

# Folklore Frontiers



No. 24

# Folklore Frontiers

## No. 24

JANUARY, 1995

Folklore Frontiers is an independent, non-profit making magazine devoted to contemporary folklore, in particular urban myths.

It is published and edited by Paul Screeton. Address is 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS25 2AT.

Published roughly on a quarterly basis, a subscription for four issues is £8; \$12. Single issue £1.50. All payments to "P. SCRETON" -- NOT to Folklore Frontiers. Dollar notes only from USA due to exorbitant bank charges.

A sheet of information on availability of back number is offered on receipt of an SAE.

If your subscription expires with this issue, an "X" will appear on the line below:

## The Diary

DO I detect that the media has now realised urban myths exist, but ..... Journalists are still unsure what constitutes such?

Here are examples from the upper end of the Press. Firstly a motoring section (Weekend Telegraph, 3/12/94) journalist, Helen Mound, writes that: "According to urban myth, it's mostly women that drive practical cars such as estates. However, if you believe research statistics, that's only because they have to."

Helen, it may be myth to you, but not as WE know it.

I recall Bill Porter pointing out to me that 90 per cent of usage of the word "archetypal" was misapplied.

"How's this for a contribution to the mythology of urban nightmare," begins Justin Cartwright (The Times Magazine, 10/12/94). Expect therefore a story its teller expects to be dodgy, but no, he is serious.

"A family man, resident of the leafier parts of Streatham, south London, finds his toddler daughter in the garden. She appears to have something in her mouth. He investigates and finds a used condom. Used by a prostitute the night before. In his front garden."

This is not folklore territory but a moral dilemma geographically embedded. He persists, however, that "most of the kerb crawlers are not the judges and magistrates of folklore, but young men who have had a few drinks," and then pointing to the very real case of the former Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Guardian, too, (?/12/94) reported Operation Back in Bradford's Lumb Lane which did net "solicitors, accountants, bankers ...." Martin Wainwright's



piece also mentioned that academics at Bradford University symposium were discussing our oldest profession.

Pointing to surviving street names such as Hooker Lane and Mabgate, which recall past red light status, a paper from Birmingham university in a session called Hot Streets in English Medieval Towns dismissed the traditional concept of prostitution as a marginal, snigger activity.

"The very distinctive geography of these streets suggests that, far from being marginal, such activity was closely integrated with commercial and political functions at the heart of towns."

From leys to lays!

\*\*\*\*\*

STRANGE CHAP, Spike Milligan. OK, so after calling Prince Charles a "little grovelling bastard" following a tribute from the Royal Goons fan was read out at the British Comedy Awards where 76-year-old Spike received a Lifetime Achievement award he said it had been made in jest.

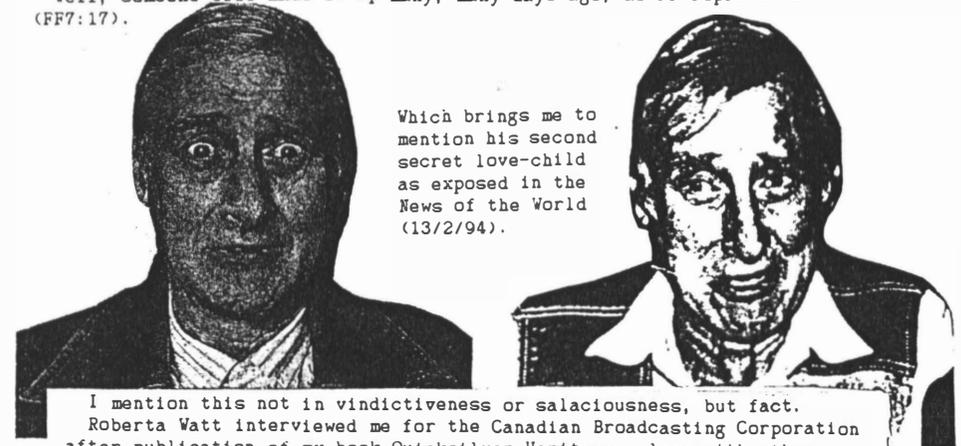
But this was also the man who said of Prince Philip he was "fucking lucky to meet the Queen. He had nothing when he met her. His arse was hanging out of his trousers." Or in one of his occasional short letters to the papers he claimed: "I have solved the mystery of the Royal family's marital problems: the truth is that Princess Diana died during one of her suicide attempts and Prince Charles is now living with a Princess Diana lookalike."

From fame for wit he became more famous for depression (he is patron of the Manic Depressives Fellowship). (Various between 6 & 28/12/94).

Last year, in an interview he claimed to make up a joke a day (Journal, Newcastle, 1/4/94).

"A guy goes into a pet shop and says: "I want to buy a wasp."  
The shopkeeper says: "We don't sell wasps."  
The customer says: "You've got one in the window."  
That's yesterday's joke.

Well, someone else made it up many, many days ago, as FF reproduced (FF7:17).



Which brings me to mention his second secret love-child as exposed in the News of the World (13/2/94).

I mention this not in vindictiveness or salaciousness, but fact. Roberta Watt interviewed me for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation after publication of my book Quicksilver Heritage, along with other earth mysteries personalities. the lengthy interview was carried out in quiet while downstairs my daughter Kathryn filled in colouring books with Romany, who was the same age. When fellow interviewee John Michell told me of Romany being orphaned (John represented the ley-hunting fraternity at the funeral) my wife Pauline and I, knowing only that Roberta had been a single parent and concerned for lovely Romany, inquired if there was no one to look after her and that we would in the circumstances willingly adopt the child, only to find that arrangements had been made and that Romany was in safe hands.



## Secret love-child No 2 for Goons star Spike Milligan

COMIC Spike Milligan has a second secret love-child, the News of the World can reveal.

The former Goon fathered Romany Watt in 1973 during a three-year fling with a journalist—but has never met her.

At the time Spike, 75, was married to his second wife AND having a relationship with Margaret Maughan.

She had his other love-child James, 17—revealed by the News of the World two years ago. Spike, now re-married, confessed: "It's true and very depressing. I've never met my daughter—and I don't want to."

Spike split from the mother Roberta Watt before Romany was born on August 2, 1973 at West Hill Hospital in Dartford, Kent.

Tragically, Roberta died in January 1981 aged 36 after a gall-stone operation. Romany was adopted by her grandparents Burt and Josephine Watt in Nelson, British Columbia, where she is still a student.

Spike had bought Roberta a house near Dartford to be held in trust until Roma-



SPIKE: Flings



ROMANY: Daughter

By AYLIA FOX

ny became an adult. In return, Roberta agreed to retain custody of Romany and support her financially. The deal ended Spike's responsibility towards them.

Spike is recovering at his home near Rye, East Sussex, after major heart surgery.

He said: "I've seen pictures of Romany and supported her financially, but to be honest that was only to keep her mother quiet."

"I'd rather just forget this, if you don't mind."

## FolkJokeOpus

or what can happen if you invite MICK GOSS to write a column for FOLKLORE FRONTIERS

# MY FATHER FOUGHT WITH ROBIN HOOD

Every now and then I wake in the early hours of morning and I think: "Somewhere in the world - right now, this very minute - while I'm lying here sleepless: a football match is being played!"

What worries me most - more than the fact that I'm worrying about this at all - is: I will never find out the result of the game.

Lately, perhaps in consequence of my counsellor advising me to tell myself that one of the teams is Arsenal (in which case the result is a foregone conclusion: Arsenal always win 1-0) I have developed a new source of pre-dawn insomniac deliberation:

*Whatever persuaded Kevin Costner to play Robin Hood?*

This isn't the first time I've been kept awake by England's premier folk-hero, the Man who put Sherwood Forest on the Map. (I mean Robin Hood, not Kevin Costner). Other unanswered Hoodian questions inimical to nocturnal rest have included:

(1) how come I spent the better part of TWO YEARS in Nottingham without meeting anyone - nobody, NOT A SOUL - who knew exactly where Sherwood Forest was?

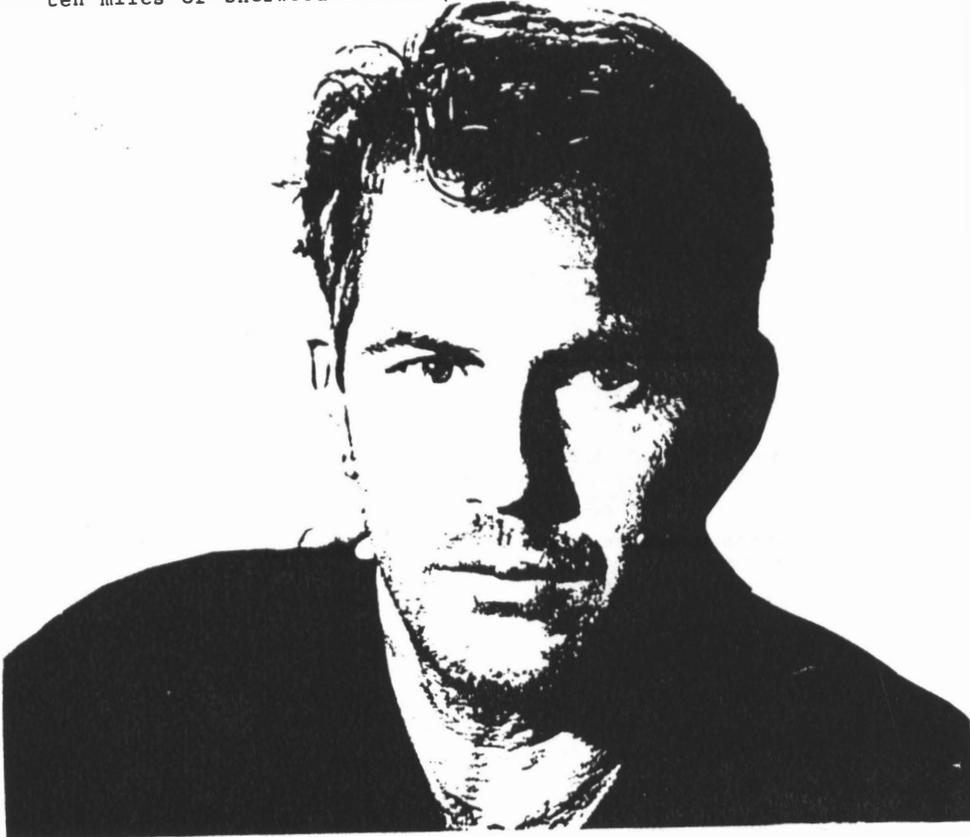
(2) that 1950s TV series with Richard Greene (a show which indelibly coloured impressions of Robin Hood for a whole generation, mine not least of all). It opened, didn't it, with a guy inaugurating the title-shot captions by firing an arrow into a tree the size of St Paul's Cathedral. What the hell was he trying to achieve? Was he REALLY trying to shoot a tree and if so why? Or was he trying to hit something else and simply missed?

Oh, all right, then - just one more:)

(3) what became of all those little white plastic Robin Hood figures they used to put in Cornflakes packets?

Anyway, back to Kevin Costner. My bewilderment stems from having just finished the thirty-seven items which make up the

Robin Hood cycle in Francis James Child's The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (1882-1898). Essential reading for the folklorist, balladist and indeed the Robin Hood freak, most of the fifth part or volume of Child's monumental work is devoted to and dominated by this great icon of the greenwood(s). My conclusion is that any cinematic star with half a grain of respect for his machismo shouldn't go within ten miles of Sherwood Forest (wherever it happens to be). The



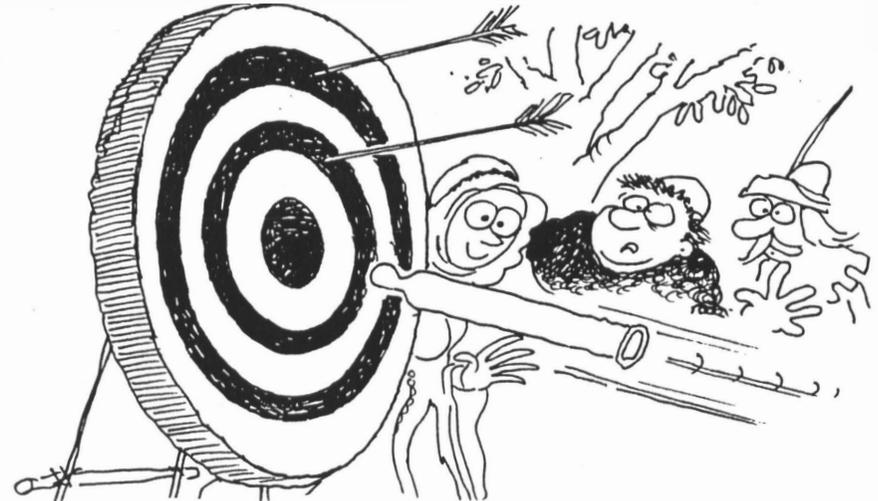
screen idol of our decade may suffer reverses, may waver...but when it matters, he has to be a winner. Kevin Costner takes roles where he comes out as a winner. We have been brought up to regard Robin Hood as a winner. But in the Child ballads, he is a loser. Nearly always. And an ignominious loser at that.

Yes, England's best-loved folk-hero is a loser on an epic scale. Look at the evidence of the Child ballads. (The numbers which follow in this article are those which Child assigns to his material). Engaged in single combat - which, typically, he starts, oft-times gratuitously - Robin loses with monotonous regularity. The most he can hope for (on one of his better days, mayhap) is a draw, but even then he's the one to cry Hold, Enough. In this context, a draw is as bad as a lose. Or, to quote Billy Bremner, you get nowt for coming second...

Oh, sure, Robin's got the measure of the Sheriff of Nottingham, whose head he cuts off at the end of the sixth "fitte" of "A Gest of Robin Hood" (117); the Sheriff revives

miraculously, only to succumb in the final stanza of 118 to an arrow in the back from Little John. (Elsewhere he appears, apparently in good health, for as long as it takes for him to be totally flummoxed by our hero). And admittedly, Robin also liquidates Guy of Gisborne (118) who for reasons conjectural has taken to hanging around the greenwood in a horse costume. (A real horse costume - "Topp and tayll and mane" an imaginative disguise in which he hopes to catch the outlaw offguard, evidently. Not a pantomime horse costume). Other outclassed enemies include the Prince of Aragon (129), the Bishop of Hereford (143) and fifteen churlish foresters who give the young feller a bad time before he's old enough to be recognized as a real Folk Hero ("Robin Hood's Progress to Nottingham", no.139). But, like some Premier League sides infamous for losing Cup games at home to teams from lower divisions, Robin has a chronic habit of failing against opponents who, on paper, seem less than moderate opposition.

A wearisome pattern emerges. Robin comes upon some more or less innocuous-looking stranger in the forest - immediately insists upon fighting him - loses/settles for a draw. In 121 he is beaten in quarterstaff play by a potter, though he soon recoups prestige by taking that tradesman's place at Nottingham in what becomes a frolicsome humiliation of the Sheriff. (Note: Robin is forever changing places and outfits with humble folk, purely to inflict fresh and frolicsome humiliations upon the Sheriff). Not long after, he is forced to concede to "The Jolly Pinder of Wakefield" (who goes on to fight Little John to a standstill in the next round/stanza: 124) and then calls a halt after a two-hour bout with a tanner named Arthur a Bland (126). Loses outright to a tinker (127), takes on and can't beat someone who proves to be his own cousin Gamwell (128: Gamwell is renamed and known hereafter as "Scarlet"). Comes off second best to an anonymous Scot (130); is severely thrashed and trashed by forest ranger (131) and loses out to a pedlar who proves to be yet another relative - Gamble Gold, this time (132). Is turned over by a beggar (133), kisses goodbye to £20 when he bets he can master a shepherd, which he can't, but then nor can Little John. 'The like did never none' exclaims the narrator, as though blissfully unaware that everyone and his dog has beaten Robin Hood in single combat at one time or another.



Gets worse. The contagion of defeat spreads to the other Merry Men in the strangely-titled "Robin Hood's Delight" (136) where Robin, Little John and Scarlet are defeated by three keepers. ("Robin Hood's Delight"? Has he lost so often that he's come to enjoy it?). In 137 he's knocked senseless by yet another pedlar, who sportingly administers a revivifying balsam which Robin vomits up... all over John and Scarlet. The ultimate indignity awaits in 150: Robin fights Maid Marian who (over-influenced by her lover's penchant for disguise, perhaps) has dressed herself up as a page-boy. Predictably enough, he doesn't recognize her, so that they fight till blood runs apace from both; just as predictably, he can't beat her and has to bring the contest to an end. OK, ye politically-correct, what's worse: Robin Hood not being able to beat a woman or the great English Hero picking a fight with a little page boy?

"Soe beware always, /How ye do challenge foes," warns the narrator of 137, "...or you may have the worst of the blowes." He should have told Robin sooner. Only, of course, he wouldn't have listened. Robin is a noble and high-spirited fellow who cares not for winning nor for losing (which, given his record, may be just as well). He fights these single battles just for the exercise and because he wants to test the stranger's mettle. Besides, they're a useful part of the Sherwood Outlaw Recruitment Programme.

Indeed, it's virtually impossible to become a Merry Man without having upended Robin Hood first. In one of the best-known stories, Robin and Little John meet for the first time on a narrow bridge over a stream (125). They form a lasting friendship after a tussle to decide who gives way to whom, mutual trust and admiration being fermented by the way Little John knocks Robin into the drink. This aquatic ceremony is repeated in "Robin Hood and the Curtail Friar" a.k.a. Friar Tuck (123 - his only appearance in the Child cycle) where the jovial fun centres around dropping one another into a ford. As a general rule, passages of arms always terminate with Robin inviting his opponent to take his place in the merry Sherwood band. They never turn down the offer. This strikes me as odd: would you want to be part of a band that's led by a notable loser like Robin Hood?

Let's face it: if Robin Hood was a football team, he'd be in deep, permanent relegation trouble. But could that be the reason we love him? He's cheerful, magnanimous - never complains to the referee; he's a surprisingly fallible champion. And, as the Child ballads triumphantly prove, he does win when it really matters - when greed, injustice and corruption are his real opponents, ones to whom we can't afford to have him lose.

Robin of Swindon Town? Kevin Costner of Sherwood Athletic? If Kevin Costner signed for Arsenal, where would they play him? I foresee hours of insomniac speculation in that topic.

— By Mick Goss

BEFORE leaving Robin Hood behind, here are two revisionist versions found in the FF files. Top one (D Sport 4/14/94) and lower (D Sport (13/12/94)).

# THROBBIN' HOOD WAS A WOOFER

## Folk hero had more beaus than arrows

**ROBIN HOOD never made Marian. And he was more interested in chatting up his merrie men than robbing the rich to give to the poor.**

For England's legendary folk hero was a raging woofier who found a new beau behind every tree in Sherwood Forest, according to French historian, Alain Donneaux.

Randy Robin was always ready to try a f\*\*k with any man who crossed his path.

And his beautiful Maid Marian was a 15-stone drag queen who could wrestle the limp-wristed outlaw to the ground with one arm tied behind his

back. The love of Robin's life was really a 20-stone bearded transvestite who was built like a brick outhouse.

Dr Donneaux dishes the dirt on the the men in Lincoln Green tights after a 30-year study of ancient manuscripts.

He says: "Robin was an expert archer who occasionally handed out some of his loot to the peasants.

"But his merrie men were seedy outcasts, drawn together by their blatant homosexuality.

"Marian was really a muscle-bound hunk called Drake who always needed a shave and had rotten teeth."

Dr. Donneaux, who has published his findings in Paris, adds: "Robin was as queer as a three-franc note. And he couldn't stand life in the great outdoors."

## **Robin was a bird!**

● **ROBIN Hood wore tights — cos he was a GIRL,** according to Scottish historian Seoras Wallace. Her real name was Robin Hud DeCrog, daughter of the 13th century knight Sir Robert DeCrog, who lived in Glasgow's Crookston Castle. But the claim has outraged expert on the Nottingham outlaw, Jim Lees, who stormed: "What does that make Maid Marian?"

# Telling some home truths

Misinformation on the Internet is rife, reports

**Matt Cockerill**

NEARLY 1989, Craig Shergold, a nine-year-old from south London, was diagnosed as having an apparently incurable brain tumour. He and his family decided to raise money for the local Royal Marsden hospital by trying to break the world record for the most get well cards received by one person. The record, an impressive one million cards, was broken on November 16, 1989.

Unfortunately that wasn't the end of the matter. The Guinness Book of Records lists Craig's total as 33,000,000 cards, but an unstoppable series of chain-letters, faxes and e-mail messages have kept cards arriving at a stupendous rate. The current estimated total is over a hundred million, even though the campaign officially ceased in 1991 and Craig's family have done everything in their power to end the appeal so that their son can return to a normal life and continue his remarkable recovery.

This example of the wildfire spread of misinformation has become a legend on the Internet. The Shergold card appeal — along with rumours that Ernie from Sesame Street will get leukaemia so children will learn to cope with bereavement, and that the Federal Communication Council plans to introduce a tax on high-speed modems — is one of the net's "bad pennies". When a long buried, out of date and categorically false story resurfaces, net veterans can be heard to mutter a resigned "Uh-oh, I think we have another Shergold here."

Can anything be done to make on-line information more reliable without forgoing the net's traditional unfettered freedom of expression? Some optimists think so. Just as there are programmers who devote a great deal of effort to developing antidotes for conventional computer viruses (the viruses that infect

programs and damage data), there is also a Usenet newsgroup that aims to put a check on information viruses — the stories of dubious veracity which propagate so freely on the net. It's called *alt.folklore.urban*, also known as AFU.

ALTHOUGH urban folklore was around long before the Infobahn, the on-line community is particularly at risk. Information exchange on the net is dangerously promiscuous in that it is easy to forward messages to multiple contacts by e-mail or via the newsgroups. Worse still, attempts to eradicate information viruses are rarely effective as the viruses can survive in a dormant state in the Net archives for years before being rediscovered, shorn of context, sources and dates, and starting a new outbreak of misinformation.

One characteristic that these viruses share with the biological kind is that they mutate, with new and virulent strains being passed back and forth across the Net in a kind of global Chinese Whispers. Not only does Craig's illness vary from source to source, but variants have appeared saying that Craig now wants to receive business cards or postcards. (He doesn't.) He also appears to get younger with the passing of time. Most of the messages currently circulating refer to him as a seven-year-old; in fact, he has just turned 15.

The *alt.folklore.urban* newsgroup's mission is to produce well-documented evaluations of tall tales. It is a good place to turn if you hear an unlikely story which you would like confirmed or refuted. However, it is worth checking the FAQ (the list of Frequently Asked Questions) first. This contains the results of the group's researches to date — and, incidentally, informs us that June 24, Craig Shergold's birthday, has been declared AFU Day.

AFU's work is laudable, but as more and more conventional publications appear in on-line form,

we need a systematic approach to the validation of the digital word. Anyone who has used a "hypertext" system such as the World Wide Web will realise that digital publication can, potentially, eradicate a large amount of misinformation. No longer need quotes from hard-to-find sources be taken on trust. Point and click on the quoted text and a "hypertext" link will bring up the original document. But how can we be sure that the source documents haven't been tampered with?

The answer is digital authentication, which uses encryption algorithms to add an electronic signature to a document. This signature provides a reliable check that the document has not been altered, and also confirms the identity of the sender.

Vulnerability to forgery has until now been a serious flaw in the Internet e-mail system. For example, recent participants in the *alt.hackers* newsgroup have included *god@heaven.com*, *stpete@pearlygates.com* and *oldnick@hades.com*, not to mention *clinton@whitehouse.gov*.

In the future, each participant on the Internet will become their own editor, and will be able to believe whichever individuals and organisations they choose.

The future of the Internet as an on-line gossip mongering coffee-house is assured, but if you want authenticated facts, these will be available too. This is good news for everyone — especially the Shergolds.

*The alt.folklore.urban FAQ is available by FTP from [rtfm.mit.edu](ftp://rtfm.mit.edu). World Wide Web users can find out about digital authentication from [www.rsa.com](http://www.rsa.com)*

*The alt.folklore.urban FAQ is available by ftp from: <ftp://rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet-by-group/alt.folklore.urban> World Wide Web users can find out about digital authentication from <http://www.rsa.com/> Matthew Cockerill can be e-mailed as: [m-cockerill@orf.icnet.uk](mailto:m-cockerill@orf.icnet.uk)*

• *Guardian*, 18/8/94

## THE STRANGER SIDE OF 1994

- Council workmen used green paint to mark out a football pitch at Retford, Notts.
- John O'Hanlon Smart of Hendon, Tyne and Wear, used a manhole cover to smash a shop window then stepped back and fell down the hole.
- A garage in Splott, Cardiff accepted pensioner Alf North's pet Amazon parrot called Fred as part exchange for a second-hand Mini Metro.
- An armed raider who held up a betting shop in Toxteth, Liverpool walked into a policeman telling staff how to deal with robbers. He was arrested.
- Ambulancemen found a woman lying naked with a broken leg under an oak tree in Windsor Great Park. She fell while having sex in the top branches.
- Five Welsh rugby fans set off to watch their team play in Bucharest, Romania and ended up in Budapest, Hungary.
- An arbitration panel in Canada ruled that a government worker who missed work because of a hangover was entitled to sick pay.
- Richard Powell, aged four, of Senghenydd, Mid Glamorgan, dialled 999 after his mother refused to let him have a bowl of strawberry jelly.
- Kim Winfield, 35, of Gillingham, Kent, broke her big toe when she dropped an 18lb trout her husband had caught and put in the freezer.
- A burglar who raided a house in Goole, Humberside left behind an artificial arm.
- Two policemen called to round up stray cows in Exeter were PC Nick Bull and PC Glen Bullock.
- Thieves stole six of the Seven Dwarf costumes from a car in Poole, Dorset. They left Dopey behind.

# Witches are burnt and ancient ways linger in the new S. Africa

North of the capital Pretoria lies an arid, impoverished, rural region stretching for hundreds of miles towards Zimbabwe. When villagers are confronted with the unknown, they react in accordance with traditional beliefs. The consequences can be grisly. **Bob Drogin** reports from Witches Hill

**B**Y all accounts, the mobs were deliberate, determined and deadly.

In Leeufontein, they dragged a grandmother, aged 82, from her home, put a petrol-soaked tyre around her neck and burned her alive. In Inverane, they marched two women to a river bank, stoned them to death and torched their battered bodies. And in Moraphalala, an elderly woman was painfully poisoned to death and then heaved into her blazing hut.

The four grisly deaths early last week in different parts of rural South Africa had several things in common. The women

were all accused of being witches. The killers were almost certainly their own friends and neighbours. And the killings were not unusual.

In this year of liberation, at least 100 accused witches have been burned alive or stoned to death. More than a third of the recorded deaths occurred in the impoverished Seshego district, near Pietersburg. The local police's Colonel Mohlabi Tlomatsana said: "Only a tiny proportion has been reported. The real problem is decidedly worse."

Not all of those accused of casting evil spells, raising the dead or using supernatural powers were killed. Many were

forced to flee their villages, had their homes burned and their children chased from school. Some took refuge with the police.

Scores of accused witches and their families now live in Witches Hill, a kind of refugee camp for the damned, in a police-sponsored witches' protection programme.

Slithering lizards, gnarled cactus and razor-sharp thorn bushes line the sun-seared slope. Dust-devils twirl in a bone-dry wind.

"They said I bewitched two women," explained one resident, Lina Ngoepe, a 60-year-old woman with an engaging smile and piercing eyes. "It was just pure jealousy. But they accused me of being a witch."

Neighbours banished the Ngoepe family and torched their six-room home. They moved to a one-room, mud-walled shack in Witches Hill in September after living for five months in a tent at a police station. A heap of charred window frames and a broken sewing machine are the only remnants of their former life.

Police have arrested hundreds of people for witch-related murder, assault and arson but have won few convictions.

Villagers rarely agree to cooperate or testify in court. Some fear reprisals. But most

simply applaud the vigilantes.

"They feel the people who have murdered the witch have done the community a favour," said Koos van der Heever, a Pietersburg lawyer who specialises in witchcraft cases. "If you don't participate in the killing, it's an offence according to traditional law. So the whole village shares the guilt."

This grim side of the new South Africa is most apparent in the vast Northern Transvaal region to the north of Pretoria, especially in the impoverished former black "homeland" of Lebowa. "Eighty per cent of all murder cases in our region involve witchcraft," said Mr Van der Heever.

Villagers blame witches for misfortune, like road accidents, or for events they cannot explain, like cancer or epilepsy. But some secretly settle family feuds, target business competitors, or simply express envy for

a neighbour's prosperity by accusing them of witchcraft.

In most cases the village elders convene a tribal court if witchcraft is suspected. Every family must contribute to hire a special witch hunter called a *nyanga*, usually from outside the tribal area, to sniff out the demon. He gives the instigators a hallucinogenic potion to drink, then tells them to shout out the witch's name.

Sometimes the suspected sorcerer is simply banished. More often, an angry mob of youths uses the agony of fire to exorcise the evil spirit forever.

Government officials have repeatedly condemned the attacks. Since many local police are also terrified of witches, a police task force has been created to investigate what a spokesman called "this barbaric scourge".

But the deaths have been an unsettling reminder that one of

South Africa's deepest divisions is between traditional beliefs and modern ways. The government hopes to bridge the gap by incorporating traditional healers and herbalists into the health care system.

Western-trained doctors are sceptical at best. In a report released this month, the Medical Association of South Africa estimated that 80 per cent of black people regularly consult the country's 200,000 traditional healers. The cultural barriers may be insurmountable, the doctors' group warned.

Salomon Mahlaba, who heads the Traditional Medical Practitioners' Association, said Westerners do not understand the mythic power of African medicine men, diviners and witches. "It's like radiation," he said. "To me, nuclear power remains a mystery, just as, to you, the witches remain a mystery." — Los Angeles Times.

THE GUARDIAN  
Friday December 30 1994

The motherland avenges her devoted sons in the Zulu war (as seen by 'Judy', 1879)



# Oldies but Goodies

Sunday Sport October 2, 1994

## ...TELL A FRIEND TO START READING SUNDAY SPORT

# VICE GIRL STOLE MY KIDNEY

### EXCLUSIVE

From TARA BARDOT in Los Angeles  
 A BRITISH tourist is recovering in hospital after a nude hooker stole one of his KIDNEYS.  
 Johnny Fuller, 47, was found unconscious with blood seeping from a hastily-stitched wound in a Las Vegas motel room.  
 He was rushed to the city's Memorial Hospital where he spent three days in intensive care after X-rays revealed the grisly truth.

And Johnny, from the West Midlands, told us: "That night of passion almost cost me my life."

The dad-of-three, who had gone to Vegas with pals for a gambling holiday, added from his hospital bed: "I had won a couple of grand and was chatted up by a very pretty woman in a topless bar."

### Licking

He added: "It wasn't until we got back to my room that she said she was a prostitute."

"We took a shower together and she gave me oral sex then we made love in every position imaginable."

The last thing he remembers about his night of lust was licking champagne off the hooker's privates.

He revealed: "I was dragged and she was obviously part of an organ-peddling ring because the cops say a doctor must have operated to remove my kidney."

A police spokesman said there is a huge black market for organs in the U.S., with kidneys fetching £3,000.

He said: "This type of attack is rare but it has happened before."

And a hospital spokesman said: "Mr Fuller is lucky."

"You can live with one kidney but he could easily have bled to death if he hadn't been found."



TRAP: The Las Vegas topless bar



ABOVE: The familiar bodily organ theft as an "exclusive" even!

TOP RIGHT: Wrinkled thespian Marlon Brando has just published his autobiography and pretty naif it is by all accounts. The Iheophilus column on February 5, 1994 (published in ???) claimed that a few months previously Brando rang a well-known European actress. In that trademark growl he put the morale-sapping question: "Say, did we ever sleep together?"

All of which reminds me of a lovely tale told (and retold) by my old pal Paul Frost (name-dropper that I am).

Frosty drinks in a certain hostelry in Stockton where there's one little old fellow who has turned full time drinking into an art. He sups from eleven in the morning to eleven in the night with barely a break for a bag of crisps.

One day, says Frosty, an American tourist was in the bar and watched our elderly hero drink eight pints between 11am and three.

"You look like a man who can take his drink," said the American. "But I bet you couldn't drink eight pints in five minutes."

The old boy asked for time to think about it and shuffled out of the back bar. He was gone for a while and then returned to take up the challenge. The pints were lined up and then duly sank, all within the five minutes.

The American shook his head and paid up. "I didn't think you could do it," he remarked in amazement.

"Neither did I," the old boy replied. "Until I tried it in the lounge first..."

ABOVE CENTRE: We had this in an earlier FF, but Brian Page gives it an airing in his Northern Echo, Darlington, 4/12/93 column. The Frost mentioned is a pretentious local television journalist.

# Terror of the TNT todger

THOUSANDS of men who find it hard to get a hard-on are carrying a timebomb between their legs, scientists warned last night.  
 For their pricks, blown up by silicon implants, plane cabins, say the couple, can explode on high boffins.

ABOVE: We've previously been cynical about boob transplant altitude scare stories. Here's the male equivalent (D Sport, 13/4/94).

altitude jet flights.  
 America's Federal Drug Authority reckons 350,000 men have had the operation, which turns impotent wimps into superstuds.  
 And the horrendous side-effects were spelled out after the pumped-up plonkers failed safety tests.

A spokesman for the US government watchdog said hundreds of clapped-out romeos in Britain have had the controversial "penis enhancements."

Surgeons insert tiny bags of silicon into drooping dongers.  
 And patients rise to the occasion by pressing a button that fills them with air.

But the bags could burst in pressurised plane cabins, say the couple.

# SEX TRAGEDY OF SICKO BATMAN

## Naked dungeon drama

By GREG PALMER

A BATMAN bondage nut was in a coma last night after a comic-book sex stunt went tragically wrong.  
 The man, whose kink was to be suspended over a naked girl wearing his hero's cape and mask, was nearly strangled when ropes slipped.

### Dungeon

Rescuers got him out of the basement torture dungeon as he hung from the roof half dead.

Police, who refused to reveal the full name of the married businessman, said: "It's the

weirdest case we've ever come across.

"The fellow got so turned on playing with himself in his Batman gear that he moved this rope which became twisted round his neck.

"The naked girl underneath thought he was in ecstasy when he went quiet. But luckily the brothel madame happened to

look in and realise what was going on."

Last night doctors were battling to save the man, named only as Rainer V. The hospital said he may be suffering from irreversible brain damage.

The drama began when the 50-year-old tycoon, clad only in skimpy Gotham City gear, was hoisted up over the naked 21-year-old beauty. The girl told

A classic:  
 D. Sport,  
 21/12/94

cops: "He was in a real state with an enormous hard-on shouting 'Don't worry lady, Batman's coming'."

"When he went quiet I just thought the excitement had got too much for him."

### Checked

The 35-year-old leather-clad madame from Bonn, Germany, realised what was happening as she checked out the £400-a-time torture chamber.

She said: "Batman had gone too far this time. We managed to winch him down in the nick of time."

BELOW: The cartoon strip just looks like an urban tale like the one above but in condensed form. Was it ever one? Will it become one?



BELOW: After the well-known stuck couple, here's one better -- the stuck triple (Daily Sport, 9/5/94).

# SEX CURSE TRIO ALL STUCK UP!

POLICE have blamed a sinister curse for leaving three randy lovers locked together in a sex position for THREE days.

Two lusty romeos were found STUCK inside a cheating wife by a neighbour who heard their cries for help.

The saucy wife had invited her lover and his best pal to her home for a sex romp when her husband went away on business.

And detectives now believe they were the victims

of the witch doctor's spell "likhubalo", which is used to punish wives who are unfaithful.  
 After they managed simultaneous vaginal and anal penetration, the randy threesome found themselves locked in what is known as the "double dog's knot", with both men unable to withdraw.

### Octopus

And a detective said: "There's no doubt about it -- it was another case of likhubalo. They looked like a three-headed octopus."

The Inspector from Simunye in Swaziland, said: "Likhubalo means any man other than the husband who enters his wife will get stuck fast. It's very effective."

He added: "When the husband returned he agreed to have them freed after they begged for mercy."

... and an octopus of a different kind (D Sport, 19/2/93)

# GIANT OCTOPUS SAVES COUPLE

A COUPLE whose yacht sank in a storm claim their lives were saved... by a giant octopus.

Richard and Betty Carter were thrown into the water when a mammoth wave capsized their liferaft.

But they told rescuers that a 100-ft long octopus rose up from the deep, grabbed them in its huge tentacles and righted the raft before placing them gently inside.

"We thought the was going to eat us or something but instead he came to help us," said Betty, 38.

"There's no way we would have survived if it was not for him. It wasn't some accident. He knew

## Proto-legends

First off, this one was new to me and has all the hallmarks of a bona fide urban legend. I won't attempt to paraphrase or alter .....

A petrol thief was left feeling down in the mouth when he tried to siphon off petrol from a campervan. The elderly owners heard the sound of someone tampering outside but it stopped and they went back to sleep at the camp-site in Wellington, New Zealand. When they went outside the next morning they made a strange discovery. They found a rubber tube and a pool of vomit outside. The thief had connected up to the portable loo outlet by mistake (D Sport, 31/3/94).

Another sick tale -- again without alteration .....

Prankster Tom Hansen is mourning the death of his wife, Kristin, after a practical joke went wrong. Tragic Kristin had a heart attack and died when she saw a pile of fake vomit Tom had placed on an expensive new carpet as a joke. Tom, a 65-year-old hardware store owner, of Kolding, Denmark, sobbed: "I'll never forgive myself. We were inseparable through 35 years of marriage. I'll suffer for this until the day I died." Police who investigated the incident say they will not press charges (D Star, 12/1/94).

This one looks dodgy as reality. Gravedigger Clive Farrell, of Auckland, New Zealand, could not keep up with payments on his car so he buried it in a cemetery and claimed it had been stolen. But he was nicked and charged with fraud after people noticed a large patch of disturbed earth -- with a car aerial sticking out (D Star, 4/4/94).

On the subject of cars, courting couple Greg Penser and Melissa DeCarli were suing a truck driver who crashed into their car -- and made Melissa pregnant. The lovebirds were parked in a quiet country lane and were indulging in heavy petting when Victor Renold's pick-up truck ploughed into the back of their vehicle. The sudden impact squeezed the semi-naked couple together and cause Greg (24) to ejaculate in an unplanned act of love, according to lawyers in Waterbury, Connecticut. "We never intended to go all the way," said Greg. "But the crash forced me on top of Melissa and I just couldn't stop myself." The pregnancy had ruined their career plans and they were demanding more than £250,000 compensation. Renold countered: "They were parked illegally in a no-waiting zone." (D Sport, 1/4/93).

I have my doubts about this alleged happening from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, where the mirror fixed on the ceiling of their bedroom had spliced a young couple's sex life. They were getting a great view of themselves going hard at it when the 3ft mirror crashed down and smashed into pieces over the girl's head. Her boy friend needed stitches when a sliver of glass speared his forehead. "I put the mirror up for a laugh," said the boyfriend. "When I told the doctor he fell about laughing." The girl said: "On reflection, we needed stronger screws." (D Sport, 14/7/93).

Another one where what you get is what appeared originally in print.

A vice girl, found guilty in a London court of soliciting, asked for time to pay the fine. Asked how long she wanted, she glanced at her watch and replied: "oh, about half an hour." (normally abysmal The Edge column, D Mirror, 26/11/93).

Chairs next. We all know of the concrete overcoat, but Russian gangsters have a new killer version. Moscow police were investigating the death of a businessman who died after his office chair was deliberately packed with radioactive material. A top Russian scientist said: "If the Mafia are really using radiation, it's a horrible thing. Can't they stick to the traditional methods, like guns and knives." (D Star, 10/12/93).

Back home, thousands of BBC staff have been warned to watch out for exploding chairs after a technician almost lost his manhood. As the victim sat down, the chair's pressurised suspension failed and blasted a bolt through the seat. It just missed his privates and buried itself in the ceiling of Broadcasting House, London. A spokesman said: "There was clearly a design fault -- it could be extremely dangerous." A memo was sent to staff urging them to check their chairs and a "help desk" was set up for advice. (Sun, 4/1/94).

Found this in the files by accident. It made me laugh -- not a lot does these days. Daily Express showbusiness editor Victor Davis in a rambling personal view of a sort unfortunately no longer fashionable (this was 29/2/80) writes (remainder unedited by me) .....

There's a veteran correspondent around Fleet Street who once mounted an expedition to darkest Central Africa to interview Dr Albert Schweitzer. As the intrepid reporter came up the river he saw the saintly man standing on a jetty, the sun making a halo of his white hair. Overcome, the journalist stood up and made a speech about the many hardships he had encountered on this 6,000-mile journey, but now worthwhile it had been. Whereupon, the dear doctor put his foot to the bow and sharply kicked the dugout canoe back into midstream. "Fuck off!" he said and that was that.

Scanning the book Motoring Shorts (Tony Bosworth, Guinness publishing, 1994), I reckoned it contained not a single modern legend. Perchance a fine thing, later that day I came across this:

Identical twins have escaped four manslaughter charges because police can't prove which one did the stabbings in Ead Hersfield, Germany (Sun, 7/11/94) (D Sport, 9/11/94).

Which reminded me of Bosworth's:

Police in South Africa don't see much point stopping a certain 21-year-old man from Port Elizabeth in connection with any motoring offences. He's one of three identical triplets, and a charge of driving without a licence was dropped when the prosecution admitted that positive identification would simply prove too difficult.

Then a trawl through the files uncovered this:

Blind pensioner Hanna Strauber has discovered she's been living with her dead husband's brother for 31 years! the amazing hoax was discovered when Horst Strauber, the fake posing as hubby Hans, died in a car crash. Hanna, of Topeka, Kansas, said: "My real husband died of a heart attack in 1963 and no one ever told me. I was completely fooled by that man." (D Star, 29/3/94)

Maybe like any dead cat story we should suspicious of twins tales. Also I've long been wary of South African stories. Here's one without even a city, town or named individual:

Police in South Africa tortured a suspect by getting a tortoise to bite his private parts. The man was held down, stripped and lettuce leaves put between his legs. The tortoise ate them and "in the process nipped his genitals causing him severe anguish" investigators said yesterday. (Sun, 30/7/92)

As for cats, do we believe this one?

A desperate couple had their cat castrated in a bid to stop a foul smell in the kitchen -- but then found the stench was coming from a bag of dirty washing. Jessica and John Howkins paid £18.50 for the operation on kitten Fluffy but the smell lingered on. Jessica, from Oxford, searched the room and found the dirty soccer kit John had dumped ten days earlier. She said: "The poor cat was definitely not guilty and he wasn't too amused by it." (D Sport, 20/1/93)

Next!

Mum Sandi Shawn and her three daughters were saved from a fire by their pet angelfish. It leapt from its bowl on her bedside table and tickled her awake. Sandi said: "There's no doubt Angie was a guardian angelfish." The family fled to safety from their burning home in Detroit. But Angie fried. (People, 30/5/93)

Either go "aaaah" or "yuck".

Another pet tale coming up:

A lusty labrador choked to death in a cat-flap as he tried in vain to reach a bitch in a neighbour's house. The bitch's stunned owner called police when she found the randy dog dead on her doorstep with his legs in the air. Last night a Southampton police spokesman said: "It seems his passions got too much for him. He ended up choking himself in his haste to get through the cat-flap." (D Sport, 15/7/93).

Another story now about being in the wrong place:

Nearsighted granny Martha Thomason, 73, mistook her five-month-old grandson for the roast turkey and put him in the oven. She pulled baby Lester out after trying to feed his bottle to the stuffed bird and realised her mistake. Martha, who had put Lester's bib on the bird, said in Denver, Colorado: "I nearly turned him into a roast." (D Star, 22/10/92)

More kiddie kidding?

A teenage nanny killed a baby by bathing him in a washing machine ... The "ignorant" 16-year-old was taught to use the washer by the child's parents. They left the house, telling the girl to do the laundry, then bath the baby. Thinking the machine would do for both, she put the child in and switched on. The year-old boy drowned. A newspaper in Xinjiang, China, said the couple, both teachers, regretted hiring an "uncultured" nanny. (Sun, 29/7/91).

And to end this round-up of ones to watch out for in the future, here's another heavenly body tale.

A star crossed tale now, of a student astronomer from Cardiff University, interested in globular clusters, known to their many passionate admirers as M followed by different numbers to identify the groups. He was setting up his equipment in the darkest place he could find, by the roadside near the Severn Bridge, when the police arrived. They asked, suspiciously, what he was up to. "Looking for M5," he said. "Follow us," they demanded, and wonder if he'd broken some obscure by-law, he did. They led him -- ah yes, you've got it -- back to the motorway, across the Severn Bridge and down the M4 to Junction 20, where they happily offered him a choice of the M5 south, or the M5 north. (Guardian, 6/7/93)

## Articles elsewhere

\* The Parliamentary constituency adjacent to that of Hartlepool is Sedgefield. Its MP is Tony Blair, new Labour Party leader who once wore his hair long, wore flared trousers and played guitar in a rock 'n' roll band. FF has covered backmasking in the past, and apparently the band's name, Ugly Rumours, came from a supposed hidden message on a Grateful Dead record sleeve. Or so Caspar Llewellyn Smith claims in an article on "quantum musicians" (D Telegraph, 30/7/94).

\* A large piece (The Independent, 19/4/94) devoted itself to Fluxus events and a Tate Gallery exhibition documenting the movement in the 1960s/1970s. Writer Andrew Graham-Dixon wrote that "the suspicion lurks that the entire exhibition is a hoax ... that perhaps Fluxus never really existed. Perhaps it was a movement that was said to only exist." Perhaps, indeed. Depicted are two people with "I am ~~Taa~~ Breakwell" signs in preparation for Breakwell's visit to a Fluxus event. It adds: "The identity of Ian Breakwell remains a mystery. Well, not to me it doesn't. With colleague Ian Lidgate I went to a mid-Sixties "happening" organised and "starring" Breakwell in either Durham or Newcastle. Very hippie, my main memory was of a bloke introducing a parrot to each member of the "audience". Breakwell, no doubt.

\* A lengthy and sympathetic piece on the fight to stop road building at Little Solisbury Hill, near Bath, had C J Stone (Guardian Weekend, 4/6/94) hearing from Sam, Queen of the Donga Tribe, that the Freemasons were attuned to a negative form of earth energy that the tribes worship and were actively trying to cut off the Earth's nervous system by burying plague victims on sacred spots, putting sewerage works on St Catherine's Hill and now wanting this road. Stone concludes that Sam "has many theories that are obviously part of the ongoing myth-structure of the movement.

\* The strapline to the article reads "His song is number one but Reg Presley has more important matters on his mind ... like corn circles and little green men". (Today, 30/6/94). Pathetic: Presley, lead singer with The Troggs, was interviewed in Avebury's Red Lion Pub and asked if he would board a UFO if invited. "I would risk it," he replied, then paused. "Mind you, I hate flying. I believe that every landing is just a controlled crash." He is currently writing a book with the working title Wild Things They Don't Tell You.



\* Staying with rock music, a reasonable requiem to Kurt Cobain by Giles Smith (The Independent, 14/4/94) looks at the Dead Rock Stars Society, mentioning along the way how Jim Morrison of The Doors died in Paris of respiratory failure in 1971 but later the same day was seen at Paris airport. He concludes: "There are already small puzzles spinning off the Cobain (of Nirvana - see FF22) story: where was he during those lost, last days? And who gave him the gun, if it is true that his own collection of arms had been confiscated by the police following a domestic incident at his house last June? A smart career move? Death is where the madness starts."

\* Wild boar scares and continuing alien big cat sightings led the nationals to feature stories of dubious merit (15 paragraphs only but picture by-line for Henry Macrory, D Star, 13/6/94; 12 pars but better from Janet Knight, with map, D Mirror, 10/6/94). This summer, ferreting around the tracks of the Kent and East Sussex Railway at Rolvenden I little realised I could have been in mortal peril of confronting the wild boars of that liminal counties border. Hunk of lard Roy Hattersley (I interviewed him in the Sixties) best wrote it all up (D Mail, 19/3/94). Noteworthy too were two pieces (The Independent, 17/3/94; D Mirror, 16/3/94).

\* A Birmingham drug project deputy manager related how a parrot was being treated as a crack addict and cats had become hooked on their owner's solvent fumes. By-lined with an "exclusive" tag for Lynn Wallis and Colin Wills (Sunday Mirror, 30/1/94), I only became a little suspicious at the last paragraph warning "the centre says it is not taking any more parrots in for rehabilitation as resources are limited." A couple of days previously it had been revealed that a budgie had died of lung cancer caused by six years of inhaling from its 40-a-day owner's cigarettes. Case of we can invent a better story??

Then along came "The cats who need cold turkey..." by Simon Davies (Weekend Telegraph, 5/1/94). Remember Mick Goss wondering if sniffer dogs could be thought to be addicts themselves .....

OUR neighbour is a kindly pensioner with three cats and a perilously low, fixed income. Last week she made a costly mistake — she switched from a supermarket brand of cat food to Whiskas for a three-day treat.

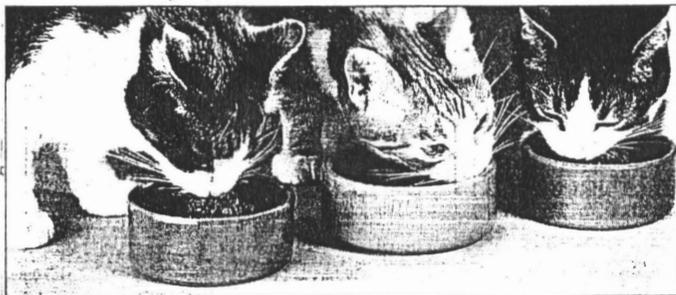
That's a leap from 19p to 45p a can. Since that day, her cats have refused to eat anything else. All she gets is a hostile stare and a bout of tail-swishing.

Cats can become addicted to particular foods in a matter of days, according to

Mike Davies, director of the Beaumont Animal Hospital. They become chemically dependent on food in much the same way as people become dependent on drugs.

Davies explains that when the cat finishes a meal that does it physiological good, its body sends out a message that says: "This is good for you." The cat experiences a sense of well-being and a flood of hormones are released. The addiction has begun.

"Whenever the animal has that meal again," says



Quick fix? Cats become addicted to foods in a matter of days

Davies, "this process is reinforced. The cat becomes conditioned to eat that food and will resist change."

David Watson, veterinary business development manager for Pedigree Petfoods, says most cats will have made up their mind whether to eat their food "even before their head is in the

bowl". He says cats can pick out individual aromas — right down to molecular structures and amino acids.

Do cat-food companies put addictive ingredients in their food? Mike Davies says they don't. But they don't need to — cats get hooked on unique textures or smells.

The message to cat-

owners is clear — if you switch to a more expensive variety, be prepared for the consequences. The only cure, according to Davies, is a regime of "cold turkey".

"A finicky eater can be weaned off a food if you don't give in," he says. "All cats will eat what you give them after three days."



FLYING HIGH: Passive smoke gives parrots a habit

## Books

### THE WORLD'S GREATEST GHOST AND POLTERGEIST STORIES

By Sarah Hapgood

AT random the reviewer selected the entry for The Durham Poltergeist of 1963/64. A family called Coulthard found their council house was the scene of a poltergeist outbreak. Crockery and bottles were smashed, slippers flew through the air and chairs moved. The vicar's exorcism was to no avail and they were rehoused. What happened there in Bronte Street could be retold from a thousand homes in Britain.

There is no suggestion events were falsified to provoke a pleasing change of address: the point is that so much of this book is so condensed as to be meaningless. The Haunted Toilets entry is five lines long: you find it's Dunston, Tyne & Wear, but not specifically located. So what?

There's 18 Dorset Street, West (sic) Hartlepool, and 4 Eden Street, Horden (see elsewhere this issue).

The author writes of ley lines (sic) and claims some people suppose phantom hitch-hikers now follow the course of these supposedly supernatural lines. A serious fellow enthusiast and researcher would want a footnote to bolster and explore this dubious claim.

Which raises the very real criticism of this book. It looks like a quick scissors and paste reductionist job. Not that it is cynical, but the scholarship in the brief introduction is certainly shallow.

Having personally written a book on The Hexham Heads discussed here, the reviewer knows what front-line investigation and back-up inquiry is all about.

If all you want is a superficial and arbitrary compendium of supposed spectres and supernatural happenings then this book fits the bill. But the "Great" in the title is misleading to say the least.

You have been warned.

Published by Foulsham, £7.99.

### AS WE SAY IN OUR HOUSE

By Nigel Rees

SUBTITLED A Bok of Family Sayings, this looked like being a corny collection of homilies and useless home-spun wisdom, ill fitted to a world of broken homes, single parents, delinquency and homelife akin to tram shed security.

Instead its compiler has made the mundane fascinating, flavored the frivolous and not shied away from the rude and bodily functions.

Unknowingly we all use and recognise others' often abstruse remarks. This reviewer's choice phrases not suitable for a family newspaper, but a good example would be colleague Margaret O'Rourke's mutter when awakening from a reverie, "This isn't getting the baby bathed," which I've picked up and use regularly.

Some sayings such as "queer as Dick's hat-band" end up the subject of lengthy debate in newspaper Q&A columns, usually totally confusing the issue.

These abound as do aphorisms. Large issues such as who's to be boss in the house upon marri-

age can be encapsulated in a simple statement of advice and intent such as "when she hands you a dishcloth, blow your nose on it and hand it back."

Putdowns are common. An amusing example of a person considered too inquisitive being: "He always wants to know the far end of the fart and where the stink goes." And: "She wanted to know the far end of a goose's trump, how many ounces it weighed, and which way the stink blew."

Also here, "more tea, vicar?" is a common response to anyone belching or farting where I work.

The book even covers house names. From Dunroamin these extend to the retired policeman's Copper Leaves, retired maths teacher's Aftermath and could have included the redundant late geomant Anthony Roberts' Gondolin.

"Heavens, eleven o'clock and not a whore in the house dressed."

Must close here. Published by Robson Books, £11.95.

### STRANGE BUT TRUE?

By Jenny Randles & Peter Hough

USUALLY programmes on the supernatural are unduly sceptical (if not ridiculing) and intellectually superficial. These accusations cannot be made about this current ITV series, introduced by Michael Aspel.

To accompany the series comes this well-illustrated, large format paperback covering stories of flying saucers, ghosts and poltergeists, psychic powers and near death experiences.

Published by Piatkus Books, £10.99.

\* Mick Goss drew our attention to mind-surfing Jole and Merv of techno-pop combo Eat Static (New Musical Express, 18/6/94). These Steve Hillages for the Nineties ramble about Clay (sic) Hill, Warminster. "It's just geographically powerful, because of ley line (sic) paths ... Also there've been a lot of circles a couple of miles away in a place called Upton Scudamore, that we've visited. They're all on the same line. The centre of the circle's in line with the peak of Clay Hill, which is in line with Glastonbury. It's just mad." Their new album, *Impiant*, is named after those silicon bugs with which extraterrestrials have supposedly tagged quite a few of us humans. Tracks are about Cydonia and the Dzhopa Tibetan fraud/hoax. There's also a condensed history of ufology and its influence on pop music in the mag.

### Railway Disasters of the World by Peter Semmens

THANKFULLY today railway disasters are rare.

When they happen they make headlines in the world's press, simply because of our safety-conscious measures.

Peter Semmens has been expert on railway matters for decades and after retirement from ICI became assistant keeper at the National Railway Museum in York. He also wrote for a period during the Sixties articles for the Mail's former weekly Billingham and Stockton Express series.

Not surprisingly therefore we find here two pictures of locomotives off the rails at Billingham itself.

On a less parochial scale here, he provides the first survey to cover the subject of train accidents on a global scale.

Here he documents all significant accidents which have occurred throughout the world from 1900 to 1989 involving more than 20 deaths.

Much of the material would not even be known to seasoned railway enthusiasts and it is presented chronologically.

In a scholastic but totally readable introduction on safety and the railways, Semmens reassuringly shows how this mode of transport compares admirably with others.

He also correctly chastises elements of the media which fail to appreciate by comparison what lethal beasts cars, lorries and buses are - or rather their drivers.

The reader is taken from how the fireman on Locomotion died when safety-valves were tampered with and its boiler blew up on the

Stockton and Darlington Railway three years after its opening, to the Japanese "Bullet Trains" which have never cause a single passenger fatality in almost 30 years of operation.

The reviewer has travelled on trains regularly for 40 years and has yet to witness a crash or even serious derailment, though was shocked in steam days to see a fireman seriously injured at Carlisle as a locomotive coupled up to its train. Almost written off in a Newton Bewley car smash, he has far greater faith in rail travel than any other.

Also on a personal level, for the author to believe disasters occur as "clusters" purely as random chance, begs the question as to why this was even introduced and then, arguable wrongly, dismissed. Fortears take note!

Published by Patrick Stephens, £17.99

### FILTH!

Compiled by Crispin Leyser

AND you though Chubb by Brown was crude! Trumpeted as "The Book of the Comedy Event of the Year," this is gratuitously disgusting and as subtle as standing in dog excrement. Few these days are easily offended, so this will doubtless sell massively.

Very little could be quoted even here and anything non-rude would be untypical. Even Ben Elton has had to jettison his politically-correct stance to get in here, looking at Baywatch and bikini lines.

Creepy Simon Fanshawe rubs shoulders with Julian Clary, Maureen Lipman is in company with Jo Brand. There's Lily Savage, Harry Enfield and a wide range of people

breaking every sexual taboo imaginable.

Going back to a previous FF, Jeremy Hardy goes on about the Leeds teacher who explained Mars Bar parties. "(They) foxed me. I mean I know about the apocryphal Marianne Faithfull story and that obviously the origins of the practice of combining food with cunninglingus is that for a lot of women the only way they can get their man to do it is to put his dinner up there.....

Published by Arrow, £5.99.

### STATELY SECRETS

By Richard, Earl of Bradford

A light-hearted look at life in historic houses from an earl, his fellow peers, stately home owners and servants. A look through the keyhole at dubious goings on in high places; witty, irreverent and fascinating.

As a sucker for the apocryphal, there's a tale about an American film producer walking through the state rooms at Syon. In one small corner there is a large framed painting of the Percy family tree, under which there is the title: The genealogy of the Dukes. The producer, who was rushing to catch up with the rest of the party, must have misread the sign, as he was heard to exclaim by the Duke: "Good God - what does that say? The Gynaecology of the Dykes?"

The Daily Mirror scurrilously took two items as if news, the second reproduced thus:

*He also reveals that a sacked maid said to a titled lady: "Your husband, his Lordship, has often told me that I'm a better housekeeper than you are and a better cook. What's more, I'm better in bed than you are."*

As a sub-editor myself

I understand how it came to be slashed and altered from the original:

*Many years ago a certain Lady had occasion to fire a pretty parlour maid. The girl stood silently as she received her dismissal, but finally spoke up: "Your ladyship, now that I am sacked I feel able to speak my mind. I want to tell you that your husband, his Lordship, has often told me that I am a better housekeeper than you are, and a much better cook. So stick that in your pipe and smoke it! And what's more," she added, "I'm better in bed than you are!"*

*"Heavens!" said her Ladyship. "Did my husband really say that?"*

*"No," replied the maid. "The chauffeur said that."*

Published by Robson Books, £14.95.

### SEXUAL DREAMS

By Gayle Delaney

DREAM LOVERS can evoke sensuous euphoria that reminds us of our best sexual experiences in the past or that strikingly inform us of what we are missing and of what we are capable.

The author explains a practical method of dream interpretation to help readers connect directly to their private dream language, revealing how the images are metaphors shedding light upon everyday concerns. Dreams can lead us to live fuller sexual lives by showing us our restricting attitudes, conflicts and our potential. Advice is given on incubating a dream to explore a problem.

Dr Delaney also covers the disturbing subject of incest revealed through dreams and the flipside of unethical therapists so often involved.

Published by Piatkus, £9.99.

### BACKSTAGE PASSES

By Angela Bowie

I found this book somewhat nauseating. Not because of the sex (mostly bisexual) and drugs and rock 'n' roll, but the sycophantic style.

She might have been married to David Bowie for ten years, and doubtless played a role in his metamorphosis from minor cult idol to international superstar, but I bet she was a real pain in the butt. With typical American over-zealousness, she makes it seem everyone who was anyone swooned over her.

Perhaps the most telling episode is where some acolytes arrived to breeze her into Elvis Presley's presence (did he really want a David Bowie song then?). Angie had laryngitis and rather than pass on germs to The King, she declined the opportunity to enjoy his hospitality.

Published by Orion at £4.99.

### GOLDEN STONE

By Laura Jackson

THIS expanded paperback version points the finger of suspicion for former Rolling Stone Brian Jones' death at builder Frank Thorogood, now conveniently dead himself. Or did the sickly Jones simply drown through a combination of asthma and booze?

The sordid sensationalism comes after the bulk of the book charts the hardly as claimed "untold" life and career through friends and teachers, band rivalry, his many women and progeny, and musical originality.

But when Jones died there was so much conflicting testimony that

even the author recognises the farcical element of piecing together events and corroboration.

Published by Smith Gryphon, £4.99.

### THE MESSENGER

By Geoff Boltwood

ON a higher level than the usual New Age twaddle, this autobiographical journey of a spiritual teacher reads as an honest and humble account.

Beginning with a near-fatal illness where paranormal intervention turns the author into what shamans call a "wounded healer," Boltwood goes on to in later life undertake experimental healing with scientists and most recently channel information from a special source about the changes needed for the future of humanity and our planet.

Of interest to those seeking spiritual awareness.

Published by Piatkus, £15.00.



Magazines

**NORTERN UFO NEWS.** £3 for 3 from Jenny Randles, 37 Heathbank Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, Cheshire, SK30UP.

No. 163. Editorial on Jenny Randles' resignation from BUFORA council.

No. 164. Editorial on Jim Schnabel's new book. Bizarre claims made over U.S. base at Menwith Hill, North Yorkshire, regarding expansion of usage, ufo tracking possibility and a being like a small child seen trying to get over the fence there (out of into is not specified). Regular columns: news round-up; current investigations; case history; major articles elsewhere (FF seen as "lots of snipets on the bizarre and unusual - often sexist though!" Oh, really?).

No. 165. Editorial on anonymous shenanigans of some newsletter and perpetrators called Elite. Ilkley Moors ufo sightings site half-day trudge. Named inventor claims possible solution to Belgian ufo wave.

No. 166. Editorial sets record straight on the BUFORA sacking of Randles and News of the World revelation that Randles was born male (I'd known this for ten years or so - but to call trans-sexualism a "disease" as Randles

GIRL CHAT

THIS U.F.O REPORT TELLS OF HOW TWO MEN WERE DRIVING HOME LATE ONE NIGHT, WHEN SUDDENLY THE CAR LOST ALL POWER AND GROUND TO A HALT!

...THE MEN SAY THEY BELIEVE THE CAR'S POWER WAS USURPED BY A U.F.O.!

EITHER THAT OR THEY WERE DRIVING A SKODA!

does, seems harsh). FF described as "rampantly sexist."

No. 167. Editorial on preconceived notions and covers Roswell, Ilkley and Rendlesham forest.

No. 168. Editorial on Randles' book publishing schedule priorities.



"And now let's take a look at the satellite picture."



"Look at that flash so-and-so in the XR31—shall we stop his engine?"

Magazines

**DEAR MR THOMS.** A folklore miscellany published by the British Folk Studies Forum. Subs of £7.50pa should be sent to Gillian Bennett, 23 Brownsville Road, Stockport, SK4 4PJ.

No. 35. Abbreviated text of an article from The Independent on the burgeoning "amazing facts" publishing industry. Hartlepool supported over Eocdam as originating hanging the monkey legend. American traditional texts; photocopylore; ambiguous headlines; Craig Shergold cards. Urban myths include new version of The Babysitter, engineer's blunder, pot plant tarantulas, cycle race penalty, Proctor & Gamble as Satanical, and 1866 vanishing hitch-hiker.

No. 36. A Mick Goss essay argues for two 19th century Irishmen to be credited for 'fusing traditional narrative with the kind of literary processes some feared would kill it. Urban myths include: toy masquerading as a mobile; landscape gardener's suicide at emptying of his French lake. Updates are seven-hill cities; sewer crocodilia; definitions of a grown-up; school truancy day for drowned "Paddy Murphy"; people drinking rum used for preserving a corpse. Plus food epitaphs.



"I don't suppose those drains have been looked at for years!"

**PROMISES & DISAPPOINTMENTS.** Successor to The Wild Places and Alien Scripture. Q. £2 single issue; 4-issue sub £7.50; US 4 issues \$18 in notes. To Kevin McClure, 42 Victoria Road, Mount Charles, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4QD.

No. 1. Kevin outlines his aims like this: I intend to produce an intelligent, innovative magazine, with a fairly hard investigative edge. Not sceptical, because sceptical tends to mean boring and unproductive, but challenging the money-makers in the field, the people who are promising new worlds and new lives, dramatic contacts with ETs, abductors and the dead. The people who rattle on about the occult powers and UFO achievements of the Nazis, without giving a damn about what they really said or did. the authors and investigators who wrap up accounts of sexual violence and submission in the guise of abduction recall. Those who recommend drugs as the route to encounters and elightenment. Who transport the vulnerable to non-existent, hynosis-induced pasts lives, and call it therapy. Who promise healing, and contentment, and transformation. Who threaten the end of the world to those unhappy enough to believe them. And I want to have fun, and enjoy doing all this, too. Maybe, when we've cut away the cons and illusions, something genuinely worthwhile will be left.

So that's what you can expect. Articles cover how disparities rather than similarities put a curse on accounts of "space mummies" and lead to a human (not ETH) explanation; conspiracy theories; controversial view of abduction narratives in historical and political contexts. Exhaustive mags (and some books) reviews, where "only Paul could make word-processing look this disorganised!" regarding FF22. And to think it's also my day job.

**WEARWOLF.** Ruin your eyesight with a 5-issue sub for £2.50. Payable to Wolf's Head Press, P O Box 77, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, SR1 1EB No. 10. Moon landing conspiracy scam; small press festival experience; Brittany swine; bookseller Chris Bray latest. Plus poor poems; zines round-up (FF22: "Perhaps it's the male menopause or something" -- Kevin, I reckon you've got it in one).

FORTEAN TIMES, Newsstand mag. bi-monthly. Sub inc pap £12. Cheques payable to Joan Brown Publishing, FREEPOST (S40090), Frome, Somerset, BA11 1YA (no stamp needed in UK).

No. 76. John Michell reviews Unconvention 94; South American organ-facet rumours; Martian mediums of the 1890s; Oz cryptozoology; satanic child abuse. The Forum section has Patrick Harpur on daemonic reality and Mike Jay more or less diametrically opposed with temporal lobe seizure, plus another writer pro-conspiracy theory. As for new theories, page 54 has 26 secret ufo bases in the USA and page 55 obsessive compulsive disorder suggested as an explanation for some road ghost reports.



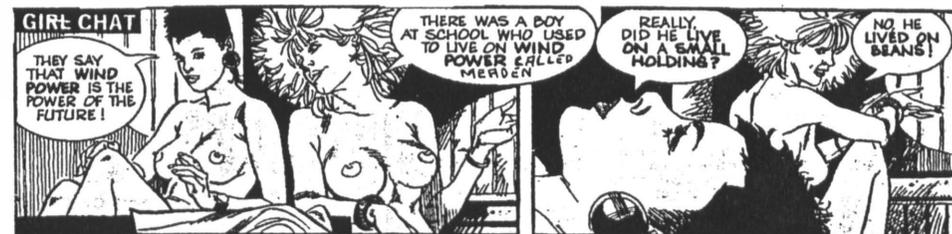
No. 77 UBT fans will enjoy an examination of the driver who flashes his headlights and is then killed as an initiation ritual which has gained widespread fear, loathing and coverage in the USA. Other folkloric topics include lake monsters, haunting Elvis, giant sloth, babies born in toilets (is the umbilical cord the clue to true or foaitale?) and BSVs. Plus Holy Spirit Fever, ancient customs, Wild West "reincarnation" and Sister Marie Gabriel profile. Contributors to the Forum section are Robert Anton Wilson, who charts the rumour of his death, and Kyle Rottweiler, who questions Fortean's acceptance of scientism (particularly unacceptable human behaviour being dubbed with syndromes -- a psychiatrist hearing the foul language in the newsroom where I work would believe we all had rampant Tourette's syndrome). Strange Days news round-up pages; letters; mag and book reviews.

SAMANTHA FOX ... high-profile convert to charismatic cause.

NORTHERN EARTH, Journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group. Q. £5 for 4. Cheques to NEMG. From 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX7 5NP.

No. 59. Topics are Wordsworth and the poetic spirit; trip to and speculation on a King Arthur's well; childless woman's challenging comment that she feels as such as different to child-bearers as men would to women; Isle of Lewis quarrying and tourism; astrological Callanish; Japanese stone circles.

No. 60. Articles on corpse ways; horned landscapes; lost monuments; segmented embanked pit alignments; Helen Woodley rubbishy ramble. Possible urban legend in the ephemera section, where the Queen spots in Windsor Great Park what she supposes are New Age Travellers, but who turn out to be archaeologists (Glyn Daniel or Sir Mortimer Wheeler would never have been mistaken in such a way). However, stone depictions of Mussolini and Hitler had been mistaken by archaeologists as Celtic, though carved in 1939. Plus book reviews and letters each issue.



THE CEREALOGIST. Thrice yearly. Single copy £2.50. Annual sub inc pzp £7.50. Cheques/POs payable to The Cerealogist are to be sent to Specialist Knowledge Services, 20 Paul Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DX.

No. 12. Founder and first editor John Michell surveys the confusion within the crop circle scene and concludes that subjecting the phenomenon to theories and beliefs distorts its meaning, which "as far as can be seen from its actual effects, has been to destroy theories and to eliminate all certainties. In this way it is informing us truly about the actual nature of the world, ourselves and our reality." Michell points out that many writers of submitted, and spiked, articles claim to reveal the answer to the mystery had never even seen a corn circle. Terence Meaden created "one of the most ludicrous fiascos in modern science" resolving not only the central thesis via plasma vortices but explaining, too, ufos and prehistoric sites before fame, fortune and a Nobel prize vanished like fairy's gift gold -- and along comes Puck (doubtless translated as "oh, fuck!" -- Ed.). Now the total-hoax theory's ascendancy looks equally dubiously dicey. Plus Sixties Wilts circles; phenomenon suggested as coming from star HD 42087; claimed channeled dialogue with devic being; 1866 mysterious repeating perfect ring of earth. Letters.

THE LEY HUNTER. The Journal of Geomancy and earth Mysteries. Three issues £5.25; USA \$15. Sterling or dollar bills. Payable to "Empress". From P O Box 92, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 2BX.

No. 121. Jeremy Harte, in an article on haunted roads, suggests against the latest paradigm that "it is better to consider the kind of place where ghosts are seen, rather than attempting to join these places into a linear pattern of lays, mystical routes, death roads or whatever. We should study the land, not the map." Also discussing paradigm-shifting, editor Paul Devereux thinks when the right place to study earthlights phenomena is found it will be as exciting as "a landing of flying saucers on the White House lawn, for while we have already encompassed such a possibility in our imaginings, we haven't imagined the impact of contacting another form of consciousness co-inhabiting our own planet with us. Such a consciousness form would be quite 'other' to ours and probably much older." Plus site intuitivity; dreamwork programme; Dutch corpse road; astronomical Avebury paths; Milky Way /cow/ death road connection. Columnists on Welsh spirit paths, dowsing and foundation sacrifices. Letters, book reviews.

No. 122. Santa Claus and Siberian shamanism; end of the TLH moots as we know them (makes me feel old that I "organised" the 1971 precursor); electrical hypersensitivity and multiple allergy syndrome claim; straight lines in Uralic and Altaic shamanism?; shamanic use of sacred geographical spots; ancient sites dream project update. Columnists: Paul Screeton presents a cautionary "streetwise" tale of astrology and landscape; Laurence main reveals dreaming secrets and a spirit path.

# Letters



From Patrick Harpur, Hampshire.

Dear Paul -- Many thanks for the handsome reviews: you're the only reviewer (incl. Sunday Times, Literary Review, Independent, etc.) who seems (a) to have actually read the book I wrote (rather than one they imagined I wrote!) and (b) to have grasped what I was driving at so that's encouraging at least. I've entered the book for the Folklore Society prize ... I hope you'll give us another quick plug when the paperback comes out next year! 1995 -- Ed.) Good luck!

From Tony Shiels, Ponsanooth, Cornwall:

WRITE!!

## Stop Press

The Healey & Glanvill book had hardly been typed up when Fanny Craddock shuffled off to the great kitchen in the sky. the Daily Sport (29/12/94) did not let us down with its headline:

### May your doughnuts turn out like Fanny's

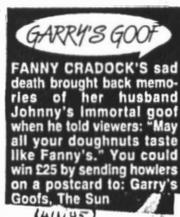
For American readers and younger UK ones, Fanny Craddock was a supercool in the days of monochrome TV with monocoled husband Johnny. She died aged 84. They made their BBC debut in 1959; she in the role of harridan, he the hen-pecked spouse.



In a tribute Keith Floyd said: "She was a most imperious lady who changed a whole nation's cooking habits."

"As did the usually subdued Johnny," wrote Virginia Hill (D. Star, 29/12/94), "who once had the temerity to finish a programme with the comment: 'I hope that all your doughnuts will turn out like Fanny's.'" The headline being the rather offhand FANNY GOES TO MEET HER BAKER.

Did he ever really say that? Colleagues swear it is true (along with Master Eates and Seaman Staines in TV's cartoon series Pugwash).



Also from the Healey and Glanvill book comes the urban myth of the camcorder loaned to film a wedding and the subsequent playback ending only to be followed by the kindly neighbour seen in congress with a pet. As I keep pointing out most urban belief tales come true. Going through a pile of cuttings during a filing session I came across the reality (I assume -- it is the Daily Sport, 20/4/94). Here it is verbatim:

A man who videotaped himself having sex with a bull terrier was given a suspended sentence yesterday. Derek Jeffrey, 59, a divorced father of five, was drunk when he romped on a bed with a neighbour's dog called Ronnie. And he was collared when he lent the camcorder to a friend -- and forgot to wipe the tape. Stunned guests at the reception saw his "disgusting behaviour" with the dog, Hove Crown Court was told. Jeffrey, of Camber, Sussex, who admitted bestiality, was "deeply ashamed," said Gareth Kelsey, defending.

He bonked  
a bull  
terrier!



Jeffrey: Ashamed