

# Folklore Frontiers



Goss, Pennick, Roberts & Screeton

# FOLKLORE FRONTIERS No. 6

#### FOLKLORE FRONTIERS IS AN INDEPENDENT NON-PROFITMAKING MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO FOLKLORE, PARTICULARLY WHAT IS GENERALLY KNOWN AS URBAN BELIEF TALES.

#### IT IS PUBLISHED AND EDITED BY PAUL SCREBTON. ADDRESS IS 5 EGTON DRIVE, SEATON CAREW, HARTLEPOOL, CLEVELAND, TS25 2AT.

#### SUBSCRIPTION RATES: U.K. £3 for 4 issues; U.S. 8 dollars. PLEASE MAKE ALL CHEQUES/P.O.s OUT TO P.SCREBTON ONLY. DOLLAR NOTES PREFERRED FROM U.S. OR ADD EXTRA FOR BANK CHARGES.

#### PRINTED BY EMJAY REPROGRAPHICS, 17 LANGBANK AVENUE, RISE PARK, NOTTINGHAM, NG5 5BU.

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Some correspondence to F.F. may have been destroyed by a former Hartlepool postman. George Jackson (after the black activist of Bob Dylan's song killed in prison and "Brookside's" criminal, the name seems fated) resigned in February and an invoice for a stolen sex aid was found in a top pocket of his old uniform. The vibrator led to the exposure of almost two months of criminal activities, basically interfering with Seaton carew mail. So the oddly-shaped parcel and his inability to wrap it back properly earned him 200 hours' community service in July. Certainly also a sack of unopened letters for Seaton were dumped in an incinerator on his last day as he did not want to deliver them.

## COVER STORY

Thought chastity belts no longer existed? No way! On the cover we have model Victoria White sporting the Britsafe lock-off safety clasp and accompanying medieval chastity belt. Use of the clasp would prevent 83% of deaths arising from maintenance of industrial machinery. You see, F.F. is not into gratuitous sexism -- we support safety in factories. Also the picture illustrates a few items.

Blacksmith John Girvan makes and sells chastity belts with padlock and key for £20 each in Devizes, Wilts (Sun, 7/9/87).

The a 22-year-old Peruvian woman died of an infection caused by a rusty padlock on the chastity belt her jealous husband forced her to wear while he was away on business trips. police in Lima said. Rosa Esquen died three days previously, they said, from septicemic poisoning after the rusty lock on the tight leather chastity belt dug into her flesh and caused a fatal infection when her husband Dionicio was delayed on his last trip -- or so Reuter reported (27/6/87).

However, what's sauce for the gander ... if you believe it, a red-faced unnamed 36-year-old man awoke after a drunken night in Chaddesden, Derbys., to find his pals had put a padlock around his manhood. Fire brigade officers who used bolt cutters to free him said he was "jumpy"

during the operation (Star, 14/9/87).

There was also a grisly report of a jealous doctor who sewed up his unfaithful wife's vagina as she lay unconscious on an operating table. It sound as if could be true, but the curious are directed to (The People, 25/10/87).

## NEWSLINES AND UPDATE

OPERA HOOLIGANS. In a letter to The Guardian (6/8/87) it was claimed that during a performance of "Orphe & Euridice" at Glyndebourne the year previously a group of tipsy opera hooligans broke into a chant of "Here we go, here we go, here we go" as Orpheus set off for the Underworld.

DIRTY DOGS. Jan Harold Brunvand popularized the fame of the Welsh village of Beddgelert in "The Choking Doberman." Its legendary hound, you may recall, was killed by his master Prince Llewellyn in the mistaken assumption that his bloodied dog had killed his child. In fact, the greyhound had saved it from a wolf. According, dubiously I feel, to the Daily Telegraph's Peterborough of 19/8/87 a "wild west show" arrived at the village and insensitively erected a large sign on the parish boundary renaming the community "Dead Dog City."

PILOT WHALE TUMOUR STORIES? Paul Smith popularized the humorist airline pilot's downfall in "The Book of Nastier Legends." The D. T.'s Peterborough, again, records a reader's alarm at the Irish co-pilot on an Air Europe flight welcoming him aboard "on behalf of Captain Jetbasher and his crew." The columnist was assured by another Smith, Peter, of parent company International Leisure Group that..."There's nothing to worry about. He's an Iranian called N'Jetbasha and he really is a most experienced pilot." (17/3/87). Peterborough again on the case of a British Airways shuttle from Belfast (Irish connection again) to London where the plane taxied along the runway the captain welcomed them to Moscow, adding "only joking" to his panic-stricken audience, "It's Heathrow really." (2/8/87).

ROTHERHAM TRIANGLE. The national pollen count service is run from Rotherham, S. Yorks., by Bob Crosby, who has fallen victim to...hay fever (Sun, 4/7/87). Contamination rumours spread around Wales Comprehensive School, Thurcroft, S. Yorks., that Bryn Blockley had planted dozens of maggots in the school's beans, but the lad had only smuggled one from a biology lesson and left it wriggling near the hot-plates in the dining-room before lunch (Sun, 23/5/87).

FUNERARY RITES. An exhausted budgie fell on the deck of H.M.S. Ariadne as the frigate exercised off Cornwall, and when it died, Joey was put in a tiny mahogany coffin and slipped overboard (Sun, 23/7/87). More bizarre yet modern was tragic parents Patrick and Susan Bradshaw cementing a lager bottle into their garden as a memorial to son Michael (19), who hanged himself. Mr Bradshaw, of Abbey Wood, S. London, said jobless Michael loved lager and "it seemed fitting" (Sun, 27/7/87).

YUCCA. Remember in F.F. 1 we rounded up the deadly spiders under the roots of an imported potted yucca plant story. A Steve Owens heard squeaks from his plant and the garden shop in Fareham, Hants., said: "Evacuate the house!" Or presumably not the shop but a spokesman, but it was a condensed two paragraph piece in the News of the World of 18/10/87. It added: "Then he spotted a nest of deadly tarantulas. Experts warned other yucca fans to watch out." All very dubious!!

ALIEN BIG CATS Almost all quiet on the A.B.C. front, but The Sun (5/10/87) had a beast seen on the roof of a Taunton, Somerset, town centre pub. Landlady Eunice Warrington said: "It was a lynx. I was so scared I called the police. That's a fair way from Exmoor and I wonder how many landladies have her ability to recognize the differences between exotic felines. As for the elusive giant cat of County Durham, it reappeared after six months. Two men chased the brown beast with white-tipped tale near Sedgfield (Evening Gazette, Middlesbrough, 16/6/87).

IT'S A GAS. "Psst, hey Jimmy, would you like free gas forlife?" Farmers with a gas main going across their land in the east of Scotland have been so approached by one of the gangers. According to the story the farmer falls for this line, parts with several hundred pounds for his private pipeline off the main and settles back to enjoy his ill-gotten gas ... which runs out in a few days because it is coming from a buried Calor gas cylinder. This story has been going the rounds in gossip and the media this autumn and I found it challenged in The Journal, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (9/11/87). Writer Fordyce Maxwell also linked it with the Circle Rose milk cultures for cosmetics scam where 2,000 people - mainly farmers uncharacteristically gullible here - had invested a minimum of £300, many much more.

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI. In F.F. 3 Mike Goss looked critically at sniffer dog stories. Well already dogs are old hat. Drugs squad chic now means they use sniffer mongoses in the U.S. They can reach parts dogs can't and those people who object on religious grounds to having their personal belongings inspected by a dog, apparently don't seem to mind a mongoose (The Independent, 15/9/87).

IT'S JUST NOT TENNIS. Cameras at Wimbledon caught out a boss beith unfaithful as you'll recall from page 20 of F.F. 1. The story was so good it was resurrected by Today (19/6/87) as a memory of the previous year when one washed-out day had as the only action for TV cameras a couple necking under a Courvoisier umbrella. Nice exposure for the drinks company, but the couple, a businessman and his secretary, had among the viewers his wife at home.

PLAYING THE GOAT. Between trains I called in The Queen's Hotel, Retford, Notts., and overheard patrons discussing a newspaper story about goats in Cheddar Gorge getting vertigo and having to be rescued by two climbers (various 7/7/87). Then one customer recalled the well-known tale of firemen having rescued an old lady's cat from a tree and having had a cup of tea driving off and running over the moggie. "Oh yes, I remember that," another nodded sagely. So should we also treat sceptically the goat tale (The Independent discussed the merits of demerits of goats climbing trees). And talking of vertigo, the Star the next day (8/7/87) pictured a topless Carol Needham, who "holidays in Kenya, dislikes heights as they make her queasy and once fancied being a reporter. What an Afro-dizzy-hack!" Ouch!!

COP THIS. During the humour-starved General Election campaign, loudspeakers produced two tales worth mention. In Paisley, local police asked if the message coming from the Labour loudspeakers could be changed. One or two sensitive souls had misunderstood the slogan: "Vote Buchan Labour" delivered in a Glaswegian accent. In Hendon South, where Louise Christian ("The police are the salmonella in the sandwich") was standing, a complaint was made about a Labour van exhorting people to "Vote Christian" in Golders Green (Dogberry column, Police, July, 1987).

THE SECRET ROOM. The Mail, Hartlepool (30/4/87) carried a letter claiming an electrician got lost in Porton Down warfare testing station and opened a door. "At first I thought I was ill. I thought I was seeing things, and then I went a little nearer and looked," he said. "It was a little monkey enclosed in a glass case - a sort of box. Its eyes seemed to be falling out and it couldn't breathe. It was in dreadful, dreadful distress. I forgot everything and went near and said something to it, and it buried its head in its arm and sobbed like a child." The writer then urged readers into anti-vivisection action. My reply elicited crank mail, but a neighbour revealed to me he had been an instructor at Porton Down and said nothing so cruel as described happened there, though experiments did take place on animals - and human volunteers. (See also F.F. 4 letter by Peter Rogerson, page 2).

# FOLKLORE meets FORTEANA

## Michael Goss

Here's a nice little newspaper report about a bleary-eyed toad rescued from inside a block of coal by a chance blow from a miner's shovel. Nothing to get excited about, really; you doubtless realize that there are hundreds of similar entombed toad accounts and if you don't ... well, if you don't, Bob Skinner has been wasting his time.

And here's another (not quite so nice) about a girl who vomitted up a small snake. ((Editor: see our THE HISSING OF SUMMER LAWNS round-up in this issue)). She'd fallen asleep on the bank of a river somewhere or other - had a bad habit of sleeping with her mouth open, this girl - snake crawled into her mouth, down her throat - she felt nauseous afterwards (not surprisingly, eh?) - someone got her to drink a saline solution to settle her stomach and WHOOMP! - up and out came the serpent. There's no shortage of THAT kind of story, either.

But ... are these REPORTS or STORIES? The newspapers' tacit insistence that they are bona fide records of actual events is not a safe guide because they are quite capable of printing a piece of fiction in the guise of fact - just as an oral narrator will corroborate that a thoroughgoing urban legend was the actual experience of a friend of a friend who never existed. The difference isn't just academic. Either these reports are all telling us that highly unlikely sounding things really and truly happen in this universe of ours despite the dictates of Science on what is or isn't possible - in which case they are the province of Fortean; OR they show that untrue stories disguised as true ones recur timelessly and perhaps perversely thanks to our insatiable love of the bizarre, the extraordinary, the cautionary ... in which case they belong to all of us, but especially to the folklorists.

Questions like these surfaced during a discussion-session at this year's Perspectives on Contemporary Legend Seminar arranged by Sheffield University's Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language: the fifth of what has become an annual and international event with irresistible charms for those who want to know what urban belief tales, rumour legends or whale tumour stories have been getting up to. Over the period July 20-24 more than a score of legend-fanciers from varying parts of the world - Britain, Europe, the U.S.A. and beyond - had a chance to contribute to the proceedings. And this year, at special recommendation of the seminar's arranger Dr Paul Smith - he of the Nasty Legends and Photocopier Lore books - Fortean were invited to air their views and to ask why folklorists don't spend a little time on pondering the possibility that what they treat as stories could have more than a mere semblance to actual events. Anomalous, maybe ... but actual nonetheless.

This report of the seminar is biased, sad to say, since the writer could only attend for one day out of five - the day on which the Folklore/Fortean session was held, needless to add. Prior and subsequent to that discussion, the perspectives had come thick and fast. They ranged from theoretical issues like Drs Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith's paper on the chronology of contemporary legend research or Jon Erickson's "Structural Properties of the Urban Legend as Genre Type" to geographical/cultural developments and examples (Marion Bowman on a "malleable migration legend" from the Greek island of Kastellorizo, Heike Starke on "The Modern Legend in Germany" and Abdelmajid Zeggaff's remarks on a Moroccan hero-legend). The ever-popular Vanishing Hitchhiker reared his or her head yet again courtesy of Mark Glazer, who looked at the effect of the informal setting in which the story is usually told; also from the U.S. came William Fox's "Roommate's Suicide" (a contemporary college legend related to the American grades system) and

Eleanor Wachs' report of a gory Boston rumour about female snappers mugged and mutilated in dressing-rooms of suburban malls. There were urban maniacs - having the Halifax Slasher gatecrash a seminar held in the Halifax Hall of Residence was only fair, after all; there were papers on AIDS (Paul Smith), diet lore (Angelika Schmetze) and others which showed how legends reflect aspects of city life (Dan Barnes).

At this point I'm going to abandon the futile effort to summarise all that went on at Sheffield that week; you will be able to reread it in much more detail when the papers are gathered into the 1987 volume of "Perspectives on Contemporary Legend." ((Keep an eye on F.F. for news of when it comes available. You can already get the first and second volumes from the 1982 and 1983/4 seminars at £8 and £8-95 respectively by writing to the Publications Secretary, Centre for English Cultural Tradition & Language, The University, Sheffield, S10 2TN).

The Folklore/Fortean discussion (formally entitled "Contemporary Legend: An Alternative View of the Belief/Truth Debate" chaired by Paul Smith) took its lead from a letter sent to Dr Smith by Bob Rickard querying whether it was advisable for folklorists to disregard the authenticity of multiple anomalies accounts - rains of fish, for example - and to treat them as "just stories." "Even a casual perusal of 'Fortean Times' or 'Folklore Frontiers' will reveal events which would be taken for foaf-tales were it not for name, place and source identification," wrote Bob, concluding with "a plea for care in dismissing many of the stories as having any origin as factual events, simply because they are preposterous." The easiest way to sum up the general mood of what followed is that several of the folklorists contributing to the debate politely declined to pursue the hints that Bob threw out. In other words, it doesn't seem likely that folklorists will start probing the background of accounts-cum-stories for signs of reality or whatever qualifies for that term in the Fortean sense.

One problem is that what passes for reality-fixing details in a popular newspaper account - the names, places and so forth - may be specious: narrative devices which give a sense of additional credibility to what is essentially a folk-fabricated yarn. The only way to test that likelihood out, though, is to undertake strenuous background research: chase up the names, visit the places and in general treat the thing as if it MIGHT be real before reaching your final decision. Yet in another and numerically large class of case-material, this isn't at all possible: by their rumoured nature the stories/accounts are not capable of proving OR disproving in the accepted fashion. "I don't believe that the heads of Procter and Gamble ARE Satanists," remarked Professor Gary Alan Fine ((Editor: see our "Sympathy for the Devil?" article in this issue)), who had presented a lively and somewhat alarming paper on rumours of large multinationals secretly run by extreme political or religious groups earlier in the day. "But I can't PROVE that they aren't." That is, a rumour-legend unlikely but not actually disproven is credible if you are prepared to take it that way ... or not.

the key word seems to be Plausibility - or, if you prefer, its antonym, IMPlausibility. Any anomaly or urban legend will contain some kind of corroborative segment, the justification for its readers or listeners to accept it as genuine; but in both instances this often resolves into a situation that we have to accept it at face value solely upon the source's assurance that the corroboration IS valid or that it exists. Without or even without, we are frequently left with a choice of gut-responses: either we believe the narrative IS plausible or we don't, and naturally that comes down to prior training, temperament or a dozen other personal factors.

This is where Folklorists and Fortean tend to part company; they respond in diametrically-opposed directions to the same kind of source material. Faced by an anomalous, unlikely-sounding story, one will be prepared to grant it MAY be true (because Fort has done such a good job

of convincing us that strange things go on everywhere and all the time) while the other votes that it is UNLIKELY to be true (on the grounds that urban legends are by definition NOT true). You can accept an entombed toad report as improbable on all rational-scientific levels, yet hold that it is plausible in spite of all that Science has to say of its fundamental impossibility - taking comfort perhaps in the plethora of similar accounts on the same theme: that makes you a Fortean. Alternatively, you can treat it and its ilk as an implausible story implausibly told - a type of narrative within the mould of fiction-masquerading-as-fact: that makes you a folklorist.

Ideally - fine word! - there ought to be some common ground between the two poles, but it was evident that it would take more than a 45-minute seminar to lay down the rules for exploring that unknown territory. The inference was that folklorists as a whole will not be expending much time checking up on stories' credentials if they've already satisfied themselves from prior experience that the story in question is ... exactly that. There's no point in going into that time-consuming process if you have pre-decided what the outcome will be.

On their side, Fortean stand accused of too much naivety - credulity - concerning legendlike reports or even a wilful pretence that the accounts ARE valid when common sense, scientific consensus AND folklore insists they aren't and cannot be. It's down to evidence yet again, but where is the wisdom in talking about it when there exists no agreement as to what constitutes valid evidence in the first place?

Maybe there is some truth in these over-generalizations. there are folklorists who grow confused and nervous at the thought that their material may be harbouring incredible yet literally-true occurrences at its core. There are Fortean \_ not many of them, I believe - who place too much reliance on literal interpretations of folktype narratives. Both accuse the other of being insufficiently versed in the literature of their common subject.

Example: anomalists have been heard to complain that academic folklorists display a terrible unfamiliarity with standard Fortean texts - Fort's books, for an obvious opener, and "Fortean Times" as a seconder. ((Editor: And perhaps as a crossover journal "Folklore Frontiers")). From what I saw and heard that afternoon in Sheffield, I'd say this might well be true in many cases. But the academic folklorists reply that anomalists show an equally lamentable unfamiliarity with standard modern legend sources; having read all three of Prof. Brunvand's books and Rodney Dale's "Tumour in the Whale" is no replacement for the more solid kind of literary habits that folklorists pick up naturally, but Fortean less often. From what I know of Fortean, I might agree that this too is correct in many cases. If we're anxious to start looking for that middle ground of whose fabled existence I just spoke, maybe we'd all better reconcile ourselves to a lot more and a lot wider reading.

TURNING TURTLE. Fisherman Roy Peacock hooked a six-inch terrapin in a canal and was looking after it in a sink at the Worksop, Notts., fire station where he worked. "The owner may have set it free because it grew too big for life in a small aquarium" (D. Mirror, 2/5/87). So far so good, but only two days later the Star (4/5/87) had a terrapin story to cap their rival. Jimmy O'Leary's drinking pals drew their own conclusion when he dived into the Thames to seemingly rescue a meat pie. But the Irishman swam back to the East End riverside pub ... clutching a giant North American terrapin. Jimmy (54), of thge Isle of Dogs, said: "They said it was a meat pie but I definitely saw it swim." Oh, yeah?

# URBAN FOLKLORE OF THE LONDON UNDERGROUND

By Nigel Pennick

It would be strange if a major installation of some antiquity used by millions of people every day did not have many misconceptions about it, and its own lore. This article is an attempt to bring together some of that lore, and to put it in perspective. Most of this lore has been received directly by the author from various Cockney sources. Obviously, it must be incomplete (as indeed is all knowledge), and I hope that further examples can be added by readers.

Tunnels have existed under London for transportation purposes since the French engineer Sir Marc Brunel engineered the Thames Tunnel between Rotherhithe and Wapping (1825-1843), and the first true underground railway was the main line from London to Birmingham on its approaches to Euston. The first London tunnels were built by miners and canal navvies whose trade had been learnt from miners, along with their 'superstitions' and lore. Deep tube tunnelling was at its height between 1886 and 1906, with further bursts during the '20s, '30s, '40s, '60s and '70s (1,2). In addition to tunnels for trains and their associated passengers, over the years, tunnellers built air-powered railways for mail, road tunnels under the river Thames, cable 'ducts' for telecommunications, a tram subway, wartime shelters and bunkers for civil servants and the military (3,4).

Urban legends about tube lines may be divided into those concerning construction; those concerning operation; and those concerning other incidents. There is one curious 'coincidence' to begin with; the 'circle and bar' motif used since the early part of the century to denote the Underground (written with upper case terminal 'D'), and subsequently extended to the rest of London Transport, is one old alchemical symbol for earth!

**Construction:** There is an archetypal folk-tale told of various tunnels which goes as follows; workmen are digging at the face of the tunnel, when a ghastly apparition manifests itself. They fling down their picks and shovels and flee, swearing that never again will they work there. This tale is told to explain the abandonment of the extension of the Great Northern and City Railway from Moorgate to Lothbury in 1904. The tunnelling shield used in digging the tunnels is said to be left embedded in the London Clay to this day. The tale attaches also to the Victoria Line at Pimlico (built in the early 1970s), and to tunnels under the nuclear power station on Anglesea. Presumably, the basis of these tales (which may exist all over the world) is that the spirits of the Earth, disturbed by the tunnellers, manifested to expel the intruders. An alternative explanation, possible in hard rock but unlikely in the London Clay, is the triggering of an 'earthlights' - type event (5). The theme was taken by the 1960s television play *Quatermass and the Pit*, an early 'ancient astronauts' motif which linked poltergeists, ghostly

apparitions, tube railway construction and prehistoric spacecraft.

Linked to these supposed apparitions are the 'deviations' in the apparently obvious course of tube lines. These stories are a variant of Urban Architecture Lore, which tells of buildings being 'the wrong way round'. Sharp curves on tube lines, such as that on the Piccadilly by the Brompton Oratory, between the abandoned Brompton Road station and South Kensington, are attributed to the engineering necessity to avoid 'plague pits'. At South Kensington, the westbound line is 78 feet deep, and the eastbound 60 feet, far below any supposed 'plague pit'. The reason for this deviation is in the line's history and in land ownership questions too complex to enter here. (6) However, these reasons are not easy to grasp, or easily found out about, and so a folkloristic explanation has evolved in the last 80 years. I have heard the same story connected with the curve in the Bakerloo line between Regent's Park and Baker Street, and also the curve between St Pauls and Bank stations on the Central Line. Another Urban Architecture-type tale tells of how the junction at Holborn on the Piccadilly line was meant to join up the twin tubes of the 'main line' to the twin tubes of the branch to Aldwych, but the drawing office got it wrong, and lined up the tunnels on the same level, making it impossible to, operate the branch line integrally with the rest of the line.

**Operation:** Tube operations are taken for granted by passengers, who rarely give a second thought to them except when something untoward occurs. Tunnels always hold terrors of being lost, and stories exist of people mistakenly getting out at abandoned stations and being trapped there for days before escaping. On the deep tube system, there are a number of abandoned stations, and one which was built but which never opened, but as the doors of deep-level trains are operated by a button pressed by the guard, or by the driver on one-man trains, even if a train should stop at one of these abandoned stations, then the doors would not open.

The worst tube accident ever which took place on February 28, 1975 is still unexplained. The 8.37 a.m. 6-car tube train from Drayton Park entered the terminal Platform 9 at Moorgate and accelerated into the dead-end of the tunnel constructed for the Lothbury extension. 41 passengers and the driver died and 74 were injured. At the inquest, eye-witnesses told of how the driver was seemingly transfixed at the controls, but as the cab was smashed almost flat (4 inches deep) by the impact, and it took a long time digging out the mangled wreckage, it was impossible to do a post-mortem on the driver's remains. Tube trains have a safety device known as the 'dead man's handle', which must be depressed by the driver at all times. If it is released, for example, if the driver has a heart attack, then the brakes are applied. This did not happen at the Moorgate accident, and so it was assumed that the driver had not had a seizure. Urban lore connects the driver's 'transfixion' with the Lothbury extension 'apparition' of 1904, perhaps a re-manifestation. The best known tube apparition is at Covent

Garden station on the Piccadilly Line, at 123 feet deep, the deepest on the line. Here, a ghost of a man, said to be suicide actor William Terriss, mounts the spiral emergency staircase, but vanishes before the top.

'Lost trains', *Odd Happenings and Other Incidents*: In the 1860s and 70s, a system of pneumatic mail tubes were built, starting with an experimental line in the grounds of Crystall Palace. This was abandoned, and the car or train was buried with it, perhaps giving rise to a brand of tube lore known as the 'lost train'.

The commercial pneumatic operation was two lines linking Euston station with postal sorting offices in Eversholt Street, Holborn and Cheapside. Close-fitting cars carrying rubber flaps were blown through the tunnels by air pressure from steam-driven fans. Although used for mail, occasional VIP passengers were carried for fun, and lore tells of a Victorian lady in Crinoline dress who leant too near the tunnel entrance, fell in and was blown from one end of the line to the other. The fact that Crinolines had been superseded by bustle dresses by then does not detract from the story. On December 20, 1928 half a mile of Holborn street was blown out by a gas explosion in the by-now abandoned tunnel, occasioned by a workman lighting a last fatal cigarette. 'Lost Trains', or at least mail cars, were discovered beneath Cheapside in 1930 by Post Office engineers as a result of the work occasioned by the explosion. One was in Hull Museum until destroyed in World War II, whilst another went to Bruce Castle Museum, Tottenham, and a third to the Museum of London. 'Lost Train' lore is, of course, more baroque than this, including a train blown apart in the war and filled in with concrete (complete with bodies!) at Bethnal Green or King's Cross or the abandoned station of British Museum (take your pick). Bethnal Green tube station was not opened to trains until 1946, a year after the end of the war, but during the war saw a major disaster when panicking shelterers cascaded down an escalator, crushing many to death. Perhaps this is the garbled origin of the 'Lost Train' tale there. Other 'lost train' principles may relate to the train enthusiasts' rumour concerning old locomotives and rolling stock allegedly stashed away for use after World War III (presumably by the Soviet Army of Occupation!). The recent restoration to service of '1938' tube trains after they were sent for scrap must give rise to more tales of this sort (7).

*Secret Tunnels*: The never-opened station at North End (or Bull and Bush), over 200 feet beneath Hampstead Heath, is the source of legend. Lying between Hampstead and Golder's Green on the Northern Line, the station tunnels were built in 1904, but never connected to the surface. However, there is the tale, reproduced in Peter Laurie's book *Beneath the City Streets* (8, p.184), that Winston Churchill once "popped out of the ground" at the feet of a sentry at an anti-aircraft battery nearby. I have seen the London Transport documents which show that a shaft never existed at the site until 1954, when it was connected so that the floodgate control centre set

up there for use in nuclear attack could be accessed from outside. This is an example of the 'bunker legends', which include some grain of truth, but which also include the tube railway from Buckingham Palace to Heathrow airport in which the Queen and Royal Family can escape (to Canada) just before London is nuked. This seems a modernized and extended version of the common tunnel legends which (in almost every town) tell of tunnels running from castle to inn to church to priory etc. On a lighter note, it was said that the Baker Street and Waterloo Railway was first thought of as a way for Westminster businessmen to get to see the last overs at Lord's cricket ground after work (9). As far as I am aware, the motif of the line built to avoid the untoward effects of military pomp and circumstance is unknown in London. However, Germany affords such instances. It is said that the former 4-track tram subway beneath the Unter Den Linden in Berlin (destroyed in World War II) was installed because the Kaiser's army held so many parades that the only way to run the trams on time was to put them underground. A similar tale was told of the Nürnberg tram subway which was built during the Third Reich, this time to avoid the endless parades of the Nazi Party.

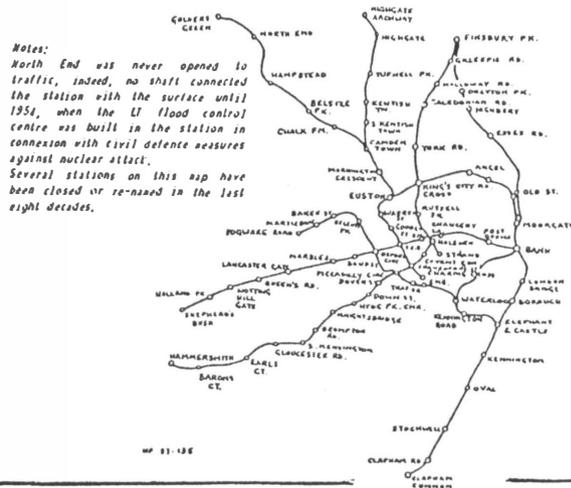
Indeterminate stories of the extent of never-opened tube lines is another area of London urban lore. Over the years, many plans for new lines have been published, and in some cases, work has begun, only to be stopped later. Among these are the Aldwych branch extension to Waterloo, said to have been built secretly in the 1930s or in World War II, and the Bakerloo extension to Camberwell, started at the end of 1949, but supposedly abandoned in 1950. Because governments have used abandoned or unopened tube stations and lines for war- and peacetime bunkers (such as the station at Down Street, near Hyde Park Corner), any unopened sections, real or imaginary, are suspect.

I am sure that I have only scratched the surface of tube lore; I have not mentioned 'The Maniac on the Platform' motif, or the tales of tube travelling pigeons, muggers and drunks. They will have to wait for another occasion. Finally, as a cross-cultural theme, it would be interesting to know of similar or allied tales from other cities with large and long-established underground railways, such as Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Moscow, New York, Paris and Tokyo.

#### References:

- 1/ Nigel Pennick: *London's Early Tube Railways*, Bar Hill, 1987, pp 3 - 33.
- 2/ Nigel Pennick: *Tunnels Under London*, Bar Hill, 1981.
- 3/ Peter Laurie: *Beneath the City Streets*, London, 1971 and subsequent editions.
- 4/ Nigel Pennick: *Bunkers Under London*, Bar Hill, 1985. <sup>para.</sup> 5/ Paul Devereux: *Earth Lights*, Wellingborough, 1982, pp.206-211.
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- 7/ Michael Harris: *Bringing Back the Red; the Return of London Underground's 1938 Tube Stock*. *Railway World*, February 1987, pp. 71-74.
- 8/ Peter Laurie: *op. cit.*, 1971 edition, p. 184.
- 9/ Charles E. Lee: *Sixty Years of the Bakerloo*, London, 1966, p.8.

BELOW: The original tube network of London, as completed by 1907, when the Charing Cross, Euston and Hampstead Railway was opened as 'The Last Link'.



# SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL?

(MUST WE FLING THIS FILTH AT OUR POP KIDS)

By Andy Roberts

The music industry has generated quite a few instances of contemporary folklore, most of which can be traced back into older forms of legend. For instance, everyone knows Jim Morrison of The Doors is not really dead but is alive and well and living in South America or somewhere else, a fact which, pop pickers, he coded into the lyrics of "Mr Mojo Risin" on the track "L.A. Woman." Honest, it's true! This echoes many older legends of the famous "he's not really dead" legend. This is nice, easy folklore which changes and varies with the times and personalities but never really has any effect.

The latest in the long line of music folklore is the alleged backmasking of "hidden" messages on records. This is not just "simple" contemporary folklore and could have dangerous and far-reaching results. Of course, there always have been "hidden" messages on records, but here I want to concentrate specifically on the "satanic" message rumours. Other hidden messages include those either on the fade out or buried deep in the mix or scratched on to the run-offs. Some people claim to be able to hear them, some not, like the word "everything" which is intoned in the midst of the instrumental part of Traffic's "Rainmaker" (which faintly but definitely exists), or the alleged "I buried Paul" on the end of "Strawberry Fields Forever" from the Beatles' "Magical Mystery Tour" album (which really says, according to John Lennon "Cranberry Sauce").

Backmasking is a different thing altogether and people are now claiming that the artist is deliberately going to great lengths to put "secret" satanic messages on LPs which are designed to subliminally indoctrinate the youth of today into satanism. Presumably because the artist himself is a satanist.

The messages in backmasking are put there by recording a verbal message backwards and making it appear to be a straightforward lyric when played forward. This can be done although the result is often ambiguous and there is no evidence that even when it is done the result can be picked up subliminally.

So where did this particular piece of modern folklore originate? You guessed it, the good old U.S. of A. The recent upsurge of the moral majority and their ilk had led to a witch hunt against anything in any form of the media which could be vaguely linked to satanism or devil worship. Many American fundamentalist TV programmes including The 700 Club and Praise the Lord have spread rumors of a massive satanic plot in the music industry which is using "satanic" backmasking. A bill has even introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman R.K. Dornan to initiate the investigation of suspect records.

All based on an unfounded rumour? Not quite. Let's have a look at a few of these backmasking tales:

On the Jefferson Starship LP track "A Child is Coming" it is alleged that the line "It's getting better" can be reversed to "Son of Satan." According to the book "Big Secrets" by William Poundstone, it can, if you choose to interpret it that way. Similarly, on Styx's track "Snowblind" the phrase "Satan move through our voices" is allegedly audible when played backwards. "Big Secrets" couldn't hear this and neither could I. Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" is supposed to contain the backmasked line "The Lords Turn Me off ... There's no escaping it ... Here's to my sweet Satan ... There's power in Satan ... He will give you 666."

I could if I stretched my ears and ruined my turntable, make out something vaguely akin to what Congressman Dornan suggests is in there. But that is the whole worrying point about these backmasking rumours, you can read (listen) whatever you want into the noise produced by listening to records played backwards. The beat goes on and there are at least 30 or 40 alleged satanic backmasked messages with perhaps as many urging world youth to do such dreadful things as "smoke marijuana" (on Queen's "Another One Bites The Dust") or worse.

The artists named are all, coincidentally of course, the type of musician Mr & Mrs Born Again America don't want their children listening to. You know, long hair, dodgy personal habits. Ipso facto they are satanists. Forty years ago the born agains would have been Born Again Entrepreneurs and the messages put there by Communists not satanists. The purple pop-person Prince seems to be bearing the brunt of this year's batch of rumours and in a recent issue of "New Musical Express" two evangelists were quoted at length about Prince's allegiance to satanism, which manifests itself via the backmasking of phrases such as "I'm fine - the Lord is coming soon." All very well but it doesn't sound very satanic to me. The fundamentalist in question opined that satan was using backmasking as a weapon in the war between the forces of light and darkness before the second coming, which as all folklorists know is imminent.

Prince incidentally includes the dedication "All glory 2 God" on his latest L.P. sleeve so perhaps he's hedging his bets. Of course, on the grounds that you've got to be a Christian before you can be a satanist, he is just compounding his position when seen through fundamentalist eyes.

Most of these rumours seem to have been started by hard-line American evangelists who have seen and been blinded by the light. Working on the assumption that the devil has all the best tunes, evangelists of all persuasions are frequently in the news in the United States, denouncing various rock acts, from the risqué but innocuous Prince to the more over-the-top "satanic thrash-metal" bands like Slayer.

A similar situation exists with regard to product trademarks. Everyone knows that the Proctor and Gamble "man and stars" symbol is really a secret satanic glyph and there are numerous other "product" rumours linking business with satanism. Even the C.N.D. sign has been accused of being a "secret" devil insignia. Whether or not the majority of these backmasked messages actually exist outside the well-washed ears and brains of the evangelists is open to question. Some certainly do, as listed above. But what are the real reasons for them?

There is no evidence whatsoever that any of these artists are involved in any satanic plot to warp the nation's minds, although several rock personalities do have an interest in the occult, notably Zeppelin's Jimmy

Page. The diehards of the far evangelical right may have missed a subtle but important factor in these messages, which is simply that most musicians have a bizarre sense of humour and are not averse to putting "secret" messages and phrases on their records, backmasked, mixed in, run off, etc., to amuse both themselves and their fans. It shouldn't go unmentioned either that this sort of thing gets them far more good publicity than bad and therefore more sales. Rock music thrives on controversy. In fact, the Electric Light Orchestra released an album entitled "Secret Messages," which contains deliberately backmasked messages, as a direct result of them being accused of satanic backmasking on the single "Eldorado." The lyrics in question on "Eldorado" when played backwards came out as "He is the nasty one, Christ, you're infernal" etc. Big Secrets could not hear anything remotely resembling this phrase amidst the jumble of reversed sounds. Several other rock acts have also announced that they have intentionally put backmasked messages on their albums just to wind the moral majority up.

The reasons why artists put some of the messages on record may be simple, but the reasons behind the present denunciation of all things possibly satanic are certainly not and the result may have disturbing effects in the "real" world. The forces of light are (still) trying to put the forces of evil in their place. These forces of light in America are very well funded and it seems that when they are in doubt about whom to point their crucifix at they will imagine a threat, in this case they lyrics of musicians who probably couldn't care less about god or the devil.

Maybe it's all a variation on themes such as the "magic" book or grimoire, which when read accidentally causes the devil to appear or the reader to go mad. The message having previously been put there for that very effect. Whereas in the past people may have been accused of a pact with the devil if they were successful or had an image, nowadays it is assumed that they have a pact and are trying to convert the rest of us. Modern technology does the rest and there we are, backmasked for satan.

At the moment these backmasking stories are just rumours passed around by word of mouth, in the music press and via evangelical sources, and have not as yet developed into any coherent narrative. They exist on the very fringe of contemporary folklore so catch 'em while they're hot!

However, I will make a prediction concerning the possible development of a backmasking narrative based on the climate from which the rumour has evolved. Over the past few years in the U.S. a growing band of "concerned" citizens have been attempting to get violent and satanic lyrics taken out of music by citing, among other things, youth suicides where it has been alleged that the victim was listening to one of the "banned" tracks at or immediately before his death. Some L.P.s have been banned or forced to have stickers describing their lyrical contents as a result of this action and this may well happen to backmasked L.P.s (alleged or otherwise) in future. The suicides are fact, the claims perhaps spurious, and at most coincidental, but the result could be religious-based censorship.

I think the first "genuine" backmasked devil lyric narrative will spring from circumstances such as the foregoing. Imagine the report in the Peter Tory column in the "Daily Star":

Boston, Tuesday: Shocked parents were still trying to discover why rock music fan Chuck Church had committed suicide at the weekend. Local evangelist Pastor Fewcher commented that the youth had been listening to heavy metal band Styx song "Snowblind," one of many L.P. tracks which contain backtracked satanic messages, in this case the words "Satan move through our Voices." He appealed to parents not to let their children listen to any of these tracks, a list of which he will send on application.

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<>>References - See Page 24.

# MONKEY BUSINESS

By Paul Screeton

Charles Darwin

So it seems that most likely such analysis would also prove Sally a fake.

Frauds, however, have a long history and pedigree. Many are those who have been fooled, including experts. Charles Darwin posited a theory of evolution without one single intermediary between species. This was accepted by many but took a serious blow over the notorious Piltown Man episode.

As Dance writes: "It is, after all, very tempting — if you are a certain kind of scientist — to be able to prove the correctness of a scientific prediction; and when the evidence fits in so neatly with the preconception the temptation to try to make it fit is irresistible."

Some scientists have, and always will, take such steps. Pseudoscientists (or freethinkers), in fairness, commonly do likewise. But it proved a salutary lesson to the dubious Darwinian mode of thought.

While Darwin has yet to be totally discredited, despite growing anxiety over the tenets of evolution, such intermediary creatures as Piltown Man and Sally prove a fillip to his notions. Just as his whole fabric of thought may prove entirely fraudulent or at best wishful thinking where one's imagination can roam free, and a suspension of belief be allowed to mist over and Sally be allowed a moment of doubt as a once-alive reality crying out to be accepted as a storyline missing link.

The eminent scientist Sir Alistair Hardy made an intriguing and serious yet irritatingly brief comment that humanity was once aquatic. This throwaway conjecture was seized upon by writer Elaine Morgan, and she expanded it into a full-blown theory and best-selling books.

Robert K.G. Temple's *The Sirius Mystery* is a thorough argument that the "primitive" Dogon tribe understood the periodicities of orbits of Sirius and its heavy dwarf companion star. He also drew attention to an amphibious creature from that stellar region called Oannes, who came to Earth and instructed mankind in civilized arts.

Temple's scholarship is held in for great esteem than that of Erich *Was God an Astronaut?* von Daniken, who readers will recall looked to the Bible for his authority for suggesting a race from outer space interbred with an inferior species on Earth. Quoting: "The sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bear children to them ..." This would answer the open to man missing link.

Bornum, who originated W.C. Fields' oft-quoted line "Never give a sucker an even break", at least had the honesty to describe his curio as "an ugly, dried-up, black-looking, and diminutive specimen." After much media-hype, creating an atmosphere of anticipatory excitement, Bornum exhibited his mermaid. New Yorkers turned up in their thousands to pay 25 cents a head for the privilege of looking at this taxidermitological wizened prune. It transferred to a museum where takings shot up to almost 3,500 dollars in a month.

The Feejee Mermaid, as it was known, had been the property of an Englishman, a Dr Griffin. He attracted attention to his exhibit, but as Andrew Mound elucidates in *Heretic Hoaxes*, it was Bornum who really knew about publicity. He managed to offer stories and pictures to three New York newspapers whose editors each thought they had a scoop.

Bornum had shown his jenny hanover — as they are now scientifically called — to a naturalist who assured him of the origin of the species, i.e., fraudulence.

Even the extravagant Bornum could not have anticipated the notion such a curio could have so alien a source as outer space. As for that interplanetary connection and Sally, an undergraduate from Cardiff University introduced himself as a member of an unidentified flying saucer society and alarmed Mrs Hovey with his opinion that such creatures arrived here by extraterrestrial craft.

"Watching Dr Who made me uneasy", she told me. "I'd think, what will happen if one of Sally's brothers or sisters come back to see her?"

What indeed!

When I visited The Plough I asked to see Sally. I knew she would be there behind the bar. Not a barmaid whose ample buxomness had made her a regional legend and caused me to travel 70 miles. No, Sally's fame was as a mythical curiosity.

For this Northumberland pub at Allerdeon, four miles out of Berwick-upon-Tweed, was some years ago host to a remarkable relic. Sally was said to be a monkey fish, mermaid, or even merman. A century dead, 18 inches long and mounted in a glass case, this eerie creature was half-fish and either half-monkey or even, perhaps, semi-human. Extraterrestrial even. Or, of course, a fake.

As for why the creature was called Sally was yet another mystery, for the head had a downy growth all over from cranium to chin and had an Adam's apple in its slender neck. The face was dark brown and somewhat akin to that of a monkey, had small teeth with the longer ones at the front, an apparently built-up nose, and false eyes which were extremely lifelike.

The torso was ribbed and long, slender arms extended outwards with narrow fingers with proper nails. These were not webbed. There were no gills, but it had been suggested the nostrils could be used for breathing.

There was no discernible joint between the torso (seemingly devoid of mammary glands — another argument against its femaleness) and the rear half which resembled a fish. It had dorsal, ventral and pelvic fins, but no pectoral fins.

Strangely, its custodian said since she had been in possession of it, the could fin (tail fin) had continued to grow!

## South Suicides

Jovial licensee Mrs Margaret Harvey told me that Sally had only been in two different cases since her death. Her capture being off Japan during the last century, but among accounts in cuttings she showed me was some discrepancy. One had it being bought off a fisherman and another having a long-deceased ancestor of Mrs Harvey catching it. All claimed it died after three days, though one claimed it met its demise due to the British climate.

It had been passed through two related families based in South Shields and Mrs Harvey's late husband, Edword, had wished it to be exhibited in a museum. However, getting approval from all his kinfolk would have proved an insurmountable obstacle.

Instead he displayed it in his Washington hairdresser's shop and loaned it to charities to raise 6d a time for the curious to marvel at.

When I spoke to her in 1980, Mrs Harvey hoped that arrangements could be made to have Sally X-rayed to authenticate her, as she was well aware that such prodigies were deftly created by unscrupulous and greedy showmen for exhibition in the past.

## Birds' feet

Yet, somewhat sadly for those who enjoy flights of fancy, Sally must have been one of the mermaids which occasionally come to the public from the previous century and consequently are usually of a very dilapidated condition.

It was just such a curio upon which insects had done their ravages which Hazelle Page received. In this case there were boreholes and its fins had been broken off. Fish teeth had been utilized to add to its frightening appearance and birds' feet added to produce claws.

This repulsive example arrived on the desk of antiquities expert Hazelle of Newcastle University. It had been sent from Hartlepool's Gray Art Gallery and Museum for restoration before being returned for exhibition.

"It really is revolting and was the last thing I expected to have snarling at me," said Hazelle, antiquities conservator for the North of England Museums Service.

The celebrated American showman Phineas Taylor Barnum was showing off an example very similar to Sally in 1842 and Peter Dance records in his book, *Animal Fakes and Frauds*, that there are still several such specimens in private hands. Most of these conform to the type illustrated by Frank Buckland and reproduced with this article.

Dance notes that one such mermaid had been X-rayed and the photographs "showed a complicated arrangement of wires which supported the body but failed to support the credibility of this charming mermaid."



Hazelle Page and the museum monster.

# The Hissing of Summer Lawns

## By Paul Screeton

IT'S BEEN a good summer for snakes in the media.

Fashions come and go for news stories, but for those of us who collect the odder items, it has definitely been the Year of the Snake.

A New Yorker called Charles Hoy Fort wrote a series of books based around his huge collection of clippings from contemporary newspapers and periodicals. For modern Forteanism, 1987 will go down as a classic year for reptilian capers.

An art of Forteanism is in predicting waves of incidents involving a particular aspect of life. Previous summers have been noted for spates of coach crashes, vicious guard dogs' attacks on children and last year, of course, a whole menagerie of alien big cats seemed to be on the loose.

This year's snake series slithered into gear when a driver heard a mysterious hissing coming from his car as he drove down a motorway.

Driver Phil Rose suspected there must be a fault in the radiator of his hire car, but he froze in his seat when a poisonous snake popped its head out of the dashboard and stuck its tongue out at him.

Unable to stop because he and his three friends were nose to tail in a contraflow on the M5 near Bridgwater, Somerset, he anxiously drove for a mile with the venomous viper staring him in the face.

Finally Phil (23), from Newquay, Cornwall, pulled over on to the hard shoulder and called the police, but by the time they arrived the hissing hitch-hiker had hidden itself away.

Understandably they were reluctant to apprehend the adder and called the R.S.P.C.A., but even they could not coax the snake out of the Montego's ventilation system.

So Phil nervously drove the car back to the hire firm in Wadebridge for it to be stripped down.

They say great minds think alike or small ones have little choice, but the tale was tailor-made for the groaning headline WINDSCREEN VIPER!, which appeared in both *The Star* and *Daily Express*.

On a more sober note, when people are bitten by an adder — Britain's only venomous snake — it is a serious matter. On average one person a year finds the bite fatal. I've come across four cases this year and one was in County Durham.

Police officer's daughter Joanne Forster (ten), of Rochester Road, Newton Hall, Durham City, was bitten on the leg during a family outing in the west of the county. She was treated at Dryburn Hospital and suffered the effects of a swollen leg but was otherwise fine.

Not so lucky was John Taylor (47), of Stourbridge, West Midlands, who was bitten on the hand while walking with his wife and son on the Gower Peninsula in South Wales. He was taken to Swansea's Singleton Hospital, to which serum was rushed, and he was reported to be "critical."

Also Stephen James (17), of Kentig, South Wales, was reported in intensive care after an adder bite. And Timothy Bevan (11), of Macclesfield, Cheshire, thought the snake he was playing with on the shores of Loch Awe, Scotland, was a grass snake, but it was an adder and he ended up in hospital.

Having not noted an adder fatality in the Press, I assume all the victims recovered successfully.

At the time, specialists from Durham County Conservation Trust were carrying out a survey into the viper's distribution, and a spokesman said: "The adder is a shy reptile which quickly retreats at the approach of humans. But at this time of the year (mid-July) when it is basking in the sun it will strike as a defensive reaction if it is taken by surprise."

Around this time a customer calling at the Mall mentioned to the front counter staff that she had seen a snake near the car park at the back of the buildings. By the time interested employees had turned out to see the reptile it had slithered out of sight into the shrubbery. From her description, it seems the woman had spotted a harmless grass snake. But Hartlepool town centre seems an unusual habitat for any form of reptile.

Several cases of snakes with Houdini tendencies were reported and newspapers encouraged more reptiles to slide into their silly season columns. Here is a calendar of curiosities — some serious but mostly of a humorous nature. Dates refer to publication, not occurrence.

June 30. Remember Phil Rose was from Newquay. By coincidence farmer Alan Richards (40), almost trod on a six-foot brown and green snake in his Newquay barn. He believed the snake must be responsible for attacks on his livestock. During the previous year a ram had died from a bite, two other sheep needed injections to combat poison swelling and a cow was badly bitten on the udder. "It was no ordinary snake," said the farmer. "It was terrifying. I need a good charmer — and quick."

July 2. Gardener Jim Glennon was bitten by a two-foot yellow garter snake in Shipley, West Yorkshire. He needed hospital treatment, but the bite was not poisonous.

July 13. "Hissing Sid" was reunited with the Thompson family, of Letch Avenue, Hawthorn, Seaham, after he pushed the top off his heated tank and vanished. Several days later the 11-foot python was discovered under a shed. It was his second escape in a short time; the previous occasion he chose to hide in the cooker.

July 13. Another python, 5ft. 6in. "Gertie" was being sought by police after escaping from its home in Sherwood, Nottinghamshire.

July 17. Burglars were in for a shock when they stole eight-foot prize boa constrictor "Gussie" — for she was pregnant. University zoologist Adrian Thomas, of Bristol, begged the thieves to keep her in surroundings above 70 degrees Fahrenheit or she and her brood would die.

July 17. Newquay again! Zoo boss Robert Poole was shocked when a housewife offered him an 18-foot python because her trucker husband had no time to care for it.

July 28. A fight between a rat snake and a sacred cobra — which cannot be touched — halted traffic in Goa, India, for three hours. It ended in a draw.

August 8. A non-poisonous five-foot American Indigo snake, missing from a Berkshire aquarium since June, was caught by Bracknell police in a garden.

August 13. This story sounds apocryphal, but you may choose to believe that a 6ft. 6in. pet boa constrictor was hiding in a pipe around the S-bend in Laurie Lamothe's loo — and kept poking its head into the pan. "I looked down and saw this pair of eyes, and a tongue going in and out," claimed Mrs Lamothe, of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Animal experts were reported to have removed the toilet and were trying to lure out the snake, a neighbour's pet, with dead rats.

August 20. The normally staid Russian state newspaper Pravda seems to be moving in the direction of own beloved Sun. It took seriously the story of a girl swallowing a snake while asleep. Her life was saved when she drank four pints of salt water to make her vomit, and the 26-inch snake plopped out whole into a wash basin. The 11-year-old girl, identified by her first name Matanet, fell asleep in the sun after picking tomatoes near her home in the region of Sabirabad in the Caspian Sea republic of Azerbaijan. As she dozed, the Caucasian cat snake slid down her throat, and she awoke starting to choke and was rushed to a children's clinic in Baku. A Soviet biologist who specializes in snake venom told Pravda the snake's bite was not lethal, but added: "If it had remained in the stomach longer and its poison entered the blood, there would have been unavoidable trouble." He added that her stomach showed "a swelling." It is tempting to associate the story with the primitive belief that swallowing a snake can cause a pregnancy.

September 4. Pet shop owner Robin Smith, of Flordon, Norfolk, was selling bags of frozen mice for people to feed their pet pythons.

September 4. That headline again — WINDSCREEN VIPER... Mechanic Mark Rowlands got the shock of his life when he looked behind the dashboard of a wrecked car — and was confronted by a three-foot python. The snake was put under lock and key at a garage in Sandlands, Swansea, while bosses tried to trace the owner.

September 8. What sounds like an unlikely cautionary tale features Tom and Donna Cooper, of Santa Barbara, California, U.S.A. Their session in the Jacuzzi was rudely interrupted when they were joined by a nine-foot escaped pet python.

September 10. A pub crawl can be a dangerous business. A circus promotion tour of bars even proved fatal for 15-foot python "Sydney." An explosion, thought to have been caused by a gas cylinder, set ablaze the lorry in Dublin where the snake was unwinding. Courtney Brothers' Circus staff rushed from a nearby pub and saved his 20-foot alligator pal "Ben" from the jaws of death. But time had been called on "Sydney" and he had shuffled off this mortal coil.

# PANIC IN HALIFAX

By Paul Screeton

**J**UST as a certain Yorkshire Ripper terrorized West Yorkshire this decade, mysterious slashings brought panic to the town of Halifax in November, 1938.

The West Riding mill town was convulsed by reports of a mysterious slasher, armed with a razor, who made almost two dozen attacks in a fortnight.

To spoil the fun, almost before we've started, it has to be stated that Scotland Yard detectives, investigating this social panic, quickly discovered that most, if not all, of the assaults were "hoaxes" perpetrated by the "victims."

Then the scare dissipated as quickly as it had arisen.

## NOTORIOUS

Until the publication of a book on the subject recently, I was unaware of this little-known episode. *The Halifax Slasher: An urban terror in the north of England*, documents the events chronologically, and author Michael Goss uses his researches to point up many implications in the fields of alleged assailants, mass hysteria and the spread of rumours and panics.

As Goss points out, there was an equally notorious but better known character, Spring-heeled Jack, in the past. Such a phenomenon generates fear and this aspect takes on a greater importance than any real or imagined physical danger. We know there are violent and sadistic criminals in society, yet with the "mystery assailant" syndrome, when pursuit is hottest the phantom psychopath vanishes with ghostly uncanniness. What is mystifying and embarrassing for those caught up in the panic and respond to it, is the eventual revelation that the mystery assailant NEVER ACTUALLY EXISTED.

Mike Goss sees the assailant as an ambiguous

WHEN a scary assailant seemed to be running amok in a West Yorkshire town almost 50 years ago, the events had reverberations throughout Britain. Copycat mutilations occurred elsewhere, but for the Hartlepoons it was the prospect of a visit by Halifax's football team which galvanized opinion. Hartlepoons supporters had a weapon with which to attack their opponents, but it was no more lethal than barbed wit. A newly-published book resurrects the terror which became known as the Halifax Slasher.

## Halifax Marauder Pu

A RUSH FOR PATROL HANDKERC  
WORK CLUE

Escorts for Girls

Court Seq

PUBLIC ANGER AT SECOND P.C. WHO FOLL  
ATTACK ON VICTIM FOOTPRIN

FLASHBACK — Headlines from the Northern Daily Mail for Tuesday, November 29, 1938.

symbol of some local unrest or protest. For sociological sleuths "the trick is to defuse the tensions which made this possible."

This monograph chronicles the short period during 1938 when a nocturnal curfew fell on a West Yorkshire town. Its citizens' siege mentality was created by a belief that a razor-wielding maniac was on the loose, materializing out of darkness to strike with lightning speed and then fade back into the shadows.

## VIGILANTES

Goss takes the story stage by stage: its rise, victims and vigilantes, climax, entry to cavalry in the form of Scotland Yard detectives, fall, the confession narratives, recriminations, and fun from outsiders like the Hartlepoons soccer supporters taunting their Halifax opponents (no doubt more than fair exchange for monkey-hangers jibes).

Of the six held responsible for the scare (though 13 in Halifax filed reports testifying to his reality), it is noteworthy that four were women and two were men. In fact, the first self-mutilator to confess was Co-op stores manager Percy Waddington. The flap had



IN PRINT — The cover of *The Halifax Slasher*.

also created false witnesses and malicious rumours, the pressures having given rise to these elements of the Slasher scare.

## MYTHICAL

In retrospect we can seek a deeper meaning, while also keeping in mind the words of Scotland Yard's Chief Inspector Salisbury: "Definitely the Slasher was a mythical person."

Goss agrees and it is hard not to accept that it was all Halifax hysteria.

While it lasted, Halifax's notoriety attached itself to its soccer team. During the fixture on December 3 at

Hartlepool, the crowd frequently broke into cries of, "Come on Slashers!" and when Halifax Town's diminutive right-winger Foulkes was locked in a series of shoulder charges with the home side's full-back Wilson, a loud-voiced terrace wit won a roar of laughter with, "Search him for razor blades."

## PLAUDITS

The Mail's sports reporter, Sentinel, described the 1-0 win to United as an entertaining game. In odd style he wrote: "A film critic would have described this as a game crammed with incident — as such it was." Ernie Thomas was Sentinel's man of the match — "I have never known such a fellow as this... Ubiquitous is the only word to describe him."

I doubt if today's tabloid soccer writers would so describe anyone, and he continued: "There were rare incidents in the Halifax goalmouth and on more than one occasion Briggs earned the plaudits of the crowd." But no Slasher mention.

However, in his review the previous Friday, Sentinel made a reference to the Slasher menace. "It is to be

hoped that Halifax Town bring no 'unsavoury' supporters with them when they visit the Victoria Ground tomorrow. By that I mean it would be distinctly uncomfortable for everybody but joyous newspaper reporters were they to be accompanied by that strange personality who has a flair for cutting up rough."

Earlier, on the Wednesday, the ubiquitous Sentinel had again referred to the panic. He wrote: "Once upon a time Halifax used to be noted for its football team.

that was before the gentleman, known as the 'Silent Slasher,' came on the scene. Since then the Halifax Town team has had a difficult job to keep in the news. Widdowfield, for instance, scored four goals in the Town against Rochdale, on Saturday, but Widdowfield is a respectable footballer, so he only got two inches of space. The other person with the weird sense of humour, gottwocolumns!"

## SAVED

So there we have it. A little wit in the sports columns.

But the Slasher scare was also well covered in the news columns. But like most news, it faded briefly and then died away. Now it has been saved from oblivion.

References to razors and blades cutting make my flesh creep, yet I find Mike Goss's book intellectually stimulating. But if my squeamish reaction is anything to go by, it could be central to the Slasher syndrome stimulus. People may well panic if given certain circumstances, imagine the worst, resemble

lynch mobs and under stress become imitative. Mike Goss is to be praised for bringing to attention this little-known nine-day wonder. Well-written and presented, it also has illustrations from contemporary newspapers, maps and concludes with reminiscences and a chronological table.

• *The Halifax Slasher* is a Fortean Times occasional paper. Send cheque or P.O. made out to Fortean Times for £2.50. Address 96 Mansfield Road, London NW3 2HX.

From NIGEL PENNICK, of Cambridge.

## READERS' LETTERS

Here are a few comments on F.F. 5, in no particular order. "Urban Legends (An Introduction)". When I was about nine (1955), the story went around the village I was living in that some recently arrived Italian immigrants used to eat cat food on toast, and 20 years later I was told of a "biology student" loaf who found a cat bone in her curry in Bradford (where there had been Pakastani immigration). A story told about the Ki-Ora Cafe, which was a transport cafe which used to stand on the All road south of Newport, Essex, was that it used cats for its "pork pies" — "during the war, when meat was rationed." It would be interesting to follow this one back in time. On a darker note, recent newspaper advertisements showing a cat purportedly ((editor: surely "purr-portedly") waiting to be boiled alive in Korea to make cat soup will surely increase the occurrence of such stories. The "telephone revenge" story was current in Cambridge in the mid-70s, when it was a disgruntled university employee dialling the Sydney speaking clock and leaving the phone off the hook all weekend.

"underneath the Arches" mentions the space shuttle disaster. An urban legend (or truth?) current states that it is entombed in concrete because a nuclear reactor on board (such as those used in the Apollo command modules and some satellites) was blasted apart when Challenger exploded. The debris is therefore radioactive, covered in plutonium, etc., and thus had to be buried in concrete. I heard a "radiation urban legend" over ten years ago, and surely that must be another genre. This one was about a Japanese man finding a piece of shiny metal in the road and taking it home, placing it on the mantelpiece as an ornament (do they have mantelpieces in Japan?). Everyone in the family then got sick, one after the other, except the grandmother, who sat in an alcove. All the family died before it was discovered that the metal was a lost piece of nuclear waste. The grandmother survived, but with one side of her face, the only part of her body in view of the metal, hideously burned.

The concrete story about the Nazi concentration camps on Alderney is mentioned (in different form) in Solomon H. Steckoll's book "The Alderney Death Camp" (granada, 1982), where on page 49, M. Albert Eblagon, grandson of the erstwhile Chief Rabbi of Crete ((editor is there a lexilink here - Crete/concrete?)), is cited by the author as having been "an eyewitness when the Germans threw a fellow prisoner into the wet cement of a blockhouse being built, after which they poured more concrete over the man."

On a "lighter" note, the 1960s pop song by Bernard Cribbins, "Hole in the Ground", recounts the burial of a "man in a bowler hat", presumably a civil servant who interfered with the digging of a hole in the road. There are doubtless other urban folktales in popular music, especially those genres such as country & western, which tell stories. One last concrete apocryphal (or not?) is in soccer folklore, where the concrete terrace known as the North Bank at the Arsenal stadium, Highbury, London, is reputed to conceal a carthorse buried in 1913 when the football ground was built.

# BOOK REVIEWS

"THE UFO CONSPIRACY — THE FIRST FORTY YEARS" by Jenny Randles (Blandford Press, £10.95).

"UFOs 1947-1987 — THE 40-YEAR SEARCH FOR AN EXPLANATION" compiled by Hilary Evans and John Spencer (Fortean Times, £12.50).

FORTY years ago, businessman Kenneth Arnold set off in his private plane searching for the wreckage of a missing aircraft.

Over the Cascade Mountains, near Mt. Rainier, he spotted a string of bright metallic objects flying in single file.

There were nine of these; eight discs and one crescent. They dodged around the peaks with "flipping, erratic movements" and he estimated their speed at 1,700 m.p.h. (later reduced to 1,200).

Following his landing at one airfield, Arnold told a few friends his story. He then took off for a second aerodrome, where he was met by excited newsmen. He told the reporters the objects flew like "pie plates" or "saucers being skipped over water." Hence, via an anonymous journalist, the term "flying saucer" entered our language.

The more familiar term: UFO (unidentified flying object) was coined by Captain Ed Ruppelt, the United States Air Force intelligence officer responsible for such matters.

Yet 40 years on, whatever "experts" say, we're no nearer the truth of what flying saucers or UFOs are. The anniversary of Arnold's sighting on June 24, 1947, looks like making 1987 a bumper year for marketing UFO books and heightening the profile of ufological research.

Just over a week later one of the newsworthy flying saucers may well have crashed in New Mexico. The authorities supposedly gathered up the wreckage at Roswell, and if the evidence is to be believed, scientists had the beginnings of an answer 40 years ago. If all was bogus, a lot of people — military officers, scientists, government officials and ordinary citizens — were unmitigated liars.

Researchers of high calibre such as William Moore and Leonard Stringfield have interviewed witnesses and those concerned, collecting sworn affidavits. But right from the start the mill of misinformation was grinding merrily.

Then another crashed saucer was recovered in 1953 at Kingman, Arizona. Specialists were taken in blacked-out buses into the desert. There they saw the body of a dead three-foot alien. There are even medical men who claim to have studied bodies of extraterrestrial astronauts. Rumour or reality? Fabricated fairytale or the greatest untold secret of all time?

Then came the contactee craze. George Adamski is still a household name; Cedric Allingham not (he was a hoax by Patrick Moore). Again, as with retrievals stories, serious ufology was faced with an uncomfortable aspect.

UFOs causing vehicle stoppages were the next feature to achieve some prominence and this was taken to the ultimate conclusion when, under hypnosis, Betty and Barney Hill were discovered to have been abducted by aliens. John Fuller's book on the subject — "The Interrupted Journey" — proved one of the biggest sellers in UFO history. Hundreds, if not thousands, of subsequent UFO abductions — close encounters of the fourth kind in ufology jargon — have taken place if we are to believe people's claims. Stranger still is how these vehicle interruptions and whisking away of driver and families never seems to cause a road accident. Could it all really be in the mind?

A book which not only tells the fascinating story of how ufology developed during the past 40 years, but puts it into the context of official study and debunking is Jenny Randles' "The UFO Conspiracy."

Her insights into cover-ups, particularly with reference to the United States, show a healthy interest in the disturbing secrecy of officialdom.

She suspects that in America surveillance of civilian UFO groups is maintained — even that C.I.A. agents set up their own groups or infiltrate others. This suggests infringement of civil rights by spying.

A recent concept in U.S. law is the Freedom of Information Act, used to release formerly secret UFO files. Since 1977 thousands of documents have been released, but many others are withheld for security reasons.

The Official Secrets Act means that Britain "has the mirror opposite." Or as Randles says: "The conspiracy is so much easier to maintain, thanks to that."

The book also argues the possibility of an "education programme" whereby the truth about the alien nature of UFOs is being released slowly. The world is being prepared. The idea of friendly and cuddly aliens is fostered by Spielberg films so we will not panic. The same "myth" has entered the American UFO community from leaked sources.

"If you compare this possible move towards enlightenment with the manner in which the UFOs themselves seem to have been trying to educate us," writes Randles, "then it makes even more sense."

This could explain the clear phases of activity through which the UFO story has developed.

Of course, it could also be argued that what we have seen is "cultural tracking" with UFO developments keeping pace with our own scientific and social activities. In other words the phenomenon is psycho-sociological in nature. The aliens are not from outer space, but exist in our heads — in inner space. And even that sounds too easy an option to encompass all the known facts.

Randles also devotes sections to reports from around the world; "proofs" via types of encounter, physical effects and so on; and other nations' approaches to UFO confidentiality or otherwise. All in all, a well-argued case.

Another book which takes as its reference point Arnold's sighting, but which has galaxies more space to investigate the UFO enigma is "UFOs 1947-1987."

An international spectrum of researchers has been assembled to show how immensely complex the field is. It is an exercise in showing how much we have learnt from the UFO phenomenon. It is about what the physical and life sciences should be responding to, and if serious inquiry is to be meaningful, to find explanations for thousands of people having experiences which are genuinely puzzling to them and scary.

If you have the slightest interest in the greatest mystery of modern times, then you would be doing yourself a disservice not to buy this book and give it serious attention.

There have been other remarkable works by individual authors on the subject, but here is a distillation of concepts about the subject. "The 40-year search for an explanation" is the sub-title, and the contributors do their best to cover the multifarious options towards explaining the enigma. As editor Hilary Evans puts it: "Though the answers still elude us, we have none the less learnt a great deal in the process. We have learnt, in particular, not to expect easy answers. The fact that our questions are still unanswered suggests that perhaps they are not the right questions."

If we are not asking the right questions, the contributors to this survey certainly cover a broad spectrum of attitudes and speculation. The book begins with a look at the phenomena — UFOs before 1947. In 1947, worldwide nature, occultists, contactees, abductions and retrievals. The section on assessing the phenomena covers definition and investigation, physical traces and witnesses. As for explanations, sections cover such hypotheses as extraterrestrial origin, natural forms, psychological and parapsychological phenomena, and concepts of reality. The effect UFOs have had on society are examined through such aspects as cults, folklore, scientists and the public's view, the cinema and cover-ups. Cases both for and against scepticism are given. The appendices give current organizations and recommended reading list.

Chunky and well-illustrated, it is a book which can be read either from cover to cover or dipped into. It will certainly find a long life as a reference work for anyone with a keen interest in the subject.

The flying saucer story has been running for 40 years. The question we must now ask is when will it end? For all the speculation, sadly we seem none nearer to finding a solution.

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EARTH HARMONY by NIGEL PENNICK (Century/Rider, £6-95)

"Earth harmony in its widest interpretation involves a harmonious relationship between the earth, human beings, their artifacts, actions and celestial influences." — Nigel Pennick

Ever since man appeared on this planet, those with any semblance of wisdom or intuition have sought to make each aspect of their lives harmonious with the landscape. They may have had scant regard for their fellow man as they killed and ate his brain as a delicacy, but their understanding of the structure and cycles of the universe led them to create a tradition whereby their pastoral migrations and later settled habitat was governed by strict rules of geomancy. Industrialism particularly eroded this right-siting impulse, but folk custom is stronger than materialistic exploitation, and so the venerable tradition and usage has overcome the tag of "superstition." Today, from national park authorities allowing the development of only visually suitable dwellings through to people wishing to make sure their dwellings are geomantically sound, there is a spirit of re-evaluating earth harmony. Pennick explains why this is important and how to apply the craft.

Most readers, I'm sure, will be at least familiar with the Dragon Project work on energies at megalithic sites, particularly the Rollright Stones. Here really lies the crux of the problem, as Pennick notes. There are measurable energies, but their very complexity, cyclic nature and intermittent character make these forces too inexplicable to western science and so, by and large, they are dismissed. Each tradition has given the energy a different name. Also its effects are best appreciated by our own consciousness. We use electricity but don't really know what it is. When we get a bill from the Central Ley Energy Board we will know that the siting and orientation we chose for our dwelling has received official recognition. Until then we can either regard all aspects of planetary life as arbitrary or seek to make our lives more worthwhile by practising a spiritual relationship with our surroundings.

The practicalities given by Pennick, after an exhaustive explanation of aspects of landscape, specific points of power and living traditions (as splendidly described with regard to Guildford Cathedral) are particularly informative. Thirty years ago in Wansleydale I recall how important it was to keep part of the doorstep scrubbed white with a special stoner regularly. Pennick adds details of executing patterns in coloured chalks and goes on to explain the deeper meanings to symbols on bootscrapers, knockers, locks and hinges, and how much of the ornament associated with doors has solar symbolism, be it ancient or modern. Doors take on a whole new meaning of perception after reading this book.

Other protective devices are discussed with regard to other parts of buildings. One wonders if there is some occult significance to modern graffiti artists' painting Disney characters and blue Smurfs on factory walls!

Definitely much to reflect upon in particular. An Englishman's home can really be made into his psychic castle.

THE UNPOLLUTED GOD by GUY RAGLAND PHILLIPS  
(Northern Lights, £6-95)

I have enjoyed Guy Ragland Phillips' writings for a great many years. Firstly from his articles, illustrated with scraperboard pictures, in *The Dalesman*. The his book "Brigantia," developed from the earlier articles and where I gave some small assistance with ley material which his publishers demanded be included as the current "in thing." Lastly from pieces in "The Cauldron" journal, when this projected book was partially serialized under its provisional title, "Behind the Church Door" (a title dropped as the author found clergy in general were not hiding a pagan past behind the door, but took pride in the venerable age of the edifices and perhaps dubious adornments).

Phillips' title comes from his argument that the more "primitive" a people are or were, the more they revere or revered a single transcendent Great Spirit or Supreme Being. "Over the tens of millennia," he says, "a religion has not been refined. It has been polluted, and the great Spirit has been mocked."

He begins with "a sort of tremendous skeleton in the Church's cupboard," ritual phalli in 90% of Christian altars predating the Black Death (though the "evidence" is missing as so often in odd cases). It is good that Phillips draws our attention to this "gigantic fig-leaf," just as John Michell did in "To Represent Our Saviour as 'That Great Cock.'"

The gist of the argument is that churches are pagan shrines - or at least in very many cases pagan features are incorporated specifically in the stonework or woodwork. They are often on pagan sites and pagan symbols outweigh Christian ones. Example after example from diligent research is used to press home the point.

His researches - particularly into 99 specific churches - cover the Green man, sheela-na-gig naked woman sculptures with female genitalia emphasized, devils' doors, consecration, leys and going skyward (including personal descriptions).

Some readers may be particularly excited where he passes from witchcraft to an in-depth look at shamanism in the context of the book's projection and also into drug-taking. Going back to the unpolluted period, Phillips notes the shaman either usurped powers all men and women once possessed or continued them when society as a whole could no longer exercise them. This point should not be forgotten. Thousands of ordinary people are today being plucked from suburban oblivion - from housewives and grease monkeys to itinerant journalists and thriller writers - to share the shamanistic experience.

Phillips rightly recognizes there once was no distinction between natural and supernatural. He supports the Gaian Fourth World environmentalist thrust as a Quaker universalist. He looks back and looks forward. This is a very rewarding and enriching book. It is rare to come across such work of both scholarship and original research which makes the past clearer and gives guidance towards the future.

SHAMANISM by WARD RUTHERFORD (Aquarian Press, £6-99)

There has been a recent upsurge of interest in shamanism; part no doubt of the more selective approaches to occultism, interest in the paranormal and alternatives to moribund priesthood cults such as Christianity. On a descriptive level, Rutherford provides a workmanlike examination of the shaman's role in primitive societies, as mediator with the gods, ability to prophesy, guardianship of tribal myths and other magical and psychic gifts. His choosing, his training, his trance and drum are described. Yet it is rather like the small boy looking at a steam engine with its driver and fireman. The actual experience on the footplate is missing.

There are plenty of fascinating insights and speculations as the book progresses, but he seems to miss some important factors. Surely shamanism is the key to UFO abductions, for example. He is convinced the pleasure we gain from steeping in a hot bath is a bid to return to the womb, whereas I find this act akin to the shaman's famous sweat lodge procedure.

Much of the second half I found rather dry and academic, being an investigation of how primitive shamanism as the foundations of magic has developed throughout history. He speculates on "supershamans" and diffusionism, dismisses similarities with epilepsy and schizophrenia and concludes the shaman is on who, naturally hyperacuitive, has trained his sense to a far greater degree than others. He notes that such a reductionist explanation would get short shrift from those who have adopted shamanism and are keen to share their gifts in our lives. Rutherford accepts the potential value of shamanism as being reintroduced today, particularly in its role as traditional psychotherapy.

The book is well researched, crackles with ideas and is fair in its treatment of a complex and debateable subject. The style too is fluid and invigorating. Of wide interest, I feel.

LONDON'S EARLY TUBE RAILWAYS by NIGEL PENNICK  
(£1-50 inc. p&p, published by Runestaff-Old England, 25 Partridge Drive, Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8EN)

In my childhood, the Eagle comic had an illustrated comic strip with a title something like "Nature invented it first" (flying squirrel as model for parachute, etc.) and here we find Sir Marc Brunel apeing the shipworm pest to improve methods of tunneling technique. It is detail such as this which makes Pennick's books authoritative and labours of love in their detail. This book explains how the Underground we love or loathe did not come about as simply as its millions of daily commuters no doubt assume. Here is an account from its inception with all the triumphs and heartbreaks, the experiments and improvements. Many rare and unusual drawings, diagrams and photographs illustrate the work, along with contemporary maps of lines constructed and proposed. Folklorists will find some interesting material here, such as the proprietor who claimed his galvanometer showed strong earth currents generated in his water pipes by City and South London Railway trains and how it also disrupted continental telegraph instruments 130 miles away in North Walsham!

COSMIC FRIENDS by JIMMY GODDARD  
(STAR Fellowship. Price unknown. From 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 2PX)

Slim autobiographical booklet about the author's assumed communications with extraterrestrials. Has very much a dated feel of long-gone time of naive extraterrestrial contact aspirations. Goddard's sincerity need not be questioned -- I've known him for 20 years almost -- but I feel that his seeming trust in messages which most would regard as pseudo-scientific or conspiracy theorising, puts the general content in the area of naivete. I was also rather taken aback to find myself suddenly mentioned: "The idea of the Earth as a living being was passed to me many years before its current appearance -- in fact Paul Screeton thought very little of the idea." Indeed, the Gaia hypothesis struck me as eminently sensible when presented by the likes of Kit Pedler and I find it an intriguing possibility. As for messages from unknown sources, this staple diet of prophets fascinates me, but I do not put my trust in so exotic and old-fashioned a source as space people.



24.

## SHORT REPORTS

**IMPROVING ONE'S BEING.** **AQUARIAN** lead all publishers in books which teach us to lead more fulfilled lives. Their latest additions can be best started with "The Practice of Personal Transformation" by Strehpon Kaplan Williams, a package of self-therapeutics techniques designed to help the seeker realize his or her full potential (£6-99). We can also learn from our dreams, and "Working With Dreams", by Montague Ullman and Nan Zimmerman, explains why we create these strange images and how they relate to our working lives (£6-99). "You and Your Aura", by Joseph Ostrom, answers all the questions asked about this coloured halo or forcefield supposedly surrounding the body (£5-99), while "Life Lines" is Peter Vest's analysis of character and assessment of individual potential through palmistry (£2-50). "Meditation: The Inner Way" uses clear instructions and carefully-selected exercises by Naomi Humphrey to create a self-help tool (£2-50). More demanding is "Movements of Magic", in which Bob Klein writes on the ancient art of t'ai-chi-ch'uan which connects mind and body (£5-99). Two self-explanatory books which are adjuncts to one another are "Autohypnosis" by Ronald Shone and "Self-Hypnosis" by R.N. Shrout (both £2-50). While the I Ching is ancient it is also timeless, so we have two new looks into this Chinese oracle with Greg Whincup's "Rediscovering the I Ching" reflecting contemporary scholarship (£7-50) and Derek Valters' "The Alternative I Ching" ingeniously reconstructed (£5-99). Astrologically different to the usual sun signs is "Moon Signs", where Sasha Fenton argues the position of the moon at our birth affects our deepest requirements and innermost needs (£3-99). If, however, you wish to use augury upon crap try Murry Hope's "Practical Celtic Magic", which in discounting the head cult is tantamount to revisionism where Jews did not figure in the Germany of the Third Reich (£5-99).

**TIMELESS WISDOM.** **Arkana** continues to build up its library of mind, body and spirit books with old and new, very varied paperbacks. In "Homage to the Sun", Kyriacos C. Markides follows on chronicling his initiation into many mysteries under the guidance of the teacher and healer Daskalos (£5-95). From 1899 comes a rephotographed reprint of the classic "Egyptian Religion" by the scholarly E.A. Vallis Budge (£4-95), while a 12th century biography of Merlin containing a complete system of magical and spiritual development is given an edited English translation and commentary in R.J. Stewart's "The Mystic Life of Merlin." Also worth checking out are four novels published by Arkana because the imprint seemed right to fill the gap where the esoteric dimension currently lacks much such material. Most traditional is Moyra Caldecott's "Etheldreda," but you can also consider Liz Greene's "The Puppet Master," Z'ev Ben Shimon Halevi's "The Anointed" and Arthur Versluis' "Telos."

### References:

"Big Secrets" by William Poundstone (Corgi).  
N.X.E. 1/8/87.

"The Choking Doberman" by Jan Harold Brunvand (Norton).

## EDITOR's postscript: Burton-on-Trent reader Paul Smith sent us cuttings from various issues of the "Burton Mail" and "Burton Advertiser" which had reports on readers' letters about the twerps who got publicity in N.X.E. They held a public meeting in Burton Town Hall on September 2 and not surprisingly they came under hostile fire from young people who were not convinced by their arguments.



## MAGAZINE REVIEWS

**NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES.** Journal of Northern Earth Mysteries Group. £1 single copy; £2-50 for 3 issues. Orders payable to Northern Earth Mysteries. From 103 Dernyshire Lane, Norton Lees, Sheffield, S8 9EN. South Yorkshire. No. 33. Under new editorship. Long dissertation on the Wantley Dragon; Burton ley; mysteries of 3 aligned E. Riding churches; meetings, book reviews, letters, miscellany and so on.

**F.L.S. NEWS.** Newsletter of the Folklore Society. Bi-annually. £2 sub to non-members. From 18 Amberley Grove, Addiscombe, Surrey, CR0 6ND. No. 5. Steve Roud on lore of stamps (I, too, believed it disrespectful to put the stamp upside down) and letters (and also that it was ignorant to write an address in red ink); 1914 reprint of suggestions to collectors of folklore; mermaid tales and hoax of the 19th century; plus Folklore Society and other events, library news and so on.

**THE LEY HUNTER.** Premier earth mysteries mag. Sub 3 issues plus supplement £5; U.S. 15 dollars. From P.O. Box 5, Brecon, Powys, Wales. No. 103. International flavour with Ethiopian megaliths, Japanese alignments, American mystery lights, Belgian holy hill alignments; a landed spacecraft in Yorkshire; ghost hunting at Strata Florida; Abee; moon watching; and large book review and readers' letters sections.

**FORTTEAN TIMES.** Foremost Fortean journal. Single copy £1-75; 4 issues £7; U.S. 12 dollars. From 96 Mansfield Road, London, NW3 2HX. No. 48. Usual round-up of offbeat happenings, including yeti photo, sleep attacks and Doc Shiels "blasphemy." Features cover a Japanese alien in a hollow boat, opposition to scientific propaganda, images observed in eyes, William Rufus' death as murder, sacrifice or accident, and natural rejuvenation in old age. Columns by respected researchers plus letters and reviews.

**PENDRAGON.** Journal of Pendragon Society. Arthurian subject matter. Details from 42 Burghley Road, St Andrews, Bristol, BS6 5BN. No. 71. Wide-ranging articles on Grail theme.

**ANOMALY.** Journal of record for the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena. Bi-annual. £3-60 to non-members. From 65 Amersham Road, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP13 5AA. No. 3. Psychic questing to the fore, with Andy Collins on two swords discovered after a dream, and "Eye of Fire" participant's supportive comments and a separate call for outside investigation into the claims. Two other reports record the seeming paranormal linkage of sealed metal rings at a meeting in the U.S. Assessment of whether Helen Duncan was capable of manifesting people from the dead in physical form and the editor on a seance he attended where she spoke to her mother. Maurice Grosse on the physical problems the supernatural poses. Letters.

**TOUCHSTONE.** Surrey Earth Mysteries Group mag. Sub £2 for 4 issues. Cheques payable to J. Goddard, 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey. Holds monthly meetings. No. 13. Experiments at lifting people with fingertips and possible such usage at Baalbeck; Waverley Abbey and William Cobbett's childhood alien big cat sighting (c. 1767) Dragon Project meeting. No. 14. Field trip to Mother Ludlam's hold; Kingston Green fair; London Earth Mysteries Circle talks.

STONEHENGE VIEWPOINT. Archaeology, astronomy, geology and related sciences. Bi-monthly on newsprint. U.K. agent: L.P.C. Smith, 16 Solstice Rise, Amesbury, Wilts., SP4 7NQ. Rate for 8 issues 15 dollars. No. 73. Editor Donald Cyr on subliminal messages to be read in patterns of lace; possible American Indians' point of view in epigraphic research; Arthur's battles; Dark Ages speculation. Plus catalogue of books for sale each issue. No. 74. Vaillian canopy theory in "The Crystal Veil" by Cyr on woven patterns (also 75-77); Dark Ages; Bob Forrest continues his trashing of Velikovsky (concluded 75). No. 75. Gloria Farley clarifies points regarding Indian carvings mixed with Old World epigraphic inscriptions. Colorado ogam expedition (also 76 with plenty of what Glyn Daniel called gastroarchaeology to his subsequent embarrassment, and 77 rejecting "forgery" hypothesis). No. 76. Excellent account by John B. White of the effect his and Gerald Hawkins' book "Stonehenge Decoded" had on the Establishment; P.M. Hughes speculates on King Arthur; L.K. Bell on Biblical chronology. No. 77. How to write ogam and ogam tartan discussion; ancient metrology.

SOURCE. Publishes local and regional studies along with news of surviving holy wells, discussion of the lore, history and topography of wells and items on allied topics. Sub for 3 issues £2-70. Payment to Mark Valentine, 109 Oak Tree Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hants.

No. 6 studies of wells in Yorkshire, Hampshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire; Poundstock; St Withburga; Lakeland well walking; and St Albans well hunt. No. 7. Studies of wells in County Durham, Yorkshire, Shropshire, Hants., Cambs.; ghostly goings on in Cornwall; couple of interesting urban legends in a piece on wishing wells; psychic questing; notes and queries, letters and reviews.



MAGONIA. Independent journal devoted to the broad examination of anomalous phenomena and their interaction with society and the individual. Quarterly. Sub £3; U.S. 8 dollars; cheques payable to John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW14 8HB. No. 25. Excellent article on helicopter mythology; earthlights debate; value or otherwise of UFO statistics. No. 26. Articles cover such topics as habitat under siege from the wilderness (fireballs, witches, poltergeists, phantom attackers); an overview of Cracoe Fell affair and its exposure; and the effects of magnetic fluctuations on humans. Both issues have outstanding book reviews and thoughtful letters. In one of the freshest approaches to the UFO phenomenon in a long time, Martin Kottmeyer puts forward an imagination-based theatre paradigm as a possible and plausible explanation; it's well argued and I look forward to his full version in a forthcoming book from Fortean Tomes. Another "solution" is provided by Stuart Campbell with his astro-mirage hypothesis; thought-provoking but too narrow. Plus Peter Rogerson with new angles on haunted houses and the usual features.

NORTHERN UFO NEWS. 1987 sub is £5-40 (6 issues) payable to NUFON (£2-70 to end of year). From 37 Heathbank Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 0UP. No. 124. World War I mystery lights in Devon. Investigations include a bizarre Welsh case with UFO flap, Fatima-like bizarre sun effects, poltergeist and unseen large animal clawing at a door. No. 125. Psychic questing before Armageddon, Aetherius Society and extraterrestrial fishmen defeated plus usual features.

## Contributors

**MICHAEL GOSS.** Probably best known for his book "The Evidence for Phantom Hitch-Hikers", an in-depth study which sees wider ramifications to urban belief tales, is a freelance writer specializing in the paranormal. He lives in Essex and is an active member of ASSAP.

**NIGEL PENNICK.** He has long been a prodigious producer of magazines, booklets and books, threatening world forestry second only to acid rain. Trained as a scientist, he researched marine micro-organisms for 15 years and has lectured on geomancy, labyrinths, runes and underground railways before many organizations and colleges in Britain. Living in Cambridge, he is one of the most prominent authorities on ancient and modern mysteries, Northern European geomancy, a runemaster, practising geomant and traditional symbolic craftsman.

**ANDY ROBERTS.** He is no stranger to F.F. and his interests are a questioning ufology and the Fortean/modern folkloric axis. He is author of "Catflaps", a study of recent northern alien big cat sightings, edits UFO Brigantia from his West Yorkshire home and contributed to Fortean Tomes' "UFOs 1947-1987."

**PAUL SCREETON.** Became special features writer for the Mail, Hartlepool, earlier this year and his roving commission most recently took him to Berneray, in the Outer Hebrides, on a special assignment. Professionally he specialises in travel writing, environmental articles and critical looks at railway matters. In his spare time he is writing a book for Fortean Tomes, is an avid reader and combines his hobbies of ferreoquinology and ale-tasting by researching whilst hogging a seat in Seaton Carew's Station Hotel.

## MAGAZINE REVIEWS

**AMSKAYA.** Newsletter of the STAR Fellowship. Q. Sub £2. Payable to J. Goddard, 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2PX. No. 5. What STAR Fellowship was/is; Hummadruz; Martian pyramids; letter Philip Rodgers wrote me when I edited THE LEY HUNTER; Jonathan Swift's flying saucer. No. 6. How amskaya translates as "little star" from a Tony Wedd article; UFO bases on Earth claims; photocopies of two UFO articles from national Press. No. 7. The late Tony Wedd on frost protection apparatus received by contact with space people; free energy. devices investigators; editorial on Whitley Strieber; notes and news.

**UFO BRIGANTIA.** Journal of the West Yorkshire UFO Group. Bi-monthly. Sub £5-50 for 6 issues; single copies 90p. Cheques payable to Martin Dagless, 19 Bellmount Gardens, Bramley, Leeds. No. 25. Iain Johnstone believes that secret inventors were responsible for the scareship flaps; David Clarke on phantom airships of W.W.I; a Bradford Men in Black experience or complex hallucination; editor Andy Roberts on Derek C. Samson's loony telephone U.F.O. Line which manages to spuriously link UFOs and AIDS; and Jenny randles on a "hoax" photograph and YUFOS goings-on. No. 27. Rendlesham revisited - was it a pioneer from of Stealth aircraft which crashed? Independent UFO Network formed for Yorkshire; earthlights reviews, brief reports and letters.

#### Even as we typed up our copy for this issue we came across more cross-correspondences. ####

SEX AND DRUGS AND ROCK 'N' ROLL. Following from our cover theme, What's Brewing (Nov. 1987) reported on an award-winning micro-brewery, Pitfield, which used the joint promotion invitation card depicted to launch the latest album by Dark Star. Maybe more than coincidence, but Pitfield's brewery was formerly used to manufacture leather bondage wear for the American gay market and Pitfield's previous foray into bottling beer for musicians was Beckie's Brew for female vocalist Beckie Bondage (who was on the cover of The Shaman, No. 8, of course).



INTO THIN AIR. On page 3 we had a couple of Peterborough pilot stories. The files have released another from 2/4/87, where the aero-obsessed columnist reflects that during a Tenerife baggage handlers' dispute an Air Europe

flight's passengers heard the greeting: "Welcome aboard. This is Captain Lightning and I'm very sorry about the strike."

TERRORPIN. On page 7 came a new version of the pet's ordeal - usually a cat under a vehicle bonnet over a long distance or in a spin drier. But here's a tale of another terrapin. Supposedly it survived being washed down a sink, swirled miles through drains and pumped into a sewage works at Bramley, Surrey. Surely it would not fit a sink plughole and if it was flushed down a toilet we are in American alligators down sewers territory (Sun, 17/11/87).

CHIPS OFF NEW BLOCKS. In F.F. 5 we featured rumours of people deposited in concrete. Two Latvians staged a protest against Russian occupation of their country by setting their legs in blocks of concrete. Friends stood the pair outside the Soviet Embassy in Washington until they were chipped loose and arrested (Sun, 20/11/87).

## NORTHERN LIGHTS

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