

**Folkore  
Frontiers  
No. 17**



(\*) The Americans have come up with a new pastime. Before shoppers are awake, walkers eager to exercise, but reluctant to face snow, muggers, dogs or steep hills are trudging laps indoors at their local shopping malls. Several hundred people at a time might be circling counter-clockwise in any given mall and dozens of mall-walking clubs have sprung up. In Brentwood, New York, the South Shore Mall operates a walking programme called Club Tread, has a news-sheet (The Treader Leader) and holds post-walk social sessions. Thomas Cabot, founder of the National Organisation of Mall Walkers, whose most active members have covered more than 15,000 indoor miles in the past five years, says mall walking is here to stay. "They're meeting like-minded people and the groups are growing by leaps and bounds," he said. Mall merchants like the idea. Walkers see merchandise and come back later when the shops are open (Press & Journal, Aberdeen, 6/7/92).

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(\*) How true is the tale that a car's numberplate when covered with clear nail varnish will reflect the flash of the new police anti-speeding spy cameras? Clingfilm is said to have the same effect (Independent, 14/7/92).

(\*) From nail varnish to fingernail clippings. Rumours spread that Body Shop queen Anita Roddick would pay up to £10 for clippings to be used for testing cosmetics. The trendy chain led with customers to stop bringing in their little packets of unwanted trimmings. Spokesman John Grounds said: "People have been coming in with envelopes full. Some have been getting very upset when we tell them it is someone's idea of a joke. No one has any idea where the story started but it has clearly spread like wildfire" (Sun, Today, D Star, 5/3/92).

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## Newslines

As I keep reminding readers, at some point all urban belief tales come true. Take the one Jan Harold

Brunvand dubs "The Wife Left Behind" (Curses! Broiled Again!, W W Norton, 1989).

Here's a recent version. A man drove 450 miles before noticing his wife was missing from the car. The 30-year-old stopped at a motorway cafe, leaving her dozing on the back seat. But his 24-year-old wife wandered off without him knowing. She arrived home by train in a "foul mood". Her husband, from Milan, told police: "She normally talks the whole time and I never listen, so I didn't notice" (Sun, 27/8/92).

Assuming (always dangerous) with so much detail a British tale is true (Sun, D Mirror, 31/8/92), it goes like this.

Absent-minded Tom Brown abandoned his frail wife Catherine, 84, in their broken-down Skoda and said "I suppose I must have got confused." Police found Tom, 73, having a cup of tea at home - 70 miles from the M5 hard shoulder where he had left her. He had hobbled off for help with his two walking sticks after the Czech vehicle's clutch burned out at Clevedon. He took a bus to Bristol and a train to his home town Tewkesbury - completely forgetting about Catherine and the car. Police who launched a helicopter hunt and radio appeal for Tom said: "His wife was absolutely petrified and very disoriented after being stranded for five hours. He seemed blissfully unaware of the search or the fact that he had abandoned his wife."

The couple had been on their way for a holiday in their seaside caravan at Totnes. Last heard of they were setting off again ...

But hang on a mo! Totnes is not on the coast. Just suppose a news agency was having a quiet day and someone decided to do an elaborate version of the Milan story of a few days before. But journalists are scrupulously honest, aren't they .....

(\*) Another one which claims veracity but sounds more at home in our oldies section. Remember the tale where firemen rescue a cat up a tree and after having a cup of tea then run over it when leaving. In this scenario a soccer player killed both his family pets as he drove off to a match. Steve (I've lost the surname) reversed off his drive straight over terrier Jacko. He pulled forward to free the dog - and crushed cat Chivers. After comforting his wife Annie and son Jack at Sherborne, Dorset, he decided to go to his works match. He arrived late, handled the ball - and gave the opposition a penalty which earned them a 1-1 draw (Sun, 15/9/92).

(\*) Every item of new technology invariably attracts a harmful to humans tag in its early days. Latest example is mobile phones. Scientists are checking that they are not cooking our brains or giving us cancer. The National Radiological Protection Board is spending £1m on a three-year study to see if heat and radiowaves emitted by handsets could harm the brain (Sun, D Sport, 6/8/92).

And try this while on the subject. Two constables in a patrol car in Brixton's notorious Railton Road spotted a Motorola mobile phone on the top of a wall. Nobody was in sight so they decided to take it back to the station. Farther on, one of the PCs spotted a group of people and they asked them if they knew anything about it. Surprisingly none of them did. As the officers continued their patrol the phone started ringing. When they answered a voice at the other end said: "Hey man, look out, the police have got your phone" (Sean Smith's column, The People, 30/8/92).

(\*) We can't let the toe fetish fever go without comment. First there was repulsive Fun Minister David Mellor and actress Antonia De Sancha, followed by Princess Fergiana and "financial adviser" Johnny Bryan. As an omen, a sex attacker who tickles the toes of his male victims was being sought by police in Oxford. In separate strikes, he tied up two youths, aged 16 and 19, took off their shoes and fondled their feet (D Sport, 2/7/92).

What might seem a mild perversion to most folk ("toes are intriguing because they're generally covered up with shoes and socks. In that respect they're virgin territory and are appealing. Toes are also symbolic. They're shaped like miniature sex organs. When they're sucked, couples can fantasise they're performing real oral sex." - News of the World, 26/7/92) became a norm according to acres of sex therapists' advice

(Continued in Page 15)



High life ... scantily clad Antonia at a ball

CONFERENCE REPORT:     the International Society for  
Contemporary Legend Research's  
Seminar on Perspectives on  
Contemporary Legend: Sheffield  
University, 16-17 July 1992

As Martha and the Vandellas did not say: Summer's here and the time is right for going to conferences.

After all, what else are the long, hot days of July meant to be used for? But perhaps the folklore aficionado might have felt that the Summer just gone found him or her spoiled for choice, with a major Folk Narrative Research conference at Innsbruck and urban belief tales even featuring as a workshop at the Sidmouth Folk Festival. You can't be everywhere, not even when your bank manager tells you it's OK for you to try.

Evidence suggests that bank managers, particularly North American ones, aren't saying any such thing at present. This, plus the accidentally competitive effect of the Innsbruck event, most likely explains what kept attendance at the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research's tenth anniversary seminar at Halifax Hall, Sheffield, to a little over three dozen. That was a pity - not so much because the occasion marked a decade of those "Perspectives" meetings which, beginning back in 1982, have signified recognition of a "new" type of folklore study-area. Quite simply, the variety and quality of papers were such as to deserve a bigger audience and with the proposal to diversify the ISCLR's conference venues (for reasons given under the summary of Bill Nicolaisen's paper - see following pages) Sheffield seems unlikely to host this event again for some time. Given that anyone interested in contemporary legend's latest manifestations is welcome to attend, including and especially non-academics - given also that Sheffield is more accessible to privately-funded individuals than Paris, Finland or Texas, say - and there

you have the pitiful element.

Still: small is beautiful, as Martha and the Vandellas also did not say. Cramping papers and proceedings into a wondrously intense span of two days, the conference went ahead. Many of those papers will appear in subsequent issues of the ISCLR's journal, Contemporary Legend, but in the meantime (omitting all the in-Society biz and confining ourselves to actual speakers) FOLKLORE FRONTIERS presents a run-down on who went to Sheffield and what they had to say for themselves once they got there.

Day 1: \* Ellis \*\* Simpson  
           \* Wyckoff \*\* Goss

\*\* BILL ELLIS \*\*

"Christian Magic and  
 the Satanic Cult  
 Mythology"

Bill Ellis showed how he has come to emerge as one of the most respected writer/speakers on the contemporary legend scene. His scholarly interest in Satanism rumour legends has become increasingly apparent over the past few years and certain aspects of those myth-making processes formed the theme of his Sheffield paper.

Unphased by the honour of having to open a two-day conference - an honour many conference participants would want to avoid - Bill gave a meticulous and cogent presentation on the evolution of anti-occult propaganda among British and North American pentecostal extremists of the mid-1960s, majoring on the internecine warfare which developed when some incurred the charge of employing the very "Satanic" (mediumistic, charismatic) methodologies they had set out to attack - the "Christian magic" of the title. It seems mildly ironic that while allegations of Satanic assault helped to foster a group purpose, rationale and identity among these Christians,

they went on to destroy that unity by levying accusations of doctrinal impurity against one another - a point which Bill Ellis made without unnecessary emphasis. Well worth hearing for the firm analysis of influential "cult survivor" confessions like those of Warnke and Irvine which established the pattern for allegedly true-life exposés of Satanic corruption on both sides of the Atlantic - patently relevant to the Satanic child abuse furor of recent years - the paper gave the Sheffield conference a powerful impetus.

\*\* JACQUELINE SIMPSON \*\*

"Hecate in the Primrose Wood:  
the Demonization of the  
Landscape"

Perhaps you'll have heard some of the strange stories - UFO lights a-hovering, dogs disappearing, humans paralyzed and levitated - which have emerged from the Sussex beauty spots of Chanctonbury Ring and Clapham Wood. Longtime Folklore Society member and Sussex folklore authority Jacqueline Simpson certainly has -and in abundance; after all, she lives but a metaphorical stone's throw from these "haunted groves". Her wryly-perceptive paper proved that she thought little of the persistent rumour-cycle that has come to dwell about these sites - in terms of actual paranormal occurrences, that is - and by the end of it few in the Halifax Hall lecture theatre would have accused her of crass scepticism. What we had here was a study of fakelore posing as folklore: an analysis of how a modicum of "traditional" legend has been augmented by the alleged personal experiences of a small group of self-appointed (and, one suspected, self-serving) "psychic investigators" who fed the press a myth made out of next to nothing. Jacqueline Simpson is a confident, lively speaker whose reliance on her prepared lecture script appears only when she wants to quote something. She adheres to the old belief that remarkable claims require remarkably strong evidence or proof if they are to be taken seriously - as facts. The "Primrose Wood" mysteries fall short of both. Let's hope her written version of this paper features in the

ISCLR's journal before long. It promises a much-needed cold bath for those writers who specialize in passing off feeble fictions as amazing facts.

\*\* DONNA WYCKOFF \*\*

"Close Encounters of the Legendary  
Kind: Belief Legends and  
Liminality"

Recall for a second the moment when Mick "Crocodile" Dundee responds to a knife-waving mugger by drawing a knife of his own - a knife about six times as long, something more in the nature of a small sword. In the version current among members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, the weapon is a sword and the verbal exchange à la Dundee ("That ain't a knife. This is a knife") becomes something like, "I see your six (inch blade) and raise you thirty". Founded in 1966, the SCA is a well-supported American institution whose members are dedicated to recreating the ambiance (though not the literal, authenticated historical reality) of the Middle Ages. They take on medieval names; they dress as knights, ladies, bards, monks or artisans and act generally in accord with their perceptions of medieval life. Perhaps predictably, these recreationists have evolved a number of in-group liminal legends where, as in the "Six/Thirty" example, the hero - here, a SCA member on the subway, his medieval garb hidden by ordinary street clothes - is confronted by the unpleasant facts of the mundane world (represented here by the mugger). Significantly, the stories always show the mundane world in enforced retreat and the anachronistic one of the SCA triumphant against the odds. Donna Wyckoff's close involvement with the SCA - her son is a member and she herself has performed as a bard at some of its functions - makes her well-placed to apply such concepts as liminality and interstitiality to this and other contemporary legends. Hers was one of the most solidly constructed and authoritative papers of the conference. Good, too, to hear a legend-cycle that covers ground which most of us haven't been over too often and perhaps haven't trodden at all.

\*\* MICHAEL GOSS \*\*

"Rock-Lore: Legends &  
Rumours of the Rock  
Music Industry"

Throughout the last session of the day, the speaker's lecture-text - over 100 pages of it, reportedly - lay untouched and unconsulted for long periods. By his own admission, Mick Goss isn't a great read-it-as-written merchant. He approaches lectures as a chance to perform; he evidently wants to entertain, even to the point of throwing in the odd, decidedly unacademic one-liner or breaking off to ask the audience whether they have any stories they'd like to tell him for a moment's change. By its nature, rocklore is a topic which permits the kind of rehearsedly-spontaneous delivery it got here. Main thrust of the paper was to show how contemporary music legends frequently constitute reworkings of the types and motifs found in older "traditional" folklore, with the emergent hero now redefined as a rock star (like Eric Clapton, rumoresque anecdotes of whom provided the starting point of the lecture). The morbid romanticism endemic to rock culture received much attention, the speaker segueing from the "Satanic Pact" stories of bluesman Robert Johnson into Assassinated Star rumours and thence to types wherein indubitably still-alive stars are alleged by rumour to be dead (Paul McCartney) while others who are equally indubitably dead are alleged to be still alive (Elvis, Morrison, Holly et.al.). Mick uttered some cautionary remarks on the way non-oral and commercially orientated processes may promote such legends, but concluded that despite critical gibes about its musical worthlessness, Rock has created a culture with definite attractions for the practising folklorist.

Day 2: \*MacGregor \* Hobbs \*  
\* Bennett \* Smith \*  
\*Nicolaisen \*

\* ROBERT MacGREGOR:

"The Mystery of the  
Quebec Beer-Drinkers'  
Cardiomyopathy: A  
Legend Type"

In 1990 the Sheffield "Perspectives on Contemporary Legend" seminar heard from Robert MacGregor of a disturbing rumour-cycle: a product-rumour of the most virulent kind featuring Quebec's 'Killer Beer'. Two years further on, he returned with an update and more insights on that subject, with especial reference to the medical inquiry following the deaths of twenty persons known to have been heavy drinkers of the "fatal" brand in question. Adopting a relaxed, personable style that avoided melodrama as well as the obscurities of medical terminology, the speaker confided that his research into this 26-year-old mystery (during which he found and studied other locally-notorious reports of alcoholic poisoning) indicates that the debate as to how and why the victims died is still unresolved. To this end he quoted a contemporary doctor's opinion that the case represented 'a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma'. With its hints of malpractice within the alcohol industry and its clear relevance to those almost-daily scare stories about health dangers arising from our eating and drinking habits, this paper gave a valuable picture of Contemporary Legend's darker recesses.

\* SANDY HOBBS & DAVID CORNWELL:

"The Clowns"

Clowns arouse suspicion simply by being too lovable - too easily accepted (by grown-ups, at least!) as good, unthreatening fellows. Maybe children perceive them differently. Fortean clued in by the work of Loren Coleman on this

subject would have enjoyed this paper, whose relevance to the recent climate of near-hysteria surrounding child abuse/abductions hardly needs to be stressed. Presented on this occasion solely by the affable Sandy Hobbs of Paisley, it dwelt on a spate of stories which circulated among West Scotland schoolchildren in September/October 1991 concerning approaches made to their peers by clown-garbed adults. Although police found no evidence to corroborate the rumours, the reports were widely accepted as credible by the children, a development which Sandy explored via a student teacher questionnaire and press coverage. He neither disguised nor exaggerated the depth of unease created and expressed through this rumour cycle; nor did he miss such parallels as the near-identical USA 'clown panics' dating from the same period or a little before, the possibly-relevant "Chelsea Smilers" story of 1988 and the iron-toothed Gorbals "vampire" of 1954, on which he and David Cornwell have written previously. Usefully supported with overhead-projected maps and reproductions of print material, this paper generated as much interest and comment as any presented over the preceding 24 hours.

\* GILLIAN BENNETT \*

"The Bosom Serpent: Work  
in Progress"

Having apologized for being able to offer no more than a taster from a current ongoing project - hence the "work in progress" subtitle; this wasn't a formal paper - Gillian went on to give the best-received sixty minutes of the entire conference. It wasn't difficult to see why and how she has been applauded as one of the best of the "new generation" of folklorists and there's no doubt that any Fortean would have loved this (non)paper. Its theme: the timeless favourite, snakes and reptiles found in the human body and her sample of illustrations (drawn from The Gentleman's Magazine era through to our own day's oft-denigrated tabloids) amply proved that the theme is timeless, not to mention geographically disparate in its scope. The macabre case-histories and their analogues were only part

of the scene, however. Gillian insists that equally important - more important, perhaps - are the interpretations placed on them by the informants and the possible metaphorical meanings of these incidents/accounts was just one aspect taken up during the energetic discussion period that followed. For Gillian's subsequent work on this topic, keep an eye on Dear Mr Thoms (which she edits) and of course there's the prospect of the expanded version of this Sheffield "work in progress" report.

PAUL SMITH: "Defining the 'Canon' -  
Subdividing the 'Canon'"

Most of us don't worry too much about what is or isn't an urban legend. We think we know; the material seems to us so distinctive as to be self-defining. Recently, critics who oppose the notion of a distinct contemporary legend genre and of course contemporary legend scholars themselves have averred that this may not be so; just about every characteristic we take to typify the contemporary/urban legend can be shown to apply to non-contemporary, non urban narratives as well. So what deserves to be classed in this broad category - and why? And if the legends are allowed to stand up on their own, how can we arrange them in ways that reveal their characteristics and mutual relationships? Currently at work with Gillian Bennett upon a major contemporary legend bibliography, Paul Smith is not shy about revealing the complexities and perplexities of this matter. His paper examined classification schemes ranging from the simple ones inherent in the chapter heads and subheads of Prof. Brunvand's well-known books through sample pages from the UCLA, Berkley Folk Archive Index to Noel Williams's stepped schedules with their "major" theme headings and graded "levels" or subdivisions. This isn't a purely academic exercise; until we solve the kind of problems outlined in Paul's discussion, we can't be certain about the nature of what we are dealing with. The ensuing question-time debate was a lively as can be wished, particularly when Paul put forward the view that there may be grounds for not regarding "supernatural narratives (including

the much-loved Vanishing Hitch-Hiker!) as coming within the definition of "contemporary legend". Gifted with a generous helping of humour and well-calculated moments of provocativeness, this paper urged us to take a break from gathering stories just long enough for us to see what it is we've been gathering over the past ten years.

W.F.H. NICOLAISEN:

"Is There a 'Sheffield School' of Contemporary Legend Study?"

The seminar concluded with another discursive paper on an issue whose effects promise to extend well beyond Sheffield. The speaker sought to examine the occasional criticisms which depict the ISCLR as an exclusive, even vaguely incestuous affair. As a former President of the Folklore Society and a much-travelled conference speaker who has been an integral part of the ISCLR since its inception, Bill Nicolaisen invited the audience to look back over the past ten years and to decide whether there is or is not a specifically "Sheffield School" with concepts and terminologies of its own and how, if at all, it has shaped the thinking of folklorists outside the Society's membership. There was little disagreement with his suggestion that a decade of Sheffield seminars has proven the ISCLR to be more open-armed than many comparable bodies and that a survey of countries from which participants have come justifies its "International" label. That said (and again with general concurrence from the floor) it was held highly desirable for future conferences to range beyond Sheffield's Halifax Hall, with venues in Paris and elsewhere being mooted as possibilities worth further consideration. Sheffield rose to prominence as the contemporary legend seminar site by accident - or as a result of convenience - and however fond of it ISCLR members are, it cannot be taken as somehow intrinsic to the conference side of things.

\*\*\*\* Shortly afterwards the formal proceedings of the seminar came to rest. There were an awful lot of informal proceedings over the two-day period, of course. An impromptu folk-song session outside the Hall bar, for example, in which only two seminarists could be persuaded to actually sing, some deep critical discussion of Graeme Souness' rumours, a series of ghoulish Hallowe'en-style party games contributed by a lively group of Newfoundland graduate students and, believe it or not, a demonstration of hypnosis which certain ISCLR members are likely to remember longer and better than others. Now, when or if those stories come to be told in future years, they may have evolved into things closely approximating real contemporary legends..

## Newslines

CONTINUED

(Sun, 22/7/92, D Sport, 22/7/92, Sun, 26/8/92). The Sun still called it "kinky" when announcing the Foot-lovers' Admiration Society. Based in Essex, its magazine Footsy focuses on "female feet worship, kissing, licking and being tickled" (Sun, 4/8/92).

Then came the cashers in, but a Blackpool, Lancs, factory making Fergie Toes candy "suck it and see" novelties was hit by arsonists; Royalists being suspected (Sun, 27/8/92). Also door knobs in the shape of Fergie's big toe were being made by designer Clint Yallop in Launceston, Cornwall (Sun, 1/9/92).



## READERS' LETTERS

I have two questions about islands which perhaps you or readers could answer.

The first is, What is the smallest island with its own passenger railway system? It depends, of course, on how you define smallest, whether in terms of acreage or population. I have four candidates so far, the Isles of Man, Wight, Jersey and Bornholm (a Danish island in the Baltic Sea), but two of these, Jersey and Bornholm, have lost their rail networks during this century. In the list below, the population figures are given for 1901 when the island railways were all flourishing.

Jersey	45 sq miles	54,000 population
Man	227	55,000
Wight	147	82,000
Bornholm	240 approx	41,000

Unless anyone knows of any better examples, Jersey must be the smallest island which ever had railways, though Bornholm, which once had an extensive system was the least populated. Of the survivors, the Isle of Wight can claim to be the smallest

(Continued Page 21)

# Back in a Jiffi ...

**SUN** with the slogan "Never needs food, water or sunbrite."  
 A RUBBER plant made entirely from condoms is a top seller in the United States.  
 2/16/92 **SPOT**

Who needs T Rex when I can have Durex? They come thick and fast, the tales that is (see FF15, p11).

First off a clipping sent by Peter Christie concerning a furniture company awarded the British Standard kite mark. It passes on instructions to its advertising agency that this is to appear on all ads. Problem: no copy of the kite mark is to hand. What to do? Buy a packet of condoms, displaying a mark that's easily copied. This explains why the company's sofas appear in ads which declare that they have been tested for elasticity, strength and spermicidal properties (Guardian, 10/9/91).

Still with trademarks, the Big Mac burger chain is trying to ban a contraceptive called McCondom. McDonald's says McCondom -- with the letter M in yellow print -- infringes its "McLanguage" trademark. It has asked a court in Montreal, Canada, to stop condom shop La Capoterie using the name (Sun, 25/3/92).

Way back I recall the Russians' maculinity being intimidated by "large" condoms exported there but marketed by the US and UK as "medium" size. That's the trailer for a plea for medical aid for Ukraine which brought a surprise gift == 100,000 extra-large condoms. Boxes of "American and European size" sheaths were sent from Taiwan as part of a £9m plane load of supplies. At seven inches, they measure nearly an inch longer than regular Taiwan condoms (D Mirror, 8/4/92).

There are also glow-in-the-dark "condoms". Experts say the flashing sheaths signal danger because they offer no safeguard against pregnancy or diseases such as Aids. The joke items -- inspired by comic Steve Martin's film "LA Story" -- are being sold in novelty shops. Worried Leicestershire Health Authority's Warren Wiesner said: "They're not really condoms at all. People must be made aware of their limitations." But John Goldstein, of suppliers Jarroy of London, blasted: "The packet makes it absolutely clear they're purely for fun and not to be used as a barrier. They're the sort of present a girl might buy her boyfriend with the message, 'Here's something to help you find your way'." (D Star, 5/3/92)

**'EUREKA!'**  
**SHRIEKED THOMPSON**  
**THE INVENTOR OF THE**  
**LUMINOUS CONDOM!**  
**NO MORE FUMBLING**  
**IN THE DARK!**

**CHEMIST** **COMB**  
 UREX  
 GOSPEL  
 LITERS  
 TITLES  
 TITLES  
 TITLES  
**FAMILY PLANNING**  
**INC.**

"Look mate, it's my honeymoon and I'll decide how many's enough!"

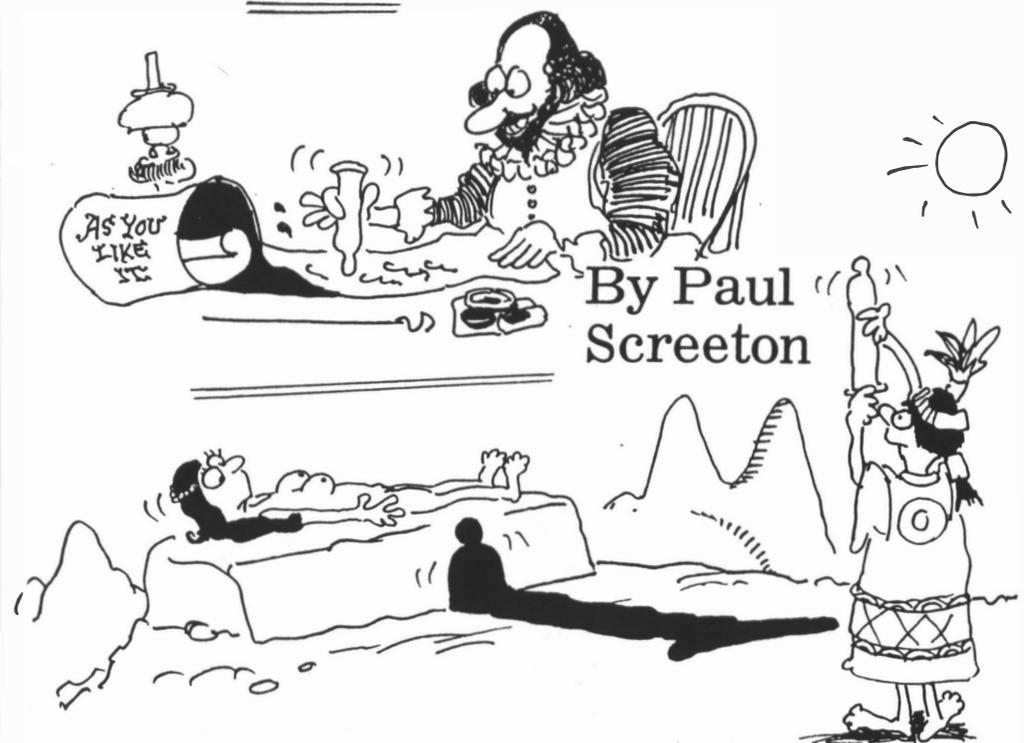
The young boy came home from school early one day and was unaware that his parents were upstairs making love.

Hearing a noise downstairs, his father — still wearing his contraceptive — went to the balcony to investigate.

"What are you doing, Dad?" the lad asked. Thinking quickly his father replied that he was looking for a mouse.

"Why?" asked the boy, giving his father a puzzled look, "are you going to screw it?"

Apparently there are now female condoms which fit in the vagina -- a doctor on morning TV was displaying one (5/5/92). Anyway, these sold out in Switzerland after just two weeks. Customers snapped up 25,000 packs of Femidom -- a four times the price of male contraceptives. Product manager Laure Schonenberger said they would soon be on sale in Britain. Which is where I came in ... (D Star, 22, 2, 92).



If you don't die of Aids from not wearing a condom you could die because you wore one! Alleged allergy experts put forward a bizarre link between bananas ... and condoms. Don't laugh. They warn people who are allergic to fruit they could suffer a fatal reaction to latex. A 50-year-old nurse with an allergy to bananas had swellings and breathing difficulties after using a condom, medical journal The Lancet revealed. And a 12-year-old boy fell into a coma after eating a fig and wearing rubber gloves. One 39-year-old man got conjunctivitis after eating a chestnut then blowing up a balloon. The Belgian experts warn: "Patients should be aware of the danger." (News of the World, 1/3/92) Patients? Isn't it by then a little late?

But there is an answer -- willy woollies. Experts (yes, more experts) in America are advising men to wear lambskin condoms under the usual rubber sheath -- to avoid allergic itching and burning (News of the World, 3/5/92). Noting the source of both being the same, is the latter genuine?

Lastly, tight-fisted couples in Chile wash their condoms and hang them out to dry before using them again. The most popular colour of condom in Kenya is white, while in Sweden it is black, the survey for Forum magazine found (Sun, 30/5/92).

## Proto-legends

We introduced this category last issue and remarked that it was Mike Goss who coined the term. One of his examples being dogs becoming canine junkies, so the cartoon's appropriate.

(\*) Our second choice last issue came up trumps. Here it comes again.

1) A cheating Polish hubby visited a German brothel while his wife was "staying with friends" -- and found her working there (Sun, 10/8/92).

2) Polish businessman Stanislaw Kania, feeling frisky on a visit to a brothel in Dresden, Germany, had the shock of his life -- the alluring charms he was offered were those of his wife, Gretchin (D Sport, 24/8/92).

Different or the same? And here's a variation on the theme. Cheating hubby Rowland Charlesworth wrote to a box number in a local newspaper's lonely hearts column and received a reply two days later -- from his wife. Now Teresa and Rowland are suing each other for divorce in Jacksonville, USA (Sunday Sport, 9/8/92).

(\*) Bikers swear statistics prove Volvos have a higher proportion of accidents with motorbikes than any other car, hence Screaming Lord Sutch found a Baron von Thunderclap who wanted to stand as Official Monster Raving Loony Ban Volvo Party. Apparently the baron had been present at an historic bikers' day when two teams, armed with hacksaws and oxy-acetylene cutters, got revenge by competing to be first to put an entire Volvo car through a letterbox.

Sutch had heard from a taxi-driver something similar not long before when he had explained that because they were advertised as the safest cars on the road, they were bought by the world's worst drivers, who then thought that they were at the wheels of a tank (Sutch is Life, HarperCollins, 1991).

(\*) Diarist Sean Smith claims an exotic lady doctor slit-hered up to him at a party in Hampstead and told about a colleague in private practice treating a man for a heart condition. The patient walked out the door and dropped dead. The horrified receptionist rushed in with the bad news and called for instructions. The doctor told her: "For God's sake turn the body round so he looks as if he was coming in" (People, 14/6/92).

(\*) And Gibbs' Gossip column provides "another true story". A young and extremely pretty London girl recently won £10,000 at bingo and was asked to pick up her cheque in a couple of weeks. When she did so the master of ceremonies said to her: "Congratulations, love, what are you going to do with the money?" She replied: "It's my 18th birthday next week and I plan to buy a car." There was a shocked silence. "I wish you hadn't told me that," said the MC. "It's illegal to play bingo for cash until you are 18 -- we can't give you the cheque" (D Mirror, 9/5/92).

(\*) Stuart Gray-Thompson spotted this one which I'm sure has been used in a TV sit-com.



A family locked themselves in their own cellar for two weeks to avoid the shame of their neighbours finding out they could not afford their annual holiday. The unnamed Luxembourg family told their neighbours they were heading south to the sun and locked up the house, hid the car in the garage -- and then spent the two weeks camping in their damp cellar. The family of four -- including two children aged nine and seven -- might have got away with the ruse if police had not spotted light through a chink in the shutters, and burst in, thinking it might be burglars. Police in the town of Steinfort near the Belgian border where the family lives, refused to comment (Press & Journal, Aberdeen, 21/8/92).

(\*) Three now with telephones as the focus.

1) A teen ager ran up a £750 phone bill after calling a sex line in Australia -- and then dozing off. The boy, whose parents were away, woke up after being on the line to sexy Jasmine in Sydney for seven hours. He admitted: "I only meant to listen for a few minutes. I thought it would be more fun than watching videos all evening. I nodded off after drinking half a bottle of red wine." The 16-year-old from Olpe, Germany, has taken a summer job to repay the money (Sun, 22/7/92).

2) People ringing up a Mafia-busting tax department are played the Godfather theme while their phone call is put through. A spokesman in Milan said they knew nothing about the tune which had been supplied by a phone company. He added: "We're too busy to listen to it." (Sun, 26/8/92).

3) Shiftworker Mario Branno climbed into bed with his wife -- and heard a portable phone in his wardrobe. He found a naked man hiding there -- and shot him. Now Mario faces an attempted murder charge (Sun, 15/7/92).

## THE EKPERTS

As Fortean guru Bob Rickard has observed: "For every expert there is an equal and opposite expert." We introduce yet another section to examine these authority figures' behaviour and list interesting reversals of conventional wisdom.

Take for instance the great cholesterol terror. Swedish research, published in the latest British Medical Journal, shows that in 22 cholesterol-lowering trials, there was no change at all in the number of deaths from heart disease. These findings have also been largely ignored. The researcher, Dr Uffe Ravnskov, found the trials which appeared to support conventional wisdom on cholesterol were six times more likely to be quoted by researchers than those which pointed the opposite way. (The Observer, 12/7/92).

And men who cut cholesterol levels are more prone to violent deaths -- particularly suicide -- say Swedish doctors (Sun, 31/7/92).

The Finns earlier met opposition when British health experts warned people to ignore their claims that cutting down on fatty food can significantly increase the risk of a fatal heart attack. The warning came after scientists in Finland completed a 15-year study of 1,200 Helsinki business executives thought to be at risk from heart attack. The study claimed people of a carefully-controlled diet are more than twice as likely to die of heart disease than those following no diet. It challenged the long-held belief that high cholesterol is a prime cause of coronary problems. Half the sub-

jects were put on a low cholesterol diet -- and suffered 67 deaths; 34 due to heart attacks. The other half, kept on their normal diet and theoretically at greater risk, had only 14 cardiac deaths and 34 from other causes. But the Coronary Prevention Group, made up of top heart-care specialists, said: "It would be a tragedy if people were discouraged from eating a healthy diet low in fat on the basis of one small study. Prof Philip James, of Aberdeen's Rowett Research Institute, said the study did not overturn years of research which had convinced the scientific community of the need to cut down on fat. He said: "The Finnish researchers should be asking themselves what they did wrong."

Appearing as it did (Northern Echo, Darlington, 23/12/91), the response was obviously timed to make people feel guilty or uneasy at Christmas.

(\*) Then we learn there are no grounds for the coffee scare.

We know that for years doctors have advised patients with slightly raised blood pressure to cut down on coffee in the belief that it will reduce their risk from a heart attack or stroke. But until now no one has ever checked to see if this was good advice, according to Dr Tom MacDonald, of Dundee University. After a study of 50 regular coffee drinkers, he and his colleagues are dismissing the conventional wisdom as another "medical myth". Standard coffee advice, he claims, is based on research showing that just a single dose of caffeine is enough to raise blood pressure in people who had not been drinking coffee for some time. It fails to take into account that regular coffee drinkers develop tolerance to caffeine (Guardian, 22/11/91).

(\*) Also for every warning that sex, drugs and drink don't mix with sport there'll be the opposite view. Hartlepool's United had a player who would sink eight pints in the Crown and then play a blinder up the road at the Victoria Ground.

Sex was prescribed for girl Olympic athletes after Israeli experts studied the performance of 84 athletes before and after sex. The 26 women performed best soon after making love, but the 58 men wilted so badly doctors recommended they cut out sex a week before a big competition. They determined that an orgasm motivates women but men just want to doze off afterwards (Sun, 20/7/92).

A televisual examination of this topic had so-called experts to argue both viewpoints. A director of coaching suggested having a cold shower and reading the Financial Times, a boxing instructor claimed lovers soften up pugilists, only for Lloyd Heneyghan to floor that view. In opposition to the argument that sex relaxes tension, judo expert Neil Adams was of the opinion that celibacy increases sporting potential. Strange this. Remember he was swimmer Sharron Davies' one-time fiance. She boasted a morning's sexual calisthenics before competing in the afternoon -- failing to say with whom.

A true perspective, I suspect, came from 42-year-old soccer legend Frank Worthington, who believed sex before kick-off was beneficial and claimed to have such 1½ hours before a game. "When you see the Italian players kissing each other it seems more like frustration than elation," he observed. After hearing they spent a month separated from wives and girlfriends before an international (On the Line, BBC-2, 20/6/91; Before, after, or instead of?, Paul Screeton Viewpoint TV review, Mail, Hartlepool, 21/6/91).

(\*) Before leaving medical matters, what about Surgeon Lieutenant James MacKay, who broke into a woman doctor's cabin and stole her undies, pyjamas and bikini. A Royal Navy psychiatrist told the Devonport court martial that MacKay suffered from a mental disorder since his teens which made it difficult for him to make friends. What was then said is the truly pathetic bit, that his disorder would have been spotted during his four years in the service if he had been in any other part than the medical section (Sun, D Sport, 17/7/92).

(\*) Boozers are always cheered by stories of alcohol being beneficial. Researchers at Newcastle University's department of medicine believe preliminary findings have shown moderate quantities of alcohol help prevent strokes and heart attacks, by making the blood less likely to clot. "Alcohol in mild to moderate consumption alters blood chemistry to increase good fats and lower bad fats, so reducing the risk of a stroke," said Prof Oliver James (Northern Echo, Darlington, 13/5/92).

(\*) And what of a drink which is REALLY good for you. Yuri Katchenko is selling what he calls Magnetic Vodka, which has been blasted for several days by "powerful magnetic waves". This magic fluid is supposed to cure cancer, and give you a warm, comforting glow - both at the same time. But Peter Hitchens (D Express, 1/19/91) was sorry to say the scientists of the Soviet Ministry of Health refused to accept Yuri's claims. "No vodka can possibly do you any good," they said. "What's more, you can't possibly magnetise it. The whole thing is rubbish."

(\*) Mice were better drunk than sober at avoiding cage areas giving electric shocks, proving that alcohol enhances memory claim scientists in Ohio (Sun, 29/6/92). Then another "tit bit" has university boffins in North Dakota claiming alcohol makes you remember - though giving no clue to research methodology (D Sport, 1/10/92).

## Letters

(CONTINUED  
from Page 15)

railway island and the Isle of Man the least populated. Are there any challengers?

My second question is, What is the smallest island that anyone has ever lived on and, at a mature age, died upon without ever having left it? This brings to mind a third. What is the smallest island containing inhabitants who have never visited its capital? I have wondered about this ever since the Falklands War, when it was said that a number of the Falklands people had never visited Port Stanley. I also read recently that some people on St Helena (47 sq. miles) have never been to Jamestown.

Folklore Frontiers would like to publish readers' observations on these questions. I can only offer some suggestions to the first question. There are certainly preserved steam railways on Alderney and Mull (Steam Railway special map, 1989) and on September 20 this year Britain's most northerly railway line was officially opened on the Orkney island of Hoy. A network of lines was created on Hoy for the Scappa Flow naval base and though the present line is only 100 metres long, there are plans to extend it so that visitors can take in historic sites (Press & Journal, Aberdeen, 2/10/92).

## Books

THE CIRCLEMAKERS by ANDREW COLLINS (From ABC Books, P O Box 189, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, SS9 1NF, price £4.95 inc p&p).

Just as the mystique of corn circles threatens to evaporate along comes the cavalry. Supernaturalist investigator and psychic sidekick ride in, the Sapphire and Steel of cornography, Andy Collins and Debbie Benstead. From a fortuitous rediscovery of a paperback on sky creature "critters" described by Trevor James Constable, they move on to Wilhelm Reich and related orgone radiation.

The psychic questers go off to Wessex to seek corn circles and their meaning; neither convinced of meteorological phenomena or the abilities of hoax claimants. Scientifically ignorant Debbie gushes forth with mediumistically-inspired lectures on fringe physics. Debbie intimated that crop circles be described as ultrasonic orgone hieroglyphs or the true written language of sound. That orgone bioforms upon impact produce grand designs; the more evolved the consciousness, the stronger and more complex the pattern. By the existence of "non-locality" we interact with and can aid the evolution of the process, which can be mimetic even (explaining hoax interference follow ons).

As for the "sinister secrets" of corn circles mentioned in the blurb, Collins claims that they are orgone accumulators and so can be either curative or harmful. Rationalists would see all this as anecdotal and subjective; the sympathetic and informed as excitable reaction to a new metaphor for the numinous.

Collins weaves in leys, earthlights, ufo nests, abductions and so on, finding adequate room in his new vision of the circles to embrace them all in comfort. Plenty of background information ties in with a personal diary of adventure and learning. Whether such a revival of orgone and Reich strikes a responsive chord will depend upon the individual reader. Whatever one's reaction, Collins has done a grand job to provide a fresh viewpoint.

CROP CIRCLES FOR FUN AND PROFIT by JOHN REID (From Wolf's Head Press, P O Box 77, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, SR 1 1EB. £1.20 +stamp for postage. Leave blank "pay" line on cheque/PO or for 6 x 24p stamps. USA 6 dollars in bills only)

"In Wiltshire circles appeared in front of us, but unfortunately it was foggy at the time and we could see nothing," said Prof Yoshi-Hiko Ohtsuki. Bit like a caption in the *Darlington & Stockton Times* some years ago which went something like "You would be able to see the magnificence of Roseberry Topping behind this cow if it weren't for the fog."

This is a witty overview of the crop circles phenomenon by John Reid, aka one assumes Kevin O'Beirne of Wolf's Head. John/ Kevin has a way with words, like when reporting on circle makers, who were cautioned by the police "after a nearby resident, er, grassed on them."

The author also asks awkward questions such as what would happen if such "electro-hydronomic things" were to manifest, not in corn but on an electric pylon or a busy road?

Rightly not only the so-called experts get their say but the "man in the street", including theories of creation by ufo anchors, cats, hypnotised field mice or bats, rutting emus, morris dancers, night-time corn dollies or gypsies leaving signs for each other. The same article being referred to had Isabelle Kingston dragging in "earth energy and ley lines, cosmic energy and unconsciousness" (D Star, 17/7/91).

But she's a "medium" whereas Terence Meaden is a scientist. The point I'm coming to is that he has also posited a prehistoric role for corn circles, as places of veneration where when they appeared the spot was marked by Neolithic monuments. As ley theory states these are precisely aligned, the booklet author rightly and critically asks of ley hunters "how would they embrace the idea of a ley line system largely owing its existence to the, presumably random, manifestation of 'vortexes'?" Fields of inquiry which won't go away too easily.

Also a Benton unreported circle so close to the Tyne & Wear Metro light railway system it should be 1991's most observed observed manifestation; David Icke's millenarian ramblings; van Gogh's "Sunflowers" as conceptual landscape art; and wildflower explosion rural rumour of Gaia's angels hurling earthenware jars of rare plants from speeding motor-cycles; Doug 'n' Dave; conspiracy theories; how "Busty" Taylor got his name - not hormonal but appended as a baby by troops at the cinema his parents ran at a Wiltshire army camp.

Entertaining overview and non-partisan.

CROP CIRCLE SECRETS edited by DONALD L CYR (8 dollars plus postage to UK from 2261 Las Positas, Santa Barbara, Calif., 93105, USA).

Donald Cyr posits the remarkable theory that lightning strikes on two south Indian Ocean islands produce whistlers which yield the crop circles in the 50-mile diameter circle of activity in Wiltshire. Whistlers are echoes from lightning

strikes bounced from the upper atmosphere and reception conditions are optimum late evenings, at night and early morning. The electronic frequencies/currents enter the ground and are then refracted. The grain stalks could act as antennae with concentric circles being created by a different order of audible tone vibrations or radio energy, sub-harmonics all emanating from the southern hemisphere (and doubtless vice versa). His colleague James Brett thinks the antennae-loading theory can possibly explain all the patterns.

Cyr goes on to suggest a fertile megalithic period with great fields of grain standing 2.72 feet high (one megalithic yard) and where circles appeared stone circles were created to the same dimensions, or rather moved some way to an optimum astronomical sighting position.

Cyr, in fairness and to give a more rounded view, then examines what others are concluding regarding corn circles. Other sections include his explaining his theories to John Michell; Michael Mideke's beginner's guide to whistlers; and Andrew Rothovius's impressions.

CROP CIRCLE SECRETS - PART TWO edited by DONALD L CYR

Donald Cyr and James Brett begin this second selection of crop circle speculation by admitting the claim to have "solved" the problem was an overstatement, though claiming the content of Part One made a good beginning. Brett even proposes an alternative theory.

Various correspondents then deliver their reservations to the whistler theory, being of varying depths of technicality and thrust. Also of interest to ufo buffs will be the Coxe-Gillespie flying saucer theory; Gillespie also contributes a piece connecting the speculations with Nikola Tesla.

A Native American tale from the middle of the last century is interpreted as a corn circle event. To me it more likely fits the "lover from the sky" motif (see Michell's *The Flying*

Saucer Vision), though obviously unintentionally mimicked in cartoons of all too human couples coupling in corn circles.

We are on firmer ground with Gerald Hawkins' analyses of mathematical, geometrical and diatonic factors.

Interesting piece, too, on the Marfa lights of Texas.

Cyr's publications are more refreshingly open-minded generally than their UK counterparts. The cut and thrust of debate is leavened with a humour often lacking on this side of the big pond.

ISIAH ON  
GUITAR: A  
GUIDE TO  
JOHN WESLEY  
HARDING by  
ROBIN  
WITTING

(Valis Books,  
52A Lascotts  
Road, Wood  
Green, London,  
N22 4JN. Price  
54.50 inc p&p.

My copy of  
Bob Dylan's  
Bible-rock  
album "John  
Wesley Hard-  
ing" was  
bought for me  
by the girl  
whom I mar-  
ried. It came  
from a shop in  
the shadows of  
Durham Cathed-  
ral. Shortly

afterwards I quit my newspaper reporting job in dramatic fashion, telling my friends why by quoting Dylan: "...one should never be where one does not belong."

Later I would buy all the huge Stephen Pickering books on Dylan and struggled through all the Jewish mystical arguments, Old Testament blood and thunder, quabalistic conundrums and where Dylan's head was at in all these visionary vibes. It was bringing back all the A-level English literature home, only there was the advantage of no exam - and no certainties. Cryptic word games to stretch the intellect.

Having become something of a lapsed Dylanologist of late, I wondered if Witting would revive my faith in Dylan as universal panacea. It certainly flexed my critical faculties as the author jumped back and forth between Dylan's lyrics, other LPs and the novel Tarantula; the Bible; and everyone from Brecht to Eliot to Carroll (Lewis - not Hattie).

Several fundamental criticisms readily spring to mind as Witting analyses the songs in turn. He is too selective with particular lines (missing wholly more obvious meanings, at least I believe); that the Scriptures can be bent to suit many, if not any, argument; little opportunity is given for alternative speculations (though to invoke evangelist John Wesley in addition to outlaw John Wesley Hardin is novel); and there is no indication of how important a role Biblical belief and study



Corn dolly bird for issue 17 - Dawn Love

Book of Isiah plays.

Turning to the songs, Witting regards All Along the Watchtower as practically a paraphrase of the Book of Isiah in 12 lines. A dense, charismatic song ... the most powerful cut on the album." Uh-huh, it's The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest which I feel is most significant: characterisation is strong; use of cliché is shunned by good writers unless in a new context and for good reason and you'd have to read Isiah to comprehend why Dylan's "as quiet as a mouse" is in fact a meaningful image; but why after the line "nothing is revealed", is the last verse omitted from this commentary? Incidentally, my justification for quitting my job came from the wrapping-up verse. Perhaps, if I'd taken notice of a line a little further on -- "and don't go mistaking Paradise ..." -- I'd never have spent a year in Hull.

It is this sense of incompleteness of analysis, of just picking a certain parts which creates uneasiness. It is as if the album is a buffet, not a feast, and the eater is finicky.

The book's apparent Americanness is no great problem, though when discussing the significance of the word "house" he points to Isiah's tribal use of the word and America's contemporary tribal totem pole, the White House. We do, of course, have our own Houses of Commons and Lords. Also the cover in Britain is not green; my copy is brown.

He does, however, seem naive at times: quoting from "Tanan-tula" there's "& Delia who's called Debra when she walks around in her nurse uniform, she casts off pure light in the cellar & has principles," which he sees as idealised nurse to treat those who have strayed off the straight and narrow, but seems to me a role-playing nurseogram at best and whore at worst.

Yet there can be no doubting the author's commitment to Dylanology nor the enormous amount of work put in. He even took a magnifying glass to see if there really are people's heads (Beatles?) in the bark of the tree on the cover? a part of Zimmerman folklore.

It was an unexpected album for its time and this book is also incongruous. Nevertheless it sheds light on a fascinating and neglected slice of evolutionary musical deadending.

LIFE AS SUTCH by LORD DAVID SUTCH  
(Harper Collins, £10.99)

I have a good excuse for including these political memoirs in FF, for I once wrote songs for the performer.

Screaming Lord Sutch and The Savages appeared at the K-D Klub in Billingham in the mid-Sixties. My pal Richard Wilson and I went to see them at this Teesside venue and were extremely impressed. It was sheer showmanship and he utterly terrified the girls at the front of the audience.

As a vignette to reveal his caring nature, when later in the office to receive payment, he was perturbed whether takings were sufficient to cover his fee, and if not, offered to take less money. In fact the owner's father was a self-made millionaire.

After this Richard and I got chatting to him and told him we were trying to break into songwriting. He told us that there was an American No. 1 single at the time called Haunted House and he had been asked to do an album along similar lines in the hopes of breaking into the transatlantic market. He asked if we could supply songs quickly. Naturally we agreed and got down to the demo tapes. Shortly afterwards we received a Christmas card from David. On the front was a picture of him shaking hands with Premier Harold Wilson (my chum's father's name, by coin-

vidence) and inside a note to the effect that the songs were fine and were to be recorded under Joe Meek's supervision. We heard no more and Meek shot his landlady and then himself in 1968.

But here's the anecdotal/apocryphal bit. Two people have claimed they heard a Sutch recording of one of the songs we wrote on the radio. "Down in the Graveyard" was dire, but I still occasionally sing it when I recount this episode of personal history.

Perhaps some day David will invite me to join his Cabinet. Minister of Transport would suit me fine.

At the end of the first chapter you realise the book is not going to be entirely serious when he relates that Winston Churchill approached him during a wartime walkabout. Young Sutch knelt before him, they spoke briefly and shouting "Now Sutch, get out of my way, you little squirt" he took his fat cigar from his mouth and stubbed it out on the child's outstretched, pleading hand. The hand the Greatest Living Englishman had scarred so badly was his voting hand.

An older Sutch would realise: "By that branding he had passed on the torch of his destiny and that of the British people, to little me."

But first he invented the rock 'n' horror genre, which having seen him in 1965 I can confirm his stage act was brilliant; when he stuffed maggots down girls' dresses they would - as he politely puts it - "go into hysterics; piss themselves, pass out, or do all three in quick succession."

But the political part is greatly amusing, particularly Sutch's friendship with that other redoubtable candidate Lt. Cdr. Bill Boaks, the road safety fanatic, whose all-time low was only five votes in the by-election at Glasgow Hillhead.

I also recall the infamous Darlington by-election and Sutch's viewpoint was one I was not aware of, including (perhaps apocryphal) the visit by Churchill's grandson and Sutch's addition that during the Gulf War he was amused to read in papers that when Churchill junior visited our troops he introduced himself to one soldier by saying: "Hello, I'm Winston Churchill". "Oh yes, and I'm Rommel," the reply promptly came back.

However, to hark back to any chance of my becoming his rail supremo, he recalls lugging his luggage over the footbridge at Crewe at a cold 3am. One of two chaps recognises him and speaks sarcastically, but before David can reply they are engrossed in the passage of a locomotive below. Sat minutes later in his warm compartment he muses that cold figures out there trainspotting are the real loonies (like me).

The book is packed with anecdotes, many very revealing about prominent politicians and also bits from rock 'n' roll past and present.

Conspiracy buffs note that there are still those who are suspicious of Loony self-funding and think deposits must come from devious source. Sutch also reveals that corn circles were created by the party using the backwash from a Marshall amplifier.

This extremely funny, mildly-bawdy, tongue-in-cheek book was co-authored with Peter Chippendale.

**SECRETS OF THE SOIL** by PETER TOMKINS & CHRISTOPHER BIRD (Arkana, £12.99)

Irish round towers as paramagnetic antennae receiving cosmic energy for cultivation and Mayan pyramids on "ley lines" controlling weeds and insects. From such claimed historical golden age agriculture, the authors confront the reader with the indisputable soil pollution by chemicals of the 20th century and argue not only the benefits of organic farming but use of radionics to create improved crops and livestock. If you can overcome natural cynicism, give this account of biodynamic farming a hearing.

# Magazines

**DEAR MR THOMS.** A non-profitmaking folklore miscellany, distributed to members of the British Folk Studies Forum and its friends.

Sub is £5 for approximately six issues. From Gillian Bennett, 28 Brownsville Road, Stockport SK4 4PF.

No. 25. Paul Smith explores the well-established tradition of photocopying bits of the human body with examples and illustrations from literature and anecdote (I recall this being the "theme" in a sequence in a top-shelf magazine a few years ago when the nubile not only



ILLUSTRATION FOR THE GREAT ESCAPE

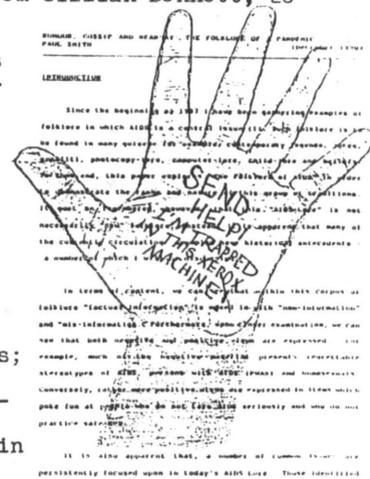
photocopied her breasts but her private parts as well). Other topics featured include stolen human kidneys; Craig Shergold relocating all over the USA; chain letter problems; Body Shop bounty for inch-long nails rumour; Monster Raving Loony Party; Mirrogate warning signs; ABC; medical horrors; tarmacadam floors.

No. 26 Bill Scott looks at how convicts created a new Australian literature and how specialist house building developed. Alien big cats are the quarry of a London detective constable (reported from Observer, 14/6/92). Oddly uncredited history of roaming garden gnome. Two versions of an egregious recipe overcharge, wellknown to Brunvand fans, plus bizarre "chain-letter cake" based on quantities of yeast! Dutch dobermans' horror story from Brunvand himself. Plus news cuttings on drug tattoos, spin-drier kitten, driver leaves wife behind and inflatable sheep sex aid.

No. 27. "Boem" circulated by carers of aged with mythical origin; Desiderata; Daniel Defoe Aids-style amour revenge analogue; early morning train as population booster; updates on costly cookie recipe, bosom serpent, satanic abuse and photocopying body parts.

**STRANGE MAGAZINE.** US glossy professional magazine equivalent to our own Fortean Times. From P O Box 2246, Rockville, MD, 20847, USA. Cheques in sterling to Mark Chorvinsky. Four-issue sub £13.50. Available several London book stores.

No. 9. At the heart of the mag's raison d'etre, Michael Grosso offers a timely essay on the motives of anomalists; those of us drawn irresistibly to the metaphysical twilight zone. After last issue's blitzkrieg on Tony Shiels, the editor has dramatically reduced coverage of his "exposed" with only one piece on Shiels and fairy photos. Of interest to FF subscribers who were with it during its The Shaman incarnation, where I published an exclusive article with Shiels' drawings of monsters, a letter here by Tony states the Nessie and Morgawr are authentic and "the 1983 photographs, taken in Ireland, are not really good enough to argue about. All the rest may be hoaxes, some of them most certainly are." The onus being put upon anyone by Tony himself.



Appropriately Kristan Lawson examines the theory and practice of hoaxing. Paul Wydeen looks at Pacific cargo cults and the similar theme in ufology via ritual and sex magic and Jung. "The Dawon of Magic" by Pauwels & Bergier introduced me to the fringe subjects I've pursued ever since, so the in-depth article on Jacques Bergier was particularly interesting. Karl Shuker begins an in-depth look at hoaxed mystery animals. Much on humanoids worldwide. Plus plenty of smaller items of anomaly phenomena, either weird personal encounters, brief investigations or clippings; reviews.

## Folklore Sport

(\*) With our interest in the pin-up phenomenon, we note that women readers of a glossy soccer monthly have been calling for Page 7 fellows, bringing the response that they would doubtless be the first to object if men asked for topless pictures of players such as Karen Walker of Doncaster Belles, who finished top scorer in the Women's National League last season with 39 goals. The editor was relenting to women's lust the following issue (Football Monthly, Sept, 1992).

(\*) Tony Gdula, from Darlington, Co Durham, writes in the Northern League magazine about his request for a Bovril at Northallerton Town's tea hut. "First I got a quizzical look and then a shrug of the shoulders before the chap tore off a piece of kitchen roll for me." Gdula, predictably, asked what was going on. "Well," said the assistant, "didn't you ask for some bog roll?" (Mike Amos' Backtrack column, Northern Echo, Darlington, 1/5/92).

(\*) The news story gives no indication that a hoax using official headed notepaper is involved, but pigeon fanciers had been put in a flap after being told they would have to pay poll tax on their lofts. Council officials ruled lofts on allotment land at Shaw, near Oldham, Lamcs., were rateable as business premises (D Sport, 13/7/92).

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## Stop Press

(\*) Just when we introduced the new The Experts category heading, one of those briefly mentioned there became the subject, just after I'd written the section, of a spoof satirising just such Press stories. The mumbo jumbo in question was a revised theory on pachyderm ears. Viz (No. 56, 1992) lampooned: "A former international footballer is about to rewrite the wildlife record books. A goal-scorer turned amateur zoologist Frank Worthington believes he has made an amazing discovery which turns accepted zoological theories upside down. For former Leicester City centre forward Frank claims the experts have got it wrong - and Indian elephants have in fact got bigger ears than African elephants, not the other way round."

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## PROBLEM AREA

If you've reached this far, I beg your forgiveness. I won't bore readers with a medical bulletin, but suffice to say I have been off work since mid-May. Among factors affecting FF have been an inability to input my full commitment; eventual lack of access to any hi-tech equipment: a narrow range of contemporary media reading material; enforced use of larger typeface leading to less for you to read.

Making any sort of promise would be foolish, but I hope to get the next issue out by Christmas and for it to be an improvement, if my health picks up, Amstrad gets its finger out and I get back to work to plunder all the daily and regional newspapers. We have Jan Harold Brunvand on "dumbtown legends" lined up and would welcome anything others may wish to contribute.