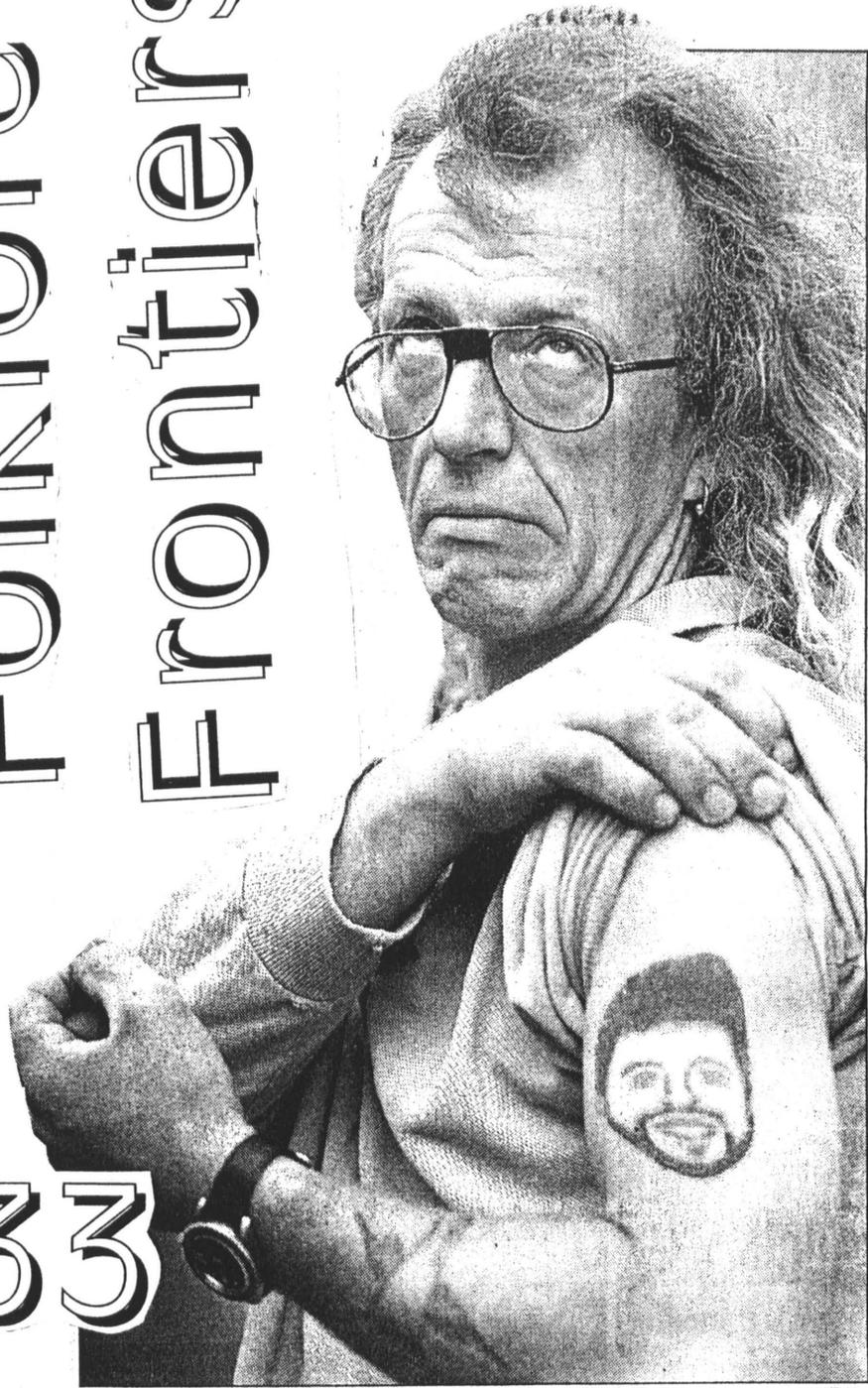


# Folklore Frontiers

33



# Folklore Frontiers 33

September 1998

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS is an independent magazine covering various aspects of folklore, particularly urban belief tales and contemporary culture. It is edited and published by Paul Screeton, to whom cheques should be made out (NOT the magazine). Address is 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT. Subscription for 4 issues is £6; US \$14 in dollar bills. If subscription expires an X will appear below:

## \*\*\*\*\* The Diary

Welcome to FF33. My "Wrong Animal Rights piece seems to have unearthed a new motif of urban lore, the officialdom and fanatics mistakenly outraged over alleged animal abuse. See also side cutting, plus "Angry women stormed a Melbourne shop advertising 'Chastity Belts for Bitches.' Owner Charles Bryant explained the belts were for female dogs." (D. Star, 16/8.96).

Rory Lushman debuts in FF with a piece on a Box Tunnel investigation. This has become a bizarre cause celebre in UFO circles. I have checked back into this odd business and found the following quote about Box: "There are 4 sets of points inside the tunnel, leading through steel gates into the interior of the hill." (Undercurrents, No. 8, 1974). The bunker is also discussed in Network News No. 9, 1995. Anyone else out there got any opinions?

The e-mail satire under the siliconlore label was sent by Mike White. Photocopylore has been overtaken by hi-tech and he wonders how we should describe it: e-maillore or weblore seem tame. As we're a carbon-based lifeform, computers seem the next nearest chemical type and taking us over, so siliconlore seems appropriate.

John Tait looks back at the World Cup and as his piece arrived, a claim was made (The Sport, 30/7/98) that an Orange Order Ulster defence Force hitman had been hired by Vesh Ham and Man City thugs to assassinate Beckham.

In Update we return to aural simulacra. Steve Snayd says there's a detailed discussion of what he calls "auditory stabilisation" and experiments of Dr Chris Evans at the National Physical Laboratory in Brian Aldiss' "The Shape of Future Things" (Faber, 1970; Corgi, 1974).

Saturday, February 21, 1998 *The Journal*

## A dip to remember

PETER Mandelson will probably never live down the story that he once mistook mushy peas for avocado dip in a Hartlepool chippy.

The hoary old chestnut was trotted out yet again this week as MPs quizzed Mandy about the content of the Millennium Dome.

"I hope that, as a fellow Northern MP, the minister will try to ensure there is a substantial measure of regional content in the experience - something beyond fish and chips and

avocado mousse," quipped the Humberside MP Austin Mitchell.

Whether true or not, it's a tale that will stay with the Hartlepool MP to the grave.

Less well-known, but in a similar vein, is the story of Tony Blair's tour of miners' welfare clubs when seeking the Sedgefield nomination in 1983.

Advising the future Prime Minister to order a pint in every bar, his minder added: "And whatever you do, don't order any bloody Perrier Water."

## Bra game fury over cruelty to maggots

ANIMAL lovers are calling on a pub boss to end his wacky games nights because of cruelty to MAGGOTS.

Regulars take part in Japanese Endurance-style fun contests including eating red-hot chillis, sniffing dirty nappies and having their nipples clamped.

But when girls had live maggots poured into their bras, a party of drinkers began to protest.

### Happy

Mark Peters, 37, who organises the fun at the Bull in Pitsea, Essex, said: "Most pub-goers love to see the games.

"It's ridiculous that we should get a complaint from a few animal rights nutters.

"If I was a maggot I'd love to be shoved down a young girl's bra - at least I'd die happy."

## Marilyn myth

SIR - It is interesting that Dr Des Dawson, "an acknowledged expert on eating disorders", should repeat the myth that Marilyn Monroe was "at least a size 16" (report, Nov. 28).

A person who should know, her dress designer and sometime lover Billy Travilla, said that her true figure was 35-22-35. Is it not obvious to the eye - it certainly is to mine - that the Monroe figure is not "in common with nearly half the present female population"?

STEPHEN DORRIL  
Netherthong, W. Yorks

D. Telegraph, 29/11/97

By Paul Screeton

Whether it's the French force-feeding geese for pate de foie gras, Britain exporting cramped calves for veal consumption or Koreans breeding dogs for the dinner table, each nation of supposed humanitarians has a black side.

If we are such animal lovers, why is it we read daily in newspapers of hedgehogs used as footballs, prosecutions over emaciated dogs or more sinisterly spates of mutilations which take on mythic proportions? I have a small wager on the Grand National and wear a t-shirt of the Sun's front page proclaiming "Freddie Starr ate my hamster." Neither makes me a suspect for cattle castration, I hope.

But there are stories in the Press where animal rights supporters let their beliefs and imaginations get way out of proportion. Even if many of these are true and reflect rightful concerns, the element of misidentification puts a folkloric hue on the event. Some, of course, have all the ambience of an urban belief tale. Why three New Zealand tales in my files; why so many parrots in central role?

The first story is outlandish indeed, and having a Taiwanese origin suggests acceptance of factuality would hinge on Westerners' regard for anything originating there to be cheap and tawdry but believable.

Allegedly, Taiwanese pet shop owner Kim Boo Yuk had been selling miniature dinosaurs after placing adverts in a newspaper claiming that by using "Jurassic Park technology" he had bred a selection of "prehistoric pygmy monsters" which were for sale. Business boomed with more than 200 transactions during the first week, including 86 tyrannosaurus rexes, 60 pterodactyls and one man-eating mollusc. One woman said: "My husband gave me a stegosaurus for our anniversary. I cried with joy." Mr Boo Suk's entrepreneurial scheme seemed assured until the dwarf carnivores displayed a predilection for sunflower seeds in preference to raw meat. They were then unmasked as gerbils concealed within India-rubber dinosaur outfits. One conned customer complained: "I knew something was wrong when I noticed my velociraptor had whiskers." (The Big Issue, No. 200, 1996)

In similar fashion, a dozen customers tried to place orders when a pet shop in Coulsdon, Surrey, put up a spoof advertisement for baby tyrannosaurus rexes. (Daily Star, 8/10/93)

Also cashing in on "Jurassic Park" interest, in Southampton, restaurant boss Nigel Bruce advertised "dinosaur steaks" and youngsters mounted a protest with placards and police were called. Methinks an enterprising newsagency was at work. (Daily Star, 29/7/93)

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

Still in antediluvian days, Sid Allen upset customers with his "woolly mammoth" burgers. The Bournemouth butcher was cashing in after fossilised remains of an elephant were found a few miles away. The brief filler described them as "Jurassic" but Pleistocene era would be more accurate. Anyway, as usual "a woman said she'd report me for selling meat from an endangered species." (The Sport, 5/9/96)

Still in Bournemouth, circuses are particularly prone to animal rights activity and protesters blew their big tops when they saw a poster of a gorilla advertising a circus. However, they failed to realise that the giant ape was pantomime actor Gus Rawlings in a monkey suit. (Sunday Sport, 13/8/95)

Similarly, animal rights campaigners called off a demo over a "dancing bear" at a fair in Bromley, Kent, when they found it was a man in a furry suit. (Sun, 23/3/93)

Another entertainer in trouble was wacky Merlin Cadogan berated by fanatics for juggling tortoises. The Barnstaple Devonian, however, uses lifelike concrete ones from a garden centre. He said: "I love animals but now I'm the target for abuse from animal rights people who smash my windows." (The Sport, 6/8/97)

Earlier, RSPCA inspectors raided the Aquarius Centre nightclub at Windermere, Cumbria, over a poster promising snake racing. The manager had to explain that Racing Snakes was a rock band. Less easy to understand was why the same newspaper published the story, almost identically, twice. (Daily Star, 17 and 23/5/94)

Remaining with revellers, a new pub game in which frozen chickens were bowled at a set of skittles was roasted by animal welfare groups. The game, called "chook chucking" was launched at the Fat Ladies' Arms in Wellington, New Zealand. It required some skill. "These chickens are pretty hard to aim, and it's really cold on your hands," said one plucky chucker. But the RSPCA -- it says here, though this New Zealand -- said throwing corpses around showed contempt for animal life. Groups working to feed the poor said it was a waste of food, but a member of the pub staff said that they only used chickens that were unfit for consumption. (Daily Express, 3/7/96)

More activists, but in Romania, were demanding that werewolves be put on the endangered species list, making it an offence to kill them. They insisted on pushing ahead with the plans even though it had been pointed out that werewolves don't exist. (The Sport, 24/4/98)

Cars are a major focus of legend and here are two cases central to my theme. An angry crowd called an animal cruelty inspector when they spotted a corgi in a locked car near Auckland, New Zealand, on a scorching hot day. He had to break into the vehicle to prove it was stuffed. The car's woman owner had pet Sash to a taxidermist "to keep her forever." (Sun, 1/10/93) Also in New Zealand, animal lovers broke into a car in Whangarei to rescue a dog locked in the back seat. It was also a stuffed dog kept to deter thieves. (Daily Telegraph, 9/9/93)

Another item was published as if a TV stunt had gone wrong, but I guess the reaction was exactly what was sought and expected. A team from cult show "Surf Potatoes" set up a bogus market stall selling "parrot pies" for £1.75 each. Not unexpectedly, a naive pet lover complained to the local council in Caerphilly, South Wales. Angry customers told how the show's Graham Childs claimed the pies were made out of parrot braast, bacon, onions, apples and leeks -- with a guaranteed 30 per cent parrot content. UK Parrot Society secretary David Coomes blasted: "Parrots are for beauty and friendship. This was a sick joke." (Daily Sport, 3/6/94)

One man, nevertheless, could be said to be sick as a parrot. In a fraud to match the earlier bonsai dinosaurs, an Australian was imprisoned for spray-painting common parrots and passing them off as valuable rare ones. (The Big Issue, No. 200, 1996)

Scottish Insp Brian Cowing, of the RSPCA, felt a right bird-brain

when he realised the complaint he was investigating at Perth market was a "prize every time" slot machine mechanical furry green and blue parrot. "The complaint was genuine," he claimed, "but you'd have to be very shortsighted to mistake it for a real bird when it's got an electric cable up its backside." (Daily Star, 9/8/93)

Another case of mistaken identity had pub landlady Jacqui Philips accused of cruelty -- to a plastic fish. She bought Fillet, a yellow and black angel fish in a tiny replica porthole, to give regulars a laugh. However, a woman tippler flipped when she saw battery-operated Fillet and thought it was a real goldfish. Insp Janet Harvey arrived at the Anchor Inn, Thornbury, near Bristol, and snapped: "I want to talk to you about how you're treating your goldfish." It ended with a gulp and laughter. (Daily Star, 9/3/94)

But is there again journalistic mischief; perhaps as earlier a freelance concocting a story to sell? The next tale began as a hoax, but as you'll see those animal lovers got fooled again. There was disappointment for randy punters when they turned up for the opening of the Sleazy Club Bonk in Liverpool. A review in the city's "L. Scene" magazine which had promised dirty dancing, wank parlours and Gladiator-style "cock fights", was a wind-up, and the clubbers tempted to the Old Post Office in Victoria Street took their frustrations out with animal rights activists. They'd arrived because the article said there'd be a caged panther suspended over the dance floor. "It was bloody obvious it was a hoax," sighed a magazine spokesman. (Daily Sport, 11/4/94)

Lastly, a non-cruel tale, included to underline human gullibility and to suggest we have here yet another urban myth in the making. When a pet shop owner placed a large tank of water and a sign displaying "invisible Malayan ghost fish" in his window, a large crowd gathered outside to watch. John Fletcher, who runs the New York store, answered questions by saying the fish only became visible at night in the dark. Bubbles helped convince spectators the fish were there and more than 300 people insisted they'd spotted them. Then, after a week, Fletcher admitted it was a hoax and the tank contained only water. (The Sport, 26/5/98)

Rather like the ornithologists who mistook a cowpat for a nightjar and wooden duck for a rare species, believing they had seen both move, but that's another motif.

## Man believed aliens were after him

**A MAN stabbed himself in the heart while believing he was being targeted by aliens, an inquest heard yesterday.**

Former miner Patrick Cleaves complained to police that he was suffering from chest pains which he blamed on an alien laser beam being shone on him.

## UFO yourself

Summing up the inquest, deputy North Durham coroner Brenda Davidson said she did not believe that Mr Cleaves had wanted to harm himself and recorded a verdict of accidental death.

And, although an officer then tried to reassure him, he is believed to have later stabbed himself once with a kitchen knife to remove the pain.

Mr Cleaves, a divorced father-of-four, died in the early hours of June 24 at his home in Yoden Road, Peterlee.

His friend James Haswell, who was staying with Mr Cleaves at the time, called for an ambulance when the 58-year-old collapsed.

He told yesterday's inquest at Durham's County Hall that Mr Cleaves had visited the upstairs toilet before settling down to watch a film.

"All of a sudden he started groaning. I thought he had collapsed, not knowing what he had done at the time," said Mr Haswell.

He also told the inquest how Mr Cleaves had not been his normal self in the days before his death and that he was convinced he was being watched.

Mr Cleaves even rang the police to report his fears and was visited at home by PC Sandra Forsyth on June 22.

She told the inquest that Mr Cleaves was convinced that alien beams were coming into his home and turning his TV and video on and off.

"He kept pointing to his chest, saying the beams were burning into his chest," added PC Forsyth.

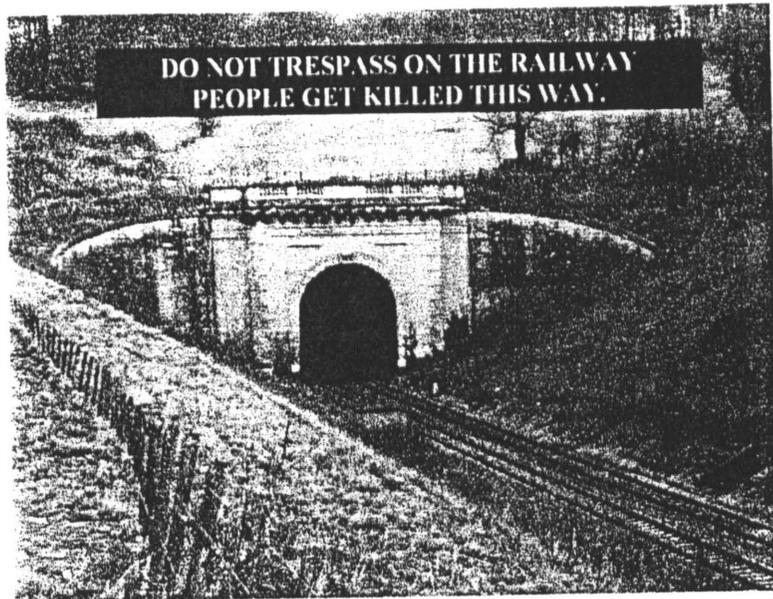
She later discovered that Mr Cleaves' fatal stab wound was in exactly the same place on his chest where he had been pointing.

Home Office pathologist Dr James Sumter revealed that a slender kitchen knife found at the top of the stairs may have been used to inflict the injury.

A post mortem examination found there was no evidence of any other injuries apart from the stab wound to the chest.

Police launched a murder-style investigation after the death of Mr Cleaves although it was scaled down after lengthy inquiries.

Detective Superintendent Tom Ryan, who led the inquiry, told the inquest: "I found nothing to suggest that anything untoward had happened of a violent nature by any third party to Mr Cleaves."



## THE BOX HILL TUNNEL, AN ANORAKS PARADISE OR A PASSAGE TO NARNIA. BY RORY LUSHMAN.

The box hill tunnel is situated on the Great Western region of our ever decreasing rail network. This tunnel can be found in Wiltshire, a county that many ufologists head for in the summer months in their quest for a fix and that fix being - crop circles. Many would claim that Wiltshire is the focal point for ufo activity in the UK. The Wiltshire soup consists of, ancient sites, military bases and "unusual events", all mixed together to form one mighty weird county or so we are led to believe by the ufo paranoia sweeping the county.

Now, how could a railway tunnel be caught up in all this weirdness. The Box Hill Tunnel is 1 mile, 1452 yards long and is situated on the Chippenham to Bath line. Matthew Williams has been looking into this tunnel, its dark. I have emailed Matthew a few times and some of his comments have helped me. I would like to thank Matthew for putting up with my questions. Matthew told me that there is a secret tunnel that goes to Rudloe Manor from within the Box Tunnel.

Now let's assume just for the minute that there was a tunnel within the tunnel. How would access be gained off the main line. It would take a set of points to steer the offending train into said tunnel. Speculation has it that the "secret" entrance is accessed from the London side or Thingley Junction side of the tunnel. If a train was approaching from the London end, it would need to cross over onto the adjacent line and then come off at the points. Trains drive on the left, just as we do on the roads,

there are exceptions to this but the left side rule is the norm. So given that the train approaches on the left line as you look at the tunnel, it would traverse a set of points, then leave into the secret tunnel via another set of points. Now, what happens when the train leaves the location. Basically it can only go out the way it came in, back towards London. If it was required to go in the direction of Bath, it would either have to reverse out of the tunnel, then traverse another set of points to enable it to get back on the left track or the locomotive would have to run around its train to get it at the right end.

If the locomotive had to run around its train, where would it do this? It could pull the train out of the tunnel and at a suitable set of points run around to the other end of the train. Now this practise is quite common in certain parts of the country, especially when shunting freight trains. If all the above was true, surely someone would have spotted these unique movements within the area. You have to remember that there are high speed trains passing all the time and all this shunting can only hold up procedures. Mind you, is it done in the middle of the night? I doubt it.

If the tunnel entrance was accessed from the Bath side, the same manoeuvring problems would have to be overcome. If there was a secret tunnel, what would be sent into there, is it still used and if its disused, why has it been abandoned. Probably questions we will never get an answer to.

As rumours spread in ufology, they also spread in all other walks of life. Railways certainly have their share of rumours. If you speak to any rail employees, especially Great Western division employees, many will tell you that there is a secret tunnel within the Box Hill Tunnel. Is it a hiding hole for ufo's or is it a secret place into which we can find out more about ufo's. Matthew Williams says that ufo reports are sent to Rudloe Manor, is the secret tunnel of any significance or is it just a tale handed down from generation to generation to add a bit of sparkle to otherwise bored employees.

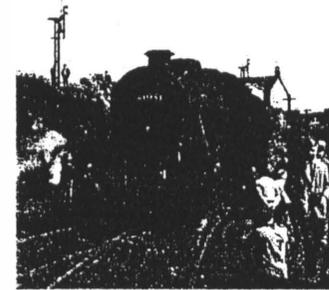


Figure 1. The class 8f, allegedly a disappearing engine. This picture shows a derailed class 8f at Rosegrove, Burnley.

The railmen have their own version of the Holy Grail and its certainly not ufo's. So what could be down in the tunnels that would get railmen whispering in corners. Well anoraks and gricers of the world unite and prepare to besiege the Box Hill Tunnel, for there in that dank, dark hole, lies the STRATEGIC RESERVE. The strategic what!

The Strategic Reserve is an oubliette for old steam engines from bygone days. Train crews recount tales of locomotives going missing without a trace. When a locomotive is scrapped, as with a car, this is meant to be recorded. Rail employees tell stories of locomotives disappearing, supposedly scrapped but when they visit the site of the carnage, no trace can be found. Many of the steam locomotives of the class 8 and 9f's supposedly vanished into the Twilight Zone.

Although rail crews will tell you its mainly locomotives that went missing, many types of other equipment are in store. Things like jeeps, weapons all have encountered the phantom scrapman. So what is the purpose of the Strategic Reserve? There are a number of reasons for having a strategic reserve. The main reason put forward is the oil crisis back in the 70's. Much of the worlds oil is found in Arabic countries and if there was a fall out with these people oil would run short, hence the use of steam trains, as we have plenty of coal stockpiled.

More sinister is the thought that steam engines would not be affected by the blast from a nuclear strike. This is probably bordering on paranoia. It would make sense to hold back equipment in case on an emergency but steam engines, bah humbug.

Rail staff say there are many locations up and down the country where locomotives are kept. We do not hear rumours of masses of diesels being stored away. In the late 80's and early 90's, many classes of diesel went to the wall. This theory would lend itself well to the oil crisis scenario.

Many of the rail crews suggest that not only is the Box Tunnel an anoraks paradise but it is the place where the top brass would assemble in the event of a nuclear war. Rumours are rife that there is a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile long platform along with an underground marshalling yard within this secret complex. They also suggest that the facility has room for over 4000 people and I'm sure the likes of you and me will not be on that list. They also suggest that this location has been chosen because its so far underground and its very near to other military locations, with quick access to runways etc.

If steam trains were being kept how would they prevent rust from spreading within the boiler. If you filled the boiler with deoxygenated water, this would prevent rust. The temperature within a tunnel is constant, whatever time of year it is. Obviously the portal ends would fluctuate with the outside temperature but deep in a sealed tunnel, the temperature would not fluctuate.

Now the problem comes, when you want to fire up the boilers on the steam engines. In an underground facility, where would this be carried out, as the soot, smoke and steam would create an unbearable atmosphere. They would have to be readied in an open environment, heaven for the anoraks. In an emergency and at short notice, steam engines would not be very practical as they take up to 8-9 hours to get up to steam.

*"Err General, we've just had a nuclear strike and all the diesels have failed, we need to move some equipment fast."*

*"Can you come back in 10 hours time please, when the kettle has boiled."*

Steam locomotives may be useful only after a nuclear strike for moving stuff but they are not instantly ready and not very practical or realistic.

If you go through the Box Tunnel and head towards Bath, you come across another tunnel, called Middle Hill. On the downside of the line (tracks moving away from London) on the Bath side of the tunnel, there are some disused platforms near the location of Shockerwick. At the end of the platform there are some stairs to an

underground passage. It takes a sharp left and climbs up the hill. This was probably an old tunnel left over from the war. Could people from both ufology and the rail network be confusing the tunnel at Shockerwick for the tunnel at Box Hill.

It is very easy to get wires crossed and maybe the rumours of tunnels have got mixed up. People who like a good mystery could associate a rumour of a secret tunnel with the Box tunnel. The Box Tunnel is well known but the Middle Hill tunnel is not. Could someone have visited the tunnels at Shockerwick and spread the word. People not in the know may have associated the tunnel to Box rather than Middle Hill, as it is known to many people.

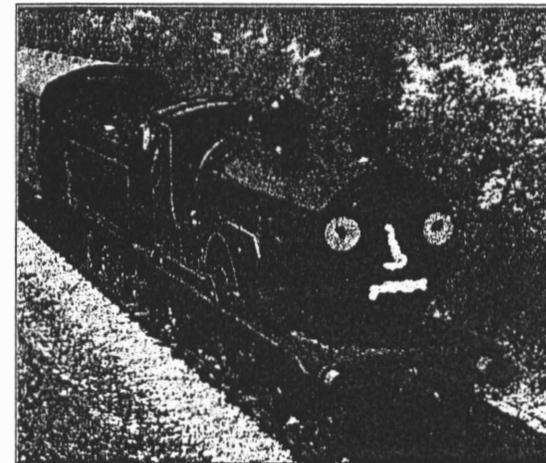


Figure 2

MEANWHILE ON THE ISLAND OF SODOR, BRIAN THE BLACK, UNMARKED ENGINE WAS GOING TO DO HIS OWN CATTLE MUTILATION - AT THE NEXT LEVEL CROSSING.

that locomotives have gone missing, including some of the famous Blue Pullman units, all of which were meant to have been scrapped. Again speculation says that one unit was converted to a strategic mobile unit and painted black.

There are reports of steam locomotives being painted in all black, with their numbers and any identification marks removed. We had black helicopters, now we have black trains. Helicopters can fly out of sight but trains can only go where the rails take them, so I think this one is a red herring and complete bull manure.

So here is my recipe for a good mystery soup:-

#### Wiltshire Soup

Find one county with military bases in it.

Stir in a  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb of Rudloe bullshit.

Put a sprinkling of ufo rumours in.

Add 60 steam locomotives.

People then could assume that the tunnel being secret could lead to Rudloe. Its very easy to get involved in this game of Chinese whispers. The whole sorry tale is a mish mash of rumours and speculation.

I think the whole thing is what you want it to be. Ufologists want it to be a place where there is a great ufo cover up. Rail enthusiasts want it to be their own version of the X-Files. Many rail employees claim

Put in a dark tunnel for a few years.

Bring it out into the daylight.

Bring it to the boil and serve to gullible people up and down the country with a slice of conspiracy bread.

Top with unsubstantiated rumours and tales.

ENJOY.

Another reliable source told me (well I think he was reliable, everyone else gets away without proving their sources) that there is a tunnel entrance into Rudloe but it is not accessed from within the tunnel but from a portal on the Chippenham side. This portal is meant to be outside where everyone can see it, although locked up. So now we have three possible sites. The Box Hill Tunnel, Shockerwick and now a portal on the up line of the line to Chippenham. My contact says that the portal is only wide enough for one track and all the rails to it have been lifted. If you look at the portal on the Chippenham side of the tunnel, then look to the right at about 200 yards before Box, there is a disused cutting which takes you to the portal. We will be visiting the site shortly.

My contact worked on the Signalling and Telecomms side of the rail network. He has walked through the Box Hill Tunnel on three occasions and not once did he see a portal into any "secret base". He tells me that there could not be points inside the tunnel as the signal protecting it is an automatic one. An automatic signal, changes to red as soon as a train passes it, so that no other train smashes into the back of it. Once the train passes the next signal, the tunnel signal would go to orange or double orange. Double orange is preliminary caution i.e. the next signal is a single orange, which is caution and so the final signal will be red: danger.

Automatic signals allow for faster running trains, eliminating the signal box - in this case controlled from Bristol Temple Meads - interfering with the operation. The signal box can override an automatic signal. You following this. Any section of track that has a junction ahead of it, would not have an automatic signal before it. The rule approaching an automatic signal is that if the light remains red, you may after two minutes approach the next section very cautiously. This would only apply if the section ahead was a segment without a junction before the next signal. If there was a junction ahead, this could have disastrous consequences if the two minute rule applied. Any train moving towards a junction without authorisation runs the risk of crashing into another, or having the points set against it, taking the train onto a wrong line. Today most signals are equipped with phones connected to the signal box, so a driver can double check before proceeding.

So from this, we can conclude that there can be no entrance within the Box Tunnel to any secret location. The common consensus amongst ufologists and railmen is that the tunnel is disused. I cannot find one person who has ever seen a set of points within the Box Tunnel at any time. If the tracks had been lifted, when did this happen?

The favourite location for an entrance into a base, would probably be from the portal on the Chippenham side of the line, a completely separate site. Slightly out of the way but still visible from the line, not very secret.

Having walked through the tunnel, my contact says there are eight telephones spaced at regular intervals. These phones would connect you to the signal box. Next time you go on a train, look at the signal and you will see about 4ft off the ground, a telephone attached to the post. He also says there are a number of rooms within Box, about 8ft square, where the permanent way gangs - people who maintain the track - keep their tools etc.

My contact also says he has never signed the Official Secrets Act, even though working in the Box Hill Tunnel. He knows of no other person who has signed the OSA. Matthew Williams told me his informant - who is meant to be ringing me and never has - had signed the OSA. I can accept that people who work on sections of line that connect to a government, i.e. an ROF establishment, do sign the OSA. My contact and many other rail employees, I have spoke to, have not signed the OSA. So we can conclude from this that there is nothing of significance attached to any rail connection to Rudloe, now or in the past.

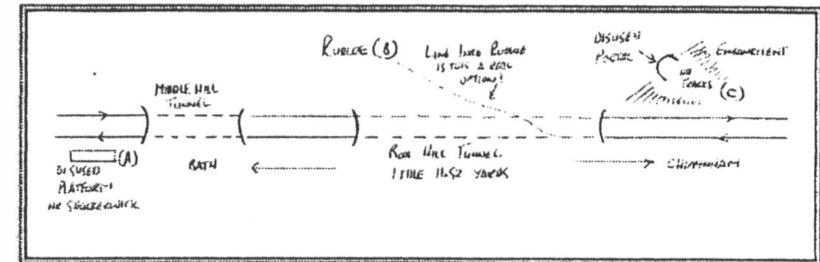


Figure 3. There are three possible entry points into Rudloe. A=Shockerwick, this tunnel leads up the hill and is badly positioned. This is probably an old war time tunnel. B= Points from within the Box Tunnel. Signalling arrangements would rule this out. C=The disused portal and cutting, would be a favourite entry point to Rudloe. Although if an entry point, it is long abandoned.

If there are steam locomotives within Box Hill, then this is truly an anoraks paradise, maybe they dream they will go there when they die, the rail buffs Valhalla.

As I have said many times, secret bases, contain secrets but this does not mean an ET connection. Rudloe Manor both for rail and ufo enthusiasts has become a dreamers mirror, you see there what you want to see. What few facts there are, get intertwined with a tangle of lies, rumour, speculation and the search for a truly weird and wonderful railway.

I bet Issy Brunel is laughing in his grave. To think all these years on, a simple railway tunnel - though not simple to build - would attract the attention of the classiest anoraks in the UK. We love a good conspiracy and we love to fall into the trap by jumping on every little bit of information, no matter where it has come from. We then pass this down or on to other people, who in turn add their little bit of "conspiracy" to it.

There are bound to be truths wrapped up in all this confusion but in our haste to make a story more exciting, we cannot discern the truth from the lies. As an over worked phrase goes, "the truth is out there" but then so are the lies and the poor information that leads us to inane conclusions. I

# TA It's WORLD CUP GALLERY

Well the hullabaloo of the World Cup is done and dusted for another four years. Yet before the victorious hosts had even lifted the cup came rumours that the whole episode was as big a fix as the moon landings. They had to win you see, after all it was a Frenchman who invented the tournament in the first place, and they hadn't even come near to winning the cup in past years. Apparently one of the first, "Whistleblowers" to the whole scam was non other than Maradona, the Hand of God himself.

"Evidence" presented for the case in pubs up and down the country seems to rest almost entirely on the lack lustre performance of the mighty Brazilian team in the final. They didn't even bother warming up before the game. Particularly disappointing was the performance (or lack of it) of the "World's Greatest Striker" - Ronaldo. Rumour has it that the ankle injury claimed for the great man was as phoney as a page three girl's age. Not to mention his, "Alleged" fit after the game.



Ronaldo yesterday.

Considering the scale of rigging the greatest sporting tournament on Earth, people certainly do seem to be prepared to consider it. Perhaps this believability has something to do with traditionally strained Anglo - Gallic relations. There are very few nations we English mistrust more than the French. Except of course the German's. Oh and then there's Argentina of course. Not to keen on the Japanese neither mind you.....

With England's inevitable exit from the tournament, came the election of the nation's scape-goat - "We would have won, but.....". Of course there was only ever one candidate for the job. David Beckham. Mere days before the fateful match against Argentina, glamour boy Beckham was the darling of the nation. Talented, good looking, engaged to a Spice Gal for pitie's sake (Posh, I believe - She's the one who doesn't sing but points a lot with a seductive expression whilst thrusting her arse out at impossible angles. Class eh, you've either got it or you aint). However with his sending off after a fit of pique he fell from grace with virtually the speed of light.

The tabloids went wild, demanding at the very least a full public apology from Beckham. Yet pretty soon it was clear that even this would not satisfy some devastated fans. There were rumours of a wealthy consortium taking out a contract on Beckham's well groomed head. The sum offered for the hit? Why the obligatory one million pounds of course. Enough to tempt Posh with the weedkiller in the tatties?

Of course writing this now a month or two after the disappointment has at least been put into perspective, rumours of contracts and the like seem a little far fetched. However the often irrational fervour aroused by football never ceases to amaze me. Reported in the *Evening Chronicle* 16/1/1997 was the story of a Newcastle United fan throwing himself in front of a runaway car to prevent it from getting damaged. But this wasn't anybody's car mind you. Oh no, this was PETER BEARDSLEY'S car. Think about it, the car had no one in it, it was apparently only going to run into a brick wall after Beardsley had forgotten to put his handbrake on, causing a few quids worth of damage. Yet this guy threw *himself* in front of the car simply because it belonged to a footballer and, "...I wouldn't want any part of St James Park damaged and I'd do anything to help Peter". Even more amazing was the manner in which the paper reported the incident. A headline of, "Maniac Chucks Himself in Front of Absent Minded Footballer's Runaway Car" would, I feel, have captured the gist of the story. But no, "Sliding Tackle Saves The Day." Only to be followed by, "Newcastle United fan, Paul Stansfield is the toast of the Toon after coming to the rescue of one of his soccer heroes." Bearing this bizarre story in mind, a million pound contract on Beckham seems quite reasonable.

On the international football scene, the passion with which the English fans support their team is viewed with extreme suspicion. For included within this merry band of passionate supporters, there lurks a sinister core of compulsive hooligans. More worrying still is the belief that these hooligans are not simply loose cannons, but they are organized, structured and dedicated legions of mayhem. The idea of Organized Football Hooligan (OFH) has even been used to great and violent effect in the movies, *1.D* and *The Firm*.

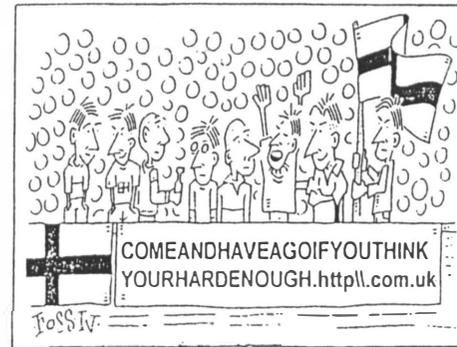
But what is the reality of the OFH? After trouble erupted in France during the World Cup the media was full of accusations. Interviewed fans spoke of printed flyers

distributed to English fans outlining battle plans and tactics before the trouble. However the hard evidence in the form of examples of such flyers seemed strangely elusive. Although of course, everyone knew of someone who had a friend who actually had a one. The authorities on both sides of the Channel take the OFH exceedingly seriously. Months of work prior to the start of the tournament had seen police raids on the homes of known football hooligans. A massive intelligence network was assembled involving computerized mug shots of undesirables. This led to a handful of deportations. Yet a few apparently slipped through the net and violence erupted. Despite the authorities' best effort, it appeared the OFH had triumphed again.

Come the next war I suggest we recruit OFH's into the undercover intelligence unit. Forget the suave cool of James Bond, if the OFH theory is to be believed these apparently thick-as-pig-shit thugs have established a sophisticated covert guerrilla organization with the ability to outsmart the finest police in Europe - In their spare time.

And for what? Some misguided attempt at patriotism? Notoriety? Because our football team is crap and we've got to be good at something? No the motive for the OFH is as puzzling as that of the more domestic Bogus Social Worker.

For what it's worth, my own theory on football hooliganism I term the, "Pot Hooligan Effect". You see it works very much like a Pot Noodle. When it's dry it is a reasonably innocuous collection of assorted ingredients. But you just add a bit of hot water and Shazzam! A tangled glutinous mass guaranteed to turn your bowels looser than those of a hanged man. It's the same with football hooligans you see. Except of course, you just add a large quantity of warm lager instead of water.



Staying with football thuggery, this time involving everybody's favorite cheery, cheeky Geordie footballer, Paul "Gazza" Gascoigne. Rumour had it that during one of his infrequent (?) nights out in a Newcastle nightclub in 1991, Gazza found himself on the receiving end of the fearsome wrath of local hardman, Viv Graham. Graham, who was gunned down on Wallsend High Street in 1993, was behind a multitude of highly lucrative pub and club protection rackets and probably has as much folklore woven around his life as any historic character in the North East. The incident involving Gazza being one such gem. However, in a foreword to the forthcoming book about Graham's life (*Viv - Simply The Best*. By Steve Richards to be published by Mirage.), Gazza dispels the allegation that it was Graham who attacked (or was behind the attack on) him. In fact, they were good mates. So there.

Before I go, just check your pockets. Any £1 coins? Well check the tail sides, if you have a one with a "Three lions" design it's very rare being produced for a very limited period to commemorate the World Cup and most importantly of all, worth a tenner. Well that's (as Huggy Bear used to say) the word on the streets anyway.

John Tait.

From Steve Sneyd, West Yorkshire

## Letters

Responses to a couple of things in issues sent -- "Kilroy is Here" (FF32:27) wasn't limited to Yanks, Brits took it up - still saw it as an occasional graffitit 50s/60s. (In fact, one of my early poetry chapbooks was called "Kilroy Was Here Until He Died," which title I got off a guy who did some joinery or whatever at Staithes Hall Mental Hospital near here and spotted it as graffitit).

Version we sang of Hitler thing (FF27:18) when I was a kid (late 40s, in a Devon village - we kids thought the postman was Hitler, who escaped Germany, he looked a lot like him, and wasted endless time spying on him whenever he was doing deliveries) was "Hitler has only got one ball,

Himmler is similar, while Goebbels has no balls at all, where the bulldog bit him". Don't know if that was the original Black Propaganda one, or a garbling. Someone in the 60s when I first came to Huddersfield told me a ludicrous story (I must have a gullible face - I believed for years the one that the Ashes (FF32:15) were of W G Grace's beard when he'd shaved it off once for some bet, and the one that banjo players stand up to play because the first great New Orleans banjo player, forget his name, had piles and couldn't sit down) that when Hitler had to have a testicle removed for medical reasons, didn't want a German doctor to know so a surgeon from Jimmy's in Leeds was furtively flown to Germany, kept the testicle as a souvenir, and it's still somewhere in Leeds Medical School.

## Articles elsewhere

ABC. In "Searching for the Beast of Bodmin2 (The Times Weekend, 18/7/98), Robert Verkiak visits the Colliford Tavern on Bodmin Moor where a barman was telling the story about a woman pub regular who formerly kept a panther as a pet when living on the moor. "Whenever she came to the pub she used to bring the panther with her. It was quite playful at first but then it started to get aggressive, clawing the bar and occasionally taking nips at customers. The previous landlord got fed up with it and had the animal barred. According to the barman the next time the woman came back she was alone. "I reckon she just got rid of it, just let it go on the moor," he said. There was no point in looking for tell-tale scratches on the woodwork, as the pub had been refurbished since the cat's last visit. Convenient, or what?

FF has featured Eddie Bell several times (lastly FF32:2). John Dean's piece "Sergeant Eddie's animal sanctuary" discusses his mission to save neglected animals (Durham Town & County, Spring 1998). It also features his hunt for ABCs and belief that many were released by private owners. In Co. Durham, he reckons, there are 10 to 14 puma, one of which he saw at his remote smallholding, attracted by the presence of his lynx.

Rory Lushman sent a copy of "The 'Beast' is back" (Burnley Express, 7/8/98) in which Jo Maris updates the Padiham Panther with an hour-long sighting along Glen View Road, Burnley, of a 3ft high, black beast.

KNIGHTS TEMPLAR. Dr A S L Rae kindly kept me informed of new twists to the mysteries surrounding Rosslyn Chapel (the Rennes le Chateau of Midlothian). Firstly a new book claims Christ's head is buried there in Catherine Deveney's "Christ Row is headline news" (Scotland on Sunday, 9/8/98) and Nick Thorpe's "Head of Jesus buried under chapel, says author" (The Scotsman, 10/8/98). Secondly the Knights Templar of Scotland get angry over a comic, "Batman: Scottish Connection" written by local lad Allan Grant. Andrew Walker ("Holy smoke at Batman 'trivialism' of Rosslyn," The Scotsman, 13/8/98) writes that Militi Iempii Scotia plan a seminar to dispel the "wild assertions" about the site.

TIPS. As an adjunct to an article about tips being included in the new minimum wage, Stuart Miller ("No gratuity - hell to pay", The Guardian, 12/6/98) lists a series of cameo restaurant legends from The Soiled Apron website. (cr: Peter Christie)

HULL. Kevin Jackson's profile of the ghastly place ("Hull and Hot Water", Night & Day, 19/4/98) mentions rivalry between the two Hull Rugby League giants. One played in black and white, the other red and white, and one interviewee claimed that in the old days, some Hull FC supporters refused to eat bacon because it is red and white, and Rovers fans wouldn't touch black pudding.

Ac. Aberdeen University researchers have used DNA technology to prove that the culprit behind a recent roe deer kill at Durris, which bore all the hallmarks of a big cat slaying, was the red fox (The Scotsman, 27/7/98) (cr: Dr A S L Rae)

## Update

EXCLUSIVE By SIMON SCOTT

A MAN who asked for an anchor tattoo on his arm got a portrait of Jeremy Beadle instead — because the tattooist thought he said "Draw me a w'nker".

Circus performer Guy Rawlins now has to live with the *You've Been Framed* host staring up at him.

Guy, 40, said last night: "I never used to like Beadle, but when I looked at my arm after I got home I realised that there'd been a huge mistake. I knew that I'd have to get used to him."

"I'd paid £90 for a tattoo of an anchor, and instead got Beadle's face forever!"

"I went back to complain and the tattooist went red in the face and said she thought I'd asked for a w'nker. "I thought she gave me a funny look before she started tattooing me."



### Terrific

"I was a bit pissed off at first but I've come to terms with it. Now I've actually become a bit of a fan."

"I've even worked with him when he did a stint as a circus ringmaster. He's not a w'nker — he's a great bloke and a terrific entertainer."

"But it was a real shock when I realised what had happened."

"The tattooist covered my arm with a bandage after she'd finished, like they always do to stop infection."

"So it wasn't until I got home and unwrapped the bandage three days later that I realised what had happened. I was mortified."

"I went back to talk

### Painful

"I did consider having it removed, but it's quite a painful process and it's pretty expensive as well."

"The way I look at it now, it could be worse. I could have a picture of Stan Collymore on my arm!"

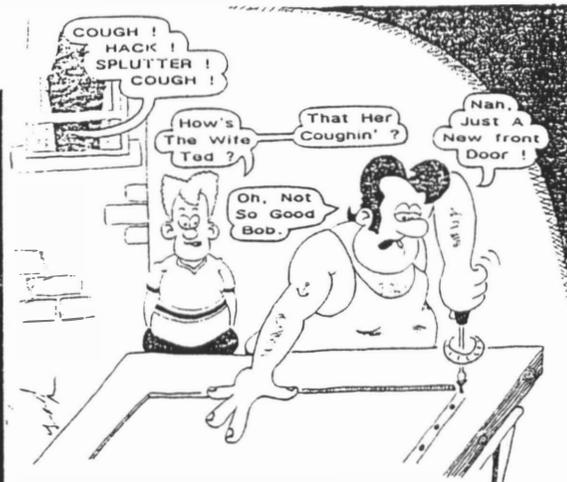
The Sport, 14/8/98

## OH, THEY CAN BE SO VERY WUDE TO WOY

TAKING advantage of the robust and no-holds-barred nature of political debate just now, we find we cannot resist the following rude story about Roy Jenkins (below, left). Mr. Jenkins — it has to be remembered for the purpose of this item that Woy is unable to pronounce his R — was at that time resigning from Westminster to go to the European Parliament. Also resigning for the same purpose was MP David Marquand, a particularly unpopular figure. Announced Roy: "I want you to know that I leave this great chamber without rancour." A Yorkshire voice from behind shouted: "I thought you were taking him with you."



Peter Tony Dwyer, Stan, 22/5/87



Cartoon by Jona Tait

TONY Gdula from Darlington writes in the Northern League magazine about his request for a Bovril at Northallerton Town's tea hut. "First I got a quizzical look and then a strug of the shoulders before the chap tore off a piece of kitchen roll for me."

Gdula, predictably, asked what was going on. "Well," said the assistant, "didn't you ask for some bog roll?"

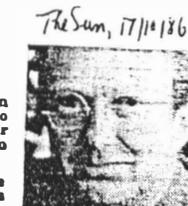
Mike Ross, Backtrack column, Northern Echo, 1/5/92.

THE ABOVE offers an excellent opportunity to recall a visit by writer Auberon Waugh to Senegal.

He was asked by the Senegalese Journ Union to address them on the subject of breast-feeding.

### Funny

Mr. Waugh, so he tells us, spoke at length on the subject. However, while honoured to do so, he was surprised that his audience hooted with laughter throughout. "Why did you find it so



AUBERON... talk

funny?" he asked afterwards.

It was explained that his hosts had not, in fact, asked him to speak about breast-feeding — but Press freedom.

"They thought I was being satirical," explains Mr. Waugh, who insists that the story is entirely true.

## In a roundabout way

WE must admit to having fallen, as if from the dizzy ledge of *Beachy Head* itself, into a trap which we have been telling our readers about for the past two weeks.

We have been relating a series of popular myths, stories with which most of us are familiar but whose origins are profoundly doubtful.

At the end of last week we told, as a true story, of a foreigner in the Oxfordshire

traffic who was heard shouting: "I've been done, I've been done."

It transpired that he was, in fact, frantically asking for directions to Abingdon.

Our correspondent had informed us: "This happened last week. At the Cowley roundabout, just outside Oxford."

Oh, the shame of it.

An Oxford reader called us yesterday to say: "I first heard that story 25 years ago."

Peter Tony Dwyer, The Sun, 18/12/86

Article sent to computer mag problem page.....

I'm currently running the latest version of Girl Friend and I've been having some problems lately. I've been running the same version of Drinking Buddies 1.0 forever as my primary application, and all the Girl Friend releases I've tried have always conflicted with it. I hear that Drinking Buddies won't crash if Girl Friend is running in background mode and the sound is turned off. But I'm embarrassed to say I can't find the switch to turn the sound off. I just run them separately and it works okay.

Girl Friend also seems to have a problem co-existing with my Golf programme, often trying to abort Golf with some sort of timing incompatibility. I probably should have stayed with Girl Friend 1.0, but I thought I might see better performance from Girl Friend 2.0. After months of conflict and other problems, I consulted a friend who has had experience with Girl Friend 2.0. He said I probably did not have enough cache to run Girl Friend 2.0, and eventually it would require a Token Ring to run properly.

He was right, as soon as I purged my cache, it uninstalled itself. Shortly after that I installed Girl Friend 3.0 beta. All the bugs were supposed to be gone, but the first time I used it, it gave me a virus anyway. I had to clean out my whole system and shut down for a while.

I very cautiously upgraded to Girl Friend 4.0. This time I used a SCSI probe and also installed a virus protection programme. It worked okay for a while until I discovered the Girl Friend 1.0 was still in my system. I tried running Girl Friend 1.0 again with Girl Friend 4.0 still installed, but Girl Friend 4.0 has a feature I didn't know about, that automatically senses the presence of any other version of Girl Friend and communicates with it in some way, which results in the immediate removal of both versions.

The version I have now works pretty well, but there are a few problems. Like all versions of Girl Friend, it is written in some obscure language I can't understand, much less reprogramme. Frankly I think there is too much attention paid to the look and feel rather than the desired functionality. Also to get the best connections with your hardware you usually have to use gold-plated contacts.

I've never liked how Girl Friend is totally object-oriented. A year ago, a friend of mine upgraded his version of Girl Friend to Girl Friend Plus 1.0, which is a Terminate & Stay Resident version of Girl Friend. He discovered that Girl Friend Plus 1.0 expires within a year if you don't upgrade to Fiancee 1.0. So he did, but soon after that, he had to upgrade to Wife 1.0, which he described as a huge resource hog.

It has taken up all his space, so he can't load anything else.

One of the primary reasons he decided to go with Wife 1.0 was because it came bundled with FreeSexPlus. Well it turns out the resource allocation module of Wife 1.0 sometimes prohibits access to FreeSexPlus particularly the new Plug-Ins he wanted to try. On top of that, Wife 1.0 must be running on a well warmed-up system before he can do anything. Although he did not ask for it, Wife 1.0 came with Mother-In-Law which has an automatic pop-up feature he can't turn off.

I told him to try installing Mistress 1.0, but he said he heard if you try to run it without first uninstalling Wife 1.0, Wife 1.0 will delete MSMoney files before doing the uninstall itself. Then Mistress 1.0 won't install anyway because of insufficient resources.

Any ideas???

Reply:-

We recommend the installation of MOS - the Mormon Operating System. It has two features that will address your problems. First, it will permit the installation of multiple Wife programmes. Second, it will establish the protocols that will ensure that all Wife programmes will remain subordinate to the Master programme.

There are however a few drawbacks of which you should be aware. First, each Wife programme comes with its own version of Mother-In-Law. Second, while the multiple Wife package will allow you to play with your Golf package, you will occasionally have to resolve resource allocation errors.

Third, MOS will not permit the installation of any version of Drinking Buddies!! Fourth, MOS will reduce your cache by 10% every month!!!

JOKER John Jakubowski has been told he can't change his name to Kiss My Arse.  
A judge in Detroit,

Michigan, denied the wacky request because he said John would "hide behind the name as a way to use the expression".

PIZZA delivery man and singer David Hunsinger, 22, decided he wanted to pick his own identity.

So now he's called Just A Name.  
He would have been Just Anonymity Name but Florida judge Maurice Glunta said Name's choice of middle name wouldn't "flow".  
So, after considering the judge's suggestion, Name agreed to abbreviate Anonymity.

THE A-Z OF NAMES IN ROCK by Mark Beech (Robson Books, £12.99)

"There is evidence that although children may have been given names at birth, these were only a temporary convenience until such time as the child or a shaman or the gods were able to find a real identity" -- Bill Butler

Another Abba to Z Z Top encyclopedia, but this time concentrating on the stories behind the names of performers and bands -- though not all are "amazing" as the subtitle boasts. Many are mundane, but that does nothing to demean what is a novel slant on rock trivia. This volume will come in handy when swotting for your weekly pub music quiz.

Here revealed is how such luminaries as Sting, Bono, Bob Dylan and Elton John came by their new names. Of course, not all artistes felt it necessary to reinvent themselves through a name change, but all groups have no choice.

As the biggest modern phenomena, I looked up The Spice Girls to find the claim that their name came from Ian Lee, who said to them, "You're a bunch of spicy bints." However, showing this book is not omnipotent, The Sport's Sarah Stephens states categorically that the band name comes from the Essex saying, "She's spicy," which means she likes oral sex.

Throughout the book, however, are listed incorrect but amusing alleged derivations of names. For folklorists there is plenty of apocrypha, such as Mick Hucknall turning up at a noisy club and asking to sing solo. The owner asked for a billing, "Call me Red," said Mick. "What?" "Call me simply, Red." He was billed as ... Simply Red.

Hours of reading fun awaits, whether you studiously turn the pages from Adam Ant to The Zantees, or simply leave it by the bedside to dip in. Both entertaining and a reference work for when you're bet a fiver you can't find the connection between 10cc and The Lovin' Spoonful.

LORD HIGH EXECUTIONER by Howard Engel (Robson Books, £9.99)

Here in Hartlepool is the historic warship Trincomalee, but few visitors know that one of its former sailors was John "Babbacombe" Lee - "the man they couldn't hang." For "reluctant" hangman James Berry tried several times to execute Lee, but each time the trapdoors failed to open. Lee had prophesied this and served 20 years in prison for murder, while Berry could never forget the incident. In fact, Berry believed that a bond connected the hangman and his victim. Each was dependent upon the other: the hangman for the victim's co-operation and steadiness, the victim upon the executioner's skill and speed. Indeed, a most chilling intimacy.

This erudite and entertaining work presents a close-up look at what the author regards as the "ritual killing in the public's name." Not surprisingly he is an abolitionist, though he has deliberately tried to keep his position out of the text.

He uses a chronology of dispatching in Britain (the expression "gone west" as a euphemism for dying, comes from the drive west from Newgate to Tyburn), Canada and the US, interspersed with tales of decapitation (by the headsman), the guillotine and crucifixion. Another awful execution method was pressing to death with stones on a board as happened to Saint Margaret Clitherow of York, a major influence in my life. A separate chapter deals with punishment for women, revealing the double standards of man's inhumanity to women, and concludes with payment for execution.

All in all a gruesome yet fascinating read.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO UNUSUAL LEISURE by Stephen Jarvis (Robson Books, £10.99)

Since (early) retirement I have found new leisure interests. My wife regards my new absorption in watching football on TV as utterly bizarre -- of truly Damascene proportions. Gardening, too. Compared with trainspotting, my new spare time occupations are so totally out of character.

Well, Pauline did suggest I find new hobbies. Jarvis began trying out new weekend pursuits and colleagues' interest in his leisure activities led him to pursue this book. If after reading this collection you still feel bored then the phrase "get a life" could not be more appropriate (some people even collect junk mail).

He is no dilettante either; the introduction to earth mysteries is a model of condensation and comprehension of a multi-faceted area of study and outdoors enjoyment.

Also at on time or another I have been (and in instances still am) interested in as described here (in no particular order): dragonlore, pub signs, cryptozoology, military pillboxes, archæocryptography, subterranea, dowsing, flat earth, hollow earth, ancient astronauts corn circles, psychic questing, astral projection, chicken impersonation (dab hand pre Norman Collier), all of which have specialist societies and/or newsletters. All are here, along with far, far more bizarre pursuits, with full details and contact addresses. Nor is this an armchair scissors and paste job, for Jarvis personally tried out many of the strange hobbies. Comprehensive (well, no teggestology) and compelling.

#### IN BRIEF

URI GELLER'S LITTLE BOOK OF MIND-POWER jumps blatantly upon the Little Book of Calm bandwagon. Whereas Paul Wilson has been accused in some quarters of producing a spoof -- albeit a lucrative one -- Geller's effort oozes a copycat cynicism. Quotations, proverbs, meditations and techniques to recharge your mind-power. Oh, and you can also win a valuable rock crystal (Robson Books, £2.50).

The Celtic revival continues apace, with John Matthews leading the pack. THE BARDIC SOURCE BOOK (Blandford, £20) is an accessible and readable collection of what the subtitle calls an "inspirational legacy and teachings of the Ancient Celts." Here is a generous selection of texts by some of the greatest bards, such as Myrddin, Taliesan and Aneurin, also including many previously hidden and forgotten gems. Arthuriana is the other main string to John Matthew's bow and THE UNKNOWN ARTHUR is now in paperback (Blandford, £10.99). Subtitled "Forgotten Tales of the Round Table," Matthews goes back to the original sources to retell a dozen stories associated with The Matter of Britain. Another amalgam of self-development and the Celtic influence is CELTIC PILGRIMAGES: SITES, SEASONS & SAINTS by Elaine Gill and David Everett (Blandford, £18.99). Many sacred places in Britain, Ireland and Brittany

are described in the context of the Celtic calendar, inviting the reader to visit special sites and make it part of a spiritual journey. Well illustrated by the ubiquitous Courtney Davis.

SPIRITS OF THE SACRED GROVE is a chatty yet esoteric personal journey by Emma Restall Orr through the seasons. Seen through the eyes of a modern druidess, nature's wonder is celebrated as she acts as a guide along paths of the sacred rituals. It's an accessible philosophy of personal healing and empowerment, with plenty of personal experiences and anecdotes to put a human element to the elemental (Thorsons, £9.99).

Another self-help book to increase spirituality is the grandiose, promisory titled BE A GODDESS! In addition to being a guide to Celtic spells and wisdom, Francesca de Grandis offers not only self-healing and prosperity, but "great sex" too for just £9.99 (Thorsons).

Another self-realisation paperback which claims everyone has a guardian angel, a source of wisdom and advice. HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR SPIRITUAL GUIDE, by Liza Wiemer (Thorsons, £7.99) is a practical guide on how to get in touch with this source of support. Practical exercises are offered in WHEN ORACLES SPEAK by psychotherapist Dianne

Skaife (Thorsons, £8.99) to help you reconnect with this rich source of spiritual wisdom. She argues that guidance can come in dreams, meditative states and other forms, and that the oracular gift is still achievable.

DRAGON-SLAYING MYTHS ANCIENT AND MODERN by Bob Trubshaw (Dragon's Head Press, PO Box 3369, London SW6 6JN, £1.99 + 50p p&p)

If a brief overview of the origins and mythology of dragons and their slaying is to your fancy then here is an excellent beginner's guide. It was originally published by the author in 1993 and should reach a wider public through this small press.

Treated chronologically, Trubshaw takes us from the pagan ritual "twins" principle, dragons in ancient times, Dark Ages and modern era.

In a chapter discussing Saints Michael and George, Trubshaw challenges the orthodox, or popular concept, that St George is not a late intruder into English folk customs, following cultural contacts of the Crusades, but an authentic, indigenous pagan god whose pedigree was absorbed with his Holy Land namesake.

Aspects are competently argued, the booklet is well illustrated and modestly priced, but could have done with more diligent proofreading.

SKY DRAGONS & CELESTIAL SERPENTS by Alastair McBeath,  
(Dragon's Head Press, £4.99 + 50p p&p)

The dragon legend closest to my home is that of the Sockburn Worm and one rather far-fetched theory is that the marauding beast flew down from the dark side of the Moon.

In addition to this our closest heavenly neighbour, McBeath discusses in detail the mythology which lies behind the naming of the constellations, several of which we can all pick out in the night sky. In addition to the dragons, serpents and sea monsters personified in the heavens, McBeath devotes space to discussing comets and shooting stars.

The mythology is balanced by solid astronomy, in fact a primer to explain heavenly movements, and will be a boon to the novice sky-watcher and seasoned mythologist alike.

RATCLIFFE'S MEGATHESAURUS by Eric Ratcliffe  
(Hilltop Press, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield,  
W. Yorkshire, HD5 8PB. £2.50. Make cheques to S. Sneyd)

Ratcliffe himself lists megathesaurus in 44-page paperback as: "Any annotated and often eccentric alphabetical list of 'family' terms having a common focus in a group of words (e.g. Meg, Roaring). The term was invented by a retired information scientist (Eric Ratcliffe) in 1995 when living in the vicinity of the Roaring Meg or Stevenage."

As, such it is a personal compilation, but its quirkiness has a fascination. For instance our soccer hooligans are reflected in the 18th century gangs of well-heeled ruffians called Mohocks or Hawkbitas and "roaring" being associated with blatant homosexuality. There are pen portraits of the Edinburgh Castle cannon Mons Meg, Deioe's Moll Flanders, Mystic Meg, Long Meg and her Daughters, Hereford's Roaring Meg mortar and Stevenage's stream. I could also add to his definitions that classes 81 to 85 electric locomotives were nicknamed "roarers."

Ratcliffe is not prudish and had he researched an old article in Oz magazine he would have found Mons Meg to be a formerly favourite term for the vagina. A highly-original and entertaining curiosity.

CASCADING COMETS: THE KEY TO ANCIENT MYSTERIES by Donald L. Cyr (\$10.  
From Stonehenge Viewpoint, 2261 Las Positas Road, Santa Barbara, CA.,  
93105-4116, USA)

Latest in the continuing series of reprints from Stonehenge Viewpoint (and in a more compact size than previously), Cyr here develops further his Vailian theory of cometary ice crystals circulating in the upper atmosphere, inspired megalithic rock art, the creation of certain prehistoric artifacts and the design of orders of Greek architecture.

LANDSCAPES OF LEGEND by John Matthews & Michael J. Stead (Blandford, £20)

Photographs which evoke the magical spirit of sacred places are not just created by pictorial craft, but require a harmony between place and person. The colour illustrations here do full justice to the spiritual nature of sites which have become through place, name and folklore special.

To complement Stead's sympathetic portraiture, Matthews contributes informative texts and has arranged the pictures into five categories.

The first chapter deals with stone circles and standing stones, the second hill figures, forts and Roman way, the third something of a pot pourri, the fourth medieval castles and halls, and fifth the evolution from simple tomb to the majestic Durham Cathedral.

The Durham shot is the clichéd weir and museum with cathedral towering above and Matthews writes of Stockburn instead of Sockburn regarding the dragon legend. Only two pictures are truly idiosyncratic shots being of Craig-y-Dinas and the Uffington white horse (or dragon).

Nevertheless, overall it is a fine example of the coffee table book to suit the armchair geomant.

ALCHEMY by Diana Fernando (Blandford, £18.99)

There is still a fascination for alchemy for all the derision hurled at it past and present by sceptics. The transmutation of base metal into gold is one thing; the process as pathway to self-realisation yet another. Few worthwhile aspects of living are what they appear on the surface.

The author's alchemic quest has led to the creation of this fine dictionary where laboratory operations and well-known alchemists are balanced with entries on the framework that made alchemy possible. Here are the sacred places, brotherhoods, collectors and patrons, the texts and publishers (printers are still keen Freemasons), and something of the language.

The author is hardly po-faced despite alchemy's anxiety for secrecy with gibberish to hide essential information; how can you take too seriously a search for an elixir requiring semen and dung?

This A to Z is illustrated with 160 of the author's own line drawings, plus 12 colour plates. It is a fine reference work, re-establishing alchemy as an overall view of humanity and science.

MYTHS OF THE MIDDLE AGES by Sabine Baring-Gould, edited by John Matthews (Blandford, £10.99)

These 12 stories originating from the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould's classic 1869 collection, Curious Myths, include the search for the location of Eden, swan-maidens, the Sangreal, the trusty Welsh dog Gellert, the Man in the Moon, Prester John and the Antichrist and Pope Joan. Selected by John Matthews for their merit, he provides introductory essays giving background, context and relevant historical or mythological origins. Baring-Gould may have been over-zealous in censoring some aspects of material he collected, but we must give him credit for scholarly and fascinating work such as this.