



**Folklore  
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# FOLKLORE FRONTIERS

April, 1999

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS is an independent magazine covering various aspects of folklore, particularly contemporary legends and culture. It is edited and published by Paul Screepton, to whom cheques should be made out (NOT to Folklore Frontiers). Address: 56gton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT. Four-issue subscription is £6; US \$14 only in dollar bills. If your subscription expires with this issue an X will appear below:

## The Diary

The Midwestern Epigraphic Society in Ohio, USA, has chosen to honour my and FF's good friend Donald L. Cyr with its MES Barry Fell Award for his life achievements as a scholar and publisher. The main aspect of the award comes from recognition in the MES journal, plus selectees receive a plaque. I was honoured to be a "tribute giver" to Don's life and works and thought that in addition to airing my appreciation of him for the MES I would share it with FF readers.

It then seemed fitting to reprint an article claiming Irish ogam script carved by Vikings. This issue also has Tail's Gallery and a note on the contributor requested by me. I have also covered many of your favourite categories. Articles from readers are always welcome.

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The situation in Kosovo is not funny, but here's a likely proto-legend. A gang of drunken Albanian stoways were caught in London after guzzling 12 cases of wine while hiding in a lorry travelling from Belgium. (Sun, 29/10/98)



"That's got rid of the planning inspector, anyone else any objections to my plan for the millenium circle to be known as Stonehenge?"

I like a tippie myself, but I'm glad I wasn't in the beer garden of the Bellringer, Stoke, Staffs, for according to The Sport (20/7/99) a meteor hit it at 47 miles per second. Perhaps it was a meteorite -- a meteor would have devastated central Britain.

AS with the Falklands War and Bosnia, hoaxers have been sending spoof official call-up letters to cause individual consternation. Danie Burr, 21, of Rochester, Kent, said: "Someone took a great deal of care to make this appear as genuine as possible." He was told a coach would take him from Catterick railway station in North Yorkshire (no such has ever existed, however) to a regional Army barracks for basic training. "Any other time I might have seen the funny side but in the current climat it's sick," said Daniel (D. Sport, 31/3/99)

# Norse code cracked on standing stones

Ancient inscriptions in Irish ogam script carved by Vikings

By Stephen Fraser

FOR generations historians and mystics have sought to decipher the writing on ancient standing stones found all over Scotland.

Theories over the centuries as to what the symbols - known as runes - spelled out have ranged from primitive religious pronouncements to evidence of an alien visitation several millenniums ago.

But now a Scottish academic claims his studies have revealed the mundane truth about the writing on the stones.

The indecipherable carvings are ancient graffiti, Old Norse versions of "Kilroy was here", Dr Richard Cox, an expert in Celtic at Aberdeen University, believes.

The standing stones are sprinkled all over Scotland, with concentrations in the north east, the Orkneys and the Shetland Islands, visible reminders of the ancients.

Some are arranged in circles, others stand proudly on their own. Mysterious theories on their genesis have abounded for decades.

One Welsh historian, Sir John Rhys, put forward the idea that the carvings were written in Basque, and were evidence ancient Scots were related to or had extensive

contact with the Basque nation which is now found in modern-day Spain.

Other historians dismissed the carvings as ancient Picts copying writing methods found in Ireland but producing only unreadable nonsense.

But Cox, noting the Viking influence on Scotland, in particular the Highlands and Islands, decided to compare the carvings to Old Norse, an ancient Scandinavian language.

He says he soon discovered their secrets. "The inscriptions are written in ogam, a writing

naming the dead while the writing on the Brandsbutt stone, from Aberdeenshire, reads "Olaf made this."

Another cherished find, a large stone on the island of Sanday in Orkney believed to have been used as a building slab, was found to bear the initials of the householder in translation.

The content of the messages were not a disappointment to Dr Cox, who has been caught up in what he believes will be a revolution in our understanding of the link between

Norse writing on them in Ireland. So I am treating this with a little scepticism, and I would like to see if there's any evidence in Ireland if he's right."

Despite this new theory, mystery will still continue to surround the standing stones of Scotland - many bear no inscription and are of much greater antiquity than those examined by Dr Cox.

Two of the largest groups of stones are the 36 which make up the Ring of Brodgar on Orkney, while the largest group and perhaps the most famous stones of all are at the 5,000-year-old site at Calanais (Callanish) on Lewis.

It was during the Pictish era, however, that most of Scotland's surviving standing stones were erected.

The Picts occupied large areas of Scotland for centuries until around 1200AD. The Romans gave them their name - it means "painted people" - because of their elaborate body decoration, and they were also renowned for the skill of their carving and other art work. They are believed to have died out or been assimilated with incoming Scots - originally from Ireland - by the 11th century. Besides the standing stones, their legacy is in place names derived from their language, such as Pittodrie, in Aberdeen.

## No one has been able to make sense of the inscriptions ... Old Norse is the key

system using a series of straight slashes on, through or below a central stem line, developed in Ireland and later brought here," he said. "While the system was used to write Gaelic in Ireland, no one has been able to make sense of the inscriptions in Scotland. But using Old Norse is the key. With it the inscriptions can be translated meaningfully."

The inscriptions on the 19 standing stones he studied for his new book, which date from 1050 and 1225, may make sense but they are hardly inspiring. The majority, he says, are memorial gravestones

Scandinavia and communities in ancient Scotland.

Other historian colleagues are less certain the mystery of the stones has been solved at last. Robert Black, a lecturer in Celtic studies at Edinburgh University, said: "I would be delighted for Richard if he has been able to prove this theory conclusively. When dealing with peoples like the Picts, they have left so little behind that all we have is theories."

"The Vikings co-mingled much more with communities in Ireland so if this is correct, then you would expect to find standing stones with Old

(Scotland on Sunday, 4/4/99 -- cr: A.S.L. Rae)



# Tait's Gallery

Hullo everyone and welcome to another trawl through the bowels of gossip hearsay and modern myth.

Well would you credit it eh, after last issues discussion of phoney TV, the whole subject is thrust into the public consciousness by revelations that guests on the BBC's Vanessa show were nowt but stooges. poor old Vanessa Feltz herself (known to her friends as, "Fuzzy") was forced to make an on air apology about the deception.

However much the media proclaimed its horror at this affront to their integrity (ahem), it would seem the public would rather watch a twenty one year old model with breast implants the size of inflated bin-bags tell lies about her sex life than watch a serious discussion with survivors of cervical cancer at half nine in the morning. As since this scramble to the moral high ground Ms Feltz's viewing figure are going down faster than an ambitious Whitehouse intern.

Channel 4 was a tad more bold at coming clean. The proposed show, "Daddy's Girl" was pulled at the last minute due to the production company being made aware that the "Daddy" in the title was in fact the young ladies star struck boyfriend hungry for his fifteen minutes of fame. To be honest, I don't think Channel 4 nor the production team can really moan to much as the resulting documentary about their falling for the scam was probably far

more enjoyable and widely watched than the proposed po faced offering. And didn't it screen at an opportune moment? Just when the Vanessa show was coming clean. Coincidence?

Staying with TV for a mo, I'm sure I was not alone in catching a peek at the terrestrial TV premier of the movie, "Babe".

For those of you fortunate enough to miss it, it's about an adorable little pig who thinks he's a sheep dog and.... well you get the picture. Anyway, I remembered reading somewhere that the film company which distributed the movie were given a hard time over the fact that the film's star ended up on a butcher's slab as soon as filming stopped. Adds a whole new meaning to the phrase, "It's in the can" eh?



"You're telling me mate"

The movie house hit back and proclaimed their innocence. No, no, no, babe was in fact Babes, half a dozen little porkers who took turns in playing the lead AND every one of them was now enjoying a rest in-between jobs in the Hollywood hills. Probably with an apple in their mouths.

One animal movie star which certainly does appear to have avoided the table - at least for now, is the Orca who had the misfortune to play the role of Free Willy. In a blaze of publicity this particular giant dolphin was removed from his aquarium in the USA to begin the long road of reconditioning him back into the wild.

Many experts and cynics have proclaimed the task to be hopeless, that the unfortunate star will have lost the ability to communicate with his own kind and will be unable to fend for himself in the wild. Much like his human showbiz counterparts really.

Whatever this unfortunate animals ultimate fate, it is still considerably better off than the whales harvested every year under the banner of, "Scientific research". Much of this research it is alleged must be in the rate of digestion of whale blubber, as much of the catch is said to end up on dinner tables.

In a letter in the cryptozoological journal, "Animals & Men" (issue 18) an organisation called, "Breach" is said to go one step further, claiming that whale meat is being included in school dinners to foster an appetite for the stuff in the hope that these youngsters will grow up to be the blubber buying con-

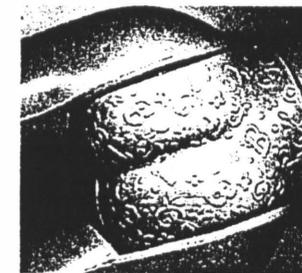
sumers of tomorrow.

A classic piece of repugnant tale familiar to most readers of urban myth. However, the letter quotes the organisation Breach as being a pro-whaling group. A double twist or a misprint?

I have long been fascinated with the ancient stone carvings known as, "Cup & Ring" marks. Fortunately there are many excellent examples to be found very near to my home and I often while away an hour or two looking over them and sketching their details. I have always hoped that one day I would discover a hitherto unknown design which would unravel the whole mystery behind their purpose.

However, I think all these years I've been looking in the wrong places. Forget the bleak moors and heather clad hills, oh no, I've stumbled across some very mysterious inscriptions - on Barbie's arse.

Yes my friends you heard me right. It all came about when I had cause to remove the electric blue bikini bottoms of my eldest daughter's Barbie doll (I feel I should perhaps justify that term, "had cause"... but I won't), and there they were.



Barbie's arse, yesterday

All the old questions and contemplations I have asked of the Cup & Rings returned, Who? Why? When? And of course is Ken's genitalia similarly decorated? Answers on a postcard to the usual address.

But it would appear that Miss Doll is not the only one sporting cheeky embellishments. I have it on good authority that the buttocks of Cabbage Patch dolls bare mysterious sigils not unlike those penned by the great occult artist Austin Osman Spare.

Of course the merest whiff of an occult association with any product, especially in the US, can cause absolute mayhem. Imagine the scale of the shenanigans if this product was a child's doll!

Plotting the course of any moral outrage is a delight to anyone interested in the evolution of stories. From heavy metal music's satanic links to the IQ eroding capers of the Teletubbies (Covered by our esteemed ed. in "Letters to Ambrose Merton, number 12. December 1997.). One topic which is receiving very unpopular press at the moment is smoking.

Yes smerkin a tab, is probably now one of the most antisocial things you can do in public without getting nicked. And there are many people trying to have that amended. And of course no one and nothing wishing to avoid being hauled over the coals by the very powerful anti-smoking lobbyists can dare to show anyone smoking.

But some have escaped detection. Until now.

It would seem that Safeway are the unlikely rebels without a cause in the supermarket league, as a figure on the label of their delicious traditional lemonade does indeed seem to be having a sly puff (oooo you are awful, etc)



A Tab up close

It's been in use for a good while now, but I bet if a few people start to point it out it'll not be.

Well thanks as usual for putting up with me. All the best.

JOHN TAIT



John Tait is a writer and illustrator who has contributed regularly to a multitude of publications, most notably his recent

stint as editor of the international journal of haemorrhoid sufferers, "Heard it Through the Grapevine". He has recently started a graphic design studio called, Just The Donkeys...

The photograph isn't of him. Although he wishes it was.

A TRIBUTE TO DONALD L. CYR

by

Paul Screeton, editor, Folklore Frontiers

Upon reading that in England there was a sugar shortage, a Californian friend shipped my family one pound of Demeraras sugar! Consummate kindness and practicality, hallmarks of a wonderful American polymath, Donald L. Cyr.

We first met when I invited Don to stay with us in North-East England during his first Stonehenge Expedition in 1973. I was already aware of his fame as a latterday champion of the prehistoric era ice crystal canopy theory of Quaker geologist-astronomer Isaac N. Vail through his magazine ANNUAL NEWSLETTER, which metamorphosed into STONEHENGE VIEWPOINT.

While we pondered whether his great tallness would fit our spare single bed, he excitedly explained how after just visiting Stonehenge, he thought maybe the sarsens had been carried quite easily by a form of fishermen's net to spread the weight and how two queues of people could have built the massive artificial mound Silbury Hill in quick time. I realised that his career as an engineer had not been wasted and a fertile mind was there to solve all practical problems.

The next time we met was in Glastonbury, the "holyste erthe" in England, where gregarious Don bought a large group of us young antiquarians pizzas, which we ate in a pub beer garden hoping the fried fungi was not magic mushrooms!

The second time Don stayed with us (along with his artist daughter Annette), I arranged a visit for him to meet Bob Forrest, a prominent Velikovsky skeptic. On the journey across the Pennines, I regaled Don with the misfortune that a publisher for whom I had written a history of prehistoric alignments (ley-lines) research had gone bust. Problem solver that he is, Don immediately offered to serialise my manuscript in STONEHENGE VIEWPOINT, and so SEEKERS OF THE LINEAR VISION appeared between 1981 and 1984, and subsequently as a paperback in his estimable anthologies series.

These compilations are a monument to his assiduous scholarship and maverick spirit, providing a receptive public with new concepts in the realms of archaeology, astronomy, climatology, Celtic art, dragons, corn circles and, of course, epigraphy.

As an introduction to one of his anthologies on epigraphy, Don wrote: "If you look upon all the opportunities of the world spread out before you on a smorgasboard table, awaiting your choice, then you too follow the eclectic philosophy. This volume documents the efforts of a valiant group of people making epigraphic selections in mid-America ... The competition is severe. In a sense, all is fair in love, in war, and in epigraphy. Rock art experts write-off readable ogam in America as glacial scratches, plow marks, tool grinding marks, or forgery. Epigraphers themselves argue about obscure points. Some inscriptions can be read, others not -- at least not yet. Hence the challenge!"

Both in his writing a conversation, Don has always balanced erudition with an ability to be engagingly entertaining. I am pleased to number him among my best friends and delighted he is being so honoured.





# Oldies but Goodies

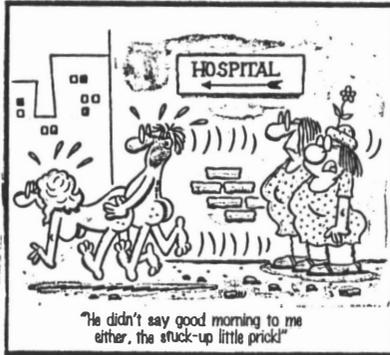
\* **TRAVELLERS' TALES.** A really familiar oldie to start with. "Atrocious tales abound about travellers, some apocryphal, some not. ... Nastiest currently circulating story is of New Agers urinating in a supermarket freezer cabinet, then reclaiming the packets from the store's rubbish bin." (Christopher Middleton in the Weekend Telegraph, 30/11/96).

\* **TURD BURGLAR.** While with bodily functions, dog owner Laurence Brown, of Hastings, Sussex, scooped up Labrador Benson's poo in a park near his home, but a teenager cycled past and snatched it. "I'd love to have seen his face when he put his hand inside and discovered his haul," said Laurence. "It was quite a big one and it smelled pretty awful." A police spokesman said, allegedly: "We're on the scent of the offender and hope to sniff out the culprit fairly soon." (The Sport, 25/7/97).

Same scenario, same paper. Suspicion from the start as a 66-year-old woman, "who has asked not to be named," had her poop-scoop bag nicked she she walked her dog in Dalton, West Yorks. There were several leads but so far police hadn't had a sniff. (The Sport, 11/5/98)

\* **TRICK PLOD.** A PC who said he had drawn his "staff" in a fight was asked by a London judge why he hadn't used the word "truncheon". The PC replied: "I couldn't spell truncheon in my report, sir." (News of the World, 15/8/93)

\* **STUCK COUPLE.** A couple having a secret affair had their cover blown when they got stuck during sex and had to be rushed to hospital to be prised apart. The pair, both married, had to be airlifted from their village in Kenya to hospital in Nairobi, where a crowd gathered to laugh at them. (The Sport, 8/5/98)



\* **PASSION IN REVERSE.** A randy young driver hit peak revs when the gearstick shot up his bum after a nookie session in a mini. And his agony was made worse when he and his knickerless girlfriend, who was hanging by her ankles from the car's grab handles, had to be rescued by firemen. Details of the incident on a hillside near, Preson, Lancs., were revealed by the embarrassed driver -- identified only as "The Mini Man" -- in a letter to motoring mag Redline. (The Sport, 29/6/98)

\* **MEXICAN PET VARIANT.** The All-Ukraine Gazette reported the tale of Victor R, who returned from an unnamed destination with what he thought was a bull-terrier puppy for his wife and son. On the sixth day the parents were awakened by the screams of their child, whose ear was being chewed off by the animal. The child was treated for minor wounds, and a vet informed the parents that their pet was actually a rare species of Pakistani rat, which when young resembles a bull-terrier pup. (The Journal, Newcastle upon Tyne, 17/9/96)

\* **WEDDING HITCH.** A report from an Athens new agency claimed a bride-to-be took her friends to see her dress the night before her wedding. There, in the couple's new home, she found the bridegroom wearing her bridal gown and in a passionate embrace with his best man. The wedding was called off. (The Times Weekend, 22/8/98)



# Proto-legends

\* **TOLD** as a true story to Des O'Connor on TV, Jim Davison explained how he'd helped pay for ex-SAS man Harry Taylor to climb Mount Everest without oxygen. When he got to the top, he painstakingly set up a satellite link so he could phone Jim. But then wife Tracy refused to get him out of the bath. When Jim asked who'd called, Tracy said: "it was a double-glazing salesman, Harry from Everest." (The Sun, 21/10/90)

\* **IRAQI** terrorist Khay Rahnajet didn't pay enough postage on a letterbomb. It came back with "return to sender" stamped on it. Forgetting it was the bomb, he opened it and was blown to bits. (Scotsman Weekend, 10/10/98) (cr: A.S.L. Rae)

\* **A cop** fell to his death while trying to talk a depressed man out of jumping from a roof in Paris. The suicide bid was abandoned. (D. Sport, 25/7/96)

\* **TWO men** about to stand trial for rape began punching the air when told they were to be freed, because the alleged victim had failed to turn up. Soon they became far more thoughtful when Chicago prosecutor Brian Sexton explained that the woman was unable to attend because she had Aids. (Guardian, 20/6/98) (cr: Peter Christie)

\* **AN ambulance** rushed to a court after a judge gave a note to her clerk reading "Blind on the right side. May be falling." But the judge in Denver, Colorado, was referring to a venetian blind in the courtroom. (D. Sport, 15/1/99)

\* **A COUPLE** of seasons ago a chap presented himself, honestly, at Northallerton FC's tea hut and was offered several sweets or anorex. He thought, only momentarily. "I didn't say bog roll, I said Bovril." (Mike Amos, Gadget column, Northern Echo, 20/3/96)

\* **A CINEMA MANAGER** in Yosu, South Korea, thought the film "The Sound of Music" was too long, so he reduced the length by cutting out all the songs. (The Sport, 6/8/98)

\* **A DOG** owned by a lock-keeper at Swansea docks may have been eaten by the crew of a Korean ship. The mongrel, called Sluice, vanished while the ship was in port and lock-keeper Roy Jones said it may have wandered on board and ended up on the menu. (D. Sport, 5/11/98)

\* **AT Ikea** in Gateshead, the tale's circulating the staff room of the customer trying to fill out a receipt, but finding that the proffered pen made little impression. You have to put your weight on it," said the assistant, helpfully. The woman was big, at least bodily. Fourteen stone three pounds," she wrote (Mike Amos, Northern Echo, 24/4/96)

\* **A BUSINESSMAN** at a hotel in Grimston, Norfolk, was handed a note by a waitress saying: "I try to be helpful and keep customers happy, but I'm sorry I'm unable to adjust your flies." (D. Sport, 27/2/96)

\* **EDIBLE junk mail**, which comes in tasty roast beef and ice-cream flavours is being marketed in Hamburg. (News of the World, 17/1/96)

\* **A MUM** and dad went grave-robbing and posted bones and parts to their son to help his lessons in medicine. The couple, nabbed digging up the grave, told a court in Athens: "We only did it because we wanted him to do well." They were jailed for four months. (D. Star, 22/1/97)



## Articles elsewhere

**BOGUS SOCIAL WORKERS.** Paul Sieveking looks at all manner of abduction tales and in particular an Irish scare involving 38 reports of attempts to lure children into vans and a recent nationwide spate of BSW visits across the UK. (Sunday Telegraph, 2/2/99)

**CULT OF DIANA.** Headlined "Will the weepers awake?" Edward Pearce (Scotsman, 20/10/98) sees "what the nation indulged was a carnival of baby-mindedness" following Princess Di's death. He believes "the cult of Diana is part of a general failure of education" and sums up: "Diana is a false goddess pitifully worshipped." (cr: A.S.L. Rae)

**LESS HORNY.** A preoccupation of the Chinese is male virility, which motivates the slaughter of rare wild animals whose parts are believed to have a stimulating effect on sexual activity. However, rising sterility now affects one in eight couples, being blamed upon pollution, smoking and sexually-transmitted diseases, writes John Gittings (The Guardian, 15/12/98). The Beijing Morning Post also suggested premarital sex had an adverse effect on fertility and blamed "invisible killer waves" from household appliances for causing infertility. (cr: Peter Christie)

**TAKE A SQUINT.** Jack Shamash says little research has been done into the evil eye and gives a brief overview of talismans to ward off this force which destroys good fortune. We have a blue ceramic charm hanging in our bedroom which my wife was given by a Turkish shopkeeper to ward off bad spirits after she declined monetary change as she was about to fly home. (The Times, 13/1/99)

**BOUNTY -- Bah!** Plans for a £370,000 reward for a recorded sighting of the legendary Tasmanian tiger, or thylacine, was abandoned after insurance negotiations broke down. Most Tasmanians apparently know someone who has seen a thylacine, wrote Mark Chipperfield, but these claims are treated with cynicism by mainland Australians "who point out that tiger sightings are usually made in the vicinity of pubs, with the frequency increasing after closing time." (Sunday Teleg, 18/10/98)

**METEORSHITE.** Comet authority Dr Duncan Steel has solved Stonehenge. It was built to predict meteor storms and the early warning system stretches to the long barrows. "They look like air-raid shelters, so that is perhaps what they were," reckons dunce Duncan. "The burials may just be a later use for them." (Sunday Teleg, 22/11/98)

**BLUE MOON.** Canadian folklorist Philip Hiscock's search for the origin of the expression "once in a blue moon" (a "blue moon" occurs when there are two full moons in a month) is written up by Aisling Irwin (Sunday Telegraph, 2/2/99)

**NOT IN HARMONY.** When aal-women classical musical group the Mediaeval Baebes were summoned by Rosslyn Chapen enthusiast Francesca Norton to see if there is a coded harmonic message in the stones (and win a £5,000 reward from the Michael Pentine Roselyn Questing Scholarship), Rosslyn Trust project director Stuart Beattie was annoyed. "We weren't consulted at all," he said. "It's a bit like people coming and painting your house without asking you." As FF readers are doubtless aware, the Aidothian mysteriwhot spot is supposed to be the last resting place of the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy Grail, "real" Stone of Destiny, genuine heart of Robert the Bruce and the embalmed head of Jesus Christ. "I wouldn't be surprised to read next that the crew of the Marie Celeste had been traced to our vaults," he sighed (Scotland on Sunday, 1/11/98). "I'll have to remember to increase the insurance premiums in case they get the harmonies right," he told Jackie Kemp. (cr: A.S.L. Rae)

**SOCCER BEHAVIOUR.** Popular rootia belief is that the first goal is the catalyst that brings the game alight, that the chance of seeing goals scored increase towards the end of the match and most famously of all, there is the Theory of Immediate Strike-Back, where teams are never more vulnerable to conceding a goal than when they themselves have just scored. To put the cliches to the test, two statisticians of Newcastle and Surrey Universities have fed in enough raw data to discover as so often, the "folklore" proved pretty reliable (Sunday Teleg, 13/9/98)

**WICKERFD.** Previewing a film shown only on BBC1 Scotland, "ex:is the Wicker Man", Iain S Bruce (Scotsman, 15/12/98) cheerily announces that continued interest in Robin Hardy's classic offering has inspired him to begin work with Christopher Lee on a sequel, which is currently at the script development stage and is scheduled to begin production in time for the new millenium. (cr: A.S.L. Rae)

**WHO CALLS?** Following growing concern about the effects of mobilephones Peter Tharl Larsen writes that the Worlf Health Organisation has written to UK mobile operators asking them to fund a study. Cancer sufferers will be quizzed about how much they use their mobiles and results will be compared with non-users to see if they are less likely to suffer from the disease. (The Independent, 5/12/98)



## Update

47299. This is the locomotive which was seen in a dream to crash when numbered 47216 (FF16). the prophecy was fulfilled and one person died. I did research on this for the TV programme "Strange But true" and was paid for my services, even though -- I believe -- the subject only appeared in the tie-in book and not on screen. In 1997 I dealt with two researchers for the same programme, both unaware it had been tackled already. We agreed a £30 fee for my involvement (I never got paid). Their parallel research elicited the fact that due to its dubious reputation a clergyman had exorcised the locomotive at Finsley traction Depot, Sheffield. However, what might seem quirky, at one time each page 2 of Rail magazine had its main contributors' pen portraying some aspect of life as it affected them. One issue listed what each of the particularly hated, and one staffer pilloried TV programme researchers. Wonder if it had anything to do with non-remuneration and 47299! At least the engine is still in revenue-earning service and has just been overhauled for English, Welsh and Scottish Railways. Its bizarre career suggests it will be a strong candidate for preservation.

**BEOWULF LOCATION.** This subject was covered in two articles in FF22. Paul Wilkinson has found place-names such as Heorot (the same as Hart, near Hartlepool, where a Father Haigh sets the original location) around Faversham. Two topographical detective pieces appear in British Archaeology and History Today to argue for the poem being a travel diary set in the Kent landscape.

# Ghostbusting By Paul Screeton

It is commonly presumed that poltergeist activity revolves around teenagers at puberty, but David Kenny (*D. Sport*, 30/10/98) says experts told topless model Vicky Roberts the paranormal pest hurled plates because he was frustrated at not getting his leg over the 16-year-old. Strange shadows, smells, slammed doors and tossed clothing occurred when the family lived in Burton Street, Wavertree, and the spookiness followed them around the corner to Smithdown Road. Holy water brought Lourdes by a friend was sprinkled around and that was the last of it.

Another topless model, Ann-Marie Dixon, was molested in bed when she was 18 and living in Dartford. "I was feeling very sensual," she told Kenny. A boyfriend wondered why she was moaning when he wasn't even touching her. "He must have thought I was playing with myself, but he could see my hands were nowhere near my body." After Father Marx from St Paulinus, Crayford, blessed the flat that was "the last of my ghost or whatever it was."

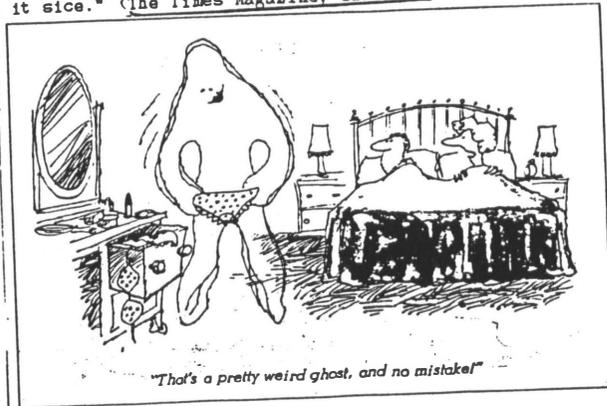
Council house tenants who seek rehousing because of an alleged haunting always arouse suspicion. Kim Puckering, 30, a single mum of Hull claimed a thick-set Cherokee (not any old redskin) had two minutes' intercourse with her. Her five children had also seen the brave and next-door neighbour Georgina Atkinson told Kim she'd had the same "dream" four times. (*D. Sport*, 1/12/98)

More spectral antics come from the Red Baron and Blue Lady at Mains Castle, East Kilbride. New owner Ruth Cooper said: "I tell them to shut up if I'm trying to sleep, but they don't seem to listen." (*Sunday Magazine, News of the World*, 28/2/99)

Believe it or not, pretty Janine Dawkins, 26, walks naked around her late neighbour's home in Perth, Australia, to give his ghost a thrill. The £157,000 house was left her on condition she had a nude stroll once a week. (*D. Sport*, 27/11/98)

Shaun Ryder, foul-mouthed Happy Mondays rock star, told readers (*D. Sport*, 27/11/98) he was moving home in Burnley after objects started moving and going missing, lights and gas would go off. Subsequently he was told a man bludgeoned and stabbed his wife in his bedroom before cutting off her ears and dumping the body in a rolled-up carpet. "I don't know if that explains the weird goings-on," wrote columnist Ryder, "and I don't believe in that shit, but we're off."

Another species of spirit is one which acts as a guardian of correctness. While courting my wife in the Sixties, we ate at Harry Ramsden's Guiseley fish and chips restaurant. Branches now stretch globally. "We've inherited Harry Ramsden's mantle and aren't doing anything wrong," says chief executive John Barnes. "We considered adding meat to the menu and two brand-new light fittings in my office crashed to the floor. We decided Harry didn't like that idea and we've not discussed it since." (*The Times Magazine*, 12/12/98)

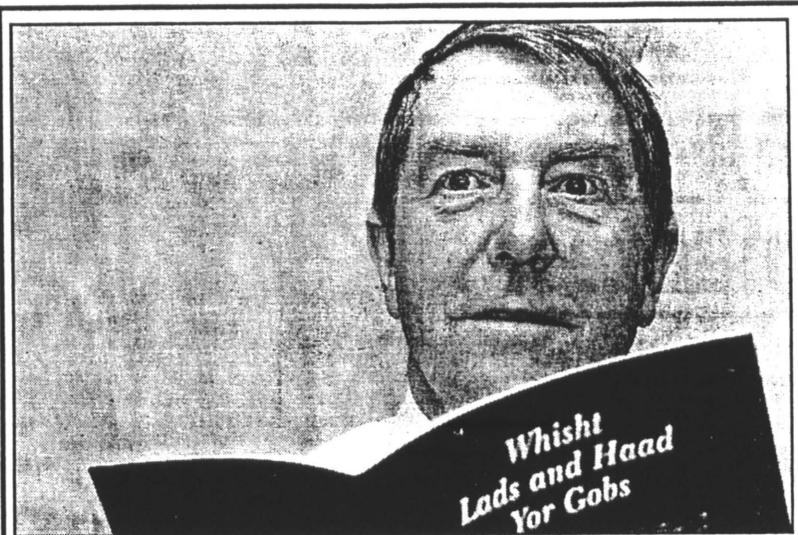


**SHEEP GORGING.** A tumbledown house in a former pit village near Hartlepool was allegedly won in a card game and the rather more stately Sussex manor base of the British HQ of Scientology, formerly owned by the Maharajah of Jaipur, was won in a card game, claimed L. Ron Hubbard (*Night & Day*, 30/3/97). But let Robert Burton tell another tale: "The story goes that the Soay sheep in Cheddar Gorge owe their presence to a poker game. They are said to be descended from a small flock that was the final stake of a gambler down on his luck. The winner took them home in the early hours and, by next morning, they had demolished his garden. To avert domestic strife the sheep were rounded up and released in the gorge, where they settled happily and proceeded to multiply. The release of any alien animal into the countryside is a threat to our native wildlife: think of the destruction wrought by grey squirrels and mink. But these sheep are doing good: they are aiding the recovery of some rare native species of plants and animals. The Soay sheep of Cheddar Gorge have increased to about 50 animals (in three years) under the watchful eye of the National Trust, which manages part of the gorge. Despite their alien nature, their accidental appearance on the scene has provided a tool for promoting biodiversity. Their ceaseless grazing is helping to restore limestone grassland turf and its many inhabitants." (*D. Telegraph*, 11/7/98)

**TREE CURSE.** Back to Hartlepool -- its Headland area to be precise. Previously I had not come across this tale and Andy Croit, £7,000 grant writer-in-residence, told Bernice Saltzer: "There is apparently a curse put on the headland in the 15th century by a friar called Father Simon, who said that no tree should ever grow there again. I found out about it through a 20th century poem called 'The Friar's Curse' and all the kids and I decided to try and lift the curse." This involved a special ceremony on National Tree Dressing Day outside the Borough Hall where the children's poems were attached to trees and a new rowan tree was planted. A gardening friend told the poet that in the soil, bread, salt, coal and beer should be added to ensure the tree's survival. "It was certainly the strangest poetry reading I've ever been part of," said Andy, "but the tree is still there." (*The Hartlepool Mail*, 19/3/99)

**BOOBS WARMING.** Is one of the benefits of global warming women growing larger breasts? Maybe not politically correct, but speculation is rife about Lindsey Dawn McKenzie (19) -- pictured on this FF's cover -- going from 37FF to 37H and is divided between experts, as always happens. A doctor at a leading Manchester breast clinic said: "Many women's breasts continue growing until their mid-20s." But Dr Stig Samuelsen, of the Danish Institute for Ecological Studies, said: "There's nothing to say this girl's breasts are not sensitive to changes in climate temperature. And if the Earth carries on getting hotter, perhaps breasts will get bigger." (*The Sport*, 18/2/98)

**GOING APE.** After a motorist reported sighting a baboon, patrol car police reached the scene in time to see it vanish into undergrowth. It favours the Shaw Farm Road area of Prestwick, Ayrshire. Richard O'Grady director of Glasgow Zoo, told *The Scotsman* (16/2/99): "No zoo in Scotland keeps baboons," adding they were too aggressive to be pets and the nearby airport would have reported such a loss. (cr: A. S. L. Rae)



DRAGON SLAYER . . . Paul Screeton with his new book

## Worm turns for local author

DRAGONS and mythical worms are the subject of a new book highlighting the North-East's rich heritage of folklore.

*Whisht Lads and Haad Yor Gobs*, by Hartlepool author Paul Screeton, tells of the region's fascinating history of dragon legends and attempts to explain the phenomenon.

With illustrations throughout, the book looks at many of the legends, including the Sockburn Worm on the Tees, the Pollard Worm of Bishop Auckland, the Brancepeth Brawn, and even a sea serpent off the Durham coast.

But it is the Lambton Worm that remains the best-loved of all the British dragon tales.

Paul's book - subtitled *The Lambton*

Worm and other Northumbrian Dragon Legends - looks at how the beast terrorised the banks of the Wear, how it was slain by cunning, and the curse that befell the Lambton family.

Paul, a former journalist at the Hartlepool Mall, said: "Tales abound of heroes slaying fierce dragons throughout the land, but nowhere do dragons proliferate more than in the area between the Tweed and Humber."

"Dragons are popular with adults and children alike, bringing a little mystery into our lives."

*Whisht Lads and Haad Yor Gobs* is published by Northeast Press, price £4.99, and is available from the Hartlepool Mall Fotolab in York Road.

THE HARTLEPOOL MAIL Monday, January 18, 1999



## DRAGON REVIEW

*Whisht Lads and Haad Yor Gobs: The Lambton Worm and other Northumbrian Dragon Legends*. Paul Screeton (with a foreword by Dr. Karl Shuker). North East Press Ltd. 1998. Price £4.99. 36pp. A4. PB. ISBN 0 9519967 9 7.

(Review by Ade Dimmick)

The republication of this book holds a special interest for me, not only as a committed dracophile, but by virtue of the fact that I was born in the north-east of England, and by coincidence, in the same town as the author, Hartlepool.

As a boy, living in the region in the late 50's and early 60's, the story of the worm was more than just a legend, it was a 'true story', about a vague, but very real historical event. A story that had grown up in the consciousness of the local population.

This book was originally published in 1978 by Zodiac House, despite North East Press stating it was first published in 1998. The author, Paul Screeton (who still lives in Hartlepool), a well known folklorist and writer, brings us bang up to date with a revised and re-edited edition.

The book is split into two parts; part 1 deals with the legend of the Lambton Worm, and covers nine pages. The author goes onto explain various aspects of the legend, including: contradictory versions; verse and song; the infamous Lambton family; and present day pageants and events celebrated by local people in celebration of the worm. (In fact, the local Tourist Board has even adopted the Worm as a publicity symbol!)

In rather less detail, the next ten pages cover other Northumbrian legends, such as: The Sockburn Worm; The Laidley Worm of Spindlestone Heugh; The Pollard Worm (possibly a boar); The Wode Worm of Linton; The Long Witton Dragon; The Lindisfarne and Tynemouth dragons; The Dunstanburgh Serpent; Newcastle Serpent; Gunnerrford Dragon; Osulf's Serpent and the Blackhall Rocks Sea serpent.

Moving southwards, and dropping out of the counties of Northumberland and Durham, we find ourselves in Yorkshire. The next three and a bit pages are devoted to paragraphs on dragon legends from Handale,

Nunnington, Slingsby, Well, Sexhow, Whorl Hill, Filey, Kellington, Huddersfield, Hartishead, Bradford (another boar!) and Wantley.

Part 2 is entitled, *Explanations of the Dragon Phenomena*, which for me is the most interesting part of the book. It covers six pages and is subtitled as follows: Prehistoric Leftovers; Invaders and Oppressors; A Sockburn Snake Sect; Sulphur Soup Dragon; The Dragon as Devil; The Dragon and Fertility; Scorpio and Sacred Dragons; Dragons and Prehistoric Monuments.

For further reading the book ends with a fairly comprehensive bibliography of books, periodicals, articles and news clippings.

All in all, apart from thoroughly enjoying it, I believe this book is an invaluable guide to the dragon legends of north-east England, and a good starting point for further research. I don't hesitate in recommending it's purchase, as an invaluable addition to your bookshelf. However, if I was to have one criticism of it's content, it would be that some of the tales could have done with further expansion. My only other criticism, and in actual fact my main one, is the book's peculiar format; A4 magazine style, double columns, numbered pages, and no list of contents.

I'd like to end this review with the author's own concluding remarks; sentiments shared in lots of respects with the aspirations of *The Dragon Chronicle*, and indeed Dragon's Head Press itself . . . .

"I now leave it to the reader to wrestle in his/her own fashion with the identity of the fabulous Northumbrian worms and dragons, firm in the knowledge that whatever the outcome, the pleasure of the exercise (and the mythical insight gained) will more than repay the intellectual energy expanded. Dragons can still be potent magic!"



Available at £4.99 plus £1 p&p from Northeast Press Limited, Echo House, Pennywell, Sunderland, SR4 9ER.

THE ACTIVE SIDE OF INFINITY by Carlos Castaneda (Thorsons, £15.99)

The sham shamanism goes on even in death. As Castaneda died last year, this must surely be the last book from the fraudulent anthropologist. Back with his fictional Yaqui Indian sorcerer don Juan Matus, who allegedly lectured the budding ethnobotanist with the latest notions of anthropology and psychology, here Castaneda's genius for plagiarism and money-making is played out in what is claimed to be "the definitive and revealing overview" of the sorcerer's apprentice.

That said, this like his earlier books, will sell by the truckload. Recently, upon seeing various Castaneda books in Hartlepool's New Age shop, Spellbound, I found my argument to the owner that he was a conman went down badly. Pity so few people are aware of Richard de Mille's expose, The Power and the Allegory, which puts Castaneda into perspective. Seems controversy has done little to dent Castaneda's reputation.

TIAMAT'S BROOD: An investigation into the Dragons of Ancient Mesopotamia by Alastair McBeath (Dragon's Head Press, P O Box 3369, London SW6 6JN, £10.99 + postage)

You guess the writer knows his subject when the notes and references are almost as long as the main text! Comprehensive it certainly is, and astronomer and mythologist McBeath provides more than a dragonlore account, but a meticulous study of Mesopotamian cylinder seals. Serpents here are generally peaceful-loving and the author notes that none of the known artistic representations show them performing any clearly harmful actions. In fact, there are a great many depictions both of seal impressions and astronomical charts, plus a text which must have been a typesetter's nightmare. Maybe hard going for the average reader, however.

MY AREA. VOLUME 6 -- Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland & Tyne & Wear by Alan Gilmour & Simon Thrower (InterCity Railway Society, £1.95 + 35p p&p from ICRS Sales Dept., 27 Chatsworth Avenue, Warton, Preston, PR4 1BQ)

Subtitled Photo-Spots for Lineside Enthusiasts, various locations in the geographical area of the title are described along with their vantage points, traffic signalling and how to get there by road and rail where possible. Maps give a good idea of overbridges and level crossings. Your esteemed editor is credited as one of the researchers and contributes two of the photographs.

IN BRIEF

A friend of mine in Hartlepool edits a mag on some branch of the esenes, has been to Egypt a couple of times and has immersed himself in the current theory that pyramids date from an 11,500BC super-civilisation. What I've read so far, and what he extols still leaves me cold, as does Gods of the Dawn by Peter Lemaurier. This "Stargate" theory postulates the pyramids as a star map beckoning mankind to rejoin a superior race in space (Thorsons, £7.99)

Rather than being morbid, THE PAGAN BOOK OF LIVING AND DYING by Starhawk (Harper San Francisco, £11.99) is a resource guide to death and the process of dying, which combines practical rituals with prayers, chants, blessings, meditations, essays and insightful personal stories. Until I read ALTARS MADE EASY by Peg Streap (Harper San Francisco, £12.99), I hadn't realised that my pond creation efforts in our garden - which have given me endless pleasure and relaxation -- were part of the urge to create a personal sacred space. This is another personal development guide where creating altars focus energy and reflect the spirit. How to create your own unique altar for meditation, reflection, prayer and revelation.



# Magazines

LETTERS TO AMBROSE MERTON, Quarterly folklore miscellany. £7.50 for 4. Payable to David Cornwell, Psychology Section, Dept of Education Studies, University of Strathclyde, Jordanhill Campus, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow, G13 1PP Scotland. Subjects covered include: IV cartoons' Hallowe'en episodes; a Scottish newspaper's wild accusations of Deliverance-style inbreeding in America by clans of tartan tinkers, by its US correspondent; nursery rhymes suggesting child labour; fact-/fiction account of an urban myth focus group?; and familiar tales such as child abduction scare. Plus pieces from the Press and book review. (No. 6)

FORTEAN TIMES, News-stand. £2.60. No. 118. Santa Claus as death and resurrection of a beast-god dating back to the Neanderthals; remote viewing challenged; vampire movie as world-domination metaphor; Berwyn Mountains "ufo crash" of 1890 (£2 + S&E for 2 definitive contemporary articles I published in THE LEY HUNTER); Velikovsky assessed. Plus world news round-up, letters and reviews. No. 119. Current South African witchcraft accusations and its legal system with echoes of European medieval episode; dodgy Pascagoula ufo abductions scenario; extraterrestrial contact hoax; weird Russian emigres to Canada explored; bosom serpent and other bizarre vomits. No. 120. International cat multi-slayings; Noah's Ark notions floated; Bliphas Levi. No. 121. Nigel Watson on sexy spacepeople; demystifying "Alternative 3"; going over old ground piece linking JFK assassination and Area 51; chupacabras objections; cerealeological skepticism; Will Firmage's mission.

STRANGE MAGAZINE, UK £17 for 4, add \$2.50 post. Twice-yearly. Cheques to "Mark Chorvinsky" at P.O. Box 2246, Rockville, MD, 20847, USA. No. 20. Tediously detailed search for boy upon which "The Exorcist" was based, and does not even name the prime suspect; Glastonbury; Karl Shuker's excellent cryptozoology. Plus book reviews and catalogue.

MAGONIA, Q. £5. Cheques payable to John Rimmer. Address: John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB. No. 65. John Harney on why few scientists get involved with UFOs; Peter Rogerson on drawbacks of memory and separately on why the BTH cannot be a useful scientific working hypothesis; the bizarre and chequered roles and predilections of the episcopi vagantes and their unstable sects. No. 66. Desmond (Mr Esther Rantzi) Wilcox's child abuse false memory of a schooling by drunken teachers and punishment-happy Jesuit headmaster is termed "recovered psychobabble syndrome"; humdrum musings; Proctor & Gamble's Luciferian motif and McDonald's Individual Retirement Account (IRA) involvement find their way into FF subscriber David Sivier's argument for Satanic child abuse scare as a response to class conflicts; 17th century reports of marvels in the skies. Book reviews and diary column.

THE DRAGON CHRONICLE, 4 issues £7. Sample £2. Cheques payable to Dragon's Head Press: PO Box 3369, London SW6 6JN. No. 15. The Lindworm and geology in Austrian dragonlore; reader's ambitious dragon research survey outlined; St George piece taught me that he served at the HQ of the IX Legion at York and specifically draws attention to English painters' general neglect of the patron saint; Draconids shower; my Lambton Worm book favourably reviewed. Plus fiction, poetry, news snippets relating to dragons and magazines reviews supplement.

NETWORK NEWS, 4 issues £5; £6.50 Europe and USA surface. Pay to M. Ayers. Address P.O. Box 2, Lostwithiel, Cornwall, PL22 0YY. No. 13. Secret Powers of Music issue. Describes itself as: "The occult battlefield of the west Cornwall area around the time of the so-called solar eclipse of August 1999, is decoded as a hyperreal simulation of a series of events that took place in south London in the 1980s. A savage

Litany of Guns and Sex and Witches' Flying Ointment. Not for the faint-hearted." What a collaboration between J. G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock would doubtless turn out like. Rollicking rollercoaster!

3rd STONE. The Magazine for the Few Antiquarian. Q. 4 issues £10; sample issue £2.75. Payable to 3rd Stone. From P O Box 961, Davizes, Wilts., SN10 2TS. No. 33. Templar mysteries in Wiltshire; Newgrange visiting neutered; archaeological research at Holt, Dorset; hogbacks seen as commemorating the "saints" of a Norse warrior cult; Victorian trains "express" service from London to Woking cemetery; Graham Hancock's televised "lost civilisation" doubted; Monuments at Risk Survey of England; Sligo ritual landscape. Plus witty diary column, news update and abstracts.

NORTHERN EARTH. Q. 26 for 4. Cheques payable to Northern Mysteries Group. From 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks., HX7 5NP. No. 76. Rather too international an issue for my liking, with Netherlands Bronze Age solar symbolism and Japanese ban on women to sacred mountains (and certain tunnels); Pennine Raven name-grouping as Celtic boundary possibility; access to the countryside issue. Obituary for Ted Hughes as pagan Bardic poet with shamanic dimension. Plus miscellany, readers' letters and book reviews. No. 77. East Yorkshire well desecration plus commentaries and advice on rubbish accumulating at sacred sites; barrows in folklore and archaeology; fascinating readership survey results.

NORTHERN UFO NEWS. 26 for 6 issues. Address: 1 Halletts Close, Dove Holes, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8ES. No. 181. Talk about scoring an own goal -- decrying the public perception of ufologists as morose, editor Jenny Randles abhors such as "anorak wearing, mentally challenged trainspotters" (like me, I suppose). Also, I would not normally be so pedantic, but the TV series "Heartbeat" is not set in the Pennines as Jenny suggests, but the North York Moors. More on Rendlesham, crop circles and Santilli alien autopsy scam. Book and mag reviews; latest UFO investigations.

## Stop Press

IN an attempt to end speculation on the alleged sacred artifacts hidden there, Roslyn Chapel Trust is seeking the opinion of Historic Scotland to allow a team of archaeologists access to conduct a sophisticated non-intrusive study of its vaults. If an investigation proceeds, the trust will allow computerised scanners to sweep the walls and floors to find clues as to whether Biblical treasures exist. With the approach of the millenium and the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ (The Courier and Advertiser, 15/3/99), it seems an appropriate time to unlock Roslyn Chapel's ancient secrets and end the conjecture once and for all (Cr: A.S.L. Rae)

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Ruth Gledhill (The Times, 17/4/99) reports a new "miracle" craze in Britain via Canada and California. God is filling worshippers' teeth with gold fillings and producing gold dust on their hands and faces as the latest manifestation of the "Toronto Blessing," the charismatic phenomenon which led to worshippers falling down, laughing and barking like dogs in churches up and down the land in 1995. Gold fillings are said to replace amalgam fillings in worshippers' mouths during prayer. The latest Christian "miracles" are said to be a fulfilment of the prophecy in Psalm 81.10: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." The miracles are reported on the British Christian website "Ship of Fools." Churches in Wimbledon, Bath and Croydon are among those said to be affected. The miracles began in March at a meeting of evangelical church leaders, where more than 300 people were said to have received gold fillings in their mouths.