace and love, and he met his dead mother who told him he had to go back to his life.*

*'I treated him for the anxiety attacks which followed which, not surprisingly, followed this event and, because I took his story seriously instead of treating it as a distressing symptom of mental instability, he recovered.*

*'His experience was in my mind when I took part in a BBC TV programme called "GLIMPSES OF DEATH" on the subject some years later. This documentary prompted 2,000 letters from people who claimed to have experienced similar events.*

*'I interviewed many of them and finally produced my own book based on their experiences. "THE TRUTH IN THE LIGHT" was published in 1995.*

*What persuaded me to go ahead and publish, in the face of widespread professional scepticism from colleagues that I respected, was the fact that so many common threads ran through all these accounts. How could so many people have suffered identical "illusions?"*

*And how could their experiences have affected them in such a similar manner?*

*Those who "return" all report that they have been changed. They no longer fear death, and many have a new determination to make the most of the opportunities that they have been given in this life.*

*Those who were religious found their faith renewed. Those who had nothing often acquired at least a belief in some form of afterlife.*

*I do not begin to know what lies behind the extraordinary experience they had undergone. But I am absolutely convinced that that the thousands of people to whom I talked believed that what had happened to them was real.*

*'As a scientist, I do my best to try to explain what happened to those undoubtedly sincere people in terms of biology and psychology.*

*But more research is needed.*

*And if we fail to find a "logical" explanation, we must prepared to accept that they have undergone a mystical or religious experience which conventional science cannot begin to explain.'*

*22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2001 'DAILY MAIL'*

*\*\*\*\* Several examples of OOB's were included in a subsequent article that appeared in the pages of the several tabloids over the ensuing days.*

*They are all fairly similar in nature, so rather than bore you to death (or should that be near death), I'm sure you'll settle for a couple of examples:*

*Sandra Ayling, 56, is a care worker who lives in Plymouth.*

*Here is her tale; 'My Near Death Experience happened in 1980, but I will never forget. I was 36 and had no idea that I had a medical problem that could have killed me.*

*'It was late at night and I was watching the TV at home. Brian, my sister's boyfriend, had dozed off on the sofa. Suddenly, I had huge chest pains and this crushing feeling in my chest. As the pain got worse, so did the crushing. I was clutching my chest and my throat, gasping for breath.*

*'Just as I felt I couldn't breathe anymore, I found myself flying vertically upwards through a tunnel at high speed. There were gruesome, distorted faces passing over me. It was horrifying. There was a blinding light at the end of the tunnel but the faster I travelled, the further away the light seemed to be.*

*'That's when the pains in my chest were at their worst. Then I came out of my body and floated upwards until I was level with the clock, halfway up the wall. I was looking down on myself in the chair and at my sister's sleeping boyfriend. I felt weightless, floating freely. I couldn't feel the pain in my chest anymore. I couldn't feel a thing. There was nothing except peace and tranquillity. I've never experienced that feeling of bliss any time in my life.*

*'Then I started thinking that I wanted to get back, back to life. I looked down over to Brian and I thought I'd try to wake him up. I shouted and shouted but I couldn't get through to him. In reality I suppose, I wasn't making any noise. So I willed myself to come right down. It seemed like I went back in my body from my feet upwards and it felt like someone gave me a really sharp bang in the ribs when I went up through my abdomen. I had a tingly feeling all through my body and now I assume that's when my heart restarted.*

*I did wake Brian up then. I was shattered. My chest felt as though a thousand horses had run over it. He said to me; 'You look like a ghost.'*

*I stayed in the same chair all night, too frightened to fall asleep and not understanding what had happened to me, physically or spiritually.*

*The next morning, I shuffled to the doctor. I was very fit but that morning I couldn't walk faster than a shuffle. It was agony. The GP took one look at me and sent me to hospital for tests. It turned out that I had a pulmonary embolism and they said that I had come very close to dying.'*

\*\*\* Next up we have the case of Dennis Hickman, 76, a retired railway technician who lives in Lymington, Hampshire.

*'You have to go back to the Second World War for my Near Death Experience but I still have a crystal-clear recollection of it. I was 20 years old, a signaller in the Navy and was taken ashore to a hospital near Aberdeen with a case of acute appendicitis and peritonitis. I was in intense pain and was put on the operating table immediately.*

*'I was told afterwards that during the operation I had clinically died. My heart stopped working. That when I had my OOB.*

*'I went up in the air in a shaft of bluish light and was looking at myself lying on the operating table. I saw the doctors and the nurses around me and was looking down at the tops of the operating table lights. I could see the whole of my body. I saw my open stomach. There was coloured light all around me and I was still floating above everyone in the operating theatre.*

*'Then the bluish light changed to a more misty shade and went back to its natural colour. I went back down the shaft of light and back into my own body and suddenly I had this excruciating pain again. The doctors realised I was alive and carried on resuscitating me.*

*'I made a full recovery and soon went back to my ship but my perspective on life has changed.*

*'From that particular point in time, I have always felt I am in charge of my body and that me and my body are two different things.*

\*\*\* And finally, Heather Sloan, aged 50, is a clerk from Portsmouth, Hampshire, and she has this to say about her NDE.

*'My experience was in 1976. I had an 18-month-old daughter, no close relative nearby and a husband at sea with the Royal Navy. I had had severe abdominal pains for about a month and was very thin. I was told I needed an operation to investigate the cause of the pain and was in a side ward in hospital following this surgery.*

*'I found myself lifted out of my body and looking down on myself. My spirit was attached to my body by a thin wisp of cord which looked like it could break apart at any time. I was urged by the presence of a being not to look back but to move on towards the light. I felt reassured by my companion, which I can only describe as a "being of light."*

*'I did not find it too difficult to think that this was the God which we would all meet. However, this was not how I had envisaged God to be. This was a compassionate being and not the judgmental character I had been led to expect. I felt surrounded by many beings of light.*

*'I started to see my life from its beginning. I was able to experience everything in its entirety. I became aware that perhaps I was not returning to life. A period of distress occurred as I knew I had a small child at home. How could I leave her and my husband? The beings of light were compassionate and it was decided that I would return. I asked why this was happening and was told I had an ectopic pregnancy and had suffered a severe haemorrhage.*

*'I had not actually been told this by my doctors, but it proved to be true.*

*'I was allowed to meet this "child" and I explained that it had no reason to fear, that it would have a happy home full of love. However, it did not feel able to attempt life yet.*

*'I began the journey back to my body and found myself hovering over my body as two nurses were standing on either side of my bed. There was a small jolt and the next thing I remember was being woken up for temperature and blood pressure recordings.*

*'I had no idea what an OOB was, even when I underwent my own experience.*

*'It wasn't until years later, when I was reading a magazine, that I realised my experience had a name and many others shared it with me. Perhaps the experiments going on now will find the answers the sceptics need to see to demonstrate scientifically that there is a self beyond the physical.'*

16<sup>th</sup> February, 2001 Various 'DAILY EXPRESS'

\*\*\* Given his track record for constantly championing the cause in terms of the reality of supernatural phenomena, it should come as absolutely no surprise that the esteemed Colin Wilson should add his voice to the growing controversy.

In an article published in, yep, you guessed it, 'THE DAILY MAIL,' Mr Wilson had this to say in defence of his belief in some kind of afterlife...

*'Has Schwartz's team conclusively proved the reality of life after death? Unfortunately, no. Scientists can still fall back on one powerful argument: that the Mediums are simply highly-skilled mind readers who pick up information about people's dead relatives from the sitters' minds.*

*'Unlike life after death, telepathy has been proved again and again in the laboratory under test conditions.*

*'So how can telepathy be ruled out? A Danish-American 'expert,' Dr Nils Jacobson, investigated a case in which the evidence is impossible to fault.*

*'In 1928, a man died in America after being crushed against a wall by a truck. Six years later, his brother attended a séance in which the Medium said he was in contact with a man killed by a truck, and gave details that convinced the sitter that his dead brother was present.*

*'So far, this could have been telepathy. But then came a startling piece of information. The dead man said that he had not died of head injuries as everyone had assumed, but of a complication that "came from the bone."*

*His brother checked the medical records which showed that his brother had died from a brain embolism caused by a blood clot from a broken bone.*

*'That, I would argue, is a virtually watertight case. But it raises another question. The dead man had been unconscious from the moment of the accident until he died.*

*'So how did he know the precise cause of his own death? Was he present in the post mortem room when the cause was established? That seems to be stretching credibility rather far.*

*'Yet many paranormal investigators would accept that possibility. The Oxford researcher Charles McCreery recorded the evidence of a girl who had been on the pillion of a motorcycle when it struck a car at speed.*

*'She told McCreery how she had somersaulted through the air and landed on her head.*

*Then she sat up, surprised to feel no pain, and wondered why people were running towards her. At that point, she saw her own body lying in the road, and heard somebody say: "She's dead."*

*'Suddenly, she told McCreedy, she was terrified. Somehow she knew she had to return to her body, and suddenly felt the hard road beneath her, and the terrible pain of bruises and lacerations.*

*'But when she recovered, she recalled being able to walk about when her unconscious body lay nearby, and how she felt as if she were still in her body.*

*'Another example occurred when the novelist D.H. Lawrence was dying. He apparently told his wife that he had just been floating near the ceiling and looked down on himself lying in the bed.*

*'Scientists call such evidence "anecdotal." But researchers like McCreery have set out to test it in the laboratory using people who claim to have mastered the trick of leaving the body at will.*

*'One of the best was an American, Keith Harary. In 1973, he was tested at Duke University, North Carolina, by the paranormal researcher Dr Robert Morris.*

*Dr Morris used a kitten called Spirit. It was put in a box and began to mew to be picked up. Half a mile down the road, Harary lay on a bed, with another researcher sitting beside him.*

*'The researcher rang Morris, and they synchronised their watches.*

*"Okay," said the researcher, "Go and visit your kitten."*

*'And within seconds, Spirit had stopped meowing and seemed to be looking at somebody.*

*'When Harary "returned to his body" again, the kitten soon began mewling for attention.*

*'Whenever Harary was ordered to visit Spirit, the kitten stopped mewling. Again and again, the kitten behaved as if it was looking at someone when Harary was "visiting," and did not meow once.*

*'All of which explains why, although the work of Schwartz's researchers may not be beyond criticism, they surely deserve warm congratulation for taking a huge step towards proving the reality of life after death.'*

*5<sup>th</sup> March, 2001 General 'DAILY MAIL'*

*\*\*\* And still the debate raged on...*

Just a few days after the publication of Colin Wood's thought-provoking piece, came news that dear old Dr Wiseman and his team had successfully debunked the legend of the ghosts of Hampton Court.

The less-than ground breaking conclusion that the many witnesses to apparent paranormal phenomena at one of the most 'haunted' sites in Britain, had actually been the victims of their own over-active imaginations, didn't go down too well with the more open-minded amongst us.

The results of the study, published in a paper prepared by the team, also laid the blame for sense of an otherworldly presence on a freak cold spot.

Dr Wiseman was quoted as saying; *'In terms of location, the haunted gallery is strange as there are concealed doors with changing thermal patterns and people literally walk into a column of cold air.'*

People, it seems, have mis-attributed a normal phenomenon as being due to ghosts, and a study of 450 people, which was revealed at the British Psychological Society annual conference in Glasgow, showed that those who believed in the paranormal were more likely to think they had witnessed an inexplicable event.

Hey, no shit, Sherlock!

A total of 430 weird experiences were reported to the group, and according to Wiseman, the vast majority made reference to a rapid decrease in temperature. Others claimed to have sensed an eerie presence, whilst a fifth were convinced they actually encountered a ghost. A third meanwhile, had remained sceptical and had at least tried to find a logical explanation.

Dr Wiseman concluded; *'If people feel cold, know a place is haunted and believe in ghosts they are more likely to have an extreme experience.'*

The team had used thermal imagery to monitor the gallery at night, and were astonished one morning to actually see a figure walking down the corridor. The excitement was soon deflated however when the 'ghost' turned out to be a cleaner looking for a Hoover.

Some of the witnesses had described seeing people dressed in Elizabethan clothes, but Dr Wiseman dismisses these sightings as being of nothing other than a normal human guard dressed in period costume.

There does however remain the mystery of one cold patch that is not in the vicinity of an obvious draught. Even the good Dr was forced to admit that the team hadn't solved that one yet.

*'I'm not 100 per cent certain about the other cold spot at the moment. We've not managed to solve that enigma, for the moment at least.'*

*29<sup>TH</sup> March, 2001 Hampton Court, London 'DAILY EXPRESS'*

\*\*\* Almost inevitably, a response wasn't long in coming. And here it is, courtesy of some bloke called Ben Shepherd.

*'So yet another attempt to prove the existence of ghosts, ghouls and spooks has drawn a blank. One in a long line of spectacular failures. So, why when there isn't a shred of scientific evidence of their existence, do people want to believe in ghosts? "People see and hear what they want to see and hear," says Stuart Warburton, the managing curator at Belgrave Hall, a museum in Leicester that achieved fame two years ago when security cameras seemed to pick up the spectral image of a Victorian woman. The ghost was instantly "identified" as Charlotte Ellis, a suffragette who lived at the hall in the early 1900's. A local paranormal investigator declared he had never seen anything like it.*

*The explanation turned out to be something rather more mundane...namely, an oak leaf.*

Mr Warburton was amazed that people couldn't simply accept that explanation. *"It was an oak leaf, but no matter what you say, people get so entrenched in their belief and you just cannot shift it. It's all psychological. It's like the ink-blot test. You give people a shape and they project what they want on to it."*

Shepherd then goes on to cite the furore that erupted in the wake of the screening of the video of the ghost/leaf, and the readiness of the media to nurture the belief that something truly paranormal had occurred.

Camera crews from as far afield as Japan descended upon the Hall and Dr Larry Montz, the apparent model for the highly successful 'GHOSTBUSTERS' movies, also turned up looking for evidence of phantoms, and the museum attendances doubled. Mr Warburton decided to call in a representative from ASSAP to carry out a series of vigils. At the time of writing, they had failed to find any trace of anything remotely paranormal.

Terry Hewitt, one of ASSAP's volunteers, told reporters; *'There are particular buildings which you can enter and get an immediate sense of presence. You sense it's not a nice place and then you start expecting strange things to happen. There are also old stories about incubus and succubus, where people think there is some presence weighing down on them. A lot of that is to do with your brain switching your muscles off when you go to sleep to stop you damaging yourself when you're dreaming. This switching on and off can sometimes feel like something pressing down. I'm not saying that everything has a scientific explanation. I'm Mulder as well as Scully, if you like. What we try to do is sort the wheat from the chaff, and when we're left with the wheat, we ask ourselves how it happened.'*

The fact is though, however many rational explanations the so-called 'experts' dream up, there will always be those who claim to have seen ghosts, who refuse to accept the debunking.

One of those who refuses to be swayed from his belief is Phil Skelton, who has cordially invited Dr Wiseman to visit his pub, Carbrook Hall, in Sheffield, any time he likes.

*'Quite recently I saw a figure walk through the pub and then disappear without opening the door.*

*'I watched out of the corner of my eye (interestingly enough, according to traditional belief, the best way to view otherworldly entities, from Faeries to phantoms, extraterrestrials to alien animals), and then realised that a lad sitting at the bar had also been looking in the same direction. We both saw it together. Psychic researchers have visited the pub three times and each time they've said there is definitely a presence there.*



(ABOVE): Carbrook Hall, Sheffield, Phil Skelton's haunted pub. The owner had invited uber-sceptic Dr Wiseman to visit any time he likes, if he wants real proof that ghosts exist.

*'The strangest thing I have ever seen was one evening when it had never entered my mind that I might see a ghost. I saw the distorted outline of a figure standing at the top of the stairs. He brushed past my elbow. Some time later a man came into the pub and said he hadn't been here since he was practising with a band upstairs. He described exactly the same apparition that I had seen.'*

Mr Shephard summed up the situation thus;

*'Wiseman's study at Hampton Court leaves no doubt about the power of suggestion. He invited visitors to record any unusual experiences and they reported icy draughts, 500-year-old moans and ghostly touches galore. But he also told half of them that the spookiest area was the Haunted Gallery, while the others were left under the impression that the palace's Georgian rooms had the most ghosts. Sure enough, there was a clear divide as each group reported the tingliest goings on in the area they thought was the most haunted.*

*'Hampton Court spokeswoman Elizabeth Whiddett is not surprised visitors react like this; "We have five centuries of history here, including some very tragic events.*

*'When people visit they want to get caught up in the past. It's natural to want to believe there's something there. We give them the environment and they want to feel part of it all.'*

*'But even the level-headed staff at Hampton Court don't want to explain everything away. After chucking away at the aforementioned incident with the cleaner and the Hoover, Elizabeth adds in a suitably grave tone; "There are too instances of strange things happening here to dismiss it all as total rubbish. There are things that staff and colleagues have witnessed that even Dr Wiseman couldn't explain....'*

And boy, was the good Dr in for a shock, just a few days later...

*30<sup>th</sup> March, 2001 Hampton Court, London 'DAILY EXPRESS'*

## The Vault Of Horror

....The ubiquitous Mr Wiseman, had his smug self-satisfied grin well and truly wiped clean off his face when he and his team elected to investigate the vaults beneath an 18<sup>th</sup> century bridge in the centre of Edinburgh.

The ten day study produced some unexpected, not to say chilling, results, shaking the volunteers sceptical foundations like a veritable earthquake. And a pretty seismic one at that.

It emerged that the 250 members of the public who stood in the vaults under the South Bridge were more prone to describing unexplained phenomena if they were in one of the vaults which was allegedly haunted.

The experiment left Dr Wiseman puzzled (now there's a change), when he told a meeting of the Edinburgh Science Festival that 44 per cent of the volunteers had reported some type of unusual experience.

Among the phenomena described were temperature changes, touching and pulling sensations, the sound of breathing and a sighting of an actual phantom; a male figure in a leather apron walking across the doorway.

In five vaults reputed to be haunted 51 percent of people reported experiences, but only 35 per cent did so in the other, not quite so haunted ones.

The team also discovered a number of anomalies in three photographs taken in the vaults.

One digital photo seemed to show a 'green density spot', whilst a green blob appeared in an instant picture print. A third photo displayed a whitened area in its centre.

Dr Wiseman told the attendees; *'When you take a lot of photographs you expect some of those anomalies. What was interesting was that those three only occurred in the two most haunted vaults.'*

Despite attempting to maintain his level of scepticism, even he was forced to admit; *'I'm closer to being a lot more curious. And the fact that the photographic anomalies happened in allegedly haunted places makes me think that there's something going on.'*

*'Had the public experiences been randomly distributed between the vaults then you really couldn't conclude anything. What you can conclude here is that there is something going on in some sense, that these vaults are in some senses producing an experience.'*

*'That's why I think scientists can be quite excited about this, because suddenly there is an effect to*

*work with, something to untangle that is a little bit of a mystery.'*

*'One of the investigators actually heard their name called very close to their ear and turned around to find that there was no one there, (that's some "little mystery"!!!) so people have been having interesting experiences.'*

*'Just in terms of the science and psychology, it's interesting to see what's bringing about those experiences. But they are not trivial for some people.'*

Dr Wiseman expressed the belief that the background light from beyond the vault's archways and the size of the vaults themselves may be some sort of factor.

*'We measured air temperature, air movement, magnetic fields and light levels from outside the vaults.'*

*'When it was darker outside in the corridor people reported far more experiences inside the vaults.'*

*'So there's obviously a sense of not knowing what's going outside the corridor and that's leading to people being more anxious.'*

*'The haunted vaults had twice as much floor space and they were about one-third higher.'*

*'That either means ghosts like large spaces to live in or these physical measurements are having an impact on people's psychology'*

Despite this outward display of confidence, Dr Wiseman at least had the humility to admit that he had been too frightened to spend much time in the vaults.

*'I'm terrified of the dark,'* he told reporters.

*18<sup>th</sup> April, 2001 South Bridge, Edinburgh Scotland 'DAILY MAIL'*

## Guided By (Evil) Voices.

Oh, and here's one for the Best (or should that read worst) Excuses For Heinous Crimes Department: A psychic who was accused of sexually molesting four female friends during a supposed 'home-healing session' (Well, that's one way of putting it, I guess). Terence Wood, 41, did admit to touching the girls but sought refuge in the excuse that he had been guided by invisible spirits.

These mischievous entities were apparently responsible for persuading Wood to grope and kiss the women during one-to-one sessions, making them feel uncomfortable and frightened.

Whilst giving evidence at Leeds Crown Court, Wood, who hails from Bradford, maintained that there was no intended sexual connotations to the 'groping,' it was merely a result of the spirits giving him the power to heal.

*'If I put my hand where the pain is I can take the pain away. I close my eyes, my hand becomes very, very hot and if I put my hands on the afflicted area, most of the time it works.'*

*'It's more effective when I touch the flesh – but I always ask first.'*

The father-of-three said he had gone to a house in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, last June (2000), and where the women had arranged to give readings.

He selected a child's bedroom upstairs to see the women on an individual basis in sessions lasting about an hour.

He readily admitted placing his hands inside the knickers of a 54-year-old grandmother during one of these sessions, but claimed that he was unaware of the true nature of what he was doing. She apparently had tremendous pain in the lower part of her back and hip area.

*'I brought my hands around the front area of her hips and my hands did go inside her knickers. I didn't realise where my hands were. I just go where the spirits tell me the pain is.'*

Wood, who denies a total of four charges of indecent assault, admitted making comments about one woman's breasts and blowing a raspberry on another's stomach, but said it was *'to lighten the mood'*

He wound up by saying that although he felt attracted to all his clients, it was never in a sexual way.

Yeah right.

At the time of going to press, the case had been unresolved.

18<sup>th</sup> April, 2001 Bradford, West Yorkshire 'DAILY MAIL'

## Ghost With Taste Tries To Disrupt STEPS Video Shoot

In January this year, those 'pop geniuses' and purveyors of classic, lyrically inventive, lifetime-memorable toons as er, '5, 6, 7,8' were reportedly plagued by the ghost of a 19<sup>th</sup> century poet by the name of Lady Caroline Lamb, the lover of fellow poet Lord Byron.

The phantom, who was doubtless peeved at the quality of the lyrical contents of *'THE WAY YOU MAKE ME FEEL'*, apparently caused objects at the Brocket Hall studios to move around by themselves and lowered the temperatures to a point where it was freezing cold.

*'It all started when 'STEPS' arrived but when they left everything went back to normal.'*

*'The only explanation is that Lady Caroline didn't like their music....'*

2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2001 Brocket Hall, Hertfordshire 'SUNDAY MANC'

## The Phantom Of The Funfair

...And a ghost that appears to enjoy taking a ride on various attractions at Bowood House Theme Park, was making the news, last summer.

The spirit, which likely got bored of haunting the grounds and the house itself, took to having a go on the fun fair rides.

Staff at the park near Chippenham, Wiltshire, claimed that they have heard the ghost virtually every morning while they are doing the regulation safety checks. They have even heard an invisible something on a fun pirate ship called 'Centaur,' earning him the obvious nickname, Pirate Pete.

Supervisor Michael Clease was quoted as saying; *'We hear someone swishing down the slides or on the walkways, but when we go to look there's never anyone there.'*

23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2000 Bowood House Theme Park, Nr Chippenham, Wiltshire 'DAILY SLUR'

## Tales From Where The Shadows Wait



The Bottle & Glass pub in Picklescott, Shropshire, has singularly failed to find a live-in housekeeper because the locals all believe the hostelry is haunted.

The ghost of a landlord with a wooden leg is rumoured to limp around the premises terrifying staff and customers alike.

Boss Jim Alger stated resignedly; *'When they hear about ghosts applicants back off!'*

23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2001 Picklescott, Shropshire 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

\*\*\* A TV crew working on a documentary about, coincidentally enough, ghosts, were disturbed by the fact that one of their tape machines failed to record properly when filming at Tamworth Castle, in Staffordshire.

The castle is said to be haunted by several phantoms and the BBC Midlands team were totally flummoxed by the phenomena of the faulty tape.

Anna Cunningham, a journalist working on the film, was quoted as saying; *'We were filming at a staircase which is supposed to be haunted and there didn't appear to be any problems.'*

*'But when we came to edit that part of the film it looked as if the tape had been tampered with.'*

*'The camera appeared to be moving all over the place of its own accord.'*

31<sup>st</sup> October, 2000 Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

\*\*\* Ray and Maureen Robson decided to hire a house-sitter for their holidays, this year, to act as company for their resident ghost.

Ray, 38, claims their very old terraced house in Barry, South Wales, is haunted by a docker called Tom who lived there three generations ago.

The couple, who are evidently not at all scared of the spirit feared old Tom would get lonely while they jetted off for a week in the sun.

So local psychic Ian Lawman agreed to keep the ghost company while the couple were away.

*23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2001 Barry, South Wales 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'*

\*\*\* Noreen Renier, a self-proclaimed psychic, has been assisting police forces right across America for more than 20 years.

A divorced mother of two, who resides in Florida, she quit her job as a full-time Medium when she discovered she was blessed (or cursed, depending on which way you look at it) with *'The Gift.'*

*'In the beginning I was a sceptic,'* she told reporters, *'but almost as soon as I started developing my skills I went professional.'*

*'I first found I had psychic powers when I was meditating. At first I didn't believe it and thought I was going crazy. But as I read about it I started to develop my skills. I did readings for friends and then I was invited to give lectures.'*

*'I have now helped in hundreds of cases. As long as the police send me something personal to do with the victim, things just pour out of me.'*

*'My latest mailbag contained a rib bone of a victim, along with their signature.'*

*'For years, I concentrated on unsolved murders until I was asked to find a missing plane.'*

*'I gave longitude and latitude and they found it.'*

*On homicide cases, I get sent something that was on the body - glasses or a shoe. I go into a trance and get "killed" the way they were. Then I tell the police how the person died. It's very exhausting. You can't do it every day.'*

*'Early in my career, I laid down a few ground rules number one being never to work with the family or friends of victims. I once worked on a case where the son of a mother-of-three was killed and buried in the back yard.'*

*'I "saw" to of her boys fighting and one killing the other, accidentally. So I took the boy aside and told them what I had seen. I couldn't tell the mother, he had to admit he did it. It was pretty emotional.'*

*'And once I was working on a homicide in Texas, and as I started describing the murderer, the detective said "You've just described detective so-and-so." After an investigation, one of their colleagues was arrested for the killing.'*

*'He either had a lot of guts to work with me or he had no choice. I never found out which.'*

The article then went on to feature a selection of 'foolproof' ways of improving your own psychic powers, which, according to many paranormal 'experts,' lie dormant within us all. It might well be a load of hoary old nonsense, but just for the hell of it, I've decided to include the 'highlights' here for your enjoyment...

If you've ever been close to or deeply in love with someone, you are likely to have experienced a form of telepathy. This at least, I find myself in

agreement with. Quite often you seem to know exactly what your friend or partner is thinking and can accurately predict what they're going to say before they've even opened their mouth.

The fact that if you live with someone or associate with them over a number of years, it's hardly amazing that the familiarity will cause to be able to guess their thoughts and the paths of their conversation.

The article attributes this to an innate psychic ability, however, and gives the following tip as how to increase the talent...

*Try To guess what your loved one is about to say, or finish sentences for him/her. And compare dreams to see if any are the same.*

Another way of honing these 'skills' is to try and guess which TV ad is going to come on next, or when driving, what colour car is going to come along the road.

You could also attempt to describe a place you've never physically seen or been to before and upon arrival check to see if you're at all accurate.

What is also undeniably true is people can tell when they're being stared at by someone from behind. If you doubt this, try staring intently at a strangers back and witness how often they become uncomfortable or even turn around and look at you. After having imparted this 'crucial,' life-changing information, the article concludes with some tips on how you can use psychometry, or using objects to sense a person's 'vibrations.'

You should, our 'experts' tell us, start by asking a friend if you can handle something that belongs to someone they know. Your friend should be aware of the history of the said object, but obviously, you should be entirely ignorant of even its existence. The aim of the exercise is to attempt to tell your friend about the life and character of the owner.

*'You need to relax and let your thoughts flow. Say what comes to mind. Do not censor your thoughts. However silly it might sound, say exactly what pops into your head.'*

*'Then imagine that the person who owns the object is standing right in front of you. Is this a warm person or a cold one? Happy or sad? Perhaps he or she is a worrier?'*

*'Try to detect what they are good at, the skills they have. Can you trust them? What are their good points? And - be careful with this one - what are their bad points?'*

*'Once you have described their character, try to use your intuition to perceive a few specific facts about them. What kind of a childhood did they have? What does their home look like? What sort of people do they mix with? Have any specific events changed the course of their life?'*

*'Finally, when you have seen as much as possible, ask your friend to tell you what percentage you got right. You may surprise yourself with your accuracy!!'*

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Another psychic, Sally Morgan, not only claims to be in touch with the everyday spirits of the departed. She has gone on record as stating that she can contact the souls of deceased celebrities....

Sally is now in her 50's, and has been a full-time psychic for twelve years. Apparently, the answers come thick and fast when she is conducting an interview. The only indication that anything untoward is occurring is a massive dilation of Sally's pupils which, the 'SUNDAY PEOPLE' say, is disturbingly convincing....But convincing of what?

First up, Sally told the tabloid press that she'd asked JOHN LENNON the following questions/

'What's it like up there?'

'Mind-blowing' (a little surprising seeing as how the very great Mr Lennon once wrote a lyric that made reference to the fact that above us there was only sky!)

'What do you do all day?'

'Meditate. And watch you.'

Was how and when you died meaningful?'

'To whom? It was instant, so how I died was good.'

'Meaningful to her?'

'He means Yoko'

'She's made up now.'

'He's started laughing.'

We move on to PRINCESS DIANA...

'Was there a plot to kill you?'

'I don't wish to play games. It's all going to come out.'

'Not her death, something that'll affect her reputation,' Sally interjects.

'Were you going to marry Dodi?'

She ignores this question.

'He wants me to say silly things.'

She apparently means the writer, Nick

'I wish to thank the press for allowing my boys space.'

Are you proud of Wills? Do you want him to be King?

'Do you really have to ask? It was, and still is, my greatest wish.'

'How would you feel if Charles was to marry Camilla?' ('There is only a stony silence).

'How do you feel about the public reaction to your death?'

'I was overwhelmed. It keeps me from passing on when I should.'

JOHN F. KENNEDY is next to join the party line.

'Who shot you?'

'There were four rifles, but it was organised by a fat man who also killed my brother. A vendetta.'

'JFK's father apparently did the dirty on this man years before.'

'It was only worth doing when I was President.'

('He says his right hand man knew. He's saying Johnson (Vice President Johnson took office on Kennedy's death). He made it easier for them to do it).

'Who is the fat man?'

'He headed an organisation with men at the top level of government in his pocket.'

Is there a Kennedy curse?'

'No. We just keep repeating the same mistakes. Jackie's here. We had to be here for our son, J.J. His knee locked and made him lose control of the plane when he died.'

Next up, MARILYN MONROE:

'Did you have an affair with John F Kennedy?'

'With John and Bobby. But it's all been said.'

John never wanted me. He didn't have to tell me, I knew.'

'They didn't have her killed. She died as a result of feeling inadequate because John rejected her. She didn't mean to take her own life.'

'And the note that was left?'

'Written by someone who thought they were helping me. All I wanted was to be able to sleep. Everything was planned for the next day. I wouldn't have done that if I had been planning to kill myself.'

'It suits everybody that this is how I died, but it's a myth. I was quite religious. I wouldn't take my life.'

Our penultimate guest is the one and only ELVIS PRESLEY.

'Do you have any advice for people with eating disorders?'

'Get help. Don't hide it.'

'Any tips for healthy eating?'

'Are you kidding?'

'Anything you'd change?'

'No. I'd do it all again the same.'

'Tell us a secret?'

'I have a living son.'

'Who with?'

'A dark-haired woman, who is not a celebrity.'

('The woman, I think, is identical to him')

'Where is he?'

'A very deserted area of the US. Miles of nothing but a straight road and a garage. The boy, a man now, lives near or works there.'

'Does he know Elvis is his dad?'

'He has a good idea, but he's incredibly humble, and doesn't want anything to do with it.'

So finally, we come to the late lamented singer of the Australian band INXS, MICHAEL HUTCHENCE...

'How did you die?'

('He's laughing, but it's a nervous laugh. There's a burning smell. He sounds like he's choking but not because there's something round his neck. It's more of a cough. I think he had a cough when he died.')

'Suddenly, quickly.'

('There were two women with him when he died.')

'Are you ashamed of the way you died?'

'Yeah, it should have been more dignified. I tried to come back but it was too late.'

'Who do you believe should look after Tiger Lilly?'

'She needs her sisters. With them she will see her mother, her likeness, I mean. Bob will tell her about me. He is an OK guy.'

'Are you with Paula Yates now?'

'Sometimes.'

'Do you have any regrets?'

'Oh man, I wish I could hold Lola. That's what I call Lilly.'

'Were you angry when Paula died and left Tiger Lilly?'

'Anger destroys. She wanted to see me, really see me. She did, man.'

5<sup>th</sup> May, 2001 'SUNDAY PEOPLE MAGAZINE'

## Tales From The Middle Kingdom

A photographic archive of the infamous Cottingley Faeries was sold for £6,000 at a Bonhams & Brooks auction in Knightsbridge, London.

The picture, reproduced below, was originally snapped by Elsie Wright, then aged 15, and purports to show her cousin Frances Griffiths, 10, surrounded by Faeries in the village of Cottingley near Bradford, in 1917.

Both Elsie and Frances claim that although the photographs were a hoax, they only took the pictures to 'prove' the existence of the Little People they both saw for real on regular occasions while playing in the beck at the rear of their house.

The snaps served to convince Edward Gardner and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and with the eyes of a media anxious for some light relief from the horrors of the First World War, the girls were subsequently left with little option other than to stick to their story that the photos were genuine.



It wasn't until 1982 that the *British Journal Of Photography* published an article declaring that with the camera they were using it would have been impossible to have produced such clearly defined negatives.

Even when, the following year, (March, 1983), the cousins publicly announced that they had faked the photos, in the pages of *THE YORKSHIRE EVENING POST*, they both remained insistent that they had seen real-life Faeries down in the beck, and it was an assertion they took with them to their graves.

At the time of the hoax revelation, Elsie stated that the strangest thing about the whole furore surrounding the pictures was that anyone could ever have believed they were genuine.

It's a question Diane Purkiss, writer of a new book on the subject of Faeries entitled; *TROUBLESOME THINGS: A HISTORY OF FAIRIES AND FAIRY STORIES*, (Penguin Press £20) sought to answer in a recent Sunday magazine article.

*'One reason was that they offered a last hope for theosophy which, from 1875, had argued that we were surrounded by invisible beings. As humanity evolved, the theory went, we would be able to see the lower orders of the hierarchy, and then successfully higher ones, until identity with the deity was achieved. Humanity had not reached the stage where even the lowest order, nature spirits, could usually be seen.'*

*'It was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who brought the pictures to the public attention in a series of articles in THE STRAND magazine. This was the creator of Sherlock Holmes, a god-like, sceptical investigator who uses scientific rigour to uncover such supernatural fakes as the Hound of the Baskervilles. Yet Conan Doyle championed the photographs, thereby damaging his reputation permanently. And, to do so, he had to distort the facts.'*

*'The girls' pictures were sent to three expert photographic laboratories for authentication. The Kodak laboratory technicians reported that they could not guarantee that the pictures were not fakes; another lab reported that they were pretty sure they were forged. Conan Doyle, however, decided that the labs were biased, and suppressed the more damning sections of the Kodak report, while ignoring the others altogether.'*

*'Why? Conan Doyle had many occult beliefs, and he always claimed that these were based on his keen powers of observation. He believed in spiritualism and spirit manifestations.'*

*'In a fair light, I saw my dead mother as clearly as I ever saw her in life,' he wrote. "I am a cool observer and I don't make mistakes."*

*'The trouble with thinking that you are Sherlock Holmes is that you are apt to think that you cannot be fooled (and Holmes himself, after all, believed in sinister groups of killer Mormons).'*

*14<sup>th</sup> March, 2001 Knightsbridge, London  
'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'*

## A CABINET OF CURIOSITIES:

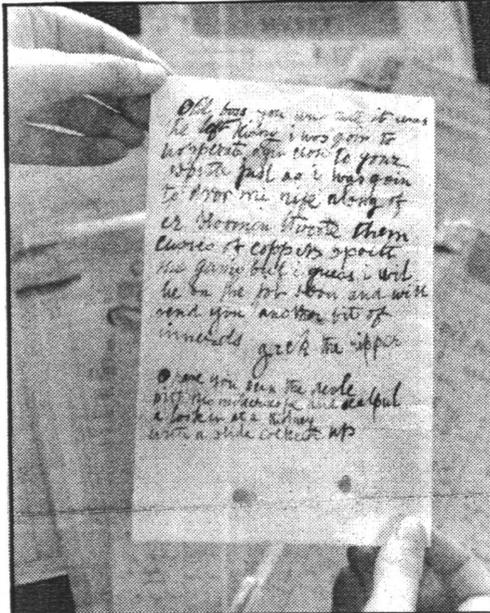
### Lost Letter From 'Jack The Ripper' Placed On Display

A good few months prior to the scheduled release of the movie adaptation of Alan Moore's modern classic graphic novel, *'FROM HELL,'* a letter, supposedly penned by no less a personage than 'Jack The Ripper,' was making the news down in the ol' Smoke.

It was placed on display at the Public Record Office in Kew, South-west London, decades after it disappeared from the Metropolitan Police archives. The note, scrawled in black ink, and signed 'Jack The Ripper,' was written back in October, 1888, at the height of the hysteria surrounding the infamous Whitechapel Murders, and when the last of the serial killer's known victims still had ten days to live.

Hundreds of letters purporting to have been penned by the Ripper, deluged London during the fog-shrouded, 'dying days' of Autumn, 1888. According to at least one 'expert' however, this particular letter has a better claim to authenticity than most.

The note was posted in the East End on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1888, and adopts a kind of colloquial written Cockemec.



It was mailed to Dr Thomas Openshaw, a pathologist at the London Hospital, who had been asked to examine a piece of human kidney contained in another supposed Ripper letter.

The kidney was said to have come from one of the five prostitutes who were the Ripper's murder victims; Catherine Eddowes.

It read; *'Old boss you was rite it was the left kidney I was goin to hopperate agin close to your ospitle just as I was goin to dror mi nife along her bloomin throte them cusses of coppers spoilt the game but I guess I will be on the job soon and will send you another bit of innerds, Jack The Ripper.'*

The note had a PS: *'O have you seen the devle with his mikerscope and scalpul a looking at a Kidney with a slide cocked up.'*

Written on one side of notepaper and covered in blotches and smears of ink, the note is believed to have been stored in the Met's archives before being thrown out in the Fifties.

The force didn't have a trained archivist until 1959 and items were regularly thrown away when space demanded.

Fortunately however, this particular letter was saved by persons unknown and some years later found its way into the possession of Donald Rumbleow, a crime historian and author of *'THE COMPLETE JACK THE RIPPER.'*

Mr Rumbelow, a former police officer, would not say how he came to get hold of the letter.

*'Of course the letter is genuine in terms of it being sent in 1888, but if it is from the real killer I do not know,'* he told reporters.

After keeping it in his own domain for thirty years, Mr Rumbelow returned the piece of paper to the Met last December.

Mr Rumbelow's friend, Stewart Evans, the author of a book on the Ripper letters, said there were 220 letters purporting to come from the murderer, and he doubted if any were genuine.

But he added; *'This particular letter has a better claim to be genuine than most. Who can say for certain that it is not genuine? You cannot prove categorically that it is a hoax.'*

Those interested in the prevalence for Fortean phenomena to imitate contemporary art, (see the coincidence of the release of *'HANNIBAL'* with stories of real-life cannibals elsewhere in this issue for example) will doubtless not be surprised to learn that the movie *'FROM HELL'* gets its title from the wording of the letter sent with the kidney to George Lusk, leader of a vigilante group formed in the East End to catch the killer.

That letter began; *'From hell, Mr Lusk, Sor, I send you half the kidne. I took from one woman prasarved it for you.'*

The original letter is not believed to have survived and only a photograph of it now exists.

The identity of the killer has long been a source of speculation with suspicion falling on every one from Merseyside's very own James Maybrick (see various back issues of *'DON'*) to the Duke of Clarence, Queen Victoria's grandson and then heir presumptive.

There is also speculation that the Ripper murders did not stop at a mere five, and that as many as 13 victims may have been involved.

Mr Rumbelow has his own theory as to the killer's identity; *'I don't think it was any of the big names. It was probably an East End man who frequented the red-light area. All the (known) murders happened within 15 minute's walk of each other.'*

20<sup>th</sup> April, 2001 Kew, London *'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'*

## ***NEW EVIDENCE IN JFK ASSASSINATION***

Almost 40 years since one of the most infamous assassinations of all time, the debate over just who shot President Kennedy in Dealey Plaza on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1963, continues to rage.

To add fuel to the fire, new information has recently been published in *'SCIENCE AND JUSTICE,'* the respected journal of the Forensic Society.

This new evidence seems to provide vindication for those who believe that this was not the work of a single lone gunman, but was actually some kind of conspiracy. The probability, the paper concludes, is as high as 96.3 per cent that there was a second gunman hidden on the notorious grassy knoll. In statistical terms, that is pretty much a certainty.

Don Thomas, a statistician with the US Department of Agriculture, has re-examined the crucial 18 seconds that began when Jesse Curry, the Dallas police chief in the lead car of Kennedy's motorcade, announced on channel two of the police radio that he was approaching the triple underpass at the end of Dealey Plaza. It ended with the chief shouting urgently; *'Go to the hospital!'*

What seemed to be a succession of gunshots was picked up on channel one during that interval. The

Warren, then chief justice of the Supreme Court, ignored the recording. Two subsequent investigations examined them, but could not agree on the number or timing of the mysterious gun-shot-like sounds.

Using Curry's words to synchronise events on the police channels was misleading, Dr Thomas has discovered. It led the most recent official examination of the sound recordings, conducted in 1981, by a special panel of the National Academy of Sciences, headed by Harvard professor of physics Norman Ramsey, to conclude that the noises 'were recorded about one minute after the President was shot,' and emanated from the police motorcycles.

Dr Thomas re-examined the tapes and determined that the analysis by the NAS was flawed and that the gun-shot like noises occurred 'at the exact instant that John F Kennedy was murdered.' He calculated that the chance of the NAS panel being correct is smaller than 100,000 to one and that the fatal shot almost certainly came from an unknown gunman situated on the grassy knoll, not Lee Harvey Oswald on the sixth floor of the book depository.

The transmissions were on two channels. One, for routine calls, was preserved on a sound-activated Dictaphone belt, a machine that used a needle to scratch the sound onto grooves in a moving plastic band. A second frequency, dedicated to the motorcade, was recorded on a sound-activated disc machine called a Grey Audiograph.

Since 1964, when the Warren Commission decided that only three shots were fired by a single assassin – namely, the demonised Mr Oswald – from the book depository at the north-east corner of Dealey Plaza, the questions surrounding the tantalising blasts on the police recordings have chipped away at the credibility of their findings. In 1978, the House Of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations (*that must be some organisation to work for, don't you think? I mean, what do they do when there are no assassinations to work on? Endlessly dredge up the Great Unsolved Assassinations of Yesteryear? Or set about organising brand new ones?*), re-examined the forensic evidence.

The suspected gunfire blasts were recorded when a motorcycle patrolman inadvertently left his microphone switch in the 'on' position, deluging his transmitting channel with what seemed to be motorcycle noise. Using signal analysis techniques, a team from the Computer Sciences Department of City University, New York, filtered out the noise and came up with five 'audible events' within a ten-second time frame that it believed might be gunfire.

The House Committee on Assassinations then hired a specialist agency to fire test shots in Dealey Plaza, positioning 36 microphones along the motorcade's route to examine the possibility of a shot coming from the grassy knoll to the side of the limousine. They found ten echo patterns that matched a gunshot sound emanating from the knoll, travelling carefully measured distances to nearby buildings and then bouncing off them to hit the open motorcycle transmitter.

By comparing the test patterns an oscillograph traces of the cleaned up police recordings, they

deduced that an unknown gunman had fired at least one shot from behind a picket fence at the top of the knoll, in front of, and to the right of the limousine, but concluded that this shot missed, and that Kennedy was killed by the final of three bullets from Oswald's rifle.

And so it seems that the question of how many gunmen were involved in the assassination has finally been 'solved.'

But, hold onto your butts for a minute, just three years later, in 1981, the Justice Department commissioned Professor Ramsey's NAS panel to review the House Committee's findings.

Using the voice heard on both channels of Dallas County Sheriff Bill Decker saying; '*Hold everything secure...*' to synchronise the recordings, it found the gun-shot like noises came a minute after the assassination and concluded there was only a 78 per cent probability that at least one of the bangs was a gunshot from the knoll.

Dr Thomas is now convinced that the National Research Council made crucial mistakes in synchronising the two police recordings because it did not realise that one of the recorders was running five per cent faster than the other and because the needle on the band recorder jumped immediately before Decker's words were recorded on channel one.

To synchronise the two channels, Dr Thomas used a snatch of speech three minutes after the assassination, when Sgt Bellah of the Dallas Police asked; '*You want me to hold this traffic on Stemmons until we find out something, or let it go?*'

Dr Thomas determined that this made a crucial difference. *On channel one, the Decker broadcast is 171 seconds earlier than Bellah's broadcast. But the Dictaphone was recording five per cent too slow. Adjusting playback to real time, the time lapse is 179 seconds.*

*The Decker broadcast was one second after the last acoustically identified gunshot on that channel. Thus, the suspect noises were simultaneous with the time of the shooting.'*

Dr Thomas re-worked the statistical analysis of the echo delay time coincidence and found that the grassy knoll marksman was not quite where the 1978 committee placed him, behind a picket fence at the top of the knoll, but a few feet further back, where the fence trails away from the knoll and is hidden by a clump of trees.

*'It seems like the fatal shot came from the grassy knoll because of the mesh between the acoustic evidence and the video evidence, and the medical and the ballistic evidence,'* Dr Thomas added. The video evidence comes from the now infamous cine film shot by John Zapruder, that formed a key part of previous investigations.

*'The Zapruder film shows the President's head driven backwards. Modern studies of enhanced versions of the film show that the fatal shot to the President was at frames 312/313.*

*'The camera used by Zapruder ran at 18.3 frames a second, giving a time interval of 4.8 seconds between the shot that hit Governor Connally and the shot that killed Kennedy.'*

Dr Thomas's findings concur with those of Jean Hill, an eyewitness known as 'The Lady In Red' in

footage of the assassination. She had always maintained she heard a shot from the knoll, not the book depository, and claimed she ran towards the knoll, to see if she could make out the shooter but was prevented from doing so by two policemen.

Professor Ramsey maintains that he remains 'fairly confident' in the work of the NAS panel, although he went on to state that he did not remember the cross talk of Sgt Bellah's question recorded on both channels.

But for Robert Blakely, former chief counsel to the House Assassinations Committee, Dr Thomas's study is a vindication of the committee's work back in 1968.

*'It shows that we made mistakes, too, but minor mistakes. We thought there was a 95 per cent chance it was a shot. He puts it at 96.3 per cent. Either way, that's beyond a reasonable doubt.'*

18<sup>TH</sup> April, 2001 Dealey Plaza, Dallas 'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'

## RESIDUE FROM MAGONIA:

### Fish Fall In Wiltshire

One of those rare, but hardly unique showers of fish (the annals of Fortean phenomena are literally drenched with reports of a similar nature) fell upon four golfers whilst they were walking along the fairway of a course in Wiltshire.



In the midst of a sudden downpour, the fairway on the second hole at the Salisbury and South Wiltshire golf club, was littered with the wriggling bodies of 15 dead goldfish and koi carp.

Carl Horrax, manager of the 113-year at Netherhampton, arrived on the course to find the golfers surrounded by the fish.

He was quoted as saying; *'When I first heard what had happened, I thought someone was having a laugh.'*

*'But it was a very strange sight seeing all these fish scattered all over the place.'*

*'It is not possible that it was a prank. I drove over that area of the course about ten minutes before I got the call so if someone had dropped them then they would have been seen.'*

Another equally perplexed member of staff was Michael Cartwright, who told reporters; *'They looked like they were from someone's garden pond. To say we were surprised is a bit of an understatement.'*

The usual, tired old explanations were dragged out by the Met office, and I guess you all know them by now...That incredibly selective whirlwind/tornado was responsible, they said.

The Wiltshire fish did not survive their fall, although in the past, fish of various species have fallen and lived.

4<sup>th</sup> May, 2001 Wiltshire 'DAILY MAIL'

## Dust Storms Rage On Mars

Any form of Martian life (should it exist) was having to batten down the hatches this summer, as a giant dust storm swept the surface of the Red Planet. These raging tempests were so intense in their ferocity that they caused the atmospheric temperature to soar to unbearably high levels.

The highly unusual event served to afford scientists the opportunity of observing a sort of speeded up version of global warming in real time.

Within the space of a single month, the atmospheric temperature on Mars shot up by about 30C.

The planet was baking because much of the Sun's energy is usually absorbed in the upper atmosphere. But scientists were anticipating viewing the opposite effect as Mars was hit by the equivalent of a 'nuclear winter' caused by the dust clouds.

Evidence of what was happening was relayed back to Earth by the trusty Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft, currently orbiting the planet. Scientists have calculated that the storm originated with a large dust storm in the southern latitudes that quickly spread until it enveloped virtually the entire planet.

Professor Philip Christensen, one of a team investigating the data at Arizona State University in Tempe, was quoted as saying; *'The dust trapped sunlight and heated the atmosphere locally. As the warm air flowed to regions where the air was still cool, it generated winds that raised more dust into the atmosphere.'*

*'By the end of the first week in July, most of the planet was covered.'*

22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2001 Martian Surface 'DAILY TELEGRAPH'

## Darwinism Challenged By New 'Findings'

Researchers at Liverpool's John Moores University have thrown down the gauntlet, so to speak, to those who adhere to the commonly held theory of human evolution.

For years beyond counting, scientists have been at a loss as to how to drum up an explanation to account for the fact that virtually all of the 14 known species of hominids became extinct

Sapiens to develop into modern man.

Ever since Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has been accepted that the answer lay in the survival of the fittest. Homo Sapiens, it was assumed, was simply more able to adapt to the severe global changes that affected their 'rivals' to a far greater degree.

Now however, a team from JMU has drummed up a new theory that challenges this 'conventional wisdom,' for the first time in more than a hundred years.

The university's social anthropologist, Dr Benny Pieser, and Michael Paine, an impact researcher from Planetary Society in Sydney, Australia, believe that large-scale cosmic catastrophes hold the key. They suggested that the demise of the hominids could have been simply down to being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

They argue that available fossil records do not show that the creatures were gradually replaced by a more modern and adaptable species. Instead, a string of abrupt and devastating global incidents may have been responsible for sealing their fate.

Dr Pieser argues that severe climatic changes brought about by the Earth being struck by comets and asteroids was a key component in the shaping of human evolution.

He was quoted as saying; *'The reason that Homo Sapiens has survived in spite of these global disasters has little to do with traditional explanations given by Neo-Darwinists.*

*'It is sobering to realise that we are alive because of cosmic luck rather than our genetic make-up.*

*'After all, the populations of hominids and early modern humans were extremely small. Had any of these impacts occurred in the proximity of these groups, we might also have gone the way of the Dodo.'*

Mr Painre, meanwhile, told reporters; *'Just over two million years ago an asteroid estimated to be two kilometres in diameter struck the Southern Ocean, south west of Chile. Had it struck land, the environmental consequences would have been much worse. If the collision had occurred on southern Africa, it might have been wiped out along with our ancestors. Big cosmic impacts not only caused severe disruption to the Earth's climate, including a significant drop in temperatures and long periods of darkness, but may also have led to other environmental disasters, such as a loss of the ozone layer, the formation of acid rain and other toxic pollutants.*

*'Such catastrophes may not only have wiped out directly hominid species, the abrupt loss of the ozone layer and the sudden release of toxins may have even have affected the DNA in some unknown matter, thus triggering macro-mutations.'*

*8<sup>th</sup> April, 2001 John Moores University, Liverpool*  
*'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'*

### *The Flat-Faced Man Of Kenya*

Meanwhile, the human family tree has become a tad more tangled thanks to the discovery of the so-called Flat-Faced Man Of Kenya, a relative who lived 3.5 million years ago. His almost complete skull and face were unearthed by researchers who

believe that it belongs to an entirely new group, or genus, of ancestors.

The fossil has been dated to between 3.5 million and 3.2 million years old, making it the oldest 'reasonably complete' cranium found. It was christened with its less-than-flattering nickname (its other name is the slightly grander sounding *Kenyanthropus platytops*) by Dr Meave Leakey, of the National Museums of Kenya, who reported its discovery in the well-respected journal, *NATURE*.

Until a few years ago only three genuses of hominid – species more closely related to humans than chimps – were known to anthropologists.

One, Australopithecus, was living between four and three million years ago. Humans are thought to have evolved from an early member of Australopithecus afarensis, the species made famous by the fossil Lucy, who, it now seems, may have been sharing the woods and grass plains of prehistoric Africa with a rival. The skull was found by Dr Leakey in a rugged, semi-desert site on the western shore of Lake Turkana, in northern Kenya. The face is surprisingly human in appearance.

Dr Leakey believes that her find is a new species and a new genus. The bones discovered at the site included more than 30 skull and tooth fragments dated to between 3.5 and 3.2 million years ago. At that time, the site was a mixture of grassland and woods.

The fossil has a small earhole, like those of chimpanzees. It shares many features of other primitive hominids, such as a small brain, but it also has striking differences, including tall cheek bones, small teeth and a flat plane beneath its nose bone, which would have given it a flat face.

Dr Daniel Lieberman, an anthropologist at George Washington University, Washington D.C., told reporters; *'We can now say with confidence that hominid evolution, like that of many other mammalian groups, occurred through a series of complex radiations in which many new species evolve and diversify rapidly.*

*'It seems that between 3.5 and two million years ago there were several human-like species, which we were well adapted to life in different environments, although in ways that we have yet to appreciate fully.'*

*22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2001 Kenya, Africa 'THE TIMES'*

## 2000 BC - The Oldest Cross-Channel Ferry

Scientists may have discovered Britain's oldest example of a cross-channel ferry, a plank boat that sailed 4,000 years ago.

New dating techniques have revealed that ancient timbers found on the banks of the Humber Estuary in 1963, came from the oldest plank boat found in Western Europe.

Similar boats may have carried stone slabs from Wales to England during the still mysterious construction of Stonehenge.

The boat is one of three found at Ferriby, East Yorkshire, over the past 70 years. More than 52 ft long, it was made from huge planks sewn together with twisted yew branches.

It had room for 18 paddlers and possibly a mast. Archaeologists believe that it may have been seaworthy and could have carried metal, furs and amber from the Continent. The first boat was found in 1937 by Ted Wright. He found another in 1940 and a third in 1963.

The 1963 boat has been dated to 2030 BC, with the most likely date 1900 BC. The others are a few hundred years later.

Mr Wright, a fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries, was 13 years old when he found three oak planks sticking out a mud bank on the Humber. 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2001 *Humberside*, England 'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'

## A Real-Life Romulus (or Remus)

From the southern port town of Talcahuano, Chile, comes news of a ten-year-old boy who was raised by a pack of wild dogs.

He had escaped from a children's home in 1998, and authorities only discovered where he had been living when the boy drew a shaky picture of the only family he had ever known. The pack had apparently scavenged with him, and actually suckled him when he was hungry.

Police told how the boy had been living in a cave and running with 15 ferocious dogs in Talcahuano, since his absconding from the orphanage.

The youngster was predictably christened with the nickname Dogboy, and is more than a little miffed at being reunited with his own kind.

'The dogs are my family,' he shouted upon being dragged from the pack. 'Please let me go back to them.'

His pleas fell on deaf ears, however, and a police officer was later reported as saying; 'He lived in a cave with dogs and roamed the streets for food with them. He would eat out of garbage cans and find leftovers.'

*The child had even drunk milk from one of the dogs. There is no doubt that they were like a family to him and they looked after him. A female dog nurtured him.*

*'But he showed clear signs of malnutrition when we found him.'*

The boy, who had not, at the time of going to press, been named, threw himself into the ice-cold waters of the southern Pacific in an ultimately vain bid to escape from the police.

An officer dived into the water and rescued him. The boy, who has two broken front teeth and a scar on his left cheek, spent a day in the hospital in the city of Concepcion and was subsequently taken to a child care centre.

'He's showing signs of depression, is aggressive and is not speaking much, although he does know how to speak,' said a nurse at the hospital.

A social worker involved in the case told reporters; 'He is like a modern-day Mowgli. He not only survived with these dogs, he grew to love them as if they were his family.'

*'We are hoping that he will slowly get back to a more normal way of life.'*

The case has interesting parallels with that of Ivan Mishukov, a 6-year-old from Russia, who spent two

years living with a pack of dogs after being abandoned at the age of four, back in 1998.

In that particular instance it took police in Reutova, west of Moscow, more than a month to prise the youth from the pack of strays. 'The dogs loved and protected me,' he was quoted as saying at the time.

20<sup>th</sup> June, 2001 *Talcahuano, Chile* 'DAILY SLUR'

## The Metal Bender Strikes Again

And here's an interesting tale from the December of last year, concerning everyone's favourite (ahem) 'bender,' the one and only Uri Geller.

He came to visit Manchester, just prior to Christmas, and during a meeting with the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, he accidentally bent his £250,000, diamond-encrusted chain.

The bizarre incident occurred at Le Meridien Victoria and Albert Hotel in Manchester, where Uri, a columnist for 'THE JEWISH TELEGRAPH,' and Lord Mayor, Councillor Eddie Clein, were celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the newspaper.

Early in the evening, the pair were introduced and Uri took a shine to Coun Clein's evening mayoral chains, especially the large enamel and gold coat of arms, decorated with almost 400 diamonds, which makes up the crest at the centre.

But the psychic refused to touch the chains and jokingly told the Councillor to stay away from him in case anything happened to the 123-year-old chain.

However, neither Uri nor Coun Clein thought anything more about their first encounter until an hour and a half later when something very strange happened.

As Uri was busy entertaining diners at his table by bending a spoon for the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, who was sitting next to him, Councillor Clein, four tables away, felt a rattling around his neck.

Suddenly, as he reached for the salt and pepper, the back plate of the coat of arms came off in his hands and would not fit back into its socket.

Councillor Clein was quoted as saying; 'I couldn't believe it. Just as I was leaning forward to get the salt and pepper I heard this rattle around my neck and when I turned the jewel around to look, the gold back plate had fallen off.'

*I simply can't explain how it happened but there is no doubt it was Uri. It was a very weird experience.'*

And even Uri, who has apparently bent spoons for Elvis Presley, John Lennon and President Kennedy in the past, was astounded by what he had done.

He said; 'It was one of the most unusual things that has ever happened to me.'

*'I have bent a lot of cutlery for famous people and even bent a £1 million silver statue of a horse and rider carrying a sword for Lord Bath, but this is the most expensive piece I have ever bent accidentally.'*

*'It was quite incredible.'*

*'When I first saw the jewel I knew immediately that I had connection with it, more than the other Lord Mayor's chains.'*

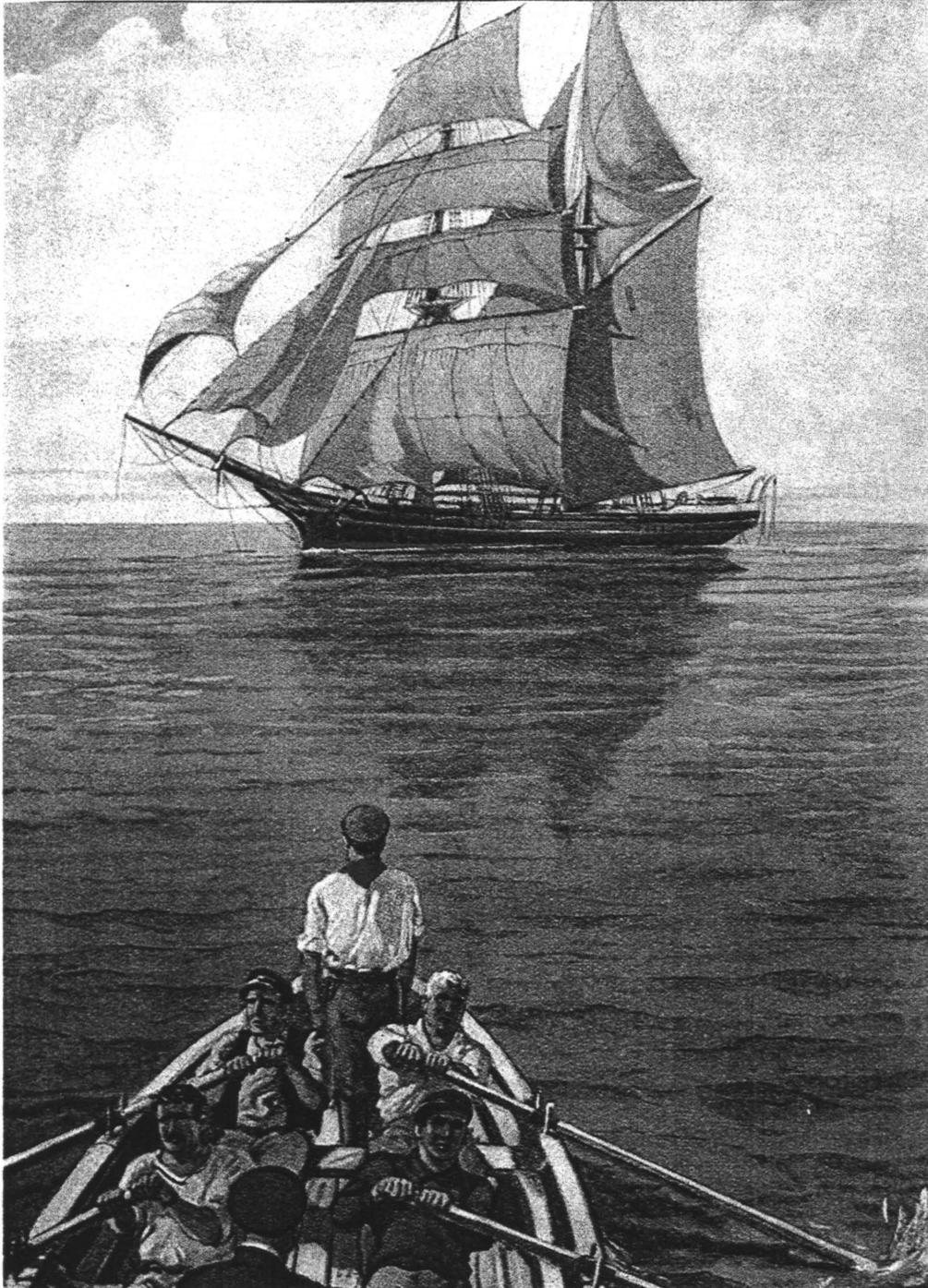
*'It really stood out. The gold and diamonds sparkled – it was a magnificent piece of jewellery.'*

*'I told the Lord Mayor to keep it away from me and I didn't want to touch it. It began as a funny remark but in the past things of this nature have happened to me. I don't know if it was my energy that bent it or if I channelled the power of the Lord Mayor within himself. Whatever happened, it was a fantastic phenomenon.'*

The following day, Councillor Clein took the jewel to be repaired at Liverpool jewellers William Pyke and Sons and they too were baffled by what they saw. All the rivets which hold the back plate on to the jewel at the front had fallen out and had been bent. Managing director John Pyke told reporters; *'I am a sceptic about this sort of thing but what has happened to the jewel is difficult to explain. All the rivets have been pulled out and the entire gold back plate has fallen off. We check the chains for the Lord Mayor regularly and repair them.'*

*12<sup>th</sup> December, 2001 Manchester/Liverpool 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'*

## The Watery Grave Of The Mary Celeste



And here's news of something that takes me back to the halcyon days of childhood (though they surely never seemed like that at the time), and more specifically to the midst of a summer holiday in North Wales, sitting outside the family caravan, head buried in a *'GREAT SEA MYSTERIES'* paperback. I remember thinking that the tales were given added poignancy by my close proximity to the Irish Sea. I might not have been able to actually see the shoreline, a ridge of sand hills hid it from sight, but the salty smell of the ocean drifted on the sweet

summer breeze, filling me with a strange, melancholic sense of loneliness. In the distance, a train shunted into the local station. The tinny voice of a bingo announcer called out a sequence of numbers. A seagull cried mournfully. And there, amongst the true-life stories of Sea Serpents, Mermaids and Giant Underwater Wheels of Light, was the fascinating enigma of all; The mystery of whatever happened to the passengers and crew of the *Mary Celeste*.

If ever there was a story to stoke the flames of a child's imagination, then this was it. It had all the classic ingredients of a true mystery, the answer to which would likely never be known, leaving the way clear for all sorts of wild speculation. Anything and everything could be considered; From abducting aliens to high-sea piracy. From marauding Sea Serpents to parallel dimensions. From weird weather conditions to crew mutiny...

And pondering the unknown fate of the crew of that deserted vessel helped kill the time during those interminably dull double Algebra lessons or the long walk home in the bone-freezing dead heart of winter.

In common with the Bell Witch piece featured elsewhere in this issue, anyone with more than passing interest in Fortean phenomena will very likely be more than familiar with the background to this story. So you'll pardon me if I just pen a brief sketch of the history of this case by way of an introduction to the *real* reason for this article....The discovery of the *Mary Celeste* deep beneath the waters off the Haitian coastline.

The 'jinxed' ship that would soon pass into maritime folklore, was built in 1860 at the shipyards of Joshua Lewis on Spencer's Island, Nova Scotia. She was originally launched under the name *Amazon*, and ominously enough, by the time of her maiden voyage, in 1861, the American Civil War broke out. The first in a lengthy series of misfortunes that befell people associated with the ship occurred that same year when her inaugural captain, Robert McLellan, fell ill of some unspecified disease and died.

The second skipper, John Nutting Parker, suffered an extremely short-lived command when his ship collided with a fishing weir off the coast of Maine, and had to limp to the shipyard for repairs. Whilst undergoing repairs, the ship was struck by a second disaster; a fire broke out amidships. Fortunately, (if that's the right word, given what was to follow) the damage wasn't great and the ship was soon re-launched to embark upon its first Atlantic crossing. At the tail end the voyage, the *Amazon* collided with a brig, causing it to sink, whilst the *Amazon* once more limped to port for yet more repairs.

And so her third skipper was relieved of his duties. With the appointment of her fourth captain, the ship ran aground off Nova Scotia, but although she was successfully repaired, she quickly gained a reputation for being cursed, and passed through several owners, all of whom, it seems, suffered a sickening bout of ill luck. Eventually, the vessel was bought by a consortium of New York ship owners and re-named the *Mary Celeste*.

According to paranormal researcher and author, Paul Beggs, the unusual mixture of English and

French was '*the result of a painter's error, the intended name being Mary Sellers or even perhaps Marie Celeste, the name, ironically, by which most people know her.*'

And so, at last, we come to the fateful voyage in November 1872, when the latest captain of the ship, the delightfully-named Benjamin Spooner Briggs, set sail from New York, bound for Genoa, Italy.

Beggs describes him thus; '*Briggs was a man of strict beliefs and religious convictions, and although he was a teetotaler, he was no monomaniac on the subject. He was described by those who knew him as always bearing the "highest character as a Christian and as an intelligent and active shipmaster."*

*'He was also a shareholder in the Mary Celeste.'*

The rest of the ship's crew were deemed to have been both honest and trustworthy.

As for the passengers, well, these included Spooner's wife, Sarah Elizabeth, and one of their two children, Sophia Matilda, aged two.

The ship finally set sail after being confined to the relatively calm waters of Staten Island's lower bay, whilst storms raged across the expanse of open sea, on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1872.

Bound for Genoa, she may have been, but she might as well have set sail for the outer reaches of oblivion.

Because on December 5<sup>th</sup>, almost a month out from New York, the crew of the *Dei Gratia*, a merchant ship transporting petroleum, came across the *Mary Celeste*, its sails somewhat tattered and the vessel listing slightly to one side.

Receiving no response to the crew of the *Dei Gratia*'s repeated hailing of the mystery ship, Captain Morehouse ordered some of his men to row across and check things out.

Despite searching the ship from stem to stern however, they were unable to find a trace of single living soul. The main staysail was found on the foreward house, but the foresail and the upper foresail had been blown from the mast and was now lost. The jib, fore-topmast staysail and the forelower topsail were set. The remaining sails were furled.

A portion of the ships' rigging was fouled, and sections of it had been blown away, whilst parts of it were hanging over the sides. Other parts of the mast were either broken or slightly damaged and the ship's wheel was spinning on its own, as if the *MARY CELESTE* were being steered by the ghost of a lunatic sailor.

Certain hatch covers had also been removed and found abandoned by the hatchways. There was less than a foot of water in the galley and the vast majority of the six months' store of provisions had been spoilt. There were plentiful supplies of fresh water, however.

Despite the fairly evident signs of damage, perhaps the result of a storm at sea, the ship was in a far better condition than plenty of other ships sailing the turbulent oceans, and there seemed to be no clue as to why the passengers and crew would have felt compelled to have abandoned the vessel.

And it was abundantly clear that that was just what had happened. The chronometer, sextant, bill of lading, navigation book, and a small boat were all missing.

As has been mentioned earlier, Benjamin Spooner Briggs was a highly experienced seaman, so, one presumes, it would taken some very real and present danger to have persuaded him to take the decision to forsake the ship for the dubious safety of a tiny lifeboat.

There was no suggestion in the Captain's log that anything untoward had occurred, so whatever happened, happened pretty quickly.

There were those who suggested that Morehouse and the crew of the *DEI GRATIA* had conspired to invent the story of the mysterious disappearance so that they could lay claim to salvage – the *MARY CELESTE* was in a more-than seaworthy condition and she still retained her full complement of cargo.

But the evidence doesn't seem to bear this out. Morehouse, it seems, was very reluctant to spare the men that were needed to help steer the ship to the waters off Gibraltar, and upon arriving there, the ship became an object of extreme suspicion.

All kinds of theories were proposed by those investigating the case, including the possibility that the original crew had mutinied and killed Briggs and his family after having gotten blind drunk on the ship's cargo of alcohol.

This theory was eventually demolished by the assertion that the alcohol was actually denatured which means that it would have caused acute stomach pains to anyone had tried to get bladdered on the contents.

Over the ensuing twelve years, the *MARY CELESTE* changed hands no less than 17 times and, it appears, the jinx that dogged the ship did so right up to its watery grave, plaguing every captain unlucky enough to take charge of the ship.

And now, during the comparative Golden Age prior to the time an insidious Evil crept across the world like a hideous black shadow, the wreck of the *MARY CELESTE* was finally located. For better or for worse.

A Canadian expedition led by the best-selling thriller author, Clive Cussler and film producer John Davies, have already succeeded in salvaging a number of artefacts from the ship.

At the time of going to press, not too many details about the wreck had been divulged, but not everyone it seems, is overly ecstatic about the discovery.

Father Lionel Fanthorpe, the priestly presenter of the ever-excellent *'FORTEAN TV'*, voiced his concern that the solving of long-established mysteries is not always for the best, equating it with that infuriating spoilsport who's intent upon wrecking the viewing of some cliffhanger movie by telling you the ending.

*'The unknown is magnetically attractive and has been throughout history. Greece and Rome had their tales of ghosts, monsters, lost lands and even a vanishing legion of Roman soldiers. There are medieval stories of Saints whose severed heads were miraculously re—affixed, magical cauldrons, healing wells, encounters with Devils and Dragons. Victorian England had spooky seances; levitationists, and the mysterious Devonshire footprints which led a trail a hundred miles long thought the snow-covered valley of the River Exe in a single night.'*

*'During the 1930's, there were many reported sightings of Nessie, and they still continue. Apparently, she has distant cousins, too – Oogopogo in Lake Okanagan, British Columbia, and Morgawr in Falmouth.'*

*'In addition to aquatic monsters there are reports of giant cats, birdmen like the Owlman, and quasi-human animals like the North American Sasquatch and the Yeti.'*

*'Vampires reportedly prowl Highgate Cemetery (see Neil Arnold's article elsewhere in this issue – Ed), and all over the world there are reports of Werewolves, Zombies and Ghouls.'*

*'Human beings are insatiable. When we've obtained our basic needs for food, drink shelter and companionship, we start looking for meaning and purpose. We need to feel life is worthwhile, that what we do is important – not only to us, but to the community in which we live.'*

*'Curiosity is one of the most powerful human motivators. It's natural for us to want to know what life is about. Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going when this life ends?'*

*'If ghosts are genuine, then there's life after death. So we set out to explore stories of hauntings. If people can mysteriously appear and disappear, then there may be other weird dimensions into which they vanish – and that might mean we might be able to go there, too.'*

*'The most sensible, objective scientists are still normal human beings under all their scientific training. They share our natural longing for thrills and excitement. Unsolved mysteries, of which the Mary Celeste is a good example, are among the best adrenaline boosters in the great funfair called life.'*

*'The most tranquil and contented folk still yearn for a break from the routine of everyday life. Examining unsolved mysteries provide us with those vital breaks.'*

*'But though looking for the answers to life's big questions is fascinating – finding them would blunt life's cutting edge and dim its bright colours.'*

Hear, hear, Mr Fanthorpe.

10-12<sup>th</sup> August, 2001 Caribbean, Near Haiti  
*SCOTTISH SUNDAY POST/ 'DAILY MAIL'*

## THE INVISIBLE INVADERS

It may sound like the plotline of some 1950's science fiction classic, but Robert Foot, a leading Australian scientist, was warning that we had better take the threat of meteorites composed of mirror matter – a form of the invisible dark matter that some scientists claim may make up 95 per cent of the universe, could smash into the planet (assuming we don't give it a helping hand and destroy it ourselves, first) causing catastrophic damage without leaving any trace of itself.

Mr Foot, of the University of Melbourne, told reporters; *'The objects may pose a greater risk than space bodies composed of ordinary matter because an approaching space body made of pure mirror matter would not be detectable. Only after impact with the atmosphere would its effects be observable, but then it would probably be too late to do anything.'*

## Cattle Mutilations Leave The 'Experts' Baffled

The countryside around the town of Bryan, in Burleson County, Texas, has been plagued by an outbreak of unexplained cattle mutilations, with many people pointing the finger at some sort of cult, although, at the time of going to press, no hard evidence had been obtained to back up the theory.

In the majority of cases, which seem to be occurring once or twice every year, the bodies of bulls have been discovered lying in the fields with their abdomens sliced clean open. The genitals have frequently been reported to have been missing, also. And on some occasions, the animals tongues and internal organs have been removed with 'surgical precision.'

Strangely enough, that which one would assume to be of most value to anyone looking to make a profit from such activities, namely, the valuable beef, is always left to rot.

Burleson County officials have, at the time of going to press, been unable to link any of the deaths to those that have occurred in other county's throughout the state of Texas.

*'If we could find any indication that human beings were involved, we would do more,'* the County Sheriff, Gene Barber told reporters from *'THE BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION EAGLE.'*

*'It is a mystery to me. Investigators have so far failed to any of the tell-tale signs of human involvement, for example, tyre tracks, shoe prints, shell casings or cigarette butts. We have therefore little option but to lay the blame for the deaths squarely at the feet of Mother Nature.'*

Rancher Johnny Ryan, however, remains unconvinced by this explanation; *'I am certain that some sort of sick cult was responsible for the mutilation of my prize Charolais bull. The perpetrators only took the animal's blood and major organs.'*

Another rancher, W.H. Ryan, agrees wholeheartedly. *'I can see no other explanation for the killing of my bull four years ago. The animal was killed around Halloween, and the genitals and internal organs were missing. None of the meat was taken, however, which I find more than a little weird.'*

Officials with the Texas & South-West Cattle Raiser's Association are adamant that in most, if not all cases, the mutilations can be put down to the depredations of skunks, possums and other 'pesky varmints' that prey on animals that die of natural causes.

Larry Gray, the Association's Director of Law Enforcement & Market Inspection Services, claimed that such animals often have razor-sharp teeth that can make incisions as easily as a knife, and these creatures tend to eat the softest tissue, including the internal organs, genitals, tongue and udder. He also notes that if the carcass of an animal appears to be bloodless, it is most likely that gravity has caused it to pool at the bottom of the creatures body. Mr Gray was quoted as saying; *'I have never once seen a proven case of any cult involvement in the deaths of cattle. 'Usually, these type of people prey on dogs, cats or poultry.'*

28th May, 2001 Burleson County, Texas *'THE BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION EAGLE.'*

## Magician Causes Bankrobber's Gun To Disappear

A would-be bank robber in Sao Paulo named Osker Gomes, aged 19, attempted to hold up a bank, but was left totally bemused when a magician standing in the queue, made his gun disappear.

The stunned criminal was left standing in sheer disbelief and didn't move a muscle until the police arrived on the scene and promptly arrested him.

Unfortunately for the prosecution, the subsequent court case duly collapsed when a Brazilian judge ruled that the pistol was key evidence, and no one, not even the magician, had seen the pistol since the attempted hold up. The court ruled, perhaps not surprisingly, that the gun was key evidence in the case against Gomes 'Ten people saw the man with the gun but no weapon, no case,' a particularly irate police officer was quoted as saying.

11<sup>th</sup> May, 2001 Sao Paulo, Brazil

## Sheep With Brains Seek Shelter

And it looks as though we may have to review our perception of sheep as being the clueless no-hopers we often reckon them to be.

Flocks that are seemingly fed up with the constant wind and rain that plague the beauty spot of Ilkley Moor, West Yorkshire, have taken to seeking shelter in the public toilets, giving both locals and tourists something of a surprise when they enter the WC's.

10<sup>th</sup> May, 2001 Ilkley Moor, West Yorkshire *'DAILY SLUR.'*

## Brother Mistaken For Hunted Elk

In the wood outside Helsinki, Finland, a local mistook his brother, aged 21, for an elk and promptly shot him dead after they became separated while out hunting at the start of the bloodsports season.

The young man was wearing the obligatory red vest and cap, and had gone to a field alone to lie in wait for his would-be prey, but it had fallen dark.

His brother then caught sight of what he thought was the animal and fired.

2<sup>ND</sup> October, 2001 Helsinki, Finland *REUTERS*

\*\*\* Equally unlucky was pipe-smoker Bill Mahon, 58, who was rushed to hospital in Colchester, Essex, after he suffered severe burns to his face and body after accidentally setting fire to his beard.

28<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 Colchester, Essex *'THE DAILY MANC'*

\*\*\* And finally, superfit Allan Walker (no relation) of Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, managed to swim Lake Windermere, run up Scafell Pike, cycled 200 miles...and then broke his leg falling off his bike.

28<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 Lake District *'DAILY SLUR'*

# THE MAGIC WORLD OF MRS WILTSHIRE



'The Evangelist Wiltshire,' as Mrs W. sometimes calls herself, is a portly Jamaican lady with an air of serio-comic dignity about her. A wooden portable altar stands at one end of her cluttered front room, and on it rests a huge white-covered Bible ever open at *Psalms*.

Every now and then, the Evangelist phones me up and urges me to go to a mass rally held by a well-known white American preacher, such as Morris Cerullo or Don Stuart. Instead, I usually go to her East End flat a day or two after the rally. Over a delicious meal, she recounts the highlights of the campaign and urges me to tend to my salvation.

Evangelist Evadne is a fascinating conversationalist, as she combines Christian missionary zeal with almost every kind of magical belief imaginable. Her best friend is a spirited young girl named Sweetness. As Sweetness has overstayed her visitor's visa, the poor girl spends most of her time in hiding from Immigration Officers who wish to deport her to Jamaica. This worries Evangelist Wiltshire.

One morning, the Evangelist phoned me to say that someone had 'sprinkled something in front o' me door.'

'I blame a jealous Barbadian woman upon the next floor. She trying to put something on me, but I know what to do. I spit and put salt on it,' she continued in her slow, sad voice.

From West Africa has come the belief that the right combination of feather, hair, eggshell and other mess, placed where a person may step, can inflict a curse upon the stepper. One of my West Indian neighbours always washes her front step after she has quarrelled with someone, 'just in case.' Mrs Wiltshire believes that her friend Mrs Mack died because 'she hubs-band or she hubs-band girl friend put something on me. Yes! Is bad they bad, you know.'

'Sweetness have vanish! No one know where she gone,' I was told on another occasion. 'I know she is in difficulty, as she is haunted by a brown and white cat.'

'See, she brought me a photo of her Bajan boyfriend, and when him see the photo gone, he straight away think she was trying to work something on him. Some does invoke Satan through a person hair or nail or photo, but Sweetness don't do that kind of ting. All I can do is pray and burn John the Conqueror, the root I did buy from the spiritual shop.'

So saying, Mrs Wiltshire opened a packet, took out a dried-up piece of wood, and set fire to a corner of it. A

sweet-smelling smoke uncurled, a fragrance to bind Sweetness and keep her in her spiritual godmother's sight. I was pleased to make the acquaintance of High John, a laughing man of power incarnated as a root imported from America, but surely first grown in Africa. Stories are told of High John, how (in his human guise) he triumphed over Old Massa, in slavery days down South. Jamaicans, who have adopted John, are familiar with his cousin Anancy The Trickster, sometimes man, sometimes spider. For myself, I had heard of John through the Southern hoodoo blues written for Muddy Waters by songwriter Willie Dixon. Ten years after they were written, these songs electrified a generation of English suburban grammar school boys.

In the event, I discovered Sweetness through the writers' bush telegraph, for she had become a cleaner at the office of 'COUNTRY LIVING MAGAZINE.'

Living up to her name, she denied that any Evil influence had been put on her by anyone, least of all by a brown and white cat. This was fortunate, as some West Africans and West Indians give hundreds of pounds to charlatans who claim they can remove spells. Most of these charlatans are white people.

*'Rub your fist into your eye. Do you see flashing lights? Those are Evil Spirits and more are on the way!'*

Meanwhile, back in Mrs Wiltshire's flat, the smoke dispersed, and the Evangelist placed half a loaf on her personal shrine, a shelf covered in candles, bottles and photos of Billy Graham.

'The staff of life,' she murmured absently, as the doorbell rang. In trooped her Prayer Meeting, an anxious-looking man named Alex, from the island of St. Kitts. Prayer meetings in front parlours are a feature of West Indian life in England. No one else turned up, so eventually Evangelist Wiltshire 'opened in prayer.'

'Lord, You are so mighty, Lord, from the four corner of the earth to the toenails of Time, You rule all. Hear your servants' humble call! Hear us, Lord, the God of Daniel, the God of Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego! Let your spirit of wisdom and truth rest and remain upon the table of our hearts, and when our time of praise is over, Lord, see us safely back to our homes of abode, in Your name, Lord, amen.'

'Amen,' Brother Alex and I repeated, impressed, Evangelist Wiltshire can certainly pray. Her anxieties forgotten, she seemed to swell, and seemed every inch a powerful Woman of God.

After a few Redemption Hymns and Bible readings, came a Discussion. This developed into an argument between the two, about mental illness. Brother Alex claimed that some mental illness had physical or natural causes, but Evangelist Wiltshire insisted that all the mentally ill were 'Demon possessed.'

'That Sister Tanisha from our last week meeting is involve with Satan!' she declared.

'Sister Tanisha *dealing*?' Brother Alex enquired.

'No, no - is possessed, she is possessed! She so rude and unruly to her mother, all her mother do is repeat "I rebuke you, Satan!" over and over again. When Sister Tanisha speak, it not she speak, it is the Devil! The Devil make she cuss she mother! Yes!'

Eyes flashing in righteous indignation, Mrs Wiltshire went on to recall the day she had been summoned to nearby Hackney to pray with a woman whose Rasta son had 'become possessed.' A tragic story unfolded, of a clean-cut hard-working young man who had suffered a breakdown after his divorce. He missed his children, and began to pine. Instead of going to work, he sat alone in his basement room. First of all he grew a beard and Rasta locks, then he shaved his head bald and began to burn black candles. These he obtained from the same 'Spiritual Shop,' run by

an Indian, that sold the John The Conqueror (or Conquer Root). Burn a black candle all night and pray, and someone will die.

Mrs Wiltshire and the boy's mother found the young man staring intensely at a row of flickering black candles. Seeing his visitors, he looked up with bleary eyes.

'Why do you want to kill me?' he boomed.

'We only want to help you,' the mother replied in a sweet, trembling voice.



Both women retreated when the young man ran towards them holding a knife. As they walked sadly down the road, they heard a fire engine. Turning, they saw smoke and flames. The mad son had set his flat on fire. Firemen, promptly called by a neighbour, succeeded in rescuing the boy. He was taken to hospital, where he recovered from his burns, but he remained insane.

Sensitive people, such as poets and artists, can be toppled by misfortune and fall into madness. In many parts of Africa, madness is as feared as cancer is feared in the West. Perhaps a magical atmosphere, where Witches and Demons abide, can act as an *inoculation* against total madness, as snake venom is used as a cure for snakebite.

As the Prayer meeting ended, Evangelist Wiltshire once more aired her groundless fears over the fate of Sweetness. 'In a dream it reveal to me that Sweetness is being followed by an Evil Spirit,' she declared dolefully. 'A black woman from Jamaica was whipping she.'

'I thought that Spirits couldn't cross water,' I said, in a bid to try and cheer her up.

'You joke! Me own grandmother appear an' help me when I was in labour with Chantelle. She was a midwife, you know!'

Fortunately, it appeared later that Sweetness had been having the time of her life far away from Mrs Wiltshire, whose conversation had begun to depress her. Penitent, she returned after a while, and prayed with her mentor at the Mercy Seat, before the kitchen table.

Evangelist Wiltshire herself had an earthy side to her nature, as she was in love with a Brother Faron, who ignored her, as if he was under the power of his wife and daughter. 'And them both Witches, you know!'

In order to appease the Evangelist, who often grew angry at my 'backsliding,' I agreed to accompany her to an Evangelical Rally. The American Evangelist, whom I shall call Don Camillo, was billed to appear at the City Temple, in London, a large Victorian church near Holborn Viaduct. Crowds of West Indians, mostly middle-aged women, thronged the doorway. A hand tapped my shoulder, and there was Brother Alex, doing duty as an usher. Sister Wiltshire herself sometimes volunteered as an unpaid usher for the great man. Don Camillo has a world-wide fan-following, and most of his disciples subscribe to glossy Camillo-pamphlets, with stickers enclosed to put in their windows.

Inside the Temple, we sat in a pew near the front, as the building rapidly filled with West Indians, Africans and Black British, with a scattering of English and Indian faces.

A gaunt turbaned Trinidadian woman sat next to Evangelist Wiltshire. I recognised her as a churchgoer from my street. Unused to white people, she regarded me with apparent terror, her eyes starting from her head.

A Black British (or sub-Jamaican) drum and guitar group played and sang warm-up music, as we waited for Don Camillo. Leaflets were passed around the pews, advertising an instant adopt-a-child scheme organised by Don Camillo. Just sign on the dotted line, and for eleven pounds a month you could 'adopt' and feed a 'Third World child' without needing to leave England. At least thirty West Indian women rushed to the stage with their money and application forms. My sister once joined a similar scheme, and received unconvincing letters from her 'adopted child' in Brazil. Finally, she went to Brazil, to be told 'her child's' address didn't exist. Organised Charity should be approached with the utmost caution.

Then Don Camillo himself strode boldly onto the stage and smilingly announced 'Greetings, England!' Flattered at being treated as part of England, the West Indians in the audience replied 'Greetings!' in more-or-less unison.

'I didn't hear you - say it louder!' he teased them, then launched straight into a Hellfire sermon. With equal suddenness, he stopped preaching and launched into a melodramatic country and western gospel song. His voice was rich, and he clearly held most of the audience in the palm of his cufflinked hand.

'Those who feel in need of special prayer, come forward!' he commanded.

Several women, all West Indian, approached the stage. Descending, Don Camillo faced the first candidate, a demure, neat young lady. He looked at her for a moment, and suddenly seemed to come to a decision.

'I'm gonna throw my coat over you!' he announced, and did just that. As the coat fell on the girl, she swooned on the spot, caught by the woman behind her. Reverently, Don Camillo laid her on the floor.

'Great gifts are pouring into her right now!' he informed us.

Guided by ushers such as Brother Alex, half the audience arose and formed a line around the walls, all queuing to have Don Camillo's jackets thrown over their heads. The band began to play, with heavy percussion, and the City Temple became an arena for religious promenade or ring-shout. Circling processions of half-dancing Brothers and Sisters are a feature of many Negro churches. Don's coat had first been casually removed, nightclub fashion, when the Evangelist had burst into song. Now that same coat was felling worshippers like ninepins. Each swoonee arose after a few minutes and returned to his or her seat, apparently refreshed.

After the first ten swoons, the Camillo coat seemed to lose power somewhat. No one fainted any more, but all felt happy, with dreamy or radiant smiles. Was he tricking the worshippers, playing on their superstitious admiration for white people? As well ask if American tourists are cheated by English tour operators and souvenir-sellers. As long as he only sees that which is bogus, the American tourist is deliriously happy, and the same might be said of those who idolise American Evangelists. Whatever Don Camillo's opinions might be, his audience was utterly sincere. Someone who gives an audience what they want is an entertainer, not a swindler.

In a moving testimony, an elderly Jamaican lady told us of the day when Camillo had cured her blindness. On that occasion, he had thrown a scarf over her, instead of a magic coat.

Faith can truly work wonders.

During an intermission, Sister Wiltshire and I were perturbed by the antics of a mentally disturbed young man of great strength and agility. He rolled his eyes, lolled his

tongue, made strange noises and ran up and down the aisles. Finally he settled down and with great intentness began to make an invention out of plasticene and string. His little bird-like mother patted him fondly on the head, then greeted Sister Wiltshire. Her face shone with pity, love and anguish.

'She take him round all the Evangelist dem, but him never heal,' Sister Wiltshire whispered.

A few months later, Don Camillo returned to these shores, this time performing at Earl's Court. I didn't go (enough is enough, after all) but Evadne Wiltshire toddled along and told me that his act had changed. Noticing that more and more of his audience were West Africans, and that less and less Jamaicans grew delighted when told that they were English, he had Africanised his rally. This scandalised Sister Wiltshire.

'I must write to Brother Camillo and hexplain he must not use African drums. Yes! Them drum conjure up Evil Spirits, you know. With these own eyes I saw all manner of African Evil Spirits coming out of the drums, all dancing naked! It was shameful. The House of God was full of Witches!

'At first I thought it was only me could see the Witch dem everyplace. But then an African preacher stood up and shout 'Come forward, all who are doing Witchcraft here!'

'I was so happy that the Witches get found out, that I sprang to my feet and shout "Hallelujah!" Brer Roy, *in one second* all them African men and women *rise* from them seats, grab at me an; beat me sore, *hitting* me an' tryin' to throw me out! When I jump like that, them thought it *me* that's the Witch. That's why them get furious. Before I was too much hurt, a Brazilian pastor rescue me and I fight them off. He got me outside and on a bus home - such a good man, the Lord will bless him. So that's why I intend to write and warn Brother Camillo.'

If only Evangelist Wiltshire had met one of my African acquaintances, George Lekaukau, she could have obtained many more juicy titbits of African Witchcraft - gossip. George, a guest at my house for several weeks, was a tall stern Tswana cattle herder from the Kalahari Desert, Botswana. As a young man he had been a clerk at a South African goldmine and had then studied to be a schoolteacher at Tiger Kloof. When he reached retirement age, he returned to the traditional pastoral life of his people, with a unique ability to interpret that side to English-speakers.

Years of "white man's education" seemed to have reinforced rather than eliminated George's fear of Witches and Witchcraft.

Resolutely unimpressed by England regarding our mechanised ways as madness, he argued keenly about Witchcraft, insisting on its reality in Africa. And indeed, if everyone believes in a system of thought, that system makes its own 'reality.'

Who, in George's circle, could doubt that when a clansman died by being struck by lightning (as happened to George's brother), somebody was responsible. The man was struck while walking on an open plain. Out of all the places the lightning could have struck, why did it choose this one man? Obviously somebody hated the man and wanted him killed. So this unknown person must have consulted a sorcerer, and put *something* on George's brother. Oracle spirits could be consulted to find who that person might be. In the Kalahari, the bushmen can be paid to perform an ecstatic dance during which the spirits speak through bushmen mouths and name the guilty person who either obtained Witchcraft or who was himself a Witch. A Tswana man who consulted the bushmen over the death of his wife was told the answer he believed and half-wanted to hear - that the 'indirect murderer' was his mother-in-law. Do not Witches often kill those whom they love the best?

When accused, the mother-in-law consulted another oracle, and declared her accuser the true culprit. The Cottler, or village parliament, upheld the mother-in-law and the bushman-consulter was banished. He became a heavy drinker, who slept out of doors under a tree outside the boundaries of the village.

Each year, the Cottler heard his appeal and each year they turned it down. Before the days of British rule, the 'Witchcraft man' might have been hung upside down from a tree in a net, a scorn and a wonder to passers-by until long after his death. Judging by the character 'Hung up naked,' a malevolent wizard in Irish folklore, the Ancient Celts may well have practised this custom. Village parliaments presided over by headmen who hold the land as a trust for all are a feature of African life today, peasant Russian life yesterday and English Saxon life the day before yesterday. After the Norman Conquest, they became transmuted into manorial courts.



Belief in Witchcraft only came to an end in England when peasant life, its ally, also ended. Christianity cannot, apparently, wipe out a belief in Witches.

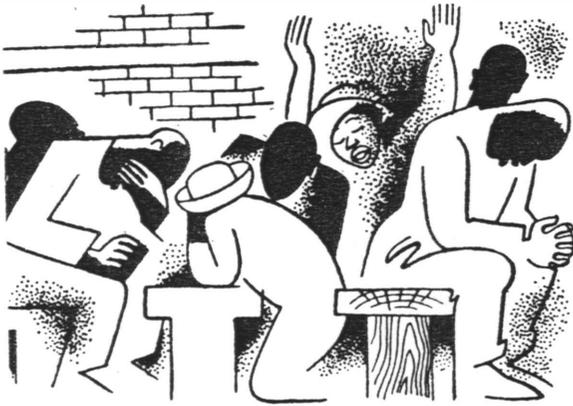
Pantheons of Gods vanish as if they had never been, but Witchcraft remains, the ultimate challenge to missionary and Evangelist. It is a challenge that should be met, for the belief that the ills of mankind and mishaps of all kinds are the fault of some living person must poison all dealings between individuals.

One day, also George told us, he had been travelling all day in the desert and felt very thirsty. An old lady, a distant kinswoman, felt sorry for him and gave him a drink of milk. Soon afterwards, George accepted a lift in a lorry, and sat on the tailboard with bare feet dangling. A deadly black mamba snake jumped up and entwined itself around his ankles, chaining his feet together. In terror, George disentangled the snake, which slid harmlessly away. He ran to his favourite witch doctor, who assured him that an enemy's curse had only failed because of anti-Witch items earlier provided. To this day, George believes the old lady put 'medicine' in his milk.

'She wanted the snake to kill me, but her plan did not succeed! Why else did she give me a drink?'

Who, in such an atmosphere, dare perform a deed of kindness to a stranger? Who can be able to appreciate the

kindnesses that are still, in spite of such discouragement, daily performed? In many parts of Africa, babies are deemed to be Witches if they cut their top teeth before their bottom teeth. When such infants are put to death, the mothers have to pretend to rejoice, to avoid accusations of Witchcraft against themselves.



The African belief that 'Witches are everywhere' becomes, among New World descendants of Africans, the far less harmful belief that 'Satan is everywhere attacking Christian people.' This belief blurs into a simple and healthy importance of the inevitability of Original Sin.

Most West Indians in England have heard of malevolent spirits called 'dupples,' even if they do not believe in them. However, a Black British generation has, for the most part, shrugged off such beliefs. The concept of a Good Self (Angel) and a Bad Self (Devil) was a common feature of American cartoon films in their 1940's folklore-based heyday. Belief in dupples echoes such ideas - your Good Self goes to Glory but your Bad Self hangs around after death, playing tricks.

It is your duple. An obeahman can summon it, but an obeah mother (sanctified wise woman) can banish it.

Belief in two, or even three, souls per person can be traced back from the Caribbean to West Africa. There, such beliefs thrive to this day. In the Caribbean, for the most part, a person is expected to die before his duple can do any harm. But in West Africa, a person can become a Witch or an Evil Spirit by birth or 'possession' and leave his or her body at night to revel with other vagrant souls at meetings of spirit societies. Although the living body of such a person is usually asleep in bed, he or she is not in a coma but has a spare soul in the body, one able to deal with any emergency before the other adventuring soul can get home.

Much of my information on the subjects comes from a little blue book presented to me by Evangelist Haastrup, of the Yoruba-based Celestial Church of Christ. Although his name suggests a seafaring Norwegian, Israel Haastrup, is a Nigerian, a very important member of his church, as well as a prosperous businessman and hotelier. In his younger days, he was a ship's captain, and his full title is Reverend Captain Doctor I. Haastrup. When I met him, at the church he founded in London's East End, he received me in state in the Upper Room. There, dressed in full Bishop's regalia, he received an audience in grand style. Church sisters in white robes kneeled and did obeisance before him, as they offered him choice curtailed meals on paper plates, like the wives of a great chieftan. I felt quite honoured to receive a copy of the book he had written: *'DEMONS AND DEMONIC FORCES'* King James the First, of Bible fame, wrote a similar book about the Witches of his day.

Evangelist Haastrup, who comes from Desha, in Oyo State, north of Lagos, blends Biblical events with traditional Yoruba and Ibo beliefs. He cites the Fall of Lucifer as the

cause, or creation of Evil Spirits. He divides the spirits into four categories: Witches, Obanjes, Emeres and Water Demons. The Yoruba Thunder God Sango is a reality to Haastrup, as is Amadiona, Sango's Ibo counterpart. In Haastrup's world, these gods have become Demon princes at Spirit revels, and devotees can summon them at will to fling thunderbolts at enemies. Strangely, Sango survives in Trinidad as Shango, a God whose devotees spin around and whirl poles when worshipping. Just as Greek and Roman Gods are closely related, so are the Gods of West African tribal nations. Evangelist Haastrup moved from Yoruba to Ibo country (Port Harcourt, East Nigeria). Novelist Chinua Achebe mentions Ogbanjes in his tale of Ibo life, and I believe the name to be of Ibo origin.

Witches, in the African scheme of things, fly to their coven meetings as disembodied spirits, only visible to fellow spirits when they have entered the form of an animal. Ogbanjes seem to be the nearest relatives to New World dupples, though they also share attributes with European Goblins, Vampires, Witches and particularly Faeries. Emeres are below them in rank, and Witches the most mundane of them all. Like any Witchfinder General, Haastrup interrogates very many people who claim to be under the power of such possessive spirits. Instead of punishing them, however, he blesses and exorcises them, for they have come to the Celestial Church for release.

All of his interviewees are in Nigeria, not England, and many of them are teenage schoolchildren. It is odd to read of thirteen year old Ibo boys who, in their night-time Ogbanje lives, are princes who marry powerful princesses. Dreams and visions are taken as realities by the confessors, and Haastrup questions them closely on the social lives of spirits. Many of his questions are 'loaded,' revealing his own beliefs. Such traditional beliefs may act as a comfort to sufferers from mental illness, since every symptom is 'codified' and corresponds with a commonly-held idea of a possessive spirit. In the same way, dancing devotees of Gods, in 'pagan' or traditional African ritual dances, exhibit different kinds of ecstatic behaviour linked to the behaviour of of recognisable Gods.

Ogbanjes are not always evil, but can be merry, amoral and helpful to those they befriend. They can become, or possess, unborn babies. If they decide to abandon the baby they are 'in,' the child is born dead. These Ogbanjes are members of the African 'baby spirit' family, one of a hundred explanations for the mystery of the still-born or afflicted child. Since the Ogbanje Society resembles the medieval and Celtic idea of Faerie-Land, a place both beautiful and frightening, it seems likely that Western stories of 'Faerie changelings' owe something to a long-lost European tradition of 'Ogbanje.' Wonderful objects in the palaces of the Ogbanje world reappear as bits of rubbish in the 'real world,' an echo of the European idea of 'Faerie glamour.'

Old stories from the Celtic fringes tell of a person led to a secret world under a hill where, after food is eaten or magic ointment applied, all is splendour. Wipe away the ointment, however, and the ballroom becomes a cave, the banquet a heap of bones, the silk curtains foetid rags. All the wonders have been mere 'faerie glamour.' If a mortal, lured under the hill, should eat Faerie food, then such a person is forever in thrall to the People of Peace. Haastrup's confessors often say that a friend gave them enchanted food and drink, and thus brought them into the dreamtime world of Ogbanje. (As a strict Christian, Haastrup is far more severe on the Ogbanje than is the average Nigerian. From his puritanical viewpoint, all strange gods are Demons).

Taken from their sleeping bodies at night, the new Ogbanjes find themselves in a country of fellow Ogbanjes, who initiate them into the Society. Sometimes, they marry

in the dream world, while at other times they are greeted by Ogbanje spouses or relatives who claim already to know them. As spirits, the new Ogbanjes can roam the world playing tricks on people and occasionally performing deeds of kindness, returning to their daytime bodies at cock-crow. Some of Haastrup's confessors later grew alarmed when confronted, in the world of 'real people,' by a man or woman who says "I am your Ogbanje partner - don't you recognise me?"

Apparently, on occasion, Ogbanjes and other spirits met only at night by a dreamer, disconcertingly become real and intrude on the waking life of the person. For the most part, however, they are spirits, described as follows in the poem 'OGBANJE' by J.N.K. Esseboe.

*'At dead of night, they leave their loved ones.  
To meet under dreaded trees where  
They plan and swear to bring unborn babies  
And drink men's blood.*

*Slouching out of their numb bodies  
Like snakes discarding out-grown skins  
They dive, human frogs living on dry land  
Of the physical world, in the water of spirit life.'*

(From 'DEMONS AND DEMONIC FORCES' by  
Evangelist Israel Haastrup, Pam Unique Publishing  
Company, Port Harcourt, 1989).

This poem would be considered by many an Ibo as a piece of anti-Ogbanje propaganda. Many people in Nigeria are respected because of their connection with Ogbanje.

In East Nigeria, it is believed that when a woman loses a baby more than once, it is a child who has become Ogbanje, constantly appearing and reappearing. When a baby finally arrives and lives, it will be chided for its previous behaviour and assumed to be a poetic Ogbanje in touch with Faerie Land.

Compared with Haastrup's collection of traditional Yoruba and Ibo spirits, the dupples of the West Indies seem almost cosy. Various anti-dupple remedies are tried.

Instead of the English horseshoe above a door, orange or other fruit peel is often hung over a half-open door to keep away Evil Spirits. Both West Africans and West Indians still do this in England. Sometimes a tape measure is used, as 'dupples hate being measured.' In Jamaica, tailors who carry tape measures are said to be free from dupple attack. In my neighbourhood in London, a mentally ill Jamaican walks about holding a beribboned cross and a ruler to ward off dupples.

Among the English-born descendants of West Indians, the word 'dupple' only seems remembered as a schoolboy insult. 'You big dopple fool' means 'You brain-dead zombie.'

In Jamaica Obeahmen are said to have the same power over invisible dupples as their more practical Haitian counterparts, 'the Houngans,' have over real Zombies. (For the truth about Zombies, read 'TELL MY HORSE' by Zora Neale Hurston).

As a link with the Ogbanje of West Africa, dupples are said to have a malevolent influence over babies.

'Don't let a baby sleep in the dark, or dupples may play with it,' Jamaican grandmother's warn their London families.

'Anti-dupple' rituals, such as boiling pungent brews and smoking out the house with herbal incense, are carried out on occasion in England just before a newly born baby is brought home from hospital. Should a baby die, still more rituals, of similar kind, must be carried out, or the child's dupple might remain as a mischievous 'Abner,' similar to a Poltergeist. Mothers are cautioned to be stoic on such tragic occasions, as the child's burial is a gift of appeasement to the Earth.

Not all Jamaican women believe such ideas, but one woman who did was Mother White, a 'Wise Woman' I met in the St. Paul's district of Bristol. She was a great believer in boiling mash to keep off dupples. Pennies placed on the ground also placated the spirits. The day came, however, when Mother White herself was laid to rest, and crowds of friends and relations sang mournfully around her grave. Strange to say, according to her family, Mother White herself became a dupple!

Mother White's dupple was such a plague to the family that another 'Obeah Mother' relative was sent for, a venerable Jamaican lady with immovable cast-iron features. First of all, the women fasted for three days. Then, armed with a Bible, a bottle and a cork, she sat up all night, 'praying down' Mother White's Evil spirit.

Faced with such a barrage of powerful prayer, the dupple (visible only to the Obeah mother) began to quail, fell helpless on the table and there began to shrink.

As the little quivering creature, with imploring eyes, grew ever smaller and more helpless, the grim Obeah mother held a cork to one side of it and the empty bottle to the other. Gradually, she brought them closer, ever closer, praying aloud all the while. Suddenly, with a satisfying 'pop!' she banged the cork into the bottle, and held Mother White's spirit triumphantly aloft, trapped like a Djinn of the Arabian Knights! The family kept the invisible Mother in her bottle for a few days, then took her on a coach outing to Weston-super-Mare and dropped her off the end of the pier. So be careful of bottles you may find, bobbing about in the sea or easy up on the beach.

I must say that, like the crow in the Walt Disney film 'DUMBO,' 'I didn't see that I only heard.'

Just to be sociable, you may take my word. Such events were not unknown in England in pre-industrial days, for in Buckinghamshire they still tell of "Sir John Shorne, Gentleman Born, who conjured the Devil into a horn."

Sir John, apparently, sat up all night 'praying down' a Devil that had been annoying the villagers. It shrank, it pleaded in vain, and bang! he sealed it up in a capped powder horn (some say a laced-up boot, but that doesn't rhyme so well). In Herefordshire, I was told of the spirit of evil Squire Vaughan, preached into a bottle and dtopped into Hergest Pool.

In Pentecostal churches, stern sermons are preached against the sin of making magic spells against dupples.

Sometimes, the belief in Dupples itself is considered a sin, at other times prayer to Jesus and the reading of the Twenty Third Psalm are declared to be the proper Christian remedy for keeping Evil spirits away. After church, many of the Brothers and Sisters, if Caribbean-born, discuss various means of Dupple-prevention as if nothing had happened.

Here are some excerpts from sermons heard in the Church of God (Pentecostal). One snowy night, the door of as bleak little hall flew open, and Sister Spring, the Pastor's wife burst in, snowflakes covering her glasses, feather boa and fluffy coat. Almost immediately she launched into a passionate sermon, 'Am I not a Harchitect' (architect), looking like a strange owl-angel from Mars. As she warmed to her theme, and the snow melted, her sermon turned into a criticism of Auntie White's anti-Dupple precautions.

'Brethren, I always say "Everyone according to their spirit!" Take the Harchitect! I am not a Harchitect! If everyone was Harchitect, where would we be? I am glad there is Harchitect when I see beautiful buildings, but I am not a Harchitect! Everyone according to their spirit! Cow take nine months to born a calf, but donkey take thirteen months! Yes! After eight month, where is donkey? After nine month, where is donkey? But after thirteen month a donkey give birth to a child according to its spirit! But

brethren, spirit don't have to be inside a thing. There are wandering spirit, and a dog can discern spirits, you know! They see something and they growl.

'But it we trouble with spirit, the only cure is prayer? Don't go to the Obeah man! All this boiling mash and rub-rub, it rubbish! Not healing, but rubbish! Yes!

"Finally, brethren, I will jusy say this: If I try to be a Harchitect, it is covetousness and that is next to Witchcraft! Turn to Hymn 121 and just hum while I ask Sister Dorothy to pray."



At a church convention in Birmingham, a Jamaican pastor launched into a wild shouting sermon in which he announced that in his own church, many months ago, two strange men walked past him without speaking, "and vanish out the door! All at once, I fell ill! Them was not men, them was Demons! I go to bed, and days later the doctor say I should go to hospital for operation! But I knew the Demons would use the operation for a chance to kill me, so I don't go! I pray to Jesus, I fall into a deep sleep, and when I awake, I am perfectly well! Jesus is my doctor!"

Although the older Caribbean members of the audience clapped and shouted approval, some of the English-born youngsters looked mulish and sceptical. Later, I heard of a young man (not a churchgoer) who, whenever he visited his parents' island of St Lucia, made a point of stepping in the feather and eggshell evil spells laid at people's doorstep. Nothing ever happened to him, and that way he proved that 'Obeah' does not exist.

In the Church of God, a young Barbadian girl warned a London congregation to 'Beware of DeLaurence.'

The DeLaurence company of Chicago market magic potions and spell-books for American Negroes, and these have found their way to the 'Obeah'-conscious West Indies. 'When the Obeah man gets saved, he throws away his Obeah!' Pastor Spring announced joyously.

Just as some of the West African immigrants in London forty years ago came to England to escape from Witchcraft-curses, so did a few of the later-coming West Indians. One young man whose mini-bus crashed became convinced, after consultation with an 'Obeah-mother,' that someone was trying to 'put something on him.'

He believed that an Evil Spirit cannot cross water, and so London Transport soon boasted the only test-passed driver who (unknown to the boss) was totally unable to read or write. Luckily, he did not crash again. I have heard

Pentecostal pastors warn their flocks against Obeah-men who do 'trading,' that is, swap information about their various clients and encourage enemies to buy more and more expensive spells for protection and correction. Rather like old-time lawyers, in fact, encouraging clients to sue one another while secretly getting together and sharing fees for favours.

'When nothing the Obeah man do makes any difference, he just tells people to read the Twenty Third Psalm,' a Barbadian church member told me. 'I ask you, why doesn't he just say that in the first place!'

'I had "Obeah" put on me once,' a Grenadan rail worker put in. 'A woman saved my life when she took it off. The man who "put it on me" live next door, and to get revenge, him bang on the wall all night! That is why I can't get to church more often than I do, 'cos I can't sleep at night so I sleep on Sunday.'

'They say "Love your enemy," but the Devil is your enemy,' a fiery young Jamaican gospel singer put in. Later this man was to terrify a church audience with his vivid impersonation of Satan, at a concert.

'Brave Christian!' he loudly sneered, as everyone trembled, and the twelve-year-old drummer boomed out a reggae beat. 'I am your enemy! My name is Satan!'

Gospel-reggae can be very effective, as anyone who has heard the recitation, in frigheningly dramatic tones, of 'The Baptism of Jesus,' will testify.

Having dealt with Witches and Duppies, it now only remains for me to tackle Mermaids. It might seem odd to English readers for me to include Mermaids here. Like Faeries, they have become a symbol of goodness, if not goody-goody-ness, and like Faeries they have become associated with little girls' dolls. But (also like Faeries) Mermaids in Britain have a seamy past. Before the era of cartoon films, within living memory they could be malevolent capricious beings, Sirens whose duty it was to lure sailors to their doom. A Sailor's song, 'THE MERMAID,' describes the horrified reaction of a whole ship's crew who realise they are doomed just because they can see a Mermaid in a stormy sea.

Throughout West Africa, and to a lesser degree in the West Indies, there is a strong belief in the existence of underwater kingdoms, usually at the bottom of lakes. Such kingdoms seem to exist in mysterious air bubbles, crocodiles or soft-shell turtles when passing from one submerged village to another. These subjects, in their rightful forms, are good-looking men and women with fish-fins on their legs. On land they can take human form. In their blue-green shimmering world, whether in salt water or fresh, the fish-women seem to be more important than the men.

Such water-spirits, Gods and Goddesses, have as many African names as their are tribes and languages, but in African-English they are called 'Mermaids,' sometimes regardless of sex. Their queen is Mammy Water, a forceful, glamorous underwater Goddess. Mammy Water, whose name is known wherever 'pidgin' is spoken, has real-life human devotees, shrines, priests and priestesses. To some she is a Goddess, but to West African Christians she is a she-devil and equally real.

Let us see what Evangelist Israel Haastrup has to say about Mermaids and Mammy Water, in his book of recorded confessions; *DEMONS AND DEMONIC FORCES*. Here he interrogates a young Nigerian lady who has dabbled in Mammy Waterism and who now wishes to sever all connections with the 'Mermaid world' and become a Christian. Her adventures in the 'Mermaid world' take place in dreams, which are taken as reality among African and West Indian mystics.

'My grandmother was a chief priestess of the Mammy Water cult in my town. As a chief priestess, she used to

serve many Evil Spirits. When I was with her I used to help her in preparing things for the spirits.

'After her death, it was revealed that her spirit wanted me to take her place, and instructed that her power should be handed over to me.

'My father wasn't happy about the decision of handing this power to me. He was annoyed. He threw all the spiritual objects that my grandmother left behind, and which were handed over to me, into a running stream. One day, I went to swim in that stream. From there the spirits my grandmother used to serve invested me...'

In a dream, the girl went to a beach and met a beautiful woman who befriended her. The dream-woman told her to call at a certain address. On awaking, the girl found that there was such an address, the home of a fetish (pre-Christian) priest. There she was initiated into the mysteries of the Old Faith. In his role of Grand Inquisitor, Haastrup broke in with a question;

'Were you told that it was the spirit of a sea python that was befriending you?'

'In the dream it was a woman that spoke to me. I did not know whether she was a sea python or not.'

By burning holy candles supplied by Haastrup's church, the young woman was eventually freed from all Mermaid connections. According to Haastrup, 'It is a characteristic of women possessed by the Mermaid spirits to love jewels and ear-rings.' He heads one chapter: *'CONFESSIONS OF A FEMALE VICTIM OF SEA DEMON ATTACK.'*

Here are some samples;

'In the dream world I often make new friends who in fact drove away my friends in this physical world. Surprisingly, my academic progress has been unhindered by these Demons. The Mermaid I am now involved with...'

A male confessor claims to have seen a sea spirit who was sent by the Sea King and Queen to meet an earthly woman whom he entered 'as a pregnancy' and so became born into the world of humans. He said that no one can leave the Mermaid world without Royal permission. Later, Haastrup comments that 'the seas are controlled by Holy Jimota,' a caretaking Angel sent by God. All the same, Jimota bears a resemblance to Neptune, Poseidon and the whole family of sea gods, just as the Lake Mermaids resemble Celtic water spirits. Perhaps, as has happened in Holy Ireland, strident Mammy Water will gradually be transformed into the gentle Virgin Mary of the sacred wells.

How have these Mermaid spirits been absorbed into the Christian and magic world of the Caribbean and Black London? To find out, let us first of all return to the strange, dingy flat belonging to my good friend Sister Evadne Wiltshire. There, among flowers both real and plastic, where holy pictures clash with lopsidedly-hung portraits of green women and tearstained children, where wooden crosses and television antennae entwine, she holds forth to all who come to listen, heavy teapot in hand.

'Brother Faron is a foolish man - me sorry for him, you know. Him did promise he would come and help me run the Lily of the Valley Mission here in my flat. But his wife and daughter are all Witches! Yes! It is by *Witchcraft* me tell you, Brer Roy, that they have won Brother Faron away from me. But Jesus is greater than Satan power. I don't 'fraid Obeah, even if all the Witch doctor of Haiti was here.

Haiti is a place where Obeah stronger than it is in Jamaica. I hear about two young white men crossing Haiti by car. Them stop to ask some people the way, and see that one big rough-lookin' man have got fish tail, like big fin dem, on he feet. So one o' the young men laugh, an' the fish-man fly into a rage an' cuss him. Another man say "Don't vex the fishtall man, 'cos him real bad."

But the two drive off and take no notice.

'Brer Roy, what do you think happen to that young man when him step out of the car now?'

'I've no idea,' I said, but I feared the worst as Sister Wiltshire had evidently reached the climax of her story. There was an ominous pause, as her eyes bulged and the rest of the room seemed to grow darker.

*"HIM BURST OUT OF HIS CLOTHES AND TURN INTO A DONKEY!"* she cried, jumping up from her chair and nearly frightening me out of my skin. In calmer tones, she continued.

'His friend cry, the boy family in America cry, but no use, him stay donkey. So the other young man went back to America, left the donkey with a reliable family. One day, a holy spiritual mother came along, heard the story an' engage in fasting and prayer. By her effort and power of God, she turn him back. So at last the donkey became a person again. Is bad that they can do in Haiti.'

In order to correct Brother Faron's wayward tendency, Evangelist Wiltshire made one of her periodic trips to the Mohan Bros. shop in Holloway Road for holy charms and candles. This John The Conqueror shop is patronised by Jamaican London's Obeah mothers, or spell-removers. One day, not quite by chance, I stumbled upon another shop in North London patronised by Obeah men.

Women very seldom came there, although good magic was sold as well as bad, and some of the candles bore beautiful pictures of the Virgin Mary.

These candles in the window caught my eye, as they bore so little connection with the shop's name. *'FOOD STORE'* was emblazoned above the door and window, in lurid yellow. Inside, I learned that the shop's real name was *'DARK AND LIGHT,'* a title that referred to the use made of the shop's contents.

*'We Are Not Responsible For What Will Happen To Shoplifters. At Your Own Risk,'* a sign said. Skull-faced Death Candles glared at me. Black candles nearby were woman-shaped.

Proprietor Bernie, a Haitian, was away on business, but I spoke to his assistant Michael. He seemed interested to hear of my acquaintance Mother White and her eventual fate as a Duppel in a bottle.

'If you want to do the same thing, I have books here that can help you,' he offered, then broke off to serve a big jovial Jamaican man.

Carvings of ebony and mahogany crowded the shelves, along with potions of every kind. A vital and somewhat alarming force seemed to exude from the pouting figures. Some came from West Africa, some from Haiti and some from black America. There, with fish-tail complete, stood enigmatic Mammy Water with her Mermaid followers.

ROY KERRIDGE *London Spring, 2001*

## ALIEN ANIMALS

# In The Coils Of The Naga

Richard Freeman Reports On The Centre  
For Fortean Zoology's Field Trip To  
Thailand In Search Of Giant Snakes

*I was recently contacted by the author of this fascinating article one early Spring evening this year, and during our telephone conversation, (during which it emerged that we share a mutual interest in just about every aspect of the weird and wonderful world of Cryptozoology) Richard very kindly granted me permission to reprint the following*

account which first appeared in the current issue of the ever-excellent 'ANIMALS AND MEN.

As Britain's only full time Cryptozoologists we at the CFZ are frequently contacted by researchers from TV companies wanting to make monster related programmes. We are habitually visited by bright young media things, who get incredibly excited and tell us that our ideas would make excellent documentaries. They then invariably, disappear for good. In the worst cases we find our ideas have been stolen and bastardised by people who know nothing about the subject.

Therefore when we were contacted by a company called Bang Productions in July 2000, we did not hold any great expectations. We were visited by an outlandishly beautiful half-Japanese girl called Manami Szymko (Japan being where the company was based) to interview us as possible presenters on the Bloodbound Gang-endorsed 'DISCOVERY CHANNEL' The project was called 'MYSTERIES OF ASIA.' In particular, she was interested in the Naga, a gigmatic legendary snake reputed to inhabit the Mekong River. Other episodes were due to feature other Fortean phenomena such as The Yeti, Ghosthunters in the Philippines, Indian Holy Men with healing powers, the supposed undersea city off Japan, and UFOs above the skies of China.

Manami interviewed me at length about the monster and filmed a screen test. She met all our exotic pets and then vanished and we never expected to hear from her again. That was in July 2000. Imagine then, Dear Constant Readers, your humble narrator's surprise when a young lady called Sandra Egart came from the aforementioned company in Early October, asking if I could join them in Thailand in a handful of day's time.

The next few days were a blur of injections and procurement of topical accoutrements. Then all of a sudden I was thousands of feet over Asia on my way to experience a welter of potential "Boys Own" (the 1920's comic, not the limp-wristed 'boy' band) style adventures.

It may be prudent at this point to give some background on the Naga itself.

Nagas are giant snakes found in Hindu and Buddhist mythology. They bear an erectile crest upon the head like that of a cockatoo but consisting of scales. The Naga is said to hold this aloft when angry rather like a Cobra opens its hood. According to Buddhist scriptures a Naga can kill in any one of three ways. Firstly, by biting and injecting its venom. Secondly, by spitting like certain species of Cobra. In this case the venom has a paralyzing effect causing the victim to become as stiff as a statue in death. And thirdly, by constriction with its immense body.

According to legend, Nagas have incredible intelligence and magical powers. They could transform themselves into humans and walk unnoticed in the world of men. It was believed that they inhabited grand underwater palaces rather like the Dragons of China. Unfortunately for folklorists of the Michael Meurger ilk, the Naga is not merely satisfied with being the stuff of legend and still rears its scaly head from time to time, even today.

The flight from England via Amsterdam took an uncomfortable ten hours, but finally, I arrived in Bangkok. I was met at the airport by Sandra, the production assistant, who had contacted me earlier and Peter Daniel, the producer. I was surprised at their youth, having expected middle-aged people. Sandra, a former model, was of a particularly striking beauty. I had been told that due to budget restrictions we were staying in a cheap hotel. 'Cheap hotel' seems to have a different meaning in Thailand, though. The Amari Atrium in which we stayed whilst in Bangkok was by far the finest hotel I have ever had the pleasure of patronising. This begs the question, what would an expensive hotel be like?

Presently, we were joined by other members of our crew. The researcher and interpreter Athilhan Srivetbodee or, to paraphrase 'BLACKADDER,' 'Bob' for short, who also worked for a charity protecting captive elephants, The cameraman was Derek Williams, who in a thirty year career, had covered just about every event of importance in Indo-China. His mother had been badgering him to write his autobiography for years. I for one would love to read it. He was ably assisted by his soundman, Somyot Pisapark, who had accompanied him on numerous previous adventures. Somyot was a dedicated man. Halfway through our filming he was told the tragic news that his wife had developed throat cancer, but he continued with his work all the same.

Bangkok is a very strange, but nonetheless beguiling city. What is particularly weird is that fact that it bears an uncanny resemblance to Birmingham, England. It even has an office block shaped like Birmingham's famous Rotunda. Gaining planning permission in Bangkok is as easy as fancying Kim Director ('goth' star of, amongst others, 'BOOK OF SHADOWS: BLAIR WITCH 2,' film fact fans-Ed) So buildings spring up like fungi. So fast do they get (ahem) erected, that often times some small, irrelevant things like foundations and strengthening rods are neglected to be included and the building is all too soon abandoned. Unlike Birmingham however, one often comes across an elephant wandering nonchalantly down the street or rooting through a bin outside a bakery!

Later that evening I was shown some film of the giant Mekong catfish (*Pangasius catfish gigas*). This animal is the largest (in terms of bulk) freshwater fish in the world and has been mooted as an explanation for the Naga. The sequence showed four men catching an eight-foot specimen. The silvery-grey fish is of massive bulk and has bizarrely situated eyes, very low on the head. The men manually simulated the fish's cloaca to collect its milt to use in captive breeding programmes. Strange to think I had travelled all the way to Thailand to watch a fish being masturbated!!!

The day after my arrival we visited Samutprakarn crocodile farm, home to the largest crocodile in captivity, a 20-foot Indo-Pacific Siamese cross named Yai. Yai in Thai means big, what a lot of thought and imagination went into his naming!

Yai was sharing a network of pools with around 100 other crocodiles. Conveniently for us he was in a small shallow pool that allowed me to walk up and down his entire length and confirm his size.

The keepers swore that Yai was the largest crocodile on the farm, but out in the main lake I saw a number that appeared to be several feet longer. Two specimens looked to be around 23 feet and a huge individual appeared to be about 25 feet. This latter giant stayed in the centre of the large pool and would not be tempted closer to the bank. He showed only the end of his huge jaw and a portion of his scuted, tree-trunk-like tail. Ergo an accurate measurement could not be made. I had a theory that the Mekong Monster could be a large (30-foot+) Indo-Pacific crocodile (*C. porosus*). I later abandoned this idea after hearing eyewitness accounts, but this gave me a chance to view my favourite creatures up closer than ever before.

The crew had me talk about crocs and the titanic sizes they could reach whilst filming me in front of the pool. Then the gates were opened and I was presented with several buckets of chicken carcasses.

'You lean through and feed them. We'll film you from over there,' they said.

My days as a zookeeper taught me that captive crocodiles are much more interested in eating the food a keeper presents them with than the keeper himself. Yai was not hungry but several of his comrades came whizzing in like

Polaris missiles with bear traps attached to them. I must admit to enjoying feeding them immensely and became nostalgic for my years as a zoo keeper.

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As well as the Naga, other Thai monsters were also present. The Garuda is a creature said to be half-bird, half man, which can bring the rains on his wings. There is also a magical golden lion. All three live together in a mystic jungle. So we have a giant water serpent, a bird man and a mystery big cat in the same country. Sound familiar?

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So I found myself surrounded by 100,000 screaming Thai's shining spotlights and laser pointers on the water and letting off fireworks. Traditional longboats illuminated with candles passed by as we waited for the phenomena to begin. Suddenly, a shout went up, a fireball had been spotted. Shortly after I saw a red light spring upwards from the opposite bank and then fade away. Soon more followed firstly, in the singular, then in twos, threes and fours. Swiftly, something dawned on me; if this were a purely natural phenomena, it would be occurring from the entire width of the river. All the lights were springing up from the far bank of the Mekong, ie, the Laotian side. Also, they were all coming from areas where lamps were visible and, presumably, people were present. They also looked to be very orchestrated. The fabled Naga fireballs seemed to be nothing more than fireworks, the relatively noiseless kind that fade away rather than explode, much like maritime distress flares. I mentioned this to some of my Thai companions who said they couldn't possibly be fireworks because they were silent and faded rather than exploding!!!

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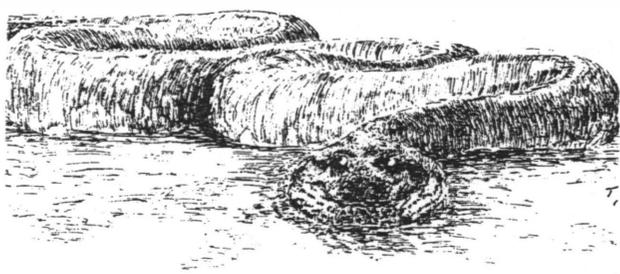
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This aside, I was excited by the prospect of laying my hands on real physical evidence of the creature. We were told that the owner did not want to be filmed and that he would not allow us to take the bones away for DNA analysis, as I had wanted. However, we were allowed to film and touch them. I was confident about being able to identify snake bones and hoped we had stumbled across evidence of a titanic new species. The bones were brought to the police station and kept under lock and key until we arrived. They were brought out in a silver chalice. We waited with bated breath as the lid was removed to reveal...a sodding elephant's tooth!

Quite how, in a country packed with pachyderms, anyone could mistake an elephant's tooth for anything else is beyond your humble narrator. Sadly, another mystery is shot down in flames.

My final full day in Thailand turned out to be the most exciting and fruitful. We drove for hours north along dirt tracks in the jungle before trekking on foot to an extremely remote village in the forested hills. I don't even know if this place has a name. I never found out. As Randi, from *'IT AIN'T HALF HOT, MUM'* once said; 'It's the back of beyond and then some.'



Our witness was a sprightly old man of about seventy, named Mr Pimpa.

He had a frighteningly close encounter with a Naga in some little-known caves in the area. After filming and interviewing Mr Pimpa, he offered to take us underground to the Naga's lair. We were led to a small cave mouth in a hillside hidden by the verdant morass.

It did not look like much but Mr Pimpa told us that it led to a network of caves that stretched for some ten miles beneath the hills and connected to with the Mekong. Like a guardian, a strangely flattened and cryptically coloured spider four inches across, lurked on the lichen in the cave mouth.

The camera crew filmed the entrance and Peter, the producer, followed Mr Pimpa, Pang and myself into the first cave. Roughly fifteen feet square and four feet high it did not look like much, but by flickering candlelight, our aged guide showed us a tiny triangular tunnel in one corner. Peter, with his expensive hand-held camera, went no further and I left my bulky camera behind, too, as Pang and I followed Mr Pimpa. The tunnel was half filled with water and so low one had to crouch. It led for some forty feet into the main network. It was as if we'd entered the fevered mind of Clark Ashton Smith. These caves were by far the strangest and most alien place I had ever been in. Imagine a hybrid of the labyrinth of Sogo in *'BARBARELLA'*, and the 'Caves of Androzani' from the eponymous *'DR WHO'* adventure. Now, shrink them. None of this honeycomb was more than four feet high. The dank, unwholesome passages were usually half that wide. Occasionally, they widened out into spaces of fifteen feet. These were peopled with unearthly rock formations like giant coffins or Greek pillars. All were festooned with offerings of jasmine wreaths in honour of the great serpent. On several occasions, we had to cross icy subterranean rivers and navigate razor sharp stalagmites that hung like

gillotines from the ceiling. When not crouched, we were on all fours or slithering like worms on our bellies through the primordial slime. No bats hung from the ceiling but I observed what looked like tiny glowing strings of pearls hanging from the cave ceiling. These were drops of luminous saliva suspended on strands of silk by carnivorous midge lava like ghoulish fishing rods. I have only heard about these caves in New Zealand and never anywhere else. Unfortunately, I was not carrying a specimen jar (a near physical impossibility down there) so I could not collect any. Does anyone out there have any idea if this is a new species?

We travelled for about a mile until we came to the place where Mr Pimpa had seen the monster some ten years ago. It was an elongate tubular cave. The old man had been exploring by candlelight when he had turned into this cave and come across a giant snake. Its head was in the shadows, but the visible portion of its body was sixty feet long. Mr Pimpa pressed himself back against the wall in terror as the giant reptile crawled by at an agonisingly slow pace. Its scales were black with a glossy green sheen, and it was around two and a half to three feet thick. Finally, it disappeared along the passage and Mr Pimpa collapsed, gasping in relief. In the dark, he had felt against a tiny semi-precious stone which he pocketed. Scrambling back out of the cave system, he returned to the village and told his weird tale.

He later had the stone mounted on to a serpent-shaped ring which he showed us. He believed that despite the fear he felt at the time, the Naga brought him luck. Prior to his adventure he was a poor man who could hardly afford to feed his family. After it he inherited some land and became a successful farmer. The caves were now considered sacred to the villagers.

Fortunately, the resourceful Pang had a tiny pocket camera and took shots of me in the Naga cave. He is posting them on to me shortly.

He led us back along a different set of passages and I regretted not having brought a ball of twine. Suddenly, daylight streamed in, and I looked up to see a vertical shaft which was ten feet high with perpendicular, slime-covered walls. Mr Pimpa shot up like a monkey but a portly, clumsy cryptozoologist is not the most agile of creatures.

After several attempts I was forced to climb up poor Pang like a living ladder and be dragged the rest of the way by our guide. We then pulled up the exceedingly trampled Pang, and trekked back off through the jungle to our crew. I was impressed with Mr Pimpa's testimony. He had nothing to gain from lying to us and was not paid for his story. He seemed genuinely surprised that people from the outside world were interested. He was a very nice man who went out of his way to be helpful.

That night, back in the hotel, I was shown the film by the director of Pata Zoo, of the supposed Naga swimming in the Mekong. Most film of alleged cryptids is bad, fuzzy, pixelated, out-of-focus, but this truly took the proverbial biscuit. It was a wobbly, badly filmed log being bobbed up and down by the current. Nothing more, nothing less.

We had a goodbye drink at Pang's pub *'Made In Udon Thani'*. It's a great place, with live bands, beautiful bar maids, good food and good beer. If you are ever in Udon Thani, be sure to check it out (*aye, aye, Steady on, Richie ol' beam. I've only just finished paying off the trips to Cardiff and Dortmund to see the Mighty Red Men - Cash-Starved Ed*), and give Pang my regards. The next day we flew back to Bangkok and awaited our transport home. Bob, Derek and Somyot, returned to their abodes in Thailand. Peter, Sandra, (who both live in Hong Kong) and I waited for our planes. We had a drink with an old friend of Peter's, Mike Dwyer, a computer programmer who

married a beautiful Thai girl, and lives in the country full time.

Sandra and Peter's flight was several hours before mine, so Mike kindly stayed and downed a couple of pitchers of beer with me, whilst I waited for mine. He told me of the idyllic life he had led, living in a shack on a beach in southern Thailand, with a lovely Thai girl selling T-shirts to tourists, until they built a hotel over his shack. At the moment, his wife is very ill with a respiratory disease caught from bat guano in some caves. My best wishes go out to both her and Somyot's wife.

I slept most of the flight back, and returned to cold, rain and floods (*no change there, then - Meteorologically pissed offEd*). After the laid back attitude of Thailand, it was as if a tidal wave of woe had broken over my head. But forgetting my moanings, for a moment at least, what conclusions did I come to?

Firstly, the so-called fireballs seem to be man-made, possibly, in order to attract custom to the area (stall holders really cleaned up on the 13th).

Secondly, the Naga bones were elephant teeth.

Thirdly, the Naga film was a floating log in the Frank Searle tradition.

But one mystery, at least, remains unsolved. Namely, the Naga itself. The witnesses seem to fall into two categories: those who saw something in the river, and those who saw something on land. Both however, have mystic overtones, eg, serpents guarding temples and statues or bringing good luck.

Do you recall me telling you about the Hindu influence on Thai Buddhism? Well, this I think is the key. Nagas originated in Indian legend and were brought down into Indo-China. I think all of the mystical elements of the original legendary Naga have been grafted onto a real animal, something that has always inhabited the Mekong. But what is it?

There were once a group of snakes that did reach immense sizes. These were the *Madtsoids*. They first evolved in the Cretaceous and were found world-wide. At first believed to be giant *Boids*, it is now known that they were a primitive basal group of snakes. These were highly successful for such archaic beasts and flourished in some cases, such as the Australian *Womambi* until the end of the Pleistocene epoch, only ten thousand years ago. Some species dwarf today's anaconda. A vertebra from South America indicates a sixty-foot snake as thick as an oil drum. Primarily aquatic, it is believed they were live bearers.

Reports from all over the Tropics suggest that some species may have survived to the present day. As well as great size, all these monster snakes seem to have strange ornamentation on the head.

The Lau of the swamps of Sudan is said to have facial tentacles. The Mano Tauro or Sucuriju Gigante of the Amazon is believed to have horns, and Indo-China's Naga has a crest.

Horns are not unknown on snakes, the Rhinoceros Viper of Africa and the Horned Viper of the Middle East are just two. The horns are actually modified scales. *Madtsoids* killed their prey by constriction with huge muscular coils, so what of the Nagas venom? Having both constriction and venom would be evolutionary overkill. As far as we know, no *Madtsoids* were venomous. Perhaps this is a facet of folklore like the harmless Salamanders of Europe, which were supposed to be deadly poisonous.

So there you have it, my theory on the Naga and giant snakes worldwide.

It is only a theory and will remain so until a well financed expedition with a lot more time makes a concerted effort to find a specimen.

One last thing about these giant snakes. It makes you wonder about all the medieval legends of giant snakes in

Britain, such as the Lambton Worm and Linton Worm, etc. Could there once have been a temperate hibernating species in Europe?

Nah, that's just too fantastic....Isn't it?

Richard Freeman July, 2000

## The Terror Of 'The Monkey Man'

During the not-so-merry month of May, this year, reports have been humming down the wires from the Indian capital, New Delhi, that an ape-like creature has been terrorising the populace, provoking such hysteria that at least three people were reported to have been killed trying to flee the mysterious entity.



Interestingly, these reports come hot on the heels of a similar panic sparked by a so-called 'Invisible Assailant' that was said to have chopped off the heads of sleeping children in the Indian province of Santhal Pargana. (See *DON # 19*), and pre-date the later accounts of a 'Were-Bear' in the Guwahati region of the country.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the rationalists have sought to pinpoint the blame for this outbreak of weirdness upon the heightened tensions with neighbouring Pakistan. Indeed, one theory currently doing the rounds across India, is that the Pakistani Secret Service have concocted the story of Monkey Man as part of a plot to destabilise India. And it is a sociological fact that in times of national and international crises, reports of strange phenomena increase dramatically. For example, the modern, headline-making sightings of the Loch Ness Monster during the Great Depression of the 1930's, the rash of UFO reports in the midst of the paranoia-riddled 1950's and the apocalyptic portents that appeared in the skies just before the outbreak of the Gulf War.

It's almost as though we're somehow compelled to give 'form' to our darkest fears in the face of a suddenly uncertain future. Perhaps, in the end, it is easier to contemplate some supernatural denizen, than have to face the very real horrors of disease, famine and war.

Whatever the truth of the matter, though, the rumours that an imhuman monster was prowling the streets of New Delhi, reached fever-pitch during the second week of May.

The creature was described by witnesses as being 4ft 6 inches tall and to be dark and hairy, with human legs and an ape-like face. It was also said to have metal claws with which it raked human skin. It was reported to have attacked dozens of people, quite a few of whom claimed to have been bitten by the beast. However, doctors who were called to examine the 'victims' wounds diagnosed that they were caused by a perfectly ordinary species of monkey, common enough in Delhi's suburbs, and prone to jumping on people when food is scarce, as opposed to some sort of alien hybrid.

The three people who were killed trying to get away from the 'Monkey Man' included a couple who fell to their deaths after hearing the creature was nearby and a pregnant woman who was sleeping on the balcony of her home when she was awoken by neighbours shouting 'The Monkey Man has come!!!'

As she raced down the stairs out of her apartment, she tripped and fell and died at the scene.

There were also reports of a fourth victim, a factory worker who also plunged to his death, trying to escape.

What is also of interest, is the different descriptions of the beast forwarded by witnesses who managed to stay on their feet long enough to outrun 'Monkey Man.' Two photofits were issued by the police, one showing a swarthy, broad-faced, bearded man with a flat nose, thick lips and a piercing stare. The other showed a narrow-faced man with receding hair and dark glasses, (some witnesses have reported the 'thing' was wearing a helmet. This strikes me as being reminiscent of sightings of Spring-Heeled Jack and The Mad Gasser of Mattoon)

Needless to say, neither photofit looks remotely like a monkey.

But that didn't stop the panic spreading throughout the city. The local media didn't do a whole pile to calm the hysteria, even when innocent victims, such as a Hindu mystic, were set upon by gangs of vigilantes, mistaking them for 'The Monkey Man.' On the contrary, the Indian newspapers hepled whip up the frenzy. A bounty of 50 rupees (£700) was placed on the head of the creature, whilst at the same time, the police warned that anyone making a hoax call (they had received 266 such calls since the outbreak of the phenomenon) would face a six-month jail term or a £77 fine. They had arrested more than a dozen people accused of helping to spread the rumour about the alleged entity.

A police spokesman was quoted as saying; *'We are going to zero down on this very early, and put an end to this menace. A special team of officers has been set up to track down the creature and more than 3,000 officers will be armed with rifles will patrol the worst hit areas in a bid to calm residents fears.'*

Nevertheless, at the time of going to press, there were still those who refused to be calmed and remained steadfast in their belief that what they were dealing with here was a genetic scientist who changed into a monkey after experimenting with some kind of serum.

And as if to reinforce the stubborn refusal of the phenomenon to be entirely debunked, came news from the Guwahati region of India, of an animal resembling a bear causing widespread panic amongst the residents of the country's remote north-eastern state of Assam.

The creature was reportedly responsible for wounding at least 20 people over a period of a few days, during the latter part of May.

As in New Delhi, panic-stricken villagers were, initially, at a loss as to how to respond. Like their fellow countrymen in the capital, they formed vigilante groups, though others elected to resort to supernatural means to banish what they saw as an evil spirit. Rituals were performed in a bid to exorcise the 'demon,' after the entity spread a contagion of

fear throughout the locale. Some inhabitants of the villages worst affected, felt compelled to keep all-night vigils, and according to local police, their officers nightly patrols had been stepped up in a bid to calm shattered nerves.

Frightened witnesses told the police that the 'animal' they had seen could somehow penetrate through closed doors and only appeared well after dark. It made a loud noise when it attacked and promptly disappeared whenever any light was shone upon it.

At the time of going to press, there were no further details, but rest assured we'll keep you updated of any further developments.

*17th-27th May New Delhi/Assam India REUTERS/SKY NEWS'*

## TALES FROM THE LOCHSIDE From Out Of The Age Of Wonders

I awoke on Sunday 26th May, at the not-too-ungodly hour of 10am, and in the midst of the usual hangover, glanced disinterestedly at the morning papers...And was sure for a moment that I must be dreaming.

There, on the cover of that most (ahem) conservative of newspapers; *'THE MAIL ON SUNDAY,'* was the unmistakable image of the legendary Loch Ness Monster.

Granted, the grainy colour photographs were a good deal less than convincing (and that's being kind), but hey, it's been a long time since *any* story concerning the reality or otherwise of 'Nessie,' has made the front page of a national newspaper.

I stared at the pictures in wide-eyed wonder, and despite the cynical Adrian Shine voice piping up in my mind

*'Oh, come on, buckeroo, you can't be fooled by that, surely. They're obviously a fake. Hell, they positively SCREAM fake. I mean, they look like they belong in the Frank Searle Gallery Of Cut And Paste Monsters, circa 1972!!! Wake up and smell the coffee, slugger!!!'*

still I paused to read the text for the background story as to how the photos had been obtained.

According to the account, James Gray and Peter Levings were rowing on the Loch early one morning, when Gray, who is a professional photographer, grabbed his camera after he saw *'this thing sticking out a few yards away. Instinctively, I started snapping. The thing, whatever it was, raised itself a couple of feet and was rising even more as I looked at it. Soon, it was about six foot out of the water.'*

*'I'd stood over Peter to do the pictures. As he turned round to see what I was photographing, he just saw what was left of it...a sort of black blob as it disappeared. It had curled forward and gone down.'*

*'This was certainly no seal - it was too high up in the water for one thing. It had a long black neck almost like a Conger Eel, which would be impossible in Loch Ness. But I didn't see a head. It didn't seem to bend very much but as it went under it sort of arched and disappeared.'*

*'We started the engine and drove to the spot where it had vanished, circling for around twenty minutes, but we found nothing.'*

James claims that he didn't bother to have the film developed straight away because he was pretty certain the image was so small, it would be barely noticable on camera.

*'But when I saw the images I got a bit more excited,'* he told reporters, doubtless rubbing his hands with undisguised glee. He also claimed, somewhat arrogantly,

that he had barely given the teams of 'Nessie hunters' a second glance during his time at the Loch. He is, according to the press account, a photographer of well-known celebrities, including the late Princess Diana, and as such, had precious little time to waste chasing a 'mythical monster.'

*'I always thought that if there is one, then there would have to be more than one, and surely they would have been seen much more often than is claimed.'*

*'And now? Well, if so many people think that it is Nessie, then it's a photographer's dream.'*

*But I am not sure that I gave captured the monster on film. I certainly don't know what the damn thing was. Let's just say I'm cautiously excited, but I am not putting any name to what is in those pictures.'*

And neither, it seems, are the band of usual suspects rounded up to be questioned as to what in their opinion the photo's may contain....



*(Above): One of the four photographs featured in the 'MAIL ON SUNDAY' appears to show the 'head and neck' of a creature arcing as it prepares to dive beneath the surface of the loch.*

*We leave you to draw your own conclusions as to what it actually shows.*

First up we have Old Beard Face himself, Mr Adrian Shine, who had this to say;

*'It appears to rigid to be a living creature. And there's no head. If anything, it gets thinner at the top. It is probably a tree branch.'*

Rip Hepple, a monster hunter with 35 years experience in the field and author of the excellent '*NESS LETTER*,' reckons *'it looks like the bumper off a Morris Minor!'*

Meanwhile, biologist David Martin, who has written a book on the phenomenon, stated; *'It is too stiff. And there seems to be no movement below the water surface. Perhaps it's a log.'*

Gary Campbell of the Official Loch Ness Monster Fan Club, told reporters that *'what concerns me is that the shots do not appear to show the shape disappearing completely. The sequence should show the water after it has vanished. I've no idea what it is.'*

And finally, Dick Raynor, another experienced investigator, was equally unconvinced; *'I don't think it is Nessie. It could be anything from a tyre to a tree branch.'*

If I am totally honest, the pictures do look to me to be pretty, well...*flat*, is, I guess the word I'm looking for, and as to whether they show any living creature I have extreme doubts.

But I'm sure I'm not the only one to be struck by the notion that (assuming the picture isn't some less than elaborate fake) this may a classic case of simulacra...Surely only a Cosmic Joker could imbue an otherwise mundane object, rotting log, Morris Minor bumper, or whatever,

with a sense of headline-grabbing magic, by causing it to surface in front of a professional photographer, who just happened to be in a perfect position to capture the image smack in the centre of all places, Loch Ness.

*26th May, 2001 Loch Ness, Scotland 'MAIL ONSUNDAY'*

\*\*\* Curiously enough, just a few weeks prior to the publication of these pictures, Kevin Carlyon, a High Priest in the British Coven Of Witches was setting about hatching a plan to cast a '*blocking spell*' to prevent Jan Sundberg's attempts to capture Nessie (see the last issue of '*DON*' for the full story of Sundberg's highly controversial scheme aimed at capturing a live specimen of the legendary monster).

There was an amusing clip on '*CHANNEL FOUR NEWS*,' which featured Mr Carlyon, dressed in his White Witch robes, confronting Sundberg down by Urquhart Bay, as a band of bemused cameramen looked on. Sundberg, every bit as arrogant as he appeared on the Monster of Lake Seljord documentary, screened by the same channel, a couple of years back, threatens to kick the High Priest into the Loch if he attempts to interfere with his hideous project. Kevin looks him up and down, and with an expression of outright contempt, replies that he will have the hunter arrested on the spot.

It's a huge disappointment that the clip ends before things have a chance to develop further.

Presumably, the Witches' bad luck curse was devastatingly effective, because at the time of going to press, there'd been no word from Sundberg's team of any level of success whatsoever, so well played, Kevin.

*24th April, 2001 Loch Ness, Scotland 'SUNDAYMANC'*

## Alien Big Cat Round-Up

### The Beast Of Widness

You know, it never ceases to amaze me the less-than-obvious places where you sometimes find evidence of the 'magic that surrounds everyday life.'

Check this out, for example, from, of all publications, '*THE GOLFERS CHRONICLE*,' picked up from our local pitch'n' putt course early one June morning.

According to the back page clipping, which appeared amidst the competition entry forms and adverts for Golf Club Society meetings, a witness by the name of Paul Burns, claims to have spotted a 'black panther' on the 16th while golfing with his son at St Michael's Golf Club in Widness.

The same, or similar creature had apparently been reported in the '*CHRONICLE'S*' sister paper, the imaginatively-titled; '*WEEKLY NEWS*,' by other locals in the Widness area.

Paul described the mystery animal as being bigger than an alsation, with a long tail and with sleek fur.

He was quoted as saying; *'We both moved to take a closer look and its ears pricked up. It seemed to be in a stalking position but it sprung swiftly into the woods when it realised wewerewatching.'*

*'I told the lads up at the clubhouse bar but they just took the mickey out of me - and I don't blame them. I would do it myself.'*

The usual theories concerning the ABC's origins, were voiced by the usual teams of 'experts,' most of them centering upon the imposition of that infamous 1976 Dangerous Animals Act and the presumed release of countless pets, including big cats, into the wild.

The fact that very few of these 'released' pets' are ever captured, despite intense searches by experienced trackers

(see the review of the *Channel Four* documentary, elsewhere in this issue), isn't something that seems to detract any from this otherwise rational, prosaic explanation.

June, 2001 *Witness, England* **THE GOLFERS CHRONICLE'**

## To The Ends Of The Earth: ALIEN BIG CAT SPECIAL

### Channel Four 8pm 21st May

The programme opens with a scene from some rural wilderness in the small hours before dawn. The pitch black darkness is illuminated by a probing searchlight atop a landrover, an image that puts me in mind of a band of kangaroo hunters out in the Australian Outback. But this isn't anywhere near as exotic a location. It is in fact, England, as the rolling backwards, 'STAR WARS' -style introductory notes confirm;

*'Since the early 1980's, there have been reports of mysterious black beasts stalking the South-West of England.*

*'Often seen but never captured, these strange beasts continue to roam the English countryside, slaughtering sheep and lambs in frenzied killing sprees, then disappearing into the night leaving no sign of their existence.*

*'These beasts are now thought to be Alien Big Cats.'*

We see the jeep wend its way down a deserted country lane. A would-be hunter loads his high-powered rifle. He takes aim. He fires at some invisible target.

The screen goes black.

And then we hear the first of our eyewitness reports, courtesy of Andy Moon;

*'It was Saturday evening. My friend Robert and I decided to do some lamping, looking for the odd fox. We came to a crossway, and decided to turn left. As we turned left in the middle of the road there was this huge great black thing. The eyes of it were like golden nuggets. I said to Robert, "What on earth's that?"*

*Robert got out the vehicle and actually put the rifle on the bonnet, and looked through the scope. As he looked through the scope, he just said to me "I don't believe what I'm seeing."*

*'I said "well, what is it?" and he replied that he wasn't sure.*

*'We all sort of thought the same thing, but nobody said anything. And on the way home it was very quiet in the vehicle, and one of us plucked up courage and said "what do you think it was?" 'And we all came to the decision that it was definitely the Black Cat.'*

The scene switches dramatically to a snow-covered landscape of unspoilt beauty. This is British Columbia, Canada. A place where beautiful big cats are cruelly hunted for their fur.

We see a couple of hunters on a pair of snow mobiles, skating around the unsullied purity of the mountain forests, and one of the fur trappers, Pete Wise, narrates a brief history of how he grew to love killing in the name of fashion. I won't relate the full details here. Suffice to say he's been actively out in the field, catching big cats and such since he was nineteen years old. It's hard to guess his current age, he could be anywhere from late fifties to early seventies, but if I have to say anything good about him, then it's fair to say he knows his stuff. He quickly picks out a set of lynx tracks when all the camera's eye can detect is barely disturbed snow. Mr Wise is quick to explain why the tracks are so indistinct; *'A Lynx track looks like it's out of focus. You can see the actual outline of the pads, but*

*because they have a huge amount of hair on the bottom of the foot, you don't get a very distinct impression.'*

Wise and his partner follow this 'smokin' hot track' through the snow-capped fir trees whilst providing a running commentary on how the Lynx will travel thousands and thousands of miles in search of food and of how they know men who have lived in the area for years beyond counting but had never seen a real live Lynx. We learn also that Wise's fellow trapper is a middle aged Englishman (he actually hails from the land of the rising Woolyback; *Witness*) by the name of Simon Goldfinch.

They relate as to how the Canadians have three species of Big Cat; The Lynx, the Bobcat and the Cougar. They will kill calves, dogs and even human beings in extreme circumstances. These cats are all incredibly elusive, as Wise, surrounded by his collection of stuffed exhibits, explains; *Their elusiveness is partly down to the terrain, but it also has a lot to do with people not actually seeing what they're looking at. 'Cos these guys are two foot tall, they can lay down in grass that's only a foot tall, and when they're 16 inches off the ground they can collapse their bodies down very small, and if he's lying very still, you'd walk right by him.'*

To the accompaniment of some suitably spooky music, we are then transported back across the North Atlantic to the heart of Southern England. Somerset, to be precise. Standing beside his jeep, woodsman Ed Dale tells us that over a 12-15 year period, he sees a Big Cat at least twice a year in the woods, not far from his home. *'Usually, it's the same colour: black, about two foot six in height, three feet in length, long tail, stumpy head. I've found sheep and deer carcasses with their throats ripped out. And I saw an animal early one morning cross right in front of me while I was out deer stalking. It jumped across the road. I later measured the pad marks where he'd jumped. He appeared to have jumped about eight foot.*

*'It was definitely a large black cat,' he sums up, convinced beyond doubting*

We switch back to Canada, where Wise and Goldfinch are still on the trail of a wholly indigenous Lynx.

After explaining why he forsook the dubious pleasures of *Witness* for the majesty of British Columbia, Simon goes on to describe the circumstances behind him forging a partnership with Pete Wise; *'In order to become a trapper you have to go on quite an extensive course, and that's where I met Peter. He was the instructor. That's part of where I got the idea of coming back over to England. I've known about the Big Cats in Britain since I was a kid. There was always the Beast Of Bodmin, and I figured we could take someone like Pete from here and dump him in Britain, and with reasonable luck, we could probably catch one of these things....If they exist. If Pete isn't able to catch this animal, it probably isn't there.'*

Sadly, the Lynx they are hunting here in Canada, most certainly *does* exist. We see it for a few fleeting moments when it stops to glance back at its pursuers, before disappearing once more into the woods...And then out come the 'humane' traps, and with a sickening realisation, we know the cat's as good as caught.

And sure enough, at dawn the following day, there's Lynx lying immobilised in one of those painless, but still godawful traps. A single gun shot rings out, shattering the silent splendour of the mountains. Mercifully, we don't get to see what happens to the poor animal afterwards. That's left to our imagination, though in truth we'd much rather not dwell on it.

The scene switches once more to England. This time, we're in Gloucestershire, where we hear to following account narrated by the witness, Carol Leach; *'It was late at night, just getting on for eleven. It was clear. The moon was*

shining. There was no traffic around because of the petrol blockade. I was doing what I normally do, taking the dog for a walk. We'd been down the road, and as we were coming back, I saw what I thought was a fox coming towards me along the path. I got the dog's lead round by my hand because she usually chases foxes. But she didn't pull, and as I bent down to ask her what was wrong, she was shaking, flat to the ground, and her ears were flat on her head...She was shaking from tip to tail.' (I don't want to read too much into this, but I think it's worth mentioning that the type of reaction described here is typical of that displayed by all kinds of animals, not just dogs, when they reportedly come into contact with supposed paranormal entities, including ghosts, 'Ufonauts' and Alien Big Cats - Ed)

'As I looked up, I could see that there was a thing against the stone wall, just across from me, and I saw it was a big black cat, not a fox at all. It crouched down. I didn't know what to do. I stood there and thought; "oh dear," and I stood in front of the dog because I was more concerned for her than I was for myself, and after what seemed like an hour, but was probably only three to five seconds, it just looked at me, got up, turned around, and walked away the way it had come up. It took two or three steps normally, and then it started to bound off, and it was gone in a flash.'

Before a roaring log fire, in the midst of the Canadian 'bush,' Pete and Simon, satisfied with a day's heartless killing of largely defenceless animals, get to talking about heading over to Britain to try and capture an ABC.

The old theory concerning that dog-blamed 1976 Dangerous Animals Act is trundled out by Simon as he seeks to explain to his bemused partner, the possible origins of British Big Cats.

Peter doesn't appear to take a lot of convincing that the venture is a worthwhile one and admits that it would be 'kinda nice to provide the definitive answer to the mystery.' Adding that it will take an awful lot of work to embark upon this enterprise, the film fades to black, and we next see the two intrepid hunters driving a jeep along a typical English country lane...

The hunt is on.

\*\*\*\*\*

It has apparently taken the pair the best part of a year to prepare for this adventure. Plotting out the best sites, interviewing eyewitnesses, and the general research involved has proved both expensive and time-consuming. But here they are, in Merrie olde England, in search of Alien Big Cats.

Pete is amazed at the amount of uninhabited countryside there is in Britain; 'I'd always thought with 60 million people living in this country, that there just wouldn't be anything this wild. Boy, was I mistaken.'

They pull up alongside a lake surrounded by woodland, the branches of the winter-naked trees clawing into a peerless blue sky. Having quickly established there is a plentiful food supply for any cat-sized predator, including wildfowl and vast abundance of rabbits, and that the terrain is ideal, the pair agree to split up to try and find any visible signs of an ABC.

Peter again; 'There's basically three areas that we need to look at here. We'll be looking for physical signs on the ground. We'll be looking for traces on the trees in regard to scratches. And if we get really lucky, maybe a fresh kill. We should be able to tell from any or all of those clues, whether the culprit is or isn't a Big Cat.'

Whilst Peter and Simon begin their search, another eyewitness, Peter Samways, a deer manager, tells of his encounter; 'I was walking down the path intending to go fly fishing on the lake, when I saw a bit of a black tail flitting in and out amongst the reeds. I stopped and saw that I'd

surprised a big black cat that was drinking out of the lake. I watched it for a while, and then reversed back up the track keeping my eyes on the beast, and I reckon it took three or four minutes for me to get out of sight. It stayed where it was all the time with its eyes on me. I then got to my car, shaking.'

Mr Samways, who now joins forces with the trappers, maintains there have been many sightings in the area, and Wise and Goldfinch are confident that if the beast exists, they will surely find evidence of it here. It seems they've struck gold when they come upon a series of scratches on the branches of an old oak tree. After being given a leg-up by Simon, the physically-fit-for-his age Mr Wise shimmys along the branch and deduces that the scratches have been caused by a dog, probably chasing a squirrel.

The local gamekeeper, Gareth Holland, maintains that on his estate he knows for certain that there are two she cats and a tom. 'We've had five cubs born on the estate, that I know of. The she cat that was mating last year, we have not seen any sign of cubs. It wasn't unusual to see a cat two nights out of three, when out lamping for foxes. They might be by the lakes. You'd hear the ducks, and then when you shone the spotlight in that direction, you'd have five foot of black cat just disappearing.'

'When you've seen the actual body that goes with the animal, and you know what a big cat's eyes look like, there's no mistaking what you've picked up.'

Peter Wise, in the company of Mr Holland, comes across a promising-looking footprint, and for a few seconds, it appears as though they've stumbled upon the definitive proof. But no. Before anyone can get too excited, it turns out to be the print of a dog. At least according to the 'expert.' And he should know, right?

This canine misperception is going to become frustratingly familiar as the programme rolls on.

Meanwhile, Simon and Mr Samways check out the inside of an old wartime installation of some sort...The locals call it 'The Ammo Dump,' and it proves to be something of a haven for the woodland wildlife. Sadly, there is no evidence that anything more exotic than a badger has taken up residence here.

As the sun goes down, the gamekeeper takes up the narration; 'You can be around these woods some nights, watching birds, putting birds away, your mind a million miles away. And all of a sudden, you become aware of what I can best describe as a very, very intense presence. Something you can almost tangibly reach out and touch. There is absolute silence. An uncanny, dead silence. Everything is listening to a major predator on the move.'

'And when you get that distinct feeling that that predator may be watching you, the hair on the back of your neck isn't exactly curling up for no apparent reason. It can be somewhat unnerving, and you have to tell yourself that you are a grown man, and that you aren't afraid of shadows.'

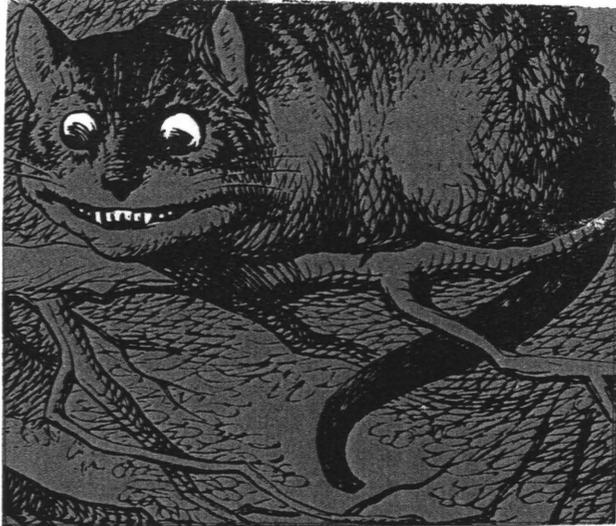
And then we get to meet Danny Nineham, a lover of paranormal mysteries, and a self-styled Big Cat investigator. We first see him driving his mobile home on the way to interview a witness to something strange in a local village.

Danny claims to have seen ABC's all over the country; 'I've seen them on the M25 when I investigated the Beast of Barnet. I saw three leopards on Bodmin Moor, and I've seen them quite a few times in the Forest of Dean. I nearly knocked a black leopard down six months ago in the Forest of Dean.'

'It's very time consuming. I've literally had to change my life in the last ten years to fit in with this. I do a milk round in the mornings, which is done and dusted early. And that enables me to be free then for the rest of the day, to be on

call for police forces and the general public. So I have to be very flexible.'

Danny pulls up in his motor home to interview a very posh young male villager, in the Wye Valley area, who tells how, as he was travelling back home from a night out with his brother, he saw a large black cat sitting outside the local shop (*one suspects, for 'local people'*). The creature was about the size of a golden retriever, and had intensely bright eyes.



Meanwhile, our old friends Simon and Pete are setting up what they hope will be an inescapable (though thankfully, totally humane) trap for any ABC's prowling the area they are currently searching. They chose a spot right in the middle of the woods, after having established that the area is well-nigh notorious for ABC activity. Pete Wise has also has another reason for selecting this site.

*'It's in a spot where if a cat came walking by, he would feel that he had found this particular sett (the trap is disguised with dead wood and branches) just by accident. We're gonna try and sucker him up the garden path somewhat here. Cats are very curious, just like your house cat. They like poking their noses in things like this. Simon's gonna put in a lure, an attractant, (and here, Pete's assistant sticks a twig into a plastic jar containing the so-called lure, prior to smearing it around the trap) We're gonna appeal to their sense of smell, so that they'll be attracted into this sett and catch him.'*

The lure can, apparently, attract a cat from a great distance, although it is not specified as to how far exactly. The trap set, we switch back to Danny Nineham, standing outside that ubiquitous motor home. *'During March of this year, we're hoping to set up the British Big Cat Society, a registered charity. We can then apply for Lottery grants, and with press coverage on a weekly monthly basis, we hope someone is gonna fund us. It's no longer a mystery, Danny insists. 'I've seen it over thirty times on a national level. I've gathered data, footprints, etc, and I've proved that there's no such thing as a Beast anymore. These are Big Cats in the British Isles.'*

Not too convinced by Danny's assertions that there's nothing left to prove, we are transported to the leopard enclosure at Cricket St Thomas Wildlife Park. There, Pete and Simon are setting about showing the viewers the difference between cat tracks and dog tracks.

*'There's been a lot of issue out here about telling the difference between the two. Now, cats have a typical lobe on the bottom of the imprint and a double lobe on the forefront of the claw. Plus its' asymmetrical as opposed to the dog which is symmetrical.'*

Despite their setting of further traps, (these latest aimed at securing footprints, using leopard urine as a lure) Danny

Nineham is certain that only one person is ever going to catch an ABC alive, and that's himself. He believes that his constant contact with both the police force and the press provides him with instant access to the latest sighting report. *'I'm the best man for the job,'* he maintains, somewhat immodestly.

Perhaps it shouldn't come as too much of a surprise to discover that neither Pete or Simon concur with this view. Indeed, when the three hunters finally meet up at Danny's mobile home, Pete sets about demolishing the photographic evidence Danny places before him. An entire photo album containing snaps of supposed Big Cat tracks and the traces of alleged attacks by ABC's.

According to Pete's 'expert' analysis, none of the pictures provide any hard evidence that anything other than a dog was involved.

In fact, much to Danny's all-too visible annoyance, by the programme's anti-climatic end, and when none of the traps prove successful in either capturing an ABC or obtaining some sort of physical trace, Pete concludes that, in his opinion, the eyewitness testimony is likely erroneous, and that large, but perfectly ordinary canines have been mistaken for something far more exotic.

The admittedly outlandish theory the ABC's may not be physical entities, but some sort of supernatural, otherworldly creature is not touched upon, and the documentary ends with Pete searching amongst some tangled undergrowth muttering 'Dog.' 'Dog.' 'Dog.' over and over as the screen fades to black...

### *Reviewed by Lee Walker*

\*\*\* But I can't help wondering what Skeptical Pete would make of the sightings last May, of the so-called 'Beast of Crickewood.'

According to accounts published in both the national and the local press, the first reported encounter with the ABC occurred when a betting agent by the name of Carol Montague saw what she described as a leopard.

She was collecting a bunch of mail from her employer's £500,000 detached home in Hocroft Avenue, when she spotted a pair of greeny-grey eyes watching her from outside the kitchen window.

*'I could not believe what I was seeing. My first instinct was to think about barricading the house. I've never seen anything like it. I rang the house owners who told me to phone the police. I can't tell you what the police officer said when he saw the cat sitting there because it is unprintable.'*

*'The police kept telling us not to move or make a fuss but they caused such a stir that it ended up bolting for the bushes.'*

The aforementioned home owners, Alan and Charlotte Newman, rushed back to the house to find it quite literally swarming with the boys in blue.

Mr Newman, 72, a one time session musician with some little-known group from Liverpool, called THE BEATLES, was quoted as saying:

*'There were about ten police cars outside, including an armed response vehicle and 20 police officers in the house and garden. They tried to lure the animal into a crate but they wound up failing. Then they laid a big net out on the grass.'*

Representatives from both the RSPCA and London Zoo soon arrived on the scene, but they had just as little success in capturing the beast.

After four hours of fruitless vigil, they eventually decided to send for the tranquilizer darts. But while the anaesthetic was being prepared, the ABC suddenly sprang up and leapt over a fence heading for the junction of with the A41, which leads to Watford and Borehamwood.

A very similar creature was sighted and cornered near the home of a South African by the name of Richard Hoarre,

who may well be rather more acquainted with exotic animals, including various species of big cat.

His fellow South African flatmate, Grant Ferguson, 21, told reporters; *'Richard was out on the balcony when he saw this huge group of police racing down the road towards us. He thought they must be chasing a robber when suddenly he spotted this incredible cat on the roof of the garage opposite our window.'*

*'When the officers arrived they told him to stay indoors.'*

About an hour later, a lynx was actually captured (can you give me hallelujah ?), when a tranquilliser dart was fired at the animal from a blowpipe to prevent it from bolting and injuring itself.

The 18-month-old female was found to be underweight with an injured left hind leg but was doing well at the time of going to press, at London Zoo. It was named Lara.

What makes this case especially remarkable of course, is the fact that the beast was captured at the scene of the sighting.

Once again, we can't help but wonder, what would know-it-all Peter The Fur Trapper would have made of this.... We don't think he would have been shouting *'Dog!!!'* quite so confidently, that's for sure

9th May, 2001 Cricklewood, London *'DAILYMAIL'*

## ANOTHER TALE FROM THE LOCHSIDE

And glory be, here comes another 'expert' to make like Messrs Campbell and Binns, and single-handedly 'solve' the mystery of the Loch Ness Monster, with one simple catch-all explanation...

This time, we have Doctor Luigi Piccardi to thank for showing us all the foolish error of our ways.

It seems what the hundreds of eyewitnesses have really been seeing on the surface of the Loch (not to mention the anomalous sonar contacts) has been nothing other than admittedly unusual earth tremors along the fault of the Great Glen.

The good Doctor, who hails from the grand-sounding (pardon me while I take a deep breath) Centro di Studio deli Appennino e delle Catene Perimediterranee in Florence, announced his findings at an international scientific meeting in Edinburgh.

He stated that it his belief that the bulk of the recorded sightings can agree on few details except that the 'monster' creates a huge splash and commotion in the loch, which the Dr maintains is consistent with an earth tremor.

The meeting was organised by the Geological Society of London and the Geological Society of America. Dr Piccardi is also of the belief that studies should be conducted to link seismic activity with unusual water movements in the Loch.

He went on to admit that he would be mightily relieved if those who gave their time up to actively investigate the monster at least took the time to hear him out and didn't become *'Piccardi hunters.'*

*'It is no coincidence,'* he told the delegates at the conference, *'that Loch Ness is positioned directly over the fault zone of the most seismic sector of the Great Glen Fault, the major active fault in Scotland.'*

*'Still active, the fault was responsible for a major quake as recently as 1901. And a huge earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 triggered a small tidal wave in the Loch when the fault channelled its energy.'*

He also goes on to state that the famous Picts' water horse was not the creation of Scottish folklore but actually originated from the *hippocampus* of Greek mythology (*hippos*, horse, *kampus*, sea monster), the sea horses that drew the chariot of Poseidon, the God of earthquakes.

*'Loch Ness is directly on the fault zone. When there are small shocks, it can create a commotion on the water surface. Along the fault there can be gas emissions, which can create large bubble on the surface.'*

*'There are many surface effects which can be linked to the activity of the fault.'*

*'There have been more than three and half thousand Nessie sightings. Of these, some are due to natural explanations, others are due to hoaxers. If these are excluded to leave relatively few reliable accounts, what is usually described is a violent commotion or anomalous wave, and the beast is inferred as the cause. Few describe Nessie, and if they do the details do not match.'*

Well, I'm not sure about that last statement, (the 'upturned boat' and long, sinuous neck with a tiny head crop up fairly regularly) but even if Dr Piccardi is right in his conclusions, there is something he neglects to mention... That all kinds of strange phenomena, from UFOs to Bigfoot sightings, from Alien Big Cats to yes, Lake Monsters, all of this and more is frequently reported as occurring with uncommon regularity in the vicinity of areas prone to earthquakes. See the works of John A. Keel, Janet and Colin Bord, etc, for more on this apparent correlation.

27th June, 2001 Loch Ness, Scotland *'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'*

## The Hunt For The Monster Of Lough Ree

Not content with trying to trap Nessie, that infamous Swede Jan Sundberg has elected to join forces with Norwegian Espen Samuelson, and US marine Nick Sucik, in a bid to locate traces of the lesser known monster of Lough Ree in County Westmeath, Southern Ireland.

The team, known as GUST (Global Underwater Search Team) were checking out reports that the creature reputed to haunt the lake may be a giant eel, or a Horse eel, as they were known. The fabled Horse eels have been sighted in many of the waterways of Ireland. The team were planning to spend a week at this particular lough before travelling throughout the country looking for any potential fossilised remains, or indeed any other evidence.

They were going to utilise equipment that detects underwater disturbances of the type made by large mammals. According to Sundberg, there is a good possibility that Horse eels reside in many Irish Loughs; *'The description of these creatures are very much the same as those in Scandinavia, namely, an eel or snake-like animal, three to ten metres long, with evenly thick and muscular bodies. It seems to have the ability to move over land from lake to lake, and could be very aggressive.'*

Witnesses have claimed that the Lough Ree monster's body is coiled in a series of loops when it appears on the water's surface. It is at least six feet long with a relatively small head, 18 inch head.

The team's approach of lowering devices into Loch Ness apparently some sort of acclaim from a section of the scientific community. Their was, it seems, at some degree of success in the operations at Loch Ness, when GUST were excited by a recorded sequence that, according to them, sounds precisely like large aquatic bodies propelled by large flippers moving through the water.

The most famous historical sighting of the Lough Ree monster occurred back in 1960. On May 18th of that year, three Dublin priests fishing in the waters of the Lough were startled by the vision of a long-necked, flat-headed creature swimming about one hundred yards from their boat.

It was a warm, balmy evening, the waters were calm, visibility was excellent. The men could see the beast with perfect clarity. The head and neck, between 18 and 24 inches long, were separated by about 2 feet of water from another part of the body that could have been a hump on the back of a large creature beneath the water's surface.

They watched for a total of two or three minutes as the monster swam towards the shore. It then gradually submerged, reappearing a couple of minutes later and then disappearing again 30 yards from the shore.

14th June, 2001 Lough Ree, Kiltmore, Ireland 'THE IRISH TIMES'

## New 'Evidence' Found For The Existence Of The Yeti

According to reports emanating from the Himalayas, a team of scientists hunting the Abominable Snowman, have managed to obtain what they believe to be a sample of the legendary creature's fur.



Some of the world's leading DNA specialists were apparently baffled by the strands of hair brought back from a previously unexplored region of eastern Bhutan.

Not surprisingly, given the less-than convincing track record of such 'evidence,' the team were fully expecting the hair to belong to an indigenous species of bear. But they were in for a shock.

'It's not human, not a bear nor anything else we have so far been able to identify. It's a mystery, and I never thought this would end in a mystery' Professor Brian Sykes, a DNA expert at the Oxford Institute of Molecular Medicine, told reporters. 'We have never encountered DNA that we couldn't identify before.'

The good professor qualifies his ability for identifying previous samples of alleged 'Yeti' fur by recounting how, in 1999, he was able to confirm that the pelt had come from a bear.

Rather than being in overly discouraged, Dr Robert McCall, an Oxford University zoologist, decided to lead an expedition in search of the Yeti, in the wake of these negative findings; 'We thought it was worth examining the stories because the tales were so vibrant, but my gut feeling was that the Yeti was a bear.'

When the group returned with a total of four hair samples, two of which did indeed belong to identified species, ie; a bear and a wild boar, pessimism set in. However, 'the fourth sample was the one that we were most interested in,' Dr McCall later told reporters. 'We found it on a tree that one of the country's leading animal trackers claimed had been used by a Yeti.'

'This fourth collection of hair turned out to be neither bear nor primate,' and Professor Sykes, it seems, is at a loss to name the origin of the sample.

Meanwhile, Dr McCall believes no matter what the final outcome of the analysis the sample is now being subjected to, it will be well-nigh impossible to ever totally disprove the existence of the Yeti, but thinks that every failed expedition brings scientists a step closer.

'Each time an expedition comes back empty-handed the chance of anything being out there becomes more remote. What our findings have done is keep the mystery open for the time being.'

Early Summer, 2001 (Exact date of clipping unknown) The Himalayas, Nepal 'DAILY EXPRESS'

## Weird Spider Plague Hits Royal Residence

A potentially dangerous species of poisonous spider has been discovered to be lurking near to the Queen Mother's weekend home.

These rare creatures are around 3 inches long with fangs strong enough to pierce human skin.

They were stumbled upon by a British Telecommunication engineer when he lifted a manhole cover near the Queen Mother's Royal Lodge in Windsor Great Park. 'Expert's were afraid that there may well be a colony several thousand strong, and that they might have spread to Windsor Castle through the underground cables and pipes. Conservationists are reported to be completely baffled by the appearance of the spiders and are currently conducting tests to learn more about them.

Graham Smith of the Project Ark conservation team, called in to make the area safe, told reporters; 'Everyone must take care until we know more. They (the spiders) should not be touched.'

'We've taken samples so we can make a positive identification and establish whether or not it is a new species.'

'We need to find out as soon as possible how dangerous they are because, if the colony has been there for a while, there could be thousands of them around Windsor.'

It is feared that the spiders have been breeding along cable routes that stretch for miles between homes near the Royal Park.

Mr Smith added; 'I'm sure there are some perfect nooks and crannies for them under Windsor Castle and in the Queen Mum's place - so the Royals should remain alert.'

BT health and safety officer Michael Copp, added; 'None of our engineers wanted to go near them because they were so big and aggressive looking.'

Now we know they are dangerous, no work can be done in the areas where they have been spotted.'

17th June, 2001 Windsor Great Park 'SUNDAY MANC'

## Out Of Place Alligator In New York

In an example of Urban Legend becoming (almost) Urban Fact, reports of an 18 to 12 inch alligator sighted in the water and near the shoreline of the Harlem Mere in New York, were making the headlines last June.

The Mere is actually a small lake in the north east corner of Central Park, and up to 25 witnesses claimed to have seen the creature on June 16th, alone. Included amongst the witnesses were an off-duty police officer and his two daughters, several city employees, and park management workers. One brave person even succeeded in grabbing the reptile by the tail before flinging it to the ground, but

unfortunately, the subsequent noise and confusion drove it back into the water in double quick time.

The police were summoned to deal with the 'gator and they duly sealed off the area with yellow crime scene (yeah, good thinking guys. No pesky alligator's gonna get past that trap!), before launching a boat with officer carrying a noose-like device.

They very nearly caught the animal on one occasion, but it managed to swim to freedom amidst the 9ft depths, and, at the time of writing hadn't been seen since.

19th June, 2001 New York, USA 'ASSOCIATED PRESS'

## New Species Of Dinosaur Found In Sahara Desert

A new species of a gigantic dinosaur which may well have been the second biggest creature ever to walk the Earth has been discovered in the Sahara Desert.

The four-legged giant measured up to 100ft, from the tip of its long neck to the tip of its whip-like tail, and weighed more than 75 tons. It has been named Paralititan, the first part of which means 'tidal giant.'



When the creature was alive, 94 million years ago, the area of the Sahara where its remains were found was very different from the way it appears now. Back then the region was a vast coastal mangrove swamp. A 67-inch thigh bone found at the site suggests that Paralititan was almost as big as Argentinosaurus, currently the largest dinosaur known.

Scientists from the University of Pennsylvania made the discovery at an oasis, 180 miles from Cairo.

1st June, 2001 Sahara Desert, Africa 'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'

## STRANGE DAYS IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM The Animals Strike Back

In the grand tradition the late, great Alfred Hitchcock, our feathered friends have become outright fiends in a couple of instances this summer.

Firstly, fire investigators in Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset, were amazed but left with little option other than

to lay the blame for a blaze which severely damaged a semi-detached house on sparrows carrying smouldering cigarettes. The firemen were called out to the home of Carole Collison, 49, and her daughter Niska, 23, and arrived to find the roof already well alight.

They managed to stop the flames from spreading, but the wrecked. Station officer Peter Stobart, of Avon Fire Service was quoted as saying; 'The most likely cause of the fire was a house sparrow that had brought a cigarette end into its nest to use as bedding.'

12th June, 2001 Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset 'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'

\*\*\* And just a few days later, dive bombing seagulls were forcing a terrified pensioner to vacate her home after she was injured during an attack by the birds. Two of the gulls, nicknamed Stukas by neighbours, for obvious reasons, were shot down by Lewes District Council.

Grace Amos, 86, was pecked on the head whilst she was in her back garden at Seaford, East Sussex, and needed several stitches in the wound.

She stayed with relatives whilst the Council, using special powers blasted the birds, which had also been responsible for launching dive-bombing raids on the local postman, a gardener and other visitors, out of the sky.

28th June, 2001 Seaford, East Sussex 'THE TIMES'



\*\*\* If that wasn't enough, consider if you will, the even more recent account of a Yorkshire terrier found dead in the back garden of a house in Brixham, Devon. The 9-year-old dog, named Poppy, was apparently killed by a seagull.

'Experts' believed that the 4lb terrier would have stood little chance against a bird with a five-foot wingspan and a razor-sharp beak. The dog suffered a fractured skull and may have lain for several hours before bleeding to death.

The sad sight of her pet's body lying on the lawn greeted (if that's quite the right word) Patricia Dawson 58, she returned home from a shopping trip. She was understandably devastated after finding a beak-sized hole in the dog's head. She told reporters; 'Poppy was only tiny, but she thought she was a Ratweller and would have stood her ground if a bird attacked.'

A team of 'experts' went on record to state that attacks by seagulls on domestic pets are rare but at this time of year, the height of the bird's breeding season, the gull in question may have been a mother trying to protect her young.

Graham Madge, of the Royal Society Protection For The Protection Of Birds, said; *'Gulls can be quite intimidating. They often nest on flat roofs in seaside towns and when the young are quite advanced in the nest, they may be testing out their wings for the first time.'*

*'It may be that one took a spill, fell out of the nest, and the terrier went over to investigate.'*

*'The mother would then have launched an attack to protect her young. It's a horrendous incident and very distressing for the owner.'*

7th July, 2001 Brixham, Devon **'THE DAILY MAIL'**

\*\*\* The good intentions of a local environmentalist group were scuppered when it attempted to come to the aid of some starving birds.

PROBE, the Banbury environmental, ecology study and protection association, together with Cherwell District Council, brought food for wild birds in the town Spiceball Park during the big freeze after Christmas, last year.

But a flock of seagulls (real birds, not the 80's Liverpool band, one presumes) swooped on feeding goldfinches, linnets and sparrows and promptly ate them.

3rd February, 2001 Banbury **'CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS'**

\*\*\* A pair of nesting swans were causing a whole bundle of hassle near to the (supposedly haunted Ellesmere Port Boat Museum) in the early days of last spring.

The birds had been living contentedly together on the canal since before the previous Christmas.

They became such a familiar sight that museum staff named them Sammy and Susie.

However, towards the end of April, the female laid eggs on the canal banks, causing her partner to become irate with people who wander too close. His aggressive behaviour reached new heights when the bird gave chase to two museum staff, probably because they christened him with such a dumb ass name.

A museum spokesperson was quoted as saying; *'We called in a swan rescue service to see what they recommended.'*

*'We've never had any problems with the swans before. All the staff are used to seeing them swimming happily on the canal. We were really surprised when Sammy started acting aggressively. After he flew at one of the staff, the manager went down to inspect and he then went for him too. So we put up a sign warning people that the swans were nesting and were dangerous, and not to get too close.'*

*'But then Sammy started getting aggressive even when people were nearby minding their own business, so we realised we had to do something.'*

The museum then called in Jackie Leech, who runs Save Our Chester Swans, a rescue service she operates from her Chester home.

Jackie inspected the swans and advised staff to give them a wide berth for a few weeks.

She also taught them a trick to use should the male swan become aggressive again.

*'It involves facing up to the swan to challenge it. It takes courage, but eventually it will stand down,'* reckons Mrs Leech.

20th April, 2001 Ellesmere Port, Cheshire **'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'**

\*\*\* A profane parrot was also making avian headlines this Summer when embarrassed sailors were forced to lock Sunny, an 18-month-old African Grey away during the visit of a defence chief.

Sunny refused to play ball however, and instead let out a string of expletives from an annex to the officer's mess.

The outburst was clearly audible during a flying visit to the frigate Lancaster by Admiral-in-Chief Alan West. The admiral was reported to be 'perplexed' as the parrot fired

off catchphrases from **'THE FASTSHOW'** as well as a few choice swear words. Sunny, the ship's mascot, also squawked; *'Zulu's...thousands of 'em!'*

Admiral West was conducting a briefing in the officer's mess when Sunny announced its presence with the word 'arse,' swiftly followed by 'bollocks.'

Its repertoire apparently includes whistling the theme tune to **'THE GREAT ESCAPE'** and the cry 'You ain't seen me, right?'

Ratings are believed to have taught the bird to swear during Lancaster's current six-month tour of the Persian Gulf.

Unusually Sunny lives in a cage in the officer's mess. To be on the safe side, officers have banned her from the mess and nearby areas during future visits by senior officials.

Lt Cdr Peter Lee, engineering officer of the Portsmouth-based ship, was quoted as saying; *'Sunny can be particularly foul-mouthed at times.'*

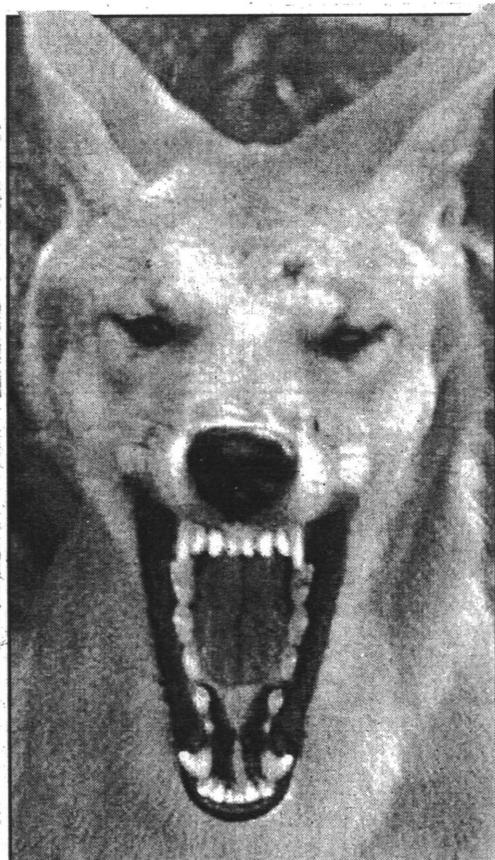
*'But for her not to be around would be even more of a shock and we would all miss her.'*

21st June, 2001 HMS Lancaster **'THE DAILY MANC'**

## DINGOS ON THE ATTACK

Two British women were attacked by a dingo whilst they were on a holiday island, not long after a nine-year-old boy was mauled to death.

The backpackers were bitten and scratched while walking through bushland on Fraser Island, off Australia's Queensland coast.



State officials ordered a cull of the 200-strong population after the killing of Clinton Gage, from Brisbane, six days earlier.

Rangers have been shooting dogs found close to camp sites amid fears that they pose a risk to the public. One of the British women, who weren't named, was bitten on the legs after she fell while being chased by a dingo.

*'I don't even know where it came from,' she told reporters. One witness was quoted as saying; 'We heard this screaming, so I jumped up and ran over to find this dingo running after her.'*

Neither woman was badly hurt. The dingo was destroyed. Officials say the attack vindicates their decision to order the cull.

State Premier Peter Beattie said; *'This confirms the need for cull. People are more important than dingos.'*

6th May, 2001 Fraser Island, Australia 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'

\*\*\* A pig knocked over and savaged its owner to death as the farmer was getting the animal ready for market.

The boar leapt off a set of scales as it was being weighed in Hungary.

10th April, 2001 Hungary 'DAILYMANC'

\*\*\* And another porker conspired to cause chaos in Marlborough, Wiltshire, when it dug up a grenade instead of a truffle. Bomb squad officers blew the device up safely.

17th June, 2001 Marlborough, Wiltshire 'DAILY SLUR'

\*\*\* A motorcyclist was killed when his superbike collided with a stray cow.

The man, who remained anonymous at the time of going to press, but was believed to be in his early 20's, suffered fatal injuries when his powerful Suzuki Bandit motorcycle hit the animal in Greetland, Halifax, West Yorkshire.

Local police were more than a little puzzled as to how the cow had wandered onto the road and were appealing for witnesses.

A spokesman told reporters; *'This appears to have been a tragic accident but we are trying to find out exactly what happened.'*

15th July, 2001 Greetland, Halifax, West Yorkshire 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'

\*\*\* Oriental crabs, capable of causing millions of pounds worth of damage were on the march towards Scotland last Spring, with sightings in the Rivers Tees, Tyne and Blyth in the north-east of England.

According to a marine scientist, the activities of the crustaceans - Chinese mitten crabs - can lead to flooding, resulting in substantial damage to homes and property.

They were first spotted in the Thames, where they're believed to have arrived in the ballast water of a ship from the Far East in the 1930's, the crabs bring ruin to natural habitats by burrowing into river banks.

One mitten crab can bore 50 holes, each half a metre in length and 10 centimetres in diameter, in one square metre of river bank.

*'The cost associated with bank erosion can run into millions of pounds,'* Dr Matt Bellamy from Newcastle University's Department of Marine Sciences and Coastal Management.

*'But the immediate danger is environmental and ecological. They cause river banks to collapse and threaten valuable wildlife habitats.'*

With the crabs capable of travelling 800 miles and a single female able to produce one million larvae, nothing can stop them crossing the Scottish border.

4th March, 2001 Scotland 'THE DAILY RECORD'

\*\*\* Several squirrels managed to cause a fire in the home of Gerry and Bernadette D'Souza, forcing them to move out of the house in Chatham, Kent.

The rodents chewed clean through power cables at their abode, causing a fire which destroyed two bedrooms.

4th March, 2001 Chatham, Kent 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'

\*\*\* And an hard-faced, apparently anti-Catholic squirrel broke into a tin and managed to eat *all* the communion

wafers at St Peter's Church, Spexhall, near Halesworth, Suffolk.

1st April, 2001 Spexhall, Suffolk 'DAILY SLUR'

\*\*\* Back in April, frogs invaded Nottingham's Trent Bridge cricket pitch, after one of the wettest winters on record.

*'The water has encouraged the frogs to spawn there,'* head groundsman Steve Birks told reporters. *'It's mayhem. They keep arriving in their hundreds.'*

Along with his staff, Birks spent the majority of the month collecting the frogs in buckets and dumping them in the nearby River Trent.

15th April, 2001 Nottinghamshire 'SUNDAYMANC'

\*\*\* Sophie Bernard was faced with the shock of her life when she awoke in the middle of the night to find a huge badger sitting on the end of her bed.

The animal, which one presumes, must have been very hungry, had broken into the house when in Hastings, East Sussex through a catflap and sauntered into the nine-year-old's bedroom for forty winks after chowing down on the cat's dinner. It made itself a very comfy nest out a bunch of soft toys.

Sophie's mother, Janet locked the badger in the room, and it was later rescued by the RSPCA.

25th March, 2001 Hastings, East Sussex 'SUNDAYMANC'

\*\*\* A sex-starved, and presumably short-sighted moose in Norway, somehow managed to mistake a small yellow Ford Ka for a potential mate. Once it realised its mistake, the animal took a dump on the bonnet.

Leif Borgersen, the car owner, was quoted as saying; *'I found it bathed in lick marks, saliva and, not to put too fine a point on it, shit.'*

*'The front yard was simply transformed into an outdoor lavatory.'*

*'I'm a bit uncertain whether I should take the risk of letting the car stand alone and defenceless in the front yard from now on.'*

23rd April, 2001 Oslo, Finland 'REUTERS'

\*\*\* A farmer was lucky to survive when an enraged cow charged and flung him into a trough as he tended to her newborn calf.

Peter Hutchinson, 69, of Greenhill Farm in Balderston, Nottinghamshire, was flown to hospital, where he was treated for severe injuries to his face, back and chest.

He also needed surgical stitches after biting through his tongue.

His wife, Joan, had this to say; *'The cow was simply protecting her young. He has been very lucky. It could have been so much worse.'*

13th May, 2001 Balderston, Notts 'SUNDAYMANC'

## INVASION OF THE LOCUSTS

A mild winter and torrential rains worldwide have conspired to cause a veritable plague of locusts right across the African Basin and throughout the Middle East.

Now a billion-strong swarm is happily chomping its way across America, China and Russia.

The eighth of the ten plagues of Egypt, which according to the Bible, arrived on an east wind in a swarm so dense that *'the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb in the land, and all the fruit of the trees...and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in all the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.'*

Since early June, this year, huge swathes of vegetation and crops on two continents have been devastated by nature's seemingly unstoppable force.

In China, 8 million hectares of land are under attack from sky-darkening clouds of the migratory insects. Local

farmers are, at the time of writing, living in dread that once the locusts have devoured the wasteland where they are now congregating, they will turn on the summer crops and winter pastureland.

In the American state of Utah, locusts known as the 'Mormon crickets' have already caused some \$25 million worth of damage to farmland, threatening around half a million hectares. Not surprisingly, an agricultural emergency has been called there.

In the southern Russian region of Dagestan, the plague has been confined to 70,000 hectares of land close to the Caspian Sea - an area the size of the Isle of Wight.

Supplies of wheat have however, been severely decimated. Russian 'experts' were predicting that if the swarm wasn't destroyed within the space of a single week - while the young locusts are still earthbound and slow-moving - then central Eurasia will be left facing the worst locust plague in 40 years.

Locusts crawl at 1.2-1.8 miles an hour. But when they reach sexual maturity and grow wings - a process which takes about two weeks - they can cover hundreds of miles a day, consuming anything in their path.

No wonder, then, that officials in the U.S., China and Russia are steeling themselves for a dramatic and costly battle, using insecticide sprays across large areas - it takes 55 gallons to kill 200 million locusts - or 'dusting' the locusts with toxic compounds dropped from the air.

The Chinese government was planning on employing a more environmentally-friendly tactic, transporting hundreds of thousands of ducks to the worst affected area of Xinjiang Province. The ducks can eat up to a pound a day of locusts.

20th June, 2001 Various locations 'DAILY EXPRESS'

## ANIMAL KINDNESS AND INTELLIGENCE

### Monkey Magic

According to reports in the so-called 'quality' press, monkeys have perfected their own insect repellent, made from the body of a freshly squashed millipede.

Deep in the Venezuelan jungle, wedge-capped capuchin monkeys can be found gathering in groups of up to 35 for rub-down sessions. The lotion comes from a squashed *Orthoporus dorsovittatus* millipede.

A team of American researchers who were working at Venezuela's Fundo Pecuario Masaguaral jungle reserve found that one millipede is potent enough for the entire troop, and far more powerful than the strongest jungle-strength repellent used by human armies. Unfortunately, it is far too painful for human usage.

Some capuchins were seen popping a poisonous millipede in their mouths - perhaps to hurry the secretion process, the researchers speculate. The team discovered the monkey's mosquito repellent when they were trying to find out why capuchins spend less time scratching themselves than other primates.

Nice work if you can get, I guess.

21st January, 2001 Venezuela, South America 'THE TIMES'

## SAVED BY A COCKATOO

A pet cockatoo somehow managed to dial 999 and persuaded the operator to dispatch a squad car once the address had been traced. Outside the property in Sale Moor, Greater Manchester, a bemused house owner by the name of Michelle Gibbs, 29, sat after having locked herself out. Inside perched the bird named Sky who, free to roam the house, had elected to dislodge the telephone handset and peck, of all numbers, 999.

*'I am sure she knows what she's doing with that telephone,'* said her owner Richard Slater, 27, who was on holiday 'aving it large in Ibiza at the time.

Predictably, the ever-chirpy guys at the RSPB took a more mundane view.

*'It's a fantastic story but she must have just pecked the buttons at random and hit the same one three times.'*

The drama began when Miss Gibbs, who hails from Cardiff, decided to go out into the garden to try and top up her tan but then found she could not get back into the house.

*'I sat on the front doorstep with the dog, Sam, to wait for a neighbour who had a spare set of keys to let me in.'*

*'The next thing I knew, a police car arrived and a policeman told me he had received a 999 call which had been traced to my house. I was quite shocked and said there must have been a mistake, but when we went round to the back of the house, there was Sky pecking the phone.'*

*'She had been roaming around the house before I went out and must have got on the phone and put the numbers in somehow.. She has a thing about the phone and loves pecking it.'*

*'When the neighbour came back and we got in I found that the phone had been knocked off the hook.'*

*'Sky was all puffed and pleased with herself and kept saying her favourite phrase; "Who's a pretty girl?" over and over.'*

*'I rang her owner straight away in Ibiza and he was proud of her. He reckoned she knew what she was doing, even though she'd never done anything that fantastic before.'*

*'She must have thought I was a burglar trying to get in. She's better than a guard dog anyway.'*

*'How many pooches do you know who could call the police like that? Fortunately the police saw the funny side.'*

Greater Manchester police confirmed that its Trafford operations room had received the 999 call.

Superintendent Martin Harding said; *'It's not unusual to receive silent 999 calls but it's the first time we've been called by a parrot'*

17th June, 2001 Sale Moor, Greater Manchester 'DAILY MAIL'

## SQUIRREL USES IT NUT

Cyrl the squirrel apparently hates litter, and so she's learned how to put her shells in the bin.

The tame, tree-dwelling rodent takes food from the hands of regular visitors to the car park at Medway Maritime Hospital. But the people were left (ahem) shell-shocked when they spotted her politely disposing of left-overs in a dustbin. Michelle Carr from the RSPCA, said; *'Squirrels are very bright, and will mimic things they see people do.'*

10th June, 2001 Medway Maritime Hospital 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

## RAIDERS FOILED BY A GOOSE

A goose managed to save its own neck after it succeeded in single-handedly foiling a gang of would-be raiders at its owner's farm. The goose managed to startle the intruders by causing such a racket that the farmer, who was planning on killing the goose pretty soon, was alerted. He immediately let out his three dogs and the burglars were forced to flee empty-handed.

The grateful farmer, Neil Hill, 55, of Ashburton, Devon rewarded the bird by retaining its services.

Well, it was the very least he could do.

He was quoted as saying; *'The goose was due to be someone's lunch, but it saved me hundreds of pounds.'*

The bird has now been marked with a special blue dye to identify it from the others destined, sadly, for the meat-eaters dinner table.

12th January, 2001 Ashburton, Devon 'DAILY SLUR'

# Religious Phenomena

## The Gentle Passing Of A Hand

During the early spring of this year, especially around Easter time, the Sunday magazines were filled with allegedly true stories regarding encounters with beatific entities, be they the ambiguous denizens of the realm of Faerie or unequivocally benign Angels.

We reprint edited details of some of the more intriguing encounters here. Make of them what you will..

Back in the long hot summer (remember them?) of 1995, Avril Makin from Manchester, was more than aware that her mother was dying. Avril, then aged 43, was feeling depressed beyond words, but one night she had a dream in which she saw the vision of an Angel radiating waves of comfort and love. The face of the being was so bright and the dream so vivid that Avril awoke feeling a good deal less despondent and found that the words from the hymn *'GUARDIAN ANGELS FROM HEAVEN SO BRIGHT'* running round and round her head.

When later that morning she received a letter from relatives in Australia, it all appeared to fall into place...They had sent her two Angel lapel pins for Avril and her aunt. Avril then began to see her mother's death as a joyful transition to the next life.

\*\*\* Another woman from Manchester, Karen Scott, aged 36, lost her husband in a car crash whilst he was on his way to the airport, leaving her to bring up three young children on her own. Karen was partly reassured after visiting a clairvoyant who told her that Jack was proud of the way she was coping. But one morning, 18 months after the crash, Karen woke knowing instinctively that it was going to be a bad day. She stood in the kitchen as the black waves of despair washed over her.

Suddenly, she felt a hand on her shoulder. She spun around but she saw that there was nobody there. Nevertheless, she felt reassured. She was filled with the belief that the hand was transmitting the message that she should 'trust.'

A little while later, Karen was astonished to see the clairvoyant pull up outside her house. 'I know you must be surprised to see me,' the psychic said. 'But for some time today I've felt you needed me.' Karen never again doubted that there was an Angel at her shoulder.

\*\*\* And was it with Manchester???

Mavis Croft, 65, was also in need of spiritual comfort when she was nursing her dying mother. As the stress daily increased she felt compelled to kneel by her mother's bedside and pray desperately for assistance.

Suddenly she became aware of a presence in the room. She opened up her eyes and saw two enormous wings of light radiating a sensation of peace, love and healing. Mavis was overwhelmed with this display of otherworldly support.

As the sight of the wings slowly faded from view, a smile spread across her mother's face. She too opened her eyes and told Mavis before she died; 'Do you know, I think I'm going to be alright now.'

\*\*\* Okay, this is getting ridiculous, now. I know the media are biased towards all things manc, but as Morrissey once said; 'Oh, Manchester, so much to answer for.'

Anyway, a mother by the name of Helen O' Connor, claims to have met an Angel at Manchester Royal Infirmary...

*'Together with my staunchly Roman Catholic husband, I was delighted when I found that we were expecting our first child. But, from that moment, everything went wrong. I had a difficult pregnancy.*

*'During the birth the danger to my unborn baby and myself increased. Deterioration was so rapid that I knew I was dying.*

*'Unbeknown to me at this time, the consultant, aware of Peter's strong Catholic faith, took him to one side and asked him to whom he should give medical priority - me or the baby.*

*'My poor husband was at his wits end and asked for a little time to think. Minutes were all he had as he paced the hospital corridors in a frenzy of grief.*

*'I was slipping in and out of consciousness, with the medical staff fading from view, when suddenly everything went completely black. There was no noise, no light, no pain.*

*'A figure slowly emerged, level with the foot of the bed, growing in form and brightness and radiating calmness and love (there's that phrase again).*

*"Am I dead?" I asked. I felt I must be but the figure gave me a wonderful smile and answered: "It's not your time. You must go back."*

*'The floating feeling of warmth, love and peace made me reluctant. The figure I saw had no wings but I knew it was an Angel. A long pale gown covered its feet and it appeared to hover above my bed.*

*'Slowly the Angel faded and I became aware of the lights of the hospital theatre. Both myself and my son survived and he is now a healthy 15-year-old.*

\*\*\* And finally, consider if you will the case of Diana Cooper, who, you'll doubtless be relieved to hear, doesn't hail from anywhere near Manchester.

This is her story;

*'Eighteen years ago, I was in the depths of despair. I was getting divorced and could see no way ahead for me at all. I'd been a housewife for 20 years and I couldn't see how I was going to earn a living. My three children were away at boarding school, so I was alone and I could see no future for myself.*

*'I threw myself into a chair and said; "If there's anything out there, show me - and you've got an hour." I had no spiritual background of religious beliefs, but I suppose this was a cry to God.*

*'If nothing had happened, it would have confirmed my belief that there was no higher power, that ours was a hostile universe. But, instead, an Angel appeared.*

*The Angel - my Guardian Angel, as I later learned - took me on a tour of the universe and showed me my future. When I eventually came round, exactly one hour had passed. That hour completely changed my life. I moved house, became a therapist and a healer, studied counselling and moved on to what is sometimes called a "service pathway" - devoting myself to helping others.*

*'Then, about seven years ago, I was lying in my bath and more Angels appeared. They said: "We want you to introduce people to Angels."*

*'They gave me all kinds of information about why they are here with us. They told me that everyone has their own Guardian Angel and that Angels are now being sent en masse to Earth by "Source," a word I prefer to God.*

*'The wings which people often see on Angels are a manifestation of their energy. An inner light shines out from them in the shape of wings. Many of the artists who once depicted Angels were psychic; they were simply illustrating the way these beings looked to them.*

*'The Angels of peace came to me another time, and they were huge, about nine feet tall. They had what looked like fluffy, cream-coloured feathers on enormous wings. My Guardian Angel was, by contrast, a deep gold colour and had no wings. I've seen white Angels, too. The form in*

which they appear depends on what you can accept at the time.

'From my own experiences I have learned that Angels will come if you send out a cry from the depths of your soul. That cry means that you are ready to change. They will also come to you to intervene when it is not your time to die. Your Guardian Angel will step in to remove you from the danger. That's why there are so many examples of people having miraculous escapes from death.

'You will die only when it is your time to die.

'The Angels help the deceased along their way. When somebody dies, it's really important that the Angels are asked to give them the energy they need to pass into the light. Prayer raises the energy needed for a person's spirit to be received by the Angels. Humans developed funeral rituals when they understood this.

'Whatever happens to me after I die is not that important. I hope, however, that I am remembered for the messages I have tried to impart, and for guiding people to their Guardian Angels.'

Easter 2001 General (although Manchester features pretty heavily) 'THE SUNDAY PEOPLE'/MAIL ON SUNDAY'

## The Search For Sodom And Gomorrah

The Biblical the destruction by fire and brimstone of the God-damned towns of Sodom and Gomorrah may have at least some basis in reality according to a British engineer. Graham Harris - co-author of a paper entitled, imaginatively enough; 'THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH,' has it seems succeeded in persuading the BBC to produce a documentary based on his findings. The Old Testament tells of how the cities' 'sudden, apocalyptic end' was brought about by the wrath of a wrathful God, His temper raised to breaking point after the cities descent into sexual and moral depravity. Only Lot and his daughters managed to make good their escape. Lot's wife, of course, was foolish enough to be unable to resist the temptation to look back at her burning home and was turned into a pillar of salt.

No trace of either city has ever been uncovered, so if the story is not a complete work of fiction rather than an allegory for some real disaster, an earthquake for example, then we're left with a pretty puzzling set of circumstances. However, in the light of the paper published in 'THE QUARTLEY JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING GEOLOGY,' perhaps we are a little nearer the truth behind the fable.

The proposed theory runs along the lines that a certain patches of solid ground can, in the right geological circumstances, turn to liquid - a phenomenon not unique to Biblical times. Exactly the same cataclysmic set of circumstances occurred in Greece in 1861 and China early last century. It's even happened recently enough to be captured on film, in Kobe, Japan, only six years ago.

Graham Harris has worked on the huge Volta Dam in Ghana and other large-scale projects all over the world. He also once worked at a chemical excavation works at the southern end of the Dead Sea, and began to take an interest in scientific speculation surrounding the cities' infamous demise.

'I met a hundred archaeologists with a hundred pet theories about what happened to them; but none of them made geological sense.

'Clearly, some sudden, dramatic catastrophe occurred. Some say that climate change destroyed Sodom: but that is slow and drawn out. We are talking apocalypse here. We are talking destruction so extreme that just one family escaped it - something that happened, literally, overnight.'

'To work out how a city could be destroyed, certain prerequisites have to be met, including the existence of Sodom and Gomorrah in the first place. In Biblical terms this has never been seriously disputed. The Bible lists five Cities of the Plain - the others were Admah, Zeboim and Zoar. Sodom is assumed to have been the principal city, with the other four, smaller cities strung either side of it. And the shore of the Dead Sea is assumed to be their location; first, because the Dead Sea was never far from the action in the Old Testament; second because they would have had to disappear into something and finally, because the Dead Sea is a natural source of asphalt - the most important part of my theory.



'The asphalt is found in the cliffs around the Dead Sea. There you can see black specs, like the sticky black lumps sometimes found floating in the Dead Sea. These are lumps of asphalt, or bitumen, a fossil product which, like coal or oil, is formed over millennia deep below the ground from the remains of plants. They float to the surface of the sea because constant small earth tremors release them. Today, asphalt is used to coat roads, but in ancient days it was vital for coating the hulls of ships.

'So important was this mineral that the Romans called the Dead Sea the "Lacus Asphaltitis," and Greek geographer and historian Strabo wrote: "The sea has water so heavy that divers cannot work there, and any person that walks into it as far as the navel is immediately afloat. It is full of asphalt. The asphalt is blown to the surface at irregular intervals from the midst of the deep, and with it rises bubbles, as though the water were boiling. The people who live around the lake collect it by means of rafts made of reeds."

"So now we can assume Sodom was a trading town because of the asphalt. But there is also evidence of other enterprises. In the more fertile hills behind the town, remains of large rooms full of hundreds of jars and thousands of olive stones have been found - clearly an olive oil factory and, from its size, one which supplied whole cities. Sodom itself, however, moved not to the slow rhythm of agriculture but it was a city with all the rough-and-tumble bustle of a modern frontier oil town - contributing perhaps, to its reputation for evil living.

'The smell of the tar pits where the asphalt was excavated or processed would have permeated it; so would whiffs of sulphur from the Dead Sea. It would have been a place in which people lived to make money, rather than because they loved the scenery or the smell. And asphalt, of course,

burns well. But there was another flammable material around the city, too. Recently, contractors building a road on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea hit a problem; fire.

"Methane gas was leaking from the rocks. It ignited when the rocks were blown apart.

'Now the jigsaw is beginning to fall into place. Sodom was a city, close to the sea, dealing in - indeed built on - inflammable material, in a place prone to earthquakes on the biggest fault line on Earth. It is reasonable to expect then, that at some point a larger-than-average quake hit the place; one which would have set the methane in the rocks free. The earth shakes and splits apart, the rocks belch forth fire from the methane, the tar pits where the asphalt was dug or processed catch fire and add their black smoking flames to the stench of sulphur dioxide (brimstone is an old word for sulphur) bubbling up from the sea. There is death and sulphurous destruction from the bowels of the earth - or, if you prefer, from Hell; after all, the Dead Sea is not just the saltiest sea on Earth, it is also the lowest place on Earth, quite appropriate for a Hellish scene.

But still, for the total disappearance of a whole city, we need one more ingredient; water. This is the added agent of destruction that no archaeologist could have guessed at; it takes a soil engineer to know about it.

'When Kobe was hit by an earthquake, a few seconds of film of a shop front showed not only the earth shaking, but solid ground turning to water. Water shoots up apparently from nowhere. On film, it looks like a huge burst water main erupting. Everything that stands on it half collapses, half sinks, into silt-filled water, and is simply swept away.

'Geologists call it liquefaction. They meet it, now and then, in certain earthquakes and certain soil types when specific conditions are met. And when they do meet, liquefaction is immensely destructive.

'In Kansu, in China, 30,000 square miles liquefied; whole villages were displaced by miles, and thousands died. There was another liquefaction in Greece, on the site of the ancient city of Helice, which was also mysteriously destroyed in antiquity.

'You see, normally, water is trapped in earth, in the gaps between particles of soil. They disort the earth, push the particles together, and make those gaps smaller, as in a quake, and the water is forced out. It is exactly like squeezing a sponge.

'The water has to go somewhere. It rises to the surface as muddy, sandy liquid silt. The land slips away as a slurry, and nothing that was on it is left. Of course it is rare; the soil particles must be reasonably large, loosely spaced and the space in between filled with almost as much water as the ground can carry.

'Those conditions were met on the Plain of Sidon. It was on the shore of the sea, so it was wet; we have analysed the soil; it fits. The result? With the earthquake, with the flames of burning methane and black smoke of boiling bitumen, another terror in the night for the sinners of Sodom and neighbouring Gomorrah.

'The very ground beneath their feet betrayed them. They fell and floundered as the ground failed to hold, while their homes sank before their eyes into the once-solid earth. It drowned men, women and children, and all their livestock, carrying them all downwards in a brown slurry of destruction. Their very land flowed away into the sea, and a thousand feet down its underwater cliffs to its bed. Land and Dead Sea became one.

'The plain where Sodom stood exists no longer. Compare maps of the area from antiquity and today and a "bite" can be seen to have been taken out of the shoreline where the northern part of the Dead Sea meets the southern part. That gulf, a hundred square miles of it and more, was land that

turned to liquid and flowed away. Sodom and Gomorrah once stood there.'

7th July The Dead Sea 'DAILY MAIL MAGAZINE'

## 'I Promised You A Miracle'

Back in 1998, a documentary film-maker by the name of Antony Thomas elected to set about attempting to find what truth, if any, lay behind the performances of so-called 'Miracle Workers,' and whether or not there was any real, hard evidence for modern-day miracles.

In an article printed in the 'DAILY EXPRESS,' he relates what he found whilst out on the road...

He started with German 'healer' Reinhard Bonnke, who, at the time was holding a meeting in Benin City, Nigeria. Bonnke has been criss-crossing the African continent for nearly 40 years, always commanding massive crowds with the promise of miracle cures.

Thomas juxtaposes the case of Bonnke with another 'healer' plying his trade on the other side of the world. In Portland, Oregon, Benedictus Hinn, a Palestinian, backed by a 100-strong choir and claiming to be able to cure the afflictions of the poor and crippled whilst casting out Demons, also regularly plays to packed houses.

'Between them, Bonnke and Hinn dominate the modern "miracle business," Thomas says, with more than a trace of cynicism. 'Bonnke regularly preaches to audiences of 500,000 people. Hinn sometimes doubles these numbers, and his TV programmes are seen in nearly 200 countries.'

Not surprisingly, those employed in the medical profession are extremely sceptical about the efficacy of the 'healer's' cures. Well, they could hardly be anything else, could they? They'd be talking themselves out of a job, if they accepted otherwise. At the two events Antony Thomas attended, a combined total of 154 'miracles' were claimed by the two men. 'As people of all ages came forward, cures from cancer, osteomyelitis and Aids were proclaimed from the stage. Deaf-and-dumb children were supposedly speaking and hearing for the first time. The blind were recovering their sight. The rows of abandoned wheelchairs certainly testified to something. People who had arrived here crippled with arthritis and other painful conditions were now able to run and leap across the stage. But to prove it, we would have to know the full medical history of the people concerned and the results of medical examinations performed after the event'

And so, whilst in Benin City, Antony and his team decided to pay a visit to the homes of some of the people who had apparently been cured at the meeting.

Things didn't start out too well. It turned out that an old blind man whose sight had supposedly been miraculously restored had never been truly blind at all. It was also immediately apparent that some of the children who had been cured of deafness were still openly lip-reading.

Significantly, the team only managed to find one case where there had been a definite improvement;

A woman in her thirties, who claimed she had come to the event on crutches because of a damaged knee. Now she was able to walk freely. Once again, however, much would depend on gleaning details of this woman's medical records. Without the opportunity to do so, the woman's claims remain frustratingly unverified.

Meanwhile, at Hinn's Portland crusade, 76 'miracles' were claimed to have taken place.

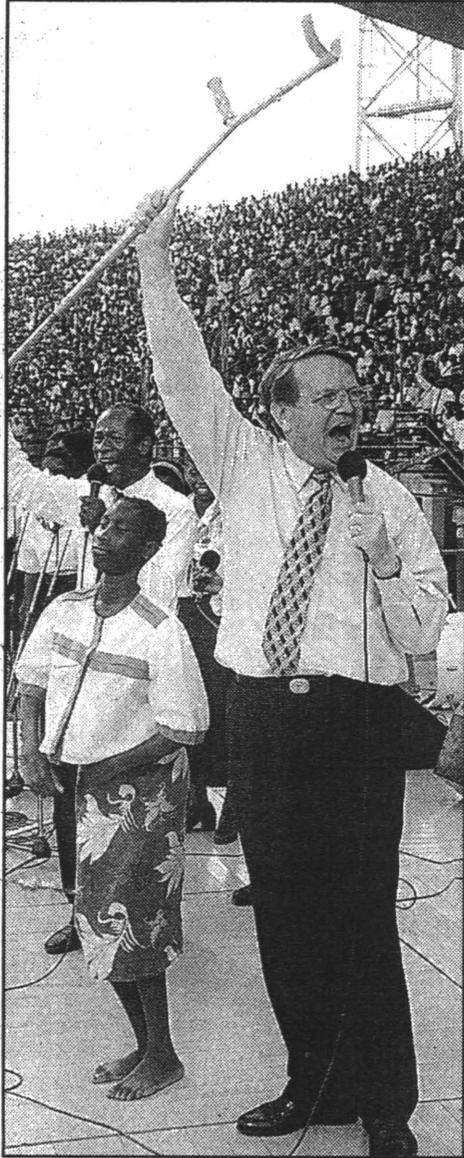
'We asked for as many names and addresses as possible so that we could make assessments,' Thomas states. 'Thirteen weeks later Benny Hinn Ministries produced five names.

*We followed these cases for nearly a year and the results were less than convincing.*

*'An elderly woman, whose broken vertebrae had been miraculously healed, agreed to an x-ray examination shortly after the crusade. Her vertebrae were still broken.*

*'Another woman, who had come up on stage claiming that her hearing had been fully restored after a lifetime of severe deafness, was shown to be a fantasist.*

*'According to her medical records, she had suffered a very, very mild hearing loss, two years earlier and had made a normal recovery.*



(Above): A Messenger Of Deception: Reinhard Bonnke claims credit for curing a boy of lameness...

*'In the other three cases, the people concerned seemed so anxious to convince themselves that God had rewarded their faith with a miracle, that they had refused further medical treatment in spite of a marked deterioration in their condition.*

*'One of the three, a woman with lung cancer, never went back to see her oncologist. It was only when I wrote him an anxious letter after her phone calls stopped that he made inquiries and discovered that she had died of lung cancer just nine months after Hinn declared that God had cured her.*

*'We also met Amendra and Mila Prakash, recent immigrants to the U.S. Shortly after their arrival, their 10-year-old son Ashnil developed two massive brain*

*tumours. An operation to relieve the condition went disastrously wrong and the boy was reduced to a vegetative state. The doctors told the couple that nothing more could be done for their son.*

*In despair, Amendra and Mila took Ashnil to Hinn's crusade believing that God would reward their faith with a miracle and that Ashnil would be cured.*

*'They made a £1,400 donation to Hinn's cause. Seven weeks later the boy was dead. They blame themselves. The death of their son must be a punishment for past sins. This is part of Hinn's warped theology.*

*'But if the activities of Bonnke and Hinn are nothing more than exploitation and showmanship, important questions remain unanswered. How do these people manage to get out of their wheelchairs and run across the stage? Why do so many others believe that they have been cured, only to relapse days later?'*

*In the search for some kind of explanation the team turned to some of the world's leading scientists and psychologists. Video footage of the 'Healing' events was shown to the 'experts' and the results proved to be fascinating, if perhaps, a little on the negative side*

*Hinn always opened up with the classic introduction; 'You must let every guard down.'*

*The moment he says 'Choir, fire' and his 100-strong choir fall backwards, it is not what the 'healer' insists is the Demon of the Holy Spirit running through him, but an old hypnotic trick.*

*The 'experts' further explained how the combination of music, words and a vast over-arching space such as a stadium, all acted on the brain, releasing natural opiates that suppress pain and reduce the symptoms of inflammatory diseases such as arthritis.*

*The well-known sceptic Professor Michael Persinger was wheeled on to tell the team; 'The healing power doesn't come from the charismatic preacher. It comes from the person's own brain, their own expectations and their own changes of brain chemistry that produces changes in their body.'*

*'Medical science has long recognised the power we have to heal ourselves. It is known as the placebo effect, when patients get better because they believe they will get better.*

*'The latest brain imaging techniques are giving researchers an opportunity to study these mind-body pathways, to learn how a thought or a mood translates into physical change.'*

*After studying Hinn, Bonnke and many of the lesser known healers, Antony was convinced that he saw nothing that went beyond the placebo effect. The rest was a combination of fantasy, attention-seeking and greed, mixed up with dodgy theology.*

*Despite his condemnation of these modern-day healers however, Antony, it seems, still believes in miracles.*

*He has faith in the reality of the healing-powers of the grotto at Lourdes, (see elsewhere on this page for more on this allegedly holy place) where he reminds us that 66 confirmed miracles have apparently occurred.*

*'Here, people are no longer encouraged to expect a physical cure, Instead they discover something else: Love, meaning, hope, purpose and dignity, no matter how great their suffering or how close they are to death.*

*'To me, that is the real miracle.'*

*20th April, 2001 Africa/Portland, Oregon, USA 'DAILY EXPRESS'*

## *In A Holy Place: Author Makes Pilgrimage To Lourdes*

*In the spring of this year, author Stephen Walsh decided to head for Lourdes in the company of 1,000 people as part of the Liverpool Archdiocesan Pilgrimage. He managed to*

stir up a fair bit of controversy when he published accounts of his journey.

Describing himself as a 'fallen' Catholic, Stephen nevertheless felt the pull of a whole series of religious shrines as the Millennium approached with its attendant (though ultimately groundless) fears of impending apocalypse.

He visited Rome, Knock, County Mayo, and Medjugorje, Bosnia, before setting off for the most famous shrine of all, Lourdes, in Southern France.

Sharing his debut were 1,000 Scousers, leading Walsh to describe the site as a *'holiday with self-improvement thrown in, like a spiritual tennis camp or a week-long celestial driving school.'*

He'd flown from Liverpool Airport. *'On the plane there was not much legroom, with septuagenarians by every escape hatch. We were on the sort of charter that has a spare part tail unnecessarily painted in a different colour from the fuselage.'*

*'Was it a lack of faith which led me to speculate on the irony of going to Lourdes healthy and, thanks to a crash or a fire, coming home a cripple?'*

Stephen's first impressions of the Welcome Mass in the Domaine, with its *'churches, chapels and basilicas, a selection of crypts, baths and holy water taps, hospital lodgings for the sick, Miraculous Cures exhibitions for the well, keeno youth centres and oddball evangelical HQ's full of people in big glasses.'*

It was, he thought, far removed from the vision of peace and tranquility he had anticipated prior to his arrival.

*'The atmosphere became positively mental as the massed ranks, hundreds of them in yellow polo shirts, turn up to push the sick in their beds and chairs to Mass.'*

*'The sick who pilgrim here represent an indescribable array of illnesses. The thoroughly ancient are stretchered on their mobile bunks, some unable to be held upright.'*

*'Death's Door is open and the moving finger points at those who sit, wasted with weariness from fighting unseen and unbragtable diseases.'*

The torchlit procession also had a profound effect upon Stephen's imagination.

*'The crowd thickened towards the Grotto - several thousand people were milling, 30 deep, each carrying a candle in a sort of paper dolly-cum-waxy-windshield.'*

*'Throughout, the Rosary was said: not just a few decades, but the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries, the Glorious Mysteries, the whole mish-mash uttered in at least four different languages, depending upon what crowd is in this week.'*

*'I later sampled the ultimate Lourdes experience - immersion in the sacred waters.'*

*'After five minutes it's clear what the main miracle of Lourdes is: That no one feels sick as a result of passing through these baths. Hundreds of people pass through each of the tubs and the holy water is only changed once a day.'*

*'Add to that the fact that at least a quarter are suffering from a life-threatening disease and your imagination constructs quite a combo of bacteria and germinology.'*

*'Another of my biding impressions was the profusion of Madonna images.'*

*'Christ dies his death here in a multiplicity of forms - stripped, robed, clothed, hologrammatic. And there are Virgins crowned, starred, beaded and flowered; and Blessed Ladies whose robes act as barometers.'*

*'They cascade from huge to teeny-weeny, from five inches to five feet. She appears, miraculously, on key rings, medals, plaques and saucers; in bronze, in plaster, even plasticraft; on plates cups, spoons, mugs; on hats scarves, jerseys, sweatshirts, pants and coats.'*

*'Despite my unease with much of the Lourdes experience however, I was moved by the devotion of the pilgrims. And although the physical experience of the baths was uncomfortable, I did experience a spiritual uplift.'*

*'I did feel strangely invigorated. A feeling that must be reinforcing if you start from a position in which you have something to reinforce.'*

Not everyone is quite so cynical about the shrine, however. Margaret Kelly, from Garston, Liverpool, is the organiser of a group calling itself *'The Light And Peace Pilgrimage,'* and every spring, (since 1994) she takes a party of up to 150 of my fellow Merseysiders to Lourdes.

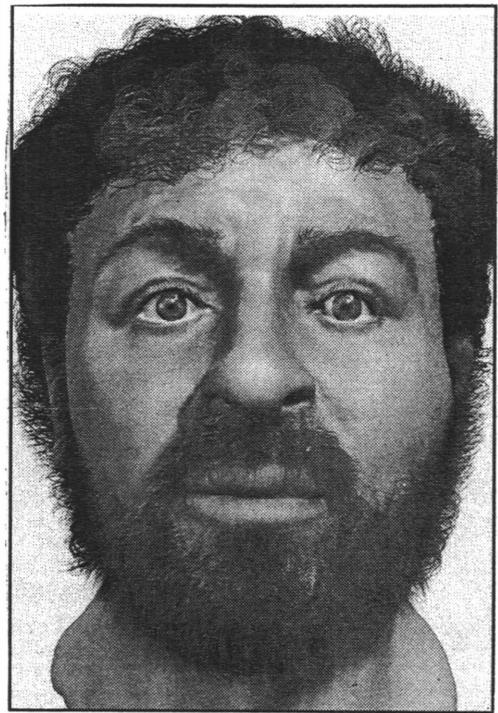
She told reporters from *'THE LIVERPOOL ECHO,'* *'There's something very special about Lourdes. If you won the lottery you couldn't buy the peace and joy you find there.'*

26th Match, 2001 Lourdes, Southern France  
*'LIVERPOOL ECHO'*

## Foto-Fit Of Jesus Resembles 'Wanted Poster'

The BBC stirred up a storm of controversy amongst Christian religious leaders when they elected to computer-generate an image of how Jesus Christ might have looked when He walked the Earth.

You only have to afford yourself a peek at the picture, reproduced below, to imagine why it was ecclesiastics were less than impressed. As a publicity/propaganda advert, it quite frankly, sucks.



One of the most vocal, though admittedly fair-minded (not to say humorous) critics was the Reverend Ron Ferguson, of St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, Scotland.

*'It looks like a guy on a "Wanted" poster,'* he proclaimed to reporters.

*'The new image looks like a slightly demented Palestinian terrorist. All it need's is the Beeb's own Anne Robinson to step forward and say; "Jesus of Nazareth, you are the weakest link"'*

*'This new face of Jesus, produced for a TV series, is certainly startling. But its only real offence is that it doesn't look anything like the portraits we've become used to.'*

*'I was reared on Sunday School pictures of a blond, handsome, fair-skinned, inoffensive-looking Jesus in a spotless white toga. He looked like a 'PERSIL' advert. Whiter than white. Other representations made Christ look like Colin Hendry with the combine-harvesting elbows.*

*'The real Jesus may have looked more like Yasser Arafat than Leonardo DiCaprio, more Ken Dodd than Charlton Heston.*

*'He might have walked with a limp or spoken with a lisp. Like most people of their day, Jesus and the Disciples might have had halitosis. Sowhat?*

*'Whether Christ was tall, handsome, small or ugly, we simply don't know.*

*'The fact is we've become conditioned by the religious art of the centuries into seeing Jesus the Jew as a good-looking European.*

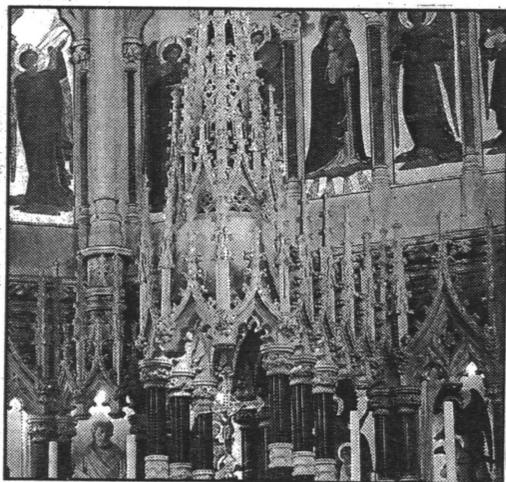
*'The BBC's picture is, like all the others, guesswork. The swarthy man, though, is at least nearer the truth than the white, conventional Jesus. But that's all that can be said.'*

As for your friendly neighbourhood Editor, I hate to sound heretical, but I can't help thinking the picture bears a remarkable resemblance to the photo-fit of India's so called 'Monkey-Man' (see elsewhere in this issue).

*Easter Sunday, 2001 General 'SCOTTISH SUNDAY POST'*

## 'Face' Of The Virgin Mary Appears In Birkenhead Church

Not too far down the road from where your humble Editor resides, is Our Lady's Church in the centre of downtown Birkenhead.



Last spring, a number of local parishioners were claiming to have seen a vision of the Virgin Mary in a structure above the altar. One of these witnesses was Albert Johnson who has been attending the church for most of his natural life. He first noticed the 'Blessed Virgin' when his brother Robert was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident five years ago.

Albert, 65, not surprisingly takes some degree of comfort from the vision of the 'crowned face' and prays to 'Her' on a regular basis.

Just recently, his 10-year-old granddaughter, Daisy O' Quiggley, was seriously ill in Alder Hey Hospital after a tumour was found in her neck.

He spent a lot of time at the church praying and promised that once Daisy was better he would tell more people about the unusual feature inside the building.

Mr Johnson told local reporters; *'I've been seeing Her face here for years. I look at the altar and can't see anything else. Isn't it unusual that this woman's face is in Our Lady's Church? I think it is wonderful and it has strengthened my beliefs.'*

The decorative stonework above the tabernacle in which the 'face' can be seen, was designed by the famed Victorian architect Edward Pugin in 1899.

Parish priest John Gordon remains (strangely, considering the propaganda possibilities) unconvinced by the sightings; *'It's part of the structure and one of those things. Some can see it and others can't. I can't.*

*'Many people can see images in clouds and ink blots. This is something similar.'*

I've tried to make out any kind of simulacra in the photograph of the altar reproduced above, but I'll be darned if I can make anything out.

We'd be interested if any of our readers can discern a trace of something that could remotely be described as being anomalous...

*26th February, 2001 Birkenhead, Merseyside 'WIRRAL NEWS'*

\*\*\* Meanwhile, across the water over in the USA, a bartender by the name of Rosalind Knaff claimed she saw the face of Jesus Christ inside the cash drawer of a till at the James Dean bar in Akron, Ohio.

*'It was so distinct you couldn't mistake it'* she reportedly told journalists.

And wouldn't you just know it, the faithful (or should that read gullible) elected to flock to the bar in order to view the manifestation.

Local alky's are more than a little impressed. One of the,, Bill Risko, even thinks that there may be a lesson to drunks the world over.

*'This proves that Christ is everywhere,'* he was quoted as saying.

*1st March, 2001 Akron, Ohio, USA 'DAILY EXPRESS'*

\*\*\* And even more bizarrely, locals in the city of Texas, claim they have been able to discern the face of the Virgin Mary in the dust on a bonnet of a 1981 Chevrolet Camaro sports car.

Devout Christians were making pilgrimages to the car, as amazing as that might sound, to view it for themselves.

*1st June, 2001 Texas, USA 'SUNDAY MANC'*

## LAUGHTER IN HEAVEN:

### The Cosmic Joker Strikes Again

Fredo Dorini succeeded in setting a record by reversing for a grand total of 125 miles...

Unfortunately for him, a mere few days after achieving this 'feat,' he backed out of his drive straight into a police car.

*11th June, 2001 Anzio, Italy 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'*

\*\*\* Graham Eldridge, aged 14, was struck by lightning in Luton, while writing an essay on why he did not believe in the existence of Heaven.

Fortunately for Graham, he only suffered slight burns.

*6th May, 2001 Luton 'SUNDAY MANC'*

\*\*\* Village cricketer Simon Walter got lost on the way to his first match...for the Ordnance Survey team.

He took a wrong turning as he travelled to Michelmersh, Hampshire.

Simon, 24, from Portsmouth (at least he thinks he is), told reporters; *'I was banking on Ordnance Survey supplying a map.'*

*20th May, 2001 Michelmersh, Hants 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'*

\*\*\* Grieving Lucinda Barrigan collapsed and died of a heart attack after her dead husband Hector suddenly sat bolt upright in his coffin.

She was praying beside his lifeless body after he drowned in Santiago, Chile.

The local doctors later explained the involuntary movement on a post-death spasm which caused the man's muscles to contract.

*11th February, 2001 Santiago, Chile 'SUNDAYMANC'*

\*\*\* A would-be robber by the name of John Morgan, decided to hold up a couple in Dallas, Texas. He took their Rolex watches, before shoving the gun down his pants in what he doubtless hoped would be a cool gesture...And promptly shot his goolies off!!!

*27th February, 2001 Dallas, Texas, USA 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'*

\*\*\* Alan Savage, 43, was forced to abandon his planned school lecture on garden safety after he fell off a step ladder and cut his face while pruning his garden hedge.

*10th May, 2001 Cramlington, Northumberland 'DAILY SLUR'*

\*\*\* Grandmother Jean Hudson, 84, was knocked clean unconscious by a wedding cake when a table suddenly collapsed during her granddaughter's wedding in East Sussex.

*13th May, 2001 East Grinstead, Sussex 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'*

\*\*\* Jogger Howard Master, 47, decided to change his route after being attacked on four separate occasions by dogs near his home...Only to find himself being attacked by a nesting swan.

*15th April, 2001 Sandwich, Kent 'SUNDAYMANC'*

\*\*\* An audience expecting an evening in the company of a clairvoyant were forced to tralpe home in bitter disappointment when she failed to turn up...

The reason? The psychic got mixed up over dates.

*26th March, 2001 Rotherham Civic Centre, Yorkshire 'DAILYMANC'*

\*\*\* Eleven teenagers who sought to find what they assumed would be an ideal, foolproof shelter under a tree were all killed when it fell after it was hit by lightning in the West African state of Burkina Faso.

Several others were injured.

*17th July, 2001 Burkina Faso, West Africa 'OBSERVATEUR PAALGA'*

## When Fate Smiles Down

### 'I Was A Bouncing Baby..'

A two-year-old boy by the name of Job Watson had the most incredible escape from serious injury or even death when he plunged 25 feet through an open window in Kent, Sussex.

Job had been dangling out of a second-floor window and, for reasons best known to himself, decided to let go. But as he plummeted towards the unforgiving concrete pavement below, by an extraordinary stroke of luck, he fell straight into the arms of a passing stranger....And a doctor, to boot. Dr Ken Castro happened to be passing in his car seconds before Job took the plunge and managed to get to him in time to half break his fall.

Even though Job still hit the pavement fairly hard, he emerged from the experience without so much as a bruise or a scratch. He landed on his well-padded nappy.

His mother, Joanne, told reporters; *'We would like to thank the man who helped him and got him to the emergency services.'*

Job had apparently been tucked up safely in his bedroom for the night at 8:45pm when he decided to go on an adventure.

He climbed over a stairgate and headed towards a window in one of the bedrooms of his home.

Job was actually holding on to the window frame by his fingertips when Dr Castro and his driver Tim Winter spotted him and shouted at him to hang on.

As the little boy predictably let go, he hit a ledge above a ground floor window, which slowed his descent but prevented the good doctor from being able to catch him cleanly.

As he carried with his daily surgery, the doctor was quoted as saying; *'It all happened so quickly. It was over in a matter of seconds. We got there just in time.'*

*'I checked him over but he was crying, which is always a good sign. We took him to the local hospital in the car and thankfully he's okay.'*

Job was taken to the Kent & Sussex Hospital, which is only a few hundred yards from the house, where the doctors had been expecting to treat him for major injuries after being told how far he'd fallen.

David Hartwright, head of the hospital's trauma unit, said; *'A boy falling from such a height is bad news and it is fair to say that we thought it would be fairly horrendous.'*

*'But there was not a scratch, not a bruise on his body. It is astonishing really.'*

*'People talk about bouncing babies but in a funny sort of way he genuinely is.'*

*27th June, 2001 Kent 'DAILY MAIL'*

\*\*\* Not quite so lucky was Maria Pratesi, 48, who suffered head injuries when a suicidal woman leapt from a balcony, landed right on top of her, and walked off completely unhurt.

*27th May, 2001 Rome, Italy 'SUNDAYMANC'*

\*\*\* Lynne Rees's fortune changed big time after she bought a £3 lucky charm from a tin pot market stall. She won a £75,000 jackpot in a spot-the-ball competition.

Lynne of Tonypanydy, South Wales, told reporters; *'I could hardly believe it when I got the phone so soon after buying the lucky charm.'*

*20th May, 2001 Tonypanydy, South Wales 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'*

\*\*\* Stockbroker Ian Cholby sneezed at work and accidentally touched a computer key which bought shares worth £140 million.

Other New York traders followed his move and 20 minutes later he was able to sell his stock for a £9 million profit.

*'It was the best trade I ever made,'* Ian later exclaimed, somewhat unnecessarily, you might think.

*11th March, 2001 New York, USA 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'*

## WEIRD HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Mother-of-two Nadine Trewin, 31, got herself so drunk she managed to make the stuff of urban legend come true. She stuck the family cat in the microwave and wound up cooking it to death.

She confided to a friend what she had done to her pet cat Sasha, and the friend promptly called the RSPCA.

Trewin pleaded guilty to the offence of cruelly mistreating the animal, but claimed she was on Prozac for depression at the time and had drunk seven pints of lager and almost two bottles of wine.

*20th June, 2001 Horsham, WestSussex 'DAILYMANC'*

\*\*\* And talking about people doing incredibly strange things when they're not aware of it, a sleepwalker might have managed to hang himself while dreaming about a death scene from the Steven Spielberg holocaust film *'SCHINDLER'S LIST,'* according to the evidence offered at a coroner's inquest.

Michael Cox, 37, had apparently been prone to sleepwalking ever since he was a child and often dreamed about films he'd recently watched.

He was discovered hanging by his trouser belt from a banister at his home, just a few days after watching the Spielberg classic, which has a hanging scene at its climax. Cheltenham and District Coroner's Court heard psychologists drew up the theory because there appeared to be no other explanation for why Mr Cox would have killed himself. The inquest was told that the bachelor, who lived in Wotton-Under-Edge, near Bristol, was found two days after he died at his home. The hearing also heard that although he had previously suffered from depression, his family knew him as a bit of a joker who had a bubbly personality.

Psychologist Jonathan Bird said in a statement; *'Mr Cox had been a sleepwalker as a child, then as a teenager and apparently more recently. He would dream about films he had seen and had been intending to see the film 'SCHINDLER'S LIST,' which concludes with a series of hangings at Nuremberg.'*

Coroner Lester Maddrell, who recorded an open verdict, was less than convinced, however. *'The experts say a sleepwalking death was very unlikely but they cannot totally rule it out.'*

*12th June, 2001 Wotton-Under-Edge, Nr Bristol 'THE TIMES'*

\*\*\* Chinese officials have given conflicting versions of the deaths of up to 14 imprisoned sect followers in a labour camp.

A government official said 14 members of the banned Falun Gong sect committed suicide in the camp, hanging themselves with sheets. Another 11 followers also attempted to take part in the mass suicide on 20th June, but were rescued by camp guards, in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang.

A central government spokesman denied that quite so many people had chosen to top themselves. He claimed that only three had died.

*27th June, 2001 Heilongjiang Province, China 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'*

\*\*\* Otto Mann, who hails from Berlin, decided to divorce his wife Trisha, after he claimed that an accidental bang on the head two months earlier had made him forget that he was gay.

*4th March, 2001 Berlin, Germany 'SUNDAY MANC'*

\*\*\* A Swedish man who is blind in one eye and partially sighted in the other lost an appeal to the country's television authority for a half-price licence.

Nice try, though.

*12th June, 2001 Stockholm, Sweden 'THE INDEPENDENT'*

## REAL-LIFE CANNIBALS

I guess it was pretty much inevitable that, in the wake of the (vastly inferior) sequel to Thomas Harris's *'SILENCE OF THE LAMBS'*, gory tales of real-life Hannibals, would appear in the pages of the tabloid press.

And so it proved.

First up, we had the story of the self-declared *'Godfather of Cannaballsim'*, Issie Sagawa, who, it seems, is still on the loose. A Japanese doctoral student, Sagawa hit the headlines when, in 1981, he shot and then devoured parts of 25-year-old Renee Hartevelt when she spurned his advances. French police discovered bits of her lips preserved in the fridge, while the rest of her was crammed into suitcases dumped in the Bois de Boulogne.

Whilst he was incarcerated in prison, he wrote several critically acclaimed novels concerning his peculiar preferences.

*'It looked like beef, red meat...It had no smell or taste, and melted in my mouth like raw tuna in a ruski restaurant.'*

That's how he described eating human flesh, in one such 'story.'

But he wasn't in prison for all that long.

After being transferred to a Japanese insane asylum, he was released, probably because his father was a wealthy industrialist and had just concluded a massive deal with the French government, at about that time.

This was despite the warning from the deputy psychiatrist that Sagawa was an *'untreatable psychotic.'*

The cannibals subsequent attempts to live a life of anonymity weren't too successful, however. Despite changing his name he was tracked down by the Japanese press, becoming a pundit on all matters of a cannibal nature and regularly on TV (*and there was me thinking that sort of thing could only happen in America*).



He went on to write a column in a tabloid newspaper, and in 1989 revealed an (ahem) tasteless sense of humour by announcing plans to open a vegetarian restaurant.

Recently, when Sagawa was asked how he wanted to die, he said he would like to be eaten by a young woman.

*'That,' he said, 'is my only possible salvation.'*

*May 2001 'TOTAL MOVIE MAGAZINE'*

\*\*\*And just a month or so later, accounts of an ex-soldier, who had murdered a friend after an argument, then cut out his liver and ate it fried with some wine (a nice chianti, one presumes), was featured in a couple of the less-reputable papers

Former Khmer Rouge fighter Heang Hun shot his friend Khin Khoeun dead whilst they were both drunk.

Not surprisingly, he was found guilty of cannibalism and jailed by a court in Kompong Tom, Cambodia, for a total of 18 years.

A local newspaper reported that; *'After killing Khin, Hun calmly ordered some children to drag the body downstairs.'*

*'Hun then took a sharp knife to cut the body and remove the liver to fry. He made then made a suace with wine.'*

*11th June, 2001 Kompong Tom, Camodia 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'*

## ANOTHER BATCH OF PRETTY HOPELESS CRIME

In Israel, a would-be robber managed to lead police right to his door by dropping a trail of coins on the pavement after holding up a post office with a toy gun.

He was promptly arrested.

*17th June, 2001 Jerusalem, Israel Reuters*

\*\*\* And another clueless raider in Jackson, Alabama, was equally unsuccessful in his efforts to procure some ill-gotten gains. John Warren elected to fire a gun into the air in a bid to scare a laundry owner into handing over the staff wages.

But instead of blasting a hole in the floor, Warren, 28, shot off the toes of his right foot and fainted dead away with the shock.

*1st April, 2001 Jackson, Alabama, USA 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'*

\*\*\* Judge Robert Klien told witness John Fletcher, 31, not to return to his court in Austin, Texas, after the luncheon adjournment wearing a T-shirt and shorts.

The sarcastic Fletcher took him at his word and came back wearing only his shoes. He was jailed for a total of three days for contempt of court.

*4th March, 2001 Austin, Texas NEWS OF THE WORLD'*

\*\*\* A thief armed with a couple of live lobsters forced a shop assistant to hand over the takings. Carol Baywater, 23, didn't waste any time in opening the till when the robber threatened her with the crayfish-like claws.

The police later suspected that the unusual weapons of choice have by now very likely been eaten.

*4th March, 2001 New York, USA 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'*

\*\*\* A Vauxhall Nova was broken into in Cheltenham and filled with crumbs and broken biscuits. On the same day, Ben Crawford returned from his holiday to find that a garden shed had been erected on his front lawn in Surrey.

*15th April, 2001 Cheltenham/Kent 'SCOTTISH SUNDAY POST'*

\*\*\* A very strange individual who seems to get his kicks from squashing gateaux, ruined supermarket stocks worth £22,000.

Jim Barton, 37, seems to like walking along the aisles sticking his thumb right through the desserts.

As you do.

*9th May, 2001 DAILY SLUR'*

\*\*\* A man in Iran has been sentenced to 18 years in prison after police charged him with the heinous crime of transporting a gambling device in his car...A pair of furry dice!!!

*6th May, 2001 Iran 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'*

\*\*\* A shop worker managed to foil, a would-be thief when she filled his swag bag with rubbish instead of hard cash. The raider fled from the store in Waterlooville, Hampshire, without checking his haul.

*19th March, 2001 Waterlooville, Hampshire DAILY SLUR'*

\*\*\* Five armed robbers who held up a post office in Athens, Greece, fled with hundreds of exam papers instead of two bags containing 220 million drachma (£400,000)

*13th June, 2001 Athens, Greece THE INDEPENDENT*

\*\*\* A lay preacher arrested for driving without insurance told police that God had offered to protect him from accidents. Peter David said he did not need road tax or an MOT for the exact same reason.

Officers flagged down the pensioner's car after spotting the old number plate, DEUT 818.

David, 66, told them it referred to the Bible's book of Deuteronomy, chapter 8, verse 18, which declares God is the only source of power.

PC Richard Coulthard told magistrates in Neath, South Wales, that the current registration should have been A903 BUX.

He said David had also admitted having no tax or MOT. 'I asked him why and he said, "the Lord says I don't have to. He lets me know when anything needs doing. "

His faith wasn't rewarded, however. David was found guilty after refusing to plea. He was fined £150 with £50 costs.

He told the magistrates that he does not expect to pay it.

*12th June, 2001 Neath, South Wales 'DAILY MANC'*

\*\*\* A man accused of hogging the microphone at a Karaoke bar was promptly shot dead and a friend badly injured in Bangkok, Thailand.

*11th July, 2001 Bangkok, Thailand 'DAILY MANC'*

\*\*\* A robber took it upon himself to hold a terrified delivery man at gunpoint...Just so he could steal a grand total of three pizza Margaritas in Sheffield.

*22nd June, 2001 Sheffield, England 'DAILY MANC'*

## KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!!!

### UFO UPDATE

#### Microbes From Outer Space

Proof that a primitive form of extraterrestrial life may exist on the very edge of our atmosphere, was apparently confirmed by a bunch of scientists, last July.

Astrobiologists were so convinced of the reality of this alien lifeform that they were prepared to stick their collective necks out and go on record to state as much in the pages of the international press.

They claim that they have caught so many primitive bacteria floating 25 miles above the surface of our planet that they simply must be not of this Earth.

Professor Chandra Wickmasinghe, the British scientist behind the 'discovery,' was quoted as saying that samples of the bacteria were being examined by his laboratory at Cardiff's Astrobiology Centre.

The microbes, stuck together in clumps, resemble bacteria found on Earth, but the height at which they were found, and their distribution indicates strongly that they were not swept up in air currents but fell from space.

'I believe they must have come from a passing comet,' the professor told reporters.

The bacteria were caught in the filter of a high-flying balloon probe launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation.

An announcement from Cardiff University called it 'the first positive identification of extraterrestrial microbial life.'

Professor Wickmasinghe presented his findings at a meeting of the International Society for Optical Engineering at San Diego, California, on July 30th.

He said; 'There is now unambiguous evidence for the presence of clumps of living cells in air samples from as high as 41 kilometres, well above the local tropopause (the junction between the troposphere, the lowest layer of the atmosphere, and the higher stratosphere), above which no air from lower down would normally be transported.'

'It is unlikely that the balloons could have been contaminated by earthly bugs.'

'I think they are extraterrestrial for a couple of reasons. The chances of getting anything terrestrial at a height of 41 kilometres is remote. It could possibly happen as a result of violent eruptions, or debris from space missions, but we have detected between one and ten clumps of these bacteria per litre of ambient air. That's a huge amount.'

The height profile is also significant. You would expect a much greater density near the surface than further up for something terrestrial, but this isn't what we found.

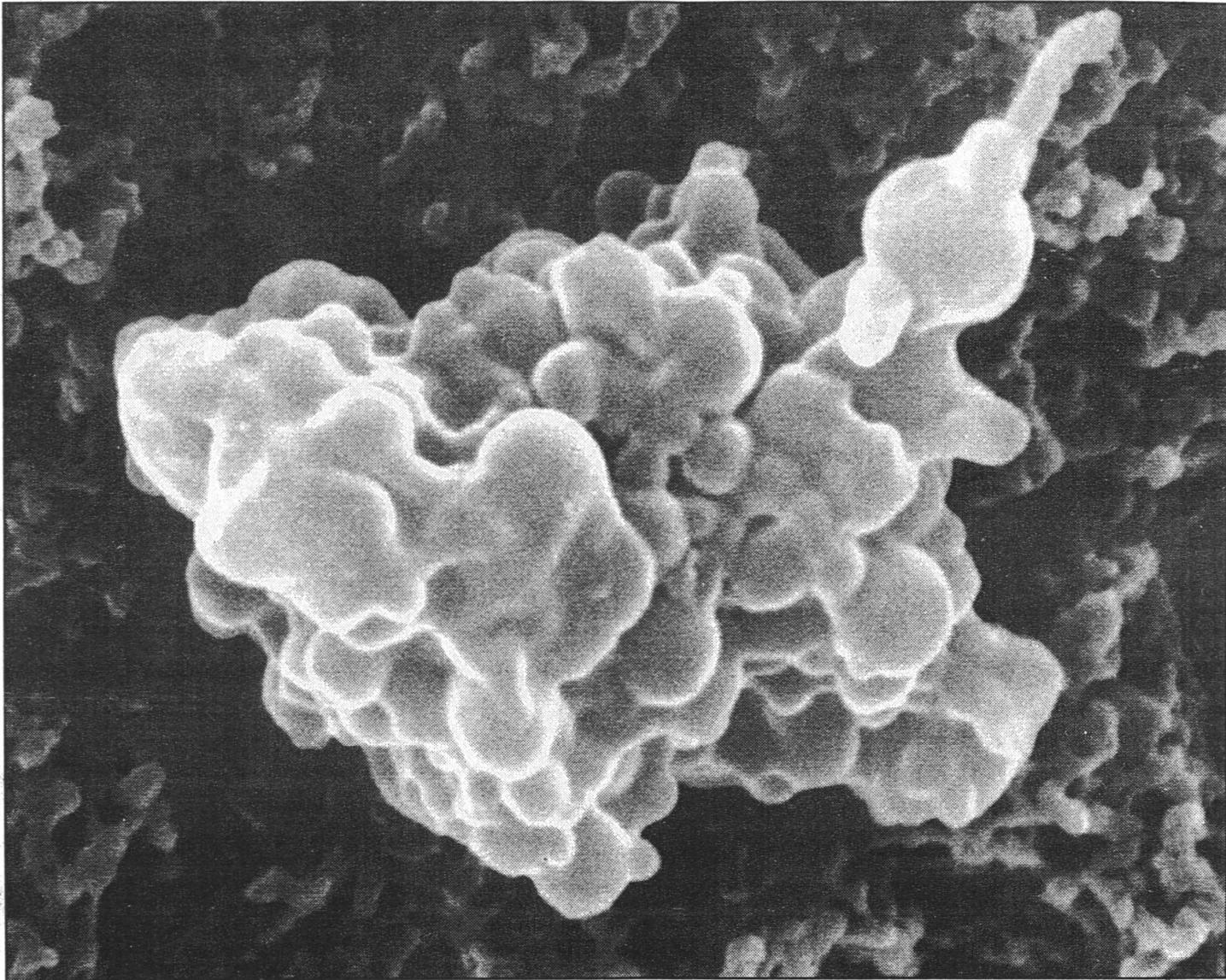
'When you calculate the expected distribution of particles falling from space, it fits in exactly with our results.'

*'I am not surprised, because a small group of us has been pioneering this idea for a long time. In the 1970's, it was considered outrageous, but now a lot of people are beginning to accept it.'*

The good professor has, as most Fortean will doubtless be aware, long courted controversy in scientific circles. He proposed 30 odd years ago, along with the eminent astronomer Fred Hoyle, that life can be transported through space. The theory claimed that seeds of life, in the form of DNA or dormant microbes, can be carried by asteroids or comets, or drift in interstellar clouds, to fall and germinate on suitable planets such as Earth.

Once dismissed as nothing more than the plot line of a tacky science fiction novel, the idea has gained increasing currency amongst the scientific fraternity.

Professor Wickramasinghe has also stated that he believes the BSE epidemic and flu outbreaks could possibly have been caused by the arrival of alien bacteria.



*(Above): The first glimpse of an extraterrestrial lifeform? Or yet another false hope raised momentarily, only to be dashed by the serried ranks of 'experts'?*

The idea that the bacteria captured by the high-altitude probe was in fact extraterrestrial met with the usual heavy dosage of scepticism, of course. 'Experts' were quick to suggest that the professor submit the evidence to a major scientific journal, which would require his conclusions to be vetted by other 'experts' in the field.

Dr Alan Penny, an astronomer at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Didcot, Oxfordshire, said; *'A pinch of salt is required here.'* Quite what use salt would be in establishing the true origin of the microbes, the doctor didn't say.

Another member of the Cardiff team was also a little reluctant to commit himself one way or the other. Professor David Lloyd, who led the analysis of the samples, said; *'It may be that they are just ordinary terrestrial bacteria, but we don't know how they could have got up to these heights.'*

We await further developments with great interest.

*31st July, 2001 General 'LIVERPOOLECHO'*

### ***AND DO WE HAVE EVIDENCE OF MICROBIAL MARTIAN LIFE?***

Italian researchers Bruno D' Argenlo, Guiseppa Geraci and Rosanna Del Gaudio, all based at the University of Naples, have apparently discovered bacteria still reproducing inside chunks of space rock billions of years old. They displayed a series of photographs to the assembled 'ladies' and 'gentlemen' of the press, who were so inspired by what they seemed to

show, they resorted to pathetic, corny lines about how we all may have evolved from these microbial lifeforms, and that Page Three girls are *not made of sugar and spice and all things nice, after all...*

Christ on a bike, who the hell writes this crap?

Oh, of course, it's those highly intelligent modern-day philosopher's over at the *'THE DAILY SLUR'*

10th May, 2001 General *'DAILY SLUR'*

## NEW 'FACE' ON MARS

Now that the once-famous 'Cydonian Face On Mars,' so beloved of Richard Hoagland and his many acolytes, has been all but thoroughly discredited, wouldn't you just know it, along comes another less-than convincing simulacra...

This time, the leading astronomer who is prepared to risk all and publicly state on record that *this* face is real, is Dr Tom Van Flandern. He is apparently convinced beyond doubting that the image could not have been created by nature, and is entirely artificial.

It's likeness, he says, is uncannily similar to the rock carvings of US presidents on the face of Mount Rushmore, in South Dakota.

*'If we are right, this is a bombshell finding,'* he told reporters. *'It could be one of the most important discoveries in the history of human civilisation.'*

The photograph is one of several new snaps of the planet recently released by NASA.

Dr Van Flanders believes that other pictures may well contain images of pyramids and tunnels and some form of written message...Not unlike Hoagland and his once-merry band.

The images, picked out from amongst 67,000 taken by the Mars Global Surveyor, were all obtained from a region known as Syrtis Major. This location is about 3,000 miles from the other rock formation in Cydonia where, in 1976, the Viking 1 Orbiter snapped the photo's of the original 'Martian Face.'

But, despite the hammering those particular pictures have since taken in the wake of more recent photographic surveys (apparently proving that the Sphinx-like images are nothing more than a combination of tricks of the light and shadowplay), the good Doctor remains convinced of the reality of these latest anomalies.

*'We have analysed these photographs very thoroughly and using reliable parameters we can say the objects they show are likely to be of artificial origin.'*

*'In some cases, we see what appear to be symbols or writing carved into the rock. We have aksed NASA to re-photograph this area and give it priority.'*

Just in case you were labouring under the mispprehension that Dcotor Van Flandern was something of a raving loon, the articles we came across were quick to point out that our hero has a PhD in astronomy from Yale Unversity and is former head of celestial mechanics at the US Naval Observatory.

He now runs the Washington-based Meta Research to investigate 'celestial anomalies.' While his interpretation of the photographs is obviously controversial, (to say the least), NASA apparently has enough respect for his academic background not to simply dismiss his 'findings' as mere nonsense.

Not that they were exactly falling over themselves to endorse his theories, you understand. One 'expert' was quoted as saying, somewhat patronisingly, *'There has never been intelligent life on Mars.'*

*'It is quite true that the photographs appear to show a human face and other interesting phenomena.'*

*'But they are just piles of rocks. Their impact comes from the play of light and shadow.'*

The so-called Face, then, if it truly existed, would be more than a mile wide and, according to Doctor Van Flandern, *'if NASA refuses to concentrate on this area it will be a scientific tragedy.'*

*'People use ridicule to dismiss our findings, which is not a very scientific way to go about things.'*

The scientists, as you might expect, beg to differ. According to Dr Arden Albee, project scientist at the California Instiitue of Technology;

*'There's a very simple explanation for why some features on Mars appear as they do. The same natural forces that shaped the rocks there can be found on the Earth.'*

*'The area in question is very interesting geologically speaking. It looks like there were a number of layers of material laid down in the planet's foundation with different hardnesses. These layers are then eroded, so you get craters perched up in the air, like on a pedestal.'*

Dr Van Flandern isn't listening, however; *'I don't know where the civilisation that may have inhabited Mars came from or where it went.'*

*'My speculation is that the main asteroid belt in the solar system is probably the shattered remains of a planet that collided with some other large object 65 million to 250 million years ago.'*

*'Intelligent life on that planet may have evacuated before the collision and launched colonisation probes on Mars, Earth and perhaps elsewhere in the solar system.'*

*'It is possible that this civilisation had some impact on evolution on Earth, and even influenced the ancient Egyptians.'*

*'If we are right about this face, it tells us something of greater importance - that the alien civilisation that carved it must have looked very similar to the modern human.'*

*'It's a very human face, it could be your neighbour's.'*

*'It may also mean that if there are alien civilisations in othersolarsystems, many could have human features.'*

*'But some people don't want to believe we are not alone. They find that unsettling.'*

10th May, 2001 Martian Surface *'THE DAILY MAIL'*

## CAST A COLD EYE:

### *Too-Good-To-Be True UFO Footage Snapped Over Derbyshire*

A housewife by the name of Sharon Rowlands apparently received the quite obscene amount of £20,000 for a sequence of video footage that purportedly shows a huge UFO traversing the skies over a Derbyshire village.

According to the usual sensationalist reports in the pages of the tabloid press, American scientists were *'stunned'* by the images on the tape and the story that Sharon had to tell them...

In her account, Mrs Rowlands claims she spotted a 3-mile wide object hovering over the village, and luckily, for her, just happened to have her video camera near to hand. She shot up to six minutes of footage and the American TV company who forked out the cash later described the film as *'one of the most important UFO sightings ever captured.'* Well, for that price, they could hardly claim anything else!!!

If the reports in the papers are to be believed, the film was sent to NASA, after they asked if they could view it for themselves, although, at the time of going to press, there was no word from the officials who, one assumes, have had the footage thoroughly examined.

Some unnamed official at NASA, was quoted as saying that they were curious about the film because the featured UFO bears a more than passing resemblance to an object captured by their own cameras during one of the shuttle

missions. There was hard confirmation of the source of this alleged quote, I'm afraid to say.

'THE DAILY SLUR' made reference to the 'fact' that the film was locked away in a bank vault (along with Dr McRae's legendary Loch Ness Monster movie reel, one assumes) in California, prior to being screened worldwide. Meanwhile, Sharon, who resides with her husband Hayden, 45, in Bonsall, Derbyshire, told reporters; 'I was a complete and utter disbeliever. but the evidence of my own eyes made me think again.'

'I've watched all the UFO programmes. If there is such a thing as a UFO, this is as good a photo as you will get.'

She states she used her camcorder to video the strange object which she described as 'looking like a giant disc with a bite taken out.'

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March, 2001 Bonsall, Derbyshire 'DAILYSLUR'

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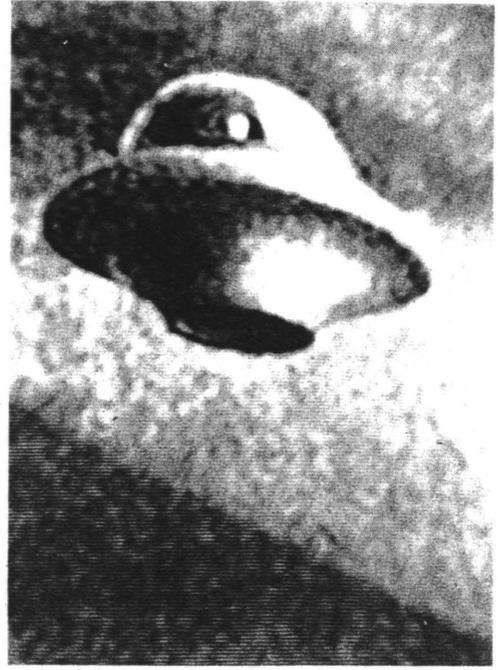
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*Meetings were meant to last until 10pm, but they would go on and on, which annoyed the caretaker.*

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*26th April, 2001 Bristol 'DAILY MAIL'*

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But back, for a little while at least, to our hero, *Robson At Large*;

*'You could say that Bonnybridge looks damned normal; a few shops, a pub or two, a couple of churches, new and old houses and roads that run up and down quite steep hills.'*

But as he says, with his tongue wedged so far into his cheek he doubtless looks like he's sucking on the world's largest gobstopper, 'I would say, as a man who wasn't born yesterday and a trained reporter, that when you come to a place where worlds collide you should have your wits about you...'

For reasons best known to himself, Robson decided to make the car park of the Bonnybridge Golf Club his first port of call. Apparently, it was the only place where there was any sign of life, terrestrial or otherwise. There then follows much 'hilarity' as Robson takes the proverbial out of the locals ('There was a notice about a missing kitten in one shop front - How spooky is that?'), and makes reference to a group of Welsh rugby supporters in a bar who he 'mistakes' for aliens conversing in Venusian, (*Puh-lease, my aching sides!!!*).

The comedy genius decides to get a tad more serious however, when he speaks to ufologist and author of several books on the subject, Ron Halliday. 'Mr Halliday appears to be in no doubt that there is something special about the Bonnybridge Triangle, between the Forth Estuary, the border of Stirling and Edinburgh. Yes there is a NATO air base, yes there are airports, yes there are motorways with flashing lights on them. Even so, there are too many strange things and too much video evidence.

*'Indeed, he believes there have been abductions. In 1992, Gary Wood and Colin Wright, both in their 20's, had a Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind. They were driving along the A70 when they were taken from their car and*

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*'You could say that Bonnybridge looks damned normal; a few shops, a pub or two, a couple of churches, new and old houses and roads that run up and down quite steep hills.'*

But as he says, with his tongue wedged so far into his cheek he doubtless looks like he's sucking on the world's largest gobstopper, 'I would say, as a man who wasn't born yesterday and a trained reporter, that when you come to a place where worlds collide you should have your wits about you...'

For reasons best known to himself, Robson decided to make the car park of the Bonnybridge Golf Club his first port of call. Apparently, it was the only place where there was any sign of life, terrestrial or otherwise. There then follows much 'hilarity' as Robson takes the proverbial out of the locals ('There was a notice about a missing kitten in one shop front - How spooky is that?'), and makes reference to a group of Welsh rugby supporters in a bar who he 'mistakes' for aliens conversing in Venusian, (*Puh-lease, my aching sides!!!*).

The comedy genius decides to get a tad more serious however, when he speaks to ufologist and author of several books on the subject, Ron Halliday. 'Mr Halliday appears to be in no doubt that there is something special about the Bonnybridge Triangle, between the Forth Estuary, the border of Stirling and Edinburgh. Yes there is a NATO air base, yes there are airports, yes there are motorways with flashing lights on them. Even so, there are too many strange things and too much video evidence.

*'Indeed, he believes there have been abductions. In 1992, Gary Wood and Collin Wright, both in their 20's, had a Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind. They were driving along the A70 when they were taken from their car and*

*found themselves being examined by tall thin creatures. There were hours unaccounted for. When Gary underwent hypnosis he was regressed and the memories emerged.'*

Mr Robson also decided to call on Margaret Ross, a 68-year-old great grandmother who lives in Stenhousemuir, about three miles outside Bonnybridge. She told him, convincingly, he asserts, of how she had seen an unexplained bright light in the sky whilst looking out of her bedroom window back in 1999.

*'First it was diagonal lines, then it became like a full moon, then it disappeared. I called my husband Alec who was downstairs and we got it on video.'*

*'I've seen about four occurrences. The last one was like a streak of light, like the trail from an exhaust.'*

Mr Robson readily concedes that the video is impressive. He also raises the possibility that the great grandmother may have faked the footage, although her son-in-law is quick to point out that would be *'Impossible, she's not clever enough to do things like that.'*

The intrepid reporter also talks to another witness, Jim Malcolm, who lives near Bonnybridge. He claims that in 1991, he saw strange objects traversing the skies above the village. They moved up and down, before moving off and disappearing. He claims that many locals have seen the same or disconcertingly similar things, but are too scared to come forward to make their accounts known to the public. He himself has a hour and a half worth of video footage.

But it's Councillor Billy Buchanan that Mr Robson is most interested in...He is, after all, the man who wants to set about twinning Bonnybridge with Roswell. He apparently has visions of a UFO theme park; *'Millions go to Disneyland to see six-foot high mice,'* he exclaims with more than a trace of sarcasm. *'Forget about Goofy, come here.'*

Billy sit as an Independent on Falkirk council and dreams up his schemes in an office so crowded with papers, files TV's and things that you can hardly get in.

He is the author of several books on the history of Bonnybridge, (the last battle on British soil was fought here, and when the Stone of Destiny was stolen from Westminster Abbey in 1950, it was hidden within the confines of the village).

Robson describes Buchanan as being *'a thick-set, rather handsome man, now 52, and with good white hair. He used to play football professionally in Australia and Hong Kong. Now he has a two-and-a-half daughter. He may exhaust the conventional councillors of Falkirk but I think he is great.'* He hasn't seen too much UFO activity himself but claims he is more than convinced by the evidence and witness testimony that reaches his ears.

*'The world is full of sceptics saying "Rubbish, nonsense, and anyway, why Bonnybridge?"'*

*'Have an answer for that... Why Bethlehem?'*

*17th February, 2001 Bonnybridge, Scotland 'DAILY EXPRESS'*

\*\*\* And just a day later, another reporter from the same paper, this time a woman named Esther Oxford, gave her version of events in Bonnybridge...

*'The town could not be more ordinary - flat fronted brick bungalows with fitted curtains and PVC double-glazing, bus stops with plastic seats looking on to green trimmed verges. It is enough to make your head spin.'*

But the local pastime, she reminds us, seems to consist of crowds of people gathering together after dark to gaze up at the night sky. They bring picnics and six packs of beer and share stories.

And then there is the video footage...Some of the objects featured in the sequences of tape have been said to

resemble floating loaves of bread and disembodied eyes. They inspire both awe and terror.

And whilst Bonnybridge can't yet hold a candle to Roswell, at least in the eyes of the conspiracy theorists, it is fast becoming a beckoning beacon to hordes of ufologists.

Oh, and here's our old friend Mr Buchanan, once more; *'We can't guarantee that visitors to the village will see a UFO. But we can guarantee hospitality. The theme park, featuring virtual reality rocket rides is expected to cost somewhere in the region of £250 million. Not surprisingly, not everyone in Bonnybridge is happy about the proposal. But when they see how much the town could gain from new jobs, tourism and industry they will change their minds.'*

Ms Oxford then provides something of a potted history of the phenomenon and how it has affected Bonnybridge. She maintains that the 'flap' started back in 1991, with Nell Malcolm's encounter.

*'I was driving down the street when this big white light the size of a jumbo jet appeared above me. It started following me. I was afraid. I didn't know what it was.'*

His mother, Ann, then takes up the story; *'I was sitting at home. Nell burst in looking like he'd seen a car crash. I ran outside to take a look at this so-called "white light." It was there for a long time. My daughter-in-law grabbed a video camera and filmed the event.'*

Neil was disturbed by the incident; *'I couldn't speak about it to anyone. When people asked me what happened I would just say "Oh, nothing." Now even my mother is reluctant to talk about the sighting, which belies the cynical rumours that the family are only out to see UFOs to help promote custom for our families restaurant.'*

*'I get tired of people saying to me: "Have you seen any green aliens recently?" It belittles our experiences.'*

Not long after this incident, Joe Lemetti, owner of a chippy near Bonnybridge, saw his first UFO whilst he was at a local barbecue. *'A group of 30 of us were sitting in the garden when this UFO just appeared out of the sky. It looked like a ball of light going backwards and forwards, up and down. Then more came, about 16 in all. Helicopters don't do that, well, certainly not at that speed. The sighting when on for three hours.'*

*'I've been stopped by the police in the middle of the night. I tell them I'm looking for UFOs and they let me go (hey, perhaps some of our criminal clients could try that one next time they're stopped in downtown Birkenhead, on the wrong side of midnight - Legal Ed). 'So far I've had 12 to 15 different sightings. The last one was a year ago.'*

Malcolm Robinson, head of the SPI (and 'DON' subscriber/contributor) was the first to be contacted by the Malcolms (so to speak). Mr Robinson claims he can tell the hoaxers and the time wasters from the genuine percipients by *'their body language and the books under their chairs. They usually just want to get on television. If I am unsure about their credibility, I sift through the evidence. I check with the Air Force to make sure no aircraft have been in the area. Then with the Ministry Of Defence. My job is to make sure that the sceptics are satisfied. Ninety five per cent of all UFO sightings can be explained away.'*

*'The person may have spotted an aircraft or a comet - all of which can appear perplexing when viewed from the ground. What fascinates me is the five per cent left over. This amounts to six or seven sightings a year. The Malcolm's was one.'*

*'But the case that served to impress me the most was the Gary Wood and Colln Wright encounter. They were driving along the A70 between Edinburgh and West Lothian, when a black disc-shaped object appeared before them. hovering*

over the road. A curtain of molten silver dripped on their car and they were catapulted into complete darkness. Months later under hypnosis they revealed that small grey creatures had forcibly removed them from their car, taken them to a circular-shaped room, stripped them naked and subjected them to an examination. Sounds like a dream? I've never met two more honest to goodness gentlemen.

So why has Bonnybridge become the mecca of UFOs? Well, it has more than its fair share of military establishments. Perhaps the UFOs are being used as surveillance. Many UFO researchers believe that the disproportionate number of sightings around military bases may be associated with intelligence gathering.

But of course, there are always those who take the opposite, maddeningly rational view. One such 'expert' is an astro-physicist by the name of Dr John Watkins, who's now a GP in south-east Wales. He insists that multi-witness sightings are just an example of mass hysteria (wowie, now that's surely original. I'm half-expecting those other classic sceptical standbys; misperceptions of Venus and swamp gas.

*'The human mind is apt to play games. It tries to make some kind of logic out of a pattern of occurrences which are not logical.'*

Mr Buchanan predictably, remains philosophical about the serried ranks of disbelievers. His wife, a nurse, was once a confirmed sceptic, quite literally saw the light on January 2nd, this year. She was driving home from work when she saw a bright white gas emerging in her path. Refusing to panic she simply kept on driving. *'I just knew Billy would be pleased,'* she later told the reporter...

18th February, 2001 Bonnybridge, Scotland *'DAILY EXPRESS'*

## Ice Found On Mars

The prospects of finding some form of life on Mars was once again raised this summer after astronomers published evidence of frozen reservoirs on Mars and a liquid ocean beneath the crust of Callisto, one of Jupiter's moons.

If the findings, published in the journal *NATURE*, are confirmed, it means that water could be relatively common throughout the solar system and gives two new targets for investigating extraterrestrial microbes.

Dr John Mustard, of Brown University, says hummocky ground detected by the Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft suggests that shallow reservoirs of ice lie below the surface of the Red Planet.

A unique type of planetary terrain, a smooth surface broken into a pitted pattern, may show areas where dust has been permeated and cemented by ice.

The estimated thickness of the soil and its latitude suggest a vast ice reservoir created during a period of climate change. around 100,000 years ago.

A second study has found evidence of a liquid ocean beneath Callisto, one of the four moons of Jupiter spotted by Galileo. The moon, which is around 3,000 miles across, is covered with craters and was once thought to be a geologically boring ball of ice and rock.

But in the 1990's, the Galileo spacecraft detected a magnetic field around the moon that fluctuated with the rotation of Jupiter. Scientists began to suspect that a salty ocean lay beneath the 120-mile thick crust.

Using mathematical models, Dr Javier Ruiz, of the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain, has worked out that this ocean may have retained enough heat from decaying radioactive matter to remain liquid. That raises the prospect that life could be found within the moon.

Another of Jupiter's moons, Europa, is also thought to have a slushy or liquid ocean under an icy crust.

Dr Kristen Bennet, an astronomer at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, was quoted as saying; *'Where there is any suggestion of water elsewhere in the Solar System other than Earth, there are suggestions of the possible existence of life.'*

20th June, 2001 Mars *'DAILY TELEGRAPH'*

## THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW

Back in the balmy, all-too brief flirtation with Summer that was the month of May, this year, an event that didn't exactly make the headlines, took place in Washington DC. More than 20 witnesses, all from respected professions joined forces to reveal to the world's media (if they could be bothered to listen, that is) what they claim to be the depiction of elected governments by unaccountable but powerful self-interest groups.



Canadian artist Gene Duplantier renders likeness of typical MIB as encountered by numerous UFO witnesses.

Of course, in virtually any other field, pollution scares or some kind of political scandal, these witnesses, made up as they are of senior military officers from the US, UK and Russia, decorated pilots and astronauts, reputable scientists, and even a cardinal from the Vatican, would find their testimony taken deadly seriously. And doubtless, there would loud calls for a public inquiry.

In this case however, that well-worn cliché about how 'extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof' was the only response to the assertion that UFOs are real and that we may already have been in contact with extraterrestrials. The omnipotent (in ufological circles at least), Dr Steven Greer, had been nevertheless holding out the hope that the claims of the witnesses would be regarded as being rather more than a bunch of paranoid claptrap.

Dr Greer, director of the Disclosure Project, who was set to host the event, is also the director of the Centre for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence (CSETI), a non-profit scientific organisation that was set up in 1990 to *'establish peaceful and sustainable relations with extraterrestrial life forms.'*

Several years ago, the Disclosure Project invited 'experts' from *'military, government or government contractor personnel'* who were witnesses to UFO events and projects to come forward and make statements about what they know. Around 400 volunteered information and more than 100 have had their testimonies videotaped by Dr Greer, who says they will establish once and for all that we are not alone. One of this group's key witnesses is a former Division Chief of the Accidents and Investigations Branch of the US Federal Aviation Authority. In his testimony, John Callahan tells about a 1986 Japanese Airlines 747 flight that was tailed by a UFO for 31 minutes over the Alaskan skies. The UFO also trailed a United Airlines flight until the flight landed. There was visual confirmation as well as air-based and ground-based radar.

This incident was significant enough for the then FAA Administrator, Admiral Engen, to hold a briefing the next day attended by the CIA, the FBI, and President Reagan's Scientific Study Team. Videotape radar evidence, air traffic voice communications and paper reports were compiled and presented.

At the end of the meeting, a CIA member instructed everyone present; *'The meeting never took place' and that 'this incident was never recorded.'*

*'At the time I said, "Well, I don't know why you are saying this." Callahan remembers saying in response. "There was something there and if it's not a Stealth Bomber, then you know it's a UFO, why wouldn't you want the people to know?'*

*"They got all excited over that - "You don't even want to say those words."*

*"He said this is the first time they've ever had 30 minutes of radar data on a UFO. He said if they came out and told the American public that they ran into a UFO out there, it would cause panic across the country."*

*"But as far as I am concerned, I saw a UFO chase a Japanese 747 across the sky for over half an hour on radar. And it's faster than anything that I know of in our government."*

Project Director Dr Greer claims that *'technologies related to extraterrestrial phenomena are capable of providing solutions to the global energy crisis.'*

He aims to persuade the US Congress to hold open hearings at which a further group of *'deep cover'* witnesses could testify with official government protection. During his investigations, Dr Greer and his team have briefed the Clinton Administration, including former CIA director James Woolsey, senior military officials at the Pentagon, and selected members of Congress.

Whether any of these sensational claims are true or whether it's a conspiracy theorist's version of *'THE HITLER DIARIES'* remains to be seen. The provenance of the witnesses will certainly be verifiable.

Dr Greer, now aged 45, is a medical doctor from Virginia, who has spent eight years and \$5 million of his own money putting together the evidence the Disclosure Project planned to present last May.

Along with his small research team, Dr Greer has spoken to witnesses all over the world, many of them high-ranking military personnel who have stated unequivocally that they have seen UFOs.

*'Sceptics say they are deluded, or are liars. But in any other circumstances they would be considered heroes of their country,' Greer told reporters.*

*'These are individuals in whose hands rest the nuclear arsenals of the world - launch control officers, who we trust with the safety or destruction of our planet. Either these military men were hallucinating, or they saw what they saw.'*

The terrifying truth, according to the good Doctor, is that the testimony of his military witnesses will prove that the US and other countries have engaged *'extraterrestrial vehicles'* in armed attack.

*'If there is even a 10 per cent chance that this is true, then this constitutes the gravest threat to world peace in human history,' he says.*

And there's no doubting that the integrity of his witnesses is pretty impressive. They include Britain's former Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Lord Hill Norton, who states in his testimony; *'There is a serious possibility that we are being visited - and have been visited for many years - by people from outer space, from other civilisations; that it behoves us to find out who they are, where they come from, and what they want. This should be the subject of rigorous scientific investigation.'*

The consensus among those in the know, says Greer, is that we are not facing hostility from extraterrestrials. He is extremely concerned, therefore, about President Bush's announcement that he is going ahead with NMDS, the National Missile Defence System, a hi-tech space defence shield.

*'Our visitors may be quite neutral but they may not be so happy about our military adventures.'*

*'The continued secrecy is preventing the world from entering into an informed debate about NMDS, not to mention environmental and energy issues.'*

*'And I'm talking about levels of secrecy that have even removed presidents from the loop.'*

*'The buck supposedly stops at the Oval Office, but it seems like it doesn't. Carter and Clinton were deliberately deceived - it's explosive, but we know this to be the case.'*

*'I am aware that I'm making serious allegations. Why should anyone believe me? Well, I am a licensed MD in two states.'*

*'If I were perpetrating a hoax I would lose those licences and my livelihood. We have three attorneys here too - if they were hoaxers they would be disbarred. There's a lot at stake here.'*

And Nick Pope, the former UFO desk officer at the Ministry of Defence, backs Dr Greer to the hilt. *'Those people who have genuinely been involved in government or military UFO projects undoubtedly have fascinating stories to tell. I hope people will pay attention and realise the UFO phenomenon raises some serious defence and security issues.'*

Meanwhile, Dr Greer remains hopeful that serious media interest will provide the impetus need to lobby for an official enquiry.

*'All I am asking is that we spend a fraction of the time on this that we did on Monica Lewinsky. If only one of these witnesses is telling the truth, it's the biggest story in history.'*

6th May, 2001 Washington DC, USA 'SUNDAY EXPRESS'

## AIRPORT CLOSED DOWN BY A UFO

An airport in Southern Siberia was shut down for 90 minutes after pilots refused to use it, claiming that a UFO was hovering over the runway.

The crew of an Ilyushin 76 cargo jet refused to take off after reporting a luminescent object over Barnaul Airport, Russia's Integfax news agency reported.

Aviation chief Ivan Komarov said the crew of another cargo plane also refused to use the same stretch of runway for the exact same reason, and landed their jet at another airfield.

The UFO eventually took off and vanished from the airport an hour and a half after the stand off began.

30th January, 2001 Barnaul Airport, Russia 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

## Odds On UFO Reality Slashed

And do they really know something we don't?

Bookmakers William Hill have slashed the odds on the chances of a US President meeting with an alien from 12,000-1 to just 1000-1.

A gambler by the name of Alan Cockayne, 51, of Chaddeson, Derby, found out when he went to renew his £10 bet which had expired.

He told reporters; *'They seem to be aware of something that the general public are still in the dark about. Perhaps it's something to do with this Star-Wars-obsessed President George W. Bush.'*

*And perhaps finally a close encounter really is on the cards.'*

Perhaps, but I won't be holding my breath, Alan.

15th July, 2001 Derby, England 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'

## UFOs Over Wiltshire

Two sets of entirely unrelated witnesses reported seeing a unidentified lights in the skies over Seamington and Trowbridge, between 10.20-11.10 pm, on Wednesday, June 13th, this year.

Roger White saw a bright light traversing the skies over Seamington and told reporters; *'It seemed to be moving slowly. At first I thought it was a planet but it was too bright. I think the RAF may have gone for a look because because I also saw a strobing light. But when I looked back seconds later, it had disappeared.'*

*'It must have taken off at an incredible speed because it was soon a single dot on the horizon.'*

The same, or similar object was seen fifty minutes later at approximately 11:10pm, by four people in Trowbridge. One of the witnesses, Nicola Winney, described the UFO as having three lights in a triangle formation. *'It blocked out the stars as it passed overhead making a soft droning sound as it moved.'*

13th June, 2001 Seamington-Trowbridge, Wiltshire 'THIS IS WILTSHIRE'

## AND MEANWHILE, IN KOREA...

Also during the Spring of this year, a rod-shaped UFO was filmed by TV news cameramen on at least two separate occasions. Firstly on April 9th, and subsequently on 5th May.

Both sightings were in Cheong-Ju, North Ching Cheong Province.

A local investigator by the name of Seo Jong-Han, has dedicated more than 20 years to the study of UFOs. His expertise is mostly in the field of photographic research, and he pays particular attention to the twenty or so UFO photos that appear every year in that country.

He works as a computer game developer during the day, but he's also a member of the Korea UFO Research Association (KUFORA), a small group of analysts that subjects each reported sighting in Korea to close, computer-aided scrutiny.

*'When I was in fifth grade, I read a magazine called 'BOYS CENTRAL' They had articles about UFOs every month, and I just got curious about it,'* Seo told reporters.

Each photograph is examined through computers for traces of forgery. Seo compares the reflection of sun rays in the photograph to the alleged position of the photographer at the time the picture was taken. He then checks the astronomical charts to see if any planets, shooting stars or solar flares were visible at the time. He also considers the testimony of the witness and looks for inconsistencies in the reports of any other witnesses. Finally, he sends the 'survivors' to another researcher to procure a second opinion.

*'99 per cent of photos I get turn out to be fakes,'* he says. *'But Korea has a long history of UFO sightings. During the Korean War, both US and Korean pilots reported encountering UFOs. And in March 1979, two Korean Air Force pilots participating in the Team Spirit Joint Military exercise told of how they saw a very bright lighted plane. Nothing was picked up on the radar screens.'*

*The pilots alleged that the craft had flashing lights on the sides and what looked like a 'blazing furnace' in the middle. It then shot sideways, stopped and then moved rapidly upwards and out of sight.'*

*In 1982, people reported three separate sightings, helping to make it 'The Year Of The UFO' in Korea.*

*Having studied each case in minute detail, Seo shared the lessons learned from his intensive research and the techniques you should employ to grab a successful photo of a UFO, with 'THE KOREAN HERALD.'*

*'It's not enough to set up a camera. To ensure that your photo survives scrutiny, it's important to use proper techniques. The best method is to use the eponymous technique developed by an American named John Bro. The Bro Method is designed to detect UFOs hiding in the Sun's rays.'*

*'Take a video camera or timed camera and put it on a tripod. Place the tripod just under the eaves of a house or a building with the lens at an 80 degrees angle.'*

*'The shadow of the eaves will fall over the camera reducing glare and highlighting flying objects that would otherwise be obscured by the Sun.'*

*'UFOs often hide by placing themselves directly in front of the Sun. With the Bro Technique, you can still catch them on film.'*

*'As in real estate, location is the key. Once a UFO is sighted, there's a good chance it can be seen again in the same area.'*

*'While UFOs have been seen all over North and South Korea, the best place to pitch a tripod is Kapyeong in Gyeonggi Province. With two UFO sightings and a slew of military bases in the area, Kapyeong is fertile ground for film.'*

*'I went to Kapyeong after a reporter from a local paper succeeded in capturing a photo of a UFO hovering in the sky. I shot my film at the exact same spot where the reporter had stood. The video that I managed to shoot is still under examination, but I've caught a moving cloud which I actually believe to be an alien spacecraft.'*

*'Finally, patience is obviously something no researcher can work without. It might take years to get The Shot, the reward of hundreds of rolls of film, moments of elation and disappointment and endless public negativity.'*

*'UFOs can be distinguished from airplanes or weather balloons by their rapid movement, their ability to turn on a dime and accelerate almost instantly. This violation of the laws of physics is what leads most scientists to view UFOs as a spurious phenomenon rather than an object of scientific study.'*

*'Those who manage to get a rapidly moving object on film shouldn't be disappointed if it doesn't look much like a classic flying saucer. Among the most UFO types reportedly seen across the country, is the cigar-shaped craft, also referred to as the 'Mother Ship.' There is also 'ball type,' 'triangular-type,' 'round with a dome' and 'half a sphere.'*  
May, 2001 Korea 'THE KOREAN HERALD'

## DANCING WITH THE DARK:

### Did The Nazis Build Flying Saucers?

One of those more outlandish ufological rumours that never seems to go away is the theory that the Nazis may be responsible for the building of the craft we've come to know as Flying Saucers.

Someone who at least subscribes to the possibility is Nick Cook, the Aviation Editor of Jane's Defence Weekly. In a series of articles in the ultra-conservative 'DAILY MAIL,' he 'revealed what he believes to be 'an incredible secret - the truth about flying saucers.'

The story starts, strangely enough, in the July of 1986, in the heat-baked scrub of the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Amelia Lopez, a local deputy sheriff, had been crawling into her sleeping bag in the wake of an all-night camping party when something crashed to earth a dozen miles from Bakersfield, California. Her attention had been caught by the sound of a supersonic jet roaring overhead, its sonic boom echoing like summer thunder. A few seconds later, the horizon was illuminated by a massive explosion, with the flames leaping high into a sky so blue it looked ready to shatter into a million pieces.

The jet had gone hurtling to destruction into a desert canyon nearby, and Lopez and her friends were itching to find out what had happened.

They hadn't got more than a six miles or so towards the point of impact however, before she found herself being pushed to the ground with a gun rammed into the side of her head. A group of 'soldiers' brandishing Colt Commandos, wearing night-vision goggles began issuing threats about government property and national security.

It wasn't until 1988 that the outgoing Reagan Administration admitted that the plane, strictly classified even though it had been in service for three years, was an F-117A Stealth fighter. The troops at the crash site were part of a Pentagon 'red team' helicoptered in to secure the area, and to ensure that the secret of the Stealth's technology remained just that.

The reason the story starts here is to show America's obsession with so-called 'black ops' and the lengths to which their security forces will go to guard that which it deems vital to conceal.

But Nick Cook claims he was to discover there is an even greater secret which is no less than *'the aerospace equivalent of the Holy Grail: Anti-Gravity.'*

*'In other words, the action of levitation where gravity's force is more than overcome by electrostatic or other propulsion.'*

*'For some time I had regarded an anti-gravity system as the ultimate quantum leap in aircraft design. Something dreamed about, but beyond reach and unlikely to remain so.'*

However, Mr Cook is now convinced that anti-gravity is no longer the stuff of science fiction.

Anti-gravity, Cook maintains is an invention of the Nazis, a direct result of their desire for world domination. *'And it could also explain the thousands of sightings of UFOs that have occurred since the end of the Second World War.'*

*'The draconian measures applied at the Californian crash site were among the final pieces in a jigsaw I had been putting together ever since photocopied pages of an old popular science journal had been placed anonymously on my desk at JANE'S DEFENCE WEEKLY, the British magazine which documents the day to day dealings of the multi-billion dollar defence industry.'*

*'I have worked there for 14 years as aviation editor and aerospace consultant, covering everything from Chinese combat engines to radar systems. But this was way off my usual beat' (is it me, or does Mr Cook come across as a gumshoe-type character, like something out of a Raymond Chandler novel?).*

The clipping turned out to be about revolutionary US military research, and was dated 1956. The headline was *'THE G-ENGINES ARE COMING!'* and it featured a drawing of a US airman climbing out of an aircraft that had no wings and no visible means of propulsion. The article proclaimed; *'By far the most potent source of energy is gravity. Using it as power, future aircraft will attain the speed of light. Scientists, designers, and engineers are perfecting a way to control gravity - a force infinitely more powerful than the mighty atom. The result of their labours will be anti-gravity engines working without fuel -*

*weightless airliners and space ships able to travel up to 170,000 miles per second.'*

Nick was going to consign the article to the round plastic cabinet marked 'Bin,' but something in the next paragraph caught his eye.

*'The gravity research had been supported by Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Company, Bell Aircraft, Lear and several other American aircraft manufacturers who would not spend millions of dollars on science fiction.'*

It also quoted Lawrence D. Bell, founder of the plane company that was the first to break the sound barrier: *'We're already working on nuclear fuels and equipment to cancel out gravity.'* George S. Trimble, head of Advanced Programs at Martin Aircraft, added; *'The conquest of gravity could be done in about the time it took to build our first atomic bomb.'*

Seems like the writers were already predicting the dawning of a new gold dream..the possibility of anti-gravity in the 1960's.

They set out the notion of a fuelless propulsion source, one that could deliver phenomenal performance gains over a jet, perhaps including the ability to accelerate rapidly, to pull hairpin turns without crushing the pilot and to achieve speeds that defied imagination.

All the things that subsequent witnesses would describe the UFOs they'd seen to be capable of.

Nick began to research the subject of anti-gravity - and discovered that the seeds of the technology were sown by the German scientists in the dying days of the Second World War, and quickly appropriated by the yanks from right under the noses of the Allies.

According to Nick, the main man was a German engineer and administrator, Hans Kammler, who began as a civil servant with the Reich Air Ministry but whose burning ambition led him to the SS, where he became head of the Building and Works Divisions that masterminded the obscenity that was the concentration camps.

Eventually, Kammler, who was a qualified engineer, worked his way up to become involved with the Luftwaffe. He was a typical Nazi, both highly intelligent and unspeakably cruel - approximately 20,000 slave workers died creating the vast galleried complex hacked out under the Harz Mountains in Germany where Kammler oversaw production of V1 rockets. As an example of his brutality, in one March day in 1945, the guards hanged 52 people in Gallery 41, tying a dozen at a time to a beam which was then pulled up by a crane. Those next in line were forced to watch their fellow workers final moments.

Perhaps not surprisingly, his superiors were so delighted with his methods of 'getting things done,' that Kammler quickly rose to the rank of SS General, and was put in charge of all aircraft and missile programmes as well as being allowed to set up his own high-powered research and development think tank. He set about organising a secret operation in the huge Skoda industrial complex in the former Czechoslovakia.

The scientists there were working on weapon systems so advanced that they made Germany's V1 and V2 rocket bombs look positively ancient. Among these were nuclear power plants for rockets and aircraft, highly sophisticated guided weapons and anti-aircraft lasers.

A Polish source informed Mr Cook that experiments had been taking place in a mine close to the Czech border. They involved feeding large doses of electricity into an underground chamber where a bell-shaped device emitted a pale blue light. Five scientists exposed to the device had died of side-effects.

Word had it that they were investigating some kind of anti-gravitational effect. The Bell, which was about the height of a man and glowed during testing, was made of hard, heavy metal, filled with a violet mercury-like

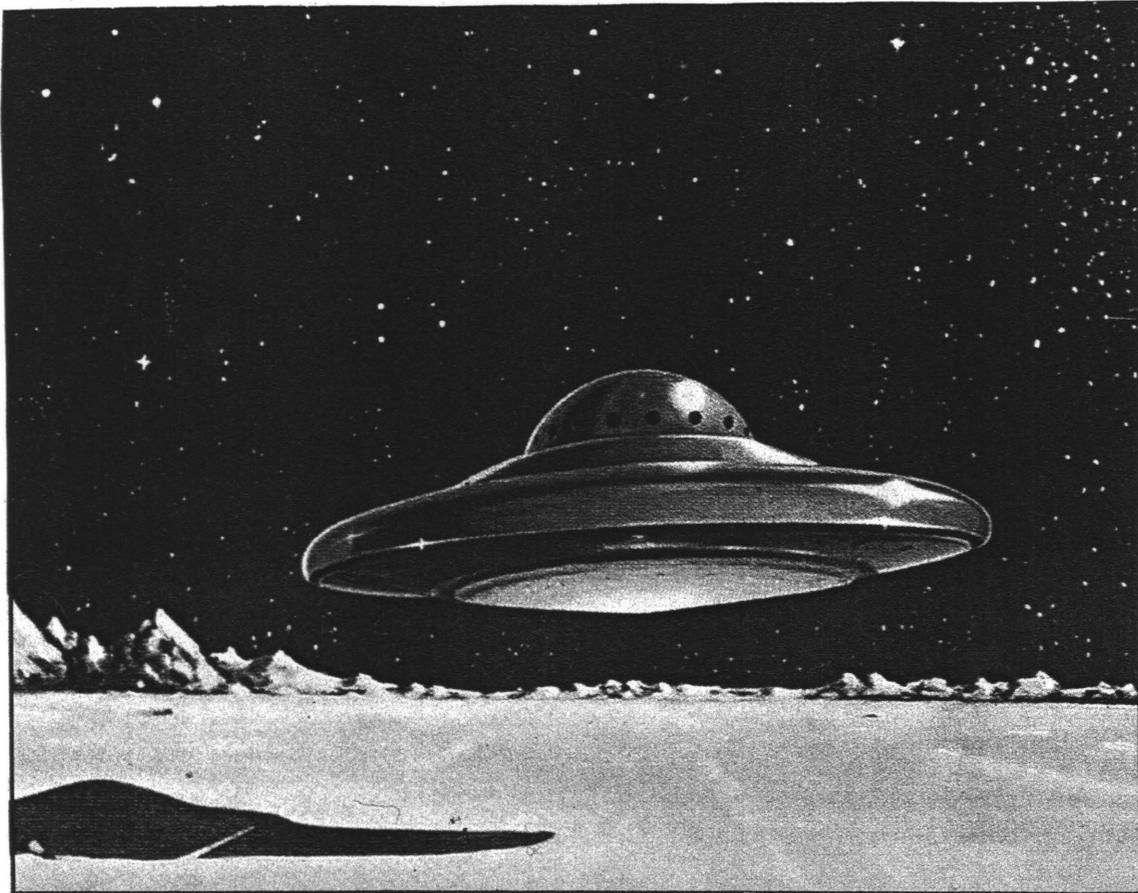
substance. This metallic liquid was stored in a flask, encased in lead three centimetres thick.

*'Experiments always took place under a thick ceramic cover and involved the rapid spinning of two cylinders in opposite directions. The chamber in which the experiments took place was deep below ground. Only The Bell itself was preserved after a series of tests, each lasting about one minute. Even the room was destroyed and rebuilt.*

*'Various plants and animals such as frogs, mice and rats were exposed to The Bell's sphere of influence. Rapid decay set in and people who helped conduct the experiments suffered from sleep problems, memory loss and muscle spasms. One of the terms used was "vortex compression." Another was "magnetic fields separation." Both were associated with anti-gravity.*

*'These secrets were undoubtedly Kammler's ticket to safety once the war had ended. By the mid-April of 1945, Kammler had dropped off the map. He was a leading Nazi, implicated in the Final Solution - yet protracted searches in the US National Archives yielded not a single mention.*

*'How could this monster, the most powerful individual outside Hitler's inner circle, be so easily forgotten?'*



Cook theorises that Kammler was an unremarkable enough-looking man, and out of uniform would have blended easily into the background. In the chaos that ensued at the end of the War, Kammler could have assumed any persona, gone anywhere and no one would have noticed.

*'He probably went east, back to his Speical Projecxds group in Czechoslovakia rather than simply wait for the Americans to arrive in Munich. He had a two-fold purpose in making this dangerous journey. First, to retrieve the mother lode of documentation and blueprints. And second, to hide it before setting up the deal which would buy his freedom. Although the Skoda works were in the Soviet zone of occupation, my reseach shows that US forces had the run of the place for six days before the Red Army turned up.'*

It's likely, of course, that Kammler had already set up a deal with the Americans, which would explain why he wasn't arrested at any stage.

The Bell was removed by a special SS evacuation team just before the Russians arrived. More than 60 scientists were ruthlessly executed just because they were involved in the experiment. The Bell was shipped out to an ultra secret location.

However it was transported, Kammler had the means at his disposal to shift it along with thousands of tons of documentation, equipment and personnel.

*'At the end of the Second World War, via captured technology from Germany that has never seen the light of day, America acqbred knowledge of a most dangerous kind.*

*'Whatever the secrets of The Bell and other technology, the German secret weapons programme had yielded the ability to design a radically different form of aircraft. A craft that was "circular" or "elliptical," made no sound and could turn on a sixpence. And one involving a process which could also be harnessed to create a weapon more destructive than the hydrogen bomb.'*

By a bitter irony, America's technological advances from the late 1945 onwards, were much very much assisted by the very same German scientists who had been responsible for building craft designed to rain death upon the Allies just a few short months earlier.

That being the case, perhaps we shouldn't be too amazed to discover that the Yanks bent over backwards to accomodate Kammler, *'keeper of the Third Reich's most exotic military secrets.'*

Mr Cook makes mention of a memo he found buried in the dusty archives of The Imperial War Museum, written by General Nathan Twining, head of US Army Air Forces' Air Material Command, to a brigadier in USAAF Intelligence in September, 1947.

It stated that objects 'approximating the shape of a disc,' of such appreciable size as to be as large as a manmade aircraft, 'were neither 'visionary or fictitious.'

Twining went on to write that it was possible 'within the present US knowledge - provided extensive detailed development is undertaken - to construct a piloted aircraft which has the general description of the object above which would be capable of an approximate range of 7,000 miles...'

Nick thinks it slightly more than a coincidence that the memo was penned a mere three months after the infamous 'flying saucer' crash at Roswell, New Mexico.

He then makes passing reference to the Avro Car, an ultimately doomed project that the US Defence Department openly admitted to creating. Despite its alleged complete failure, the existence of such a classic saucer-shaped craft, proves beyond doubting that there were plans afoot to invent a proto-type flying saucer.

However, as Nick Cook points out, perhaps this perceived 'failure' was just a smokescreen, an aviation joke aimed at deflecting attention away from the real business at hand.

*'There was no golden age, 'THE G-ENGINES ARE COMING!' had predicted. At least not in the open. But I discovered evidence of mysterious aircraft which chimed with reduced gravity systems.'*

Talk then turns to the semi-mythical Aurora, the aircraft that supposedly flew on the edges of space. In 1992, there was a well-authenticated sighting of a massive triangular-shaped craft seen flying in apparent formation with a squadron of US bombers over the North Sea.

Three years earlier of course, there had been the famous UFO flap in the skies over Belgium, as literally hundreds of people, including experienced military pilots, reported seeing silent triangular-shaped craft right across the country.

*'I also discovered evidence of the Pentagon's enormous "black budgets" which finance deeply classified defence documents. Huge amounts of money have been spent, often in areas of the US where UFO reports are most common.'*

*'And my research would take me to the deserts of America, home of the Stealth fighters, the leading edge of aeronautical science, and much more.'*

*'One of the world's foremost aviation and aerospace scientists once told me about a place - a "virtual warehouse" - where ideas that were too dangerous to develop into hardware were locked away for ever.'*

Initially, he disregarded the talk as being mere science fiction, but he now says he has been convinced beyond doubting of the reality of the claims no matter how outlandish.

*'I am now sure, after ten years of research, that one of these discoveries, locked away for half a century, is the biggest secret since the invention of the atomic bomb.'* Namely, anti-gravity.

In the wrong hands, he believes, this anti-gravity could destroy the world.

And occasionally, this hardware can put in a fleeting appearance... *'Take for example, the strange craft spotted from the mid-Eighties in a triangle bordered by New Mexico to the south, California to the west and Nevada to the north-east.'*

*'Nearby, on the edge of the desert, is Palmdale, home of the Skunk Works, a legendary aircraft-manufacturing facility. So-called because, in the 1940's, foul-smelling chemicals emanated from its secret facilities on the edge of the main Lockheed aircraft plant. Other factory workers, not*

*knowing what was going on there, joked that it was being used to make moonshine, or "skunk juice," as it was referred to in the Li'l Abner cartoon strip of the day.*

*'Skunk Works employees work on top secret projects and are highly skilled engineers. They are recruited from the work's parent company, Lockheed, which today builds everything from Stealth fighters to space launchers and satellites. Could a team from its 4,000 employees have had anything to with the "airquakes" reported by the US Geological Survey as having been caused by an unknown craft as it flew over California?'*

The Skunk Works was founded in 1943, in response to an urgent US requirement for a jet fighter to counter the threat of the German Messerschmitt 262, a revolutionary twin-jet fighter bomber being developed by the Luftwaffe. The result, the XP-80, built in great secrecy and under budget in just 143 days, became an immediate aviation classic.

It set the standard for everything that followed. Ten years later, when the CIA demanded a spyplane to overfly the Soviet Union, the Skunk Works delivered the answer; the graceful Mach 3 A-12 Blackbird. It developed into the fastest operational aircraft in the world until its retirement in 1990.

Because of its track record in keeping top secret aircraft projects such as the U-2 spyplane and the Stealth fighter, Nick was of the opinion that there was no better place to look for evidence of the the anti-gravity experiments.

*'My request for an interview with Jack Gordon, the head of the Skunk Works, was eventually granted. It took place in his office at the heart of his empire - a hangar which dominated the desert for miles. In his 23 years with the company, he said, he had worked on 15 "real flying aircraft" but significantly, he could only talk about twelve of them.'*

*'I asked how many of the remaining three had anything to do with anti-gravity?'*

*Gordon was admitting nothing, but there was informed speculation within the industry that one was Aurora, the "fast mover" people said they had seen as a pulsating light flying over the south-western United States.'*

*'Since the late Eighties there had been talk of a secret replacement for the revolutionary Blackbird: a mythical plane that supposedly flew twice as fast and on the edges of space. The prognosis was that it was a massive leap forward in aerospace terms, powered by a new form of engine that gave it a cruising speed of anything up to Mach 8 - that is 5,300 mph.'*

*'There were also rumours that the Reagan Administration had embarked on a massive programme of aerospace and defence research. If you know how to interpret the Pentagon's annual defence budget, and calculate the difference between unclassified expenditure for the three armed services and the grand total, you can work out what is allocated to the so-called "black budget."*

*In 1988, the sum worked out to be \$30 billion for research, development and secret weapons programmes - more than Britain's entire defence budget. If Aurora existed, or research into anti-gravity was taking place, this is where the funding came from.'*

*'Much of what formed the basis of the Skunk Work's projects came from the German technology and expertise plundered by the Americans at the end of the Second World War.'*

*'The Americans simply removed the paperwork for hundreds of thousands of patents and shipped them home. According to the US Office of Technical Services - the body set up to ensure that German technology was moved rapidly into American industry - the documents contained a wealth*

of material which "very likely contained practically all the scientific, industrial and military secrets of Nazi Germany." "I became convinced that hidden away among the tens of thousands of tons of paperwork, were the revolutionary anti-gravity experiments of Viktor Schauberger, an Austrian inventor enlisted by the Nazis at gunpoint. He actually produced an anti-gravity machine which flew - and I tracked down his grandson, Jeorg, who has devoted much of his life to researching his grandfather's work.

'Viktor Schauberger, Jeorg said, was a forester and engineer who had been working on an energy device. As the war drew to a close, the Nazis chanced upon his secrets and ordered him to devote himself to the German war effort, on pain of death.

'What appealed to them was a machine of his that had a dual purpose - it could be both an energy generator and a power plant for an aerospace vehicle of saucer-like appearance.

'One of Schauberger's colleagues later said that the first time they tried to run the machine - which had a diameter of 5ft and weighed 300lb - "the flying saucer rose unexpectedly to the ceiling and then was wrecked. It rose upwards, trailing a blue-green and then silver-coloured glow."

'It was a process Schauberger called "implosion" - at its simplest, a three-dimensional energy pattern channelled inwards and not outwards - which generated phenomenal force levels. His grandson, Jeorg, showed me the rusting remains of the machine and told me more about what had happened in those fateful days when Germany was collapsing.

'One of the five machines Schauberger was engineering was dubbed "the flying saucer." And it was this that the Americans seized upon when the war ended. They seemed to know what they were looking for - a radical form of aeroengine which sucked rather than pushed its way through the atmosphere.

'Had Schauberger created an "anti-gravity" device? And had the Americans gotten wind of it? The conquering Americans held Schauberger under house and debriefed him thoroughly.

'Now the Americans, in 1946, had the rudiments of an entirely new propulsion medium: one which 18 months later would have Nathan Twining saying that the US had the knowledge and the ability to construct a piloted aircraft with the pioneering characteristics of a UFO within the foreseeable future. A craft that seemingly defied the laws of physics.

'But what happened to this knowledge? Why, nowadays, do we not travel in aircraft capable of phenomenal speeds and no longer dependent on jet engines? American scientists were predicting a golden age of anti-gravity for the Sixties. A fuelless propulsion source was on the horizon, but it didn't happen. Why?

'For the simplest and deadliest of reasons: the fear that anti-gravity could not only be used to revolutionise the world of aerospace, but could also become a destructive force so powerful that it had the potential to destroy the world.

'Their discoveries struck terror into the hearts of the keepers of the secrets of anti-gravity.

'They realised that if you fiddled with the building blocks of nature in a way that they could not fully understand, then you might set off a chain reaction like a nuclear explosion, but hundreds of times more severe. And worse, if America could do it, then so could any rogue state.

'It simply wasn't a risk worth taking.

'No wonder that someone, somewhere, took the view that anti-gravity should be kept a secret for a very long time.'

In summing up, Mr Cook attempted to answer the oft-asked question: why are so many reported UFO's round in shape?

The answer, he believes, lies in the fact that anti-gravity is based on the quantum physicists' theory that gravity is actually created by little-known forces working at a sub-atomic level all around us.

The theory further supposes that if these minute forces can be manipulated, anti-gravity could be created to make an object 'lose' its weight.

One idea for how this could be done is 'electrogravitics.' At its most simple level, the theory is based on magnetism: if a metal plate is given a positive electric charge on one side and a negative charge on the other, it will 'exhibit thrust' towards the positive pole.

If it is horizontal, the plate will lose weight because it will rise as the negative underside pushes up towards the positive top side.

'But, say believers, it's more than just pushing up and down: charging different parts of the plate will make it move in any direction. Because the power of gravity is so great, using it in this way would mean the object could move at incredible speeds.

'If this idea works, there is one shape of aircraft ideal for using the electrogravitics force: a flying saucer. The rounded top and bottom would make the most of the lifting force while the circular shape would be ideal for moving any direction at the flick of a switch. Nazi researchers are said to have believed the round shape was ideal for carrying a jet engine to generate the electricity needed to charge the flying saucer.

The danger in creating anti-gravity is that any method used has to tap into the infinite power of sub-atomic particles. This power could be deliberately or accidentally released in an uncontrollable sub-atomic reaction that could create an explosion big enough to destroy half of Europe.

'This may only be a theory - but so was the atom bomb just a few days before it was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945'

\*\*\* By coincidence, I came across this interesting, if somewhat ironic postscript to all this Nazi UFO theorising, just a few hours after typing the piece up...

Back in April, 1997, a 'spacecraft full of fugitive aliens from some far distant galaxy' was apparently due to land in a back garden of a house in Germany, but elected to stay away as gangs of neo-Nazis went on the rampage.

Erika and Wolfgang Reckerhad decided to hold a party in their garden at Selfhennersdorf, near Goerlitz, to welcome the visitors and even went so far as to invite the whole village.

The aliens' planet had, it seemed, been threatened by some unspecified ecological disaster and they were desperate to seek asylum.

Erika went on to explain to bemused reporters from the local media; 'The aliens have been in contact with us using telepathy, and they have agreed to land in our garden.'

When, predictably, neither the aliens or their craft deigned to put in an appearance, Erika had her excuses ready to assuage the disappointed crowd. She told them that the aliens had probably gotten lost during their long journey from their home planet.

This 'explanation' didn't go down too well, however, and a bunch of neo-Nazi gatecrashers quickly lost their collective tempers. They began shouting; 'Aliens go home. Germany for the Germans' and other cheery little ditties from their songbook of racial bigotry.

They then smashed up the couple's house forcing Erika and Wolfgang to flee.

5th April, 1997 Germany 'DAILY EXPRESS'

# The Legend Of The Highgate Vampire:

REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR NEIL ARNOLD  
LOOKS AT THE FACTS SURROUNDING THIS  
FAMOUS CASE

During the late days of the Swingin' Sixties, it was alleged that a tall, dark, sinister figure was haunting the ivy-strewn pathways of London's Highgate Cemetery. This was a time when vandalism was rife, and it was not uncommon for a twilight wanderer to stumble upon skeletal remains in the leafy passageways.



If we fast-forwards to the present day, we'll find that Highgate Cemetery still stands on Swains Lane like the grounds of some gothic fortress. It is now in a resurrected state of manageable neglect, restored and rescued from bankruptcy by The Friends Of Highgate Cemetery. These people may well have dusted down the cracking headstones and swept away the dank eeriness from this graveyard, but Highgate Cemetery has become so haunted by its mysterious past that now it is regularly patrolled by security guards.

Guided tours at a cost are now the only access to the secret confines that were once suspended in a thick, all-pervading gloom. Any mention of spectres will result in you being regarded with the type of expression usually reserved for UFO abductees, and people who claim they have seen God. And every Halloween, special police patrols are put on a state of high alert.

It wasn't always like this, however. From 1967, through to the 1970's, Highgate Cemetery became a real-life horror story. Its ominous facade a gaping mouth spewing forth dramatic tales of Vampires, Ghouls and bands of Devil Worshipers. The fact of the matter is though, these rumours were nothing more than an overblown fantasy which centered upon two main characters; David Farrant and Sean Manchester. Both of these protagonists are, to this day, embroiled in a mental and sometimes physical duel. If Bram Stoker's '*DRACULA*,' were not a work of gothic fiction, then Highgate and all its oddball characters would fit the roles to a tee.

Psychic investigator David Farrant formed the British Occult Society in 1967, in order to research and analyse reports of paranormal phenomena, like a latter-day

Professor Van Helsing. One night during 1969, whilst walking home, Farrant saw, behind the North Gate of the Western Cemetery, a tall, dark figure which had about it some indefinable sense of evil. It veritably oozed malevolence, and this terrifying encounter prompted David to write to the local '*HAMPSTEAD & HIGHGATE EXPRESS*,' to appeal for any other witnesses to this unearthly figure to come forward.

From then on, things would never be the same again.

Many stories were collated by the newspaper and by Farrant himself, most of which appeared to focus on the undeniably spooky North Gate. Many witnesses described similar sightings of the sinister apparition, and their accounts uniformly featured an entity that would seem to float behind the iron bars, exude evil, and fix them with glowing red eyes (*an oft-reported occurrence when encountering all manner of otherworldly creatures - From Black Dogs and Alien Big Cats, to Mothman and The Beast Of Bray Road - Ed*). Other witnesses described a mental assault in which the phantom would almost drain them of energy before vanishing into the undergrowth.

Farrant obviously believed that some type of apparition was haunting the grim confines of the cemetery, but never in his wildest dreams would he have imagined that this extraordinary haunting would spiral into a virtually uncontrollable circus.

Sean Manchester first entered the equation around 1968, when he was introduced to Farrant via a mutual friend. Manchester had always been fascinated by Vampires, and once he'd befriended David, he turned a dark ghost story into a full-blown *Hammer* horror Vampire tale. He wormed his way into the British Occult Society and became a fully-fledged associate of Farrant's, but after eliciting a positive response from the local press, he eventually attracted more interest than the group could handle. All of a sudden, 'The Vampire of Highgate' had become nationally famous as the only explanation for the ghostly sightings, and hundreds of people converged upon the cemetery hoping to catch a glimpse of the blood-sucking entity, that likely never existed outside of Manchester's imagination.

At the time there was also belief that a serious group of Satanists were using various crypts for their rituals, and soon they were on to Farrant, as were the media, the police and many vandals who felt that any harm done to corpses within their graves would be blamed on the 'Vampire' that was supposed to haunt the catacombs.

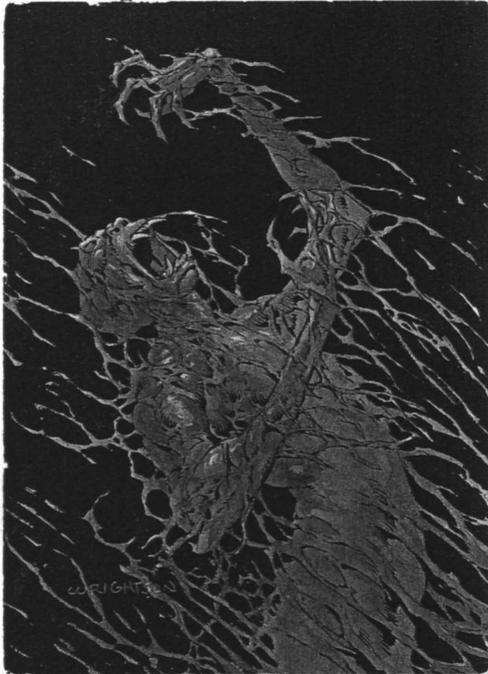
Within a few months, and after much exaggeration and misinformed publicity, David Farrant was being blamed for the desecration of various graves, conducting Black Magic rituals, writing graffiti, trespassing and arson. Some of these allegations resulted in Farrant actually serving a prison sentence. This was despite the fact that there was a distinct lack of evidence to link David to any of these crimes. Farrant was blamed solely for the frenzied hysteria that reached ridiculous levels, and all the while Manchester sat back making absurd claims that David Farrant would head for the cemetery in order to stake the undead!

The local press had a field day, but before too long, Farrant's face would be plastered all over the national tabloids and the TV screens as 'The hunter of the King Vampire.'

During the late 1960's, Highgate Cemetery became a must-visit attraction for film crews, students, drunks, and of course for Farrant, who has never denied the fact that he did enter the cemetery to take photographs, and on a couple of occasions, in the company of fellow investigators, to attempt to establish some form of communication with the malevolent entity.

Farrant believed that the Highgate ghost was capable of frequenting much of the surrounding village, as well as the

cemetery. Perhaps, he theorised, the apparition was able to 'travel' by means of a series of Ley Lines, which served to connect various other locations; sites that had also earned a reputation for being haunted.



Meanwhile, Sean Manchester believed that a blood-sucking fiend was responsible for the terrorising of the local populace, draining their blood and shacking up in an old vault full of dusty coffins. Manchester, after finally parting company with Farrant, would go on to write the unintentionally hilarious book, *'THE HIGHGATE VAMPIRE,'* in which he claims, that as a man of the cloth, he succeeded in tracking down the so-called King Vampire, after it had poisoned a loved one, to a suitably remote, derelict mansion.

According to the book, Manchester, after uttering a sequence of powerful prayers, managed to lay the Vampire to eternal rest, whilst making open references to Stoker's classic.

*'THE HIGHGATE VAMPIRE'* reads like a particularly good example of gothic horror fiction, but the fact that it is actually written as (ahem) gospel truth, it merely winds up as a testimony to Manchester's growing belief in his own fantastic delusions.

David Farrant was of the opinion that serious Black Magicians may well have summoned a dark spirit which had previously been confined to some corrupted corner of the burial ground. Indeed 'evidence' that some foul entity was indeed abroad was provided by the bizarre discovery of the corpses of several dead foxes bearing strange puncture marks to the throat. The carcasses were often found littered on the pathways of the cemetery. Many of the animals seem to have died on the spot, as if frozen by the fear of some hideous force.

One witness, who was lost in the graveyard after dark, was confronted by a seven foot tall, entirely black shape (*eerily reminiscent of the huge entity described by Liz and Bill Rich, at Heol Fenog, in the Shadow of the Black Mountains, back in 1996 - See DON # 10 P:12-Ed*), that engaged him in a mental battle, before the man was finally able to tear himself away, drained by the experience.

By 1970, there was so much confusion surrounding the Highgate mystery, that David Farrant's version of events had been all but ignored in favour of Manchester's dramatic claims that the entity was a bona fide Vampire. That was bad. What was worse was that Farrant now found himself being made the scapegoat for every single thing that went on at the cemetery. He was actually

arrested at Highgate after a seance being held there was misinterpreted by the police as a Vampire hunt.

Even by the mid-1970's, David was the frequent target for controversy as old photographs taken from within the graveyard years before were published as evidence that he had interfered with the graves of the deceased. In a matter of five years or so, the Highgate case had become (and maybe still is) one of the most complex supernatural stories of the latter half of the 20th century.

David Farrant's short pamphlets give detailed accounts of what was said to have occurred at the time, but, by virtue of their very slimness, they cannot possibly hope to contain all the facts. Likewise this very article. Despite a lengthy interview with Mr Farrant, I am only able to relate here a tiny fraction of what actually went on at Highgate, during the late 60's and early 70's. The stories of the Highgate Phantom are, to my mind, as real as the stone walls and wrought iron gates of the frequently fog-shrouded cemetery. Tales of skeletons sitting in cars, threatening letters written in blood, of Incubi and Succubi, and badly mutilated mental patients discovered lying on the pathways of the cemetery became almost the norm at a time when mysterious black figures apparently strolled calmly down Swains Lane, and schoolgirls reported hallucinogenic visions of Zombies crawling from out of their coffins.

There were also accounts of 'strange rushes of wind' in various parts of the cemetery resulting in film crews reportedly clutching at their throats whilst shooting at the North Gate.

Thanks to the lies and deceit that have sprung up around the reported phenomena, most Fortean's have only ever heard of the Highgate Vampire. But beyond the frame of the well-known story, exists a world that revolves around Farrant and Manchester. This involves 'supernatural duels, rescues from Satanic forces, Vampires at Robin Hood's grave, and a series of dramatic personality changes that have seen Manchester claim to be a descendant of Lord Byron.

It often appears to me, as ludicrous as it might sound, that the Highgate case cannot exist without the involvement of these two characters.

Whatever Farrant 'communicated' with at Highgate, has never been made clear, although it does appear that the man himself believes there is some sort of Wiccan connection involved here. Not only that, but he is still of the opinion that whatever walked there 30-odd years ago, resides there still, though it may be at some form of peace, lying dormant, bereft of outside influence.

It is this author's opinion that 98 per cent of what has been written about Highgate is essentially false. The fact is, David Farrant has no trouble in accepting he personally experienced some malign force during the course of his investigations at the site. He has likened it to the draining power of an elemental spirit, sucking the life force from the unwary.

The Highgate Phantom may have once reached cult status, but today it exists only as a legend of the darkest fantasy.

In summing up, I hope I have driven the final nail into the coffin of the Highgate Vampire -that never existed outside of a fevered imagination.

## 'The Thin White Duke' Dabbled In The Black Arts

According to an excellent article published in *'UNCUT'* Magazine, David Bowie was at an all-time gutter-low during the early part of 1975, when he was living in the States.

Following an acrimonious split with his management company, MainMan, the crumbling relationship with his wife, Angie, and the soul-destroying temptations dangled

by the creeping hordes of drug dealers and parasitic groupies, Bowie sought refuge in a dubious combination of 'fat packages of best Peruvian flake' and the esoteric world of the Occult.

The passing interest soon blossomed, like some diseased and poisonous flower, into a full-blown obsession. He became convinced beyond doubting that two female fans required his sperm for impregnation upon the occasion of a Witches' Sabbath, in a bid to ensure that the spawn of Satan would walk amongst mankind. He was quoted as saying; *'There was something horrible permeating the air in LA, in those days. The stench of Manson and the Sharon Tate murders...'*

Most of Bowie's days, he recalled, were spent scrawling huge pentagrams on the walls of his home, storing his urine in the fridge to protect him from spells, sculpting vast monoliths in front of the TV, and looking for coded messages in *ROLLING STONES* album sleeves.

In a particularly disturbing, not to say frightening incident, Bowie felt compelled to have his swimming pool exorcised. He later claimed, that at the height of the ceremony, he saw the waters churn and boil until an image of 'The Devil' was seared into the bottom of the pool.

*'I drew gateways into different dimensions,'* he later reflected, *'and I'm quite sure that, for myself, I really walked into other worlds and saw what was on the other side.'*

Tales of further encounters with the 'otherworldly' emerged from when Bowie was recording the 'LOW' album at the Chateau d'Herouville studios in France.

The two studios were linked by a covered arcade, each named after former residents Frederic Chopin and George Sand. The ghosts of these doomed lovers were said to roam the endlessly twisting corridors. Not that these rumours appeared to frighten Bowie any. In fact, he chose to sleep in the master bedroom precisely because it was meant to be haunted.

*'It was a spooky place,'* he later told journalists. *'I did refuse one bedroom, as it was impossibly cold in certain areas of it. To my knowledge, though, the place itself had no bearing on the form or tonality of the work. The studio itself was a joy, ramshackle and comfy-feeling.'*

The album's producer, Tony Visconti, was quick to agree. *'There was certainly some strange energy in that chateau. The master bedroom had a very dark corner, right next to the window, ironically, that seemed to just suck light into it. It was colder in that corner, too. I took the bedroom because I wanted to test my meditation abilities. I never admitted this before. I had read that Buddhists in Tibet meditated all night in a graveyard to test their level of fear/no fear. It felt like it was haunted as all fuck, but what would Frederic and George really do to me, scare me in French? I loved the look of the room so I decided to spend one night there. If something happened I planned to shout so loud I'd wake up the village. Eno claimed he was awakened early every morning with someone shaking his shoulder. When he opened his eyes, no one was there.'*

April, 2001 North Doheny Drive, Bel Air, USA 'UNCUT MAGAZINE'

## Hear' Say Star Plagued By 'Voodoo'

I guess it's fair to say that there are those (mostly people with some degree of musical taste), who will doubtless snigger at the following snippet, and say, well, talk about poetic justice...This hideously manufactured 'band' have assailed our ears with a bland, dirge-like song, containing a chorus that shamelessly rips-off *ALL SAINTS* and *OASIS*

without coming within a billion light years distance in terms of talent, of either group.

And then proceeded to pollute the airwaves and TV screens for what seemed like an eternity, throughout the early part of this year.

But I digress.

Myleene Klass, one of *Hear ;Say's* femalesingers (?) has apparently vowed never to return to the famous 'POPSTARS' house after it was burgled by raiders who then left, what the tabloids have termed; *'a Satanic symbol.'*

Myleene had returned to the £1 million property she'd formerly shared with the other members of the group, only to find that it had been ransacked by burglars who, as previously mentioned, had daubed *'a sinister hex symbol'* on the driveway. According to the accounts I came across, the sign was actually a Voodoo curse of a sort that's supposed to bring a whole world of bad luck to the recipient.

Ms Klass was sufficiently frightened to check into a London hotel until she can find a new flat. Fortunately, the 'cursed' house was due for demolition to make way for new homes pretty soon, anyway.

The burglars took thousands of pounds worth of musical equipment as well as DVD players and cameras belonging to Myleene, containing snaps of her and her family.

A spokesman for the group told reporters; *'Myleene was absolutely panic-stricken, She had been working late and stayed at a hotel overnight - otherwise she would have been there alone. God knows what might have happened.'*

*'She is quite freaked out about it and says she doesn't want to ever set foot in the place again.'*

27th May, 2001 London 'SUNDAYMANC'

## WHEN THE LIGHT SINKS TO SHADOWS

...And it's that man, yet again. The ubiquitous Colin Wilson was busy making his views known regarding the reality of paranormal phenomena in the pages of the tabloid press, once more, this Summer.

Not content with voicing his opinions on UFO's and life after death, the subject this time was Demonic possession, and the article I came across started out *'On of the most frightening ghost stories that I ever heard.'*

The tale was related to Colin by a Czech psychiatrist named Stanislav Grof, at a conference in New England. Colin happened to ask him if he believed in the reality of the forces of Evil. By way of reply, he told the following story;

*Back in the 1960's, I pioneered a technique of psychotherapy with the use of the psychedelic drug LSD, enabling patients to relive the past. At a psychiatric conference, a fellow doctor described the case of a suicidal patient named Flora, whose seemed practically incurable.*

*'At the age of 16, she had been sentenced to four years in prison for taking part in a robbery in which a nightwatchman had been killed. Released on parole she became a violent drug addict who struggled with wild and dangerous impulses, such as an urge to drive her car at top speed into other vehicles. At the end of the conference, I was asked by Flora's psychiatrist if, as a last resort, I would try giving her LSD treatment. I was unwilling, since if she committed suicide, or even murder, the LSD therapy would be blamed. But in the end I decided to risk it.'*

*'During the first two sessions, Flora relived what seemed to be her struggles as a baby in her mother's birth canal, convincing me that this "birth trauma" was the root of all her problems.'*

*'But during the third session, he face froze into something I can only describe as a mask of pure Evil, and she began to speak in a deep male voice.*

*'The voice introduced itself as The Devil, and ordered me to cease my treatment, saying that Flora belonged to Him. Then he made threats about what would happen to me if I persisted in treating her. I could feel the tangible presence of something alien in the room, but what really frightened me was that the intruder seemed to have insight into my personal life, knowledge that Flora had no way of acquiring.*



*'I felt as if I were encountering a genuine force of Evil. The next two hours were the worst of my life.*

*'Trying desperately to think on my feet, I found myself being drawn into direct combat with this Evil presence. But then I realised that the presence was feeding off my own fear and anger, and the more I struggled, the stronger it became.*

*'The only answer was to stay calm and centered, and to starve the presence of the emotional energy that was making it strong.*

*'Gradually, Flora's hand, which had become contorted and claw-like, relaxed in my own, and the mask of Evil vanished from her face.*

*'When Flora woke up, she remembered nothing of what had happened. And after that session she improved dramatically, ceased to be a drug addict and got herself a regular job.'*

Collin is keen to point out that he can't say for sure that the 'mask of Evil' and the deep voice that Flora exhibited was the manifestation of an actual Demon. He readily admits that the logical explanation for the phenomena would be that the voice came from the aggressive depths of Flora's subconscious.

But....

*'Three decades of studying such phenomena have convinced me that there are indeed such things as disembodied spirits,*

*and that some of the inhabitants of the "psychic ether" are very nasty indeed.'*

As examples of this, he drags up the now too well-known to bother repeating here, tale of the so-called 'real-life case' that inspired *'THE EXORICIST'* (See 'DON' #16 for the full story on this case), along with the personal experience Mr Wilson had with a serial killer named Danny Rolling.

*'In late August, 1990, a horrific series of murders on the Gainesville campus of the University of Florida shocked the whole of America. On 24th August, two girl students who shared an apartment were stabbed to death and one of them raped.*

*'The following night, another female student was raped and murdered. Two nights later, a male and female student who shared an apartment were stabbed to death, and again the girl was raped.*

*'After five murders in four nights, students fled in droves from the campus. But no more was heard of the killer.*

*'Two weeks later an armed robber named Danny Rolling, 36, was arrested after he had held up a grocery store in Ocala, Florida. Found guilty of robbery, he was sent to Florida State Prison.*

*'It wasn't until the following February that it occurred to someone to make a blood test and compare his DNA with the killer's semen. It proved Rolling was the Gainesville Killer, and he was sentenced to death.*

*'I was friendly with a US criminologist named Sondra London, who had visited Rolling in jail and became engaged to him. With Sondra's help, Rolling wrote an autobiography in which he frankly confessed to his crimes. I read the typescript, found it fascinating, and offered to write an introduction.*

*'What interested me so much was that Rolling confessed to several murders, as well as to a series of earlier rapes, without any attempt to excuse himself.*

*'He mentioned, almost casually, that from an early stage in his criminal career he had been convinced that he was periodically possessed by two entities; one called Ennad, who was a robber and a rapist, but not a killer, another called Gemini, who thirsted for blood.*

*'Ennad came to possess him after he had spent years as a Peeping Tom, but Gemini took over when his voyeurism drew him into rape.*

*'It may sound as though Danny Rolling invented the story to try to escape the death penalty. But this cannot be so for two reasons. First, claiming to be possessed could only support a plea of insanity, and psychiatrists have found him sane. Second, he has no intention of appealing and is resignedly awaiting his fate on Death Row.*

*'Rolling's letters left me in no doubt that his experience of these malign spiritual entities was genuine, and that the Gemini in particular played a key role in his crimes.*

*'He told me how, trying to break into one of the Gainesville apartments, he found the door locked. He prayed to Gemini to help him, and a moment later, when he tried the door again, it was unlocked.*

*'Police investigating the murder had been baffled to find a huge bookcase had been moved to the middle of the apartment - it took two policemen to move it back. Rolling told me he was possessed by Gemini at the time, and lifted it as though it weighed nothing.*

*'When I recall Stan Grof's story of the Demonic entity that possessed Flora, I have no difficulty believing Rolling was "possessed." But I don't see this as an excuse for what he did - for I also believe it happened of his own free will.*

*'According to every researcher who knows anything about possession, an "Evil Spirit" can only take over someone already on its wavelength. Rolling, I would suggest, virtually invites Demons to take part in his crimes.'*

But Colin admits that there are apparently occasions when even the supposedly pure at heart can fall victim to an Evil Entity...

Another case in which he was personally involved, concerns a friend of his, Alan Vaughan.

Back in 1965, Alan bought a Ouija Board for a bit of a laugh and to amuse a friend who was convalescing.

One of the 'spirits' who made contact was an entity who claimed to be 'Nada' the wife of a sea captain. It soon became obvious that she was jealous of the fact that Vaughan was alive whilst she was dead.

To Vaughan's great consternation, he soon began to hear Nada's inside his head, repeating a series of obscene phrases over and over again. When Vaughan asked, via the Ouija board, what was happening. It answered; '*Awful consequences - possession.*'

The voice refused to go away, and Vaughan, in desperation, sought advice from a friend who was something of an expert in such matters. Soon Vaughan realised that he actually had two voices inside his head. The second one he called itself by the highly-imaginative name 'Z.'

Z made Vaughan's hand write the message; '*Each of us has a spirit while living. Do not meddle with the spirits of the dead.*'

At this point, Vaughan had a sense of energy rising up through his body and entering his head.

As it flooded his brain, he felt it expelling both Z and Nada, and he was lined with a tremendous sense of elation and well-being. Suddenly, he could sense what other people were thinking, and he found he could also sense events that would happen in the future.

It was this experience that led Vaughan to embark on a programme of research into precognition. He eventually went to a 'rescuer,' a natural psychic who was able to free Vaughan from the sea captain's wife by calling on the help of Z, presumably a friendly spirit.

Mr Wilson has learned, from the London College of Psychic Studies that many psychics specialise in this type of rescue. One of the best, he was told, is Terry O' Sullivan, who works closely with his wife, Natalia. He contacted Terry, and got hold of his book *SOUL RESCUERS.*

*'As his name indicates, O' Sullivan is of Irish origin. His grandmother was a Romany, which makes for a powerful combination.*

*'His grandmother seemed to possess a peculiar second sight. On one occasion, she told a woman friend; "Your husband is up to no good. If you look in the inside pocket of his jacket, you'll find a letter from another woman."*

*'She proved correct, even to the inside pocket. Having such a grandmother led Terry to accept psychic powers as natural.*

*'So did the fact that he used to see a Chinaman in a purple robe coming into his bedroom when he was a child. No one else could see this mysterious mandarin, but to Terry he was completely real.*

*'Twenty years later, when Terry began to develop his own psychic abilities, he concluded that the figure was a guardian spirit, whose job was to keep an eye on him.*

*'His interest in the paranormal led him to join a "rescue circle" who devote themselves to the exhausting business of freeing the possessed from their invaders.*

*'It is incredible to talk to a man such as O' Sullivan, for whom the dead are as real as the living, and who lives in two worlds at once.*

*'He made me understand that humans have no reason to be afraid of ghosts; in fact, they deserve pity and help. To understand their situation, we have only to recall what it is like to lie awake at 2am, with some worry going round and round your head.*

*'The wandering, earth-bound spirits are trapped in a similar feedback loop. It is Terry and Natalia's job to break that loop.*

*'Cases of possession confront them in the most unexpected circumstances - as happened to one of their colleagues, Christina, when she went for a country walk with a girlfriend, got lost, and wandered into a pub.*

*'There they discovered a wake in progress. As they started to leave, an elderly man pressed them to stay and have a drink.*

*'He was the father of a young man who had gassed himself in his car, leaving behind a wife and two children. The girls chatted to him for a while, but Christina began feeling so ill she had to leave.*

*'She began to feel worse on the way home, and finally went to see Terry and his wife. Terry said that he could see at a glance that something was deeply wrong.*

*'It didn't take him long to recognise the problem. The spirit of the elderly man's son had been so drawn to her sympathy that he had become trapped in her "aura," rather like a fly in a spider's web.*

*'And, like the fly, he was frantic and terrified. As with the spirits of most people who commit suicide, he was full of remorse and saw that he had made a terrible mistake.*

*'Terry and Natalia soothed his panic, and disentangled him from Christina's aura. Freed of the "possession," she returned to health.*

*'Another of Terry's adventures included a visit to the London Dungeon, a museum of horrors near London Bridge. He was asked to prove, for advertising purposes, that the place was haunted.*

*'A quarter of an hour in the building left him in no doubt that it had plenty of disturbed spirits. The exhibition includes many genuine instruments of execution and torture, which exercise a magnetic effect on wandering spirits. Indeed, the whole riverside area is so steeped in violence, murder and vice that Terry found countless "hot spots" of psychic ability.*

*'But what really worried him was discovering a tunnel at the back of the building which had been used as an air raid shelter during the Blitz. Sixty one people had died when it was hit, and the spirits of those people were still there, miserable and unaware they were dead, awaiting their rescuers.*

*'This task was too big for Terry, and required a small army of psychic rescuers. But it was finally carried out, so the misery of these bomb victims no longer reverberates in the back corridor of the London Dungeon*

*7th August 2001 General 'DAILY MAIL'*

## THE CURSE OF THE BELL WITCH

One of the most famous American 'true-life' hauntings concerns the Bell Witch of Tennessee, and I guess most of our regular readers will already be more than familiar with the background story, so a brief resume will doubtless suffice, here.

According to contemporary accounts, a force of pure Evil descended upon a farm belonging to the Bell family of Adams, Tennessee, back the Spring of 1817. The hauntings began without warning one evening when John Bell, his wife Mary (or Luce, depending on which account you believe) and his nine children sat down to eat. Suddenly, the house was filled with the sound of unearthly scratchings and wallings, along with weird scrapings and moanings.

And if that wasn't enough, the family were plagued by a sinister tapping at the windows, raps on the doors and a

chilling cry that came down the chimney and filled the spartan room.

Summoning up his reserves of courage, John went outside to see who or what was causing the eerie disturbances. But despite a thorough search of the outside of the wooden house and its immediate surroundings. As he trudged back inside he regarded his wife with a look of sheer bewilderment. 'I couldn't see anything wrong out there,' he told her.

'Maybe not,' she replied. 'But the scratchings and moanings went on just the same and *something* must have made them.'

Seeking to reassure his badly frightened wife, John told her he suspected the noises had likely been caused by extremely large rats that had somehow gotten stuck in the chimney.

Despite setting a wide range of traps throughout the large, two-storey house however, not a single rodent was caught.

And still the noises continued unabated, each and every night.

At a loss as to what he should go, John's only advice to his terrified family (not to mention the numerous black servants) was to just pay no attention to the unnatural tumult, and hope that it would cease as suddenly as it had begun.

But his policy of ignore it all and it might just go away proved to be nothing short of disastrous. The manifestations increased in power and volume so that by the year's end, they were literally shaking the house to its foundations. Eventually, even the family's neighbours became aware of the disturbances, so loud and noisesome did they become and some feared the Poltergeist-like entity, by now christened the Bell Witch, would enter their homes....

'It was as if the house was possessed and had somehow been brought to Evil life,' one of them was quoted as saying. 'Everyone in the district feared it would be the turn of their home next. But it was only the Bell's who were affected.'

And *how* they were affected.

By the January of 1818, one John's son's, Richard Bell, had his hair pulled by an invisible entity, so violently that it lifted him clear off the bed. He felt as though the top of his head had been taken off.

On another night, after going to bed, Mr Bell, with his wife beside him, felt the quilt being dragged off by some unseen force. That was bad enough. Snow was falling heavily outside, and the room was freezing. What was even worse though was when the quilt suddenly leapt from the bed seemingly imbued with a life of its own, and lay writhing on bare wooden floor.

John leapt on top of it and stamped on it as though it were aflame until it somewhat reluctantly calmed down.

News of the haunting quickly spread and was seized upon by first the local and then the national newspapers. This inevitably led to crowds of researchers, doctors, would-be exorcists and curiosity-seekers.

And the Bell Witch didn't disappoint. It put on a hell of a show for the assembled hordes.

'It was as if the thing knew what was expected of it,' stated a Baltimore journalist. 'It was determined that no one who travelled there would be disappointed. It obligingly put on its act even without being asked to, and if you did speak to it, it would do mostly whatever was requested.'

'At a few words therefore, pictures would fall off the walls, tables would turn on their sides, chairs would prance about and, once, even did a few somersaults, cutlery would parade up and down on the floor, china dishes and cups would march merrily along without harming themselves.'

And then the Witch began to speak.

At first there were no more than vague whisperings. But gradually the words became clearer, and the voice that was

heard was the voice of a woman of indeterminate age, and the first thing she said was; '*I am a spirit who was once happy but has been disturbed and made unhappy.*'

Her name she said was old Kate Batt's Witch and complained that someone had interfered with her jaw. John Bell guessed that the spirit was referring to an incident a few months earlier when his sons had been digging in the woods near their home and unearthed an old jawbone. They accidentally knocked one of the teeth out when they were playing with it.

The tooth could not be found, but the bones of the dead woman had to be exhumed and given a Christian burial, but even though this was carried out with all due solemnity, it did not have the desired effect.

Far from it, in fact.



The Witch seemed to exhibit a perversely dual nature; One minute it would reproduce, word for word, the Sunday sermons of the two local preachers, imitating their tones perfectly. It also sang beautifully, and quoted whole tracts from the Bible.

But the next minute, it would be cursing John Bell and promising to '*I will see Jack Bell dead and buried in his gravel I will murder him! But not until he has suffered!*'

Prior to hounding the unfortunate Mr Bell, however, the Witch turned her attentions to one of his daughters, Betsy. She had become engaged in her early teens to a local man by the name of Joshua Gardner, and the Witch, having failed in her efforts to split them up by endlessly pleading with her, chose instead to broadcast their secrets and actually succeeded in breaking up the wedding plans by '*saying so many things to Betsy and Joshua in the presence of their friends, of a highly embarrassing nature that the girl in time became quite hysterical and worn out in despair.*'

Having been successful in this venture, The Witch then re-focused its hatred on John Bell, who incidentally, was a prosperous cotton plantation owner who counted the soon-to-be President Andrew Jackson amongst his friends,

and so was hardly likely to have sought this kind of publicity by perpetrating a hoax. And besides, before too long, John had mysteriously fallen ill. He was actually discovered in his bed on December 19th, 1820, in a deep stupor and could not be roused. When his son John raced to the medicine cabinet he could only find a *'smoky looking vial, which was about one-third full of a dark-coloured liquid.'*

The doctor arrived just in time to hear the Witch cackling; *'It is useless for you to try and relieve Old Jack. I have got him this time; he will never get up from that bed again.'*

Questioned about the strange 'medicine' it replied; *'I put it there, and gave Old Jack a big dose out of it last night while he was fast asleep, which fixed him.'*



The doctor tested the liquid on one of the family's cats and it immediately went into convulsions and died.

Frustratingly, the liquid was thrown into the fire, so there was never an opportunity for any chemist to have attempted to have identified its contents.

The Witch celebrated John's death with the singing of drinking songs at the subsequent funeral.

It then announced its intention of leaving the family alone, though it did promise to return seven years later. Its reappearance seems to have been a much more low-key affair, however, and despite making fairly accurate predictions about the outbreak of both the Civil and First World Wars, little more is known about this second manifestation.

There are however, some people who believe that the Bell Witch never truly went away.

All of which brings me, rather long-windedly, to my motivation in repeating a story that is overly familiar to students of the paranormal...

A couple of days before this long overdue magazine was in its final stages, I was reading an excellent book of contemporary folk tales from the Deep South of America, collated by Pamela Petro. *'SITTING UP WITH THE DEAD,'* proved to be one of those magically haunting works that will always usher in personal memories of the time - the cool, late summer of 2001 - in which it was read.

Toward the end of the book, there is a section entitled *'THE BELL WITCH'S TALE,'* and it contained some fascinating, not to say chilling, anecdotes concerning the present-day phenomena in Adams, Tennessee....

After giving a brief synopsis of the background story, Pamela tells of how she met a local woman by the name of Chris Kirby, who sports a T-shirt with the silhouette of a traditional Witch riding a broomstick across a large golden bell. It turns out that Chris is both a storyteller and co-owner (along with her husband) of the Bell Farm. Whilst the original Bell farmhouse has long since been destroyed, the couple can still offer \$5 tours of the Bell Witch Cave, a cavern on their property.

*'We're the Number One Haunted Spot in America,'* Chris announced to the author, and Pamela herself had this to say about the cave; *'It has it's own body of folklore, including a story about a little boy who had gotten stuck in it, and had suddenly been jerked out by unseen hands.'*

*'Before touring the cave, Chris told me a ream of spooky stories under a pavillion the couple had erected on their property.'*

*'There's something here, and I don't know if it's the Bell Witch or what,'* Chris began. *"When people take pictures in the cave, weird things come up on the film."*

*'She opened a photo album and began pointing out strange lights and glowing spheres on otherwise ordinary photographs.'*

*"We had a guy come through with one of them night cameras, like they used in the Gulf War. Here's what came out." She showed me a second-by-second sequence taken by a thermal-imaging camera inside the cave, that depicted some kind of aperture opening and closing in quick succession in one of the crawl spaces: one image clearly shows a face contorted in a scream, seemingly being torn apart by the aperture. My scepticism had a tussle with my eyes, and there were no winners. "Now look at these," she said. "They were taken by ordinary folks who've visited us. They send me copies of the real good ones."*

*'Chris first pointed out a snapshot she herself had taken of her daughter and her friend. She had accidentally moved the camera and created a double exposure; the curious thing was that in the primary image of her daughter, the girl's hair was off her face, while in the shadow, or ghost image, it fell across her forehead. I looked at Chris and raised my eyebrows. She smiled and rubbed her forearms, which were covered in goosebumps.'*

*"Real creepy, ain't it?"* she commented, handing me another snapshot, this time labelled March, 1977. It was an ordinary colour shot of a family on vacation, taken next to a crumbling wall.

*"Tell me what's weird about that?"* she challenged.

*'I peered at the people, who all looked normal enough, if unfortunate victims of Seventies fashions. Then I glanced at the wall, almost formed by the cracks and peeling paint and lichen, but not quite - it was too vivid to be a suggestion - was the colourless outline of a woman in a long skirt, holding a baby, with a child by her side.'*

*"That's been tested by labs and everything, and it ain't a doctored photo."*

*'At that moment a fierce, hot wind came whirling out of the calm afternoon and shook the pavillion, scattering photos and papers every which way. Chris and I looked at each other and laughed, but we both fumbled unnecessarily with the photos, shaken but too sceptical to admit.'*

*'The Bell Witch Cave was on a cool, ferny hillside above the Red River. Chris explained that we had to be on the lookout for canoeists who sometimes tried to sneak up the bank. The Kirby's had been forced to install an electronic alarm system around their entire property, because so many people tried to sneak in at night to have themselves a good scare.'*

*'The cave mouth was outfitted with a sturdy iron gate; inside, its entrails were wonderfully cool. It was not a particularly beautiful cave. Stunned stalagmites and stalactites, no bigger than wax drippings, fixed themselves to a cluster of immense flowstone formations that writhed and twisted alongside the central passageway. The floor was uneven, and water dripped from the ceiling. The colours replicated every shade of copper penny, from brand new (orange rose) to ancient (deep brown). Chris told us that three-thousand-year old Native American graves had been discovered above the cave, and pointed out a small stone*

sarcophagus to one side of the pathway. It was about three hundred years old and had contained the skeleton of a young girl, until someone had stolen it. That reminded her.

"Never take anything from the cave," she cautioned. "I took an arrowhead once, and three days later I got a serious back injury. Then my daughter took a rock, and the next day one of our barns collapsed. We lost \$25,000 worth of tobacco. You bet we put all that stuff back."

"I looked in horror at my sneaker, which was covered in ochre mud. Did sediment count? As it turned out, fear was the only thing that haunted me from the Bell Witch Cave. That and a curious impression. What the Bells called their "Family Trouble" made for a first rate ghost story, but in many ways it was a very human haunting.

The spirit preyed on personal relationships and unemployment, to my mind, fairly low-level methods of nuisance making. It even stooped to poisoning. Although it claimed to be from "Heaven, Hell and Earth," its manifestations and concerns fell within the sphere of mortal activity - so much so, in fact, that unlike other ghosts it was obsessed with the present and the future, rather than the past.

"This human orientation puts the Bell Witch in a different category from the ghosts I had previously encountered on my journey - those incarnations of the terrible, impersonal predations of the coast; the storms, the disease, the Devil lurking in overwork, heat, and stagnant swamps. Whatever shape they assumed, from human to plat-eye, coastal ghosts were ultimately part and parcel of the elements, which is what gives their stories such sensory-soaked fatalism. The heat, the thunder, the damp: the weather there was always ripe for recalling old hauntings, although threatening to create new ones.

"But we don't expect such terrors from the hardy soil of Adams. Tennessee.

So where did The Bell Witch come from? She - the Witch was gendered female from the very beginning - had an all-too human fanaticism about her: Her imperious judgements about what was best for members of the family, especially the lone daughter, her rabid dislike of blacks, her overwrought citations from Scripture, her autocratic sense of right and wrong, her violent outbursts. In an eerie way the spirit pre-figured a very "Southern" brand of intolerance.

"Had the presence that tortured the Bell's been a kid of mirror reflecting the family troubles of the South?

Or a warning that went unheeded?

\*\*\* NB: Incidentally, what is doubly curious about this classic case is the Cosmic Joker aspects alluded to by paranormal researcher John Keel in his excellent book *UFOS: OPERATION TROJAN HORSE*.

The Bell Witch apparently delighted in playing tricks on the local populace. Not only would it frequently change its 'true' identity from the spirit of a dead woman to the shade of an early immigrant to a full-blown Witch, it would also instruct people to dig for a supposed hidden treasure in a certain spot. And people being what they are, flocked to the scene of the buried fortune....But of course, despite their frantic efforts, they never found so much a rusted copper coin.

All this wanton capriciousness smacks of the behaviour of yesterday's inhabitants of Faerie and the essentially pointless actions of modern-day Ufonauts, be they Grays, Reptoids, Nordics or whatever.

\*\*\* Sources: *OUT OF THIS WORLD* (Phoebus Publishing 1976) *UFOS: OPERATION TROJAN HORSE* John Keel (Souvenir Press 1970), *THE UNEXPLAINED* (Orbis 1975), *SITTING UP WITH THE DEAD* (Pamela Petro Harper Collins 2001)

## Witch Hunt In The Congo

Meanwhile, over in the northwestern Congo, more than 800 people were reported to have been killed after they were suspected of taking part in various forms of Witchcraft.

Ugandan army commander Major General Odongo Jeje confirmed that the killings had taken place, but refused to be specific about the actual numbers of people who had been killed in Congo's Ituri Province.

Apparently, residents began murdering people suspected of Witchcraft back in June, this year, but the killings were eventually stopped by the direct intervention of Ugandan forces.

13th July, 2001 Northwestern Congo, Africa 'DAILY TELEGRAPH'

## Merseyside Cult Blamed For Cat Deaths

Much closer to home, last March, it is my sad duty to report that a collection of dead cats laid out in Liverpool's Yew Tree Cemetery, could well turn out to be the victims of a bizarre (not to say sick) cult.

The bodies of three cats were found in the graveyard in the West Derby district of the city, by a man visiting his father's resting place.

The cats were set on on a series of gravestones, with two being covered in leaves. A spokeswoman for the RSPCA told reporters that she was 'alarmed and concerned' by the discovery.

RSPCA Inspector Helen Smith went further by adding: 'This is an horrific act that will have caused great distress both to those visiting loved ones at the cemetery and to pet owners.

'I would urge pet owners, especially those with black cats, to be especially vigilant in case something sinister is going on.'

20th March, 2001 Yew Tree Cemetery, West Derby, Liverpool 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

## 'Crowley' Responsible For Satanic Murder

A so-called Satanist with the curiously synchronistic surname of Crowley (no relation to Aleister, we presume) was said to have been freed from prison only to murder a 12-year-old boy. Edward Crowley, 52, dubbed a 'Devil Worshipper' by the tabloid press, was finally given a life sentence at the Old Bailey for killing the schoolboy named Diego Piniero-Villar.

Crowley, who was of no fixed abode, claimed to be a disciple of the aforementioned Mr Crowley, and somehow befriended 12-year-old Diego whilst hanging around Phoenix Garden in Central London.

Although Crowley was arrested a total of three times, he was never proved to have acted with any degree of indecency, and so was always released without charge.

He was finally charged however, for harrasing the boy who lived with his mum and her partner in Covent Garden. Crowley was remanded in custody for psychiatric assessment in December 1999.

Even after Crowley was charged with harrasing Diego, and deemed to be dangerous, he was nonetheless released on bail in March, 2000, with a condition that he did not approach the boy...With tragic consequences.

Three short months later, he stabbed Diego to death in a crazed attack with a kitchen knife.

12th March, 2001 Central London 'LIVERPOOLECHO'

## Faded Tory Warns Of The 'Black Magic' Corruption Of Our Youth

That thankfully obsolete politician Norman Tebbit, has gone on record as stating that he believes that the youth of today are under the very real threat of abandoning the er, salvation offered them if they would only choose to stick to the true path of Christianity.

According to our Norman; 'It was G.K. Chesterton who said: "When men stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing, they believe in anything."

'A survey of 13 to 15 year olds has found that 41 per cent believe in God, 40 per cent believe in ghosts and 35 per cent trust horoscopes.

'Two in ten believe fortune tellers, slightly more in Black Magic (I wonder if that is Harry Potter's influence?) and three in ten believe we can contact the spirits of the dead.

"Oddly, more youngsters believed in life after death, being married in church and baptising children than believed in God.

'The Value Debate Study also suggests they are work-orientated, accept responsibility and believe the world can be improved. They look to be at least as good a generation as their parents. I hope they are not corrupted as they grow up.'

What? By self-righteous, out-of-touch political has-beens, like yourself, you mean? On yer bike, Norman!!!

July, 2001 General 'MAIL ON SUNDAY'

## The Fall Of The Devil's Chimney

The self-styled High Priest of White Witches, Kevin Carlyon, was extremely busy during the Spring of this year. Not only was he engaged in a battle of wits with dubious Swedish monster hunters on the banks of Loch Ness, (see elsewhere in this issue), but during early April, Kevin was organising a convention of Witches to descend upon the notorious suicide spot, Beachy Head.

The Devil's Chimney, a 200ft high chalky section of the white cliffs of Eastbourne, fell into the sea on April 4th, after being out of bounds to walkers for over 50 years.

The sudden collapse of the landmark triggered memories amongst the locals, of Aleister Crowley, who successfully climbed the 'Chimney' in 1894, while at School in Eastbourne.

Some years later, when Crowley had become infamous throughout the land for his occult practices, he went on record as stating that; 'When Devil's Chimney falls, so will the fortunes of Eastbourne.'

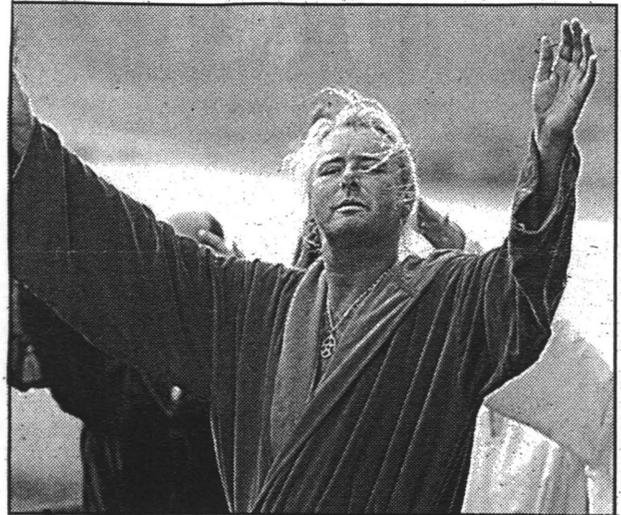
Intent upon averting disaster, Kevin Carlyon set about arranging the aforementioned gathering.

He already claims to have 'cleansed' the Channel Tunnel and a Royal Mail sorting office of 'unpleasant vibrations,' and was hoping to achieve a similar result at the popular seaside resort.

He told reporters; 'There's no doubt in my mind that Aleister Crowley was a very powerful magician and that Beachy Head is a place which exerts a strong force on people who go there.

'I doubt whether Crowley could claim to have created that force - stories about the pull of Beachy Head go back thousands of years - but he was the kind of man who would

have tried to harness the force and use it for his own ends. We think it's better to be safe than sorry, and now that the chimney has collapsed I'll be holding a simple cleansing ceremony on Sunday 8th April, with a handful of other White Witches, if only to put people's minds at rest. I'm not sure how close we'll be able to get, but we'll do our best.'



Kevin Carlyon: High Priest of the White Witches 'cleansing' the Devil's Chimney in Eastbourne

Local historian Dr John Surtees claims that the South Coast seems to have had some peculiar fascination for Aleister Crowley.

After blowing the majority of his inheritance and becoming a morphine addict, he died in a boarding house in Hastings, just down the road from Eastbourne, in 1947.

'He was a character, someone who would have gone down well as a modern gameshow guest,' Dr Surtees was quoted as saying.

'What few people realise is that he actually made several attempts to climb the Devil's Chimney before he succeeded and got himself stuck several times, having to be rescued from the sea or by members of the Alpine Club.

'He complains in one of his memoirs of being rescued and delivered to Eastbourne by his rescuers still covered from head to foot in chalk.

'He recalled that he had to walk through the town with all the common people looking at him and thinking he was a baker or a miller.

'He was the kind of man who would have been very cross about being laughed at. Perhaps that is what his "curse" is about.'

A more sceptical spokesman for the local council, who was plainly more worried about the Foot and Mouth crisis than gripping the area, had this to say; 'The collapse of the stack is a natural phenomenon. Our only concern is that if people do want to come and see for themselves, they obey the every Foot and Mouth restriction.

'People should also be wary of trying to walk along the cliff base from Eastbourne. It's a three-hour walk and it's all too easy to get cut off by the tide.'

6th April, 2001 The Devil's Chimney, Eastbourne 'DAILY EXPRESS'

## The Black Spirits Of The Vetch Field

And Witch doctors have been called in to Swansea Football Club's Vetch Field ground in the aftermath of a negative spiritual diagnosis from spoon-bender extraordinaire, Uri Geller.

Mr Geller warned officials at the Division Two club that the ground is infested with 'black spirits,' and they duly contacted The Kenyan Boys, who at the time were touring with the *Cottle & Austen Circus*. They were only too happy to offer their assistance and the Swans' communications manager Peter Owen was quoted as saying; 'I have invited them to come and help out. When Uri Geller visited us he said there were black spirits at the club - he even claimed they caused the suicide of one of our players, Tich Evans, who died here in the 1920s.'

At the time, Swansea were second to bottom and had won only three home games all season.

22nd March, 2001 *Vetch Field, Swansea* 10th March, 2001

## The Trial Of Hellish Nell

The story of what has since become known as 'the trial of the last British Witch,' is to be the subject of a forthcoming movie following the publication of a new book by Malcolm Gaskill.

Helen Duncan earned the nickname, *Hellish Nell*, long before she achieved notoriety as a Witch. She grew up in Glasgow and quickly acquired a reputation for being something of a tomboy. At the time she was born, during the latter part of the 19th century, such behaviour was universally frowned upon, hence the less-than flattering nickname. As she grew into adulthood, the name seemed to take on an eerily prophetic quality when in March, 1944, at the age of 55, she was forced to stand in the dock at the Old Bailey charged under Section Four of The Witchcraft Act, an archaic law made under the reign of King George II in 1735.

In the years leading up to the trial, Helen Duncan was regarded as being one of the more reliable of mediums and was thought to have exhibited remarkable psychic powers. It was even claimed that she could cause the spirits of the departed to materialise to pass on messages to the loved ones they'd left behind.

Helen had her own newspaper column where she used the pen name Victoria, and it would cost the equivalent of £25 to secure a seat at one of her seances.

Her talents had proved to be profitable enough to enable her family to escape the poverty of Glasgow and buy a fine house in Edinburgh. The famous psychic investigator Harry Price, spent the vast majority of his career (when he wasn't busy publicising the events at Borely Rectory, that is) trying to prove that she was nothing but a fraud.

But despite this, it was widely believed that the real reason Helen ended up in court was that one of her spirit-guided predictions proved to be a little too accurate for the liking of the wartime government.

HMS Barham, a British warship with a crew of more than 1,000, was sunk by a German submarine on November 25th, 1941. Churchill's war cabinet, secretly reading decoded Enigma messages, realised that not even the Germans knew that it had destroyed one of Britain's last remaining battleships in the Mediterranean and the decision was taken to keep the loss secret, to buy time to reorganise the Navy's fleet.

Even the families weren't told that more than 800 of the crew had been killed until late January, 1942, a full two months later. Yet shortly after the sinking, a woman had been at one of Helen Duncan's seances in Portsmouth and the spirit of her dead son had materialised for her with the HMS Barham band around his cap.

The next morning she rang the Admiralty to ask for confirmation and was soon visited by a couple of Naval officers demanding to know the source of her information. This may have sparked intense interest in Helen's powers for the security services, although it wasn't until two years later that she was actually arrested following a police raid on one of her seances at a Portsmouth pharmacy and charged under the Witchcraft Act.

Contrary to popular belief Helen's case was not quite the last to be tried for Witchcraft, though it was certainly the modern era's most famous. The massive interest generated amongst a fascinated public, with the inevitable polarising of opinion; the forming of two camps both for and against Mrs Duncan, resulted in the government being forced to review the need for such an outmoded law in the middle of the 20th century.

There are those today, apparently, who would very much like to see Helen receive a posthumous pardon. Hardly unreasonable, given the circumstances.

Surprisingly, filmmakers have now finally cottoned on the fact that the whole thing makes for the plotline for a potentially successful movie. Producer Judy Sokolov is hoping to make the film and has let it be known that Dame Judi Dench would be perfect for the role.

The author of the new book on Helen Duncan, makes mention that a certain Mrs Marion Gray attended one of Helen's seances in 1941, in Paignton, Devon, and was asked to be an independent witness to the examination of Helen before a 'performance.' Mrs Gray described Helen as "a coarse and immensely fat woman, partly naked, sitting on a chair smoking the sag end of a cigarette. The very sight of her revolted me and I'm afraid she noticed my expression." As for the spirits Helen invoked that evening, Mrs Gray said that it seemed to her that they all looked remarkably like the medium herself, fat and coarse. She wrote to Harry Price and asked; "Don't you think something should be done to stop these harpies from battering onto the misery and agonies of others."

There is no doubt that although the information about the sunken ships may have worried British Intelligence, Helen's trial was also inspired by the indignation of the less superstitious who felt that the bereaved were being defrauded.

According to her own and her husband's account of her life, Helen's powers appeared early. She claimed she had told one boy he would end up at the bottom of the sea in a war which no one could guess was coming in 1900, but which Helen and her husband Henry knew had devastated a generation by the time they wrote their memoirs.

As a child, she was a loner and a misfit, a large girl who had few friends. The Duncan family memoir makes no mention of the fact that, at 16, she became pregnant and was banished to Dundee. She never saw her parents' house again.

She had her baby, Isabella, and managed to keep her while she worked in the jute mills and lived in a woman's hostel. There, in 1914, she met Jean Duncan who had a brother at the Front in France. When Helen told her of a dream she had had in which she met the spirit of a soldier whose eyes told her that his soul would be joined with hers forever, Jean urged her to write to Henry, her brother, hoping that writing to a real soldier would bring her down to earth.

Henry was invalided out of the army and met Helen while convalescing in Dundee, although both claimed they had already met many times in spirit in their dreams.

Henry, a fervent spiritualist, was disabled by his condition and never able to hold down a full-time job after the pair were married in 1916. He devoted himself to helping his wife develop her "powers" by reading everything he could find on the subject.

He would get cheap trinkets from the market and get her to guess the price from the "vibrations." She began to discover that she could divine an envelope's contents by running it over her head and down her spine.

After a decade of poverty along with producing a total of seven children, the Duncan's thought it might well prove profitable for them to hold seances at their home, and charge people for the privilege of attending.

In order to achieve widespread notoriety, Helen knew she would have to hold the kind of spiritualism that was immensely popular at that time, i.e. making the dead materialise from so-called 'ectoplasm' that she claimed she could produce from her own body.



(Above): The front page of Helen's publication, 'THE PEOPLE'S JOURNAL,' printed during the height of her popularity

In such gullible times, she became a virtual overnight sensation, with plenty of people willing to suspend their disbelief in order to get in touch with their dear departed.

On some occasions however, a sceptical person would turn up who, far from being convinced of the reality of Mrs Duncan's mediumistic abilities, would complain loudly and indignantly. One of these doubters was a Royal Naval lieutenant whose protests sparked the police raid which eventually led to her being arrested and put on trial.

What made Helen's case especially unusual was that the authorities decided to make an example of her. Yet people who were pillars of society proved to be more than willing to offer her their support.

Alfred Dodd, an authority on Shakespeare's sonnets, gave evidence about a seance in 1936, during which, he said, he was reunited with his first sweetheart, Helen, who had died in 1897 at the age of 21.

He told the court; 'I called out to my wife "Why it's Helen; it's Helen." 'She stood before me, a living, palpating woman. The same hair that I knew so well, dark and ruddy; the same eyes. Then she spoke in the same Scotch accent I knew so well.'

There were many more witnesses like Alfred, of good standing, clear-headed and articulate. Her defence even offered to hold a seance for the jury, but the judge refused claiming it was for her own sake in case she had an off day and couldn't persuade the spirits to appear.

She was sentenced to nine months imprisonment and served 142 days, a martyr to the spiritualist cause. Undeterred, she went back to her trade after being released. But increasingly in the last ten years of her life, she was less than professional. Some observers were convinced that behind the curtains where she was supposed to be deep in trance, she was actually chain-smoking. Her trances often seemed remarkably like tipstness.

In the Britain of the 1950's, there was no repeat of the wartime enthusiasm for spiritualism. A less superstitious

public informed by newsreels about how their loved ones had died left Helen with far fewer customers.

If spiritualism had been a response to an incomprehensible scale of death after the First World War, then the information piped directly into post-Second World War home by radio and TV was the perfect antidote to relative's longing for knowledge to help them come to terms with their losses. They listened to the radio, watched TV and talked to each other on the phone. How many more miracles did they need in their lives?

Harry Price, the psychic investigator who devoted years to proving that mediums were frauds, was delighted with developments in infra-red technology which allowed him to film seances in the dark.

Helen herself admitted that prison had made her deceitful. Another psychic investigator saw her at a seance in 1953, where, despite the raptures of the women around him at the "ectoplasm" emerging from Helen, all he could see was "cheesecloth and a wire coathanger glinting in the light."

Even one of her close friend described her as a "very foolish woman," who had a real spiritual talent, but was "battered on" by her family to make money.

But what really put paid to Helen and others, was that, with the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in 1951 and its replacement with the less sensationally titled Fraudulent Mediums Act, the element of martyrdom was gone. Bill Neech, Editor of 'THE PSYCHIC NEWS,' summarised it neatly in 1961; 'Spiritualism was recognised in an Act of Parliament. It was the kiss of death.'

One of her most famous cases concerns the transformation of the life of the curiously-named Ena Bugg, from Gosport, Hampshire, whose fiance' Ronald went to sea as the Second World War began and whose friend Bob Brake was stationed in Preston.

Ena and Ron were married in 1940, but a month later he was killed when his U-boat.

Ena met Bob again and agreed to marry him, but only if Ron would give his blessing from the spirit world. In 1941, they attended one of Helen's seances. Albert, Helen's spirit guide, called upon her to summon a young man whose body lay at the bottom of the sea. Ena pleaded; 'Come on, Ron, speak to me.'

The cabinet in which Helen was sitting, opened and out stepped Ronald. He said; 'I've come to give you my blessing. Take care of her, Bob, until she can join me.'

Ena and Bob, now in their 80's, continue to talk of Helen with the same reverence they felt 60 years ago.

The authorities made one final attempt to pillory Helen Duncan, and her family always claimed that the shock killed her.

In October, 1956, police raided a seance in Nottingham. Helen was pinned to the floor by the officers and later held in custody while being questioned.

When she was allowed to return home two days later, her health was in decline. A month later she died, the cause given as heart failure and diabetes.

That was not the end of Helen's presence on earth, however. Various mediums claim to have received messages from her after her death. But although a few supporters struggle on, demanding a posthumous pardon for her, they don't seem to notice that the British public doesn't share their preoccupations.

A few modern spiritualists still meet in small congregations in British towns, following the dictum attributed to Sir James Dewar, that minds are like parachutes: they only work when they are open.

Most of us, however, might prefer the advice of Jacob Needleman, who recommends that we should remain open-minded, but not to the extent that our brains fall out. Spoken like a true Fortean...

19th March, 2001 General 'DAILY EXPRESS'

# STOP PRESS PART II

## Alien Big Cat Stalking The West Country?

According to witnesses in and around Churchill, north Somerset, a lioness was on the prowl late during the dying days of last summer.

Susan Todd was the first to claim to have seen an anomalous feline as she was in her car, together with her six-year-old daughter, Shannon, waiting at a petrol station. She spotted *'the unmistakable figure of a big cat climbing the hillside,'* and convinced she was seeing a lioness, she raced inside the kiosk shouting for assistance.

Her husband, Ken, who had popped into buy a pack of ciggies, was every bit as stunned by the sight of the Big Cat when it was pointed out to him by his wife. It was lurking just 300 yards away. Within a minute or so, a group of about 15 people had gathered in shocked amazement to watch the creature.

*'I looked across to the field opposite and saw this lioness walking across it,'* 49-year-old Mrs Todd later told reporters.

*'It was big and tanned and definitely a lioness.'*

As Mrs Todd ran into the kiosk of the Rowberrow Service Station, sales assistant Karen Hitchings called the police.

The three were eventually joined by a group of lorry drivers who had pulled up to see what was happening.

*'We all went on to the forecourt and these men pulled up in lorries because we were pointing,'* Mrs Todd was quoted as saying. *'They couldn't believe it. Two of the men went over the wall and into the field and the lioness ran up the hill towards the woods and disappeared.'*

Sales assistant Miss Ritchings, 20, said the animal had remained in the field for about two hours before moving away.

*'It was sitting there watching us watch it, really,'* she said.

*'It was definitely a big cat, the size of a large dog.'*

*'We haven't seen it since, but the police told me there was another sighting three weeks ago, so it's obviously roaming around the area.'*

Terry Hooper, coordinator of the Exotic Animal Register, said the cat was most likely to have been a puma, and spouted the usual theories as to how these Alien Big Cats arrived in Britain

*'Pumas are quite often mistaken for lionesses as they can be similar in colour.'*

*'There have been sightings of them in the area for years, but they are not a danger to the public. They shy away from people and usually feed on rabbits and occasionally deer.'*

*'Pumas have entered the wild from a variety of routes'*

*'Sometimes people buy them illegally, they can't cope and then dump them. Others are descended from Victorian times when it was fashionable to keep exotic animals, and have existed in the wild ever since.'*

Mr Todd, however, would beg to differ with Terry's analysis.

*'I used to work as a security guard at Longleat Safari Park, so I know a lion when I see one,'* he insisted, somewhat indignantly.

*'I thought my wife was being silly when she told me what she'd seen, but I had a good long look and it was definitely a lioness. It was too big to be a puma.'*

One of the other witnesses, Sandra Redgers, aged 50, is the manageress of the Renberrow Filling Station.

*'I'm adamant about what I saw. I have been working here for fifteen years and I'm always on the look-out. It was too big to be a domestic cat. It was large and sandy-coloured, and its thick tail was as long as its body. When it walked it looked all muscly.'*

Miss Ritchings, the aforementioned sales assistant, went on; *'It came up to here,'* indicating a height somewhere near the top of her thigh.

*'When I came to close up the garage at 10pm, I was petrified that it would still be out there. Sandra told me not to bother to lock up the pumps but just lock the door, get in my car and go home.'*

*'When you think something like that is out there it is quite scary. Every time a leaf rustled, I jumped. I had seen it for myself.'*

When the foolishly curious lorry drivers vaulted the wall to investigate further, the Big Cat unconcernedly turned a casual tail and ran over the crest of the hill.

When everyone but Mrs Redgers and Miss Ritchings had left the scene, the animal sauntered back into view and lay in the grass apparently sunning itself. The police were summonsed, but the ABC had long gone by the time they arrived.

And a spokesman for Avon and Somerset Police revealed that, surprise surprise, a search of the area had found nothing to account for the sighting.

Or at least that's what they said at first. Later, they stated that they were investigating the possibility that the sighting may have been linked to a recent spate of sheep mutilation in the area.

No Big Cats had been reported missing and there have, at the time of going to press, been no further reported sightings.

Locals too, have been less than convinced by the reported encounter.

*'It was a fluffy alsation, you wait and see,'* some smartarse sceptic who lives in Churchill went on record as saying. He topped it off by uttering the following example of comic genius; *'It will be pink elephants next.'*

Richard Curtis must be quaking in his boots!!!

A reporter from *'THE DAILY MAIL,'* Bill Moulard, went to Churchill to check out the story for himself, armed with a pair of binoculars and a typically cynical outlook.

*'On the ground, it did not take much imagination to turn two muddy indentations in a patch of hay into the paw prints of a giant striding beast. Only the sheep grazing passively in the next door fields gave the lie to the thought that it might spring out at any moment.'*

He paid a visit to nearby School Farm where he spoke to the farmer's daughter, Kathryn, aged 32.

*'It's a bit worrying,'* she told him in response to the suggestion that there might be a lion prowling the surrounding fields. *'I have been trying to get the police but they are not being very helpful. We have been trying to count up the sheep to see if any are missing, but at the moment we're not quite sure.'*

The last word goes to Terry Hooper, the man who reckons we're dealing here with a puma, as opposed to any other type of Big Cat. *'We have never had any proper lions recorded. But lots of people do confuse things like pumas with the lion. They do look very like female lions, although they are smaller. Our record of sightings goes back to the mid-19th century. The Victorians were big collectors of everything and there were private menageries all over the country until the outbreak of the First World War.'*

*'No one ever found any remains because the cats would slink away to die in their hidden lairs.'*

*'As for being dangerous, a puma would have plenty to eat in the wild without looking to raid the well-stocked food shelves of the Rowberrow Filling Station.'*

Whatever the truth of the matter though, Fans of the Cosmic Joker's Name Game will doubtless be delighted to learn that the name of the farmer whose pasture the 'lioness' was reported to have been ambling across was none other than a Mr Jack LYONS.

22nd August, 2001 Churchill, North Somerset *'DAILY MAIL'*