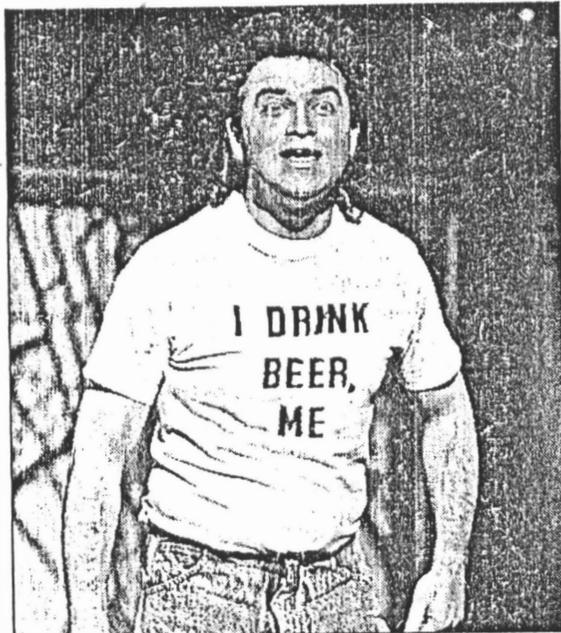


# Folklore Frontiers



TOUGH NUT: It's Buggerall against the world

Soekburn mysteries Snakes  
Autocash guilt Durham Cat  
Broom ale Submerged lands  
Newspaper taken for ride



# FOLKLORE FRONTIERS No. 7

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

\*\*\*\* IT IS EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY PAUL SCREETON FROM 5 EGTON DRIVE, SEATON CAREW, HARTLEPOOL, CLEVELAND, TS25 2AT.

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() () IF YOUR SUB EXPIRES WITH THIS ISSUE AN "X" WILL APPEAR OPPOSITE: .....

## COVER STORY

"Youse wots been watchin Friday Night Live'll seen us. I'm Biggerall-money an am hord. I drink beer, me, pints of it. Smerking tabs, fower at a time. It's the only way ah can get through 180 a week. Ah like to gannoot to the pub an clobber someone in the nuts, especially southern bastards. Ah drink Dog. That's Newcastle Broon Ale. Howay nah let us gerronwithit."

Biggerallmoney -- Harry Enfield's Geordie alter ego -- is a larger than life stereotype of the hard-drinking North Eastern mach man, but after a gallon and a half of Newcastle Brown many people on Tyneside resemble him. Known locally as Dog, Dragon's Blood or Journey into Space (as referred to at the beginning of the current "Pump up the Bitter", the drink is hip hop nectar of mind-blowing proportions.

There is a legend on Tyneside that in a Newcastle hospital there is a special ward for people who have been brain damaged by the brew. Such is told as if a little-known fact kept secret from the public. It is whispered in the bars around the Eldon Centre -- just as you're about to buy another bottle.

Brewers Scottish and Newcastle are proud of their beer, but say there is no truth in the rumour that it blows out your brains and leaves you shaking in a hospital bed for the rest of your life (Sun, 10/9/79). This, of course, is a variation on the Secret Room (see also F.F.4, page 2; F.F.6, page 4).

In fact, S&N have been much in the news recently, often loosely connected with folkloric motifs. Take the interestingly-named Shamen group scam.

AIDS gets everywhere and S&N, concerned that the Matthew Brown estate it had taken over could be a centre of infection in any epidemic installed 70 machines from the Dur-a-vend group as it was dissatisfied by the previous



condom supplier as, in the company's own words, had "pulled out at short notice." (What's Brewing, March, 1988). Meanwhile the destroyer H.M.S. Newcastle swapped the usual "gin" flag flown when guests are aboard for one week with the Newcastle Brown Ale symbol (Sun, 8/3/88)

A couple of tales from Billy O'Dell's look at Hartlepool of yesteryear caught my eye and focussed on a Headland character who was a big elbow bender:

"One story goes how he was challenged to drink 8 pints of best in an hour. He thought about it but before he accepted he decided to check that he could do it. He asked the landlord to pour a gallon of water into a bucket, went into the gents and proceeded to gulp the water down. No problem he thought as the last drop disappeared. Returning to the bar he took the bet and won with minutes to spare. "Another drinking epic of his occurred when he took a bet on to drink six pints in the time it took St Hilda's Church clock to strike the chimes of 11 -- no problem he won it. "People often ask me why the old borough had so many pubs and large families in the old days -- surely it's plain to see, what other entertainment was there." (Hartlepool Times, 24/3/88).

\* Slimey, Bruce! (D. Mirror, 15/4/88 - Credit N. Pennick.

## Slimey, Bruce!

AUSSIE drinkers have come up with a heady new cocktail -- cane toad slime.

The concoction has a similar effect as LSD. Drinkers experience "vivid colours and a burning feeling".

Zoologists say the slime can be fatal.

## Porn note

A £1 million TV advert for McEwans Lager, due to have been launched on April 2, has been kept in the can following a furore concerning the group that supplied the music.

Press stories report that the group, The Shamen, show pornographic videos at their concerts, and that one member of the band is a self-confessed drug user. Scottish & Newcastle, have decided to arrange music from another group, saying: "The company has a very strong policy for social responsibility."

The band retort that if S&N are that responsible they would not be in the business of producing alcohol.

## CONTRIBUTORS

GUY RAGLAND PHILLIPS. Sadly Guy died of a severe heart attack on February 21. He was in hospital in Norfolk for three weeks in January and had seemed to be recovering from a third light stroke. He had read my review of his new book "The Unpolluted God" and kindly wrote that he was "absolutely delighted; by far the most intelligent that I have had: a review that shows quite clearly that the reviewer had reached the same or similar perspectives himself. Most encouraging ... Yours is a review that adds distinction both to the object surveyed and to the surveyor." The piece here published makes its posthumous debut, though it was one of two additional chapters Guy hoped could be included in a new edition of his earlier book Britain. Readers will I am sure join me in offering condolences to his widow, Ivy.

JAKE WILLIAMS. Jake lives in Aberdeenshire, where he dabbles in self-sufficiency, fiddles about with electronic gadgets and writes occasional articles for magazines. He does a regular column on "The Night Sky" in the Banffshire Herald and had a piece on hitch-hiking stories in F.F. 2.

EDDIE BELL. Police Constable Bell is a community liaison officer with Durham Constabulary living in North-West Durham. He has offered to give talks to any organizations wishing to learn more of the alien big cat sightings and to see the plaster casts of footprints and so on.

PAUL SCREETON. Paul is a feature writer and senior sub-editor with the Mail, Hartlepool, in which the articles on Fortean snakes and denuded coastlines appeared firstly. He is the author of a number of books on earth mysteries and folklore.

# Taxi raid backfires

A CRAFTY taxi driver took a Hartlepool couple to the airport...then returned to their home to strip of valuables.

But his daylight raid was foiled when the owners came home after forgetting their passports and caught the thief red-handed.

The man and his wife, from Owton Manor, were careful not to let people know they were going away but their security plans backfired.

Their opportunist driver went straight back to their home before breaking in and proceeded to load the couple's TV and video into the boot of his cab.

The couple, who did not wish to be named, took a taxi to Newcastle airport but arrived at the holiday check-in desk without their passports.

The man, a taxi driver with Hudson's Private Hire, hailed another cab to take him home to collect the passports but got the shock of his life.

"He got a taxi from a rival firm to take him to the airport because he didn't want his workmates to know he was going on holiday," said David Hudson, proprietor of Hudson's Private Hire.

"He couldn't believe what he saw when he got home to find

the driver that had taken him to the airport loading stuff into his boot.

According to witnesses, the opportunist thief was caught red-handed.

The story came to light this week after the Hudson's driver told colleagues of his "safety measures" which went wrong.

"Not telling his mates nearly cost him his TV and video," said Mr Hudson.

"He should have taken a Hudson's cab - that way he could have been 100 per cent sure of safety!"

The couple finally got away, complete with passports, for a fortnight in the sun.

No. 33,545 (1111th Year) Friday, July 17, 1987

HARTLEPOOL

## WHODUNNIT PROBE BY TAXI BOSSES

# IDENTIFY RAID CULPRIT DEMAND

ANGRY taxi bosses and their drivers have demanded the name of the cabbie at the centre of a Hartlepool raid row.

The call comes after a town private hire boss revealed that one of his employees was "ripped-off" by a rogue taxi driver.

The incident happened when the man - who works for Hudson's Private Hire - and his wife took a taxi to Newcastle Airport, but were forced to return home in a different car, when they found they had left their passports behind.

The couple arrived home, in Owton Manor, to find their original driver busy removing valuables from their house.

By PETER FRENCH

Now furious colleagues and taxi chiefs are demanding that the crafty driver be named.

Ian Cameron, secretary of the Hartlepool taxi proprietors' association, said: "My members and their drivers want me to ask Mr Hudson to inform

Saturday, July 18, 1987.

us of such a standard that the people of Hartlepool can and do place their trust in them.

"I have been a proprietor for nearly 20 years and I have never known a licensed taxi driver to be involved in theft while on duty.

"We in the licensed trade recognize the fact that our drivers have to

be of such a standard that the people of Hartlepool can and do place their trust in them.

"In Hartlepool we have always tried to give the public the highest possible standard of service and honesty.

"We will not be associated with a driver who is involved with dishonesty," he added.

The stories on the previous page come from The Mail, Hartlepool, of July 17 and 18 last year. Students of urban belief tales will immediately recognise the variation on a familiar theme.

If you're not familiar with it, here's a recent example of the core story. It's taken from the Daily Mirror (22/9/87).

A CHEEKY car thief returned a family's car with a full tank of petrol and an apologetic note saying he had booked them dinner in a top restaurant. The family of four took up the invitation - then returned home three hours later to find that while they had been dining and dining, the "repentant" thief had stolen jewellery and £800 savings from their house in Treviso, Italy.

You get the picture? The Hartlepool case, as I pointed out to journalistic colleagues, was as leaky of any real factuality as a collander.

## Concern over taxi article

Also it appeared at a time when there was a bitter and public rivalry between taxi firms and the town's private hire operators, with accusations of poaching business, some violence, culminating in the taximen taking the law into their own hands to the extent of barricading a stretch of road at one point. It was in this climate of animosity and highly-charged feeling that this specialized variant manifested.

I WOULD like to express my deep concern at the article "Taxi Raid Backfires" (Mail, July 17).

At that time I was advertising an airport special and never received one telephone call. As Mr Hudson got a free bit of advertising in the statement, he cleared his name but left the rest of the taxi firms under suspicion.

Remember how according to the witnesses the opportunist thief was caught red handed? Well, why has he after made an appearance before Hartlepool magistrates? We know, of course.

Well, I would like to point out the fact that it was in no way anything to do with Lil's Taxis and hope all the people in Hartlepool will trust other taxi firms in the future as they used to.

It would help us all if Mr Hudson would reveal the taxi firm in connection with this incident.

Also, if he is so good, why did his driver use a rival firm anyway?

\*\* The reader's letter on the right was published in The Mail on August 6, 1987.

Lil,  
Lil's Taxis.  
Thornhill Gardens,  
Hartlepool.

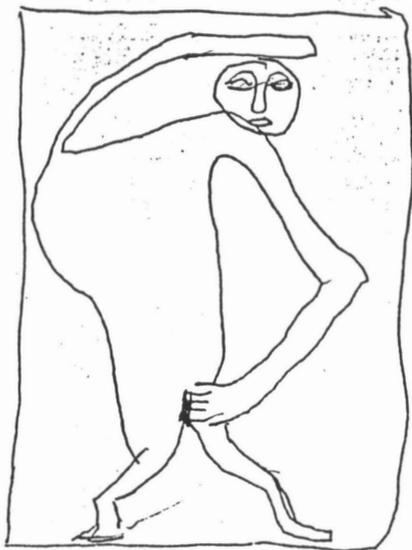
## \*\*\*\*\* FORTEANA \*\*\*\*\*

The line between urban belief tales and Forteana often blurs, so we'll be having brief round-ups of some of these incidents. First off a couple of bizarre compulsions. Police were puzzled by a motor-cyclist who stopped women in the street, claimed he'd broken down and then asked them to sit on his head. Although he had committed no crime, several women from Barnet (get the allusion head=barnet), Herts., dialled 999 and complained. Some even admitted carrying out his bizarre request (Star, 18/6/87) ... and a phantom blonde wearing only a beige raincoat and high heels was being hunted in Hampshire for flashing at other women (Sun, Star, 21/1/88) ... then shoppers in Stroud, Glous., were pelted from the sky by a fall of pink frogs. Naturemen claimed the frogs could be albino, so giving the impression of being pink, and weathermen suggested they'd been sucked up by wind and rained down. But look at the date for the cutting (Sun, 24/10/87) ... while a wallaby spotted at midnight hopping down a main street in Poole, Dorset, remained one jump ahead of police (Sun, 16/1/88) ... while shocked fishermen were hit by a freak invasion of octopuses. The tentacled terrors were raiding lobster pots in Northumberland and eating the catch before it could be hauled in (Sun, 21/1/88) ... earth mysteries students well know the old tales of the Devil or other agencies hindering the building of a church where it should not be erected, but builders at the church in Piddlehinton found that unfinished work had been mysteriously completed before they returned to the site the next morning (News of the World, 27/12/87) ...



# The Pattern of Sockburn

By Guy  
Ragland  
Phillips



Sheila-na-gig,  
Croft - n. Tees

Dr Edith M. Guest, the eminent authority on Irish Celtic mythology and folklore, in an article in "Folklore" (vol. 401. 1937) on the "Sheila-na-gig" of Ballyvourney, described in careful detail not only the cutlandish object itself and certain ancillary objects associated with it, but also a kind of regular pattern of behaviour which "pilgrims" visiting the site were expected to observe. She remarked that though the artefacts concerned are in no case apparently to be dated before the Norman Conquest, the "pattern" has a very much more ancient look. "If at other places where Sheila-na-gigs are found, we trace the same series of ideas and influences, we may justly deduce that these are what the figure stood for, and today stands for in the minds of the people. We shall look for the magic water with its offerings; for associations with: fertility symbols, rounds or patterns; one or other link will generally be absent, but the chain will still be recognisable."

A detailed and cool Guest-like examination of a complex myth of the sort awaits the attention of an investigator on the county border around a spit of land called Sockburn Peninsula, almost surrounded by a loop of

the River Tees. On that loop stands Sockburn Hall and also the ruined Sockburn chapel. Just at the point where the old Great North Road crosses the Tees from Yorkshire into County Durham, on the outskirts of Darlington, the village of Croft, with a fine church beside the great bridge. Push open the doors of this church and immediately turn around and look at the wall you have just come through. There you will see an extraordinarily lewd carving (depicted with article - drawing by the author).

In former times the Bishop of Durham was, in every sense, a prince except only that his position was not hereditary. He had absolute jurisdiction within his diocese, which included enclaves in other areas, such as Northumberland. A newly-appointed Bishop of Durham, journeying northward to take possession of his palatinate, on arrival at Croft would presumably enter Croft Church under the gaze of this figure - described today as a "representation of local divinity, probably associated with the river" - and would then move in splendid procession 200 or even 300 yards along the front of the church to the magnificent bridge across the river. Here he would be met by a representative of the current Lord of Sockburn. This officer would then present the Lord Bishop with a very strange weapon, a Saracen falchion, with which a mediaeval ex-Crusader knight known as the Champion Conyers slew a demon "Worm" (dragon) which demanded periodical human sacrifices of the Andromeda kind. The presentation of the falchion was the fee by which the Lordship of Sockburn was held. The Bishop was then expected to return the falchion to the Lord's officer, after which he passed over the bridge into his bishopric.

But in the loop of the river, a little below Croft, there are sulphurous springs known as Hell's Kettles. There is also the site of the Worm's demise. It has been stated the defeated Worm plunged down a hole; what is left unclear is whether it was really killed or merely clobbered. The top of the hole was (and still is) covered with some big stones, especially one very large one. At some time (no one seems to know when), this stone was disturbed and thereupon struck by lightning and split in two, and so it remains to this day.

I cannot make up my mind whether it would, or would not, be a desirable thing to investigate that hole and the sulphur springs thoroughly. After my own experience of such sites, especially the Sheila-na-gig at Copgrove, near Harrogate (which always warns me with a thunderclap if I try to photograph it), I would not care to take a pickaxe to that big stone.

One last word, the little ruined chapel of Sockburn may be inspected by seeking permission at the Hall and contains some particularly fine brasses of monuments of the Conyers family. It was here that I noticed a feature of brasses to which I have never seen any published reference. It is common in ancient writings, whether calligraphic, or carved, or in brass, to find abbreviations, such as, for example, a single "n" instead of a double "n". There were available certain diacritical marks which could be inserted above the single "n" to warn the reader that there was an abbreviation. At Sockburn I noticed just such an instance: Hic jacet - somebody or other - who died ANO DOMINI whatever it was (alas I did not make a note). I jumped to the conclusion that this was an abbreviation for ANNO DOMINI, but there was no "caret" diacritical mark, though there was plenty of room for it; in effect the brass-cutter had carried out a most hilarious and, at the same time, obscene mistake.

Since then I have noticed the precisely similar error constantly and almost stubbornly perpetrated in old churches all over Britain, so that I begin to wonder if it could be something more than an error, but might perhaps, have had some connection with Templar practices, or with the Gnostic version of the Gospel according to St Mark, which gave a categorical homosexual twist to the Lazarus story.

The falchion of the Champion Conyers is still preserved at the wonderful museum attached to Durham Cathedral.



Figures (do you remember them from school physics? Moving figure-of-eight patterns on an oscilloscope.). Anyway, the developers didn't think much of the idea, and I didn't even get into the shortlist. But I still think it was a good idea.

I heard a report of the "Stop the City" campaign, which aimed to disrupt the business of the big financial world. One of the tactics was to gum up cashcard machines by spreading something sticky on a card-sized bit of plastic and feeding that to the machine. I wonder if the idea has caught on? Maybe there is a dedicated team of technicians working against the odds, to keep these machines more-or-less working.



## NEWSLINES

**HONING RETURNS.** Thieves who stole four (D. Mirror, 21/1/88; Sun, same day, three birds) racing pigeons lost them the first time they released them -- because they flew straight back to their owner's loft in Reading, Berks. Also there must be some doubt about the widely-publicized tale (most nationals, 29/4/88) of geriatric pigeons sent kamikaze style to be remote-controlled exploded to kill hawks.



**PLATFORM END RUMOUR.** That old chestnut of buried locomotives returns. A reader challenged the authority of a claim in a pub quiz where one of the questions asked was: "What is buried beneath Wembley Stadium?" To his and most others' amazement, the answer was "a steam locomotive." (Steam Railway, April, 1988). Another correspondent in the next issue believed a small tank engine in use on the huge construction site met with a mishap and unworthy of repair was covered over as work continued. However, I've heard this many times before regarding steam locomotives, including one supposedly buried at Hartlepool's waterworks and a modern class 27 diesel wrapped in polythene and buried under Paterson's Tip, Mount Vernon, Glasgow, because of its asbestos content -- never mind that hundreds of other same era diesels were/are similarly contaminated. Back at Wembley, a Quatermass TV programme some years ago suggested exotically and wryly it was described as the "sacred turi" not through footballing glory but for earth mysteries reasons.

**MIRACLE OF THE SEA OF SHARKS.** Many newspapers (23/12/87) carried the story of a boy who floated on a plank for two days after the Philippine ferry Dona Paz sank with the loss of around 3,000 lives. Only one paper I saw cast doubt on this pre-Xmas miracle and I blushing admit I seem to have mislaid the cutting to scotch the rumour.

# The Durham Cat

## — The Story So Far —

By P.C. Eddie Bell

The first sighting of the Durham Cat came completely out of the blue at about 8.00 p.m. on Sunday, 17th September 1986 at the Thinford Inn Roundabout, near Spennymoor. A lorry driver who was sitting in his cab was terrified by what he described as a large cat and would not get out, asking for help using his CB radio. People who have spoken to him said that he was clearly frightened and that it appeared quite genuine. The cat ran off when people came out of the nearby Thinford Inn, and was described as being Alsatian dog-sized, black in colour and with white chest markings.

I went to the scene two days later, but there were no footprints or any other signs at that stage. However when I asked around the area I discovered one or two unusual incidents prior to the sighting such as two suspicious deer kills on a local estate, a lamb kill which, though the farmer drove off what he thought to be a dog, the dog was a long way off at the time and the marks on the lamb were not like those on a lamb killed by a dog. Someone also reported that their horses had been petrified one night, and had been bucking around as if startled by something. They were used to dogs and never reacted like that previously.

The next sighting was at 1.15 a.m. at Fishburn Coke Works which have since closed. A driver working night-shift saw a cat described as two feet tall with a small face, long tail and a deep chest, pass in front of him and run up a steep face of coke. These coke heaps were some ten feet tall and the coke moved when walked on; when I looked later there were only two impressions of where the animal had run up the face of the coke. It was clearly very athletic.

I returned to the coke works later in daylight and was shown foot-prints in an area of soft dust where the cat had apparently been. These foot-prints were about three inches across and clearly those of a cat. I also saw a dead seagull, apparently the remains of a meal which was reduced to only wings and a few feathers. Whatever caught it while it was roosting on the open coverless areas of coke had to be a good hunter.

From then on, because of the press exposure received, the number of sightings began to increase and came in almost daily from that time right up to the middle of December. I had difficulty deciding what were good sightings and what were not so. Some of the sightings were from people reporting having seen a cat prior to the original sighting, but not daring to report it.

Amongst the not-so-good sightings was one from a woman who reported having been out walking her dog and hearing the cat 'roaring' behind a hedge. Subsequent investigation revealed that the field was full of cows!

The area of the sightings also began to spread and, by the end of the initial period, these sightings had come in from Ferryhill, Bowburn, Spennymoor and most points inbetween. The colour did vary and was either black, brown (or fawn) and also tortoiseshell. The size varied too, although size is very hard to judge in any case, and the cat seemed to be between 18 inches and two feet tall, and between three and four feet long.

By the end of October the range had ominously extended to Newton Aycliffe and Consett and it meant that my own trips out to sightings had to be more selective. Then on Sunday 26th October 1986 I went to a farm near Bowburn to a dead sheep. When I arrived I found a sheep carcass lying completely devastated in the corner of a field. It had been killed apparently by a bite to the back of the neck and an estimated 24 pounds of meat had been eaten. From the appearance of the carcass only one animal had fed on it as it was not torn apart. Meat had been eaten from the front limbs, shoulders, the body area and all the offal was gone. The lower skin still on the ground had been licked clean of blood and flesh. There were no bite marks on the hard bones, only the soft rib ends being chewed at all, and the carcass was covered in 'chippings' of meat and bone as if it had been rasped from the carcass.

The sheep had been killed that night, and at about 11.30 p.m. on the Saturday the farmer's mother had tried to let her dog out but it had refused to go. This was not to be the only sighting where people reported that a dog was frightened by something.

Further to this, the knacker took the carcass remnants away and, with 40 years experience as a knacker, confirmed he had never seen a dog kill like that. In addition when skinning the remains he found a bruise on the shoulder which had deep scratches running through it where the sheep had presumably suffered a heavy blow with a clawed foot. Three other sheep had run from the scene of the kill and then dropped dead, presumably from fright, as they had no marks on them, except one which had a similar bruise on the shoulder to the eaten remains.

Unfortunately, Durham Cat Fever gripped the press now and sightings began to flood in from Satley, Castleside, Wingate, Peterlee, Metal Bridge and Ferryhill. One sighting occurred beyond Ferryhill Station and I went the following morning. I found footprints in some mud and decided they were dog prints. I then found the dog (a small black and white mongrel with some collie) hiding behind a hedge. It was clearly lost, and I approached it, made friendly noises and reached out to get hold of its collar. Then I found the friendly noises had gone un-heeded and it severely chewed my hand. I drove to Dryburn Hospital for urgent repairs and an undignified tetanus injection. The press actually found me between the Casualty department and the dispensary at the hospital for an immediate reaction. My diary on the sighting simply reads, Dog 1, Me 0.

Having now realised that people cannot tell the difference between dogs and cats I reviewed my policy and found that many more sightings were also of dogs. After November saw the last rash of sightings covering distances from Wide Open to the A66 Cleveland Border, with all colours and sizes reported, the largest being 4 feet 6 inches tall - anyone lost a tiger?

On December 11th there were reported sheep kills identical to the one at Bowburn, with there being three in about nine days, but the carcasses were disposed of and I never saw them. The same farmer then reported seeing the cat in his farmyard.

The sightings then died down up to and after Christmas and my final trip out was on January 7th 1987 when I dragged myself from my sick bed with 'flu, to go to Steetley Quarry where 'the cat' was apparently trapped in a wood. When I arrived wrapped up against the cold and staggered to the scene in the snow I was shown a superb set of dog footprints (clearly a Rottweiler) and then had the witness describe a perfect Rottweiler to me. I went home.

Sporadic sightings still come in, and I have no doubt there are some good ones. I log them and, when time allows, go out to look around, but the problem I have is that sightings recently have come from Castle Eden Dene, Blaydon, Castleside, Trimdon and Beamish. Where do you start to look?

The last sighting in mid-October 1987 was back within 400 yards of Thinford Inn.

So what is it and can you believe in it?

If you discount every eye-witness sighting there is still other evidence. There are the footprints of which I have photographs, the dead sheep I have seen and the cast of the footprint. Then there are the reports of similar sightings throughout Britain, from the Brecon Beacons, Isle of Wight, North Scotland and the famous Exmoor Beast.

The sightings even follow a pattern, with very definite individual areas: Peterlee, Castle Eden Dene, Wingate; Bowburn, Spennymoor, Thinford; Burnopfield, Beamish, Pelton; Castleside, A68 area South; and even possibly areas around Croft, Cleveland/Durham border, and also Blaydon.

There is also a pattern in that the Peterlee Cat is invariably black, while the Beamish sightings are always of a more lynx-like cat with tufted ears.

Its origins may be a little more inexplicable but consider the following:

1. There may now be an endemic population of known wild cats such as puma or lynx as it is certain that, after the Dangerous Animal Act of 1982, many people who had such pets released them rather than have them destroyed, and because they could not afford the insurance and licence.
2. It could be an endemic wild cat as described by Di Francis in her book 'Cat Country', explaining the large number of similar sightings throughout Britain, and the similarity of the cat kills to those on Exmoor. (The Exmoor Beast has now killed in excess of 170 sheep.)
3. The Hancock Museum has identified a cat which is a hybrid between the Scottish wild cat and the feral domestic cat which is larger than both and varies in colour.

As for food, while it has killed sheep the likely size would suggest prey of the size of rabbit and large birds which are abundant.

I leave you to decide as it is all a matter of belief, but consider the last few points:



Dec. 18. Paul Humphreys was unpopular when one of his six pythons escaped. The Dartmouth, Devon, fisherman's 20-footer called Rambo slithered across several neighbours' gardens before being recaptured.

**Contemporary legend**

Of course, most stories in the Press have a basis in fact. However, there are also occasions when the tale is nothing more than a contemporary legend. People swallowing snakes — as was the case of a Russian peasant girl last year — are especially dubious. The veracity of the one above about the flooding is also suspicious.

Commenting on my last round-up, author and writer on Fortean matters Michael Goss (who is also a member of the Zoological Society of London and the International Society of Cryptozoology) pondered the truth of the serpent allegedly down a toilet. He recalled a Swedish correspondent to Fortean Times sending him a cutting about rats supposedly emerging from lavatories in Malmo.

"It just goes to prove you can't be too careful, though personally I'm not going to start firing a gun down the W.C. every time I want to use it, as is reportedly the case in 'hot countries'," writes Mike.

**WIFE IN CONCRETE**

A man was arrested yesterday after his wife was found entombed in concrete on the 7th floor of a newspaper office in Dayton, Ohio.

SUN (28/4/88)



"In your own sick way, you are considerate."



"Never mind how we managed it—get on with the topping-out ceremony!"

**Belt up darling!**

CHASTITY belts are making a comeback. Jealous husbands are eagerly snapping up the medieval passion killers — complete with personal padlock—at £860 a time.

Artist Angelo Camerino who turns out the steel contraptions at his Rome studio said: "I made my first for an exhibition on feminism. But soon men were asking if I could produce special ones for their wives."

Now customers are bringing their women to Camerino's workshops for individual fittings and little extras like leather or silk linings.

**Rover's Reform**

PET shop owner Helen Kelly is selling leather chastity belts—for lady dogs.

Helen, 27, from Galway, Ireland, took four years perfecting the belts.

She claims that they will thwart any romeo Rover.

The cost—from £5 up. "Leather is expensive," she explained.

THE STAR (31/4/88)

NEWS OF THE WORLD (24/12/88)



"Only three customers in tonight. The police, the Purity League and the R.S.P.C.A."

**SNAKE**

BUSTY Italian actress Merla Sole thought Salome was a role she could get her teeth into — until a snake got its teeth into her.

It bit the bikini-clad actress's bosom as she rolled in a field while filming a video.

Forty-year-old Merla was given anti-viper venom and was recovering at her home near Florence.

"It was lucky," she was quoted on September 18. "It could have been fatal if I had been bitten nearer the heart."

**SPOT**



"I do wish you wouldn't bring your work home with you from the zool"

**LETTERS**

From Bob Skinner:

I was fascinated to see again the picture of the baboon "Jack" reproduced on the back cover. I have seen it elsewhere, but coincidentally I had only read the other day an account of the story and photograph in a volume of Chambers Journal. The issue for Feb. 27, 1897 (5th series vol 14 No 687) contains reference to a communication from a Mr H. V. Bidwell of Uitenhage, Cape of Good Hope, with reference to an article on monkeys previously published. Mr Bidwell wrote: "We had a remarkably intelligent baboon here a few years ago. He was a giant of his species. His master and trainer had the misfortune to have both his legs cut off in a railway accident, and on his leaving hospital the Cape government gave him a berth as a signalman, near the terminus here. He taught this baboon not only to work the signals, but to place the wheels of a little trolley on the line, and then the bed on the wheels. His master would then seat himself on the trolley, and Jack would push him along to his house, about 200 yards down the line. He would then detach the pieces of the trolley and clear them off the line. He would also lock the door of the signalbox and take the key to his master. When he died I obtained the body, and sent it to the Albany Museum at Grahamstown, but the taxidermist informed me that the body was too decomposed for preservation. I believe his skeleton has been afforded a place in the museum. I enclose a photograph of poor Jackoo and his master showing the former working the railway signals as hundreds of people have seen him."

Further information on the baboon, and the same photo as on your postcard appear in Gerald Wood's Guinness Book of Animal Facts and Feats (1972) pp98-99; the story is also summarised in The Sparrow Book of Animal Records by Pamela Cleaver (1982) p61.

From Wood we learn that the man's name was Wyld and that he had his accident on the Port Elizabeth main line in 1877. After becoming a signalman, he saw the baboon for sale in the local market and bought him as a pet. It became devoted to his master and was soon trained to fetch water, sweep out the shack and hand a special key to passing engine drivers who used it to adjust certain points farther up the line. He used to rush to the signalbox and get the key from a peg on the wall whenever he heard an approaching train. Eventually "Jack" learned to work signals on his own, and became so proficient that he was able to carry out the whole operation while his master remained at the shack. He was never known to make a mistake. The partnership continued for nine years until Jack died of tuberculosis in 1890.

Wood also records that in 1971/2 another baboon called "Jock" was working as a signalman on a branch line Pretoria, earning 1s. 6d. a day and a bottle of beer every Saturday night!

From Mick Goss:

The Irish labourer/terrapin affair (p23, FF6) sounds like a reworking of the old joke where a woman buys a tortoise from a pet shop ... goes back next week: "The meat pie you sold me was fine, but my husband complained about the crust...". Mmm...



From Mary V. Bonney

A small article on urban legends appeared in The Observer Midweek on May 6, 1987. This is one of the free papers with which we are bombarded and I only spotted this recently while turning out. The following items from it refer to Slough.

At some time in April this year a Mr David Metcalfe, of Balfour's (newsagents), Mirader Crescent, Upton Lea, was urging his customers to collect empty cigarette packets to send a nine-year-old leukaemia sufferer to Disneyland. He was led to believe that if they could match the weight of the boy in empty cigarette packets, a major company would pay for the trip to America. The Walnut Tree pub in Bourne End were running the same fund-raising venture, likewise believing they were doing something worthwhile.

In the files of the Slough Observer dating from apparently 1937 "we came across the girl who vanished from the former Adelphi cinema, in Bath Road. It was alleged that while watching the film she suffered a slight stab in her leg and felt faint. She went outside for fresh air and a cinema attendant was approached by a woman saying that she would look after her. But the girl was not seen again .. Officials at the Adelphi, now run as a bingo centre, had investigated the matter thoroughly. By all accounts a message was flashed on to the cinema screen enquiring her whereabouts, and this, with the rest of the rumour, was found to be a hoax. The manager, a Mr Groom, said that when he was in Glasgow, a carbon copy of the story was told about a cinema there."

I wonder where this tale has cropped up between Glasgow and Slough and when?

Additionally Mary sent a column from the Evening Post, Reading, for 31/7/87 which included an item on the Basingstoke canal - "the rumour is that radar traps may soon be installed on the canal to stop cabin cruisers and narrow boats breaking the 4mph speed limit."

WHATEVER HAPPENED  
TO ALICE MAKWENA?

Former prostitute Alice Makwena's Holy Spirit Movement seems to have run out of steam. Her suicidal war on Ugandan troops will be known to regular newspaper readers, but our interest is that when her weird crusade began legend had it that she was a huge, one-breasted Amazon who could not be killed. (D.Exp. 27/10/87)

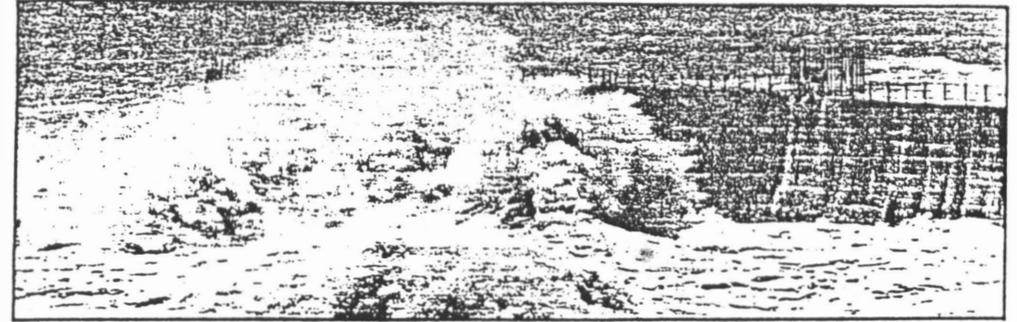


Alice: Fanatic

**BACK-TO-FRONT BUILDINGS.** This architectural folklore was mentioned in F.F.4, p26, and F.F.5, p20. As expected we can now report the genuine thing. Various papers (14/5/88) reported bungling brickies boding a bungalow, but surely it was someone more senior who should have spotted the blunder at Chatteris, Cambs. The Sun called it a "bungle-o" and one suspects they made up the last paragraph where a labourer on the site said "sod off."

Many newspapers (23/12/87) carried the story of a boy who floated on a plank for two days after a Philippine ferry sank with 3,000 lives lost. Only one paper I saw later cast doubt on this pre-Xmas miracle.

# THE CRUEL SEA



HEUGH BREAKWATER

## Britain's changing coastline

**T**HE SEA is part of the great untameable side of nature.

For those in peril on the sea, equally there are those who lose their homes each year as the waves buffet relentlessly against cliffs and man-made defences.

On a wider scale there is the romance of legends of sunken continents and islands and vanished cities, towns and villages.

Would we rather intellectualize Atlantis as a metaphor for some spurious possible lost Golden Age or believe it once existed physically and its survivors brought civilization to Europe?

Did fabled Lyonesse once exist as a fertile land mass between Cornwall and the Scilly Islands?

Or nearer home, we have our mystery at Seaton Carew connected with the awesome power of the sea. Also the "submerged forest" — but more of these later.

**A** GOOD reason to focus upon our changing coastline comes from the recent publication of "Lost Lands and Sunken Cities" by Nigel Pennick.

When St  
Hilda's  
received  
a push

FEAR of the waves' power of denudation lies at the root of one of those stories which mock the credulity of a community. In this case worried fishermen decided to push St Hilda's Church, on Hartlepool's Headland, farther inland for safety.

Before attempting their task, they took off their coats. While they heaved and grunted, a rag and bone man spotted the garments. Hardly believing his good fortune, he collected them and went on his way.

After a while, the fishermen checked their progress and noting the clothing had gone, assumed they had pushed the church sufficiently far to bury their coats.

For the first time in one volume have been collected the scattered fragments of geological, pictorial, literary and folkloric remains of these disappearing lands. They have been rescued from archaeological and geographical remains, old maps, regional histories and folk memory.

The evidence reveals how considerably the outline of Britain has changed within historical times. We all know there was once a land bridge to continental Europe and the White Cliffs of Dover continue to crumble. How many know a great Saxon cathedral and parkland lies below an anchorage at Selsey Bill or that the marine graveyard Goodwin Sands was formerly farmland?

All around our coasts, ports and fishing communities have vanished, either destroyed in sudden cataclysm of subsidence and inundation or

by gradual but inexorable erosion.

Pennick details five forms of event which can create loss of coast before going on to chapters covering such catastrophes as historical surge tides, the mythology of the universal deluge, Atlantis and other lost civilizations, and legends and traditions of lost lands.

The book is splendidly illustrated with ancient and modern photographs, antiquarian and newly-drawn maps and historic engravings. A fine corrective in words and pictures for those who believe the shape of Britain has never changed.

**T**HE COAST around Hartlepool has seen its fair share of changes over the centuries — forest covered, stacks of rock collapsed and a chapel lost.

The name of Hartlepool may be a corruption of *Haracleopolis*, suggested by town councillor and author Doug Ferriday as possibly a residence of traders from the East, or it may simply be "that peninsular land sometimes isolated by water, and covered by forest, being the peculiar hunt of deer." The latter would have correspondence with the Hartlepool town seal, with a stag standing in a pool.



ST HILDA'S

BY PAUL SCREETON

## Night the circus came to town

THERE can be few alive today who actually recall seeing the Elephant Rock, but almost everyone in Hartlepool will have heard of it. Shaped with all the principal details of a pachyderm, this geological marvel off the Headland crashed down during a storm in the 1890s.

With white clover growing on its "head" and "back", from a distance it made it look truly lifelike, these resembling the trappings as worn on occasion in Eastern countries.

When it stood, to be able to climb the Elephant Rock was considered a great achievement; hard to scale and even more difficult to get down.

One could not wholly blame the North Sea for its demise, for its fall was indirectly due to a new promenade whose backwash from

The eighth century ecclesiastic Bede favoured this view, calling the place *heopru* or *heoprea* — the place where harts (deer) drink. Later historians refer to the Island of Harts.

Large oak forests are known to have been common in the area, and

the waves quickly wore down the "legs" of the elephant. Its fall brought both excitement and dismay. Also a tale which sounds apocryphal!

That night, as the waves thundered against the promenade and rocketed back down in the town a circus had just arrived, and was being installed by the light of flickering hurricane lamps, on a sheltered site near the Palladium cinema.

Without warning, one of the elephants fell down dead while at the same time, by the storm-lashed seafont, the Elephant Rock toppled finally into the sea.

"fossilised" remains can be seen in the Newburn Bridge and Longscar Rocks area. Among the tree branches and acorns, deer antlers have been found.

Such submarine forests also occur off Wales, Lancashire, Holderness, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Kent and Sussex. They occur when land sinks, relative to the sea level, either gradually or by sudden cataclysm, the vegetation being submerged and partly preserved by silt.

Visible at low tides, the remains are nothing special to look at, but the location of a flint chipping

shaped by Mesolithic man who hunted there around 7,000 B.C. makes for exciting discovery. I recall around ten years ago the Mail recording that the following day, the planetary positions would

create an extraordinarily low tide. At midday, Seaton Carew sea front and stretching back to Church Street, in Hartlepool, was jammed with traffic as sightseers seemingly expected to see some petrified jungle stretching to the horizon.

According to Pennick, as late as 1667 a fortification was constructed at Seaton Snook by the mouth of the Tees, all trace of which has now vanished. He also records the chapel of St Thomas a Becket at Seaton Carew, built around 1200 and which disappeared more than three centuries ago. It still lies somewhere under the greens of the golf-course.

It has been said that the Seaton Carew sand-dunes have been eroded in recent years, replacement sand at the Fish Sands simply vanished and blame for various denudations have been put variously on sea, wind and at one time the offshore sea-coal dredger.

Yet when I was in the Outer Hebrides last year, I was assured the high sand-dunes of Berneray were a recent acquisition. However, on the whole, it seems the sea claims more than it gives.

Lost Lands and Sunken Cities by Nigel Pennick (Forthen Tomes, £8.50).

## NEWS NEWS Spy cliff hanger!

RADAR equipment used to track shipping in the Thames estuary, has been moved to a new base — to save it falling into the sea.

Two nearby houses on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, have subsided as nearly 120 ft of land was eroded by sea and rain.

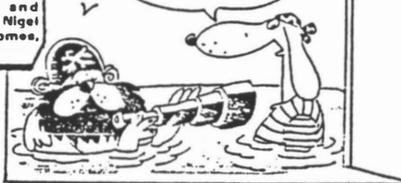
## MISTAKE, SURELY

The town of Beccles — eight miles inland — has been moved to the coast on the cover map of new Suffolk phone directories.

WE'RE HEADING FOR THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE, WHERE SHIPS MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEAR!



I THINK WE'VE ARRIVED!!



## FOAFTALE NEWS

In issue No. 7 of this occasional news-sheet on contemporary legend research appeared a very backhanded appraisal of the first four issues of Folklore Frontiers. Yes, Screeton would ask to be judged on the contents, which a damn sight more interesting than those in Foaftale News. Yes it is cheap -- at £3 for issues of 28 pages it makes Foaftale News' asking price of £2 for two flimsy issues (it may be more now, as I was not sent this issue but was tipped off by a subscriber) highway robbery. Reviewer Gillian Bennett finds riling the "awful jokey, exclamatory style" -- well tough luck!!!! "This is not an analytical or academic magazine in any respect, just a forum for the exchange and collection of information." No, we're not a stuffy magazine and British academics (unlike their U.S. counterparts) are invariably awful. Gillian had the cheek to ask if I would care to contribute a paper at the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language annual conference on contemporary legend. The only paper I feel would be suitable and understood by her would be a sheet of lavatory paper. Lastly, I am accused of "a carelessness of detail." Ms Bennett believes I live at 3 Egton Drive, whereas I can assure her a family by the name of Plaiice have lived there for more than two decades. We've been their neighbours at No. 5 since 1969.

# MAGAZINES

**NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES.** Journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group. Rates: £1 single copy; £2.50 for three issues. Cheques/POs payable to Northern Earth Mysteries. From 103 Derbyshire Land, Norton Lees, Sheffield, S8 9EN. No. 34. Two highly-contrasting reports of the group's terrestrial zodiacs theme 1987 moot; fascinating piece on mysterious Longendale and a surviving pagan Celtic community; major lunat standstill personal experiences; Yorkshire Dales alignment; book reviews, letters and clippings. No. 35. Lively letters on T.Z. reports; interesting alignments in North Yorkshire; dragons along the River Don; Wortley Hall billiard room dragon paintings; well-dressing at Etwall; meetings reports.

**NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION JOURNAL.** membership details from Betty Lewis, 172 Robin Hill Road, Chelmsford, MA, 01824, U.S.A. No. 77. Dull piece on Tartessus whose inclusion is extremely tenuous. No. 78. Interview with a man who studied and photographed New England stone structures for 60 years; alignment of three dolmens described as "good evidence for a ley line" (a ley - not ley line - requires four points at least); revision of the Anubis Panel in the caves of Oklahoma; report on trip to Scottish megalithic sites and observations that U.S. enigmatic stonework is not reflected in Britain (an argument against colonial settlers' construction); Avebury. No. 79. More on Anubis Panel; labrynth. No. 80. Possible 17th century answer to Mystery Hill; possible origins of other New England chambers; metrology; early Norse contact; ritual murder and sacred geometry in Lorraine. Issues also include book reviews, letters and chapter news.

**MAGONIA.** Independent journal on interaction of anomalous phenomena with society and the individual. Four-issue sub £3; U.S. 8 dollars. Cheques made out to John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW14 8HB. No. 27. Lengthy editorial dealing with recent Streiber and Hopkins books and concluding that "the time is coming when urologists should get out of this abduction business." American Dennis Stacy asks pertinent questions on the vexed origin and authority of the MJ-12 documents; Dennis Stillings assesses Hopkins' "Missing Time" abductees book and comes to a very different non-ETH conclusion; Manfred Cassirer writes the worst mishmash it has been my misfortune to struggle with for many a long month; Roger Sandell reassesses the Cathar and Templar myths; letters. No. 29. Roger Sandell looks at ley hunting from a social viewpoint and concludes wryly that some alignments may be the work of our ancestors creating early works of art! Martin Kottmeyer on the inner creativity of many abductees. Paul Devereux gives Claude Mauge a literary pistol-whipping. Ralph Noyes casts doubts on the Majestic 12 scam.

**F.L.S. NEWS.** Newsletter of the Folklore Society. Biannual. Annual sub to non-memoers £2. c/o University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT. No. 6. Items on 1809 private brewings in "lusa-nouses" and how the term "silly season" may have arisen; readers' appeals for information; correspondence; officers' reports; lists future events.

**PENDRAGON.** Journal of the Pendragon Society investigating Arthurian history and archaeology, plus wider aspects of the Matter of Britain. Four issues + membership £4-50; 10\$. from 42 Burginley Road, St Andrews, Bristol, BS6 5BN. Vol XVIII No. 4. Arthur's resting place as rough theme with articles covering the controversy over a claimed site in the Gower; Glastonbury's claim; Arthur's son Mlaccu; Arthurian art; Turin Shroud update; informal membership news.

AMASKAYA. Newsletter of the STAR Fellowship. Q. Sub £2. Cheques payable to J. Goddard, 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2PX. Uncomfortably uncritical, belief-oriented and vibrating with late Fifties/early Sixties unfulfilled optimism. No. 8. The late Tony Wedd on how flying saucerology (his term) is not scientific but spiritual; Wilhelm Reich's orgone theory in brief; short accounts of the 1963 and 1964 STAR rallies; editor Jimmy Goddard on a possible personal UFO sighting; book reviews. No. 9. Philip Heselton on mental and physical contact with space people (inc. old chestnut of megaliths power fogging film - from hundreds of shots I've taken it's never occurred for me); Tony Wedd on Dan Fry about to have a saucer flight; more past STAR rallies; notes and news.

TOUCHSTONE. Surrey Earth Mysteries Group mag. Q. Sub £2. Cheques payable to J. Goddard (address above). No. 15. Jimmy Goddard and family ley hunting in Wilts.; Welsh ley; mysterious Royston; Addle Stone; notes and news. No. 16. J.G. on Northern Moot; Chris Hall on the T.L.H. Oxford moot; letters include the worst instance of pseudo-leys I've seen in 20 years; dowsing notes.

FORTEAN TIMES. The Journal of Strange Phenomena. Four-issue sub £7; U.S. 16 dollars; single issue £1.75 (\$4). Cheques payable to Fortean Times, 96 Mansfield Road, London NW3 2HX. If you read no other mag read this!! No. 49. Editor Bob Rickard outlines the folkloric approach to lake monster traditions; Mike Dash entertainingly encapsulates the erudition of 1987's cryptozoology conference; plus features on the Tasmanian tiger and Aussie sub-humanoids, Brazilian spooklights, those who have escaped hanging or awoken on the mortuary slab, and a weird impregnation which I've come across before and regard as contemporary legend despite its 1874-5 date and Lancet credentials. Columnists tackle Fortean films, WWI war rumours and corrigenda. Strange Days covers a multitude of odd occurrences from the realm of the unexplainable or downright odd. Letters, reviews and comix. Strange days indeed!

THE LEY HUNTER. Senior earth mysteries mag. Approx annual sub 3 issues + supplement 25 U.K.; \$20 overseas (air) 15 (surface). From P.O. Box 5, Brecon, Powys. No. 104. Extremely interesting piece on Greek axial alignments and Jean Richer; Dutch alignments; comparative geomancy between East and West; Andy Collins speculates on Mount Athos; Laurence Main walking in Wales; Paul Screeton on stone consciousness in modern times; David Clarke on Pennine earthlights; Rose Heaward on the 1987 moot; book and mag reviews plus letters. Includes Moonwatch Supplement.

UFO BRIGANTIA. Now Journal of the Independent UFO Network. Sub £7 for six regular 32-page A4 issues; single copies £1-25. Cheques payable to Martin Dagless, 19 Bellmount Gardens, Bramley, Leeds. No. 28. Albert Budden reassesses the bizarre Rowley Regis mincepie Martian fairies (concluded 29); investigations of recent Northern cases, south Pennines and a 1943 archive case of entities and UFO in Norfolk; Persinger earth faults challenged in a U.S. "window" area of Yakima, where Kenneth Arnold was flying and which is also reinvestigated separately; editor Andy Roberts editorializes on U.K. cover-up doubts and separately why Project Uranus (your bum!) was a hoax. No. 29. Those wacky YUFOS lot seem to have another Cracoe Fell boob or similar proportions in their allegations concerning Rendlesham and H.M.S. Norfolk; mystery lights speculation; IUN photographic cases analysed. No. 30 Thought-provoking follow-up editorial on Arnold's Creationist ufology as article of faith balanced by Regina Cullen's rebuttal of earlier Van Kampen piece. Andy begins a regular feature on ufology in the media; Humberside ufos as USAF refuelling during exercise; Jenny Randles on her "UFO Conspiracy" book background and official disinformation; OSEAP resources centre; Yorkshire UFO sightings.



"Forget your lead-  
er... Take us to Maria  
Whittaker."

THE GIANT OF PENHILL by IAN TAYLOR

(£6.95. Northern Lights, P.O. Box 113, Dunnington, York, YO1 5JW)

the book begins with the legend of the Penhill giant and Taylor fleshes this out with his knowledge of Celtic, Saxon and Norse mythologies and ancient star lore. he then focusses on the well-known Burning of Eartle folk custom held annually below Penhill in West Witton, N. Yorkshire, with the author pointing out the more ancient and esoteric connections than a simple chase of a sheep thief (incidentally my ancestorrrs come from Scruton in Wensleydale and family folklore avers that there was a sheep thief relation way back who was hung). Taylor concludes that Eartle and the legendary giant of Penhill are one and the same being -- the sun god son of Mother Earth and also Green Man Robin Hood.

He then records his impressions of the 1985 ceremony and its seriousness to those participating. By 1986 he was totally immersed in the landscape of mid-Wensleydale and interviewed one of the key participants, who answered with fervour but was not particularly sympathetic to the author's geomantic beliefs.

Taylor's researches spread to a legend of phantom pigs, Giant's Graveyard, Tazzie Parlour and other likely geomantically-powerful spots. He also took in the hill Addlebrough and a possible link with coded messages of lost civilisations. Eventually Taylor found the figure through an involuntary traancelike experience and says to normal sight it is reasonably visible, delineated by deep channels or ditches, at certain sunset conditions. Yet the two photographs reproduced do little to convince me. They took me back to physical geography textbooks for "A" level examination of land erosion.

Subsequent chapters deal with alignments from Penhill Beacon, some lunar and solar and due to length referred to as "corridors", plus appendices on folk survivals in Wensleydale, a Knights Templar preceptory, the Pennine Light phenomenon (witnessed by me as a daylight disc 30 years ago and recorded in the book) and York Minster fire.

"The Giant of Penhill" is a rattling good read. Readers snare Ian Taylor's quest and it is a refreshing and satisfying experience.

"NINETEEN CENTURIES OF WRONG: THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION OF OTHER FAITHS" by NIGEL PENNICK

(Runestaff-Old English, 60p inc. postage. From the author, 142 Pheasant Rise, Bar Hill, Cammeridge, CB3 3ED)

This pamphlet takes as its starting point the expulsion of the Christian sect in 90 A.D. and how Orthodox Judaism therefore sowed seeds for anti-semitism.

Much of the remainder is the history of persecution of pagans with the witch-hunts and totalitarian regimes formulated. Fanaticisms and paranolias are chronicled from Jewish magicians blamed for the Black Death through heinous crimes against gypsies, anti-Catholicism, persecution of atheism to the shambolic Sunday trading laws.

At Hallowe'en I wrote a serious feature article for the newspaper I work for and received the obligatory dire warning epistle from a crazed Christian fundamentalist who hoped I would repent. Intolerance, I'm afraid, won't make the paranormal go away.

THE COSMIC AXIS by NIGEL PENNICK (£1.20 - from address above)

New edition of one of Nigel's Northern European Tradition of the Elder Faith booklets which reconstructs aspects of a wide-based paganism. Lots of information and illustrations in compact form explaining the Tree of Life and its wider context. A good spiritual panacea back in print.

TONY WEDD: NEW AGE PIONEER by PHILIP HESELTON

(From the author at 170 Victoria Avenue, Hull, HU5 3DY, £4 inc. p&p)

Tony Wedd will always be remembered as the first person to consciously link ancient landmarks and UFO sightings. When he made this intuitive connection in the early Sixties it was novel and exciting. However, with a background as R.A.F. pilot, Tony chose to see the flying saucers as a nuts and bolts extraterrestrial phenomenon. Yet his was not a wholly materialistic interplanetary view. His philosophy was basically mystical and he possessed many thoughts which were far more radical in pre-hippy days that they now appear in current ecological conversation. He was a designer, artist, teacher, writer and psychic.

These facets of his life -- born 1919, died 1980 -- are engagingly and comprehensively covered in this fine biography by Philip Heselton, who was greatly influenced by Tony's ideas and attitude to life in general. Tony was ahead of his time in many respects and in his wide involvement with many artistic and scientific ventures was a truly modern renaissance man.

When I restarted The Ley Hunter magazine in 1969, Tony was an enthusiastic and popular contributor. He had been a disciple of Alfred Watkins, met Harold Fletcher Irew on the Glastonbury Zodiac, was interested in earth energies and Stonehenge and had a particular affinity with the Scots pine (visiting our then editor's cottage on bleak Bowes Moor a few years ago, I was surprised to find in the kitchen a painting by Tony of these ley marker trees. Tony's niece was then married to the editor and is better known as "Widaacre" authoress Philippa Gregory).

Tony was early fan of the flying saucer contactees and formed the STAR Fellowship to promote contact with and welcome UFOs and raise public consciousness about this postwar development. His booklet "Skyways and Landmarks" sets out his leys/UFOs link thoughts. He was also to receive communications which led him to construct "free energy" machines.

His wife of 23 years eventually divorced him and with new companion Cilla and baby daughter Elyssa, he set off to start a new life in Queensland as a youth hostel warden. He died of cancer in Australia in 1980.

As a pioneer in the alternative lifestyles New Age movements, Tony was a larger than life character and this book is a fitting testament to his youthful lifestyle and worldview. Philip Heselton has interviewed many people for this book and collected many photographs, 27 in all in 160 pages, and made this labour of love a fascinating biography of a remarkable man.

THE SEED OF AVALON by RUPERT BENJAMIN (Zodiac House, Gondolin, Westhay, Somerset. Price unknown) and JESUS LIVED IN INDIA by HOLGER KERSTEN (Element Books, £5.95).

Benjamin, half Jew and half Scots, argues that Jesus was related to our Celtic forefathers, St Anne of Cornwall being mother of the Virgin Mary. However, I am not convinced by his genealogical arguments for he assumes Caradoc to be a single person whereas it is a title, like king. Publisher Anthony Roberts adds voluminous notes on various aspects, particularly Glastonbury connections and Atlantean speculations. I

would like to believe the thesis, but remain unconvinced.

Kersten's book never mentions Glastonbury and argues Jesus Christ spent his youth in India and after surviving the Crucifixion returned there. Again it has the ring of sincerity but again I remain doubtful.

NEEDLES OF STONE REVISITED by TOM GRAVES (Gothic Image, £5.95)  
and SPIRITUAL DOWSING by SIG LONEGREN (Gothic Image, £4.50). Add  
20% p&p for both.

"A widespread faith exists in the power which some people claim to possess to detect the presence of underground water where it was not previously known to be. Nevertheless, I am prepared to relegate dowsing to the realms of fallacy."

So writes windmill impressionist and pop scientist Magnud Pyke. He quickly consigns most supernatural/occult/strange phenomena to an apocryphal junkheap, but he obviously has a sneaking suspicion he might be wrong. He promises that if convinced otherwise, he would be happy to delete his dowsing putdown from any later edition of his "Dictionary of Fallacies."

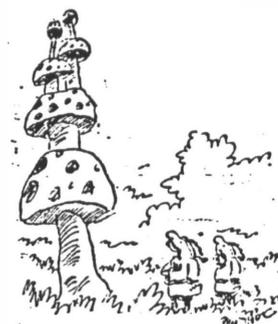
Maybe these two books would persuade Dr Pyke that there are ways to discover information other than by our visual senses.

Graves' book is a revised edition including recent developments over the past decade particularly summarising Dragon Project research which has widened our appreciation of magical technology and earth mysteries phenomena. Following in the footsteps of T.C. Lethbridge and Guy Underwood, Graves, who is arguably Britain's foremost dowser, takes the reader through such matters as parapsychology, science, archaeology, geomancy and ghost-hunting in a coherent look at past and present. There are plenty of ideas presented and a reassessment of the pagan view. It also castigates the truth benders of archaeology Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy.

Friendly American Siggy Longren is another authority on dowsing and his book is an immensely useful work beginning with tools to use, earth energies to dowse (though his terminology will confuse Britons), their constitution, history of ley hunting and inner growth. Practical and philosophical guide which is highly recommended.

DEVAS, FAIRIES AND ANGELS by WILLIAM BLOOM (Gothic Image, £3. inc. p&p).

Having seen a wood gnome by a lump of quartz at a roadside outside Carlisle -- stop sniggering at the back there -- found this book stimulating. Bloom's book, subtitled "A Modern Approach", is however very much in the Theosophist tradition. My single encounter with an elemental is perfectly intune with Bloom's thesis: it did seem like pure energy but also a separate entity. Rather like when the TV goes on the blink in a haze of wavering lines. Bloom mentions three of Geoffrey Hodson's books in his bibliography and the reader of this slender introduction is recommended to seek out his books. Bloom points out that elementals (he terms them all devas) are of a parallel consciousness to humankind, covers their form, seeing them, working alongside them, evolution, types and hierarchies, meditation, healing and ritual. Recommended to the open-minded.



"That's the last thing we need—high rise toadstools!"

THE SOUL OF THINGS by WILLIAM DENTON (Aquarian, £8.99)

In his introduction the ubiquitous Colin Wilson claims Denton was born in Darlington, Yorkshire (it's in County Durham actually) and was a Temperance lecturer (Darlington is the worthy bastion of Campaign for Real Ale fanaticism and fundamentalism today) That aside, this 1863 work

is a fascinating early examination of psychometry, a power which allows people to see the entire history of an object placed in their hand. Denton believed everyone possessed this power and it simply required development. His own experiments produced such results as a fragment of dinosaur bone bringing a vision of a prehistoric beach and a Cuban fossil producing a description of a tropical island. My own investigations with persons claiming psychometric powers have been varied, mostly inconclusive or contradictory, but once extremely

AN ENGLISH FIGURE: TWO ESSAYS ON THE WORK OF JOHN MICHELL  
(Bozo, £4.50, From BM BOZO, London WC1N 3XX)

The pair of essays are a general overview of John Michell's published writings by John Nicholson, the creator of this small book, and American Laurel Schreiber, largely examining Michell's ideas from the standpoint of his "Eccentric Lives and Peculiar Notions."

It also begins with a bibliography, which annoyingly lists only the magazines contributed to by Michell, and not article titles or dates of publication, though due acknowledgment is given to my study of Michell's works in "Stonehenge Viewpoint."

Schreiber understands why there is no introduction -- a rarity in assessing "Eccentric Lives" -- and why Michell stands politely aside, knowing too too much to argue or to judge. Of course, Michell's favourite themes and hobby-horses are present for all his coverage of familiar themes in a very personal way and focussing on that greatest of all living wonders, Man, the author can still only be glimpsed throughout as through a glass darkly.

Nicholson's estimation of Michell is an altogether stronger portrait of the man himself and the way he so successfully cross-fertilized so many pertinent ideas and concepts. Like Colin Wilson he has widened the public's appreciation of erudite subjects by popularization and helped provide the paranormal with respectability. Unlike Wilson, however, Michell's was no precocious talent and he came late to book writing. Yet in his first two books were encapsulated all the themes he was later to expand upon in his subsequent dozen or so books and articles spread throughout a wide range of mostly obscure publications.

Following a biographical pen-portrait, Nicholson works his way through Michell's messages as presented in his richly-revelatory books from the hippy "The Flying Saucer Vision" and sacred engineering stimulated "The View Over Atlantis" through two elegant books arguing the cases for visually-aligned megaliths and the reality of prehistoric astroarchaeology; sympathetic presentations of the ideas of the variously notorious; promoting by putting back into print important works by others; his "The Earth Spirit" and "Simulacra" by the reputedly exploitative Thames & Hudson and the unorthodox paranoia plympower "The Fantastic"; on to Fortean with "Phenomena" and "Living Wonders" with Bob Rickard as co-pilot; resurrecting the revolutionary Hitler's epigrams; back to UFOs with explanatory notes on a House of Lords debate and stones with "Megalithomania"; on to humans centre stage for "Eccentric Lives"; a solution to Ulster's problems and Dylanesque Desolation Row view of the rioting copts at Stonehenge. It's essential reading for Michellophiles. A good addition to the chapter on the man in this writer's "Seekers of the Linear Vision" and Anthony Roberts' essay "The Last True Antiquary" in The Shaman, No. 6.

SECRET WISDOM by DAVID CONWAY (Aquarian, £6.99) and THE SCIENCE OF THE  
PARANORMAL by LAWRENCE LE SHAN (Aquarian, £6.99)

Conway has long been the laughing stock in occult circles. Conman the Barbarian would be an apt name for this fool who recommends Williamson and Bellamy's book on leys as "a sensible treatment of the subject generally." David Condom gives mediocrity a bad name.

Dr Le Shan is not a fool, but his books are always hard going. This sounds very negative, but I cannot in all honesty recommend him other than to those who are willing to get on his wavelength and wrestle with new concepts and terms in the hope that they will be meaningful. To me he is overbearing and obscurantist.

"EARTH ENERGY" by J. HANVELOCK FIDLER  
(Aquarian, £6.99)

Heavily panned in its earlier incarnation as "Ley Lines", Dr Fidler's book now has a new title, plus the subtitle "A Dowser's Guide to Ley Lines" and will still infuriate those past the novitiate stage in earth mysteries.

His grasp of leys and megalithic archaeology are suspect and exposition novel, to say the least. I would as much trust him to come up with a convincing ley as I would Arthur Daley to sell me a second-hand car.

He apologises for confusing Watkinsian ley alignments and dowsing's overground energy lines in the first edition. Despite a protestation that he had read widely about leys before the first edition, reading of his wife's choosing his literature for him from a mobile library in remote Ross-shire leaves one suspicious. I doubt if he's acquainted with one per cent of the work written on leys. In fact, the published material linking leys and entomology would fill a volume this long and that's Fidler's chosen subject, as Magnus would say.

The dowsing is straightforward enough; being based on the Lethbridge - Underwood - Graves axis one would be surprised if this was erratic. But whether the energy being measured is human in origin, from the planetary body, some other source or spurious, remains contentious. He follows from advancing the manmade preference to suggesting that modern developments such as cities and motorways may well be altering critical biological aspects of our planet's earth energy system. As a professional entomologist he would probably agree with a view put forward in another book I've just read about Dutch elm disease where the theory is posited that its geographical distribution in the village of Norton, Cleveland, correlates with a new major roadworks!

The book has a quirky inquisitive resonance and this gives it very much the same character as the works of the late T.C. Lethbridge. Yet somehow I felt Fidler's thesis was unfocussed and in the final analysis unfulfilling.

"PHANTOM AERIAL FLAPS AND WAVES" by NIGEL WATSON  
(Magonia, 95p + 25p postage. Cheques to John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW14 3HRQ)

This 24-page A5 booklet is a worthy "sampler" of airship panic case studies by a researcher who has spent many years studying this aspect of the ufological phenomenon. In his introduction, he concludes that "such sightings are the product of social and cultural explanations" and hopes his monograph will encourage a greater interest in the historical predecessors to the current UFO enigma.

Since the dawn of Man, humankind has sought to find explanations for anomalous aerial phenomena, and a timely work such as this shows how intriguing occurrences during the past 100 years still are not entirely explicable, require further analysis and comparison within a socio-cultural context. We can't close our eyes to mysteries which many saw and still see in our skies.

Watson begins with Springheel Jack, but the second entry on C.A.A. Dellschau and an anti-gravity gas was new to me. The booklet then leads

