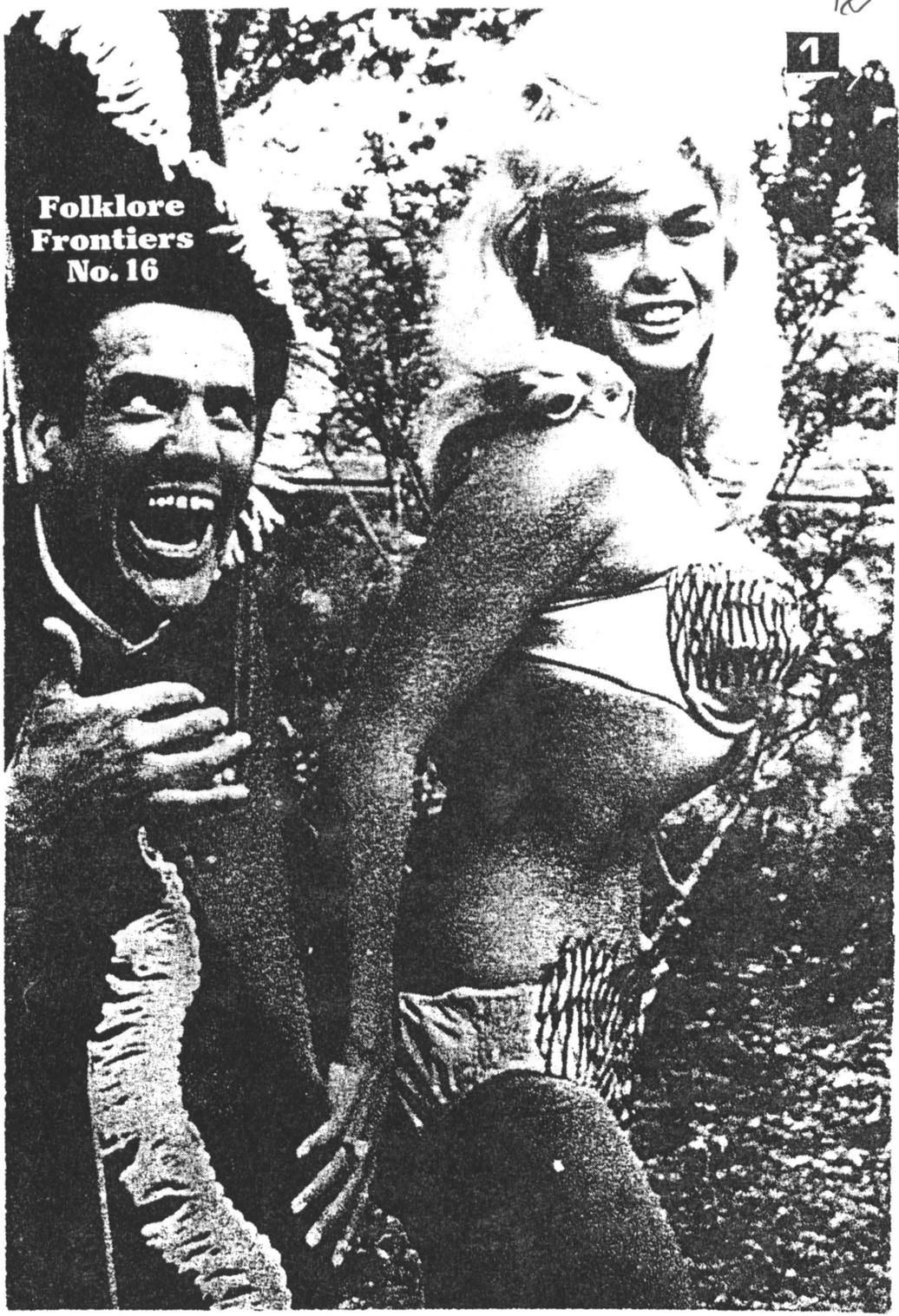


**Folklore
Frontiers
No. 16**



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June, 1992

The Diary

Hartlepool returned to Parliament Labour spin-doctor Peter Mandelson. I introduced him (FF 12, p2) and in his election diary column Mike Amos referred to him as being unable to "shake off an urban legend of fish, chips and mushy peas" (Northern Echo, 19/3/92). This pseudo-xenophobia of those below the Watford Gap is expressed by Amos: "Of Mandelson, and others, it is alleged that he went into a Hartlepool fish shop, placed his order, pointed to the peas and said he'd have some of the avocado mousse as well." According to Amos, the Daily Telegraph accepted only grudgingly that the story might be apocryphal. "It fits him like a glove," it reported.

■ We read in Fortean Times (No. 61) of Bert the capybara — a yard-long giant South American guinea pig. He escaped in 1989 and evaded hunters for 17 months, before being finally recaptured on May 14, 1991. The Daily Star had the added fact he was returned to his "wife" and had been at large for 471 days. Their one-paragraph filler appeared as if he'd just been caught; publication was 21/4/92.

■ Your editor has previously exposed the dubious doings of author Barry Herbert, a man who would put to shame many top tabloid door-steppers (FF3, p21; FF9, p14/15). Don't let the facts get in the way of a good story, Barry, but that's like telling your grannie to suck eggs. Now the bold Barry is advertising for material for a book on "railway crime." If the cap fits ...

■ Precursor to FF was The Shaman and in the last issue of the run (No. 11, p4) was featured an article by me on Reg Wright and his folklore books, particularly his belief in an Arthurian presence in South-East Durham. Reg, 78, died of cancer last year (obituary Mail, Hartlepool, 28/10/91). We'll say no more.

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■ Outside the North-East, I doubt if the name T Dan Smith means much. He's the former Newcastle City Council leader who went to jail for his part in the Poulson affair. But the gig advertised above was not being played by the 76-year-old former politician but part-time band Tea Dance Myth. The name was dreamed up under the influence of alcohol at a (non-political) party (The Journal, Newcastle, 20/3/92).

■ On the subject of musicians, these rude bits made it into the Mail, Hartlepool. My pal Jimmy McKenna (remember one minor punk hit wonders Disguise?) sneaked into his Codtalk column (16/1/92) The Candy Ranch's new manager Mike Hunt (say the name quickly). Also mentioned (15/4/92) was Aussie comedian Kevin Bloody Wilson's x-rated album The Far-Canal (quickly again). Lastly, at least for the moment, the Mail's astrologer, Eleanor Richmond, slipped this in for Pisceans (1/5/92): "You're not going to be interested in romance so much today, as high passion! Something in you is yearning to be unleashed now and bottling up your feelings and emotions just won't do! Make sure you have a cloth handy to clean up afterwards!"

■ Tucked away in The Crop Watcher are some notes by P Lewis, of Chesham, on the Amersham cross corn pattern. He reports that he noticed an empty condom packet within the formation and wonders whether anyone else has found similar evidence that might "indicate a new fertility cult".

Fortean Frontiers

If Fortean Times can knowingly or unknowingly feature urban legends, we can justifiably include Fortean. Equally we might slot into this spot urban tales when they should be pigeonholed otherwise.

These first two have similarities, were published 24 hours apart and could be foaflore.

Police cautioned John Laslow, 63, for running naked through the streets after fleeing a mortuary in Victoria, Australia, where a doctor had pronounced him dead (News of the World, 26/4/92).

A woman being carried to her grave suddenly leapt from her open coffin. Mourners were stunned as Anne Bochsky ran into the street. But Anne, from Bucharest, Rumania, was killed by a passing lorry (D Star, 27/4/92).

An alternative is that newspapermen just made them up as handy fillers.

The next two occurred within a week; the first decidedly dodgy.

Russian skier Valentina Zobina, 23, lined up for a race in Kirov and was shot dead by the starter, who accidentally pointed his pistol, which launches a firework-type rocket, at the competitors and killed Valentina instantly (D Star, 4/3/92).

Pensioner Hector White narrowly escaped being killed by a World War I bullet at home in Yorkshire. Using a blowtorch, he was trying to mend a paperknife made from an ancient shell-case, but to his amazement it exploded and Hector, 80, was grazed on the forehead as it smashed into his living room ceiling in Gomersal, Bradford (D Mirror, 9/3/92).

Meanwhile, just having typed the above, I came across this shooting.

Horried grandad Luigi Buonocore, 60, shot his four-year-old grandson Salvatore dead as they were playing cowboys in his garden in Naples. A police spokesman said. "He had forgotten his rifle was loaded." (D Star, 1/5/92).

If true, rather strange is the tale of a rampaging giant panda stalking a Chinese village and having devoured 31 goats and sheep, then sleeping it off in a shed. And you thought they were cuddly and only ate bamboo shoots. People in the remote Sichuan village of Sanfeng were powerless to do anything as the 1,000 remaining pandas are protected by law (Sun, 18/4/92).

While with wildlife, there was the tale of Yorkshire terrier Tania carried half a mile by a hungry owl at Addlestone, Surrey. Its owner tracked it by its yelps and it eventually wriggled free to fall into a blackberry bush. Owner and pet were pictured (D Mirror, 6/3/92).

Alien wildlife is always of interest to anomalists and it seems abandoned terrapins are defying our general climate and breeding in London, Wales, a Manchester housing estate and at a pond in Kent with several

hundred, Ninja Mutant Turtles have a lot to answer for (Weekend Telegraph, 25/4/92).

Then there's an inquest with a misadventure verdict on lifeguard Jason Luck, who felt his name was a jinx. He was taken to hospital after falling out of a train and plunging 40 feet from a railway viaduct. While recovering, he fell out of a window, paralysing himself from the neck down. He was later taken to a hospital in Storrington, West Sussex. Jason, 22, of Worthing, died when a tube connecting him to a ventilator fell out and the alarm did not sound (D Express, 11/3/91).

More lucky was once-blind Middlesbrough, Cleveland, civil servant Andrew Miles, 37, who withdrew from society. Then in 1987 he met Wendy Screaton (never seen such a spelling before), now 24, they married and guide dog Peter was best "man". In Scotland they became committed Christians and his return to vision was foreseen in 1990 by evangelists. Now he can drive. "It had to be a miracle," he said.

In France, Boy Scouts detailed to remove modern graffiti of diagrams and obscenities at the Magdalenian Age Grotte de Mayrieres also scrubbed away 15,000 years old cave paintings of bison (D Mail, 23/3/92).

Lastly, this one looks more likely to be a modern legend.

Anti-drink drive campaigner Marian Wlodarski died when a drunk's jeep smashed into her Chicago home and crushed her as she slept on a sofa (Sun, 9/3/92).

Competition

In FF 14 you were invited to add to the 20 occasions when 20 people were reported to have used the word "fucking" either because of the occasion or their incongruity in using such language. We had no difficulty in finding a winner ... there was only one "fucking" entry (no pun intended). Devon schoolteacher Peter Christie submitted:

"What the fuck is fucking?" — Adam.

I had considered entering the following under pseudonyms to make my readership seem a jovial, witty lot, but ... anyway try these:

"Not another fucking get-well card." — Craig Shergold.

"Where's that fucking Mars Bar got to?" — Marianne Faithfull.

"Where the fuck's, oh what's her name? Er, Di ... Di ..., Diane? Diana?" — Prince Charles.

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Blonde icons

By Paul Screeton

A brand of legend particularly associated with Marilyn Monroe is conspiracy theory. If we are to believe such theorists, she was bed hopping between the covers with not only United States president JFK, but also his brother Bobby. Also her "suicide" was manipulated by outside sources, possibly the CIA.

Apocrypha gravitates towards blondes, particularly busty ones. Cue Jayne Mansfield ...

Jayne Mansfield



For a start, and for some the only thing she had going were those monumental mammaries. She would say they measured 40, 41, 43, even towards the end of her life they had metamorphosed she claimed to top a 44-18-35 figure or even 46-18-36. Probably those breasts did measure up to a 40-plus eyeful, but photographers and anecdote suggest tricks of special bras and posture created the illusion of shape and projection.

She hotly denied this, "I am not padded, I use the normal bra, the ones everybody buys." It seems that she shared her fans' obsession with her bust. Interestingly, in a book with a focus on a book with a focus on roads (***), one of her most oblique quotes on her figure from Michael Feeney Callan's "Pink Goddess" (W H Allen, London, 1986) goes like this: "How can I put it? Two girls put on a dress. One girl will look just like a pencil, the other will look like a highway. With my kind of figure it's difficult not to look like a road."

Another statistic she was proud of was her IQ. Dating from her time at Southern Methodist University, the 163 (or 165) was an impressive, apparently never subsequently substantiated, figure and according to one authority one which actually increased in later years. Certainly not a dumb blonde, but reflecting over her life and career, hardly a universally sensible one.

Frankly, I find Jayne Mansfield a more believable, interesting, attractive personality than Marilyn Monroe. She made fewer films but she still had magic; she created her own phenomenon but her schizoid energy also sowed the seeds of her destruction. Just like Marilyn.

Where folklore — or fact, perhaps — really links the two is the speculation that horny President J F Kennedy had both her and Monroe as lovers, as outlined in "The Tragic Life of Jayne Mansfield" by Ray Strait.

The most popular tale associated with Jayne relates to how she became pregnant at 16. Separate stories from her own narratives give rather different accounts. Certainly they at least confirm the adage that if you play adolescent games with lusty adults you get hurt. One tale has her attending a party where someone got her drunk on Vodka Collins mixture, another worldwide guy offered to take her home, stopped by a playing field and raped her.

The girl with the huge IQ was not unduly worried "because people had told me I couldn't get pregnant the first time." In fact, schoolfriends here suggested first husband Paul Mansfield had her as putty in his hands and put her in her in the family way.

Her libidinous ways were legendary and I recall during awakening pubescence marvelling at a photograph in Esquire of her and daughter Jayne-Marie. The caption claimed that 15 minutes after giving birth, the star was having intercourse with her masseuse. I swear I read it.

More roads to travel

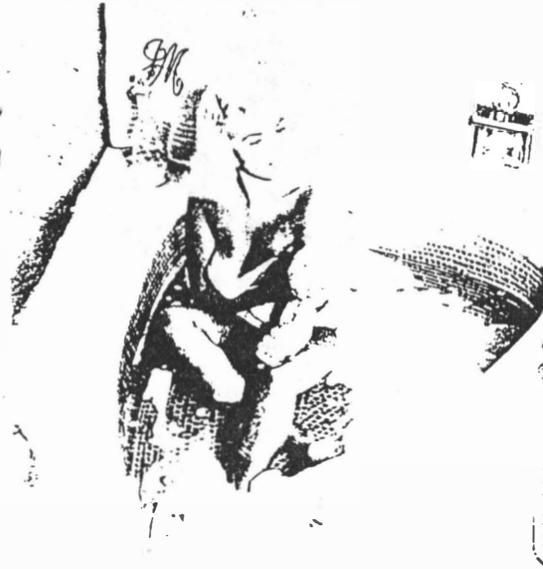
Just as the current Pope keeps kissing airport tarmacs, when Jayne first crossed the California county line, she stepped from the family car and kissed the asphalt. For her the state was sacred and Hollywood its shrine.

But by 1967 the road she was on was to lead to ruin. A recriminatory court battle in which she claimed her daughter Jayne-Marie was out of control was disastrous for her faded image. During the trial her violent lawyer lover Sam Brody crashed his car for the ninth time in as many months. He was seriously hurt, Jayne less so. But both had been put under a curse by self-confessed Satanist Anton La Vey. Jayne was brooding and treating it as an omen.

Her spirits were raised by cabaret dates at a supper club in Biloxi, Mississippi. After her performance she left for a hotel. Brody sat between her and young driver Ronnie Harrison while three of her small



PLAYBOY QUEEN



BEWITCHING JAYNE

There were rumours of a witch's curse when Jayne Mansfield's head was sliced off by a lorry on an English road. And the whole world was shocked when an American paper printed pictures of the star's headless corpse.

If such pictures were indeed published it would be in gross bad taste, Satanism is not witchcraft and the death did not occur in Britain. What tripe (Sunday, 31/5/87).

With Sam Brody in London, April, 1967. Note the hairstyle includes a live budgie!



children were in the back. Nearing 2.30am on Route 90 the lights of the Buick momentarily blinded Harrison, reflected off mist thrown from a mosquito-spraying machine. There ahead was a trailer lorry. With no time to brake, the tail section scythed into the car. The roof was torn off and the three adults thrown out and killed instantly. Lying low in the back, the children, badly injured, survived. Jayne Mansfield was decapitated.

Jayne had premonitions of her death, as had columnist and confidante May Mann,

who had almost completed an official but no-holds-barred biography at the time of Jayne's death. The intimacies of Jayne's life had left her appalled and with her death despondency. Then from the spirit world, the star called, telling May to complete the "Jayne Book".

Rising singer Engelbert Humperdinck met her two weeks before her death and eventually bought her house, The Pink Palace. He believed her ghost shared the home. "I'd smell her rose petal perfume. She would come to me at odd times, times

of worry, times when I needed help. Once I was going through a bad patch and I saw a figure in a long black dress in front of me. It was Jayne," he said (The Sun, May 15, 1984).

Diana Dors

America had Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield, but Britain had Diana Dors. Tragically she died of cancer, plumper, witty on quiz shows and wise as a newspaper agony aunt. Her earlier claims to fame were having once been the youngest Rolls-Royce owner and having the

classiest chassis to be manufactured in Swindon, Wiltshire, despite its redoubtable Great Western Railway products.

The following tale, reprinted in good faith, has golden girl apocrypha hallmark stamped well and truly upon it (source missing).

"Legend has it that soon after she changed her name and set off on the high road to stardom, Miss Dors was invited back to her home town to open a garden fete. Apparently the vicar who was to introduce her from the platform was eager to use her real name but anxious lest he make an unfortunate slip of the tongue. When the time came he concentrated hard, so determined was he not to omit the all-important 'L' from the surname. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he declared, 'I am going to ask you to welcome a very special person here this afternoon. She is known to the world as Diana Dors. She is better known to us of course as plain Diana Clunt'."

Paying homage to the Great Western Railway in Swindon, whose product was matched by the young Diana Fluck.



THE ORIGINAL HOME OF THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

(***) This is an extract from a work abandoned in progress about urban belief tales in a wider context.

The chapter on blonde icons was one of about half completed before it became obvious there was no certainty of publication.

Bob Rickard was keen to have it for his Fortean Tomes project, but there were at the time cash flow problems.

FF will publish more extracts from this chapter over subsequent issues — covering Madonna, Marilyn Monroe, Samantha Fox, Raquel Welch and Wendy O'Williams.

As for the reference to roads, highways and cars, these seemed to play a large role in urban lore.

Working titles for the book were "paradise by the Dashboard Light", "Autohenge" and "Rust Never Sleeps".

The chapter has not been rewritten for FF, though there will be some updating.

Ariadne Lives!

By Paul Screeton

Without doubt the locomotive with the most charmed life is a British Rail workhorse numbered 47299

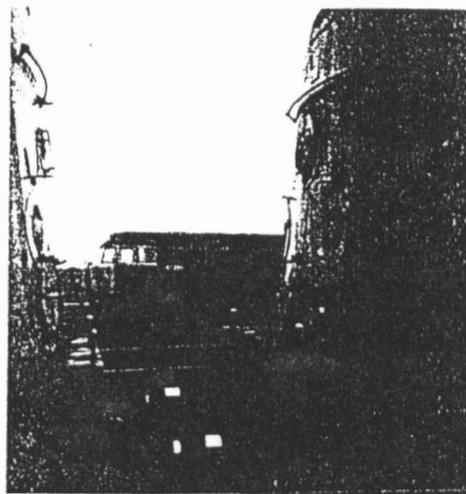
Old in the tooth and with the track record of a show booth pugilist, this jinxed engine is currently being given what amounts to a four-year life extension. Before discussing what makes it special, here are a few technical and historical notes.

As D1866, the Class 47 diesel electric left the Brush company's Loughborough works in May 1965. In February 1974 it was renumbered 47216 for computer classification purposes. In December 1981 it became 47299, the only remaining and possible number for a 47/0 before the 47/3 slow-speed control series began.

The reason for this second renumbering has about it something of the magical ritual — a banishing one — for normally new numbers are only allocated when a machine has a major modification necessitating the TOPS computer to identify its new sub-classification for allocating it duties commensurate with its re-equipped capabilities. In the case of 47216 there was no physical change; only a psychic element.

As a keen rail enthusiast, I had never understood the reason for the renumbering. The first inkling came when the loco was involved in a crash where one magazine reported: "After predictions of impending doom, BR even renumbered 47216 to 47299 ... but it obviously made little difference." (1) This brief news item also claimed that "the jinx that has haunted an Immingham-based Class 47 for over two years followed it to a remarkable crash."

This occurred at Wrawby junction, a convergence of lines just outside Barnetby, Lincolnshire. At about 18.18 on December 9, 1983, 47299 was hauling the 15.02 Drax — Lindsey 900-ton empty oil



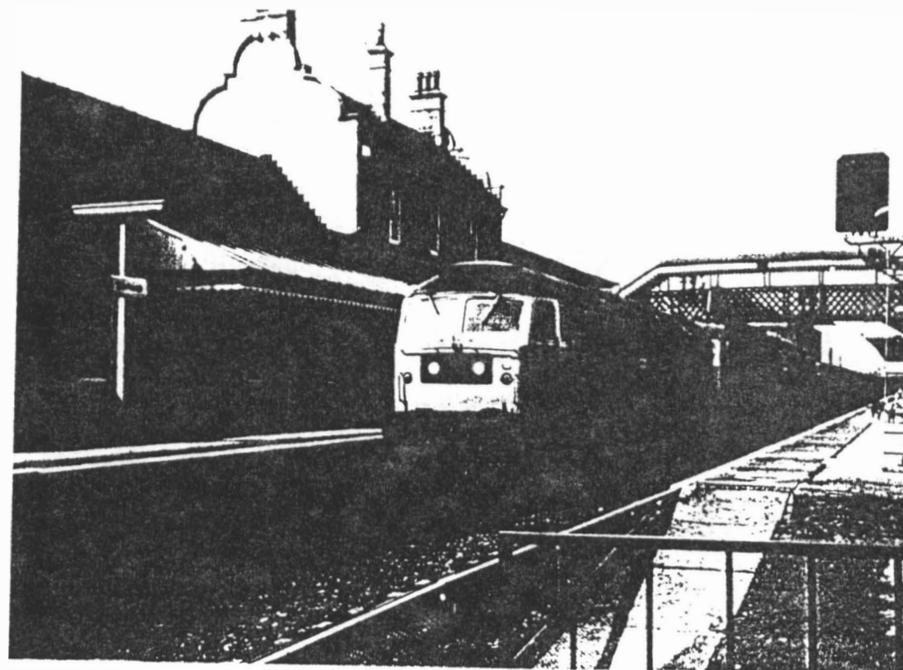
● □ Pictured between "Choppers" 20026 and 20070 at York is 47299. (Photograph by Paul Screeton).

tanks when a set of power points which had been hand cranked but not clipped reset themselves in front of the freight train. (2) A collision then occurred with the 17.32 Cleethorpes-Sheffield two-car diesel multiple unit (Class 114s 53049 and 54049). Student Rachel Taylor was killed and a dozen other passengers injured. It seems almost callous to add that both cabs of 47299 were stove in and the DMU severely damaged.

The official report stated the "weather was fine and visibility good," yet another report claimed "emergency services were stretched to the limit in appalling weather conditions," while adding the renumbering came "after a soothsayer predicted a crash involving its earlier guise, 47216." (3)

So who is this psychic with a line to mediumistic ferroequinology? Perhaps we'll never know. The report with greatest detail does not say and even the April 1 dateline should not necessarily concern the reader.

Graham Bell's by-lined article is as accurate as I have ever come across a railway news story in a national newspaper; particularly as in this case an offbeat, human interest story. A clairvoyant had a recurring vision of a train crash involving a big blue engine hauling oil tankers, nothing could stop it and someone would die. She could even decipher the number 47216. She called British Rail and insisted her name be kept secret before revealing the accident in minute detail. Apparently depot managers found her predictions had been taken seriously in police investigations.



● □ 47299 assists 56002 through Worksop, Nottinghamshire — my favourite spotting location. (Photograph by Alan Hopkins).

After the crash, rail enthusiast Howard Johnston, of Sawtry, Cambridgeshire, recalled phoning Immingham depot to ask why 47216 had been renumbered and was told staff had been warned of a clairvoyant's predictions and made a special application to BR headquarters in London to change the number. According to Bell, who checked his story out with BR and confirmed 47299's history, the prediction was not mentioned at the inspectorate hearing and the BR spokesman said: "We regard the whole thing as an amazing coincidence." (4)

Does all this give the story credence? The press loves supernatural stories and with police, BR spokesman and depot managers you either accept the reporter was thorough or cynically mutter about "authority figures" and apocrypha.

I wrote about 47216/47299 in 1984 (5) and in slightly larger context in 1985. (6) Meanwhile 47299 was back in traffic, noticeable because its new cabs were two inches higher than the rest of the bodyside lower profile, and the buffer beam lacked the usual raised edge. (7)

Writer Jenny Randles used the prediction in a book on paranormal experiences. Her report is generally sound, though the renumbering explanation is in error: sequence number 47299 had never previously been carried. Don't worry Jenny, seasoned spotters and BR employees can be equally baffled by the vagaries of loco numberings! (8)

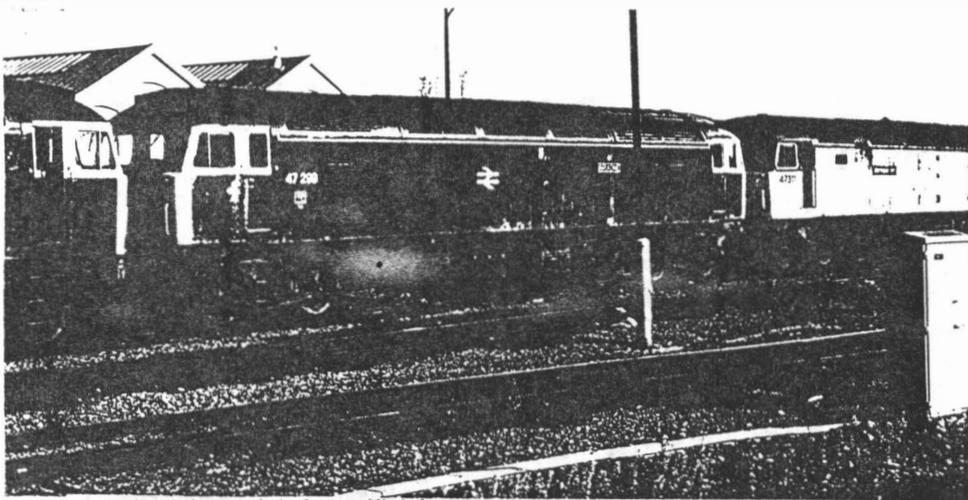
But there was to be a note of scepticism abroad. Dave Rapson's feature (Traction Profile — 47299) focussed upon the loco as the "Demon" as the railway fraternity

believed, and stated "its sudden change of identity had never been revealed, although it is generally believed a visionary foretold of impending doom ... even the depot staff at Immingham had been sworn to secrecy, though the general belief was that, as 47216, the locomotive had been involved in a number of incidents." (9) But many locos have had chequered careers without such publicity (Great Train Robbery engine D326 is an exception) or renumbering.

As Rapson pointed out, 47299 was condemned on September 5, 1989, only to be reinstated three days later when a replacement wheelset was found. He concluded: "Whether or not this stay of execution is merely temporary, time will tell, and we may never know just how sinister the tale behind 47299 is!"

Much of this material comes from Rail Enthusiast and a lengthy caption of the loco as D1866 disputes two earlier points: stating "BR officials at York" — not London — permitted renumbering and its worn tyres reprieve came after seven — not three — days. Trivialities, perhaps. (10)

The same magazine recently gave it another full page's attention. Again, the standfirst to pictures mentioned premonition and "several collisions" including Wrawby and giving the reprieve as "less than a week." However, after 20 years on Humberside it moved to Tinsley, Sheffield, and emerged in June last year



carrying the painted unofficial name *Ariadne*. "Prophetically, the locomotive recently suffered fire damage and retired home to Tinsley to await a decision on its future. Surprisingly, in view of the recent Freightliner cutbacks, 47299 has been sanctioned repair and has entered Doncaster BRML for intermediate overhaul (CEM G-exam) to emerge in Railfreight livery and roam the rails for another four years. Unless..." (11)

Well, first a few facts which may be superstitious, incidental or stupid. I have 19 photographs of this engine in my collection from various sources: two I took myself at York on separate occasions, one of which is the only loco picture among several hundreds to have had an horrendous accident making it almost unrecognisable (there is a body of lore related to supernatural beasties/incidents causing photographic negativity!). I knew Jenny Randles had written up the premonition claim and took home her book "Sixth Sense" only to find it was the wrong one — it is in "Beyond Explanation?" Hardly shows me as an ace psychic; rather a victim of library anti-angels. Also to check the *Ariadne* name, I failed to locate in our house my encyclopedia of god/goddesses' names — it had vanished, or was it evidence of careless filing?

If nothing else, the folklore surrounding this locomotive reveals substantial support for a supernatural element in its career.

However, I have been in contact with Immingham depot and have a letter dated 13/2/92 from S D Boner, Area Fleet Manager of that traction function. I specifically asked about the psychic, renumbering and any earlier accidents to the locomotive. The brief reply states:

I refer to your letter dated 5th February and the 'folklore' surrounding locomotive 47216/299 and the *Barnetby* crash.

● □ 47299 in a convoy of locomotives in 1991 at Darlington with its unofficial name *Ariadne*. (Photograph by Alan Hopkins).

This is not a matter about which I have any knowledge. I personally have been here since April, 1989, and this is the first time it has ever been raised.

Renumbering of locomotives occurs quite frequently for many varied reasons, all of which are decided at Headquarters level.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful. Hopefully the foregoing is of some assistance."

Not really, actually. In fact, very disappointing. So what conclusion can be drawn: there are several possibilities — that he was too busy/bored to inquire further; that there was no mystery or psychic; or that the depot staff had really been sworn to secrecy.

The fact that it is receiving a comprehensive overhaul suggests that in the real world it's the accountants who rule.

In conclusion, this is obviously in no way a "corrigenda" inquiry. Elements of the paranormal, Fortean and folklore merge and would be difficult to exorcise. What-ever, the renumbering is a real mystery. Overall only time will tell.

I doubt if when 47299 re-emerges from works attention it will have an unadventurous second coming.

Notes:

- (1) 47299 in fatal accident. Rail Enthusiast. Feb. 1984.
- (2) Collision at Wrawby Junction, ER. HMSO. (Precis in Modern Railways. April. 1987.)
- (3) *Barneby: The aftermath*. Rail Enthusiast. March. 1984.
- (4) *Fate rides on the 5.32*. Sunday Express. April 11, 1984.

(5) *Railway Rites — The Renumbering of 47216*. The Symbol. No. 4. 1984.

(6) *From George Stephenson to Carole-Anne Stephenson (Changing Locomotive Numbers and Names)*. The Shaman. No. 9. 1985.

(7) Rail Enthusiast. Feb. 1985.

(8) Randles, Jenny, "Beyond Explanation?" Robert Hale, 1985.

(9) *The Ghostbuster loco!* Rail Enthusiast. No. 109. 1989.

(10) Rail Enthusiast. No. 131. 1990.

(11) 47299 — *The 'Jinx' continues*. Rail. No. 163. 1991.

■ **Postscript:** Surprise, surprisel Released from Doncaster Works during the last week of January, 47299 "was up to its

old tricks within a couple of weeks" (actually more than a couple) (1A), when noted derailed at Basford Hall yard, Crewe, after working the 0100 freightliner from Garston on February 14.

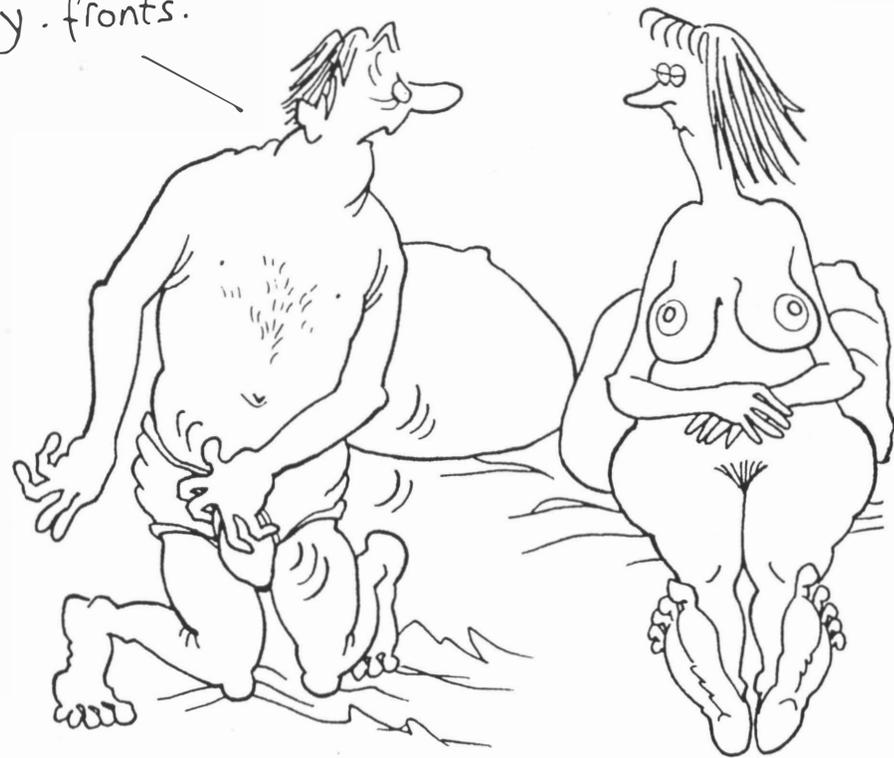
■ I have since located the missing book mentioned above and for completeness note that Ariadne was daughter of Minos, King of Crete. She helped Theseus overcome the Minotaur and they married, but he abandoned her on an island where Dionysus found her and made her his bride (2A).

Notes:

(1A) Rail. No. 170, 1992.

(2A) Stoneham, Richard. Greek Mythology. Aquarian Press, 1991.

No, I'm **not** interested in hearing your theory linking the disappearance of the dinosaurs to the wearing of y-fronts.



Black Comedy Country

Excited bug hunter Ray Gabriel (D Star, 25/2/92) or Bagriel (Sun, same day) spotted a bee he thought to be extinct — so he killed it to make sure. He posted it to the National History Museum where experts confirmed he had killed a cuckoo bee, which had not been seen in Britain for 49 years. He spotted/swatted it in a park in Swindon, Wiltshire. He told the Sun: "When I found out what it was, it crossed my mind it could be the last one in existence — and I had just killed it." But the Daily Star had him say: "I'm sure there are more of them about." What a silly b...

●! An over-the-top piece claimed "a Loch Ness Monster-style mutant could be lurking in the depths of a Stoke Newington pond after being spotted by frightened anglers who fear it could be a vicious flesh-eater (Hackney Gazette, 18/10/91 — credit Lucy Fisher). There were back-up comments from local people reporting an extraordinary denizen of the depths. Yet spokesperson from Hackney council came up with this comment:

"It's most probably a carp, some of which weigh 20lb or more, he said. "The pond was stocked with all sort of fish about seven years ago, including carp, pike, roach, perch and tench. One of them may have grown to an enormous size. However, it is just possible that this mystery monster is a pit bull terrier that has adapted to an aquatic life to escape the latest muzzling and castration laws the government has brought in."

●/ Suspicions about nuclear power stations would not be helped by the discovery of three-clawed crab, by fisherman Ivor Godden, near a waste pipe leading from the electricity generator at Winfrith, Dorset. Sea life specialist Mike Quarm said. "It's a true mutant and it must be significant that it was found near the power plant. In commercial terms, Claws Three is the equivalent of the four-legged chicken" (D Mirror, 28/10/91).

● Animal releases into the countryside are varied — from (largely) French viper recolonisations to British (alleged) ex-urban foxes and big cats. After ABCs (alien big cats) we have DSCs (domestic small cats) as reported (Sun, 28/2/92).

Fish lover Peter Dashwood was so fed up with neighbours' cats gobbling his prized koi carp he kidnapped them. He lured the moggies into a wire cage with tins of herring, then drove them miles away and dumped them. But neighbours rumbled him and alerted the RSPCA.

Peter, of Southampton, was warned any more catnapping would lead to prosecution so he was installing a sonic ray to keep intruders out of his £10,000 garden wildlife park. He said: "I drove the cats across the city at night. I knew it was wrong but I never harmed them."

■ As for pit bulls, we still have to see a story of a feral example in the press. Yet we still get scare stories (Hartlepool Star, 6/6/91).

From the letters column this extract: "Owners who love their dogs will not, for any money, hand it over: they would rather release them into the

countryside to fend for themselves. That is what happened in Ohio, U.S.A., when the government tried to pass a similar law."



■ Back in the urban jungle (Guardian, 11/1/92), there was a reference in a feature on Milton Keynes by Maev "I've interviewed Groovy Gordon Bennett Harris" Kennedy. The hackette refers to the town (her) / city's (me) most famous inhabitants — the concrete cows.

"Modern legends about them abound: that they were made as a joke by a builder's labourer to use up left-over cement, or made to teach urban refugees about the strange animals they might expect to meet in a field some day.

■ The Guardian again. Its Questions & Answers section asked: Do wasps serve a useful purpose (26/8/91)? M R Meek replied: "Wasps are agents from outer space appointed to keep an eye on the progress of human beings. They soon discovered that human beings didn't serve any useful purpose on the planet so they turned their attention to rotting plums and open-air cream teas and have been having a whale of a time ever since."

This reminds me of something I read in The Atlantean decades ago about bees coming from Venue or some other planet as they are aerodynamical impossibilities in our atmosphere — but has anyone told them that (along with the old country tradition of keeping them informed of fmaily matters such as births, marriage and deaths, perhaps extending these days to stock market reports, hiving off to private industry, pools coupon results, etc).

And lastly some quickies:

■ Sharp-shooters in helicopters were searching the desert for a dangerous escaped beast — an atomic goat. They had orders to shoot on sight the animal, which was fitted with radioactive isotopes in a scientific experiment in New Mexico. One concerned police marksman said: "We're worried that the food chain may soon be contaminated" (Today, 10/7/91).

■ Ex-policeman Jack Tanner kept an all-night vigil to nab thieves stealing posters from a noticeboard at Boldre, Hampshire, and discovered the culprits were hungry slugs (Sun, 22/10/91). We recall this one relating to stamps missing from posted letters in

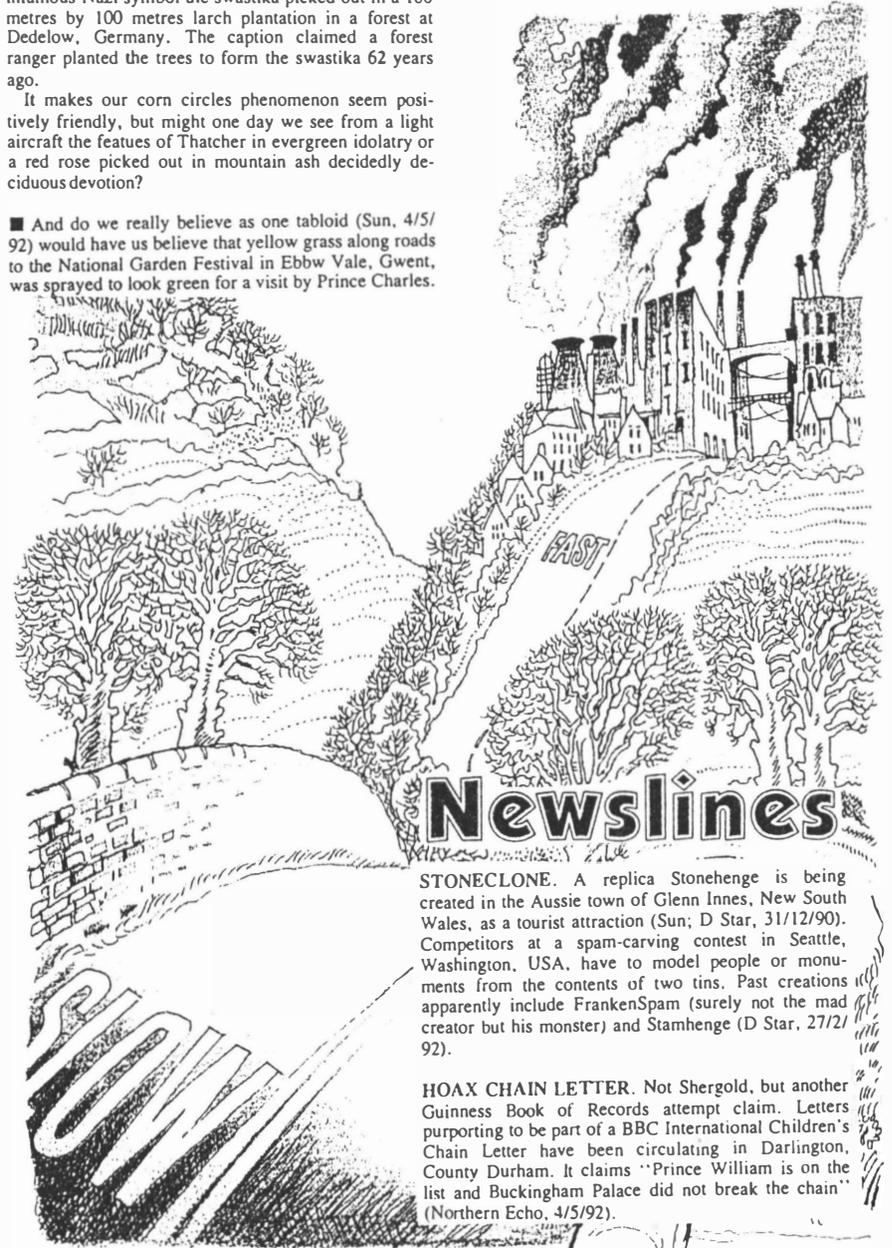
pillar boxes.

■ A puffing puffin escaped a pursuing puss by knocking on a door for help. When stunned Phil Russell opened up at Alnwick, Northumberland, the bird rushed in and the cat fled (D Mirror, 19/7/91).

■ A disturbing picture appeared (The Journal, Newcastle, 4/5/92) of light-coloured trees forming the infamous Nazi symbol the swastika picked out in a 100 metres by 100 metres larch plantation in a forest at Dedelow, Germany. The caption claimed a forest ranger planted the trees to form the swastika 62 years ago.

It makes our corn circles phenomenon seem positively friendly, but might one day we see from a light aircraft the features of Thatcher in evergreen idolatry or a red rose picked out in mountain ash decidedly deciduous devotion?

■ And do we really believe as one tabloid (Sun, 4/5/92) would have us believe that yellow grass along roads to the National Garden Festival in Ebbw Vale, Gwent, was sprayed to look green for a visit by Prince Charles.



Newsline

STONECLONE. A replica Stonehenge is being created in the Aussie town of Glenn Innes, New South Wales, as a tourist attraction (Sun; D Star, 31/12/90). Competitors at a spam-carving contest in Seattle, Washington, USA, have to model people or monuments from the contents of two tins. Past creations apparently include FrankenSpam (surely not the mad creator but his monster) and Stamhenge (D Star, 27/2/92).

HOAX CHAIN LETTER. Not Shergold, but another Guinness Book of Records attempt claim. Letters purporting to be part of a BBC International Children's Chain Letter have been circulating in Darlington, County Durham. It claims "Prince William is on the list and Buckingham Palace did not break the chain" (Northern Echo, 4/5/92).

Platform end rumour

ALCOHOL appears to play "a significant role" in the frequency with which rail passengers fall to their deaths from trains, a new police report has revealed.

Just over half those who die have been drinking, said British Transport Police.

"More than half the victims (24) had been drinking and almost three-quarters of those were over the drink-drive limit," added a spokesman.

The force's analysis of evidence was undertaken amid public concern about the death toll of more than 200 over the past 12 years.

The findings are being passed to the Health and Safety Executive, which launched its own major investigation into the mystery a year ago.

Today's report is into 47 fatal falls between January 1990 and last month.

The analysis concluded that "alcohol does appear to play a significant role in these deaths".

Victims were most likely to be male, aged 17 to 50, the report said. Most deaths were between 3pm and midnight, between Wednesday and Saturday.

Four out of five deaths involved doors opening towards the rear of the train. Previous investigations have shown these are more likely to be blown open by the train's slipstream if the catch opens slightly.

Detective Chief Supt Peter Whent, who compiled the report, said: "It is still true to say that there are a small number of cases — less than five per cent — where no satisfactory cause can be established.

"The report doesn't aim to establish whether there is a lock design fault or not, nor can we say exactly how each person died, but I hope it will be helpful to the HSE and BR in their inquiries."

A British Rail spokesman said the report was in line with previous findings that drink had been a factor in some of the deaths.

An HSE spokeswoman said it could make no comment at this stage. It was hoped its report would be published in July. (Press Association, 8/5/92).

I try to be vigilant with my media surveillance. Various stories claimed that before the end of 1991 the HSE would publish its findings — many deaths occurring on a straight stretch of track dubbed the Tamworth triangle. Detailed reports of the ongoing investigation appeared (Rail, No. 157, 1991; The Railway Magazine, November, 1991). The report seems to be running late.

■ Every regular passenger on British Rail must have at some time become rather annoyed. Yet Mark Smith beats all others, for up to December 14, 1990, he had slashed his wrists ten times to protest at BR's services.

Travellers watched in horror as he stormed off a train and cut himself with razor blades because the ride was "uncomfortable."

Yet York magistrates were told the 20-year-old from Bath was not mad and did not need psychiatric help. The charge of disorderly behaviour was dropped after he agreed to be bound over to keep the peace for 12 months. We've not heard of him since, so maybe he's calmed down or found transport.

Similar protests had been carried out over 20 months at Newcastle, Exeter, Leeds, Plymouth, Crewe, Preston, Edinburgh, Weston-super-Mare and London's Euston.

When searched, a number of razor blades were found in his socks. The prosecutor said: "He has been seen by a psychiatrist who confirms there is no need for any treatment."

Mark added: "I just like travelling on the trains and I only do it when I'm annoyed with British Rail. I want to ensure their services are kept up to scratch." (Sun; Northern Echo; Mail, Hartlepool, 15/12/90).

● AFTER the wrong type of snow, autumn leaves, and Kuwaiti half-burned oil on the lines, British Rail's latest track excuse cum peril is streakers. Three potty pranksters forced the 12.18 Inter City from Manchester to Reading to screech to a halt just outside Oxford when the driver spotted the drunken trio dancing starkers on the rails, waving beer cans around. The three men vanished before police arrived (D Star, 30/4/92).

■ Unable to afford a hearse to take their dead uncle 300 miles to the family grave in the heart of Romania, three relations sat their dead uncle's corpse upright on a seat on the night train from Bucharest. They doused him in alcohol to "conceal the odours of mortality." No-one on the train noticed anything amiss, because like most trains, the carriage was unheated and unlit (Guardian, 3/1/92).

■ In times of anxiety, rumours inevitably appear. British Steel is the sole user of the branch from Northallerton to Redmire, for the purpose of shifting limestone to its steel furnaces at Lackenby on Teesside. The line is under a six-month reprieve, otherwise 90 lorries a day will thunder along narrow dales roads with stone. A rumour spread through Wensleydale that the 8,000 tons of limestone a week would be moved by British Steel after buying the line for a peppercorn price. Hambleton District Council puzzled British Steel as to how it had come to believe this tale (Northern Echo, 29/2/92).

■ Two naked "bodies" spotted near a railway line at Benfleet, Essex, turned out to be blow-up dolls in kinky underwear (Sun, 29/12/90).

■ Just like the last issue by chance introduced as it was put together various references to farting which were not planned, here we keep coming across, Swindon, Wiltshire.

Roy Stevens writes:
"In late 1840, two young men of great vision, Great Western Railway chief engineer (Isambard Kingdom) Brunel and his superintendent of locomotives, Daniel Gooch, met and had lunch in open fields below the old town of Swindon to confirm the site of the proposed GWR locomotive depot. The legendary tale that they



→ P16

BIZARRE

By PIERS MORGAN

THE SUN, Thursday, January 30, 1992

SILLY BUFFERS

How to spot a train-spotter

TRAIN-SPOTTERS have become the butt of a new insult sweeping Britain.

"You're a train-spotter" is now one of the most offensive barbs you can hurl at anyone.

The crushing jibe has been inspired by the loco fanatics who spend their lives at dingy railway stations, gawping at trains and noting down their numbers.

But DAN COLLINS (pictured) says that train-spotter bookshelves to most these curious creatures of their Mecca, Crewe Station in Cheshire.

His findings were clear: they're not that tough. Mike Ducey, 22, a Tesco store boss from Gloucester, has been spotting trains for ten years.

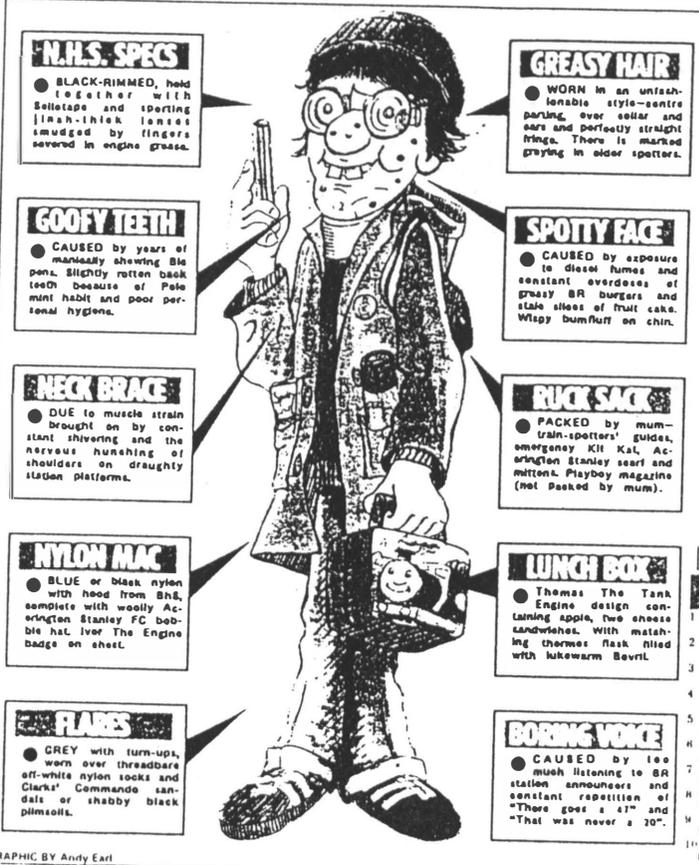
Carrying binoculars and a paper pad, he said: "People at work think I'm an idiot but they don't understand trains."

"I blame most of it on Jasper Carrott, he's always having a go at us."

Solicitor Tim Pritchard, 30, from London, was dressed in a cloth cap, duffle coat, red scarf, gloves and jeans.

He said angrily: "We're not boring. Some of the most interesting people I know are train spotters."

Company director Paul Stapples, 64, from Solihull, West Midlands, said: "I like travelling on trains and looking at trains—it's that simple."



N.H.S. SPECS
● BLACK-RIMMED, held together with Sellotape and sporting jinnah-thick lenses smudged by fingers smeared in engine grease.

GREASY HAIR
● WORN in an unshameable style—centre parting, over sailor and ears and perfectly straight fringe. There is marked graying in older spotters.

GOOFY TEETH
● CAUSED by years of manically shoving Bile pens, slightly rotten back teeth because of Pele mint habit and poor personal hygiene.

SPOTTY FACE
● CAUSED by exposure to diesel fumes and constant overexposure of greasy BR burgers and stale slices of fruit cake. Witty burnflout on chin.

NECK BRACE
● DUE to muscle strain brought on by constant shivering and the nervous hunching of shoulders on draughty station platforms.

RUCK SACK
● PACKED by mum—train-spotter's guides, emergency Kit Kat, Asprington Stanley seat and mittens. Playboy magazine (not packed by mum).

NYLON MAC
● BLUE or black nylon with hood from BHS, complete with woolly Asprington Stanley FC bobble hat. Iver The Engine badge on chest.

LUNCH BOX
● Thomas The Tank Engine design containing apple, two cheese sandwiches. With matching Thomas Flash filled with lukewarm Bovril.

FLATS
● GREY with turn-ups, worn over threadbare off-white nylon socks and Clarks' Commando sandals or shabby black plimsolls.

BORING VOICE
● CAUSED by too much listening to BR station announcements and constant repetition of "There goes a 41" and "That was never a 10".

● SPOTTERS say the worst thing about their hobby is the abuse and side effects. Workmates think you're mad, your family doesn't care and you get the shakes if you don't see a train for five days. And, of course, there's the addiction to stale butter and BR tea.

- 10 TOP STATIONS**
- 1 Crewe (known as Mecca)
 - 2 Clapham Junction
 - 3 Birmingham New Street
 - 4 Leeds
 - 5 Doncaster
 - 6 King's Cross
 - 7 Motherwell
 - 8 Cardiff
 - 9 Newcastle
 - 10 Carlisle

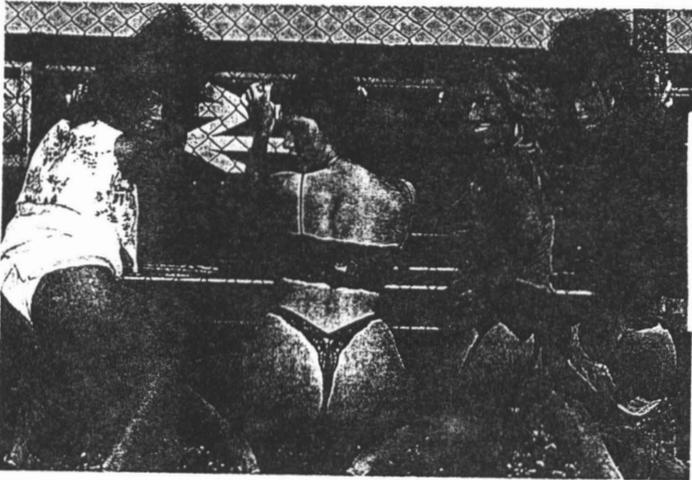
- 10 TOP SPOTS**
- 1 Class 20—The Chopper. Sounds like a helicopter. Does 60mph.
 - 2 Class 91—The Greyhound. Fastest Intercity train. 140mph.
 - 3 Class 37—The Bulldog. Takes heavy workload. 89mph.
 - 4 Class 55—The Spear. Big power. 100mph plus.
 - 5 Class 33—The Cromwell. 80mph.
 - 6 Class 60—The Carthorse. Slowest train around. 60mph.
 - 7 Class 58—The Bowler. Sounds like a vacuum cleaner. 100mph.
 - 8 Class 45—The Poser. 75mph.
 - 9 Class 47—The Brum. My favourite with spotters. 60mph.
 - 10 Class 43—The Shinkansen. Fastest Intercity train.

GRAPHIC BY Andy Earl

□ This is how the Sun saw rail enthusiasts. Actually it is fairly accurate for a not insubstantial proportion of spotters. However, in recent years there has been a noticeable interest from females and there are also plenty of sensible respectable enthusiasts, such as your editor.

threw a sandwich to mark the spot for the first surveyors' peg makes a good story....."

Also:
 "Some of the many reports at the time at the time (around 1848) concerned the difficulty of getting a seat in the refreshment rooms during the rush when a train arrived at Swindon for its compulsory ten minutes stop, together with the perceived difficulty of fully consuming hot items before the bell rang for passengers to resume their seats in the train. One of the oft repeated folklore stories is that soup was served so hot that customers couldn't possibly drink it and, when they left, the soup was returned to the urn for serving up to the next group." (Steam Railway, October, 1991).



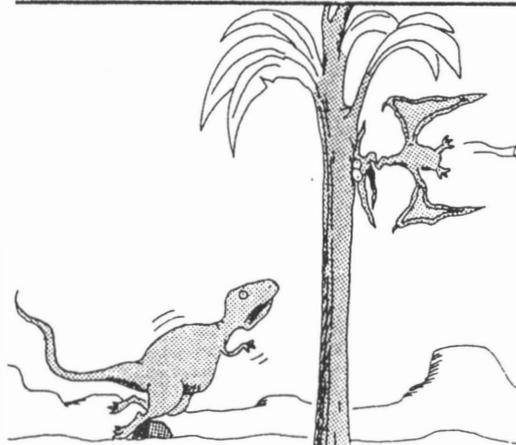
□ To prove trainspotters are not all dodgy-looking men in anoraks with Twix bars, here photographed are four members of the Swindon Modern Traction Society pictured while getting excited by the sight of a Westbury-based Class 56 locomotive with large logo livery.

Newslines

ROTHERHAM TRIANGLE. It's hard at times for news agencies. White's of Sheffield was recently visited by a gypsy woman, who offered to change their luck. Overcoming their journalistic cynicism they agreed to part with £3 from petty cash to buy a small model pixie. If they rubbed the pixie every morning when they came in to work their luck would change, she promised, and they would secure a succession of valuable page leads. Although feeling slightly ridiculous they duly rubbed the pixie each morning and their luck did change. Their stories have made page leads across the region and elsewhere. The trio who run the agency are now regretting that they didn't go for the agency's super de luxe offer. If they had paid £5 to have their tea-leaves read would they have had a succession of national page leads? (UK Press Gazette, 28/10/91).

CATMAN. The case of a 26-year-old Ohio man is detailed in a medical journal. For 15 years he thought he was a cat. At 17 he confessed to eating small prey, falling in love with a zoo tiress and having attempted

suicidewhen the tigress was moved to another city. He is not quite so bad these days but still dresses in tiger-striped clothe and consumes a lot of fish and milk. (Aberdeen Press & Journal, 11/2/91. Cr: S Gray-Thompson).



Newslines

■ For no logical reason I cut out the goldfish cartoon in the morning (5/5/92). Then while collecting washing up crockery from my son's room, I spotted an old Daily Mirror (4/4/92). Glancing through to check for clippable items, I came across Sophie Nowell, who had seen a shrivelled-up goldfish on a pavement. She wanted to give it a burial, but mum said "no". Twenty minutes later they passed the lifeless fish again and mum scooped it up in her hanky. While Sophie was rinsing off the grit at home before giving it the burial, the fish flipped its tail and started gasping for breath. Mother Nell, when she saw it swimming, declared it a "miracle". Dad Roger, a trawler skipper, said "it must have been out of the water for a good 30 minutes." Quite a 30-minute coincidence. Lucky now swims happily in Goldsithney (note dad's employment with fish and place with gold in name, as in goldfish...), near Penzance, Cornwall, and a fish expert from the National History Museum said: "Goldfish are hardy creatures, but this is unusual."



"I Like to let Sammy out of his bowl, for half an hour, every day."



BOWLED OVER: Sophie keeps a close watch on her new friend Lucky.

were all outcold" (origin not recorded).

And it doesn't just happen on trains.

Thieves robbed a carpet dealer and his family of heirlooms worth £150,000 by pumping sleeping gas through the letter-box of their apartment in Milan, Italy, and knocking them unconscious as they watched TV (D Star, 4/3/92).

ANAL ANIMALS. Satirical smut TV show "The Mary Whitehouse Experience" (23/3/92) had a character pretending to be a mouse. Upon seeing a human approaching, he feigned fright: "It's a man with a PetShop Boys' T-shirt. I'll end up in his rectum" (see FF 14, p24, if confused).

Update

IT'S A GAS. People gassed by gangs on trains was covered previously (FF14, p10) and here returns. This tale's only difference is that it has a named victim.

A gang robbed 17 Britons on a French train after knocking them out with gas. The raiders, dubbed The Sleeper Gang, stole £1,630 from one family after spraying the gas into their compartment. Twelve other Brits were robbed before the men stopped the Boulogne to Avignon overnight train and fled. Victim Mark Atherton, 34, of Westhoughton, Lancs., said: "We

Freddie's Back

Freddie the dolphin, who achieved fame through an alleged bestiality court case (see FF15, p20, plus earlier references and sporting column in this FF) was upstaged by an April 1 spoof announcing his former home of Amble had become host to a killer whale nicknamed Maggie (Journal, Newcastle, 1/4/92).

Whatever, Freddie had earlier moved down coast to Tynemouth (Journal, 2/3/92, 3/3/92; Northern Echo, 3/3/92). Here Alan Cooper swam with him for the second time since being acquitted in December of indecently assaulting him (Journal, Northern Echo, Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 5/3/92). He then appeared off Seaham (Northern Echo, 12/3/92) and Sunderland (Mail, Hartlepool, 20/3/92).

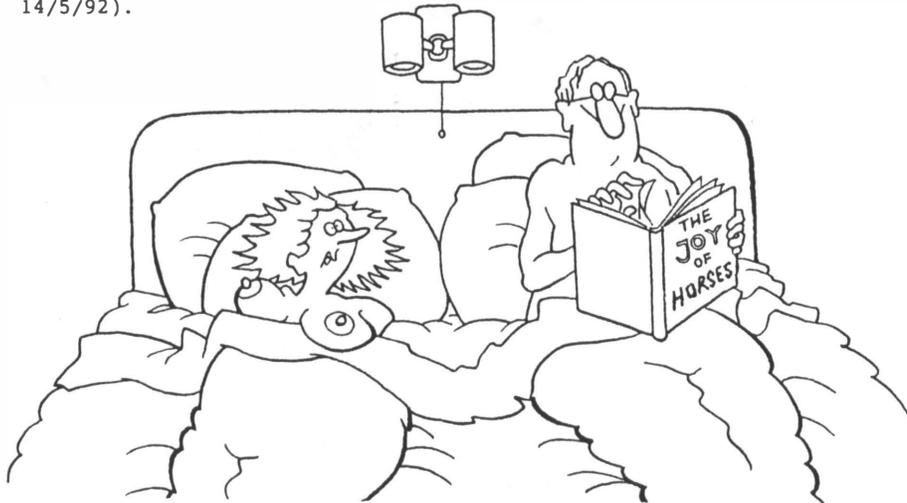
Then came rumours among the fishing community that a crew snared Freddie, he drowned, they cut his body free and let it sink. A radio conversation between boats was said to have been overheard covering up his demise.

Fishing tackle shop owner Steve Drury said: "It is common knowledge that Freddie died off Sunderland three weeks ago. He dived into a boat's gill net and got trapped. The crew realised it was Freddie because of four distinct scars on his spine. It's not hard to imagine the public outcry there would be if Freddie's body had been brought ashore. These nets catch everything in their path. We have been fighting to have them banned for years" (Today, 22/4/92). During this alleged message a Sunderland fisherman was advised: "You've got Freddie. If you get that back there'll be a lynching. Cut it free and make sure it sinks" (Northern Echo, 23/4/92).

Others were more hopeful and regarded the rumours as nonsense (Mail Hartlepool, 22/4/92; Journal, 24/4/92). He then reappeared off Sunderland (D Express, Northern Echo, 25/4/92) and later six miles off Amble at Cresswell (Journal, 29/4/92; Northern Echo, 30/4/92) and there again a week later (Journal, 5/5/92).

*** As for bestiality, the owners of a Belgian magazine which printed pictures of cartoon hero Tintin committing a serious sexualoffence with his dog Snowy were ordered by a French court to pay one franc in symbolic damages (Northern Echo, 13/2/92).

* Rather more unpleasant was Malcolm Downes, 34, of Hull, who admitted causing harassment, alarm and distress to an elderly couple who spotted him masturbating twice in front of a mare. He admitted he was fond of horses when reined in by the police and his defence solicitor said he had "a very serious problem". He got probation (D Sport, 14/5/92).



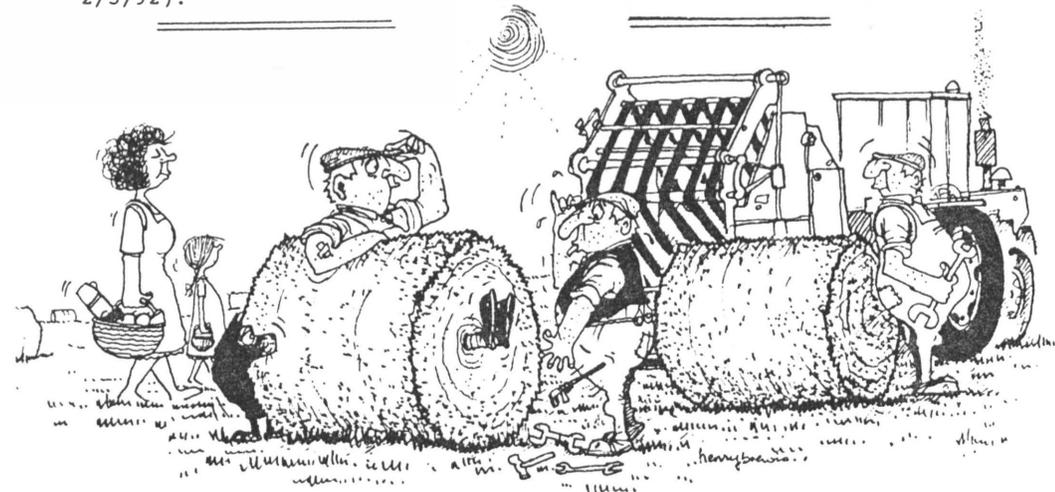
Update

ALIEN BIG CATS. Humans coming to harm in the presence of alien big cats are extremely rare. However, a "giant "panther-like cat" (Sun, 3/4/92) sank its fangs into Kathleen Topliss, 68, who lives on the edge of moors at Hayfield, Derbyshire. At three foot high one wonders how daughter Denise White believed it got in and out of the cat flap! Police were said to have been hunting the beast for three years (D Mirror, D Star, Northern Echo, 3/4/92).

We last looked into these in FF15, p17, and were pleased to find the "Durham puma" back. Grandmother Audrey Atkinson, of Gordon Terrace, Fishburn, County Durham, thought it was stalking rabbits or partridges (Northern Echo, 11/4/92; Mail, Hartlepool, 13/4/92). Former policeman Eddie Bell, whom we interviewed previously (FF4; see also FF7), was interviewed for a retrospective article (Northern Echo, 7/5/92). Then 58 lambs were found slaughtered on a remote Teesdale farm at Harwood and suspicion fell on the "Durham puma" (Northern Echo, 6/5/92).

The latest twist in the saga was a sighting of four big cats in long grass near the A66. A large black cat had three cubs, but the man who lives in Melsonby, North Yoprkshire, would not be identified but having shot feral cats said they were not those (Northern Echo, 8/5/92, 9/5/92). Then Doris Needham, also of Melsonby, said her family were too terrified to go out after dark following repeated sightings of a strnge black cat stalking the fields in the neighbourhood. Several others spotted it but police found noevidence (Northern Echo, 12, 5, 92).

Meanwhile at least two pumas had been reported nearby by Bob Lawrence, of Bewdley Safari Park, Kidderminster, Hereford and Worcester (Press Association, 4/3/92) and a dog and sheep had been ripped to pieces on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, by an alleged puma (Sun, 2/5/92).



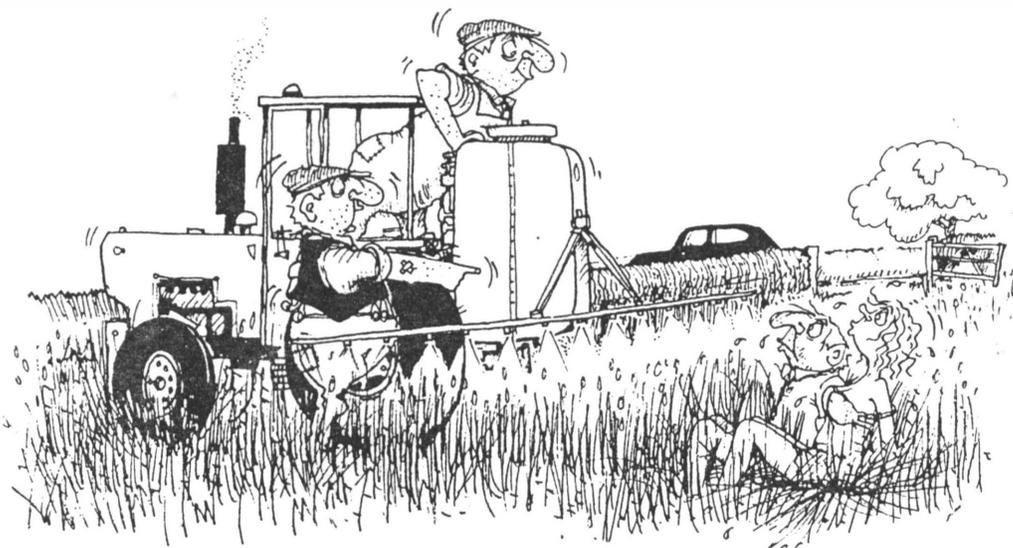
"...where's that bloke Meaden gone? I can see a vortex over there..."

CORN CIRCLES. As I write these notes another season is underway: what will it bring? Are the corn circles a projection of trauma in the human psyche? Inevitably and logically. You either have the parahuman intelligence contacting us; the hoaxers are simply surrealistic shamans in a non-archaic society; the meterologists are just traditional rain-makers working instead with the element wind.

I wish I'd received this insight earlier. Reason? Remember the Sunday Mirror set up a two-year competition with a £10,000 prize to solve the riddle. When it closed in April, guess what -- no prize was awarded. This was because nobody solved the mystery to the mutual agreement of the four judges. The newspaper did, however, donate £1,000 to a children's charity. Praiseworthy though that may be, surely some entries deserved some cash for original research and data.

So much for journalistic objectivity, Reg Presley, leader of the cult Sixties rock band The Troggs, was described as a "potty pop star" (D Star, 5/3/92) when he ran away from prehistoric Silbury Hill when spotted carrying a satellite dish in a bid to contact extraterrestrials.

Harvesting can be a dodgy business overseas, for a tourist was beaten up by Indonesian islanders because they thought he was a folklore ogre who ate children. Swiss Pini Mauro, 24, was knocked unconscious and lost two teeth after startling children fetching water on Sumba. He needed a jaw operation. Remote islanders who rarely see foreigners believe the ogre strikes after harvesting (Sun, 2/6/92).



'... I'd better tell y', mister, it's about a week before this stuff takes effect, - then everything just withers away ...'

BSW/SCA. Ever since the Cleveland child abuse debacle we've kept readers informed of developments. In particular we published John Michell's insightful and radical views on the "reality" of bogus social workers (FF12). These phantom figures are still at large and provided the Mail, Hartlepool, with front page stories, one the splash lead item (19/2/92 and 5/3/92). As is normal the BSWs were female, there were full descriptions of them, no identities of the persons visited and the news items led nowhere.

Equally there was no surprise regarding the hybrid satanic child abuse scam in Scotland. In the wake of the Orkney lunacy a report to the Church of Scotland General Assembly found no evidence (Journal, Newcastle, 13/5/92).

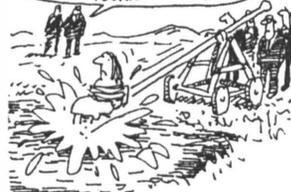
Similarly the Epping Forest court case fell to pieces when a ten-year-old kiddie admitted she had "hate trips" in which she lied to people. If that was not bad enough, discredited social worker Sue Richardson,

of Cleveland infamy, presented a holier than thou attitude attacking the Epping case collapse and scapegoating of professionals in Cleveland, Nottingham, Rochdale and Orkney. This vile piece of garbage appeared (where else but, Guardian, 22/11/92).

Controversial Judge Pickles cut through a lot of crap in his column (Sun, 19/10/91) succinctly summing up: "LaToya Jackson -- pictured -- tells of being physically abused by her father. Revelations can be good for business. Roseanne Barr Arnold's sitcom jumped to No. 1 after she said her dad 'used to chase me with his excrement and try to put it on my head'. How's that for dirty washing?"



WERE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING DEVELOPING THE ORKNEY RITUAL ABUSE CASE AS AN ONGOING TOURIST ATTRACTION



Others are cashing in too. There was a lengthy profile of Andrew Vachss, who goes where other US lawyers fear to tread in his ruthless campaign against alleged child abusers (Weekend Guardian, 2-3/5/92). He became a celebrity by gaining an alleged incest victim a small fortune from her father, but as a novelist he has often been accused of inventing and exaggerating such cases. For instance he believes multiple personality disorder can only be created by chronic child abuse. Spooky guy.

Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine's hit record "After the Watershed" was about child abuse and bad boy ravers EMF had the ecover of their hit "Unexplained" condemned by the Evangelical Alliance as capable of promoting child abuse. It features voodoo dolls with massive horn-like genitalia (D Mirror, 11/5/92).

Also, TV Scouse soap "Brookside" is to cover topical issues over the next year, including cancer, trans-sexuality and ritual abuse (D Star, 10/4/92).

Articles elsewhere

POURING COLD WATER ON WARMING. We looked at the "wildflower phenomenon" (FF 14, pl 1; FF15, pl5) and it seems the type of proof climate extremes that we have witnesses in recent seasons may represent the beginning of a trend that would have a profound effect on wildlife. Phil Gates (Northern Echo, 17/4/92) states:

"Some of the changes that we might witness over the next few decades might we welcomed. A milder climate would add a new dimension to gardening and will also favour some wild plants and animals that currently struggle to survive in our cool, wet climate.

"But on balance, the longer term implications will be disastrous for wildlife and the countryside in Britain, especially in the south-eastern part of the country where rainfall is expected to decline and summer temperatures are likely to rise.

"Scientists estimate that average temperatures will rise by about one degree every 30 years provided that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can be held down to 1990 levels."

Whatever, he concludes "it seems certain that we are already committed to several decades of global warming and climate change." He lists the changes we are likely to see in the garden and the countryside — many will be quickly recorded in Fortean columns if they occur, such as infestations (aggressive, drought-tolerant weeds), population increases (sun-loving insects such as butterflies, grasshoppers and reptiles) and exotic species (jellyfish, turtles, seahorses and octopus). He was, incidentally, plugging his own book (Spring Fever published by Harper Collins).

This is not the only scare article from this newspaper for under the headline "The eve of destruction" (Northern Echo, 20/2/92) a subsidiary header unequivocally stated "Global warming heralds cancer and disasters." Extinction of daffodils, etc, via a Greenpeace report.



Naturally there are those who oppose such a theory and the George C Marshall Institute of Washington does just that, gaining a reputation for hostility to the scientific consensus that greenhouse gases would contribute to a significant warming. The scientific contempt is well presented (Independent, 14/6/90).

Global warming and carbon dioxide emission is described as a "chicken and egg situation" by R. Noble in a letter to the Independent (20/10/90). He noted that



"You've used up a couple of trees, writing all these protest letters!"

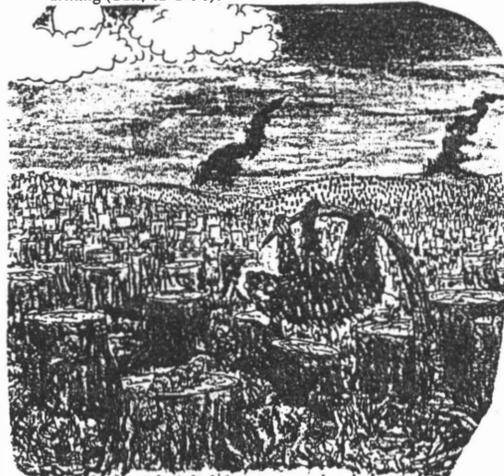
during the Middle Ages "mean global temperature was higher than it is now. This was then followed by a minor ice age, when the Thames was regularly frozen over. Since then the mean global temperature has increased steadily up to the present day. Thus the present increase in temperature began before the Industrial Revolution was underway.

Columnist Richard Littlejohn (Sun, 11/6/90) has little sympathy for the Greenhouse Effect, recalling similar predictions of hothouse Britain after the drought of 1976. A few years ago "the same men with beards told us we were entering a new Ice Age."

While on the subject there's scare-mongering at its worst:

Yellow bellied sea snakes — five times more poisonous than cobras — could invade Britain's beaches because of global warming. A report from Aberdeen zoologist Dr Monty Priede said the Pacific snakes could swim around the Cape of Good Hope if sea temperatures rise (D Mirror, 9/11/90).

And lastly: The cold forced Friends of the Earth to call off a demo at Caterham, Surrey — against global warming (Sun, 12/2/91).



"Well at least it's stopped raining all the time."

EATING PUSSY. More publicity for crackpot Joan Wearne, director of National Petwatch, came in the Mail, Hartlepool (24/4/92), where Bernice Saltzer swallowed her claim we eat cats in ethnical restaurants scam. She trotted out a printer in Yorkshire who supposedly found a mincing machine with a cat's paw and tail by its side in the basement of a former Indian restaurant. And in Manchester a policeman on the beat found the remains of 200 cats buried in a skip, their carcasses stripped bare of flesh.

We have noted dodgy restaurant rumour before (most recently FF 13) and unpalatable though it is, Joan is convinced that cat flesh finds its way into food at Indian restaurants.

The article also covered the more mundane Control of Dogs Order and later legislation, though she has all the hallmarks of a crank discussing this. Journalists are warned to beware the motives of those who approach them; particularly pressure groupies!



The Biff cartoon looked at the French Disney World and saw it as the Americans discovering Europe. Walt Disney is in his cryogenetic state as expected. A cultural Chernobyl as someone observed.



Proto-legends

It was Mike Goss who in an earlier issue suggested a couple of what he termed proto-legends (drug squad dogs becoming canine junkies and peace women being zapped by mysterious rays). Many stories we come across in the media do not seem to ring true (whatever that might be), urban legends or fall into Fortean categories. Therefore I'm introducing yet another section under the working title of proto-legends. Many will be brief and have no comparative version. These are the waifs and strays of the clippings; like a vasectomy not quite all there, not exactly castrated but still functioning at some level, but not really with any pride.

We start gynaecologically here:

■ A gorilla named Bobo has given birth to a human baby at a research centre connected to a private zoo near Cape Town, South Africa.

"This is an abomination," stormed religious leader the Rev Henry Clark. "The parents admitted that they had an ape carry their daughter in its womb because they were too busy enjoying their yuppie lifestyle.

But Dr Thomas Twyman, who implanted a fertilised egg in the 410lb surrogate mother, was unrepentant. The birth showed the way ahead for busy two-career couples, he said. "It's like dropping your car off at the garage. You leave it there for a few days and come back when it's ready" (Sun, Florida, date ?; Weekend Telegraph, 28, 3, 92).

Now here's one to make you wonder about your partner.

■ Randy businessman Jacob Beisvitz, of Tel Aviv, Israel, stormed off after a bedtime bust-up with his wife who didn't want to make love. He checked into a local hotel and ordered a call girl for a steamy sex romp. But he couldn't believe his eyes when the gorgeous hooker walked into his room — it was his 27-year-old wife Rachel! Now he's divorced his double-life missus.

Hang on though. How did she get there so quickly? Anyway, still with what we might call sex drive ...

■ Fishermen rescued two young lovers from their sinking car — which rolled into the sea when they made love too vigorously. Leonard Cellura, 21, and his girlfriend Maria, 19, had parked on the edge of the quay at the port of Agrigento, Italy. Unfortunately they hadn't put the handbrake on and their movements made the car roll over the side. "They were very nude and very embarrassed," said police (D Star, 5/3/92).

And another unfortunate young couple's cash became confetti!

■ Italian newlyweds were left stoney broke on their honeymoon — after rats ate all their cash. They rented a beach hut in Sao Paolo, Brazil, and hid almost £3,000 under the floorboards for safekeeping. Then they heard a noise during the night ... and found the rats had reduced all the notes to "confetti". (D Star, 22/2/92).

Magpies are wily birds, but this one is just ridiculous.

■ Choking gran Agnes Lysholm's false teeth fell out as she tried to spit out a bone — and were grabbed by a magpie in her garden. She went to a dentist for new ones and was told it would cost £180. Six days later the bird dropped the missing bottom set near her house in Oslo, Norway, and Agnes, 81, popped them back in. "How did the magpie know where I live?" she asked.

Bungled bank robberies seem quite common in reality so, perhaps ...

■ A postmaster held up his own office wearing a carnival mask. But staff recognised his shoes and set off an alarm as he fled with £90,000. Police in Perugia, Italy, nabbed armed Claudio Mori, 35, and unmasked him (Sun, 21/2/92).

And another daft person tale ...

■ A junkie is in the nick — after complaining to the cops that the crack he'd just bought simply wasn't up to standard. The addict stormed into a police station in Atlanta, Georgia, demanding the dealer's arrest ... but they locked him up for possession. An officer said: "He didn't want others being ripped off as well" (D Star, 11/3/92).

Now an unfortunate one, suggesting a cautionary tale of how impersonal we can be in urban areas, ignoring our neighbours ...

■ An 84-year-old woman's body was left sitting on her balcony for two months before a neighbour discovered she was dead. Police in Stockholm, Sweden, believe the old lady may have died while watching fireworks on New Year's Eve (D Star, D Mirror, 18/3/92).

Best left for last. I laughed until tears rolled down my cheeks at this one. Also doubtless a cautionary tale about allowing ourselves to lose control, the return to nature and pain of humiliation, there is at a deeper layer something deeply disturbing when the laughter stops.

■ A woman who was told under hypnosis that she was a beaver built a dam near her home that flooded several farms.

Claire Buelton of Seattle, was put into a trance during a party at her home. "She wandered away while I was working on another subject," said stage hypnotist Marty Weider. He says that because hypnotic trances usually wear off in a short time he did not worry when he could not find Mrs Buelton.

But police say she built a dam — using dirt, stones and tree trunks and branches which she chewed down herself — that spread over a mile on either side of a stream near her home.

Mrs Buelton is now suing Weider on a variety of grounds, including public embarrassment (New York Sun, date ?; Weekend Telegraph, 18/4/92).

□ ... □ Footnote: Upon compiling this rather random assortment, I began reading the latest Strange magazine issue, in which editor Mark Chorvinsky discusses in his editorial the subject of clippings; accuracy and problems they pose. Their brevity, anecdotality and ephemerality make them worthy of use for researchers, but more as footnotes rather than any basis for serious theorising. They are superficial but also generally entertaining.

Chorvinsky tells his readership that he does not use material originating in American tabloids (looks like I have), because they are known to have fabricated stories. He reckons the better UK tabloids are safer ground (though not mentioning the Sport dialies).

He urges his readers, despite the limitations he has delineated, to keep clippings coming. I would urge FF readers to do the same, but also — and particularly with this section — let us know if you've come across another version, so it can pass from "proto" to something perhaps more substantial.

Folklore Sport



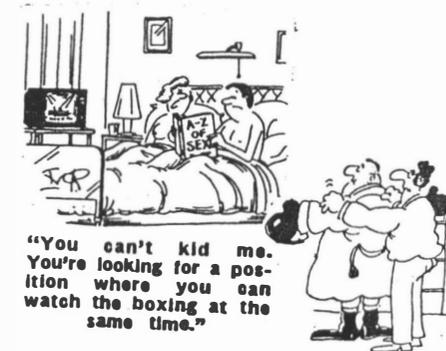
Jinxes are a familiar folklore theme so let's start this new section with the Magpies. A hapless Newcastle United supporter called the cult Saturday night Radio 5 phone-in show for football fans to explain that the club's results had slumped ever since the introduction of shirts with different-sized stripes. It was confusing the players, the Geordie caller claimed, because they couldn't tell how far apart they were from each other. Radio host Danny Baker, a Milwall fan, found much sense in this theory. "So the reason Newcastle aren't doing very well," he told listeners, "is because they are dizzy." Columnist Tony Jones (The Journal, Newcastle, date ?) reported the present kit is deeply unpopular with older supporters and he expected the "unlucky stripes" to be dropped.

■ ■ Magpies and Sunderland supporters hate one another, so in fairness we'll give them space, too, and their kit. Regarded as an omen, on February 26, Sunderland were to play Wesh Ham United in an F A Cup 5th round replay in London. At around kick-off time a display of the Aurora Borealis was visible from Sunderland and consisted of shafts of red and white light — just like Sunderland's red and white striped shirts. One fan, National Trust warden Peter Collins, said: "this could be a sign from above that this is going to be Sundreland's night. We regularly see the Northern Lights here but coloured the way it is tonight has got to be significant." Sunderland won 3-2 (The Journal, Newcastle, 27/2/92).

■ ■ Another omen was an appearance of Freddie the dolphin (see elsewhere in FF) off Sunderland harbour, supporters convinced he must have been nearby during the team's 2-1 victory over Chelsea. Margaret Liddell, manageress of the club shop at Roker Park, said: "I think the sound of the Roker Roar must have drawn him in and I have heard he loves people." There were rumours floating that Freddie might even be signed up in time for Wembley, just like Billy the Fish in the adult comic Viz (The Journal, Newcastle, 21/3/92).

■ ■ Before leaving the terraces, remember last issue there were a few references to farting. Pants that make an electronic sound like breaking wind — but no smell — will be sold by a firm in Eastwood, Essex. A spokesman said: "They're great if you need room at a soccer match."

■ ■ With lack of confirmation, jealousy, frozen camera claim and evasion, a mountaineering scandal sounds like something out of ufology or other Fortean lore. The Tomo Cesen Affair has become the most notorious controversy of all time, for he is probably the world's best mountaineer. The rumours about the Slovenian's ascents come as he habitually climbs alone and so proof has been difficult to prove. He has been joined by Catherine Destivelle, the French rock-climbing star turned alpine mountaineer who received a rumoured £30,000 for one filmed climb with alleged guides helping her initial ascent and helicopters clan destined dropping food and supplies to her. Both deny the claims. Steve Dodd's account (Weekend Guardian, 18-19/4/92) is full of wagging tongues expressing justified or malign suspicion. Counter claims, missing slides, et al, are all grist for the rumour/conspiracy mill.



"You can't kid me. You're looking for a position where you can watch the boxing at the same time."

"I don't wonder he's getting a tremendous ovation—he's forgotten to put his shorts on!"

Books

AS TEARS GO BY : MARIANNE FAITHFULL by MARK HODKINSON (Omnibus Press)

Marianne Faithfull's place in folklore would appear to be that of a life support system for an organ with confectionery retention capabilities. "Where's the Mars Bar then, Marianne?" always brought the retort "Fuck off" from the upper-class chanteuse.

An in-depth article studying the genesis and progress of the Mars Bar legend will appear next issue. Here I wish to draw attention to what I regard as a near-perfect contemporary biography.

The author was not even born when Marianne Faithfull had her first chart hit; thus he has just claims to approaching his subject with objectivity. As someone who met her twice and has followed her career/life since with interest, I feel that the book captures the facts and lifestyle extremely well; neither with salaciousness or moralising, glorifying nor condemning.

His assessment in 1978 is both a testament to his observation and writing skills; also an apt summation of how ("the elegantly ravaged outsider" -- Ian Birch) Marianne had become: "Marianne was set to become a euphemism to illustrate someone wasted, wrecked, tortured, experienced, soiled, obscure, unsung, ignored, misunderstood, and sje believed in her new status as a purveyor of Art from Life; revelling in self crucifixion with drug abuse, dead friends, sexual infidelity, attempted suicide, and an uncanny talent providing the nails from which she could hang for the macabre to gawp."

It is a harrowing life story and the main points are too well known to repeat and the details so interesting you should read the book itself.

As an unashamed admirer it has pleased me that the past few years have seen Marianne get her act together, man. The author subdivides her fans into three distinct groups. He believes the "most interesting is the original fan, the one who pinned her gentle, beckoning features on his bedroom wall in 1964." That's me -- but he spoils it by equating "these plaintive figures are the equivalent of train spotters, but with the added loyalty of forgiveness." I'm proud to be a trainspotter and Faithfullophile.

Just for condemning the rail enthusiast fraternity, I'll turn the spotlight on Hodkinson's word choices (though his prose is often elegant and general construction near perfect). Having consulted the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, I must ask why Alex Higgins is "perfervid" and what a spot of "frottage" was with Brian Jones. Perhaps Marianne in court was fragile rather than "frangible" and a condition not "exasperated" but exacerbated. Or is the author a sloppy proof-reader?

Certainly the research was not sloppy but a truly professional job and an enjoyable one to boot, I bet.

A CALENDAR OF FESTIVALS by MARIAN GREEN (Element, £9.99)

A lightweight introduction and handy reference all the year around guide to traditional celebrations, songs, seasonal recipes and ideas to keep children happy.

The turning year is followed with its customs, leavened with astrological portraits and instructions on making the likes of pumpkin lanterns, corn dollies and wildlife Xmas tree.

There are fetes and fairs, pilgrimages, dances, beating the bounds and other folkloric happenings. For October make the children worm soup, poison toadstools and stagnant ponds to eat. The elders can enjoy the sloe gin.

Magazines

CONTEMPORARY LEGEND. The Journal of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. The 1992 institutional subscription rates are £20 in the UK and £22 in the rest of the world. All institutional subscription enquiries should be addressed to: Hisarlik Press, 4 Cotisfield Road, Enfield Lock, Middlesex, EN3 6BD. Personal subscriptions are available as part of membership in the International Society for Contemporary Researc. To join, send a cheque made out to ISCLR for \$18 USD to Mark Glazer, Department of Behavioral Science, University of Texas -- Pan American, Edinburg, TX 78539, USA, or for £10 UK to Sandy Hobbs, Treasurer, Department of Applied Social Studies, Paisley College of Technology, High Street, Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland, PA1 2BE.

Vol. 1, 1991. After a faltering start I was greatly impressed with William M Clements' argument for what he calls "interstitiality" as crucial to many modern tales, where legend fills gaps between categories (life/death; human/animal; human/machine; and so on); concluding persuasively that "this interstitial dimension of legends reveals them as both projections of fundamental cosmic anxieties and reflections of germinal creative processes."



Bill Ellis takes the bull by the horns and goes where other folklorists dared not venture -- cattle mutilations. He hoofs it through the various theories and changes throughout its lifespan. There is also valuable discussion of media enhanced conduits; a form of networking among participants, believers, collectors and researchers. Discussion also touches upon the possibility -- as with corn circles, bogus social workers, and so on -- that there really is a "transforming power" at work in society, supernaturally manipulating as if some invisible university course.

Joel Best takes a sociologist's look at what occurred in 1987 when the media brought Califor-



nian freeway violence to the public's attention. In many ways the process foreshadows the British 1991 construction of the social problem of dangerous so-called joyriding and burning of cars taken without consent; though admittedly the deviants responsible are not category A bogeymen, though they cause random killings and stike a sensitive item of personal property. This intelligent analysis is, however, flawed, for when he says randomness is an indulgence in "blaming the villain instead of the victim", he indulges himself in do-gooderdom pseudo-social worker crap -- which just shows where my "reactional biography" is coming from these days! Also a footnote on increased freeway shootings does more than suggest his primary thesis skates on thin tarmac, or put another way, it's a footnote where he shoots himself in the foot.

Paul Smith examines interactions in the many Coca-Cola tales, noting these legends and beliefs comment upon every aspect of the drink from its creation to its use, though rust removal, contaminations, hangover cure, intoxicant, aphrodisiac, abortion agent to bottle as substitute penis.

Janet Langlois will make the reader who loves mayonnaise recall each time it is ordered or spread the tale regarding a Burger King employee with Aids who attempts to infect others by ejaculating into the spread for others to eat. She ties this in with the male tale of the promiscuous cheerleader who has to have her stomach pumped to remove the semen after a fellatio-session with the whole team; later metamorphosing into the gender-bender Eighties featuring Rod Stewart.

It ends with Daniel Barnes seeking and reproducing contemporary legends he has discovered in literature, with the aim of creating an annotated checklist.

Essential reading for all urban belief tales buffs and researchers.

Letters

From Janet Bord, Wales.

Thanks for FF15: no comment on the naked ladies, but they're perhaps marginally better than the photograph on p. 16! Sub enclosed -keep publishing!

Stop Press

* Posing as a drug buyer, TV sleuth Roger Cook set out to expose the drugs-in-meat racket which allegedly makes millions for the IRA (see FF15, p5 -- News of the World, 10/5/92; and earlier Sunday Sun, 15/9/91).

* With reference to the piece here (p 23), I also had published a reader's letter decrying Petwatch.

Petwatch boss put the cat among the pigeons

DOES anyone seriously believe the ludicrous horror tales of cats slaughtered to provide meals in Indian restaurants?

Petwatch Director Joan Wearne, (Mail, April 24), is a propagandist of the worst sort, preying on people's xenophobia and fear of generally unfamiliar cooking.

Stories such as she relates of cats coming to alleged harm, (or often in such urban legends, dogs),

are familiar to folklorists, hygiene inspectors and anyone with an ounce of commonsense.

Joan Wearne is concerned about the way cats disappear without trace. Hasn't anyone told her cats are notorious self-willed wanderers and also frequently victims of road accidents.

Paul Screeton,
Egton Drive,
Seaton Carew.

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* The Health and Safety Executive report into death plunges from trains -- 165 in ten years -- has finally appeared and British Rail would seem to be bracing itself for a flood of compensation claims. See this issue (p14 -- Sun, 21/5/92).

* Another catnapping on top of one earlier this issue (p12 -- D Star, 21/3/92) was of pigeon fancier Ken Warkup who dumped a cat 12 miles away after catching it scoffing one of his prize words. The cat returned home five months later and Ken confessed to the RSPCA what he had done. He admitted cruelty at Bridlington magistrates' court, Humberside, and was given a conditional discharge.

* Another gassing to add to the earlier two (p17 -- Sun, 4/6/92). Thieves used knock-out gas on 100 geese guarding a factory in Bettola, Italy, and escaped with £400,000 worth of machinery.

* Lastly we have more on the grass item we mentioned earlier in sceptical mode (p13 -- Independent, 6/5/92): The grassy approaches to the National Garden Festival in Ebbw Vale look dead lush. So would you -- if you'd been dyed green. "That's hydro-seeding," explains a spokesgardener -- grass seed and fertiliser mixed with dye to show which areas have been seeded. Very sensible. And handy, if you had someone like Prince Charles arriving to inspect the lawns yesterday.