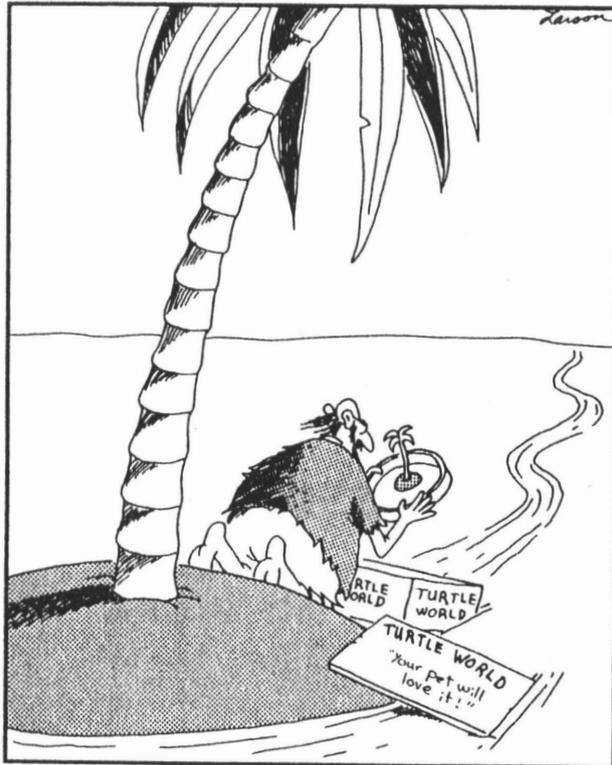


Folklore Frontiers No. 23



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The Diary

WE'RE pleased to announce that from next issue Mick Goss will be contributing a regular column. These, with my agreement/endorsement will promise/threaten Mick be more like articles. Fine by me and will be in that wider context of what that buzzword "folklife" conjures up. Mick's suggested the column be named FolkJokeOpus. It's the title from a Roy Harper album (remember he's the folkie -- When An Old Cricketer Leave The Crease -- who got some disease through kissing a sheep; I think it was kissing).

He'll also be doing general articles and snippets for FF -- examples of which await your delectation this issue. There's also a piece from Nigel Pennick, who promises more contributions. Mick Goss claims to be a "hopeless egomaniac" but he's got a long way to go before he gets in the big league with this next guy. Step forward David Icke.

Speaking on Teesside earlier this year, the Son of God's organisation sent FF a load of leaflets to distribute. They arrived in a bulky envelope with a 2p stamp affixed: amount underpaid 50p, surcharge fee 15p, to pay 50p. Thankfully this twaddle was delivered by a liveried servant of Her Majesty who commonsensically decided not to demand the extra.

DAVID ICKE
HEAL THE WORLD
TOUR 1994

SURCHARGED	
AMOUNT UNDERPAID	50
SURCHARGE FEE	15
TOTAL TO PAY	65p



September 1994: the news isn't very good

By Mick Goss

As you'll find from the newspaper items reproduced alongside this article, three species of urbanite terror tales staged London revivals during the September just gone.

The press reported them as facts rather than as legend and, let it be said, with some justification. It seems rather perverse to dismiss a subway maniac as contemporary fiction when he's standing in court between a couple of policemen. It seems carrying scepticism too far when three red-eared terrapins that a naturalist saw sunning themselves in his local reservoir get logged as scaled-down variations on Brunvand et al.'s sewer alligators. Even so and quite as justifiably, folklorists won't need much help in recognizing "legendary characteristics" in all three. It's not just a matter of seeing them as the latest versions upon themes which appear to have acquired their narrative form in the late 1980s, forms arguably evolved from the plots of slightly (and in some cases, much) older rumour-legends. The style in which they are reported also deserves to be identified as what I'll pretentiously call "legend-impregnated" or "legend-conformational". (In plain English: certain stylistic features closely associated with contemporary legend are frequently found in journalistic reporting as well). All of which relates to the ever controversial question of how much in contemporary legend may be reprocessed fact, or, if you prefer, how much in contemporary news-reporting may be repackaged legend.

NEWS OF THE WORLD, September
11, 1994 9

Needle attacks terror

MUGGERS are using syringes to scare victims into handing over money.

Police fear the method may spread following an outbreak of attacks in North London.

In one, a 23-year-old Spanish tourist had just got off a train at Kings Cross when a liquid-filled needle was jabbed into his arm and leg. He was then forced to hand over £200 and his passport.

The tourist feared he had been given AIDS and had an HIV test and counselling after his ordeal.

In another attack a 37-year-old man was threatened with a dirty needle by a gang of three in Kings Cross and forced to hand over £100.

The thugs also stole his cashcard and took more money from a hole-in-the-wall machine.

A police spokesman said it was extremely unusual for criminals to use hypodermic needles. But he added: "We are worried the syringe is becoming a new weapon for muggers."

There is nothing inherently improbable, let alone impossible, in the NOW's "Needle attacks terror" (11 September 1994). As the police spokesman points out, criminal misuse of hypodermics may be unusual, but there is the generalized fear of AIDS, popular conceptions of how it can be contracted and of course a gamut of rumorised reports in which victims of the disease vengefully pass it on to the uninfected. (I wrote about some early manifestations of this AIDS-lore revenge

theme back in *FF5*, pages 5-10 & 23-26. Among folklorists, the type is sometimes known by its vicious punch-line, "Welcome to the world of AIDS" - which is what the prostitute's client finds lipsticked on his mirror next morning, but also the title of a paper on this subject by Gary Alan Fine in *Western Folklore* 46/3, pp.192-197). All told, it wouldn't be outside the scope of the criminal imagination to trade upon these fears, conceptions, rumour-reports. Clean or filthy, virus-contaminated or not, the very sight of a hypodermic could be a potent "new weapon for muggers".

This won't disguise the presence of legend-like narrative devices in the reporting. The inevitable voice of the police spokesman occupies its traditional honorary position; it comes at the end of the piece, delivering the Last Word on the topic. This spokesman is of course nameless; once the narrator has declared that the voice belongs to a police spokesman, we need to be told no more about him. In legend the Police Spokesman is a role, not an individual, so he requires no personal name.

The victims are equally anonymous. They serve as foci for a set of events which constitute the story; what happened to them is the story. In the style common to newspaper journalism and contemporary legend alike, they are reduced to ciphers - defined in terms of age ("a 23-year-old... a 37-year-old") and one is described as a "Spanish tourist". For the purposes of the account we don't really need any more, do we? Personal identification here would be redundant.

Then there is the allusively-significant setting for the story. In recent years the press has drawn ample attention to the outrageous criminal decadence of the King's Cross district, modern London's newest version of the Badlands. In this nocturnal empire of pimps, whores, drug-marketeers and dope-friends, a gang of hypodermic-wielding muggers sounds more credible than not.

Analogues: prickers, stabbers and jabbers abound in urban terror tales. Bill Ellis noticed a particularly interesting "odd outbreak" of reports about needle-gangs centred on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, NYC around Halloween 1989 (see his "Needling Whitey" in *Foafale News* 17, March 1990, pp.5-6). The same random-victim plot with overt or implicit reference to AIDS hysteria were present and once again it was not necessary to commit oneself to outright belief in the stories to find them disturbing or even inhibiting. The mere possibility that they might be true was enough to affect anyone who encountered the rumours.

Guardian 13 Sept 1994, p. 12

Stranger 'tried to push woman under train'

A YOUNG City worker struggled for her life as a stranger tried to push her under the wheels of an approaching train, an Old Bailey jury was told yesterday. George Cameron, 30, unemployed, of Lewisham, south

London, denies attempting to murder Caroline Smith, of Plumstead, south-east London.

Miss Smith and two companions went to London Bridge station at about 11.30pm. Mr Cameron was on the platform in a "belligerent, angry and aggressive mood". For some un-

known reason, said prosecuting counsel Anthony Scott-Gall, he singled out Miss Smith, lay in wait for her, shouted obscenities and, as a train approached, he dashed forward and tried to push her under it. She was saved by her friends.

The trial continues today.

Whether literally, metaphorically, wholly or partly true, the *News of the World's* report passed for fact with at least one of my relatives: "I wonder why you go up to London... It seems they're sticking needles with AIDS into people now." It occurred to me that even if you avoided the Kings Cross needlers, you still ran the risk of being pushed under a train by the Maniac who is reported to haunt the platforms of the capital's Underground stations. Since I recorded the fabled doings of this unpredictable subterranean psychopath in

Magonia (May 1985) at least two temporarily- or permanently-deranged characters have been charged with attempting to push random victims beneath oncoming trains at London stations (with no apparent provocation and with no motive beyond the suggestion that they were temporarily or permanently deranged). *The Guardian* of 13 September 1994 details the second of these stories. The Platform Maniac, as I wrote nearly ten years ago, sounds like another of contemporary legend's self-defined super-psychopaths, though one more strictly credible than the owner of The Hook or that much-travelled transvestite loonie, the Hairy-Handed Hitch-Hiker. Perhaps at close quarters George Cameron emerges as a rather unsatisfactory Platform Maniac, however. The legendary original was characterised by approaching victims with awful stealth; this more tangible counterpart gave himself away in advance by "belligerent, angry and aggressive behaviour", not to mention "shouted obscenities". The genuine-legendary Maniac never failed; happily for Caroline Smith and indeed for all of us, his 1994 avatar failed signally...dismally. Consequently, while my *Magonia* Maniac possessed the uncanny ability to melt away undetected in the jostling crowd once his fell deed was accomplished, Cameron departed from script by getting caught.

Compared with AIDS needlers and platform maniacs, the idea of Britain's waterways depopulated and ecologically ravaged by cast-off terrapins may verge upon a non-event. What interests me about Stephen Moss's revelation from Lonsdale Road reservoir, SW-whatever, is how it relates to previous and more lurid reports on the same theme. And that theme is a modest little fork on a classification tree uniting escaped snakes and free-ranging crocodilians with a small zoo of larger, furrier and sometimes more alarming creatures - bears, boars, panthers, pumas, etcetera, etcetera.

Reservoir ducks

As summer passes into autumn the birdlife on the "patch" begins to change, Stephen Moss reports

IT'S BEEN just over a month now since I began to visit my new local patch, Lonsdale Road Reservoir in south-west London. Yet I'm already getting to know the rhythms and patterns of its birdlife.

Guardian 14th September 1994, p. 2.

Take the locals. On regular visits, you don't just get to know familiar species, but the individual birds themselves. On every visit I'm welcomed by a family party of eight mute swans, which have a nasty habit of harassing passers-by for food. Other regulars include moorhen and coot, and the single grey heron, usually standing on one of the artificial islands in the centre of the lake.

There are also ruddy duck chicks, the fourth brood here this year. These hatched around mid-August, and a couple of weeks later had dwindled in number from seven to just four. The unfortunate trio could perhaps have been taken by pike, but a more exotic culprit may have been responsible.

One sunny day last month, I glanced down at the sun-bleached branches of a fallen tree, poking out of the algae-covered water. There, sunning themselves like a platoon of beached submarines, were three red-eared terrapins.

A passing jogger revealed that the terrapins arrived here at the height of the Ninja Turtle craze of a few years ago. Presumably the owners, terrified of the creatures' ability to eat almost anything within range of their powerful jaws, liberated them into this quiet backwater.

Whether or not ruddy duck chicks are on the menu, the terrapins appear to be holding their

own. Some have grown to the size of dinner-plates, and with their chrome-yellow, green and black colouration, set off by the tiny red spot behind each ear, they make an interesting addition to the capital's fauna.

My earliest reference is from the *London Evening Standard* of 9 January 1987, wherein fishery experts of the Thames Water Authority hypothesized disaster on evidence that their properties had been abused by illicit turtle-tippers. Read carefully, this melted down to the discovery of those pet-shop favourites, red-eared terrapins (but favourites no more and callously discarded) in pockets of the Oxford Canal. This was not a disastrous development in itself, but a bad omen. The experts ruminated on what would happen if larger, predatory species also available on the pet-shop circuit - the common snapper, the alligator snapper - were similarly set at

liberty. Predicted outcome: ecological upset and digital damage, for the steely-jawed aliens would surely snap at anything within reach, be it fish, fowl or casually-dangled human finger.

Please note that the article presented no veritable evidence that these larger subaqueous demons *had* been dumped in the Thames Waterways, nor anywhere else. But last year (17 August 1993) *The Guardian* alleged that red-eared terrapins were menace enough on their own. They were accused of having infested the French Riviera between Marseilles and Mentone, where bathers in three rivers were held to be under threat (and one reportedly bitten) by these innocuous-seeming emydids. (Yes, really: I looked up another way to say "terrapins" and it comes out just like that. If I've misused the word, please don't bother writing in). It seems that they could be regarded as innocuous no longer:

"Abandoned by being flushed down the lavatory or discarded in lakes, the little green terrapins only a few inches long are mutating into carnivorous creatures weighing up to 10lb and over a foot long.. voracious, eating everything around them, with nothing eating them."

"Mutating" is an evocative verb. It adds a frisson of monstrosity, making the creatures seem unnatural...not what they once were, unrecognizable as the endearing little pets they posed for being. A shade of horrid sci-fi corruption colours the picture. The rejected pets become empowered as agents of revenge. A superior species (namely, us) steals them from their natural environment on a transient whim - dumps

them just as casually once the novelty and fashionability of ownership wears off. According to the severe morality preached by legend, however, Out of Sight is not allowed to remain Out of Mind and Don't Care is Made to Care. The turtles are back..and it's all your fault.

Mutation and the flushing-down-lavatory (thence into vile conditions which make the ghastly mutation possible) instantly refers these terrapin tales to the classic New York sewer alligator cycle. More topical here is the direct allusion to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles craze, present in all three reports as a useful and modish explanation for how the reptiles came to be where they are while jabbing an accusing finger at selfish, exploitative market forces which have wrought this contamination. For Stephen Moss's "passing jogger" the faddish Ninja Turtles were explanation enough. Without ruling out its validity, this narrative stratagem appears to be on a par with the ubiquitous Travelling Circus that sheds dangerous animals as it rolls through our countryside or the Mystery Van featured in some alien big cat reports.

I seldom go near King's Cross. I never stand close enough to the edge of an Underground platform to offer a good target. I used to keep red-eared terrapins, but I didn't flush them down the lavatory and moreover I still have a full set of fingers/thumbs. But I still feel unprepared to say that all contemporary legends are deficient in fact or that daily newspapers aren't above presenting their material in ways that mimic modern folklore.

BOOKS

THE BABY TRAIN by JAN HAROLD BRUNVAND (V V Norton, £14.95)

IN his latest superb collection, Brunvand begins by relating how he was in at the genesis of an urban myth when a misunderstanding in an ethnic restaurant was later retold and botched.

It reminded me of an occasion in a Hartlepool Chinese restaurant where the various accents similarly baffled and fascinated our waiter. I had a local accent, one of the two record company representatives spoke broad Glaswegian and the other an Irish brogue, while the Texan drawl (my son claims he's Caribbean) came from black singer Johnny Nash (biggest hit "Stir it Up" where "stir" is pronounced "steer" and if I tell you he boasted to me about his hard-core porn collection, you can guess what the song was really about). After hovering for a while, the Chinese waiter could contain himself no longer. It went something along the lines of: "Me listen only to learn English. But you all speak so differently. You come from boat on docks?" We all creased ourselves at the idea of being mistaken for merchant seaman. True tale but no folkloric context. (In fact, Alan Bennett wrote a play about a lonely Chinese waiter which was filmed at the same restaurant and in Seaton Carew for TV - he could use this anecdote to liven up a new version).

So on to the meat of Brunvand's book.

Still in the preface, Brunvand discusses synonyms for urban legends, including "dead catters" - adding: "Never trust a dead cat story, say experienced newspaper writers, since most such stories are legends." Most, I agree, but all ... ?

One aspect of his latest book which was different from earlier ones and which surprised me was the inclusion of items which would be more at home in a Fortean collection. Brunvand was on a radio chat show when a caller brought up the subject of West Virginia's human-shaped creature well documented in John Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies*, a book which Brunvand claims he was unable to locate (come, come, that shouldn't have been too difficult). Anyway, Brunvand notes that he normally bypasses supernatural lore, but thought the scratching on a car roof made it sound like an urban legend. I mean, he does have a point, "why should creatures from (outer) space, or monsters spawned by industrial accidents, be so attracted to the tops of our cars?"

It is followed by the clowns abducting children scam. This, too, has been placed by Loren Coleman and others in a Fortean context and it would seem to have its reality less in urban belief tales domain but rather with the bogus social workers and Men in Black sector of what Patrick Harpur has termed daimonic reality!

And still not satisfied with muscling in on Fortean territory, this is immediately followed by the borehole reaching Hell and the microphone picking up the wails of the damned, recently debunked in *Fortean Times*; which also picked upon the next tale, too, toad toking to get high from the drug naturally secreted by these amphibia.

Later he is dismissive of black panther sightings, being unable to see them in perspectives British investigators do.

Brunvand's treatment of tales varies from the briefest outline to full-length investigations, doubtless based on the number of accounts, their distribution, content interest and personal bias.

Those given the full treatment include the widespread organ (usually kidney) removal, which I even heard told as a true tale recently occurring in Newcastle upon Tyne by a colleague, the Pullman coach "send the son of a bitch the bedbug letter" and spiders in the yucca.

I've been noticing a proliferation of revenge/mischief true or legend tales in the media recently, perhaps a disgruntlement with personal additional duties all those unfortunately in employment seem to be having thrust upon them. I liked the one here about the oil rig worker who misplaced a tool in a well and when it was finally recovered at great cost and he was fired, he perversely kicked it back down again.

On another tack, Brunvand mentions that Chrysler Motors' chairman denies he was originally not Lee but Lido Iacocca, christened in remembrance of Lido Beach where his parents honeymooned. "Not true, says Lee; and not much of a legend say I." Huh! A pal of mine swears his wife Brenda was conceived on the back seat of a car parked in Hartlepool's Brenda Road. Hartlepool has a St Paul's Road ... on, forget it!

Anyway, most columns deal with rather simple legends, jokes, or even superstitions, ranging from burying a cheap St Joseph statue as a ritual to sell a long-listed piece of property; mistaken identities; Built in a Day; teabag confusion; Fricky Dicky's solitary swim; dynamite tied to an animal which gets its revenge is tracked to 1899.

His column, from which this book is compiled with additions, has been discontinued. However, we can doubtless look forward to another anthology as excellent and entertaining as this one. Long may he continue to collect.

IN BRIEF

THE ART OF DREAMING by Carlos Castaneda. Carlos Fraud has flashbacks which transform him into Carlos Even Bigger Bank Balance. Not shamanism but sorcery, but still a technique of being economical with the truth. After promising no more books after his fourth, he now threatens a ninth! (Aquarian, £5.99).

CELTIC MYTHS, CELTIC LEGENDS by R J Stewart. Unlike many Celtic revivalists, Stewart does not romanticise this race renowned for its penchant for separating head from torso. He retells tales from that dark period, retaining the original mystique. Splendid colour plates by Courtney Davis and, illustrations by Sarah Levey (Blandford, £15.99).

CELTIC MANDALAS by Courtney Davis (text by Helena Paterson). Mandalas, being evocative symbolic images, have naturally been abducted into the New Age ideology. Artist and illustrator Davis has reconstructed for the Nineties the art of the ancient Celts where the mandalas have a dual-dimensional form to induce travel into another realm. Exceedingly beautifully crafted, this book adds to an already prolific portfolio of Celtic art (Blandford, £9.99).

THE COLORADO OGAM ALBUM by Donald L Cyr. My old friend Don has assembled from his magazine Stonehenge Viewpoint an anthology which makes what would otherwise be obscure, easily accessible to scholars or amateur ogam sleuths. Of course, it may all be illusion, but here are masses of pictures and interpretation is in the eye of the beholder. These mysterious letters inscribed on rock panels and shallow caves in south-east Colorado continue to puzzle eigraphers. Would-be cryptographers are invited to examine the 180 site photographs and decide for themselves whether there is diffusion evidence of transatlantic contact and whether they are not just chance scratchings. (From D L Cyr, 2261 Las Positas Road, Santa Barbara, California, 93105, USA).

THE SORCERES' CROSSING by Taisha Abelan. Would I be being cynical if I suggested this woman's tale of being taught by the female members of don Juan's group was most probably written by Carlos Castaneda? I certainly couldn't trust this book to be a true account. (Arkana, £5.99).

SELECTED WRITINGS by MEISTER ECKHART. Tough-going theology, but with current interest in neoplatonism, the 12th century German Dominican mystical visionary will find a willing audience. (Penguin, £7.99).

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE QUESTION by Jacob Needleman. The essays here by the modern professor of philosophy call attention to the eternal uprising of dualities and possible syntheses in all aspects of the inner life of man, otherwise the inner search for the true self. (Arkana, £7.50).

DAIMONIC REALITY: A FIELD GUIDE TO THE OTHERWORLD

By Patrick Harpur

I have seen a daylight disc and craft like zeppelins; a black panther in Northumberland a wood gnome and under sleep deprivation the tooth fairy; a half-human, half-zebra entity in the office toilet during mycological flashback; a woman medium's face turn into that of a Chinaman; a bird give its life to save mine.

This book is about this sort of anomalous phenomena and the author suggests that "if these strange visitations have any purpose at all, it is to subvert the same modern worldview which discredits them."

Luckily I need no convincing, nor have since adolescence.

The author, too, approached the subject as a believer, but wanted to examine the data within a framework; to present it to himself as much as to others.

Harpur notes that this worldview with its comprehension of the importance of dreams, unconscious contents, soul images, existence of apparitions, and so on, exists unofficially and instinctively among groups and individuals in our own monotheistic culture against all the odds.

He notes that such people largely lack a sense of precedent for their view, an historical context for the evidence of their own eyes and senses; and this is partly what his book aims to provide.

Which brings us to the book's title. The daimons here, for the sake of convenience, embrace all apparitional figures, including fairies, angels, souls and aliens; flexibly changing form to suit their times, i.e., cultural tracking, as abstractions or preferably remaining personified. Archetypal personages going back from Jung to the Gnostic/Hermetic/Neoplatonic tradition of philosophy.

The Neoplatonists described the world of gods and daimons as Anima Mundi (Soul of the World) and Harpur reckons this has the advantage over the collective unconscious as a root metaphor as it returns us to the idea of soul instead of psyche; reintroducing the idea of an objective ensouled world "out there."

Particular places are where we are more likely to encounter the unseen order of things. Lights hang over prehistoric sites while military bases, power stations and reservoirs attract hovering ufos because these are the shrines of our modern secular culture, becoming a shadow display of hi-tech alien "spacecraft" to mirror our technological preoccupations. At such places the laws of time and space, matter and causality seem attenuated: caravan sites and trailer parks being in that liminal area between town and countryside are specially prey to ufos or strange creatures which particularly favour boundaries. This greater transparency at certain sacred sites has led to the ufological, and broader, term "window areas." Paradoxically they straddle many borders, such as that between fact and fiction.

Harpur concludes the section with a discussion of urban myths, seeing them also spanning the gap between fact and fiction; ambiguous and using the friend-of-a-friend convention to distance us from the alleged event.

After the collective unconscious and anima mundi, he constructs a third model, that of imagination, for making intelligible the nature of daimonic reality. Primary imagination is here defined as encountering the sacred; secondary imagination is recreative and evaluating, making from the human condition art or at a personal level being therapeutic.

Not only is a rather complex theory of models made to make sense (he could have included other models such as Mercurius or faery), but as all Fortean will understand, daimonic phenomena cannot, by definition, be explained (for explanations are images and myths anyway). Daimonic reality is a self-coined metaphor to emphasise the power of the models examined.

However, after taking the reader through such topics as missing time, scars, strokes, near-death experiences, stigmata, changelings, midwifery, alien sex, Bigfoot, supernatural food, satanic child abuse and bogus social workers, shamanism with Shield and Shuttlewood, John Keel's quest, soul and body, he ends the book with two instructive examples of successful descents into the Underworld - "now more than ever the most appropriate spatial metaphor for daimonic reality."

These visits involve ufology's notorious greys and C. G. Jung.

For a book that is arguing that its subject matter cannot be explained and that soul resists spirit's wish to find single underlying principles, Harpur has come as close as anyone so far to produce a unifying theory for the great diversity of subject matter loosely labelled paranormal/supernatural/occult/mythological and folkloric.

Naturally the author sees the paradox, aware that the book's perspective is partial and incomplete. Nevertheless it is a remarkable tour de force.

Published by Viking, £18.

ONE of my regular duties at the evening newspaper where I work is to select the items for the only page where we print national and international news, as opposed to the general local bias for our readers.

Commonsense dictates the main home and abroad stories chosen, but I like to sprinkle the filler items with Fortean or folkloric material if any is about. One such presented itself while reading a new book by Dr Karl Shuker, *The Lost Ark*, was a tantalisingly brief Press Association item about a "new" species of kangaroo which climbs trees and whistles. The 4ft black and white animals are virtually unafraid of humans and were found in remote mountains in New Guinea by an Australian expedition.

It was not an April Fool's Day spoof - July 21, actually - and Dr Shuker seemingly knew all about it from the discovery originally in 1988 after four years of pursuit by Sydney Museum zoologist Tom Flannery and ranger-biologist Lester Serl of a very special tree kangaroo.

The creatures in the book are only recently discovered or rediscovered; all visually spectacular, zoologically significant or both. Creatures dismissed by zoologists as fantasy or folklore; exiled from zoological consensus but alive in that veritable ark of animals effectively lost to scientific study until rescued from anonymity.

With his extensive personal archive and lifelong interest in the

THE LOST ARK: NEW & REDISCOVERED ANIMALS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

By Dr Karl Shuker

subject, Karl decided to rectify the glaring omission of zoological literature lacking a book solely devoted to the 20th century's treasure trove of new and rediscovered multicellular animals.

The subject under discussion has the morbid-sounding name cryptozoology, but this is simply defined as "the study of hidden life."

As someone who spends quite a lot of time sitting by his garden pond reading and occasionally glancing in to watch the fish and frogs, I found Karl's book a delight. Having one day encountered a grass snake on the iris "island" in the pond, I know the joys of natural history discovery. I share Karl's excitement and optimism regarding the exciting wildlife rescued from obscurity and awaiting release in the future from the lost ark.

But what of the black panther I saw in Northumberland or the flurry of reports of big cats in and around Hartlepool last year? Phantoms of daemonic reality or cryptozoological out-of-place alien big felids? Whether spectral, semi-real or solid, there is a menagerie of mystery out there. Luckily we have such an enthusiastic guide to point us in the right direction and infectious imbue us with a sense of wonder at what is going on in the world of cryptozoology.

The formidable procession of wildlife described here includes the

famous donkey/giraffe okapi, hunted to extinction sea mink; "terrible mouse" the size of a fox terrier; "Gorillas in the Mist" giant herbivores; Fraser's dolphin becomes suddenly common and widely distributed; Kitt's hog-nosed bat, which is no bigger than a bumblebee (the colour photograph shows it held by someone with disgracefully bitten-down fingernails); aquatic civet and possibly similar insectivorous species; banana bat which facially makes it resemble a flying rhinoceros; a man's pet restoring the "lost" yellow-tailed woolly monkey; and the monkey whose moustache was wrongly made to curl upwards like that of the German emperor Wilhelm by a taxidermist.

Then there is the hero shrew, so called because tribesmen believed that if they consumed (or wore as an amulet) any part of these animals, they would be indestructible. In 1916 when a party when a party of mammal collectors were in Zaire, they saw a tribesman stand on a few ounces weight nine-inch (half comprised the tail) hero shrew, balancing on one foot. Several minutes later he stepped down, the shrew merely shook itself and scurried away none the worse. Protective reinforcement allows for this feat, but fails to explain why an insectivorous rodent should acquire this facility.

But not all discoveries are cut

and dried. Fortean magazines and books frequently discuss Loys' American ape, controversial for its (disputed) size, being far larger than other latter New World species. There is a perplexing photograph of this beast but it is no nearer satisfactory resolution. Shuker notes sadly that it is rarely alluded to in wildlife literature (as opposed to Fortean interest) and that by ignoring the zoologically-inconvenient issues, such cases will simply disappear.

Another area of controversy is discussed with regard to the king cheetah. Lena and Paul Bottriel, who had studied the animals in detail, postulated in 1987 that they could actually be demonstrating evolution in action. The divergence of a mutant form from the normal which, if separated reproductively from the wild type for a sufficient period of time via habitat and behavioural differences, could ultimately become a separate species in its own right. A suggestion to give anti-Darwinians apoplexy.

Darwinians might, however, be even more heartened by *homo pongoides* - the Minnesota iceman who cometh to fairgrounds frozen - a version perhaps of the Neanderthals. As with so many anomalous exhibits and discoveries its current whereabouts are now unknown. Bernard Heuvelmans, a veteran cryptozoologist, believed in its genuineness, and believed it was shot

during the Vietnam War and smuggled back into the U.S.A. inside one of the "body bags" used to transport the bodies of American soldiers killed during the war.

Yet some of the animals here are now totally familiar to everyone, though some are still mysterious such as the giant panda, and even that most popular species of small pet mammal the golden hamster was virtually unknown to science until 1930.

And these are only the mammals!

As for birds, did the inaccessible island rail - those three words are its weird name - once wander the fabled lost continent of Atlantis and what do you make of a "furry" frog or platypus frog which broods its young in its stomach?

Ichthyologically speaking, the coelacanth came back from 200 million years ago and there are also an array of odd invertebrates, including a three-inch earwig which would really cause problems if it burrowed into your head.

The book's style makes even such a serious subject accessible to all, for instance: "Also known as Congo eels, amphimas are neither eels nor from the Congo (nor should they be confused with congeals).

Dr Shuker has written a fascinating field guide to mysteries revealed and let's hope many more shadowy species emerge.

I wonder if he has a £1 bet on the Loch Ness Monster being caught and verified.

Published by HarperCollins, £15.99.

THE RETURN OF URBAN MYTHS

By Phil Healey & Rick Glanvill

THEY give your editor an acknowledgement here, but did not choose to become FF subscribers. Please themselves!

Here's another 200 foaf tales and a great many were new to me - along with classics, some with new twists.

The introduction tells of their free-loading promotional odyssey. They discuss evolution of myths and how many tellers defend their yarns' veracity vehemently, even aggressively, concluding how loudly they strike a chord and their themes reveal much about our psyche. They also provide a Rough Guide to Myth-Spotting.

Familiar lore includes the dog retrieving dynamite; soggy doggy in washing machine; concrete poured

into car, leaving TV in pub where it can be seen; bonk in showhouse; surprise birthday (version now with dog licking food off 40-year-old woman's body); and evil roat (now potato plant growing in ovaries).

My favourite new one is the bride who wanted played the Robin Hood theme, only for the aged organist not to have heard of Bryan Adams and the procession arrived down the aisle to the "Robin Hood, Robin Hood, riding through the glen" theme.

They also have the Falkland Islands human parts war souvenirs scam.

Much is positively revolting - though offering morality warnings - such as the hen-night giel where a stripper caused her to have a public louse living in her face; condoms in everlasting gum; eating another's vomit; naive student chloroformed and

buggered every Friday night; after-birth in bag; and bluebottles swarming into man's mouth and him choking.

Subjects include technophobia, pets, crime, food and drink, sex, medical, showbiz, xenophobia and occupational hazards.

They also include after each section miscellanies of one-liners such as: Bayeux Tapestry depicts a kangaroo; if you pick a hamster up by its tale its eyes drop out; and porn actor King Dong fainted through lack of blood when his huge member became erect.

Despite a few truly stupid tales, the duo have come up trumps. Cheap and nasty it may be, but also fairly funny and up to date with the latest foaftales doing the rounds.

Published by Virgin at £4.99.

FOR GOD, COUNTRY AND COCA-COLA

By Mark Pendergrast

COCA-COLA may well prove the principal symbol of 20th century American culture and its most consequent export. No mean feat, considering it is basically sugar water. The other one per cent is the secret formula; secret that is until this huge volume itself (for volume also read 40,000 Cokes consumed worldwide each second).

Born in the era of snake-oil salesmen, Coca-Cola began life as a cocaine-based patent medicine and hangover cure. Now a century on and minus the cocaine, it has passed through back-room political wheel-dealing, a cosy alliance with governments, near-wars with Pepsi, and the usual scandals of money and sex in black market scenarios.

This is not really a story of a corporation and its product, rather the world seen through that all too familiar shaped bottle.

I would have preferred far more anecdote and rumours, what folklorists call "Cokelore." There's brief mentions of fears expressed that the drink causes impotence, hair loss, cancer, made teeth fall out, was an aphrodisiac, that the dissolved body of a worker who fell in a vat improved the taste, and that it would turn copper to silver. Its taste was variously described as resembling dog medicine, burn comb, like sucking the leg of a recently-massaged athlete; one sentimental Japanese waitress, however, described it as "the sweet-and-bitter taste of first love."

Published by Phoenix at £12.99.

AT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD

By John Michell

MOST curious is the legendary reputation of Meriden as the midpoint of England. How or when this legend arose is anyone's guess. No early typographical writers mention it, but the belief has been long established locally and is widely recognised throughout England today, so Michell reckons it should be "most fittingly regarded as the Centre of England."

Other lesser sites are dealt with in far greater detail as local omphalos sites, and I wonder if Michell is being hasty in his espousal of this particular site.

I recall as editor of *The Ley Hunter*, publishing a piece by Paul Devereux and Ian Thompson championing Croft Hill, Leicestershire (currently being decimated by Redland in the pursuit of profit from road-building aggregates), as the likely true omphalos. This and several others are referred to here and the author is of the opinion that their former significance was primarily regional as opposed to national.

As for Meriden, perhaps it is a case of the geomantic controversy not being settled to everyone's satisfaction until the fat lady sings.

Many other ritual centres are discussed, with primary research by the author into locating these (such as Sancreed in West Penwith, Cornwall, a special area for Michell).

The basis of the book is geographical and antiquarian, but he also points to the practical and personal value in these centres as symbols of an ideally-governed state. A previous monograph - from which this seems to be an expanded version - argued for a solution to the modern religious and political divisions found in Ireland and he returns here to the symbol of the national, unifying centre being particularly powerful for that troubled island, as a reminder of its ancient traditions and image to transcend current disharmony.

However, there is an element of the naive about Michell - even if he has reached his Sixties. Discussing Ireland's past of kings and chiefs, whose followers were "hunting game and raiding their neighbours, and they were ever ready to profit from the weakness or sleepiness of rivals." This sounds like some archaic version of the relentless competition between drug barons of Mosside and Broadwater Farm, the ram-raid invention from Meadow Well, to rifeness of burglary and shoplifting. These past era clans simply echo the influence of the Krays and Richardson, or for that matter the Maxwell family, where the violence was through monetary manipulation as lethal as any physical torture, gaining and losing influence, but it is not a derided golden age hippie vision which can seriously argue, against commonsense and experience, that "everything took place within the same stable traditional social order which imitated the order of the cosmos." Nevertheless the reviewer must concede that unlike the grey men in suits and the champagne socialists we have to choose between today, at least in olden days the populace knew exactly whom they were voting for and why.

That there is a numinous enchantment to landscapes is, however, a viewpoint we both share. That localised ritual centres exist also.

Currently not a mainstream player in the study of earth mysteries, perhaps I have been too critical and lost my bearings. If so, I apologise, but I do feel too idealised a view of the past is being promulgated.

That aside, let's admit Michell's wry sense of humour betrays itself occasionally, as with: "Thus, fashionable Londoners, to whom Sloane Square is the centre of the universe, have no quarrel with the Muslims who locate it at Mecca" or "Modern life depends entirely upon an invisible pole, the international money system which every year grows more elaborate and more evidently beyond human control. If that pole were to snap, we would soon learn to admire the Achilpa for the dignified way in which they responded to the collapse of their own world-order" (by lying down together and awaiting death). More seriously, the most remarkable conclusion - and doubtless contentious - in this book is the argument that the Tynwald mound on the Isle of Man was formerly venerated as the inner sanctum for an entire religious system, the religion of the Druids throughout all Britain and Ireland.

As always everything comes in circles, and here cultures widely separated in time and space are seen to have symbols of the centre, these being among the most persistent elements of myth and belief.

Apart from some carping criticism in this review - meant well and coming from a friend - it is a truth indeed that Michell, along with Bob Dylan (a revolutionary, however, and not a traditionalist) greatly altered the world-view of a generation. Long may he continue to illuminate us.

Published by Thames & Hudson, £14.95.



THE CHATTO BOOK OF DISSENT

Edited by Michael Rosen and David Widgery

If you can judge a book by what it excludes, then this is aprize turkey. The subversive agenda here may contain the obvious and the historically famous, but undermining our institutions requires more than the usual pantheon of whingeing liberals.

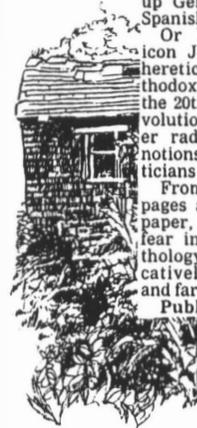
Bob Dylan, Elvis Costello and Malcolm McLaren are here. Cher even. But no Angelic Upstarts' lyrics or reference to the North-East punk band which kicked a pig's head around the stage, the symbolism of which was not entirely lost upon officers of Northumbria Police, or their underclass audience.

Where is Tariq Ali or Stuart Christie (his CV would have begun: arrested 1964, age 17, trying to blow up General Franco. Three years in Spanish jails...)

Or like David Widgery, Sixties icon John Michell, whose brand of hereticism proclaimed universal orthodoxy (i.e. the exact opposite of all the 20th century's ills), and whose revolutionary articles championed older radical and eternal causes and notions under siege from pygmy politicians and the thought police.

From the Bogside to bedside, the pages are worthy for using as toilet paper, for nothing here will strike fear into the Establishment. An anthology of Viz would appear provocatively anarchic by comparison and far more relevant.

Published by Chatto at £8.99.



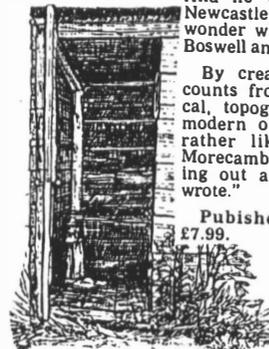
A WALK TO THE WESTERN ISLES

By Frank Delaney

THE reviewer was once dispatched to the Hebrides by his erstwhile editor and thoroughly enjoyed it - especially the rail travel involved. Delaney, however, hated this, remarking tortuously "travel is so frequently so boring that all the mind's tools are needed for a survival kit." And he wrongly puts hyphens in Newcastle upon Tyne. It makes you wonder why he decided to follow in Boswell and Johnson's footsteps.

By creating a pot pourri of accounts from 200 years ago, historical, topographical descriptions and modern observations, the result is rather like that other double-act Morecambe and Wise plus guest acting out a play of Ernie's "what I wrote."

Published by HarperCollins, £7.99.



THE POWER OF THE B1s

By Peter Swinger

THE photographs give a pictorially superb history of a rightly-acclaimed class of steam locomotives, several of which were at times allocated to the West Hartlepool.

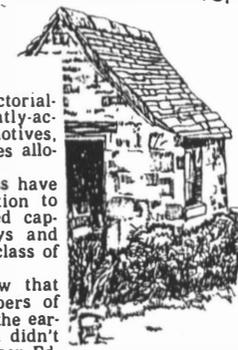
Steam buffs would doubtless have preferred a longer introduction to this survey, but the detailed captions help fill out the whys and wherefores of the 410-strong class of mixed traffic 4-6-0 workhorses.

I did not previously know that two names duplicated members of the antelope species given to the early members of the class, but didn't the author realise that designer Edward Thompson was having (or otherwise at his expense, for he seems to have been a humourless man) a joke here, for there is a Thompson's gazelle in natural history nomenclature.

The reason for mentioning such an arcane tome in FF is that I was told as a young lad that when class member 61379 *Mayflower* was needed for a special train and was declared a failure, Immingham depot substituted another B1 sibling for the special duty. Nameplates and number were altered and no one knew the difference.

Anyway, the book is a must for steam fans, with a splendid portfolio of photographs of the class at work all over Britain.

Published by Oxford Publishing Company, £16.99.



THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE

By E O Wilson

THE author is erudite and authoritative when discussing environments and conservation, but the classically stylish writing masks wider issues and concerns. Is evolution so simple or even broadly correct? Are there not even more examples of cryptozoology to be discovered? Is the introduction of exotic animals into new habitats so potentially harmful?

Nevertheless, a readable tour of the history and geography of life on Earth.

Published by Penguin at £7.99.



THE MOMENT OF ASTROLOGY by Geoffrey Cornelius. Impressive approach through closely-examined horoscope cases. Touches on terrestrial zodiacs and extraordinary case of how after John Addey determined a Cheam Road Zodiac of relationships between residents and their homes fitted an astrological pattern, he recast it all and again it seemed to fit! (Arkana, £8.99).



DREAMING WITH OPEN EYES by MICHAEL TUCKER (Aquarian/Harper, £20)

As the author observes, most recent commentators on shamanism have ignored the shamanic dimensions of contemporary art. Subtitled "The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth century Art and Culture", the subject matter is the return of the western mind to the ancient shamanic idea of the artist as visionary healer. It also includes current examples of the shamanic consciousness which can be detected in the art of what Tucker calls non-industrial, traditional cultures.

In addition to discussing archaic shamans, Tucker applies shamanic vision to such painters as Klee, Kandinsky, Munch, Sjoog and Picasso; writers, particularly Nietzsche, unfortunately Castaneda; sculptors and film-makers.

Gabrielle Roth called rock 'n' roll "today's shamanic call" while Wilfred Mellers calls Bob Dylan "a shaman who effects psychological fulfilment." Normally never trust the artist, but Van Morrison on his incredible song "Astral Weeks" says "It's kind of one of those songs where you can see the light at the end of the tunnel." Try also his wistful, lustful, sacredly topographic "Brown-Eyed Girl." That voodoo chile, Hendrix, too.

If the book does seem a scatter-gun selection then so be it, but there are plenty of nuggets of wisdom and interest.

magazines



DEAR MR THOMS. Q-ish. Informal modern folklore miscellany. Sub: £7.50. From Gillian Bennett, 28 Brownsville Road, Stockport, SK4 4PJ.

No. 34. American widespread rumour of innocent motorists killed in a sinsiter rite of passage; vanishing hitch-hiker; corporate legends survey among students; weather vanes depicting insect vermin and human bodies invaded with parasites; past millennial panic doubted; Mary had a little lamb variations; wee tale about polished marble; Satanic child abuse; childlore; multiple executions through the ages; Paul McCartney "dead."

FORTEAN TIMES. B. The Journal of Strange Phenomena. Sub £12 UK; \$30 USA. Payable to John Brown Publishing. Send to Freepost (SW 6096), Frome, Somerset, BA11 1YA (UK only).

No. 74. Intriguing policeman's account of what seems a genuine (and not so uncommon) SHC case (cont. 75); new ice circles phenomenon; German unicorn?; Benjamin Creme, a John the Baptist for our millenarian times?; Arkaeology; and Orkneys. Plenty of Fortean clippings. Contributors tackle: have aliens sent us meteorites as "messages in bottles"?; New Age fanatics who give us a bad name; Mick Goss endorses hypnotist Paul McKenna; confessions from an archaeologist (to dowsing). Letters and reviews.

No. 75. The severed penis comes on strong from Loreana Bobbitt, ending with fellatio incident in Swansea on 1/10/88 when a woman had an epileptic fit and her jaws clamped upon the male's penis. Investigation into ufological quicksands of Chicksands, Vietnam and quite a few "controversial" characters. Contributors: John Michell on parallels between Plato and Fort; Colin Bennett on why we shouldn't take scientists seriously. Plus book reviews (including your editor's Seekers of the Linear Vision) and letters.

STRANGE MAGAZINE. P>O> Box 2246, Rockville, Maryland, 20847, USA. Twice yearly. Sub \$17.95 for 4 issues; UK £13.50. UK orders make cheque out to Mark Chorvinsky.

No. 13. Fortean wild talents philosophy explained with panache and humour; call for examination into seeming connection between ufology and practice of ritual magic; Ray Wallace's pivotal role in the cultural history of Bigfoot; 1912/1913 airship scare; many Martian mysteries; cryptozoology and ufo news; read enough but four pages on a confessed showman was a waste (the Shiels stuff previously was not). Plus letters; alleged firsthand weird experiences; reports from around world; book reviews.

MAGONIA. Q. Interpreting contemporary vision and belief. Sub: UK £4; US \$ (in dollar bills). Cheques to John Rimmer. Address: John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB.

No. 49. Martin Kottmeyer begins a look at the external influence motif in ufology and its chief progenitors ("heavy drinkers were

also said to be at risk of submitting to telepathic Orion control") (in 50 contemporary writers on control motifs). Columnist Peter Rogerson denotes a constant retreat in aspects of the subject leading fittingly to a ufological Alamo in the deserts of New Mexico, i.e., Roswell. Rogerson also continues his revisionist history of ufology, with part three looking at how in the late Sixties a stereotype was developing from the Hills' case, with many suspected hoaxes and children's rumours sweeping North America (in 50 its the period of stories' heterogeneity and no real dividing line between contactees and abductees). Plus BUFORA deflated and three urban myths on one page in The Bracknell Times. Videos reviewed and high-calibre letters from Hilary Evans and Paul Devereux.

50 Peter Brookesmith wittily demolishes a "mystery missile" Kent radar visual. Books extra.

NORTHERN EARTH. Q. Antiquarian mysteries. Sub £5, Cheques to Northern Earth Mysteries Group. Address: 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX7 5NP.

No. 58. Gordon Harris is back with his nonsensical bunched radiating meaningless lines, particularly his notorious Three Stone Burn examples (I wonder if he's ever been there, as I have. Also who originally called these "obscene" I wonder). Paul Devereux on gender whingeing. Another article on Killin in Scotland (I stayed at the Kilin Hotel on a week's bus trip and missed all these interesting sites, particularly annoying being the local stone circle); Gypsy Race and Wolds sacred landscape; very detailed astrology of Alfred Watkins's "ley vision." Letters.

~~~~~ Many more mags next issue.

# The Fare-Dodger: a German legend

By Nigel Pennick

Public transport everywhere has its own legends, and, in other writings, I have touched upon the urban folklore of the underground railway system in London. This year, another urban transport legend has come into prominence through a film directed by Pepe Danquart titled *Schwarzfahrer*, shown at the Cannes Film Festival and screened on Channel 4 TV on September 6th 1993.

The story concerns the antics of some passengers on a German tram, probably in Berlin. A black youth sits next to an elderly white woman, who complains loudly to the other passengers. A ticket inspector appears, and the woman gets out her ticket to show to him. But, before the inspector arrives at her seat, the black youth takes her ticket from her and eats it. The inspector asks her for her ticket, and she tells him what has happened, and of course, he does not believe her. Then she is ejected from the tram for having no ticket.

That this filmic legend omitted the well-known fact in Germany if one travels without a ticket, one is fined around 100 DM (£40.00) on the spot, seems to point to its origin in earlier days, when a fare-dodger would just be thrown off. The whole film relied on a racist pun on the colour of the youth, and the German colloquialism *schwarzfahrer* 'black traveller', for a passenger who rides without paying. In the United States of America, the film's title was *Black Rider*, a more literal translation.

However, when the film received the French equivalent of an Oscar at Cannes, it was discovered that the story had a forerunner in an earlier version made a few months earlier in Bielefeld by Bettina Middeke. Although Bielefeld also operates trams, her film was set on a bus, running on the fictitious route 90 between Werther and Borgolzhausen. The story was the same, with an old woman complaining in racist language (in a Stuttgart accent) about the black youth, with the same result.

It appears that the story dates back over 30 years, and was set in a number of different cities. In earlier times, the youth was a Turk or Yugoslav 'guest worker' rather than black. But the story seems well entrenched now as an urban legend. In early 1994, the Köln (Cologne) transport undertaking's company magazine, *Intern* reported a local newspaper report that this incident had just occurred on line 3 of the Wien (Vienna) U-Bahn underground railway. I have not heard of this story attributed yet to a British bus, tram or underground railway system, but, as the film has appeared here, doubtless we will.

\*\* Just as Nigel's piece arrived, we found *Magonia* was also on the trail. Here's how it appeared in *issue 50* for September 1994.

## Schwarzfahrer

A prize-winning short film of 1993 entitled *Schwarzfahrer* has attracted the attention of readers of the journal *Light Rail and Modern Tramway*. In the film an elderly woman loudly airs her racial prejudices when a young black man sits next to her in a tram. When the ticket inspector gets on the young man snatches her ticket and eats it. The inspector refuses to believe her story, and the woman is ignominiously ejected from the tram.

Most of the letters to the editor were concerned with nit-picking over where the film was made (Berlin?) and the correct translation of *Schwarzfahrer*, which is simply the German idiom corresponding to the English 'fare dodger'.

In the July issue, Peter Kuntze of Gütersloh informs us that there was nothing original about the film, as a very similar one had been made in Bielefeld about six months earlier. In this one the action takes place in a bus.

Mr Kuntze goes on to tell us that this

story has been doing the rounds since the mid-1960s, similar incidents having allegedly happened on tramways in different parts of Germany. In these stories the young man is usually an immigrant from Italy, Yugoslavia or Turkey. The editor reports that he has received a press-cutting alleging that a similar incident recently happened on the U-Bahn in Vienna.

Any reports of this story from other countries, or any other public transport foibles, would be most welcome ●●●

REPRISE....

for those of you who've fed up with urban legends about firemen rescuing cats and then running them over ... for those of you who've heard the one about a guy who gets marooned in the middle of nowhere after he's accidentally thrown out of his caravan or whatever...these two from the DAILY MIRROR of 30 June and 2 July are just for you...

## Cop flattens little Pepsi

POLICEMAN Steve Hanson caused a catastrophe while trying to settle a row over a moggie called Pepsi.

The Pe arrested Pepsi's owner Paul Tansey on suspicion of assault, but destroyed the evidence by running her over and killing her!

Fur was flying in Sunderland, Tyne and Wear and when the law arrived Mr Tansey said a neighbour had teased the cat.

Pe Hanson arrested Mr Tansey for an alleged assault on his neighbour, but didn't notice Pepsi curled up under the wheel of his Panda. As he drove off, he flattened the cat.

Mr Tansey denies causing actual bodily harm and has elected a Crown Court trial over the incident.

tour van on to the M40. The band - The Beatles, who perform covers of Beatles songs - had played a gig at Tower Bridge, London, and were on their way home to Worcester in their Co-registration Renault Dodge Transit.

It was travelling at about 60mph when the accident happened. PC

Jim Strachan, of Thames Valley Police, said Duncan was found slumped on the hard shoulder of the M40 near Stokenchurch, Bucks.

"He suffered serious injuries as he landed and scuffed along the ground," said the officer. "His friends, who were in the front, only discovered he was missing when they

# 'BEATLE' FALLS FROM M-WAY BUS...AND NOBODY NOTICES

stopped for a break at a service station further up the motorway."

He added: "It is a fairly old diesel van and the engine noise would have been quite loud. There was also the noise of the equipment rattling around in the back."

"They thought he had crashed out in the back but then saw the side roller shutter was half open and their friend was missing."

"They contacted us but we had already been informed by a lorry driver. Until his friends called us, we had no idea whether he was a pedestrian or whether he had fallen or even been pushed from a car."

An ambulance took the guitarist who was unconscious, to John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford.

He was in a stable condition last night. His wife travelled from their home in Worcester to be at his bedside.

Beatles' manager Tony Gibbon said: "We had just done our 100th gig at Tower Bridge. It all went really well and now this happens. We are absolutely gutted."

The other band members are Les Almae, who imitates Paul McCartney, Jules Benjamin, who plays John Lennon, and Ringo Starr impersonator Simon Ramsden. They were due to play in Southampton last night but the gig was cancelled.

The band recently played with Pete Best, the Beatles' drummer before Ringo.

## Oldies but Goodies

In Jan Harold Brunvand's latest collection, The Baby Train (see review) there is a tale demonstrating positive visualisation. It goes like this: "An American serviceman, an avid golfer, was taken prisoner during the Vietnam War and subjected to ghastly, inhumane conditions. While many of his fellow prisoners suffered grave emotional disorders and mental breakdowns, he was able to cope with the misery of his existence by visualising 18 holes of golf every day. He visualised all the drives, the putts, the fairways, and the greens. As he imagined himself playing each daily round, he kept refining his game. When the POW was eventually released, back home one of the first things he did was grab his golf clubs and head for the course. He played the best round of his life!"

One of Brunvand's students recognises the tale and points to an inspirational book in which the POW is identified as a Major Nesmeth. That source had borrowed from an earlier book and it also seems Reader's Digest carried the legend.

A couple of days after reading this passage, I was skimming through writer and broadcaster Frank Delaney's A Walk to the Western Isles (see review). On page 21 Delaney writes: "Several years ago, when a long kidnapping and siege in Ireland ended, I asked the victim, a Dutchman called Dr Tiede Herrema, how he remained sane, held at gunpoint in a council-house bedroom the size of a tall cardboard box. He replied that every day, at a specific time, he closed his eyes and across the acres of his mind played 18 holes of golf over the course near his home." The dubious Delaney does not reveal whether the prisoner's game had improved his contact with terrorists.

\* Still on the subject of golf, as you'll see. Gardener Fok Keng Choy is used to meeting snakes in the grass. But he never expected to meet one in the loo, Fok, 43, was bitten on his toedger by a seven-foot python which suddenly emerged from the toilet bowl he was squatting over at a public convenience on a Singapore golf course (D Sport, 20/12/93).

\* The old chestnut about saving crisp packets which prove worthless to save a sick child was taken up by campaigner Gillian Fox in wonderful Worksop, Motts (at one time centre of the editor's trainspotting universe). By collecting the sick kiddie's weight in crisp packets, the con said he would be sent to Disneyland (News of the World, 15/8/93).

\* Also I expect this one will be familiar enough. Liverpool-born Jack Mackline, 55, has been cured of his partial deafness he has had since he was eight. Swedish doctors were astonished to find a 47-year-old bus ticket in his inner ear (D Star, 17/8/93).

\* The punch/headline says it all. A man died of a heart attack while having sex with a prostitute. Pradikto Suratno, 59, was a regular client at the massage parlour in Jakarta, Indonesia. A local paper headlined the story: Man Dies In The Saddle (D Star, 29/6/94).

\* And lastly -- A hunter was recovering after being shot by his dog. The man, 48, was resting when his retriever pawed at the gun "like a stick" -- and caught the trigger. More than 100 pellets were later removed from the hunter's hip, foot and knee by surgeons in Famagusta, Cyprus (Sun, 8/12/93).



A contact was drinking there last week when his friend, a keen gardener, entered the pub with his arm impressively plastered. Supported by a triangle of metal in the armpit, it stuck out as if he were doing the front crawl.

After much coaxing, the man admitted that he had been tending his allotment and, while trying to get mud off his boots, had leaned against the base of an electricity pylon. A fellow allotment holder, seeing him in contact with the pylon, his feet apparently twitching, presumed the man was being electrocuted. Knowing he dare not touch him, the have-a-go hero sprinted over and separated our man from the pylon with an almighty thwack of his spade. Sadly, the collarbone was unequal to the challenge.



LEFT: The shock tactics is a classic. Parish Pump column, Weekend Telegraph, 28/5/94 for this mention. It supposedly happened in Peterborough.

A HUBBY who tied up his naked wife then put on a Batman costume KO'd himself on the ceiling as he bounced on their bed in LA.

ABOVE: Los Angeles and another familiar story (Sun, 8/10/94).

And while in LA, a woman and her son were arrested after the body of an 8-year-old girl was found encased in a barrel of cement (D Mirror, 31/7/93).

LEFT: That xenophobic favourite is still hard to swallow (D Sport, 20/9/93).

## Cafe for cannibals

A WOMAN chef who dressed up as a cannibal to promote her trendy restaurant has been arrested for barbecuing three teenagers and serving their flesh to unsuspecting customers.

Felicia Cordoba, 42, was charged with murder and cannibalism after owners of neighbouring businesses complained of "unusual smells" coming from her kitchen.

When police were called to the restaurant, they found the grisly remains of the three youngsters in a refrigerated meat locker.

And bone fragments found on the carcasses matched up with samples found on plates of leftovers from the restaurant, it has been alleged.

### Atmosphere

The dead teenagers had been reported

missing four days before the shock discovery, at Cordoba's popular Barcelona restaurant, The Jungle.

One customer said: "The place is full of plastic palm trees and African decorations."

"Most nights, the owner would be dressed up like a cannibal but we thought it was just part of the atmosphere."

A police spokesman said it was not known how many people had been served human flesh.

# Update

\* Talk about Freudian slips! The heading for the round-up (FF22:6) was not meant to be Dubious Missionary positions, but Dubious Transmissionary Positions. Also a Stop Press piece failed to make that issue. It read:

Two items we'd just typed up for our dubious transmissions round-up were picked up on by Tom Bussmann for his Zeitgeist column -- who says we're not on the ball and populist? (Guardian Weekend, 2/4/94).

Firstly he adds to our laserdisc Jessica Rabbit reference that "the pervy perpetrator, for good measure, added a telephone number for the fictitious brothel of Madam Allyson Wonderland - which, for the benefit of frustrated in EuroDisney, happens to be the home number of Michael Eisner, ludicrously overpaid head of Disney."

And secondly: "It was disappointing to find that air bags in cars were not as likely to be set off by drivers using portable phones as was first hoped. Perhaps manufacturers could compensate by ensuring the bags inflate if the horn is used when the vehicle is stationary."

\* Also our Stop Press missed scotching rumours that Eric Clapton had fallen for actress Susannah Doyle (FF22:7), readers learned he spent Easter in London with Italian Francesca Amfitheatrof, for whom friends said he was besotted (news of the World, 10/4/94). Er, so what.

\* Broadcasters' bloopers were mention (FF22:19) and a new set were publicised. Radio presenter Pete Sylvester felt a silly cooker when he mentioned the BBC's Good Food and Cooking Show -- and got his F and C mixed up. And DJ Jimmy Lee could have cooking died too when he tried to introduce a record by Dr Hook -- and accidentally called the group Dr Fook.

The on-air blunders are revealed in Coventry and Warwickshire Radio's station magazine called Tune-in. Other examples had a newscaster referring to "nuclear dumping" and a woman who "had been laid in her flat for 14 hours." (D Star, D Sport, 14/4/94).

\* Those "missing" GIs in (FF22: 19) Vietnam have an unlikely champion in former top world boxer Muhammad Ali, once convicted of refusing to fight in S.E. Asia. He was reported in Hanoi seeking clues to GIs posted missing during the war. He was helping the Missing in Action group hoping to meet Vietnamese officials to find Americans still allegedly held as prisoners of war. Ali, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, said at breakfast at Hanoi's government guest house: "I've allowed myself to be used to help this cause." (D Sport, 12/5/94).

## Letters

From Nick Brown, York.

Once again I wouldlike to renew my subscription to your excellent journal Folklore Frontiers. It is the only magazine I can read in the bath without soaking. For God's sake do not change its size!

## Stop Press

Used to 28 or 24-page issues, you'll wonder this issue is slimmer than usual. The reason is that six months since the last issue, I thought I'd better get something out or else you might think FF had met its demise. No promises -- but I'd like to get another issue out just before Xmas. Thanks for bearing with me.

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