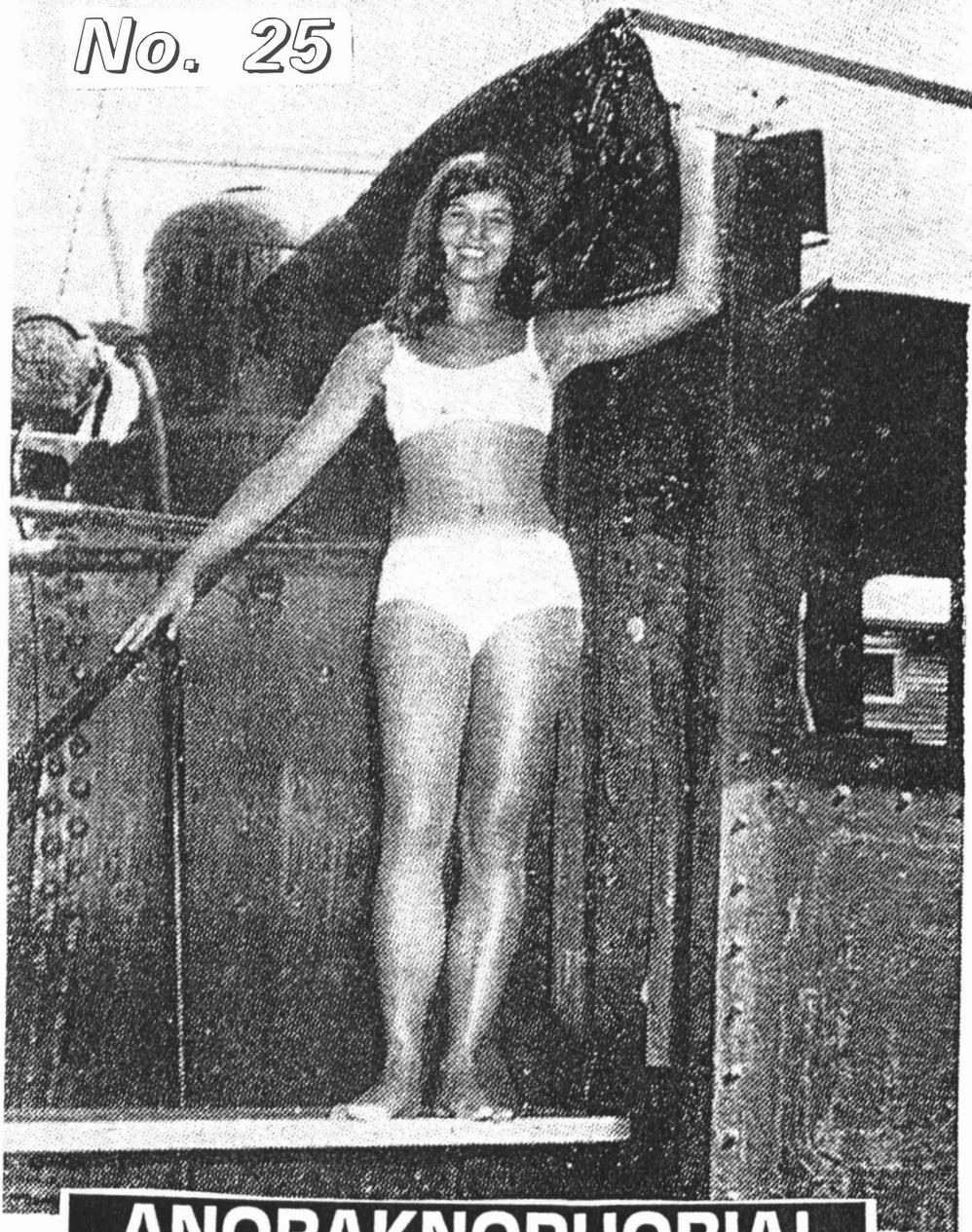


Folklore Frontiers

No. 25



ANORAKNOPHOBIA!

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APRIL 1995

Folklore Frontiers is an independent, non-profit magazine covering folklore and folklife, in particular contemporary beliefs and actions. Urban myths and new social trends are its main concern. The magazine is broadminded and far ranging in expressing today's concerns.

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

Published roughly quarterly, a subscription for four issues is £5: \$14. Single issue £1.50. All payments to P. SCRETON (NOT Folklore Frontiers). Dollar notes only from abroad.

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

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The Diary

WELCOME to FF25. I'll keep this brief as there's loads of good material (and much left for the next issue).

Last issue we wrote about Spike Milligan's lovechild Romany in the Diary. Spike was the subject of television's This is Your Life programme and most national newspapers reported how he apologised to his other lovechild James for the snub by producers.

Spike's (age 76 Sun, 73 D Star) contribution did not extend to Romany, however.

MORE controversy comes with pieces here on Robert the Bruce and a "gay" ghost. Plus our 1994 survey results. Actually, I reckon this is the best FF so far.

SPOTLIGHT this issue is on transpotters (I'm one myself, but I call myself a ferroequinologist -- study of the iron horse -- like Beatty said "you've got an ology") and subsequent issues will look at boozing, breasts (sexist? FF?) and sub-editors. Contributions on such subjects (or any other) welcome.

I'll sign off with two items:

1) "Transvestism is a cheaper hobby than golf, and more socially acceptable than transpotting ... (The People). Must try golf some time and know all three.

2) I agree entirely with this (Guardian, 24/2/95):

The East Coast InterCity train sat on the track for over half an hour, just north of Peterborough. Fox hounds on the line. Eventually the senior conductor announced: "Originally we thought that some huntsmen had been injured, but unfortunately it was just the dogs.

* The anoraknophobia and transvestism pieces are pretty much tongue-in-cheek, you realise.

"Transvestism is a cheaper hobby than golf and more socially acceptable than transpotting ... " (The People) We here have both!!!



The 'Gay' Ghost Scam

Would you Adam and Eve it? A ghost in Eden Street? This haunting from 1967 plays a small part in this cautionary tale.

Unable to access Peter Underwood's A to Z Gazetteer of Ghosts, I have had to "rely" for information on this beginning of the saga Horden, County Durham, haunting from the ludicrously titled the World's Great Ghost and Poltergeist Stories by Sarah Hapgood (Foulsham, 1994).

Apparently a miner and his wife were disturbed by inexplicable events at their house and, although extremely reluctant to discuss what happened, called in the local vicar, the Rev T. Matthews, to perform an exorcism.

The clergyman's prayers failed to halt the events and the couple moved out, still reluctant to describe what had occurred, except to say that "ghostly presences" had made themselves felt.

The scene now turns to our place of employment, The Mail, Hartlepool. In case the editor would disapprove of the story which reporter McCusker had written, the deputy editor splashed the bizarre exclusive as the Page 3 lead. This is it: THE MAIL Friday, December 9, 1994:

Former pitman tells how spirit has haunted him for 37 years

Ex-miner says ghost is ruining

his life



Ronnie Pratt outside the Horden house where he first experienced the ghost.



Spook keeps stealing my boyfriends says gay man

A GAY ex-miner says a jealous ghost is chasing away his boyfriends - and has left him for his former lover.

Ronnie Pratt, 55, who lives in the Oxford Road area of Hartlepool, says the ghost has been with him since they became friends when he was eight. But the ghost has now left him and is living with Ronnie's former boyfriend.

By PETER McCUSKER

And Ronnie said: "When I get a new man he will come back and chase him away like he did with the last one." "He is a good ghost,

he is my friend but all of my life he has chased away my mates." The former miner says he was born in a haunted house in Eden Street, Horden, and when he was eight the ghost abused him. The house is listed in the A-Z of British ghosts. Ronnie, who worked down Horden pit for 28 years, has lived in seven houses since and he says the ghost has followed him to every one. The father of two from a 28-year marriage, explained how the ghost spooked his former boyfriend so much that he left him. "He was in the house and the lights in the living room went out and all my hair went on end and he went all shivery. I told him it was the

ghost that had done it. "The ghost hasn't got a name, but I know it's a good ghost and I won't have him exorcised, although a priest is coming to the house soon." "I know when he is around because I go icy cold. "On other occasions, the video switches itself off when he is around, and there are other things which have happened which I just cannot speak about." He added: "I am not frightened about coming out and saying I am gay. I lived a lie for 28 years but at the end of the day you are what you are."

So far so good. No comeback from the editor. In fact, we all in the editorial department expected great media interest, with the story appearing on television and spread salaciously with smutty headlines in the tabloids. The silence was not only deafening -- it was suspicious. "It had all the ingredients of a brilliant tabloid tale," said McCusker. "But it turned out to be a complete nonsense. In fact, a total pack of lies. "It all came about because the bloke at the centre of the tale wanted to get back at a man he claimed was a 'rent boy' who had ripped him off financially." Apparently Ronnie Pratt had called at the office twice to tell a tale about the "rent boy" who stole his money, allegedly. "It was never followed up," said McCusker, "so Ronnie came back a third time and mentioned the gay ghost. Now that was a story!" Mr Pratt telephoned after the story's publication to say he was pleased with the presentation. "But the following day the truth came out. Ronnie came into the office to say it was all a pack of lies, concocted to get publicity. "His logic was erratic. It had something to do with flushing out this rent boy through publicity." As a postscript, apparently Mr Pratt's family were unhappy with the new story, but an approach to the Press Complaints Commission was thrown out because Pratt himself had approached *The Mail*. Also, Pratt was not born in the haunted Eden Street house - but next door.

Naturally there are other ramifications to this scam. Certainly knowing the scissors and paste nature of much paranormal publishing, although as far as is known only publicised in the *Hartlepool Mail* so far, doubtless the story will do the rounds eventually, each time supposedly true, doubtless with embellishments. Yet it was wholly untrue. Journalists are always wary when anyone approaches them: is there an unseen agenda, manipulation, revenge motive, or whatever? Not that there is any such implication here, of course, but a cynical motto oft heard in newsrooms goes along the lines of "never let the facts get in the way of a good story." It was a good story, but not a ghost of factuality.

Mick Goss, on hearing of my gay ghost "scoop" trawled his files and found a bizarre tale (*Reveille*, 9/12/77). I reproduce it as written by Jack Pleasant:

THERE are odd goings-on in the fair city of Bath. An apparently gay male ghost with its hair tied back with a ribbon is haunting a gravel path there. Appropriately, it's happening at the back of Gay Street. It has been seen on a number of occasions, but appears only to men. Even when women have been present, they've been unable to see it. One of the latest people the ghost seems to have taken a fancy to is the deputy-mayor of Miami, Scott Harris. He and his wife, on a visit from America, were on a tour of Bath with local ghost expert Margaret Royal. "As we all walked along the path behind Gay Street, Mr Harris grew very agitated. He said the figure of a man was keeping pace with us. His wife and I could see nothing. Mr Harris' description of a man with white hair tied back with a ribbon matched those given by other people who say they have seen the ghost."

And so it goes on. Make of all this what you will. It just goes to show that strange things happen in this world.

By Paul Screeton & Peter McCusker

Newslines

* Road workers have taken out space between the words on a sign to the River Uck, in Sussex, after graffiti merchants added another letter. Any guesses? Also see Proto-legends section (*Sun*, 29/6/93).



Potential Anne Frank in 1940

* This seemed familiar but I include it here as it is the 50th anniversary of Anne Frank's (pictured right in 1940) death. There have been some doubts about the veracity of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, but that apart, this 13-year-old Jewish girl from Amsterdam was forced, with her family, to hide from the Nazis in sealed-off rooms for two years. According to one tale, the stage version was performed on Broadway with Pia Zadora's portrayal of Anne bum-clenchingly ghastrly. So much so that when the Gestapo finally burst in, the audience rose to their feet and shouted: "She's in the attic" (*D Sport*, 3/12/93).

* Pop star Michael Jackson's wife is not Lisa Marie Presley but an imposter. Who says so? None other than Professor Haakan Borglund, of Lund university, Uppsala, Sweden. A double was substituted, apparently, to prevent any attempts at a possible kidnapping. Her head has shrunk and there is a demand that the "double" take a DNA test. The real Lisa last appeared in 1978 and her double has been shown in photographs since 1982. Borglund says: "There are no records of her changing from a youth to adult; this made it easier for her double to fit in" (*Guardian*, ?; *D Sport*, 10.2.95).

* Last year ley-lines (sic) were blamed for sending racing pigeons off course. The latest bogey is mobile telephones. Mark Brewster, of Hereford and secretary of the Midland Racing Pigeons Group, said: "The signals interfere with the birds' homing device that relies on the earth's magnetic field." A spokesman for Vodaphone responded: "There is no conclusive evidence of a link." (*D Star*; *D Sport* 13/2/95)

Anoraknophobia

Everything you wanted to know about trainspotting but dared not ask. PAUL SCREETON returns from the end of the platform with his assessment of the hobby and its participants

(An irrational fear of trainspotters)

WHAT is funny about trainspotters?

Why are they the butt of an insult which has swept Britain?

How could a journalist write in The Sunday Times: "Trainspotters are our worst nightmare."

Well, is there anoraknophobia? An irrational fear of trainspotters?

Admittedly, I know of quite a few anorak-wearers, people with dodgy spectacles, Gerry Adams-style beards, Thermos flask carriers, gauche individuals and even some with psychopathic tendencies. And that's just my colleagues.

Some of the figures who huddle on platform ends are pathetic, dysfunctional and sexually-aberrant homo sapiens.

Equally, many are respectable, well-educated, intellectually-stimulating men of the world. Women, too, these days.

The trouble is that public perception of rail enthusiasts comes from Jasper Carrott monologues and tabloid jibes.

Also people who should know better get in on the spotter-bashing act.

The man in overall charge of the National Railway Museum in York, Director of the Science Museum Dr Neil Cossons, attacked preservationists and compoun-

A half-naked girl on the line...

THE CREW of a permanent way trolley on the South Devon Railway were left agog during a run out to Littlehempston after the last train on August 28 when they discovered tied to the track near Hood Bridge, Staverton...a scantily-clad female.

The girl, wearing only a bra and frilly knickers, was being filmed on video by another girl, both of who claimed to be "students, working on a project".

"It was the most remarkable incident we've yet encountered" said SDR general manager Richard Elliott, "but there's a serious side to it. They thought the last train had gone and didn't expect to see a works train coming down the line."

"As it was, it took nearly five minutes to untie the girl on the track: if we'd been running a full works train, there could have been very serious consequences." The incident was given full embellishment in the following day's Sun newspaper.

Steam Railway, October, 1991

ded his astonishing outburst by adding: "Gricing (another word for spotting) is a harmless hobby for consenting adults."

And Ian Allan, who made his fortune from the pocket-sized ABC books of loco numbers, said of spotters: "I will do anything to keep away from them. They are utter bores. I like trains, but not the number-crunchers."

With friends like these, rail enthusiasts could be excused any amount of paranoia.

However, help is at hand, even if it is from

one of those "loony" boroughs.

The People's Publicly Correct Socialist Republic of Camden . . . Sorry, I'll start again. Camden and Islington Family Health Services Authority in north London has made laughing at someone over their hobby a disciplinary offence.

Dubbed the "trainspotters' charter," anyone ridicules a colleague's outside interest does so at one's peril.

To many people seeing 22 men who kick a lump of inflated leather and half of them kiss one an-

A stage you go through . . .

JAMES HOLMES produced a surprise hit with his one-man show as a trainspotter, Anorak of Fire, seen recently in Darlington and Newcastle.

If people will pay to see an actor demystifying the subject, it says something though I'm not sure quite what.

Also TV tough guy Jack Marsden, 28, played a gormless trainspotter in a pub comedy routine at The Portway, Wythenshawe, Manchester.

It seems he looked an easy target for muggers when jumped afterwards by five louts armed with a seven-inch knife and a plank.

Karate black belt Jack escaped with injuries leading him to say: "I'm in terrible pain and fear it'll stop me working."

Instant justice - instant karma!



JAMES HOLMES

other when it goes between two posts looks dodgy. Or why not doubt the sanity of staring down a rod dangled into a river for hours on end.

Anyway, spotters are a sizeable contingent.

One estimate puts the number at six million in the UK. More railway magazines are published than, say, gardening monthlies.

Also the hobby is pursued by plenty of well-known celebrities. In addition to those profiled briefly here, I could add Chris Rea (album named after the Deltic class), Mike Read (made a record as The Trainspotters), Jim Bowen (like Chris Donald lives in a converted railway station), Rod Stewart, Elton John, Phil Col-

lins, Justin Hayward, Captain Sensible and Michael Palin.

Pete Waterman's worldwide record sales number a staggering 140 million, having produced discs for such stars as Cliff Richard, Kylie Minogue and Jason Donovan. With 136 Top 40 hits, he became a chart artiste himself in 1987 as part of Stock Aitken Waterman. Now he owns Waterman Railways - the former Incenter City special trains unit. The ultimate trainset!

Yet still the gratuitous insults appear almost daily. "Trainspotting" has become a verb to mean trivial or mindless. When caught off guard by a caller, TV presenter Richard Madeley was traumatised

into verbal patheticism and traded "trainspotter" for a "shoplifter" implication.

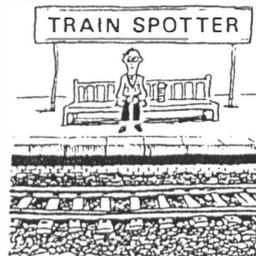
Which brings us to the psychobiological aspect.

Dr Uta Frith has edited a book on what she calls "a devastating handicap."

"Trainspotting is fertile ground for people with Asperger's syndrome. Not all trainspotters have the syndrome, but I know one, for example, who is really interested in carriage light fittings. That is fairly specialist."

The condition, studied 50 years ago by Austrian psychiatrist Hans Asperger who noted cases of people obsessive-

TIMOTHY POTTER



VIZ comic was criticised by the police over a two-page spread on Michael Sams. Satire is not their bag.

The comic had Timothy Potter: Train Spotter. Would FF show a segment which would offend?



ly collecting meaningless sets of objects and who were generally pedants lacking humour, is also characterised by social naivety.

In 1993, David Whitley, 19, an Oxford University student and Class 47 basher went on a £12,399 train wrecking spree. His defence council said his client suffered from a psychological disorder and "boiled over."

Then this February, accountant Tim Wallis, a track basher, was convicted of fleecing British Rail to fund his hobby. He had travelled on more than 22,770 miles of BR: 99 per cent of the network.

Also, five pals paid £56,000 to buy a new Barratt semi backing on to two lines near Stockport: loco cabs in the garden upsetting neighbours and rocking the marriage of the main participant.

Really! And I've several times rung my wife from the office after an interesting loco has passed the Mail office travelling south and she - in Seaton Carew - would run up Brompton Walk to the rail line by Kildale Grove to get me the number as the train passed by five minutes later.

Trainspotters mad? Some of them really are loved!



Platform souls



KENNETH CLARKE ... Chancellor of the Exchequer Ken ran his school's trainspotting club and took pals on trips to stations and locomotive depots all over the country. "I was addicted and had a fanatical interest in steam engines."

Nowadays he and historian wife Gillian explore medieval ruins together. They call it "monument bashing."



CHRIS DONALD ... Viz comic editor saw becoming a trainspotter as a major turning point in his life.

"I met lots of quiet, nice, well-behaved kids. I was a trendy trainspotter. I never wore an anorak. I accept that taken to extremes, train-spotting can be a rather disturbing hobby."



Spotter varieties

TRAINSPOTTERS have sub-species.

1. Number crunchers (underline loco numbers in published book).
2. Haulage bashers (see how many different locos they can be hauled by in a year).
3. Track bashers (must ride over every bit of BR rail in UK).

One-legged Sams described himself as two personalities: "The Hyde was my feelings when I was angry. But my trainspotting or modelling would soon return me to Dr Jekyll."



MICHAEL SAMs ... Kidnapper (Stephanie Slater) and convicted killer (Julie Dart) is writing his autobiography, cruelly, teasingly entitled Mr Kipper (re Suzy Lamplugh).



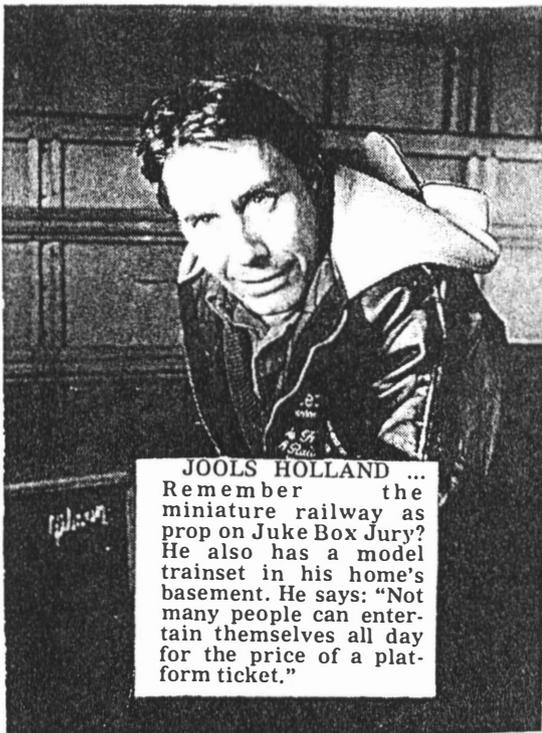
PETE WATERMAN ... The millionaire record producer says: "I've travelled more miles on the railways in the last 20 years than most drivers. That's one of the reasons I still trainspot - to help pass the time. I've cleared BR several times but I still log the numbers of the 37s and 47s because I love them so much and it's nice to be able to see how many times you've seen a loco you now own."

Railtours

THESE are mostly for track bashers and go where normal trains don't venture, such as the Seaton-on-Tees branch to Hartlepool nuclear power station.

These one-off trains has silly names such as Blyth Spirit and Rylstone Cowboy denoting the prime destination.





JOOLS HOLLAND ...
Remember the miniature railway as prop on Juke Box Jury? He also has a model trainset in his home's basement. He says: "Not many people can entertain themselves all day for the price of a platform ticket."

Scornmongers



RICHARD MADELEY ...
Smoothy TV presenter blew his top when a caller asked him to "steal me a bottle of wine." Stunned and rattled, he responded caustically: "These are sad people. These are anoraks ... It's like a train thing to do. Go and spot some trains or buy yourself an anorak, love."



STEVEN NORRIS ...
The Transport Minister who recently spoke of the "drreradful human beings you find sitting alongside you in any form of public transport." Least likely to say: "Fwah! Copped my last Growler at Crewe yesterday."



PAUL MERTON ...
In a newspaper column the humorist suggested carnivorous plants of the venus fly trap type could be planted at the end of railway platforms specifically designed to eat trainspotters. "Always supposing you could find a plant capable of swallowing an anorak."

Nicknames

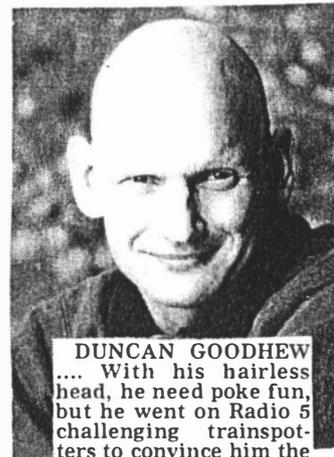
LOCO classes have pet names. Here are ten you never knew:

1. 20s - Chopprs.
2. 25s - Rats.
3. 26s - Macrats (they're Scottish).
4. 31s - Toffee apples, Skinheads and Gargoyles.
5. 37s - Growlers.
6. 40s - Whistlers.
7. 47s - Duffs.
8. 50s - Hoovers.
9. 56s - Grids and Screamers.
10. 58s - Egg timers.



Snappers

RAILWAY photographers are noted for an initial as second name. Ace "new wave" lensman is Colin T. Gifford. Others are Norman E. Preedy, Ian S. Carr and Hartlepool's much-published John E. Auguston.



DUNCAN GOODHEAD ...
With his hairless head, he need poke fun, but he went on Radio 5 challenging trainspotters to convince him the hobby is indeed a creative leisure activity.

Gratuitous insults

Alicia Arden (Women Only, Vol. 1, No. 7, 1993): "The Big O is a great leveller ... Eight inches of majestic man muscle. Actual whanger? Two and a half inches of stunted chipolata. Runtish trainspotter in NHS specs and BhS anorak. Expected whanger. Limp lingune."



"Sorry, no train spotting without a blue cagool."

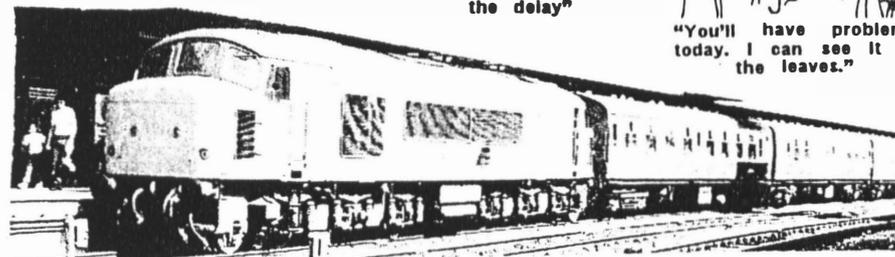


"You're right. Trains are boring, I'll get my stamps!"

This happened at King's Worthy, Hants (Daily Star, 5/9/92). "A train driver almost went off the rails when he saw a trainspotter waving at him from a bridge - wearing only a woman's girdle." Begs the questions - he couldn't go off the rails literally and was the person a gricer? I did see a lad masturbating frantically as my train passed through Rotherham Masborough (a "mas" synchronicity).



"Here's the train set you wanted for Christmas—we apologise for the delay"



John Diamond (The Times, 7/11/92): "An anorak is anyone who treats life as one of the more anal-retentive hobbies ... Anoraks collect train numbers ..."



Garry Bushell (Sun, 9/4/93): Sodomy kills hobby-horseman says: "The saddest truth about the Gay Rights brigade is that they are life's losers, the trainspotters of politics."



Amanda Cable (Sun, 24/6/93): Sun Woman Editor - Bushell's female equivalent - on gays and lesbians after their march. "We left behind on the train the most sordid bunch I have ever met ... They could have been trainspotters from Peckham, birdwatchers from Basildon ..."



Guy Browning (Guardian, 17/4/93): "For most men sex is sublimation of their obsession with trains."



"Fiona Wright" (Daily Sport, 3/1/94): Following a letter on the Pantie Liberation Organisation, the six-times-a-night athlete comments: "I suppose it's better than collecting train numbers." Or being ghost written.



"You'll have problems today. I can see it in the leaves."



Prairie thrills for cowboys in panties



PAULINE CALF: TV star

MACHO cowboys in Canada's Wild West have been exposed as... secret transvestites.

Once a year, hundreds of butch farmers and ranch-hands put on padded bras, saucy undies and frilly dresses to act out bizarre "wedding ceremonies" in front of their families and friends.

And their wives join in the cross-dressing fun by donning tuxedos for the day. The bizarre

rituals take place on the anniversary of a couple's real wedding.

A college professor researching folklore traditions of Canada's prairies has exposed the cowboys' madcap antics.

Rural

Michael Taft, of the University of Calgary, says the transvestite ceremonies are a well-established tradition among dozens of rural communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan and

Manitoba. No one knows how or why they started, but they've been doing it since the 1830s.

The cowboys put great effort into their TV transformations, ending up with results that cross-dressing celebrity Pauline Calf, alias comedian Steve Coogan — would probably be proud of.

Says Taft: "It's all played for laughs. They have to act out a script full of sex jokes, puns and double entendres."

"But it would be dangerous for a man to break out of the script, or act his part too naturally."

"That would be frowned on by members of the community."

*** ABOVE:

Amazing But True column, D. Sport, 23/1/95

*** ABOVE

LEFT: London Spy column, Midweek, 16-20/6/94

My wife had been away at her parents for a few days. After meeting a friend she asked: 'I'd been on our local beach. Yes, I had, I said. So and so saw you she said, but why were you wearing my bikini bottoms? Because I'm look silly in top and bottom, said I. Actually, I was unable to find my own trunks. I'd had a swim and fallen asleep in the sand dunes. Just shows, you can't do anything without someone seeing. So now you know your editor is a transvestite.

YEAH, THAT FIGURES

Here's another of those Slackstatistics - wonderfully exaggerated numerical "facts" that can't possibly be proved or disproved. In an advert in a national newspaper, I spied the astonishing statement that "According to a leading expert, fifty per cent of all men cross-dress into women's clothing at some stage in their lives". We have to accept this figure, I suppose, because it's been calculated by no less than "a leading expert". But, wow, that means that half of the members of the present cabinet must be transvestites. Hmm, come to think of it, perhaps it's not such an outrageous claim after all...

The Xperts



Last time in these pages you read of (and maybe gasped at) the Stuck Triple, a legendary narrative from Swaziland that went one better or one worse than the well-known Stuck Couple scenario. Prepare to gasp anew as FOLKLORE FRONTIERS now brings you a

Stuck Quartet.

Durably interlocked in the act of love by freakish circumstances beyond their control, the Stuck Couple serve as a warning against adultery (and also as an excuse for some dirty laughter). Recapping briefly - which is, after all, the only worthwhile way to recap - the Swaziland story featured three adulterous and overambitious lovers welded in unescapable embarrassment, flagrante delicto and not unlike what you've seen happen to dogs from time to time: all this by virtue of a witchdoctor's spell that the *Daily Star* of 9 May 1994 said was known in those parts as "likhubalo". And like hullabaloo it must've seemed to the glued-together threesome, oh yes.

Our latest version - well, it's about 300 years old, actually - comes from *The Euing Collection of English Broadside Ballads in the Library of the University of Glasgow* (published in facsimile, 1971). More specifically, it takes the form of "*The Lancashire Cuckold*", one of not a few indelicate items in that collection, though perhaps not the worst.

Adultery has always been a favourite sit-com theme for folktale narrators the world over. That said and granted, it's fascinating to see the Swazi witchdoctor represented here by a 17th Century Lancashire counterpart in the occult arts, the Conjuror, who comes equipped with '*pleasant pipe*' capable of Pied Piper-like effects and a charm that turn a chamber-pot into something as inconvenient to humans as a fly-paper is to flies. (I nearly wrote that it's a case of *from Swazi to khazi*. Just as well I didn't).

Less obvious to modern readers is the way the broadsider picks two popular mockable ballad stereotypes (parish clerk and tailor) as 50% of this four-way degradation. Note, too, the improbable happy ending. The clerk preserves his "*nutmegs*" (testicles) from the outraged husband by handing over £100 which he just happens to have on his person - this despite the fact the narrator has previously told us he and the others were '*Naked all but their shifts*' - and everyone heads down the pub, where they *laugh'd at the jest*.'

We hope you do likewise...

No. 200 The Lancashire Cuckold: OR, THE

Country Parish-Clark betray'd by a Conjurer's Incharmed Chamber-pot.

To the Tune of, FOND BOY, &c.

LICENSED ACCORDING TO ORDER,



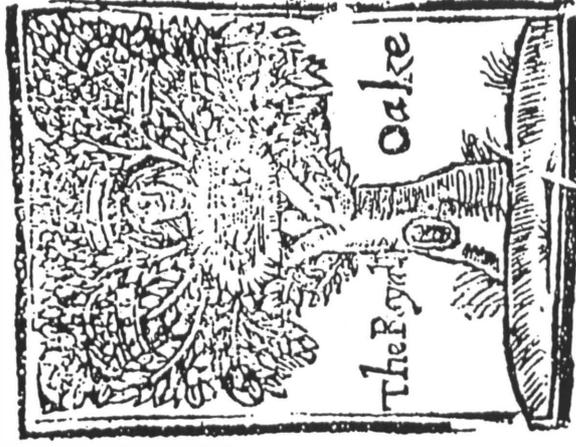
A Lancashire Farmer he had a fair Wife,
Whom the Clark of the Parish did love as life;
In the pleasures of Love they would frolic and play,
Now her kind loving Husband grew jealous they say:
To a cunning Man therefore the Farmer did go,
To be told whether he was a Cuckold or no.
The Conjurer cry'd, If my counsel you'll take,
Then to-morrow right pleasant good sport I will make,
For I have a strong Charm that will lock them all fast,
And as pleasant a Pipe, that at every blast,
All that hears it shall caper and dance too and fro,
And you'll find by this if you'r Cuckold or no.

Go tell your kind Wife you must ride out with speed,
And you shall not return till the next day indeed;
Now to keep yourself warm take your cloak and your gown
There's an old hollow Oak half a mile out of Town,
In that very same Tree if you lodge but all night,
The next morning I'll show you a delicate sight.

The Farmer resolving this project to try,
With the Conjurer's humour he straight did comply;
Having told his sweet Wife he must ride out of Town,
She began with a sorrowful sigh to look down;
Yet his back being turn'd, for her Gallant she sent,
That all night they might revel in joys with content.

Against the Clark's coming, a capon she drest,
Unto which they had humming March-beer of the best,
When the Supper was ended, to bed they did high,
All the night in their wanton embraces to lye:
But before the next morning there was a strange rout,
Which the cunning Man he by his Charm brought about.

The Conjuring-Schollar got in by his skill,
Where he lay full as safe as a Thief in a Mill;
In the Piss-pot he fixt such a Charm at the last,
That who e'er toucht the same should be sure to stick fast;
Now the Clark to make water near morning did rise,
Then the Piss-pot was lockt fast betwixt his two thighs.



The Farmer's fair Wife she rose up in her shift,
For to help her poor Lover out at a dead lift;
On his delicate Dildoul her right hand she got,
With the left hand she seiz'd on the side of the Pot,
Where she tug'd and she pull'd till she made her arms ake.
For she likewise stuck fast like a Bear to a stake.

In this sad distress ~~with~~ her foot she did knock,
Then her Daughter she straightways run up in her smock.
Quoth the Mother, Girl, help us and make no excuse,
Sure the Pot is bewitch'd for we cannot get loose;
Pretty Nancy endeavour'd to set them both free,
But as soon as she touch'd it they stuck there all three.

The cunning Man open'd the door, being day,
On his Conjuring pipe he began for to play;
Naked all but their shifts they did caper and dance
Through the Town, till they met with a Tailor by chance
Who would needs break the Pot, being lousy and strong,
But he stuck fast and likewise went dancing along.

He piping did lead them along the highway,
Till they came to a place where her Husband he lay;
Who when hearing a noise, he peep'd out of the Oak
Like a Man that was frighted, the first words he spoke,
He cry'd, What my friend Richard the good Parish-Clark
Is it you then that tickles my Wife in the dark.

Now when they had caper'd three times round the Oak,
Then the Spell of Enchantment immediately broke;
The poor Tailor he run, but the Clark staid behind,
Quoth the Farmer, By you I'm a Cuckold I find;
If for this foul offence, I am not satisfy'd,
I'll immediately whip out your nutmegs, he cry'd.

The Clark he did proffer to give him ten pound,
For it was but a trespass, he said, on his ground;
But the Farmer no less then a hundred would have,
And the other did give it his Nutmegs to save;
Their apparel was sent for, and when they were drest,
They went all to the Ale-house, and laugh'd at the jest.

London: Printed for J. Blars, on London-bridge.

NOTE

Bill Ellis summarized an earlier press report of the bemagicked Swaziland couple (from that country's Times of... December 1992) in FOAFTALE NEWS 29 (March 1993, page 11). There the binding rite is named as "ulunyoka" - not quite as funny to Western ears as The Sun's version. Well, not to my Western ears, at least. And it involved a charmed pocket-knife. (* Actually Daily Sport - Ed.)

William Hansen of the Classical Studies department, Indiana University uses this summary as a starting-point for his "The Stuck Couple In Ancient Greece" (Foaftale News 36, January 1995, pages 2-3) which focusses upon the myth of Ares and Aphrodite transfixed in the adulterous act via a magic net made by the cuckolded Hephaistos. Hansen writes that there is 'little evidence outside of Homer for this story as a traditional oral narrative in ancient or modern times.' Ignoring the broadside reproduced here, however, there is this notes in G.H. Doble's paper, "Hagiography and Folklore" (Folklore 54, September 1943, pages 321-333; see esp. page 328). Discussing marvellous legendary episodes common to saints' lives and to other types of legend, he picks on examples in The Life of S. Gwinear, one of Cornwall's less-famous saints to whom 'a string of local legends' is attached:

'One relates how two lovers who had imprudently exchanged an embrace whilst seated on the sarcophagus of a certain venerable bishop, one of St G.'s companions, were unable to release themselves from their embrace till brought to the memoria of S. Gwinear, where, by the intercession of the martyr - the prayers of the faithful, they were set free. There is an exact parallel to this story in one recorded on p.196 of the Book of Llandaff, where a certain potens vir of Ewyas in Herefordshire, while going one Sunday to the church of S.Clitauc (now Clodock) with his wife, was guilty of a similar imprudent action, with similar consequences. Of course we have here the well-known folklore theme contained in the story of "The Golden Goose" in Grimm. It reappears in hagiography in a story in the Tripartite Life of S. Patrick...'

By Mick Goss

A FRANTIC hubby really gave his wife a mouthful when she had an epileptic fit during a sex session.

Poor Carlos Cesaro went through agony...as his toddler was firmly clamped between her TEETH. And when he couldn't wriggle free, he tried to strangle her and bashed her with an alarm clock! When the couple walked into their local hospital doctors threatened to call the police.

Carlos, 27, was walking gingerly with a stick, sporting severe injuries to his mangled todger and badly-scratched buttocks. Wife Gina, 25, had a gash

to her forehead and a bruised cheek.

And when Carlos told them what happened, the medics in Lima,

Peru, were in hysterics!

He said: "Disaster struck when I straddled her. It was strange when her eyes started rolling.

Pain

"Then I was in the most incredible pain. I grabbed the alarm clock and started hitting her, shouting: 'God forgive me.'"

"I do not know how many blows I struck, but I eventually let go."

From the files -- Left: D Sport, 15/6/94; centre: Sun, 17/12/94; above right: D Sport, 17/12/94 (note place name disparity). Also (D Sport, 16/2/95) Howard Foy referred to the subject as dismissed as urban myth, but (right) ---

A bite of the other

A HUSBAND needed treatment for bite wounds on his manhood - after his wife's jaw clamped shut as she had a fit during sex.

She opened her mouth after he bit her on the head with a frying pan in the kitchen in Assen, Holland.

"He's wonderful, but we will not indulge in oral sex again."

Just time for a quick bite

A NAKED couple's kitchen frolics turned to agony...

SHE was giving HIM oral sex when she had an epileptic fit and her jaw clamped.

HE screamed in pain, grabbed a frying pan and clocked her over the head.

The pair, from Assen, Holland, ended up in hospital - being treated for injuries to opposite ends.

Experts admit that there is a rare condition known as vaginismus which causes a woman's vaginal muscles to clamp shut during sex - temporarily trapping her partner's erect penis inside. But doctors say that the condition - caused by stress or nerves - is only temporary and once a man loses his erection, he can easily slide his todger out.

Robert the Bruce - Essex-Man FolkJokeOpus

By Mick Goss

BAD NEWS for all ye who're solidly into the "Scots wa hae wi' Wallace bled" thing. Robert the Bruce, prime Scottish culture hero and natural successor to William Wallace in the

Caledonian glory-stakes, was English-born. Worse: this model of Scottishness, this inspiration for generations of nationalistically-minded Scots, was born just outside Chelmsford. As Chelmsford is the county town of Essex, that makes Robert the Bruce an Essex Man.

It's only bad news, ye ken, if you insist that national heroes must belong 100% to the nation that they're national heroes of. Very few do. That towering symbol of Merrie England, for example - Richard the Lionheart: this fine upstanding Norman spent just a few measly months of his reign in England and in that time he never learned to speak the language so good. If it comes down to thinking that nationality derives at base from the country you were actually born in, many a culture-hero starts to look dubious. By this token, most of the Irish national football team should have waited for a call from Terry Venables and refused to speak to Jack Charlton. (Yes, Big Jack - latterly recognized as an Irish hero for his managerial achievements on behalf of the aforesaid national soccer team...and as everyone knows, formerly a member of the England side that won the World Cup in '66).

But Robert Bruce - Robert the Bruce. Began the early 14th Century as one of several claimants to the Scottish throne. CV gets more interesting after he liquidated his biggest rival, John Comyn the Red, whom some believe had a better claim than did Bruce. Anyhow, Bruce crowned at Scone, 1306. Thereby upset Edward I, King of England, who harboured the belief he had final say over who was King of Scotland. Bruce had estates confiscated, got beaten by English, went into hiding - tradition says he spent part of it in a cave. Possibly several caves. With a spider. Possibly several spiders. [Great story. More on it later in article].

Came out of cave/closet/whatever in 1307, beat English a few times, e.g. at Loudon Hill. Death of Edward I. England now managed by Edward II. Bruce beat English decisively and properly in 1314, Battle Bannockburn. Epic moment in Scots history: English had a lot more men, for one thing. (Excuse: soggy pitch no good for quality play. Also bad tactics by Edward II.) Thereafter: R the B symbol of Scottish resistance, Scottish independence. Name still invoked in anthemic folk-song that goes, "O Floor [= Flower] o Scotland, whan wull we see yoooar like agin?"; this especially popular at big Scotland-England sporting fixtures. Widely assumed by singers to be traditional Scots folk-song, handed down generation to generation, etc. Actually written by Roy Williamson of The Corries folk-duo. Don't know when, but at a guess sometime in early '60s. Ealy 1960s, that is.

Robert the Bruce is a legendary figure in the most expanded and expansive senses of the word. His name is talismanic for proud Scottishness; suitable for utterance as a clarion-call that reminds your fellow-Scots of their birthright and of their duty to defy the English oppressor. Ever since the canonization process began with a patriotic and very long poem, The Bruce, by Robert Barbour (c.1320-1395), the victor of Bannockburn has been routinely presented as being as Scottish as porridge oats, haggis and Burns Night. (Or Rab C. Nesbit, Scottish culture-hero for the 1990s). Thus it's likely to come as a source of disillusionment and anger when somebody claims the great Scots icon was born at Writtle, Essex.

Writtle nowadays is best and most politely described as a suburb of Chelmsford. Larger claims were made on its behalf by Reginald W. Brazier in a short article for Essex Countryside of April 1962, entitled, "Once The Home of Kings: Writtle...". To the surprise of one reader, Arthur Norman Harrisson, there was a notable noble omission from the monarchical parade in this piece. For, protested Mr Harrisson mildly, it contained 'no mention at all of the king whose first home it was. Improbable as it may seem, Robert the Bruce, Earl of Carrick, King of Scotland, was born in this Essex village on July 11, 1274.'

Improbable, yes. Mr Brazier hadn't mentioned this important historical fact because, despite being Writtle-born himself, he'd never heard of it. Understandably, on finding nothing to support the allegation in the Essex Record Office, he requested more information of Mr Harrisson.

E'en before this, other Essex Countryside readers had leapt forward to say there wouldn't be any. They knew fine weel that Robert the Bruce hadna been born in Wrrritle. He had been born in Scotland: at Lochmaben Cattle, Dumfries, where they could also show you the cave where he'd hidden from the English. Perhaps this was the one with the spider in it. [Yes, I'll get to it. Hold on for a few more paras.] Alternatively, he'd been born at Turnberry, Ayrshire. A Stirling correspondent named J.D. McAnish liked this better, having found it confirmed in 'authoritative writings' and he wryly reminded readers of EC June 1963 that in the words of the old Scots saying, "'ye ne'er know whaur a blister micht licht.'" Well...no, you certainly don't, do you?.

In between (EC November 1962) Mr Harrisson was back citing the Complete Peerage Vol.III, p.56, under "Carrick, Earldom". This stated 'without equivocation that Robert the Bruce...was born July 11, 1274, at Writtle, Essex.' He was supported by William T.Squire, who believed his family was descended from that of the Bruce; in May 1961 the Edinburgh Register Office had supplied him with info that 'definitely stated that Robert Bruce was born at Writtle, near Chelmsford, on July 11, 1274.' At least everybody seemed to agree about the date.

It's worth reminding ourselves that none of the disputants openly accused Robert Bruce of being not really Scottish; it was only this business of where he'd been born and the

inconvenient possibility that place was a few hundred miles short and south of being Scottish. Come to that, no-one doubted that the Bruce family was of Norman descent...that they had been supporters of the English king and knew the English court intimately...and that Robert's father (also named Robert) had owned estates in Essex, which included land at Writtle.

Harrisson had the last word in EC for August 1963. He contested that Mr McAnish's 'authoritative writings' said *definitely* that Robert the Bruce had been born at Turnberry. He even doubted that some of them deserved to be called 'authoritative writings'. He much preferred to go by his Complete Peerage ('a work of the highest authority, which commands universal respect') and he closed with a remark that put the debate into a useful perspective:

'As an Essex man, I should like to feel that Robert the Bruce was born at Writtle, if the evidence supports that theory; as a Scot, Mr McAnish seems to want to feel that Bruce was born in Ayrshire, although the evidence may be against him.'

So there.

Me? I'm an Essex man, too - an Essex man married to a Scot - and all I know about all this is what I read in Essex Countryside - and I don't really care *where* Robert the Bruce was born. Having mentioned to a couple of Scots that Robert the Bruce *may not* have been born in Scotland, though, I'm inclined to think that some people care very much about it.

Certain aspects of the Bruce Legend have long been recognized as folklore, which means they aren't taken too seriously as historical fact. I mean specifically the famous bit where he hides in a cave from the English and receives some assistance (direct or indirect) from a spider.

The first motif, wherein the English are misled into thinking the cave unoccupied purely because there's a spider's web across its mouth (which means they don't go poking around in it, which means they don't catch the Bruce) has been attached to other heroes in folktales from other parts of the world: David, Mahomet and even Jesus, for example. The second has Bruce inspired by the spider's tireless persistence at building a web. No matter how many times it fails (eleven, in one version) it goes on until it succeeds. Bruce emerges from the cave resolved to do likewise and we all see the result at Bannockburn. This motif appears elsewhere as well and may have been popularized in the Brucian context by Sir Walter Scott.

But the Writtle affair bites deeper. It attacks the belief that nationality is, after all, down to where you are born. It undermines the view that Robert the Bruce cared most for - fought exclusively for - Scottish independence. There is a risk that suggesting that he may have been born somewhere

other than Scotland is tantamount to suggesting he was (a) not Scottish and (b) not a Scottish hero.

Robert the Bruce was not a Scotsman, nor an Englishman. He was a Medieval Man. And what he did, he did chiefly for Robert the Bruce and for the family Bruce.

In the Middle Ages and amidst the upper echelons of society in especial, there was little authentic awareness of belonging to a particular nation. You belonged to a family. That family owned lands which, in the case of the Bruce family as with many others, gave you an interest in more than one country. Recognition of the right to hold those lands was what wars were fought for. A good deal of Medieval history can be made to resemble a gigantic and complex power-struggle between aggressive lineages, the stuff recalled today in post-Steinbeck soap-operas. Inheritance and marriage widened your family's interests. It might be that eventually both or either would place you within reach of the greatest land-unit of all, the Kingdom.

It's not too cynical to suggest that Robert the Bruce opted to be, not Scottish, but *King of Scotland*. Perceiving a claim to the Scottish throne by right of descent, he fought for that. His resistance to the English came down to the fact that it was the English king who refused to recognize Bruce's familial rights. It was to this same English Crown that Robert the Bruce had earlier offered his feudal loyalty; like all medieval aristos, he knew a good deal about the art of switching allegiances to suit individual interests.

The people who find this sort of reduction demeaning to the heroic memory of Robert the Bruce - the ones who want him to be not only a Scottish hero, but pure Scots by birth as well - are likely to be responding to folklorism. This quaint-sounding German word covers the invention, creation and adaptation of folklore for defined purposes which may include nationalistic ones. Venetia Newall expounds on its range in her fine "Folklore and Tradition" paper for *Folklore* 98-ii (1987) pages 131-151, where she shows how it can be enlisted to foster a sense of national identity. Robert the Bruce can be made to stand for Scottishness. When we react to evidence that our "traditional" national images have no basis in history, or that their historical basis may not match the image we ourselves prefer, we are involved in folklorism. We are defending our own perception of what makes us different and what we see as making our nation what it is. We defend what we want the Hero to be and what we have made him.

Say again: I don't much care about where Robert the Bruce was born, nor whether he was or wasn't an Essex Man. Still, Essex needs all the folk-heroes it can get. Anyone who wants to subscribe to a statue of the Bruce (spider as optional extra, perhaps) for erection on the corner where the A414 runs into Writtle...well, I'll be happy to take their money. Make all cheques payable, please, to the "Friends of Edward II/Hello Jock, Got A New Haggis?" Fund.

Robert the Bruce - Hart-Man

By Paul Screeton

ROBERT THE BRUCE was born in Hart.

Fair enough there is no evidence to prove this, but no other place in England or Scotland can prove evidence for his birth-place. So let's hear it for Hart, County Durham.

He was one of Scotland's greatest heroes, but few people realize that in addition to owning estates in Annandale and Carrick in Scotland, he was also Lord of Heortness - this tract of land including Hart and Hartlepool.

Scottish nobility such as the Bruces were an obvious example of people well at home in England. The Scots hero was the eighth member of the family to be called Robert, five of whom are buried in Gulsborough Priory, founded by the second of the line, including the hero's grandfather.

The lordship of Annandale was conferred on the second of the Norman family of Brus by King David, who when he died left two sons, one of whom, Robert, received the Scottish and Heortness estates.

Another noble with ties in both Scotland and Northumberland was John "Red" Comyn, who fought for Henry III at Northampton and Lewes. Robert Bruce cut Comyn's throat in a fit of temper and became a hunted outlaw. As such he appealed to the patriotic section of the Scots; in our parlance he and William Wallace became freedom fighters, or if you were on the opposite side, terrorists.

He boldly canvassed his claim to the Scottish throne - and had his lands in Heortness taken from him by King Edward I. In two minor engagements Bruce was defeated but eluded



"He's getting very good at it, but I dinna think it'll hold back the English!"

capture. It was at this juncture that the spider of legend enters history - or folk history.

There are two versions of a tale where the Scots monarch was hiding in a cave.

In one he watched a spider laboriously making its web and have many mishaps with its delicate construction. A variety of "If at first you don't succeed try, try again" hope was inspired and he emerged to lead his people to victory.

Or while hiding there a spider wove a web across the entrance which caused his pursuers to assume that nobody could be in the cave and went away.

I have my doubts as to the last story as I was told a similar tale in Aberdeenshire with Bruce replaced by Rob Roy. And how large would the spider have been to spin a web across a large cave entrance?

Bruce went on to ravage England's northern counties, exacting a terrible revenge. In 1314, the two-day Battle of Bannockburn left the English army in tatters. It vindicated Bruce's claim to the Scottish throne and his revolutionary bid for leadership of the Scots. Peace was made between the countries in 1327.

Article modified (second paragraph only) from *Mail, Hartlepool*, 13/9/88.

Proto-legends

A sexy model called her doctor in the middle of the night because she had a boil on the bottom. The beauty phoned him hours before she was due to fly out for a photo shoot in Ibiza. She told him desperately: "I'll be for the high jump if the photographer sees that." The Manchester GP turned out to answer the plea and treated the girl's embarrassing problem. (D Star, 30/7/94).

Couple of tattoo ones now. First off, told that it would cost £500 to remove a four-letter tattoo from a 15-year-old boy's hand, a judge in Indiana said half the cost could be saved by leaving just UK on his skin (D Sport, 13/12/94). And hell-raiser actor Johnny Depp (31), who is going out with waif-like Croydon catwalk queen Kate Moss, has his mother Betty Sue's name tattooed on his left bicep. However, on his right bicep he did have a tattoo saying "Winona Forever." But America's People magazine claims he is having it removed on the latter at a time - because it is such a painful procedure. At the moment, People says, it reads Winona Forever (Today, 30/9/94).

Stripper dies in cake

STRIPPER Candi Stryper suffocated in a giant iced cake while waiting to burst out for her performance at a stag night. Guests at the bash in Copenhagen got so drunk that they forgot all about her. And police were called in to investigate whether someone had intended to kill 26-year-old Candi with the colossal confection. Cops decided there was no foul play and now a Danish coroner has finally ruled that the blotto bachelors had no criminal thought in mind. He recorded a verdict of accidental death on the stripper.

LEFT: (D Sport, 6/2/95) and taken up by The People, 19/2/95).

Magic lotto

SUPERSTITIOUS Neapolitans rushed to bet on a "magic" number in Italy's state lottery after rumours spread through a Naples neighbourhood that a dead man had come back to life.

The city has a sophisticated system for the weekly game with each number carrying a set significance. People said 47, signifying death, and 46, the man's age, were hot favourites after the rumour, later proven wrong, spread like wildfire. (Press Association, 2/2/95)



R.I.P. TO MAN WHO GAVE US WACKY WORLD

THE Sun's legendary Italian correspondent John Kerr, who brought readers a string of wacky stories, has died of a heart attack at the age of 60.

John specialised in bizarre yarns which were guaranteed to raise a laugh. And his own life was almost as wacky.

His real name was Fred Pye and he used to be a London copper.

He called himself John Kerr when he fled to Italy 16 years ago after his stormy marriage to 60s chart-

By JOHN KAY and BILL COLES

opper Kathy Kirby ended in divorce. John — who was said to have had a fling with American jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald — kept up a non-stop flow of off-beat stories from Treviso near Venice. There was:

The **HOB** whose dinner party guests were arrested after getting high on spaghetti laced with pol.

The **MUN** who revealed she was secretly married 15 times.

The **HUSBAND** who paraded his wife naked through the streets after catching her with another man.

The **NEIGHBOUR** who shot dead the man upstairs for constantly playing the piano.

The **IDIOD** filling his car with petrol who decided to have a smoke.

Long time friend and colleague John Rodgers recalled: "Even as a copper, Fred had a nose for news. He wouldn't only tell me about shootings and robberies.

"There were also the off-beat stories like the girl who walked into Holloway police station and asked him to file off her engagement ring after she'd rowed with her fiancé.

John quit as a police sergeant on health grounds.

He joined a news agency where his biggest scoop was collecting photographs of a man being crucified by his friends in an Easter prank on Hampstead Heath.

After a funeral service in Treviso where John lived with Anna, an Italian teacher, he was buried under an olive tree at his holiday home in Southern Italy.

He leaves two daughters and five grandchildren.

Snakes and bladders

DOCS were astonished when they examined Henry Bender's stomach... and found a 12-inch SNAKE trapped inside.

The reptile apparently slithered down his throat when he was sleeping on a park bench in Miami.

Medics were amazed to find it was still alive. But Dr Ben Thomas said: "The snake is getting weaker. We will keep Mr Bender in hospital until it is naturally eliminated by his body."

Party trick cops crooks

● CRAFTY coppers collared a gang of crooks... by throwing a PARTY for them!

"Tired of knocking on their doors and finding that they were out, the Sheffield detectives sent the wanted men invitations offering free drink and prizes.

Then they arrested the 31 who turned up.

● PARK keepers nailed signs to 1,500 trees in California. The notices read: "Do not post signs on trees."

doggy disaster

STUDENT Terry Cahill was more than miffed when his parents and family didn't appear to be doing anything about his 18th birthday.

So he decided to make the date go with a bang with the help of his girlfriend Lila.

On the big day he smuggled her into the empty family home and started on an orgy of bedroom bonking.

But halfway through the phone rang downstairs and the naked couple decided to answer it — doggy style.

Chorus

But when they piled into the living room a chorus of "Happy Birthday" from parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins turned to groans of horror as the young couple lay on the floor showing all they had.

Terry, who told of the drama in a magazine's *Most Embarrassing Moment* doesn't know if he is going to be banned from the family home in Poughkeepsie, New York.

But his parents have vowed never to give another surprise party.

- Col 1 - D Sport, 32/2/95
- Col 2 - D Sport, 12/5/95
- Col 3 - D Sport, 10/1/95
- D Sport, 22/5/95
- Sun, 5/1/95
- Col 4 - Sun, 17/2/9
- D Sport, 2/12/94

War hero had shell stuck up his bum!

● IT WAS the most odd bum story yet — an unexploded anti-aircraft shell found up the backside of an old RAF officer. He was operated on as bomb squad officers waited outside.

● Other bizarre bottle finds in a new survey by the men's magazine *Loaded* included a loaded gun found up the rear of an Alabama jail inmate; a ping-pong ball in cement; and a bust of Beethoven, apparently used in a failed suicide bid.

● Another was a bottle of tomato ketchup. The man slipped and fell on it when climbing through his kitchen window.

Books

URBAN MYTHS UNPLUGGED

By Phil Healy & Rick Glanvill

WHEN interviewed by Mark Radcliffe on Radio 1 about their previous book, the authors said they had been in a band (The Fall, I believe) so this would explain the "unplugged" title buzzword. But plug their books they do, with a cheery vengeance, so the title is also akin to a pun.

For the uninitiated they explain the nature, evolution and popularity of friend-of-a-friend tales before getting down to the usual categories.

Folklore Frontiers has its "oldies but goodies" and Healy & Glanvill begin with one I had always considered F o r team/paranormal/spiritual and, er, true. It's the saint found perfectly preserved after several centuries of death. Maybe I was naive or Healy & Glanvill are outside their brief.

This antiques roadshow — their term — even has the elephant which sat on a Mini, mistaking it for its stool, which is almost as old as the mammoths. There's also the pair of dobermans terrorising a would-be burglar; the old woman's ruse to get her "daughter" to pay for her meal; woman who goosed a complete stranger; bosom serpent; huge tapeworm; earwigs in brain; and bus ticket which had caused deafness for years.

Then there's the tale of the exotic dancer whose boa constrictor became jealous of her new boyfriend and motivated by jealousy attempted to strangle him.

Healy & Glanvill have a bizarre tale of a rottweiler given extra-large silicon implants inserted in its scrotum, only for the mutt's original testicles to drop into the attentive hands of a show judge. Equally embarrassing was the television documentary team which homed in on a rescue dog supposedly having found a human victim under an avalanche but, in fact, servicing a stray bitch. Worse is this end of the tape of a wedding where the camcorder loaner is found having sex with his pet dog.

Among the more modern legends on their way to becoming classics included here is the traffic control police who play "snooker" when booking motorists by the colour of their cars; selected Euro-myths; Amazon urine fish; Fannie and Johnnie Craddock ("and all your doughnuts will turn out like Fannie's"); thespians' special attention to rodents; Chris Evans caught "burping the worm," as we call it up here, while watching Baywatch and caught on secret cameras for Noel's House Party; prostitute asked how long it would take to pay a £40 fine ("about half-an-hour"); tattoo transfers of Mickey Mouse, dosed with LSD or Ecstasy, being sold outside infants' schools to get the kids hooked.

There will always be cases where reality mimics myth and the tale here of an attempted suicide suing the New York subway authority and train driver, for being robbed of his democratic right to end it all, is reflected in the true UK even where model Heather Mills, who lost a leg, is being sued for distress by the speeding police motor-cyclist who injured her. In the

USA the depressed dweller won.

New contemporary legends here include the housewife who when finding the half-dozen packets of a popular washing powder she bought at an auction did not shift stains whatsoever, and sent a sample for analysis only to find her washing blues turned her white upon learning the product had been six 30kg cartons of pure heroin — at a very good price, too!

Some tales are plain stupid, some relocated dirty jokes. But was there any need to make a crude reference to Cleveland fathers and their daughters? But then what then do you expect when you become involved in urban mythology.

Published by Virgin, £4.99

HISTRIONICS

By Geoffrey Regan

A pot-pourri of historical anecdotes which like the proverbial parson's egg has its good and indifferent moments. Arranged according to a variety of topics, it is a collection of anecdotes and true (?) stories; episodes, memories, curiosities and snippets. Overall, a worthy enterprise.

Among those tales to most amuse the reviewer is one related about George IV's hatred of his wife which was so great it blinded him to everything else, even the greatest enemy this country has ever known. On Napoleon's death on St Helena, a servant congratulated the king, saying: "Sir, your bitterest enemy is dead." "Is she, by God!" replied the king.

It was she, too, who allegedly conducted an affair with the Muslim Dey of Algiers. The Chief Justice, Lord Norbury, supposedly observed: "She was happy

showbiz

WEE MISTAKE

A Russian trying to dodge army service sent medics some of his diabetic lover's urine — and was told he was pregnant.

POUCHES

All mod cons not included

A ROMP in a Jacuzzi and sex in a King-sized bed made Paula Brown, 23, think she'd found her dream lover.

The stranger she met in a New York night club said that he owned the luxury mansion where they made love.

But she woke up to find her romeo had flown and an estate agent and two would-be buyers staring at her.

as the dey was long."

The author says he has expunged distinctly apocryphal tales such as those of Robert the Bruce and spider or Canute and the waves. However, we are treated to King Alfred burning the cakes (never mind that it was recorded in the 12th century Annals of St Neot's); the obviously mythic discovery of Richard I by the tenacious troubadour Blondel; how Walter Raleigh "weighed" his tobacco smoke for a wager with Elizabeth I (i.e. the difference in weight between original and ashes) and also here is his putting his cape over a puddle for the Queen; and daschunds (German sausage dogs) were attacked in the street after 1914 so one woman decked here out in a union jack coat, with the inscription "I am fully naturalised."

Other tales doubtless have little or no basis in fact. For instance Sarah Bernhardt, playing the part of Cleopatra in the last years of Victoria's reign, stabbed the slave, stormed about the stage raving at the top of her voice, wrecking some scenery and as the curtain fell, dropped to the ground in a convulsive heap. As the applause subsided an elderly British matron was heard to observe to her companion: "How different, how very different from the home life of our own dear Queen."

Some anecdotes are mundane, inconsequential or tedious; even akin to the dirty joke and the British scholar and explorer Sir Richard Burton one - what a surprise - sounds apocryphal, but has its internal (and eternal) logic: "As they watched, the sheikh's wife fell off a camel, revealing her private

parts. The Englishmen were thoroughly embarrassed and were amazed when the sheikh seemed entirely unconcerned. It was only later that they learned that the sheikh had in fact been delighted that his wife had managed to keep her face covered when she fell."

Incidentally, the longest piece is also the most salacious, about Theodora, wife of the Emperor Justinian, which is very Dally Sportish, despite being penned by her contemporary, the Greek historian Procopius.

From longest to shortest, Calvin Coolidge - this one is a nod to our American readers - is regarded as having been dim, but this tale suggests otherwise. At the start of a dinner party, a woman turned to him and said: "I hope you will talk to me, Mr President. I made a bet that I could get more than two words out of you." "You lose," said Coolidge.

Published by Robson Books, £15.95.

THIS SPORTING LAUGH

By Norman Giller
THE introduction be-

Letters

Cookery test

From Ms Gillian Bevan

Sir: The death of Peter Cook has reminded us of a much-loved and often-told true family story.

My husband, having recently arrived in London from university in Warwick, where he had spent the previous three years, found himself one day in the ironmonger's shop in Hampstead. The sight of celebrities still being a new experience for him, he found himself smiling with pleasure at the sight of Peter entering the shop, which Peter took as a sign

gins: "There is too often a snarl instead of a smile on the modern face of sport."

With Cantona's kick in mind, this selection shows there are also hilarious moments, the daft and the bizarre. The sportswriter claims the anecdotes are all true, but the reviewer reckons several are suspect.



"He had it all—women, alcoholism, gambling addiction. But he wasted it all for a life of football."

Surely apocryphal is the one already well enough known to paraphrase. George Best had a former Miss World in bed beside him as he counted his £15,000 casino winnings. The Irish night porter who had brought up champagne

asked Best: "George, just where did it all go wi'ong?"

that my husband worked there. "Secateurs?" inquired Peter, quite naturally. To which my husband, thinking it must be some kind of literary test, replied rather hesitatingly, "Non sequiturs?"

It was only when Peter walked the length of the shop, giggling to himself, that my husband realised his mistake, and blushed with a mixture of embarrassment and pride at the classic Pete & Dud conversation he had just had with one of his heroes.

Yours faithfully,
GILLIAN BEVAN (Independent)
London, NW2

12/1/95

Another familiar one was New York Jets American football player Joe Namath after playing his first game on the synthetic surface AstroTurf, being asked: "What's the difference between grass and AstroTurf?" "Well," drawled Joe, "I can't rightly say 'cos I've never smoked AstroTurf."

Of the cheeky tales there's the occasion at Twickenham in 1982 where Erika Roe made her streak. "Hey, Bill," scrum-half Stevie Smith said to captain Bill Beaumont, "there's a bird just run on with your bum on her chest."

As well as tall-sounding tales, there is a large selection of quotes. My favourite is, "I always say that to maintain an interest in sport, it is important never to meet sportsmen," from Roy Hattersley. I interviewed him as a junior reporter when he was a junior minister. Doubtless this accounts for my lack of interest in politics.

Published by Robson Books, £6.99.

NEW WORLDS 4

Edited by David Garnett

LAST of the series; even its editor admits the reason is because short stories don't sell.

So will this collection do any better? There's plenty of icons named - reborn Hendrix and Warhol, Bob Dylan busking in a car park - and no lack of sex, mostly of a bizarre type, particularly in The Last Phallic Symbol.

Best story of all is Robert Holdstock's series of "spoo" letters from a botanist. The Americans, she discovers, have set up small intrusions of transgenic hazelwood in 50 forest locations, each with the Group-DNA-sequences from a



When bones dug up in pits during Victorian times are analysed, it seems they are from 50,000 to 100,000 years ago - and of modern man, "Something about the teeth: lacunae in two molars show signs of having been produced by a metal drill. Sounds like one of those urban myths, doesn't it." (Actually no, try Fortean phenomena).

Plus David Langford on SF or SF-like works written by those not mainstream genre writers, and neat afterword by Michael Moorcock.

Published by Gol-lancz, £6.99.

different charismatic individual. In Maryland, the Clint Eastwood pine-wood was named Make-My-Day wood.

There's also the tacky and forgettable Papwoods of Madonna (another story has as postcard displaying her with a donkey); Thatcher wood deemed a failure and for the chop; Ed Kennedy copes of New England having deteriorated into shallow lakes and marshes, where locals dump their old cars.

Humour is sparse in this anthology, but there is real wit The Charisma Trees.

IN BRIEF

THE BABY TRAIN & OTHER LUSTY URBAN LEGENDS by Jan Harold Brunvand. A collection which will also entertain Forteaners, as we pointed out in the review of the hardback in FF23. The cover of a baby with a British class 91 locomotive is quite captivating. If you missed the hardback, you've no excuse to get the paperback. If in doubt refer to the review FF23:7/8. (Published by W W Norton, £7.95).

KING ARTHUR AND THE GRAIL QUEST by John Matthews. Visuallytals looks like a book from my grandfather's generation (ie last century) and for children, at that. Also I've never been a Matthews fan whatsoever. John Billingsley, reviewing the book for Northern Earth, notes: "Matthews' reworkings of Grail tales -- his rebashed stories and visualisations found in about everything he writes are now played out. Those who cannot write guided meditations. Surely readers do not need their Grail on sugar lumps?" Hear, hear. (Published by Blandford Press, £16.99).

THE ART OF CELTIA by Courtney Davis. I rather like Davis' work but I'm not a Sir George Trevelyan fan (this socially ignorant old git has probably damaged true wisdom seekers' cause more than any other individual. His dotty appearance on TV some years ago horrified me, whatsoever. Seventy colour and 70 b/w illustrations. Bit too coffee table though for my true appreciation. (Published by Blandford Press, £9.99).

TWELVE CHANNELS OF THE I CHING by Myles Seabrook. I've taken part in an I Ching session and was impressed, but have never followed it through. Therefore I cannot give a real judgement on the book and trust that this updated version of the ancient Chinese method of divination and prediction is relevant. It claims to be a simplified version which will intrigue novice and expert alike. (Published by Blandford Press, £9.99).

THE GREEN KNIGHT by Iris Murdoch

PART-MYTH, part-mystery and part-thriller, this haunting, evocative story revives one of the most enduring Celtic and mediaeval legends and infuses it with new, contemporary life. This is the story of Professor Lucas Graffe, who suddenly disappears after he accidentally kills a nocturnal assailant. His brother Clement, an actor, becomes extremely concerned and, with the help of some mutual friends, attempts to track Lucas down. The friends include an aspirant monk and a single mother with three beautiful daughters. Then a mysterious stranger enters each of their lives, causing tension and discord. When just as suddenly Lucas reappears, he too is confronted by the stranger and faces demands for restitution and revenge.

Published by Penguin, £6.99.

NAPOLEON'S BOOK OF FATE edited by Michael Colmer

PROPHECY is very much an underrated component of urban mythology. Whether we can see into the future -- or should attempt such -- is debatable. Having been to a gypsy fortune teller (she spooked the hell out of me), done ouija (shocked again) and I Ching (very accurate), though told by the self-proclaimed greatest astrologer since William Blake that I will die abroad aged 53 (I'm 48), I give oracles the benefit of the doubt. This ancient oracle is edited and adapted for everyday use with 1,000 answers to 32 of Napoleon's specific questions. User friendly.

Published by Blandford, £7.99.

Country matters



by TRISTAN DAVIES

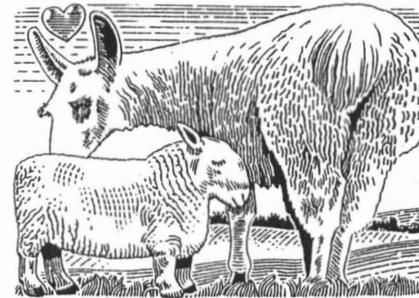
Rammer llama ding-dong

FOXES have again caused carnage at a friend's farm in Brightling, East Sussex; lambs, chickens and ducks have gone the way of predecessors in an orgy of blood and feathers. Why my chum won't do the sensible thing and buy a llama, I don't know.

Studies show that hardy South American llamas, increasingly popular in Britain, are extremely effective at guarding sheep against predators once they have marked out a territory and bonded with their new woolly "family".

But therein lies a problem which was highlighted the other morning on Radio 4's *Farming Today*. A sheep farmer from Headcorn in Kent had shelled out £500 for his male llama to guard his livestock. Sadly, the urge for the llama to "bond" with his woolly charges proved irresistibly strong, and the creature -- how can I put this? -- became afflicted by the love that dares not bleat its name.

The farmer must now buy a female llama or have his male one gelded.



AS A postscript to the Brightling fox carnage (see story above), my friend tells a curious tale that he assures me is true.

Still reeling from the attacks on his own animals, he was commiserating with a neighbour, a redoubtable woman who shoots rabbits

from inside her farmhouse, whose hens had also been ravaged by a fox the night before. "Come and look," she said, leading him to the henhouse where she keeps her Marans French fowl.

She pointed to one of the survivors. The day before, the feathers had been typically dark grey and speckled. But overnight, following the fox attack, all the feathers had turned completely white.

Do readers know of any other such occurrences in their parish?



Parish Pump and Robin Page's *Farmer's Diary* both Weekend Telegraph, 21/5/94; 100 spaniels, D Mail, 7/5/91

Mystery of the Duke and 100 vanishing dogs

FOR more than half a century, the link between the Duke of Windsor's trousers and the massacre of his father's favourite dogs has been a whispered rumour among villagers near Sandringham.

But now an amateur historian is publicly claiming that the Duke had 100 clumber spaniels shot because one once cocked its leg over his plus (four) during a shooting party.

By TRACEY HARRISON

His father George V, who was fiercely proud of the breed he reared, roared with laughter.

But the Duke never forgot -- and took spectacular revenge soon after his father's death, according to Hadrian Jeffs, 30, an aviation historian from Norfolk.

Just hours after becoming Edward VIII in 1936, he ordered the head gamekeeper to shoot every clumber in the kennels.

The story was passed down to Mr Jeffs by his grandfather and father. He finally made it public following a debate in a newspaper letters page when a clumber won Cruft's this year.

After one correspondent claimed that the Duke had once a favourite clumber, Mr Jeffs decided to tell the world.

Mourned

"I have absolutely no documentary proof," he said. "But I believe both my grandfather and father got their information from good sources."

"My grandfather was head gamekeeper at a nearby estate and was told the clumbers had disappeared. There were rumours of a shooting."

"But in 1941 my father managed to buy one, and

was told by the woman who sold it that it was one of the few survivors."

The story goes that as Queen Mary mourned, the new King slipped off to phone head gamekeeper Freddie Bland.

"Take those wretched clumber dogs out and shoot them -- every single one of them, and do it straight away," he is said to have demanded.

Records

With two helpers and a heavy heart, Bland shot most of the dogs and drowned their puppies. But he smuggled a handful out to nearby villages to prevent the breed from extinction.

Last night Philip Ziegler, author of *King Edward VIII: The Official Biography*, admitted he had heard a vaguely similar rumour. But after talking to scores of people and scouring estate records, he found no evidence to support it. "It's well known the Duke didn't like Sandringham, but he absolutely did like dogs."

The Duke kept cairn terriers, pugs and a peke -- and once adopted a stray he saw in a dogs' home in France.

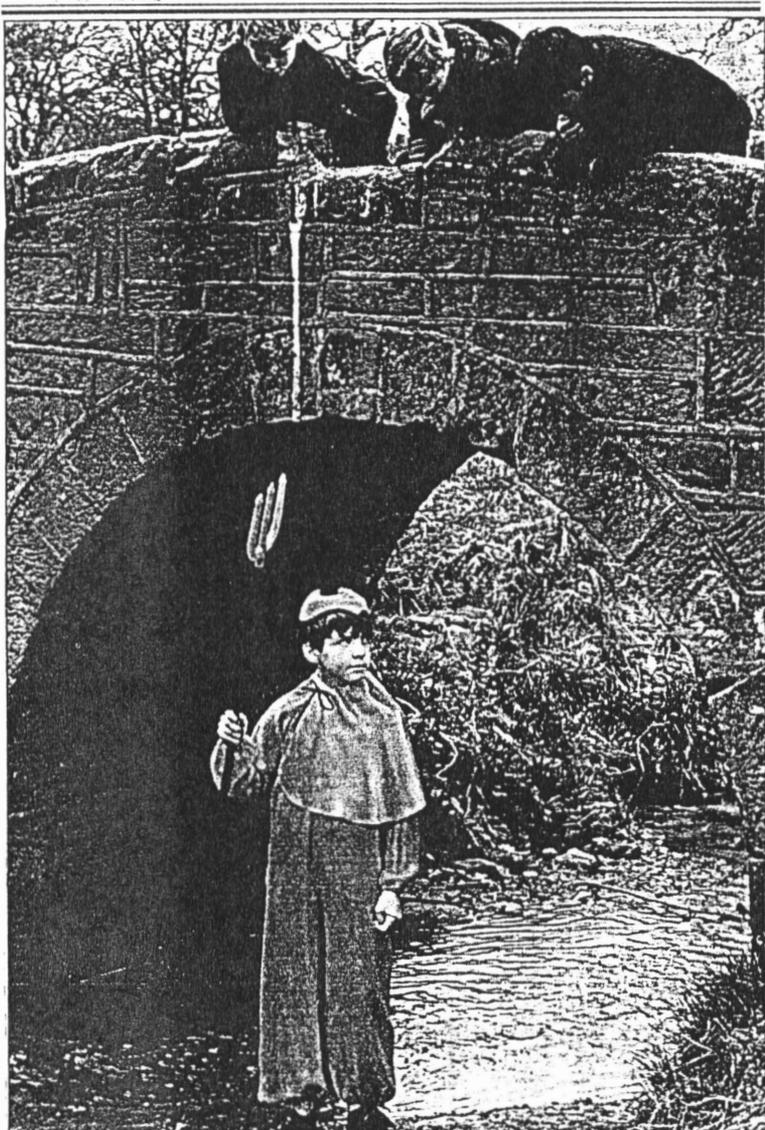
Buckingham Palace said last night: "We cannot verify this story."

FARMER'S DIARY



● I WAS recently asked -- as someone with no vested interest -- to take part in a BBC *Open Door* programme on bunting. While filming, the producer told a story of a programme she had recently finished about black Tories.

She had found a black Conservative, with a "frightfully, frightfully" accent, who rides to bounds. At one meet the hunter was approached by a screaming anti. "You should be ashamed of yourself," she bawled. "Don't you remember slavery? A hundred years ago this lot would have been bunting you." He looked down from his horse and answered calmly: "My dear, 500 years ago I would have been eating you."



Little devil: Paul Bowman plays the lead role at Devil's Bridge watched by fellow pupils of Newham Bridge School
Picture: MEL ATTRILL

Pupils' devil of a task

CAN anyone help solve the devil of a mystery over a Middlesbrough landmark?

A sandstone bridge at the meeting of Newham and Marton West becks in Acklam has been known as Devil's Bridge for 200 years - but no one knows why.

Yesterday an 'imp' from nearby Newham Bridge primary school took

a view from the bridge to try to solve the mystery.

Shirley Muir, beck valleys officer for Middlesbrough council, said: "The name may refer to days when monks used the route.

"Maps refer to Newham Bridge, but if anyone can shed light on the Devil's Bridge name, we would use it on display boards."

Red rumour hangs balance

By SIAN ROBERTS

HANGING baskets have overtaken hung parliaments as the centre of political discussion in Richmond.

Rumours started to blossom that red flowers were banned from hanging baskets for fear of them showing support for Labour, while white, blue and green flowers would be allowed to flourish.

But the rumour, which sprouted in the run-up to the General Election, was officially scotched yesterday and the true explanation was revealed as the latest War of the Roses episode.

It was also confirmed that the baskets will not go on display until June 1.

A public meeting dismissed red flowers because they represent Lancashire and would not be appropriate in Richmond, which this year hosts Yorkshire Day on August 1.

Coun Pam Cross, chairman of the town's floral committee, said the political rumours were funny, but untrue.

She said that the public meeting, called to discuss the town's entry in the Britain in Bloom competition, decided on white flowers because of Yorkshire Day.

"But all white would have looked horrible. People at the meeting said red was for Lancashire so a nurseryman suggested blue and green for the colour," said Coun Cross.

"That's the only reason. Next year we might decide on red, white and green."

LEFT: Northern Echo, 26/3/92.
ABOVE: Northern Echo, 6/4/92.

Stop Press

Ran out of space for more books and any mag reviews. Also held over in the 1994 newspapers survey.