



DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE



Issue 22

May 2002

Price: £2

THE TERROR THAT COMES IN THE DARK HOURS

*Investigating The Horrifying Entities Rumoured To Stalk The
Flimsy Borders Between Sleep And Waking*



***Merseyside's Premier Publication Dealing
With All Forms Of Paranormal Phenomena***

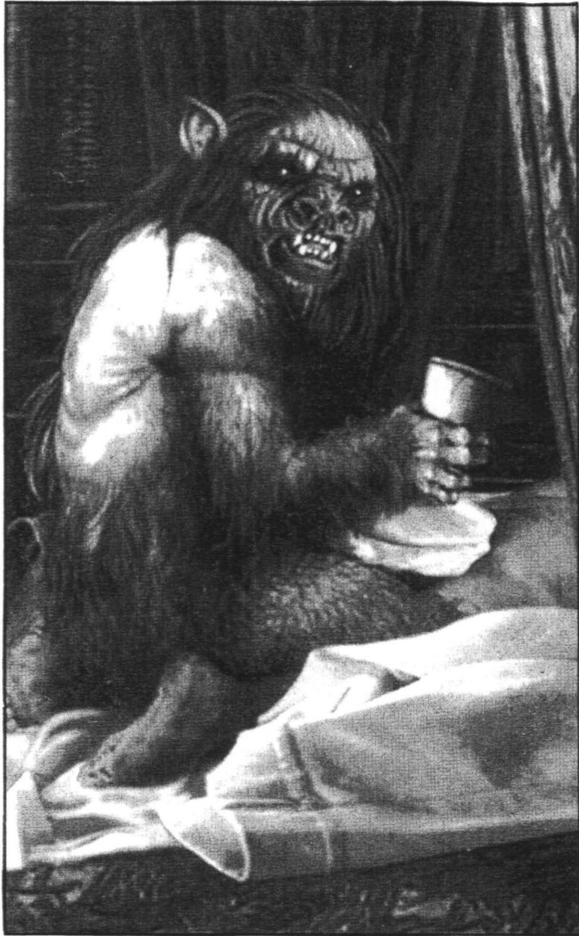
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DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE

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THE TERROR THAT COMES IN THE DARK HOURS



I think it's fair to say that for as long as I can remember I've always been afraid of the dark.

Blame it on an over-active imagination, my parents liberal-minded attitude in allowing me to stay up and watch late night horror movies, or my devouring of the work of M.R.James, James Herbert, Stephen King, et al, or the 'true-life' ghost stories with which my auntie Anne used to regale us every Christmas; the restless spirits of the two children who'd died, trapped inside the disused army storage depot opposite our house, the bogeyman who lurked in the shadow-filled depths of the school boiler room, the shambling monstrosity that haunted the treacherous mud-flats of the Mersey Estuary...

All of these doubtless contributed to the sense of dread I'd feel creeping into my bones when I came to climb the stairs long after my younger brother had gone to bed, and was forbidden, for that reason, from turning on any of the lights. Closing the door behind me I'd step into the near-total darkness. The thick, heavy curtains were nearly always pulled together, even at the height of summer, admitting nought but the tiniest sliver of bony moonlight. It was like entering a black void where anyone or anyTHING could be lying in wait, ready to grab at exposed flesh with wormy fingers or tear with razor-sharp claws.

I'm not ashamed to say that I frequently ran for the sanctuary of my bed as though the Hounds of Hell were at my heels, and I would leap onto the mattress with the all the grace of a shot albatross before throwing the covers of my head and reaching

under the pillow for my plastic torch and the protective amulet I'd copied from MacGregor Mather's KEY OF SOLOMON' (The Fifth Pentacle Of The Moon, which, among other things, is supposed to protect people from the night phantoms).

I never actually switched the torch on, though. I only used it as a last resort. But just knowing I had the option of a light source within easy reach proved to be a great comfort and helped me to sleep most nights.

There were however, occasions when such protection against 'The Terror That Comes By Night' was considerably less than effective. Sometimes I would wake up at some ungodly hour unable to move, convinced beyond doubting that there was something inhuman standing at my bedside, watching me with evil intent.

At such times, nothing, not the gentle snoring of my brother from the bed on the other side of the room, not the ticking of my Donald Duck alarm clock, not the knowledge that I was 'protected' by the Fifth Pentacle Of The Moon, and that my torch was within touching distance, could dilute the sheer paralysing terror that held me immobile in a vice-like grip. I would simply be unable to move, my body slimy with cold beads of perspiration, hardly daring to breathe or swallow the click in my throat. I'd feel, in short, as though I'd been drugged, unable to move or cry out, or indeed do much of anything other than lie there and wait for the Thing In The Room to descend upon me, a hideously grinning face looming out of the darkness, its breath the smell of dead flowers rotting in a charnel house...

For many years, I thought I was the only person to suffer this particularly horrible form of waking nightmare. I mean, I know most people have bad dreams from time to time, usually as a consequence of eating too much rich food prior to going to bed or when excessively stressed or caught in the throes of depression.

But this was markedly different. I was sure I was wide awake when what I came to call The Mur Mur Man (a childish corruption of 'Nightmare Man,' one presumes) paid a nocturnal visit.

Not only that, but that sense of a very real presence was so palpable its existence was an incontrovertible fact.

What was even more disconcerting was the regularity of these dreams. They would occur roughly once a month and it got so bad at one point that I was too scared to go to bed, sneaking back downstairs to sleep in the living room with all the lights on until I was eventually caught out by my parents.

They were fairly sympathetic to my plight, but their suggestion that I should perhaps refrain from watching horror movies and lay off the scary novels for a while didn't appeal to me one iota.

And so I was left with little option other than to (quite literally) sweat it out in my bedroom.

And the dreams continued with varying degrees of regularity, right through my childhood into my teenage years and beyond to the present day. Even now, in my mid-thirties, I wake up some nights sure that something is waiting in the black...Waiting to brush its cold lips on the back of my neck and rasp my stomach with its jagged fingernails....

It was only in comparatively recent times that I became aware that far from being the only one to suffer this type of experience there were literally thousands (and quite likely millions) of people who had been afflicted with similar nightmares.

In fact, it's so common, psychologists even have a typically fancy term for it; Sleep Paralysis With Hypnagogic And Hypnopompic Hallucinations.

It has a long and venerable history, too.

What follows is an essay featuring the various forms the phenomenon can take, including percipients experiences,

theories as to their origin and what, if anything, they might mean, a review of a recent Channel Four Documentary on the subject and regular contributor Neil Arnold's own haunting account of 'THE NIGHT HAG.'

Pleasant dreams, Dear Constant Reader.

Sceaming On A Blade Of Dreams

The main features of the typical sleep paralysis experience are as follows; At the outset there will likely be an impression of wide awakefulness and total immobility.

This inability to move a muscle may be exacerbated by a very real fear of moving, as if, by revealing your awareness of The Entity in the room may inspire It to act. This refusal to let It know you are even awake may even result in you refusing to open your eyes and be forced to gaze upon the presence. After all, The Entity is almost always inherently Evil and extremely threatening. It may be human, animal, or some formless capering horror, and may content Itself with simply watching (as in my case - up to now, at least) or, in some instances, may choose to speak or even physically assault It's victim. These assaults usually take the form of a feeling of intense pressure on the percipient's chest, but it can also involve pushing, choking or smothering.

The Entities are quite often totally silent but the most commonly reported sound is that of footsteps or a shuffling, so soft in the dark. Breathing, too, has often been reported.

As previously stated The Entity can take many forms, but their appearance tends to conform to these five categories;

- 1: Ghostly human form in outline.
- 2: Dark or grey in colour.
- 3: Often only a disembodied face or 'mask' is seen.'
- 4: Eyes are most common, and often only distinctive feature.
- 5: May undergo transformations or movement.

(These categories defined by J.A.Cheyne of the Department of Psychology, University of Waterloo)

On rare occasions, the percipient may undergo an apparent Out-Of-The-Body-Experience, a feeling of being lifted up (as in levitation) or a tingling or vibrating sensation.

In terms of frequency, these 'nightmares' most commonly occur either once or occasionally with large intervals in between, although sometimes these intervals can be punctuated by a 'run' of attacks lasting for the majority of one or two weeks.

There are (thankfully) very few instances where attacks are experienced on a very frequent or nightly basis.

Not surprisingly, sleep paralysis and its attendant hallucinatory properties has been held to be responsible for everything from Demonic manifestations to ghostly phenomena to the modern-day alien abduction controversy. The author J.A. Cheyne has described the symptoms of sleep paralysis thus; *'It is a condition in which someone, most often lying in a supine position (on their back) about to drop off to sleep, or just waking from sleep, realises that they are unable to move, or speak, or cry out. This may last a few seconds or several moments, occasionally longer. People frequently report feeling a 'presence' that is often described as malevolent, threatening or Evil. An intense sense of dread and terror is very common. The presence is likely to be vaguely felt or sensed just out of sight but thought to be watching or monitoring, often with intense interest, sometimes standing by, or sitting on, the bed.*

'On some occasions the presence may attack, strangling and exerting crushing pressure on the chest. People also report auditory, visual, proprioceptive, and tactile hallucinations, as well as floating sensations and OOBes. These various sensory experiences have been referred to collectively as Hypnagogic and Hypnopompic experiences (HEEs).

'After seconds or minutes one feels suddenly released from the paralysis, but may be left with a lingering anxiety.

'People may also report severe pain in their limbs while trying to move them.

'Several recent surveys suggest that between 25-30% people say that they have experienced at least a mild form of sleep paralysis at least once and about 20-30% of these have had the experience on several occasions.

'Aside from many of the very disturbing features of the experience itself, the phenomenon is quite benign.'

It seems that sleep paralysis often begins in the years of adolescence, although, in truth, it can start up at any age, though it is rare to kick in after one reaches their 30s.

The Nightmare as a form of nocturnal attack has been closely linked to Demonology and stories of ghostly visitations since time immemorial. One of the most common Entity descriptions is that of the Night-Hag, the wizened cackling crone familiar from fairy stories and the Witchcraft pamphlets of medieval Europe.

The Sumerian Demon Ardat lili or Lilitu, (the prototype for the later Hebrew Lilith and the Roman Lamia) was one of the earliest Hag-Demons. She was capable of flying in the wee hours before dawn and delighted in attacking men in their sleep.

There are a number of related Evil spirits described in Middle Eastern and European folklore who also exhibited a penchant for sitting on men's chests and attempting to choke them while they slept. Some of the better known spirits of this sort are Greek Ephialtes (one who leaps upon) and Mora (the night 'mare' or monster, ogre, etc), the Roman Incubus and Succubus (one who presses or crushes), the German Mar/Mare, nachtmar. Hex endrucken (Witch pressing) and the Old English maere (mab, mair, mare-hag). Other countries such as Norway, Spain and Poland also had their disconcertingly similar Night-Mares, and the interested reader is advised to check out the works of the likes of D.J. Hufford for a thorough overview of the history of the Old-Hag phenomenon.

As well as attacking helpless humans in the (ahem) dead of night, these creatures were notorious shape-shifters, able to take on various forms during these attacks.

These Demons were often identified with the spirits of the forest, such as the Great God Pan, as well as Satyrs, Silenus and Sylvani, and even with the Goddess Diana. Many of these creatures were depicted as having the upper body of a human being, and the lower half of a goat or faun.

Pan, of course, was the originator of the word 'panic' and he was frequently described as being the 'instigator of dreams and visions, especially those that produced sudden, violent terror.'

There was also certain classes of Angels called 'Watchers' (not to mention the Fallen Angels) who were said to be associated with the Incubus. According to Christian belief, some of these 'Watchers' were sent to watch over human affairs and wound up getting sexually involved with mortal women. The progeny of such illicit encounters were, predictably enough, inhuman monsters and Demons who thought it great sport to assault humans lying in bed at night.

But such lore is not exclusive to Western culture.

In St.Lucia, in the West Indies, an attack of Kokma comes at a time when the victim is just falling asleep or just waking up. The sensations should by now be familiar to you; the pressure on the chest, the inability to move, the fear and dread of the sensed presence. Here however, the entity is the spirit of a dead baby that haunts the area. They enjoy jumping on the chest of their victim's and clutching at their throat. The victim is therefore unable to cry out.

The Kokma cannot be controlled. They grab people's throats for the sheer hell of it.

Interestingly, the idea that the The Terror is the spirit of an unbaptized baby (or a whole squadron of unchristened infants) is also prevalent in Ireland.

In Thailand, the phenomenon is known as the Phi um (Ghost covered) and Phi kau (Ghost possessed), and involves pressure, immobility, and something black covering the body. In Japan, kanashibara ('to tie with an iron rope') is a common and widely known experience. In Korea, people are said to be afflicted by the ka wi nulita ('scissors possessed'), inspired by an overwhelming sense of fear.

Meanwhile, in Laos, da chor is described as follows; 'You want to listen, you can't hear. You want to speak, you are dumb. You want to call out, you cannot. You feel you are dying, dying, you want to run away. You piss with fear in your sleep.'

As David Hufford wrote, back in 1976, the Sleep Paralysis Night-Mare 'is widespread, at least in Western Culture. It has been regularly reported for more than two thousand years and has been attached to a variety of narrative frameworks...But regardless of the framework, the experiential features have remained basically the same. This consistency of detail, apparently rather independent of tradition, is the most surprising and difficult to account for.' In simple English, the striking similarity of the entities encountered and experiences shared, between the widely different cultures, is more than a little strange.

And there is something else worth mentioning at this juncture. Although there are literally hundreds of folk remedies available to help ward off these nocturnal attacks, the most common preventative measure is not to sleep on your back. Almost all attacks have been reported by people sleeping in this position.

There are two recognised types of sleep paralysis. One is called (with astounding originality) Common Sleep Paralysis, a state whereby a person wakes to find their body 'frozen'. This temporary paralysation affects the body's motor functions and macro muscle groups. This state can last for anywhere between 15 seconds to a minute, although there are rare cases of it lasting for far longer.

In fairly recent times, researchers have discovered that hormones released during the R.E.M./dream state paralyse the body and prevent it from acting out the plot of your dreams. During most regular sleep cycles, the hormones begin to wear off even before the dream is completed and thus people wake with a fully functioning body. In rare occasions, the hormones are still actively suppressing the gross motor functions of the body and thus upon waking the individual finds his or her body temporarily paralysed.

Though waking to this state of helplessness can be frightening, it is, by definition, fairly common and perfectly harmless.

However, the second form of Sleep Paralysis, the one which we've been referring to throughout this article, known as the *Hypnagogic (the state between sleep and wakefulness) Sleep Paralysis (HSP) or the Hag Phenomenon, is a far more terrifying experience.

There is evidence that HSP can simultaneously afflict an entire locale, for example a whole village, in much the same way as an epidemic. A region that has previously had no reported cases of HSP can overnight be inundated with stories of sleepers being attacked by Bedroom Invaders. And it seems, these newly-afflicted areas can remain 'infected' with HSP for up to three years. There is as yet no explanation for this.

'HSP is a very profound and frightening experience,' a psychologist by the name of Dr Chris French, who is currently collecting data on the phenomenon, stated a little obviously a few months back. 'People are very reluctant to talk about it, either because they think it really is a an alien or nocturnal visitation, or because they think they are going mad.

One frequently asked question is why are the victims of HSP only ever confronted by visions of unmistakably Evil Entities and not faith-affirming Angels?

Our old friend, Dr Al Cheyne, thinks he may have the answer. 'Recent evidence from neuroimaging studies during REM shows that the (pay attention! Here comes the science bit!) amygdala and several related limbic structures in the brain - the centre of our emotional being - are active during REM sleep. These structures associated with instinctual responses, including fear, and what is called the "threat-activated vigilance system"

This is thought to be activated by subtle cues for threat, which the system then attempts to corroborate by searching for further cues for danger. Such cues are especially active during anxiety dreams and nightmares and probably stimulate unpleasant memories, including culturally conventional images of threat, such as Ghosts and Aliens.

The fear of undetected threat is exacerbated because the person is awake, paralysed and usually in a helpless, supine position. These are hardly circumstances to generate pleasant hallucinations. This throws up Ghostly images. The confrontational Grim Reaper and other hooded figures are popular...Some people have even seen Darth Vader!'

'What Do You See At Night, When The Demons Come?'

Night-Terror Case Histories



We start this round-up, (for no good reason other than it's a fairly typical eye-witness account) back in 1995, when David Musson, a 29-year-old architect from Croydon, experienced a classic Night-Hag visitation.

David takes up the story;

'I'm not sure what it was that made me wake up, but right away I had this horrible feeling that someone else was in the room. It was a few seconds after that I realised I couldn't move at all. By then I was panicking, and at the same time I felt there was someone leaning right over me: not touching me at that point, but really close, looming.

'And then I saw this face coming quickly out of the dark, just for a second, really horrible, ugly and old. And I realised I couldn't breathe properly - it felt like someone was pushing down really hard on my chest

'I thought I was going to die. I'm not sure if the pushing on my chest stopped before or after I found I could move again.'

January 1995 Croydon, England 'DAILY MANC'

*** During the April of that same year, two women reported to the press of how an icy-fingered Spirit-Demon climbed into their respective beds and made love to them!

Mrs Pamela Day and Ms. Kathleen Dallaway claimed they suffered sleep paralysis as the Invisible Assailant had its wicked way with them.

Mrs Day, 47, was quoted as saying; *'We need professional help to get rid of this Spirit. Three weeks ago I was in bed with my boyfriend. He had his back to me. I suddenly felt a cold presence next to me and two icy fingers caressed my spine. Then, a week later, the Spirit got into bed with me again and the bed began to move up and down. It was a Ghost having sex with me. I later mentioned it to another tenant, and she said exactly the same thing had happened to her.'* Single mum, Kathleen Dallaway, 26, who lives on the building's seventh floor, said; *'Two weeks ago, I could feel him in bed with me. There was no sexual thing. I could just feel his cold presence on my back. I was paralysed with fear.'* The Incubus made no sexual advances when it first appeared, more than two years earlier. Pamela Day stated that the Spirit used to merely play about messing up the bedclothes and sitting on her two-year-old daughter's leg as she lay on the couch.

'But one night, I became aware of a presence bending over me in bed. In certain lights you can just make out the outline of a male figure.'

23rd April, 1995 Victoria House, Leamore, Walsall 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'

*** But what if the 'experts' are wrong and these malignant Nocturnal Entities, be they Demons, Ghosts, Aliens, Extraterrestrials, whatever, really exist?

Such a question could understandably be posed by the relatives of seven residents of Canyon County, Idaho, USA, who died in their sleep during a five month period in 1997.

Area doctors were forced to call in state and federal health officials to help explain the mysterious deaths.

'There were some unusual findings in the cases that suggest they might be tied together,' Mercy Medical Centre pathologist Thomas Donnelinger told reporters, without, frustratingly enough, elaborating on any of the details.

6th February, 1997 Canyon County, Idaho 'USA TODAY'

*** Matthew Jones-Chesters, 30, a neuropsychologist working for North Exeter Mental Health, described recently to reporters how he often awakes *'rooted in bed, watching as a black shape gathers in the corner of the room, as if from nothing. I can see it, like a huge bat, massive and caped. It fills the room and comes closer and eventually it's around me, cloudy and dark. I feel its pressure and it's holding me and then, under its weight and power, I feel I'm sinking and being dragged down.*

'I fight to bring myself back round, but I can't - and this is the truly awful part - I can't because I am totally paralysed. The best I can do is make a noise in my throat in the hope that I'll bring myself round. It's horrible.'

18th November, 2001 North Exeter 'THE GUARDIAN'

NIGHT BRINGS THE HAG

Regular contributor Neil Arnold takes a personal look at the Hag-Attack Phenomenon

The following tale is a true account. I believe that it may well be rather unique with regards to the phenomenon known as the Old Hag, or what science and psychology likes to call Sleep Paralysis.

I have read countless books on the paranormal, and many articles and papers on *'the terror that comes in the night.'* I have also experienced such an 'apparition,' too, and now I feel the need to write of my experience, not least because I have never read or heard of any other quite like it. My friends and family have also undergone a bout of the 'night terrors,' and have their own stories to tell, but again, they bear little similarity to my own.

I am unable to recall the specific dates of the events I am about to relate, although I can confirm they occurred within the last couple of years.

After reading a book called *'The Terror That Comes In The Night'* by David Hufford, I was intrigued but not satisfied with the explanations put forward for the experiences recounted within its pages.

Okay, so the Sleep Paralysis effect, not yet fully explained by conventional science, may well be the catalyst for many of the reported encounters with (quite literally) nightmarish phantoms, but why should witnesses from wildly differing countries and cultural backgrounds all describe eerily similar entities? And is the modern-day Alien Abduction phenomenon a natural progression of the ancient 'Hag-Experience'?

I am not convinced that we fully understand the workings of the mind. Is it possible that it may in itself be a separate entity, holding the keys to the 'super unknown?' Perhaps apparitions and ghosts truly do exist, but only within the field of our own mental perception.

I am not saying that everything peculiar we see is simply 'all in the mind,' but when people say 'Oh, the mind is just playing tricks,' maybe they're closer to some weird immutable truth than they think.

The so-called 'Hag Attack' can occur at any time. Whilst the hours of darkness seem to be more suited to such encounters, I know a number of people who have experienced such a presence during daylight. Many cases simply describe a strange, forceful pressure on the area of the chest, which gradually eases after a period of time, sometimes minutes, sometimes (worryingly) hours. Witnesses will usually describe how their bodies are overcome with an awful state of paralysis, rendering their entire body immobile. This, it must be stressed, is the common Sleep Paralysis attack, and may well be explainable in pure psychological terms.

However, quite often, there comes the feeling of a dreadful presence entering the room, often taking the shape of an old hag, adorned in dark vestments. The bony, ancient-looking crone may move quickly towards the bed, and in the most extreme cases, leap onto your chest. This in fact happened to a good friend of mine, who later told me that he felt as if *'I was fighting to save my soul!'*

It is not uncommon for the victim to feel drained mentally and physically by this entity, although eventually, they are able to wrestle themselves free of the presence and the accompanying paralysis. One way of securing release, is to focus on a certain mundane object in the room in order to be able to concentrate upon its everyday reality and gradually conquer their fear.

Another of my friends, who has personally investigated the Blue Bell Hill Ghost (sometimes described as an old

Witch/Hag), has reportedly seen just such an entity in his bedroom, which although appearing small, actually fought him physically. On one occasion he was forced to grab the phantom by the shoulders in order to save himself from real physical harm.

If such encounters are mere sleep-induced hallucinations, then something is very wrong here. Sceptics may argue that such vivid 'dreams' are caused by over-active imaginations and being deluged with media-images of the strange and uncanny, even when we are unaware of it. But whilst I readily concede that excessive tiredness, illness and stress can induce nightmares, I do not see why so many people should be reporting being attacked by such an obviously decrepit figure...

My own personal 'attacks' have involved peculiar apparitions totally unlike the Hag and more akin to the denizens of the realm of the ridiculous.

Now, as regular readers will be aware, I enjoy engaging in a little bit of clandestine occult activity as well as tracking exotic animals in and around Kent, hunting Vampires in Highgate Cemetery (see last issue of *DON - Ed*), and endlessly writing papers on all things weird and wonderful. However, this should not be taken to imply that I am more susceptible to these nightly visitations. Indeed, a majority of people who have experienced Sleep Paralysis its attendant presence have not had any interest whatsoever in the paranormal or the occult, and many have never even heard of the Old-Hag Phenomenon.

My first experience came just prior to nodding off one night. Yes, I had a lot of things on my mind, hell, most of us do. Yet the fact that I wasn't fully asleep made the whole thing far more bizarre.

It must have been around midnight when I caught sight of something white in colour and about the size of a squirrel scuttle out of my bedroom door. It promptly disappeared. This 'thing' never returned. It never attacked me and I never discerned any great degree of detail, and although I thought the whole situation odd, I soon put it out of mind.

My next experience was a whole lot weirder.

I awoke one night after I had felt 'something' touching my left hand. I sat up in bed and, in the darkness was just about able to make out a 'blob' sitting on my hand. This thing somehow felt attached to one of my fingers and although it didn't seem to be biting, it felt as though it was draining me. In shock and horror I jumped up and slammed my hand on the bed over and over, in an attempt to dislodge this thing from my finger. Eventually, the presence vanished and when I summoned up enough courage to get up and switch on the bedroom light, there was no trace of the whatever-it-was.

The next morning, however, I discovered a blood blister on the very same finger. I tried to dismiss this as being a direct result of my hammering my hand against the mattress.

The strangest thing of all occurred quite recently, and was completely different to the other manifestations.'

Again, it took place at night. I had barely been asleep so it must have been around 12:30am when I felt a presence in my bed. I was lying on my stomach and could feel something on one of my legs and it was moving slowly up my body. The thing moved up my left-hand side I could feel it faintly. I sat up quickly wondering what was going on and simply sat there for a short while.

The next thing I knew, the 'Thing' was on my left shoulder and it appeared to be a white, misty mass. Absolutely terrified, I leapt up and began brushing at my shoulder with my right hand.' The 'Thing' seemed to disappear after a few well-aimed swipes. I was now stood on the floor and then noticed that my left arm was numb and there was a tingling feeling all over it.

'The Thing' was nowhere to be seen.

How could I adequately seek to explain this incident? The Entity seemed insect-like in appearance, and was roughly the

size of a rugby ball. It was oval-shaped and seemed to have weird stubby appendages protruding from its sides. The only living creature I could possibly compare it to would be a jellyfish.

After this experience I trawled through many books and magazines dealing with paranormal phenomena to see if I could find any similar cases to mine, and whilst there were many unique and horrifying encounters, and many occurred during Sleep Paralysis, and a goodly amount involved either strange light formations or hag-like entities, none involved anything remotely like what I had seen.

Even more peculiar was the fact that about a year later my father was sitting in the living room around 6pm one evening, reading a newspaper when something caught his eye. Upon looking up he saw a plum-sized form whizz across the floor and vanish before his eyes. He described the manifestation as being a whitish, almost transparent form that was so weird it was surreal. A relative of mine claimed it was ghostly plasma.

After my experiences, my cousin also reported a strange encounter with what he described as a 'black blob,' one night. It was about 11:30pm, and he was lying on his back in bed. He was dozing fitfully, but kept waking up. All of a sudden something dropped onto his foot. This startled him, but he surmised that one of his books had toppled from the top of a stack piled at the end of his bed. But still he looked at the afflicted area and was shocked to see 'a blob' the size of a bird positioned on his foot which was under the blankets at the time. He was horrified by the sight of the thing and flicked his foot in a state of panic. Involuntarily he sat straight up in one movement. The thing flicked up onto the window ledge. On this particular night he had left the window open, and now he could see the black object just behind the curtain. Trying to be rational he thought that maybe it was a bird or even a bat, but then the object, whatever it was, vanished into thin air.

I have often been of the opinion that 'Psychic Vampires' exist, at least in the sense of dark forms of energy which float in the atmosphere and are able to somehow draw even more energy from human beings. Those slumbering are, for some reason, more vulnerable to these attacks. I also believe that so-called 'wet dreams' are the work of these entities which have a lot in common with the old folk tales of the Incubus and Succubus; the male and female Demons which were said to feed off the secretions of the living. Again, I accept that science will dismiss these views as arrant nonsense, but I haven't seen anything to yet disprove my beliefs.

I am also of the opinion that the state of sleep can somehow enhance our ability to perceive spectres and apparitions. Perhaps this is because our subconscious can enable the rest of the body to connect with the ethereal, which is why everything seems normal when one is in the dream state. Perhaps these other 'presences' are able to flitter in and out of our dream-induced visions.

Neil Arnold November 2001

How It Is To Be Children...Secure In Belief And To Be Afraid Of The Dark

Children are more frightened of the dark than their parents were because of an increase in exposure to artificial light. This means, obviously, that they rarely experience total blackness. This revelation was announced by Powergen, following a study by that group.

Nearly two thirds of children aged under ten insist on sleeping with a light on, compared with half of their parent's generation at the same age.

Aric Sigman, a psychologist and author who analysed the findings, said that electric lights, television and computer

games have deeply negative effects on an entire generation of children because it was stifling their imagination.

'Children's imaginations need to be given space to develop. Being in the dark gives them a blank canvas on which to paint their own imaginary pictures. It can be very stimulating for them to play and entertain themselves in the dark, because all the images that they produce will be unique...But this rarely happens now.'

The study also indicated that the nature of children's fear of the dark is changing as the traditional 'imaginary monster under the bed' is replaced by ready-made images imprinted on children's minds from television, cinema and computer games.

The scariest monsters cited by children include Lord Voldemort from the Harry Potter novels and film, Saruman from *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, and Powell from the computer game *Tomb Raider*.

14th February, 2002 General *'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'*

THE RETURN OF MONKEYMAN

And speaking of Sleep Paralysis-type entities, from Ahmedabad, India, comes news that the nocturnal terror that gripped this region last year, has seemingly returned to haunt the slums of Khanpur Darwaja Chhapra.

During the last week of February, residents of the area claim to have seen a 'person dressed in black and wearing a mask' flitting amidst the squalor. The Monkeyman they describe is aged between 20-25 years, is dark-skinned, has curly hair and can be seen hopping from roof to roof (a la SPRING HEELED JACK!) and tree to tree.

The residents had reportedly been too scared to make an official complaint to the local police, so convinced are they that this is a supernatural manifestation. They have instead, decided to set up a series of all-night vigils in the hope of defeating the otherworldly intruder.

The locals reject the notion that 'Monkeyman' could be a perfectly human thief or drug addict. They claim that the entity hasn't stolen anything and that when chased, the figure simply disappears. Most of these sightings have been reported between midnight and dawn.

What has served to heighten the fear is that report that two youths, Mehooob and Farooq, managed to get close to the 'Monkeyman' which promptly vanished when it became aware of their presence. Ever since the encounter, both youths have been 'behaving abnormally,' and had to be taken to a local priest (Maulvi) who sprinkled holy water on them.

'Four days ago, we chased the man along the river bed till we reached the Cama Hotel. Then he just disappeared,' says Bashir Malbari, a resident of the area.

Convinced that this is no ordinary human being, Malbari was quoted as saying, *'I feel someone is practising hypnotism in our slum. This is not simply a case of someone playing tricks. No thief would try his luck at the slum.'*

'Mehooob, who saw the man from as close as five feet and even attacked him, fainted. We had to take him to the Maulvi. There have been at least half a dozen encounters in the past fortnight.'

26th February, 2002 Ahmedabad, India *'AHMEDABAD NEWSLINE'*

THE ENTITY (Channel Four 2001)

One the most unnerving, disturbing, and downright terrifying documentary's I've ever seen was screened late last year, and its effect was enough to ensure my previously mentioned fear of the dark didn't ease any. I guess I should have known as much when the announcer at the outset of the programme

issued a warning that the contents might disturb certain viewers.

The lilting tones of the Scottish narrator informs us that *'there is a nightmare more terrifying than any other. A nightmare that has haunted thousands of people all over the world.'*

'A presence comes into the room, paralyses its victim, then leaps on their body and assaults them.'

'Sometimes it's a shadowy figure. Sometimes an old hag. Sometimes a Demon. But whatever shape it takes, The Entity, as it is often called, has concrete effects, leaving its victims battered and exhausted, their lives in pieces. Sufferers are sure that when they see it they are awake and it is real. Science, psychology and religion have all grappled with this phenomenon.'

Can any explain the mystery of The Entity?'

The first eyewitness account comes from a suburb of Houston, Texas, where one woman has been suffering Entity attacks for most of her life. They began when she was just five years old.

During an interview, (in which the cameraman seems to have a 'BLAIR WITCH' fixation, with lots of shots of the witnesses bulging left eye filling the screen) Jamie Jackson, 32, relates her personal history of Entity visitations

'The first thing I remember as a child was one night, when my mother had just put me to bed, and I could see the lights on in the living room. I just lay down, and I could hear my parents, and I could hear the Television...And I looked up, and to my right I saw a couple, very shadowy, very dark, in my bedroom.'

'It was a man and a woman and they started walking towards me. It was very frightening. I couldn't speak. I wanted to call out to my mother but I couldn't call out to her, I was just terrified. And round about that time my mother walked into the room and it appeared she walked directly through the two people who were standing to my right, and I began asking her "Who are these people in my room?" "What's going on?" She kept telling me that it was just a dream and to go back to bed. I told her that it wasn't a dream and that I hadn't been asleep, I could hear the television on in the other room.'

As she Jamie grew older, the Entities that stalked her grew more vivid and more violent.

In a chilling reconstruction that begins with a woman alone in her bed in the middle of the night, we hear Jamie tell us; *'As soon as I become aware that there's someone in the room, I'll go into a paralysis. I can't move (she grips the white sheet covering the mattress) and I can't shout out. I'm unable to call for help and I'm unable to ward off any attack (her eyes frantically scan the darkness for signs of movement) 'It feels like you've been drugged somehow.'*

We then glimpse a slightly out of focus, stickman-like figure, slowly unwinding itself in the far corner of the room. Jamie calls him The Shadowman, for obvious reasons.

In a sudden blur of movement, this sinister figure races over to the side of the bed and begins throttling Jamie as she lies helpless on the bed.

'He's very violent. He doesn't use any caution whatsoever. He couldn't care less if my neck is broken.'

The Shadowman is then joined by an even more frightening Entity: The Old Hag, standing at the edge of the bed, draped in many layers of clothing and with dirty unkempt hair poking out from beneath an ill-fitting bonnet, she crawls onto the bed and sits astride her victim's chest, her hideously wizened face mere inches from Jamie's.

'She's not extremely heavy but she's heavy enough that it's very hard to breathe. I can't get my lungs to expand. And the attack becomes twofold. The Shadowman will have hold of the base of my neck and the Old Woman will be choking me near the top part so violently that I think that my voice box is going to collapse. I can't move. He's got my arms down,

usually, or the Old Lady's sitting on my chest. And there's nothing I can do.'

As stated earlier, Jamie is convinced that she is awake during these attacks; 'the fear is extremely real. You're looking round the room. You're looking for any way out. I can see my clock. I can see my curtains. I can see everything in the room, and that tells me that this is real. That this is happening to me. And I'm wondering why my husband can't hear them. Why he can't hear the struggle. Why he can't hear the fight. And beyond that, I'm wondering what's gonna happen to me after they kill me? Who's next?

Your mind and your body thinks you've been through it. But to everyone you associate with, your workmates, your friends, your family, your doctors... They say it's just a dream, just get over it.'

The narrator then tells us that during research for the programme, there were literally hundreds of phone calls from people who claimed to have encountered similar Entities and undergone remarkably similar experiences.

We hear a series of tape recorded commentaries of Night Hag experiences courtesy of Matt Watkins, aged 25, who hails from Wiltshire, England.

In the recordings, Matt, who is a psychology student at the University of the West Of England, describes, in suitably terrified tones, how the Old Hag appeared in his room. We see the bedroom door opening slowly. Unholy white light floods the threshold from which an unmistakably female figure gradually emerges. 'I just remember she was old. She looked me in the eyes. And she ran right up to my face.' The ominous figure runs on her tip-toes towards the bed where Matt lies immobile with fear, with unerving, almost spider-like speed. 'She stopped right in front of my face and literally two inches away from my nose, looked me right in the eyes, and she had what could be described as black eye-liner running down her face.'

The hideous old woman, straggly hair blowing in some unnatural breeze, leans towards him, her dead eyes bleeding black blood, her pale, worm-like lips parted in a mirthless grin...

Not surprisingly, these 'visitations' and their associated phenomena have had a profound effect upon Matt.

'It's made me question the nature of reality. It's made me look into many different areas; psychiatry, parapsychology, all these different areas. I realise that there could be other explanations for this, and I started looking into it a bit more. I decided to make The Entity the focus of my degree.

'Searching through ancient texts, I was surprised to find evidence of The Entity Experience dating back over 2,000 years.'

At this point, a sinister whispering voice intones the following quotation:

"When doomed to death I will attend you as a nocturnal fury: I will attack your faces and brooding upon your restless breasts, I will deprive you of repose by terror."

Horace - 1st Century BC

And, as we have already seen, it wasn't just literature that made reference to The Night Terror.

During the Middle Ages, The Entity was often represented as a horned beast that preyed on sleeping women, and was sometimes thought to rape them (Incubi and Succubi).

At this point, the narrator asks a couple of very pertinent questions... Why were there so many depictions of the Entity Experience? And why were they so similar?

Before seeking to answer these queries, we return to the case of the Entity-plagued Jamie Jackson; 'Every time I'm attacked like this, I don't really repeat a lot of it, and I try to forget it, and I'm having a very hard time describing how intense it is.

I've woken up with cuts on my hands from my fingernails clenching my fist. I've cracked teeth in my sleep, just from the intensity of everything. Clenching my jaws.

I did think a few times about taking my own life... You just don't see any out to it. What happens is, you get to the point where you're so tired... and you're just so tired of fighting... And every night when you go to bed you know it's going to be another fight, a struggle, you become afraid to fall asleep.'

In the search for a logical, scientific explanation, we are introduced to Dr J Allan Cheyne, a bearded professor of psychology from the University of Waterloo in Canada, (and who bears an uncanny resemblance to the author Stephen King.)

'When we are dreaming, a mechanism in the brain paralyzes us to prevent us acting out our dreams. Some people get trapped in the state between wakefulness and dreaming called Sleep Paralysis.

'I have studied over 9,000 cases, and I believe it (Sleep Paralysis) may have been experienced in mild form, by up to 30 per cent of the world's population.

'Sleep Paralysis, as I view it, is a type of dream. A waking dream. Or perhaps more accurately, a waking nightmare.

'Imagine, if you will, there are two mechanisms deep in the brain stem. One of these mechanisms we'll call "The Wake Up Mechanism." And the other one we'll call "The Dream On Mechanism." 'And they are linked to one another. In particular, "The Wake Up Mechanism" inhibits "The Dream On Mechanism" 'So when this one is turned on, you're awake, alert, conscious of your surroundings, able to respond to your surroundings. Imagine that as your wake up system turns down, if there's a problem, particularly with neuro-transmitters, it may not be inhibiting the other system, so this one may turn on, before this one turns off, so you have two systems on now, so you're awake and you're dreaming.'

Sounds logical to me, if a little on the 'oh no, here comes the incomprehensible science bit,' side.

But we still have to look for an explanation as to why sometimes, there is a shared scenario experienced in the attacks.

And the good doctor may have the answer to that, too.

'A way in which the hallucination might build might be where you imagine there is something on your chest. Perhaps it's simply the fact that you can't take a deep breath, because you are paralysed, after all. One interpretation is that there really is something on your chest preventing you from taking a deep breath.

'If you've also had a visual hallucination, it's easy to conclude that whatever that thing was, that is now what is on your chest. Initially, it's just a feeling that there is something there, and you're searching for it, and if your eyes are closed, you'll be thinking if you could just open your eyes it would be there.

'If your eyes are open, it might be just out of sight. Perhaps you will see it. Perhaps you will see some form. Some vague shape 'Maybe you'll hear something. Footsteps. Movement in the room. You may actually feel something touching you. And you can see, as each of these things happen, the hallucination gets fleshed out, so these vague sense of a presence can become a concrete entity in the room.'

But can Sleep Paralysis explain cases where the Entity attacks reportedly go much further?

We travel next to Glasgow, Scotland, and the horrifying story related by Mark Dillon, aged 33.

Despite a normal childhood, Mark has been the alleged victim of a particularly vicious series of nocturnal attacks, since entering his late teenage years.

'I was only about 17, when this first happened to me. I went to bed as normal. Fell asleep, enjoying a good sleep, when,

during the middle of the night I was awakened by the feeling that someone was in the room.

'I couldn't explain who it was. I didn't know who it was. I then felt totally paralysed. I could not move. It was as if the power that was there, the energy, was able to control my body.

'I was being held face down on my back. I could feel his hands on me. I could feel that it was a man. I could feel the size of him. It was a fully grown man.

'What happened next was a sexual act, (we see disturbing images of him being pushed up and down on the bed, as if violent anal intercourse were taking place) 'It was as if I could feel him pushing himself on top of me.

'I thought I was gonna die.

'I thought the Demon was going to kill me.'

'When the paralysis eventually went away, I felt as if the presence had withdrawn into a corner of the room. There was a creaking as though there was something there.'

Mark's attacks have been so horrifyingly real to him, that his relationship with his fiancée has suffered badly as a result.

But everything's okay. Don't worry. Cos here's Dr Cheyne to drum up another dose of logical explanation.

'Sexual assaults are not common, but they certainly occur. Our dreams have sexual content because our sexual organs, and sexual areas of the brain are still being activated. So it's not surprising that the combination of fear and sex leads to sexual assault scenario.'

But how does this account for the fact that Mark's bedroom, where the assaults allegedly took place, once belonged to his older brother, and he apparently underwent similar experiences, unbeknownst to Mark.

'A couple of years before this happened (the attacks on Mark) my brother was staying in that bedroom. I started to tell him what had happened to me in that room and he said to me that he had very similar experiences, such as being strangled, a feeling of someone being there.

'Is it just a coincidence that it was the same bedroom?'

One person who has made it his life's work to study and evaluate Night Terror experiences is David Hufford, who is up for interview next. He begins with telling us of his own encounter, years before he became interested in studying the subject.

'I once had a Sleep Paralysis attack of my own. I'd never heard of anything like it. It had all the details that I later found in traditions all over the world. I heard footsteps, I sensed a terrifying presence. I saw it climb up on the bed. I couldn't move. I thought I was being killed. It was terrifying. I never told anybody about it, cos I didn't want anyone to think I was crazy.

'And then years later, when I got to Newfoundland, and I came across The Old Hag Experience, I thought "What's going on here? How can these people have a tradition about what happened to me in a completely different country?"

'I just had to follow it.'

Hufford discovered that whilst Sleep Paralysis might account for people who felt pressure on the chest, it could not account for people who felt it on other parts of their body.

Mr Hufford, again.

'It's common during Sleep Paralysis for people to report pressure on the chest. This could be caused by paralysis of the voluntary muscles involved in breathing. But sometimes the pressure is on other places. I've heard people say they've felt their head being pushed down through the bed. Other people said it was pressing on their feet so hard they thought their legs would be broken. I would like these explanations, if we're going to buy them, to really line up with the data consistently. So far, these don't.'

To deal with attacks, not just on individuals, but on whole communities, we travel next to the exotic climes of Pemba Island, off the East Coast of Africa.

Residents here claim they have been plagued by a mysterious Entity, they call the Popabowa, for more than a decade. They look to pages culled from The Koran, for protection.

One witness, an old man in his seventies, recalls; *'I was asleep, but I felt something in the room with me. All the doors in my house were locked. I don't know how it got into my house. It wanted to rape me. When I woke up...I found semen on my back.*

'I think it was a Shaatan. A bad spirit. A Devil.'

Meanwhile, another much younger man relates how *'the shadow came through the wall. It was walking towards me. It was threatening.'*

And a third witness, a nearly toothless individual in his mid-50's, says *'The Entity came into my house. It came to me...I was paralysed. It tried to squeeze my throat. I could not breathe.*

'The villagers began to complain. We went to catch the Popabawa. We could not find it anywhere.'

Perhaps it has taken refuge in the East Village area of New York City...

For it's here that Ted Fillpone, 25, has been repeatedly attacked by a particularly vicious Entity, a series of assaults that have apparently been witnessed by independent observers.

Ted's been so affected by these attacks, that he is unable to hold down a regular job and as the visitations occur on a nightly basis, he's unable to sleep most of the time, terrified of what he might see emerging from the darkness at the edge of his bed.

With no one else to turn to, Ted decided to go to the Catholic Church, and seek refuge in the hostel run by Father Pat Maloney, who claims to have witnessed the phenomena for himself.

'There was one particular time...Ted seemed to be very upset.

Not so much agitated, as fearful. He said "Look, it's at me again. It's bothering me." I said "What is bothering you?"

I sat in the corner about a foot away, then I got just a little bit closer, and I felt an immediate a type of vibration. A physical presence of some kind. And yet, I did not feel that whatever was bothering Ted was malevolent. It was as if he were attracting some force. Something outside our dimension.'

Ted's girlfriend, the very lovely Ines Changanaki, relates the following;

'I was sitting on a couch watching TV, and I was facing the bathroom door, and the bathroom door was open and I saw some type of greyish silhouette walking out of the bathroom. You couldn't really define a shape, male or female, it was just a silhouette, but very tall, cloudy greyish, and it was walking towards Ted's bedroom.'

David Hufford is back on screen again; *'In a way, every case is sort of remarkable, and are highly strange. The ones though that really just AMAZE me are the ones where more than one person is involved: Where one person is having the Sleep Paralysis, and hearing something and seeing something, and somebody else in the house sees or hears the same thing at the same time, even though they are not having Sleep Paralysis.*

'How do you account for that? I'm just baffled.'

Equally perplexed, is Father Maloney, who, at his wit's end (and in all likelihood is probably more concerned with making sure his Bobby Charlton-style comb-over lookd the (ahem) part on screen), calls in, with the help of the programme-makers, a 'professional Demonologist' named Lou Gentile. A practising Catholic, Gentile claims to have helped many people in Ted's situation.

'Demonology is the study of Fallen Angels. It's the study of things that are Evil,' Lou informs us helpfully. 'I come across cases that are Evil, malevolent, Demonic, or diabolical on a monthly basis.

'In a month I may get five or six cases that truly have activity that can only be described as Evil.'

Lou and his assistant meet Ted at the hostel and interview him extensively, in a bid to determine whether the attacks have a psychological or supernatural origin.

Lou asks Ted whether he's ever taken drugs of any kind, including hallucinogens (eg; acid), and whether he's ever suffered from Tourette's Syndrome, personality disorders, or narcolepsy. To all of these questions, Ted answers in the negative (well, he's hardly likely to admit to any illegal drug-taking on camera now, is he? Cyncial Ed).

Courtesy of some snazzy speed-frame photography, night falls swiftly, like a black curtain over the facade of the hostel.

Lou is convinced, after a gruelling, two hour interview, that Ted's case warrants further investigation. Along with his colleague, they set up fairly sophisticated video and audio recording equipment both in an upstairs bedroom and in Ted's room, the plan being to record any discernible unusual activity should Ted suffer an attack.

Nothing happens for what seems like the longest time, and to be fair, the makers of the programme do a good job of creating an atmosphere of barely repressed tension with some suitably eerie music on the soundtrack and lots of POV shots of Lou and his assistant and of Ted lying motionless in his bed.

And then, Ted's feet start kicking out at an invisible something, and he appears to wake up, raising his head from the pillow and, although we don't actually hear him say it, Lou informs us that Ted said something grabbed his leg.

Lou immediately springs into action, taking with him portable dictaphones in order, he hopes, to record any EVP (Electromagnetic Voice Phenomena) present in the room.

Lou speaks directly into the infra red camera; *'Since Ted's claiming that something touched him and actually pulled his leg, I'm going to sit by him, I'm going to be asking some questions on the recorder, and see what we get.'*

While we wait for any such revelations, the scene is intercut with footage of an earlier interview with Ted in broad daylight. *'I've tried communicating with It,'* he says, *'and not only did I not receive a reply, the assaults got more intensified within ten minutes of asking.'*

I guess somebody should have told Lou, because, back in the darkness of hostel, he's busy firing away queries, like there's no tomorrow.

'Beginning of EVP, July 30th, 2001, at precisely 2:45am.'

'If there is a spirit around us now, please tell me your name on the recorder.'

'Are you a spirit that is out of the light of God?'

'Please release whatever has been performed on Ted.'

'I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.'

'End of recording.'

There is no audible response to any of these questions, but this doesn't surprise Lou any. It's only when the tape recording is played back that we hear something unusual and not a little chilling. In the wake of each of Lou's questions, the tape seems to emit a series of weird noises. In response to the query *'Is there a spirit around us now?'* we can discern what sounds unnervingly like scratching or worse, the grunting of some sort of wild animal. This increases in volume with the question *'Are you a spirit out of the light of God?'* and, with repeated viewing, it seems that a voice is speaking. I'm sure I can hear the words *'Read (or is it 'leave?') the tape!'* on the recording, followed by a burst of diabolical laughter whilst another whispered voice repeats faintly *'read the tape.'*

And finally, when Gentile intones the name of Jesus, he's all but drowned out by what can only be described as the strangled, ear-splitting roar of the completely insane...

Lou is remarkably calm about the, quite frankly, bowel-loosening recording, claiming that the sound that we've just heard *'in some people's minds, could be portrayed as*

static discharge. To me that's ridiculous, because I've heard the things scream blasphemies in people's houses, and they've called people's names, people who aren't even a part of the case.

'What you heard is as real as it gets.'

The programme makers decided to have the tape analysed by forensic 'experts.' They suggested that the only way similar sounds could be created would be from rubbing the microphone or through a remote receiver, neither of which were apparent during Lou's investigation.

With the coming of the dawn, Lou tells Ted his opinion about what he thinks is going on here.

It transpires that Mr Gentile believes that the Entity is engaged upon a mission to try and drive a wedge between Ted and his faith in God. *'You need to reaffirm your faith,'* Lou assures him. *'These are nothing but scare tactics They're going to poke you. They're going to prod you. They're going to hit you. But they're not going to get completely violent because somewhere in your heart you do have faith.'*

'So if I lose more faith, they're gonna get more violent?' Ted asks anxiously, although you suspect he already knows the answer.

'Yes'

'Oh great,' Ted turns to face the wall in a gesture of fearful desperation.

'All I want is to sleep peacefully, without always sleeping with one eye open, looking out of the corner of my eye, opening, closing, opening, closing, just to see if there's an Entity in the room. I question myself "Why is this happening? Why can't it just stop?"'

Lou believes that only a return to the Church can put an end to the Demonic manifestations and physical harassment.

The programme's final case, is perhaps the most bizarre of all. It concerns a man who hails from Monticello, Arkansas, USA, who believes he is actually possessed by an otherworldly Entity.

The man's long-suffering partner, Monica Forrest, opens the account by stating that she thinks her boyfriend, Cody McKee is possessed because when he's awake he's not violent *'and he just don't look like himself when he's having a Night Terror. And he don't sound like himself.'*

'He has a terrifying holler. His eyes have a glazed look. They just don't look like him.'

There follows a disturbing sequence of footage secretly filmed by a hidden camera during one of this man's attacks. Lying apparently asleep on the living room couch, he suddenly throws aside the single blanket and suddenly leaps to his feet, emitting an animalistic roar as he heads for the living room door.

We then switch to bright daylight, and Cody, 26, is seen pushing one of his two children on the back garden swing, looking every bit the doting father, with not a care in the world. He accepts that as a child, he had something of a violent upbringing, but that with the passing of time, he has managed to put his past firmly behind him. Cody's only problem now, is the ever-present threat of the Night Terrors. He cannot recall, the next morning, what it was he'd seen, or in fact any precise detail of what the experience entailed.

His family however, have had seven years of sleepless nights, worrying about what Cody might do whilst in his 'possessed' state.

Cody tells the narrator; *'I really can't recall any of it. It's like I go to sleep, I wake up, and I don't know what I did, or what made me do what I've done. I just feel like something jumped in my body and made me go crazy.'*

Monica shows the camera some of the damage Cody has caused to the doors of one of the bedroom's, holes that appear to be the result of powerful punches by a man consumed by rage.

Cody's also knocked holes through walls, and stuck his hands in electric fans, and lost the tip of his toe when violently kicking at a wainscott.



Cody has one, somewhat vague memory of one of these Night Terror incidents; *The only night that I can say it actually felt like something jumped inside of me and took over my body, was the night that I jumped out of the window. When I came too, behind my Daddy's car, I heard somebody say "I'll see you later, Cody."*

Then I started walking back up towards the trailer, and that's when I realised that I'd done something to myself and I saw I was cut head to toe. I had sixty or seventy stitches.'

Not surprisingly, Monica can recall those particular events clearly, too. *'It looked to me like someone threw him out the window because he did it from a dead stand. He just went out. He hollered and went out the window.'*

And it's not just Cody who has been hospitalised by these night attacks. Monica once had her nose broken when she tried to prevent her boyfriend from going towards her child whilst he was in a 'possessed' state. She attempted to grab hold of him to wake him up and was struck fully in the face by Cody's arm. The injury was so bad a bone protruded from the top of her nose. In the aftermath of that incident, Monica wisely decided not to sleep in the same room as Cody and began locking her bedroom door at night. Not only that, but she's been forced to place items in front of the door, such as a heavy bed and a bulky dressing table, in order to keep him out.

Her loyalty may surprise many readers of this review, but Monica has chosen to stand by her boyfriend for better or worse. They were unable to afford medical assistance, but the programme-makers arranged for Cody to attend a sleep clinic to see whether they could they could explain his nocturnal awakenings. The couple travel to the Baptist Health Medical Centre, where they are introduced to Dr David Davila, who elects to take on the case. He tells the cameras;

This is the most extreme case of sleep-walking and Night Terrors that I've seen. This is the first one that we've had here at our centre of this magnitude. '

Other doctors assemble to study Cody's brain activity and muscle tone as well as recording him sleeping using infra-red cameras and sound monitoring equipment.

With a whole collection of gadgets and wires stuck to his bandaged head, Cody attempts to get a restful nights sleep while the cameras roll.

During the first night of monitoring, Cody wakes up, apparently scared out of his wits. Eyes bulging, mouth wide open in a soundless scream, his face is contorted into such an ugly mask of terror, he doesn't even look like himself.

The EEG machine tells the watching doctors that Cody is still in deep sleep and not dreaming. Which kind of begs the question, what is provoking the all-too apparent fear transforming Cody's features?

The next morning, Dr Davila asks Cody whether he remembers anything from the night before, and he replies in the negative.

All he can say, as he views the video footage, in hushed tones of awe, is *'it looks wicked to see me eyes open like that. I mean, it just don't look like me...Really.'*

Dr Davila tries to drum up a rational explanation; *'With his eyes darting around it's kind of hard to know whether he's actually seeing anything or not. He doesn't have any recall of opening his eyes. He doesn't have any recall of seeing anything frightening, although he looks frightened.'*

'In Cody's case, we cannot find a specific trigger. So he is a mystery in that sense. And we cannot determine what is going on in his mind.'

'For some reason he is fighting to get into wakefulness and alertness, and literally fighting his way into that.'

'I believe Cody is suffering from an extreme form of sleepwalking that occurs during the deepest stages of his sleep. But what Cody actually sees, or why he is driven to such violence, still remains a mystery.'

Cody, needless to say, is less than impressed with the doctor's diagnosis.

'They haven't given me a reason why I do it. They haven't told me 'cos they don't know why I do it, or what causes it. All they know is that they can put me on medication and maybe that'll stop it. And you know, I hope to God it does. I hope I can rest at night and sleep and not hurt anybody or myself.'

At the time the programme was due to be aired, Cody had been taking the medication for three months. Although his attacks have reduced in number, they still occur and are as unpredictable and violent as ever.

At the programme's conclusion, the narrator sums up by saying; *'For many, who suffer from nocturnal assaults, their testimony is evidence of an experience that is still not fully understood.'*

David Hufford adds his voice; *'I've seen lots of different explanations offered as THE scientific explanation of this phenomenon. In general, in fact all of them that I know of, do not fit the data of the experience well. Now maybe someday, people will be able to get to the point where they really do fit well. But I do think that it's not fair to people's experience and people's understanding of this sort of thing, to take a loose, sloppy, hypothetical scientific explanation, and to hear "Oh well, at least it's scientific. We ought to accept it."*

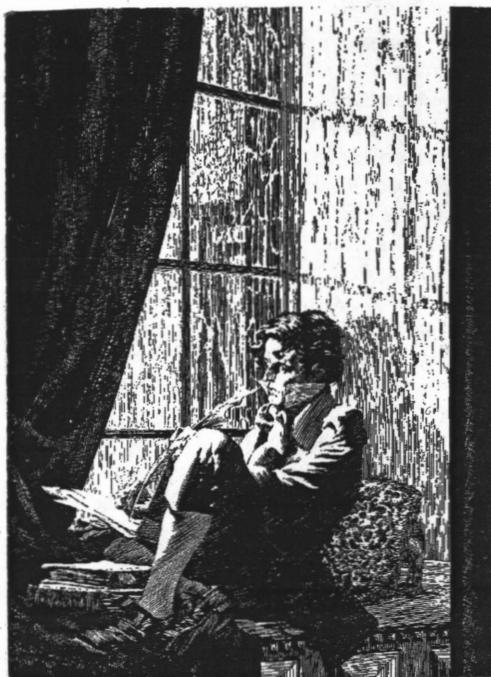
'No, that's not right. It ought to really account for what needs to be accounted for. None of them do yet. Good luck, everybody, keep working on it. But let's not claim that it's been done.'

Whether or not science will one day be in a position to offer an acceptable to all parties-type explanation for these nocturnal attacks is unclear. But as the narrator points out, just before the final credits roll; *'What IS clear is those that suffer will continue to live in fear of what lurks on the other side of sleep.'*

Reviewed By Lee Walker 22nd April, 2002

Over InThe Mercyland

Most of the glossy magazines for Nigerians in London devoted pages, covers and headlines to the kingly funeral of Samuel Bilewu Oshoffa. This took place in the Autumn of 1985. Oshoffa was the founder and the leader of The Celestial Church of Christ, or 'Cele' for short. This has become the archtypical Yoruba church, its 'parishes' spread across the world, wherever Nigerian Yorubas have made their homes. 'Papa,' as Oshoffa was known, was born in the Republic of Benin in 1909. His mother's forebears had been kidnapped from what is now Southern Nigeria, by fierce Dahomean warriors, during a Nineteenth Century tribal war.



Although brought up in Benin, Oshoffa always felt an affinity with Nigeria. His grandmother had taken him to the Nigerian village Imeko, in Ogun State, to see where he might have lived if the Adubi War had never happened. Oshoffa never forgot this trip. It was to Imeko that Oshoffa's coffin was borne by an entourage of thousands marching and singing in procession from Lagos City Hall, where his body had first been laid in state. Trumpeters preceded the coffin, and women hurt themselves in the struggle to touch the holy casket.

Now Imeko has been declared a Celestial City, bearing the shrine of Oshoffa. For all this, Oshoffa never declared himself to be God, merely God's servant. He was especially venerated by hunters, who sang their traditional songs as the procession advanced. The name 'Oshoffa' derives from that of a magic standing stone that was worshipped in the prophet's family compound in Benin. Today a plaque in Oshoffa's memory stands beside the stone. Attempts by Beninois to 'kidnap' the body for burial in Benin where thwarted. As the prophet was laid to rest in Imeko, an unexpected eclipse of the Moon occurred.

The young Oshoffa had first realised his mission in life when exploring the forests of Benin by canoe, in search of ebony. 'AFRICAN CONCORD' magazine published a first-hand account of his vision.

'When I opened my eyes, I saw a white monkey with two teeth each on top and bottom, with winged hands and feet like those of a bat. When it wanted to fly, it flapped its wings forward. But it was stationary.'

In a trance-like state, Oshoffa then cured his canoe-paddler of a stomach ache by laying his hand on the affected part. In terror, the cured paddler ran away, leaving Oshoffa stranded in the 'bush,' unable to paddle his own canoe. It was three months and many visions later before he was finally rescued. From this strange beginning, an empire of churches has been created, and there are branches in London, Paris and New York.

The best-known English 'Cele' is in Clouesley Square, Islington, where an historic Barry Church has been leased to the sect. This is Holy Trinity, completed in 1828, an elegant neo-Gothic masterpiece that compliments the grandiose dwellings of the Square. Nowadays, the church is full of dancing white-robed figures, and African hand-drums vie with trumpets, electric guitars and conventional drumkits for the worshipper's attention. Hourglass-shaped 'speaking drums,' bound with palm fronds and carried under one arm, are hit repeatedly with hooked drumsticks. Some of the robed figures are known as 'war leaders' and can be possessed by 'warrior angels.' Here I was told that Oshoffa's death had been announced by an eclipse of the Sun, not Moon, as reported, and that a power-struggle over his successor might ensue.

A typical Celestial service at Clouesley Square begins with clouds of incense and the spraying of Holy Water. The rest of the worshippers, already changed into their white robes or 'soutanes' wait in their dressing rooms and given permission to enter and worship. Women wait in a room to the left of the entrance, men to the right. This separation continues inside the main building, where the sexes are separated by the aisle that leads to the gorgeously decorated altar, aglow with candles, patterns of tiles, and a neon sign that reads 'Mimo,' the Yoruba word for 'holy.' Large 'garden centre' ornamental white vases are abrim with flowers.

Shoes are left on shelves outside, and once the service has begun, the worshippers kneel and rest their foreheads on the wall-to-wall carpet. The rows of prostrate white-robed barefoot figures would not look out of place in a mosque. Women wield considerable power in the church, and similarities to Islam are superficial.

All the pews have been removed and replaced by foldable chairs. Songs and sermons alternate between the English and Yoruba languages.

Celestial music combines all the glories of early jazz and gospel music. Louis Armstrong meets Mahalia Jackson, but the English translations of Yoruba songs seem odd, to my ears, at least.

*'Jesus turns my sorrow to joy,
He erases all my sadness!
He sees me as a great sinner;
Long life, resounding health!'*

A long Yoruba song, to the rhythm of speaking drums and conga drums, ends in a flourish of organ music and muted trumpets. The next song, 'I Will Enter His Courts,' is well-known to all members of West Indian and English evangelical churches.

*'He will make me glad, He will make me glad,
I shall rejoice for He will make me glad!'*

Music over, for the time being, the church settles down comfortably for the Preacher's sermon. The story of Daniel in the Lion's Den, followed by a spiritual message.

'Yes, the lion's jaws were locked by Angels, and Daniel was unharmed! Let me talk to you about Angels. There are many kinds of Angels. Perhaps you have heard of Seraphims. The Seraphims are the Messengers Of God. Each Seraphim has six wings. Six! Yet they only need two to fly with. What do they do with their other four wings? They use them at all times to cover their faces before God! God is such a shining light, they cannot see Him; they are not worthy. And if

Seraphim are not worthy, what are we? At all times they are ready, eyes covered in case God should call them. We should learn from the Seraphim...

Half an hour later, the 'Message' ends, a song is sung and the chairs are cleared away and stacked against the walls. At the Preacher's orders, everybody faces the north, south, west and east in turn, arms raised to the chant of 'Jehovah! Holee! Jesus Christ! Saint Michael! Holee!'

An usher goes around proffering a large wooden collection box on a long handle, a candle burning in a built-in holder. Candles are sacred here, and deemed very pleasing to God. Silver trays are placed on the floor, beside the aisle, and members who choose to do so put money in these. Collections are popular, perhaps because of a feeling that a grateful God always answers prayers. And there is so much to pray for - jobs, health, passports, visa extensions, exam passes and, above all, children, or 'Fruits of the Womb.' Crowds gather around candle-sellers, and to the music of the jazz band, candle-offers crocodile in line up to the altar, swinging their bodies in time to the rhythm, singing loudly in Yoruba all the while. When the altar seems ablaze with lit candles in holders, the people crocodile back, still singing as drums thud and trumpet soar. Once more, the four corners of the church and the world are loudly saluted: 'Holee!'

When the main service is over, men and women mingle and chat, and small groups from here and there beneath the slender Gothic columns of the attractively designed church. These groups pray, prophecy, wave holy wands and conduct miniature ceremonies under the direction of men or women prophets. Others take fruit from the altar and stroll around eating. Just such a scene may have been witnessed by visitors to Stonehenge at the close of a great ceremony, thousands of years ago. Do the great columns recall the standing-stone in Oshoffa's compound in far away Benin?

A big, vigorous old lady takes her small grandson by the hand up to the table where sits the stern but fair figure of the Preacher, Father Peter. Together with the frail, timid child, she kneels silently before the Preacher, holding a burning candle, as she seeks a boon.

'Father Peter, my grandson is sick and weak,' she says, when given permission to speak. Gravely, the Preacher anoints the five year old's head with olive oil from a bottle, then makes a wax cross on top of his head with a dripping candle.

'Young man, you must be good in church, then God will not punish and you will grow up strong,' he warns the child.

Meanwhile, fervent prayers are taking place at a church sandpit placed near the altar, with low brick walls to keep the sand in place. In Nigeria, services are held facing the sea on sacred beaches. Church sand pits are consecrated as Mercylands, or indoor beaches. Here candles are placed in saucers on the sand, and prayers have extra potency. Prophets call out the names of the various types of prayer.

'Fruits of the Womb!' is roared in a custermanger's bellow, and men and women who long for children hurry over to Mercyland.

Sometimes the playful children who scamper around the church are rounded up by strict Shepherdesses, herded into Mercyland and commanded to 'Pray!'

Obediently they do so, kneeling with eyes closed and heads nuzzled into the sand, while adults crowd and lean over the wall to watch and encourage them.

Nigerians in England who admit to a belief in their traditional pre-Christian and pre-Moalem gods are few indeed. One that I met, a mini-cab driver and devotee of Ogun, god of iron and war, fiercely dismissed Christianity as the imposition of 'colonial masters.'

He spoke warmly of the gods of the land, sea and air, of Oduduwa, the mythical founder of the powerful Yoruba tribe (or nation), and of Yoruba kings past and present.

'Worshippers of the Sea God pray on beaches, all robed in white,' he told me.

I reached my destination, paid him and could hear no more.

Nevertheless, a trace of the Sea God's influence could be felt in Oshoffa's Celestial Church of Christ. Did Oshoffa consciously decide to worship Christ in a Yoruba style, borrowing from pre-Christian traditions? Whether or not he did so, his Celestial Church of Christ has achieved such a blend of traditions, one that is immensely satisfying to Yoruba worshippers who now feel that the Christian God is truly their own.

When a bewildered non-Yoruba visitor from Angola asked Father Peter if 'the old Gods' were worshipped at 'Cele,' he met with a firm reply.

'We are Christians!'

Together with broadcaster Michael Tunde, a Yoruba intellectual, I attended a Naming Ceremony at the Cloudesley Square 'Cele.' Such ceremonies, corresponding to Church Of England christenings, are traditional to the Yoruba people. In the Church Of England, the significant moment of the child-welcoming ceremony, is the splash of Holy Water on the baby's head. Only then, to an orthodox believer, is the child's soul secure from harm, as a member of the Church. Among Yorubas, both Pagan and Celestial Christian, the conferring of the name is the crucial moment. Only at that moment of nomenclature does the child truly become a Yoruba or a Heaven-protected member of the Celestial Church of Christ, with his or her own soul or individuality.

We arrived during the formal part of the service, before the Ceremony had begun. Rows of foldable chairs still lined the church, and we took our seats. As Father Peter concluded his sermon, I could hear the man sitting behind me whispering about a friend of theirs who had been deported to Nigeria, an almost weekly occurrence in these anti-immigrant days. Pity was tempered with amusement at the deported one's folly in getting caught.

As usual, once the chairs had been cleared away, the atmosphere grew more African and relaxed. Glorious Celestial music played, a girl group singing in shrill Yoruba as drums and guitars boomed and rang, and clave-players expertly cracked their criss-crossed sticks. Throughout the Ceremony, in singing and in preaching, Yoruba and English were used alternately. White robed Shepherds and elders of the church swayed in unison.

When the musicians subsided, all had been made ready, a desk with chairs placed in the central aisle. Most of the aisle, from the desk to the altar, had been piled with delicious-looking fresh fruit, great bunches of bananas, grapes, apples, pineapples and coconuts. Prophetess Skerritt, a pale, freckled West Indian convert, sat in her white robes at the desk, holding the yet un-named baby in her arms. Only eight days old, the required age for the ceremony, the little fluffy-headed girl seemed anxious, bereft of her mother. Her father sat near the Prophetess, but her mother would be deemed unclean for forty days after giving birth. The equally-anxious mother stood outside in the hall, peeping like a woman barred from visiting her child in a fever hospital.

Over on the women's side of the aisle, relatives of the parents stood against the wall, dressed in the fantastic colours and silvery headwraps of fashionable Nigeria. On our more sober side of the aisle, Michael Tunde and myself also stayed in the rear, as only those who wear the white 'soutane' have complete freedom to move around while a service is going on.

Prophetess Skerritt now arose and held the baby aloft, a little bundle in white. Three prophets and three prophetesses stood close by. It was a dramatic moment. Like the Faeries at the christening of the Sleeping Beauty, the prophets and prophetesses prayed that the baby girl might be gifted with Wisdom, Prosperity and Health. No wicked Faerie appeared to

mar the scene, but the new Sleeping Beauty awoke and cried dismally for a minute or two. Prophetess Skerritt soon calmed her. 'Prophets' and 'Prophetesses' were no empty titles, but apt descriptions of church leaders trained in psychic powers.

None but the Prophets and Prophetesses knew the name God would confer upon the tiny scrap of mortality held in Prophetess Skerritt's arms. In the Celestial Church, parents and relatives do not choose names for their children, but first hear the name with happy surprise at the Ceremony.

A tall, impressive Prophet unrolled a scroll of parchment worthy of any Royal Proclamation, and read aloud in English: *'The child's name is Mary Adelekan!'*

Relatives gasped in wonderment. Several more names were added as the scroll unrolled. The Prophet announced *'Mary'* as *'Merry'* some of the time. A metal tray was brought forward, containing sugar, honey and salt. Sugar and honey were placed on the child's lips to the cry of *'May your life be sweet!'*

Next, the tall Prophet dipped his finger in the salt and placed a grain or two on Mary's mouth.

'Salt is for preservation! May you also be preserved from all harm!' he boomed.

Overjoyed, the father gave a cheer, then leaped into the air with a shout of 'Hallelujah!' Unable to contain herself, Mary's mother burst open the church doors and also cried 'Hallelujah!' in response, her eyes shining. Several members laughed sympathetically. The mother had only leant forward, and had not set foot in the church, so all was well. Mary Adelekan now definitely existed in the eyes of God, and the main part of the ceremony was over.

Loud, exciting music burst out anew, with the thud of palms on drums, and men and women alike began a bouncy, half-crouched Jack-knifing dance. Walls of Yoruba gospel music rang out from the band, song after song, with an occasional chorus in English. *'Michael, Row the Boat Ashore, Hallelujah!'*

Father Peter walked up and down, scattering Holy Water.

Women appeared from somewhere behind the scenes with tray after tray of hot food. Michael Tunde and I had cans of fizzy drink pressed on us.

'If you must go, have your rice and meat in Chinese style,' a kindly woman in a yellow sash urged Michael, handing him a hot takeaway carton.

'Refusal would be a great insult,' he whispered as we left. *'When I was named as a baby, in traditional pre-Christian style, a cola nut was broken for my prophecy. Cola-nuts are important to most Yorubas, but to the Celestial Church people they are an abomination, like alcohol. Most non-Celestial Naming Ceremonies have cola nuts served and plenty of gin and whisky, but Celestials get fruit instead. Palm oil is sacred to most Yorubas, but Celestials regard it as Pagan and use olive oil at ceremonies. Only in the Celestial Church do children get surprise names from God at the Naming Ceremony. Parents and relatives usually choose children's names, all over Nigeria. In England, nearly all Nigerian parents are afraid that their children will grow up as Jamaicans, as the Jamaican influence is so strong in British schools.'*

'All the children at Cloudesley Square talk like Jamaicans, unless they've just come over from Nigeria,' I said. *'White children and Indian children become Jamaicanised too - it's just part of London life.'*

'Well, Nigerians are scared as Hell about this!'

Later, back at 'Cele,' I asked why a baby had to be Named when it was eight days old.

'Turn to your Bible and read Luke Chapter Two, verse Twenty One,' came the reply.

'And then eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the Angel before he was conceived in the womb.'

Where Romford Road leads traffic from the East End to the dreary north eastern suburbs of London, there stands a large red brick Victorian church. A thick-set tower with windows shoots up from one corner of the somewhat misshapen churchm lending it the air of a school crossed with a fire station. Inside, it has been newly refurbished, with shiny pinewood floors on several levels, a kitchen, a dance floor (for services) and even a minstrels' gallery. Ever since the Grand Official Re-opening and Dedication in September, 1993, the church has been known as the *'Ultra Modern Cathedral Church,'* of the Celestial Church of Christ. The official name of the church is *'Seventh Year Parish,'* because God provided a place seven years after Oshoffa died.

Mastermind and guiding spirit behind this church is Doctor Reverend Captain I. A. Haastrup, the Evangelist-in-Charge. A big, forceful, energetic man, Rev. Haastrup is a former ship's captain and also captain of several industries and businesses in the neighbourhood of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. These include the Concord Holiday and Health Farm Resort Ltd., the Haastrup Line, the Haastrup Industries, Ltd., Haasoil Independent Marketers and Haastrup Communications Ltd. As ambitious in the spiritual as in the commercial realm, he spends much of his time in the East End, pastoring his church. The church had been opened with immense ceremony, the official Scissor Bearer cutting a tape across the doorway. The Dedication service lasted a week, some of the worshippers sweeping on the premises.

I looked on the third day of the Dedication, and was presented to Rev. Haastrup with great formality. Fellow-Celestials treated him with (ahem) reverence, ducking and bowing. Since S.B. Oshoffa died, the affairs of the Celestial Church of Christ have been in turmoil. The Leader of the Church is now Reverend A.A. Bada, said to be Oshoffa's named successor. However, some Celestials hold this in dispute. Very keen to show he was a peacemaker, Haastrup invited Bada and his contestants for the Celestial crown to take part in the Dedication ceremonies. The Leader could not make it, but Oshoffa's son, Evangelist Ebenezer, was present, together with other Celestial bigwigs. Oshoffa's widow, Superior Senior Prophet Elizabeth, had been invited, but sent her apologies.

Enormous hot meals of rice and meat were being served when I arrived, and church ladies competed with one another in carrying the tastiest portions in bowls to Rev. Haastrup. So the Rev. was in great spirits when we met. With his floppy velvet Tudor hat, small chin-beard and impressive stature, he reminded me of a Nigerian Henry VIII with spectacles. To my regret, I found I had missed the strangest Dedication ceremony, a service held around an empty coffin draped in flags, the coffin symbolising the death and Ascension to Heaven of the Prophet Oshoffa.

'We kept the coffin a secret, because if it were known, every Celestial member in England would be here, and the place would be too crowded,' I was told.

In the dining room, there was a roar of conversation, and my eyes were dazzled by the colourful dresses and head-ties of the women. Musical instruments were heaped in a corner, tentatively practised on by small children. One bright-eyed boy beat out a rhythmic tattoo on the conga drums. Carrying my shoes, I sidled through the crowds to the small shoe room, whose floor was lined with footwear. Padding about in my socks, as church custom decreed, I explored the modernised interior of the former Methodist Church. Steps led here and there, the polished floors gleamed and the minstrel's gallery awaited the musicians and Holy Motown girl group. When these came on, the service started. I took my seat beneath a ceiling hung with blue and white balloons, and tried to join in the singing.

*'Little ants give thanks to God,
Sand of sea shore offer thanks.'*

Let us also give our thanks!

Hallelujah to the Lord!

He takes care of every ant.'

Many of the songs and messages were in Yoruba, but at least two thirds of the Dedication that day was in English. At a meeting on the previous day, I learned, somebody had prophesied that the cars parked outside in the road ought to be blessed. People had run out of the church, scattered Holy Water on the cars, and made wax crosses of candle grease on the windscreens. Unaware that their cars had been so honoured, the good-humoured Cockneys of Romford Road must have scratched their heads in puzzlement when they returned to find their vehicles wet and X-marked. I explained the mystery to one Cockney family, and they took it in good part. Cars belonging to church members had been driven over lit candles planted in the road, for an extra blessing.

Welcoming Superior Evangelist P.H.Ajose, a big jolly moustaciod man in crimson robes, Reverend Haastrup had this to say,

"Our preacher is Bada's representative! After the death of Prophet Oshoffa, our Founder, people have been trying to divide the Celestial Church. But the Church should remain one! Every religion finds itself included in the Celestial Church! Moslems and Roman Catholics are invited on the first Thursday of every month. You will see that some members are lying on the floor, under sheets, with candles burning. They seek Healing, so we shall leave them as we proceed, and just let the Angels do the work."

After reading several verses from the Book of Jeremiah, Evangelist Ajose delivered a resounding blow against the sin of Murder.

'Murderers are vile, they are wicked, they are Anti-Christ, they...they are killers!' he exclaimed passionately. Criminals of all kinds were condemned equally, and the man next to me grew uneasy. He had kindly offered to share his hymn book with me.

'Excuse me, I must go outside, I saw some white youths standing near my car,' he muttered.

As the music played, two long lines of men and women in white danced to the altar bearing silver trays piled high with fruit, coconuts, oranges, pineapples, grapes and bananas. This delicious offering, or sacrifice, was later eaten by the congregation who sat around on the floor and feasted joyously. Some of the women had beautiful lace patterns on their soutanes, a sign of superior rank. 'Celestial' is a heirarchical church with many grades of Shepherd and Prophet. Lace-bearers are known as Lace Superior Sisters.

While speeches, prayers and Yoruba songs followed one another, my eyes kept straying to a large coffin-like object covered by a white cloth. Could it be another empty coffin? At last the mystery was solved, as a statuesque Shepherdess ceremoniously removed the cloth to reveal a large cake! It was shaped like an open book, covered in icing, with messages on both 'pages,' written in blue icing on white. Oshoffa's name headed each page. More speeches were made over the cake, both in Yoruba and in English, and then church dignitaries were invited to cut. First the men and then the women gravely cut neat slices out of the cake with a silver wedding-cake trowel, and ate them with evident enjoyment. The Celestial Church of Christ could almost be called a gourmet church, with a kitchen that is always busy. No wonder the women's headwear resembles chef's hats. Such enjoyment has a serious, symbolic side, for everyone grew solemn when the name 'Oshoffa' was finally sliced up and swallowed.

A glorious throaty trumpet sounded above the soulful organ and insistent drums, as the hymn 'Jehovah, Omibu Ore' was sung from a song-sheet. I mimed along with the rest, in good School Assembly fashion, and suddenly realised that the words had become English: 'Jehovah The Benefactor.'

Thou who did pass Thy order to

Birds of the air to traffic in

Delicious bread and flesh indeed

For Prophet Elijah.

By Jordan River, hearken unto us

Who call up Thy name.

To make provision for our daily needs

In ways mysterious for Thy chosen one,

King in rich abundance!"

Redolent of mystery and hunger, the song wailed on from a thousand throats, like a choral 'free form' blues. Three trumpets weaved and bobbed, seemingly trying to outdo one another in a 'cutting contest' - not cake-cutting, but competitive jazz-playing of the kind once heard among the saxophone players of Kansas City. I later found that each trumpeter represented a different church. Even if they were trying to outdo one another, the effect was one of glorious harmony. No such trumpet music, with a 'gospel voice,' has been heard since the last heady days of the jazz era in America.

The evening ended with an exchange of voices, or chants, between the whole congregation and the band. Sometimes the congregation seemed to chant a question in Yoruba and receive a musical reply. At other times they made a triumphant statement, capped by one yet more triumphant from the musicians. With swollen cheeks, the musicians blew notes that no doubt corresponded to the chanted words, for Yoruba is a tonal language. In Yoruba tradition, drum-playing imitates speech and can send messages for miles - the 'bush telegraph.' Then came a collection, the Benediction and the saluting of the four corners of the church, with seven 'Hallelujahs' for each corner.

Afterwards, I wandered around in my socks and admired the grotto-like Mercyland, with its figure of the Virgin Mary standing over a sandpit, or holy beach, in prayerful attitude.

This outdoor Mercyland resembled an aquarium, as it had been enclosed by transparent perspex around the vestry's French windows. I peered through the glass at Mary on the sacred sand. It is said, in 'Cele,' that if you light a candle and pray seven times in Mrecyland, God will answer any request.

Ever since I recieved a Celestial Church Prophecy, or holy fortune-telling, I had wondered how the Church Prophets and Prophetesses were trained. Before I left, I asked Rev. Haastrup about this.

'Future Prophets and Prophetesses are made to hold small objects,' he told me. *'Then the chief examining Prophet asks each member of the group to tell him what the others are holding. Some get it wrong - that's because they are controlled by the wrong spirits! The Prophet keeps on asking people, once they are "in the spirit," in a spirit-filled trance, and some get right answers because the spirits are from God. Others keep on being wrong, because the spirits in them are not from God. When a trainee gets everything right, he or she is a Prophet or Prophetess.'*

In just such a repetitive way did Elizabeth, the 'African Witch' of Joyce Cary's novel, train a little girl novice in the arts of pre-Christian Nigerian magic. Eventually the child's 'outer self,' was worn away and she became psychic, an apt pupil for the formidable Elizabeth. 'The African Witch' was published in the 1930's. Reverend Haastrup would not be amused to see the techniques of his church compared with those of a 'Witch' or fetish priestess.

Some Nigerians do accuse the Celestial Church of Christ of practising Witchcraft. I discovered one of these critics not long ago, thanks to a visit to my friend Chris the Printer.

Chris Thomas is the English name of a tall, good-looking Beninai member of the Celestial Church. I often visit him in his little printer's shop at Haggston, in the East End. Sometimes his two playful young sons are there, making merry as their harrassed father answers phone calls concerning

wedding invitations and business cards. *Thomas Reprographics*' would be a flourishing business if only the customers paid their bills.

When I called there the other day and asked *'How's tricks?'* Chris wearily gestured towards the Board Of Shame. Here, on the wall, he has pinned all his bounced cheques. If only they hadn't been dud, he would be a rich man today. Idly, I scanned the signatures.

'Prince Bankole-Ojo, I read.

'Why, this one's a prince!' I exclaimed. *'You'd think he'd be above bouncing cheques!'*

'Not only a prince - he's a pastor!' Chris told me sadly.

Wishing my friend better luck with his customers in the future, I took a bus up to Ball's Pond Road, and looked into the Africa Video Centre. There, to my surprise, I came across a magazine called *'SOULWINNERS'*. On the cover was a picture of the editor, beaming, bespectacled Pastor Bankole, also known as Reverend Doctor Bankole Ojo, the President of Soulwinners International Christian Missionaries (Worldwide). I glanced through the mag and saw that it was addressed mainly to Nigerians who had grown disillusioned with the Celestial Church of Christ or with similar *'spiritual, white garment churches.'* In all probability, a magazine that attacked Chris Thomas's church had been printed on Chris's own Origina Heidelberg machine completely free of charge! (Later, I now learn that Pastor Bankole has paid up like a gentleman).

In an attack on magic in church, Bankole printed the Testimony of Joseph Olatoye Faluna. Drifting around London, unlucky in jobs and in love, Joseph had sought solutions for his problems in a *'white garment church.'*

Apparently, he had been told to equip himself with candles, cloth, red soil and coins. He had handed two hundred and fifty pounds to a church leader, and was taken to the seaside at night. There, on the deserted beach, both men faced the waves as if in devotion to a sea god. Acting in his mysterious mentor's instructions, Joseph kneeled and prayed.

'As I knelt down, I heard some weird birds making strange noises,' he afterwards wrote in *'SOULWINNERS.'* These birds were probably right-flying seagulls, not supernatural devil-birds as Joseph appeared to imagine. In any case, the prayers did not work, and Joseph's bad luck continued. One day, he met Pastor Bankole, who urged him to accept Jesus. Joseph did so, and according to his testimony, employment and love soon came his way.

An article by Bankole in the same journal showed that magic spells were not regarded by him as nonsense, but as all-too real manifestations of Satan, to be conquered by prayer.

'There is absolutely nothing to fear in Satan and all His works,' Pastor Bankole states, sanguinely. *'Whatever weapon they fashion against you, be it arrow, gun, spear candle (any colour) matches, incense oil, cutleass, hoe, needle, thread, alligator pepper, incantations, night meetings in the trees, in the rivers, in the bush, at the three junctions, in the air, wherever, shall in no way prosper.'*

A lighter note was provided by a joke column.

Teacher: *'What is a Witch or a cannibal?'*

Pupil: *'I don't know, sir'*

Teacher: *'What would you be if you ate your mother and father?'*

Pupil: *'An orphan, sir.'*

Later, I learned that Bankole had once been an Assistant Evangelist in the Celestial Church of Christ, but had broken away to form the Soulwinners Ministry, apparently run on more orthodox Pentecostalist lines. He secured a major coup when enlisted by a 'Black' television crew, who sought to show the Celestial Church as a Devil-worshipping Witchcraft cult. This they did by interspersing shots of innocent Father Peter at the Cloudesley Square 'Cele' with studio montages of frightening Black Magic equipment set up by programme

organisers. Then Bankole came on and roundly accused the Celestial Church of being 'money mad' because members had to pay for holy candles.

The starting-price for such candles is usually twenty pence, but some members believe that the more they pay the more efficacious their prayers may be. Although Father Peter's sermons at 'Cele' may seem strange to English Christians, he and his fellow Leaders are not 'money-mad,' an epithet that more accurately fits white American stadium-hiring evangelists, the television people had sent a spy to Cloudesley Square, who took clandestine film and hid a microphone in the Mercyland sand.



Filled with curiosity, I attended one of Pastor Bankole's meetings at Cissold Road, Stoke Newington. A large, bleak hall, beside a tower block estate, was packed from end to end with excited, happy-looking Nigerians, men in suits and women in bright traditional costume. Probably most of them were Yorubas, as were the preachers and musicians on the stage. Quite a few West Indians and English people were also present, all full of high spirits, leaning forward or bouncing in their seats in favour. On stage, a girl group sang shrilly to the music of keyboards and a drum machine.

I could not dislike Pastor Bankole, a frenetically jolly, tubby, quick-moving, fast-talking man, gleaming with sweat and spectacles, like a fast-forwarding Mr Pickwick. He had little to say on his own account, but appeared to be a build-up man for the star of the evening, Pastor Anwuzia, just over from Nigeria. It was clear that Bankole hero-worshipped Anwuzia, and seemed overjoyed at his good luck in procuring such a speaker.

A roar of applause heralded Anwuzia's appearance. He was a young man, clad in white robes, with a shadowy beard around his chin.

'Here is the Man of God, a man who truly follows Our Lord Jesus Christ, a man you must all listen to - Pastor Anwuzia!' shouted Pastor-Prince Bankole.

'My friends, I have a message, only believe, believe... and wealth shall be yours!' Anwuzia pronounced in thrilling tones. Everyone in the audience went wild at this news, and huge women leaped from their seats, clapping, screaming and ululating. When the applause had died down, Anwuzia explained that wealth could be obtained through Giving.

'Give now, with prayer in your heart, and within one week it shall be returned a thousandfold God will send you the increase! One thousandfold! Just think! Praise the Lord!'

An usher passed up and down the hall with a bucket, into which five, ten and twenty pound notes were thrust rapturously. Another burst of preaching was followed by another bucket, and another, and another. Finally, it was over, and free food was served to the worshippers. I introduced myself to Bankole, who shook my hand cordially, but said that he had no time to talk. Pastor Anwuzia swept out to his car, followed by his entourage, Pastor Bankole and many other well-wishers, all behind him in single file.

'You see how they follow him everywhere, just like the Disciples of Jesus,' came a voice at my elbow. It was Mike, a West Indian acquaintance, now seemingly unbalanced by religious zeal. He accompanied me back to my bus stop occasionally pausing to shout or hit at his three anxious, starveling children.

'Demons and agents of Witchcraft are everywhere,' he intoned ominously. *'Tyrone, get out of the way of that car, are you mad?'*

When I described the meeting to a Jamaican friend, she declared that I had seen a *'Prosperity Church.'* This was a new one on me. Hitherto, I had vaguely classified Protestant Churches as High or Low, in the Anglican manner. At the High end of the spectrum is the fast-vanishing Calm Church, a place of stillness, stained glass, cool grey stone, organ music and carefully-reasoned sermons. In Low-style churches, loud rhythm, raw emotions and shouted messages lead to a different experience of God, a one-ness through Shamanic possession and a return to the ancient idea of Healing by Faith and the casting out of Demons. *Celestial'* Christians combine elements of High and Low, fused together by traditional Yoruba lore. Prosperity Churches seem to be a Low Church offshoot - instead of Healing, their leaders invoke God to cure poverty. In so doing, they may well fall under the spell of Mammon.

A week later, I attended another Yoruba Prosperity Church, a stone's throw from the Cloudeley Square Celestial Church of Christ. It seemed to me that Pastor Bankole-Ojo had little right to condemn the *'Celestial Church'* as being *'money-mad.'* This church too was full, though the audience, all Nigerians, were more calm than the leaping crowds who had rejoiced around Pastor Anwuzia. As I entered, the mild Pastor began his sermon, urging wives in the congregation to forgive their husband's unfaithfulness.

'Adultery is wrong, but the most important thing is to save the marriage,' he declared. *'Now I must ask a question. Why are so many Christians below the poverty line? There is no need to be poor if you have faith in God. My own wife, speaking in the Spirit as the Spirit descended on her, asked the Spirit of Poverty to leave her. So then the Spirit of Poverty appeared to her in the very room. He was a skeleton holding a basket. Imagine that! In my very house! If I had been there at the time, I would have been frightened, really scared. What he had in the basket, I do not know. Slowly, the Spirit of Poverty left my house forever. There was also a big snake and an alligator in the room. The alligator made for the window, but the big snake caught it and swallowed it.'*

;'All this while, my wife prayed for the Holy Spirit to touch her tongue. Now her tongue is blessed. Anything she asks for, she can get. We have banished Poverty, and with prayer and fasting, you can do the same. Hal-lelujah!'

Although the congregation repeated the Pastor's *'Hallelujah'* with many embellishments, they seemed more restrained and sceptical than the people at the Anwuzia meeting.

'Did you know that some of the people outside in the street aren't human?' the Pastor pursued. *'Satan has the power to put his spirit into corpses. Evil Spirits look for bodies and go into corpses to make them get up and walk and talk. Such*

corpses pass as human, but it is the Devil inside them. Just look at some of the people outside. You can tell the ones who are not human, because of their funny eyes.'

At this, a young man laughed outright.

'This is no laughing matter! This is serious! Now is time for our discussion - Can Fallen Angels go to Heaven?'

Full of keen interest, the congregation vied with one another, opinion for opinion.

Since some people pray to *'Fallen Angels,'* the arguments had a practical side to them. All the same, I decided to slip away, taking with me the latest edition of Bankole's *'SOULWINNERS,'* on sale in the lobby. It contained an attack on *'Mercyland Sand,'* holy candles and other cherished practices and artefacts of the Celestial Church of Christ. *'Herbalists'* were also condemned, along with all Magicians, and a quiz on the back pages offered prizes of thirty pounds apiece.

One advertisement caught my eye, for a video of Reverend Balogun, a reformed herbalist who had been *'the head of Witches and Wizards worldwide for thirty eight years,'* before his conversion to the Redeemed Church.

'Hear his testimony exposing Ogbonis, Witches, Wizards and False Prophets,' I read. (Ogbonis are devotees of an Earth Spirit cult, and have developed into a traditional Yoruba equivalent of Freemasons. Judges, barristers and politicians are often members of Ogboni.

Outwardly, the anti-Celestial *'Prosperity Churches'* I had seen resembled ordinary Penetecostal fellowships.

Prayers, hymns and music were not unlike those heard in chapel-type congregations of English, Welsh or West Indian worshippers. Only the sermons differed, taking me into a nightmare world from which I was very glad to emerge.

So what might be the future of the Celestial Church of Christ and its fervent soutane-clad worshippers gathered at the Mercyland?

The boom time for converts seems to be over. Some of my friends have left, and change and unrest hover perilously near the unseen Angels in the incense-laden air.

'Celestians!' Father Peter addressed his flock recently. *'Ever since the Prophet Oshoffa died in 1985, the Celestial Church has been sinking. A ship jettisons cargo when it sinks, so see that you do not become that cargo.'*

Prophet Oshoffa ruled over the church he founded for thirty eight years, until his death. From his deathbed, in Nigeria, Oshoffa declared that God had chosen Pastor Alexander Bada to be the new prophet-ruler of *'Celestial.'* This appointment wasn't taken too well by some priests and prophets. Dissenters were dismissed from the church and some looked around for a way to discredit Prophet Bada.

Soon the new Prophet found himself accused of Paganism! Had he not worn a necklace of *'fetish cowrie shells'* when he was anointed Head of the church? Such cowries, it was claimed, were of a type used by *'herbalists'* when performing acts of *'black spiritualism'* (non-Christian magic).

Prophet Bada defended himself from the charge of using cowries to cast spells by saying that a *'strange man'* had given him the shells.

According to this man, Founder Oshoffa had discovered the cowries on a West African beach during a prayer session in 1957. On seven Bibles the unnamed man had sworn that these were Oshoffa's cowries. They had Christian powers, he said, and would provide the owner with food and money. Upon receiving the cowries, Prophet Bada put them in a drawer and forgot all about them. He denies all accusations of *'Paganism.'* and there the matter rests.

It is my belief that all this is a storm in an (ahem) sea-shell, and the Celestial Church of Christ will endure.

If, however, the Church does split up into schisms, the West African style of 'spiritual worship,' in white robes, with drums and bells, will continue, ever-growing, until Judgement Day.

Roy Kerridge

London, November 2001

Witchcraft And Demonology The Emergence Of The Christian Witch



The following appeared in the excellent publication *HISTORY TODAY*, last November. It provides a fascinating insight into the background of the the Christian concept of Witches and their craft, and so here, without further ado are the 'highlights' of the piece, written by P.G. Maxwell-Stuart.

It begins with the emergence of Christianity as the dominant religion in the Roman world, and the subsequent difficulties the infant faith had in dealing with the concept of magic. Magical practitioners were as widespread as they were numerous, and were highly regarded by those who clung to Pagan beliefs.

Those who sought to convert to Christianity initially did so on the understanding that the priests or orders of monks would be able to exercise the same degree of control over the supernatural forces that impinged on the lives of 'mere ordinary mortals,' as did the Pagan magicians.

This stubborn clinging to the 'old ways,' persisted as late as the twelfth century. Saints played a major role in this preternatural activity. They worked their fair share of wonders and miracles, exorcising Demons and curing the sick. Even the once-sacred amulets of long-forgotten gods, were remoulded to represent Christian deities, and were worn by converts as good luck talismans in exactly the same way as their Pagan forebears.

These selfsame converts also considered that Jesus Himself must have been a great magician, seeing as how He was so successful at expelling Evil Spirits, feeding the starving multitudes and turning bread and wine into representations of His own body and blood.

This attitude obviously caused the Church a great deal of concern. Christian missionaries were able to draw on Pagan

willingness to accept the possibility of the downright miraculous more or less without reservation, and hence belief in Christ's resurrection and the efficacy of the sacraments; but still they had to explain why the miracles of Christ Himself, or those of the Apostles or later Saints were genuine, whereas those of Pagan magicians such as the first-century AD Simon Magus, or his contemporary, Apollonius of Tyre, were fraudulent.

They also set about re-interpreting the notion of nature spirits and Pagan Gods, and transformed them into the denizens of Hell, ruled by the Fallen Angel, Lucifer or Satan. *Daimones*, the intermediary spirits akin to Faeries, once worshipped by the Romans, became Evil Spirits and in that guise were associated with every branch of magic because of the supposed pact between them and human beings.

The Christian concept of the creation of the world also required a major overhaul of the once-accepted theology. As Maxwell-Stuart points out; *'Everything took on a Manichean aspect; God was mirrored by Satan, (even though Satan was always acknowledged, at least in theory, to be weaker and not divine); creation became a battle ground between the forces of Good and Evil, with humans allowed, by free will, to choose which side they would fight upon; and Angels were divided into ranks and had their counterparts in Hell.'*

Concepts and beliefs in supernatural power, such as the Evil Eye however, continued to hold sway over many people's lives, although the efficacy of such forms of 'Black Magic' could now be countered by the power of prayer and recourse to the wearing of Christian amulets. Meanwhile, those who sought to cast wicked spells against their fellow man, could now be identified as being *'adherents of Satan'* and therefore idolaters and apostates of Hell.

As Maxwell-Stuart points out; *'As a result, the early Christian state came to treat magicians of any kind and their clients as potential trouble-makers or even enemies. The collection of edicts known as the Theodosian Code (AD 428), which contained legal pronouncements from more or less the whole of the fourth century, forbade consultation of magicians and diviners, regarded necromancy as being highly dangerous, since it sought to foretell the future by raising and communicating with the dead, and imposed the death penalty on practitioners of magic.'*

'Those who confessed to working harmful or poisonous magic (maleficium and veneficium) or had been found guilty thereof by due process of law, were not allowed to appeal against their sentences and their families were liable to lose any possible inheritance; nor were convicted defendants able to benefit from any Imperial pardons issued in honour of Easter or to celebrate a birth in the Imperial Family.'

'Indeed, being a worker of harmful magic was considered sufficient cause for a woman to sue her husband for divorce, as though he were a murderer or a violator of graves, and some of the edicts went as far as to describe magic in medical terms, as a pollution which contaminates those who come into contact with it.'

The state had no qualms about imposing the death sentence against magicians who dabbled in nefarious arts, but the Church (in marked contrast to the later, Medieval Witch Persecutions) were much more reluctant to add their voice to the call for the carrying out of the ultimate sentence. Eager to show they had a huge capacity for forgiveness, the Church would seek to guide the offenders along the path to redemption, by the issuing of a stern verbal rebuke, a session of fasting and the uttering of countless prayers.

In contrast to this comparatively lenient attitude, some of the laws passed by the Church Councils between the fourth and eight centuries were more than a little eccentric. Women were forbidden from keeping watch in cemeteries, one assumes on the grounds that they might be tempted to rifle the graves or

seek to invoke the spirits of the dead. People were not to call Angels by names not to be found in Scripture, a prohibition clearly aimed at the ingrained custom of including Hebrew and Egyptian names in magical invocations. Also on the 'forbidden list' is showing excessive devotion to certain Angels, such as Michael. The explanation for this we presume, is that such adoration might be uncomfortably close to Pagan worship.

'Witches, magicians, diviners and other practitioners of the occult sciences did not exist on the margins of society in late antiquity, nor were they confined to a particular group by virtue of age, sex, or education. Anyone at all, cleric or layman, might practise magic in some form at one time or another. We should also avoid drawing strict boundaries between magic, religion and the natural sciences. Parents with a sick child, for example, might offer prayers for its recovery, turning to the priest for exorcism if the illness were of a kind which warranted that assistance, and seeking the help of an apothecary or amateur herbalist for infusions or poultices whose ingredients might or might not be gathered in accordance with astrological calculations, and put together and administered to the accompaniment of prayers or magical formulae, or both. Magic was not an exotic recourse to which people turned when religion or 'science' in the form of medicine had failed or seemed to fail them. It was a valid alternative way of seeking to exercise power, or tap into the hidden forces of creation, for personal benefit, even if the official line of both Church and state declared that magic was a dubious activity best left alone.'



No one, least of all the clergy, it seemed, questioned the reality of magic or its (sometimes) beneficial effects. And yet, as Christians, they had to deal with the unpalatable truism that practising magic was dangerous to the soul, and therefore were left with little option other than to publicly condemn those who sought recourse to the occult.

'In the world of late antiquity or the early Middle Ages, it is impossible to define someone as a Witch (as opposed, for example, to an amateur herbalist, a heretic or a scold), and none of the legalisation of the time attempted to do so. Offenders were designated offenders by virtue of their performing various actions or wearing certain objects declared by the legalisation to be condemned or forbidden. For all practical purposes, the 'Witch' had not yet been invented.'

Instead, there were simply practitioners of different degrees and types of magic, of both sexes, who might well belong to any rank of ecclesiastical or lay society.

It was the crime of heresy that eventually inspired both the clergy and the state authorities to clamp down on 'magicians.'

It was always inevitable that the Church would take a less-than-rosy view of any manifestations of magic which it did not itself approve or control. For example, if a person uttered Christian prayers aimed at affecting the current weather conditions, then that was all well and good. But if Pagan prayers and rituals were offered to achieve the same

ends, then that was interpreted at best as being a direct snub to the Church, and at worst, outright heresy.

'As a result, magic and heresy were almost bound to be perceived as two sides of the same coin.'

The consequences of this viewpoint proved to be hugely significant.

Before too long, Paganism and magic would come to be regraded as an organised movement with its own belief system and its own deities, in direct contravention of the Christian faith, with its One True God. Once perceived as being a real threat, it was all too easy for the Church to equate Paganism/Magic with heresy.

'Thus, in 1437, Pope Eugenius IV issued a bull addressed to all inquisitors, deploring the fact that so many people were practising various forms of magic, worshipping Evil Spirits, and making pacts with them. In consequence of this, he said, those people were to be arrested, brought before inquisitorial tribunals and, with the assistance of the local bishops, tried in accordance with canon law, after which they were to be punished. If necessary, the Pope added, the secular authorities should be called on to render their assistance.'

By the later Middle Ages, the Church had begun to declare that *Daimones* had become a major element in explaining how Witches were able to operate, and why an all-powerful God allowed them to do so.

Alfonso de Spina (died 1469), writing in Latin but recording some Spanish terms for spirits and Witches, noted some of their names and types;

'Just as good angels and blessed souls are divided into nine ranks, so evil spirits fell from these nine into another nine categories and damned souls along with them. Those evil spirits who belonged to the higher grades of the heavenly hierarchy became correspondingly worse and more inferior in that part of the meridian whose ruler the Psalmist, has called "the destruction that wastes at noonday."

But there are popular names for many of these spirits and their various grades. Some are called Fates, others (in Spanish) Duende, others Incubi and Succubi. Some of them cause wars, others eat and drink with human beings and appear in their dreams. Some are said to be generated from the smell given off by a man and a woman during sexual intercourse, or from planetary rays. Some are hermaphrodites, some are clean and others filthy. Some deceive men and women who are called *jorguinias* or *brujas* in Spanish. Many people claim, to have seen spirits of this type and stick to the truth of their assertion.'

The significance of this for Witches is pretty obvious.

The *Daimones* in pre-Christian times, were widely regarded as being neutral or even benign figures, but as the new religion began to establish itself more fully, these entities became gradually regarded as evil spirits who had fallen from Heaven. And those who continued to worship them were increasingly looked upon as malignant heretics, whose sole purpose was to sow discord and turn people from the path of Christianity.

The net result of this was that; *'it became virtually impossible for Christian theologians to dissociate the practice of magic from traffic with evil spirits; when de Spina discussed jorguinias and brujas (different words for "Witch"), he used a verb illudere capable of more than one meaning. The spirits, he said, "deceive" them in the sense of "playing with" them or "making fools of them," as well as "using them for sexual pleasure." His is thus a complex description of a sinister relationship.'*

As we move into the Middle Ages, so the penchant for blaming virtually any kind of misfortune on the machinations of Evil Spirits grew.

'God might be all-powerful and all-merciful, but he was prepared to permit Satan and his demons to punish people's

sins or to test their faith, as the Biblical case of Job demonstrated. The serried ranks of angels and demons became opposing armies in a continual war between good and evil. It could therefore be argued that any human being who practised magic was liable to be doing so with the help of Satan and thus to be an enemy of God.

The situation was summed up by the fifteenth century theologian, Pedro Ciruelo:

"Anyone who maintains a pact or treaty of friendship with the Devil commits a very grave sin because he is breaking the first commandment and is sinning against God, committing the crime of treason or lese majeste.

His action is also contrary to the religious vow he made when he was baptised. He becomes an apostate from Christ, and an idolator who renders service to the enemy of God, the Devil."

The scene was all but set then for the emergence of the classic Christian concept of the Witch. In truth however, the basis for 'her' behaviour had long since been established. In c.1115, for example, Guibert de Nogent recorded in his autobiography, *Monodiae* (Solitary Songs) details of the behaviour of certain heretics from Soissons. They would meet, he said, in underground chambers where they would light candles and then, coming up behind a woman who was lying on her stomach with her naked buttocks on view for everyone to see, they would 'present the candles to her.' (and you can doubtless use your own imagination as to precisely what was meant by that, Dear Constant Readers!!!)

After these ritual acts, the candles were extinguished, everyone shouted 'Chaos!' and indiscriminate sexual intercourse took place. Any baby which might result from this orgy, was then brought to another meeting and thrown from one person to another through the flames of a large fire until the unfortunate child was dead, after which its body was reduced to ashes, made into bread, and eaten as a kind of blasphemous sacrament.

These details were by no means unique, and similar tales had long been told of all kinds of heretics and, in the early days, of Christians themselves. Yet they were adopted with only certain changes to provide the picture of Witches' Sabbats, which rapidly became the norm.'

But whilst the Sabbat itself could be explained away as being nothing more than anti-Pagan propaganda, the Witches supposed ability to be able to fly had other, more folkloric roots.

The earliest known description of Witches' magically taking to the air is to be found in the *Canon Episcopi*, a piece of canon law dating from c.906

'Certain wicked women turn themselves round to face the other way behind Satan and, led astray by hallucinations and figments of their imaginations created by evil spirits, believe and maintain that during the hours of night they ride upon certain beasts along with Diana (a Goddess of the Pagans), or with Herodias and an innumerable host of women, traversing many areas of the earth in the silent dead of night; that they obey her commands as though she were their mistress, and that on specific nights they are called to her service.'

Perhaps the most notable aspect of records concerning the flight is the degree of scepticism which attended them. The *Canon Episcopi* itself calls such stories hallucinations and figments of the imagination. This sceptical attitude was further maintained by the likes of John of Salisbury who, in a passage devoted to dreams and visions, declared that there were some people who were so driven by their sins and the free rein they gave to wickedness that God made them attain such a pitch of madness they believed that something they were experiencing in spirit was actually happening to them bodily.

Despite these sceptical views however, the stories of Witches' flights maintained a certain allure. Thus in the mid-thirteenth century Thomas of Cantimpre told the tale of how a nobly-born girl, was carried away at the same time hour each evening, by a bunch of Evil Spirits, and although her brother, a monk, tried his best to prevent this occurring by grasping her firmly by the arms, as soon as the appointed hour arrived, she promptly disappeared.

And in the early fifteenth century, Johannes Nider, whose *Formicarius* is considered to be an important repository of key ideas in the development of the theories surrounding Witchcraft and the behaviour of Witches, was informed of the experience of a fellow-Dominican who had arrived at a village to be confronted by a woman who claimed that at night she flew with Diana; and although neither Nider nor his informant believed her story, the fact of its being told is enough to indicate that belief in such flight was common. Then, in c.1440, Martin le Franc, secretary to the anti-Pope Felix V, wrote a long poem, *Champion des Dames*, in which two speakers exchanged views on Witches and their evil practices. One of them described women going to the Sabbat on foot or on sticks, 'flying through the air like birds,' and the manuscript illustrated the point with two marginal miniatures showing one woman astride a besom and the other riding a long, stout staff. Significantly, they flew under the heading 'Vaudoises.'

'By the second half of the fifteenth century, then, there had come into existence a notion of the Witch which was not completely at variance with earlier conceptions and models of the magical operator, but which tended to concentrate on certain newly developed 'theatrical' (as opposed to everyday magical) aspects of her behaviour. In much of the literature which was beginning to specialise in these aspects, the Witch now seems to have been visualised more or less as distinctively female. What's more, her activities were described as those of a person who was less a depraved individual and more a willing member or adherent of an organised anti-Christian sect of Devil-worshipper whose aim was to help Satan corrupt the society of the faithful and thereby swell the ranks of the damned in Hell.'

November, 2000 'HISTORY TODAY'

Salem Witches Help Fight The War On Terror

According to reports in the American press, just prior to Halloween, entire covens of Witches were planning on joining together to achieve a common cause; to aid the victims of the September 11th attacks on New York and Washington.

In an eerie echo of the reaction of British Witches during the darkest days of the Second World War, these Wiccans have elected to pool their resources into both defending their homeland from malign forces and bringing comfort to the spirits of those who have been cut down in the prime of life.

'Pagans are thinking about the extremely high number of people who have died very abruptly since September 11th,' says Grove Harris, project manager of Harvard University's Pluralism Project, which apparently highlights the multi-religious nature of North America.

The Witches purpose, says Mr Harris, is to 'honour and communicate with the spirits of the thousands believed killed in the terrorist attacks.'

'This time of year, states Grove, referring to Halloween, 'is about going into the darkness and seeing where you are with the blessed ones who have passed on. Many Pagans will link with the recent dead through seances, psychic channelling and meditative listening.'

I'm not exactly sure what practical good this will do for the tragically bereaved, but according to the account I came

across, the scheme certainly won't be lacking for support in terms of sheer numbers. There are anywhere from 200,000 to 1 million neo-Pagans living in North America, alone, two thirds of whom are women.

These Pagans, Wiccans, call them what you will, are at pains to point out their religion has nothing whatsoever to do with Satanism. An unidentified spokesman was quoted as saying, 'In fact, this Halloween, with missiles hitting Afghanistan (the majority of which seem to have an uncanny ability to hit tumbledown sheds, Red Cross warehouses, 'friendly' forces, the already shattered homes of innocent civilians...Everything in fact, save those they're supposed to be targeting!), many of North America's Witches are holding healing circles for peace.

'Since Paganism is an ecological religion maintaining that all of life is interconnected, most members are inclined to shun violence'

27th October, 2001 USA THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC'

The Fear Of 666

Meanwhile, over in Greece, last year, a civil-servant who also happened to be an avid Christian, simply refused to clock on for a total of four months in order to defeat what he saw as a 'Satanic conspiracy,' resulting in him being regularly late for work.

Surprisingly, given that Greek courts are hardly renowned for their sense of justice and fair play (witness the appalling treatment of those British plane spotters placed in custody just recently, for the heinous crime of er...spotting planes), the Supreme Administrative Court in Athens, ruled that the woman, identified only by the initials E.P., should not be sacked, but merely reprimanded.

The Council of State found that the Deposits and Loans Fund should not have stopped paying the woman her wages simply because she refused to use the electronic clocking-in system.

She explained to her employers, and later to the court, that the microchip on her card contained the dreaded number 666, the so-called 'Number Of The Beast.' The State Legal Council duly consulted the software manufacturers, who (what a shock!) denied that any Satanic link.

The court accepted E.P.'s argument that she had signed the company book upon entry and departure.

But it still decided, in its ineffable wisdom, that she should be reprimanded for regularly being a few minutes late over a ten month period.

27th December, 2001 'KATHIMERINI' Athens, Greece.

I Was A Teenage Witch

Only in America...

You'd hardly think it was possible in this day and age, but in the 'land of the (abem) free,' a sixteen year old girl with the really rather marvellous name of Brandi Blackbear, has been accused of practising Witchcraft by Union High School officials after allegedly placing a curse upon art teacher Kyle Kemp.

Despite her protestations of innocence, the curse was assumed to have been successful when Mr Kemp suddenly fell ill.

Brandi's father, Tim, was quick to leap to his daughter's defence by stating that 'She's a good girl with good grades, and she had a good group of friends. Her life has been turned upside down by these accusations.

'She's an outcast and has suffered continuous ridicule and humiliation from her classmates.

'Her horrible experiences have caused her a great deal of anguish - as well as stopping her from getting a proper education.

'It's hard to believe that in the 21st century, I'm going to court to defend my daughter against charges of Witchcraft.

But if that's what it takes to clear her name, then that's what I'll do.'



The story began when Brandi was unexpectedly called to see school assistant headmaster Charlie Bushyhead, (come on, that's gotta be a made up name - Incredulous Ed), who'd apparently heard that she'd been studying the Wiccan religion. Bushyhead claims that he was told that Brandi had put a curse on a teacher who had been rushed to hospital the night before with what turned to be appendicitis.

Not surprisingly, Brandi was reduced to tears when Bushyhead and a school councillor, in true Spanish Inquisition-style, literally bombarded her with quite ridiculous allegations, (and no doubt screaming 'confess!!! confess!!! confess!!!' over and over like enthusiastic students of that infamous Witchfinder, Matthew Hopkins, back in the 17th century).

'They were hostile and accused her of being a Witch,' Tim told reporters. 'They said she cast spells on people including Mr Kemp, causing him to be hospitalised. Brandi denied the accusations until she just wasn't strong enough to emotionally to do so.

Because of continued hostility, she finally admitted she could be a member of a Wicca coven.'

Bushyhead indicated that a five-pointed star with a circle around it written in ink on her hand was 'proof that she was a Witch,' along with the fact that she couldn't display religious emblems - even though other students wore crucifixes. She was deemed 'an immediate threat' to the school and was duly suspended for 15 days.

Classmate Lorena Coleman was quick to jump on the bandwagon and claim that her fellow pupils had good reason to fear Brandi who had begun to 'act weird' by (gasp!) dressing differently and streaking her hair red and green. She adds, 'Brandi went to seances and said she hexed people' (what? at seances? how's that supposed to make any kind of sense? - Totally Bemused Ed).

Brandi's dad countered by saying that Kemp was one of Brandi's favourite teachers and that 'she didn't do anything and she was never given the chance to defend herself. All she did was check out a book on Wicca from the library.'

The article I came across thinks it highly significant that Brandi is an avid reader of the horror stories of Stephen King and she loves to write macabre short stories. She'd allegedly been taking books out of the school library and making notes, until she was spotted by classmates who, with all the charm of your typical teenager, began taunting her with accusations of Witchcraft. To be fair to the author of the piece, he or she is keen to highlight the fact that Wicca has at least 250,000 adherents in the USA, and that its basic tenets are not based on Devil worship or Black Magic, but on the celebration of the elements; Earth, Air, Fire and Water.

The growing religion, which emphasises peace and unity with nature, is approved by the US government and is practised at military bases and aboard US navy vessels, such as those currently stationed in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.'

It may well be that Brandi's multi-racial background has something to do with the Witchcraft accusations. She's half Cherokee and working class, and so was always going to be singled out as being different in a school renowned for its exclusive nature. *'This would never have happened if Brandi had've been the prom queen or class swot,'* her dad insists, not unreasonably. *'She's just an average kid who goes to school, does her homework and enjoys learning.'*

Brandi's troubles actually began at her previous school, where she had respectable grades, a perfect attendance record and no disciplinary problems.

Not long after the tragic events at Colorado's Columbine High School, Brandi's principal and school councillor had questioned her about a story she had written about a boy killing several other students.

Searching for weapons, they seized her backpack, ransacked her locker and confiscated her writings, mostly horror stories, which included one about a shooting on a school bus.

'It was just a story about a guy who got on the bus with a gun,' says Tim, not unreasonably. *'And yet she was suspended for the rest of the school year.'*

Her stories were never returned (*hey, maybe someone, somewhere's planning on publishing them under their own name - Cyncial Ed*), the Blackbears believe they've been destroyed, and soon after Brandi was branded an outcast.

Taunted constantly by kids asking if they were 'on her hit list of potential victims,' Brandi inevitably fell behind in her studies and had difficulty catching up when she started high school. The gossip about her reputation soon reached her new principal and she was subsequently singled out as a potential problem child.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which Tim's wife, Toni, 38, contacted, is suing the school for violating Brandi's civil rights, and is demanding millions in damages.

A spokesman for the ACLU was quoted as saying: *'Kids were asking Brandi how and why she did it, after they'd heard a rumour that she'd put a spell on one of the teacher's.'*

The pentagram drawing was, in fact, a star and a smiley face doodled by the bored teen, according to the ACLU - which is seeking damages for the 'emotional and physical pain' - Brandi has suffered. It wants her school records erased and says she should be allowed to wear any religious item, including a pentagram, if she so desires.

The lawsuit states; *'The school's action has been a deliberate attempt to suppress any inclination she may have toward the religion of Wicca and has been an attempt to force certain religious concepts on her.'*

'These outlandish allegations have made Brandi's life unbearable. I'd like to see the evidence the school has that a 15-year-old girl made a grown man sick by casting a spell.'

The family's lawyer, John Butler, calls it a load of hocus-pocus, saying *'This is taking us back to the Salem Witch-Burning Times.'*

But, school officials remained adamant, at the time of going to press, that they were 'concerned about the opportunity for students to learn without fear.'

The School District Superintendent Cathy Burden, claims their students aren't suspended for expressing religious views, wearing jewellery or displaying tattoos, but *'if a student threatens or is a danger to others that makes it a safety issue, and the student will face consequences.'*

Meanwhile Brandi is faced with the prospect of going to school with her fellow pupils constantly whispering behind her back. And she's lost her love of writing. She was quoted as

saying: *'You've got to feel to write, and I just don't feel like it anymore. It makes me nervous.'*

The trial was set to be heard before a federal court at the time of going to press.

October, 2001 Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA THE SUNDAY MANC"'s SUNDAYMAGAZINE'

The Return Of The Lancashire Witches

(Well, two of 'em, at least)

Hot on the heels of Brandi's story and her refusal to acknowledge that she has ever been interested in becoming a Witch, came news that another young girl here in not-so-merrie England, is more than happy to admit she is a Wiccan.

Alice Willow, who hails the Witch-haunted county of Lancashire, is apparently a 10-year-old 'apprentice Witch,' who (and this may provide some fuel to the fire of those religious bigots we'll regrettably be meeting up with a little later), loves to read the works of J.K. Rowling.

Alice lives with her divorcee mother, Sara, and two brothers, as well as a thirteen-year-old sister.



(Above): Sara and her daughter Alice prepare to celebrate their Wiccan religion...And protect the British countryside from harmful diseases like foot and mouth, whilst they're at it.

The tabloid carrying this story makes great play of such 'incriminating evidence' of Witchcraft as the facts that she's allowed to keep a pet boa constrictor, has (lawdy, Miss Scawlet, whatever next?) white mice in her bedroom, and a broomstick leaning against her front door...

Or at least she did have the latter, until recently.

'The broomstick was my mum's, but it mysteriously disappeared at Halloween,' Alice told reporters, quickly adding that she believed it was entirely human 'trick or treaters' who had conspired to spirit it away.

'A lot of Witches have brooms and when one is placed outside the door, it means a Witch is at home. We don't ride them, before you ask...Unless there is a full moon,' 37-year-old Sara cackled mischievously. The article describes the Willow's home as being perfectly ordinary (aside from the mice and the snake, of course), and the journalist insists that *'there is nothing remotely spooky about either Alice or her mum, and there is not a cauldron in sight.'*

Alice, it seems, has only come to regard herself as being a real Witch for the past six months, a time marked out by her decision to emulate her mother. She maintains that she has already acquired the ability to enhance a person's level of fortune and can banish the all-too heavy stress of housework. Her mum ensures that Alice doesn't over-step the mark, and is constantly under her supervision.

Being too young to officially join a coven, Alice has to be educated in the ways of Wicca by Sara and her friends, and is allowed to attend the social gatherings called Moots, held on the nearest Saturday to every full moon.

And as far as Wiccan lessons are concerned, Sara revealed to reporters that the two most important things a juvenile Witch has to learn is 'firstly, a rule spoken in the old tongue: "An it harm none"

'It means that whatever you do, nothing should be harmed in the process. This obviously includes cursing somebody, but it can include casting a love spell on somebody who doesn't feel anything for a particular person.

The second is the Threefold Law. Witches believe that anything you do will come back to you threefold. So if you bless someone or curse someone, it will return to you three times as powerful. It is just a guideline for life in general, and is like the Christian doctrine of "as you sow, so shall you reap."

There will, of course, be those who'll quick to condemn Sara, and accuse her of brainwashing her young daughter, and dragging her headlong down the Left Hand Path.

Sara dismisses this notion right at the outset, and in doing so, displays a refreshingly relaxed attitude about her offspring's faith, or lack of it. *'I let my children make up their own mind about what they believe. My two sons are agnostic, and Lily is only mildly interested in spells.*

'I balance the information I give my children about Christianity and Paganism. I became drawn to books about Paganism in the local library, and found that it was something that appealed to me and made sense.'

Alice meanwhile, has this to say; *'I learnt about Christianity at school but it didn't interest me. What my mum told me was exciting and interesting.'*

To confirm her beliefs, Alice was, at the time of writing, preparing for her 'Paganing,' a Pagan version of a christening (Alice is the only one of Sara's children not to be baptised). Alice has to choose her Witch name, based on the names from the Wicca religion.

'I have chosen Athene,' Alice confided to the journalist. *'She is the Goddess of Wisdom and I liked the sound of her name. I must find out more about her before my Paganing, which I hope will be at my next birthday.'*

The last word goes to Sara;

'We are not Devil-worshippers, or people who don pointy hats and cast curses or weave evil spells. Any spells we do are for the good of others.

'Eight months ago, Witches up and down the country united to use their powers to alleviate the foot-and-mouth crisis, and soon after, the epidemic was drastically eased.'

In point of fact, just a couple of days prior to our going to press, the Government declared that the crisis was finally and officially over.

30th October, 2001 Preston, Lancashire 'DAILY EXPRESS'

PAGANISM ON THE RISE

And both Alice and Brandi may be cheered by the following item regarding the religion they are supposed to be actively practising. According to an article published on the ever-excellent FORTEAN TIMES website, and penned by regular contributor, David V. Barrett, 'Britain's rapidly growing band of Pagans were in celebratory mood for their 2001 conference.'

And well they might be for they had quite a bit to celebrate, it seems. For a start, the occasion marked the 30th anniversary of the formation of The Pagan Federation, or PF, inaugurated back in 1971, and it was also 50 years since the welcome abolition of the Witchcraft Act.

About a thousand adherents numbering Wiccans, Druids and Odinists amongst their ranks, gathered at the Fairfield Halls in Croyden, last November.

David writes; *'because of the anniversaries, this year's conference was called 3050, but it could just as easily have been called "Looking Back, Looking forward." There seemed to be a sense that this is a religion which has successfully passed through adolescence, and is about to join the grown-ups.'*

He then gives us a potted history of Paganism, beginning with the aforementioned repeal of the 1735 Witchcraft Act in 1951, and its replacing with the Fraudulent Mediums Act. The original statute was introduced in order to outlaw those who *'pretend to exercise or use any kind of Witchcraft, Sorcery, Incantation, or Conjuraton, or undertake to tell Fortunes, or pretend, from his or her Skill or knowledge in any occult or crafty science, to discover where or in what manner any Goods or Chattels, supposed to have been stolen or lost, may be found.'*

The 1951 Act, on the other hand, aside from being a whole lot more readable, makes a lot more sense, aimed as it is at people who express an *'intent to deceive, purports to act as spiritualistic medium or to exercise any powers of telepathy, clairvoyance or other similar powers.'*

This does not mean, of course, that professional magicians, illusionists and the like are barred from utilising such practices for entertainment purposes.

Good news too, for those found guilty of falling foul of the Act. Back in 1735, a miscreant could expect a maximum of 12 months in jail and one day each quarter to be spent standing on the pillory in the centre of the market square for an hour, doubtless having various types of rotten fruit thrown at you, to four months and/or a £50 fine. Oh, and no standing in the pillory, dodging foul-smelling cabbages and well-past-their-sell-by-date tomatoes.

David then introduces us to Gerald Gardner, a retired civil servant who, it is strongly rumoured, set up a coven of Witches in the New Forest, and set about writing openly on the subject in his influential book *WITCHCRAFT TODAY (1954)*.

Others soon jumped on the proverbial bandwagon, including the (ahem) shy and retiring, Alex Saunders, who promptly announced himself to be *The King Of The Witches.* With the dawning of the 1970's, various covens had formed, pledging their allegiance to either the Gardnerian or Alexandrian variety of Witchcraft.

Mention is then made of Janet and the late Stewart Farrar.

Janet actually spoke at the conference, and David takes up the story. *'Stewart and Janet were among the first to write open, accessible books about Witchcraft, beginning with "WHAT WITCHES DO" (1971). In a lively presentation, Janet Farrar and her new husband Gavin Bone, who co-wrote several later books with the Farrar's, spoke of their personal history through Paganism, and the many paths they followed before finding their own. The days of Kings and Queens of Witches are gone, they said, the cult of personality, perhaps necessary in the early days of struggle, is dying out. Janet appealed to the young Pagans, "the new face of the Old Religion," to be revolutionary, to challenge authority, and she appealed to the older members of Paganism to accept this, rather than insisting that their own way, "the old traditions," must be right.*

'As Pagans, our strength is that we're all doing different things. This applies geographically as well. Traditions must

be different in different places - they don't travel, she said. As to whether they thought of themselves as Pagans or Witches, she had a helpful explanation which should cut through any confusion.

"Wicca is a holy order within the religion of Paganism."

In fact, Farrar and Bone revealed for the first time that, although they eschew titles, they have recently been ordained as priests in the Aquarian Tabernacle Church, and are now officially the Reverend Janet Farrar and the Reverend Gavin Bone - and, in a startling revelation, that this church has been formerly accepted as a "proper" religion in the Republic of Ireland, where they live.'

The current President of the Pagan Federation is Prudence Jones, and she had this to say to assembled faithful;

'For the next fifty years, Pagans need to engage in serious dialogue with those of other religions, but we also need to defend ourselves from the right wing lunatic fringe. Paganism must be recognised as a religion, not just as a hobby. Religion is more than just a set of moral rules, it's about making contact with deity, and with celebration.

'In our pluralism we have so much to offer the world. In monotheistic religions, one answer solves everything. In reality, this just isn't so. Paganism is pluralistic - we have many ways of worshipping deity. It is the religion of the 21st century. It respects individuality and it respects others. It welcomes diversity and other ideas.'

November, 2001 'FORTEAN TIMES WEBSITE'

The Curse Of Durham To Blame For Foot And Mouth

It never ceases to amaze us here at 'DON,' the readiness with which people often seek to blame supernatural forces for cataclysmic events (See last issue's September 11th aftermath round-up, for ample evidence for this penchant). We're not saying they're wrong to do so, of course. That would be incredibly patronising, not to say decidedly un-Fortean. We simply make the point. And leave you, the reader, to decide.

Consider if you will, the allegation that a curse written by the Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow, back in the 16th century, was the root cause of that regions particularly virulent foot and mouth epidemic, at the outset of 2001.

The curse was intended to condemn pillagers in the 1500's to 'the torments of Hell,' but modern-day clergymen fear that the power of the ancient enchantment may have been revived after it was inscribed on a giant stone to form the centrepiece of a millennium exhibition.

As a result, Anglican leaders, including the Bishop of Carlisle, the Right Reverend Graham Dow, called for the stone to be exorcised.

He was quoted as saying; 'Words have power and in as much as the curse wishes evil on people it should be revoked.'

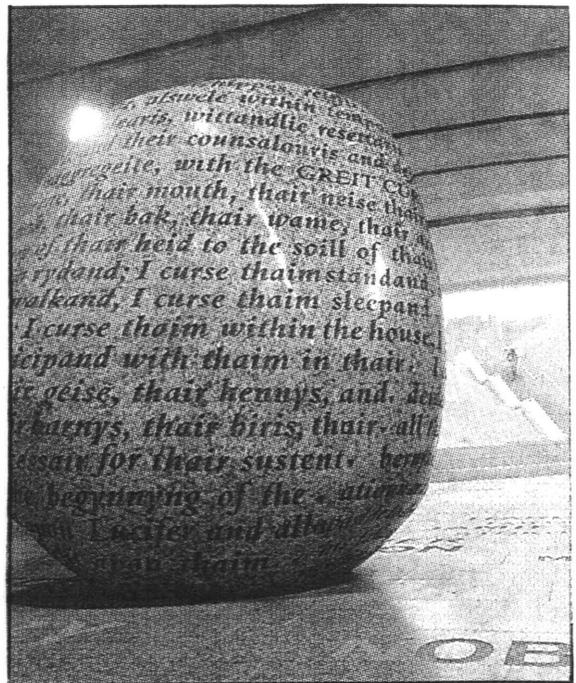
The oath was issued 500 years ago against the Border Reivers, English and Scottish sheep rustlers. Contemporary priests used to recite the words of the curse to the local congregations. Just three years ago, sculptor Gordon Young saw fit to carve those selfsame words into the circumference of a giant granite ball to be showed off at an exhibition in the New Millennium Gallery in Carlisle.

Certain members of the clergy believe that the fact that it has been on public display for so long, visitors innocently walking around it in an anti-clockwise (or Widdershins) direction.

The Vicar of Scotby, the Reverend Kevin Davies, even goes so far as to demand that the stone be smashed to pieces.

Of a slightly more tolerant bent is the aforementioned Bishop of Carlisle, who had put in a request to the Catholic Church of Scotland to lift the curse by blessing the stone.

'I would prefer it if the stone wasn't there. If it has to stay I would like a blessing to offset it.'



(Above): Secrets In Stone Untold: The 'cursed' lump of granite on display at the New Millennium Gallery, Carlisle. Awaiting further visitors to walk its circumference widdershins, and propagate its Evil?

The more sceptical members of the clergy however, are more than a tad bemused by the furore. The Reverend Gavin Gilchrist of St Helbert's Church, Carlisle, told reporters; 'I can't see a problem with someone walking around the stone to read the inscription.'

6th November, 2001 Durham 'DAILY MAIL'

And The Curse Of The Lonely Lament

The fact that pop star (and sometimes actress - in the loosest sense of the word) Mariah Carey has suffered a breakdown has been blamed not, as you might be forgiven for thinking, her more irritating than bleach on sunburn vocal style and material that is about as tuneful as a cement mixer in full effect, but a cursed song, namely, the tear-jerking weepie, 'WITHOUT YOU.'

Apparently, Carey's version of the song, which was her first British Number One and featured on the *Bridget Jones's Diary* soundtrack, somehow resulted in her being admitted to hospital suffering from exhaustion, and rumours of a failed suicide attempt.

And what evidence do we have that the song is cursed? Well, the lead singer of *BADFINGER*, Peter Ham, hanged himself in 1975, five years after co-writing the tune with Scouser Tom Evans, who himself committed suicide in 1983.

Harry Nilsson's acclaimed version hit the Number One spot in 1972, and he was forced to wage a constant battle against alcoholism, before dying of a heart attack in 1993

14th August, 2001 General 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

Witch Doctor In Breach Of Trading Standards

An African spiritual healer called Mr Madiba, was taken to task by the Advertising Standards Authority as they questioned his supposed ability to be able to mend broken marriages and successfully render any evil spell totally ineffective.

Mr Madiba, who currently resides in Bradford, has also claimed to be able to cure men of impotency, magically help students pass forthcoming exams and aide those faced with the daunting prospects of a court appearance or a new job. The self-styled Witch Doctor might well have avoided any trouble with the advertising watchdogs had he not sought to circulate adverts openly boasting of the efficacy of his 'abilities.'

West Yorkshire's Trading Standards Office received a complaint that Mr Madiba was attempting to exploit the emotionally vulnerable, and challenged whether the claims could be substantiated. Mr Madiba had publicly stated in the circular that he could help people with all sorts of problems 'regarding love, marriage, court cases, exams and jobs.' And if that wasn't impressive enough, he also claimed he could assist with problems 'concerning good luck, health, suffering from asthma, breaking spells and, if your partner has run away from you, he can get him/her back.

'He can help somebody suffering from Black Magic spells and also men suffering from impotency problems.'

Whilst Mr Madiba refused to respond in writing to the authorities enquiries, the ASA understood that he prayed for people.

Upholding the complaint, the ASA considered that (not surprisingly) the advertiser had not substantiated his claims.

It agreed that some of the claims exploited the vulnerable, while others breached the codes.

The ASA told Mr Madiba he should not seek to repeat the claims or refer to serious medical conditions in future adverts.

In response, Mr Madiba assured the ASA that he would indeed alter the circular, although what these changes were, the report didn't say.

19th September, 2001 Bradford, West Yorkshire 'DAILY EXPRESS'

The Joy Of (ahem) Sects

Chinese women who belong the White Tigress spiritual sect apparently share the belief that the secret of retaining youthful looks is based on copious amounts of oral sex.

But Hsi Lai, who had the foresight to write their Sexual Teachings, was quick to point out that they may well require up to nine different partners a week!

24th October, 2001 China 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'

The Sacrifice Of Innocence

And talking of people being overly fanatical about their beliefs, consider these cases of ritual human sacrifice, the ultimate in attempted bids to curry favor with supposed wrathful deities.

In New Delhi, India, (a country currently rife with war and rumours of war) a self-styled 'God Man' was alleged to have decapitated his own son, hoping to appease a God and acquire powers beyond the pale of ordinary men, (sounds like a line from one of those old MARVEL comics I used to love to read, as a kid - Nostalgic Ed)

Chandrase Kharan, 46, was arrested by police whilst actually holding the head of his 20-year-old son, Shanmuga Sundaram. The father had chopped off his head with an ornamental sword, and was heard to be chanting hymns whilst sat in front of a series of portraits of Indian deities.

His wife and mother-in-law tried their level best to intervene on Sundaram's behalf after they were alerted by the boy's screams, but they were unable to rescue him due to Kharan swinging his sword at them like a maniac.

Police later said that Chandrase had fully admitted killing his son 'as he dreamed he would gain supernatural powers if he did so.'

At the time of writing, those 'supernatural powers' had remained conspicuous by their absence, as Kharan's only reward for slaughtering his son has been to lie cooped up in jail awaiting trial for murder.

October New Delhi, India 'UNITED NEWS OF INDIA'



*** Meanwhile, elsewhere in India, Bijnor, to be precise, a Hindi temple priest was arrested early this year, (2002), for allegedly sacrificing an eight-year-old boy.

Officers claim that the priest chopped off the boy's head and hid the torso in bushes near to a holy temple.

News of the incident broke not long after the boy was reported as being missing after he had gone to the Shiv temple to play with a group of his friends.

His body was later recovered from the nearby bushes.

At the time of going to press, there was no official motive as to why the sacrifice was carried out.

3rd January, 2002 Bijnor, India 'THE PRESS TRUST OF INDIA'

Touched By The Hand Of Glory

A few of our readers were a little non-plussed by the fact that the cover art gracing the last issue of our humble publication, which showed a monk (bearing an uncanny resemblance to Gary Neville - though not quite as terrifyingly ugly, obviously), holding a Hand Of Glory in one clenched fist, did not feature in any of the articles printed inside.

I could try and argue that I simply overlooked a planned article, or that there was simply no room to include it in that particularly packed issue. I *could* do. But I'd be lying.

The truth is, I was way past the intended publication date (no change there, then), and I could hear the sound of disembowelling cutlasses being sharpened as angry subscribers demanded their mag, or their money back, on pain of death. It was therefore a matter of convenience that I happened to come across an old drawing buried in some old dog-eared back issue of the classic pulp magazine, 'WEIRD TALES.'

I had to go with something suitably lurid for Halloween, and the Hand of Glory pic seemed just the ticket. I simply hoped no one would notice. Turns out I was wrong.

Regular contributor and keen-eyed reader Mr Roy Kerridge, proved to be the most vociferous of those who spotted the error of my ways.

This is what he had to say in a recent letter,

After deservedly admonishing me over the omission, he writes, 'There is a Hand of Glory in the museum at Whitby, North Riding. As you must know, The Hand of Glory is the dried hand of a robber cut from his dangling corpse after he'd been hanged at a crossroads gallows, so the custom must have ended by the Victorian era.'

'Unless (as happened in America), a prison guard cut one from the jail gallows, prepared it in the traditional way, and sold it. I'm not sure when crossroads-gallows ended in England - was it 1820?

Anyway, the severed right hand of a robber would be dried, then fitted with fingertip candles, as in your picture. Armed with this hand (!) another robber could expect every door to open at a touch an every person in the house to fall into a deep sleep. A great many Hands Of Glory were made, mostly in the 17th and 18th centuries, but I can't believe that any of this worked. It would be ironical in the extreme if a robber armed with a Hand Of Glory was caught, hung, and then lost his own hand to a Hand Of Glory-maker.

I don't know why exactly, it's called a Hand Of Glory.

There is a long poem about it, called 'THE HAND OF GLORY,' funnily enough, in a quaint book of Victorian ghost stories set to rhyme by a vicar from Kent, the Reverend Barham (sounds like the first line from a limerick; 'There was an old vicar from Kent,' muff said).

This book, which has horrifying woodcut engravings, is called 'THE JACKDAW OF RHEIMS,' which used to be in every school poetry book in my day.

17th October, 2001 Kensal Green, London ROY KERRIDGE

AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT:

Exorcisms On The Rise

It may seem strange at the dawning of the 21st century, and its attendant days of supposed scientific rationale, but nevertheless, British priests have been reporting a significant increase in the number of exorcisms they have been called on to perform, just recently.

'People believe the world has become more Evil in the wake of September 11th,' appears to be the mantra spouted by those seeking an explanation for this upsurge in spiritual cleansing.

Despite the fact that neither the Catholic Church nor the Church of England have saw fit to release official figures on the precise number of exorcisms they have carried out over any given year, the Reverend Tom Willis, one of Britain's foremost Exorcists, (or 'Minister of Deliverance,' to coin the new, PC-friendly term) has been prepared to go on record as stating that the volume of cases has increased dramatically over the past decade.

Predictably, ministers from both Protestant and Catholic churches believe this increase to be the direct result of a loss of faith in Christianity combined with a growing fascination for the so-called New Age religions, and Paganism. This turning away from the face of God has resulted, so the clergy maintain, in legions of Evil spirits gaining access to our world. And, some things it seems, never change.

Nearly 30 years after it first hit the screens to nationwide hysteria, the re-release of William Friedkin's *THE EXORCIST*, at cinema's in 1998, and subsequently on video and DVD, (complete with missing scenes, included the notorious 'Spider Walk') was still being cited as a direct cause of the increase in the number of people clamoring to be possessed.

The Reverend Willis told reporters; *More people are dabbling in the occult than ever, thanks to the New Age phenomenon. These people are bringing more Evil into the world. I get on average, two requests a week, more than I can cope with. Part of the reason is that there is a worse Evil in the world. There is a better goodness, too, but Evil is turning nastier. There hasn't been an Evil as big as the fall of the World Trade Center since the H-bombs in World War Two.*

The increasing number of Exorcism cases have been highlighted by the aforementioned Cures of Durham, (see elsewhere in this issue) and also by the news that the Bishop of Oxford had set out to remove a curse placed upon Third Division Oxford United's new, state-of-the-art footy stadium, rumoured to have been the direct cause of the team's (ahem) 'diabolical' start to the season (in which case, I wonder what Evertonian's are seeking to blame for their lack of form, then - Oh, wait, I remember - Heysel! Silly question really!).

The stadium was built on a field where local gypsies had once parked their caravans while helping with the harvest.

When the field was duly sold to the club, the gypsies, banned from using it, promptly placed a curse upon The Kassam Stadium.

A team of 14 'experts' set out to cleanse the stadium in early November, and the Reverend Walker (no relation-Ed), told Radio 4 listeners that *'We don't make a big thing of it (Exorcisms) because people who are perhaps emotionally vulnerable or have a psychological illness can latch on to something like this.*

'Ninety per cent of cases turn out to have a perfectly rational explanation.'

Having said all this, however, the Bishop was at pains to point out that he hadn't in fact exorcised the stadium insisting instead that he had simply prayed to God to bless the ground and make it free from Evil.



The Reverend Willis maintains that, high-profile as these two cases were, they represent only a tiny proportion of the true number. It is estimated that there are more than 200 Exorcists in the Church of England and 22 in the Catholic Church, at least one in each diocese. In fact, the demand and subsequent workload has been so great that the Anglican Church has felt compelled to set up a working party -*The Christian Deliverance Study Group*, to train local priests.

The group recently held its annual training conference in Newbury, Berkshire, where 25 clergy were taught how to become Exorcists.

The leader of the group, the Right Reverend Dominic Walker, Bishop of Reading, was quoted as saying; *'Bishops usually have a team of people and every so often they need to add to them because priests retire or move away.*

These priests are taught how to recognise various symptoms and the theology of Exorcisms. Some come for refresher courses.'

As for the Catholics, one of their spokesmen; Father Jeremy Davies, a Westminster Exorcist and co-founder of the 200-strong International Association of Exorcists, stated; *There are more people in need and the church is dealing with the problem more effectively.*

The incidence of the Demonic on the whole is rising. At the centre of this is man's growing pride and attempted self-reliance.'

The Vatican issued a new manual for Exorcism in the year 2000, replacing the hopelessly antiquated version of 1614. The new manual, which took 20 years to complete courtesy of Vatican theologians, encourages priests to work in tandem with the medical profession to distinguish between genuine Demonic influence and mental illness.

It also encourages priests to spend more time in prayer with possessed people.

But it's not only the Christians who have been reporting an increase in the number of Exorcisms. Our old friend Kevin Carlyon, the self-proclaimed High Priest of White Witches, took time off from sabotaging Swedish monster hunters at Loch Ness and exorcising the curse of the dreaded 'Scottish play,' to say; *More people than ever are coming to me asking that I remove Evil spirits*

The New Age phenomenon is growing in popularity. We are seeing more cases of Poltergeists because people are now less afraid to admit they've seen them.'

'Harry Potter and Sabrina The Teenage Witch are making Witchcraft the in-trend. I have 1,600 members and more people than ever are asking to join.'

Meanwhile, *FORTEAN TV's* very own Reverend Lionel Fanthorpe was busy telling reporters about an incident that occurred on some undisclosed date in the recent past.

A journalist, Bob Williams, travelled with the good Reverend to Hullbridge in Essex, to visit a supposedly haunted semi-detached house.

Requested to visit the premises by a woman given the pseudonym 'Karen' to protect her true identity, the pair travelled to the town and were immediately struck by the unexplained chill pervading the living room. The lounge, it seems, is haunted by 'negative spirits' and the reporter and the Reverend are informed that 30 odd years ago, a man had committed suicide near the front window of the lounge where a chest now stood. His spirit had apparently not left the room in which he killed himself.

In order to remove 'this vile presence' as Karen called it, Mr Fanthorpe set about performing the exorcism ritual. He first presented Karen with some Holy Water in a vessel made of the Nanteos Cup which, legend has it, is the Holy Grail. He gave this cup to Karen to keep for her own protection. Lionel then asked for some more water, which he duly blessed and began to intone a prayer, directing his words towards where the former occupant had taken his own life.

He read; *'Lord of all Power and Might, God of infinite Love and infinite Wisdom, all things visible and invisible, spiritual and material, are Yours to control and command. We come before You, O Lord, seeking help and guidance for this distressed soul. You are the Good Shepherd, most loving Lord, and so we ask that this spirit-being who has not yet reached the eternal and abundant joy of Your heavenly presence may be helped and guided to find everlasting happiness and love with your Saints and Angels in the light and beauty of Your Eternal Kingdom. We ask this prayer in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'*

As soon as this was over, Mr Fanthorpe picked up the egg-cup of Holy Water he had just blessed and began to sprinkle it around the room.

'With this Holy Water we ask for God's protection,' he boomed. 'May its cleansing power renew and refresh.'

That appeared to have had the desired effect. The vicar then asked Karen if she wanted anything else done. She immediately asked; *'Is it possible you could close me down?'*

It appears that Karen is a medium who had been having trouble with her 'psychic guides,' which she felt were not protecting her from the spirits she was channelling.

She was therefore open to malevolent forces and wanted her 'psychic door' firmly closing for good.

Lionel duly obliged, went over to her and made the sign of the Cross on her forehead with some more Holy Water, saying; *'May she only channel spirits she wants to channel for joy and peace. Keep her from all that causes her difficulty.'*

With tears copiously rolling down her cheeks, Karen left the room, relieved that the ordeal was finally over.

According to 'Patricia,' another medium present at the Exorcism, the room immediately felt warmer and more comfortable. Soon afterwards Karen returned smiling; *'I'm still anxious,'* she said to Mr Fanthorpe. *'But I'm heartily glad that you came.'*

***And just a couple of months later, and much closer to home to yours truly, the Bishop of Liverpool, the Reverend David Gait, Liverpool's advisor to the aforementioned Deliverance Ministry, went on record to state that he was a fully-fledged Exorcist.

He was also keen to dispel the public's perception of the ritual, as he told reporters; *'A lot of people think it is like it is in the film THE EXORCIST. But it is nothing like that. People don't scream and writhe about while the Devil is gotten rid of.'*

'I recite the Lord's Prayer and a special deliverance prayer as part of the Exorcism ritual and I encourage the possessed to laugh.'

'The last thing that pleases Evil is laughter. It makes it feel powerless because people are laughing at it. Laughter is very powerful in what I do.'

'But sometimes you cannot help anyone because they do not want to show up at the church afterwards to receive the follow-up prayers and support.'

The Reverend Gait, 53, divides his time between working as a parish priest in Widnes and training lay preachers.

But in addition to an already punishing work schedule, he still finds time to fulfil his responsibilities to the Deliverance Ministry. Every week he is called upon by the Church to visit someone who believes they are possessed or that their house is haunted.

What is especially interesting about this particular vicar is the fact that when he was a student at Oxford, back in the 1970s, he was not only an atheist, but was actively involved with what he termed; *'the other side.'*

Not surprisingly, the Reverend Gait is somewhat reluctant to reveal the precise nature of his dabbling in the occult other than to say; *'it was far darker than ouija boards,'* and that if he hadn't have succumbed to *'a nagging feeling that it was becoming too dangerous,'* his obsession might have developed into something very serious.

David, who grew up in Norris Green, travelled to a Christian youth camp in Devon when he was just 21. Instinctively, he walked towards a group of strangers and was told that God was ready to protect him from Evil.

This startling conversion to Christianity was compounded two years later when he was completing the final research on his Masters bio-physics project into decompression sickness. He was in his science lab, thinking about taking up the position of associate professor in Boston, when he claims he heard a voice urging him to become a vicar.

Reverend Gait qualified when he was 24 but kept his past a secret, being very careful about who he told, only a select bunch of people who he was convinced he could trust.

However, when he was a young curate working in Bootle, a botched Exorcism in West Yorkshire led to the Anglican Church setting up its Deliverance Ministry in 1974. Given his scientific background and his experiences with the paranormal, the Reverend Gait was the ideal candidate for a place on the Liverpool Diocese's team and he has been working on it ever since.

'It means I am very thorough and do not jump to conclusions. I investigate everything to make sure there is no other explanation for someone being possessed.'

'I have only ever exorcised three people in all the years I have been on the team. Nevertheless, I am called out weekly to people who have been oppressed by an Evil spirit at some point.'

'A lot of people have been squashed by something nasty.'

'It is like a carpet that has had a sofa on it. Although the sofa has long gone, there are still marks on the carpet and it takes a long time for the carpet to recover and get back to how it was before the sofa was on it.'

'People get squashed in a similar way and feel as if the nasty thing is still inside them even though it has gone.'

'I also have visits from a lot of people who have mental health problems and mistakenly believe the voices they are hearing are those of the Devil or another Evil spirit.'

'In that situation, I can do nothing but pray with them and refer them on because Exorcism is more likely to exacerbate rather than alleviate the problem.'

'I have lots of friends who are schizophrenics but unfortunately I cannot help them because that is not what I am there for.'

'Schizophrenics are not possessed by Evil spirits. They need psychiatric help and counselling instead. But I can tell you who can be helped by spiritual cleansing. The Church is good at detecting when people are ill.'

'I openly admit to watching and enjoying the likes of BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER, but I would like to point out that becoming too obsessed can have its downfall.'

'A lot of people are really getting into Angels but they have no idea what they are dealing with. They think it is all harmless, but it is not.'

'The problem is at the moment Angels are trendy but the Church is not. They don't want to link the two together because it isn't fashionable.'

8-18th November, 2001-16th January, 2002 Oxford/Essex/Liverpool

'DAILY EXPRESS'/DAILY MAIL/LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'

FROM HELL

The synopsis of the following account of a modern-day Exorcism was written up in one of the most unlikely of paranormal sources, the satirical weekly magazine *THE SPECTATOR*.

The story begins in the Convent of Santa Gemma in northern Tuscany, just beyond the walls of a small village called Lucca. Rod Williams, a journalist working for the mag, reports that within the confines of the non-descript convent, something truly extraordinary is taking place. A 16-year-old girl named Martina, is strapped to chair by the convent chaplain, Father Alfredo. The girl, beautiful in that classically Italian mould, screams at the priest to let her go, even as her true father helps to tie down her right arm. Father Alfredo struggles to ensure that her wildly kicking legs are restrained, but is unable to prevent the girl from catching the 76-year-old priest in the chest, sending him spinning to the floor.

'Go to Hell!' she screeches, compelling the distraught mother to take out a plastic bottle and sprinkle Holy Water down the back of her daughter's neck. The room is instantly filled with

decidedly *unholy* shrieks of pain. In a phrase uncannily similar to that uttered by the Pazuzu-possessed little girl in *THE EXORCIST*, Martina yells in agony; 'It burns! It burns!'

A few seconds later however, the girl falls unexpectedly quiet. Her legs and arms are quickly fastened to the chair with leather thongs. The exorcism can now begin.

Mr Williams takes up the story;



'We filmed this scene while making a documentary series for Channel Four about the less well-known aspects of life in Tuscany. The renewed popularity of exorcism is something of a paradox in what has traditionally been one of Italy's most anti-clerical regions. As church-going declines, Paganism booms.'

'Belief in mal occio - the Evil Eye - is widespread, and Tuscans of all social backgrounds visit sorcerers and wizards to have it removed (with olive oil and rosemary). According to the Catholic Church, it is precisely those people who have dabbled in the occult who are most vulnerable to possession and who are now flocking back to the Church. Over the past three years, Father Alfredo has become an Exorcist by popular demand; every Sunday, dozens of parishioners visit the convent to seek his blessing and to hand over the talismans and crystals which they had unwisely purchased. One of 15 licensed Exorcists to be working in Tuscany, he performs up to ten exorcisms a week.'

'A warm and loquacious man, he is a monk as well as a priest; the Church requires Exorcists to have a rock-hard spiritual centre in order to resist the blandishments of Satan. Many people come here and say "Exorcise me," he tells us. 'But you can't just do it to anybody. There has to be a sign that the Devil is there. Because it is an imperative, you say "Satan, go away. Go to Hell!" you have to be sure that He's there. Otherwise you're saying "go away" to thin air. In that case, Satan would start laughing.'

'From Hell.'

'In the story we were invited to film, Father Alfredo had no doubts - Martina's hysterical reaction to the application of Holy Water had been conclusive.'

At the time Rod Williams and his crew arrived on the scene, Martina had been coming to see Father Alfredo twice a week for six months. And still the air is turned blue with *'diabolical growls and torrents of Tuscan expletives.'*

'Leave her, revolting spirit!' the priest attempts to command the 'Demon' inside her.

'Go fuck yourself, you shitty little priest!' the entity charmingly replies.

There then follows a trading of insults, neither side giving any quarter.

'To Hell! Off with you. Leave this place to the Holy Spirit! I raped this girl! Raped her! Raped her!'

'Antichrist, Antichrist, Antichrist! You are our slave. You are Christ's monkey!'

'She's mine!'

After the Exorcist session, Martina tells the reporters that she feels fine, like another person, *'calm, like I am in bed with the Madonna'* (sounds like a catchy title for an egotistical semi-documentary featuring Mrs Ritchie, to me -Sarky Ed) *'Unfortunately, this joy doesn't last long. Sometimes I can smell the stink of sulphur in my bedroom (a commonly reported feature of Alien Abduction accounts, interestingly enough). 'Sometimes the Devil leaves marks on me; he puts hot hands on me here on my back.'*

Perhaps not surprisingly, Martina's parents were pretty much convinced that their daughter was, at the very least, bewitched, and sought the guidance of Father Alfredo. Piles of so-called cursed items were destroyed, including, bizarrely enough, most of the living-room furniture.

To his credit, Father Alfredo is well aware of the potentially serious effects the carrying out of exorcisms can have on a child's mental state. He apparently keeps in close contact with Professor Eugenio Sanguinetti, a clinical psychologist who hails from Pisa. The Professor, open-minded though he may be about the physical reality of Devils and Demons, is of the opinion that exorcisms can have therapeutic effects. In fact, he often refers some of his patients to Father Alfredo.

After making a brief appraisal of Martina's case, he immediately ruled out schizophrenia or psychosis, and unusually for a psychologist, endorsed the priests own finding: that she seemed to be possessed by one or more *'negative presences.'*

According to Rod Williams, *'In the Professor's view, the nuns would play a vital role in Martina's liberation. "What really counts is prayer delivered by an ascetic community with profound faith. All praying together - even when the subject is far away. That can bring about liberation."*

The nuns, it seems, were more than keen to help out, only for Martina's condition to worsen considerably. The Devil, or whatever Demon had taken over her body, decreed that she would not be able to walk, and constantly bedridden, she had to be carried to the sessions with the priest. On one memorable, for all the wrong reasons, occasion, Martina's mother tried to apply Holy Oil to her daughter's vagina in an attempt to drive the Evil Spirit from out of her body.

'Get your hands off me, you whore!' came the riposte. *'It's your fault your daughter is like this.'*

Strangely enough, Father Alfredo was encouraged by this deterioration, as it convinced him that the Demon was cornered and fighting to retain control of its human host.

And sure enough, Martina's liberation was not too far distant. During an exorcism that took place on 7th April, 2001, at precisely 4:30pm, she told everyone within earshot that she felt *'as if someone had thrown a pail of hot and icy water over me, from head to foot, as if the Holy Spirit was enveloping me and had freed me.'*

She later claimed that she was certain a total of 22 Demons had eventually fled her body (one of whom turned out to be an SS officer who had killed more than 200 people).

Aside from a couple of *'minor exorcisms'* that subsequently took place over the phone, Martina is blessedly sure that she no longer needs Father Alfredo and is currently aiming to eke out a living as a professional singer.

Martina's father, who had lost his faith, has now returned to the welcoming arms of the Church, inspiring his wife to ponder; *'Perhaps this is what the Lord wanted from Martina. He permitted this thing to happen in order to recreate His sufferings, to give them to others, to attempt the conversion of many people.'*

I don't know about you, Dear Constant Readers, but such sentiments remind me of that which a noted film critic once said of William Friedkin's classic 1973 shocker;

'THE EXORCIST is the greatest advert for the Christian faith since the Resurrection.'

5th January, 2002 The Convent of Santa Gemma, Tuscany, Italy THE SPECTATOR'

How To Avoid Spirit Possession

And if, after all these accounts of apparent 'Demonic possession,' you're filled a growing sense of unease and dread, you may care to read the following as a way of (hopefully) ensuring that you don't fall victim to these unwelcome intrusions.'

Worryingly, according to some sources, absolutely anyone can potentially become possessed, even those who consider themselves to live righteous and holy lives. Modern Western psychology and psychiatry, do not, of course consider possession to be a clinical reality, but amongst the more open-minded practitioners and researchers there is a feeling that certain types of psychosis, such as schizophrenia, or any sudden or radical change in a person's behavior, could well be attributed to spirit possession.

Theologians are often asked, What kind of spirits do this? Why do they possess the living? and What is their purpose?

Brad Steiger, a prolific author and 'expert' on many forms of strange phenomena, seeks to provide answers.

'Current modalities of the universe maintain that energy can never be destroyed. Therefore, it is reasoned, even though we may discard our bodies at death, the Soul energy that we have created during our lifetime exists even after we have died. At death, this psychic energy force separates itself from the body and begins a new existence on the spirit level.'

'A number of parapsychologists have declared that there may be very little difference between the two worlds. The electromagnetic structure of the Soul continues to have the same habits, thoughts, memories, feelings and flaws as exist in the physical plane.'

'Thus, if a person has spent his entire existence in pursuit of pleasure, the psychic soul personality will experience the same mediumistic drives as after death. He will attempt to return to all his old, pleasurable places.'

'Think of the tremendous, unresolved shock when someone dies unexpectedly and enters the spirit world.'

'And if there were additional negative factors, such as a feud left unsettled, an old score left unpaid, an argument left unresolved, then that spirit might hunger to return to the physical world and obtain vengeance.'

'Such a negative earthbound spirit might seek to attach itself to a susceptible person and make him or her do things unnatural to and against his or her will. Such spirits become parasites.'

According to Mr Steiger, reliable signs of spirit possession are any or a combination of the following behavior patterns;

1: Hearing voices directing the person to perform acts he or she may not have ever considered doing.

2: He or she will frequently see or sense the image of the possessing spirit as it existed in its physical life.

3: The victim may blackout or faint without knowing what transpired during that time.

4: Sometimes in the midst of a conversation, he or she may have a mental block and act in a trance-like manner.

5: He or she may be observed talking or walking differently or acting in a strange, irrational manner.

6: The victim may act in a way they have never done before. Their friends and family may see them as a totally different person.

7: In the worst case scenario, the possession may reach a climax where the person may commit a crime, often violent or extremely anti-social in nature, or even commit suicide.

8: He or she may speak in tongues, and perform lewd acts and avoid religious objects (like a crucifix, rosary, etc).'

Another researcher, clinical psychologist Edith Fiore, over 50 per cent of those confined in mental hospitals in the United States are not insane but victims of spirit possession.

22nd October, 2001 THE INQUIRER NEWS SERVICE'

'Witchcraft' Murder In London

The Metropolitan Police have gone on record as saying that a boy whose dismembered torso was found in the River Thames, last September, may have been the victim of some bizarre Witchcraft-inspired ritual.

The officers investigating the case openly discussed the possibility that his death was perpetrated by Witchdoctor's, who had used his body parts for use in some undisclosed magical potion.

The body of the African-Caribbean boy, with his head, arms and legs missing, was spotted by someone crossing Tower Bridge in September.

At the time of writing, nobody had come forward to identify the boy, who has been estimated to have been five-years-old.

Detective Inspector Will O' Reilly, from the serious crime group, was quoted as saying: 'Some sort of ritualistic motivation is one of many lines of inquiry we are currently looking at. We are not ruling anything out.'

'Statistically, this is very, very unusual, there has not been a case in the UK of this type of child dismemberment since our records began over 30 years ago.'

Police had not ruled out the possibility that the child had been murdered by a gang of paedophiles, although there was no obvious sign of a sexual attack.

Investigating officers recently met with Dutch police currently involved in the disconcertingly similar murder of a young white girl in Holland, but officially no connection has yet been made between the two killings.

16th October, 2001 London, England 'BBC NEWS'

The Spawn Of Satan

The husband of an Ecuadorian woman apparently believes that she's pregnant with the son of the Devil.

He describes the medical scan of the seven-month-old foetus as 'looking nothing like a human baby.'

He claims his wife has suffered a series of fits during which she gains unexplainably superhuman strength and shouts 'Let me out! Let me out!' in an otherworldly deep, guttural voice.

Vicente Suarez and his neighbours in Jipijapa, Ecuador, told the local press that Digna, 17, is definitely bearing Satan's child.

Those selfsame neighbours were in agreement that the girl often goes into a trance, at the height of which she openly praises the Devil. She also is said to be unable to bear the presence of children or religious images.

'When the Devil is in possession of her body, she spits at anyone who approaches. She kicks out and she drinks urine as if it were water,' her husband was quoted as saying.

Digna's family and friends say, that until her pregnancy, she was a shy, home-loving girl. They believe Satan took control of her body during one of those highly-unadvisable ouija board sessions

Residents are currently raising money to pay for a thorough medical examination which will be followed by an exorcism if the doctor's state that it is necessary.

27th August, 2001 Ecuador, South America 'ANANOVA' NEWS'

*** Meanwhile, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, local police discovered that a watchman who was supposed to be looking out for a building where there was a fire, practised Witchcraft. Firefighters who were called in to contain the blaze were quick to alert the police about his nocturnal activities.

The man, who was handed over to the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, stated that he had been practising Black Magic since first arriving in the kingdom, nine months earlier.

23rd November, 2001 Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 'AL-MADINAH'

Witchcraft In Malaysia, Romania & Loudon

Starting this round-up in Malaysia, three people have recently been hanged for the 1993 murder of a member of the state assembly in a Black Magic ritual.

The trio had been unsuccessful in a whole series of appeals after being sentenced to death in 1995 for the murder of the politician, Mazlan Idris, two years earlier.

During a quite sensational trial, the court were told of how the 'Witchdoctor' couple and their assistant had chopped Mr Mazlan's body into pieces (see the London, September case featured above) and used his money to carry out shopping sprees and plastic surgery.

Mr Mazlan, an US educated assemblyman in Central Pahang State, had originally approached Malaysian Witchdoctor, Mona Fandey, for magical help aimed at boosting his political career.

Fandey, 45, and her husband Mohamed Affandi Abdul Rahman, 44, and helper Juraimi Hussin, 31, took part in a ritual in which the politician was persuaded to lie on the floor, close his eyes, and wait for money to 'fall from the sky.'

He was then beheaded with an axe, skinned, and his body cut into 18 pieces before being buried in a cement-covered hole.

The jury were told that the motive behind the murder was purely money. Within hours of the killing, the couple went shopping in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, and Fandey paid for a facelift for herself.

During the trial, Fandey, real name Maznah Ismail, attracted regular publicity by regularly modelling glamorous outfits. She also claimed to have provided politician clients in the ruling Umno party with a variety of charms and talismans.

A prison official claimed that the trio had expressed not the slightest remorse at the pre-dawn execution.

The case has led to calls for Witchcraft of all forms to be outlawed.

October, 2001 Malaysia 'BBC NEWS'

*** Meanwhile, in Romania, a woman returned to her native village in the Jiu Valley to visit a woman who briefly touched her life but left a lifelong impression upon her.

All Silvia Radan remembers of the childhood experience are tiny bits and pieces; a tirade of fast words whispered fervently above her head, a sudden wet glob of spit on her forehead. She recalls being very young and very sick, and she had just had her first encounter with a real-life Witch. She had been brought there by her grandmother to remove the Evil that that

was making her so ill. Her grandmother genuinely feared for the little girl's life, laid low as she was by this mysterious ailment. And so, at her wits end, she felt she had no other option than to take her, not to the local doctor, but the local Witch, for treatment.

Magic, both of both the Black and White varieties, are still practised in Witch/Vampire/Werwolf-haunted Romania, and Silvia was determined to track down the woman who had helped her all those years ago.

And Silvia found her much as she remembered her smoking like the proverbial chimney and still in business. The woman mainly casts spells over children, but she receives adults, as well. People from all the villages in the area flock to her for advice and treatment and for the power of her healing hands and magic words.

One of the ways she reportedly tells the future is through the use of 41 corn grains. She claims she mastered the art by watching her own grandmother practice it and insists that the best Witches are the ones who learn from others and master knowledge that can't be found in any other book. She switches the grains around into different groups while reciting spells and casting tidings for the one who is receiving the reading.

The Witches are not just confined to small villages and outlying areas, however. At least not in Romania, anyway. Many are to be found living in urban areas and they often make a profitable living from their trade.

They perform Tarot readings, purchase a spell to ward off Evil or obtain true love. So popular are some Witches, they have large queues lined up outside their gates waiting in turn to see them. Others have set workdays that would easily rival that of a successful conventional doctor, only seeing clients on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for example. Some adapt the spells and the fees they charge individually to meet the resources and needs of their client.

As age old as their trade is, modern business concerns are influencing the way they practice.

Many Witches are finding a new reason to be discreet about their profession and their clientele, as Romania's income revenue system becomes more efficient it becomes increasingly likely they'll be taxed on their earnings like any other professional. Even a Witch's best spell isn't able to ward off the tax collector.

7th November, 2001 Romania 'REUTERS'

*** And finally, over in Loudon County, USA, items seized from the home of two local residents accused of the murder of a scientist named Robert M. Schultz, included swords and documents relating to human sacrifice.

Michael Pfohl, 21, his 19-year-old girlfriend Katherine Inglis, and 18-year-old Kyle Hulbert of Woodbridge, were charged with murder following the December 10th, 2000, discovery of Schwartz's body in his remote home on Mount Gilead, southwest of Leesburg.

Officials have said that the three suspects were all friends of Schwartz's youngest daughter, Clara, a 19-year-old student at James Madison University. On December 11th, Prince Williams officials issued a search warrant for a home in Erin Drive, Haymarket, where Pfohl and Inglis lived with his relatives.

Police seized clothing, shoes and cleaning supplies, along with at least nine knives, three swords and a machete.

Also listed on the search inventory was 'assorted altar items, a green rectangular stone plate, computer and discs.'

Loudon County Sheriff Steve Simpson has criticised reports that the stabbing death had cult-oriented underpinnings and denied earlier reports that a letter 'X' was carved into the back of Schwartz's neck.

Simpson's investigations found multiple lacerations to the body, but these marks would be consistent with a frenzied killing resulting from rage, according to Simpson. He does not

dispute that the suspects may have known each other through an interest in the occult, however.

The affidavit signed by a Prince William detective states that during the December 11th search of the Pfohl home, police found 'miscellaneous documents that contain language of killing and human sacrifice in a Wiccan fashion. Wicca is a cult that involves Pagan rituals and sacrifices.'

Fortunately, for Wiccans, Scott Cunningham, author of 'LIVING WICCA: A FURTHER GUIDE FOR THE SOLITARY PRACTITIONER,' was quick to point out that Wiccan tradition states that 'no ritual animal sacrifices may be made.

'Wiccans simply don't cause harm to others.'

2nd January, 2002 Loudon, USA 'LOUDON TIMES-MIRROR'

The Deadly Fear Of The Number Four

In Western culture, it seems that the Number 13 is the single, most dread-inducing number, responsible for such 'irrational' unwritten rules as there being a distinct lack of a thirteenth floor in most high-rise buildings, and people refusing to climb out of bed when Friday the 13th comes rolling round.

In Asia, however, it's the number four that inspires feelings ranging from mild unease to outright terror.

According to a study carried out by the University of California, it may well be the case that certain individuals are quite literally scaring themselves to death on the fourth day of every month.

A study of death certificates over a 25-year period showed that the number of 'average' deaths in the Japanese and Chinese American population jumped by (cue 'TWILIGHT ZONE' theme tune) 13 per cent on the fourth of the month.

In areas such as California, where there is a more concentrated population of Chinese and Japanese residents, the number spiked to 27 per cent instead, suggesting that the power of superstition is magnified when it's reinforced by a larger group of people who share the same belief.

The word 'four' is read as 'si' in Chinese Mandarin and 'shi' in Japanese, a close homonym for the word death in both languages and in the Cantonese dialect spoken in Hong Kong.

Just as with the number 13, the number four is often avoided in numbering hotel and hospital rooms in China and Japan. So deeply rooted is this fear that the Chinese Air Force avoids the number in designating military aircraft.

Despite these commonalities between the superstition of the numbers 13 and 4 in the two cultures, there did not seem to be a corresponding increase in US deaths on the 13th of each month among those with American or European ancestry.

The results of the survey lend new meaning to the term 'scared to death.' It does indeed seem quite possible to do just that if your belief is strong enough in the things you fear most.

24th December, 2001 University of California 'REUTERS'

Lord Of The Rings And Harry Potter In The Dock Again

And here we go again.

No sooner have a couple of hugely-imaginative (not to say, massively entertaining) cinematic blockbusters hit the screen, than people acting as spokesmen for the Christian religion start bleating on about how spiritually damaging films dealing with the fantastic can be...Especially to their target audience; the young and delightfully open-minded.

First up, we have Father Gabriel Amorth (whose surname, amusingly enough, makes him sound pretty much like a character from Hogwart's or the land of Gondor) and his

rantings that he believes Satan is the guiding force behind the Harry Potter novels.

Rome's official Exorcist saw fit to seek to warn parents against the 'Evil' contained within the pages of J.K. Rowling's bestsellers. *'They could feature innumerable positive references to the Satanic art,'* he told reporters.

He believes the books try to make a distinction between Black and White Magic, but maintains that such a distinction doesn't exist *'because magic is always a turn to the Devil.'*

Fortunately, many other, thankfully enlightened senior churchmen have sought to praise the novels.

*** Meanwhile, over in the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan, so-called 'Tolkien groupies' are being rounded up beaten and arrested as subversives.

State police are currently cracking down on what they perceive to be *'dangerous Bohemians,'* akin to Satanists.

Previously banned in that country, Tolkien's books became a massive hit in 1990's Russia with societies holding organised readings and mock battles.

'We are perfectly legal,' one Tolkienist complained to reporters. *'In fact, we spend most of our time in the mountains. It's our lifestyle.'*

16th January, 2002 Rome, Italy 'DAILY TELEGRAPH - January 2002 Kazakhstan TOTAL FILM.'

RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA

The Fellowship Of The Ring Score Points With Christians

Contrary to the negative reaction to Peter Jackson's excellent celluloid version of Tolkien's classic series, featured above, conservative Christians over in the States have decreed that the trials and tribulations of Frodo, Sam, and the rest of the Fellowship, are infinitely preferable to the 'Satanically-influenced' Harry Potter novels.

Catholic publications are reportedly *'ecstatic'* about the movie with the Archdiocesan newspaper in Boston, *'THE PILOT,'* claiming that the film highlights *'the message of the Gospels,'* and the weekly *'NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER'* declaring: *'Move over Harry Potter. The Hobbits are coming!'*

Some religious newspapers even went so far as to devote their entire front pages to photographs of Frodo Baggins (played by Elijah Wood) complete with a quote from a 'specialist' (in what exactly, the clipping doesn't say) saying that the tale conveys *'fundamental Christian truths.'*

Meanwhile, even the more evangelical of Protestants have proven to be equally enthusiastic in their appraisal the first part of the trilogy. One pastor over in New York, has been reading the series of books several times a year, and has even gone so far as to teach himself Elvish, Tolkien's invented language of the Elves.

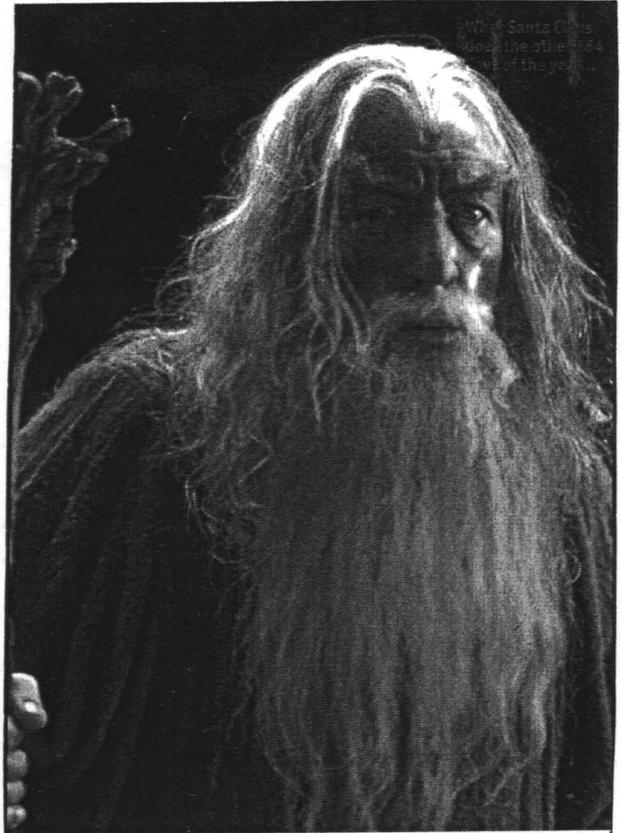
Robert Crosby, pastor of Mount Hope Christian Church in Burlington, Massachusetts, was planning on holding a discussion during the course of this seemingly never-ending winter, on how parents should best handle the works of Tolkien and Rowling.

What bemuses this writer some, is the undeniable fact that the basic plotlines of both Harry Potter and The Lord Of The Rings share many common themes: Responsibility for being the deciding factor in the eternal struggle between the forces of Good and Evil, is thrust upon a small, seemingly insignificant individual. Aided by magic, fortune, and not a tiny amount of plain old fashioned good sense, these underdogs manage to

triumph against all the odds. With a little help from their friends, of course.

So why the widely differing reactions to the release of the two movies, and the novels that spawned them?

The answer, it seems, is every bit as cynical as it is bigoted. Catholics are at pains to point out that the authors are poles apart when it comes to revealing where their religious loyalties lie. Tolkien was a devout convert to Catholicism, whose faith informed his writing, whilst J.K. Rowling, a member of the Church of Scotland, has failed to emphasize her religion as a central part of her biography.



Tolkien was also a friend of C.S. Lewis, the famous Christian writer who penned the *'CHRONICLES OF NARNIA,'* that is also supposed, by some, to be a Christian allegory.

'BOSTON GLOBE' reporter, Michael Paulson, writes: *'Critics argue that Tolkien's treatment of issues such as Evil, power and heroism is richer than Rowling's and more closely reflects Christian conceptions of the world. And some contrast his celebration of the heroism of an ordinary folk - Hobbits - with Rowling's elevation of a special class, Wizards, over regular folk, whom she calls Muggles, and tends to describe derisively.'*

'The popularity of the Harry Potter books immediately spurred criticism from some evangelical Protestants, who argued that the four books and the movie glorify the occult.'

'That view is not unanimous. Harry Potter has evangelical defenders, including Charles W. Colson, who went to jail for a Watergate-related crime and is founder of an evangelical prison ministry.'

'The American Library Association placed the Harry Potter books at the top of its list of most-often challenged books of last year (2001) saying that critics had sought to ban the books for occult, Satanism and anti-family themes.'

James A. Herrick, one such critic who researches religious controversy as a professor at the Hope College in Michigan (nice work if you can get it - Undeniably Jealous Ed) was quoted as saying: *'Certainly the Harry Potter books are not the most sinister thing, but they have piqued interest in Witchcraft and occult-related themes.'*

'And in the Potter books, you get this sharp division between Muggles and magical people, and I think that's something worth being concerned about.'

(Personally, I think there's about a zillion things on this Godforsaken, spinning ball of sorrows to 'be concerned about,' right now, but hey, I'm just a humble magazine Editor, so what do I know?)

Perhaps the last word on the subject should go to a conservative Presbyterian minister named Tim Keller. He first read *'LORD OF THE RINGS'* when the woman who is now his wife gave him a copy at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Both are now Tolkien fanatics.

But Keller stirred up the proverbial hornet's nest when he sought to praise Harry Potter during a sermon at his church, arguing, not unreasonably, that the books do a good job of portraying Evil as a force in the world, portraying the power of the supernatural, an portraying the importance of sacrificial love as illustrated when Harry Potter's mother dies saving her infant son. Keller claims he has been verbally criticised by a small group of people vocally upset that he attempted to praise Potter. Keller says such criticism is *'inexplicable.'*

His wife, Kathy, goes even further. *'I learned that anything can be misued when one of our sons picked up a big Bible and dunked his brother on the head with it. But that doesn't mean we banned Bibles.'*

5th January, 2002 USA *THE BOSTON GLOBE'*

NEW DAWN'S FAITH

Maybe it's nothing more than a hefty dose of wishful thinking on behalf of the populace in the wake of September 11th, but according to a recent survey carried out by the *SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE'*, in conjunction with the Ohio University, most Americans believe in the existence of Angels. The results of the questionnaire seem to indicate that one in five of US residents are convinced that they have either seen Angels themselves, or they know of someone who claims to have done so. The survey covered 1,127 randomly chosen American citizens.

When asked; *'Do you believe in Angels, that is, some kind of heavenly beings who visit Earth, do in fact exist?'* a staggering 77 per cent responded by saying *'Yes!'*

Almost as many of them, 73 per cent, said that they believed that *'Angels still come into the world, even in these modern days.'*

Both sceptics and believers alike concur that in recent times, public interest in Angels has increased dramatically. Some attribute this upsurge to popular (if somewhat cheesy) TV shows like *'TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL'* and *'HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN'*, and big-screen productions such as John Travolta's appearance in the movie *'MICHAEL.'* This might not be evidence of an increase in the level of people's faith, but rather a general rise in interest in spirituality.

The survey also seemed to indicate who amongst the population was most likely to profess a belief in Angels.

A spokesman for Ohio University told reporters; *'Belief cuts across almost all ranges of education, income and lifestyle. Women and young people are slightly more likely to believe than men or older Americans, but a majority of almost every demographic group has faith in these supernatural beings.'*

'And not everyone thinks this is a good thing.'

'The Founder for Secular Humanism bemoans these findings as an indication of a "very disturbing new trend, leading to a decline in critical thinking and scientific literacy."

'Others balk at being labelled a victim of a surge in superstition, insisting that the experience happened to them and it was as real as it could get, citing instances of a helper appearing out of nowhere in a dangerous situation and then just as mysteriously disappearing once they were no longer needed.'

'Others who took the poll have a slightly more broad definition of what an Angel is to them, arguing that there are people who, through their very actions, must be considered Angelic. Acts of extreme kindness or selflessness as given as proof of their other-worldliness.'

'And who is less likely to believe in Angels?'

'Folks with post-graduate degrees, households with \$80,000 income or more, Jewish individuals, and those with no religious preference tended to have a much more mortal view of things than others in the study did.'

26th December, 2001 USA *'SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE'*

Baby Gabriel In The Company Of Angels

And someone who very definitely believes in the existence of Heavenly entities is three-year-old Gage Gabriel, (how's that for a Cosmic Joke Name Game?) who, last Christmas Eve, was found shivering on a beach alongside the body of his dead mother on the banks of the Bay of Fundy, in Cumberland County, USA.

Gage later told police that he saw two Angels floating above the water, and that they both smiled at him and kept him company.

'One of our officers was talking to him and he mentioned that h saw a couple of Angels with wings on the water,' Amherst RCMP Sgt. Dave Bogle told reporters.

'Anything's possible, let's face it, when you look at someone surviving a crash like that.'

The crash in question occurred when Gage's mum, Tobi Gabriel, lost control of their car and was killed instantly when the vehicle plunged off a cliff and landed on the rocky shore off Lower Cove Road, near a place called Joggins, sometime between 10-10:30pm. Miraculously, (perhaps quite literally!) Gage survived both the impact of the crash and the numbing cold out on the beach all alone.

He was found to have frost-bitten toes and a bump on his head but he was otherwise unharmed when a neighbour stumbled across him at 9am on Christmas Day.

Gage told his rescuers that two Angels suddenly appeared on the water where his mother's lifeless body floated near the overturned car.

Tobi's grandfather, Roy Gabriel, has no difficulty in accepting that the Angels saved his great-grandson's life.

'He said that he saw two women in white dresses standing in the water smiling at him all night,' Roy confided to journalists. *'That's what kept him alive. If it wasn't for that, the boy would have died there in the rain.'*

And Sgt. Bogle expressed a similar point of view when he was quoted as saying; *'I believe Gage's story because he hadn't talked to any adults when he told the tale. It sets you back on your heels in a way. He's three-years-old - how could he simply come up with this? There's a higher body than me or you.'*

Anglican minister Mel Langille, not surprisingly, was keen to point out that he totally accepted Gage's heart-rending account; *'Angels touch people's lives quite often at times when we are at most need,'* he said.

'They were comforting him and keeping him from despair, and letting him feel the warmth of God's love.'

31st December, 2001 Bay of Fundy, Cumberland County, USA *'HALIFAX DAILY NEWS'*

FAITH HEALER RETURNS FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

A Filipino husband decided to have his faith-healer wife's body exhumed after he claimed she had visited him in a dream.

Guillermo Anselmo reckons his wife, Marcelina de Leon told him her mission on Earth was still not finished.

Now her body has duly been exhumed as requested and the local villagers are once again flocking to her house in large numbers to be treated for various ailments.

Bai Marcing, as she was known, used to apparently cure people using a combination of water, betel nut and palay in Bugallon, Pangasinan.

Now that her body has been disinterred, it is currently lying in a specially built room at the back of her house and her son and grandchild treat the sick after consultation with her corpse whilst rubbing tap water on the afflicted part of the patient's body. Her family were surprised to find her body soft and not cold. Guillermo told the authorities he will rebury his wife's remains if the body emits a foul odour or when she tells him in another dream it is time to do so.

7th January, 2002 Pangasinan, Philippines THE PHILIPPINE STAR'

'GOD TOLD ME TO'

A former drug dealer by the name of Kenny Carter, 40, has elected to don a ridiculous 'comedy' outfit, resembling a giant pepper, and adopting the nickname 'Peppy The Pepper' (*Nought out of ten for originality. I thought Abdullah Abdullah and Neville Neville were bad!*), because he claimed he heard God's voice thunder in his ears late one unbearably lonesome night. Kenny, sorry, Peppy, takes up the story;

'I was crying out: "Oh, God," when I heard a male voice saying; "You will be a vegetable!"

So I made a costume, wrote a song about my experiences and began singing it at branches of 'Super Fresh in Maryland, USA, where I am community relations manager.'

January, 2002 Maryland, USA 'FHM'

Waiting For A Miracle

Debate over whether or not science can ever prove or disprove the existence of God was raging once again early this year, with the publication of the very latest clinical trials held to discover whether or not the simple power of prayer can aid the physically sick in any way.

The two previous studies, the last of which was published in 1999, appeared to provide *some evidence* that seriously ill patients in Coronary Care Units improved medically if they were prayed for. Unfortunately, excitement at this quite frankly, heartwarming news was somewhat tempered by the results of the latest study of 800 Coronary Care Unit patients, published in *MAYO CLINICAL PROCEEDINGS*, showed no significant beneficial effect of prayer.

The publication has predictably given rise to calls from 'serious' scientists for an immediate cessation of such research. No matter how rigorously conducted, say the sceptics, it could never reveal the Hand of God.

What kind of 'fair-minded' God, they argue, would give help to patients who were prayed for ten times a day, as opposed to those who were prayed for just once a day?

Despite such loaded, though nonetheless relevant, questions being posed in the halls of academia, the town of Lourdes, in south-west France, is still regarded by some, as being the ideal on-location laboratory scientists investigating the reality of God or otherwise, have been crying out for. The six million people who flock to Lourdes each and every year, because of the town's reputation for miraculous healings of incurable diseases, don't need to have scientific confirmation or denial thrust upon them, of course. For these desperate souls, whether hopelessly deluded or entirely justified in their beliefs,

all that matters is the retention of faith, pure and simple. And, according to various sources, miracles do happen at Lourdes.

The most recent example is that of Jean Pierre Bely, a Frenchman, who was confirmed in 1999, by two separate and scientific committees associated with Lourdes, as having been cured of multiple sclerosis following his pilgrimage to the town, in a manner that was scientifically inexplicable, the science code for a fully-fledged miracle.

A local medical bureau was set up eight years after the first reported 'miracle' at Lourdes, in 1875, in order to check allegations of 'inexplicable cures', and also in order to protect the town from unscrupulous fraudsters who might seek to make a profit by making false claims of miracles.

Granted, many cynics would say that these supposedly independent doctors and scientists are simply clubbing together to perpetuate the myth of Lourdes, and ensure that the easily-led and increasingly desperate continue to flock to the town in their millions. Yet this committee, which has grown in size and sophistication with the passage of the years, is now intending to spend years checking individual cases, with up to 250 different doctors interviewing and testing a patient, before a claimed cure will be deemed accepted as not explainable by conventional science.

And even at the conclusion of this quite exhaustive process, the case is then turned over to an independent international medical committee, where another set of doctors and scientists re-examine the case and conduct further tests. Then the phenomenon is finally submitted to a vote among the investigating scientists, as to whether any other explanation other than a miracle is plausible. For example, was the condition accurately diagnosed in the first place?

The final part of the process occurs when the Church is invited to decide whether it wants to pronounce they deem it a sign of God's direct intervention in the affairs of mankind.

Given such scientific rigour, Jean Pierre Bely had to wait ten years before sudden ability to walk during a mass at Lourdes was officially recognised as a true miracle.

The toughness of this scientific process explains why a mere 66 Lourdes cases since 1862 have made it to official 'miracle status.'

This is in stark contrast to the number of people who have claimed to have been blessed with an inexplicable cure...7,000 and counting at the time of going to press.

The church though, is choosing to rely on scientists first to validate the claim that an event cannot be accounted for by natural phenomena.

This would seem to indicate a huge swing away from the previous reluctance of the Church to look to science for verification of its alleged religious phenomena, and by definition, proof that God exists.

The journalist, Raj Persaud, recently recounted for *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH*, the story of Alexis Carrel, one of France's greatest physicians in the first half of the 20th century, and a winner of the Nobel Prize for Medicine.

'Carrel had been a sceptic and lost his Catholic faith before he went to Lourdes on an invalid train, out of scientific curiosity. He became especially interested in a woman he thought was too severely ill even to reach the goal of her pilgrimage. However, she made it to Lourdes, where her stomach was bathed in a pool and her large abdominal tumour soon disappeared - Carrell believed that he had witnessed a genuine miracle.'

Sceptics however, will always smile wryly and shake their heads at man's capacity for simple belief, and ask why there are not hundreds, nay thousands of wooden and prosthetic limbs piled high alongside the crutches cast away by those who had supposedly been cured. The implication being that these so-called miracles did not radically challenge fundamental laws of physics or biology.

But as Mr Persaud points out, 'there are many astonishing remissions of large cancerous tumours amongst the official miracles of Lourdes,' though he also accepts that 'spontaneous remission of cancer is not unknown in the outside world

'One theory is that spontaneous regression of a cancer represents a sudden mobilisation of natural host defence mechanisms. Since it is well established that our immune system is influenced by our emotional state, it is possible that strong emotions evoked by visiting Lourdes could have beneficial physical effects in suddenly galvanising an immune system to start attacking the cancer.'

A British study testing at regular intervals the mental state of pilgrims to Lourdes discovered that up to a year later, the pilgrimage had produced significant reductions in anxiety and depression, an effect equivalent to the strongest anti-depressants.

The fact remains however, that even the most open-minded of commentators, such as Dr Patrick Theillier, Head of The Lourdes Medical Bureau, have recently been forced to admit that the number of authentic miracle cures have become markedly fewer in recent years, as that which lies beyond the pale of scientific explanation appears to inexorably diminish. Paradoxically, a recent survey of the spiritual beliefs of scientifically-trained arch-sceptics and debunkers, revealed that an amazing 39 per cent of biologists, physicists, and mathematicians said not only did they accept the existence of God, but also in a God who answers prayers. Even more astonishing was the revelation that the highest rate of belief was found in the field of mathematics, the language of the sciences.

The final word goes to Dr Raj Persaud, the journalist responsible for these findings, (as well as being a consultant psychiatrist at the Maudsely Hospital in London);

The most recent attempt to review the link between religion and health found that across 42 studies, involving nearly 126,000 people, highly religious people were found to be almost a third more likely to live longer, for reasons that still remain mysterious. The best scientific theory is that religious and spiritual practices engender positive emotions like hope, and limited negative emotions like hostility, and this has profound long-term hormonal and immune system benefits.

'So it would seem that if you follow the latest science, faith is, oddly, still the most pragmatic approach for a long life, but you should only start relying on prayer after you have exhausted what medicine and science have to offer, after all, isn't that what the Church does in Lourdes?'

16th January, 2002 Lourdes, France 'DAILY TELEGRAPH'

GHOSTLY TALES Ghosts And Devils Over Merseyside

Just prior to Halloween, last year, our old friend Tom Skemen was once more gracing the pages of the local press as part of a seasonal round-up of Merseyside true-life tales of the Supernatural.

Reproduced here, are a just a few of the highlights:

We start back in October, 1968, at a house just off Pigue Lane, in the Wavertree district of Liverpool. A lady by the name of Mrs Crowther was cleaning dishes at the kitchen sink when she clearly saw a man dressed all in black walk directly past her window. He wore a black peaked cap and carried a long, iron bar.

Without warning, the man suddenly vanished in the midst of the backyard, and Mrs Crowther likely doubted her senses at this point. Fortunately for her sanity, one of her neighbours

also saw the weird, threatening-looking stranger on the following night, and he was quoted as saying that the man looked like a railway worker carrying the type of bar the shunter men once used to undo railway line couplings.

A week later, at bang on midnight, a family in the same street watched in amazement as their chandelier suddenly began swaying of its own accord. They then heard a strange rumbling sound. Ornamental plates fell off the walls with the vibration. Everyone in the street came out of their houses, doubtless thinking there's be an earthquake.

The following Friday, again at precisely midnight, a Mrs Richardson was sitting on her son's bed, telling him a bedtime story, when she heard a distant roar, coming in her direction. It sounded like a heavy rumble.

The noise got louder still, and passed through the downstairs part of the house. Then an ear-splitting whistle sounded. It was reminiscent of a whistle of a steam train. Seconds later, the whistle ceased and the noise suddenly ended.

Mrs Richardson rushed down the stairs with her son hanging onto her dress. She found the place in total disarray. The table had moved towards the window, an armchair was overturned and the windows themselves were dripping with condensation.

The exact same phenomena seemed to have overtaken the entire street. Two women said that they had seen the ghost of a steam train emerge from the last house of the street and vanish into the night at the end of Pigue Lane.

Tom later discovered that a railway track had run through the same street in Victorian times.



*** More recently, in 1994, to be exact, a university student named Philip Brannigan left the Philharmonic pub on Hope Street, at just after last orders, and was waiting on Hardman Street for a taxi to take him home. He heard the sound of a woman crying nearby, and decided to see if the lady was okay. The sobbing sound was coming from a narrow alleyway between the pub and a restaurant, so Philip went down the passage, and saw something that was to give him a whole host of sleepless nights.

The proverbial Woman In Black stood before him. She had long, snow-white hair that covered her face, and she was emitting a spine-chilling whistling noise. Philip was convinced that he was confronted with a Banshee, the legendary Celtic harbinger of death.

Not surprisingly, the badly frightened man turned and ran for home just as fast as his legs would carry him.

Not surprisingly, the badly frightened man turned and ran for home just as fast as his legs would carry him.

And as he arrived at his bedsit in Ullet Road, Phil's phone was ringing. Trembling, and filled with a dark sense of foreboding, he answered it...Only to hear the broken voice of his mother informed him that his Dad had dropped dead of a heart attack, at 11pm, the precise moment Philip first saw the Banshee.



*** And for a tale of revenge from beyond the grave that wouldn't be out of place in one of those classic *EC Comics* of the 1950s, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*,¹ say, or *VAULT OF HORROR*,² we travel back to the mid-1970s, where, at an undisclosed address in the Anfield area of the city, the body of an Irish-born man who had died from a heart attack was laid in an open coffin, as is the tradition at a wake.

The grief-stricken widow was comforted by her sister and brother-in-law, as well as a host of friends and neighbours, who combined to accompany her to a local pub. Understandably, the widow got herself pretty drunk, and when she returned home, her sister went into the kitchen to make her a supper she very likely didn't feel a whole pile like eating.

On impulse, the widow told her brother-in-law that her dead husband had regularly dabbled with the Ouija board, and against her better judgement, doubtless clouded by drink, she decided to bring the board into the parlour.

She then succeeded in persuading her sister's husband to put his fingers on the upturned glass used to spell out 'messages from the other side.'

Immediately, the widow felt the glass slide across the board causing her to retract her fingers and accuse her brother-in-law, in time-honoured fashion, of pushing the glass to, rather tastelessly, scare her.

Her brother-in-law promptly took *his* hand away from the glass, but it simply kept moving, with no visible agency.

The glass slowly, and inexorably spelled out the word 'Adultery,' and the coffin containing her husband's body began to move as though imbued with a life of its own.

Suddenly, the coffin slid off its stand and stood upright.

The white-shrouded corpse was flung from the coffin, and it landed in an undignified heap on top of the widow's brother-in-law.

Not surprisingly, the terrified man suffered a devastating nervous breakdown, and later tearfully admitted to his wife that he had been having an affair with the widow.

One almost expects to hear the cackling voice of The Crypt-Keeper or The Old Witch, uttering awful puns at this neat and satisfying conclusion.

*** One of the strangest cases I've come across in quite some time, was said to have occurred in the early 1980s at the Royal Liverpool Teaching Hospital, and was allegedly witnessed by at least seven people.

A middle-aged man walked into the casualty department with a bruised forehead and bloodied nose. He calmly told the receptionist that he had just been in a car accident near Fraser Street in London Road, and suddenly felt *'very strange.'* His actual words were: *'I feel as if I am dead.'*

Two nurses attempted to take the man into the emergency ward, but he simply refused to go with them. Instead, he just stood there with his hand on his left wrist, trying in vain to feel for his own pulse. The man then abruptly informed the nurses: *'I knew it. No pulse. I'm dead, aren't I?'*

One of the nurses was concerned enough about the man's injuries and his increasingly bizarre behaviour and felt the man's carotid artery in his neck and there was no pulse there either. Even stranger, he was stone cold.

At this point, the man pushed the nurses and ambulance men aside in a blind panic and walked out of the Casualty Department shouting: *'I feel as if I'm dead!'*

One of the ambulance men raced out after the man, but when he got outside, there was nobody there.

Less than ten minutes later, the same ambulanceman was called to the scene of a car crash off London Road. The very same man who had stumbled into the hospital earlier that night was dead inside the vehicle. His forehead was badly bruised and his nose was bloodied, just as they had been when he visited casualty.

31st October, 2001 Merseyside 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

Wraiths Haunt The Worsley And The Cavendish

The Worsley Arms in Woodside, Birkenhead, and The Cavendish, on Grange Road West, are the latest in a long line of Merseyside pubs to gain a reputation for being haunted.

At The Worsley, owners, Ken and Sheena Ormond, as well as various members of staff, have reportedly experienced disembodied cackling voices, glasses unaccountably falling off shelves, strange smells and sudden changes of temperature.

The pub, situated on Chester Street, was built in 1844, at a time when Woodside was in its heyday, with hordes of travellers from far and wide stopping en route to taking the short hop across the river to Liverpool.

The three-storey building is rumoured to have been erected directly above a tunnel which runs from the basement to the similarly ghost-infested Birkenhead Priory.

The owners of the pub decided to call in a team of local paranormal investigators; The Supernatural Encounters Association, or SEA, for short, last October. They set up tape recorders, camcorders and cameras in various parts of the building and recorded four 45-minute sessions.

And there has been some degree of success.

Electromagnetic Voice Phenomena, or EVP, has apparently manifested itself in the shape of tape-recorded voices saying 'Goodnight,' and 'They can't deceive, perceive her,' as well as calling the name William.

Mike McManus, the leader of the group, told reporters; *'The equipment we use is very basic. The electromagnetic on the tapes pick up things that we can't always hear or see during the vigil.'*

'We have heard different whispered voices trying to communicate with us on the tape and believe The Worsley Arms has a portal entrance to the spirit world. It is a very unusual building and one of the oldest inns in the area.'

This is going to be a continued investigation. Our ultimate goal is to capture evidence on camera.'

Offering assistance to the team are academics at John Moore's University.

Doctor Michael Daniels works at the Centre for Applied Psychology at JMU where there is a special unit dedicated to studying alleged paranormal activity. He was quoted as saying: *'We have no reason to suspect that this is a hoax. What SEA has is clear voices on tape and here at the University we have the facilities to take a closer look at these tapes.'*

We await further developments with interest.

Meanwhile, over at The Cavendish, the landlord, David Owens, has also been experiencing strange goings-on.

David takes up the story by way of an open letter to the local press ;

'I bought the pub 12 years ago. It used to be an old bakery by the name of Stubbs.

'As with most old places, it seems there is something unusual with it, and a number of my staff have reported strange happenings.

For example, my manager Richard said that recently, while he was working in the cellar which is below ground level, the cellar temperature gauge was thrown at him and gas bottles were turned off.

There are also reports from the cleaners of lights going on and off.

The other morning, a male voice was heard, yet there were only two women around at the time.

'If anyone knows of anything that might have happened there, can they please contact me.'

October 30th-November 21st 2001 *The Worsley Arms, Woodside/The Cavendish, Grange Road West, Birkenhead, Merseyside THE WIRRAL NEWS GROUP/"LIVERPOOL ECHO'*

THE SPIRITS ARE DUE ON CORONATION STREET

Similar anomalous goings-on were reportedly occurring on the set of one of Britain's most popular soaps.

A series of *'eerie off-stage noises, doors slamming shut and objects moving across various rooms'* on the *'CORONATION STREET'* set are just some of the phenomena said to have occurred recently.

Several of the programme's stars confessed to Granada bosses to feeling as though they were being watched by an invisible something whilst they were on the toilet.

The rumours and the feelings of unease were certainly not quashed any by the revelations that the set, and specifically, *THE ROVERS RETURN,* were built upon a brothel and an old cemetery.

Things got so bad that the producers felt compelled to call in an Exorcist to cleanse the area.

Some press accounts revealed that insiders admitted; *Management thought they were being taken for a ride at first and that it was all a big leg-pull.*

But then there were more complaints of weird things happening. Some of the cast thought it was all quite funny, but others were genuinely frightened and worried about it all.

Eventually, it reached the stage where something had to be done and an expert ghostbuster was called in.

'Until now most people thought the only spirits on the set were in the ROVERS RETURN. But perhaps a few of the old characters have never truly left the Street.'

One of the newcomers to the programme, Samia Ghadie, who plays trainee hairdresser Maria, was the first to complain she was being watched by a spirit.

The 19-year-old actress described to studio chiefs how she saw the apparition of a woman in the ladies toilets.

Bosses at Granada have been at pains to point out that all is now quiet on the set and that things have returned to normal.

Spokeswoman Rachel Ashcroft said; *'It was felt necessary to call someone in after several people complained of strange goings-on.*

'There was a strange feeling of unease at the studio with odd things happening all the time. We cannot say who we called in, but the problem has been fixed.'

26th November, 2001 *Coronation Street Set, Manchester 'DAILY EXPRESS'*

A MOBILE THREAT TO THE EXISTENCE OF GHOSTS

One of the more intriguing theories doing the rounds last Autumn was the perceived threat to all kinds of ghostly entities brought about by, of all things, mobile phones.

The theory goes something like this: The UK's 39 million-plus cellphones may be adversely affecting the electromagnetic energy many paranormal 'experts' maintain could well be the catalyst for all kinds of Fortean activity.

Put simply, the sheer volume of cellphones are responsible for causing intense electromagnetic fields combined with microwave radiation from countless mobile calls and text messages.

Tony Cornell, of the Society for Psychical Research, was quoted as saying; *'Ghost sightings have remained consistent for centuries. Until three years ago we'd receive reports of two new Ghosts every week. But with the introduction of mobile phones 15 years ago, Ghost sightings began to decline to the point where now we are receiving none.*

'The decline mirrors the increasing use of mobile phones in Britain. They could be drowning out our Ghosts.'

And this depressing pattern, assuming it is a true reflection of the state of things in the spirit-world, is mirrored in other countries, too. American researchers are also running low on the number of recently-reported sightings.

In response, the SPR was, at the time of going to press, considering whether to send 'ghosthunters' to the world's more isolated spots to see if there is a marked difference in the number of reports of ghostly phenomena in these comparatively mobile-phone-free zones.

14th October, 2001 *'DAILY EXPRESS'*

THE HAUNTED TITANIC EXHIBITION

According to reports in the Chilean press, a museum display of artifacts recovered from the wreck of the ill-fated *Titanic*, has been plagued with an outbreak of paranormal phenomena. Witnesses have stated that they have heard strange noises and even on occasion, glimpsed ghostly figures in the vicinity of the exhibition.

The display in Santiago has been organised by Juan Pablo Cuadra, and he told local journalists; *'Guards, visitors and even the police have all reported experienced strange phenomena such as seeing apparitions.*

'A number of visitors have told of how they have heard human voices and footsteps when there is absolutely no one near them.

'One married couple told me they had seen a woman dressed in a long white dress typical of the period.'

Somewhat predictably, Mr Cuadra denied that these stories have been invented merely to ensure an increase in attendances at the the museum. *'My security guards aren't the type of people to make things up,'* he declared via the local press.

'Some of them are very reluctant to come forward and discuss what they have experienced and I am sure there are others who are too embarrassed to talk.'

Interestingly, the exhibition was also shown in Argentina, where visitors also reported hearing whispering and human voices coming from the objects on display.

16th October, 2001 Santiago, Chile *LAS ULTIMAS NOTICIAS*

The Legend Of Hell House

Meanwhile over in America, a team calling itself Seven Paranormal Investigations were making the news across Moore County, with revelations concerning their latest investigations during which members have been pushed, pinched, chilled and choked. They've also reportedly seen and heard things that would scare the halo off an Angel.

'We've been a few places normal people wouldn't think twice about,' claims Kady Harrington, 29, the group's founder and team director. *'But "Normal" and "Paranormal" only meet along the edge.*

'Our team is there merely to observe, not disturb. Our investigations are a combination of technology, instinct and luck. You do the ground work. Bring the equipment and hope the Ghosts do their part.

'We do not charge for carrying out our investigations, although donations defer costs are always welcome. Nobody here is chasing shadows, unless you include a wealth of stories and strange experiences.

'Like my harrowing experience at "Hell House."

Kady reckons she has spent more than half her life in the company of Ghosts. As a child she lived in a house that appeared to be haunted by more than one restless spirit. Raised as a country girl and not given to being frightened easily, she still readily admits to having been terrified by the events in her seemingly quiet home in Moore County with several other roommates when she was a teenager.

'The name "Hell House" speaks for itself,' she told reporters. *'We'd have used the name "Amityville", but it's already been taken.'* (Er, I guess Kady's never heard of the Richard Matheson novel, or the British movie adaptation of 1973, starring Roddy McDowall and the really rather lovely Pamela Franklin, then - Smartarse Ed).

'Hell House was a three-bedroom house in a rural part of the county, sitting on top of a hill, and it was later learned, on an Indian burial ground. The home itself was a half-and-half, a house built from parts of two buildings slapped side by side.

'One side was a small shell. The other part had a more sinister past. It was brought over from Bragg after the war. It was originally a nurse's station, then an infirmary, then apparently a terminal ward. Soldiers who had no hope of getting better were sent there.

'Footsteps and clattering sounds were common. Doors slammed, re-opened and slammed again, and lights and the TV seemed to run on their own schedule.

'Worst of all though was the "Blue Room." Painted an odd shade of aqua by previous renters, the room had intense physical reactions on guests. The overwhelming smell of flowers was common, and objects occasionally flew off the bookshelves without warning.

'Things kept getting worse. We finally left one night after the house kept throwing things at us and pushed us out the front door. We may have been thick-headed, but we could take the hint. You think that spooky stuff on TV doesn't really happen, but it does'

In the wake of these experiences, Kady and a fellow housemate decided to form the present-day paranormal investigation group called Seven.

'It seemed like a good name at the time,' Kady recalls. *'Now it's too late to change it. We wanted to try and find out why things happen like they do.*

'Fifteen years later, we're still looking for the answers.

'With all the new equipment, all the investigations, there are still things that can't be explained. We want to find the truth, we don't want to be chased.'



An article in a local newspaper featured the group investigating a long-since-closed down care facility in the central part of the state.

'It was called a terminal situation,' says team member Christine Stoops. *'It's a building with long halls, very creepy at night.*

'It's even more creepy inside. A decade after it closed, wheelchairs and personal effects still litter the halls. There's some vandalism and broken glass, but surprisingly little has been stolen from the centre.

'To be honest, I'd more scared of squatters than Ghosts. I was part of an advance team that scouted the centre weeks earlier, armed with flashlights and a VCR.

'The results of our search; a videotape of ghostly orbs lolling up the hallway toward the nurses station. Invisible to the eye, these orbs are a fairly common phenomenon during investigations. However, they are usually seen only on still photos. Catching them on video, distinct and opaque in pitch dark where they couldn't be reflections of back-lit bugs, is a rare treat.'

Journalists join with the group as the team assemble at Kady's home near Carthage. Not long after, Christine returns to the centre in company with Donnie Sweeny, 21, an apparent 'Ghost magnet' who hails from Greensboro.

'If you want to see a Ghost,' Christine informs the reporters, 'just send Donnie. They follow him around like kids and a puppy.'

Donnie is described as being friendly and soft-spoken. He's very adept at utilising digital cameras. He once spearheaded the group's investigation of a haunted plantation and stumbled upon the Devil's Shack.

'A creepy, creepy place,' he was quoted as saying. 'You could step in there and feel a sense of dread.'

'According to a local legend, the plantation was owned by a man who murdered his family as well as several slaves. The main house is long gone, but a number of outbuildings remain.'

'We placed a tape recorder in the Devil's Shack and left it. We watched the shack to make sure that no one entered it. When we played the tape back, it was full of Electromagnetic Voice Phenomena (EVPs). There were bells, whispers and one voice that says; "There's nothing in here...Shut the door!"'

'Listening to it will creep you out.'

Every bit as creepy, apparently, is the digital photo Mr Sweeny snapped that same night. The picture appears to show a corner of a house-porch lit by what seems to be car headlights. A shadowy figure can be seen in the centre of the porch.

But, according to logs kept by Micki Rowlette and Anne Honick, the photo was taken of an empty field in the pitch darkness. There simply was no house, or indeed anything there, whatsoever.

No cars passed by, either, as the logs plainly show.

Such inexplicable incidents are what keeps the group together, though they readily admit that a lot of the time the investigations can be nothing short of deadly boring. Something which all-too soon discourages potential additions to the team.

'We've had a few people who had their own agenda for investigating,' Kady says. 'They don't last long. They don't like the details of investigating, or they don't want to put in the effort. To them it's like 'SCOOBY-DOO,' where you get a scare and everyone runs away.'

'We're not sitting around in white gowns with a Ouija board. We don't try to call the Ghosts up.'

'And we don't attempt to get rid of them, either.'

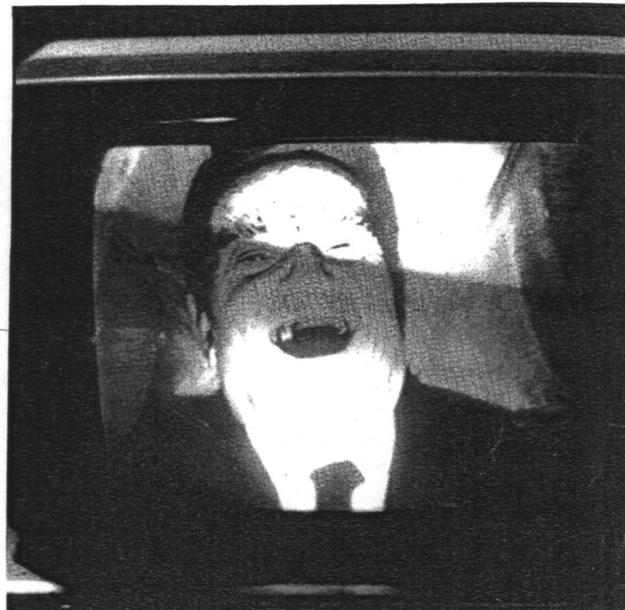
'We want to observe, not expel. The public perception is we're Ghost-chasers, or some even think we are communing with the Devil. We're just a group of people who want to investigate paranormal events and try to find out what's behind them.'

'When we prepare for an investigation, there are no crystals, no Holy Water, and the only salt is for pizza, not Poltergeists. We do utilise motion detectors, digital cameras, noncontact thermometers, military compasses, a recorder with an external microphone, an electro-magnetic field detector, flashlights...All of which we pay for ourselves.' And such an outlay on technological implements has proven to be more than useful during Ghost-watches. The noncontact thermometer, which scans temperature fluctuations, once recorded an unexplained drop of 16 degrees during a recent graveyard stakeout. The fluctuation occurred next to a particular headstone. The team claim they shot a photo at the exact same time as the anomaly, and succeeded in capturing an image of a young lady in a turquoise dress.

Everyone in the group has photo ID, and they make sure that the police know of their activities and on-site investigations well in advance.

'The police are pretty cool about it,' Kady asserts. 'If you act professionally, they remember that. They may think it's a dumb way to spend a Saturday night, but they know you're not out to cause trouble.'

Finally, the paper gets round to reporting on the team's investigations at the centre, and the team make their way along an overgrown driveway. From the front the centre resembles one of those long-abandoned roadside hotels. *'It stretches back into the blackness with one door open, the storm door yawning,'* the reporter attempts to convey the unsettling atmosphere that prevades the locale. *'Wads of wet insulation hanging from the ceiling make it a single-file procession. There's plenty of talking, both to quell nerves and to alert any human squatters of their approach.'*



'As the team works its way deeper into the building the sounds of the outside world are left behind. The only sound is the crunching of already broken glass and the occasional drip of water leaking through the roof. The air is cooler, but surprisingly free of the mustiness you'd expect in an abandoned building.'

'Several spots are chosen to set up tape recorders: in one room where several team members felt uneasy, in the boiler room and in the kitchen.'

'A lot of it is based in your gut,' Kady says. 'It's more a feeling of what you sense, not what you see.'

'The team breaks into smaller groups, each with a flashlight and cameras.'

'They click shots of halls, empty rooms, even outside the building hoping to capture something. They call out before each shot, so others won't see the flash as an apparition.'

'"You want to go in small groups," Kady says. "That way you can cover a lot more ground.'

'Ghosts may not mind a few people, but they don't like parades'

'The first real contact of the night belongs to first-timers Rowlette and Honick. Working away from the others, Rowlette gets a feeling about a room at the end of the hallway.'

'It's pitch black, except for a broken window and a small shaft of light from a door leading outside.'

'But the room isn't empty.'

'Something's there. You can feel it.'

'Rowlette and Honick step into the darkness. A few seconds later, there's a crackling of broken glass and a scream.'

'But it turns out to be nothing other than an ordinary black Labrador looking for a quiet spot to sleep, trotting by. He slips through the door out into the night as Rowlette and Honick recover in gulps of nervous laughter.'

'"We're okay! We're okay!" they yell, half-gasping, half-laughing as team members approach. "No Ghosts, just a dog!"'

'Another part of the building, the kitchen, is especially active. One group situated on the outside snaps pictures of an orb nearby. Minutes later, a different camera catches an image in the kitchen.

'Seconds later, Rowlette gasps.

"Someone brushed my hair!"

'Cameras turn and click. This time, there are no dogs, or anyone else, within three feet of her back. But the digital cameras later show a glowing orb behind Rowlette.

'Back at the nurse's station, another discovery.

"'Who's the genius who turned the mike off?'" Sweeney mutters.

"I made sure it was turned on before we left," Kady replies.

"No one has been down here since then."

'At the other end of the hall, another member of the team has an uneasy feeling. Sweeny joins her, carefully picking his way through the debris on the floor.

"Something is here," he says. "Something cold."

The thermometer is aimed down the hall and the team member quietly calls off the temperature: "55...54...53...53...51...It's on the move."

'My hair!" one of the females whispers, in a half-hiss. "It brushed against my face!"

"51...51...49...It's coming up the hall."

'Suddenly the hallway temperature returns to 55 degrees.

"It's moved up three doors," she says, pointing to the door with the thermometer's red target light.

"Guess he didn't want to play!" the team members exclaim.

'By now, it's getting late, even for Ghost-hunters. Chilly air and dampness drain the zeal just as the images and activities have drained emotions and batteries.

'During the evening, the team has taken about 300 photos, hours of tape and detailed descriptions of the conditions.

"Now comes the real work," Kady says. "We go home and listen to hours of tape and look at hundreds of images. Then when we find something, we look back against the notes to see if we can figure out what might have been the cause of the sound or the images.

'When we can't figure it out, we've got something."

'But what is it they have?'

'That's the mystery we're still trying to solve. Some people think it's electromagnetic energy by the way it drains batteries. Some think it's spiritual energy or beings.

"There's a spiritual side to it, I'm sure. Maybe they are lost spirits, or maybe they aren't yet ready to move on. Whatever the reason, there's something there.

"We're just trying to figure out what it is. We're trying to solve the mystery."

21st October, 2001 THE FAYETTEVILLE NEWS'

Glimpses In The Twilight:

On The Trail Of Britain's Ghosts

Adopted Londoner Richard Jones, 42, much like Liverpool's very own Tom Slemen, is a prolific author and investigator of paranormal phenomena, albeit on a more national scale.

And also like Tom, he found his services in demand round about last Halloween, as the media embarked upon their usual annual scramble for true-life Ghost stories.

He agreed to meet up with a reporter from *'THE DAILY EXPRESS'* on the steps of the Royal Exchange in the City. He immediately pointed out that the Bank Of England is riddled with ghostly presences, the most famously persistent of which is the so-called Bank Nun.

It is supposed that in life, she was Sarah Whitehead, whose brother Philip, a Bank employee, was executed for the crime of forgery in 1812. Sarah could never bring herself to believe

in his guilt nor the incontrovertible fact of his death and took to calling at the Bank without fail every day to ask for her brother. Her Ghost, dressed in the same black crepe mourning dress she wore in life, has reportedly been seen after dark, wandering along Threadneedle Street, still disconsolate, and still asking: 'Have you seen my brother?'



Next up, we are told the haunted history of Bart's Hospital, Britain's oldest, dating back to the 11th century.

The most oft-repeated story about this place concerns *'The Coffin Lift'*, as Richard himself relates;

'My wife used to nurse at Bart's and everyone knows about it. Legend has it that a nurse was murdered in the hospital during the Second World War, and her Ghost now haunts the lift, causing it to frequently play up. It will only go to the basement, then when you finally get out to take the stairs, it cranks into life.'

Just across the street from the hospital is Priory Church of St. Bartholomew the Great, London's oldest parish church, and rumoured to be haunted by its founder, a 12th century monk named Rahere, who was buried in a wall of the church.

In the late 19th century, the parish decided to disinter Kahere's body and found to their surprise that it was in a truly remarkable state of preservation. Two days later, a parish officer fell suddenly and gravely ill and confessed that, for reasons best known to himself, he had stolen one of the long-dead monk's sandals.

After suffering an attack of conscience, he had quickly replaced it but he neglected to place the sandal precisely back inside the tomb from where he'd taken it, since when the cowed figure of Rahere has often been seen walking around the church's shadowy pillars.

But despite all the evidence to the contrary, Richard claims that he doesn't subscribe to the belief that Ghosts are actual spirits of the restless dead, walking the Earth for a variety of reasons ranging from revenge to a reluctance to leave the place they've loved in life.

'I don't think the dead come back, but I do believe that buildings, rooms and walls can absorb intense emotions felt within them and it is the memory of a presence or an event that people might feel and then describe as Ghosts.'

In putting together material for his new book on the supernatural; *'HAUNTED BRITAIN AND IRELAND'* (New Holland, 2001), Richard personally investigated 1,200 haunted sites during a 14-month period. He considers the most Ghost-infested village to be a dead heat between Pluckley in Kent, and Prestbury in Gloucestershire.

(Ed's Note: As we've written often of the former hamlet in numerous back issues, I'm sure you'll forgive us if we concentrate on the latter, considerably less famous village).

Presbury's most firmly established entity is the Black Abott, a typically hooded monk who walks from the village church, across the churchyard, through the grounds of the old priory and then vanishes into the wall of a cottage on the High Street where he performs Poltergeist-type phenomena in the attic.

On 22nd November, 1990, Derek Stafford was photographing the floodlit gravestones. Though he noticed nothing unusual at the time, the developed film appeared to show the outline of a cowed figure, an image that has been reproduced in countless publications and has since been incorporated into the Fortean Picture Library.

Richard has also gone on record as stating that he believes the most haunted county to be Yorkshire, though he may be a little biased as he had a strange encounter with something decidedly unnerving back in April, 2000.

'I was doing research during that month and I got caught in snow at the Goat Gap Inn in Clapham, just off the A65 in a bleak part of the Yorkshire Moors.'

'Sometime between 2am and 3am, I suddenly woke up feeling very cold, with a sickly, internal kind of cold. I heard a creaking noise in the corner of my room, where there was an old Victorian washing-basin. I switched on the light and I saw the taps turn and water begin to flow. There's a Ghost in the bar, too. He sits in the corner by the window wearing a cloth cap and staring at nothing in particular. The locals don't mind him at all, they call him George.'

31st October, 2001 General *'DAILY EXPRESS'*

THE GHOST OF DICK TURPIN

A motorist by the name of Louise Hamilton swears blind that she was witness to the spirit of Dick Turpin, riding Black Bess along the A5

Louise, 55, of Burbage, Leicestershire, claims that she drove past the apparition of the long-dead highwayman as he cantered along on his trusty steed.

'I should have asked him what he was doing, but he might have drawn two pistols on me,' the wanna-be comedienne chortled.

28th November, 2001 Burbage, Leicestershire *'DAILY SLUR.'*

A Cabinet Of Curiosities Another Foul Harvest:

Cattle Mutilations In America

It's bad enough falling victim to a bout of unexplained cattle mutilation *once* in your life. Having to face the horrible prospect of dealing with such obscenities for a second time, fifteen years or so down the line, is something that doesn't bear thinking about.

But still, such is the fate that has apparently befallen a rancher by the name of Everett King, who hails from the Conrad region of Montana, last October.

Mr King reported that it looked as though a surgeon had sliced his seven-year-old Charolais, the way its right eye and ear had

been amputated. To say nothing of the way its reproductive organs had been cored.

As is so often the case with the remains of similarly mutilated carcasses, despite the fact that the body has lain in the same field for two months, it has not been further defiled by the hordes of natural predators who would usually make short work of what amounts to a free meal.

'Predators won't eat it,' King told reporters. *'It should have been cleaned up and gone a long time ago.'*

Other ranchers in the area reported a further four mutilations between the June and August of last year. Since then, there have been eleven more, and local investigators are at a loss as to explain the cause in any of the cases.

The most recent victim, a 12-year-old Hereford, was discovered in early January, 2002 on a ranch northwest of Conrad.

'The perpetrators skinned off the belly from her front legs to her back legs all the way around,' says Pondera County Sheriff's Deputy Dan Campbell. *'The complete bag was removed.'*

These latest mutilations occurred within a three mile radius of each other in the Dry Forks area. Back in October, members of the New Miami Colony, 18 miles west of Conrad, discovered two mutilated cows at the same location, a mere 70 yards apart.

The scenes were uncannily similar to mutilations reported by ranchers in the locale, more than a decade ago.

Most of the cows had the skin scraped off their faces. Often, the tongue, one eye, and all or part of one ear had been removed. Part of the udder was usually cut off as had the genitals. In one case, the cow's teeth had been completely removed, whilst in most cases, the anus had been cored.

The majority of the cows were aged between 4 and 5.

Although there are sceptics who have suggested that the mutilations are nothing more than the work of a sick hoaxer, or are merely the results of deprivations by natural predators, Campbell and fellow investigator Sheriff's Deputy Dick Dailey, remain unconvinced by such prosaic explanations.

Cuts on the cows are often circular or oval and, as with Everett King's Charolais, seems to be made with damn near surgical precision.

The animals seem to bloat faster than normal, and their missing hide doesn't reflect the work of predators.

'I've never seen an animal eat just the face of a cow when there's lots of other stuff to go after' Campbell says, not unreasonably.

And then there's the problem that at least one mutilated cow looked as though it had been burned. Another seemed to have bruises around its neck as though it had been strangled. One had a cut with a perfectly ridged edge, as though it had been strangled. And yet another had a long cut with a perfectly ridged edge, suggesting that the hide had been sliced with a tool similar to pinking shears.

Also strange is that in most cases, there is a marked absence of tracks or footprints in the vicinity of the carcasses, even when there have been copious amounts of mud or snow on the ground.

Dick Dailey actually spent several nights during the autumn months camped out in the chilly, pitch black fields, attempting to capture the culprit in the act. He has reviewed all the facts and checked out dozens of websites for answers, but has been unable to find anything resembling an answer to the mystery.

Ranchers are equally perplexed. During September, Jim VandenBos discovered the body of one of his \$850 2-year-old Angus lying dead in his pasture. The right side of its face was skinned, and the exposed jawbone was so smooth it looked like it had been polished. Its tongue was cut off along with its right ear, eye and reproductive organs. A tennis-ball sized patch of skin on its shoulder was hard like plastic.

At the time of going to press, there was no word as whether any sane, rational explanation had been proffered that would account for this most perplexing, not to say disturbing of phenomena.

3rd January, 2002 Montana, USA THE GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE'

The British Devil's Triangle

Okay, I guess it's fair to say right at the outset that the so-called *Mystery of The Bermuda Triangle*, has been all but thoroughly debunked by even the most open-minded of Forteanas as being nothing more than a welter of coincidental occurrences, freak weather conditions, and just plain bad luck (not to mention the likes of Charles Berlitz and Richard Winer looking to make a financial killing from writing about a completely fictitious enigma).

Very few serious-minded students of the paranormal give much credence to the 'phenomenon' these days, but none of the above has prevented the British tabloid press from drawing a parallel between the Bermuda Triangle and a ships' graveyard much closer to home. A tiny stretch of the North Sea, to be exact.

According to reports in various newspapers, an area off the coast of Scotland known by seamen as the Witch's Ground, has been the site of several unexplained incidents involving ships and their crew. The latest account concerns the discovery twelve months ago, of an apparently undamaged, seaworthy fishing boat lying in an unusual crater on the seabed.

Over a year later, the team who recovered the vessel are no closer as to finding out what caused the boat to drop like the proverbial stone into the centre of the underwater depression called the Witch's Hole.

Despite intensive research and the consulting of nautical records, insurance claims and ship's logs, the identity of the vessel has not been confirmed. Seeing as how the ship has likely lain on the seabed, just off Aberdeen, for about 75 years, that in itself is pretty strange.

Dr Robert Prescott, a marine historian at St Andrews University who is part of the research team, told reporters: *'We are no nearer to identifying the trawler. One thing we have been able to do is to narrow the age of the vessel to the first 25 years of the 20th century.'*

The assembled 'experts' have drummed up the theory that huge discharges of methane gas created by natural materials rotting on the seabed may well affect the stability of the water as they rise to the surface. When the gas bubbles through the sea in high enough volumes, it lowers the density of the water to a point at which most objects, including ships, will simply no longer be able to float.

A vessel sailing over such a methane blow-out would, it is fairly safe to assume, drop in a matter of seconds as if the water had been removed wholesale from under it.

Alan Judd, the leader of the team of marine geologists investigating the case, and who is currently based at Sunderland University, said: *'Any ship caught above would sink as if it was in a lift shaft.'*

'For a boat to have randomly landed within Witch's Hole would be an amazing coincidence. Although it is a hundred metres across, it represents a tiny target in the whole of Witch's Ground.'

'I have interviewed sailors who have had experience of sudden releases of gas from the seabed, but in this case it wasn't enough to sink them, although the ship did drop a metre or two, which must have been a terrifying experience. Our team realised Witch's Ground was a likely site of gas

discharges after studying survey reports compiled by oil companies. The seabed was studded with pockmarks from gas releases, some of them dating back 10,000 years.'

29th December, 2001 The North Sea, off Aberdeen Coast 'DAILY EXPRESS'

The Horror Of The Monster Waves

Meanwhile, another equally perplexing maritime mystery was making the news late last year, when it was announced by scientists that the previously unexplained disappearance of more than 200 supertankers and container ships during the past 20 years may have been due to abnormal 'monster waves' up to 36 metres in height.



A team of oceanographers at the Technical University in Berlin managed to recreate the effect of these supposed waves, capable, it is proposed, of snapping a 180 metre long ship in half in a giant tank at the university.

'Even in the tank, the effect was awe-inspiring,' the research leader, Gunther Claus told journalists. *'The exploding wave was so powerful that it broke through the ceiling of the building in which the tank is located.'*

Using a computerised, hydraulically powered wave-making machine, Professor Claus's team established that the 'monster waves' could occur with little or no warning.

Slow-moving waves could be caught up by a succession of faster waves travelling at more than twice their speed.

'What happens is that the waves simply pile up on top of each other to create a monster. The result is an almost vertical wall of water which towers up to 36 metres in height before collapsing on itself. Any vessel caught by one of these has little chance of surviving.'

This theory seems to make perfect sense, although it's a tad strange that there's a marked paucity of accounts of such humongous waves being encountered by seamen. Maybe not enough of them have survived to tell the tale...

3rd December, 2001 General 'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'

CITY UNDER THE SEA

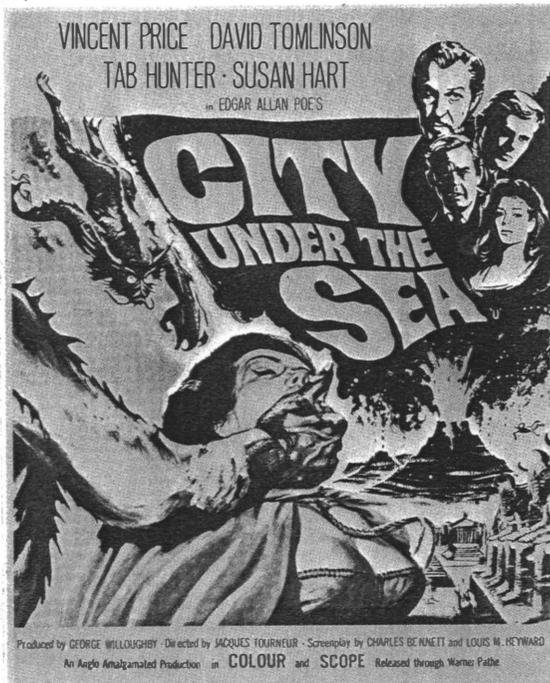
And here we go again...

For what seems like the zillionth time since I began putting this humble publication together, someone reckons they have finally, once-and-for-all hit upon the precise location of that most fabulous of lost paradises; Atlantis.

This time, it's a French scientist by the name of Professor Jacques Collina-Girard, who maintains that the fabled realm lies off the coast of Gibraltar, just as Plato said it was in about 400BC. The good professor says he stumbled upon the discovery when putting together a map of the west coast of

Europe as it would have looked in prehistoric times in a bid to study how ancient populations may have moved between Europe and North Africa.

Apparently, when he took into account shifts in sea levels, an island suddenly emerged, encouraging Jacques to speculate that there may once have been a city on this long-submerged land, just in front of the Pillars of Hercules, now known as the Straits of Gibraltar.



Plato, the Greek philosopher of course, wrote that Atlantis existed around 9000 BC, well before the existence of any known large-scale settlement. It was said to be a virtual paradise with abundantly rich and fertile soil, wealthy and intelligent inhabitants, living in an advanced civilisation. According to legend, the city was destroyed by a cataclysmic disaster and was swallowed whole by the ocean in the space of a single night.

Professor Collina-Girard, a geologist at the Mediterranean University in Aix-en-Provence, France, told journalists; *These texts are the origin of a lot of speculation about Atlantis.*

'Curiously, nobody has really taken seriously the most obvious location. I made a map of the western European at the time when the sea level was 425ft lower than it is now, to see if the Palaeolithic people of 19,000 years ago could possibly have crossed the strait.

My reconstruction revealed an ancient archipelago which surrounded one island, Spartel, just to the west of the Strait of Gibraltar, as Plato described. The Strait was longer and narrower than it is today, and enclosed a harbour-like inland sea similar to that mentioned in Plato's texts.

'We know that just over 11,000 years ago, the slow rise in sea levels, caused by melting ice as the glaciers retreated, increased suddenly. Studies of coral reefs show that water was rising at this point by more than 7ft per century, enough to swamp the island.

My island is only nine miles long by three miles wide, which I admit is much smaller than that described by Plato.

'But it could be that a mistake was made converting the Egyptian units of length into Greek units as the story was passed down largely by word of mouth.

"Plato also reported that volcanic activity sank Atlantis but this could have been a case of embellishment. The Greeks would have considered such a fate more dramatic and plausible than a change in sea level.

'As for civilisation on Atlantis being hugely advanced, I could point to Plato's own admission that he exaggerated

these details to put forward his own ideas about an ideal society.

'Archaeological records show that a prehistoric culture spread rapidly in Morocco about 20,000 years ago.

Tradition says that this came from the east. But why not from the north?

The coasts of Spain and Morocco were inhabited at the time, so certainly these islands were too.'

20th September, 2001 Straits of Gibraltar 'DAILY MAIL'

A First Step Into Darkness: Teleportation Becomes A Scientific Possibility

What once seemed the stuff of science fiction, (and in particular, the obsession of the late Seth Brundle and his slightly more fortunate son) has moved a step closer to reality when news broke that scientists in Denmark have made a significant breakthrough in a bid to achieve teleportation: the process of instantly transporting an object from one place to another.

Professor Eugene Polzik and his colleagues at the University of Aarhus have succeeded in (wait for it, here comes the science bit) creating 'quantum entanglement' in simple English, the entwining of two or more particles without actual physical contact (okay, so that's not quite an example of simple English, but it'll have to do - Ed). Albert Einstein once described the process as being 'a spooky action at a distance.' These entangled states are needed for quantum computing and teleportation. Scientists have entangled states of a few atoms in earlier experiments but Polzik and his team have done it with very large numbers and using laser light.

'It is the first result where two macroscopic material objects have been entangled,' Professor Polzik told reporters. *'We have produced entanglement at a distance which means you can share entangled objects which is important for quantum communication, including quantum teleportation.'*

Way back in 1968, what has been described as the first teleportation experiment was carried out when scientists at the California Institute of Technology teleported a beam of light across a laboratory bench.

This new breakthrough is of particular interest to paranormal researchers of course, because teleportation has often been cited as an explanation (of sorts) for the more inexplicable accounts of fish falls, ice falls, out-of-place animals, such as Alien Big Cats and disappearing/re-appearing humans.

We await further developments with interest.

I just hope they check those telepods for flies before they attempt to teleport a human!!!

9th January, 2002 Aarhus, Denmark 'REUTERS'

The Harmony Of God's Blue Period

And here we feature one of the most bizarre stories in an issue packed to the gills with assorted weirdness, (well, DON would hardly be much of a Fortean publication if it wasn't, I guess)... Scientists have, it seems, 'proved' that turquoise is God's favourite colour.

The blue-green hue that the well-known crazier-than-a-bedbug so-called 'Son Of God,' David Icke chose for his fine selection of shellsuits, is also the average colour of the Universe, according to the results of a recent study by American astronomers.

Scientists from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore reached this conclusion after maintaining that if all the visible light in the Universe was mixed together, it would glow in the exact

same shade David Icke once proclaimed to be 'the colour of love and wisdom.' Karl Glazebrook and his colleague, Ivan Baldry, have christened the shade 'cosmic spectrum green.' 'I like it,' Dr Baldry was quoted as saying. 'I think it looks a reasonable colour for walls or home decorating.'

Holding our aching sides, we are left to consider that the universal colour has not always been the same. It began with a blue period, currently favours shades of green and will end in red.

The discovery emerged from a survey of all the light emitted by more than 200,000 galaxies between two and three million light years away from Earth, using data from the Anglo-Australian Telescope in New South Wales.

The scientists used the wavelengths of the light to produce a cosmic spectrum - a rainbow of more than 500 colours - to show how much light of each wavelength was present in the Universe.

This would be what we'd get if we took all the light in the Universe and passed it through a prism to break the light into its component wavelengths,' said Dr Baldry.

For what Dr Glazebrook described as 'a bit of fun,' (oh, the long winter evenings must just fly by - to paraphrase *BLACKADDER*) they decided to work out what the spectrum would look like if it was not broken up into its component parts. When the wavelengths were averaged, the result was turquoise.

5th January, 2002 *The Universe THE TIMES*

The Killer Plants That Are Kinda Picky About What They Eat

A plant that feeds on bugs and insects may not, as previously assumed, simply lie in wait for the first creepy crawl to stumble into its carnivorous maw.



According to researchers at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe Institute in Frankfurt, Germany, the insect-eating pitcher plant *Nepenthes albomarginata*, which grows on the island of Borneo, may actively choose its prey prior to chowing down.

As its name suggests, the plant grows in the shape of a pitcher and feeds on insects that are unfortunate enough to fall inside and are digested by chemicals produced by the plant.

'Carnivorous pitcher plants of the genus Nepenthes are not usually selective about their prey, catching anything that is careless enough to walk on their slippery peristome, but Nepenthes albomarginata is an exception,' the researchers were quoted as saying. *'We have shown that this plant uses a fringe of edible white hairs to lure and then trap its prey, which consists exclusively of termites in enormous numbers.'*

'Usually, the pitcher plants had a poor catch, a few beetles, ants or flies. But when termites were around, we found

thousands of them in a single plant. All the termites in one pitcher belonged to the same species and were in the same state of decomposition, suggesting that they were caught over a short period of time.

'We also noticed that the pitchers had little white hairs, except the ones that were filled with termites.'

To investigate this we placed fresh intact pitchers, together with pitchers with their white rims removed, near to the head of a foraging column of termites.

'When single leading workers came into direct contact with the white rim hairs, they turned back to the column and recruited their nestmates, which began grazing on the rim.'

'While doing this, the termites fell into the pitchers in their masses, workers and accompanying soldiers.'

'It was a feast for the plant. As many as 22 termites a minute fell to their slow deaths.'

'It seemed as though the plants stopped growing the hairs once they had their fill of termites.'

This was the first example of a carnivorous plant actually choosing its prey and using its own tissue as bait.'

3rd January, 2002 Johann Wolfgang Goethe Institute, Frankfurt, Germany 'REUTERS'

Speaking With Dark Voices An A-Z Of Conspiracies

In the post-September 11th world, the appetite for mistrust in the powers that be and the 'cover-stories' spouted by official spokespersons in the wake of the latest breaking news story, has become increasingly rapacious. And should we really be surprised by this? After all, we live in uncertain times and conspiracies do, as someone pointed out; *'provide an alternative history to the authorised version of events, a coherent Demonology in a God-less, Devil-less age.'*

Quite simply, conspiracy theories help make some degree of sense of the otherwise inexplicable actions of madmen, religious fanatics, and corrupt regimes. Not only that, but I guess it can be somewhat reassuring to 'know' that there are those in the highest level of government who are well aware of the plot to kill President Kennedy, the crashed UFO at Roswell, the real perpetrators of the murder of Diana, Princess of Wales, and the precise whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden. And the disconcerting fact is that not all conspiracies are purely the paranoid imaginings of groups of sad-eyed losers disillusioned with their humdrum lives, with nothing better to do than seek to blame fantastical governmental plots, cover-ups, and suppression of the truth for all the world's woes.

Sometimes, those in power across the globe do elect to keep things that they would rather the public remain ignorant of to themselves. They do cover up. They do sometimes murder people who they consider to be a threat to the maintaining of their veil of secrecy.

As we shall see at the conclusion of this mini-article, the aftermath of the WTC attacks have proven to be a fertile breeding ground for all kinds of conspiracies concerning those Godawful events, some feasible, others about as surreal as a David Lynch nightmare. After he's gone to bed on a meal of chopped liver and with the soundtrack to his very own 'ERASERHEAD' blasting away in his earphones...

But before we get to them, please allow me to run the following 26 examples of Conspiracy past and present, right by you...

A is for ALIEN ENCOUNTERS: From Roswell and Rendlesham to Belgium and Bonnybridge. From huge alien

spacecraft being sighted on the moon to alien abductions from ordinary people's bedrooms. And from secret deals struck with Greys and Venusians to the proposed 'Star Wars' missile shield being mooted as a deterrent to prevent attacks by hordes of hostile Reptoids....

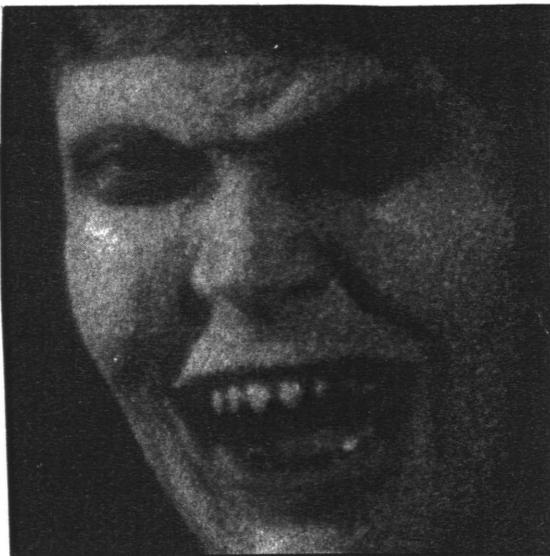
All are allegedly being covered-up by a global-wide coalition of scientists, astronomers, the military and high-ranking members of world governments.

B is for the Bilderberg Group, which organises semi-secret annual three-day meetings of the European-Atlantic great and good from the worlds of business, diplomacy and politics. The first meetings were set up in 1954 by Joseph Retinger, the then secretary general of the newly-fledged, CIA-funded European Movement.

Karl Otto Pohl, then president of Deutsche Bundesbank, David Rockefeller, Lord Carrington and President Clinton were among the more recent delegates.

Bilderberg is one of the transnational groups suspected by the American Far Right of being part of the secret, New World Order power structure.

Even the most sober-minded of publications such as *THE FINANCIAL TIMES*, have gone on record as stating 'If the Bilderberg Group is not a conspiracy of some sort, it is conducted in such a way as to give a remarkably good imitation of one.'



C is for Nicolae Ceausescu, who was tried and executed in a bid to cover-up the complicity of Romania's new leaders in his crimes. The video footage of the Christmas Day show-trial of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu apparently makes for compelling viewing. Repeatedly, Ceausescu and his wife turn on their interrogators and accuse them of knowing the answers to the questions they have posed.

Prosecutor: 'What do you know about the Securitate?'

Elena: 'They are sitting across from us here.'

And she's right, of course. Because sitting in the courtroom were secret police chiefs such as Colonel Magureanu, who had been party to the attack on civilians in Timisoara that had helped trigger the revolution. He was subsequently promoted leader of the conspirators, Ion Iliescu, a former crony of Ceausescu, to head the renamed secret police, the 'Romanian Information Service.'

Iliescu became president, the tainted hero of a tainted revolution.

D is for 'Deep Throat,' the mole in the Nixon administration guiding journalists from *THE WASHINGTON POST*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, to the Watergate scandal.

'Deep Throat' remains, to this day, unidentified.

In his book *'HIDDEN AGENDA'*, Jim Hougan nominated both Nixon's chief of staff, Alexander Haig, and National Security Agency boss, Bobby Ray Inman, as prime candidates.

E is for electric lines, which reputedly fry our brains. A growing number of protestors have complained that electromagnetic waves in overhead power lines have led to illnesses such as depression, headaches, cancer and even mental disorders.

No government agency has publicly placed much credence on these complaints. The epidemiology of environmental effect is notoriously difficult to prove, but all good conspiracy theorists believe there is no smoke without some sort of secret ray.

F is for Freemasons, who reportedly club together to better themselves in the world.

The majority of active Freemasons have sworn not to divulge the secrets of their cult, on pain of having their tongues 'cut out by the root and buried in the sand below low-water mark.'

Other Masons who have been brave (or foolish) enough to attempt to break ranks have invariably paid a heavy price for their betrayal, such as 'God's Banker,' Roberto Calvi, found hanging from Blackfriars Bridge in 1982.

G is for the Gemstone File, the conspiracy theory which first surfaced back in 1975. Originally a precis by U.S. journalist Stephania Caruana of allegations made in letters by American chemist Bruce Roberts, now deceased, Gemstone attributes much of post-war America's ills to the power of Aristotle Onassis, who, they theorists claim, had the Kennedys and Martin Luther King assassinated, seized the Howard Hughes empire, did a deal with the Mafia, etc. Authorless, floating around the world in samizdat form, Gemstone is a perfect, small-scale disinformation vehicle for anyone who cares to use it.

H is for Rudolf Hess, once locked up in Spandau prison because he knew all about the secret 1941 negotiations between Britain and Nazi Germany. Hess's flight in May 1941, remains one of the most bizarre episodes of the whole of the Second World War. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, son of the Duke of Hamilton, the Scottish landowner to whom Hess presented his plans, said: 'Hess's proposals consisted of a limited peace, deal under which Germany would have allowed Britain a free hand in her Empire in return for Britain allowing Germany a free hand in Europe and Russia. His so-called peace plans would have meant the enslavement of Europe.'

Hess was promptly imprisoned, went mad and hanged himself in Spandau prison. Or not, as the case may be. One theory has it that the Churchill government, in a hideously clever propaganda campaign against the Nazis, ran a double, 'Hess Two.'

Evidence supporting the double theory emerged when a Dutch TV journalist, Karel Hille, disclosed that he got the secret file on Hess via an unnamed British historian who got it from the late spymaster Sir Maurice Oldfield, who allegedly stole it from the British government.

I is for the Illuminati, the secret society controlling all the other secret societies. An 18th century Masonic splinter group began by Adam Weishaupt, the Illuminati were said to be the hidden force behind the French Revolution. After World War 1 they were re-launched into the English-speaking world by Nesta Webster, who credited them with organising the Russian October Revolution, too. In 1921, *THE SPECTATOR* described Weishaupt as a 'Prussian with criminal instincts and lunatic perversions...Who shunted continental Freemasonry on to Antinomian and revolutionary lines.'

In the demonology of the Anglo-American far right, the Illuminati largely replaced the Jews as the spider in the centre of the web. These theories were brilliantly parodied in *THE*

ILLUMINATUS' trilogy by Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea.

J is for James Jesus Angleton, the orchid-growing, poetry-writing, paranoid head of CIA counterintelligence throughout much of the Cold War.

Angleton believed that the CIA and all other spy networks to be so much gorgonzola, riddled with KGB moles. In his search for these moles, Angleton paralysed large chunks of the CIA for years at a time and blighted the careers of many senior officers. It was Angleton who insisted in the 1960s that British intelligence investigate Prime Minister Harold Wilson, a task taken up enthusiastically by Peter Wright and his circle in MI5.

Angleton's overarching idiocy was to believe that the KGB defector Golitsyn, who alleged that the friction between the Soviet Union and Mao's China in the late 1960s was a fake to deceive the West. The confession of top CIA man Aldrich Ames that he was a KGB mole have proved some of Angleton's fears to be well-based.

K is of course, for John F. Kennedy, killed by just about anyone you care to mention. According to Captain James T. Kirk of the *Starship Enterprise*, the '*first rule of assassination is to kill the assassins.*'

The killing of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby set a hare running that has never been stopped. So many people likely had a hand in Kennedy's murder I could fill the rest of this publication with a list of names ranging from the highly probable to the borderline loony-toons. But as anyone with even the slightest interest in such matters is doubtless already familiar with the vast majority of these, already, perhaps you'll forgive me if I only make mention of one of the more obscure conspiracy theories doing the rounds, namely that JFK is still alive, but kept a permanent prisoner by the National Security Council.

L is for Lockerbie. On December 21st, 1988, 270 people were blown out of the sky when Pan Am 103 exploded over Scotland. Although two Libyan intelligence officers were recently convicted of this terrible crime, there are still those who remain unconvinced of their guilt. Tales of suitcases of heroin recovered at the crash site by mysterious U.S. intelligence officers point to a joint CIA/Drug Enforcement Administration operation that was fatally compromised by Iranian and Syrian-backed Palestinian terrorists. American spies, the theory proposes, were running 'controlled' deliveries of Lebanese heroin through Frankfurt airport in return for information about the hostages that were then being held in Beirut. The terrorists were aware of this and switched the dope-filled case with one containing the bomb.

M is for David Mellor, apparently got at by Mossad after his pro-Palestinian outburst in 1988 on the West Bank.

The Israelia were set upon toppling Mellor after he became the most prominent critic in the British Government of their conduct in the Occupied Territories.

First, they managed to secure his removal as Junior Foreign Office Minister, threatening to stop passing on intelligence information about the hostages then being held in Beirut unless Mellor was moved. Second, they arranged for the clandestine phone-tapping operation which led to the highly embarrassing 'toe sucking' allegations. The result: Mellor was forced to quit the cabinet.

What a shame, (*Sarcastic Ed*).

N is for Nostradamus, the 16th century psychic seer who supposedly predicted the coming of Napoleon, Hitler and the killing of JFK.

The prophet's highly ambiguous quatrains have spawned more than 200 books, a propaganda war between the Nazis and the Allies during World War Two, a movie, an American TV

spin-off show, Monopoly-style board games, a virtual reality game and even a watch, which ticked down the hours from January 1st, 1995, to the dawning of the Millennium, though that's now more than a tad obsolete.

Currently back in fashion after the events of September 11th, thanks to some highly doubtful interpretations were placed upon those equivocal quatrains.

O is for oestrogen in the water supply, put there by militant activists from the Society For Cutting Up Men (otherwise known as SCUM).

This man-hating clique is rumoured to have polluted the water supply in major Western cities '*including Los Angeles, Montreal and London.*' in the early 1970s by adding vast quantities of oestrogen. The result has been a steady decline the male sperm count in the years since. Man is not the only species to be affected.

Polar bears in the Arctic, alligators in the Florida swamps and bull elephants in Africa have all experienced a 40 per cent drop in sperm count since the end of the Second World War.

P is for Promis software, stolen from a Washington law firm. In 1982, a Washington computer firm, Inslaw, developed Promis (Prosecutor's Management Information System), which it supplied to the Justice Department for \$10 million. A year later, Justice stopped all payments and Inslaw went bankrupt. A ruling in 1987 at a bankruptcy court concluded that the Justice Department '*took, converted and stole Promis software through trickery, fraud and deceit.*'

So what? you may say.

Well, it is only when we look at how people started to probe into why Justice had acted in such a way that it gets interesting, prompting one investigator to claim that the case was '*a lot dirtier for the department than Watergate had been, both in its breadth and depth.*'

It turns out that, allegedly, the men behind the theft of the software were all Reagan appointees who helped engineer the 1980 '*October Surprise,*' whereby the Republicans struck a deal with the Iranians not to release American Embassy hostages from Tehran until after Reagan was safely installed in the White House.

The software was then sold to foreign intelligence agencies across the globe, to generate revenue for covert operations not authorised by Congress and to make it easier for U.S. operatives to hack into the software.

The story was chased by U.S. journalist Danny Casolaro. A year after making himself known to the Inslaw people he was found dead in a motel room in West Virginia. The official verdict was suicide, but former Attorney General Elliot Richardson, hired by Inslaw to investigate the case, said at the time; '*It's hard to come up with any reason for Casolaro's death other than he was deliberately murdered because he was so close to uncovering sinister elements in what he called "The Octopus."*'

Q is for Carroll Quigley, the granddaddy of all modern U.S. conspiracists.

Quigley's 1,340-page volume '*Tragedy And Hope, History Of The World In Our Time,*' included a dozen pages on the existence of a hitherto unknown secret society financed by Cecil Rhodes's estate.

For far-Right groups such as the John Birch Society, these pages were proof, from an 'insider,' of the great conspiracy they had always suspected. Not the Communists, not the Jews, not even the Illuminati, but the '*Perpetual Hidden Government*' - the PHG!

Quigley's revelations are behind much of the recent talk of One Worlders and New World Orders.

R is for James Rusbridger, killed and framed as a sex pervert by British intelligence. Rusbridger was a tremendous thorn in

the side of the security services. He letters to newspapers poured scorn on the Official Secrets Act; his books, such as *'THE INTELLIGENCE GAME,'* cast doubt on the official version of events. But where Rusbridger, aged 65 at the time of his death, really annoyed the spies was when he unearthed Britain's code-cracking secrets, in particular the story that the British had cracked Japanese naval codes in advance of the attack on Pearl Harbour.

S is for the suicides of the scientists who worked at Marconi, the British defence giant. In 1988, a host of brilliant researchers working for Marconi killed themselves in a variety of ways. One drove his petrol-filled car into an abandoned fast-food building, another jumped off the Clifton suspension bridge, a third electrocuted himself.

The deaths appeared to be a case of life imitating art - in this case an episode of the original *'AVENGERS'* TV series, screened back in the 1960s. The programme in question featured a number of brilliant scientists suddenly taking upon themselves to commit suicide.

The first problem here is that there was no obvious linkage between the deaths. Second, suicide is ten times more common than murder in Britain. Third, men tend to kill themselves in more violent ways than women. Fourth, scientists are more ingenious than the rest of the population, so one would expect them to kill themselves in rather spectacular fashion. Fifth, the defence business employs huge numbers of scientists, and Marconi is a big employer.

When the numbers are crunched, there is no statistical aberration in the number of suicides by Marconi scientists.

T is for Mark Thatcher, whose reputation was tarnished by enemies of his mother (and Lord knows, there are plenty of them). There is no substantial evidence that Mark Thatcher is anything other than a relatively small time wheeler-dealer with a famous mum. Certainly the suggestion that he is a global Mr Big in the arms business is extremely flimsy, to say the least. However, Howard Teicher, a bagman for Oliver North in the U.S. National Security Council, insisted back in 1992 that he saw intelligence and diplomatic traffic naming Mark Thatcher in connection with the \$20 billion Al Yamamah arms deal.

U is for The Unified Conspiracy Theory, or the Grand Unified Conspiracy Theory, which knits all theories into a coherent tapestry.

V is for Vatican, which murders the popes that it doesn't like. The markedly short reign of John Paul I has given rise to this theory. Rumours persist in the Vatican that he was intending on cleaning out the Aegean stables of the pontiff's finances and in so doing expose the scandalous links between the Mafia, the Freemasons and senior cardinals in the church.

W is for Colin Wallace, who was forced to resign as a British defence minister in 1975 when he leaked information about a covert operation called *'Clockwork Orange.'*

Wallace, from Northern Ireland, said that he had been involved in the operation, which had been designed to destabilise paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland through disinformation. Wallace alleged that the scope of the operation had been extended to include mainland politicians viewed as *'politically soft or leftist,'* a list that included former Prime Ministers Harold Wilson and Edward Heath. Wallace claimed it was within his remit to discredit these *'targets'* using unfounded smear stories about sexual impropriety.

X is for Mr X, the third man who allegedly went to bed with two senior Conservative politicians, and former cabinet ministers in the (now thankfully deposed) Tory Party, at the same time.

Y is for Yakuza, the Japanese mafia who run the world. The Yakuza are supposed to be the world's richest and most

powerful gangsters in the world. They control many of the big-name Japanese corporations that have a huge leverage in the major Western economies. According to the theory, nothing can be done to loosen the grip of the Yakuza on the world.

Z is for Zagreb Operation, when the Soviets inducted British publisher Robert Maxwell as a double agent. Maxwell was never clear about how he managed to escape from Nazi Germany.

In fact, he was given secret passage through Nazi-allied Croatia by Communist partisans, then loyal to the Soviet Union, in return for a lifetime as a spy. Back home in Britain, he became a respected publisher. But he led a double life. For aiding the NKVD - forerunner of the KGB - Maxwell received help in smoothing his path in arranging deals with Eastern Bloc scientific publishers and the like. Maxwell prospered.

(NT: John Sweeney, the author of this article which first appeared in 'THE JOURNAL GAZETTE - FORT WAYNE,' readily admits to inventing two of these alphabetical conspiracies. Our readers may like to hazard a guess at which of the two are out and out fakes...Ed).

CONSPIRACY UPDATE:

As stated at the outset, the recent tragic events of September 11th have sparked a predictable rash of conspiracy theories...

'BBC NEWS ONLINE' found itself being forced to defend itself less than a fortnight after the terrorist attacks simply because it was inundated with emails requesting confirmation on some of the various urban legends in the making hurtling along the information highway.

What seemed to be top of the list was the accusation that *CNN* had dredged up ten-year-old footage of mass celebrations following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, back in 1990, and passing them off as images of Palestinians revelling in the aftermath of the attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon.

Psychology Professor Cary Cooper was moved to comment on this upsurge in conspiracy theorising:

'I think people are simply trying to fend off fear of random violence and unpredictable death. In order to preserve our sense of security, it's easier to assign that Evil to someone who's not a rogue person or an unsophisticated group who could actually cause so much death and destruction. We create alterante realities because we reject the world where a single madman can snuff out a Princess...and a few men with knives can terrorise an entire country.'

1st October, 2001 General 'BBC ONLINE'

*** A couple of months down the line, and the screening on our TV screens of Osama Bin Laden's apparent 'confession' that he was behind the Sept 11th attacks was met with a fair degree of scepticism...in some circles, at least.

In the Muslim world, perhaps understandably, the authenticity of the film was widely challenged, and the seeds of doubt were hardly dispersed by the admission of certain special effects experts that with modern computer technology it would be possible to create the footage and make it appear perfectly credible. Then there are those who claim that the man in the video is only an Osama Bin Laden look-alike, whilst others were adamant that that the images on the tape have been subtly manipulated. The motives for such supposed doctoring are obvious. As a propaganda tool, (and in the absence of any further concrete evidence that Bin Laden was responsible) it is damn near invaluable, likely to convince many doubters of Bin Laden's guilt.

The director of a London-based production company called *'Smoke And Mirrors,'* one of the foremost SFX organisations in Britain, confirmed that it would be *'relatively easy for a skilled professional to produce a fake video of Bin Laden such as the one the United States is presenting to the world.'*

'However, there are only about 20 people in America who would have the experience and skill to produce one that could fool the top experts. The odds of finding someone with the necessary skills to do that and them keep quiet about it would be pretty difficult.'

The tape was reportedly shot on a camcorder and the quality is rather poor. Precise details of where it was shot, where it was found, and by whom are tantalisingly vague, all of which only adds to the speculation, of course. And unless the U.S. is prepared to reveal the answers to these questions, doubts about the veracity of the tape will continue to grow.

17th December, 2001 *THE GUARDIAN*

*** And finally on the conspiracy front, for this issue at least, the still unexplained (at the time of writing) crash of Flight 587 over Queens, New York, last year, continues to give cause for much rumour and counter-rumour. The official line that the downing of the flight was not due to terrorism but 'structural integrity problems,' hasn't entirely satisfied many members of the public, including, most pertinently of all, several of the eyewitnesses to the tragedy.

Accounts by a fairly large proportion of these witnesses were all but ignored, inexplicably brushed aside by the investigating authorities, including the NTSB and the FBI.

Because of the general population of the neighbourhood where the plane went down, some of the eyewitnesses were what one would normally term highly reliable, seeing as how they were retired police officers and firefighters, people who have frequently testified in court about things they have seen and who are professionally trained to be careful about events unfolding about them. That doesn't mean they are totally infallible, of course, but still...

They were reported as being puzzled, greatly saddened and highly concerned about their inability to get anyone to listen to their story about the crash.

The accounts are remarkably similar in sequence and detail and are completely united in their insistence that the tail remained on the aircraft until the *second* of the two explosions, and therefore could not possibly have been the cause of the accident.

Reports were doing the rounds, at the time of writing, that a traffic surveillance camera had succeeded in capturing footage of the explosion and the subsequent crash, but, surprise, surprise, the film has not yet been released to the public. New York security chief James Kallstrom confirmed that the tape exists but stated that it was part of an on-going investigation and would not be released in the foreseeable future.

We leave you to draw your own conclusions.

5th December, 2001 Queens, New York, USA *'NEWSMAX'*

REMOTE VIEWING EMPLOYED TO TRACK DOWN BIN LADEN

As we go to press, the trail of America's most wanted man (although it's looking increasingly likely that ol' Saddam may be about to be awarded that decidedly dubious distinction), has turned colder than the proverbial Witch's tit, so perhaps we shouldn't be too surprised at the rumours flying round that the U.S. Government is reportedly employing somewhat left-field methods in a bid to locate Bin Laden.

For the first time since the 1970s, (at least as far as we, the humble public are aware) increasingly frustrated members of the Bush Administration are turning to psychics to both help track down the Saudi and assist in predicting any further terrorist outrages.

These so-called 'remote viewers' were first openly used by the U.S. Government at the height of the Cold War. They were reportedly recruited as part of a programme being conducted at Stanford Research Centre called 'Stargate', and was

apparently continued until 1995, when the Soviet Union had collapsed to the point where it was no longer conceived as being a military threat.

According to various commentators, it is hoped that these remote viewers will be able to give law enforcement and government agencies an advantage in outsmarting the terrorists in their next attack (they seem to have been successful...up to now, at least). Reports from one company called 'Transdimensional Systems,' claim that their consensus was that a sports stadium could well be a likely target for a future attack (the Winter Olympics? The World Cup in South Korea and Japan?).

The FBI and the CIA predictably refused to comment about reactivating the programme, but were willing to state that they had been instructed to think 'outside the box' in their efforts to use every resource at their disposal.

13th November, 2001 Stanford Research Centre, USA *THE TIMES*

Glimpses Through The Gap In The Curtain Russian Military Astrologer Predicts Bin Laden To Strike In February/March

Alexander Buzinov, former supervisor of the disbanded Russian Laboratory for Space and Astrological Forecasts, has painted a grimmer than grim picture of future events, both in his own country and for the world in general. As well as major inflation problems in Russia and the sacking of high-ranking government officials, he forecasts World War Three to break out in 2008, and of more immediate concern, for the West anyway, that Bin Laden will be very dangerously active during the months of February or March, this year.

Buzinov, who has worryingly successfully predicted the sinking of the Estonia ferryboat, Yeltsin's early resignation, and the events of September 11th, claims he not actually a natural psychic, but has spent years studying the cycle of the planets in order to predict the future. He was recently interviewed by a journalist from 'PRAYDA,' and during their conversation, Buzinov had the following to say about September 11th and its aftermath.

'Bin Laden was the initiator of the attacks on America, I have no doubt about that. He was born June 28th, 1957, and his horoscope is typical for a terrorist. The so-called return of the Black Moon falls in September - this is the climax of the orbit of the lunar cycles with the Evil forces of the world. There are three stars above him; Antares, Hara and Alhafera. These stars are directly connected with brutality and crimes. Antares is considered to be the most horrible star and this star is influencing him at the level of 100 per cent.'

'I suppose that if there is information saying that Bin Laden is dead then it will not be the real Bin Laden, but one of his "twins." The preliminary rhythmical analyses show that February 1st-15th, March 15th-31st and May 1st-10th of 2002 are going to be the most dangerous days. Bin Laden is going to be extremely dangerous for the West in February-March. If he is not killed during these periods, then it will be possible to kill him only in 2006-2008.'

'I can forecast two serious crises for the USA, and for George Bush himself, and also another two strikes, similar to the events of September 11th. The first strike can be made against a large industrial enterprise, a large passenger or military vessel, or the underground communications. The last variant is also dangerous for Moscow, as well. The second strike is more likely to take place in April or May. There will be a threat of life-threatening attempts on world leaders, such as Putin and Bush, but they will not suffer. I forecast

serious contradictions in the new government of Afghanistan, the UN will fail to deploy its troops in the Pashtun regions. Thus, the Third World War will last, not for a year or two, but much longer, fading and growing. The second half of 2003 and the year 2008 maybe the most difficult times in the future.'

4th January, 2002 Russia 'PRAVDA'

The Man Who 'Predicted' September 11th

A man named Delmart Edward Vreeland was facing credit card fraud charges in a Toronto court last October, when he claimed that he was a lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Intelligence unit, a spy who knew in advance about the September 11th attacks. In his affidavit, he says he tried to warn Canadian intelligence about possible terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon, along with targets in Ottawa and Toronto, but was written off as a petty criminal.

So he decided to write the warning on a piece of paper, sealed it in an envelope, and handed it to jail guards a whole month before the attacks. They opened the letter on September 14th, and immediately forwarded the information to Ottawa.

His lawyers, Rocco Galati and Paul Slansky, were, at the time of writing, fighting extradition, telling the court their client could face treason charges and the death penalty in the U.S.

In the first stage of hearings, federal prosecutor Kevin Wilson told Mr Justice Archie Campbell of the Superior Court of Justice that he was skeptical of Vreeland's claims.

'Is his story possible? I can't go so far as to say it's not possible, but it's not plausible.'

The prosecutor added that he hadn't seen any evidence to back up Vreeland's claim that Canadian embassy official Marc Bastien was murdered in Moscow in December, 2000, Canadian officials say the 35-year-old computer specialist died of natural causes.

All of which has led to people asking just who is Delmart Edward Joseph Michael Vreeland III?

According to the court documents, Vreeland was 18 when he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1984. Two years later, Vreeland says in his affidavit, he joined a special unit investigating drug smuggling into the U.S. by naval personnel. But the navy says Vreeland was *'unsatisfactorily discharged'* in 1986. Vreeland also claims he gathered information on a crime family in Detroit and testified against them in 1998. Late last year, he says, he went to Canada to help smuggle Russian secrets out of Moscow, including Russia's plan to counter the American 'Star Wars' missile defence system. Whilst he was in Moscow, he claims he met Bastien. Vreeland was arrested by a police fugitive squad. While in jail in Toronto, he met Nestor Fonseca, who was facing drug smuggling charges and extradition to the U.S. The court documents say Fonseca allegedly told Vreeland of his plans to kill a Toronto judge and others. Fonseca was charged with counselling to commit murder.

Galati and Slansky said in the documents that Vreeland should be put into the witness protection programme in Canada because he is the main witness against Fonseca.

Galati writes in one document, *'Neither myself nor Mr Slansky...have seen anything as incomprehensibly frustrating, inexplicable and irresponsibly absurd...as the RCMPs position that they are not interested in reviewing Mr Vreeland's information.'*

23rd October, 2001 Toronto, Canada THE TORONTO STAR'

Norwegian Trolls Out Of Favour

In Oslo, a company that makes models of Trolls, the legendary Evil monsters that dwell in caves, (and were almost the bane of Bilbo Baggins in *THE HOBBIT*;) for tourists, has been

forced to suspend production after public demand for them plummeted in the wake of September 11th. Half of its production was exported to the United States.

20th October, 2001 Oslo, Norway 'ASSOCIATED PRESS'

The Killer Sweets

Parents were issued a warning last December, not to let their children eat an Asian fruit cup sweet after a total of 16 people worldwide choked to death courtesy of their expanding jelly centre.

The warning related to three brands imported from south-east Asia: *ABC Mini Fruit Bites, New Choice Mini Fruit Gels* and *Rolin Mango Jelly Cup*.

The centre of these sweets contains konjac, a jelly fibre *'that swells on contact with moisture and enlarges if it gets caught in your throat, making it impossible to dislodge the sweet, even using the Heimlich manoeuvre,'* a spokesman said.

In one case in Japan, where five children and three adults have died after eating the sweets, one distraught family resorted to using a vacuum cleaner to suck one of the sweets from their child's throat.

15th December, 2001 General 'DAILY TELEGRAPH'

Learning To Fly: The Plane With A Mind Of It's Own

A man by the name of Paul Clary III, was out on the tarmac working on the engine in his small two-seater plane when he got the shock of his life. The plane suddenly decided, of its own accord, to break free from its moorings, roared down the runway at the rural Sonoma County airstrip and took off without a single person at the controls. He was forced to watch in disbelief as the aircraft calmly flew out of sight, disappearing from view over the horizon.

It was later spotted by a California highway patrolman near Lake Berryessa in Napa County, who recognised the mangled Aeronca Champion from the description in a circulated police bulletin. Incredibly, no one was injured during the pilot-less flight. The plane, which was built back in the 1950s, appeared to have flown for about 20 miles before crashing.

28th December, 2001 Sonoma County, California 'ANANOVA'

The Curse Of The Pharaoh

Three Italian schoolgirls were taken to hospital after falling victim to an alleged curse cast by an Egyptian Pharaoh.

The girls, all aged eight, collapsed after complaining of headaches and nausea at the end of a visit to the Pharaoh Ini Exhibition at the Egyptian Museum in Turin.

It's apparently the third time in a year that visitors to the exhibition have become unaccountably ill, and there have reportedly been dozens of other incidents. You may not be surprised therefore to learn that many believe the artefacts to be cursed.

'At the moment we still don't know the cause of the illness,' Frederico Signonie, a paediatrician at Turin's Mauriziano hospital was quoted as saying.

'It is certainly odd that same thing should happen in 10 months. There was no sign of any carbon monoxide in the girl's blood, but I am intending to carry out further tests aimed at finding out whether other toxic substances or gases may be to blame.'

18th January, 2002 Turin, Italy 'ANANOVA'

Weighing In With Abuse

Shoppers in Australia early this year, were harangued by a less-than complimentary weighing machine that actually told one woman to *'Get off, fat pig!'*

Not only that, but the coin-operated scales, which were supposed to print out details of weight, height and body mass, told Bruce Hamilton; *'You are a little overweight. Fat cunt!'*

A somewhat shell-shocked Mr Hamilton was quoted as saying, 'Some people could have been deeply offended'

Not surprisingly, the machine was promptly removed from the shopping centre in Melbourne.

17th January, 2002 Melbourne, Australia 'DAILY TELEGRAPH'

Strange Days In The Animal Kingdom Attack Of The Killer Sheep, Horses & Cows

This may sound like the plotline of a James Herbert-style potboiler, but a wild flock of sheep that roam the desolate fields of Weardale, County Durham, responsible for the death of a farmer's wife, have, it seems, developed a taste for meat.

Apparently forsaking their grass diet, three of the sheep raided a grouse nest, hunted down a chick, and swallowed it whole, an attack was witnessed by bird 'expert' Dr Niall Burton.

Three years earlier, members of the flock had pushed 61-year-old Betty Stobbs to her death from a rockface.

The unfortunate lady was feeding the animals from the back of her bike when they suddenly charged.

Betty was flung over the edge of the Ashes Quarry near the village of Stanhope, Weardale, and died as a result of her injuries.

A friend of the family, Mr Eric Dent, who personally witnessed the tragedy, said at the time; 'I've also been pushed off my feet by two, so a flock could easily push a bike over the quarry.'

Betty was spotted just three miles from the place where Dr Burton saw the grouse attack.

A local farmer told reporters; 'Sheep are peaceful creatures - but not here. Since Betty's death they have become the stuff of legend. We even warn our kids to keep away.

They've got a taste for blood. That means none of us our safe. We even warn our kids to stay away from strays if they spot them in the wild.'

In the journal, 'BRITISH BIRDS,' Dr Burton describes how the sheep targeted eight chicks near Stanhope. One of three sheep 'ran forward, picked up a chick and ate it whole..The female took her remaining chicks into the heather.

'I believe the sheep in the area are craving calcium missing from their moorland diet. It is probably a means of alleviating a calcium deficiency.

'It may occur on nutrient-poor moorlands where there are breeding grouses.'

20th December, 2002 Stanhope, Weardale, Co Durham 'DAILY SLUR'

*** Meanwhile, over in County Durham, a woman by the name of Margaret Munden, 27, was killed when a car she was travelling in hit a cow .She was crushed when the animal rolled over the car roof after being struck by her husband's Seat Cordoba on the A66 at Bowes Moor, County Durham.

Her husband was taken to hospital were he was treated for minor cuts. Three other people travelling in the car behind, which also hit the cow, suffered minor injuries.

13th January, 2002 Co Durham 'SUNDAYMANC'

*** Another woman was killed when the car in which she was travelling hit a runaway horse on a motorway in West Yorkshire. Firemen had to cut the body of the 26-year-old from remains of the vehicle after it collided with the horse on the A1 between Bramham and Boston Spa, in darkness at about 7am.

The woman, who wasn't named at the time of writing, was killed instantly. The horse, one of two thought to have escaped

from a field, was also killed. A second car hit the dead horse but the driver wasn't injured.

2nd January, 2002 A1 between Bramham-Boston Spa 'THE TIMES'

*** Stephanie Durrant, 58, was also killed by a horse, just a few months earlier when she was kicked in the head by an animal which she owned.

Her body was discovered at Mylor Downs Stables, near Falmouth, Cornwall, by her husband John after he had gone out to look for her when she failed to return home.

A police spokesman was quoted as saying; 'She has suffered a head wound and it is believed she was kicked by her own horse. She'd gone out riding earlier in the day and her husband had become concerned.'

18th November, 2001 Falmouth, Cornwall 'SUNDAY MANC'

The Terror Of The Critters

Across the world, but particularly in security-conscious America, authorities are on high alert not only for attacks by fanatical terrorists but to the threat posed by beavers, woodchucks, deer, blackbirds and other seemingly benign critters.

A study ordered by Congress amounts to a compendium of dangers from innocent-seeming these creatures; 27,000 injuries a year inflicted by rodents. \$1 billion a year in damage from cars hitting deer. 15 deaths a year from snakebites. 6,000 collisions a year between birds and airplanes. Starlings are now known as 'feathered bullets' because they can cause so much trouble. £70 million in annual livestock losses from predators, mainly coyotes. Odd incidents of planes being damaged by wingless creatures, including alligators, turtles, foxes and woodchucks that apparently lumbered or skittered onto rural airstrips.

The General Accounting Office, Congress's investigative arm studied problems caused by wildlife and the effectiveness of federal actions to protect people, their property and businesses from them.

It was asked to do so by members of Congress involved in approving the budget of the Agriculture Department, which kills some predators and tries to frighten others away.

The study found that nonlethal means of scaring off wildlife show promise, but many animals learn to thwart the best-laid plans. For example, lamb carcasses were laced with a chemical to make coyotes throw up, in the hope that they would steer clear of lambs in the future.

The (ahem) wily coyotes stopped eating them. But they still kept killing them.

They have had more luck with llamas and lasers.

Ranchers have discovered that llamas bond with sheep. They will chase coyotes, gather sheep and stand between the two with little or no training. 'Guard Llamas' also stay on the job longer than guard dogs. Predators and pesky birds often adapt to loud noises and flashing lights, while rattled people in the area don't. But the study claims harmless lasers have effectively scattered birds that interfered with the search for evidence in the World Trade Centre debris.

*** A sort of poetic justice was meted out to a farmer in Giza, Egypt, who ploughed over the hole in the ground which doubled as a home for a resident cobra. The snake promptly took its revenge by biting the man who later died en route to hospital.

*** Also in Egypt, officials in that country were beseeching people to refrain from throwing their dead pets in the street because they are attracting hordes of aggressive crows.

Authorities in Suez City said that the birds were attacking people, and local officials have had no option other than to start shooting them (the birds, not the people, one presumes). Vet Gamal el-Sayed Chahine told reporters; *'We have organised five hit teams, but on the first day we only killed about 30 birds because thousands of them attacked us. The next day, these cunning birds our cars and told each other. We were attacked by huge swarms. We didn't stand a chance 'A farmer was attacked by hundreds of birds after he killed one of them with an axe. We need real co-operation from the people of Suez. Everyone must stop throwing their garbage and dead pets into the street.'*

Civil servant Zaynab al-Sayed told journalists; *'Sometimes they attack little children playing in public parks, brazenly snatching the sandwiches and sweets from their hands. 'You never see any nightingales or other melodious birds here anymore, only these big, black, ugly crows.'*

*** A partridge exacted a satisfying revenge on a beater by the name of Ian White, a man responsible for flushing game from the undergrowth for big macho heroes to blast with their shotguns in the name of 'sport.'

Mr White was sitting in the open back of a pick-up truck when the bird came flying from out of nowhere at 30mph and hurtled into his head. Ian was knocked unconscious by the one-and-a-half pounds of beak and feathers. Sadly, the kamikaze bird died on impact.

The 42-year-old builder was travelling between shoots at Holland and Holland's Molland estate in north Devon when he was attacked. Fellow beaters used a mobile phone to dial 999 amid fears that Mr White had suffered a brain haemorrhage. He was airlifted to hospital at Exeter by the Devon Air Ambulance and recovered consciousness an hour later.

'I don't remember being hit,' he later told reporters. 'There were flashes in my head and I vaguely recall someone slapping me around the face. The first I really knew about it was waking up in hospital with a sore head.'

'This is the kind of accident you can never plan for. We were driving slowly, 15 to 20 mph, but the partridge must have been flying flat out. My friends won't ever let me forget it.'

'I was pretty badly concussed and though I've tried to go back to work it proved too much.'

'If it had been a bigger bird - say a 4lb pheasant -then I probably wouldn't be here today.'

Jeffrey Olstead, of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, said; *'I have never heard of a beater being knocked out by a live partridge.'*

'It's a story which will be told for years to come.'

*** In Cleveland, New Mexico, Adelia Maestas Trujillo, 93, was killed by a black bear which smashed through her kitchen window. She died of multiple bite injuries.

The 250lb adult male bear, about four years old, was subsequently tracked down and killed.

The death came at the tail end of a summer of increased encounters between humans and bears in New Mexico and other Western states.

Officials theorised that the spell of dry weather had limited the growth of plants suitable for food, forcing bears into populated areas to search for something to eat...In this case, humans.

*** Over in Singapore, at least six people, including two policemen, required hospital treatment after they were attacked by an irate swarm of bees whose hive had been disturbed by a flock of birds.

*** Returning to the USA, Nolan Lett, a former employee of the Aramark corporation in Illinois, was attacked by a goose, loose on company property.

Lett decided to sue the company on the grounds that the Aramark building had become a popular goose hangout, thanks to the ornate pond and garden the firm had constructed on its premises.

This resulted in a high-speed angry goose-chase, with the bird eventually causing him to fall, breaking his wrist. He won \$17,000 in damages

21st August, 2001 Giza, Egypt DAILY SLUR/28th September, 2001 Cleveland, New Mexico LIVERPOOL ECHO/November, 2001 Suez City, Egypt CAGE & AVIARY BIRDS/27th December, 2001 North Devon DAILY MAIL/ January, 2002 Illinois, USA FHM/3rd January, 2002 Singapore DAILY TELEGRAPH/11th January, 2002 USA CNN.COM

ANIMAL KINDNESS AND INTELLIGENCE

Students at the Madanpur Mahabir College in India stated that they witnessed a monkey climb through an open window to sit rapt with apparent attention though an entire economics lecture.

If that sounds a tad unbelievable, consider their further assertion that the ape then leapt to the library to flick through the *Ramayana*, a Hindu holy text. For an encore, it then parked itself on a statue of monkey God Hanuman for a goodly while.

January, 2002 Madanpur Mahabir College, India FHM

*** A fox which breached security precautions at the United States Supreme Court managed to evade all attempts by police and a hunt to catch it and appears to have set up home in the complex.

16th January, 2002 Ben Fenton, Washington LIVERPOOL ECHO

*** One of the most amazing animal kindness stories I've come across in a long time concerns a lioness in central Kenya, who baffled wildlife 'experts' by adopting a baby oryx (a kind of small antelope) a creature normally preyed upon by big cats.

Reports claimed that the full-grown lioness came across the oryx in the Samburu game reserve, during the last week in December, 2001, scaring off its natural mother.

Instead of then attacking the defenceless calf, the lioness adopted the baby, protecting it from other predators, including a leopard. Even more extraordinary was the way in which the lioness allowed the mother oryx to come and feed her calf before chasing her away.

Sadly, the normal, harsh reality of life in the wild reasserted itself when a male lion attacked and killed the baby oryx while the lioness was sleeping.

'This is either an extraordinary case of maternal instinct or simply the eighth wonder of the world,' Herman Mwasaghu, who was one of the first to spot the unlikely pair, told local reporters.

Certainly, once news of the story broke, it proved to be a popular draw for tourists and game workers alike. The lioness would lie down to rest in the afternoon and its unlikely charge would curl up beside her. Wildlife 'expert' Vincent Kapera said that he thought the lioness spared the oryx because *'animals have a special instinct to care for for the young.'*

'What is baffling is why the relationship lasted so long.'

According to the AFP news agency, the sad end to the story came when the lioness led the oryx down to the river to drink.

Weakened by two weeks of looking after her adopted baby, she fell asleep, failing to notice a hungry male lion in the area.

The oryx met its death, and Patrick Muriungi, a receptionist at Samburu Lodge, told AFP the lioness was grief-stricken when she woke up and realised what had happened.

'She was very angry. She went around the lion about 10 times roaring, and then the lioness disappeared.'

7th January, 2002 Kenya, Africa 'BBC NEWS'

*** And perhaps equally astonishing, was the story of Big Bertie and Tiny Bruno, a cat and mouse respectively, who are apparently, the very best of friends.

Trainer Sue Wood, who prepares animals for film and media work, came up with a novel way of making traditional enemies enjoy each other's company.

Normally, when filming rodents and cats, one-way glass is used so the mouse cannot see the cat. But that was no good for close up work. So Mrs Wood hit upon the idea of putting the two species together virtually from birth at her farm in Sevenoaks, Kent.

And of all of her cats and mice, Bertie, aged five and six-month old Bruno seem to get on best.

Mrs Wood, 45, was quoted as saying: *'On their first encounter Bruno sat on a ball of wool face to face with Bertie, and then reached forward and started nuzzling him.'*

'It may all be to do with Bruno's genes. His father - also called Bruno - was himself a big hit with Bruno until he died of old age several months ago. I would however add a word of warning for domestic pet owners. During training, my cats and mice are never left alone. I would not advise this be tried with domestic pets. The cat's instinct can take over in a second. Bertie has never eaten a mouse but I would not take the chance.'

5th January, 2002 Sevenoaks, Kent 'DAILY MAIL'

*** Animals other than humans and apes are able to reason, scientists have discovered. Experiments show that baboons are capable of abstract reasoning even though their understanding of concepts is less distinct than that of a human.

Two baboons, taught to use a computer by French and American researchers, could recognise that detailed sets of images were either the same or different. The researchers found that while the baboon's ability to reason was not *'an intellectual forte,'* it was within their capabilities - the first time an animal other than a human or an ape has proved able to reason.

The scientists said the results showed raised the possibility that other species might also be more human in their thinking.

Writing in the *'JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY,'* the scientists said; *'Analogical thinking and its possible precursors may well be found in non-human animals, if only we assiduously look for them.'*

Scientists have already shown that chimpanzees can think in abstract ways, but the research has implications for theories of the evolution of man's intelligence because there is a much wider gap between humans and baboons. Baboons belong to a different primate family that split from the group that forced humans and apes 30 million years ago.

The team led by the unfortunately-named Dr Joel Fagot, from the Centre of Research in Cognitive Neuroscience in Marseilles, and Dr Edward Wasserman, from the University of Iowa, trained a male and female baboon to use a computer and a joystick to select different grids of pictures. The baboons were made familiar with one of two sets of 16 pictures laid out in four rows. One set contained a collection of different pictures, such as the sun, a lightbulb, a train and a house. The second set had one picture repeated 16 times.

The baboons were then given a choice of sets, each containing a grid of different pictures or one picture. They were rewarded when they chose sets that had the same pattern as the original. The baboons matched the grids correctly more often than would have been predicted by chance.

The scientists said it took thousands of trials before the animals learnt the *'relation between relations,'* but eventually showed they could recognise *'sameness'* even when the clues were more subtle and abstract.

When the number of *'different'* items was reduced so they were more similar to the *'same'* grids, the baboons were slower and more accurate when compared with two humans.

The researchers said the apparent different cut-off points between humans and baboons in recognising *'same'* and *'different'* could be due to language. For humans *'same'* described things that were identical, but to baboons the concept may be more indistinct.

16th October, 2001 University of Iowa USA/Centre of Research in Cognitive Neuroscience, Marseilles, France 'THE TIMES'

*** Meanwhile, rats, gorillas and killer whales have distinct regional cultures, with eating habits that vary accordingly, according to scientists.

Culture, or social behaviour passed to each new generation, is much more common in the animal kingdom than most people assume.

In the past 50 years, rats in Israel worked out how to eat the kernels of cones from pine trees introduced by Jewish immigrants. Rats from other countries could not eat them, but Israeli rodents were taught by their mothers.

The researchers have shown that the skill was learnt, not inherited, said Richard Byrne, an 'expert' in animal behaviour at St Andrews University.

6th September, 2001 St Andrews University, Aberdeen, Scotland 'DAILY TELEGRAPH'

*** Tony, a 14-year-old Jack Russell terrier, stood guard over his owner's body for two days when Harold Squirrell died at home in Macclesfield, Cheshire. The dog refused to leave at first when police and the RSPCA were called.

10th October 2001 Macclesfield, Cheshire 'THE TIMES'

*** A family of cats were pulled from the rubble of the World Trade Centre after an amazing 38 days.

Vets believe the mother gave birth to three kittens while trapped in the basement of a restaurant.

She produced enough milk to keep them alive despite living off nothing but water from puddles.

The mother, dubbed predictably enough, Hope, and her kittens, Flag, Freedom and Amber are being looked after by vet Dr John Charos.

He was quoted as saying; *'They truly are the miracle cats. It is a wonderful story. Mum gave everything to keep her babies alive. She couldn't have gone on much longer.'*

The cats have eye infections but are expected to survive.

23rd October, 2001 World Trade Centre, New York, USA 'DAILY MANC'

Weird Human Behaviour Dead Lovers Reunited

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a teenage couple who died together in a road accident were united in the 'afterlife' in a combined Taoist wedding-funeral ceremony.

Wong Chuan Meng, 17, a mechanic and Teng Sook Sheun, 16, a pub singer, were killed when a car crashed into their motorcycle in Penang.

The couple had been dating for about two years, and Teng would have turned 17 on February 13th.

In the wedding ceremony that preceded the funeral, three Taoist priests married the couple, represented as a pair of effigies clad in wedding garb. The priest later handed out red jackets, or ang paws, to unmarried relatives of the deceased, purportedly on their behalf. At a traditional Chinese wedding, newly weds give away ang paws when the ceremony is over.

The remains of the couple were then interred next to each other at a local columbarium.

The 22 year-old student who drove the car that hit the couple's motorbike visited their parents and tried to beg forgiveness.

During the funeral ceremony, the student, in police custody, crawled for five metres and knelt before Wong and Teng's parents. But the grief-stricken parents paid little heed.
5th February, 2002 Penang, Malaysia *THE STAR*

Blitzen The Christmas Reindeer Blasted To Death

A reindeer managed to escape from a Christmas display only to be shot and killed by a hunter.

The 'fearless great white slaughter of innocence' mistook the animal for a local deer and shot him in Franklin Park, Pennsylvania. Donner had succeeded in making good his escape from a garden centre along with his sidekick, Blitzen. Donner was quickly recaptured, but Blitzen scooted away to the depths of the nearby forest.

Garden centre employee Jennifer Smith told reporters; *'We are all very upset and distraught. We feel like we've lost a member of our family here.'*

'We hope this will make people more cautious of what they're doing during hunting season. Don't get buck fever and shoot at anything that moves.' (fat chance - Cynical Ed)

11th December, 2001 Franklin Park, Pennsylvania, USA
'ANANOVA'

'Hell Hath No Fury...'

A woman who was spurned by her former lover, exacted a terrible revenge when she murdered him and skinned his body before cooking it and serving the flesh to his family.

Katherine Knight, an abattoir butcher from Sydney, Australia, left the skin hanging in the hall and the plates in the kitchen, with the names of John Price's three children next to them.

Earlier, the psychotically-possessive Miss Knight, a 44-year-old mother of four, made a home video for her teenage children, outlining plans to slaughter Mr Price, her partner of six years.



Then she went to his home, where she found Price to be, unluckily for him, already unconscious, probably from a drug overdose. Having quickly finished him off, she utilised her abattoir skills to decapitate him and boil it with a mouth-watering mixture of body parts and vegetables.

The scenes in the house were so gruesome, police officers who attended at the scene are still having counselling a year later, a court in East Maitland was told.

Mr Price's daughter, Rosemary, 27, said the guilty plea had spared the court the stomach-churning details. *'It would have*

haunted the jury for the rest of their lives like it haunts us,' she told reporters.

'Only a week before Dad's death, they (Knight and Price) were at a family celebration for a grandchild's birthday. Everything seemed okay between them. We had no idea what was to come.'

'Apparently, Dad wanted out of the relationship. He had applied for an aggravated violence order against her because he was frightened of what she might do. For her to do what she did to him makes it really hard to bear. Dad was a great bloke.'

10th January, 2002 Sydney, Australia *THE MIRROR*

The Phantom Hair Thief

A man alleged to have snipped off the tresses of several long-haired women has recently been arrested in California.

Michael Lynn Howard was detained by police a day after a sheriff's deputy fired shots at his vehicle after the latest attack by the hair-snipping fiend.

Police say the suspect may have used a knife or scissors and is thought to have assaulted at least four women.

Three of his alleged victims are Hispanic and aged between 12 and 45. Police had been tipped off about Howard's whereabouts after an earlier raid on his home failed to locate him.

The suspect was treated at a medical center for a minor head wound and then released into police custody.

Police say Howard's wound may have been sustained during the confrontation with the deputy sheriff. Investigators allege the deputy spotted him grabbing a woman and shearing her hair in east Los Angeles.

The deputy went after him in a patrol car and watched as the man climbed into a parked vehicle. The officer jumped out of the patrol car, told the man to stop and fired several rounds when the suspect drove towards him.

Officers recovered some cut hair and a pair of scissors after the incident.

2nd January, 2002 Los Angeles, California *'LONG-BEACH PRESS'*

'Easy, Tiger!'

In India, police have arrested a man for threatening to kill a tiger he believes is the reincarnation of his lover from a previous life. The businessman allegedly called a zoo in Hyderabad and told the keepers there that he planned to murder the tigress. A hotel attendant overheard him and alerted the authorities at Nehru Zoological Park.

Himanshu Das was picked up for questioning after subsequent calls were traced to his hotel.

Police say he claimed Rani, the white tigress, was his lover from a previous life. He said that the animal had come to him in a dream and asked him to take her away from the zoo, and that he had then been angered by her refusal to return with him to Calcutta.

A zoo official told the police that the man was found wandering near the animal's cage in a suspicious manner the day prior to his arrest.

'I thought he was just some nut. He was pleading with Rani to look into his eyes but she kept ignoring him, and that probably made him more mad. He began shouting abuse at her.' zookeeper Narsimhulu told reporters.

The man has since been released by the police with a stern warning ringing in his ear to leave the tigress alone and to keep away from the zoo.

9th October, 2001 Hyderabad, India *'AAJ KAL'*

'Fargo' Sparks Hunt For Fortune

A Japanese woman searched a remote area of America during a quest to find a briefcase containing almost \$1 million buried by a fictional character in the cult film *'FARGO'*.

In the film, a villain stops his car in a snow-deluged landscape, featureless save for a wire fence and a series of fenceposts, where he buries the case.

In an apparent attempt to find the supposed money, Takako Konishi, 28, left her home in Tokyo to travel to North Dakota. Once there she was reported to police in the small city of Bismarck after she was seen near a rubbish dump. When officers interviewed Miss Konishi, she showed them a crude map purporting to show the location where the money was hidden.

Lt Nick Sevart of Bismarck police, said; *'We tried to explain to her that it was a fictional movie and there really wasn't any treasure.'*

She paid him no heed, however, and Miss Konishi's body was found by a hunter in deep woodland near the village of Detroit Lakes, which lies on a road between Fargo and Brainerd.

Police, who at the time of writing were awaiting the results of tests to establish the cause of death, said that Miss Konishi had been wearing only light clothing on a night when the temperature dropped to 26F (-3C).

They believe Miss Konishi may have been confused by the opening credits for the film which claimed it was based on a true incident in 1987, but this was merely a device to help sell the movie.

11th December, 2001 Fargo, North Dakota, USA *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH*

Inmate Breaks Back Into Jail

Mark Delude, 39, a prisoner at the St Johnsbury work camp in Montpelier, Vermont, USA, succeeded in escaping one Friday night, last December. He was serving an eight to thirty month sentence for a variety of minor offences, but gained his freedom, even if it was for just an hour or so...By the time state troopers arrived at the minimum security prison, they found Delude with a 24-pack of beer and a carton of ciggies back inside the fence.

Delude had apparently crawled under that same fence that surrounds the jail, and walked the mile and a half to the nearest convenience store where he made his purchases and then headed back to the jail.

10th December, 2001 Montpelier, Vermont, USA *FOX NEWS*

Cuddly Teddy Bears May Be Banned In New Zealand

According to New Zealand health officials, seemingly harmless teddy bears may have to be banned altogether from Doctor's waiting rooms because they spread infections to already sick children.

'Isn't it time to give teddy the boot?' asked Paul Corwin and his colleagues at Christchurch School of Medicine in New Zealand after checking contamination levels of toys at six group practices in Christchurch.

Their findings were published in the *'BRITISH JOURNAL OF GENERAL PRACTICE'* and showed that 90 per cent of soft toys examined had moderate to heavy bacterial contamination. They also found that soft toys are difficult to disinfect and are rapidly re-contaminated after cleaning. Hard toys were much less likely to be contaminated and were easy to disinfect. They said that many doctors provide toys in waiting rooms and stopped short of calling for a total ban at this stage.

'Children, many with infectious diseases such as those causing diarrhea, are likely to be handling toys and putting them in their mouths. The next child to play with these toys may thus be exposed to pathogens that could make them ill,' 'experts' concluded.

But according to Rose Mulligan, of *'Good Bears Of The World,'* who distributes teddies to sick children in hospitals, a cute teddy is likely to do more good than bad.

'We have been giving bears for thirty years and they have a soothing and comforting affect,' she was quoted as saying. 29th January, 2002 Christchurch, New Zealand *THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF GENERAL PRACTICE*

Bizarre Sex Crimes



A man who allegedly killed his gay partner in the midst of a blazing row over household chores is believed to have slept with her corpse for the following 45 days.

He was taken to Linares Prison in Chile and charged with murder and was facing psychological testing.

The couple, who were divorced from their wives, lived on a smallholding near Calbun Bajo.

The unnamed 47-year-old had been shot in the head.

The murdered man's sister had become suspicious during a visit to the smallholding when she was told that her brother had simply moved away.

She asked the police to search the house and they found the victim's body in an advanced state of decomposition in the couple's bed.

30th January, 2002 Calbun Bajo, Chile *'LA CUARTA'*

*** Fed up with the sheer girth of his oversized gonads, 32-year-old Romanian Mihai Stefanescu hit upon the jolly good wheeze of shrinking them by injecting his balls with salty water. Confronted by incredulous mediscs, the goballoon explained that his father had successfully carried out the salt water cure on one of the family goats.

23rd January, 2002 Romania *DAILY EXPRESS*

*** Equally strange was the news that a Romanian couple seeking fertility treatment failed to conceive because they were mistakenly engaging in anal sex...

The newly-married couple with a less than impressive knowledge of the birds 'n' bees became increasingly frustrated at their inability to have a child, and at their wits end went to their gynaecologist for advice. Having diagnosed their problem, the bemused doctor sent them home armed with a bunch of sex education leaflets.

January, 2002 Romania *'FHM'*

*** But the prize for the sickest case of this issue of 'DON' must surely go to chef Stephen Hall, 23, who had sex with a goat and was seen by a trainload of passengers in Hull.

Mr Hall was alleged to have lassoed the unfortunate animal with his belt at the Paradise allotments near his home.

As the packed Hull to Bridlington train stopped at signals, dozens of passengers stared at the sight beyond their windows with disbelief.

In seconds, police switchboards were jammed as horrified commuters used their mobiles to report what they had witnessed.

The female goat was one of a number left to graze near the allotments. A man out walking his dog also made a 999 call to Humberside Police Control Room.

Two members of the public managed to pin down Hall while a stream of officers raced to the scene.

A vet who later examined the goat said it was 'subdued' by the assault but not suffering any long-term injury.

British Transport Police Detective Inspector Dave Crimmon, who investigated, was quoted as saying; *'I saw the goat the next day. It did not seem to be too upset but it's difficult to tell.'*

The Judge at Hull Crown Court, Jacqueline Davies, who had adjourned the case for reports at the time of going to press, said that she did not know what sentence the court were likely to impose on him.

Hall, who is gay, said after the hearing; *'My friends have been giving me a lot of stick. They're all joking with me about it. I have never done anything like this before.'*

8th February, 2002 Hull, Humberside *'THE SCUM'*

*** The wife of a New York financier who had his leg bitten off by a shark was understandably upset by the attitude of one of the lifeguards present at the scene of the attack.

The couple were on holiday in the Bahamas when the shark took a bite out of her husband, and when the woman appealed to the lifeguard for help, she claims he replied; *'I don't do that. I just sit in the chair.'*

21st November, 2001 Bahamas *'DAILY MANC'*

*** A pathetic criminal by the name of Edwin V Gaynor set himself up when he truthfully filled in a Baltimore police employment application. Having ticked 'Yes' to the question 'Have you ever committed a crime?' Gaynor was asked to elaborate by his interviewers.

He then obligingly told them that he had once carjacked a vehicle and robbed five other during a one man crime spree in Killeen, Texas, a few months previously. He then proceeded to give details of the incidents, including what he was wearing. His descriptions checked out and he was subsequently arrested and charged.

November, 2001 *'FHM MAGAZINE Baltimore, USA'*

*** Meanwhile, a guilt-prone Japanese man has decided to give himself up to police after he admitted he was *'thinking of doing a robbery.'*

The 49-year-old was about to turn to crime because he had been made redundant and was heavily in debt.

The mere thought of carrying out the heist - which was to involve a raid on a post office with a can of oil, and some lighted matches - sent the man scurrying to the boys in blue in Kashinara. Unforgiving and uncompromising cops charged him with both stealing the oil and conspiracy to commit the crime.

Surprisingly, the would-be criminal held no grudges. *'If my life had continued to be as hard as it is now, I would have definitely begun leading a life of crime.'*

January, 2002 Kashinara, Japan *'FHM'*

*** Also in Japan, a woman named Mika Hasegawa, 28, was charged with entering her neighbour's flat through a hole that took a total of two weeks to cut and stealing game software and video tapes.

Mika, of Yorii, near Tokyo, is alleged to have patiently used scissors to carve the 12in by 16in hole through the 4in wall, covering it with cardboard so that her neighbour wouldn't notice it.

Police said she then squeezed through it to steal from her neighbour

17th August, 2001 Yorii, Tokyo, Japan *'DAILY EXPRESS'*

*** A couple invited an old friend to dinner, then axed him to death and ate him over the course of several weeks.

Yuri and Valerie Kaschenko, aged 37 and 32 respectively, killed 34-year-old Vladimir Karpov after getting him drunk on home-made vodka. They then put his dismembered body in the freezer at their home and set about dining on him.

8th January, 2002 Vladivostok, Russia *'DAILY SLUR'*

The Face Of Evil

It's common knowledge that Trick or Treating is a big tradition over in the States (and is becoming increasingly popular here in Britain), and the children of that country love to acquire the scariest and most ghoulish of horror masks...But some may think that the boundaries of taste were well and truly crossed last Halloween, when there was a massive demand for Osama Bin Laden masks on sale in New York stores.

*** And certainly, two residents of Florida would think the masks to be in bad taste.

They've recently filed a \$1.1 trillion dollar lawsuit against Osama. The plaintiffs are claiming damages on the grounds that the West's Most Wanted Man is, wait for it, scaring them! 28th October, 2001 New York, USA *'LIVERPOOL ECHO'* 8th January, 2002 Florida, USA *'DAILY MANC'*

Total Over-Reactions

A nightclubber booted out of a bar in Northern Greece for unacceptably loud behaviour returned a few hours later in a tank.

The incident occurred in the village of Ferres, where Alexandros Mitrakas, a 22-year-old soldier serving in a nearby army unit, used the vehicle to crush the bar's front window an return to his base before the police could intervene.

22nd November, 2001 Ferres, Northern Greece. *'LIVERPOOL ECHO'*

*** In Salem, Michigan, a man has been charged with attempting to murder his wife...for the second time in five months.

Timothy Brandt, 33, is alleged to have wrapped his 'beloved' in Cellophane and blankets and then sealed her in a smoke-filled box resembling an Egyptian tomb. The woman managed to call for assistance and was later treated for head injuries. Among items seized at the house were a video of *'THE MUMMY.'*

The previous March, Brandt had attempted to electrocute his wife by wiring up and flooding his basement, and then getting her to enter the room on some pretext.

One can't help thinking that she must be either incredibly dumb, hopelessly in love or loony-toons to have stuck with him after that attempt failed.

23rd November, 2001 Salem, Michigan, USA *'DAILY SLUR'*

*** Talk about Competitive Dad!!!

A *Monopoly* addict narrowly escaped a prison sentence after he assaulted his 13-year-old stepson when the boy had the temerity to beat him at his favourite board game.

The unnamed teenager was pushed against a wall and repeatedly punched.

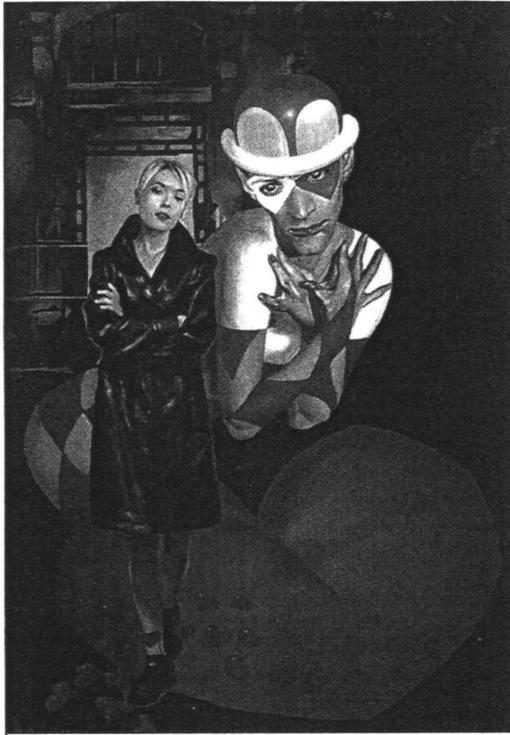
13th January, 2002 *'SCOTTISH SUNDAY POST'*

*** And finally, in Holland, a Dutch woman rented out her three-bedroomed flat to house her dead mother's cat.

The woman forks out £275 a month for the seven-year-old cat, all because she promised her dying mother she wouldn't ever move the animal. According to neighbours, the cat sits at the windowsill all day, looking lonely

12th January, 2002 Holland *'DAILY SLUR'*

THE COSMIC JOKER'S LATEST PRANKS AT HUMANITY'S EXPENSE



Part Of Man's Penis Sucked Off By Vacuum Cleaner

An Italian man had part of his penis cut off by a vacuum cleaner while watching a porn film.

The embarrassed 63-year-old went to hospital claiming he had accidentally cut himself while shaving his pubic hair. He was carrying the severed part of his penis in a sheet of newspaper. Doctors who were unconvinced by the man's story, later informed the police, who found the man's vacuum cleaner had traces of blood in it and there was a porn tape in the video player.

The man, who hails from Lugo di Ravenna, later admitted that he had inserted his er, manhood into the vacuum cleaner (as you do) and that the decidedly unimpressed machine had revolted by using its fan to cut part of it off.

He said that he tried to preserve his penis part in a freezer while the ambulance was called to pick him up.

He has since undergone surgery and the penis part has been re-attached, though it's unlikely that it will ever work properly again. The man's penis, not the vacuum cleaner, one presumes. 13th December, 2001 Lugo di Ravenna, Italy 'IL NUOVO'

GROOM KILLED BY STRIPPER'S BOOBS

Dearie me, what a way to go!

In Geneva, a bachelor's party at a local strip club ended in tragedy when 32-year-old groom-to-be, Daniel Greene was enjoying the attentions of a particularly well-endowed stripper, and suffocated while his face was buried amidst her mountainous breasts.

It may sound suspiciously like an Urban Myth, but according to investigator's, Greene was enjoying a lap dance when one of the strippers, Kandy Kane, got too wrapped up in her

performance (or rather poor old Danny did) and suffocated the man between her 72-DD breasts.

Witnesses say that Greene had had his fair share of beer but didn't seem to be out of control.

When the song 'I'm Too Sexy' began to play, Greene became excited and began to dance on the tabletop, hooting and hollering 'like an idiot.'

Miss Kane, apparently pleased to see someone enjoying her choice in music (and you could hardly blame her...I mean Right Said Fred? One of the great pop icons of recent times who'll doubtless be revered for many years to come...Sarky Ed) moved in closer, and when Greene took his seat, she began giving him a lapdance, shaking her breasts in his face.

The more she shook, the deeper Greene got lost in her cleavage.

'Daniel was having so much fun,' partygoer John Gillman was quoted as saying.

'We all thought he loved being in that girl's chest. Who could have known that when he was waving his hands around, he was signalling for help?'

Cheering onlookers eventually realised that Greene was no longer moving, and pulled him from between Miss Kane's breasts.

Now the family is suing Miss Kane and the Pretty Kitty for wrongful death.

Greene's father, George, refused to specify how much they were suing her for, but claim that it isn't about the money.

'Those breasts are lethal weapons,' he told reporters. The Pretty Kitty should not have allowed Miss Kane to have her bust enhanced to the size that she did.

'We hope that by filing this lawsuit, we can send a message to other strippers: keep your bra size within a reasonable range.'

Kandy Kane issued the following statement through her lawyers; 'I thought he liked it in there.'

16th January, 2002 Geneva 'WEEKLY WORLD NEWS'

Schoolgirl's Tongue Freezes To Railings

Ambulance crews were called to rescue a seven-year-old Canadian girl after her tongue froze to a set of metal railings.

Amanda Sharkey was hidden from view on a footbridge in Calgary, where temperatures had dropped to -14 degrees. An engineer who happened to be passing by eventually spotted her. Paramedics sprayed warm water on the railing to release her. Paramedics says she was curious to see what would happen if she licked the metal.

Her mother, Tracey, told reporters; 'When the paramedics came she thought they were going to have to cut off her tongue. She's a very lucky girl.'

Amanda says she never thought her tongue would actually stick to the railings. I guess now, she knows differently.

23rd January, 2002 Calgary, Canada 'THE CALGARY SUN'

TAKING THE MIKE

A thief who was being questioned by police regarding a shoplifting offence had the cheek to steal a mike from the police station interview.

Wayne Griffiths, 26, admitted taking it after being quizzed at Llandudno, North Wales.

22nd August, 2001 Llandudno, North Wales 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

Hit Thumb Kills Man

A man hit his thumb with a hammer...Setting off a bizarre chain of events, that conspired to kill him within 24 hours. Paul Davidson, 29, fainted after pressing his thumb minutes after whacking it and fell 8ft from a ladder where he had been helping a friend with a barn conversion.

Doctors in Carlisle found his spinal cord was severed, paralysing him.

Mr Davidson, who lived in Penrith, was taken to a spinal unit in Middlesbrough for surgery but died after he left the theatre. A pathologist found a sliver of bone had severed a vein, leaking three litres of blood into his chest and stopping his heart.

23rd August, 2001 Penrith, Cumbria 'DAILY MANC'

Bridal Bouquet Wrecks Four Cars

A bride's bouquet caused a four-car pile-up and a total of £33,000 worth of damage at a wedding party in Buerstedt, near Frankfurt, Germany.

The flowers, which had been fixed to the bonnet of the car talking the happy couple to the reception, suddenly flew off and right into the path of the following cavalcade.

The driver in the next car slammed on his brakes and three other vehicles smashed into him.

A police spokesman said, with an air of understatement, 'It was a shame since some guests had come a long way.'

23rd August, 2001 Buerstedt, Germany 'DAILY SLUR'

Burnt Offerings

Firemen accidentally torched 7,500 acres of land whilst trying to teach farmers in Brazil how to control agricultural burning.

15th August, 2001 Brazil 'DAILY MANC'

Shamed Into Hiding

A shamed Russian teacher was discovered hiding in his school's attic, three years after he disappeared.

Colleagues were convinced that Vassili Vorobyev had died, but instead the former deputy head teacher was smoked out very much alive when a fire broke out as he was in the process of boiling potatoes.

The reclusive pedagogue explained that he had retreated to the attic to study maths after his headmaster called him an 'ignoramus.'

He survived by stealing school supplies of food, along with pens and paper so that he could continue to swot.

November, 2001 Russia 'FHM'

Death By Falling Brazillian

A Brazillian man jumped to his death from a Rio de Janeiro apartment, landing on an unfortunate passer-by, who also killed. Police said the pedestrian was returning from Copacabana beach when he was hit.

16th October, 2001 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

Blown Off Course

Researchers hoping to install equipment to measure wind speed at Corfe Castle in Dorset, were forced to call the project off...Because it was too windy!!!

23rd November, 2001 Corfe Castle, Dorset 'DAILY MANC'

Man Kills Mother In Random Crash

In Dona Vista, Florida, USA, 21-year-old Dwight Samples was allegedly drag-racing on a highway at speeds over 100 mph, when he lost control and slammed into the back of another car, instantly killing two people, one of them his own mother, who was taking an elderly friend for a drive to look at the local Christmas lights.

Diane Samples, 45, and her passenger, 72-year-old Vivian Green, died at the scene.

'It's bizarre. His mom was doing this act of kindness taking this lady around to see Christmas lights,' Lt Chuck Williams, a Florida Highway Patrol officer was quoted as saying. 'You think the probabilities for a phenomenon like this are, wow!'

A neighbour at the trailer park where the mother and son lived in separate trailers said that the two were very close.

The poor kid is probably going through hell right now,' Susan Schmidt told reporters. 'It was a one in a trillion thing.'
20th December, 2001 Dona Vista, Florida, USA 'FOX NEWS'

The Wombles Cause Mayhem On The M1

The M1 was briefly thrown into chaos when a lorry shed its load. a box of Womble soft toys.

The weird accident happened at 8:41am on the middle lane of the M1 northbound between junctions 12 and 13 in Bedfordshire.

A police spokesman said a number of cars had been forced to swerve to avoid the normally obsessively tidy Wombles on the road and that eventually all of the toys were cleared up.

24th January, 2002 Bedfordshire 'ANANOVA'

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

A jilted lover quite literally gave his ex-girlfriend the finger last February 14th, after he wrapped up his severed middle digit and sent it to her at her place of work in Manhattan, USA.

Then he called and asked her, 'How do you like your Valentine's gift?' according to the NYPD.

Police arrested Forest Simon, 24, with his left hand wrapped in a fresh bandage, and took him to Bellevue Hospital for a psychiatric evaluation.

The lovestruck romeo, still pining for his former hairsylist girlfriend since their break-up a year ago, used a messenger to deliver the black jewellery box containing the finger to House of Field, a boutique and hair salon in the East Village, at 12:50pm.

The shop is owned by Patricia Field, costume designer for HBO's 'Sex And The City,' but she wasn't the recipient of the 'gift.'

'The hair-stylist opened the box and there's three-quarters of a finger inside it and it's all bloody,' a police spokesman was quoted as saying. 'She was quite startled.'

The 27-year-old called the cops. While officers were there, Simon phoned repeatedly, and cops tracked him down to nearby St Marks Place, police said.

After chopping off his finger, Simon went to Beth Israel Medical Centre, where doctors treated him for the wound.

Police said Simon, who lives in the East Village on First Ave., faces charges of aggravated harrasment.

15th Febrary, 2002 Manhattan, New York. 'NEW YORK DAILY NEWS'

By The Numbers

Joseph N Esposito, president of the Lighthouse Research for Preservation, based on Staten Island, New York, made the following 'discovery' recently. Within an hour of the September 11th terrorist attacks, Esposito raised the American Stars and Stripes outside his home as a tribute to the victims, as well as the three nautical flag nautical equivalents for W, T and C.

'I was just looking at it and then I realised that all three nautical flags are red, white and blue, the only nautical flags that contain those colours,' Esposito was quoted as saying.

Not only that, but the total number of stripes in the three signal flags equal 11, as in September 11th, and the North Tower was hit by a plane coming from the East and a plane coming from the West hit the South Tower. This was the N-E-W-S of the day.'

Esposito, who hails from Dongan Hills, added that the apparent numerology sent shivers down his spine.

'It jumped right out at me. I had to show my wife. I couldn't believe the coincidence.

12th February, 2002 'STATEN ISLAND LIVE'

TALES FROM THE LOCH-SIDE: In The Shadow Of Boleskine

'If there's one thing I know, you can't control Evil. You can lock it up and burn it and bury it and pray that it dies, but it never will. It just rests awhile. You can lock your doors and say your prayers, but the Evil is out there, waiting.

And maybe, just maybe, it's closer than you think.'

Tommy Doyle: HALLOWEEN: THE CURSE OF MICHAEL MYERS (1996)



Is it possible for an entire area to be haunted by what, for want of a better word, we term Evil?

Haunted, not just by a solitary headless horseman or a single phantom monk doomed to walk an identical route on the anniversary of some dark and terrible deed?

Haunted.

Blighted, the way other areas seemed to be *blessed* with vistas of breath-taking natural beauty, a sense of inner-peace, or a deeply religious aura?

Can mere rock and shoreline. Stream and greensward. Meadow and valley, somehow retain a vivid impression of horrors past and horrors yet to be?

Can a place simply be 'born' bad?

Of course, there are those students of strange phenomena who wouldn't hesitate in telling you that it can indeed. And if you'd care to politely enquire further, they'd doubtless delight in informing you (in that smug, patronising tone exclusive to certain schoolteachers, college course lecturers and that maddeningly annoying smart arse who knows the answers to all the 'TRIVIAL PURSUIT' questions), they've known about the existence of such places for years beyond counting.

Hell, they even have a name for them... 'Window Areas.'

Now, that's as good a name as any, I guess. And who am I to argue with what's long since become a universally accepted entry in the 'Paranormal Researcher's Bible' right alongside *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*, 'NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCES' and '*SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION?*'

I hope you'll forgive me however, if I choose to refer to these areas by another name...A name that from personal experience I consider to be far more appropriate:

'SHADOWLANDS'

A place that seems permanently bathed in a scummy wash of light, a queer flat yellow that throws the landscape into 3-D relief and where the air seems forever pregnant with rain and thunder.

Where the Moon rises like a spirit with a pale, humourless face amidst a sea of diamond-chip stars

Where the rakish silhouette in the middle of a farmer's field looks like a figure torn from the mist by a lunatic's hand.

Where buildings stand at weird, unnatural angles.

Where birdsong is muted.

Where shadows gather and lie eternal.

SHADOWLANDS.

One

If such places truly exist outside of the students wishful thinking and this writer's somewhat fevered imagination, then the area around Boleskine House, overlooking the dark, brooding waters of Loch Ness, must stand as a shining (if that's quite the right word) example.

And yet, I'm sure a considerable proportion of the people reading this won't ever have heard of the place. That's hardly surprising. You'll find little mention of it, even in paranormal circles, despite the fact that the infamous magickian/occultist/drug-fiend/pervert (delete wherever your personal opinion of the man decrees to be applicable), Aleister Crowley, once resided there. Even books, videos and magazine articles dealing specifically with the Loch and its legendary Monster contain only the most cursory of references.

Illustrations of the locale are rarer still. The sole example I've yet to come across was featured in Simon Marsden's *'PHANTOMS OF THE ISLES'* (Guild Publishing 1990). That work includes a two-page black and white spread of Boleskine Burial Ground looking suitably moody and ominous (Interestingly, Marsden's attendant notes contain the following disturbing, and maybe starkly relevant lines: *'The whole enclosure had a particularly strange atmosphere, as if it were the centre of some powerful force.'*

And later; *'Crowley may have unleashed Evil Spirits that ran amok in the area.'*

The validity of the latter we'll dwell upon in a little while. Firstly, let me just confirm that Marsden's initial comment is bang on the mark. A personal visit to the area will be enough to convince you of that.

But therein lies a problem.

It seems hard to believe, but even regular visitors to the Loch may remain blissfully ignorant of the existence of Boleskine, situated roughly between the tiny, picturesque villages of Dores and Foyers. General Wades's Military Road, the endlessly winding B852, is comparatively shunned by tourists in favour of the main A82 that runs directly along the opposite shore (and is therefore considered to be far more *'Nessie-Spotting Friendly'*)

My friends and I journey up to Scotland at least once every year. In more recent years it has become less a holiday in the traditional sense of the word, more a sort of annual pilgrimage stretching back to the Summer of 1992, and we only came across the Burial Ground quite by accident. We'd been searching for The Foyers Hotel, (from the grounds of which the first full-time monster hunter, Tim Dinsdale filmed his now famously controversial footage that appears to show *something* traversing the Loch).

The memory of our 'discovery' remains vivid, though to be honest, I often wish I could succeed in

relegating its recollection to some dusty corner of my mind, because all too frequently, in the wee dead hours before dawn, the memory surfaces in my dreams and on such occasions, I often find I scream myself awake into the rough, uncaring darkness...

Two

Picture if you will a miserable, rain-sodden afternoon deep in the Scottish Highlands. The calendar insists it is mid-August, but you could be forgiven for thinking Winter still holds sway. The sky is the colour of slate and a vicious wind sweeps up piles of crumpled leaves and spins them into mini-tornados.

A *Rover* drives along a narrow, winding road bordered on one side by steep, heavily-wooded slopes and on the other by undergrowth so dense the vast expanse of water you know to be there is only visible in brief, tantalising glimpses of grey.

Suddenly, the road veers away from the Loch and the car is all but engulfed beneath a thick canopy of trees. It's clear that even on the brightest day, the enveloping foliage would admit no rich tapestry of sun and shade. Only a vaguely depressing half-light...Perfectly suited to the desolate burial ground that hoves into view over the next rise.

The car slows to a halt. Five young(ish) men, yours truly amongst them, climb out and make their way across the road to the walled enclosure smack in the middle of the proverbial nowhere. There is no one else around. The road is empty of traffic. There are no farms or houses in the lush green fields either side of the graveyard. The only signs of modern civilisation are the telegraph wires snaking their way through the treetops. It's an achingly lonely place, the atmosphere stiflingly oppressive, but the intrepid five are too consumed with curiosity to pay much heed. This unexpected discovery fills them with excitement. They're eager to explore. And the rusted gate is standing open as if silently beckoning them to enter.

And enter they do...

A battered noticeboard is attached to the wall nearest the entrance. Contained behind a transparent plastic cover are a collection of children's notes and drawings. A placard informs the reader that the work is the product of the pupils of Foyers Primary School, and provides a brief history of the burial ground. Reference is made to the deliberate destruction of the attendant church, now little more than an empty, roofless shell, its crumbling walls all but hidden by blackberry bushes and clumps of high, stinging nettles.

There are details too of how the cemetery had long been redundant, for the very good reason that by the middle of this century, there had simply ceased to be any room left within the consecrated earth in which to bury the newly-dead.

'Things had gotten so bad,' the childish scrawl, written entirely in block capitals confides, *'that the bones of the deceased were being buried in graves so shallow, packs of wild dogs had begun roaming the plot, digging up the remains almost the minute they were laid to rest.'*

Bodysnatching had apparently been rife here, too, with doctors from nearby Inverness willing to pay a

handsome price for fresh cadavers upon which they could perform their medical experiments.

There is also mention of one particular headstone standing in the most neglected corner of the graveyard riddled with what appear to be bullet holes. The story goes that during the 17th Century Jacobite Rebellion, a British patrol were passing the funeral of a rebel who had been killed in action. On seeing present amongst the mourners those whom they suspected of being Jacobite sympathisers, they immediately opened fire, hence the 'bullet-holes' in the headstone. It is not recorded whether anyone was killed or wounded in the attack.

We look around the enclosure and see it contains row after row of crumbling, moss-covered tombstones that prove upon closer inspection to be almost exclusively inscribed with the surname Fraser. The wind howls through the fissures in the ancient stone, like a lament for all that's dead or dying, and an even closer look at those crooked graves reveals that might not be so very far from the truth. The majority of the names engraved here are the final glorious epitaphs of those who have fallen on foreign battlefields in the service of their country, (Waterloo, South Africa, the Somme) or else were the tragic victims of inter-clan warfare.

Suddenly, without warning, I am struck by the sudden memory of my grandmother's funeral on a similar rain-swept afternoon, when I was just fourteen years old.

Then, as now, I am standing by a graveside, head bowed, shoulders hunched against the bitter cold. My red-rimmed eyes fix upon the wreaths and brightly-coloured bouquets. The simple, moving messages of condolence attached to the flowers are quickly obscured by the incessant rain. The words slide from the soggy cards in thin rivers of ink like a woman's mascara moved by tears. The air hangs heavy with solemnity and grief. The only sounds are the muted sobbing of the assembled mourners and the vicar's sonorous tones as he utters banal words of cold comfort. From somewhere far off, I hear the chimes of a passing ice-cream van, the distance turns the child's nursery rhyme tune into a discordant melody of false cheer as though a demented circus clown, its face sweating greasepaint, had been let loose on one of those old-fashioned hurdy-gurdy's. I had an image of it grinning insanely as it pummelled the keyboards with white-gloved hands. A murderers hands.

A chill that had nothing to do with the godawful weather causes me to shudder uncontrollably, and as much as I love my Nan, I think selfishly, 'I wish they'd hurry up and get it over with. All this standing around and sobbing in the rain isn't gonna bring her back. Can't they see that?'

And then I promptly burst into tears of my own. The precious recollections of all the good times we spent together come flooding back in a deluge so powerful, I'm almost swept away by their sheer force. My mother puts her arm around me and I bury my face into the soft fabric of her coat silently cursing the God who could deign to take my Nan away, closing my ears to the murmured consolations that are now doing the rounds.

An eternity seems to pass.

No one moves.

We're soaked to the skin and all cried-out. Time, it seems, has stood still.

Eventually though, as if on some unspoken cue, the congregation prepares to depart. And now, incredibly, I actually don't want to leave. Walking away now feels too much like desertion. Abandoning a friend just when they need you most. I'm all but dragged to the waiting hearse and it's po-faced chauffeur. I clamber aboard, slide into the back seat between my two brothers and glance back over my shoulder one more time.

I see there's a wood pigeon perched atop my Nan's headstone. I can hear its plaintive 'song' even through the thick, tinted glass, and it may sound crazy, but its gentle, repetitive cooing lightens my mood. I can't say why, but for the first time on that terrible day, I feel a sense of inner-calm.

And then my hear skips a beat and I have to cover my mouth with my hand to stifle an astonished cry as a single shaft of sunlight emerges from between a ragged gap in the cloud cover. It spears down like a laser beam across the row of headstones, their uniform whiteness turned blindingly bright. The pigeon, doubtless startled, suddenly takes to the air, and I watch it ascending to rejoin its flock, before flying towards the distant horizon, looking for all the world like a soul that had joyfully been set free...

If the recalling of that cherished memory was meant to fortify me against my natural fear of death and the grave however, it proved to be more than a tad unsuccessful.

The Boleskine Burial Ground gives off a sickly ambience, impossible to shake or ignore. No matter how nonsensical it may appear.

Here, it's easy to believe, the spirits of the dead remain chained to whatever is left of their physical remains for all eternity.

Worse, their resentment, their understandable anger at being cut down in the prime of their lives has been harnessed by some powerful, inherently evil force that has existed here since the dawn of time. And over the passage of the centuries, all that resentment has been transformed into something far worse. A bitter, twisted hatred that had turned the very earth sour.

Or at least, that was the overriding impression this place etched upon me...

Three

One thing the noticeboard fails to make mention of is the derelict-looking building that stands roughly half-way along the opposite wall. This strike me as being a little odd, as although there is nothing outwardly remarkable about it, the fact is that aside from the ruined church, it easily dominates the enclosure.

Intrigued, we walk in-between the headstones, careful not to tread on any of the actual graves lest we insult the fallen, towards the building's only entrance; a rotted oak door that, contrary to our expectations, is standing slightly ajar.

A brief argument ensues as to who should be the first to enter. We stand motionless for a few long moments, as immobile as any of those grand old sepulchres dotted around the graveyard. Predictably, no one volunteers. And then, with a collective

mental shrug, we *all* push the door fully open and cross the threshold together.

The tiny cottage, for that it was what it must have been, once, contains two floors.

The sole source of illumination is a small upstairs window, but even allowing for the time it takes for our eyes to adjust to the pervasive gloom, it is quickly apparent that the ground floor, where the air is heavy with a dank, foetid aroma, is little more than an empty shell, not worth exploring.

A set of rickety wooden stairs leads to the floor directly above. The original flight had, it seemed, long since been removed wholesale. In total silence (a silence that would appear almost reverential in any place save *here*), we ascend.

At first glance, this room, too, seems to be disappointingly empty.

The late afternoon light falls in grey slabs across a bare, wooden floor. Dust motes dance crazily like a swarm of maddened insects. There is no furniture. No outward sign of decoration. The place is as drab and colourless as the surface of the Moon. And the only sign that anybody had set foot within these walls in years, *decades* even, is some fresh kindling stacked in the grate of an old-fashioned fireplace.

Filled with a perverse sense of anti-climax, (and what had I *expected* to find, exactly? The angry ghost of some departed member of the Clan Fraser, berating me for having dared disturb his centuries old sleep? A bunch of black-cowled Satanists performing a secret and obscene rite? A haggard recluse, complete with kilt, Claymore and a love of the Highlands matched only by an inbred hatred for the English?), I glance out of the single, grimy window, I notice the wind has dropped dramatically, leaving in its wake a stillness that seems unreal, almost dreamlike. Very little is moving out there. The only evidence that I'm not gazing at a photograph or a matte painting, the kind they use on all those low-grade B movies when the budget doesn't even stretch to cover the cost of on-location shooting, is the thin, wispy woodsmoke spiralling above the treetops and the cries of a v-formation of southward-bound Canadian Geese, their song the soundtrack of incurable loneliness.

I'm just about to suggest we leave the building when someone, Simon, I think it was, suddenly exclaimed, 'Hang on a minute. Take a look at this!'

I turn to see where he's pointing, and at first I'm unable to make out much of anything on the dust-covered floor. Gradually however, I'm able to discern a crudely-drawn circle surrounded by vague symbols, several of which clearly resembles writing in a foreign language.

As someone who has slightly more than a passing interest in occult matters, I think perhaps I recognise some of the words as being Latin or Hebraic, and like a birdwatcher who strongly suspects he has caught a glimpse of a particularly rare species, I make a mental note to check up and confirm their identity and their meaning when I get home.

There are more scribblings on the walls and all along the oak beams that criss-cross the ceiling; a heady mixture of the exotic and the entirely unintelligible. And here...looking as out of place as a string of Christmas tinsel blowing across some sun-drenched beach, is a sentence in plain English:

DO WHAT THOU WILT SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW

Painted in a rusty shade of red...the colour of dried blood...there is something chilling about that seemingly innocuous phrase. Chilling, and at the same time somehow familiar...

At the time though, I can't quite recall where I've heard it before. It lies in the brink of recall, like a half-remembered upon waking.

And then, one of my companions, Simon Norris, I think it was, discovers the charred remains of animal bones stacked in the far corner of the room. And resting upon a shelf cluttered with discarded beer cans and several yellow-stained rags, is the clean-picked skull of some horned creature, a goat most likely. A used condom, nestles beneath the ridge of its teeth and its depthless hollow eyes seem to regard me with the type of black empty madness that one presumes exists beyond the rim of the universe.

The sight of this, more than anything, sends a sensation of prickling horror travelling up and down my spine.

A sense of Evil, intangible, yet nonetheless *real*, grows and becomes so overpowering that we each turn and leave by the same unspoken consent with which we'd entered.

Though a whole lot quicker!!!

The afternoon was wearing on. It had been our intention to travel to Fort Augustus and stock up with some provisions for the remainder of the holiday. I tell myself that this alone is the reason for my impatience to be away from this place, and I successfully close my ears to the voice that pops up in my head to remind me; '*We lie best when we lie to ourselves.*'

We clamber back into the car, Simon guns the engine and prepares to steer the car out of lay-by in which he'd parked and back onto the road.

We breathe a collective sigh of relief. Like the song says, '*We're on the move!*'

And then, I suddenly remember where I'd seen those words written in (dried blood) red paint on the walls of that Godforsaken cottage...

DO WHAT THOU WILT SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW

I remember.

And in truth, had I ever really forgotten?

Four

The Civic Centre Library situated on the outskirts of Bebington Village, has always been a favourite haunt of mine. It often seems I spent half my childhood and nearly *all* my teenage years with my head buried in a rollicking good novel, (I had a particular fondness for the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, the wonderfully scary ghost stories of M.R. James and the crime thrillers of Raymond Chandler, but I'd read just anything, if the story grabbed me), leafing through the piles of old magazines or browsing amongst the reams of dusty volumes that lined the walls of the reference section located on the library's second floor.

I loved the Reference Room, the best.

It was like a tiny world of its own peopled by a race that knew exactly what was expected of them of precisely what their place was in the grand scheme of things. On any given day, (except on Wednesdays and public holidays when the building was closed) you could ascend the stairs, take a seat at one of the large, plastic-topped desks and pretend to read whilst really glancing about you at the timeworn habits and rituals of the inhabitants.

There'd be a group of college students or sixth-formers, their foreheads creased in concentration as they pored over massive tomes dealing with the Franco-Prussian War, or Advanced Mathematics. The desk opposite would be occupied by several schoolkids, more often than not tittering over the pictures of human genitalia in the biology encyclopaedia's, or else trying to cough loudly to cover their ripping out of portraits of Eminem or Kylie Minogue. There'd be groups of old men rustling their newspapers pointedly in gestures of mild annoyance, courting couples who gazed lovingly into each others eyes over the tops of a stack of 'NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICS,' and a young female librarian, her tight blouse and mini-skirt accentuating her hour-glass figure, driving both the adolescents and the old men to distraction.

And presiding over all, the dread-inducing form of the Head Librarian...A large, grim-faced woman with a spiteful, kid-hating attitude that would put the Witch in 'HANSEL AND GRETEL' to shame. She sits at the head of the room, peering out at her 'domain' with an expression on her face that simply demands that those assembled behave themselves.

At the front of her desk is a laminated placard inscribed with the words;

This Is the Public Reference Floor.

People come here to study. All are welcome, but please remember these simple rules:

1: No books make be taken from this floor for ANY reason!

2: People caught defacing or damaging books WILL be prosecuted!

3: In a library, silence is more than a virtue, it's an absolute necessity!!!

Thank you for your cooperation.

Have a nice day!!!

Her name may or may not be Mona. The kids all called her that, (though never to her face),and the way she was always complaining and well...*moaning*, meant that a name was never more appropriate. But woe betide the unfortunate who was caught breaking any of Three Commandments According To Mona. I've seen grown men cower in the face of her wrath. She hands out her reprimands with all the aplomb of a person who has spent a lifetime joyfully inflicting misery and watching others bend before her will.

But still, in spite of Mona, or maybe in some strange way *because* of her, I loved the place.

And I regret deeply the fact that I hardly ever seem to have the chance to go there any more. Maybe I'll make a point of dropping in there this weekend. Maybe. If Liverpool FC aren't at home. Or I haven't got a mobile disco to set up. Or an article for the magazine to write. Or a garden fence to paint. Or...Or..

Myabe.

Anyway, it was on a damp and misty afternoon in late November, 1980, the day I first came across the words that would return to haunt me 12 years or so down the path of my life. I remember the world beyond the round windows (most of them decorated with multi-coloured cardboard leaves, drawn and pasted on by children) looked grey and distant. The library was lit by soft, diffused lighting and I was struck with the feeling that those passing by outside might be glancing up at the building with the same expression on their face as that of a weary traveller lost on the moors who, after countless hours of aimless wandering, suddenly spies the welcoming glow pouring from the windows of a farmhouse. And perhaps, thinking these thoughts, the passers-by might add a spring to their step in their hurry to get home a little faster.

I was idly leafing through a book by Dennis Wheatley called 'THE DEVIL AND ALL HIS WORKS,' when I came across a section dealing with modern-day Satanists and Black Magicians. Amongst the lurid pictures of Witch's Sabbats and strange, arcane rituals, was a black and white portrait of a curious, bald-headed man wearing an enigmatic expression and with intense, almost hypnotic eyes. He seemed to be neither smiling nor frowning. He was ordinary-looking yet at the same time possessed of a striking charisma. He was of indeterminate age, although the lines on his face seemed to indicate that too much emotional voltage had been running behind the inscrutable countenance for too long a time.

The caption beneath the photograph had said simply; '*Aleister Crowley: The self-styled Great Beast 666. Raised by devoutly religious parents, he rebelled to become one of the most notorious black magicians in recent times. A former member of the Golden Dawn, he was reviled by the popular press who labelled him 'The Wickedest Man In The World.'*

His most famous edict was: 'Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be The Whole Of The Law.'

My interest aroused, I'd read the whole piece and spent the remainder of that day gleaning all I could about this mysterious figure, Crowley, though in truth this didn't actually amount to a great deal. Just a tantalisingly brief synopsis of his life and times and some of the more sensational newsworthy events that had contributed to his notoriety.

And something else...

Something that had all but leapt off the page amidst the references to the Abbey at Thelema, the famous '*IO to Pan*,' and his many run-ins with McGregor Mathers (a fellow member of The Golden Dawn).

It was simply this: Aleister Crowley had once lived in a remote hideaway, deep in the Highlands of Scotland. He resided, for quite some time, in a secluded mansion screened from the roadside by a thick canopy of trees.

It's a house (to paraphrase Shirley Jackson) that has stood for a hundred years and may stand for a hundred more.

A house that overlooks an ancient clan burial ground.

Boleskine Burial Ground on the banks of Loch Ness...

Five

Almost from the second that I remembered the origin of the jagged scribbling on the walls of that ramshackle cottage, and informed everybody else in the car pulling away from Boleskine, I just knew there was no way we would be able to simply drive off without affording ourselves a brief glimpse of Crowley's residence. The long journey back home to Merseyside would be even less bearable if we missed the opportunity to snap a few pictures of Boleskine House and scare ourselves silly during the dark nights leading up to Halloween, passing the photo's round and swapping true-life horror stories at a beer-laden table in 'The Bridge Inn,' while a bonfire blazed away outside and the rich smell of baked potatoes and roasted chestnuts filled the chilled October air.

Our curiosity chased our fears, and by the time Simon began reversing the car back to the lay-by, being afraid was quite the furthest thing from my mind. Once more we emerge from the car and begin looking about us with renewed excitement.

Almost from the beginning, however, it is clear that the house is not going to be easy to find. Even the most cursory of glances is enough to convince us all that unpalatable fact. There is only one building (aside from that damned graveyard keeper's hut, of course) visible on the road, and though we race towards it expectantly, we see almost immediately that it's nothing other than a small cottage inhabited, judging from the 'Range Rover' parked in the driveway, a well-to-do family. There's a child's tricycle lying on its side beneath the front window and a 'Barbie Doll,' naked and minus an arm is propped up drunkenly against an apple tree. It's abundantly clear that this is not the place we are looking for.

Our Grant, ever the practical one, suggests we knock and ask to see if they know the location of Boleskine House. If the occupants have lived here for any length of time, it's a fair bet they'll know right enough. We unlatch the gate, swing it open and our stopped in our tracks by the sound of a woman's voice calling to us from just down the road.

A middle-aged lady is making her way towards us, dressed in wellies, jeans and an all-weather anorak with the hood pulled up.

'Excuse me,' she says in clipped tones, and without a trace of a Scottish accent. 'Who does that car belong to, parked in that lay-by over there?'

Before any of us can answer, she speaks again, her hands on her hips, the gesture of someone just spoiling for an argument. I can only just about make out her face, obscured as it is by the hood, but for one crazy moment I'm convinced that standing here before me is ol Mona herself. The head librarian from the Civic Centre, come to decree a set of *new* Commandments:

1: Please do not park on the B roads around Loch Ness

2: Any trespassers found on the grounds of local residents will be sacrificed to some obscure Demonic entity.

3: Around the former home of Mr Aleister Crowley Esq, silence is more than a virtue, it's a

necessity. If you speak too loudly, you'll likely wake the dead!!!

Thank you for your cooperation

Have a nice day!!!

'Will one of you kindly move the vehicle. It's causing an obstruction and there's a Sunday School bus due this way any moment now!'

'Alright, missus, keep yer hair on,' Our Kid replied quickly. 'We won't be a minute.' Seeing she was somewhat placated, if not completely satisfied with this response, seized the opportunity by adding, 'Erm, we heard a fella named Aleister Crowley used to live round here. I don't suppose yer'd know if his old house is still standing, and if it is, where we can find it, would yer?'

The second the words left his mouth the woman's expression of haughty intolerance changed to one of outright suspicion and hostility. And as people will do when they're momentarily caught off-guard, she answered the query with a couple of questions of her own.

'Why do *you* want to know? We have more than enough weirdo's hanging around here as it is. Why on earth should I encourage others now, hmmm?'

'What do you mean "weirdo's" ? I jumped in. 'You mean Satanists? Black Magicians? Devil Worshipers?'

'I mean *weirdo's!!!*' she repeated, like a teacher explaining a simple math problem to a backward pupil. 'I'm referring to people, and I use the term loosely, who come up here to plague us with their endless questions, their ceaseless trampling on other people's property, their constant vandalism of yonder Burial Ground and their pathetic little attempts at what they doubtless deem to be acts of homage, such as dancing round naked in the fields at midnight, sacrificing an animal or two...or dressing up in a monk's cowl and sleeping on the very doorstep of Boleskine House...'

She caught herself, but too late. The confirmation that we sought, that Boleskine House did indeed still stand, had been unwittingly provided (except, with the benefit of hindsight, I'm not at all sure there was anything 'unwitting' about that 'slip of the tongue.' Around Boleskine, things didn't seem to happen without a purpose...And its usually a less than wholesome one.

'Mona' made a show of shrugging her shoulders resignedly. 'Okay, so now you know. Crowley's house is around here, somewhere. But I'll be damned if I'm going to tell you its precise location. Now go and move your car like I told you. The school bus will be coming this way any moment now, and you're vehicle's causing an obstruction.'

And with that, she stormed off, leaving the five of us standing in the middle of the road, left speechless by her departing glance of withering contempt.

Stevie Gee eventually broke the spell. 'I suppose we'd better move the car like she says. We know the house is somewhere on this stretch of road, probably overlooking the Burial Ground, If the books you read are right, Lee. But we could spend the rest of the day traipsing up and down between here and Dores, and either break our necks in the woods or get run-over by a Sunday School Bus...'

He paused momentarily, his brow furrowed in obvious puzzlement. And I think we all realised

what he was going to say a milli-second or so before he actually said it.

'Hang on a sec. Today isn't Sunday. It's Monday. Bank Holiday Monday, to be exact. What the hell's that woman on about?'

And he was right, of course. It was indeed a Monday. We'd been so concerned with our questions regarding the house, we'd clean forgotten *what* day it was. It's a common enough thing. When you're on vacation, the passage of the days, so important during the working week, becomes meaningless, at least for as long as the fun and games can continue unabated.

But for a (to quote Tubbs 'n' Edward in the ever-excellent *LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN*,) local to forget. Now that wasn't quite so likely, was it. Not if she was in possession of her full quota of marbles, anyway. No. It was my guess that she was smart enough to calculate that as dumb tourists, we'd have almost certainly lost track of time. She'd just wanted rid of us as quickly and as painlessly as possible.

We turned around, each of us intending to let her know, in no uncertain terms, that she hadn't succeeded in fooling us, but when we turned to confront her the road was empty for as far as the eye could see. There were only the trees, their overhanging branches forming a natural green canopy that stretched away into the distance like the arched cloisters of some mighty cathedral.

'Where the hell did she go?' I asked, my voice sounding tiny in the caught-breath silence.

'Maybe there's a farmhouse just out of sight beyond those woods,' Richie offered. 'We just can't see it from here.'

'Yeah, that's likely it,' we muttered in unison.

'There could be a whole bunch of crofts and cottages just down the lane, there.'

'Oh aye. The owl biddy's probably watching us through her bedroom window, right now.'

'Is right, lad'

'Probably laughin' her socks off'

'What a conniving owl boot!'

And the fact is, looking at things from a cold, logical perspective, that was very likely the truth of it. She had almost certainly put on a bit more speed the second our backs were turned, and had scurried home. She'd then charged upstairs and pressed her nose against the window, anxious to keep an eye on us lest we set about disembowelling the local sheep with machetes so we could gorge ourselves on their blood...

That's the *logical* explanation of where she went...

But, we were so concerned with finding an answer to that question, we completely ignored a query that was even more relevant; Bearing in mind that we'd just travelled up from the village of Dores, a good three miles distant (and the direction from which she'd first approached us) without seeing so much as a single habitation; so where the hell had she come *from*?

That's one of the things that keeps me awake some nights, afraid to sleep. Afraid to dream.

Another is something Steve said with typical black humour as we stood on the road, mentally debating our next move: 'Hey, I know where she lives! I know where she'd be right at home. In the

graveyard. In the graveyard with all the other dead things!!!'

Six

I sincerely doubt we'd have ever found the place, that day at least, if we hadn't have heard the faint strains of pop music floating on the air, just then.

We had been more than ready to abandon the search and continue with our journey to Fort Augustus. Hunting down the homes of the infamous could only hold your interest for so long.

It was Richie, I think, who heard the music first. He was certainly the first to recognise the tune.

'Hold on. There's a radio playing somewhere. It's Marvin Gaye innit?'

And so it was. Marvin's voice drifted toward us sounding disembodied and somehow lost, like the helpless cry of a child who can't find its mother.

'I bet you're wondering how I knew. 'Bout you plans to make me blue..'

With the unspoken consent that had been a regular feature of this never-ending day, we walk towards the source of the music spread across the road looking for all the world like a bunch of cowboys heading for the showdown gunfight at High Noon.

We still had our hearts set on seeing that house and it was possible that the owner of the radio might be able to help us in our quest.

It turned out we didn't have to walk very far. There was a small lodge a third of a mile or so from where we'd parked. When we'd passed it, a few hours earlier, it had appeared to be nothing more than a dilapidated shell, and so we hadn't slowed to take a closer look. But now, as we approached the building, we could see that there was a man in his late thirties, painting and decorating the front entrance. He was atop a set of ladders, paint brush in hand, whistling along to Mr Gaye, oblivious to all.

Once again, it was Grant who spoke in order to grab the man's attention.

'Excuse mate, have yer got any idea where Boleskine House is, please?'

The man looked up startled, and very nearly fell off his ladder. He took a good few seconds to regain his composure. When he eventually found his voice, his accent was immediately recognisable as purest Glaswegian.

'Well now, it could be that I do have a very good idea of where the house you're lookin' for lies. But before I decide whether I should tell yiz or not, let me ask youse a question; Why do yiz want tae know?'

Being familiar by now with this reluctance to reveal the location, we thought carefully before answering. We decided to play 'the dumb tourist,' out to take a few snaps of places of local interest (and was that really so far from the truth?). We must have come across as being fairly convincing because his face split into a grin as he said 'Och, why not. It cannae d'nae harm that I can see.'

Then he slapped his thigh as though he were about to recite the world's funniest gag. 'The thing is fella's, yiz gonna kick yerself's all the way back tae Liverpool when I tell yiz. This building here, is Boleskine *Lodge*. I'm the head groundkeeper, the summer help and the caretaker all rolled in tae one.

The path yiz see winding its merry way up the hill behind those gates over there... That driveway leads right up tae the yiz are lookin for; Boleskine House. But yiz cannae go that way. The man who owns it is a wee bit paranoid about security. He's had more than his fair share of nutcases hangin' around his front door. He keeps guard dogs. Big, mean black hounds that'd tear a man's arm off as soon as look at yiz. And it's all alarmed wi' the latest, high-tech surveillance equipment, too. So, I'm afraid yiz have had a wasted journey. Tough luck, lads!

Having imparted this information, he laughed so hard he nearly fell of his ladder again, and he was still braying like a donkey as we walked dejectedly back the way we had come. And for all I know, he's still there at this moment, holding on to his not inconsiderable belly, hee-hawing fit to bust at the hopeless endeavours of a bunch of pig-ignorant Scousers.

Seven

Luckily for us, that cackling Scot's low opinion of us actually worked in our favour, and once we were well out of sight, it was *our* turn to laugh loud and long.

He obviously didn't know who he'd been dealing with. Three members of our group, Stevie Gee, Grant and myself, were, from the age of 13, original founder members of *The New Ferry Ghost Club*, and as such, were adept at gaining admittance into reputedly haunted houses. (The thought that were likely committing burglary by doing so, never even crossed our minds. And I don't suppose it would have deterred us any, even it by chance it had. We didn't see ourselves as criminals. We were honest-to-God paranormal investigator's).

In the Summer of 1992, I was sure as eggs no longer a kid, secure in the naïve belief that latter-day Professor Van Helsing's are not sent to prison for long periods of time if they're caught breaking into other people's property. I was old enough to know better (or at least I *think* I was). But even if we couldn't actually get inside the place and take a look around, nothing was going to stop us sneaking a glimpse and a couple of photographs of the *outside*...

We knew the location. Now all we had to do was find an alternative route to the driveway, and in the end the answer proved to be just as plain as day. The house was obviously hidden from the road, just like the books had said, by a screen of gently rolling hills and thick clumps of fir trees. All we had to do was climb over a wire fence that ringed the adjoining field, clamber up the steep hill, and look down on the front of the house.

And with excitement and anticipation once more at a peak, we set out to do precisely that.

EIGHT



I suppose, after all we'd been through, the actual viewing of Boleskine House was always going to be something of an anti-climax. Just as when we'd entered the top-floor of that graveyard-keeper's cottage, in what had by now seemed an age ago, I'm not quite sure what I'd expected to see, but can't help feeling that perverse sense of disappointment wash over me like when you're burning up on some tropical beach and the large, white-capped wave heading your way that you hope will help cool you down, turns out to be horribly lukewarm.

The house is every bit as huge as enormous as I'd anticipated it would be. And I suppose, seen from a different angle, late at night, with its many windows filled with a sickly light, it may indeed appear suitably ominous.

But as you can see for yourselves, the briefest study of the photo reproduced above in glorious monochrome, could not hold a single, spluttering candle to either the entirely fictional abodes of Evil (Shirley Jackson's *Hill House*,

where whatever walked, walked alone, or William Castle's *HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL*, to name but two) or the allegedly genuine (Borley Rectory, or 112, Ocean Avenue, Amityville, for example). It looks so *ordinary*.

We stand there for what seems like the longest time, and I let my thoughts wander along with my gaze.

I looked back towards the Burial Ground, now several hundred feet below us, and then out across the Loch...And in the midst of that 'semi-permanent twilight,' with the dark clouds hanging so low they seemed about set to swoop down and kiss the diseased earth, I find it easy to imagine how it might have been here in some dim and distant time before....Imagine and wonder if there had truly *ever* been a time when this place may have been 'spiritually clean' 'Elemental-free.' Held sacred And where the only shadows cast were the natural consequence of cheery sunlight....

Nine

Boleskine: Before The Fall

The height of springtime.

A crisp, fresh Sunday morning.

The skies are clear and eye-wateringly bright, and sun-rays dart off the surface of the Loch, sparkling like a promise.

Paddle steamers cruise the shimmering waters and groups of well-to-do tourists sit on the banks sipping their iced tea or tucking into picnic lunches. Everything is right with the world. God is over all.

And within the lovingly-tended plot that marks the final resting place of members of the Clan Fraser, families file happily into the church. The tiny, rough-hewn building's stark simplicity makes it no less welcoming. A minister with a kind, grandfatherly face stands at the Lych Gate, shaking hands with each and every one of his parishioners. Giggling young girls in pigtailed and summer-white dresses. Sullen boys in stiffly starched shirts. The adults, conservative and God-fearing, who take their seats staring intently at the church's only decoration: the two rows of stained glass windows. Even the smallest child looks upon these colourful works of art with something approaching religious awe

And perhaps, although they are very probably not aware of it, something else, too. Those intricate depictions of the Eternal Struggle Between The Forces Of Good and Evil: (The Temptation Of St Anthony, The Revolt of the Fallen Angels. St Michael Defeating the Dragon), may have acted as a reminder of something long since forgotten.

A whispered hint of something that was given form in the dreams of the even the most pious during the dark watches of the night.

Confirmation of their ancestor's knowledge that there exists the very finest of lines between a land that is blessed and a land that is cursed, and while it was likely certain places were simply born bad, perhaps with the passing of time they could be

cleansed, reclaimed, Exorcised, if you will, by the thoughts and deeds of mortal men.

Perhaps Boleskine, once damned, was such a place.

And, if that were so, it followed that the faithful would do well to remain vigilant. Any lowering of their guard. One failure to recognise Evil sneaking into their midst. One careless acceptance of a seemingly well-intentioned stranger...Then the delicate balance could be tipped in favour of the Serpent of Lies. God, weeping would turn his back upon the once-faithful. And the Dragon would emerge from the Pit, triumphant, the shadows it cast would cover the land like a death shroud.

And yet, despite the oft-repeated warnings, it came to pass that those who had been appointed 'Brotherhood of The Watch' proved negligent in the task entrusted to them. And when the inevitable time of reckoning came round, and a smiling, bald-headed man had suddenly appeared amongst them, twirling a silver-tipped cane like a harmless children's magician, they had forgotten the wisdom of the village elders.

And of they hadn't exactly welcomed him with open arms, they had at least been far too willing to accept him at face value.

And the stranger, whose benign features were constantly lit by a grin that never touched his eyes, had been left to his own devices...Which was precisely what he'd wanted all along, of course.

Evil, the elders had always taught, came in many guises, more often than not pleasant or at worst innocuous-seeming. It seeks a safe place, out of sight and out of mind, where it can rest and gather strength. And once it obtains a foothold, it breeds like the most virulent strain of a killer disease. Cancer, say. Or bubonic plague. It has a voracious appetite and it eats its way through everything, starting with all you've ever cherished and held dear to your heart together with all the things you'd long since taken for granted. And it ends with the tragic, irreversible loss of innocence.

And the most terrible thing of all is that you don't even notice it happening...Until it's far too late. The changes are as imperceptible as the movement of a clock hand, but every bit as inexorable as the passing of time.

Perhaps a few of the older generation, the elders, would have perceived the differences. Fewer visitors to the area. A drop in the number of souvenir-hunting tourists with bulging purse-strings. Less and less guests at the Foyers Hotel.

And then, a gradual souring of the atmosphere. People finding excuses not to go to church. Doors once permanently open to neighbours, bolted firmly shut. Mistrust and suspicion tearing long-standing friendships asunder. An increase in family feuds. Sudden and unexplained deaths among prominent local people.

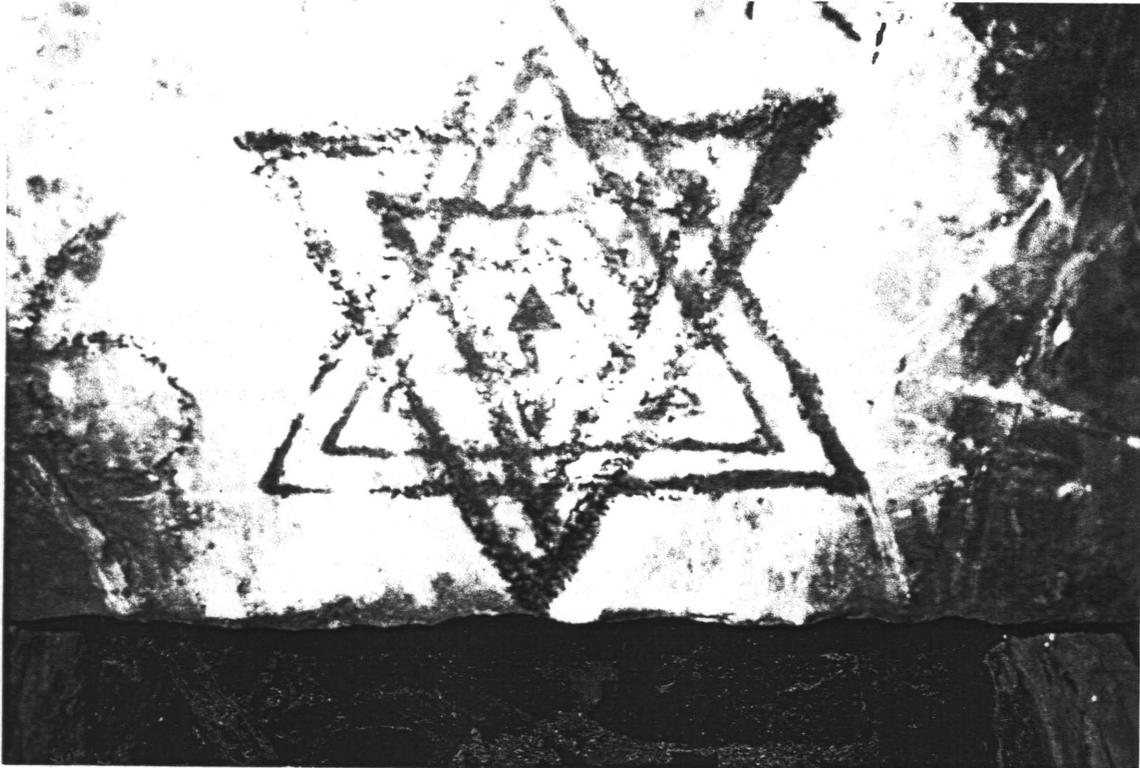
And stories of the man who owned the house on the hill overlooking their church. Strange tales involving weird rituals and disappearing children, multicoloured lights flashing in the Highland skies...

And of things seen on the road as day closed down.

Terrible things.

*A coffin lying in the road, something grey and shapeless sitting hunched atop it.
The spirits of the restless dead shuffling along, their faces rotted, their bodies decayed, their blankly staring eyes
as cold and unfeeling as a dead fish on a slab.
A crawling eye that pulsates like a grotesque paper bag.
A nameless batrachian horror seen in the woods by schoolchildren bunking off Sunday School.
The church soon fell into a state of disrepair and the Burial Ground became disused.
The place became shunned.
The place became cursed.
The place became a SHADOWLAND*

TEN



(Above): A magickal symbol adorning the walls of the deserted graveyard keeper's hut in the Boleskine Burial Ground

I shivered and decided there and then that my curiosity had been well and truly sated. It really was time to get moving. A shopping expedition had suddenly never seemed so enticing.

We clambered back down the hill, careful not to slip on the still-wet grass and vaulted over the wire fence. The car was parked a little farther up the road and we tiredly began making our way towards it.

We were perhaps a little less than a hundred yards shy of Simon's Rover when another car came towards us. It gave us all a start because it had been the first vehicle we'd encountered since arriving at Boleskine. We moved to the side of the road, almost having to lean on the wall of the Burial Ground in order to let the car pass, and as it did so, I felt a vague sense of unease. I could see that there were two people in the car. One was an ordinary-looking man staring straight ahead, as though concentrating intently on the road ahead of him. The other appeared to be a nun. Certainly she was wearing a wimple and I caught sight of her face as she turned toward us and smiled. The window on her side was half-open, and her outfit was blowing in the breeze that had suddenly sprung up. She smiled and I almost smiled back, but then the smile became a sickly, lopsided grin that I didn't care for one little bit...

I looked away quickly, glancing at the others to see if they'd seen, and judging by their expressions, they had indeed. There was something not quite right about that couple, (just as there been something indefinably odd about the middle-aged woman who had told us to move the car an hour or so earlier), but I was damned if I was going to dwell on what it was that made them different in this of all places.

The car passed, and we jogged the last few feet to the Rover, and not one of us said a word.

Simon gunned the ignition.

We began to drive away in silence

I looked back at the Burial Ground one final time. I couldn't resist. Despite the sick knot of fear twisting away in the pit of my stomach.

And I immediately wished I hadn't.

I saw, or thought I saw, a group of people standing in the middle of the graveyard.

Three people, to be precise.

A woman whose features were obscured by the hood of her anorak.

An ordinary man who just stared sightlessly ahead. And a nun, her habit blowing about her like a black sail.

And all three of them were grinning.

I looked again, and saw only three lumbering gravestones.....

Lee Walker 8th April, 1996

(Updated: 30th January, 2002)

The 'Great Beast' Of Boleskine

Not long after I originally put the finishing touches to the above article, I was startled to stumble upon an intriguing piece in Stuart Gordon's excellent '*BOOK OF CURSES*' (Headline 1994). I was also a trifle amazed, because I hadn't until the point come across any worthwhile reference to a site that I believe to be worthy of serious investigation.

Amidst the references to the Reverend Donald Omand, and his contention that the Loch Ness Monster is not a real (in the accepted sense of the word) *physical* animal, but a '*malignant phantom from a prehistoric past, Evil and hateful, leaving witnesses paralysed with fear, or speaking of an abomination,*' is the following tale.

The good Reverend had attempted to carry out an Exorcism of the Loch, and together with his companion, the well-known paranormal researcher Ted Holiday, hired a boat in order to perform the ritual.

Three days later, at a place called Strone, the Lochside house where they had been staying, there occurred what was described as '*an inexplicable manifestation.*' At the time, Omand was warning Holiday not to approach an alleged UFO landing site near the village of Foyers, not far from Boleskine House. (Incidentally, Gordon alleges at this point that sometime in 1969, Boleskine Burial Ground had been visited by American tourists who had found, hidden under a grave-slab, a tapestry embroidered with humped, worm-like creatures, wrapped around a conch shell that made a braying sound when blown).

It was as Omand's hostess, a Mrs Cary, was also warning Holiday against heading for the UFO site that there was a sudden '*tremendous rushing sound like a tornado outside the window.*'

The garden was suddenly filled with '*indefinable frantic movement.*' There were thuds, as if heavy objects were striking the wall, and seen through the window was what looked like '*a pyramid-shaped column of blackish smoke revolving in a frenzy.*'

Scared out of her wits, Mrs Cary screamed, but apparently her husband, who was present throughout, failed to see or hear anything out of the ordinary.

Eventually, the disturbance, whatever it was, ceased, and Mrs Cary then described seeing '*a white circle of light on Ted Holiday's forehead...I thought*

the house had been struck by lightning with this light shooting across the room.'

Holiday was moved to comment that the beam of light, of which he'd remained blissfully unaware, had struck the exact same spot on his forehead where Rev Oman had earlier crossed with Holy Water.

The very next morning, over the road atop a slope heading down to Loch Ness, Holiday reportedly spotted a strange man, dressed entirely in black. His back was to the Loch, and he was glaring malevolently at Ted. He seemed to be wearing black leather or plastic gloves, a helmet, a mask and goggles (*sounds like a classic description of Spring-Heeled Jack, to me!*). Displaying a remarkable degree of courage, Ted approached the man, and as he drew close to him he was disturbed to see that there appeared to be no eyes behind the lenses and that he could discern no sound of any breathing. Holiday pretended to be gazing out across the Loch, then began to turn. As he did so, he heard an odd whistling sound and swung right round to find that the ominous-looking figure had disappeared without a trace.

Understandably, Ted kept this experience to himself for a period of several months. Not even the good Reverend was aware of what had reportedly transpired. Ormand, not long after the attempted Exorcism, seemed more preoccupied with the fact that he believed there would be no more manifestations around the house, but that the Monster would continue to be seen. However, long-standing astral forms are apparently very difficult to dissolve. The original Exorcism would therefore require to be reinforced on many further occasions in the future.

A year later, Holiday returned to Loch Ness, only to be struck down by a heart attack on the very spot where he had encountered the enigmatic Man-In-Black.

Five years later, a second heart attack killed him, aged 58.

*** And only a few weeks after reading this, I was even further surprised to receive the following press release, very kindly sent to me by paranormal investigator and author, Rita Gould.

In the middle of February, 1997, plans were well under way to begin restoration work on Boleskine House...

The clipping came in the form of a '*chilling warning given by Michael Dent, former buddy of millionaire pop star Jimmy Page, and custodian of the house for 20 years.*'

On the 50th anniversary of Aleister Crowley's death, Malcolm was publicly urging Dingwall architect Sandy Gracie, who was set to restore the North Wing of the 18th century mansion to get the job done as quickly as possible or to face the consequences.

Dent was, according to the report, a 6ft 3inch streetwise Londoner when he arrived in the sleepy hamlet of Foyers. Locals were, by this time, shunning Boleskine after dark, and although at first, Dent was sceptical of the tales he caught around the corner of whispered conversations, he gradually came to believe there may be something to the stories, after all.

'I have witnessed what can happen,' he said. 'My former wife and I got our ears, and eyes opened over the time we spent at Boleskine. Most of the oddities occurred during upheavals in the house. I am not talking about wallpapering, but structural alterations. Any time there was anything major in hand, it was almost as though the house didn't like it. If we didn't get on with the job and get it finished something would let us know about it. It was as though a reminder to get on with the job quickly and get the job over with. Once the work was finished, the house would settle down.'



A further disturbance occurred when Malcolm, who now makes hand-crafted furniture in a place called Embo, was getting ready to return to Boleskine about six years ago, and again, 'something' made itself known.

'There had been an upheaval getting the house ready for viewing, and I started moving some of my possessions. I was outside at the time when, without warning, and in what I can only describe as a great, booming voice, something shouted; **WHAT ARE YOU DOING?**'

'When I got back inside the house, I was as white as a sheet. That little experience certainly scared me!!!'

Another more visual experience occurred when Malcolm and his friends were discussing the occult with a few wee drams having been downed.

'We were discussing the house, Crowley, and what had happened at Boleskine, and had all initially expressed contrary views.

'As the evening wore on, we eventually found ourselves in agreement and there was a moment's eerie silence. At that point, something happened that, looking back, was a very emphatic exclamation mark! A small porcelain figure of the Devil rose off the mantelpiece to the ceiling, then smashed into smithereens in the fireplace.

The most overtly horrific experience of all was actually something Malcolm heard but was too terrified to open the door to.

'I was awakened in the wee small hours...and just knew something was wrong.

'I was quite literally petrified.

'Something was snorting, snuffling and banging. It sounded like a some sort of huge beast.

'I had this clear picture in my mind of what the creature looked like, but there was no way I was gonna open that door and to take a look. I had a knife on the bedside table and I opened the blade and just sat there. The blade was so small it wouldn't have done any good, but I was so frightened that I had to have something to hang on to.

'The noise went on for some time, but even when it stopped, I still could not move. I sat on the bed for hours, and, even when daylight finally came, it took lots of courage to open that door. Whatever was there, I have no doubt, was pure Evil.'

Malcolm added that he was glad that the old house had been taken on and was now being treated as a home.

'I had quite a few drawings of what Boleskine House looked like back in the Twenties.

'If Sandy, the architect, wants any help, I will be only too happy to give it.'

But it seems Sandy, who has been working on the house for 20-odd years on and off, claims that he wasn't worried about the house's reputation.

'The North Wing was destroyed by fire and we are rebuilding what was there so that the house will be as it was,' he told reporters.

'We are building up one room and doing re-roofing work. The latest work will go ahead as soon as we get listed building planning consent. I have been working at the on and off since Jimmy Page had it, 20 years ago. I'm afraid I can't say I have personally seen or heard anything strange over the years I have been involved with the house.

'The latest owners, the MacGillivray's are basically taking on the work Jimmy Page started.'

We wonder if Sandy would be quite so dismissive of the stories about the house if he heard something on the other side of a closed door, snorting, snuffling and banging...Sounding like a huge beast trying to get in???

8th February, 1997 Boleskine, Foyers, Loch Ness
THE HIGHLAND NEWS.

*** And finally, for this issue at least, a couple of Halloween's ago, news hummed down the wires from Loch Ness that a man and a woman had stumbled across what they described as a 'Devil worship altar' whilst walking their dog.

Jeanette Robertson, 33, of Abriachan, and her partner, Neil Borland, 34, both claim that their hair stood on end when they examined a large triangular artifact, created entirely from stones. Its internal decorations included standing stones situated at each corner and feathers torn out of the bodies of unfortunate birds were found beneath one of the central stones.

One side of the triangle appeared to be pointing across the Loch at Boleskine House on the opposite shore.

Mr Borland, an electrician, told reporters; 'Almost immediately we made the connection between the apparent altar and Boleskine House on the other side of the Loch.

'The large stone just outside the triangle is presumably where someone sat and looked into the triangle's interior design. It is all fairly meticulous and must have involved quite a bit of work.'

Mrs Robertson was moved to add; *'It was very worrying and suspicious, giving all the appearance of Devil worship. I have not seen anything like it before.'*

'I go there for walks with our three children and the dog, so Neil and I destroyed the triangle, scattering the stones about. We do not want people like that around here.'

'It was worrying finding the feathers torn out of the bird's bodies placed under the stone.'

'It is private land and we have asked Highland Council to take down its sign indicating the way to the old pier, in case the place attracts more weirdos.'

Apparently unconcerned about the couple's pleas that the area should remain essentially free of (ahem) 'weirdos,' *THE INVERNESS COURIER* promptly gave directions as to how to gain access to the pier: You simply make your way along a narrow, tree-lined track from the Inverness-Fort William Road.

31st October, 2000 Abriachan *'THE INVERNESS COURIER'*

Creatures From The Outer Edge

The Top Ten Cryptozoological Stories of 2001

One of this writer's favourite authors on the subject of Alien Animals, is Loren Coleman. A dedicated researcher who not only writes excellent books and magazine articles on all aspects of this fascinating subject, but actually travels the world to carry out thorough, on-the-spot investigations.

He is held in deservedly high regard throughout the Fortean world, and so it's with little reservation that we re-print here the highlights of Loren's Personal Top Ten Alien Animal Stories for last year...

Images Of The Skunk Ape...

In February of last year, new photographs emerged of the Bigfoot-type creature rumoured to haunt the remote areas of western Florida, known, due to the distinctive odour it reportedly emits, as The Skunk Ape.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Department were the first to receive the pictures from an unidentified elderly woman who reckons that she took them near Myakka State Park, in December, 2000.

According to Loren, who has seen the original snaps firsthand, the photos appear to show 'a large, upright, dark orang-utan-like animal among

the palmettos, showing eye-shine, and typical anthropoid behaviour of fright due to the woman's flash camera.

'The woman and her husband had found the creature stealing fruit off from their back porch over a period of three nights. The woman decided to take pictures to get law enforcement assistance in dealing with their "problem."

And it wasn't only the anonymous couple who were being visited by this mysterious entity. Other residents, too, also claimed they had been 'bothered' by anthropoid-like animals.

Florida has been 'home' to this creature for at least the past 60 years, if the eyewitness reports from across the county are to be afforded any degree of credence.

Frustratingly, at the time of writing, investigations into the authenticity of the latest photographs were still on-going.

At the risk of sounding like a *CNN* anchor-man, 'watch this space for any further developments.'

...and Footprints Of The Sasquatch

During the early June of last year, state officials in northern Ontario, were busy investigating reports that Bigfoot had been sighted and had left a trail of clearly discernible footprints.

Upon arriving at the scene of the most recent BHM accounts, a set of tracks 35 centimetres long and 12 centimetres wide were duly discovered crossing the Weenusk First Nation Reserve along the south shore of Hudson's Bay, 1,600 kilometres north of Toronto.

One of the trackers, the appropriately-named Abraham Hunter, was quoted as saying; *'It is definitely not the tracks of a bear. I looked at them and they were six feet apart, walking. It's big and shaped like a human footprint, and further analysis will be required to determine its origin.'*

Interestingly enough, on June 14th, mere days after the discovery of the unusual tracks, a principal Ministry of Natural Resources officer examining a series of old radar stations uncovered a strange track 150 kilometres east of the original prints, in a remote area of Polar Bear Provincial Park.

'I was walking through the bush and I looked down and saw this footprint.' Rick Tapley, an MNR officer with 31 years experience, told reporters.

'I couldn't explain what it was. I naturally thought it might be Bigfoot because of the shape of it.'

'Orang Pendek Hair' Discovered

During late October, 2001, a team of British amateur explorers reportedly stumbled upon evidence of the Orang-Pendek, Indonesia's version of Bigfoot.

Early analysis showed that samples of hair and footprints taken on the team's trip to the depths of the jungle does not appear to come from any known primate in the region.

At the time of writing, clumps of the hair were undergoing DNA analysis in Oxford, to clarify the

genetic affinities of the Orang-Pendek, which is reputed to look like an upright, five foot tall ape. Adam Davies, an Internet project manager from Manchester, led the expedition to the mountain rainforest near Gunung Kerinci, in Western Sumatra. *'We are getting indications from the scientists that we may be on to something, and I have no doubt myself that this creature exists.'* he was quoted as saying. *'We heard its calls and we've discovered a trail that can't be explained by anything else.'*

The Giant Snake Of Moccasin Creek

Sometime between the high-summer dates of July 24th-26th, Shirley Nikodym and Chris Heinz were enjoying a stroll near to a footy field on Melgaard Road, South Dakota, when they saw what appeared to be a huge snake poke its head out of the sparkling water of (the aptly-named) Moccasin Creek. Immediately upon setting eyes on the couple, the snake dived back beneath the surface and began swimming toward the shore, where they were stood. Predictably, and understandably, neither Shirley or Chris were brave enough to hang around to obtain a closer look, and they ran off before it could get too close.

Police and animal control officers were called to the scene, but as is so often the case with Alien Animals, no trace of the creature was found

The case does have at least one subsequent report to add credence to this most recent account. On July 31st, there was a call to the local police from the 1500 block of South Cochrane Street, describing an encounter with the same, or a similar giant snake in Moccasin Creek.

Despite a thorough search of the creek by police however, no trace of any snakes, giant or otherwise, was found.

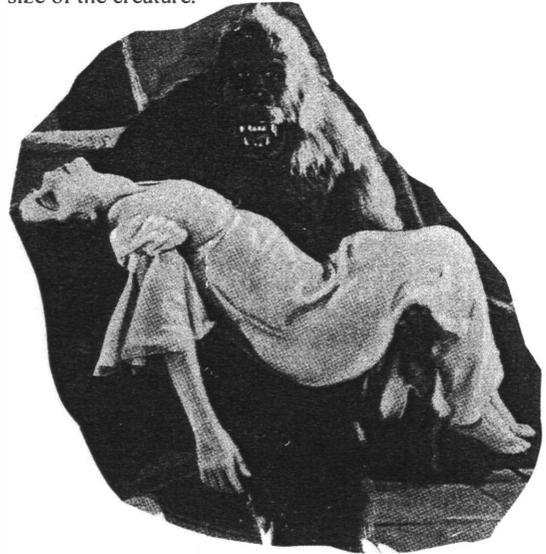
Giant Ape Sighted In New Hampshire

Meanwhile, last September, on the ninth day of that month to be precise, search parties were engaged in an ultimately fruitless hunt for a giant monkey spotted near Pleasant Street, and Kingston Road, Danville, New Hampshire.

During a two week period, at least ten monkey sightings were reported to local authorities. Danville Fire Chief David Kimball was amongst the first to sight the anomalous ape running across Kingston Road. Other witnesses, like Pleasant Street resident Vivian Wicker, 58, said she heard the monkey, or something equally strange, hollering outside her home.

'It wasn't a sound I had heard before,' she said, describing the noise as hooting or a strange howling sound, totally unlike a dog's. *'I heard the sound every couple of minutes.'*

The black monkey was reportedly eight feet long from his tail to his hands. Chief Kimball said that local residents were getting very nervous about the size of the creature.



On the Monday after the weekend of the local media attention and giant monkey searches, *NBC-TV News* dispatched a crew to Danville. The camera people and reporter spent time filming a human interest story for *'THE TODAY SHOW,'* but it never aired. The date for the scheduled screening was Tuesday....September 11th.

The Purple Kangaroo

In mid-October, Scientists in Australia claimed that a mysterious purple-coloured kangaroo, long thought to be a creature of legend, may actually exist.

A biologist named Le Souf claimed to have discovered the species in 1924, but zoologists remained highly sceptical. Researchers from Macquarrie University in Sydney, however, announced during 2001 that the wallaby does in fact exist and has purple around its neck and on its face. They have called it, with sparkling originality, the purple-necked rock wallaby.

It is not yet known how and why the purple pigment is produced, but it has been found to wash off in rain before reappearing.

Stubbornly sceptical Department of Biological Sciences researcher Dr Mark Eldridge told reporters; *'No, they can't have purple necks, they must be rubbing themselves on some rock and getting this funny colouration.'*

'Because it is secreted through the skin, once the animal is dead the pigment rapidly fades, so by the time Le Souf got the specimens back to Brisbane or Sydney from North Queensland, the colour had gone. It just looked like a very plain, normal - looking rock wallaby.'

Using genetic technology, the MacQuarrie University team found the animal was indeed an entirely new species.

New Species Of Whale Discovered

At the late autumn meeting of the Society of Marine Mammals in Vancouver, British Columbia,

it was announced that a new species of ziphiid or beaked whale had been identified from four incomplete specimens stranded on the east coast of the U.S.. The species is to be named Perrin's Beaked Whale (*Mesoplodon perinii*). In early December, Darren Naish, cryptozoologist and palaeobiologist at the University of Portsmouth, noted that this discovery, from the eastern USA, is quite astonishing. British marine biologist Charles Paxton, was moved to comment that there will likely be further new species of Ziphiid discovered in the near future. Also announced at the Vancouver conference, as many as twenty six additional new ziphiid species have been documented by molecular analysis, but as yet they are not completely known morphologically.

Coelacanths Spotted Again

A population of 'living fossils,' the celebrated Coelacanths (*Latimeria chalumnae*) thought to be extinct after officially dying out 70 million years ago, until re-discovered alive and well in 1938 near the Comoro Islands off Africa's southeast coast, were unexpectedly spotted again off South Africa's coast late in 2000.

They were in the news again in 2001, when during February, the biologist Philip Heemstra of the JLB Smith Institute of Ichthyology, with a preliminary budget of \$130,000, was searching for additional funds to study the new population with the help of a small submersible craft. During May, Pieter Venter headed a private diving expedition to find the South African Coelacanths, and then caught one of the elusive fish on film, broadcasting the footage on the Internet.

Then, surprisingly, the capture of Madagascar's fourth Coelacanth (nearly 200 had been found near the Comoros) occurred in mid-March, at a site north of Toliara. The fish was a female of almost five-and-a-half-feet long, according to Coelacanth researcher Andrew Cooke.

Later in 2001, Coelacanth 'experts' Hans Fricke and Raphael Plante published an article declaring that the supposed silver Coelacanth artefacts from Spain, believed to be over 200 years old and representing a new species of Coelacanth from living in the Gulf of Mexico, were neither old nor Mexican. New studies published in the August issue of 'Environmental Biology of Fishes' showed that these silver figurines were made much more recently, with the Comorian Coelacanth *Latimeria chalumnae* as a model.

The Kraken Wakes!

On December 21st, 2001, Michael Vecchione of the National Marine Fisheries Service and the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, described in the journal *SCIENCE*, a brand new species of giant squid that grows 23 feet long. Instead of having two arms and eight tentacles, this new squid has 10 appendages that all look alike.

This creature, which lives more than 3,000 feet below the surface of the ocean, has baffled scientists with its strange looks and weird behaviour. The squid have been spotted all over the world – in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian

Oceans – by undersea explorers using specially designed craft. 'These are a real mystery,' commented Vecchione. 'They behave strangely but they also look really weird.' Vecchione, who put together observations from several scientists working in various countries, said no one has captured a specimen off the anomalous squid as yet, so it has not been named.

'This is well beyond a new species. New species are a dime a dozen. This is fundamentally different. The really long skinny arms are so much longer than the squid's body.'

'We don't know of any cephalopod that has arms like that. The squid joins an array of unusual creatures being spotted for the first time as improved technology makes underwater exploration more common.'

'I think there are a lot of really strange things down there. Every time someone goes down there and takes a look they find something really strange. It's Eureka time.'

Third Elephant Species Discovered

After more than a hundred years of debate, definitive genetic studies showed in August 2001, that a third elephant species does exist. Jill Pecon-Slattery, a genetic researcher at the U.S. National Cancer Institute, said the difference between Africa's forest and grassland or savannah elephants are 'like the difference between the lion and the tiger. It is that large.'

The news means, along with the Indian Elephant, there are now three distinct species in the world. The forest elephant has been viewed as a subspecies of the African variety but was never considered different enough from the savannah elephant to be classified as a species in its own right. The forest variety is slightly smaller, has rounder ears and straighter, pinker tusks. It is found in the densely wooded areas of central West Africa. The grassland, or savannah, elephant has large ears, with ragged edges and curving tusks. The Asian Elephant has much smaller ears and is widely used as a domestic beast of burden in Asia.

Wild Asian Elephants today are rare. Pecon-Slattery's study, published in the journal 'SCIENCE,' recommended an immediate reclassification of the forest type as *Loxodonta cyclotis*.

'Thunderbird' Sighted Over Pennsylvania

On September 25th, 2001, eyewitness Mike Felice says he saw a giant bird flying over South Greensburg, Pennsylvania. In the aftermath of this sighting, researchers Stan Gordon and Craig Heinselman noted other local Thunderbird sightings had occurred in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.

Then at dawn on November 5th, a local resident out walking his dog, saw a giant bird-like creature, the size of an ultra light plane, flapping away, over a community centre in Bristol, Connecticut, USA.

THE DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN

Mothman Stalks Again

The recent release of *'THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES'* movie, (starring the permanently stoned-looking Richard Gere) has sparked a predictable spate of news clippings and magazine articles concerning the titular character, the vast majority of them adopting a golly-gosh-this-is-all-supposed-to-be-based-on-truth stance, (with the notable exception of the ever-excellent *'FORTEAN TIMES'*, of course). The basic facts behind the phenomena that reportedly plagued the little town of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, USA, back in November, 1967, should be familiar, by now, to just about anyone who has the slightest interest in such matters. But just in case...Here's a brief synopsis of the history of Mothman.



Although most Fortean agree that the Mothman scare was initiated with the now famous sightings on November 15th, 1967, two individual married couples were at what amounted to a local lover's lane on the outskirts of Point Pleasant, there may well have been a considerably earlier sighting in either 1960 or 61, when an unnamed woman saw a man-shaped figure standing in the middle of the road, when she was driving her father home one night along Route 2 in the Chief Cornstalk Hunting Grounds of West Virginia.

As the witnesses drew close to the grey figure, they could see that it was actually much larger than an ordinary man. The woman later reported what happened next:

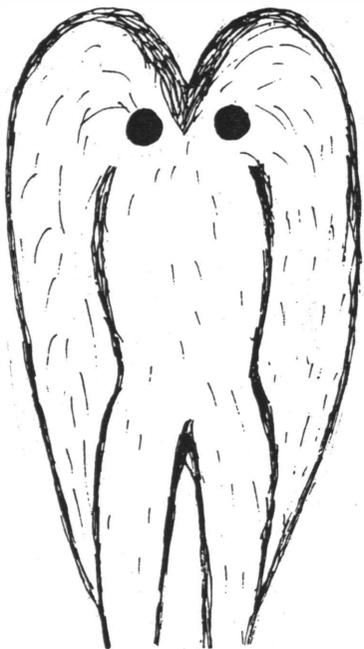
'A pair of wings unfolded from its back and they practically filled the whole road. It looked almost like a small airplane. Then it took off straight up...disappearing in out of sight in seconds. We were both terrified. I stepped on the gas and raced out of there. We talked it over and decided not to tell anybody about it. Who would believe us anyway?'

Well, Mr and Mrs Roger Scarberry, and Mr and Mrs Steve Mallette, for four.

Late on the night of November 15th, they were driving through the 'TNT area' the site of an old abandoned wartime explosives factory. As they passed an old generator plant, they saw in the pitch blackness, two bright red circles, which looked like a pair of glowing eyes. As the circles moved, the couples saw a man-shaped figure, between 6 and 7 feet tall, greyish in colour, and with big folded wings; it was shuffling along on two legs. It seemed to have no head and its eyes were situated in its breast. The creature came towards them, and Roger, who was driving, drove off at high speed, anxious to be as far away as possible from the thing. But they saw another creature, or a similar one, standing near th

road and as they passed it spread its bat-like wings and began to follow them. Despite the fact that they drove at speeds in excess of 100 mph, the 'thing' kept up with them easily enough, without once flapping its wings. Mrs Mallette later claimed she could distinctly hear it squeaking 'like a big mouse.'

When they eventually reached the safety of town, the entity flew off and the relieved couples went straight to the sheriff's office to report what they had seen. According to various accounts, the sheriff, or his deputy could tell immediately that the four witnesses were badly scared and drove to the TNT area, but could either find no trace of anything unusual, or else saw a 'puff of smoke in a nearby area from possibly this creature taking off and landing again.'



(Above): Artists composite sketch of Mothman based upon eyewitness testimony.

When the story hit the newstands, and was typically ridiculed in the local press, more and more people came forward to report that they too had seen something uncannily similar...And over the next 13 months, over 200 witnesses stated that they had encountered what became popularly known as Mothman (a name coined by a copy editor at one of the local newspapers. At the time, the wonderfully corny *BATMAN* TV series had just hit the screens, so rendering that probably more fitting moniker out of bounds...But the fact that the entity reportedly had wings inspired the copy editor to call it Mothman).

On November 16th, Marcella Bennett was paying a visit to friends who happened to live in the TNT area. She was sitting in her parked car when she noticed a figure in the darkness.

'It seemed as if it had been lying down. It rose up slowly from the ground. A big gray thing. Bigger than a man, with terrible glowing red eyes.'

Like the two couples on the previous night, Mrs Bennett seemed to be hypnotised by Mothman's red eyes. As she stood there, transfixed, staring at it, she and her baby daughter were grabbed by a friend and dragged into the house.

But the events at Point Pleasant weren't limited to 'mere' sightings of Mothman. There were also reports of mutilated dogs, UFO sightings, Men In Black, Poltergeist-type phenomena and weird voices at the other end of the phone. Into the midst of this plethora of strangeness came John Keel,

author and Fortean researcher, and one of this writer's inspirations.

Loren Coleman, (another hero of mine) described recently how about a month after the initial sightings, John Keel got an assignment to go to that corner of West Virginia. *'He sort of showed up, and had a very low kind of profile. John was on a contract to write a book about UFOs. As he began to talk to people and gather information, John found himself getting more deeply involved in the events, to the extent that there were entities that communicated with him by phone.'*

'As he analyzed the events, he found Point Pleasant to be a vortex of phenomena, and couldn't really tell one from the other. It was a scary situation for John.'

'Whatever one thinks about the validity of Keel's claims there's no arguing the horror of what happened next. John had begun to be given "prophecies" by the entities he was dealing with in Point Pleasant. One in particular said that "when President Johnson turned on the Christmas lights at the White House, the whole northeast was going to go into a blackout." However, by that point, John had started to get fooled by the phenomena.'

'On December, 15th, John is in his apartment in Manhattan. Waiting for the blackout with his bottled water and his batteries, and nothing happens. About six minutes later, on the TV set across the bottom: "Bridge collapses across Ohio River." And he just freaks out.'

'He freaked out, because the bridge in question was the Silver Bridge, which crossed the Ohio River between Gallipolis, Ohio, and Point Pleasant, West Virginia. 67 people fell into the river. 46 died. They found 44 bodies. Several people who died were related to witnesses of Mothman.'

'The collapse of the Silver Bridge has been seen as the climax of Keel's Mothman Prophecies, but I don't think it simply stopped. What I think is that it has continued on but people did not report it. It never got to the fever pitch of, say, a Roswell.'

For John Keel, his fascination with the paranormal began on Cedar Street in a place called Hornell.

A keen traveller, the results of his research have formed the inspiration for the *'MEN IN BLACK'* movies and *'THE X FILES'* TV show, and he has therefore likely earned the title bestowed upon him by fellow Forteans as *The Godfather of Paranoid Paranormal*.

Now aged 72, he was born on March 25th, 1930, in Hornell as Alva John Kiehle. As a teenager, he would change his surname's spelling and the order of his initials.

As he grew up, John would come to display a talent for a wide variety of fields. He worked as a radio programmer, UPI reporter, author, TV screenwriter, inventor and, above all, a magician.

His interest in magic led him to being in great demand for casting protective magic spells on new clubhouses or caves. *'Usually I would scatter corn around them, break an egg over the threshold and recite magic incantations thought up on the spur of the moment.'*

Through his imagination and talent for writing, Keel one day visited exotic lands, meeting the rich and famous, and the merely fantastic. He could have been a prototype for the fictional Indiana Jones, but his inquisitive nature eventually found far darker tunnels to explore, the results of which appeared in such classic, inspirational books as *'UFOs: OPERATION TROJAN HORSE, 'OUR HAUNTED PLANET'* and *'DISNEYLAND OF THE GODS.'*

The concept of the Men In Black was originated by Mr Keel back in the late 1960's, as he described vaguely Oriental-looking men wearing the now typical all-black suits who warned UFO witnesses (usually with cheesy, B-movie

cliches), not to discuss their sightings. These men often drove immaculate older cars, usually Cadillacs or limousines. Keel claimed to have personally encountered the MIB's on several occasions.

In one interview he gave, 30-odd years ago, John said of one Man In Black; *The thin man is well-known to me. I call him the Cadaver. Over the years I have had 25 different people describe the Cadaver to me. He is usually pale, as if he were bloodless. He is so thin that he looks like he is going to fall apart at any moment. He is usually rather poorly dressed, but it isn't easy to look good in clothes when one is so thin.* By 1967, John Keel was of the opinion that these entities are not aliens in the sense that they come from another planet, but are Ultraterrestrials; or beings who exist in another dimension. They may or may not have an actual physical presence in this world, but their existence, he believes may be proven by a breakthrough in physics.

In 'DISNEYLAND OF THE GODS,' he wrote; *These beings consider humans to be like ants, trying to view reality with very limited perceptive equipment...We are biochemical robots helplessly controlled by forces that can scramble our brains, destroy our memories and use us in any way they see fit. They have been doing this forever.*

Just prior to the British release of *THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES*, Thomas Chau, of 'CINEMA CONFIDENTIAL,' secured an interview with the movie's screenwriter, Richard Hatem, the 'highlights' of which are reproduced here.

Richard got involved with adapting John Keel's book in the midst of a bout of wrestling with finding a way to translate to the screen a true story of the supernatural.

'But I didn't want to write a "ghost story," where a ghost helps solve a mystery or pinpoint a murderer or find buried treasure. I wanted to tell a story about how people really, truly experience the paranormal.

'After a lifetime of interest in these subjects, what I had found is that people who live in haunted houses, or see UFOs, or have precognitive dreams rarely feel any sense of closure or "greater understanding of our universe." They simply feel confused. There's a book called "PHONE CALLS FROM THE DEAD," by Raymond Bayless and D. Scott Rogo, and it examines this strange phenomenon.

'What is fascinating is that while some people (typically somewhat religious or spiritual to begin with) are comforted by these seeming confirmations of an afterlife, most people, though they think they've spoken to a dead relative on the phone, come away with no great change in their pre-existing beliefs.

'So all this stuff was swirling round my head. I wanted to tell a story about a man who encounters some sort of paranormal phenomenon, investigates it rationally in every possible way, and in the end knows nothing more than he did when he started.

'About a month later I found Keel's book.

'It had everything I wanted and more. Because his book, and his experience said even more: the harder you look for answers in these areas, the more dangerous ground you tread - and it can lead to big problems, insanity not least amongst them.'

What hooked me on the Mothman legend was that it had everything; UFOs, MIBs, Poltergeists, precognitive dreams, telepathic communication, EVP/ITC (electronic voice phenomena/instrumental transcommunication, i.e. electronic communication with discarnate entities), and of course, Mothman.

The entire story seemed to suggest that these phenomena are not as separate as we've always thought. UFOs are

ghosts are MIBs, etc. This theory makes sense to me. The universe just keeps throwing out its weird energy and that energy manifests and makes itself known to different people in different ways based on natural laws we do not understand.

The story was also true and I liked the idea that I could get people to pay more attention to my theme by nudging them on the shoulder and saying, "Hey man, this shit really happened!"

'I knew the kind of story I wanted to tell, where questions are left unanswered, was going to be a tough sell. What was great about Keel's book is that it does have a very definitive ending - the Silver Bridge disaster - but it's still enigmatic.

'Dramatically, it had everything. Big city man in a small town (fish out of water in more ways than one) a structure that allowed for romance (this was purely invented), an on-going, far-reaching mystery with life or death stakes...It was perfect.

'I should probably clear something up which has been somewhat misunderstood until now. I didn't write the movie to popularize the legend of Mothman. I'm no more intrigued with Mothman than I am with Bigfoot or UFOs. Again, it's simply that Keel's book provided a structure and platform upon which I could discuss ideas, theories and themes about the paranormal in general, and about the natural human craving for answers where there are none.

'Am I a skeptic? Sure. Am I a debunker? Not at all. Am I a believer? I'd say I'm a hoper.

'I think people do see strange things. And I think that there are a lot of mysteries on our planet that will never be explained. I don't think we'll ever catch a Bigfoot. I hope not, because for me the mystery and that margin for weirdness must always hold. I want the circumstantial evidence to be disturbing, almost overwhelming, but never go all the way. I'm all for the paranormal cock-tease.

'Keel has very interesting theories about what Mothman might be. It ties into the theory of the Ultraterrestrials" Basically, it's what the Alan Bates character talks about in the movie. Energy forms that burst out of our dimension. (This "energy flash" is represented in the movie by the burn marks on the car and the tree, and the swollen red eyes people get after seeing things). The people who experience them see them in different ways. It's as if our brain is seeing something it's never seen, so it flips through its card file looking for a match and comes up with, "Well, it's sort of a bird, sort of a man, and those red things might be eyes." And we get this weird composite. Where do you think mythological creatures came from? The Griffin, The Sphinx, The Centaur? Probably just people like those in Point Pleasant, trying to use human brains to understand and translate non-human manifestations.

'In the original draft of the movie, you did see a little more of Mothman. I felt that as long as we understood that every time we see it, we're seeing only a particular character's point of view it was acceptable. For instance, during the bridge collapse, when John Klein (nee John Keel) runs up to the guy in the car and tells him to get off the bridge...In the original script, the guy looks up to the bridge towers and sees a gigantic bird, like a pterodactyl. It's obscured by fog, but it's really kind of there. When John looks up, he sees nothing. But meanwhile, the guy is going nuts; "What the hell IS that thing?" and John keeps looking, getting more and more scared, because there's just nothing there. Then the bird lifts up and flies right down at the guy...okay, so the GUY sees Mothman flying at him...But John sees the metal cable dislodging and flying at him. The result is the same..The guy is killed. Mark Pellington made the decision to keep the Mothman element even more theoretical than

that, and I think it was a great choice. He focused on the mystery. Smart move.

The reason that I neglected to feature the UFOs and MIB's that populate the text in John Keel's book is simply because of the Will Smith/Tommy Lee Jones movie. MIBs were out of the question from the start. There was so much in Keel's book, you couldn't include it all, so that seemed the best place to start cutting. In the original script, there were UFO encounters, but the producers at Lakeshore - rightly, I believe, felt that audiences had already seen UFOs done to death in the movies and wanted to distinguish this story as something truly different.

The phenomenon is what I took from the book. I do not believe there are any one to one relationships in the movie to exact events. Mostly it was. "Okay, someone's getting weird phone calls, someone's seeing Mothman"...etc. The dream of the Christmas presents in the water really happened. People getting calls from John Keel that he never placed is real. Indrid Cold is real; a guy really did meet him on the road...So the kind of paranormal phenomenon in the movie is all "real" The stuff that was made up was the story; the happy marriage, the wife dying. Klein's grief, the stuff with the Governor, the relationship with Connie (Laura Linney). I basically invented the character-context around which the phenomenon takes place.

The reason that Lakeshore decided to cut the death toll from the Silver Bridge disaster from 46 to 36 is that the company were concerned that was just way too many people to die. Audiences would be too depressed. At one point it was even suggested that John Klein saves EVERYONE, and that even though the bridge does collapse he manages to get everyone off just in the nick of time. Eventually that idea was dropped. Somehow the number became 36. Exactly how, I'm not sure.

The so-called 'Alien Animal Red-Eye Phenomenon' is something that Cryptozoologists have debated for a long time. There are basically two schools of thought, here; those that believe this apparent uniformity is evidence of a metaphysical origin for these entities, and those that subscribe to the view that these glowing red eyes may be attributable to entirely natural sources.

Robert Goerman, writing in the highly acclaimed paranormal publication *THE ANOMALIST*, falls into the latter camp. He points out that Mothman's burning red eyes, set into the creature's shoulders, were the singular most terrifying thing about the entity, according to eyewitness testimony.

Witnesses reported feelings of an uncontrollable, indescribable terror when faced with Mothman, but, as Linda Scarberry recounts; 'It was those eyes that got us. It had two big eyes like automobile reflectors. They were hypnotic. For a minute we could only star at it. I couldn't take my eyes off it.'

And Robert's theories as to the origin of these glowing red eyes? Bioluminescence? Infra-red vision? Some sort of mechanical function? Nope. According to Mr Goerman, the clues are in the witness testimony.

From *THE POINT PLEASANT REGISTER*, Wednesday, 16th November, 1967, 'The young men said they saw the creature's eyes, which glowed red only when their lights shined on it.'

And from eyewitness Newell Partridge; 'The dog was sitting on the end of the porch, howling down toward the hay barn...I shined the flashlight in that direction, and it picked up two red circles, or eyes, which looked like bicycle reflectors. I certainly know what an animal's eyes look like...these were much larger. It's a good length of a football field to that hay barn...Still those red eyes showed up huge for that distance.'

It's a fact that animals that see at night must have eyes that collect a lot of light. Night eyes should also be large, as the bigger they are, the more light they can retain.

They should also be equipped with special cells called rods, that assist them in nocturnal vision. Some even have reflectors!!!

Could this be why Mothman's eyes appear to glow red in the dark?

This weird effect is caused by a membrane that lines the back of the retina. As Richard makes clear, some animals which spend a lot of time using their eyes in twilight have reflective retinas. Not all light is absorbed by visual pigments in the retina, some of it passes through. 'A mirrored layer called the tapetum lucidum, "bright carpet," behind the retina reflects some of this light back through the retina so it has more chance of being captured. By increasing, or rather by bouncing the light that comes into their eyes, these animals effectively increase the amount of light available for their eyes to see with, and increase their ability to see in what we perceive as "darkness." Cats, partly due to the tapetum lucidum, can see clearly in just 1/16th the amount of light humans need. These animals lose some visual acuity this way, but make more efficient use of low light. Light that is not used exits through the pupil causing the 'glow' of animal eyes often seen in car headlights or flashlights.

'Why do different animals have eyes that glow different colours? It is possible that one of them has visual pigments which absorb shorter wavelengths (so the low-absorbed light would look red) than the other. Different coloured irises may account for something.

'People do not have a tapetum lucidum. People's eyes look red in some photographs, but it's not a reflector. It's the camera flash bouncing off the red blood vessels and red tissue in the back of your eye.

'Over and over again, frightened witnesses suggested that Mothman was "light sensitive."

The creature avoided bright light sources at all costs.

"It apparently is afraid of light," - Steve Mallette.

'Exactly what you would expect of a creature with eyes designed to see in "darkness."

'Eyes equipped with a mirrored layer called the tapetum lucidum.'

'Eyes that glow red in the dark.'

Predictably enough, this media-inspired upsurge in interest in Mothman has provoked the usual plethora of commercial spin-offs including such absolutely must-have items as Mothman Beanie Babies, T-shirts, and ornaments. One West Virginia man has even gotten around to selling Sony Pictures on a Mothman Internet game.

'He's our monster, so we want to make money off him,' Hilda Austin, executive director of the Point Pleasant Chamber of Commerce was quoted as saying. 'We don't want anyone stealing our thunder.'

Local people keen to make a few bob out of the phenomenon, are doubtless heartened by the massive commercial spin-offs in the wake of the release of *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT*, when Burkinsville, Maryland, became the focus for thrill-seekers eager to spend money on anything even remotely connected to the movie.

And, as Hilda Austin pointed out, 'Let's face it, if we don't do it, someone else will. We're the home of Mothman, and we're proud.'

Sources: *THE UNEXPLAINED* Orbis Publishing (1981)/ 'FILMFORCE Web Site' 6th December, 2001 /*THE EVENING TRIBUNE* ' 4th February, 2002/ 'CINEMA CONFIDENTIAL' 1st February, 2002/ *THE ANOMALIST* 8th February, 2002/ 'ABC NEWS' 31st, January, 2002

'Red-Eyed Something' Sighted In The Lake District

And do we have a potential distant relation to Mothman, stalking the winding backroads of England's Lake District? It may sound unlikely, but according to a fellow employee at Roberts Moore Nicholas Jones Solicitors, where yours truly ekes out a living, 'something' closely resembling the red-eyed aspect of Point Pleasant's most famous resident, put in an appearance back in the summer of 1987.

The witness, Chris S, then aged five, was sitting in the back seat of his family's car as they drove to their holiday destination in Cumbria. The actual details are little sketchy, given the passage of time. He remembers it was dark, sometime between 11-11:30pm, when he happened to glance out of the rear window of the car. Chris was amazed to see what he can only describe as *'two large, bright, glowing red eyes, hovering about six feet above the surface of the road.'* He couldn't discern the shape of body, as it was too dark, and he can only surmise that it appeared as though the owner of those glowing red eyes was following the car at 40-odd mph.

Chris turned to his parents, anxious to alert them to the presence of this thing, but when they all turned to look the 'creature' had disappeared. He never saw it again.

Chris S *Lake District* 1987

EYES SHINING IN THE DARK

Roy Kerridge Reviews *'MYSTERY CATS OF
DEVON AND CORNWALL'* By Chris Moiser

Bodmin £2.99. pp. 32

'I bet you've never even been to Bengal!' sneered a *SPECTATOR* contributor when I told him I felt convinced that pumas were breeding at large on Emoor and Bodmin Moor.

A surprising amount of people believe that a puma is a tropical animal that could not survive a British winter. In fact, the puma can be found in cold countries such as Alaska and Patagonia, as well as in the American desert, and the Brazilian rain forest. Before the Wild Animal Act of 1976 (an attempt to regulate the exotic pet trade) I saw puma cubs for sale in a Surrey pet shop. However, as Chris Moiser points out in this fascinating little book, pumas and other big cats were occasionally reported as running wild in England ten or more years before the cage doors were opened by irresponsible ex-puma owners in 1976. Incidentally, it is the tiger that lives in Bengal, not the puma, which is a New World species. However, all the big cats can thrive in cold weather. The Bengal tiger finds Bengal too hot for its tastes, and often plunges into deep water to cool off.

A black panther, superimposed over moorland gorse and heather, glowers at the reader from the cover of Moiser's book. Moiser has never been to Bengal, as far as I know, but he has been to west and southern Africa to see big cats in their natural home. Although many West Country people are big cat sceptics, a surprising number of countrymen now accept them as part of the landscape and no longer bother to tell the police when they see one. Quite casually, a visitor to Somerset told me that she had noticed, from her car window, a black panther lurking in a hedgerow. Like most people, she called it a puma, although black pumas are almost unknown. The black panther is a variety of leopard, and can be very dangerous to man.

Rosemary Rhodes, a popular big catologist, told me that she had seen blue eyes shining in the dark near her farm on Bodmin Moor. Black panthers often have blue eyes. I hope,

for reasons of public and personal safety, that the animals are black pumas after all.

Chris Moiser identifies, from eyewitness descriptions, the three varieties of West Country big cats. These, in descending order of size and ferocity, are the black panther, the puma (which is brown) and the lynx (which has a stub tail). He examines the theories he has heard on the origins of the cats, not omitting the supernatural, for many people believe the cats to be phantoms. John Michell, the *SPECTATOR* reviewer, the man I would most like to be Prime Minister, is of this opinion.

Moiser devotes at least a third of the book to hoaxers and to photographers and to others who have made ludicrous mistakes. Even so, when all the errors have been weeded out, Moiser's evidence that there *are* big cats on the loose seems to me convincing. For instance, a zoo near Barnstaple ordered some pumas which never arrived. Did they escape on the way? Shortly after the non-appearance of the pumas, in 1982, the 'Beast Of Exmoor' made the headlines. At Bodmin Moor, a garage owner illegally kept two full-grown African lions that were always getting out. Eventually he gave them to a zoo. Beasts of Bodmin continued to be seen after the lions were removed, however.

Moiser, a biologist, lecturer, and part-time zoo keeper, has a pair of African caracal lynxes in his charge. Lynxes reported in the West Country appear to be of the hardy European variety.

A few weeks prior to penning this review, a lynx was captured running wild in Crickewood, not far from where I live in London. The police, who named the lynx Lara, said that she must have been 'illegally imported,' as no owner came forward to claim her. However, I prefer to think that Lara was born wild on Hampstead Heath, the descendant of long-ago escapees. After all, coyotes (or prairie wolves) were once released in Epping Forest by a Victorian huntsman and were discovered still to be there at the beginning of the 20th century.

According to Moiser, lynxes died out as a wild species in Britain some 4000 years ago, although he admits that this is 'debatable.' Recently, lynx bones found in the north of England were carbon-dated to the 10th century AD.

Somewhere in the writings of the Venerable Bede (673-735 AD) there is a description of Northumbrian shepherds guarding their flocks from lions. My Eritrean neighbour, Mrs Ababa Aghedon, told me; *'In my country we have tigers that are very, very small. They live in the long grass.'*

I showed her a picture of a serval, a stripy lynx-like African wild cat, and she exclaimed, *'That's an Eritrean tiger!'*

So if Mrs Aghedon can tell a serval from a tiger, why should not Bede refer to a Northumbrian lynx as a lion? Over to you, Christopher Moiser.

Roy Kerridge *London* 2001

Big Cats On The Prowl In Somerset & Aberdeen

A terrified farmer told reporters how he was confronted by a 'puma-like creature,' trapped in his barn, last July (2001). Peter Wood came face-to-face with the animal when he went to collect eggs. As he opened the barn door the big cat leapt through and ran off. Peter, of Cheddar, Somerset, was quoted as saying; *'The thing was right in front of my eyes. It makes me shiver to think about it.'*

And here's one for the Phantom Alien Big Cat theorists; not one of his chickens were harmed.

22nd July, 2001 *Cheddar, Somerset 'SUNDAY MANC'*

*** Meanwhile, at the other end of the country, in Aberdeen, Scotland, to be precise, a woman by the name of Doris

Moore, of Craigieford, near Insch, in Aberdeenshire, claimed she was attacked by an ABC at the steading where her horse is stabled.

The creature was described as being the size of a labrador dog but with a long thin body and the motion of a cat.

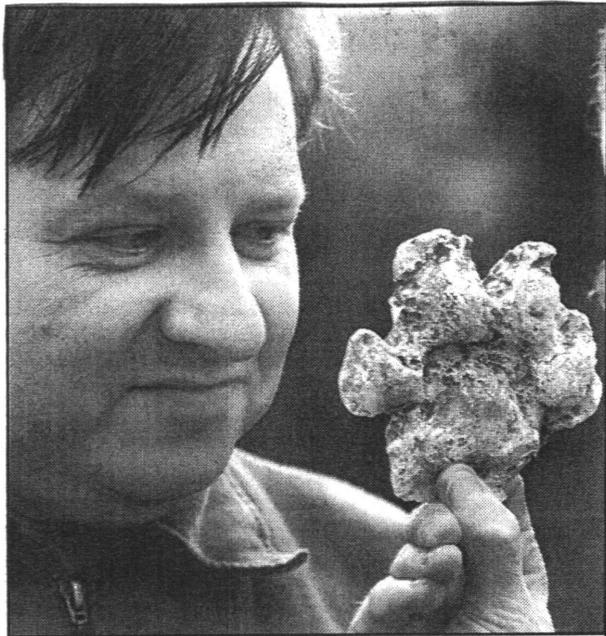
It sank its teeth into Mrs Moore's leg and hip, ripping her trousers and leaving her with bruising and three deep puncture wounds in her thigh.

The big cat ran off when she struck at it repeatedly with a bunch of keys.

A group of researchers who go by the collective name of the Scottish Big Cats Team, sent two of its members, George Markie and Mike Inglis, to investigate the attack.

Along with their colleagues, they claim to have assembled a wealth of evidence for the existence of alien big cats in Scotland.

As well as long-range photos and (typically) blurry video footage, the team have succeeded in obtaining casts of what may be paw prints and photos of big cat kills.



George told reporters; *'We have photos of a recent deer kill near Cupar where the animal's bones have been stripped of flesh.*

'It's a classic sign of a big cat kill. No other animal can do that. The cats tongues have evolved to strip bones completely.'

Mike added; *'We've always known they were definitely out there. I've spoken to so many witnesses and seen so many photos.'*

The subject was discussed by police at a recent conference. They wouldn't waste their time discussing something that doesn't exist.

'I'm convinced the Government know there are big cats roaming around, but they're afraid of public scare-mongering.'

'We think that there are several different species on the loose and we have as many theories on exactly what the sightings are.'

'We think most sightings are of pumas and panthers, but I know there are a couple of lynx in Fife.'

Mike and George got lucky when they investigated the case of Doris Moore.

They were able to obtain pretty convincing casts of paw prints in the area, and Mike was moved to comment; *'If this incident is confirmed, it will be the first one in the country. If a scientist agrees a big cat was involved in the attack, it would confirm what we've been saying for years.'*

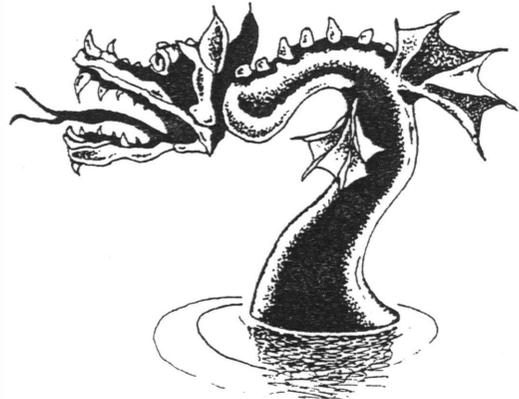
The description of a black cat around 18 inches high and over two feet long fits that of a Kellas cat, but I've heard one scientist say that the bite marks are too big for one of them, suggesting it could be a puma.

'I think this was a defensive move by the cat. If it was something like a puma and it was on the attack, either because it was hungry or hurt, it wouldn't have stopped at the woman's leg - it would have been a sustained attack.'

'The worry now is that people might go out to try and hunt it. If they were only to succeed in injuring it they'd have a far more dangerous cat on their hands.'

20th January, 2002 Craigieford, Near Insch, Aberdeenshire, Scotland THE SUNDAY POST'

Lake Monster Round Up



A much-loved lake in Tasmania that was a dust bowl for so long has come back to life, and just to add to the fun and frolics, a mysterious creature has taken residence in its newly-formed depths.

Oatlands' very own version of Nessie has caused something of a local furore since it mysteriously appeared in the lake at Dulverton, on the edge of town, early January, this year.

'People are pointing fingers everywhere,' said Tony Cawthorn, from the Friends of Lake Dulverton group, *'but it's a mystery how she got there.'*

Albert Darkin, whose wife runs the local tea rooms, went down to the lake one Tuesday night after customers reported seeing a humped backed creature traversing the waters throughout the day.

'It's Nessie alright' Mr Darkin announced displaying an astonishingly deep, meaningful insight. *'Whoever was behind the monster was clearly passionate about the lake, and bringing people back to it.'*

Methodists we'd be wise to treat this account with the proverbial pinch of salt!

10th January, 2002 Lake Dulverton, Tasmania THE MERCURY'

*** Of a slightly more believable nature are the reports from San Marcelino, in Zambales, where *'five huge, black creatures'* were said to be dwelling in the Tikis River in the former mining village of Buhawen, creating an atmosphere of fear and loathing amongst the resident Aeta families.

The Aeta's oral history has no accounts of giant fish or strange unidentified mammals thriving in the tribe's indigenous habitat.

'There! Look there! One is appearing now from the bushes on the northern side!' Joel Serrano, a village councilman yelled to reporters from the *'INQUIRER NEWS SERVICE,'* who visited the area during mid-January this year.

The journalists themselves struck lucky when they apparently had the following sighting; *'One Saturday, at 1:45pm, the strange creatures were apparently seen swimming in the river below Labuan, which is enclosed by tall, thick bushes. Observed with bare eyes from a hill some 100 metres west of*

the river, the first creature that came into sight was about seven feet long and three feet wide.

Dark black in colour, it was visible enough from that distance. Slowly, it glided and took cover again in the bushes. 'Serrano and Alfredo Banos said four other similar creatures, one of which was as big as a jeepney, never emerged in full form.

"We don't know if they are fishes or snakes or eels, they never show their heads or tails," Serrano told us.

The creatures, according to him, were first spotted last November 5th. An Aeta boy mistook these for floating logs, Serrano recalled.

The elongated outline of the creatures were slightly bared every time the wind blew and caused ripples in the river.

They have reportedly not produced any sound at daytime or at night. Exactly what these creatures are has baffled the 15 Aeta families who live in Labuan, but what they do know is that danger possibly lurks in the river.

Children have been ordered to stop playing and bathing there. The men and women have stopped catching fish, and Serrano is worried about the stopping of fishing activities in the village, some 30km from San Marcelino town proper.

'Frogs are our only source of protein,' he was quoted as saying.

These are the reasons he wants scientists to come and help them end the mystery surrounding what may be a bunch of unidentified creatures.

14th January, 2002 Zambales *THE INQUIRER NEWS SERVICE*

*** One of the most unlikely lake monster locations on the planet, one would assume, is the Martin Mere nature reserve in West Lancashire, but nevertheless, the manager is convinced something unusual lurks beneath the surface.

Some kind of creature, say staff at the reserve, is responsible for dragging fully grown swans into one of their lakes.

It is strongly suspected that a monster fish, the size of a small car might be the culprit for pulling at least one swan underwater.

Several visitors witnessed the swan trying to flee the grasp of a giant underwater predator last February.

In an earlier incident, the 20-acre lake where swans gather was left deserted as they all refused to go on the water.

'Something is completely spooking them,' commented reserve manager Chris Tomlinson.

'On two occasions, both Thursdays, January 17th, and February 7th, something in the water has caused the 1,500-plus wild wintering swans to completely disappear.'

Centre manager Pat Wisniewski adds; 'Whatever it was out there must have been pretty big to pull a swan back into the water. Swans weigh up to 13 kilos.'

Pat added; 'This could be an extremely large pike, or a Wels catfish. Both conceivably could survive in the rather murky, de-oxygenated water for years and grow to an extremely large size.'

Four years earlier, Pat spotted something that appeared to be the size of a small car circling the mere just below the waterline of the lake, which is four metres deep.

One theory is that something may have made its way into the mere through its drainage system many years ago as a juvenile and remained there ever since having grown too large to escape. Visitors to Martin Mere are being asked to keep their eyes peeled for any sign of the 'monster.'

The current British record rod-caught Wels catfish stands at 62lb, while the world record weight is 202lb. The Wels is Europe's largest freshwater fish and they are known to live in excess of 30 years.

A spokesman for *THE ANGLING TIMES* stated that it was unlikely the predator would be a catfish, however. They do

not grow to any considerable size this far north, although some specimens have been caught in meres on the Wirral. It is the wrong time of year for large catfish to be so active.

14th February, 2002 Martin Mere, West Lancashire *'LIVERPOOL ECHO'*

*** And last, but by no means least, is the following account from a lake in Ostend, Belgium, that's been the focus of attention over the last four months.

Tourist attendance has been at an all-time high since eyewitnesses swore they saw a mysterious fin breaking the surface of the water.

Speculation has grown as to the creature's identity, but the mystery has now been solved when fisherman actually came upon the culprit struggling for life on the shore and were able to perform a rescue operation. The Belgian Sea Life Centre brought it to their facility and began to do what they could for the creature, but even they had trouble believing the sight before them. It was a carp, but not just any old carp. This one was estimated to be about 30 years old and over 50 pounds in weight. Finding a carp so old is all but un-heard of.

They placed the fish in a bath with clean water and lots of oxygen, and, at the time of writing, were doing all they could to nurse the aged fish back to health.

2nd November, 2001 Ostend, Belgium *'ANANOVA'*

Big Hairy Monsters On The Prowl Again

Cryptozoologist Tony Healy produced a cast of a Yowie footprint at the inaugural *MYTHS AND MONSTERS* conference in Sydney, Australia, last October.

The conference, seemingly the Aussies answer to our very own *'FORTEAN TIMES UNCONVENTION'*, also featured speakers covering subjects such as the elusive Wildmen of South-East Asia, the Tasmanian Devil, Australia's mystery big cats, and much more on the Yowie, the Yahoo or Doolagari.

There are so many stories about these creatures, Tony told reporters, 'that you can't simply dismiss them all. So many people claim to have had experiences or seen them - and they are quite reputable as witnesses - that you have to ask the question, what is it that they saw? They can't all be hallucinating. Mr Healy, who has written a book on the subject, called with astounding originality, *THE YOWIE FILE*,' went on to say that he had a pretty good idea of what these creatures looked like. They are generally described as being covered with hair, very tall, the average size is about seven foot six inches, with largely broad shoulders and no neck.

The head is said to look quite small compared to the rest of it, and it has arms that reach down to its knees.

'In about ten per cent of cases there is also a striking miasma of stench.'

20th October, 2001 Sydney, Australia *'NETWORK NEWS'*

*** Meanwhile, part-time adventurer Adam Davies and his expedition team mates have recently returned from a 'Yeti hunt' with a sample of potential evidence of the BHM's existence.

Scientists in Oxford and in Australia, were, at the time of writing, examining these samples and footprints in an attempt to identify them or to see if they really are concrete evidence of the reality of the elusive Sumatran BHM, the Orang-Pendek, little man of the forest.

Adam, a 32-year-old Internet manager from Bramhall, Stockport, led the team, which included Keith Townley from Macclesfield. 'We spent three years in remote forests and mountains in Indonesia, some areas previously unexplored.'

'We were the first Westerners to climb one mountain,' said Adam, married with a two-year-old son.

'We're an experienced team and the earlier trips just got us keener to do more.

'We are not scientists, but try to bring evidence for the "experts" to examine. I like unknown nature of the trips and the living-on-your-wits aspect.'

The group's Indonesian findings were being analysed and DNA-checked at Oxford, and anthropologists examined the unique-seeming footprints.

'It could take months for the work, but the scientists are quite excited about our finds and say they have never seen anything like them,' Adaam was quoted as saying.

December, 2001 Sumatra 'MANC EVENING NEWS'

Biologist Re-Discovers Longest Legged Spider

A German scientist has re-discovered a spider with the longest legs in the world.

He found the Arachnid with a leg span of 30 centimetres in the cellar of a Paris museum. It was originally discovered in 1939 in South-East Asia, but has lain unseen for years preserved in alcohol in the museum's store. Biologist Peter Jaeger says that the previous *GUINNESS BOOK* record holder was a South American spider with a leg span of 28 centimetres. He has named the spider as *Heteropoda maxima*.

It was brought back from Laos by a cave explorer and belongs to the family of giant crab spiders, *Sparassidae*. Its body measures between four and five centimetres.

Jaeger chanced across the spider when he was in France for a two-week research project.

He was quoted as saying; *'I was just routinely checking the collection and discovered the giant spider.'*

16th October, 2001 Paris, France 'ANANOVA'

VAMPIRES PLAGUING MEXICO

Last November, in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, police were busy investigating three reports of a series of particularly gruesome animal deaths.

Farmer Ramira Parra Gonzalez was on his way to his field outside the city of Bocoyna one Wednesday morning, when he was sickened by the sight of the bodies of 35 dead sheep. Every one of them was found to be drained entirely of blood and with two small bite marks on their necks.

When the police arrived to investigate, the frightened farmer told them he believed that the deaths were the work of the Chapacabras or Goat-Sucker, that he claims have terrorised his family. On the night in question he had been awoken by the sound of his dogs that normally sleep in his fields begin to howl at exactly midnight. A few minutes later, he heard the dogs *'running for their lives.'*

At the time, he thought it was a fox but did not go outside to investigate for fear of what he might find.

The attacks started a few weeks earlier, when his brother Francisco claimed he returned from lunch to his fields on October 10th and found the lifeless bodies of 12 sheep and 1 pig. All of them were without any blood left in their bodies.

The strange and macabre events continued on October 25th, when another relative, Martin Parra Orpinel claimed to have found 16 of his sheep dead and another 14 gravely injured. All had been bitten in the neck and had lost great amounts of blood.

2nd November, 2001 Bocoyna, Mexico 'ANANOVA'

Keep Watcing The Skies!!! UFO Update Anomalous Objects Sighted Over Turkey



On the night of January 26-27th, this year, a UFO was filmed traversing the skies above the Turkish town of Adyaman. At around 11pm, the General Directorate of police in Adyaman received a phone call from a witness who described a brilliant flying object hovering over the eastern side of the city.

The police notified the patrolman on duty at Adyaman-Kahta highway by radio, and the officer was able to confirm the presence in the night sky of a UFO. The Chief of Police was then informed and a police team was promptly dispatched to the area. The officers were equipped with night cameras, and they soon spotted the brightly-lit object, rotating around its own axis and emitting a sequence of colourful lights. They succeeded in filming the object for an amazing five hours.

The following night, at around 2:15am, two flying objects, similar to the one sighted the previous night, were observed flying over the western area of the city. Again, the objects were filmed, this time by the watch guard of the Security Directorate between 2:29am-3am, from the roof of the police building.

In the wake of these remarkable incidents, the Chairman of the *Sirius UFO Space Sciences Research Centre*, Haktan Akdogan talked with the Governor of Adyaman, Halil Isyk, and received detailed information about the sightings.

It appears a total of five UFOs were sighted during the course of the two nights, two over the Kahta and Samsat districts and three over the Besni and Gollbasy districts. Isyk was at pains to point out that over 20 police officers and hundreds of

civilian eyewitnesses claimed to have seen these anomalous objects.

The video footage was sent to the aforementioned *Sirius* group, and the highlights of their subsequent analysis of the film are as follows;

They were able to ascertain that the configuration of the sky and the position of the planets and stars could not account for the phenomenon.

When the video images were enlarged by computer, it was seen that the objects were scattering around lights of various colours.

It was also found that the UFOs stood stationary from time to time, hovered in the sky, and then started moving again, which, according to the group, defies the laws of gravity (unless of course, they were helicopters!!! - although the report maintains that these objects made no noise whatsoever).

The objects sometimes appeared in groups of two or three, and were filmed by up to 20 different police officers, all equipped with night cameras.

As is often the way with these type of things, we await the release of this footage into the public domain with a due sense of sceptical caution.

26th-27th January, 2002 Adyaman, Turkey 'SIRIUS UFO SPACE SCIENCES RESEARCH CENTRE'

'Angel Hair' Falls On Florida

Residents in Brevard County, Palm Bay, Florida, jammed the local 911 operators with calls about strange thread-like objects falling from the sky.

Thousands of the strands could be seen floating around the locale, including the Palm Bay Police Department building. After an investigation, the substance was identified as psocid's webs.

Psocids are tiny insects less than one inch long that are commonly called barklice or web-spinners. They are almost invisible to the naked eye, and are fairly common in Florida.

Nearly 150 species of psocids are found in the United States. *10th January, 2002 Palm Bay, Florida, USA 'LOCAL 6 NEWS'*

Invasion Of The Devil Men

When Jack Muriata was only eight years old, over seventy years ago, he was playing with his friends on the sandy banks of Australia's Tully River one moonless night when he claims he encountered 'The Devil Man.'

'Our parents warned us not to go too far from camp in case the Devil Man came calling,' he recounted to reporters during January, this year.

'Devil Men, we Aborigines call them, or chic ah bunnahs. One night I was with my friends and we wandered too far from out of our camp to the river. We were playing in the dunes when this great big ball of light, so bright you have never seen such a light, came flying down from the sky above us. It lit up the whole river, and then it zoomed down low along the banks, like it was looking for us.

'My friends were yelling "Run! Run!" and we all took off as fast as we could back towards camp and our mothers.

'You don't want to get caught by the Devil Man!'

Devil Men, chic ah bunnahs, whatever you care to call them, do, for some reason, seem to be attracted to the area around the small Queensland town of Tully.

About 180km south of Cairns with a population of about 3400, Tully would have nothing to distinguish it from any other sugar cane town dotted along the far north of the country, if it wasn't for several factors.

First off, there's the famous Tully Gorge, where white water rafting enthusiasts from around the world gather to shoot its rapids.

Then there is Tully's quite extraordinary weather. With an average rainfall of 4252mm, it is officially Australia's wettest town (*'Ye Gods, that's nothing. They wanna try out the county of Merseyside, where it never seems to stop raining - meteorologically peeved Ed!!!*) and has decided to build a giant gumboot to 'celebrate' the fact.

But if you give an ounce of credence to some of the local residents, Tully's most interesting claim to fame is that it is Australia's premier UFO hotspot, boasting literally hundreds of sightings each year.

Muriata says the Aborigines have known about Tully's otherworldly visitations '*since the beginning*,' and other, older locals, such as 82-year-old cane farmer Albert Pennisi concur.

'Everyone who lives in Tully knows about the UFOs here,' he was quoted as saying. 'It's just that some folk choose to talk about it and some folks don't.

'On the morning of January 19, 1966, my neighbour George Pedley was driving his tractor across banana farm when he heard a strange hissing sound.

'At first he thought it was hissing from his tractor tyres, but he found that the sound instead was coming from a medium sized, horse-shoe shaped lagoon on my property.

'Suddenly George saw this machine rise up from our lagoon, it rose about 30 to 40 feet in the air, and then turned on its side and just shot away.

'It was gone, vanished into thin air.

'But I later visited the site and believe it left behind a souvenir of its visit.

'George went to the lagoon straight away and he saw the water still swirling, still churning around.

'I think it really shook him up, and he came to get me but I was away. Later on when I got back we went to the lagoon together, and by crikey, did I get a shock.

'Floating on my normally unremarkable lagoon was a UFO "nest," a 9m circular mass of reeds, tightly woven in an intricate design swirling clockwise and so strong, it could easily support the weight of ten men.

'Pedley's sighting of the blue-grey saucer was never repeated, but whatever made that first "nest" on my dam kept making it

'They came back in 1972, 1975, 1980, 1982 and 1987.

'There was always the big one, but we also got 22 smaller ones, and the strange thing is, while the big one always went clockwise, the others were always anti-clockwise.

'I was determined to get an explanation for the phenomena, so I took to watching the lagoon at all hours of the night.

'I wasn't scared. I didn't take any weapons with me except my cane knife but I never did find out why they came to my farm, or why they suddenly stopped coming, but I've got a fair idea why.

'Interest in my lagoon, carloads of people came at the height of its fame, plus the attention of the police and the air force may have made whatever, or whoever, was visiting my farm, shy off.

'We've had people from all over the world arriving. UFO researchers, police, the air force...Investigators were watching us 24 hours a day. It was all a bit much for a simple cane farmer.'

After extensive investigation by both the police and the RAAF, a 1966 report by the Commonwealth Aerial Phenomena Investigation Organisation (CAPIO), concluded that '*there is no explanation for visible phenomena reported but it could have been associated with the result of "down draughts," "Willy Willies, or "Water spouts," that are known to occur in the North Queensland area..*'

Perhaps not surprisingly, George Pennisi, laughs at this half-baked attempt at a logical explanation.

'They also tried to tell me it was a low-flying helicopter, a mini-tornado, even a crocodile. But anyone who saw it will tell you whatever made it was not of this world, my friend.

'Before this thing happened to me, I might have been a bit sceptical, too, but things change when you see things with your own eyes.'

Seeing is also believing for eyewitness and semi-retired handyman Les Holland, 60. He has of the opinion that Tully is 'crawling with UFOs.

'I think I would have had trouble believing it if I hadn't seen then myself. There's a hell of a lot of activity here

'If you look up in the night sky in Tully, you'll see them soon enough. Lots of very bright lights, moving quickly through the sky. They're par for the course, but occasionally you see something really mind-blowing.

'A few years ago I saw this massive one hovering above us - you could see its lights, red yellow, green. It was completely silent, just hovering there then, in a flash, it was gone.'

Holland's son, Morgan, 17, has also had his fair share of sightings. A keen fisherman, his late-night trips have yielded much more than the tasty jungle perch he is angling for.

'Morgan was out one night about 18 months ago looking out over Tully Heads when he very clearly saw a machine in the sky which looked like a pyramid with the top part cut off it.

'He could see bands across it...he could see the whole thing quite clearly. It didn't make any noise - most of them don't, they're just silently hovering.

'It didn't bother Morgan and he didn't bother it. That's the thing about Morgan, all he wants to do is fish, crocs, sharks, UFOs, nothing gets in the way of his fishing.'

31st January, 2002 Tully River, Australia 'SUNDAY MAIL'

Weird Lights Over The West End

A series of highly unusual bright lights were seen hovering over the West End of Billings, USA on January 5th, this year, according to accounts in the local press.

At about 6pm, a resident of the area, who wished to remain anonymous, claimed she and her husband were in a pick-up truck when they spotted a lighted, half-spherical object hover about 1,000 feet above an area near 36th Street West.

The object had one flashing light and hovered for about four minutes.

'My husband knows airplanes and he said "Those aren't any airplane lights." 'As soon as he said that, it took off,' the woman told reporters. 'Within two seconds we couldn't see it. It was that fast. I don't know what to make of it.'

A Billings man who spends most of his evening riding a bicycle in the downtown area said he spotted the same or similar object, but thought it was just a very fast aircraft.

7th January, 2002 Billings, USA THE BILLINGS GAZETTE'

The Lore Of The UFO Theorists

Ted Loder is a conspiracy theorist who firmly believes that the United States has access to zero-point energy technologies and anti-gravity propulsion. He announced his 'revelations' at a gathering of about 25 people who bothered to attend at the Unitarian Universalist Church, last October, but was quick to point out that a small government group is responsible for ensuring this technology is kept secret from the general public.

And they're not only hiding such mind-blowing discoveries from the prying eyes of the electorate. Oh no. They also have conclusive evidence that extraterrestrials have landed on

Earth and have made contact with high-ranking government officials.

'You can't do a UFO story without coloured lights on everybody...big black coats and fog,' Loder told his audience, after having reportedly gathered testimony from more than 400 government witnesses for an initiative called the Disclosure Project.

'All the major religions are based on testimony. Our legal system is based on testimony...and yet, when a military captain says, "I saw a UFO," he's laughed at and made fun of.'

No one amongst Loder's pitifully small audience was laughing however, when Loder presented part of a 10-week series called 'BEYOND UFOs: ALIEN IDENTITIES, NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY.'

'I already know this phenomena is real,' claims Bill Cain of Bow, who has attended all of the UFO classes.

A professional photographer, Cain says he has personally sighted UFOs three times. Shooting a solar eclipse in Istanbul, Turkey, last year, he caught several strange floating objects amongst the astronomical images. Minutes later there was a major earthquake. Cain believes it may not have been a coincidence. (See elsewhere in this section for more on Turkish UFO flap)

But Loder's ETs are a more benevolent breed. In fact he believes aliens may ultimately save us from ourselves. Some of the witnesses for the Disclosure Project testified about a UFO sighting over a cluster of missile silos in Montana. As the strange craft flew over, they said, the missiles inexplicably shut down. (This could also be interpreted as an overtly hostile act, of course)

'ETs are not gonna let us blow up this planet,' Loder has gone on record as saying.

'If they possess more maturity than humans, aliens are not as far ahead of us as we may think. Multiple witnesses tell of inventors who have devised ways to access zero-energy technology, only to have their inventions stolen or bought out. Those who resist selling out have been threatened and harassed until they give in.

'Why keep these scientific breakthroughs secret? Money, money, money, money, money.'

'Zero-technologies have the potential to make power plants, dams, oil refineries, even roads obsolete. The world economy, as we know it, would be turned on its ear.

'Nor would we be at war right now. If we weren't dependent on oil to fuel our SUV's, we wouldn't have sent troops to Saudi Arabia a decade ago. And if we didn't have troops in Saudi Arabia, Osama bin Laden might have spared us his terrorist attacks.'

'Of course, if the power to free ourselves from fossil fuels is such a secret, it follows that alien existence must be kept from the public eye. If evidence leaks out, people are going to realise that they've been hoodwinked for fifty years.'

This hoodwinking is no small project, either. Witnesses to this great cover-up include military and intelligence officers, airline pilots, and NASA officials. An air traffic controller reported seeing a UFO hovering at 80,000 feet one night. John Callahan, a former FAA division chief, testified last May (2001) about a 1986 incident involving a UFO and a Japanese airliner. He was instructed to cover up the evidence, he said. Donna Hare, a NASA design illustrator, testified that UFOs were routinely airbrushed out of high-altitude photos of the Earth. A military officer said he served on a retrieval team for 20 years, picking up dead ETs and helping live ETs escape.'

Documenting these sort of stories has been Loder's passion for the past four years. Intrigued by UFOs since childhood, he became a committed believer while in Virginia visiting his

cousin, a lawyer and a brigadier general in the Army reserves. His cousin explained the Disclosure Project, a research organization gathering evidence of alleged 'alien visits' since 1992.

After spending a week training and countless hours observing the night sky, Loder began helping to gather and compile witness testimony. In 1997, he persuaded Governor Jeanne Shaheen to send him to represent New Hampshire at a special briefing for Congress. New Hampshire was one of just two states to send representatives.

Congress was less than convinced. The majority of elected officials are not in on the great cover up, Loder said. But entertaining stories of aliens is hardly the politically expedient thing to do. The Disclosure Project is still pressing for a series of congressional hearings. In May, last year, the organisers held a conference with the National Press Club, sharing their theories with more than 200 reporters, who broadcast the event around the world.

'Public response has run the gamut,' says Loder. Even in his most recent sparsely attended, but nevertheless eclectic meetings, this range of belief and disbelief can be seen.

One woman apparently interrupted Loder with claims that NASA officials would never allow such a cover-up, that NASA's *raison d'etre* is the exploration of space and whatever it may hold.

Other audience members nodded agreement to Loder's theories, adding comments of their own.

Don Johnson (*not, one presumes, the same Don Johnson who poned around Miami in faggoty suits with Phil Collins's 'IN THE AIR TONIGHT' blasting on the soundtrack?*), who helped organise the series, has been researching the statistical evidence for UFOs for 40 years. It took him 35 of those years to become a believer. Collecting data from sightings, he started mapping them according to sidereal time. 'Amazing patterns began to emerge,' he was quoted as saying.

This was the end of my objective career.'

16th October, 2002 USA 'CONCORD MONITOR'

The Return Of The Belgian Triangles

Between 1989-1990, one of the biggest and most widely reported UFO flaps of recent times hit Belgium, provoking a mass of witness testimony, video footage and countless newspaper and magazine articles.

Now, it seems, the primarily triangular-shaped craft are back in Belgian (and French) skies. In October, 2001, an anonymous young lady reported a UFO in the Avioth area of Northern France. She described the object as being very dark and square-shaped with four lights, one at each centre. Further sightings of the same, or similar object were reported just across the border at Charleroi, Belgium.

Then in December, TV news and popular newspapers began reporting that a major new UFO wave was hitting Belgium. One of these tabloids, the cheerily-titled *LA DERNIERE HEURE*, ('THE LAST HOUR'), carried an article in its December 9th issue, that maintained that triangles had returned, most of them featuring blue lighting on the underside of the craft, as well as orange and yellow. Belgian TV produced extensive coverage of the flap, interviewing two men in Namur, not far from Charleroi, who reported a very close encounter with a silver, cylindrical-shaped UFO.

Several of the Belgian UFO organisations have expressed their belief that the sightings can be blamed squarely on the US military, considering the presence in the area of SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe), part of the NATO military construct in the theatre. So close to the intense battle zones of Kosovo a couple of years ago and now

Afghanistan, as well as other regional troubles, the flaps seem to centre around the French/Belgian border.

Curiously enough, Adamski-type craft have been allegedly sighted in the same area.

Once again, witnesses have described the triangles as being incredibly swift, utterly silent, almost magical in their manoeuvres, and flying very close to the ground or almost touching residential rooftops.

Some people have witnessed massive craft flying over their homes, and have subsequently challenged military authorities on talk radio programmes to fly their craft over their homes without making the windows rattle like the black triangles apparently have, just to prove a nervous population that these truly are conventional aircraft. They decline the invitation, of course. UFO believers will doubtless interpret this as evidence that this refusal has more to do with the fact that these craft have nothing to do with Stealth, Aurora, or indeed any conventional aircraft whatsoever.

A multiple series of sightings took place on the nights of 6th, 9th, 10th and 15th December at a place called Hainault, once again situated on the French border, between 10pm and 4:30am.

Christian Daubioul, the president of The European Centre Of Aerial Phenomena, told reporters that several witnesses have seen one or several large triangles of a dark colour, absolutely motionless and totally silent. One of these witnesses is a police officer from Mouscron, living in the Blommes district, about 400m away from the border.

My first observation was on Thursday, December 6th. Parking my car in the garage, I noticed something unusual happening in the sky. Then I saw two triangles, one on the east side, the other on the west. On the three corners of the triangles were blue lights...I observed them with my bare eyes and with binoculars. I also called my spouse to see the phenomena.

'On Sunday, December 9th, I saw again the two triangles. They were in the exact same spot, apart from the fact that one of them was higher than the other. Around 7:30am, only one of the triangles remained in the sky. But since then, I never saw them again.'

A lady living in the border district of Mont-a-Leux observed a similar phenomena on December 15th at about 6:40am, just before sunrise.

Totally absorbed by the show outside her window, she saw an imposing mass sliding above her street, before disappearing from her field of vision.

Patrick Moncelet, a noted Belgian Ufologist, was quick to express his views on the secret military weapon hypothesis, currently (and understandably) doing the rounds.

'A long study has been made of these mysterious "Triangle UFOs" by the Belgian airforce, but nothing definitive has come out of it. Public opinion in Western Europe is still divided between the UFO angle, and secret military planes.

'As a Ufologist with 40 years experience, it is my opinion that the triangular UFOs cannot be secret military drones or planes, for various reasons, the most obvious being that such secret projects would not be allowed to fly over densely populated areas of Belgium, where they could easily be spied upon and at the mercy of a mechanical failure and a potential crash. Also, one must not forget the highly unusual performances shown by these craft, for example, total silence, even at very low altitudes, or when hovering for long periods, etc. Clearly there is something else going on here than simple secret aircraft...Even the dirigible theory has had to be discounted.

'It is a fact that most of the triangle cases seem to be happening over Belgian territory, and there does not seem to be any ready-made explanation for this, either.

Floating In A Beam Of Light

The Gundiah MacKay 'Alien Abduction'

We return to Australia for our next account, to a place called Gundiah, to be precise.

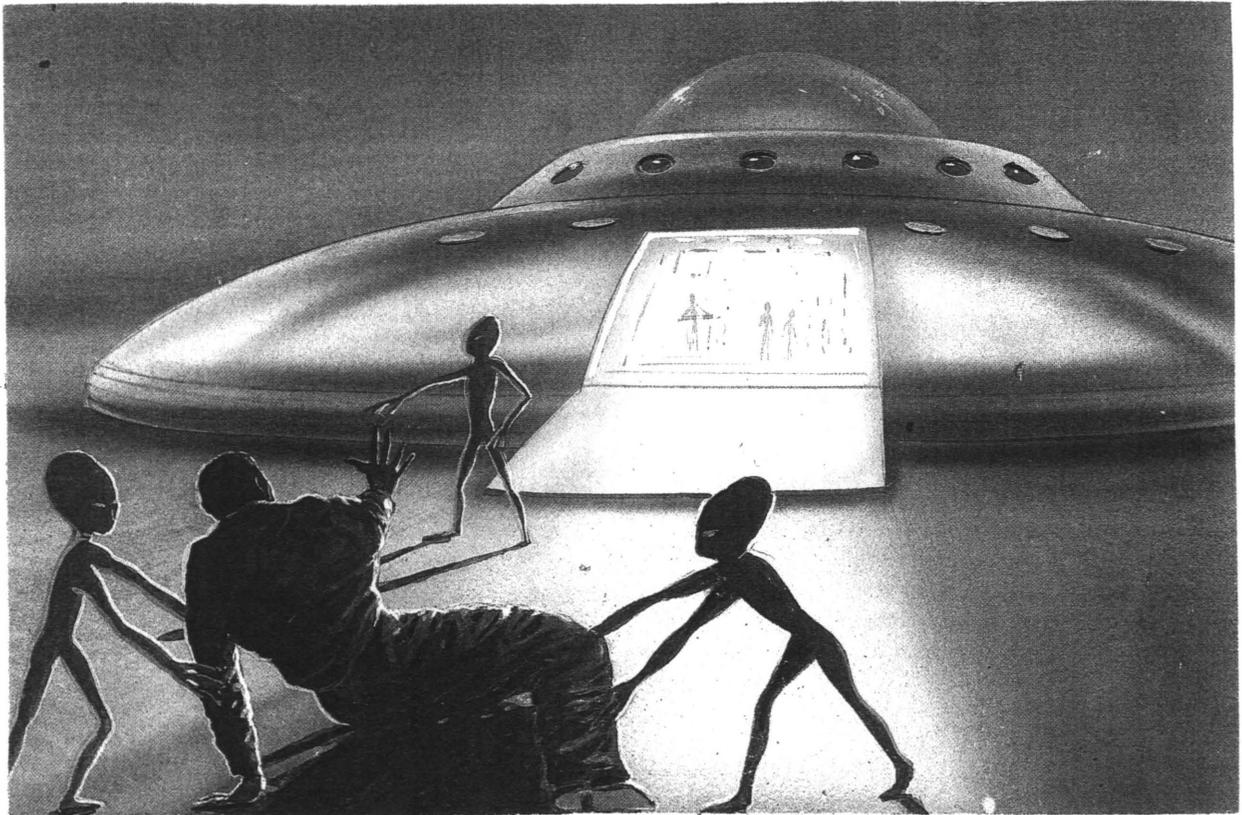
Back in the October of last year, in the midst of the archetypal dark and stormy night, Amy Rylance had fallen asleep on the couch in the living room while watching TV. Her husband Keith and a business partner, Petra Heller, both slept in bedrooms just off the living room.

Petra was awoken about 11:15pm by a very bright stream of light coming through the door of her bedroom, which was left ajar when she retired earlier. Displaying admirable/foolhardy (delete where applicable) courage she decided to go and investigate. When she went into the living room she claims she stumbled upon a scene so disturbing she fainted from the overpowering effects of it all. But prior to passing out, she managed to discern the sight of Amy, prone and in a sleeping position, being carried by this solid, rectangular beam of light through the air towards the source of the light, a classic disc-shaped UFO hovering just above the ground a short distance away. Also caught up in the beam were all the contents of the coffee table in front of the couch on which Amy had been sleeping.

Not surprisingly overwhelmed by this surreal sight, Petra slumped to the floor in a faint. When she came to her senses she instinctively called out for help and was in a state of extreme agitation. Keith reports that when he stumbled out of his room to see what the hell was going on Petra was practically incoherent. It took several minutes for Keith to be able to get the gist of what had apparently happened, but once he was able to understand they both ran outside to see if they could find any trace of Amy. But she was nowhere to be seen. She had completely disappeared.

Eventually, at their wits end, they decided to call the police and placed a call to the authorities. Officers from the Tiaro police arrived and struggled to remain objective and open-minded while they were told the incredible events of the evening.

They were able to confirm that Amy Rylance was indeed, nowhere to be found on the property. Both Keith and Petra were visibly upset and in a state of near hysteria. The torn screen was examined closely. A bush outside the window showed indications of being burned and another bush on the other side of the window was seemingly unaffected. Samples were taken for analysis and comparison.



And just when it seemed the night couldn't get any weirder, the phone rang. It was a woman calling to advise them that Amy had been taken to MacKay Hospital, where she was being examined by a doctor and treated for dehydration. Amy later gave a statement to the police stating that she had no recollection of ever having left the couch, but that she awoke to find herself prone on a bench in a strange, rectangular room. Illumination came from the walls and the ceiling and she had the impression that she had been there for some time. A male figure in a full body suit appeared who tried to calm her and assured her that they were going to be returning her to a place not far from where they had abducted her from, since *'the lights were wrong there and it was not safe to return her to that location.'*

She then says she fell back asleep and awoke on the ground, surrounded by trees. She was very disorientated and isn't at all sure how long she fumbled her way through the area before coming out onto a road and finding herself near a gas station. She stumbled into the station and was offered some water and accepted a ride to the hospital from there. She was found to have a strange, triangular arrangement of marks on her inner right thigh, marks on her head and her hair, which she had coloured earlier

in the week was growing out as if it had been in place much longer than just a few days. Body hair growth would also seem to indicate that a greater period of time had passed than would seem appropriate.

Keith contacted the Australian UFO Research Network office and investigations were underway at the time of going to press. *15th October, 2001 Gumdiah McKay, Australia 'AUFORN'*

UFO Sightings Double In Malaysia

And speaking of alleged Alien Abductions, one man in Malaysia claims he was abducted for a staggering 11 days after encountering a bizarre, square-headed entity (*no, it wasn't Joe Royle, apparently*).

The Centre for Malaysian UFO Studies was quoted as saying that six sightings were reported last year (2001) as opposed to three the previous year.

Ufologist Ahmad Jamaludin from the centre, says three of the sightings were reported in Sabah, two in Kedah and the other in Penang.

Of the abduction said to have taken place in February, 2001, he told the local newspaper, *THE STAR*; *This could be the first reported UFO abduction in Malaysia. Although the 11-day period was a little odd, as most UFO abduction victims usually go missing for two to three hours or up to five days only.*

The fact that there were some UFO activities around Kota Kinabalu at the time could lend some credence to the claim.'

Ahmad, who has studied UFOs since 1978, says his research on the phenomenon shows that there is a link between the UFO sightings and Earth's seismic activity.

'Gravitational forces emitted by objects cause the Earth's fault lines to shake, causing earthquakes and, at the same time, act as a guide for UFOs to reach Earth,' he somewhat surreally claimed.

7th January, 2002 Malaysia THE STAR'

'Oi, Churchill! Did You Cover Up Flying Saucers?'

According to an article in *THE OBSERVER*, last autumn, scientists and generals drew up a top secret dossier on UFOs, and then elected to cover up a wave of rumours and sightings that swept the British Isles in the paranoia-ridden 1950s.

The existence of *THE UFO REPORT*, compiled in 1951, and later used to brief then Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was denied by the MOD for almost 50 years. But the six-page document has recently been unearthed by UFO historians Andy Roberts and David Clarke as they researched a book on UFOs and the Cold War. The report has been a sort of 'holy grail' of British Ufology and details the conclusions of a shadowy panel called the Working Party On Flying Saucers. This group was the brainchild of Sir Henry Tizard, one of Churchill's most trusted scientific advisers during World War II, and a key figure behind the development of radar.

The report concludes that all sightings were explainable in purely rational terms, ie: meteors, unusual weather, misidentification of conventional aircraft etc, but it does speak volumes about the sheer scale of the paranoia that gripped Britain at the onset of the Cold War.

From 1950 onwards, hundreds of UFO sightings were reported across Britain and were regular front page news. Leading public figures, including Lord Louis Mountbatten, made public their belief that the Earth was being visited by extraterrestrials.

The phenomenon understandably caused great concern amongst the top brass on both sides of the Atlantic. Generals were worried that reports of flying saucers could be used by

the Soviet Union to disguise a nuclear attack or that the sightings were giving the Russians a clue that Britain's radar network was faulty and easy to penetrate - which was actually true at the time, though the Communist bloc remained ignorant of this.

'This was a time of great paranoia and fear. The Government took a decision to throw a blanket over the UFO scare and say as little as possible about it, Clarke was quoted as saying. There certainly was a cover up, but what was being covered up was Cold War paranoia and our fears over our radar system. It was nothing to do with aliens.'

Despite the official silence, the UFO scares failed to subside. In 1952, Churchill fired off a memo to his advisers in the wake of fresh UFO sightings in the United States.

'What does all this stuff about flying saucers amount to? What can it mean? What is the truth?' he wrote.

Tizard's report was then used to brief the Prime Minister on the perceived lack of real threat from UFOs in August of that year. A few months later, an order went out expressly banning all RAF personnel from discussing sightings with anyone not from the military.

In trying to underplay the sightings, Britain was following the lead of the United States (no change there then), which had conducted several studies into its own UFO sightings and also adopted a policy of official secrecy. When the British report was presented, a top CIA scientist travelled over to the meeting to make sure the conclusions of America's closest ally fitted in.

Even today, the report is unlikely to dispel the convictions of thousands of Ufologists, despite a reduction in the number of sightings and the closure last year of the British Flying Saucer Bureau. *'Believers will say that this report is a fake or a decoy and that the Government is still hiding something. You cannot win,'* stated Roberts.

As you may have gathered, Roberts and Clarke's explanation for UFO sightings are essentially prosaic. They believe that the true importance of the phenomenon lies in the fact that it was an urban myth that gained enough public power to panic the highest echelons of British Government...All the way to Winston Churchill.

21st October, 2001 THE OBSERVER'

Life From Space Theory Gets A Boost

Scientists have proved for the first time that bacteria can survive in outer space, supporting the theory that life on Earth began with extra-terrestrial microbes.

Researchers showed that spores could stay alive when exposed to ultraviolet radiation from the Sun if they were protected by particles of clay and red sandstone commonly found in meteorites.

The tests, in which spores were released from a Russian satellite, suggest that the 'panspermia' theory that life began elsewhere and was carried to Earth on meteorites is plausible. The hypothesis was first proposed by Svante Arrhenius, a Swedish chemist, way back in 1903, and was developed in the 1970s by the astronomers Sir Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe.

One theory is that an asteroid collision sent bacteria to Earth. Details of the study by a team from the German Aerospace Centre in Cologne, were printed in *NEW SCIENTIST*.

When spores were left unprotected or shielded only by quartz, they all perished. When protected by a 'meteorite mix,' between 10,000 and 100,000 survived out of a total of 50 million. The mix consisted of particles of clay, red sandstone, Martian meteorites or simulated Martian soil, in lumps of about a centimetre.

12th January, 2002 NEW SCIENTIST MAGAZINE'

Dark Entries

REVIEW: BBC2: The Secret Life Of Ghosts And Werewolves.
15-11-01: 21.00-22.00

Reviewed by Mike Ward

I am too much of a sceptic to deny the possibility of anything.

-T. H. Huxley,
1886

Being the ultra-professional scientist (and the thoroughly unprofessional cynic) that I am, it was with no great enthusiasm that I agreed to review this BBC2 programme centred around supernatural phenomena. Presented by Edward Fox, it gave a brief insight into the phenomena of ghosts, werewolves (unsurprising, given the title) and zombies (dead surprising, ho-hum) and provided some details of recent cases. Now, normally I'm one of those people that's made up my mind that I don't believe something before proceeding to not watch it, but I thought I'd give it a go. As Edward himself opined, *'We live in a world of rules, but sometimes things happen to make us question the world we inhabit'*. And he wasn't just talking about Pop Idol.

Bark At The Moon

The programme began with that classic horror legend, the werewolf. Professor Charlotte Otten, an author and historian (undoubtedly in that order), is convinced of their reality. She tells a story of a sixteenth century fellow called Stubb Peter who, for 25 years, revelled in his crimes of murder, rape and mutilation. Basically, not the sort of bloke a nice girl would take home to meet her parents. *"But mum, he's got his sensitive side. You just don't know 'Kruuckles' like I do"*. Stubb Peter was apprehended by a group of hunters and confessed (without torture, so they say) to being a werewolf, whereupon he was strapped to a spinning wheel and executioners pulled humps of flesh from him with red hot pincers. He was then decapitated and set on fire. A slight case of overcompensation you may think, but it was intended to serve as an example to other potential werewolves. If you can't do the time then don't do the crime (they had Daily Mail readers in those days too).

This was just one of dozens of werewolf trials in the sixteenth century. Bordeaux, the scene of one such trial in 1603, has also seen a fairly recent case. In 1989, a 28-year-old man invited a complete stranger to his house for a meal (as you do) and shortly after finishing the canapés, launched a vicious and unprovoked attack on his guest, beating the poor man to death with his bare hands (his own hands, not the guest's). Basically, the sort of thing you'd only expect to see on the celebrity episode of 'Can't Cook, Won't Cook', featuring Dr Crippin and Danny Mills. After his capture, the killer described symptoms of transformation into a werewolf. He told his psychiatrist, Prof Michel Benezech, *'My teeth grow longer...my skin is not my own, but that of a wolf...I want to bite and drink blood and eat flesh'*. He was subsequently diagnosed with lycanthropy (the killer, not the psychiatrist). As if to give this case an appropriate level of gravitas and credibility, the programme then featured an interview with Dr. Raj Persaud, the resident headworker from 'RICHARD AND JUDY', someone whose opinion has as much weight as a supermodel's breakfast. He informs us that lycanthropy is in fact a psychotic delusion where the

sufferer genuinely *believes* that they are turning into a wolf. Unfortunately, he fails to identify the psychotic delusion where a talentless husband-and-wife horror show genuinely *believe* that they are turning into respected TV interviewers by moving their 'work' to teatime Channel 4, but we'll let that pass. Dr Hamdy Moselhy described a patient who was convinced that her hands were turning into claws. A brain scan found a lesion in the area of her brain associated with controlling hands and feet. QED. Brain damage = lycanthropy. This is, of course, a perfectly logical argument, but you cannot conclude from this single study that this holds true for all cases. The erstwhile Dr Persaud informs us that lycanthropy may also be caused by a mental illness such as manic depression (rather than physical damage) and that the majority of people receiving treatment for lycanthropy eventually recover. And if any of you are even thinking of the *'I used to be a werewolf, but.....'* joke, you will be rounded up, taken outside during the next full moon and shot through the head with a silver bullet. All werewolf clichés which (to its credit) did not appear in this programme. Mr Fox summarises by sombrely announcing that our friend the dinner-guest bludgeoner from Bordeaux refused treatment for lycanthropy and has been released into the community and the authorities are convinced he will strike again. A chilling thought. However, I don't think we in Britain need to worry, as if he does, in any way, resemble an animal, the French farmers will probably set fire to him as soon as he reaches Calais.

Unfinished Monkey Business

So whilst impaired brain function may lead someone to *think* that they're a werewolf, how could they also *look* like one? The programme attempts to explain this using sightings of wild, half-human/half-beast creatures, such as the infamous Monkeyman of Delhi. Reports described a creature with *'the head of a monkey and eyes of a cat'* and a six-foot hairy black figure that could *'jump twenty feet into the air'*. Sanal Edamarku of the Indian Rationalists Association described mass fear and panic in which three people died in the rush to escape attack. Police collected hundreds of eye-witness accounts and 3000 officers had worked on the case.

Could the Monkeyman just be a 'rogue' monkey? Dr. Iqbal Malik, a primatologist, described how wild monkeys roaming in Delhi often go into peoples houses steal food from the fridge. They are cheeky monkeys, but they wouldn't attack without provocation. We are left to assume that this wasn't an issue, and that the people of Delhi do not have some new sport involving pelting six-foot monkeys with rotten fruit, or hitting them with big sticks. Or monkey tennis. No, Dr. Malik is 100% convinced that this creature was not a real monkey. Perhaps it is a human that *looks* like a monkey? After all, anyone who saw the 'Madchester' bands of the early 90's could understand the confusion. So, short of a six-foot man in a gorilla suit with a concealed pogo stick, what could make a human look like a monkey? Enter the *feral children* (not literally, as that would be hideous) or children that have lived in the wild. A famous example was the Wolf Girls of India, who were found in a wolf's lair by an Indian missionary in the 1920's. Despite numerous attempts to change their behaviour, he found that they continued to walk on all fours and behave like animals. I'm sure Patsy Kensit would sympathise with him. Prof Douglas Candland, a primatologist from Bucknell

University, Pennsylvania informs us that there have been over 400 reported cases since 1700. The striking characteristic of these children is that they are exceptionally hairy, EXCEPT for their buttocks (an unfortunate bareness which rules them out as future rugby players). One of his cases was that of John Ssebunya in Uganda. At the age of five, he saw his father kill his mother and fearing for his own life he took refuge in the nearby forest, where he was raised by monkeys. He has no idea how long he was with the monkeys before he was rescued but he is now a teenager. When found he was covered in thick grey hair, except for his buttocks. Why was he so hairy? Cut to Prof Hubert Lacey, an expert in eating disorders from St Georges Hospital Medical School in London, who informs us that excess hairiness often appears after hormonal imbalances and certain cancers but can also appear after excess starvation. A selective advantage may be gained as the hair traps air and gives warmth after the body's fat reserves have been exhausted (much like a fart trapped in a sleeping bag). This hairiness may explain these half-man/half-beast creatures. As far as the Monkeyman is concerned, we may never know as the sightings stopped after two intensive weeks in the spotlight (again, like most early '90's Madchester bands).

At this point the programme seems to leave us to assume that the werewolves of legend and fiction are just excessively hairy people with defective brains that spend half their lives walking on all fours and cause untold pain and misery to those unfortunate enough to meet them. Well, we've all had dates like that. I blame poor disco lighting myself.

Voodoo Lady, Black Magic Child

Next stop, the island of Haiti, home of voodoo. Witch doctors claim to be able to raise corpses to become their slaves (or *zombies*). They prey on the newly dead and the Haiti authorities take this practise so seriously that it is now a criminal offence to raise the dead (that's why there's no Haitian word for Goodison Park). Official records are harder to find than a needle in a male student's flat, but there is one famous case. Clavius Narcise was declared dead at the Albert Schweitzer hospital in 1962. He claims he was taken from his tomb and revived by a witch doctor and only when his master died did he return home. His undertaker, Antoine Veus, recognised Clavius by virtue of a scar where he had been hit by a hammer during coffinisation (as George Dubya would probably say). He was readmitted to the hospital in 1980 with a hernia and gave his occupation as '*zombie*'. Dr John Judson (an American doctor who, disconcertingly, looks more like a zombie than Clavius ever did) admitted '*I cannot explain it, there are some things in this world which are unexplained*'. Like the Bermuda Triangle for instance. How a song like that ever became a hit I'll never know, but I digress. Witchdoctor Boss Oriel (who sounds like a leading brand of washing powder, '*Our black magic keeps it's blackness over 50% longer than other similarly-priced witch doctors or your money back*') is prepared to spill the beans. A brave thing to do, as breaking the magic circle of voodoo is not exactly like letting out the secrets of Paul Daniels (a man of such wondrous magic, he couldn't even produce a convincing toupee). Apparently, it is all done with a powder which puts his victims into a deep coma. He then breaks into their tombs and revives them, although he refuses to give the recipe. However, witch doctor Ludovic Bruno goes further and claims the powder contains crushed 'sea toad' bones and liver. Sea toad is what the witch doctor calls the puffer fish (or fugu in Japan), a delicacy which is potentially lethal. The liver, skin and ovaries contain a poison called TTX (tetrodotoxin) which can cause almost total paralysis whilst

the victim is still conscious, as experienced by John Zamora, a man (read idiot) who ate an illegally imported puffer fish and became paralysed. He survived as doctors were able to keep him alive until the poison wore off as it was only a low dose. And there's the rub. The dose has to be exact, and there is a 0.001g difference between the desired effect and death in animals. Effectively, the method is about as reliable as a plumber's estimate. So it seems unlikely that it could be used with any consistency to induce 'zombification' and the programme expands no further. If true, it may be that the witch doctors have a very low success rate (think Andy Cole), plus no-one would actually see the failed attempts as they would have appeared dead to begin with.

Back to the Foxster: 'Most of us do not believe that the dead can physically return but there are many who believe that the dead can communicate with the living'. And thus we are neatly brought to the final part - that of ghosts and spirits.

Ghost In The Machine

In September 1977, the nation was gripped by the 'Enfield Poltergeist' case, an apparent poltergeist in the home of a mother and four children. Eyewitnesses claimed they saw furniture moving as if pushed by an invisible force. These eyewitnesses included officers of the Metropolitan police, who, to be fair, can be utterly trusted. Oh, yes. Especially in the 1970's when their record was as clean as a blind coalminers arse. Objects were flying through the air (or falling down the stairs, your Honour) and strange sounds were coming from the walls. At this point the family contacted the Psychical Society and the case was investigated by Maurice Grosse, a man with a moustache the size of Arbroath. It was his first case and for 18 months it ate into his time like rust in an antique clock shop with a leaky roof. To begin with, tape recorders were set up in different rooms. One such recording was played where the eleven-year-old daughter Janet had been pulled out of bed and thrown across the room. Maurice was convinced he was dealing with a poltergeist.

Dr Chris French, a psychologist from Goldsmiths College of the University of London, suggests modern parapsychologists believe not in a poltergeist spirit, but in externalised energy, often from a troubled adolescent (aren't they all?). The incidents seemed to centre around Janet, who had been most affected by her parents' recent divorce. At one point, cameras were placed in Janet's room and the pictures seemed to suggest Janet was levitating above the bed. Sceptics claimed Janet had just jumped, but the cameraman involved claims the pictures could not have been a hoax. The camera was operating at such a fast shutter speed that Janet had gone from lying down to vertically upright in the air above the bed within one-sixth of a second. Maurice found further evidence when the poltergeist acquired a voice when Maurice was being answered by a deep guttural voice, coming from the mouth of 11-year-old Janet. Dozens of other witnesses also heard her talk in this voice. When questioned, the voice claimed to belong to a man called Bill who '*fell asleep and died in a chair in a corner downstairs*'. Further investigation showed that a man called Bill had indeed died under those circumstances years earlier. This evidence persuaded the national newspapers to run the story. Dr. Chris French is unconvinced. Whilst believers say she couldn't have kept up that voice as part of a hoax without damage to her vocal cords, he claims it is possible. He also informs us that Janet's uncle had told of her training herself to speak with this voice. So was it a hoax? If so, how could so many people be fooled? Dr. French believes that people WANT to accept anything that suggests there is life after death and that Maurice (who had

lost a young daughter tragically a couple of years earlier) was more susceptible than most. This was also the biggest case he'd ever worked on and he may have desperately wanted it to be true, to the detriment of rationality. A patronising and ungracious argument, I think, but what can you expect of psychologists. The family involved did not want to talk about the events but all had previously signed statements confirming that they had told the truth. So Chris is doubtful and Maurice believes that the evidence *'speaks for itself'* (as, indeed, did old Bill). Back to Eddy to sum up, *'So it all depends which side of the fence you're on. Either you accept Maurice's interpretation of events, or you think he and the other witnesses were hoaxed'*. Nice one, Sherlock.

Underneath The Arches

Mr Fox says, *'Sometimes there is more to ghosts than simple trickery'*. Good to see he has an open mind. The world's largest ghost hunt took place early in 2001 in Edinburgh, a city which has a reputation as the most haunted in Europe. A lone piper is said to walk the battlements of Edinburgh castle, although that god-awful racket they make means that one is more than enough. The castle and its dungeons are said to be haunted by the ghosts of French soldiers imprisoned there during the 18th century (sounds like a right barrel of laughs). Dr. Richard Wiseman and a team of researchers set up the ghost hunt using *'hi-tech'* equipment (i.e. a camcorder and some pencils and paper) and over 240 volunteers. He took them to the *'most haunted place in Edinburgh'*, the vaults under the South Bridge. Fran Hollinrake, a tour guide, is convinced that the vaults deserve their reputation (although I wonder which came first – the Road-to-Damascus-style conversion or the fat cheque from the Edinburgh tourist board?). *'Not one week has gone by without somebody having something strange happening to them'*. None of them on the programme though, I notice. These chambers have only recently opened after being walled-up for years. Since then, there have been reported sightings of eight different spirits including *'an angry man wielding a knife and a mischievous little boy'*. No, I have no idea why he was wielding the mischievous little boy. Are these experiences real? Dr Wiseman, a researcher from the University of Hertfordshire, wanted to see if the volunteers experienced anything similar. He convinced them to spend time alone in the vaults under *'controlled'* conditions. I prefer the term *'monitored'* as any ghostly axe-wielding zombie in the vicinity is not going to be controlled by a C90 tape and a microphone. Some of these vaults had a reputation as being haunted; others did not. 40% of the volunteers reported some sort of experience, mainly that of a sensed presence. One volunteer saw *'a man in a leather apron'*, although this may have been a flashback to the last weeks underground butcher-themed S&M night. On analysing the data, Dr Wiseman discovered something very interesting, and probably not unexpected: those who experienced the ghostly phenomena were in the *'haunted'* vaults. So, is this proof that there are spirits there? The equipment provided other explanations. The *'haunted'* vaults had more air movement (which may explain some of the physical experiences such as the sense of someone brushing past or breathing) and unusual variation in magnetic fields. Could these magnetic fields make people feel a ghostly presence? Dr Michael Persinger of the Laurentian University, Ontario thought so. He can induce supernatural experiences in a special chamber using magnetic fields and one such experiment showed a woman strapped into a chair and, using a *'special helmet'*, was exposed to intense and varying magnetic fields: *'something's got hold of my left leg...horrid...it's as though*

something's pulling me and I can't see what it is...this is odd, I don't know what I'm frightened about, I'm really scared'. What I want to know is what kind of person volunteers to have unnaturally high levels of magnetic force pumped through their brains? It's no wonder the likes of Hitler get to run countries when people are willing to go along with anyone who wears a white coat and has the word *'doctor'* in front of their name. The magnetic fields detected in the vaults were not as intense as those in Dr. Persinger's lab, but the effects were eerily similar.

However, other invisible forces may be at work. Vic Tandy (who is not a 1960's club singer or a 1980's home computer) is a scientist from Coventry University and his laboratory was the scene of some supernatural shenanigans. The cleaning lady swore she had seen a ghost in the lab. Others had reported a strange sense of presence in the room. Vic was dubious until he was alone in the lab one night. Feeling like someone was watching him, he felt a chill, began to perspire and the hairs stood up on the back of his neck (imagine the Rocky Horror Show without the *'fun'* costumes). He noticed moving shadows by his shoulder as if something was behind him. A grey object appeared in his peripheral vision, and when he turned to look it disappeared. The next day, he was working with a foil blade when it began to vibrate on its own. He began to worry, but like any good scientist, when he put his imagination on hold he realised that the blade must be getting energy from somewhere. A bit of detective work later, he tracked it down to a sound wave at a frequency of 19Hz being produced by an industrial fan. On switching off the fan, the blade ceased vibrating. He described a sense of freshness that entered the room when the fan was off, as if *'someone had thrown open the doors...it was much less oppressive'*. The sound wave was below hearing range (infrasound) and, as demonstrated by the blade, the wave can also affect the eye by inducing vibration, causing smears in peripheral vision. These infrasound waves have also been shown to cause hyperventilation, leading to feelings of panic. Vic was convinced that this was responsible for the occurrences in his lab, but could it explain other ghost sightings? He took himself, his theory and some gadgets to a local 14th century cellar with a haunted reputation and looked for low-frequency sound waves. And guess what? Well I'd love to say that he came out of that cellar shaking, struck dumb and his hair had turned white but you know what's coming. Yep, there were sound waves present around the door where sightings had been reported. So, can infrasound and magnetic fields explain everything the Edinburgh volunteers saw and felt? Emma Beeby was one of the volunteers who heard somebody breathing and was terrified. As she talked to the camera about it, she noticed that the breathing seemed to restrain itself as if there was some sort of interaction with her. Could this be her mind at work? She is still unsure what to believe.

The last words of this relaxing hour of murder, mystery and mayhem go to Mr Fox. *'It is easy to dismiss people who report bizarre experiences as unreliable, hysterical, deluded. But perhaps we can find a place for apparently supernatural events in our world. We have seen how fear of ghosts can be generated by natural phenomena. Our belief in werewolves can be triggered by mental illness and how zombies could be the product of simple but effective poisoning. All these explanations may in time be proved wrong, some of them after all seem a little improbable, but as the great detective Sherlock Holmes once said, "once you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth"'*. Amen to that.

STOP PRESS!!!

'Area 51 Moves To Maine'

A web site christened with the name www.CounterEvidence.com, claims that the infamous Area 51, previously sited at Groom Lake, Nevada, has moved, at least partially, to Maine.

The precise location is the Worumbo Mill in Lisbon Falls. A spokesman from the site was quoted as saying; *'Area 51, the mecca of conspiracy theorists, is famous as the test site of the U-2 spy plane in the 1950s and various other secret aircraft thereafter. But conspiracy theorists make darker allegations. They claim the site is home to crashed alien spacecraft, back-engineered alien technology and even alien bodies, alive or not.'*

'A 1997 Popular Mechanics article claimed that the US Airforce has officially abandoned Area 51. But we at CounterEvidence claim that several projects from the area were loaded into military aircraft in 2001, and moved to undisclosed locations. Our researchers tracked the aircraft to Brunswick Naval Air Station and a convoy of trucks from Brunswick to Lisbon Falls.'

'They stopped at the Worumbo Mill.'

Local residents would beg to differ, however.

Frank Anicetti, who owns Frank's Famous Frozen Fruited Flavours, just across the street from the blanket mill, which dominates the southeastern edges of the main drag, told reporters; *'Well, I would say that this comes as news to the folks around here. I think I might have noticed if a military convoy rolled through town and set up shop. Except for workers, the only traffic at the Worumbo Mill is bargain shoppers visiting the outlet store.'*

Another resident, Jo Miller, also states that she couldn't have failed to notice such a dramatic arrival of men and equipment. She is co-owner of and manager of the mill and the accompanying outlet store. For the past eight years she has watched workers knit blankets - *'good, old-fashioned blankets. The most high-tech material we use here is Rayon.'* The complex consists of the outlet store, administrative offices, the mill, a hydroelectric plant...And the mysterious Building 14.

'That's just our warehouse,' Miller asserts.

'Some of the machinery is new, but much of it has been in use for a number of years. Some machines built to make yarn haven't been used since the 1950s.'

'As to why the conspiracy researchers at CounterEvidence picked Lisbon Falls and my mill, I have a theory of my own.'

'It's the name, Worumbo, and the way it rolls off the tongue. They always have trouble saying it on the radio. It's just one of those words.'

Other Lisbon Falls residents seem equally surprised to discover that their hometown is the new home to 'Conspiracy Central,' and have been quick to assert that nothing out of the ordinary has been seen in the locale.

'I'd be surprised if they (aliens) even knew Lisbon Falls or Worumbo even existed,' said Amanda Coyne of Lisbon House Pizza's.

The web site's choice of Worumbo will remain a mystery. Rival researchers are either unaware of CERC's claims or are just plain ignoring them.

Phone calls and e-mails to the consortium's Washington D.C., go unanswered. A recording advises *'You are calling from a non-secure line and cannot be connected directly to our offices. Please call back using a secure phone line.'*

An e-mail request for information or an interview was turned down by 'Jay Michael's' in the public affairs and legal offices of the consortium.

'Please understand that it is not the policy of CERC to grant media interviews,' Jay Michaels wrote. *'We do not go out of our way to garner external publicity on our findings.'*

Michaels never replied to subsequent messages sent by local journalists to his law.com e-mail address. Law.com, it turns out, is a free and anonymous service available to anyone with a computer.

CERC's story was first posted on the Internet in January, 2001, and a second report posted in February of the same year, delivers more information, but only to paying members. Later updates, scheduled to appear monthly through July, 2001, never materialised. According to the Web site, those reports are still being edited and will be released when they are finished.

Yeah, right.

Locals remain understandably sceptical, but best-selling horror writer Stephen King, a Durham native, didn't seem to be surprised by the rumour. King used to work in the mill for a time as a young man.

'If ever there was a place to stick aliens, Worumbo Mill was it,' reportedly said through his assistant.

And still, Anicetti wonders.

'When you get right down to it, Maine would be perfect for that kind of thing. There's a lot of land where you could do something without most people ever knowing. And the people here just let you work without bothering you.'

'In fact, the more I think about it, the more I am willing to believe it...Or at least a part of it.'

'If there is anything to this, I bet the story that it's at the mill was designed to throw everyone off the track. I bet it's really going on someplace else...Like Lewiston.'

26th February, 2002 Lisbon Falls, Maine, USA 'LEWISTON SUN JOURNAL'

Teenager Encouraged To Kill By Demonic Entities

And finally, for this issue, consider if you will the story of 18-year-old Kyle Hulbert, of Millersville, Maryland, USA, who confessed to the sword slaying of a prominent scientist, claiming fantasy creatures granted him permission to kill in order to protect a friend.

Kyle apparently believed that biophysicist Robert M. Schwartz, 57, was trying to murder his own daughter, Kyle's friend, by lacing lemons with sulphuric acid and poisoning her pork chops. Hulbert, who has been diagnosed as schizophrenic, said he was angered by 19-year-old Clara Jane Schwartz's accounts of her father's abuse. The pair had been friends since meeting at the Maryland Renaissance Festival in October, 2001. *'I have always told Clara that I would protect her,'* he wrote.

He said the final straw came after Clara allegedly claimed her father *'wanted to make sure she did not come back from a family trip.'* *'That was all I could take,'* he wrote.

The teenager said Vampires and creatures named Ordog, Sabba and Nicodemus then gave him permission to protect his *'closest, most dear friend.'*

Kyle said that after he stabbed Schwartz with a 27-inch sword at the scientist's rural farmhouse, he drank his victim's blood and went into *'a frenzy.'*

Along with Hulbert, Clara Schwartz, Michael Pfohl, 21, and Katherine Inglis, 19, are, at the time of writing, awaiting trial on first-degree murder charges. The four have told police they share a devotion to fantasy realms dominated by Vampires and Witchcraft.

Schwartz's mother, Mary, stated that it was *'absolutely absurd'* that Robert would try to poison his daughter, and incomprehensible that Clara would help plan the slaying.

26th February, 2002 Maryland USA 'ASSOCIATED PRESS'