

**Folklore
Frontiers
No. 20**

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Folklore Frontiers is an independent, non-profit making magazine devoted to folklore, in particular contemporary legends or urban belief tales.

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The Diary

Our cover picture this issue is of subscriber and author Karl Shuker (we follow motorbike mag Bike (October issue) in using it. An enthusiastic biker (Karl's current machine is a Honda CX500), he customised his jacket in classic rocker's style and the final result, replete with badges, studs, chains, and so on, was so eye-catching that the Walsall Leather Museum asked if they could borrow it for their Black Leather Jacket exhibition. (Walsall's Bescot loco depot has engines with a saddle motif so your editor realises the place primarily uses leather for purposes other than sadomasochism gear!). It's on until November 14, 30 or so jackets including some from celebrities such as the cast of the TV series Boon and heavy metal group Judas Priest.

Kark, is of course, best known as a cryptozoologist and authority on big cats. He recently spent a week seeking the Exmoor Beast(s) with local naturalist Trevor Beer (see picture). Sadly they did not make any sightings but Karl plans returning for more research. No black panther, but he did see a melanistic adder sunbathing on a cliff face.



ANNOUNCEMENT

In an effort to maintain a reasonable schedule this hastily compiled issue has only 24, instead of the usual 28, pages. I hope to have a full-size issue out for Christmas. There's a belter of a lead article already written, a rock 'n' roll sleaze article, and I really must get the book reviews in.

Three types of computer-generated material are here and I hope next issue to make more use of the most sophisticated of these. This will mean that you will get even more reading matter per page without causing too much deterioration of your eyesight.

Understandable enough, the Hartlepool Mail's front page demand HANDS OFF OUR MONKEY! headline (2/7/93) was emotive and, on reflection, is applauded by this writer. As author of the definitive book on the subject, Who Hung the Monkey?, I was at the time miffed as to its presentation (1) as a silly season exercise (FF19) and time lends a different perspective. Doubtless it won't have harmed my royalties nor the image of Hartlepool.

The following is an account of the media's interest in our "splash" presentation -- though I doubt if even my keen scrutiny records all the newsprint manifestations.

Even before this unexpected publicity I spoke briefly to a business journalist on the Journal, Newcastle, who wanted something light to go with a feature on the town's commercial renaissance. (2).

But back to business! The genesis of the resurgence of interest was a letter from Brian Carberry drawing attention to an article in Scottish Memories magazine. (3)

Monkey Hanging Seam

By Paul Screeton

NAME AND ADDRESS
NAME AND ADDRESS
NAME AND ADDRESS
NAME AND ADDRESS

Dear Sir
I was offside on Shell's
East Coast platform / has contact
with people who come from all over the
United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.
The majority of the people I meet
are aware of the story of the Monkey
A collage of mine described
the story of the hanging of a Monkey

in Glasgow. Knowing the
situation the few photographs
got on the platform he
thinking I would be interested.
I have enclosed a photograph
and I think your readership
might be interested to know that

Hartlepool is not alone when it comes
to being a monkey
Yours Truly
Brian Carberry

The Mail then asked Inverclyde District Council for a response, which appears below. (4)

SENT BY: INVERCLYDE DIST COUN ; 1- 7-93 9:49AM ; 0475882010+ 0429 869024;M 1

Inverclyde District Council



FAX MESSAGE

DATE: 1st Nov 1993
FROM: INVERCLYDE DISTRICT COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
CONTACT REFERENCE: MARGARET SHAW
(FAX NO. 0475 88 2010) (TEL. NO. 0475 24400)
TO: PETER J. PITCHER
HARTLEPOOL MAIL
ALORS THE NEWS SERVICE
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the Napoleonic War there was a great scare that Napoleon was going to invade Britain. A man was found wandering the streets of Greenock, a small dark haired and bearded man. People were curious as to where he came from and he was eventually arrested by the Police and questioned. No-one could understand him as he was French and didn't speak a word of English. The police assumed he was a spy and sent him for trial. He was duly hanged. This annoyed the people of Port Glasgow as they were convinced he was not a French spy, they thought he was a monkey. Greenock were therefore accused of hanging the monkey.

A short time later Port Glasgow had a problem with their town bell which had a huge crack in it. The people of Port Glasgow contacted the people of Greenock to see what advice could be given to help repair the bell. Greenock had many churches with bells and had more experience in dealing with this type of problem. In revenge for Port Glasgow criticising Greenock for the earlier incident, Greenock told the people of Port Glasgow to boil the bell. This they did and it split wide open. So when someone from Port Glasgow shouts 'who hung the monkey', Greenock retaliates by saying 'who boiled the bell'.

At this stage Peter French (appropriate Napoleonic name) was taken off the story, my sensible contribution spiked and the editor, Chris Cox, hijacked it as a front page lead (courteously asking my opinion as to whether anyone in Hartlepool would know the Greenock connection, which I conceded was remote -- even if they had a copy of my book). Phillip Hickey then went for the Scottish jugular, and that, as they say, is history.

The next day two regional newspapers followed up the tale. A simple rewrite appeared in the Northern Echo (6) whereas Tony Jones of the Journal, Newcastle, took licence in claiming the Mail carried a headline which "thundered" "Scots steal Hartlepool's most famous legend" did bother to contact Edinburgh-based monthly Scottish Memories for a quote. Sheila Norman told him: "I'm sorry if we upset Hartlepool, but this legend is quite common and crops up all over the place. I'd have to check, but there's also a town in Fife where they are supposed to have hanged a monkey." (7)

Diary

Maev Kennedy

YOU know the one about the little hairy French spy? Swarthy, tiny tattered uniform, refused to answer questions, hanged as a spy? The world-famous Greenock Monkey? In Hartlepool they would certainly hang one on the spot. Brian Smith, Mayor of Hartlepool, says furiously that the Greenock Monkey, d. circa 1760, is not the world's best-known monkey but the world's best-kept secret. The Diary was once warned "Don't mention the monkey" before visiting Hartlepool, only to find a flourishing trade in monkey postcards, T-shirts and mugs. "It's ridicu-



Maev Kennedy

lons for Hartlepool to think it has a monopoly on monkey hanging," they said loftily at Scottish Memories, a Greenock-based magazine which has just retold the well-known "local legend". Ident-

cal in every detail to the Hartlepool version, except set 30 years earlier, and the Greenock spy is found wandering the hills above the town instead of being shipwrecked. "Everyone has heard of the Greenock Monkey," they insisted at Scottish Memories (though not at the local Inverclyde District Council), adding, "There are monkey legends all over the country," OK, more monkeys please. (8)

Phil Hickey was amused that when he contacted Inverclyde council he was directed

to a real expert on the subject, Paul Screeton, who lives in your area. A woman at The Independent rang me and said it might make the Page 1 "basement" It didn't. Tony Jones rang and we had a pleasant if quick and businesslike chat. He made it sound as if he had done the real donkey work. (8)

Hanging legend is a bit of a monkey!

GRIM news for Hartlepool. There are at least five other pretenders to the legend of the monkey-hanging saga.

The Clyde-side port of Greenock (this page, Saturday) isn't — by a long chalk — the only British township which claims to have strung up a French monkey during the Napoleonic wars.

It seems that inter-town rivalry has spawned the legend throughout the land:

■ Greenock hanged their monkey in 1760 — 30 years before Hartlepool — when a ship's monkey was washed ashore from a shipwreck.

Their neighbours in Port Glasgow have never let them forget it.

■ Newcastle in Cornwall

were hanging a monkey around the same time as Hartlepoolians. The incident has entered Cornish folklore in a lengthy poem which will soon be displayed in the town museum.

■ Boddam in Aberdeenshire hanged their monkey in the 1800s. The local citizens used to lure ships on to the rocks to claim salvage rights. A ship's monkey was hanged — so folk in nearby Peterhead claim — in case it snitched to the authorities.

■ In Dorset there's a fishing port — I haven't yet identified which one — where the local bumpkins hanged a monkey because they thought it was a French spy.

■ I'm told a similar legend

circulates in the wilds of Derbyshire where a circus monkey was summarily dealt with by ignorant villagers fearing a French invasion.

I have been seeking clarification. The oracle on these matters is Paul Screeton, Hartlepool born and bred, a journalist and local historian, who is the author of a book entitled *Who Hung the Monkey?*

Paul reckons the Hartlepool legend has nothing to do with the Napoleonic wars. He believes the myth was born out of rivalry between two 19th Century railway companies which were competing for the rights to transport coal from the Teesside port.

One of the railway

directors was a man called Robinson who was caught up in the slanging match between the two companies. A popular musical hall show current at the time was *Jack Robinson and his Monkey* and the unfortunate Mr Robinson was therefore lampooned as a monkey-hanger.

Paul Screeton isn't the most popular man in Hartlepool for suggesting that his home town doesn't have a monopoly on the monkey legend. "It's a very complicated legend, but there's no doubt that other towns can make similar claims," he said.

"I'll have to be partisan, and say that our legend is the best."

Then a Greenock paper (10) belatedly joined the fray and a Lesley Couperwhite, who runs the Watt Library, whatever that is, said: "It's a story that is claimed by a number of places stretching from Aberdeenshire to Cornwall..." Very familiar and the Mail quoted him, along with a poem stressing Greenock's claim. (11)

Then in a light-hearted tea break time article about animals we learn — "the town of Hartlepool is known as 'monkey town' but visitors are advised against making such a reference. During the Hundred Years War a fully-clothed pet monkey was washed up on the shore, tried as a spy and lynched. You can see why they're still touchy." (12)

The Mail's letters pages resounded with the debate, including poems and claims that a powder monkey boy might have been hanged. (13)

To come up to date, this appeared today as I type this article:

MONKEY business or not, seaside souvenirs featuring the animal and an 'I love Hartlepool' message are staying on sale — in Whitby.

A group of visitors from Hartlepool — where the oft-repeated and much resented legend has it that the locals once hung a monkey — were upset at seeing the souvenirs and took steps to stop them being sold.

At Graham Estill's shell shop in

Whitby's Khyber Pass, the 'heavies' from Hartlepool swept all the monkeys on to the ground, damaging at least one car parked nearby.

"They got really stropky," said Graham, 43, "especially after I told them that the monkeys were my best seller."

Graham told the group that he is Hartlepool born and bred, but that did not appease them. He added: "One of them said 'You can't get away from the monkey, even in

Whitby' and with that knocked the display on to the ground."

The shells, which sell for £1.75 each, crashed into a car parked outside the shop and Graham had to give a holidaymaker from the Midlands £5 to get damaged paintwork repaired.

But Graham is adamant that the 'I Love Hartlepool Monkey' shells are staying on sale. He said: "I come from there and most people regard the monkey story as just a bit of fun." (14)

Before closing I must mention that the legend gets reasonable treatment in a significant recent book on contemporary legends (15) and our clipster Stuart Gray-Thompson informs me that it is mentioned with regard to Dorset in *Coasting*, by Jonathan Raban (can anyone photocopy the relevant extract and give publisher and publication date?).

References:

- (1) Hands off our monkey!, Mail, Hartlepool, 2/7/93.
- (2) The monkey legend, Journal, Newcastle, 26/5/93.
- (3) Letter to Mail, Hartlepool, dated 28/6/93.
- (4) Fax from Inverclyde District Council, 1/7/93.
- (5) Scottish Memories, June, 1993 (can anyone supply photocopy of article?)
- (6) Hang on — that's not your monkey!, Northern Echo, 3/7/93.
- (7) Monkey business up north, Journal, Newcastle, 3/7/93.
- (8) Diary column, Guardian, 8/7/93.
- (9) Hanging legend is a bit of a monkey! Journal, Newcastle, 7/7/93. (Cont. Page 24).
- (10) Greenock?, mid-July (credit Stuart Gray-Thompson).
- (11) Scots hang on monkey claim, Mail, Hartlepool, 19/7/93.

Did?/Didn't? (Stone me — no knickers)

One-off section, perhaps. Stories seemed to cluster in the wake of Sharon Stone's flash in the film Basic Instinct.

May 10 last year must go down as a bizarre day in journalism. One newspaper (News of the World) had a picture of Princess Fergiana peeking up Prince Andrew's kilt while nearby was the Queen. A larger picture showed Brenda Windsor enjoying a picnic in her lap and also wearing a kilt. But the newspaper commented: "Beneath the kilt? Well, we shall probably never know ..."

Even as someone uncommitted about Royalty, I found that dubious.

But the same day non-knicker obsession led another tabloid to lead with the subject (Sunday Mirror) where it was deemed essential to inform the nation Sharon Stone had been dropped by lover Dwight Yoakam for appearing without kex in Basic Instinct.

As on commentator put it:

"Serious students of the cinematic arts soon will be flocking to see Basic Instinct. Their reasons will be entirely to do with the intriguing storyline and fine performances, and nothing to do with pages of publicity about Sharon Stone crossing and recrossing her legs without any knickers on. Ms Stone seems to be a totally wonderful and trusting human being: "He told me I had to take my white underwear off because the light was reflecting off it." (Weekend Guardian, 9-10/5/92 -- which also suggested D W Griffiths had done the same to someone called Lillian Gish). Or "The director told me to take my pants off because my white underwear was reflecting. He assured me that it was dark and no one would see anything. I was so angry when I discovered he was lying." (Piers Morgan Bizarre column, Sun, 24/3/93). Another account claims she enjoyed the notoriety her no-underwear scene brought -- "You can see all the way up to Nebraska!" she supposedly screamed when she first saw it on screen (S Express Magazine, 11/10/92). Carole Malone took the moral high ground by saying "it gets right up my nose that actresses, desperate for stardom, will show you bits of their body that even their gynaecologist hasn't seen" (D Star, 22/10/92). Or the version (Sun, 8/5/92) where she tore off a flesh-coloured crotch pad which was meant to give her some cover during sex scenes with Michael Douglas. She said: "We both felt natural about it not being there."

The Sun went on to say she likes to drive to a remote canyon in the Hollywood hills and "watch insects fuck." When she showed a rock journalist the mating ladybirds she said: "That's what I call lucky ladybugs!" She also says her biggest thrill is to make love on the bonnet of a sports car -- when it's still warm from the engine. And she relaxes by firing her two pump-action shotguns or her Uzi sub-machinegun "because it feels sexy."

She is also supposed to have said: "People have made up rumours about what I've done ... I'm supposed to have slept with all my directors and leading men. I'm a bitch, a lesbian, a drunk and a junkie."

In one film she gave the crew such a hard time that they got their own back by urinating in the water before a bath scene. Also her IQ has been measured at 165 (D Star, 20/4/93) which reminds me of how Demi Moore said of the no kex scene, "I loved the power of that moment," and writer Donna Boyd wondered if "Demi has been misguided into thinking that's where her brain is?" (D Sport, 31/3/93). Another rival, Mariel Hemingway said she would have done the film "but I would have had a big problem with that crotch shot" (Mirror Woman, 7/7/93).





The human intrigue about Ms Stone's nether regions created a page lead with the headline "Is she or isn't she" when she visited a top publishing company-- and the answer was that she was wearing briefs while fistfuls of dollars changed hands "as this undie riddle spread like wildfire through the building." (D Sport, 24/8/92). After more than a year of tales of her claiming that she would no longer flaunt her body the latest cutting (Sun, 22/7/93) says she and Richard Gere rompstarters for 95% of their latest film. An insider says: "About half the time they're in bed, but the rest of the time they're doing it in every possible way."

Other celebrities to have achieved infamy through being knickerless have been:

** Shelley Preston of Bucks Fizz who gave front tables diners at a lavish bash at Wynyard Hall, Cleveland, a few years ago a saucy kexless sight.

** Sinitta was upset by paparazzi photographers when leaving a car and obviously being forgetful. (By coincidence the next day (11/5/92) I was having a heart disease medical check-up at Hartlepool General Hospital when I came across an article on knickers in the waiting area (Sun Express Magazine, No 569, 1992). Did you know the women's knickers market is worth more than £400m a year and that in 1991 women bought 226 million pairs of pants?)

** EX Mrs Wyman Mandy Smith, when marrying some footballer, wore no knickers. It was a perfect day so "losing my knickers was a good omen." (Sun, 21/6/93). Sounds like some new folklore belief in the making.

** Or how about the headline "Did they, didn't they?" regarding steamy lovers in the hit sex education video Kama Sutra (News of the World, 4/10/92). Kelvin Wise claimed: "No, we didn't. It was just good acting." Co-star Dawn St John responded: "Anyone can see we did." (Which reminds me of a past argument as to whether some actress dubbed the Sinner from Pinner and if she actually had sex in a film).

** Then there was a big issue over The Word presenter Katie Puckrick when she revealed the secret of her success was not wearing knickers (Sun, D Sport, 19/12/92)

** Wacky fashion designer Vivienne Westwood collected her OBE from the Queen wearing no knickers, which she finds uncomfortable (Sun, D Sport, 16/12/92; D Sport 17/2/92).

** Singer Maureen Cross was kicked off stage at Roseworth Social Club, Stockton, Cleveland, for not wearing knickers. Three bars into her first number treasurer Geoff Blair peered up and yelled: Get off. Stop the show. You're indecent." She responded that she was wearing boob tube, waistcoat and two pairs of tights -- no knickers -- one pair being dark, with a lace pair on top. "I don't know what he thought he saw," she said, "but I know he didn't see it." (Sun, 5/2/93; Mail, Hartlepool, 11/2/93).

The fascination of the subject led to a survey commissioned for Aristoc which found if you meet a girl without knickers she probably comes from Yorkshire. For the White Rose county girls are five times more likely not to wear anything under their tights (D Star, D Sport, 28/12/92).

That's mostly folklife and not folklore, but we suggest the next item is a prot-legend. A girl armed robber wearing a transparent dress and no underwear escaped with £1,900 from a petrol station in Dallas, Texas.

Police said pump attendants cannot recall what her face looked like (News of the World, 1/11/92). Or try this, a man shot dead his best pal during an argument over whether a woman was wearing knickers in a bar at Benton, Illinois (News of the World, 7/3/93). Then there's collectors: 1) Big knickers were being collected by women's institute members in Gwent, South Wales, to send to Russia where large sizes are in short supply. 2) Jenny Price, 20, has decorated her Liverpool bedroom with a collection

of men's under-pants from around the world (News of the World, 2/5/93).

An anti-porn campaigner was being quizzed after £5m worth of knickers were destroyed in a Vienna blaze (D Sport, Sun, 27/4/93).

In Cleveland, Ohio, it is an offence for girls to wear shiny patent-leather shoes or boots because it is feared that men might see their knickers in the reflection (D Sport, 13/5/93).

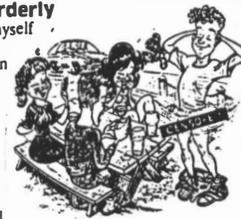
And to end, here's a court case from Yorkshire -- remember where they don't so often wear 'em -- of 42-year-old Paul Wakefield, of Wakefield (it says here, D Sport, 10/12/92, my birthday incidentally) alleged by his wife to have attacked her because she WAS wearing knickers. He denied her claims and told the city's crown court he was annoyed because wife Jeanette was NOT wearing knickers and was cleared of threatening to kill her.

Trunk 'n' disorderly

My fella Darren, myself and some friends went to Hunstanton for the day.

"Why don't you buy some novelty briefs with an animal face on the front?" I laughed, steering him into the joke shop.

So he did -- and trust Darren to choose the elephant underpants where you place your manhood inside the trunk.



We dared him to wear them out to the pub that evening. "Sure," chuckled Darren. "I'll do anything for a laugh."

(News of the World, 4/7/93)

TOURS of an undies factory are part of Knickers Breaks at the Squalow Hotel, Gateshead, Co. Durham.



"Well if you must know, the headmaster wrote it."



"Looks like someone's been sowing wild oats in the wheat field."

Sitting outside because the pub was packed, someone said: "Bet you haven't got your elephant pants on, Darren."

To prove he had, a rather tipsy Darren stood up, pulled down his jeans and started wiggling his hips, thinking he was swinging his 'trunk'.

He was totally oblivious to the fact that he'd pulled down his elephant pants, too, and was stark naked from the waist down beside a busy main road!

When everyone fell about laughing, tears rolling down their faces, he realised what he was doing.

Without batting an eyelid, Darren calmly hitched up the whole lot and sat down as if nothing had happened. Next day, he wore a paper bag on his head, though!

(Bella, No 41, 1992)

FRANK Morris got a surprise on his 90th birthday... a seat under the knicker display at Marks and Spencers.

Frank pops in every day for a joke with the girls at the store in Kendal, Cumbria.

(News & Echo, 27/6/93)

As for the Did?/Didn't? component in the section title, this centres upon two bizarre news stories regarding alleged indecent exposure.

* Funniest and least offensive was about Tim Godwin, who pulled down his tracksuit in a panic after pet ferret Gnasher dashed up his leg in the garden. Sewage worker Tim, of Reddich, Worcs, was cleared of indecent exposure after a complaint by a neighbour who saw his trousers around his knees and "a sickly smile on his face." (Sun, D Sport, 3/7/92).

* Stetching credulity and if true deplorable was the accusation by police that EastEnders actress Gilliam Taylforth had a sex romp with boyfriend Geoff Knights beside the A1. The policeman claimed they were committing an indecent act and when becoming abusive Knights was arrested for outraging public decency. Taylforth claimed Knights had been sick, was suffering from pancreatitis and he undid his trousers to ease the pain. It seems no court case followed ... (Sun, 20/6/92).



JURASSIC LARKS

Perhaps not everyone's model of perspicacity, but when the Loch Ness Monster was spotted yet again, a Daily Sport sub-editor got it in perspective with the headline "Jurassic Jock!" The Daily Star used Edna MacInnes' colour picture of a ripple and headed it with a cynical "So that's what Nessie looks like!" (both 25/6/93). Plenty of other papers covered this and subsequent sightings, but the Sport sensed the blockbuster film Jurassic Park, if not directly influencing events, was part of the media circus psychodrama which would evolve all manner of associations.

Many companies, determined to maximise profits have jumped on the JP bandwagon. The Tara dairy company in Israel put collectable dinosaur stickers on its milk cartons. But according to rabbinical authorities dinosaurs -- which scientists say died out 65 million years ago -- never existed at all because the world was created precisely 5,753 years ago.

"Dinosaurs are a symbol of heresy," says Rabbi Zvi Gefner, who is in charge of issuing kashrut certificates without which no food can be declared fit for Jews to eat. He has receive many calls from Jews angry that their children have collected stickers and he was threatening to withdraw the certificate unless it discontinued the stickers.

Naturally the scientific community responded, Rabbi Ehud Bendel, director of Hemdat, saying: "It is the obligation of the secular public and the enlightened religious public to strongly reject any attempt at extortion and coercion." So the dairy looked likely to be damned if it complied and damned if it refused (Evening Standard, 13/8/93).

Meanwhile, Southampton restaurant boss Nigel Bruce advertised dinosaur steaks and youngsters mounted a protest with placards and police were called (D Star, 29/7/93). One suspects an avaricious newsagency at work.

Essex men also cashed in with Terrydact Ale, a pale beer from Crouch End brewery, South Woodham Ferrers (D Star, 31/7/93; D Sport, 5/8/93).

Perhaps after a few beers jokers on the Isle of Wight hatched up the prank to strap a four-foot penis to a lifesize 40-foot model at an exhibition at Brightstone. Expert Nick Chase said: "It's amusing but well out of scale. Dinosaurs are not that well hung." (D Sport, 26/7/93; News of the World, 1/8/93).

Other pranksters left a huge dinosaur-style egg under a cinema seat after a JP screening in Newport, Gwent (Sun, 26/7/93). Whereas misery-guts Bob Patching made his pub in Steyning, West Sussex, a "Dinosaur-Free Zone" because he was sick of the craze (Sun, 30/7/93).

In the North-East, dragons were called "worms" and were as near as dammit the equivalent of dinosaurs. Certainly they take that role for children and a recreation of the Sockburn Worm took to the streets in Stockton, Cleveland, as part of the town's International Riverside Festival (Northern Echo, 9/8/93).

But are there any real new associated legends? What about experts who spent two months and all their £660,000 budget studying a "dinosaur egg" found in New Mexico only to discover that it was a cow's gallstone. It's the science phobia scam (News of the World, 11/7/93).



WHAT a pair of blockbusters! Cave girl Tracy Jane Garry had a Jurassic LARK when she came up against a dinosaur straight out of Stephen Spielberg's monster movie.

The sizzling beauty, 22, melted the beast's heart--and gave on-lookers the hots to boot--as temperatures soared.

Eric Evans, who huilt Dino on his front lawn in Prestwich, Manchester, said: "It looked as if a scene from the movie had come alive."

Raver

"I think he gave some people a nasty shock but he's a big softie at heart."

Eric, 55, who lost his plumbing job because bosses accused him of skipping work to build Dino, plans to take his creation on tour and raise cash for charity.

And monster raver Tracy thinks Dino will do a roaring trade...

However, I recalled a cutting from long, long ago and a time-consuming trawl through my haphazard filing system of thousands of clippings located this gem which I logged 15 years ago. With the anachronistic heading "Mammoth Production" it went:

When Bristol Hippodrome advertised its prehistoric fantasy for children with the line, "Live on stage -- duel to the death between a tyrannosaurus rex and a pterodactyl," a local conservationist grew alarmed. She complained to the RSPCA, and a rather embarrassed inspector then rang the Hippodrome "just to confirm" that live animals weren't being used. -- Peter Hillmore in *The Guardian* (Reader's Digest, April, 1978).

The Weasel diarist went to see JP and was reminded of an alleged mix-up. According to a story sometimes told at Buckingham Palace, in 1976 the Queen decided to reward the broadcaster David Attenborough for his many years of service producing her Christmas broadcasts. With words to the effect of "We must give that nice Mr Attenborough a knighthood," somewhere down the line the message was misunderstood and in the next honours list there was a knighthood for David's luvvy brother, the film director and actor Richard. So as not to draw attention to the error, David then had to wait another nine years before he finally received his title (*Independent Magazine*, 24/7/93).

Strangely the film is set on a small island ostensibly ruled by someone called John. Had he seen the film, John Major might have seen the resonance and not made the remark in a BBC interview that "Labour were in a political Jurassic Park, as far as I can see." Remember, John is forced out by the untameable saurians.



SNUFFED OUT

The subject of snuff movies keeps cropping up. Prostitute Karen White told the High Court in Edinburgh that David Edwards made "gurgling sounds" after having been kicked by four men at least 20 times in the head and chest and had a man stamp on his throat. The vice girl said the men planned to "sell" Edwards for £30,000 to a London firm that makes snuff movies (*D Sport*, 7/7/93).

Previously trading standards officers seized copies of *Cannibal Holocaust* at a children's comics and videos fair at Birmingham's Midland Hotel. The £10 movie features a white man dressed as an explorer being drugged and then decapitated and disembowelled with a knife by a tribe of half-naked Amazonian Indians. Chairman Dr Mike Hilburn said: "I have no doubt the scenes were genuine. It is beyond belief that anyone could film actual scenes of human beings being butchered." (*Sun*; *D Sport*, 6/4/93).

In an in-depth article on schoolchildren peddling porn on computer disks, Nick Squires says the product is of such high quality that they look like video films. Nude pictures of Madonna were sold for £2.50 per disk. University of Central Lancashire researcher Vicki Merchant claimed: "in addition to the usual pornographic poses, I've seen graphic close-ups of apparent rape, torture and murder." (30/7/93, *D Mail*?).

Oldies but Goodies

BABY TRAIN. To get on the right tracks here's a ferroequiological chestnut. A town's baby boom has been blamed on the express train which thunders through at 5am each day ... waking everyone up for early-morning sex. A hospital spokesman in Malakhitovo, Russia, said: "People can't get back to sleep so they kill time making babies." (*Sunday Sport*, 25/5/93).

Crash bonk alert

AMBULANCEMEN rushed to the scene of an accident after a motorist reported seeing an overturned motorcycle and two bodies lying on a roadside verge.

But when the mercy crew reached the scene, they were shocked to find the "victims" were a couple bonking madly away!

The biker explained that he had been overcome by lust as he rode home with his girlfriend on the pillion after a night out in Munich.

An ambulance man Franz Bechtel said: "There were apologies all round."

AMAZING
BUT TRUE

Finger ripped off

COPS launched a hunt for a driver in a hurry after he raced away from a motorway tollbooth -- with the toll collector's finger.

The burly motorist was handing a coin to attendant Louise Pickard when their wedding rings locked together. And as he drove off, Louise's finger was torn clean off.

As ambulance men treated the 47-year-old woman at the scene near Paris, police found her severed finger a few hundred yards away -- with her badly-twisted ring still attached.

AMAZING
BUT TRUE

THAWED CLASS TRAVEL. Peter Welbourn's "exclusive" will bring a wry smile to the faces of seasoned folklore students. British Rail supposedly allowed a glass company to try out a new toughened product. For the firm brought along an oven-ready chicken to fire at the pane placed by a train carriage. But scientists -- who'd also borrowed a high-speed catapult used to simulate aero-engine bird strikes at nearby Rolls-Royce -- forgot to thaw out their purchase and the frozen pullet-bullet blasted a huge hole clean through the carriage after shattering the glass. BR in Derby joked: "It wasn't the breakthrough they'd expected." And a spokesman for Rolls-Royce commented: "It might have worked with a fresh chicken. But frozen? It was like a cannonball!" (*D Star*, 31/5/93 -- come off it!).

FRIGHT ON THE TILES. This keeps cropping up and will be familiar enough. (See FF18:p18). Roofer David Willis fell off the top of his house when his nine-year-old son tied a safety rope to the family car. He suffered a broken leg, concussion and cracked ribs as he hit the ground when wife Michelle drove off. David, 32, from Cape Town, South Africa, said: "I figure I was dragged 200ft through the garden before the rope finally broke." (*D Sport*, 31/8/93).

ERR INDOORS. This one was in our proto-legends section in FF 16 and 17 so we can now regard it an oldie. Klaus Ackerman visited a brothel in Frankfurt while his wife was away visiting friends -- and found her working there (*News of the World*, 8/5/93).

BEST CELLAR. This one we had, too, FF17:p19. A couple who didn't want neighbours to know they could not afford a holiday took a two-week break in their cellar. The sunless spree ended when police in Steinfurt, Luxembourg, were called after a resident heard noises and thought it was a burglar (*D Sport*, 27/1/93 -- previously reported on 21/8/92 and doubtless to reappear again).

LIVEWIRE HUSBAND. A horrified wife broke her husband's arm trying to knock him off a "live" wire when she thought he was being electrocuted. As she delivered the KO blow with a plank of wood, she realised he was dancing to music on his personal stereo. No names or address but a neighbour from Southport, Lancs, said: "The only shock he got was when he was belted by his missus." Sorry, Bill Done (!? *D Sport*, 14/10/92) we know the foaftale well (FF18:pp18/19).

PHANTOM DANCER. Stan Kapowski spent the night dancing with the sexy Polish-American girl and she readily accepted his offer of a lift home. But he got a shock when she asked him to stop the car at a cemetery ... and walked straight through a wall. Next day he found she was a ghost. known as the Ice Princess who had haunted the Milwaukee dancehall for half a century. He said: "She was an excellent dancer and we spent a very enjoyable evening together. I noticed her hands were very cold to the touch but I had other things on my mind." (*D Sport*, 12/8/93). Obviously to much of a lothario to notice she was dressed 50 years out of date!

STIFF SENTENCE. Firstly let me tell you of a story my father told me years ago. When a rag and bone man's horse expired on the highway a constable was called and had to make a report in his notebook. As he could not spell Baldersara Street, the copper dragged the dead horse into Park Road ... which he could spell. So I doubted the veracity of the item about a PC who said he had drawn his "staff" in a fight and was asked by a London judge why he hadn't used the word "truncheon." The PC replied: "I couldn't spell truncheon in my report, sir." (News of the World, 15/8/93).

*** A MAN from Johannesburg shot a hare and threw it into the back of his car. Regaining consciousness, the hare touched the gun — and shot the hunter in the neck.**

*** DURING the Siege of Ladysmith at Christmas, 1899, the Boers fired a shell full of plum puddings at the British lines with the message: "Compliments of the season."**

(D Sport, 14/5/93)

(D Sport, 29/1/93)

Folklore Sport

"I didn't know Albert had taken up pigeon racing!"



Soccer player Mickey Thomas was jailed for 18 months in July for his role in a forged banknotes racket, passing dud £10 notes to apprentices at second division Wrexham. Before going into court Thomas joked with newsmen: "Has anybody got change for a tanner for the phone?" Our illustration shows a joke note found in Wales after Thomas' arrest (D Express, 31/7/93).



"But think how much the tooth-fairy will bring you."



This "priceless story" was told by Chelsea skipper about former teammate Vinny Jones when John Major met them at a pre-match meal.

"Hello Vinny, how are you settling in?" asked Major.

Jones replied: "Fine thanks, Mr Major, not too bad."

As Major turned to leave, Jones, thinking he was out of earshot, muttered: "Sort the fucking interest rates out, will you?"

"I'm trying, I'm trying," replied Major. (Frank Fearless column in D Sport, 23/10/92).

And lastly a familiar theme from elsewhere this issue. Paul Grierson, of Liverpool, won 24 cans of Harp lager for his Faxine of the Week (Sun, 2/9/93).

Question: What have Sharon Stone's knickers, Newcastle, Swindon and West Ham all got in common?

Answer: None has much chance of staying up for long.

Hart village alert as driver spots black beast

Wednesday, August 25, 1993.

A MOTORIST has put Hartlepool villagers on the alert after claiming he has seen one of the region's legendary pumas. Paul McLoughlin, 32, spotted the "beast", which he said was bigger than an Alsatian, on his way to work this morning at around 7.50am.

He was travelling into the town along the Hart bypass when he saw what he thought was a puma in the fields on the right hand side of the road.

There have been a number of sightings in Barnard Castle, Fishburn, Teesdale, Bowburn and throughout the County Durham area since 1986 but this is believed to be the first sighting in Hartlepool.

A B C

"There are horses in the field and naturally they had necks like giraffes today because they were interested in something at the other side of the field," said Paul who works as a field sales advertising representative at The Mail.

"Then I saw this beast very big, very black and very close to the ground. It was just walking round in circles over the same

piece of land watching the horses." But, despite experts saying that there may be a group of pumas, possibly more than ten, surviving on rabbits and sheep in the North-East, locals remain sceptical.

"Someone's been drinking too much!" said Hart Post Office owner Eddie Watson. "There may be deer in the fields, but I don't believe there are pumas."

And local farmer, Mr JH Thompson of Hart Moor Farm, also thought someone's had one too many. "I think it may be a black sheep and someone's had too much to drink," he said.

Neither the land owner, Ian Forbes, nor staff at the Raby Arms pub have seen or heard anything of the mystery creature.

PUMA

Thursday, August 26, 1993.

THE HARTLEPOOL sighting of one of the North-East's legendary pumas has triggered an amazing response from Mail readers.

Our switchboard hardly stopped ringing as people came forward to verify yesterday's glimpse of the mysterious beast whilst others revealed they had seen it in the past but didn't dare speak for fear of being ridiculed.

One anonymous caller said he spotted the creature at 9.30am yesterday morning whilst walking near the Hart railway line. That sighting came just two hours after Mail advertising representative Paul McLoughlin saw it near the Hart bypass.

"It had very long ears. It was n't as big as an Alsatian but it was too big to be a cat. It may have been a young cub," the man said.

"I know there were sightings in Durham and this rail corridor leads to Durham."

Meanwhile a Hart village dog owner heard her dog barking at about 6am at something outside the house.

"We have a hunting dog trained specially to hunt cats and other large game and he started going berserk. I'm not saying it was a puma, but there was definitely something out there," she said.

And Joseph Jobson, 46, spotted the animal at the Castle Eden Walkway.

"It was more agile than a dog but it was so quick I couldn't tell what sort of cat it was."

Another villager noticed something strange in the fields shortly after 8am.

Meanwhile Denton Owen, 69, said he had a close encounter with the wildcat seven weeks ago near the Hesleden Hall on the Hart to Haswell walkway.

"It was about 40 to 50 yards in front of me sitting on its haunches. It was definitely a puma," he said.

"It was dark brown on its back and it got lighter down the sides."

SPECIAL REPORT By Claire Coughman and just ask for the newsdesk.

Gerry Johnson, 59, didn't see the creature itself, but he did spot tell-tale signs.

"I took my mum to Hart Cemetery in July and under the trees I noticed a flattened patch of grass where something had been lying. It was twice as big as if an Alsatian had been lying there."

"I went over and felt the grass and it was still warm so whatever it was had obviously just left."

And Joseph Jobson, 46, spotted the animal at the Castle Eden Walkway.

"It was more agile than a dog but it was so quick I couldn't tell what sort of cat it was."

Another anonymous caller said: "We were out walking in Hart about five years ago and driving home we spotted something in the fields. We stopped our car and saw what was definitely some kind of large cat."

"You can tell the difference between a large dog and a large cat and, no, we hadn't been drinking!"

The Mail Published in Hartlepool since 1877

LOOSE!

Photographer's nerve snapped!

By BERNICE SALTZER

THE MAIL'S chief photographer Dirk van der Werff is a man who prides himself on all ways getting his picture. But there's one story he readily admits that when it came to fear or professionalism, the former won.

The sitings this week of a huge black cat prowling the outskirts of Hartlepool may have met with a cynical reception in some quarters.

But they are claims which Dirk is more than ready to believe - because of a terrifying personal experience.

It was eight years ago, about the time of a number of reported sitings of a mysterious creature, that Dirk was driving back to work from a job at Trimdon. "I was coming back along by Hurworth Burn reservoir when just before the old railway bridge I saw this black animal striding across the road," said Dirk. The photographer stopped the car and jumped out, peering into the nearby fields.

"I couldn't see anything and I couldn't believe that it could have disappeared so quickly," said Dirk.

Ditch

"Then I looked down into the ditch beside the field and I saw this creature lying down full length." Dirk now admits that he "just froze" before jumping into the car and driving off.

His close encounter of the feline kind still terrifies him eight years on and is just one more piece in a mysterious jigsaw which stretches nationwide.

Reports of seeing big cats in the wild go back to the 1960s, when around 90 claims of sitings of an animal which eventually became known as the Surrey Puma came to light.

Over the years reports have come in from as far afield as Caithness in Scotland, to Devon and Dorset in the south, and to Norfolk in the east from people claiming to have seen an alien big cat.

Often these reports are linked with the discovery of slaughtered animals, sometimes so badly mutilated that it couldn't be explained away as the work of a fox.

In 1964 farmer Edward Blacks, of Bushylease Farm in Surrey, claimed to be constantly bothered by a strange animal.

Although he and his family never

£100 for the first beast picture

Is it fact or pure fantasy?

We want proof that there is a mystery wild cat on the loose in our area and we want our readers to come up with the evidence.

We are offering £100 reward to the first Mail reader to come up with a genuine photograph of the black beast that was spotted on the outskirts of Hartlepool yesterday.

Judging by the number of people who have already come forward with reported sightings, it shouldn't be too difficult to get the photograph we are looking for.

Get snapping - without trespassing on private land - and if you come up with a shot of the beast give our photographic department a ring on 0429-274441.

saw the creature, they were aware of something disturbing the farm animals.

The matter came to a head on August 30 when a large Friesian bull was found badly mauled but still alive, while on another occasion Mr Blanks discovered the remains of a 90-pound calf which had been dragged over three

fields.

"A fox couldn't have done that," he said.

Sitings in this area are certainly not new, with reports in the Mail of what is known as the Durham Puma stretching back to the mid-

80s. Descriptions of it vary from "a panther-type animal" to "a black puma," while claims have been made that it has been responsible for the slaughter of many smaller animals and livestock over the years.

Former policeman Eddie Bell became a self-styled expert on the Durham Puma, investigating numerous sitings over the years.

And while it's easy to be dismissive of the claims, experts say that it is perfectly feasible that these creatures are out there.

Alec Coles is the principal keeper of natural science at Newcastle's Hancock Museum and says that "you can't prove or disprove that the Durham Puma exists."

"Over the years there have been a lot of injuries to livestock which people have claimed is the result of a puma attack," he said. "Nobody has actually proved it but it is possible that there could be big cats on the prowl."

Alien

Mr Coles added that over the years animals alien to this country like the Muntjac deer or the grey squirrel have been brought over from abroad and now live here successfully.

"We know for example that there are wallabies now living in the Pennines," he said.

Mr Coles added that if there were big cats living out of captivity, they have probably come from zoos or private collections.

His words were echoed by Neville Wilby, curator at Flamingoland zoo. "Pumas live in the Rockies and areas like that, so they could cope very well in an area like this," he said.

As more and more people admit to seeing some kind of creature the story becomes increasingly difficult to dismiss.

As Alec Coles says: "This is a very large area and if there is one escaped creature it is quite feasible that it could be living out there and hunting at night."

6 THE MAIL, Friday, August 27, 1993

Puma scare: more see beast

RSPCA bosses today warned Hartlepool people to keep away from a mystery beast as new sightings linked it nearer the town.

A number of callers said they had seen the large cat, in the Brierton Quarry and West View areas of the town whilst one man claimed to have seen a similar beast at High Tunstall Court three years ago.

Friday, August 27, 1993.

Derek Winwood, 41, and his wife June, 40, told the Mail they saw the creature three weeks ago in fields near their West View Road home.

"On our way to bed we happened to glance out of the window," said June.

"There's a lot of undergrowth and we saw our cat looking at

something big and black.

"We thought it was a dog at first but it was definitely a big cat - it made our look like a kitten!"

The High Tunstall Court sighting occurred when a man was out walking his dog.

"I saw a creature similar in size to a box-

er or rottweiler but it wasn't a dog," he said.

"My dogs chased it but it scurped up the embankment within seconds."

Another anonymous caller saw it in 1988.

"I walked past Greatham and Newton Bewley towards Wolviston when I heard something in the field."

"I stopped to look and I saw something big and black hissing and spitting."

"It wasn't a domestic cat because I keep cats myself and I know what they sound like, and it was too big."

RSPCA Inspector Cameron Harris said: "If anyone does come across a large cat don't approach it, keep quiet and stay away. Just let it carry on doing whatever it's doing."

TWO calves have been torn to pieces by a mystery wild animal.

The Friesians were mutilated in two night-time attacks. Farmer Keith Humphreys, 59, of Long Stratton, Norfolk, said: "This may be a big cat, like an escaped puma."

"The attacks were horrific and beyond what dogs or foxes could do."

Left D Sport; right Sun; both 31/8/93.

Puma on rampage

AN escaped puma has been blamed for killing and mutilating two newborn calves on a farm. Police and a vet have examined the remains of the calves after the attack at farmer Keith Humphreys' farm in Fornsett St Peter, Norfolk. He fears the killings may have been done by a black puma spotted in the area last year. Mr Humphreys, 59, said: "We are worried. If it could do this to a calf, it could kill a child."

From Nick Brown, of York.

Perhaps the following two items might be interesting enough to be included in the next edition?

HERM

With regards to the existence of railways on small islands, I think Herm should warrant a mention.

This piece of land, roughly 1½ miles x ½ mile was the first of the Channel Islands to have had a railway. It was built in the 1850s consisting of an iron tramway running from the avarries to the pier. As much as 600 tones of granite a day could by this means be shipped for exportation. The gauge of the line was an unusual 4ft 5 3/4in.

GREENLAND

The now tiny settlement of Narsarsuaq in South Greenland holds a dark secret ... The village had its beginning as the "Blue West One" US military base during WWII. It was constructed practically overnight and by 1945 was Greenland's biggest settlement with a population of 5,000, and all the refinements of a small US town. The base lasted through two wars; WWII and Korea. Here the US sent its "hopeless" casualties, those so mutilated in battle they would have dampened the war enthusiasm of the American public had they gone home. None of these patients sent to Narsarsuaq ever left; their families were informed of their soldier's death in action (supposed), and were sent a bottle of ashes. Once its usefulness expired, Narsarsuaq was abandoned. The military surplus was sold to Norway, and the site destroyed. Today the settlement of 150 exists as an ice monitoring station.

From Mike White, of Churchdown, Glos.

I have enclosed a cheque to cover my next year's subscription to FF and also a sheet which has been doing the rounds at work recently. Rumour has it that it originated in Australia ... (see Photocopylore - Editor). Actually, this is a good excuse to say thanks since it was reading Quicksilver Heritage years ago that started my interest in things Fortean. Small world. Keep up the good work with FF.

Letters

Photocopylore

Hazardous Materials Information System

Material Safty Data Sheet

Chemical Analysis

Element: Woman

Element: W_o_2

Discoverer: Adam

Atomic Mass: Accepted as 180lb but known to vary from 100lb to 550lb

Physical Properties

1. Surface usually covered with a painted film
2. Boils at nothing and freezes without reason
3. Melts if given special treatment
4. Bitter if incorrectly used
5. Found in various states ranging from virgin metal to common ore
6. Yields to pressure applied to correct points

Chemical Properties

1. Has a great affinity for gold, silver, platinum and precious stones
2. Absorbs great quantities of expensive substances
3. May explode without prior warning and for no known reason
4. Insoluble in liquids but activity greatly increased by saturation in alcohol
5. Most powerful money reducing agent known to man

Common Uses

1. Highly ornamental especially in sports cars
2. Can be a great aid to relaxation

Tests

1. Pure specimen turns rosy pink when discovered in natural state
2. Turns green when placed beside better specimen

Hazards

1. Highly dangerous except in experienced hands
2. Illegal to possess more than one

Proto-legends

Any reference to bodily functions or sound -- including the pulling of lavatory chain, wow! -- during a theatrical farce causes mirth. There was the story about Torquay United football club fining players if they broke wind in the changing rooms and for other stupid misdemeanours.

However, this is proto-legend time, where we assess tales which are of dubious validity and may well repeat in contemporary legend style.

First off, Heidi Sabel allegedly died of shame -- after passing wind during her wedding ceremony. Guests were shocked as the nuptials were punctuated by a loud rasp from Heidi, 23. The she turned bright red and slumped to the floor. Pastor Peter Mattis said: "A doctor said there was no doubt that she literally died from shame."

Devastated bridegroom Alain Gates, 35. said: "I could hear her stomach growling and I and I knew it was just from nerves. Then just asit was her turn to say her vows she broke wind really loud -- so loud that everyone in the church started laughing. She looked at me and mouthed the words 'I'm sorry' and then shge just collapsed. A Zurich inquest found that Heidi died from heart failure triggered by acute stress.

Back to sport. A Sun (1/6/93) page 3 lead was all about a US college football coach whose wife rewarded success on the pitch with sex. I doubt the veracity of the tale of Helmet, California, kids getting ervices on a sliding scale -- good pass got kisses and cuddles; vital tackle repaid with oral sex; touchdown for full sex -- and would not be surprised to see more versions. It's rather like the joke -- she's only had sex twice; once with a platoon of guardsmen, the other time with the local soccer squad. Kelly Brown's husband was even rumoured to have videoped the romps using a two-way mirror. the couple supposedly got five years' probation and a 16-month jail sentence (the lads were 17 so what was the crime/charge?).

This one sounds dodgy, too. Three boys, it says, were saved from a roasting when a porn film they were watching got stuck in the video during a power cut. Electricity chiefs agreed to restore supplies in Angers, France, so they could get the tape out before mum got home. Really? (D Star, 26/7/93).

Next almost verbatim comes an implausible case of embarrassment with theat other legendary factor giveaway, irony.

A Seattle professor specialises in studying embarrassment. Edward Gross says you shouldn't ignore being embarrassed. A diplomat who did sacrificed his career. At a reception he noticed his flywasopen. He sat down and tried to zip himself up, but caught his tie in the zipper. The hostess came to help but he waved her away -- but raising his head tightened the noose and he began turning blue. A guest thought he was having a heart attack and offered mouth-to-mouth. The whole room was agog by the time the hostess returned with scissors. The diplomat snipped his tie and fled. But news spread within hours, his image was wrecked and his career was over. "He should have faced the problem. Fleeing only made matters worse," said the professor (*Prince Journal, Philadelphia, 9/11/92*)

Who would beleive this one? A circus bear fled a hunter tracking him by using his big top skills. The animal was bought from a Russian circus by an unscrupoloustourist agent after he was asked to provide a tripper with a "wild bear hunt." The American tourist was then set up in Moscow's Perdelinko Forest and the bear released. But as the hunter closed in a postman was passing and at the sight of the bear tumbled from his cycle. The bear instinctively recalled his circus training and grabbed the bike and pedalled away (Sun, 21/6/93)

A hosewife bought a pup from a Russian black marketeer in the Polish capital of Warsaw. He told her it was a Siberian shepherd dog. A fortnight later she complained to a vet that all it did was sleep. He explained the large "pup" was a polar bear hibernating (D Star, D Sport, 11/2/93). Another dog-loving couple bought a cuddly white stray, this time at a Budapest streetmarket and again a vet is the figure who breaks

the news that their pet which had a huge appetite and was getting vicious, was in reality a polar bear. The item added that polar bears are often sold by zoos but on the black market they can fetch around £10,000 (D Mirror, 10/3/93).

Here's another half-dozen Russian tales:

1. A busload of desperate Russian shoppers refused to interrupt a trip to Poland simply because one of their party died of a heart attack, Tass claimed. Instead they travelled on for several days, leaving the corpse on the back seat (Sun, Hartlepool Mail, 11/1/93).

2. A Russian family had christened their baby Voucher to honour a promise made by President Boris Yeltsin. He announced every citizen would receive a 10,000 rouble privatisation cheque. The family in the Urals was following a time-honoured Russian tradition of naming their children after current events. After the October revolution new-born daughters rejoiced in the name Revolyutsiya and Oktyabrina. At the end of the 1950s many boys were named Sputnik (D Sport, 8/1/93).

3. The most popular tattoos among Russian convicts are the faces of Lenin, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and Mrs Thatcher. The first three are strictly for men while the Iron Lady is a favourite with women cons as a sign of toughness (D Sport, 27/2/93).

4. State canteens in central Russia thought they had found the way to stop guests wanting to steal the soup spoons by drilling holes in them, but now diners have to plug the holes with bread.

5. Police in the Russian Far East port of Nakhodka opened a criminal case against a 35-year-old only identified as Tamara for "organ sabotage." Her toyboy Vasily told her he was leaving and after a final bout of passion she cut off his genitals with a knife. Doctors failed to sew 25-year-old Vasily's genitals back on (D Star, 22/10/92).

6. According initially to the Wall Street Journal an Australian launched a dirty joke chat-line in Russian, resulting in teenagers in Moldova running up phone bills the equivalent of six months' salary for their parents (Guardian Weekend, 30/1/93).

Now to hi-tech tales. Firstly a version of the movie Indecent Proposal plot, which could be true or partially true as there's a picture and names. John Turner, 27, of Huddersfield, saw his neighbour Gavin Spencer playing with the £44 Super Mario Three game he couldn't afford, and asked if he could borrow it. Gavin wasn't keen but asked for a fair swap. John said: "I knew he'd always fancied my wife Lisa so I asked him if he'd like to swap the game for her. He didn't hesitate for a moment!" Lisa, 25, agreed to spend the night with Gavin and said: "I thought I was worth a lot more than £44, but I made up my mind to enjoy the night. Gavin's only 21, so I taught him a lot. I think he'll agree that he got the best of the deal!" Gavin said: "John wasn't in a hurry to give my Super Mario back, but then I wasn't in a rush to let him have Lisa back either." (News & Echo, 23/5/93).



GAME... Lisa

Still with video games, a 12-year-old boy supposedly became so hooked he suffered withdrawal symptoms if he did not get a "fix." He could not eat or sleep. Doctors in Castlefranco, Italy, cured him by putting "Game Over" signs around his house (Sun, 14/12/92).

Video filming next as tourist Natalie Ann Pizarek was horrified when she realised she'd videoed her husband having a fatal heart attack while he messed about in the sea. She said: "He wanted me to take pictures of him goofing off in the water, but he disappeared into the sea and I knew something was very wrong." Ron, 56, suffered a coronary during the frolics and died. They came from Livonia, Michigan, but where the demise occurred is not recorded (D Sport, 2/3/93).

British Telecom subscribers in Glemsford, Sussex, would rush to the phone only to hear it go dead with a background cut-off signal. One woman got calls every 15 minutes. BT said there was probably a fax machine somewhere in the world dialling up numbers until it got an answer and was considering putting fax machines in villagers' homes in an attempt to trace the source of the calls (Mail on Sunday, 24/1/93).

Books

UFOS: THE FINAL ANSWER? by David & Therese Marie Barclay
(Blandford, £12.99)

A father and daughter combination have put together a collection of viewpoints which cover most topics within ufology. Presented intelligently and without any overt biases, the essays leave the reader to make personal conclusions. Hardly a star cast of contributors, nevertheless this overview presents a general state of the art summary.

Good to see the Silpho Moor, Yorkshire, case back for public examination. I keep meaning to do an article on rumours I've heard about this and conspiracy (?) aspect I came across in Leeds City library. Is this just a hoax or have investigators been asking the wrong questions?

THE PARANORMAL by PERCY SEYMOUR (Arkana, £6.99)

The publicity handout describes this as "science meets magic" but it is not quite this: it seeks to define how sensory perception can be reconciled with science. It attempts to explain some aspects of the paranormal, including the human aura, apparitions, telepathy and clairvoyance and our ability to look into the future, drawing on the two theories of relativity and quantum theory.

Dr Seymour investigates the level of space inaccessible to the senses and scientific instruments, and therefore beyond our present understanding of reality. Central to this extrasensory space is the theory that subatomic particles trail bundles of electric force through space and time, weaving a plasma web resonating at a speed faster than light -- technically impossible as the situation stands. The idea that it isn't is embroiled in a proof known as Bell's theorem, the work of leading theoretical physicist John Bell, who died in 1990, and recently described as "the most profound discovery of science."

HOLY MADNESS by GEORG FEURSTEIN (Arkana, £6.99)

Wacky Waco apocalypse put crazy cult leaders into a renewed public focus. Here the spiritual supermarket of grunge gurus and arsehole adepts comes under suspicion; a challenge to our commonsense and foibles. Pascals galore are exposed but the study also looks beyond and at the realm of tricksters and eccentrics, seeking to see if the antics and shock tactics of the enigmatic are legitimate teaching tools or the work of common and lunatics.

A RECORD OF MEETINGS by P D OUSPENSKY (Arkana, £10.99)

I have always found Ouspensky impenetrable, but am willing to concede that for others he may well be one of the most profound and influential writers and speakers of this century. Originally in print in an edition limited to only 20 copies, this work is now available to a wider audience.

AYURVEDA -- LIFE, HEALTH AND LONGEVITY by ROBERT E SVOBODA (Arkana, £8.99)

"Ayur" means life and "veda" means knowledge, so it is the knowledge of life, dealing with the qualities that are encountered every day and how they interact and affect our well-being. At the core of ayurveda are three forces or energies which broadly relate to the air, fire and water principles. These forces govern all biological, physiological and psychological functions of the body and mind. They are essential components and protective barriers when they are in balance. When out of balance, these forces contribute to the disease process. It treats not just the ailment but the whole person and emphasises the prevention of disease to avoid the need for cure.

Magzines

FORTEAN TIMES. The Journal of Strange Phenomena. One year (six issues) UK £12. US \$30. Make cheques payable to John Brown Publishing and send to Fortean Times, 20 Paul Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DX.

No. 69. Interview with ufo abduction researcher Dr David Jacobs which does nothing to make me believe there is an objective phenomenon (tellingly Jacobs portrays abductees as depressed, paranoid and lacking self-esteem; the three hallmarks of an alcoholic). Next circlemaking; Jim Schnabel gives his guide to the hoaxers. Intriguing spiritual yet gossipy piece on Tibetan environment (with references to a sword with a knot in its blade and a famous hat woven from the pubic hair of 108 dakinis - who/what they are). Other articles cover New Zealand moa claims, cold fusion, Chinese ideological cannibalism, rumours of a wonder substance dubbed red mercury; rumours of US servicemen still in Indochina labour camps. Of the columnists I am in 100% agreement with Colin Wood on the subject of the fossil record; other topics are astrology, similarity between sexual response and the paranormal, and call to distinguish between "real" out of place animals and "phantoms" of rumour. Plus strange days review of latest Fortean events, letters and book reviews.

No. 70. Strange Days section covers such urban legends as the stuck couple, bar codes replacing ring pulls for dialysis machine hoax, knock-out drops hysteria panic and bosom serpent (true?). A major article by Jim Schnabel suggests Munchausen's syndrome and Munchausen's by proxy spring from an ancient shamanistic re-

flex; persuasive as some of the arguments are, I feel he is lumping something commonplace but lurid with a genuinely rare and sacred phenomenon. Bob Rickard interviews John Blashford-Snell. Also Christian relics; epic canine journeys; faked early man skulls; divine butterfly calligraphy; Canadian sea serpents; Great Pyramid. Columnists on acting, reappearing trees, Darwinism and Turin shroud.

THE WILD PLACES. The journal of strange and dangerous beliefs. Going bimonthly. Single issue £1.65; 4 for £6; US \$18 for 4. Payment to Kevin McClure, 42 Victoria Road, Mount Charles, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4QD.

No. 7. Editor Kevin McClure casts a timely sceptical eye over the shamanistic experience industry; new conspiracy column by Robin Ramsay films of life after death; Dr David Gotlib argues persuasively that False Memory Syndrome raises legitimate concerns with serious moral and ethical implications for the field of alien abductions and claims of satanic abuse or incest. Excellent mags review section, including how when your editor introduced himself to Kevin on a Cornish train, Kevin found it "nice to meet a legend at last!"

THE CROP WATCHER. Single issue £1.75; £6.30 for four. Cheques to The Crop Watcher, 3 Selborne Court, Tavistock Close, Romsey, Hants, SO51 7TY.

No. 17. Editorial endorses new Jim Schnabel book 98% and Andy Collins reports on Schnabel giving a frank question and answer session in Essex. Collins also responds robustly

to a snide, smug, scurrilous and totally unwarranted personal attack by arrogant "psychical researcher and practical occultist of some years experience" Robert France, the man who bored us all rigid in the otherwise exemplary Northern UFO News and whose literary bullyboy misplaced gloating has certainly backfired and left him deservedly in the proverbial (first rule of occultism being ye reap what ye sow). Plus squashed or flayed animals associated with unusual circular ground traces; 1964 Essex case investigated by Collins; Canadians argue mechanical depression does not damage crops; Dennis Stacy responds to Henry A adedel; Colin Andrews on radio, Mags round-up.

TOUCHSTONE. Published by Surrey Earth Mysteries Group. Q. £2 for 4. Cheques to J Goddard, 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 2PX.

No. 37 Norfolk leys revisited with corn circle exactly across one. Roman centuriation explained (land division into squares); dowsing workshop account; Wiltshire leys; Kingston revisited.

AMSKAYA. Magazine of STAR Fellowship. Q. £2. From 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Surrey. Chques payable to J Goddard.

No. 29. Transcript of commentary by Howard Menger, who claimed he visited the Moon in 1956 and saw in a dome various eathlings working in co-operation. Men in Black, cover-up and pseudoscientific energy claims. Short Tony Wedd extract.

SINISTER. Tony Shiels' occasional personalzine for fellow SINners, dedicated to surrealchemy, insobriety and niddniity.

February, 1993. Shielsian strangeness in various tidbits, including an article full of surrealist synchronicities.

THE CEREOLIST. The journal for crop circle studies. 3 times a year. Single copy £2.50; 3 for £7.50. From 11 Powis Gardens, London W11 1JG.

No. 8. Focus is on personalities and not crops, particularly George Wingfield. Christine Rhone relates how Wingfield fell from grace as editor of The Circular; Jim Schnabel comes clean on how he wound up the veteran; and Wingfield himself parades his loathing for characters he dubs Skunk, Spiderman, Snake and Sinister as he admonishes those whose fakery he perceives spoiled his 1992. Folklorists will be interested in Andy Collins' argument that hoaxers create sacred space gardens where "thing etheric" can play. John S Martineau pens a whimsical portrait of the summer's doings around Alton Barnes. Circle contest summed up. Interpretations of pictograms. Grasshopper warbler amplified. Plus reviews and letters.

No. 9. One first week in October, a few years ago, I helped two women stack the last stooks on a clear night on the Hebridean island of Berneray, where shortly before Prince Charles had planed potatoes. Another prominent "John Barleycorn" figure, John Michell, bows out this issue, handing over the editorship to George Wingfield, which suggests the mag will certainly retain individuality (Wingfield here

contributes an article arguing the continuing importance of cereology). Other articles include such topics as: decoding challenge;

rape circle mystery; paranoia and circle mania; Doug & Dave discrepancies; orgone connection theorising; pathetic attempt to suggest Arthur Shuttlewood unwittingly inspired the notion/motivation for hoaxed circles; dodgy analysis of "charm bracelet" circle.

NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES. Q. £3.95 for 4. New address: 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks, HX7 5NP. Cheques/PO payable to Northern Earth Mysteries Group.

No. 55. Alignments theme. Editor John Billingsley subtly suggests a possible hypothesis for spirit lines and dowsing to be commensurate and calls for truer nomenclature to differentiate between different alignments categories. Paul Devereux refines his shamanic landscape and OOB theory into a succinct presentation; John Michell defines a number of types of alignments and concludes that fundamentally such studies are heretical and only of importance on a personal level; while

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MAGONIA. Independent UFO mag. Q. UK £4 for 4; US \$10 in dollar bills. Cheques made out to J Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB.

No. 45. Articles cover: Sixties ufo hypochondria; Peter Rogerson on the current state of ufo abductions; US Linda Napolitano case in detail; Roswell (yawn). Rogerson also sees the magazine's scepticism perpetually exonerated throughout the past 25 years. Aime Michel obituary. Letters.

No. 46. Perceptive Peter Rogerson begins a two-parter on how the theme of abductions percolated into ufological culture; from a variety of disappearances to personal stories, including on-board adventures and emerging from a melange of secular abduction themes (even in 1952 there were medically inept extraterrestrial samaritans resembling three-foot asparagus stalks treating a pilot), Martin Kottmeyer on ufos in the Seventies and Eighties. Thoughtful update on satanic abuse by Roger Sandell. Nigel Watson approvingly reviews the *Im Fire in the Sky*. Excellent letter from Jake Kirkwood challenging the "avenging embryo" theory. Book reviews.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE EARTH MYSTERIES. £5.75 for 3 issues; £2.25 for one. Cheques to Gloucestershire Earth Mysteries. Address P.O. Box 258, Cheltenham, GL53 0HR.

No. 15. Change from A5 to A4 format. Wider than just Glos - there's a Chinese feng-shui article. Philip Burton muses on stone magnetism in megaliths, a topic which still fascinates me. There's a straightforward resume of the South American Kogi tribe and its straight line linkage; ritual shrines thoughts; interesting five-point alignment in Glos with associated prehistoric and paranormal elements; several items for cornographers, including the thoughts of Pat Delgado and dodgy Devon doings; ufo cases. Book reviews.

Stop Press

(Continued from Page 5)

(12) Daily Mirror, 9/8/93.

(13) Readers' letters, Mail, Hartlepool, 24/7/93; 6/8/93; 18.8/93; 7/9/93.

(14) Seaside hairy experience, Northern Echo, 10/9/93.

(15) Urban Myths, by Phil Meaiey & Rick Glanvill, Virgin, 1992.

Monkey fails to amuse trippers

8 - THE MAIL, Thursday, September 9, 1993

MORE VERSIONS OF
OLDIES BUT GOODIES

Another favourite is the report from the Southport, Ormskirk & Formby Star that reads: "A woman came home to find her husband frantically shaking and vibrating in the kitchen with what looked like a wire running from his waist towards the electric kettle. Thinking he was suffering an electric shock, she smashed a heavy piece of wood into him to jolt him away from the current, brsking his arm in two places. Then she discovered he was dancing to his Walkman."

Guardian 24/4/93

MAN'S RAGE OVER WIFE AT BROTHEL

A BRICKLAYER smashed up a brothel when he went for a romp — and found his wife worked there. The punter was choosing from an album of vice girls when he spotted a photo of his mistress and a list of her "specialties". He went berserk and wrecked the place. Police arrested him in Torella de Lombardi, Italy, for damage. Two women who ran the brothel were charged with prostitution.

Sun 11/8/93

A BID to cash in on Hartlepool's monkey-hanging legend ended up proving costly for a stunned shopkeeper.

A stock of seaside souvenirs portraying the legend at Graham Estill's shop in Whitby was swept to the floor — by angry trippers from Hartlepool.

And he had to fork out £5 to pay for damage to a parked car, scratched by the flying shell souvenirs. They are designed in a monkey shape and bear the message, "I love Hartlepool."

Graham, who owns the shop in the resort's Khyber Pass, said: "They got really stroppy."

"One of them said you can't get away from the monkey even in Whitby and then just knocked the display on the ground."

Graham tried to appease the angry visitors by ex-

plaining he was born and bred in Hartlepool, but even that failed to calm them or prevent their protest.

Despite having to hand over money to pay for damage to the parked car, owned by a man from the Midlands, he insists the souvenirs, selling for £1.75, will be staying on sale.

"I come from the town and I know most people regard the monkey story as just a bit of fun."

* This is a version of (14) from the same news agency.

Great puma riddle

THE seven-year-old mystery of whether the Durham Puma exists may be unravelled within the next few days.

Eddie Bell, who has documented sightings of the elusive beast across the region since 1986, hopes to send the half-eaten carcass of a sheep killed in Teesdale at the weekend to Ministry of Agriculture vets.

Mr Bell, a police sergeant at Consett, said: "Generally, you should be able to tell the difference between a cat's bite and a dog's bite and also, we have got to look for some sort of hair left on the fleece."

"If the Ministry of Agriculture say yes, this was fed on by something

By CLIFF EDWARDS

other than a dog, then it could be very interesting."

And he added: "It may be something I have waited for, for a long long time."

Mr Bell was called out by police to the savaged, young sheep in a field in Whorlton in Teesdale on Saturday morning. The farmer who owned the sheep estimated that about 22lbs of meat had been stripped at its throat, front shoulders and around its ribs.

A leg had been torn off and that too had been fed on.

He said it appeared only one, large hungry creature had killed and attacked the sheep.

However, he said: "It's very dog-like. It was fed on around the front end. There was no damage to

the back legs and lips."

Cats were more likely to gorge on a kill than dogs.

Mr Bell believes that there could be several pumas — thought to be up to two feet high and brown in colour — in the area. They would live mainly off rabbit, hare and deer, whose remains would be much less conspicuous than those of a sheep.

It is the first suspicious sheep kill that will be tested by the vets.

He said he hoped to hear of the results of any tests done by the Ministry by the end of the week.

But he added: "I'm not getting too excited. It could be an unusual dog kill."

● A large black cat "the size of a puma" was seen near Cambridge, yesterday. Families in two homes in the village of Comberton made separate reports of seeing the beast slinking along the side of a field, said a police spokesman. Zoo in the region reported no pumas or similar big cats missing.



Northern Echo, 20/9/93;
rewrite also 20/9/93 in
Mail, Hartlepool.