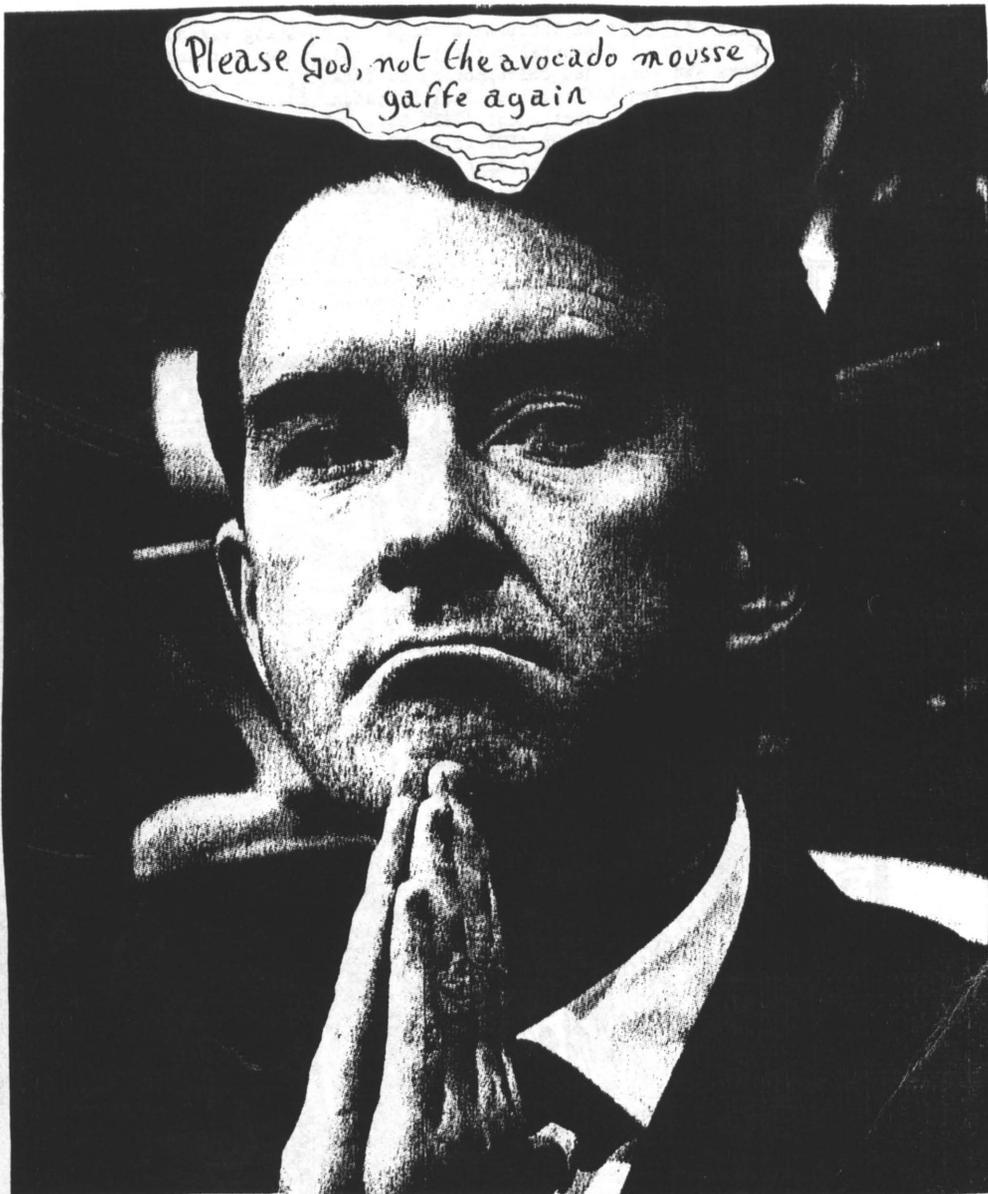


Please God, not the avocado mousse
gaffe again



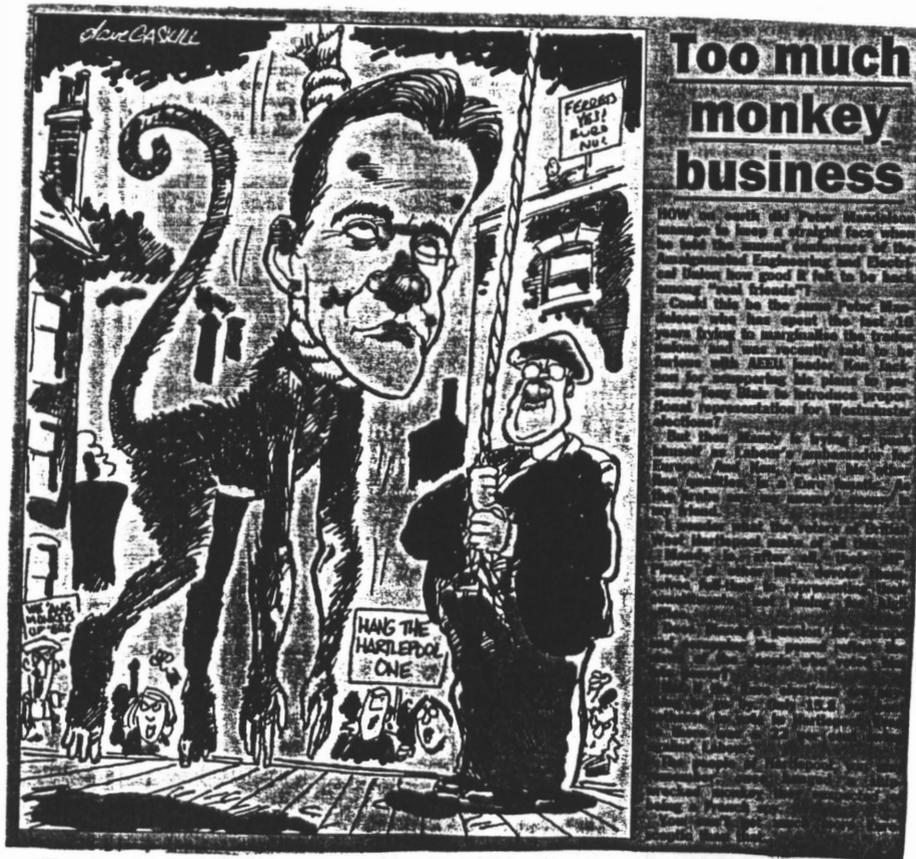
Folklore Frontiers 36

OCTOBER 1999

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The Diary



The piece above comes from Richard Littlejohn's column (*The Sun*, 2/7/99) and shows how Hartlepool's monkey-hangin legend is alive and well. This issue we feature Mandelson in his avocado mousse urban belief tale role.

On a sad note FF also pays tribute to the great loss of Donald L. Cyr, a great personal friend, supporter and reader of this magazine.



MANDELSON'S MUSHY PEAS: ANATOMY OF A CONTEMPORARY LEGEND



By PAUL SCREEPTON

TRACKING down the origin of an oft-repeated contemporary legend is like seeking the genesis of a favourite litty joke. Mission: impossible. Hopeless as the task may seem, I have attempted to track the spoor of the Mandelson myth, where he supposedly mistook mushy peas for avocado dip in a Hartlepool fish and chips shop.

A new starting point was offered by a televised portrait of the fallen minister and Hartlepool Member of Parliament, Peter Mandelson, "Now we are Two: The Real Peter Mandelson." (1) In this relatively sympathetic documentary, former Leader of the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock, purports to confess: "I am the originator of the mushy peas story, I think. I made up this story that he'd gone into this very broad veisin chip snop in the middle of Brecon and said he'd like a six and a fish, and could he have some of that guacamole dip please." Insisted Kinnock: "he took it in very good part."

The crucial word is "think" because he was wrong.

Andy McSmith admonishes Kinnock on this in his immensely detailed "insider" book on the rise of New Labour, "Faces of Labour" (2) and in a profile article on Mandelson (3) which had the avocado-peas incident in the first paragraph. Both also attempted to put the legend into a wider perspective, claiming that something along these lines happened during a by-election in Knowsley North, near Liverpool, during 1986.

A team of party professionals were there as the local party, angered by having a candidate imposed, boycotted the campaign. Working from a disused office in the rundown wasteland that was Kirkby, their only source of quick feed was a nearby chippie.

It was all very different from the cosseted home life of Shelley Keeling, daughter of a wealthy American businessman, who was completing her studies by spending a year in the Parliamentary office of Jack Straw. A party researcher named Julian Eccles treated himself one day to a takeaway of chips and mushy peas. And guess what? When Shelley saw this fare her eyes lit up and she exclaimed: "That looks delicious -- it must be avocado!" (3) or conversely "That looks delicious: is it avocado?" (2)

A few days later, Shelley was surprised to find her father on the transatlantic telephone, amused at having read a story in the Financial Times about his gourmet-gormless daughter. It was then seized upon by Peter Taaffe, editor of Militant, who related it to the 5,000-strong crowd attending a Royal Albert Hall rally for Militant on November 15, 1986, two days after Knowsley North had returned an un-Militant Labour M.P.

"Thus the story of the yuppie who could not tell mushy peas from avocado was born," wrote McSmith. (2)



4.

PETER MANDELSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

0171 219 4607

Paul Screeter
Hartlepool Mail
New Clarence house
Wesley Square
Hartlepool TS24 8BX

7 October 1996

Dear Paul

Following our telephone conversation today. The correct details of the incident which you refer to occurred during the Knowsley by-election in the early 1990s. Jack Straw's American volunteer was campaigning in the constituency, whilst in a fish and chip shop she pointed at some mushy peas and asked for avocado mousse with her chips. The story was later attributed to Peter.

I believe Andy McSmith in his book The Faces of Labour gives an accurate description of the event.

I hope that this background information is of use.

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Wegg-Prosser
Assistant to Peter Mandelson MP

Jan Walsh scoops the best supermarket guacamole



MARKS AND SPENCER
160g £1.99 ★★★★★

This is fairly expensive, but tastes delicious. It looks home-made with pieces of tomato and avocado to give it texture. "It's the perfect balance with a really natural avocado flavour," said one tester.



SAINSBURY
113g 99p ★★★★

This wouldn't be spicy enough for Mexicans, but our panel liked it. The tomato gives it a speckled appearance. "Just right, with a delicious avocado flavour and a good tang of tomato," said one.



ASDA
113g £1.09 ★★★

This is very smooth, with almost no lumps. Most liked the strong green colour, and there's a distinct flavour of coriander. "Smooth, thick and creamy. Very balanced," said one.



SOMERFIELD
113g £1.45 ★★★

One to suit the chilli connoisseurs. It's hot with a strong flavour of onion and a pale, home-made appearance. "A nice texture," said one. "It's tangy, hot and spicy. Mind-blowing," said another.



SAFEWAY
113g £1.49 ★★★

The most expensive dip in the test, but not the best. One of the mildest mixtures, though there was lots of garlic in place of spices. "Fairly bland and not a lot of texture," said one.



TESCO
120g £1.45 ★★

A very hot mixture, but so spicy, many testers felt they couldn't taste anything. "The flavour of avocado was completely lost," said one sampler. But it looks good with big rough lumps of tomato.

5.

Mandelson never set foot in Knowsley, so how did it attach itself to him?

Well, at a social gathering in Blackpool in 1990 to mark Mandelson's departure from his top party post of Director of Communications, Labour Leader Neil Kinnock told this very story as if he had witnessed it personally, claiming it had taken place during the Bracon by-election. The story had been circulating for four years, so what could have prompted Kinnock to misremember the anecdote and connect it with Mandelson? Had he perhaps read it four WEEKS earlier in The People? That Sunday newspaper's political columnist had been playing a game beloved of journalists, of repeating a Hartlepool Mail story knowing it to be untrue, and by denying it, giving it new life. All the standard details had been there -- Mandelson, avocado dip mistake, plus a joke to the effect that you can tell that politicians eat mushy peas because they are so full of wind. And who was The People pundit spreading this tale? Yes, none other than Mandelson.

The transfer of the story to a Hartlepool location, however, did not originally directly involve Mandelson. In 1990, Mandelson was an M.P. - in-waiting with sitting incumbent Ted Leadbitter having announced he was retiring at the next General Election, when the tale with more than a shade of North/South divide annui surfaced.

Supposedly, a group of the party's Hampstead faithful visited the North-East to assess Mandelson's prospects of holding the seat. They decided to "go native" and sample the local gastronomic delights. Entering a seaside fish shop, one of them with a grasp of the local lingo ordered "cod and chips, twice." Another, however, cracked under the proletariat strain and requested "some of that delicious-looking avocado mousse." Readers will doubtless have guessed that the finger was pointed at a steaming tub of mushy peas. (4)

This fabrication resurfaced in The Times, however substituting Mandelson himself for the champagne socialists, who allegedly visited a local Seaton Carew chippie, pointed and exclaimed: "And I will try some of that delicious-looking avocado mousse." The proprietor is said to have replied: "You mean the mushy peas?"

Image-maker-in-chief Mandelson denied the claim to the Hartlepool Mail: "I regularly eat fish and chips and occasionally mushy peas. Anybody in their right mind would not confuse mushy peas with avocado mousse." (5)

When it came to the General Election Mike Amos recorded in his Northern Echo election diary that Mandelson "... still can't shake off an urban legend of fish, chips and mushy peas. Of Mandelson, and others, it is alleged that he went into a Hartlepool fish shop, placed his order, pointed to the peas and said he'd have some of the avocado mousse as well. The Sunday Telegraph accepts only grudgingly that the story may be apocryphal. 'It fits him like a glove,' it says."

But does he really eat fish and chips? A major profile in the Mail on Sunday depicted in colour both mushy peas and guacamole for those (like most of us, perhaps) who might be confused by the difference, in a side panel, "The Guacamole affair in full" -- adding: "They said he went to a Hartlepool chippie and pointing at the mushy peas, asked for 'the very excellent guacamole'. He refutes this, saying he's NEVER been in a fish and chip shop in his life." (7)

The article was written by former Labour Party Deputy Leader Roy Hattersley, but I suspect more mischief as the "guacamole affair" comments were not born out in the actual article. A devious layout designer, I suspect.

Noted gastronome Hattersley not surprisingly began his profile by stating: "It was Peter Mandelson himself . . . who raised the subject of guacamole, the once-fashionable mixture of crushed avocado, tomatoes, garlic and onions which has become a satirical symbol of New Labour. Stories that he ordered the Mexican delicacy in a Hartlepool fish and chip shop only to be told that he was pointing at mushy peas were, he insisted, totally untrue. But he was clearly not satisfied that his denials had been accepted. Next day, he photocopied and posted an Economist article that dealt, extensively, with the history of the guacamole allegation and identified the young American research assistant who had actually made the mistake of which Mandelson had been so unjustly accused.

"Preoccupation with the guacamole affair is typical of Mandelson's recent behaviour -- and of the attention that it attracts."

There has been much subsequent mileage from the legend. Political commentator and ex-M.P., Matthew Parris (who had unwittingly "outed" Mandelson when it was an open secret), noted that by 1996 "the average New Labour M.P. has now just about sorted out the difference between mushy peas and avocado dip" (8) and earlier at the last General Election, Liberal Democrat Hartlepool hopeful, Reg Clark, issued a newspaper advert with a colour illustration of mushy peas with the slogan: "The choice for Hartlepool on May 1st. Avocado mousse or mushy peas. Vote Reg Clark." (9)

The hoary old chestnut was trotted out again when M.P.s quizzed Mandelson about the content of the Millenium Dome, over which he was then controller. "I hope that, as a fellow Northern M.P., 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 waspish Grimsby M.P. Austin Mitchell. (10)

At 1998's Labour Party conference, unreconstructed Old Labour Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott made fun of the multi-coloured "Kubik's Cube" backdrop to the platform, and going through each primary colour he observed: "In London we call the green 'avocado'. In Hartlepool they call it 'mushy peas'." (11)

Prescott has always hated Mandelson and so did sufficient others to have him placed 37th in Britain's 50 Most Unpopular People, which piece says "above all he hates that beguiling but apparently untrue tale that once, in his Hartlepool constituency, he mistook mushy peas for guacamole" (12)

GUACAMOLE

Avocado trees are so common in Mexico, growing wild and in cultivation, that this fresh green paste is eaten with almost every meal -- as a sauce for chili con carne, as a filling for tortillas, as a side salad, or as a dip for tortilla chips, crisps, cruciferae and so on.

INGREDIENTS METHOD SERVES 4

2 large ripe avocados Halve avocados and remove stones. Scoop flesh from skins and mash in bowl with a fork.

2-3 tbsp fresh lime (or lemon) juice Work juice into the avocado quickly to prevent discoloration.

1 small onion, peeled and finely sliced

1 large tomato, skinned, seeded and diced

2 tbsp fresh coriander, finely chopped

1-2 fresh green chillies, deseeded and finely sliced (serrano or jalapeno for authenticity)

salt to taste

Mix remaining ingredients and fold evenly into the avocado purée. Use as quickly as possible. If keeping for a while, brush with lemon juice and cover tightly with clingfilm. >



Paul Jermy has illustrated my book "The Man Who Ate A Domino", of which this article is an extended part, which is typeset but in limbo with Printability Publishing. A great shame.

Lower profile, but in a similar vein, is the story of Tony Blair's tour of miners' welfare clubs when earlier seeking the adjacent Sedgefield constituency nomination in 1983. Advising the future Prime Minister to order a pint in every bar, his agent John Burton (later to covet the Hartlepool seat himself, but standing aside for Blair's special chum) added: "And whatever you do, don't order any bloody Perrier Water." (10)

Yet all contemporary legends come full circle and move from fiction to some sort of fact.

West London's River Cafe restaurant symbolizes the metropolitan chic of New Labour and jealous Tories have dubbed it "Tony's canteen." Here Blair himself dines on roasted whole sea bass, Mo Mowlam has pot-roasted rabbit, Gordon Brown char-grilled red mullet and Peter Mandelson . . . almost unbelievably, mushy minted peas. (13)

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- (1) "Wow We are Two: The Real Peter Mandelson" Channel 4, April 25, 1999
- (2) McSmith, Andy. "Faces of Labour" Verso, 1996
- (3) McSmith, Andy. The Observer, September 29, 1996
- (4) Northern Echo, March 2, 1990
- (5) Hartlepool Mail, August 15, 1990
- (6) Northern Echo, March 19, 1992
- (7) Night & Day (The Mail on Sunday Review), September 24, 1995
- (8) Parrish, Matthew. The Sun, May 23, 1998
- (9) The Mail, April 28, 1997
- (10) The Journal (Newcastle upon Tyne), February 21, 1998
- (11) Prescott, John. Speech on October 2, 1998
- (12) Cathcart, Brian. Night & Day, February 8, 1998
- (13) Thomson, Alice. The Daily Telegraph Weekend, October 31, 1998

Oldies but Goodies

FROZEN CHICKEN. Attempted shoplifting of a frozen chicken is a regular and here are two variations. Eva Babsker was fined £100 by a judge in New York after she collapsed from cold before she could sneak out of a shop with the produce -- "If you've never had a frozen chicken bouncing around in your boobs, you don't know what cold is" (The Sport, 10/4/97). Also in New York, but this time the frozen chicken was hidden under the hat of Brenda Coleman, who was rushed to hospital with suspected brain damage due to cranial hypothermia (D. Sport, 9/4/99; News of the World, 11/4/99)

BELOW THE BELT. Salvatori/Salvadori Valdez got thunderous applause when he stepped into the ring in Cartagena, Spain, as he had forgotten to put his shorts on -- and was promptly disqualified (D. Sport, 8/1/99; News of the World, 10/1/99)

SIGN OF THE TIMES. Keen Greens in Michigan were fuming when they saw game wardens sticking notices on trees in a state forest. They carried the message: "Please Do Not Post Signs On Trees." (D. Sport, 23/6/94)

HARDENED CRIMINALS. The notorious Adams family, the north London criminal gang, were back in the news after the brutal murder of a jeweller Mr Fix-It and the disappearance of one-time enforcer Gilbert Wynter, who is, according to sources, "either in hiding in the Caribbean, or holding up the Millenium Dome inside one of the pillars." (The Independent, 5/12/98)

SHIRLEY EATON: GOING FOR GOLD

By Paul Sreeton

Actress Shirley Eaton's place as a blonde icon was assured the moment she appeared in the film "Goldfinger" 33 years ago wearing nothing but a thin layer of gold paint and a G-string. She epitomised the Bond girl.

When she met a gilded end, having incurred the wrath of the eponymous anti-hero of the film after falling in love with James Bond, she was also acting out one of the greatest body myths. That if you are covered from head to toe with paint you will die of suffocation.

"Under no circumstances does the body 'breathe' through the skin," and anonymous journalist claimed. (1)

"Any moderne cosmetic preparation which announces the user's skin to be allowed to breathe, should ne open to prosecution under the Trades Description Act. Frogs, to a certain extent, breathe through the skin, but humans do not. So, while it is certainly not a good idea to coat yourself with paint or any other substance, you will certainly survive the experience."

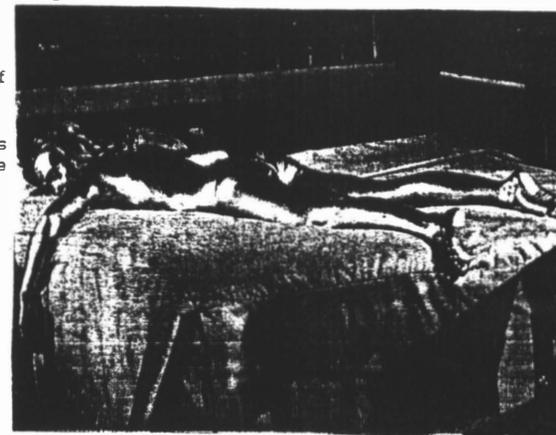
Today, she has fond memories of her movie days, especially her part in "Goldfinger". In 1995 she was still bolstering the body myth in an interview with Jane Preston. She recalled: "The studio had a few doctors standing by because they were worried that I might be overcome by the effect of the paint. But it was fine. They left a six-inch square on my tummy to let my skin breathe." (2)

At the peak of her career, aged 32, she quit acting to concentrate on her family, sons Grant and Jason, and property developer husband Colin, who died of cancer after 37 years of marriage.

At an auction of Bond memorabilia, Shirley Eaton was selling the gold lame coat she wore on promotional tours. "I am not really sure I want to part with it," she told Will Bennett. "I feel a little bit sentimental about selling it." (3)

She may be a 62-year-old grandmother, but in her gold paint execution she presented perhaps the most memorable image in a 007 movie.

References: (1) D. Mirror, 13/12/93; (2) Mail on Sunday, 3/12/95; (3) D. Teleg., 18/7/98



tAit's

Gallery

Phew it's hot. And no doubt by the time you read this there'll be six inches of snow at your doorstep, just to make an idiot of me. But hey, I had to start somewhere.

Telephones, I hate them me. But the world revolves around their ringing. Despite the hype surrounding Furbies, the real biggy on the Christmas wish list last year were mobile phones - And not long after came the reports of their brain-frying capabilities. Of course the mobile phone companies played it down, whilst at the same time advising that you placed your head inside a microwave oven to make a call. technology eh?

A rumour I head recently involved telephones of the non-mobile variety. Apparently when the weather is very hot, sometimes it is possible for the conversations down one line to, "bleed" into another on a neighbouring line. Giving one huge party line. Sounds a bit fishy, if fun, to me.

Speaking of fish, I had the good fortune to be in a pub recently. There that's it really. Ehm, no where was I? Oh yes, there was a radio quiz going on and the woman who won said she was from Maidenhead. An elderly gent snorted into his Guinness and when his mates asked him what was funny, he replied something along

the lines of, "Maidenhead derives its name from the intact hymen of a virgin". Anyone out there substantiate this "Fact"? And if true, then just who's hymen was worthy of the honour of having a town named after it?

For some peculiar reason, each time I sit down to write this column, there seems to be some issue of questionable gender in the news. this time it occurred at the World Veterans Athletics Championships at Gateshead. Not content with the odd finger-pointing regarding drug taking etc. the oldies outclassed everyone in their accusations - that the winner of the gold medals in the women's 100 and 200 meter races, was in fact a man.

Cathy Jager a 56 year old mother of two (known to her close friends as, Mick, for some reason), and grandmother of four, had the accusations levelled against "her" by officials from the Australian and New Zealand camps. For a day or so the speculation intensified as the world waited for the results of a doctor's examination. dan dan dan dan DAH..... She was a woman. As far as



they could tell.

A more famous rumour of potential gender cover-up surrounds one of the greatest love stories of the century - Edward & Mrs Simpson. It has been suggested that Mrs Simpson was in fact a Mr, and this is the real reason behind the abdication - Much more embarrassing than being found out as a Nazi collaborator I'm sure.

Not content with the she-male tag, other sources have pointed out that Wallace (and what kind of name is that for a little girl?) Simpson spent some time in the shady regions of the orient - and hey, you know what they're like.

As I write this we are only days away from a full lunar eclipse. This has sparked a deluge of government advice about the dangers of looking directly at the sun. A foaf tale I heard recently - A guy who works at a local camera shop mentioned that they had sold twice the number of binoculars as usual, when he started asking his customers what they wanted the field glasses for, the answer was a unanimous - "To watch the eclipse". I wonder if you can get calamine lotion into your eye sockets?

The countdown to the new millennium has been well covered by virtually every newspaper and magazine with a column cm to fill. However, an interesting snippet on the psyche of our nation is revealed in the poll carried out on the web site for the millennium dome (www.dome2000.co.uk).

According to the questionnaire posted on line, 6.9% of people believe that in the next 1000 years, men will be able to give birth. Well I suppose, who's to say. But compare this to only 1.6% who believe that the next 1000 years will see increased human life expectancy. despite life expectancy creeping up each decade - or so we're told. The thing most people believe will be a reality in the next 1000 years, getting a whopping 46.6% of votes, is perpetual motion. Well I suppose it's a tad more exciting than the tin-foil suits predicted by tomorrow World.

With each summer I notice more and more people flying past my Reliant Robin on my route home on high powered motorcycles. And as a sombre accompaniment, I notice more and more flowers lain by the side of the road in remembrance of accident victims who have presumably come to grief at that particular spot. It is a custom which seems to have been embraced wholeheartedly, and as far as I can tell, comparatively recently. Sometimes the flowers are accompanied by permanent plaques. Is this actually a recent custom, or is the apparent increase in roadside remembrances purely down to an increase in road casualties?

If it's the former, then it's an interesting field of investigation for the modern folklorist. If it's the latter, it's a sad indication of the human price to be paid for our technology.

John Tait

Newslines

BEEFOAKE EATERS. Newspapers have taken seriously rumours of a tribe of cannibal Amazons living deep in the jungles of Indonesian-ruled Irian Jaya. The 20-strong all-women Pok tribe are said to capture men from neighbouring villages, who after enforced sex are killed and eaten. Any boys born are slain at birth. One line of thought is that the reports are too consistent to be dismissed, another is that the behaviour of these "black widow spider tribeswomen" is nothing more than "jungle whispers" -- very non-urban belief tales. Outrageously, they are supposed to have so keen a sense of smell as to be able to detect the approach of strangers from a long way off. (D. Mail, 23/4/99; Sun. Teleg., News of the World, 25/4/99)

BEES -- A STING. Genetically modified crops now feature in the modern apocrypha. Sam Westacott (Weekend Telegraph, 10/7/99) reported that "rumours spread that beekeepers would be fined £5,000 for a hive near GM crops and that Brussels Labelling laws would force them to mark their pots 'Contains genetically modified pollen'. Who will buy it then?" In addition to the bold deaths in the family, bees should be instructed not to cross buffer zones?

TALKING RHUBARB. New traditions spring up daily -- believe me, my bulging files on the subject, too numerous to fit into RH -- but I must mention a local one. Through an appeal (Hartlepool Mail, 14/5/99; Hartlepool Star, 20/5/99) rhubarb thrashing has surfaced. "We usually play rhubarb thrashing at our games night in the Corner Flag pub at Hartlepool United's Victoria Park. There are four members on each team and you can take each other one at a time and play it not unlike croquet," said Ken Knatt. What they were appealing for was stout and solid stalks with a decent cap so it can stand up to the thrashing contest. "There are various techniques you can use, and I prefer bringing the leaves downwards in a fast motion," explained Ken. Readers answered an appeal for the fruit (it's NOT a vegetable). Ken said: "Thanks to the new rhubarb register we have a plentiful supply for this season's programme." Non-growers even suggested such alternatives as frozen or tinned rhubarb.

GOING APE. I've covered our Hartlepool monkey-banging legend plenty in these pages and today, as I write this, I signed a copy of my book on the legend for June Wright, a former colleague, who had bought it for her eldest grandson James. Hartlepool United F.C. has decided to adopt the legend for its mascot and 6ft. 1in. James, who I've spoken to and congratulated, has been selected to sweat it out in the costume and jiggle about at games.

RATTED. OK, this one's pure Fortean! Dick Whittington, his cat and a plague of rats were forced out of their pantomime rehearsal venue -- by an invasion of real-life rats. They were barred from using the scout hut in Ludlow, Shropshire, until pest control officers gave it the all-clear. Producer Elaine Ball said: "The choice of panto is strangely ironic". (D. Sport, 11/12/98)

WORLD THREAT. A Scandinavian survey has "proved" mobile phones make you ill (Sun. Mirror, 15/5/99) while a U.S. research claims they increase brain tumour risk (D. Teleg., 24/5/99). Meanwhile, Ministry of Defence researchers have ordered protective shields for staff using mobiles, despite the official stance that the phones have not been proven dangerous (Sun. Telg., 30/5/99)



In recent weeks, the *Editor* has received tips from several readers about a hilarious transcript from a Melbourne radio station. The station is running a *Mr and Mrs*-style contest, in which each spouse is asked three personal questions. If they give the same answers, they win a holiday in Bali. The transcript has appeared in *Southern Cross*, a British magazine read by Australians, and is doing the rounds by e-mail. Sadly, our fact-checkers have so far been unable to confirm its veracity; and FOX-FM, a Melbourne radio station that is running such a contest, does not recognise it. For now, then, the transcript's status appears to be "probable urban myth". Unless you know different...

Presenter: Giddy, its FOX-FM. Do you want to play the game?

Brian [a caller]: Yeah, sure.

Presenter: OK. Question 1.

When was the last time you had sex?

Brian: Ohhh, maaaaate. Ha ha, well, about eight o'clock this morning.

Presenter: And how long did it go for Brian?

Brian: Orrrrr...about 10 minutes.

Presenter: 10 minutes?

Good one. And where did you do it, mate?

Brian: Ohhhh maaaaate, I can't say that.

Presenter: There's a holiday to Bali at stake, Brian!

Brian: OK...OK...On the kitchen table.

Presenter and others in the studio [laughing]: Good one Brian. Now is it OK to call your wife?

Brian: Yeah, alright.

Presenter: Hi Sharelle, how are you?

Sharelle: Hi. Good, thanks.

Presenter: Now Sharelle, we're going to ask you the same three questions we asked Brian, and if you give the same answers, you win a trip to Bali.

Brian: Just tell the truth, Honey.

Sharelle: OK.

Presenter: Sharelle, when was the last time you had sex?

Sharelle: Oohh, nooo. I can't say that on radio.

Brian: Sharelle, it doesn't matter. I've already told them.

Sharelle: OK...About eight this morning, before Brian went to work.

Presenter: Good, nice start! Next question. How long did it go for, Sharelle?

Sharelle [giggling]: About 12, maybe 15 minutes.

Co-presenter: That's close enough...Brian was just being a gentleman.

Presenter: OK. Sharelle, final question. Where did you do it?

Sharelle: Oh no, I can't say that. My mum could be listening.

No way, no.

Presenter: There's a trip to Bali on the line here.

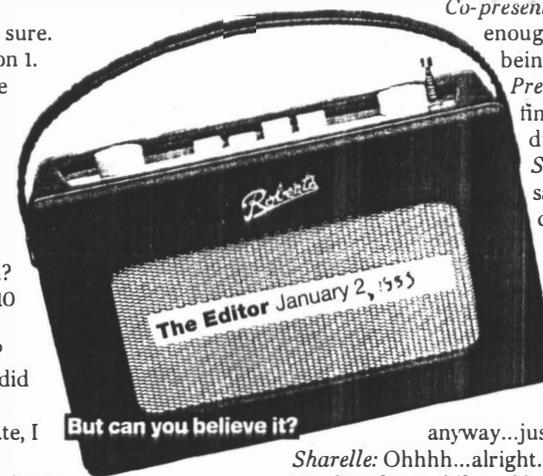
Brian: Sharelle, I've already told them, so it doesn't matter

anyway...just tell 'em.

Sharelle: Ohhhh...alright...Up the arse!

[Radio silence, followed by advert]

Presenter: Sorry if anyone was offended before, we're going live here, and sometimes these things happen. We've given Brian and Sharelle the holiday. Now we'll take a music break...



But can you believe it?

● Bill Clinton is responsible for at least 50 deaths. The rising "bodycount" includes colleagues, advisors and citizens who were willing to testify against him. [False.]

● The tops of certain drink cans are encrusted with the dried urine of rats who live in the warehouses and containers where cans are stored. The urine is toxic, so drinking from cans can be lethal. [False.]

● In a recent appearance on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, the fashion designer Tommy Hilfinger is said to have urged African-Americans to avoid his label as he designed them for upper-class whites. [False. No such interview took place, and the company says that "whether these rumours are part of a misunderstanding or a deliberate act of malice, they have absolutely no basis in fact".]

- Drug users are putting used needles in the coin-return slots in public telephones. People putting their fingers in to recover coins are getting pricked by the needles and infected with hepatitis, HIV, and other diseases. [False.]
- Bill Gates recently sent out the following e-mail message: "Hello everybody. My name is Bill Gates. I have just written up an e-mail-tracing programme that traces everyone to whom this message is forwarded to. I am experimenting with this and I need your help. Forward this to everyone you know and, if it reaches 1,000 people, everyone on the list will receive \$1,000 at my expense. Enjoy. Your friend, Bill Gates." [False.]
- The manufacturers of some tampons purposefully add small amounts of asbestos to them to make women bleed more and hence buy more of their products. [False.]
- Two Intel engineers working on a recent version of the Microsoft-favoured Pentium

microchip etched "bill sux" onto the surface of the chip. The "flaw" was only discovered after the chip was released into the market, too late for

- Intel to stop the chip being put into tens of thousands of PCs. Both of the engineers were former employees of Motorola, makers of the chips used by Microsoft's number-one rival, Apple Macintosh. [False.]
- If you send your old trainers to Nike, the company will send you a brand new pair for free. The offer is part of a recycling programme in which Nike is planning to use the rubber from old trainers to make playing fields and playgrounds for the underprivileged. [False.] Nike is said to have received hundreds of boxes of old trainers since this hoax first appeared online early last year.]

The Mining Co Guide to Urban Legends and Folklore is at <http://urbanlegends.miningco.com/library/weekly/aa121698.htm>

THE Hokey Cokey, the popular dance, has always been seen as an innocent, if raucous, form of entertainment. But an Anglican clergyman has now discovered a more sinister side: It originated as a parody of the Roman Catholic Church's Latin Mass.

Canon George Nairn-Briggs, Provost of Wakefield Cathedral, West Yorkshire, says that both the name of the dance and its actions were originally designed to satirise the traditional Mass and the clergy.

The dance involves participants forming a chain and flinging their limbs about in line with commands.

Canon Nairn-Briggs said: "In the days when the priest celebrated the Mass with his back to the people and whispered the Latin words of consecration with many hand movements, the laity mimicked the movements as they saw them and the words as they misheard them."

The words "hokey cokey" were a mishearing, or a deliberate parody, of the Latin

phrase "Hoc est enim corpus meum", which translates as "This is my body".

Canon Nairn-Briggs also contends that another corruption of the same phrase is "hocus pocus", the words believed to be used by magicians when they were casting spells.

Historical sources appear to back up his theories. The Hokey Cokey became a popular dance in 1940s America and crossed the Atlantic with US soldiers. But its origins are much older and it seems to have gained popularity originally on this side of the Atlantic, before being taken to the US by refugees. An earlier folk dance version was performed in mainland Europe in the 19th century.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that "hokey cokey" comes from "hocus pocus", the traditional magicians' incantation that derives from a Latin phrase used in satanic masses, themselves parodies of the Latin Mass.

by DAVID BAMBER

New vodka has no hangover

A VODKA maker claims to have developed a hangover-free version that also perks up your sex life.

The Russian makers say the new drink, called *No Hangover*, can also repair damaged liver cells, all thanks to a secret ingredient which neutralises the alcohol.

WEIRD

A HERBAL tea said to cure a hangover in 30 minutes is being marketed in Korea with the slogan "Goodbye to alcoholism". Maker Dr Nam Jong Hyun says it will be available here next year.

WORLD

MIDWESTERN EPIGRAPHIC NEWSLETTER, Volume 16, Number 3, 1999

MIR UNORTHODOX HAS JOINED THE HALOS : A Report on the Passing of Donald Lee Cyr (1920 - 1999)

by

John J White, III, *Ancient Science and Technology Center,
Midwestern Epigraphic Society, Columbus, Ohio*

It is with heavy heart and joyous spirit that I report to you on the passing of a good and noble friend Donald Lee Cyr on Monday, May 31, 1999. Donald was an international figure in the broad field of avant-garde archaeology. He was best known for his monumental efforts as the editor and publisher of a series of journals and books produced under the name *Stonehenge Viewpoint*.

HIS RESEARCH INTERESTS

Donald Cyr, DFMES actively published in the *Midwestern Epigraphic Journal*, and he was a winner of the prestigious MES Barry Fell Award for 1998. My wife Patricia and I enjoyed the hospitality of the Cyrs in Santa Barbara, CA in late January shortly before their 50th wedding anniversary on February 15, 1999. They accepted our invitation to visit Columbus, OH on the weekend of April 24 where Don was an invited speaker at our best ever MES Symposium. (Frank Joseph of *The Ancient American* presented what may be the finest lecture of his career!) On April 25 we took Donald and Joan Cyr to the Hopewell Mounds in Chillicothe, the Serpent Mound in Adams County, Old Man's Cave in Hocking Hills, and finally to Schmidt's German-style Restaurant in Columbus for their world famous Bahama Mama sausages.

I report these social interactions so that Don's friends may know that I had the privilege of some vintage experiences with this great investigator of geological phenomena and archaeological oddities. Don was gentle and humorous and seemingly easy going. Cyr had found a very successful formula for how to live a full and successful life without yielding unnecessarily to the stresses and political aggravations of the real world. The Cyrs I found to be very modest people with a dogged determination to see their projects reach fruition.

Judging from the titles of his numerous books, you might have the impression that Donald Cyr was a way-out lunatic on the fringes of science and history. Not so! Donald was, in fact, a shrewd industrial engineer (Univ of Southern California, 1947), technical writer, and business manager who cut his professional teeth on the ground floor of the great West Coast Aerospace Age. Donald did not strike me as a true rocket scientist, but he had an uncanny eye for unusual reports of phenomena and an even more uncanny intuition that there was real science, however

difficult to obtain closure, behind these events. Donald was in my view one of the great scientific "Palumbos" of our time. He had the courage to tackle scientific questions that no one else would touch, research the issues patiently for years, stand on the shoulders of the available giants, and edit all of this work into fantastic books that will pop the eyes out of future generations of scientists who lack his investigative zeal and courage.

Did you know that long ago when people still had ice boxes and outhouses and horse-drawn wagons (c1945), Donald Cyr wrote books titled *Life on Mars*, *Saturn Has Rings*, and *Mars Revisited* that took many years for the NASA-type people to evaluate scientifically? I once viewed his interest in the phenomena of Crop Circles to have the same fraudulent characteristics alleged for the mysterious Burrows Cave artifacts. It simply did not occur to me that Crop Circles were an artifact of certain forms of ground-lightning interaction! Donald Cyr had an ability to separate the chaff from the wheat that was a rare talent even in this century of great scientists.



Donald Cyr toured the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Chillicothe, Ohio on April 25, 1999.

There was one singular interest that dominated the research and publication interests of the so-called Mr Unorthodox. Donald moved to southern California at age fifteen, principally for his health, where he met a miner who was an enthusiast for the findings and predictions of the great late-nineteenth-century avant-garde geologist Isaac Newton Vail (1840-1912) from Barnesville, OH. Vail's Quaker family was forced to migrate to Iowa and then to Pasadena, CA in retribution for their participation in the Underground Railroad during the Civil War era. Vail had produced some provocative interpretations of the recent geological history of the Earth that caught the fancy of young Donald Cyr.

Donald Cyr was a devoted disciple of Isaac Newton Vail. Vail, a reserved Quaker-type personality, was a prolific writer and poet who never passed up a real or imagined opportunity to tell his story. Cyr, although a big man for his generation, had similar inclinations and threaded the Vail theories through literally hundreds of pages of scientific writing. It took him nearly 15 years to visit the various Vail relatives and to see that full microfilm archives of his various works were established.

The center piece of this interest was the Vaillian Canopy Theory, which predicted that the Earth of ancient man was encircled by an ice-crystal-filled cloud canopy. The truth of this theory was alleged initially to be revealed by references to "waters above the firmament" and to a variety of archaeological sites and symbols alleged to reveal many ancient "halos" resulting from a partially obscured sun. Donald avidly pursued the occurrence of many indications of "halo" observation. By 1997 it was rather clear that Cyr's lifetime pursuit was coming to a positive conclusion. A scientist named Louis A Frank had reported that the source of water and possibly elementary life forms for the Earth resulted from the continuous arrival of snowball comets. I have listed a few references¹⁻⁶ on this subject for the interested reader.

If you are not now a Donald Cyr scholar, let me suggest a few of his Stonehenge Viewpoint books that might interest our ancient history readers: The Celtic Connection, King Arthur's Crystal Cave, Cascading Comets, Megalithic Adventures, Dragon Treasures, The Colorado Ogam Album, Celtic Secrets, Full Measure, Glastonbury Treasures, Exploring Rock Art, Stonehenge Scrolls, The Diffusion Issue, and The Eclectic Epigrapher.

HIS FAMILY AND LIFE

Donald Lee Cyr was born May 11, 1920 in Butte, MT, the son of Pierre (Peter) Cyr and Marjorie Rathburn. Tragedy shaped his life at age four when his father, a conductor on the Northern Pacific Railroad, died from typhoid fever. Marjorie took her only child back to Battle Creek, MI where she ran a number of businesses. At 15 Donald contracted a case of TB and even had a small operation for it. Better medical care was available to him

in Los Angeles and Tucson, and thus he moved to Pasadena to live with his father's sister Celina Cyr. There he met a tenant who taught him the basics of the Vaillian Canopy Theory and other intriguing proposals that would occupy his research interests for a lifetime.

Cyr pursued a good education for his generation of depression-era youth. He attended Pasadena City College for two years where he was the top student. He then took a number of field-related jobs while he attended the Univ of Southern California, completing an Industrial Engineering degree in 1947.

Donald was well known for both his humor and his attraction to unexpected interests. Somewhat in keeping with this trend, he courted a UCLA student who graduated with a Business degree in 1948. On February 15, 1949 he married Joan Leveille of Pasadena, and they lived happily ever after. The Cyrs were blessed with three children, James, Douglas, and Annette, and they have six grandchildren.

To avoid duplication I will stop here. Donald wrote an autobiography for the Midwestern Epigraphic Journal that will be published near the end of this year. There he describes his job experiences and some of his motivations for research. Donald went into semi-retirement in the early 1970s after they had moved to Santa Barbara. Joan and Donald purchased the Hatton Letter Company and setup the Stonehenge Viewpoint publishing house to operate as retirement businesses.

Donald Lee Cyr was returning home from a Prehistoric Rock Art conference in Wisconsin with the company of his wife Joan and daughter Annette. During a flight from Chicago to Los Angeles, somewhere over the Rocky Mountains, our noble friend passed away peacefully on May 31, 1999.

REFERENCES

1. Isaac N Vail, Waters Above the Firmament, Stonehenge Viewpoint, 1988. FP 1874-1912.
2. Louis A Frank with Patrick Huyghe, The Big Splash, Carrol Publishing, Secaucus, NJ, 1990.
3. DL Cyr, The Crystal Veil: Avant-Garde Archaeology, Stonehenge Viewpoint, 800 Palermo Dr, Santa Barbara, CA 93105, 1995, 160p.
4. DL Cyr, "A Short Summary of the Vaillian Canopy Theory", Midwestern Epigraphic J 9, 23-25 (1995).
5. DL Cyr and JJ White, "The Life of Isaac Newton Vail (1840-1912)", MEJ 9, 26-28 (1995).
6. DL Cyr, "The Ideas of Isaac Vail Almost Confirmed in 1997", MEJ 10(2), 59-61 (1996).■

Articles elsewhere

* **ANIMAL LIB.** Following tales of urban fox releases in the countryside, Guy and Christopher Thomas Evarard, in "Should badgers be culled to stop bovine TB?", speculated that after the MAFF began trapping infected badgers, the Animal Liberation Front followed the trappers and liberated TB-infected badgers from the traps. "We are told (although do not state it as fact)" that sickly beasts were released in the Eze Valley, leading to a new outbreak. Similarly Yeovil badgers were moved to land owned by the League Against Country Sports (D. Taleg, 12/3/99). In the same newspaper, R W F Poole's "Red means dead for squirrels" points to another secret reintroduction, that of goshawks to Kleider Forest about ten years ago by substituting their eggs into sparrowhawks' nests.

* **DRILL PARADE.** An in-depth article on trepanned people, "Like a hole in the head" by Jessica Werb, argued supporters' view that it clears the mind, but had an Edinburgh consultant neurosurgeon calling it "codswallop" and warning of the risk of brain abscess, meningitis or brain abscess due to infection (The Scotsman, 3/8/99 - credit Dr A S L Rae).

* **"MYSTERY" BLOBS.** A friend of mine, Graham Droughton, penned a weird letter to our local rag, surmising that what every sane person would deduce to be squashed chewing/bubblegum was, in fact, a sinister cover-up by the Government (including D-notices to newspapers). He believes the pavement substance must come down as a mist and then solidify. He suggests that it could come from Outer Space (The Hartlepool Mail, 24/5/99). I responded to say it was plain old gum (6/6/99). Incidentally, I also contributed a tribute to my old pal Screaming Lord Sutch (25/6/99). There was also a timely overview of gum mastication by Richard Hollidge (The Times Weekend, 22/5/99).

* **MANIPULATED CHILDREN.** One journalist who has been mentioned commendably previously in FP is Byron Rogers. His pieces following the imprisonment of six men, almost certainly innocent, for the 1994 Femorox child abuse case are worthy, harrowing and essential reading for social workers (and anyone else) determined to give too much credence to children's evidence. (Sun. Teleg. 10/1/99, 7/99).

* **JACOBITE POLITICS AND PENIS SIZE.** Byron Rogers, on a less somber note, unearthed a dining society called Beggars Banquet, whose activities were dually treason and phallic. Like Freemasons, they wore ceremonial robes and their chief honcho wore a large wig made out of the pubic hair of Charles II's mistresses, and among their elaborate rituals was the measurement of their members on a specially-commissioned pewter plate. During this ceremony some local girl lolled stark naked in a chair, her face covered, with no member of the Order being allowed to touch her. They operated from 1732 to 1836 and in their early days there was a great scare about the effects of masturbation, so they decided to elevate this into a semi-social and extremely beneficial activity. A revival took place in the 1920s. As Rogers wryly concludes: "It is in all our interests that the Scottish Assembly succeeds. If it doesn't, the tape measures will be out again." (Sun. Teleg. 29/3/99)

* **NURSERY RHYMES.** James Owen explored the original sources of three well-known nursery rhymes in Somerset. First at Holcombe, the name of the village pub, Ring O' Roses, gave the clue of warning of the symptoms of the Black Death, which devastated the original community. At Kilmersdon, locals say that the Jack and Jill rhyme remembers a married couple who, in Tudor times, went to get water for the imminent birth of their child, only for the spouse to be killed by a boulder that rolled down from a quarry close by. Abbot Richard Whiting, of Glastonbury Abbey tried to avert disaster by sending Henry VIII a Christmas present, a pie in which the title deeds of 12 manors were hidden. The gift was entrusted to

Whiting's steward, and along the way he extracted from the pie the seeds to Mella; the official's name was Jack Horner, and the ownership of Mella is the plum reward he picks out with his thumb in the nursery rhyme.

Update

XRNA: KNICKERLESS PRINCESS. In a feature "Did I Didn't?" (FF20) the editorial topic of whether certain cinematograph love scenes were played for real was examined.

Movie babe Mira Sorvino reopened the debate in Hollywood after claiming stars have real sex while making films. Her revelation has set tongues wagging and critics and public are rewatching key love scenes to try and guess if it's real bonking. Lofty Sorvino, 30, who won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar in 1995 for her role as prostitute Judy Cum in Woody Allen's "Mighty Aphrodite", revealed all in an interview. She said: "It rarely happens that actors actually have proper sex in films - it does though, now and again. And other actors tell me it does." The star of Spike Lee's new thriller "Con of Sam" added: "So many people presume there are real relationships behind the scenes because they want to believe what they are seeing is for real." (N. Sport, April 7, 1999) Films which got audiences wondering include "The Lovers", "Body of Evidence", "Eyes Wide Shut" and "Basic Instinct" with its "no knickers" scene with Sharon Stone.

In fact, my article similarly discussed media claims of occasions when celebrities were supposedly caught having chosen not to don underwear. Lucy Lawless, who stars as feisty Xena in TV's swords and sorcery series, chose to wear a micro-miniskirt and allegedly no knickers on the US chat show "Live With Regis and Kathie Lee." "People always expect me to be intimidating," Lawless began. "Well, when you're not wearing your armour, it's a little different," countered interviewer Kathie. Then, looking agape at Lucy's open legs on the stool, she stammered, "In fact, you're not wearing much at all!" Lucy chuckled: "Skin suits, baby." (Mayfair, ?)

SHIP SHAPE. I've revealed (FF20:11) the secret code used by doctors to warn colleagues about patients' idiosyncracies. It seems the BRC was busily updating the personnel files it keeps on all staff and it was wondered what new Birtian code would be used regarding those with sensitive personal problems. "According to legend," writes Adam Halliker (Mandrake diary, Sun. Teleg., 6/11/98), "the old files bore a symbol on them informing bosses of anything that might be deemed dodgy in that employee's life: a Christmas tree is said to have denoted a suspected Communist Party member, while a snowflake was used for single mothers. Bemused staff have come up with their own suggestion for a new symbol to mark out those who have a weakness for narcotics. It is the Blue Peter ship.



FINXFD 47200. Since FF95, the jinxed locomotive 47200, after expensive overhaul, has suffered derailment damage and been stored unserviceable. It is unlikely that owners English, Welsh & Scottish Railways will reinstate it, but doubtless its obvious celebrity status makes it a candidate for private preservation.

Your editor's comprehensive, illustrated article on the loco -- "47200 - Predicting the Future" -- appears in a rail magazine (traction, September 1999). Also 47200 features in a new book by Jenny Randles, "Truly Weird", Collins & Brown, 1998.

Magazines

3rd STONE. The Magazine for the New Antiquarian. Q. 4 issues £10; sample issue £2.75 Payable to 3rd Stone, From P O Box 901, Devizes, Wilts., SN10 2TS. No. 35. Latest Stonehenge research assessed, including conclusion that ceremony celebrants were drunk and drugged-up and a Black Sabbath rock group Stonehenge replica (that means full scale and I doubt it) was dumped in the Hudson, Middle Ages priestly tales seen as 'faction'; British rock art; archaeological anomalies; solar eclipses; Gower ring cairns; fatuous, spurious, tedious nonsense suggesting piece of timber in Silbury Hill played a revolutionary role by R. W. Morrell. Plus witty diary column, news update, abstracts and reviews.

NORTHERN BARTH. Q. £6 for 4. Cheques payable to Northern Mysteries Group, From 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks., HX7 5NP. No. 78. Search for the goddess Verbaia in Wharfedale, 1927 eclipse; grooved ware seen as being a Celtic speciality; Celtic revisionism. No. 79. Albert Budden summarises his current (no pun intended) electromagnetic pollution and abduction scenario state of thought; Yorkshire's Adel churchyard crypt UBT of terror stretching over 20 years, plus details of the church's stones, Pentlands stones and cup and ring marks; Castlerigg speculation; ghosts and the Windermere ferry; Lancs. oddities. Plus miscellany, readers' letters and book reviews.

NORTHERN UFO NEWS. £6 for 6 issues. Address: 1 Hailsteads Close, Dove Holes, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 3EC. No. Book and mag reviews; latest UFO investigations.

THE LEY HUNTER. PO Box 180, Stroud, Glos., GL5 1YH. No. 133. Sadly the last issue of the mag I once edited (1969-1970), which brought me so many friends, revelations and a maturity not available in my journalistic career. Highlights here being Paul Devereux (editor 1976-1996) responding to a critique of ley hunting by Aloy Stone; Germans now into skywatching for UFOs at ley crossing points and embracing the terrestrial zodiacs idea; crisis in rock art study and separately altered states rock art research approach championed; laoyrinta as spirit trap; Wilhelm Teudt's holy lines well and truly put in their place as Nazi myth deserving exorcising from the ley hunting canon; an Oxfordshire Watkinsian/spirit alignment; confused attitudes of 1998 moot report; columnist Paul Sorreston on media mentions of leys and public perception. R.I.P.

LETTERS TO AMBROSE MERTON. Q 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. No. 17. Paul Sorreston is self-explanatory in the article "You get a better class of apocrypha in broadsheets"; foreign Secretary Robin Cook and two other ministers in a pickle over an obviously mythical Iraqi boy prisoner; plenty of photocopy/email lore, including work evaluation comments decoded.

NETWORK NEWS. 4 issues £5; £6.50 Europe and USA surface. Pay to M. Ayers. Address P.O. Box 2, Lostwithial, Cornwall, PL22 0YJ. No. 14. More weird stuff with an introduction reminiscent of the much-missed (at least by me) Tony Roberts. Surreal "total eclipse issue" where the fictional tale is in the J G Ballard and Michael Moorcock genre. I liked best the bit where . . . "So I sat myself down with my beer, and took a look at an old copy of the Terrestrial Zodiacs Newsletter that Paul Sorreston had sent me. There was a report by Jill Bruce about how she and her partner Bruce Lacey had done an exhibition called 'Barth Forces' where they lived in the ACME gallery in London for four weeks. There they collected rain water, which they called ACME WATER. They had been in the habit of using water from the Challice Well in Glastonbury for their performance, rituals and ceremonies. So as a reciprocal gift they took a container of ACME WATER to Glastonbury for."

FORTEAN TIMES. News-stand. £2.60. No. 122. Covers our inability to know whether Y2K will be the end of the world as we know it; deception as part of artistic creation; killer eagles; US anthrax hoaxes; Irish child abduction scare; UFO disinformation games; dream recognition experiment; Egyptian Christ theory. No. 123. Highlights include Irish convicts' myth of China (and a white utopia) a few days' travel away; South African mythical snake-like creature and other eel-like monsters; New Japanese UFO perspective; psychiatric illness; fatal exorcisms and "The Exorcist" demystified; Balkan jumping snakes. No. 124. Highlights include: after cold fusion -- slow light; much apocrypha connected with aircraft contrails; alien scripts. No. 125. Extremely interesting piece on hallucinatory Charles Bonnet syndrome and somewhat related but for newly-blind, Anton's syndrome; crop circles portents; Frankenstein crops; talking boulder shaped like a human or ape skull; aspects of eclipses. No. 126. Fish which supposedly leaps up urine flow to genitals taken seriously in investigation (I always thought it was an Amazonian belief tale); early ufologist the strange Frank B. Stranges; new light on new Ageism; and 1850s werewolf? Plus international odd happenings round-up, letters and reviews.

MAGONIA. Q. £5. Cheques payable to John Rimmer. Address: John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB. No. 67. Manchester near air miss dodgy character who claims to be witness against all rational odds (article also in The Labyrinth); the long history of right-wing conspiracy ideas and cross-fertilisation of New Age ideas and hostile current world order; Nostradamus. No. 68. Cont. from 67 catalogue/critique of big-brain/large-eyes creatures from pre-war Sci-Fi (i.e. predating Grays); why high proportion of narratives in UFO, Fortean and paranormal literature are fictions. Book reviews.

THE DRAGON CHRONICLE. 4 issues £7. Sample £2. Cheques payable to Dragon's Head Press: PO Box 3369, London SW6 6JH. No. 16. Articles of special interest on weedy and leafy sea dragons (akin to seahorses); plants with dragon names; 1999 eclipse; Cornish dragon legends; plus tree of life and dodgy magick. Free copy of issue 2 of Worms World -- lists of dragon aspects. Plus fiction, poetry, news snippets relating to dragons and magazines reviews supplement.

THE LABYRINTH. Rory Lushman's new enterprise to report upon investigations which interest him personally. No price or regularity given. From 99 Charter Street, Accrington, Lancs., BB5 0SA. Vol. 1, issue 1. Your editor is "blamed" for getting Rory hooked on the strategic steam reserve and he opens this first issue with a piece on the topic, including diesel in this conspiracy-style topic (sadly unreferenced). Also articles by a paranoid who believes the Republic of Texas, after Waco, is now being poisoned by airborne-released killer chemicals (contrails conspiracy); Guatemala terror; worthy but tedious US UFO investigation; Manchester myth (see Magonia entry). I must admit the pieces lifted from the Internet were of little interest to me compared with Rory's own contributions.

TOUCHSTONE. Newsletter of the Surrey Earth Mysteries Group. £2 for 4. Cheques payable to J Goddard, 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2PX. No. 51. Last bastion of the old guard, the editor here traces a Somerset ley replete with Watkinsian features and dowsed at 20 paces width; Hereford Web Pages brief biography of Alfred Watkins; Dutch entomologist speculates on energy fields affecting the behaviour of mammals, reptiles, birds and insects; UFOs and corn circles.

AMSKAYA. Newsletter of the STAR Fellowship. Same price and address as Touchstone. No. 44. UFO contactee George van Tassel 1970 talk continued; George Hunt Williamson 1954 lecture on short-wave radio communication with extraterrestrials; plus bits duplicated in Touchstone.