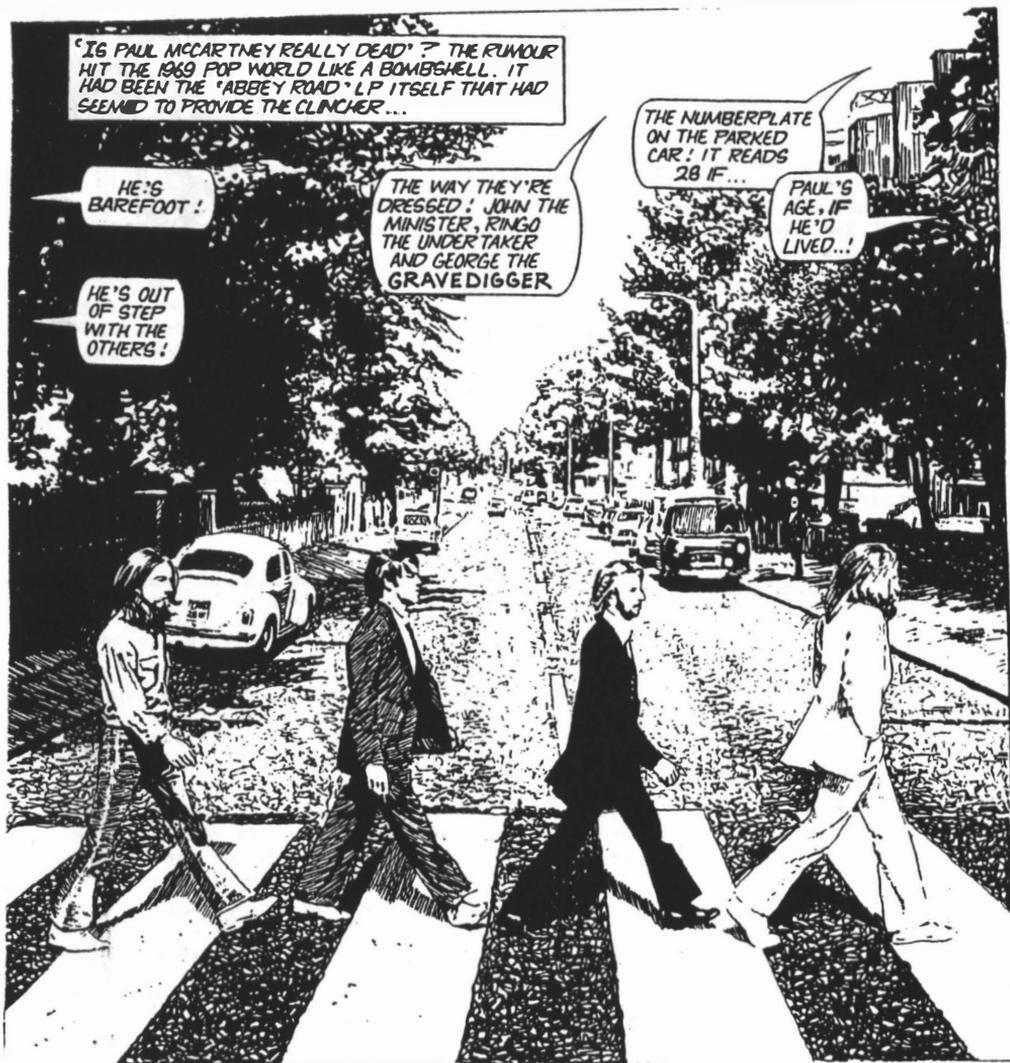


Folklore Frontiers

31



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DECEMBER, 1997

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LEAD-IN

Just when you thought it would be absolutely ages before a liveried servant of Her Majesty would deliver another subversive and depraved copy of FF you are agog at the editor's unaccustomed industriousness. It's a pre-Yule/Xmas quickie and only 12 pages (I did have to buy a new printer ribbon after 15 years, you realise). It still costs less than a pint of beer and lasts longer.

I've also been catching up on the review books pile. The front cover illustration comes from Look in of 2/2/82.

I couldn't resist the Seal People article (monitored by Dr A S L Rae who thinks it's from The Scotsman for 16/11/97) No room for magazine reviews this time.



Photocopylore

DATELINE: NORTH POLE

It was recently announced that Donner and Blitzen have elected to take the early reindeer retirement package. Streamlining was dictated because the North Pole no longer dominates the season's gift distribution business. Home shopping channels and mail order catalogues have diminished Santa's market share. He could not permit further erosion of the profit picture.

The reindeer downsizing was made possible by Dasher and Dancer, who summered at the Harvard Business School. They should take up the slack with no discernable loss of service. Reduction in reindeer will also lessen airborne environmental emissions for which the North Pole has been cited and received unfavorable press.

Rudolph's role, however, will not be disturbed. It was denied that Rudolph's nose got that way, not from the cold, but from specific substance abuse. Calling Rudolph "a lush who was into the sauce and never did pull his share of the load" was an unfortunate comment made by one of Santa's overworked helpers.

In addition effective immediately, the following economy measures are to take place in the "Twelve Days of Christmas" subsidiary. The partridge will be retained, but the pear tree never turned out to be the cash crop forecasted. It will be replaced by a plastic hanging plant.

The two turtledoves represent a redundancy that is simply not cost effective. In addition, their romance during working hours could not be condoned. Their positions are therefore eliminated. The three French hens will remain intact thought they will now cluck in English. The four calling birds were replaced by an automated voiced mail system, with a call-waiting option.

(Continued on Back Page)

Seal People steer their kayaks from seafarers' legend into history

JOHN ROSS

IT MUST have presented a fearsome sight to the superstitious fishermen of the 18th century: a series of human torsos covered in sealskin sticking out of the sea with no visible lower half.

Reports of these curious creatures, who were only seen in the water or sitting semi-submerged on rocks, helped to establish the legend of the Seal People and mermaids around the Northern and Western Isles.

Tales abound in island folklore and poetry of the mysterious Seal or Finn people and of superstitious fishermen who quickly put back to sea any that were captured.

Now a Hebridean historian and writer, John Macaulay, is investigating the legendary sea-going people he believes were a tribe who came to the islands as part of the Norse invasion. Mr Macaulay is convinced that the Seal People were from the Sjo-Same tribe, a group of nomads who broke from the better-known inland Lapps and lived most of their lives at sea in kayaks.

He is liaising with researchers at the University of Tromsø in Norway, in the area where the Sjo-Same are thought to have originated, although few records of the tribe exist. He wants to find out how and why the Seal People came to Scotland.

Mr Macaulay also plans to study three kayaks which were discovered near Aberdeen in the 17th and 18th centuries. Two of these are being held in the anthropological museum at the city's Marischal College where experts believe them to be an eskimo vessels from Greenland, but Mr Macaulay says they could be Sjo-Same craft.

He has already amassed a collection of recorded sightings of the Seal People from 1676 to the late 1800s, stretching from the Mull of Kintyre to Orkney and Shetland and to the north-east coast.

"The common factor which emerged was that they described the upper half of a creature whose upper body looked like a human. They were seen as sea creatures or animals with human features but the connection was not made that they were human."

He said the kayakers would have been dressed in a one-piece suit made of seal or walrus skin, perhaps including a hood. The kayak would also be covered in skin, drawn over a framework of walrus bones and tied around the entrance to make it watertight, like a modern-day spray deck. This could explain the folklore tales that the Seal People could not go to sea without their "belts".

Mr Macaulay believes the Sjo-Same flooded the kayak, to allow it to ride slightly below the surface. This produced the

curious sight of only the upper half of the "creature" being visible, while a highly-developed technique allowed them to dive underwater and reappear some distance away.

Mr Macaulay said: "The Sjo-Same were extremely skilful in the kayaks ... which were almost like an extension to their bodies."

He has also identified a small rocky outcrop, eight miles north of Griminish Point in North Uist, as the base for the Sjo-Same in the Western Isles. There, he said, they would have survived on seals, fish, seabirds, eggs and seaweed.

Mr Macaulay said he hopes to build up more information about the seagoing tribe and take it to Norway where there is only now some recognition of the Seal People. "They were not highly-regarded in Norway and were seen at the lower end of the social scale."

● The kayak that arrived in the River Don in Aberdeen in the 18th century was described by Francis Douglas in his *General Description of the East Coast of Scotland* in 1782: "A canoe taken at sea with an Indian man in it about the beginning of this century. He was brought alive to Aberdeen, but died soon after his arrival and could give no account of himself."

In 1688 the Rev James Wallace, of Kirkwall, wrote about "Finmen" seen sailing in canoes in the islands when local people flocked to see them.

Fact or fiction?

Were Seal people mythical or was folklore fuelled by a real life tribe? Historian John Macaulay believes the sea-going people came to the islands as a part of the Nordic invasion

The Sjo-Same tribe

It is believed that the people would have worn suits made from seal or walrus skins. These skins would have also been used for spray decks and covering the framework of a kayak



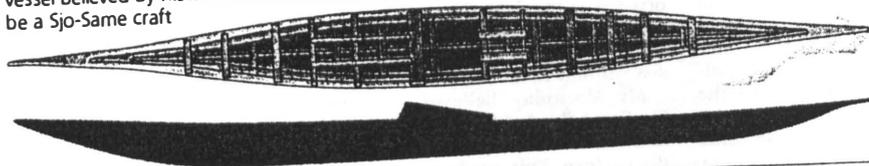
Folklore
An impression of a seal-person inspired by legend

The kayak would have been partially flooded, and with a person aboard, would have been almost hidden below the surface



The kayak

Below is the outline of the framework of a vessel believed by historian John Macaulay to be a Sjo-Same craft



Graphic illustration: Richard Painsance; Manskal Museum

Tait's Gallery

As we rapidly approach the "Season of goodwill". I'm reminded that this is the peak time for suicide, divorce and relationship break down. So to keep to a seasonal theme I thought I'd relate a couple of tales linked by that most popular of solo activity, masturbation.

The first was told to me by a friend who not only swears to its veracity, but who actually implies I was involved in the idea! When I was a teenager, I was a member of a local youth club. This particular club gained a certain amount of celebrity status being as it was, run entirely by the kids - No I'm not joking and yes, it did get as bad as you can imagine. *Lord of the Flies*, nothing, this was more. *Let's go Play at the Adams*. In fact the whole place went up in smoke after a rather spectacular indoor firework display - with fireworks that were of a definite outdoor variety!

Anyway, a member of the club had a cousin from Denmark staying with him, and brought him along for one of the regular, video evenings there. After a screening of the main feature, many people made their way home, leaving the "Select" video club members. Rather predictably, the next screening was of something a trifle naughty. And so the plan was hatched - allegedly.

After the video, the young Dutch lad was told that it was a customary "Game" of the club, to compete in a, "Wanking contest". This involved the competitors each putting a pound into a pot and turning off the lights whereupon battle commenced. The victor, and winner of the purse, was decided on the, "First come, first served" principle.

In the best tradition of European competition, the Dutch lad was encouraged to represent his country in the contest, and the lights were extinguished. After a brief few minutes, a choked cry rang out in a distinctly non-local accent. The lights went on..... And there he sat on the floor, trousers round ankles, sweat on his brow and a Kleenex in his lap. Unfortunately his sense of triumph was short lived as he noticed that his fellow, "Competitors" were standing in a hysterical circle around him with their pants very much up!

Another tale involving ham-shanking shenanigans involves a chap who hit it off with a particularly beautiful girl in a local nightclub. Imagine the young lads delight when he was invited back to her place for the euphemistic, "Coffee". Unfortunately, the girl still lived with her parents which effectively made her bedroom out of bounds. However passions being what they are, they spent a highly charged couple of hours making love on the sofa, where the boyfriend was to sleep. Desires sated, the girl then tip-toed upstairs to bed.

When he awoke in the morning, the boyfriend discovered that the girl had left her nickers on the sofa beside him. The sight of the skimpy garment brought back the memories of his night of passion, and before he knew where he was it was high noon on his sundial.... The pressure was unbearable, and so like the resourceful fellow that he was, he decided to take matters into his own hands. To add a little spice to the proceedings he fondled his lovers panties, and eventually they ended up over his head as the inevitable overcame him.

Unfortunately he must have dozed off, for when he removed the nickers from his head not only were the curtains of the room opened, but there was a cup of tea and a slice of toast placed on the arm of the sofa, put there by the girls mother!

Of course these tales are in much the same vein (oops, sorry) as the more traditional classic embarrassing incident stories such as, *Winded* and, *Not your lucky night* etc. However with each telling it would appear that the incidents need to be that little bit more cringeable than the last. I dread to think of the next inevitable stage in the tales evolution.

Moving hurriedly on, if not necessarily up, I noticed a letter in *The Journal* (8/11/97) which goes as follows:

"An unreliable friend told me not to blow my nose on toilet paper as it contained antiseptic and would cause irritation. Should I trust her information? When in any case did the manufacture of paper especially for this purpose begin?"

Unfortunately, it would seem to be an open appeal for information as the editor offers no answer. Not being an arse-paper expert despite many claims to the contrary, I can offer this poor confused soul no revelations. However after being informed by a similarly, "Unreliable" friend that eating polo's would make me sterile, not only have my teeth rotted away, but my wife is now expecting our second child. Never mind though, 'least my breath is fresh. I have yet to establish whether a Trebor mint actually does last a bit longer when stuck up your bum....

I also note that this past year has brought at least a couple of FOAF'S to life. One of the most convincing being Brendan Blennerhassett who was jailed for six months for killing a nine-week old kitten in a microwave oven. It would appear that Blennerhassett zapped the cat because its owner spurned his advances at a party (*Evening Chronicle* 19/8/97). "I could hear a thudding. The cats head was bashing off the side of the microwave" its distraught owner said. *The Sunday Sport* (21/9/97) carried a suspiciously similar tale under the heading, "Bed me or yer pussy gets it". I couldn't do it justice, so I'm enclosing it in full below.

And on such a literary high note I'll wish you all the best for the Yule and the coming New Year. Remember to cut those little crosses in your sprouts now wont you?

John Tait.

* That pussy in full:- An evil fiend has had sex with at least six different women -- because they loved their PUSSIES. The casanova creep steals cats from the woman and threatens to kill the moggy unless his sex demands are met. Cops in Los Angeles say the beast first struck last year.

* Editor's note: John, how did the cousing from Denmark suddenly become Dutch? Actually I thought I knew what was coming, but no. There used to be a schoolboy ritual at Hartlepool's Technical High School where a digestive biscuit was placed between two contestants. The first to syphon his python was deemed winner -- the loser had to eat the biscuit and its viscous spread.

Update

FROM SHOE TREE TO SHOE-LACES. FF27:10/11 we featured the shoe tree at Stokenchurch. Here's Brian Jackman (Weekend Telegraph, 28/6/97): "Every inch of the (Penwith) peninsula is filled with surprises. At Madron I followed a path almost buried under bridal veils of blackthorn blossom, to a Celtic chapel beside one of Cornwall's innumerable holy wells. Nearby, its roots clenched in the shallow waters of a kingcup marsh, stood the strangest sight -- a sallow tree covered with votive offerings. Some visitors had tied strips of coloured cloth to its branches. Others had left handkerchiefs, scarves, necklaces, ties and shoe-laces. One hopeful had even left a lottery ticket. Who said tree worship was dead in Britain?"

"Last spring (Northern Earth, No. 64, 1995) passers-by in Luddenden Foot, West Yorkshire, were surprised to see a very unusual blossom on a roadside tree; overnight the lowest to the very topmost branches, it had sprouted beer cans of every variety, threaded on to the end of twigs. The display lasted for a few weeks and was actually enjoyed by the locals, who are now wondering if the same blooms will appear next year. Something of the same spirit seems to have affected Leicester last August, where a tree was decorated with clothes-hangers . . ."

Artist Rachel Crompton hung 300 cans of baked beans on a tree at Stafford University to demonstrate how students are forced to live on the breadline. However, her "challenging perspective" of campus life was nicked by her college mates who scoffed it on toast. Only a handful of the 6p supermarket cans remained (D Sport, 11/3/96).

Meanwhile, ski officials Vail, Colorado, USA, had chopped down a tree known as the Panty Bush because it was festooned with girls' underwear from the nearby chairlift in aptly-named Beaver Creek. The saucy culprits had not been traced (D. Sport, 5/3/96).

BOOBS-FOR-BOOZE SCANDAL. In FF30:4-7 links between Two Dogs and "real dogs" (only joking, girls) was examined. Seemingly girls hooked on booze are flashing their boobs in the street to lure men into buying them alcohol. Mostly aged 16 and 17, they are banned from buying themselves at off-licences, so they approach strangers and offer to expose themselves in exchange for hard liquor. This behaviour is worrying social services and police in posh Henley-on-Thames, Oxon, where fears are that girls could be dragged into alleys and raped. Youngsters are so desperate for drink that they hurl foul-mouthed abuse at men who spurn their advances, said community worker Gabbi Enahoro. He added: "A young girl, so drunk she can hardly stand up, with her clothes all over the place and breath stinking of booze, is a very sad sight." (The Sport, 27/10/91).

A B C

THE BIG CAT OF CUPAR. Latest cat flap to report is in north-east Fife where there have been 20 reported sightings -- the latest caught on video-camera. A police officer offered the opinion that it was a puma and attributed it to release on the back of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act (Dundee Courier, Scotsman, 17/11/97. Cr: Dr A S L Rae).

Paul is DEAD ?

THE GREAT BEATLE DEATH CLUBS by R. GARY PATTERSON (Robson Books, £9.99)

On a Wednesday morning at five o'clock, November 9, 1966, in fact, driving an Aston Martin sports car, Paul McCartney died after an all-night recording session at Abbey Road, London, following an argument with his fellow Beatles. He was decapitated.

Did the despondent McCartney pick up a female hitch-hiker, who was to unwittingly cause the accident by trying too enthusiastically to embrace her pop icon?

Was McCartney's death hushed up and him replaced by a substitute, an imposter actor called William Campbell, supposedly winner of a lookalike contest, an orphan from Edinburgh with identical voice and who could write the same type of songs?

"Once the thrill of backward tracking became commonplace, the Beatles utilised this technique as a vehicle for disguising death clues in their songs." Patterson is unequivocal here, no doubt about McCartney's death.

McCartney, himself, held a Press conference to announce that he was alive and well, but subsequent solo albums have tantalising references to his death rumour.

Folklorists who ignore such a Heaven-sent lode of lore do so at their peril. This is a complex yet consistent rumour, so relatively stable and lacking developmental quality; deviations from the theme definitively discouraged (likewise, say, alien abduction accounts, as doubtless the redoubtable Thomas "Eddie" Bullard would argue).

The author's grasp of folklore seems patchy, but he has done research to flesh out and substantiate the clues through aspects of ancient folklore such as to explain the song "I Am the Walrus" the term "walrus" was derived from Greek and meant "corpse" and that in certain Scandinavian countries, a walrus is considered a harbinger of death (and you thought Lennon & McCartney were too busy womanising or pissed to study comparative mythology). With regard to the decapitation of Guinness heir Tara Browne (and possibly also McCartney's, Patterson notes that in prehistoric times and in many tribal societies, if the head were removed, the spirit could be freed. Evolution of spirit is also explored with regard to the depiction of the Indian goddess Kali, depicted on the cover of "Sgt Pepper's".

He suggests the reference here to "eggman" may have represented the cosmic rebirth of the Beatle essence and evolution of spirit to an ideal state of wisdom and love (though more prosaically it has been associated by Lennon with Animals' lead singer Eric Burdon, who would crack eggs on the naked bodies of girls to whom he was making love).

Also in some countries the practice of burying the dead without their shoes is reflected in McCartney's being barefoot twice in the "Magical Mystery Tour" booklet and on the cover of the "Abbey Road" LP. In addition to corpse traditions, "Abbey Road" has sun cycle references suggestive of resurrection.

The car on the "Abbey Road" cover had the registration LMW 281F, i.e. the real McCartney would have been 28, if . . . (that would have to include Eastern religions' addition of the time in the womb). The car, incidentally, was a Volkswagen Beetle! A later solo album allegedly had a Volkswagen with the plate ending 511S.

Patterson also adduces that the so-called McCartney myth relates to the legend of the Fisher King, for after "Sgt Pepper" they went into a creative wasteland.

Patterson's own experiments included holding a mirror perpendicular to the "Sgt Pepper" album cover, where he discovered on the bass drum the



cryptic message "I ONE IX (>) He Die" in the dead centre of the words "Lonely Hearts." The album serving as an obituary to the unsuspecting world.

But there are obviously many other equally fanatical Beatle conspiracy theorists out there scanning album covers and reading double meanings into every lyric line. As Patterson notes: "No one will ever know for sure how many turntables were ruined by overzealous fans who turned the platters backwards and destroyed delicate mechanisms inside the players."

But building such an edifice of conspiracy has its dangers. For me it for me to spoil the party, but when Patterson picks on the line in "Paperback Writer" -- "It's based on a novel by a man named Lear" -- he claims this substantiated that Lennon & McCartney were well studied in the tragedy of "King Lear." No! My honeymoon night was spent in a London hotel with a plaque on the outside wall noting Edward Lear had lived there. Like Lewis Carroll, he was well known for his nonsense verse, most famously "The Owl and the Pussy Cat." Wrong Lear, Gazzal!

Nevertheless, this is a thorough examination of a strange rumour. No other pop star has received the dubious accolade of a death rumour, though as Penny Stallings commented so astutely once -- "all dead rock stars are alive, and all live rock stars are dead." (Status Quo take note).

The (rock) bottom line must be that Patterson has amassed mountains of evidence that supports the "Paul is dead" rumour, but even so it does not prove his conclusions.

ODDS, SODS AND RACING CERTS by Graham Sharpe (Robson Books, £8.99)

Twenty-odd years ago, staying in Leeds, I placed a 3p yankee in an unfamiliar bookies. All four came up, including the last race's outside Lynwood Sovereign at 33/1. When I went in to collect my winnings (£76), all the staff clapped in unison.

That said, it's a mug's game for punters, but the turf has plenty else to offer -- fun and spectacle. Written with wit, this compendium of offbeat trivia has appeal beyond those addicted to the Sport of Kings. Here are tales about the jockeys, trainers, tipsters and bookies; facts galore; wisdom and vulgarity; the quotes full of mirth, ones best forgotten and a selection you'll never hear spoken.

Superstitions are, of course, a key element of folklife and former England Rugby Union star Stuart Barnes says: "If I put a proper bet down I'll put a copy of the Racing Post under my left foot and stand on it during the race. Most of the time it never works, but the odd winner has made it a habit with me." One trainer wears the same pair of old lucky boxer shorts when a particular horse runs.

Then there's the tale of a co-owner who pulled off some of his chest hairs, sent them to a faith healer "and the horse hasn't looked back since." Reminiscent of an X Files script, a trainer died from the same virus which claimed 12 of his horses, while a jockey was pronounced dead before sitting up in the morgue after a shot of adrenalin.

A paranormal experience is described by Jenny Pitman, revealing an OOBIE after Corbiere won the 1983 Grand National -- "What I do remember is David Coleman interviewing me and me having the strangest feeling that I was looking down on myself, watching the whole conversation."

Folklorists will doubtless wonder if Shergar is included and here is a chronology of the conspiracies, hoaxing and downright foolishness following his abduction. That he's dead is a racing cert.

THE WEEKEND SHAMAN AND OTHER NEW AGE TYPES by GERRY MAGUIRE (Thorsons, £5.99)

I turned first to The Layline (sic) Hunter, only to be doubly insulted in that this hybrid character has the burning passion of the trainpotter. Other aspects I share, such as, conspiracy theory, X files, ufology and feng shui are studiously stereotyped and trashed,



along with malebonding, acupuncture, aromatherapy and such impossibilities as sham vegetarianism and weekends-only shamanism.

A delightful pisstake of personal transformation along the lines of Private Eye's Great Bores series, with illustrations by Anne Ward. For Christmas, buy one for yourself and another for your favourite New Age pseud friend.

HOLY PLACES OF CELTIC BRITAIN by MICK SHARP (Blandford, price unknown)

Just when you thought the Celtic boom must disintegrate, along comes a book worth most of the previous froth put together.

All pictures are thankfully mostly in colour and taken with exceeding acumen, full of light and shade, atmosphere reflective the site and a true enchantment. Locations can be brooding, elevating or disarmingly ordinary.

The text is concise and knowledgable.

Sharp has divided his portfolio into four sections: pagan Celts; Romano-Celtic Britain; era of saints, and the case for continuity and revival. In addition to the individual descriptions, each section has an introduction and the book begins with a preface putting his subject in context.

Sharp readily acknowledges current divergences of opinion of who and what were the Celts, opting sensibly enough for "a reasonably liberal interpretation" of the term.

Pictures and descriptions which particularly caught my eye and fancy:

* Swastika Stones. I've visited most ancient sites around Ilkley and thought one day I'd die of hypothermia after seeing this until reaching the log fire salvation in the Cow and Calf pub.

* Castell Henllys. This Dyfed shrine now has sinister-looking wooden image as guardian: note the robin sat on one of the stag horns.

* Munlochry Well. Grotesque, disturbing and distressing (children's and babies' clothes among socks, towels, shirts, trainers and anorak).

Thousands of knotted rags where some people collect the water in receptacles while others on the A832 point video cameras out of car windows and drive on.

* Cerne Giant. Hill figures age hold a fascination for me (my column in The Ley Hunter going under the Long Man of Wilmington name).

* The House of the Old Man. A few years ago my wife and I spent a week at Killin, near Glen Lyon. This is a site regarded as particularly sacred by scholar Anne Ross and others who have visited it to see the collection of strange "family" of stones.

* Glastonbury Tor. Where tents in the orchard are checked to see if everyone has survived -- er, cold or drugs? Simply magical!

So is this book.

THE SACRED WORLD OF THE CELTS by NIGEL PENNICK (Thorsons, £15.99)

With such a plethora of Celtic (too often pseudo-Celtic crap) literature to choose from, it is refreshing to find here a sane and balanced exposition.

There are none of the awful modern paintings blurbed as superb, nor the irritating design concept of using Celtic-style knotwork wherever possible. Illustrations from the past add a better dimension, along with colour photographs of key sacred sites.

Pennick describes how the Celtic tradition has developed over the centuries, from central European origins to a living heritage. Their culture is fully described, though society and lifestyle, arts and crafts, to mythology and folklore. The book also considers continuity and its relevance to the new millennium without New Age rose-tinted glasses.

Informative and truly superbly illustrated.

THE CELTIC CROSS by NIGEL PENNICK (Blandford, £16.99)

AS someone personally involved in the Mexham Heads saga, I feel something of an affinity with Celtic culture. Also, as reported in this illustra-



ted history and celebration of Celtic artwork, being a Hartlepudlian I'm well aware of our local "pillow stones" from the 7th or 8th century. I have also visited sites in Scotland with Pictish symbol stones.

When not hacking off enemies' heads, the Celts practised an artistic tradition which is well detailed here in words, photographs and Pennick's own artistic style. The Celtic cross well deserves this book all on its own and Pennick writes authoritatively as one would expect from an expert on northern European sacred traditions. Gazetteer included.

GLASTONBURY: MAKER OF MYTHS by Frances Howard-Gordon
(Gothic Image, £8.95. \$14.95)

Just when you thought the ley hunting elite had buried Watkinsian leys and earth power concepts, along comes an avid supporter of the Earth's "nervous system made up of underground rivers, veins of ore and streams of terrestrial current" and a sophisticated prehistoric science of magnetism. Well, this is an update of an 1982 book, but it still retains a hippy "The View of Atlantis" aura.

The Gothic Image bookshop co-owner's updating acknowledges John Michell's "New Light on the Ancient Mystery of Glastonbury" with its revelation of the constellation of island sanctuaries associated with King Arthur. An earlier case of geomantic suggestion, Katherine Maltwood's proposal of a terrestrial zodiac in the landscape is endorsed.

The author looks at all the elements of sacred Glastonbury, including the Abbey, Chalice Well, Joseph of Arimathea and Jesus Christ, the Tor, Gog and Magog oaks, churches, ancient festivals and Pilton pop event.

Illustrated in colour and black and white, this is a user friendly simple guide to a place I certainly hold dear.

FOGOU: A JOURNEY INTO THE UNDERWORLD (Gothic Image, £8.95)

The nearest we have to a fogou in our garden is a rather impressive burrow constructed by Artur (as In Daley), our dwarf Dutch. I am envious of Jo May having his own Iron Age cave. In Cornwall, Paul & Charla Devereux took me to a fogou near May's and I have been in a couple of Aberdeenshire souterrains. I also may have identified a denehole a few miles from my home.

Television's Time Team took May's seriously enough to conclude after excavations that "there was a lot more to these structures than could be explained by conventional archaeology." Spiritual development training and workshops are held at the centre, with the fogou used for ceremonies and vision questing.

May's inclusion of some chapters written as fiction -- in particular a lurid, graphic rape by the Devil -- may seem to demean the first-class research and human potential aspect, but they reminded me pleasingly of Alan Garner's instructive novel Red Shift.

A book full of energy -- in more ways than one.

WHO WROTE SHAKESPEARE? by John Michell (Thames & Hudson, £16.95)

That even the ill-educated are aware that there is an Authorship problem proves there is a real mystery. Some even become obsessed with it and see a mixture of detective thriller and conspiracy scam.

Michell, as far as I can tell, scrupulously fair in giving his own version of the cases for the contenders and quoting the best of respective advocates. Then just as you suspect his monumental act of scholarship will fizzle out into compromise, he gives his considered and credible opinion.

Shakespeare of Stratford was a jobbing dramatist whose commissions would certainly have involved revision, addition and plagiarism. But this was not a case of protean genius creating a universal and timeless canon single-handedly, for Michell argues there was a true collaborative effort of great and like minds on a grand scale. It was also done in



secrecy, for Francis Bacon was using drama under the blanket name Shakespeare to spread the revolutionary spirit of the age through such a transformational medium. Bacon and others' idealism subtly changed society and the collective genius harnessed in the plays has sent a philosophy echoing forward, recognisable by all races at all times.

What a performance -- take a bow, John.

SHAMANIC ROUND-UP

Seven loosely similar books come under scrutiny here. Firstly the heaviest in weight is Shadowcatchers by Steve Wall (HarperCollins, £20), a journalistic odyssey in search of the essence of Native American spirituality which leads to a personal transformation. From the same stable (HarperCollins, £18) is Crow Dog by medicine man Leonard Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes, a narrative saga about a Native American clan which sweeps across two centuries, ending with a spiritual and political presence.

Out of Africa comes Of Water and the Spirit, the story of Malidona Patrice Some (Arkana, £9.99), whose worldview sees no distinction between natural and the supernatural and who explains his journey to find his true spiritual roots after a 15-year Jesuit upbringing. Next the spirit journey is into aboriginal Australia and your guide in Dreamkeepers is Harvey Arden, who fleshes out the visionary belief system of the custodians of the oldest culture on Earth (HarperCollins, £10.99). From the rainforest of Belize, Rosita Arugio brings the knowledge of one of the last surviving and most respected traditional Mayan healers in Sastun (HarperCollins, £8.99). I'm afraid Lynn V. Andrews gets up my nose and Woman at the Edge of Two Worlds is her evaluation of how the menopause need not be so bad (HarperCollins, £8.99).

Far more intriguing and believable is The Dream-Hunters of Corsica, an investigation by expatriate Dorothy Carrington into the mazzeri, who it seems have the power of bilocation, going out hunting in a trance state -- seen walking abroad at night while families swear the person was asleep in bed. The hunted animal would reveal the face of a living neighbour who if struck would receive an injury in the same quarter and if killed would die between three days and a year, always on an odd day. Hence the mazzeri represent an archaic shamanism having privileged access to a parallel world, this in the European Community of the late '90s. The author's grasp of the occult and sympathy for a living, supernatural tradition have created an erudite and entertaining account of what might have otherwise been consigned to a simply folkloric category or seen as superstitious piffle (Phoenix, £6.99)

IN BRIEF

Basically because I simply don't believe in crashed/captured alien spacecraft, I have only just now skimmed the 1995 UFO Retrievals by Jenny Randles (Blandford Press, £8.99). However, it does retell the Silpho Moor mini-saucer case, a personal favourite. Maybe it is displayed in an east Yorkshire "chippe": I've also heard it was melted down for scrap metal and that it resides in a solicitor's safe. Timely, tome, however.

Another in the best of Stonehenge Viewpoint series is King Arthur's Cave by Donald L Cyr and James S Brett, where the mythic monarch is recast as a little-known sun king of prehistory. Various Arthurian locations are discussed within a framework of halo crystal geometry (£7 postpaid from Stonehenge Viewpoint, 2261 Las Positas Road, Santa Barbara, CA, 93105-4116).

Arthurian expert Mike Dixon-Kennedy examines in Heroes of the Round Table the full complement of King Arthur's knights and profiles 16 major heroes, including Arthur himself and Merlin. Set in their historical and cultural context, the major themes of Arthuriana are seen mirrored in qualities portrayed by modern heroes in our own media. Chris Down provides colour portraits of the chief heroes (Cassell, £18.99).

I enthused both in FF and Magonia about Daimonic Reality, where Patrick Harpur offers several models to explain the diverse elements lumped as paranormal, creating a unity whilst claiming ambiguity. Good to see it in paperback -- and sensible change of subtitle from A Field Guide to the Otherworld to Understanding Otherworld Encounters. Brilliant (Arkana, £8.99). Another worthy reprint in soft cover is that sumptuous offering by Paul Devereux, Secrets of Ancient and Sacred Places, human structures and natural landscapes in splendid colour photos with authoritative text. Sites selected primarily reflect World Heritage List archaeological edifices (Blandford Press, £11.99).

And yet more Celtic culture. If Mike Dixon-Kennedy is so good a compiler, why is there no reference to the Hexham Heads in Celtic Myth & Legend: An A-Z of People and Places, a humourless text on a rather barbaric people (Blandford, £9.99). That is, apart from their artwork, explored in How to Draw Celtic Key Patterns, where Andy Sloss uses computer art techniques to produce diagrams for artists, designers, craftspeople and stitchcraft enthusiasts (Blandford, £10.99) and Celtic Ornament: Art and the Scribe, with its reinterpreted ornamentation by Courtney Davis of famous manuscripts and gospels to decorated brooches, fine metalwork and craftsmanship (Blandford, £9.99).

On a different note, The Little Book of Calm by Paul Wilson has spent a year on the bestsellers' list, currently top 10, and book is full of snippets of advice, from attitude change to herbal remedies (Penguin, £1.99).

(Continued from Page 2 -- courtesy of Donald L Cyr in California)

The five golden rings have been put on hold by the Board of Directors. Maintaining a portfolio based on one commodity could have negative implications for institutional investors.

The six geese-a-laying constitute a luxury which can no longer be afforded. It has long been felt that the production rate of one egg per goose per day is an example of the decline in productivity. Three geese will be let go. An upgrading in the selection procedure by personnel will assure management that from now on every goose it gets will be a good one.

The seven swans-a-swimming is obviously a number chosen in better times. Their function is primarily decorative. Mechanical swans are in order. As is known, the eight maids-a-milking concept has been under heavy scrutiny by the EEOC. A male/female balance in the work force is being sought. The more militant maids consider this a dead end job with no upward mobility. Automation of the process may permit the maids to try a-mending.

Nine ladies dancing has always been an odd number. This function will be phased out as these individuals grow older and can no longer do the steps. Ten lords-a-leaping is overkill. The high cost of lords plus the expense of international air travel prompted the compensation committee to suggest replacing this group will ten out-of-work congressman. The savings are significant because we have seen an oversupply of unemployed congressmen this year.

Eleven pipes piping and twelve drummers drumming is a simple case of the band getting too big. A substitution with a string quartet is planned. Action is pending regarding the lawsuit filed by the Attorney's Association seeking expansion to include the legal profession (thirteen lawyers-a-swing).

Lastly, if deeper cuts are necessary in the future, the Snow White Division will be looked at to see if seven dwarfs is the right number.