

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS



No. 8

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FOLKLORE FRONTIERS is an independent non-profitmaking magazine devoted to folklore, particularly what is generally known as urban belief tales or modern legends.

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LEAD-IN

As F.F. was belatedly ready to go to the printer (see top p. 28), we received an article on the Cleveland affair too topical to delay. Peter Rogerson's piece preceded the astonishing letter to the Guardian and Northern Echo by 11 fellow paediatricians supporting Dr Marietta Higgs.

To deal firstly with the Higgs' fan club (or Football Club a la Mandela?), 98 out of 121 children involved have been returned home. The doctors suggest they have access to information which suggests up to 90% have been sent back for more abuse. If that is the case and they are still being abused, those doctors are as guilty as the parents and deserve to be struck off.

The 11 signatories were gathered by someone previously unheard of called Dr Val North, who to journalists' embarrassment was found to be the wife of Dr Geoffrey Wyatt! Wyatt throughout has appeared a Baldrick figure to Higgs' Black Adder. Higgs herself has also the role of a female Matthew Hopkins. The Witchfinder General for the 1980s took the same route for seeking out evil marks of the Devil such as extra teats in 1647-9, which were nothing more than scabs and abscesses, easily found given most victims' destitution, and in the 1980s Child-Abuser via anal dilation, which could have a multitude of causes.

Middlesbrough M.P. Stuart Bell immediately made the witchcraft connection and went onto write a book, "When Salem Came to the Boro". Fellow M.P. Richard Holt, who had supported crisis-torn families in his Langbaugh constituency, has commented on a playground rhyme where young children chant a chorus which shows they see Higgs and Wyatt as figures of fear and scorn. It goes:

The doctors are coming to take you away.
They won't let you play today.

Look out! Here comes
Marietta,
And she says she's
coming to get you!

There is also, I understand, a song sung on the terraces in an effort to demoralise Middlesbrough F.C. players and fans related to the crisis.

The hysteria has blinded most interested parties and observers to rationality, with the likelihood of people taking widely opposed sides. What cannot be dismissed is the fact that there is child abuse in Cleveland, and probably no worse than anywhere else. Also that Higgs is a zealot who has awakened undercurrents in society which are far from clear.

Witches, Buggers³ and Grey Meanies

Between 1450 and 1750, upwards of 100,000 people were put to death in a series of witch hunts, in which people, mainly women, were accused of engaging in the most literally diabolic and blasphemous activity that the community could imagine. In many of these hunts the accusers were children; perpetrators could be identified by secret signs on the body, best discovered by specialist experts.

In 1987 in Cleveland, in the North of England, dozens of men were accused of committing the most diabolically obscene acts that the community could imagine -- bugging their own children. Victims could be diagnosed by experts detecting secret signs on their bodies.

In the early 1980s in communities across the United States, children reported that they had been the victims of the worst possible thing their communities could imagine -- ritualised abuse by Satanist groups, involving animal and human sacrifice and supernatural powers. Again victims are diagnosed by secret body signs.

In the same historical and geographical space, hundreds of people believe that they are the victims of the worst thing they can imagine, de facto rape by extraterrestrial beings who can abduct them from their homes, and do terrible things such as impregnate them, remove fortuses from their bodies, or otherwise humiliate and abuse them. The only physical evidence is again secret signs on the body which can be detected by experts. In both cases experts have ways of making the victims talk -- disclosure work/hypnotic regression.

One can see both the parallels and differences here. the struggle between those who have a mission to rescue humankind from the secret evil and nameless wildness in the heart of civilisation, to hold out hope to the secret victims, who are being victimised when they should be most secure, and those who see obsessed outsiders working out their own phantasies on peaceful and innocent communities and creating "mass hysteria". The secret signs on the bodies: though traditionally it was the perpetrator who had the secret sign, now it is the victim; then women were seen as perpetrators, now as victims.

There are clear cultural differences between images of the "worst thing of all", though accusations of child abuse, incest, buggery and infanticide are part of all witchcraft traditions, today additional supernatural elements are still more acceptable in the more fundamentalist religiose United States than in more secular Britain.

The two modern images of secret abuser form a clear polarity. the child abuser is often presented as a figure of wild uncontrolled lust, an animal who will abuse anything including holes in floorboards, only one step away from cannibalism; conversly the extraterrestrial abductor, like the doctors in Cleveland case, were presented as figures of authoritarian evil, unemotionally taking away children/foetuses from weeping parents. the abductor was the great social worker in the sky, who had about him, her or it more than the whiff of the pitiless angel of death. thus there are two images of evil, excess of uncontrolled animal passion versus excess of intellectual obsession. Two images of the reason why things and people fall apart -- passionate abuse by the closest; passionless abuse by the remotest.

What ended Salem and Cleveland, as with so many witch hunts, was that the accusations ceased to be directed against the "terrible others", the gypsies, the Jews, the social work cases, the savages, the reds under the beds, the junkies, moonies, the blacks, paks and yellows, the grey meanies from out there; instead they began to be turned on the affluent, successful, the holders of power and authority, the nice, respectable people like us. Then the rulers call a halt, say it was all a delusion -

Secret Abusers Across the Ages

Extremely fowl stories

By Paul Screeton

A researcher into strange phenomena, Bob Skinner, has sifted through thousands of newspapers and periodicals going back centuries in search of the miraculous. To read fully his accounts of what have allegedly been found within the eggs of domestic fowl would put anyone off eggs for life.

Rather than deal too great a blow to the beleaguered industry, I will merely list what has been reported in hen or duck

eggs: live toads and snakes, coins, gold nuggets, lost wedding rings and a pistol cartridge.

Also apparent odd images sometimes occur on the outer shells such as Halley's comet, numbers or writing. Remember the lion symbol and figures of yesteryear? Perhaps a more appropriate symbol would be the basilisk or cockatrice — reportedly hatched from an egg laid by an old cock and incubated by a toad!

1978 year of the cat story

THE last major national food poisoning

epidemic was in 1978 when botulism claimed several lives — particularly pensioners, particularly through salmon.

A story then did the rounds, a précis of which I'll give.

A man usually took sandwiches to work and his wife opened a tin of salmon. After all, she told herself, the botulism scare was over. There was some left so she gave it to the cat.

Later she found the cat lying at the back door looking ill. Botulism? She rang her husband, told him about the cat and as he'd eaten his packed lunch, he called a taxi and rushed to hospital. In

casualty a doctor arranged for him to have his stomach pumped and he was detained for observation in isolation.

Meanwhile the milkman had called and was inquiring about the cat's health. Then he

confessed he had accidentally dropped a bottle on the feline's head that morning and left it groggily.

The woman was relieved to know the salmon was not to blame, but what would her husband say when he learned how he had not needed such drastic medical attention?

Perhaps a new urban legend will circulate in the wake of the storm in an egg cup.

MAIL, Tuesday, December 20, 1988 — 15.

Stamp of disapproval for male delivery

A HARTLEPOOL party-goer was cut to the quick when his doorstep antics were given the chop.

The 17 year-old youth spent a night in hospital after trying to impress a female guest with part of his anatomy.

The luckless lad's troubles started after he tried to gatecrash a birthday party in the Chester Road area.

Furious at finding himself left out in the cold he tried to get closer to the action by posting the part that other beers cannot reach through the letterbox.

The shocked young lady on the receiving end crashed the letter box closed, leaving him hopping mad and in need of emergency treatment at

Now and again we hear of a story which has all the hallmarks of an urban legend and dismiss it as collectable but fiction and certainly unworthy of actual inquiry. One such was brought home by my teenage children. It involved penis injury in curious circumstances. A youth, worse the wear for drink, attempted to gatecrash a party. When locked out of the revelry he unwisely chose to open the letterbox and display an item male anatomy. An unimpressed girl slammed down the flap. An ambulance was called and the casualty department attended to Percy.

A sceptical newsdesk at the Mail, Hartlepool, sent the intrepid Jackie Gough to Dyke House School to investigate. She confirmed the Screetons' veracity and wrote a commendably tasteful piece. Further confirmation for the reporting staff came in the form of telephoned pleas from the parents whose illicit party was interrupted and the embarrassed exhibitionist's parents. The Mail promised not to name names; being under no such obligation, we identify Tracy Willis as party holder and Julie Stokell as amateur surgeon. The lad's name? I think he's suffered sufficiently, though he's become something of a local celebrity (Mail, Hartlepool, 20/12/88; Sun, 21/12/88). We keep reminding you all urban tales come true at some point.

Hartlepool General Hospital.

He was treated and detained overnight for "observation" while guests at the birthday bash carried on their celebrations.

A hospital spokeswoman confirmed that a young man was treated and detained on Thursday night but declined to reveal the extent of his injuries.

Magic circles



AT a secret location in the South, scientists are hoping to solve a perennial summer mystery which has become a silly season stand-by.

The mystery is the riddle of the corn circles.

Somewhere in Hampshire a team of 15 scientists have amassed a barrage of electronic wizardry to make the first serious assault on the conundrum.

The circles are precise rings of flattened crops such as wheat and barley, usually about 30 feet in diameter, and having smaller satellites, often exactly at all four cardinal points.

One of the top scientists who will be kept informed of the investigation, which began on June 12 and will last ten weeks, is Archie Roy.

Professor Roy, of Glasgow University's astronomy department, said: "This is the most serious research being carried out anywhere in the world to find out the cause of the rings.

"The circles are a tremendously intriguing mystery — the most baffling thing I can think of. "I have no idea what causes them — but they are so geometrically precise they could not have been made by anything natural like a whirlwind."

For the past two years, the stationary transient whirlwinds theory (S.T.W.T.) has held sway, partly because most alternatives were outrageous.

IMAGINATIVE SPECULATION
Until recently the subject was the provenance of ufologists suggesting the circles were flying saucer "nests". When the S.T.W.T. emerged as front runner from the cornucopia of imaginative speculation, I felt its endorsement by both scientific and progressive ufological establishments was hasty and an Emperor's New Clothes manifestation. Like the birth trauma hypothesis to explain alien abductions, it looked very attractive on the surface. The S.T.W.T. was inviting because it appeared to blow away the speculation from the wilder shores of ufology.

Modern ufology has matured greatly over the past decade and much to many people's chagrin the extraterrestrial theory of intergalactic visitors has been replaced by the possibility that the phenomenon is a complex matrix of geological and meteorological energies interacting sometimes with a psychological response — the Earthlights scenario.

Alternatives to S.T.W.T. have included: human cause, either a hoax by pole and chain or "Dodge" or "hip"; hovering helicopter down draught damage on military remotely piloted vehicles; dropping zones for hippy convoy drugs supply; chemical warfare testing; parallel universe interaction; flying saucer landings; earth energy force fields associated with ley lines; and deer or hedgehogs (!) mating.

So far the most exhaustive probe into the phenomenon has been by meteorologist Dr Terence Meaden, whose researches were

By Paul Screeton

summarised fully in a booklet on the subject by Jenny Randles and Paul Fuller. "Mystery of the Circles" claims to be open-minded, but the excellent distillation is biased towards the S.T.W.T.

Agreeing that the S.T.W.T. was possible, Paul Mason, of the Met Office in Bracknell, pointed out: "Usually there would be a trail of damage rather than a circle."

The Randles/Fuller booklet briefly mentions my favoured line of inquiry. There mention is made of a strong electro-magnetic field affecting blades of grass, geology is invoked and basically discarded. Then "if natural forces can cause circle sets, why have they just started doing so, circle sets, why always on Friday and Saturday nights?" Humans do some funny things when the pubs shut on week-end evenings. Drunken hoaxers at work or courting couples having a roll in the hay?

Away from modern possibilities of inebriation and lust, ancient burial rites sound positively mundane. Could the mystery circles be no more than the remains of prehistoric burrows?

John Keovil, writing in the letters column of a national newspaper, suggested: "These ancient peoples probably selected a slight rise in the level of the surrounding land into which they carried their chief, then dug a circular trench around the area, heaping the soil into a mound in the centre and probably bringing soil from outside the area as well."

"During the 19th and 20th centuries all soil above the surrounding ground level would have been cleared away by mechanical cultivation, even the original humus-rich top soil of the slightly raised area. The only remnant of the original work being the humus-rich soil in the circular trench which had accumulated over the

Continued
in Page 25



8 The Sewer Men Are Coming

By Michael Goss

Most of us feel the notion that rats will inherit the Earth is a remote possibility. A few of us regard it as a faint probability. Father Fairing recognised it as a sombre inevitability.

Some time in the depressed Thirties, the priest - dispirited by the sordid, irremediable starvation of his New York parish and realising the Day of the Rodent was nigh - renounced the world for a second time and descended into the sewers with a Baltimore Catchechism, a breviary "and for reasons nobody found out, a copy of Knight's Modern Seamanship." Down there he set about converting the rats to Catholicism. His journal recorded the course of his trials and struggles from the moment he blessed the foul currents that swept past his driftwood shelter in order to obtain a ready supply of holy water for baptism. He battled with recalcitrant students like Ignatius, a sceptical rodent who insisted that the doctrine of indulgences was nothing but Marxist communism; he reputedly formed a sexual liaison with a female rat baptised Veronica, who wished to become a nun. (Difficult, thought Father Fairing; he would have to consult the Bishop on that one). In return for their spiritual nourishment, three rats per day had to provide the priest's physical equivalent; the liver was Fairing's special favourite and even the tails were palatable if boiled long enough.

Eventually the exclusive rat diet, Ignatius' communistic leanings or something else proved too much. Father Fairing vanished; his journal was discovered later upon a cairn of stones, bricks and sticks inside a 36-inch pipe with the breviary, but the Catchechism and Knight's Modern Seamanship had disappeared as utterly as their owner. And in time the Rat Priest joined the alligators as yet another legend of the New York sewer-system.

Father Fairing appears (though not in person) as another element to disturb the equanimity of Benny Profane, hero of that underground classic V (1963) - a novel, of course, which contributed so much to the sewer 'gators legend. Whether he ever existed as

real person or real NY legend outside the pages of Thomas Pynchon's novel I cannot say and it may be foolish even to ask. But then, the Father is just one of a select band whom popular lore has ensconsed in the sewers: not as casual visitors, necessarily, but as fulltime residents. At times, books, films and to a less obvious extent oral tradition have toyed with the idea of what it might be like down below and what such an existence might do to those who managed it. So move over, rats and 'gators. Here we have Life in the Sewers, human-style.

Of course, it's a ridiculous idea, but the imaginative processes behind all creative fiction furnish motives and circumstances to make it seem moderately plausible. Using actual incidents, exploiting a certain wish to believe in the incredible, the vision comes to something that resembles reality. Apart from an over-zealous priest with an eccentric notion about converting the rats before they inherit the Earth, who would possibly want to live in the sewers? Answer: those who had nowhere else to go, those who didn't want the rest of us to know what they were up to..Picture a human being in desperate circumstances and it begins to make sense..nearly.

John Hollingshead was in no doubt that his Victorian contemporaries believed firmly in these romantically-wretched figures. "Even now, in these days of new police and information for the people, it would not be difficult to find many thousands who look upon (sewers) as secret caverns full of metropolitan banditti," he reflected. "When the shades of evening fall upon the City, mysterious whispered 'Open sesames' are heard in imagination near trap-door side-entrances, and many London Hassaracs or Abdullahs, in laced boots and velveteen jackets, seem to sink through the pavement into the arms of their faithful comrades. Romances, as full of startling incidents as an egg is full of meat, have been built entirely upon this underground foundation..". ①

And these so-believable romances commemorated tales - true, half-true - about the network of subterranean escape-routes to and from the notorious moral-free rookeries down which fugitives took their rapid exits when the police came calling. Although most of these rookeries were distant memories when Holligshead wrote, they and

their sewer-loving secret societies lingered on in popular lore - most conspicuously, as he says, as fit theme for written or acted melodrama. Nor was it hard to conceive amorphous races of folk who treated the sewers not as convenient means from A to B, but as their homes. One work moving along these lines was The Wild Boys of London or The Children of the Night, a 105-part penny dreadful issued in 1866 which according to W.O.G. Lofts and Derek Adley "concerned boys who lived in the sewers and salvaged corpses and their fights with the 'Peelers'." ② The book must have struck a responsive chord with readers, since it was reissued around 1876 - only to be suppressed at the 79th instalment. I will confess: I have not read The Wild Boys in either full or abbreviated form and I don't think I'm going to. To be honest, I am still recovering from wading through Varney the Vampyre.

Wild Boys evidently catered for the sort of mind that would feel it at least half-credible that a bunch of juvenile vagabonds could live in the sewers: an environment which would brutalize them to a degree where the guardians of Law and Order became natural enemies. This wasn't too much of a demand on the imagination because in popular iconography the sewers are the spiritual home of all who feel themselves outcasts from the bright lights of Society.

Erik the Phantom - master-musician, brilliant architect and monster-in-residence of the Paris Opera - would surely agree, although technically he didn't live in the sewers himself; not in the original 1911 novel by Gaston Leroux. Instead the author depicts him at home in a complete house on the subterranean lake that lies below the Opera and sewers as such don't come into the affair. Anti-social Erik certainly is, but as monsters go he is not beyond redemption. Witness this desperate piece of soul-baring for the benefit of the heroine whom he has in his clutches (not for the first time):

"'But I am very tired of it!..I'm sick and tired of having a forest and a torture-chamber in my house and of living like a mountebank in a house with a false bottom!..I'm tired of it! I want to have a nice, quiet flat with ordinary doors and windows and a wife inside it, like anybody else! A wife whom I could love and take out on Sundays and keep amused on weekdays..Here, shall I show you some card tricks?'" ③

Is that the voice of a monster who hangs people, crushes others

with falling chandeliers and wrecks high-cost opera productions? Never mind. Most people's impressions of the Phantom are more Lon Chaney than Gaston Leroux and there the sewers - or something like them - are all part of the deformed monster's ambiance and image. If there is humanity in the Sewers it would obviously be of a most monstrous kind..even if, like Erik, it could play the organ and do card tricks.

Oral sources, printed fiction and films have conspired to make us curious about the sewers and readier to believe that people live down there. As indeed they do, sewer maintenance men not included in the reckoning.

In 1986 readers of You (the colour supplement of The Mail on Sunday) were notified of a new, novel and illegal way to spend a night out in Paris. ④ Or rather, a night under Paris: teenagers had taken to entering the sewers via unguarded manholes, gendarmes notwithstanding, with the old low-ceilinged limestone catacombs south of the Seine being especially popular. Once down there, the punques held parties, drank wine, talked politics, maybe smoked a joint or two, explored or painted Hokusai murals. Getting wet wasn't even obligatory as long as you were content to avoid the deeper recesses of the system and the worst discomfort involved was that the low clearance might make you develop a Groucho Marx walk.

Despite cultivating mildly-subversive identities - the Trolls, the Sons of Anubis and (yes!) the Rats - the new subterraneans impressed one journalist as "quite responsible anarchists, very proud of their secret world, and take all their litter up to the surface, if only to chuck it away in the streets." Their secret world. It would be wrong to exaggerate the extent of their rebellion against upper air or to make too much of their lineal connections with former glorious occupants of the Paris sewers: the 18th Century smugglers, aristos fleeing the guillotine during the Reign of Terror and more recently the French Resistance. Even the growing intensity of police efforts to suppress the movement is reasoned - publically, at least - on the grounds that the youngsters were in danger of hurting themselves. And when the party is over - the wine drunk, the joints smoked, and you have savoured not only these but the frisson of being somewhere you're not supposed to be - then it's back to the world above the pavements, where you

really belong. Unless, of course, someone has parked his car on the manhole you'd planned to use as your exit..

But the Paris punques are responding to the lure of the forbidden. In their modest way they are helping to bring folklore to life. And in more than one way, if we credit to them the two foot seven inch crocodile that municipal workers found in an ancient section of the city sewers on 8 March 1984.⁽⁵⁾ Young as it was, the reptile provided stiff opposition for ten fireman before it was removed to the Jardin des Plantes zoo. Or perhaps it was the lost pet of Erik the Phantom.

It's one thing to have criminals using sewers as means to some felonious end or for the curious to defy police and orthodoxy in order to explore what lies beneath our urban wastelands. Qualitatively different are stories of things only nominally human - things that may have been human once, but not any more - which have developed a sense of belonging to the sewers rather than in the normal upper world: a world they visit briefly and with no love extended towards its inhabitants. They have evolved into a race apart. H.G. Wells' Morlocks - Homo cloacus? - the Sewer Men.

I do not like to prophecy trends in contemporary folklore. It's easy to mistake brief, rumour-like tales heard in one location (and perhaps nowhere else..and never again) for an emerging modern classic; some stories there are that never develop, never catch on, never achieve anything like the currency of authentic urban belief tales. All I will say is that at odd times I've noticed hints of a Coming Sewer-Race mythos as represented in odd rumours about people who have made the sewers a way of life. For example, there were the San Francisco hippies who dropped out in a literal sense during the late Sixties. Why I can't recall..something to do with a belief in an approaching cataclysm, I think, and that was possibly influenced by the similar reasoning that caused Charles Manson to lead his Family in a vain search for the vast gulf in Death Valley where he and his followers could hole up until they were ready to emerge as the new rulers of the planet. Or maybe the hippies retreated sewer-wards to find a place to practice their own philosophy of life for which the corrupt society they rejected had neither time nor space. Anyway - as I heard it at university coincident with the last dregs of Flower Power - down the hippies

went. And in time their unsavoury new existence caused them to evolve..degenerate?..into a race of foul troglodytes, emerging by night to commit suitably vile outrages on the rest of human-kind.

The embryo story testifies again to how willing we can be to believe virtually anything of American society - especially the San Francisco way-out variety. But it also reveals the usual foaflore practice of resorting to extrapolated facts to inject a note of credibility into its flights of fancy. The New York sewer 'gators are blind and albino (in some versions) because that is what happens to (real) animals adapted to life underground. Rats will kill and eat humans because there's irrefutable evidence that they will dine off human corpses..occasionally. This is all sewer-lore. And sewer lore's most creative improvisation speculates on what life in these insanitary tunnels would do to anyone who tried to exist there.

Well, obviously..they would ^{not} remain the same as us surface-folk. Cave-dwellers are always bitter, stunted, squinting, horrible, psychopathic. The cloacadytes would contract foul diseases. They'd certainly be unkempt. They would stink. Over a period of years - years of seclusion and adaptation - they would cease to be human in a civilized sense. They would be subhuman monsters.

And then, suppose they took it into their misshapen skulls to come topsides from time to time? (Most likely at nighttime: their eyes could not tolerate the bold glare of the sun). The sewers are where we dispose of our waste. These people -outcasts in a real sense - are human waste. They've no cause to admire us or love us and they won't. In a sort of revenge at the manner in which they have been flushed away, they would return to visit us. "Hello from the sewers of NYC," chortled Son of Sam, also known as Dave Berkowitz or the .44 Caliber Killer in a missive that dwelt on "delicacies" like "dog manure, vomit, stale wine, urine and blood". A chill reminder that those who associate themselves with the dirt and filth we consign to the nether regions don't think of us in any kindly fashion.⁽⁶⁾

The weird subhuman strain - progeny of those lost Sixties hippies? - appeared to have visited the upper climes of Los Angeles in 1982. Practically every state of the USA has its reported sightings of Bigfoot, the neo-legendary North American man-ape; in few places

has the shy, shambling figure been seen more often than in California. But although you wouldn't expect to hear of it wandering through Los Angeles, it was from that city's Buena Park that tales of a malodorous giant who emitted spasmodic howls came just a few years back.⁷ The case promised an answer to a problems that has troubled cryptozoologists for a considerable time. It is easy to see why investigators seldom manage to spot Bigfoot for themselves when pursuing reports from, let's say, the dense redwood forests of North Cal; patently, the animal has plenty of cover into which it may vanish at will. But sasquatches are also reported from urban and suburban areas and yet manage to disappear just as utterly when searched for. Where could they hide away? Not in the conventional wilderness, evidently; down in the sewers, maybe.

Anyhow, Special Forces Investigations (a group described in Omni as being "dedicated to the study of the paranormal, the monstrous and the extraterrestrial") thought they had tracked 'Buena Foot' to a concrete storm drain after sightings had come in from an adjacent flood control canal. They went down 125 feet and took casts of a four-fingered handprint which they believed came from a creature of more than human size and power: much larger than the dishevelled 5ft 8 inch tramp whom police were saying matched eye-witness descriptions of Buena Foot on at least seven points. Another bellowing vagrant was fingered by another investigator; at 6ft 4, this one made an even better sasquatch lookalike. Who or whatever he was, Buena Foot had given as much as he could to urban animal lore and seems to have staged the usual quiet getaway.

Once again, the sewers had functioned as safe habitat, last retreat, for a maybe-monster: something alien in our midst. How many more are there down there, hirsute tramps, troglodytes, maybe-monsters? Will any more steal forth, legendwise, over coming years, to trouble our peace of mind? Let's be thankful if there's nothing worse than giant maneating rats or a few stray alligators down there.

Best not worry, advises Thomas Pynchon via his hero who heard more sewer-lore and saw more curious things down below than are dreamed of in municipal bureaucrats' philosophies but learned to live with both:

The stories, by the time Profane heard them, were all pretty much apocryphal and more fantasy than the record

warranted...It is this way with sewer stories. They just are. Truth or falsity don't apply.



* NOTES:

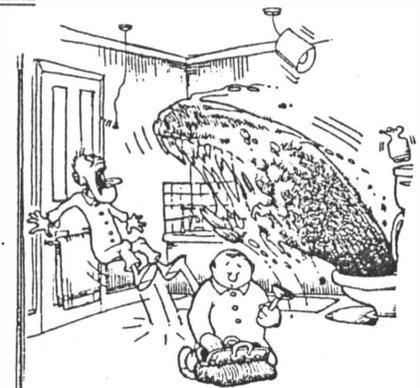
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2. W.OG. Lofts & Derek Adley: "A History of 'Penny Bloods'," Book & Magazine Collector 32 (November 1986) pp.48-55.
3. Gaston Leroux: The Phantom of the Opera (1911). See the Sphere paperback edn. (No.34 in the Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult) 1975, page 181.
4. Clive Unger-Hamilton: "Life with the sewer brats," You 14 September 1986, pp.54-57.
5. "Croc in the Sewers," Fortean Times 42 (Autumn 1982), page 26. From reports in AFP/Times, AFP/Guardian, Sun, Daily Mirror, Paris Liberation 9 March plus Reuter/Arab News 11 March 1984.
6. George Carpozi Jr.: Son of Sam. The .44 Caliber Killer (New York: Manor Books paperback, 1977), page 134.
7. Dava Sobel: "Buena Foot," Omni 5:4 (1982) page 94.

CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL SCREETON. The articles on mock mayors, circles in corn and the eggs/chickens horror appeared in the Mail, Hartlepool, where Paul is a feature writer and sub-editor. He also writes weekly columns on conservation issues and regional railway matters. He is the author of books on earth mysteries and folklore.

MICHAEL GOSS. His "The Evidence for Phantom Hitch-Hikers" is one of the most intelligent studies of urban belief tales. Mick has a keen intellect tempered with a distinctive sense of humour. He is a prolific article writer and the piece in this F.F. is, to quote Mick, "an out-take from a book I have been compiling on urban legend-type stuff". We look forward to its publication.

PETER ROGERSON. Is a local history librarian in a northern town. He has been interested in UFOs for 25 years. His contributions to Magonia on the sociological and folkloric aspects of anomalous activities are always highly original.



'Of course, working in Sellafeld can be a bit of a bugger...'

SUN 3/3/89 **SUN 2/3/89**
 A cheeky jackdaw that screeches "F***** bastard!" at primary school Pupils in Glossop, Derby, was being hunted last night.
 NORTH Sea worker Bill Wilson found a pet out of the blue - a parrot which landed on his Shell gas rig 60 miles off Scotland.

MOCK MAYORS

By Paul Screeton

MOCK MAYORS are a strange phenomenon.

That Hartlepool should have one within its boundaries comes as no surprise to me. Hartlepoolians are hardly the most conservative of people and Middletonians would seem to have had scant respect for authority in the past or, in some respects for that matter, the present.

Owen Richmond has been Mayor of Middleton four times. He was the first to hold the office when it was revived



Sandra Steel, first lady to be Mayor of Middleton, pictured in front of H.M.S. Warrior during its renovation. — (M.8150).



Jackie Knight, the current Mayor Middleton, outside the Smallcrafts Club. — (M.3800).

in 1970. He was also particularly proud to hold the title again in 1982, as it was Maritime England Year.

The second mayor was coal merchant Bertie Cox, who moved to Arbroath.

"The first chain of office was two lavatory chains attached to a Durham Light Infantry shield," recalls Owen. "The one we have now records the names of all the previous mayors."

It also has a special coat of arms with a proud emblem. It seems that long before the road was built across the Slake, each summer around July a large flock of herons would roost every night on this stretch of mudflats. Apparently the Middletonians became so attached to this migratory occurrence that they adopted the bird as an emblem. Perhaps the herons followed the shoals of herring from Scotland to the Thames, stopping off awhile along the way at the Slake. Whatever, the bird is honoured on the chain of office by the ancestors of the Middleton residents who took the graceful fishing birds to their bosom.

Last year's mock mayor was Sandra Steel, the first lady to be so honoured, striking a blow for women's lib. Sandra, of Furness Street, is a leading member of the Smallcrafts Club and a tireless fund-raiser for charity.

Owen, who retired this year as district secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, encapsulates the spirit of Middleton.

He is a man of some guile and one year saved the harbour fête by his cunning machinations. He has also been prominent in the fight to retain a right of way through the docks. In addition he has campaigned for a general clean-up of the area and against the licensed sea-coal dredger which he argued changed the beaches for the worse.

The mayor elected in 1981 was Alex Weegram, then working in the Mall's press-room. Born into a family of 11 in Middleton in 1922, his father was a dock pilot. At 14 he joined the Cameratta as a galley boy and went on to sail all over the world. During the war he served in convoys and later worked on the dredger at Hartlepool, before becoming a diver.

The current mayor is long-distance lorry driver Jackie Knight.

"We can't preserve the community. The people were moved out," explains Jackie. "But we can preserve the spirit of Middleton. That is very much alive. I think that will give you some idea why it is so important to have a mayor and honour tradition."

As for the tradition of mock mayors, this is not a widely known area of common knowledge. Owen, Sandra and all other Middleton mock mayors need not feel too associated with the following research offer!

Basically, mock mayors have been chosen from among the detritus of society — the drunks, tramps and other derelicts.

I must thank for much of the following information Derek Froome, a well-known folklorist, who summarized material he had collected from the North-East.

Durham City had its Duke of Baubleshire, a character who was ennobled as a tribute to his eccentricity.

At Embleton, Northumberland, there was a regular

election of a tramp or other derelict as mayor after having been made drunk. The local vicar had the tradition put down and in Victorian times the custom was often met with hostility from the clergy or police.

Also in Northumberland, at Ford, there was the annual election of a drunk mayor.

Having retired from Manchester Polytechnic, Derek is currently engaged in collecting further examples of mock mayors.

The Mayor of Middleton was new to him and came as a surprise.

"They are very fugitive and their discovery is more often than not a pursuit of serendipity," he tells me.

The mock mayor tradition is from the past. As for the present, we have a modern version, I suppose. Beastie Boys fans have been stealing VW badges off cars and taken to putting several on one chain to make alternative mayoral chains of office.

And while we're on about the present, how about Derek Hatton. He took away Liverpool's Lord Mayor and sold the town hall Dalmier. Who needs flash cars, old-fashioned rituals and elitist chains of office?

In Middleton they mix tradition with non-elitism, for how else could a mayor's parlour double as a drinking club!

Silly season licked!

JOURNALISTS and public alike refer to an ill-defined but distinctly summery period known as the "silly season".

We all know what it means broadly. It is that part of the year when the excesses of tabloid journalism are at their most flippant. Even the reporters and sub-editors who annually appear to lengthen its timescale are usually ignorant of its supposed evolution.

Before speculating on a more prosaic genesis for the silly season, let's refer to an authority.

It is defined in Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (7th. ed.) as: "an obsolescent journalistic expression for the part of the year when Parliament and the Law Courts are not sitting (about August and September) when, through lack of news, the papers had to fill their columns with trivial items — such as news of giant geeseberries and sea serpents — and long correspondence on subjects of evanescent (if any) interest".

Others prefer to believe it was the invention of James Bone, of the Manchester Guardian (as it then was). He, in fact, obtained the story from another journalist who went to London in 1900 on the half-promise from a senior staffer of one of the capital's evening newspapers to look over the newcomer's work.

Unsuccessful, the penniless and starving would-be Fleet Street newsman went to Charing Cross all-night post office to send a letter to his father asking for money to pay his debt at his lodgings and return fare home.

He had just bought the stamp and was about to affix it to the envelope when he noticed that a large black cat sitting on the counter had its tongue out. Down on his luck, he still had a sense of humour and temptation got the better of him. He put the stamp on the smoggy mouser's

tongue, put the letter back in his pocket and wrote a story about the incident. This appeared under the headline —

**POST OFFICE NOVELTY STAMP LICKING
CAT OF CHARING CROSS**

The cat became an immediate celebrity with thousands flocking to the post office to see the animal. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (not then Royal), Cat and Dog Home, Dumb Friends League, Crufts Annual Cat Show (yes, cat show) and even Tail Waggers' League all protested.

The subject of cats' tongues and their unsuitability for the purpose became the subject of medical treatises. The Post Office was forced to make an official denial that it was an intended service. It is said this was issued after a Question was asked in the House.

Wire services circulated the story worldwide, and as we all know, in the journalistic-cum-folkloristic manner, the story grew with due decoration and embellishment.

A good example of silly season speculation and the genesis of a new urban belief tale was a story in the national tabloid The Star. We stay with cats as the two great pillars of successful storytelling — sex and anxiety — are combined.

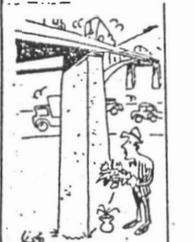
We fear nuclear power and are alarmed at any sex drive malfunction. Top Persian breeder Anne Brooker reckoned Chernobyl fallout had knocked the bottom out of top cats' sex lives.

The paper then found Britain's top feline psychologist, Dr Roger Muckford, to throw a bucket of cold water over the theory. "With Persians you would need a nuclear explosion to get them to mate at all. They are the laziest cats around," he stated.

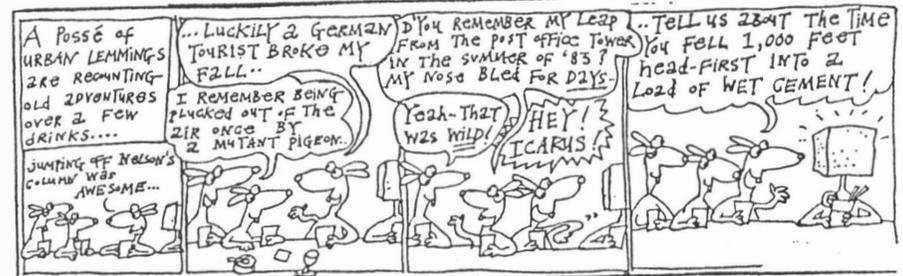
By Paul Screeton



"What possessed you to leave his wellingtons on?"



"Me and the boys really admired the way you stood up to the boss, Louie!"



SUN

A MALE nude made of fruit and veg went on show in Bath, Avon, yesterday — with ears of sweetcorn, a cauliflower brain and naughty bits wrapped up in cabbage leaves.

SPOT

Gives a new meaning to corn dollies!
Sun, 23/1/89

SAMBUSH

A £1,000 puppet of Sam Fox's body with the face of a HIPPO was swiped yesterday from puppeteer Alexandra Dane's car in Fulham, West London.

Yes, but can it sing?
Sun, 4/1/89



SAM FOX:

SUN

UFO hunters spent eight weeks tracking a mystery light in the sky near Newstead, Notts, before discovering it was a regular night flight from Palma, Majorca.

SPOT

30/9/88

Letters to the Editor

FROM Steve Roud, 18 Amberley Grove, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 6ND.

Dear Mr Screeton,

I was extremely dismayed to read your reaction to Gillian Bennet's criticisms in FF 7. By choosing to concentrate on certain points in Gillian's review you may have allowed yourself the opportunity to vent your spleen on some "enemy" that she represents to you, but have seriously misinformed your readers about the review's content. For example, Gillian writes that FF is a "mine of useful raw data", an "excellent source" of material, "good value for your three quid", and so on.

The review has two main criticisms of Folklore Frontiers:

1) Its bad physical quality, and 2) its "jokey, exclamatory style".

The comments on its physical appearance are perfectly valid - the early issues were pretty rough - but Gilliam specifically notes and welcomes its gradual improvement in this respect, as have all its readers no doubt.

The description of its style, to which you take such exception, is also, to my mind, quite accurate. Now, as editor you naturally have the right to choose whatever style you like, just as Gillian has a duty to inform readers of her review on the matter. However, you might like to ask yourself whether the style adopted might interfere with the content. One of the most infuriating traits of tabloid journalism is that accuracy and the information-provision role of the newspaper are sacrificed to style, and one wonders whether a similar approach is appropriate for a magazine that purports to comment on the results.

Other points in your reaction are inaccurate. For example, Foaf tale News is not "£2 for two flimsy issues", as it states quite clearly "No subscription scheme exists for this news sheet. However, if you would like to occasionally send us the equivalent of £2 to cover postage, we would be most grateful", which is a very different kettle of fish. You quoted this yourself in FF 2 (p.4), so you must have known. And to berate the author of a review for typographical errors perpetrated by the typist/editor is just plain silly.

Apart from misleading your readers, the real pity of this response is that it threatens to drive a wedge between "Fortean" and "Folklorists" just at the time when things were looking good for co-operation and understanding between these two approaches. Many of the past folklore "establishment" would have little to do with such nasty modern things as Yucca plants and Crying Boy paintings, but there are now a number of folklorists in this country who appreciate the value of such journals as Fortean Times, while Michael Goss in FF 6 (pp.5-7) and Bob Rickard in FT 49 (pp.61-67, especially) have shown an awareness of the desirability of closer links. The fact that you were invited to attend the Contemporary Legend Conference is evidence of this spirit of co-operation, and your unpleasant public response damages more than just your own reputation.

I suggest you reprint the whole of Gillian Bennett's review in your next issue, along with this letter, so that your readers can judge for themselves.

Yours sincerely,
Steve Roud.

FOAFTALE NEWS

No.7 (August 1987)



AN OCCASIONAL NEWS SHEET ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND RESEARCH

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS - A REVIEW

Gillian Bennett

Folklore Frontiers, which has just completed its first year of life under the editorship of Paul Screeton, at the very modest price of £3 pa is a welcome addition to the shelves of those interested in contemporary legend, belief and rumour.

The first four issues have covered such topics as poisonous yucca plants, phantom hitchhikers, UFO and AIDS rumours, "The Crying Boy" picture and the exploding bosom of Samantha Fox. Most of the material is written by Screeton himself (of which, more later), but there are also welcome pieces by Michael Goss (The Evidence for Phantom Hitchhikers), Andy Roberts and others, newspaper-clippings and book reviews.

The issues are extremely cheaply produced on typewriter and photocopier (with a helping of scissors and Pritt stick), and stapled together. Size varies from fifteen to thirty pages. Each issue zips through a lot of heterogeneous material with a carelessness of detail that reflects its modest price. The typing is frankly bad and typos go uncorrected: in some issues part of the copy has been faint to the point of indecipherability. For presentation, Folklore Frontiers would, without doubt, collect the booby prize.

Having said that, it must be acknowledged that the standard improves in each issue. Numbers three and four (typed in part on a word-processor, on A4 reduced and centre-stapled) look very much more professional and are much easier to read than numbers one and two (typed single-spaced on a typewriter that needed cleaning). Personally, I'm not complaining here: it is cheap, so what does it matter if it looks cheap? The contents are what Screeton would ask to be judged on, I'm sure.

What I myself find very riling, however, is the awful jokey, exclamatory style which pays little attention to clarity, sense or syntax, for instance "any gathering of ferroequinologists (train-spotters, if you must), will get steamed up about all manner of apocryphal platform end rumour. Cross-fertilization between themes is a fascinating pursuit for collectors and most categories will be found to be arbitrary". It's a great pity, therefore, that he overwrites almost everything that comes his way.

However, if you can bear with that, you will find Folklore Frontiers a mine of useful raw data, an excellent source of all that is current in legend and rumour at the crazy end of popular belief. As a substitute for a clipping-service it is invaluable, but don't expect more of it. This is not an analytical or academic magazine in any respect, just a forum for the exchange and collection of information.

The magazine can be obtained from Paul Screeton, 3 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Harlepool, Cleveland. TS25 2AT. You'll probably find it good value for your three quid.



Bizarre

Paul Screeton replies:

I leave it to F.F. readers to judge the merits of Ms Bennett's review and Steve Roud's defence and response to my review in F.F. 7. But let me remind readers that I only became aware of this write-up because Andy Roberts was so incensed by it that he sent me a photocopy (in the circumstances I was not even given the courtesy of receiving a copy to defend my standpoint) and said he was writing to Folk Tale News to object to the piece. If Ms Bennett honestly thought it good value why did she not resubscribe after issue 4? Maybe she still reads someone else's, but that would hardly be supportive.

Steve Roud's letter also muddies the Fortean/Folklore frontier; any self-respecting folklorist unaware of, say, developments in ufology or alien beasts does not deserve to call him/herself a folklorist. Many folklorists, I suspect are very old-fashioned and narrow in their spectrum of interest. Today's folklore is best exemplified in the tabloids and if F.F. chooses a somewhat Sun-speak style it is correctly in step with what contemporary folklorists should be thinking and voicing. Also as a professional journalist of some distinction, I am well aware of the shortcomings of the Press, as I point out frequently in F.F.

In such a spirit, I apologise unreservedly for what was a grossly flippant and inaccurate remark about "£2 for two flimsy issues".

Anyone out there want to debate this issue?

Secret source to a helping of success on a plate?

Guardian, 18/7/88

SOME WHILE ago Heinz ran a series of adverts extolling the virtues of their beans in tomato sauce. The adverts took the form of "amusing" vignettes, in which a young child is seen asking his/her mother if, by eating vast quantities of beans, they will grow up to be successful.

The series featured such celebrities as Cilla Black and Ian Botham. Now on one dark winter's evening, I was sitting waiting for the start of one of ITV's "situation comedies," when upon my screen came a Heinz advert. On the set was a mother and daughter both dressed in clothes roughly from the 1930/40s. The young girl, upon observing a glistening and obviously delicious pile of beans on the plate in front of her, asked her mother if by consuming the said beans she may one day aspire to be prime minister. The mother offhandedly said yes. The next shot was of the mother's face in detail, across the visage passed a series of emotions, dawning apprehension, panic and horror; returning to



the table the mother seized the plate, saying the while, yes Margaret you just might, she then left the room hurriedly.

After seeing this "playlet" I told all my friends and relatives to watch out for it, thinking what a super jape it was, obviously using our present Prime Minister as a role model for the young girl. However, the weeks and months have now passed and it is obvious that I will never see the advert again; more worryingly for my own safety however is the fact that no one else has ever seen it. I

feel very exposed, especially in the climate "post-Spycatcher."

I have been told that I must have imagined it, I am starting to believe they may be right, if so can I offer the idea to Heinz's advertising agency? If I did not imagine it, then far more sinister considerations raise their heads. Was this advert "spiked," if so by whose orders? I think we should be told. Edward Scarff, 2 Pounces Cottages, Manston Road, Manston nr Ramsgate, Kent.

THE SHAMAN **** This magazine preceded FOLKLORE FRONTIERS and ran for 11 issues. Still available are 2, 4, 5 and 11. Nos. 4 and 5 have attacks on Williamson & Bellamy's "Ley Lines in Question". Copies 50p each inc. p&p. Its predecessor was ANCIENT SKILLS & WISDOM REVIEW, mainly a mags and books review service. Six at random for £2 inc. p&p.

NEWSLINES

We begin with some items which just have that dubious quality because they mirror concerns which have been media events.

SEAL OF APPROVAL. Has the mystery virus now killing off seals stirred folk memories of these beasts the Independent (19/11/88) asks, then after mentioning humans marrying seals, suckling by seal mothers and rescue after shipwreck, decides they are unaffectionate. they forgot the story of 31/8/88 (Sun, Star) of a dying (was it?) seal saving a drowning (he wasn't) boy and nicknamed Flipper (that's a dolphin!). the Star particularly went overboard, excuse the pun, on Wayne Norgate, aged 8, whose dinghy was pushed by a seal.

DARVIN'S SPAWN. Funny how after a recent hit TV show "First Born" about the birth of a hairy ape/human child we have a doctor coming forward to proclaim that five years ago a "real life" example of sorts was born. Top surgeon Eftis Paraskevaides (is it an anagram?), of North Manchester General Hospital, refused to say where it occurred or identify the boy but says he is now healthy after having a tail removed. "It was a real tail which moved at times and was covered in fine, downy hair just like an animal's. I've never seen anything like it," he claimed (Star, Sun, 28/11/88).

LUMBERED. Stunned carpenters believed they had uncovered a miracle after spotting the face of Christ on a plank of wood. The Sun claimed it resembled a bearded face like the image on the Turnin Shroud and the markings were discovered the same day scientists dismissed the famous icon as a fake. They failed to make a connection between Jesus' father's - Joseph that is - occupation but were happy to tag this relic The Bacup Plank. Wooden buggers? Which brings us to...

TURIN TRIANGLE? Turin is the apex of a worldwide triangle of black magic whose other points are London and San Francisco. It is also a white magic apex with Prague and Lyons. The Independent (19/11/88) had a bizarre story of a Turin man seeing a beast like a cross between a serpent and a leech crawl from a Mr Gullo's arm on to an unspecified part of a Miss Setteducati's anatomy. An autopsy suggested the white magic involved was a powdered variety from Colombia.

ROTHERHAM TRIANGLE. Sheffield man John Hill claims to be Jesus Christ and the High Court in the city threw out his bid to sue for £100m. for failure to acknowledge his ownership of the U.K. (D. Mirror, 23/6/88; Sun, 1/7/88). He threatened a hunger strike for 14 days if not appeased to "sacrifice myself for mankind as I did before." Did he again? Also (Guardian, also 23/6/88) reported Jesus Christ appearing in Nairobi, Kenya, according to worshippers in the city's slums. He blessed a crowd in Swahili, muttered a Hebrew curse and left in a car driven by Gurnam Singh, alighted at a bus terminus and vanished into thin air. The materialization occurred at a meeting addressed by a faith healer, Mary Akatsa, who also berated a barren woman, saying she had failed to have children as she was sleeping with ten different men. meanwhile another miracle occurred in Sheffield when a carp caught at Fontainebleau was put on ice in Paris, shipped 500 miles to the steel city, where fishmonger Alan Daly saw its gills move, popped it in water and after recovering was transferred to a fishpond (Sandwell Express & Star, 3/12/87).

NOT PARAGONS OF VIRTUE. Remember the story of the media liking the story of Bernard Lavery's 372lb pumpkin fed on lager? How the British National Pumpkin Society objected, banned the practice and stipulated a sapometer would be used to test large vegetables for alcohol content? Lavery was really James Thynne handling the Heineken account for Paragon Communications. Both pumpkins and Heineken are largely composed of water and have as much style and desirability as the hoax perpetrator (Star, 23/6/88; What's Brewing, August, 1988).

MARCONI MYSTERY. The Independent (? late 1988) had an in-depth demolition of the conspiracy theories surrounding the deaths of 22 defence scientists. The "'mystery' evaporating on inspection". But those who persevered found this rather at odds conclusion to the article -- "Did the Marconi scientists compete with each other to kill themselves in the most ingenious way? It was how they made their living, after all."

MAJOR INVESTMENT. True the Sun (14/10/88) to find a sex angle to £2m. to be spent on a steel corset to keep upright the 800-year-old Major Oak in Nottingham's Sherwood Forest. Fancifully this is "where Robin bedded Maid Marion and sang with his Merry Men." Ribblehead viaduct could better have the money spent upon it...and then there was the seeming hoax about Robin Hood being bitten to death by a vampire and a group of supernatural researchers wanting to dig up his grave to prove their point (Sun, D. Star, D. Mirror, 5/1/89).

ROCK FOLLIES. Rocker Axl Rose has died of a drugs overdose and been replaced by a double, pretending to be the Guns 'n' Roses star. The bizarre death riddle is believed by many American fans, convinced there is a giant cover-up to keep his death a secret (D. Star, 25/10/88). Top U.S. singer Belinda Carlisle tells how as about to fall asleep sparks started flying from her arms and legs, the painful effect was like an electric shock and lasted for about 15 seconds. "Later I learned that what happened was similar to spontaneous combustion," she revealed (D. Star, 3/5/88). It is rumoured our own dear Queen - not Mercury, May & Co. - but Elizabeth, goes late-night shopping incognito ("The Tumour in the Whale" by Rodney Dale). So were shopkeepers in West Berlin told to stay open late in calls from Michael Jackson's suite? (D. Mirror, 24/6/88). Oh, and rock legend Elvis Presley is alive and well - just resting (D. Star, 26/7/88), and author Gail Brewer-Giorgio is writing a book on the rumours (D. Star, / late 1988). Meanwhile Dr Gaston Montale, who ran a clinic in Hormosillo, Mexico, claimed he carried out an abortion on movie legend Marilyn Monroe in 1961 when she became pregnant during a torrid affair with Elvis Presley (Sun, 11/11/88).

HARIN-GAY. Lesbos came to the playground for pupils as young as seven claimed a Sun (16/12/88) exclusive. Blaming Left-wing policies of the local council in Haringey, it recounted that instead of cowboys and indians, schoolgirls were playing a kiss-and-cuddles "poofters and dykes" game.

STUCK COUPLE. A variation on the Stuck Couple motif of a particularly crude variety has appeared (News of the World, 2/10/88) which, I suppose, legitimises it for a staid, family organ such as F.F. No names, but supposedly from Swansea, South Wales, a naked couple were having a sex session in the kitchen when the wife had a epileptic fit. Her convulsions brought on lockjaw at a climactic moment and as the husband screamed in agony, he grabbed a frying pan and dealt his dearest a blow on the head. In hospital she was treated for head injuries and he for bites to his penis.

RUBBLE RUBBISH. Seventeen survivors of the Armenian earthquake were found under the rubble of a grain store in Spitax 24 days after the devastation (D. Star, Northern Echo, 3/1/89) only for there to be a total denial (Mail, Hartlepool, 3/1/89; Sun, 4/1/89). Then five weeks after the disaster six men including Aizaz Akopyan were pulled alive from the ruins in Leninakan (D. Star, Sun, 13/12/88), but the same Soviet news agency which originally gave the world the thrilling story could not find the other five survivors or any witnesses (A.P., 14/1/89).

SALMAN-ELLA. Novelist Salman Rushdie plays literary games with myth and reality. As I write there has been burning of his book "The Satanic Verses" by Bradfordian ayatollahs. To support his writing in the Seventies he was an advertising copy-writer. Many people insist that he wrote the American Express line "That'll do nicely", which he denies. However, he admits to thge campaign for Aero chocolate with its puns on "delectabubble" and "incredibubble". The Milk Marketing Board apparently turned down his line "Naughty but Nice" on cream cakes on the grounds that it linked cream with obesity, but it was dusted off after his departure (Independent Magazine, 10/9/88).

BESTIALITY. The Chinese resentment of African students' relatively relaxed sexual mores which led to racial tension in China's universities early this year was reported in depth (Independent, 9/1/89), including how with singular bad timing, the official New China News Agency ran a story from Botswana recounting how an African peasant had been arrested for molesting a donkey. The report went into details of how he was interrupted during the act -- an image likely to take precedence in the mind over ideological friendship between African and Chinese peoples. Whereas the piece on the right comes from the News of the World (20/1/88) and with no subsequent court case we suspect it may have been made up. It reminds us of Canadian rocker Ronnie Hawkins reminiscence of life on the road: "In all that time, I must have laid around a million girls, a few boys and even the odd goat. The goats weren't too bad, except that you had to go around to the other end if you wanted to give them a kiss." ("Rock Bottom" by Muck Raker).



COCKLESHELL HEROES. "Anxious anglers are stuffing cockleshells in their boots in a bid to fool vicious otters. Welsh fishermen claim the beasts bite their ankles and refuse to let go unless they hear the cracking of bones -- or shells." (News of the World, 31/8/88).



UPDATE

HI-TECH ROBBERY. "Only the other week, I witnessed one such skinny wimp complete with micro attempting to unlawfully extract large amounts of money from a highstreet cash dispenser." The narrator notes with surprise how those in the queue were uncomplaining at the "little smart arse equipped with an amazing array of ribbon-cables and God-knows-what-else attached to what looked uncannily like: a foil-wrapped credit card." After ten minutes unsurprisingly the cash dispenser swallowed the card amid electronic fireworks. "Sadly the little runt failed to let go of his computer," relates the witness. "Seconds later he failed to respond to cardiac massage." (Men Only, Vol. 50, No. 8, 1985). While in court experts disagreed on how difficult it would be to get cash from a hole-in-the-wall dispenser with a fake card. Les Collier had spent three years and £2,000 suing the Halifax Building Society for the return of £50 he claimed he didn't withdraw (D. Express, 30/4/88). Jake Williams alerted us to hole-in-the-wall gang belief possibilities in F.F. 7, p9.

COKE RODENT. Drugs apocrypha as featured by Messrs Roberts & Screenshot in F.F. 1, pp4-7. Now we find cartoon favourite Mighty Mouse seen sniffing cocaine in a recent episode. C.B.S., which claimed as "nuts" the suggestion by the American Family Association, said its hero was sniffing flowers (D. Star, 11/6/88).

PET'S ORDEAL. To add to our collection in F.F. 7, back page, there was Pete the budgie -- "Who's a silly boy then? he used to say -- who had a match as a leg splint and scratched the phosphorous match-head on sandpaper and was burned to death in Upper Norwood, London (News of the World, 2/10/88). While a budgie taken to a pet shop while its owners were on holiday was allegedly sold by mistake at Ulverston, Cumbria (D. Star, 7/8/88). As for hedgehogs (see apocrypha in The Shaman, No. 2, advert elsewhere) it is usually a cat which is discovered under a car bonnet after a long journey. A squeaking between Cornwall and Derbyshire was found to be a hedgehog hitch-hiker which had journeyed 300 miles (D. Mirror, D. Star, D. Telegraph, 26/7/88). The accompanying cartoon comes from the Sun (29/12/88).



OUT OF THE CLOSET. The hoax letter about householders using the loo often has been flushed out again -- see F.F. 5, p19 -- and Thames Water officials have been spoofed by a con merchant who signs of Mr R. Souls (Sun, 20/6/88).

AIDS. No room to update AIDS this time again but the Sun (11/8/88) claims an Irish journalist is suing the B.B.C. because, he claims, he was described as having herpes. The Beeb maintains what was really said was that he had a hairpiece. Another item of confusion had M.P.s debating the export of bulls' sperm at the Euro Parliament in Brussels being baffled when the English translator spoke of "frozen sailors"...until they realised he meant "frozen semen" (Sun, 19/8/88).

ABOMINABLE CHEEK. Top climber Alan Hinkes was climbing Melungste, a 24,000ft Tibetan peak. On this Himalayan expedition he found his toilet paper had been stolen and blamed a desperate yeti. "There were no other animals or people near us," he said woefully (Sunday Sport, 26/6/88).

BENEATH THE CITY. Those alligators in the sewers under New York get a degree of support when a spokesman for the N.Y. Dept. of Environmental Protection, Andrew McCarthy, suggested one lived there after having been flushed down a toilet, having outgrown its aquarium. Until, that is, one finds his department has a vested (T-shirted actually) interest where its £5 garments proclaim "The Legend Lives", featuring the beast wearing sun-glasses clambering out of a manhole (D. Telegraph, 27/6/88).

BACKMASKING. We looked at Satanism and rock 'n' roll in F.F. 6, p12. Now Voice of the Beehive star Melissa Belland is being terrorised by two or three menacing letters a week. "It's really creepy," she says. "Half the letters are written backwards and when I take them to the mirror they say bizarre messages." (D. Mirror, 20/12/88). Ozzy Osbourne found himself on the 13th of the month with a full moon and 13 crew members, then a wages bill which came to £666 and the wildman's tour was beset with upsets and illness. He blamed it on the Devil; we hesitate to suggest the rock 'n' roll lifestyle had anything to do with it (D. Star, 25/7/88). Then Ozzy's hit "Suicide Solution" - about the dangers of alcohol, not a death invitation - was being blamed for fans' deaths (News of the World), while three New Zealanders' deaths were blamed on subtly-named Gothic rockers Johnny and the Fourskins (D. Star, Sun, 24/9/88). Families in Nevada claimed "subliminal messages" on Judas Priest's L.P. "Stained Class" prompted two young men to shoot each other in a churchyard, suggestive of a suicide pact (Sun, 12/10/88).

They're not made
by hoaxers.
They're not made
by helicopters
They're not made
by whirlwinds
What are they?

(Continued from
Page 7)

past three to four millenia on which the circle of standing corn now grows." The beauty of connecting ancient sites to the circles riddle is that it underpins the otherwise dubious repetitiousness of the appearances at set sites each year. It may also explain the geometrical form. Here could be the chance for earth mysteries aficionados - archaeologists - too - to discover whether the circles re on the site of tumuli. This should not be too difficult a task.

SPIRAL FORMATION

From here we need to envisage at what times would be the most likely occurrence for an earth energy discharge which would create the circle. Those who claim to experience ley power (for want of a better term) say it has a spiral formation - an energy vortex. So surely it'd with a known history of circle formation could be mapped for energy by a competent dowser before crops are planted, and then a correlation be made if and when circles appear.

Thus we could find energy discharges as the root cause. There could even be earth lights manifested and so we would be very close to getting back to flying saucers: Going around n circles, so to speak.

However, I doubt if ufology is on the mind of Colin Andrews, a senior engineer with Hampshire's Test Valley Borough Council. As coordinator of the circles probe, his machines are being monitored every four hours for the ten-week period.

They include gadgetry capable of recording minute sounds and abnormal changes in magnetic fields and temperatures. Infra-red cameras and videos. They are trained on a top-secret large field typical of the 70 or so in Britain where the phenomenon occurred last year, many in Hampshire.

The answer, my friends, may or may not be blowing in the wind, but we may find a new meaning for the term crop rotation.

16 THE SUN, Monday, February 13, 1989

Balloons bid to find lost army

SIX HUNDRED balloons will land

in Laos and Vietnam today offering a reward of £1.5 million for the return of any American prisoner of war.

The helium-filled balloons were launched from Hong Kong and the reward money was raised by 21 U.S. politicians who believe hundreds of U.S. prisoners could still be alive in Indochina.

At least 2,400 are officially missing in the war which ended in 1975.



"Cin... vodka... powdered rhinoceros horn?"

MAGAZINES BOOKS

NORTHERN UFO NEWS. Six for £6. B. Cheques/POs payable to "NUFON". From 37 Heathbank Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 0UP. No. 126. Jenny Randles' editorial on cover-up question; Rendlesham revisited; Streiber's "Communion." Usual topics each issue are major articles elsewhere, UFOs in the media, news round-up, case histories and brief modern cases, plus books. No. 127. Rendlesham editorial and more on Tim Good and cover-ups. No. 129. J.R. on amazing rise in UFO coverage in media. No. 130. Scandalous saga of alleged abduction and separate woman who had bedroom abduction experience perhaps triggered by Fallon's "Dynasty" medical revelations. No. 131. Editorial on Sunday Sport's UFO "coverage"; Ilkley pt 1. No. 132. YUFOS behaviour over Roundhay Park, Leeds, case; Ilkley pt 2. No. 133. Sunday Sport trashed; mystery circles. No. 134. Widely-reported Great October 27 Light.

UFO BRIGANTIA. Journal of the Independent UFO Network. B. Six for £7; single issue £1.25; U.S. \$20. Payable to M. Dagless, 19 Bellmount Gardens, Bramley, Leeds. No. 33. UFOs over Barnsley; Paul Fuller and dubious vortex theory; Livingston close encounter revisited; Roundhay Park abduction mystery; John Lear's bizarre beliefs in full; lively letters. No. 34. Phantom aircraft round-up and analysis; strange incident and possible time-slip and abduction; YUFOS lunacy over Roundhay likely hoax; very readable miscellany of ufological happenings. No. 35. The 1957 Silpho Moor retrieval revisited and no I did not suggest "it was on display in a fish and chip shop" as quoted (trying to rival Sunday Sport, Andy?); those Barnsley UFO pix; channelled communications; UFO abductions and Celtic connection.

AMSKAYA. Q of STAR Fellowship. Four for £2. Payable to J. Goddard, 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2PX. No. 11. Thought-provoking editorial on possible conspiracy theory over non-replication of "Gaia law"; cuttings reproduced from National Inquirer and D. Mirror; late Tony Wedd on contactees; Philip Heselton on allotechnology (cont. 12). No. 12. Harmony on medicine and music message relayed by T. Wedd from 1960; "space" message regarding E.M. (earth mysteries) and how John Michell diverted an education programme aimed at getting Earth into the Galactic Confederation(!!!); Jesus in Kashmir; and not entirely sceptical commentary on the Airfix model W.W. II bomber on Moon Sunday Sport scam!!!!!!!!!!!!

TOUCHSTONE. Q mag of Surrey Earth Mysteries Group - address, price as Amskaya. No. 18. Field trip reports and councils' stone erection; Yateley stone circle speculation; allotechnology (also 19) letters, notes and news. No. 19. Report on holiday in Pumpsaint terr- esstrial zodiac; The Ley Hunter moot report.

AFTER Manchester City Banana Power another plastic phenomenon is sprouting from Second Division terraces. Pink panthers, escorted by supporters of Stoke City, are on the prowl. Meanwhile Maine Road cannot keep up with the demand for big bananas: as no British manufacturer can meet the ever growing demand an urgent call has gone to Taiwan.

Independent, 21/1/89



NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES. Journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group. £1 single copy; £2-50 for three. Payable to "NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES. Editor Rob Wilson, 103 Derbyshire Lane, Norton Lees, Sheffield S8 9EN. No. 37. Comprehensive report on Northern Moot by Jimmy Goddard (but it's all there again in his own Touchstone (No. 20) except for name differences - see how accurate we are Steve and Gillian - with Ralph Knutt/Nutt and Penny Snape/Snee; plus more Philip Heselton allotechnology), plus write-up of following day's field trip. Articles on Lothian sites, witchcraft and famous hermit; standing Yorkshire maypoles and celebrations; West Witton Burning of Bartle 1988 ceremony; book reviews and meetings.

BUNKERS UNDER LONDON by NIGEL PENNICK
Valknut Productions, 142 Pheasant Rise, Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8SD.
£2.25, inc p&p)

Expanded third edition of Nigel's 20-year investigation into the capital's subterranean. It is No. 2 in his The Tube Railways of London series. More than conspiracy theory territory, and as with all that is little known has attracted much urban legend, the Underground is more than just a modern commuter Hieronymus Bosch scenario. From a historical beginning detailing how after W.W. I a civil defence programme was formulated ready for the repeat performance. There is a detailed account of Down Street station's conversion and the custom-built bunkers forward planning. There is plenty of social history about disasters, disinformation, mythological Blitz, disease and kazis, spivs and so on. From the Home Front, Pennick moves to the postwar period. Did you know Kajagoogoo made a pop promo video down Goodge Street bunker in 1984 and that episodes of "Dr Who" and "Blake's Seven" had Camden Town bunker as a location.

F.F. readers will be interested in Pennick's comment that "whatever the stories one hears of clandestine tunnels from time to time, and there is a huge urban folklore in this area, it is certain that they exist under Parliament." Perhaps someone will now suggest that authorization for the east coast main line electrification was given but such would not be granted for the West Country bound line out of Paddington as it is proof against power failures and the bunkers of the National Seat of Government are on its route.

Seriously, this book will appeal to rapid transport buffs, W.W. II Home Front aficionados and those concerned that we have a two-tier system for surviving wars. It is illustrated with evocative archive photographs, original and specially-drawn plans, maps and diagrams. Paranoids beware.

BROOKSIDE DRAMA BECOMES REALITY

A dramatic scene written by a television scriptwriter for the soap opera Brookside has been turned into fact by a grisly coincidence. [QL]

Millions of viewers saw policeman Rod Corckhill stumble across a corpse in Monday night's episode of the Channel 4 series. [QL]

Just 90 minutes after the programme went off the air, police were investigating a real life death at exactly the same spot. [QL]

The body of a middle-aged man was found under a railway bridge [MD] from where he is thought to have fallen [MD] at Edge Hill sidings in Picton Road, Liverpool. [QL]

A police officer discovered the body just yards from where camera crews were filming five weeks earlier. [QL]

Scriptwriter Mr Jimmy McGovern, 33, who chose the location, said last night: "If this guy has got any family I'm really sorry for them [MD] it looks rather callous." [QL]

He said he thought the "bleak and eerie" sidings were just the kind of place he imagined bodies might be found. [QL]

"But when someone finds a corpse the same night of the episode [MD] that really shakes me up. I don't think I'll write about corpses again," he added. [QL] - P.A. 25/1/89.

ENDLINES

Well, this issue seems to have had a gestation akin to that of a pachyderm. I hope the wait was worthwhile and we'll continue to give you more of the same more regularly (despite detractors). Prices have been rising and I'm sorry to feel obliged to raise the four-issue sub to £4 from this issue. I think we give value for money. A copy will last you much longer than a pint of bitter.

We've maintained 28 pages, tightly packed with excellent articles and a wry look at happenings worldwide. It's an improvement on the first two issues, which were printed by my father, who sadly passed away last November. It was he who introduced me to the Chinese restaurant which served kit-e-kat rumour and the quality car sold by the aggrieved wife for a fiver.

We close these notes with F.F.'s base, Hartlepool, in the news with actress Glenda Jackson being rumoured as approached to be Labour Parliamentary candidate for the constituency and TV's "The New Statesman" coincidentally proclaiming the town as the place where Britain's oldest moggie - Rees-Mogg - had died and was to be eaten by its erstwhile owners. Does F.F., perhaps, bring a cultural presence to Hartlepool and improve its image? Or did I hear a professional folklorist mutter "Hartlepool has got the magazine it deserves".

ADVANCE ORDERS ARE SOUGHT FOR THE FOLLOWING PUBLICATION

YORKSHIRE HOLY WELLS AND SACRED SPRINGS

by Edna Whelan and Ian Taylor

Available May 1989 from:

Northern Lights, P.O. Box 113,
Dunnington, YORK. YO1 5NG

ISBN 1 869939 09 3 - Price £2.95

This volume contains details of over 80 Wells and is the *only* major contemporary survey of these sites in the County. The Wells are grouped in areas, enabling the book to be used as a guide for motorists, walkers, locals and visitors - in fact anyone interested in the Yorkshire landscape and its sacred water shrines. The book contains illustrations of 30 Wells. Contents include:

3 Accounts of Well Lore and Legends 3 Tales of Ghosts and Goddesses at Holy Wells 3 The Piight of the Holy Well in the 20th Century 3 Details of Lost Wells 3 Information on Saved Sites 3 The importance of Holy Wells in the Community 3 How to Restore Your Local Holy Well 3

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