

# FOLKLORE FRONTIERS No. 45



UFOs, Stonehenge, Watkinsian leys, breasts, mummified cats, booze, tattoo cock-ups, bras for Alex Parks, The Maniac on the Platform, ghosts, pub crazes, stuck couple, Britney Spears' private parts revealed and her sham marriage, bosom serpent, chastity belts, Marianne Faithfull, moral panics, Peter Mandelson and the avocado dip or mushy peas, Roslyn Chapel, dubious transmissions, liquorice, weird Worksop, oral sex, Brick Lane, transvestism, Margaret Thatcher, embarrassed 'cellist, alien big cats, Charles Kennedy, drugs, Fanny & Johnny Craddock, Stilton protest, and much, much more!

# FOLKLORE FRONTIERS

No. 45

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FOLKLORE FRONTIERS is an independent magazine covering various aspects of folklore, particularly urban belief tales, ancient and modern traditions and lore plus contemporary culture. It is edited and published by PAUL SCREETON. Address is: 5, Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT. Subscription for three issues is £6, payable to Paul Screeton (NOT Folklore Frontiers). USA \$20 in dollar bills only. If paying sterling within Europe add £2. If your subscription expires with this issue an "X" will appear on the line below.

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## THE DIARY ... THE DIARY ... THE DIARY

SEEING feathers ruffled can be a joy to journalists particularly and I've become involved in an episode, albeit so far as an innocent bystander. An old friend, Jimmy Goddard, has been scanning for an internet site (<http://www.th6976.fsnet.co.uk>) copies of magazine The Ley Hunter, which I edited between 1969 and 1976. Praising me and damning the two following incumbents in the editor's chair, Jimmy writes in his own magazine Touchstone (No. 62, July 2003): "This period, the editorship of Paul Screeton, was the pinnacle of achievement of this magazine. The research and ideas that came in a seemingly never-ending flow show the reality and significance of the ley system at all its levels. The inspired contributions of Tony Wedd, Circumlibra, Philip Heselton and others form a bedrock of information about the elusive but ever-present and vitally important system and its manifestation down the ages.

"Unfortunately, being a periodical, the material it contained has been largely unavailable to people seeking the truth in the landscape today, and the supercilious, negative attitude of some who had come to be well-known in the field later have tended to undo the achievements. Therefore 'The Ley Hunter 1969-1976' is being put on the web on the above URL, so that these things may not be lost and the ley system be firmly recognised for what it is. At the present time, the issues from November 1969 to July 1970 are there; the others will be scanned and placed there over the coming few months." Jimmy follows with the index as it appears on the home page of the site.

Jimmy also has a swipe at Paul Devereux and Danny Sullivan on the first page, where he writes a mission statement on his appreciation of the truth about leys: "The last two editors of the late The Ley Hunter magazine have in recent times, and in various publications and web pages, been denying the reality of the ley system as a true entity in its own right. The system is most definitely real, as I know from 42 years of study and experience of the leys. It is complex and perceptible at several different levels, and through various properties which are set out below. The above web site (<http://www.th6976.fsnet.co.uk/leytruth.htm>) sets these out and has links in each section to sites which illustrate the points made."

By coincidence, I read Jimmy's mag at the same day I perused a Q&A piece with Led Zeppelin's singer/songwriter Robert Plant (D. Telegraph Arts, 23/8/03). Mr Plant's answer to favourite book would warm Jimmy's heart cockles: "The Old Straight Track by Alfred Watkins. It is a reference book that has all you need to know about the secrets of the Island of the Blessed." (see my article "Rock 'n' Leys -- The Old Straight Track", N.E. No. 4, 1984; Mail, Hartlepool, 28/12/83; The Shaman, No. 5, 1984). Incidentally, fellow Zep member Jimmy Page once chose as his fave tome Michael Murphy's shamanistic Golf in the Kingdom.

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CELEBRATING its 30-year history, Fortean Times chose to publish a small selection of previously unused correspondence. The penners of this crank post are protected by initials only, but I can reveal GSB, who wrote from Cleveland in 1997, is none other than Essenes newsletter editor Graham Broughton. His other specialised subject is blob hunting. The squash-

-ed slime sleuth admits white blobs on pavements nationwide "have an uncanny resemblance to chewing gum" and "one worrying aspect" is their appearance in enclosed spaces such as railway platforms and Covent Garden. While playing the role of Saturday "bodyguard" at Hartlepool's Spellcraft shop, Graham took me outside to witness the blobs. I smartly pointed out the concentration by the doors of a nearby bank, suggesting patrons seeking a loan or overdraft might not wish to scupper their chances by masticating. I added that the greatest concentration in Seaton Carew was outside the amusement arcades where bored youths congregate and imitate a stressed Sir Alex Ferguson. That said, frankly you couldn't hope to meet a nicer, and perhaps naiver, chap than Graham, but after he wrote a reader's letter on this topic to the Hartlepool Mail (24/5/99), I was fired up to reply with a withering assessment (9/6/99). I take it that his F.F. mention of the Covent Garden interior as a repository of alien substances or gum refers to the market and not the opera house. (Fortean Times 177, 2003)

AFTER the most thorough scientific study ever made into astrology, the once and for all debunking will doubtless have no effect on the earnings of Mystic Meg, Russell Grant and websites which can be worth £50m. (Sunday Telegraph, 17/8/03) I mention this as an excuse to print a forecast by Eleanor Richmond: "Pisces (February 20 -- March 20) You're not going to be interested in romance so much today, as high passion! Something in you is yearning to be unleashed now and bottling up your feelings and emotions just won't do! Make sure you have a cloth handy to clean up afterwards! StarCall (sic) 0898 666 601." Obviously the stars failed to forecast her instant dismissal as astrologer with The Mail, Hartlepool. (30/4/92).

LASTLY a tale from Seaton Carew. My wife and I were in the local butcher's to buy the weekend joint when the woman in the queue before us said she had company to cater for and hoped it would be a nice cut. Butcher Gordon Snowdon, whose fare is always excellent, responded with a sarky remark which went something like: "The angels prepare the meat and the Devil cooks it." At which point he wighed it and the till came up with £6.66. "That's the Devil's number, isn't it?" he responded. "After what I just said, I'd better just charge you £6.65."

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READER'S LETTER

From John Bilingsley, editor, Northern Earth

Sorry about describing you as an ex-journalist! I thought, from something you wrote in 'The Man Who Ate A Domino', that you had retired!

Anyway, re the jibe about the anomalous 'an' in my review of your booklet, you're sitting in a vulnerable glasshouse! As you'll note from my ad, I always advise against one's own work -- which means, of course, I don't do the proofreading in NE or anything I've written, and often not at all, leaving it to someone else. And anyway, that's advice that FF could usefully take -- I noted in FF 43 on p.11 that only part-way through it had exceedd all NE typos of 2002-3! FF14's p.11 has at least 10 typos in 'TickleStick' alone! Cheeky bugger!

That aside, I thought you had some work coming out through Capall Bann? We discussed them a couple of years ago -- is that still on, or is it fallen through? Cheers, John B.

\* Paul Screeton replies: Humble pie time. Apologies, John. Unfortunately there is no one else capable here at Fronty Towers to proofread and after 30 years employed as a sub-editor I plead guilty to letting standards drop dismally, but would defend my right to myopically hammer the keyboard which has no spellcheck. However your letter clearly has the "tickle stick" in FF14, whereas it was FF44. Nowhere in "Domino" is there an ex-journalist reference and also there was "an selection" in the NE review. Basicaly, I was pissed off because NE did not print my article on the folklore of the Settle to Carlisle railway line which I spent much time researching (not that I have the God given right to expect all I write to be published, of course).

As for Capall Bann, I proposed a book-length expansion of my monograph on the archaic heads found in Hexham, posted a copy of Tales of the Hexham Heads and synopsis on 14/1/99 and Jon Day replied on 9/9/99: "Thank you for sending your manuscript (sic!) 'tales of the Haxham Head (sic). Apologies for the dely in getting in touch. Unfortunately the book does not feel right for inclusion in our list. We wish you every success in finding a publisher."

# GINGER RODGERS DIANA

By PAUL SCREETON

LADS' mag Maxim hardly seems the place to restore Princess Diana's image, but it tackled the paternity of Prince Harry with unexpected decorum. It went like this "LIE ... Prince Harry's natural father is James Hewitt! Look at the pair of them! Peas in a ginger pod! Harry was conceived during Hewitt's well-publicised affair with Diana, when the major was giving her regular right royal rodergings! TRUTH ... Pish. Harry was born before Diana even met Hewitt, who has admitted himself that the dates don't tally. Yes, they're both ginger but Harry's red hair comes from the Spencer side of the family. He also bears an uncanny resemblance to George, the son of Diana's sister, Lady Sarah McCorquodale. To the Tower with you." (Maxim, April 2003)

YET there are many doubters and royal sources at St James' Palace refused to comment on newspaper reports of a bizarre plot to obtain a sample of hair from his head, according to reports in the Mail on Sunday and Sunday Times. They said Prince Charles' private secretary, Sir Michael Peat, had been tipped off about the elaborate sting and had contacted police. Scotland Yard refused to comment, but police sources said they had received no complaint and no investigation was under way. Both newspapers said Sir Michael may have believed that the News of the World was involved in the plot, but the newspaper denied this. Managing editor Stuart Kuttner said: "The allegation that we would attempt to obtain a sample of Prince Harry's hair is utterly preposterous. We did not do this, never attempted to do this and it has never crossed our minds to do so. If this is the approach Sir Michael Peat is adopting in his investigation into sleaze at the Palace, we can only assume He'll find everyone guilty -- regardless of the evidence. The whole notion is bonkers. Tom Crone, the legal manager of News International, publishers of the News of the World, fomaly told him so in the plainest of terms. It's a pity Sir Michael chooses to think otherwise." (D. Sport, 16/12/02)

The Shafted column (D. Sport, ?/12/02) to see if "Charlie Boy really is his dad" concluded that "if his hair does fall out when a bird runs her fingers through it, then you know he's a Windsor already." Brian Reade reckoned: "This plot to steal Prince Harry's hair and use it to check if he has the same DNA as James Hewitt has a ring of truth to it. The scam was first tried 20 years ago, to discover if Prince Edward was really Prince Philip's son. But all that resulted was a man who was bald a decade before his time. However, I don't understand the need to steal hair in the first place to discover if Harry is Charlie's boy. Surely, it's a lot easier to ask for a strand of the royal barnet, tell him you can flog it at an auction house for £2,000 and split the takings. And if he agrees, he's definitely a Windsor." (D. Mirror, 19/12/02)

THERE'S no denying Major James Hewitt had an affair with Harry's mother and he told the Sunday Mirror in September, 2002: "There really is no possibility whatsoever that I am Harry's father." (D. Sport, 16/12/02) In another denial, the love rat said of Prince Charles: "I think the poor chap has gone through enough. I've said many times I'm not." (D. Mirror, 10/1/03)

In the documentary for Channel 4, James Hewitt: Confessions of a Cad, he was trailed for six months, and it was reported it "will raise eyebrows because of the tasteless speculation it contains about his physical relationship with Diana. Hewitt scoffs at the rumours that he is the father of Prince Harry, and in one scene, filmed while Hewitt baths in a chalet in Gstaad, he boasts that the number of lovers he has had exceeds the number of runs that the English cricket team achieves in an average season." (Sunday Telegraph, 13/7/03) The most recent airing of the paternity question came when Hewitt appeared on U.S. chat show Larry King Live where a viewer asked if "there's any truth James Hewitt might be Prince Harry's father? Hewitt stuttered: "I have honestly ... I don't really ... I mean, you know." (D. Sport, 7/10/03)

THERE'S an almost throwaway specualtion in the truly riveting Stick It Up Your Punter!

# CONCEPTUAL PISS ARTISTS

By PAUL SCREETON

TWO controversial North-East artists displayed bottles of urine at Middlesbrough Art Gallery. One of them, Newcastle University lecturer Charlie Holmes, 49, was so confident of the merit of his work he was asking £16 for one of three identical chianti bottles into which over several days he decanted his wee. Labelled "Artists Water -- Passed in 1980", one had sold for £30 at an auction the previous year and he was keeping the third sample at his home in Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne. Charlie insisted: "It's not just a bottle of pee -- it's a work of art. It is urine which I passed 16 years ago, but it is tastefully displayed in an attractive bottle and sealed with wax. Many famous artists have made far more money from more perverse exhibits than this. He added: "Art means many things to many people and this was meant to be a light-hearted look at something people can normally be squeamish about. I think the bottle is a bargain and would look rather beautiful on the sideboard."

THE Teesside gallery was also showing a collection of urine donated by local chemical workers to mark the passing into history of the use of urine in chemical processes. It was once used to clean coins and to remove dyes from rock. Artist Edwina Fitzpatrick said the chemical workers gave their samples to her and she labelled each with the donor's brief character description. "I saw the chemical industry factories as a great anatomy," she said, "and that's how the idea of urine came to me. People should not be so coy about bodily processes."

MIKE CLARKE, spokesman for gallery owner Middlesbrough Council, said: "This might not be to everyone's taste. But it's a tongue-in-cheek look at art and cost a piddling amount of money, if any at all. We've had no complaints -- on the contrary the visitors' book has compliments. (The Sport, 12/8/96; Northern Echo, 14/8/96)

ELSEWHERE, a painting called "Piss of Art" by Grant Davis, 19, was withdrawn from an exhibition in Brighton, Sussex, after organisers discovered it was painted in different dye-coloured urine. (D. Sport, 21/10/99)

IN Yorkshire, funsters took the piss out of sculptor Henry Moore's famous works by filling 30 bottles of urine and arranged the work, cheekily entitled "Stified Stream of a Prostate Rake", at the foot of a signpost for one of his displays in Wakefield. (The Sport, 16/10/97)

IN supposedly genteel Cheltenham, budding artist Rosie Fenn, 21, caused a stink by making sculptures from horse manure. Rosie -- who collects vomit, phlegm and urine in beakers -- dumped two tons of dung in the Gloucestershire town. She argued: "By putting it in the street it forces people to walk around it, which makes them take notice." (The Sport, 9/7/77)

FOREIGNERS have been getting in on the bodily fluids act, too. Artist Ann-Kristin Antman came up with a Stone Age design especially for cold climates -- an anorak made from urine-soaked salmon skin. She uses the skins of salmon weighing 33lb each and soaked in 11 pints of pee collected from her family in Sweden to make the coats, which sell for £7,000 each. (The Sport, 24/9/96)

ON the subject of bodily fluids, prostitutes' phonebox cards are now called "tart art" and a bookshop in Charing Cross sells packs of four for £20. (The Times, 27/9/03)

TO WIND UP, Britain's richest artist Andrew Vicari, worth an estimated £63m, has won a £25m. Middle East commission. He scorns Britart stars: "Real artists (would never dream of making money from) leaving a dirty bed or pickling a cow." The Turner Prize "was an insult (to) the greatest painter this country has ever produced. Turner would be spinning in his grave." (D. Telegraph, 3/1/04)

# Journalists off the rails

By Paul Screeton

I DESPAIR of many members of my profession for their wilful, woeful reporting of railway matters and gratuitously snide commentary on legitimate and fascinating rail enthusiasm. For such nincompoops the term anoraknophobia was cleverly coined and I have been monitoring the jests and inaccuracies since FF25. At the risk of boring the reader, here's the latest avalanche of angst.



ALMOST forgivable is that the mildly-mocking introduction to a profile on investigative journalist Michael Crick is making the point of fastidiousness to detail from the hacks' hack. It goes: "On the greasy platform of Manchester Exchange railway station in the late 1960s, a small boy dutifully dressed in an anorak stood with his pen and notebook while trains shuttled past. Michael Crick's schoolfriends wondered: 'How sad can you get?' Today the grief is felt by others; usually those on the receiving end of Crick's penetrating investigations. The notebook has grown into an entire research team and the anorak into a wardrobe befitting a television presenter, but Crick's methods haven't moved far from the days when, as he puts it, 'armed with ruler and red Biro I lovingly underlined the day's haul of train numbers in my Ian Allen combined volume'."



LESS forgivable is a government minister's outburst that trainspotters are a menace and distort decision-making about British transport. Speaking at a Fabian Society seminar, outspoken junior Transport Minister Kim Howells launched a tirade against members of the Railfuture lobby group for saying that that railways need more money (which is perfectly logical and necessary). Dr Howells ranted: "There are 150,000 people employed in the rail industry and at least 200,000 registered (who by? makes us sound like heroin addicts! In fact, there are three million rail enthusiasts in the U.K.) trainspotters, and they have enormous influence on transport policy. Rail use accounts for only 7% of transport but 95% of transport politics." And: "I disagree with possibly everything you have said. This is precisely the trainspotter mentality coming through here. We spend much more in public funds on railways than we do on roads." (The Times, 24/9/03, Rail 471, 2003)



NEXT total stupidity with: "Trainspotters, you would have loved it. Thursday night at the Grosvenor House hotel in London for the Railway Oscars, when 1,200 of the industry's leading anoraks squeezed into their DJs and even Richard Bowker, the Strategic Rail Authority's chairman, wore a tie." (D. Telegraph, 6/9/03)



AS I stood on a structure dubbed "Anorak Bridge" overlooking Tees Yard, the driver of a red car carrying several exuberant youths, parped his horn and greeted me with the noun "wanker". As a recent survey shows 96% of women enjoy this pleasure and 99% of men enjoy solitary exercise I naturally took it as a compliment from one of the fraternity. (26/3/03)

ADAM EDWARDS' monthly guide to the best of British pubs (Telegraph Weekend, 23/11/02) chose the Derby Tup at Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. "Trainspotters get a bad press. The obsessional nerds are unloved by groovy advertisers, trendy TV and Vogue magazine. They are not wanted in the lounge bar of life. And that is fine and dandy for us trainspotting pub nerds ... (This) is where the beer anoraks drink ... (it) is a plain-speaking, peanuts and proper ale sort of place." Oh, and next door is The Midlander Model Railway Shop.



GILES COREN'S long list of why he hates James Bond includes being a wine buff. "It's no cooler than being a trainspotter. When Bond, in Goldfinger, says: 'My dear girl, there are some things that just aren't done. Such as drinking Dom Perignon '53 above a tempera-



ture of 38 degrees fahrenheit', he might as well be saying: 'My dear girl, in 1959 the A3-class Flying Scotsman was fitted with a Kylchap double exhaust arrangement and chimney to improve the steaming capability of the boiler with inferior coal.' That amount of correct accuracy is a giveaway to Coren's secret hobby. (The Times, 23/1/02)

**INTERVIEWING** the monosyllabic singer-songwriter Lou Reed, metaphorically-clichéd Peter Culshaw observed: "The only thing Reed does seem to like talking about -- at mind-numbing length -- is the kind of technical details of recording technique that are, frankly, of interest only to trainspotters. (D. Telegraph, 3/5/03)



**PETER MANDELSON** spoke off the record to a group of women journos, knowing full well his comments would be leaked. Have I Got News For You team captain Ian Hislop paraphrased Mandy's opinion of the Chancellor: "Brown's a loony, trainspotter, anorak." I would have thought better of him, but he did also make a reference to avocado. (BBC1, 24/5/03)

**SAME** programme following week. The headline "ANORAKOPHOBIA" (sic) highlighted the loony ban on rail enthusiasts carrying out their harmless hobby on Network Rail stations as they might be terrorists in disguise. There was amusement that the industry took "health and safety" seriously. Captain Paul Merton said he spotted trainspotters and noted their makes of anoraks. Chairman Never Heard of Him asked if there were any trainspotters in the audience and upon there being no response, Hislop said that as a commuter he "desperately tried to spot a train." The poxy chairman claimed "700 spotters have registered as Norman No Mates with Network Rail." (BBC1, 31/5/03)



**STAYING** with terrorism, in another relatively knowledgeable centre page spread for a novice, Olivia Stewart-Liberty went tracking rail enthusiasts to see if they were terrorists. This was an encounter with a railfan at Willesden Junction: "Alan's adamant he's not a gricer. 'I'm a rail enthusiast', he says crossly. 'A gricer is an anorak, which is any person who has an unhealthy interest in anything. Got it?' Is Alan's interest unhealthy? 'No. I go spotting twice a week at most'." (The Mail on Sunday, 15/6/03)



**CONCLUDING** a review of Simon Garfield's *The Last Journey of William Huskisson*, David Isaacs codescendingly ends: "This fascinating book could give trainspotting a good name." (D. Telegraph arts+books, 26/7/03)

**WHY** do authors show off on the jackets of books, wondered Sam Leith (to give the potential purchaser some useful facts, I'd have thought). He goes on: "The main pitfall of the author biog is showing off. Previous books are plugged, prizes and other accolades are enumerated in trainspotterish detail; academic tenure -- at the more scholarly end of the market -- firmly asserted. Peerages are mentioned in modest asides; television programmes and prestige journalistic gigs given nonchalant outings." (D. Telegraph arts+books, 9/9/03)



**AN OTHERWISE** excellently analysed article by Liam Halligan was spoiled by the "intro": Professor David Begg is a self-confessed transport policy wonk. To glance across his desk is to discover the existence of recherche magazines such as *Airport Business* and *Transit*. But Begg is no naive trainspotter. As chairman of the Centre for Integrated Transport, he is an influential actor in a politically-charged drama. (Sunday Telegraph, 18/1/04)



**WRITING** about DVD box sets, Peter Paphides says that "the extra features have made it acceptable to be anally retentive about the things we love" and "with hundreds of classic films and TV titles now available, the past year has seen a palpable shift towards satiating the trainspotters -- possibly because someone has finally realised that when it comes to the things we love we're all trainspotters at heart." (The Eye, The Times, 13/12/03)



# NEWSLINES

\* WOMEN'S undergarments being thrown on stage has been part of singer Tom Jones's act for years, but now a female artist is the recipient of bras. Fame Academy winner Alex Parks, the openly lesbian Cornish warbler whose debut single *Maybe That's What It Takes* took the charts by storm, was gobsmacked when she was bombarded at London's G.A.Y. Club. Alex said: "I've never had bras thrown at me before. I was just so shocked at the size of them." (D. Sport, 26/11/03)

\* AN ex-policewoman who claims her parents are aliens says she regularly enjoys orgasms ten times stronger than with humans. Stephany Cohen, 42, claims extraterrestrials have chosen her and her partner, plumber Michael Williams, 57, of Bromley, Kent, to help improve the human race -- and given her massive orgasms as a reward. She says she's descended from "grays", inhabitants of the planet Cirus D, who have visited Earth for thousands of years. Stephany said: "I don't know why they have picked me ... sometimes you get raptures like strong orgasms and you don't know where it comes from." (D. Sport, 20/8/03)

\* STONEHENGE is a massive fertility symbol says Canadian expert Prof Anthony Perks who reckones it represents the female sex organs, symbolises birth, and probably has a sacrificial child buried at its centre. (D. Mirror, 5/2/03) While Maria Moruzzi, of the Borough Cafe, near London Bridge, crafts food structures such as Stonehenge and Tower Bridge out of Heinz products beans, spaghetti, pork sausages and meat balls. (Front, No. 47, 2002) Engineering expert Bruce Bedlam built a model of Stonehenge which he claims was covered with slatted beams, giving it an appearance similar to the Millenium Dome. (Sunday Express, 16/6/02)

\* MEANWHILE, farmer Clive Browne piled up £1,600 worth of hay into a replica of Stonehenge to dry it out, but "Strawhenge" in Farnborough, Somerset, tempted vandals who set fire to the 80 bales and created Singehenge. (D. Mirror, 1&2/8/02)

\* AND Stonehenge-style (well, it says so in this tabloid) marble pillars built beside motorway blackspots have been claimed to eliminate accidents. Safety officials consulted druid Gerald Knobloch, who said the building of the road had broken mystical "earth energy lines". He said: "Because of the variable energy flow a driver could black out and an accident follows". The stones supposedly restore the flow of energy. Officials were to use the stones across Austria. (D. Mirror, 27/2/03)

\* FEDERAL agents are investigating a nutty dope-smuggling operation in which cocaine is being sneaked into the United States from Colombia inside packets of peanuts. Presumably salted one. (D. Sport, 6/11/03)

\* THE first plaques in memory of crash victims appeared at roadsides in August, bearing a scarlet anemone -- the ancient Greek symbol for love and loss -- a Remember Me message and the name and age of the victim. Charity RoadPeace (sic) hopes its campaign will be taken up officially. (D. Mirror, 30/8/03)

\* MOTORIST John Willis hated parking wardens so much that he had two meters marked "Expired" set up on his grave in Perth, Australia. "Let them come and try and give me a ticket, the bastards," he wrote in his will. (D. Sport, 8/7/03)

\* STILL with the Aussies, but not so recent, the world swearing championships was won by an eight-year-old girl. Angelic-looking Belinda Roberts beat the famed cursing drunks of the outback in a contest in Birdsville, Queensland. Proud dad Barry said: "Belinda loves a good swear and she's pretty fucking good at it too." (D. Sport, 18/9/00)

\* RESIDENTS of Beavers Crack, California, are campaigning for a name change after 200 years of ridicule. They have launched a competition for people there to come up with a new name. (D. Sport, 21/10/03)

\* TWO mummified cats used to keep evil spirits at bay were being sold with a £1m house. The 500-year-old deaders were found in the walls at Wynters Armourie, Magdalen Laver, Essex, once used by Cromwell in the Civil War. The cats were very well preserved and being sold in a glass case along with the manor house. Owner Charlotte Bassett said: "Every now and then I show them to my cat as a warning just in case it misbehaves." (D. Mirror, 24/10/02)

\* AN EXORCIST was being called in to rid a village of a ghost blamed for causing 26 car crashes at the same spot in 18 months. Spooked locals believed the "tormented spirit" of a young woman who died on the road about 60 years ago may be behind the accidents on the A465 in Stoke Lacy, Herefordshire. (D. Sport, 31/10/02) Meanwhile, pub operator J.W. Lees, which runs 170 pubs in the North-West, several of which are reputedly haunted, has hired a team of ghostbusters on 24-hour call. (D. Sport, 3/10/03)

\* A familiar theme with 16 Asda supermarket girls becoming pregnant after working at the same till, since which checkout 19 has been marked with a sticker warning -- "fertility chair". Seven had already had babies and nine more were expecting in Benton, Newcastle upon Tyne. (D. Mirror, 20/9/02)

\* AFTER American rock band Queens of the Stone Age released their album Songs for the Deaf, 37 deaf people turned up for a gig. (Sunday Telegraph, 25/8/02)

SPOOKED Oscar-winner Halle Berry swears she is cursed after shooting supernatural thriller Goyhika. Co-star Robert Downey Jr. accidentally broke an arm and a mystery thief ransacked Halle's home in Vancouver, Canada. Halle, 37, revealed she was having a massage when she "suddenly felt a lot of cold air" at the time of the break-in. She said: "Then the masseuse said she felt the same thing. It was weird." (D. Sport, 20/10/03)

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## ARTICLES ELSEWHERE

UFOs. Columns by John Michell in The Daily Mirror switched from arcane numbers to the more populist subject of flying saucers, creating much feedback. Michell wrote: "One of the things I have learnt is that UFOs are habit-forming. After you have seen one you are likely to see others." And: "Quite often, UFO sightings are followed by good luck and happiness." I mention this because I'm a "repeater" UFO spotter; the most recent occasion being on September 24 as my train arrived at Westbury, Wiltshire. A gleaming circular "daylight disc" crossed the sky and vanished into clouds. Why me? I have wondered if by some strange process it had anything to do with my inward journey from Devon to London Paddington; from Reading I was joined by two Alpha Course (evangelical charismatic Christians), one of whom insisted on blessing me despite my having said they were preaching to the converted and I explained my take on Gnostic Christianity. They were off to the famous Holy Trinity, Brompton, and I rather excitedly asked if they knew Samantha Fox, explaining when they seemed not to that she had been a Page 3 topless model and dumbly added "big tits", even making a descriptive movement with my hands. Alas, no. Geri Halliwell, former Spice Girls member, I've since discovered, goes there too. For completeness, I might add, my daughter Kathryn was Alpha Course baptised in Yorkshire's River Ure and my wife, Pauline, has not joined. It's a change from her being a Christian Spiritualist medium and speaking to the dead rather than associating with those speaking in tongues! Anyway back to Michell, who then asked if UFOs come from the future. If so, their technology doesn't seem to advance. (9/10/03) As for the UFO, it was only in view for a second or two though for some reason I got it into my mind it had a "filigree" edging. It would seem to have been heading from the direction of Westbury White Horse and, of course, not so far away is that Sixties centre of skywatching and happenings, Warminster. As for Michell's good luck, as I waited in the dark on the platform at Newton Abbot, I was astonished to see heritage Deltic diesel-electric class locomotive D9016 Gordon Highlander pass through from delivering another preserve engine to Little Hempston running a quiet as a ghost and being the spotting highlight of my week's holiday. Incidentally, in, I think, 1991, I spotted a similar daylight disc while asking directions near Tiverton Parkway station.

EXTRA ORIFICE. Egocentric (his term) columnist Nicky Haslam starts with F.F. topics Britart and bodily functions -- "My friend Marc Quinn ... also does paintings with his own do-do, quaintly fragrant accompaniments to Andy Warhol's famed piss-portraits" -- before covering such eccentrics as Amanda Neidpath whose trepanation "adventures are beautifully chronicled in John Michell's (sic) book, English Eccentrics. John, another member of that happy hippocracy of the 1960s, used to write splendid books about ley lines, Avebury and astral travel. Actually the book was Eccentric Lives and Peculiar Notions. (Sunday Telegraph, 26/10/03)

# Even more BritArt Crap

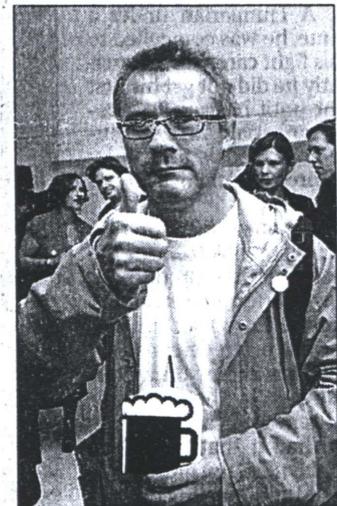
By Paul Screeton

AS an old colleague would dauntingly begin with all the beguiling charm of the Ancient Mariner, "At the risk of boring you ..." Well, I'll keep this latest attack on contemporary art as short as possible, making a few points as briefly as possible.

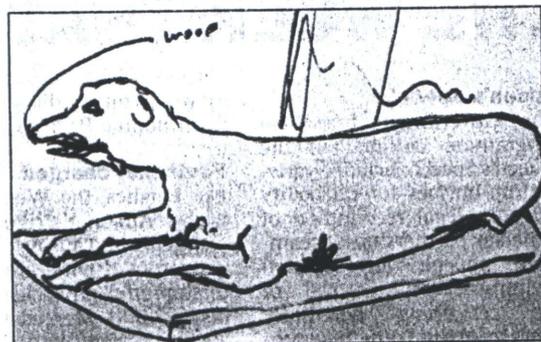
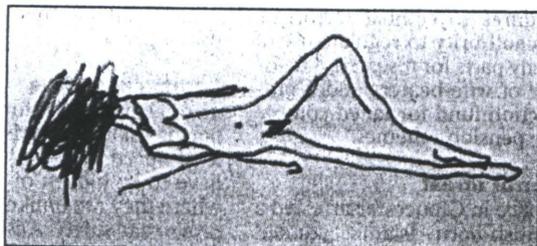
Firstly Damien Hirst's most recent exhibition at the White Cube gallery, in Hoxton, London, which is reported to have taken £11m. in its first two weeks. A vox pop concluded Hirst's work is rubbish, but there was little resentment at his wealth. Interviewee Gary Riley said: "He's a



narrow boy, very smart, very entrepreneurial." (D. telegraph, 27/9/03) Critic Mark Hudson found his conceptualism "degrades the art process" and "adolescent." (The Mail on Sunday, 14/9/03) In a profile on Hirst (pictured) it was noted he scraped into Leeds School of Art with a famously low E in A-level art. Yet I agree reluctantly with him when he says "great art is when you just walk round a corner and go: 'Fucking hell! What's that!'" In my case it was St Paul's Cathedral and Ribbleshead Viaduct, not Tracey Emin's condom and vodka bottle-soiled unmade bed. (Sunday Telegraph, 17/8/03) Then after a feud between artist and collector over how his works should be displayed in Charles Saatchi's gallery, Hirst bought most of them back for an undisclosed sum thought to be several million pounds. Saatchi hung on to one work, a shark pickled in formaldehyde, which he commissioned from Hirst in 1991. (The Times, 29/11/03) The £50,000 shark being the subject of a charge of plagiarism, during which celebrated art critic Robert Hughes wrote: "It might have been fractionally more interesting if he had caught the fucking thing himself instead of hiring a bloke from Queensland to do the job for him." The man he copied from, Eddie Saunders, had got in his boat and done just that before displaying it in a shop window. Nevertheless, as Ben Macintyre noted: "Hirst's work will only increase in value as a result of their recent tiff." (The Times, 29/11/03)



In November hundreds of people were given the chance to buy the work of a famous artist for only £35 at the Royal College of Art in London. Buyers, however, did not know who the artist was when they selected from 2,000 miniature paintings and drawings. (The Times, 29/11/03) Two are reproduced here and I do so to make my original point that the cornerstone of all art is the ability to draw. The reclining nude is by Emin and sketch of a dog going "woof" by Hirst.



# UPDATE

**BRITNEY SPEARS (FF39:3).** Rock wildman Fred Durst went on shock jock Howard Stern's show to tell how tempess Britney broke his heart when she ditched the ugly buggler. Lacking any real feelings for her, the rude Limpbizkit frontman informed Stern's audience that she has a big hairy bush of pubes and sank lower to describe her vagina as nice and tight. Sounds more like lust than love. (D. Sport, 29/10/03) Not that Ms Spears shrinks in the violet stakes. Interviewed on MTV by Suchin Pak, she said that the first time she had sex left her able to say more in her music. "When you experience something that special and something so sacred, so much more emotion goes into everything you do. I'm not suggesting that everyone go do that. I mean, I really thought that I was going to marry the person and be with him for the rest of my life, so that's why I did it. But when you do that, you creatively go through such a different state. And when you're in the studio, you feel like you can say more." Such, I take it, as with Touch of My Hand on her new album In The Zone, an ode to servicing the plumbing, scratching that old itch, killing kittens, wiping the smile on to your face (actually D. Sport of 11/11/03 gave 96 more terms for female masturbation, or rather 95 as hand jiving came in at numbers 18 and 54). To Pak's quizzing, "Britney apprehensively fiddled with her ring (sic, really!) while reluctantly giving an answer." She said: "I can totally go into the studio and sing it, but I get really weird and bashful about the whole thing. But It's a healthy thing, a positive thing, and I think it's reality." (D. Sport, 10/11/03) Then in what was probably a bizarre publicity stunt 22-year-old Britney wed childhood sweetheart Jason Alexander in a Las Vegas chapel -- filing for annulment 55 hours later. A handwriting expert said her signature showed that the marriage was not consummated. How!?! (The Times, 10/1/04)

**TAKING THE PISS-TACHIOS (FF43:4-5).** Founded in 1742, traditions are not to be dispensed with lightly at Wiltons in Mayfair, as Margaret Levin, who now presides over that most high of High Tory restaurants, is discovering. Patrons used to help themselves to as much Stilton as they liked from an enormous bowl but, on the grounds of hygiene Mrs Levin ordained that henceforth measured amounts should be served to them. This upset Julian Seymour, a former director of Lady Thatcher's private office, so much that he was urging distinguished fellow diners to revolt. "It is the case that we have now changed our arrangements for serving Stilton and this has met with some resistance," Mrs Levin told the Mandrake column. "But I do not consider it to be a matter of the gravest importance." (Sunday Telegraph, 28/9/03)

**LUNCHTIME** viewers were (claimed that guardian of morals Daily Sport and this being lifted verbatim) left with a nasty taste in their mouths when a man drank his own piss on the Terry & Gaby Show on Channel Five. Millions watched s 43-year-old Jim Crawford from Manchester urinated into a cup before swallowing it live on the chat show. Host Gaby Roslin even sniffed the cup to make sure it was the real thing before he took a swig. Comic Jimmy Tarbuck -- standing in for Terry Wogan -- and pop babe Jamelia, who was a guest on the show also looked on in horror as the therapist downed the piss. Jim swears that drinking urine is good for the body. And not only does he drink the stuff, but he says he also uses it to wash his hair and moisturise his skin! He said: "It is not a stunt and it is not a joke. Drinking urine helps the body clean and regulate itself. It can help every single medical condition, except structural problems." An editorial pontificated: "Why should telly bosses get away with showing practices more at home in a Hamburg torture dungeon than a lunchtime TV programme? You can tell that Gaby's co-presenter Terry Wogan was on holiday this week. Such a seasoned presenter would never have allowed this kind of gut-churning obscenity on his show." Actually I'm sure the leader writer's colleagues were pissing themselves as he typed it. The editor of my last paper, sacked this year, once shouted, "hey lads I'm doing a leader on the evil of drugs, what do you think?" In unison we replied "hypocrite". (D. Sport, 16/9/03)

**DUBIOUS TRANSMISSIONS (FF18: FF22:6-7, passim)** Seven families in Shalford, Surrey, with new-born babies live in neighbouring streets so close that their two-way tantrum monitors (that's what they're unfairly called here) pick up each others' tots on the same wavelength. The families use identical monitors for the babies born just months apart. (D. Mirror, 5/12/02)

**PUB CRAZES** (FF43:6-9). A breast cancer charity benefited from an auction of 124 bras collected from the 15-strong Brannigan's pub chain. Mark Bracewell, assistant-manager at the Sheffield outlet, reckoned bras were one of the most common items "lost" at hen nights and office parties by revellers playing bra-swapping games. (D. Star, D. Sport, 4/8/03)



**MARSBARIANNE FAITHFULL** (FF19:3-7, passim). This reference has turned up as I continue pruning my files. Victoria Coren nibbles the girlie pornography of Linda Jaivin's "Eat Me" (Chatto & Windus, £9.99). "According to a recent feature in the News of the World brilliantly titled 'Ooh, You Are Author!' -- there are "an estimated five million British girls who love a dirty novel." Women's porn, it seems, is the hot new genre. Eat Me is not only girl-for-girl action, it's also Australian, feminist and vaguely (God help us) post-modern. This generous helping of sauce for the goose is peppered with strident female academics and vegetarians, who meet in Sydney cafes to discuss their fantasies. Though explicitly sexual, most of these focus in some way on food -- hence the title. Think women and danger, naughtiness and illicit thrills and you end up, unerringly, at the fridge door. The novel opens with an episode involving a woman and an array of fruit: this is the Marianne Faithfull Mars Bar trick for a health-conscious generation. It sounds rather uncomfortably, if you ask me -- particularly the kiwi fruit -- but at least she stops short of making out with a pineapple," writes Coren. (The Independent Weekend, 23/3/96)

**PAGE 3 GIRLS HAVE WILLIES PUT UP 'EM** (FF35:14). Another even further back in the archives as two more topless models flee their shared flat in south-west London. Ann West and Sian Adey-Jones (pictured on cover) left after four scary months, during which: \* Ann's music centre started playing during the night; \* The French windows would be open in the morning after being locked the night before. This happened even after the locks had been changed; \* And lights continually dimmed and brightened. Ann, 21, said: "One of the most scary things was that someone answered our telephone while we were out. The first time he said he was the carpet fitter. But we had not bought any carpets. Next time he said he was waiting for us to come home. Sian and I became so frightened we left the flat and moved into a hotel." (Revue, 28/3/81)

**ALCOPOPS MORAL PANIC** (Letters to Ambros Merton, No. 12). Anything which annoys life's killjoy element I salute. Happily, brewer's droop may be a thing of the past following the launch of a new alcopop containing a potion dubbed "herbal Viagra." Roxxoff hints that men will be able to stand to attention despite having a skinful because the vodka and fruit drink is packed with Chinese aphrodisiacs. It's the first of anew wave of alcopops set to take the country by storm. None of the drinks actually contain Viagra, but they rely on Chinese herbs such as horny goat weed, which are reputed to boost the sex drive. Roxxoff is available in Black Lemon, Blueberry and saucy Pink Passion flavours and will sell for around £2 a bottle. Brushing off criticism by campaigners who claim it will encourage drunken sex, a spokesman for Roxxoffsaid: "Young people go to clubs and bars to meet people with a view to having sex -- we are just helping them." (D. Sport, 18/8/03)

**BOOZE ORGY MORAL PANIC**. While on the subject of alcohol, my pal George Stuart found himself pilloried by The Sport (8/7/97). "15 quid booze orgy slammed" it headlined. Co-owner of (now closed) Bikinis fun bar in Hartlepool, George planned a £15 a ticket booze-up to be held between 1pm and 4pm on a Sunday afternoon. It was, however, cancelled in the wake of a similar Sheffield event where a 25-year-old died from head injuries after being pushed down stairs at a "drink all you can party" where it was found he had drunk £45 worth of alcoholic drinks during a four-hour binge. Reporting the Hartlepool U-turn, Andy Barker managed in his ten-paragraph lead story to not mention the name of the bar (Hartlepool Star, 10/7/97) Moral arbiters here were the Institute of Alcohol Studies, Licensed Victuallers' Association, Law Society and police.



**LIQUORICE** (FF19:12-13). A woman who gorged on liquorice suffered muscle paralysis and nearly died The unnamed 56-year-old ate up to two 200 gramme bags of Pontefract cakes every day before she was taken to hospital. Tests showed she had a dangerously low level of potassium in her blood -- aside effect of too much glycyrrhizic acid, which gives liquorice its unique taste. Consultant Raja Hussein, of Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Trust, called for liquorice products to carry a health warning, but makers Haribo said levels of glycyrrhic acid in their liquorice fell well below the amount needing a warning label. (D. Mirror, 27/3/03)

**UPLIFT** (FF27:10-11;FF44:1/4). Hanky-panky led ski officials in Vail, Colorado, U.S.A., to chop down a tree known as the Panty Bush because it was festooned with knickers and bras from the nearby chairlift in aptly-named Beaver Creek. The saucy culprits had precictably never been traced. (D. Sport, 5/3/96)

**CHASTITY BELTS (FF6:1).** In the 15th century a chastity belt that really worked appeared on the European market. This was the brainchild of Francesco de Carerra, a senior legislator in Padua and it amounted to a padlock that closed the vaginal labia tight by the simple expedient of passing right through them -- or as it was more decorously phrased at the time "locked up the seat of voluptuousness". The device remained popular for a century after its invention, finding particular favour in France, where, according to one account which smacks of a mixture of expediency and medieval mythmaking, it sold so quickly at a fair in Paris that the stallholder was hustled out of town by the young men of the city who saw their favourite quarry rapidly being locked away. (The Encyclopaedia of Sexual Trivia, Dr Robin Smith, Robson Books, 1990)

**NEGATIVE EQUITY (FF44:11).** FF44 mentioned the short section of Kildale Grove behind where I live and those suffering from and those who have had cancer. My wife pointed out a man with leukemia who lives in the middle of this tiny "cluster hot-spot" who blames the passage of irradiated rods between Hartlepool nuclear power station and Sellafield. Well, I regularly photograph these trains and neither glow in the dark or have children with webbed feet.

**MORAL PANIC.** Anti-drugs groups are campaigning to have syringe-shaped sweets banned. The 10p Freekee Drops, which show a dribbling child with its eyes rolling were taken off shelves in Scotland last year after Tony Blair was alerted. But the Spanish-made sweets have been found on sale in the Midlands and campaigners want them banned in England. Help group Drugline commented: "It will lead youngsters to associate drugs with pleasure, which will attract them more to that kind of scene." (D. Mirror, 19/5/03)

**WEIRD WORKSOP (FF32:3-5, passim).** The original subject of this category, whom I wrote about in some detail was William John Cavendish-Bentinck-Scott, 5th Duke of Portland, about whom a new exhibition seeks to sift fact from fiction. His massive developments have been seen by some to be a job creation scheme (two articles under my editorship of The Ley Hunter suggested similar so I sense mythology). Those interested should hasten to the Harley Gallery, Welbeck, Worksop, Notts., running until December 24. MEANWHILE Paul Wong, 47, was banned from his hobby of kite-flying after forcing aircraft to take action to avoid hitting his high-flying object at more than 2,000 metres. The Chinese takeaway owner of Worksop, Notts., said: "I wanted to break the world record, but I noticed some aircraft had to swerve to avoid my kite. The police said I had to get permission from the Civil Aviation Authority." Mr Wong still hopes to break the highest kite flight record, set in 1898 in America when a kite flew at over 3,800 metres. The CAA said: "Anything above 60 metres could distract a pilot, but we're happy to advise on where kites can be flown." (D. Mirror, 7/2/03)

**ROSSLYN CHAPEL.** Latest on this Midlothian mystery is that a Japanese electronics manufacture is helping to fund research into decoding 213 cube symbols, "in the belief that it could lead to the development of muscle-relaxing products using vibrations from sound." (cr: Dr A S L Rae, ?, 16/6/02)

**AVOCADO MANDELSON (FF36:3-8).** Giles Coren rambles inconsequentially: "I embarked on this motorised march because I was feeling a little under the weather back home ... The end of summer, the repetitive glumness of the rain and the football season and the party conferences (has John Prescott made the guacamole joke yet?), the oppressive smallness of the world, the tyranny of the internet, the power of capital ... (The Times, 4/10/03)

**TATTOO COCK-UPS (FF33:1/5, passim).** A football fan was caught in a war of the roses after getting tattooed with the emblem of a rival team by mistake. Richard Sutcliffe, 24, asked for the Yorkshire rose on his arm to show loyalty to Leeds United, but he ended up with the outline of the Lancashire rose, home to arch rivals Manchester United. Freelance writer Richard, of Keighley, West Yorks., said: "I have had so much ribbing. They're all saying this could be the start of me converting to a Manchester United fan, which certainly isn't going to happen. One ortwo have told me I can't show my face at Elland Road again." The white Yorkshire rose has one petal on top between two thorns, the red Lancashire version two petals on top split by one thorn. (D. Mirror, 6/9/03) \*\* Pop singer Dido reckons "fame is like a bad tattoo". (The Times body&soul, 4/10/03)

# BOOKS

## MAN WALKS INTO A PUB: A SOCIABLE HISTORY OF BEER

By PETE BROWN (*Macmillan, £10.99*)

THE introduction announces: "This is a book about why we drink beer. More than that it is a book about how we drink beer and why we drink the beer we do, the way we do.

By page 366, as he weaves his way to a conclusion, he has decided: "We drink beer because we will always want to get out of our brains somehow". Well, I drink beer to be sociable; I also enjoy the taste. I drink as ritual and having had hangovers where had I been a Roman Catholic I would have summoned a priest to give me the last rites as my brain tried to get out of me somehow. He also believes we drink beer "because the gods gave it to us" and many archaeologists believe that one of the main reasons mankind founded stable communities was so we could get down to the business of brewing; arguably suggesting that drinking beer is the meaning of life. Without pharmacological degrees, early man assumed the happy accident of fermentation, alcohol production and resultant inebriation was a gift of the Gods and a divine experience. However, having a spiritual dimension, alcohol use and abuse was tightly controlled

Controls such as licensing hours seem a little confused here, with Brown's recollection of the afternoon drinking law changes of 1994 being at odds with his later reference to 1988 for weekdays and 1995 Sunday extension.

There are some strange statistics, such as "brewer" Greene King revealing that men claim to be obsessed with football more than anything else, with beer in second place and sex lagging third. Well, considering its Abbot Ale is akin to an Army initiation ritual, I frankly dismiss the data. Another figure to conjure with is the number of bars in Hartlepool, which has led to it being nicknamed "Hartlepub". Brown's list of colloquialisms for getting drunk misses the Hartlepuddian favourite -- "palatic" (natives just can't accept the general term "paralytic").

There is some wise commentary such as the ease we have in downing a pint of beer easily, but finding any other liquid, including water, seeming a terrific amount. I agree, but when on regular holidays in Portugal, to ward off dehydration I can down copious amounts of water if in a 50/50 mix with tomato juice.

Chapters include the changing nature of the drinking venue from mediaeval alehouse to modern pub via well-demarked types in a woozy non-chronological order i here correct to taverns, alehouses, coaching inns, railway inns and public houses; local to commercial brewing and regional choice (I went in the Beaufort Arms, Stoke Gifford, near Bristol, and upon recognising my northern accent the barmaid said she'd better find a sprinkler so I got a decent head on my beer unlike the flat pint preferred by locals) along with regional experimentation such as snakebite and blackcurrant (known in Hartlepool as "diesel"); scientific technicalities, Scottish differences and conglomeration; beer pumps, Brunel's circular bar brainwave, gin palaces and tied house system; taxation, temperance, bottled beer for home consumption, too little on the Carlisle experiment by Josiah Redfern for better pubs (Kingmoor's The Redfern has a bowling green and the foulest-tongued Scots engine drivers you could imagine); Spitfires carrying a barrel of beer under each wing to Normandy after D-Day and wartime encouragement to drink shandy to make less brewing go around (my mate Harry told me that on Armistice Day the landlord of Yarm's Black Bull dragged out a piano on to the cobbles and gave away free pints to anyone in armed forces uniform).

The Carling Black Label advertising (Brown's footnote on the not-so-successful Dambusters' efforts misses the important point that although the raid was not repeated, 100,000 German troops were switched from the western front to guard the dams, so aiding the Allies' advance) and I never knew it was Canadian or how it's boss Eddie Taylor's brassy approach to create a national brewing change caused others to form the "Big Six" (oh for the days of Watney's Red Barrel and Ind Coope's Double Diamond, not to mention Camerons' Nut Brown Ale; you can skip the chapter on the crap that's called lager and which the author extols; keg and the decline of cask-conditioned ale, CAMRA and the annual Great British Beer Festival and its piles of sawdust-covered vomit, plus the rise of John Smith's (my regular tipple), Boddington's and Hoegaarden; the Australian invasion, folk demon rural lage louts and drinking from bottles trend; more mergers and Caffrey's arrival; the rise of young persons' weekend circuit, theme, housing estate, fun and gasto pubs; profiteering, surly bar staff and a dubious pub experience package.

It's written in a cheery style, but the footnotes suggest late additions under the influence during the proofreading stage. These short, often silly, interruptions stem the flow and are generally irritating rather than educative, reeking of lads' mags' puerile humour. Nevertheless, and enjoyable literary pub crawl and required reading.

## MAGAZINES

**FORTEAN TIMES.** News-stand. £3.20 with extra 16 pages. No. 174. Unsatisfactory ghost debunking effort; impractical death of Ray Matthews and more importantly its direction towards radar; living English customs; fungus the bogeyman behind mummy's curse; long-ago mag swap mate Barry King seemingly at the barmy end of ufology spectrum; is High Frequency Active Auroral Research Programme what its name implies?; Jack-in-the-Green festival; abortive bid to enable remote viewers to communicate with dolphins and whales; scientific Darwinian cautionary tale. No. 175. Bid to put the "Nazi UFO" mythos to rest once and for all; Nazi 1938 mission to Tibet; aquatic stage in human evolution reconsidered; Trevor Ravenscroft's "Spear of Destiny" book scrutinised; significance (or otherwise) of number 23; trickster mythology and the paranormal; Jerusale; first U.K. palaeolithic rock art; Rendlesham revisited; horse-rippers return. No. 176. Special conspiracy issue covering new light on the J.F.K. assassination; conspiracy theory conferences; 9/11; a Marxist's reasoning for why UFOs visit us but do not stay; Israeli attempt to sink U.S. warship. Plus Dr Karl Shuker picks over the bones of the Loch Ness plesiosaur fossil find; Cannock crocodilian; Ulster alien big cats; Indonesian tattooing weirdness; lycanthropy. No. 177. Special 30th anniversary issue. There's a kind mention of me as one of the mag's early mentors. Resident experts look back over the last three decades, including Paul Devereux on earth mysteries, Jenny Randles on ufology, plus overviews of forteana in general, science, parapsychology, conspiracy and cryptozoology. Plus visits to F.T.'s back pages, mostly revised, expanded or condensed, including John Michell on Charles Fort, phantom Chinese hair snippers, centuries-old teleportations, Swedish runic inscriptions, bizarre loch monsters commentator, phantom Iran roadside eatery. No. 178. Most interesting but all too brief considerations of gravitic anomaly sites worldwide, though too few in the U.K. are mentioned, nor any rational reasoning for regarding such as "optical illusions"; World War II divining for dead bodies; surprise resurgences of earthlights theory; "red mercury" threat; basically inconclusive dream experiments at ancient sites; early man-made flight. No. 179. Paul Devereux investigates a link between health and holiness; positive and welcome review of F.F.'s booze special issue; déjà vu; spiritualism reassessed; yeti a bear?; "flash mobs" brief fame; chilling 2003 Chernobyl account; genitalia home surgery; Victorian seances where Peter Brookesmith proves that the volume of footnotes can be in equally opposite ratio to the value of content; Necropolis Railway; weak DIY Atlantis throwaway and hard to believe tale of Arran faery encounters. No. 180. Fascinating account of Aldous Huxley's drug experimentation; Victorian writing and psych-active drugs; 19th century indigestion and apparitional sightings; Grateful Dead and forgotten telepathy experiment; playwright August Strindberg's alchemy, persecution complex and absinthe; high on salvia divinorum. Plus letters, reviews and archive tales each issue.

**NORTHERN EARTH.** Q. £6.50 for 4. Cheques payable to Northern Earth Mysteries Group. From 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire. No. 95. Supernatural author M.R. James and alignments; Thornborough henge complex protest; nutty "idiot fringe" attack on ley-liners by C.I.A. (that's Council for Independent Archaeology) Newsletter writer; mummified and ghost cats worldwide; various seasonal ghost tales. No. 96. Sockburn Worm, Hell's Kettles, Lewis Carroll and Alice's vision quest; the mystical dimension to earth mysteries; "The Corpse Watcher" Irish folktale seen to contain several shamanic themes; fascinating Tower of London ravens' history, including one called Grog which escaped and was last seen appropriately outside an East London pub; Wensleydale West Witton's eerie pub; caverns used for ritual and funerary activity; midwinter sunset orientation speculation. Regular features: archaeological round-up, book reviews, editor's musings, letters, events.

**AMSKAYA.** Newsletter of the STAR Fellowship. £2 for 4. Cheques payable to J. Goddard at 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2PX. No. 55. Bewildering extraterrestrial technology issue which left me no wiser or convinced. No. 56. Shared anti-Devereux, anti-Randles with Touchstone (see below); Philip Rodgers and his tape-recorded sounds from allegedly outer space, with commentary by veteran ufologist Norman Oliver published in 2003, plus description of a visit to Philip by Oliver and author Eileen Buckle of The Scoriton (been there in Devon shortly afterwards, excellent pub, and it's actually Scorriton) Mystery of 1966.

MAGONIA. Q. £7 p.a. Or £9.50 for 6. Cheques payable to John Rimmer at John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW14 8HB. No. 82. Good piece of investigation into a U.S. Stealth aircraft crash which unmask the simplistic account by author Nick Cook; baffling (at least to me) piece on virtual worlds by former F.F. subscriber David Sivier (perhaps F.F. has become too lowbrow?); lighthouse-spotter Ian Ridpath's crank letter which suggests two experienced police constables to be unable to observe the motions of Venus; columnist The Pelican gives The Skeptik a good literary pistol-whipping. No. 83. Bizarre rant at Jerry Clark by Peter Brookesmith taking his hobbyhorse inalienable right to carry firearms and swipe at folkloric unofficial history (though Clark has a full-page letter and book reviewed); odd article by Matt Graeber; abduction delusions; lengthy review of The Necronomicon fantasy which neglects to mention Colin Wilson exploded this myth more than 20 years ago.

TOUCHSTONE. Mag of Surrey Earth Mysteries Group. Same address, price and frequency of Amskaya (see above). No. 62. Editor Jimmy Goddard takes former The Ley Hunter editors Paul Devereux and Danny Sullivan to task for dismissing the ley system as he believes it to be a living, complex national and international entity, basing his opinion on 42 years of study and experience, here giving the various properties which determine his groundrock of faith. Plus Jimmy's ley hunting from Surrey into London with maxed ages sites; 1985 Oxford field trip. No. 63. Veteran ley hunter and ufologist Jimmy rejects the assessments of the past three decades in Fortean Times's 30th anniversary issue with more praise for my editorship of The Ley Hunter from 1969 to 1976, and in response to Paul Devereux rejecting "the reality of leys altogether" defends leys as old straight tracks, energy lines and flying saucer geomagnetic routes as "all these things and more", plus extra attacks on perceived arrogance. Jenny Randles comes in for short shrift, too, not unexpectedly as she has changed the colours she run up the ufological flagpole over the years more times than a psychedelic chameleon. Plus chalk figures; Surrey ley-hunting; Mother Ludlam's Hole field trip of 1987; Anglesey.

HOBNAIL REVIEW. Single copy £1. Sub rates start a minimum of 5 issues £5, six cost £6 etc. Cheques and POs should be made payable to Hobnail Press, PO Box 44122, London SW6 7XJ. No. 1. Articles on one individual's crusade for honesty from vanity publishers commended by a supporter; the extensive alternative football club supporters' press. Brief book reviews, including my "The Man Who Ate A Domino"; mag and zine listings with minimal comment, including "FF", plus presses and projects summarised. No. 2. Now to appear 3-4 times a year. Articles cover the reason specialist books published by independent presses cost more than mainstream publishing counterparts; beating the postal system; two pieces explain the modes of mail (or correspondence) art; useful extracts from articles on DIY publishing (such as this); interesting briefs round-up. Usual micro book reviews, mag and zine listings, plus presses and projects update.

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## THIS ISSUE

WITH regret I inform readers that the nature of this issue was forced upon me by the sudden death of my regular printer, Mike Costello. Before starting Emjat Reprographics with his wife Gill, Mike was an F.F. subscriber. He had separated from his wife several years ago, who is now his will administrator, and what happens to the business is anyone's guess. I read somewhere that if anything happened to Mike or Enjay, half the small press publications in the U.K would be in dire straits. It is said that nature abhors a vacuum, so hopefully someone will come forward and take on Emjay as a (basically) going concern. Having sent on December 6 a 24-page, F.F. 45 it was returned in late January. I have basically had to start again from scratch and what you see is a compromise between quitting or doing the best I can with a modest word processor and some photocopying. It has meant virtually no artwork, less contents variety, but a random number of individual copies with salaciousness in colour on the cover (some people never change despite the adversity). In an ideal world someone will circulate Mike's customers and offer a same or similar service. I hope so as this has ben a pig to produce!  
(Printed by Paul Screeton, 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT)