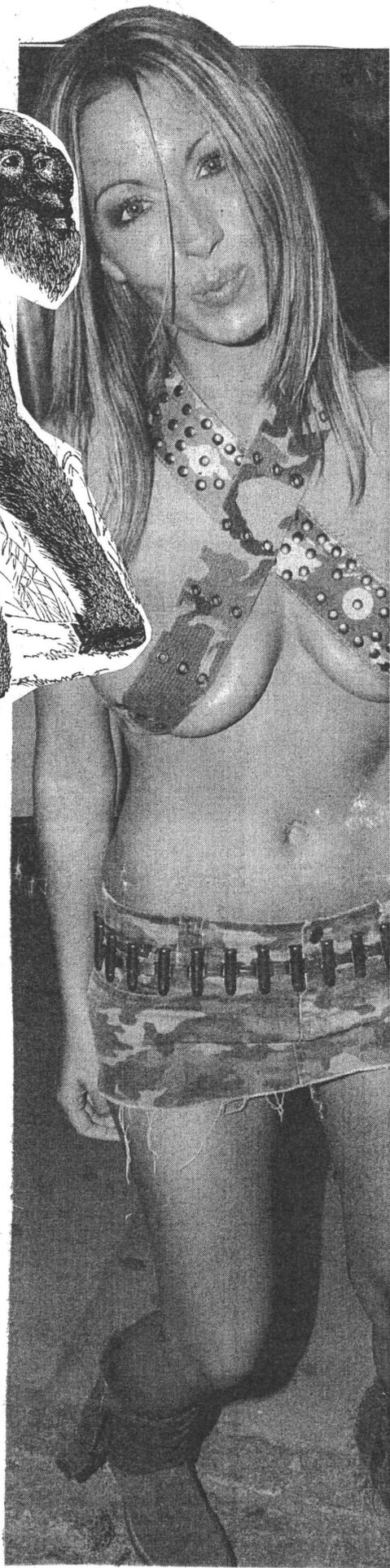


FOLKLORE



FRONTIERS



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Folklore Frontiers is an independent magazine covering various aspects of folklore, particularly contemporary legend, ancient and modern traditions, plus modern 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 made payable to Paul Screeton only (NOT Folklore Frontiers). If your subscription expires with this issue an "X" will appear on the line below.

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THE DIARY ... THE DIARY ...

RECENT reading has led me to consider that creation myth, Darwinism, which seems to require faith on a greater scale than any evangelical religionist. I was surprised to see that like Mother's Day and Father's Day, another modern addition is Darwin Day, when evolutionists celebrate the birthday of the man who wrote *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Well, if that is not provocative racism, I don't know what is! No wonder adherents prefer to refer to it as *The Origin of Species*. Charles Darwin wrote a note to himself in an attempt to decide whether or not to wed, divided into two columns: Marry or Not Marry. I have not seen any pictures of the woman he married, but assume that for the purposes of natural selection she was a nubile youngster as fit as a butcher's dog, with slim waist, suitable child-bearing hips and a virgin womb. A Victorian Jodie Marsh, perhaps.



OSTENSION, put simply, is the folkloric term for a real event patterned on an urban legend; fact mirroring fiction. Pages 6 and 7 tell how obnoxious shock jock Tim Shaw flirted with Jodie Marsh on Birmingham's Kerrang 105.2 radio station 10pm to 1am 'Asylum Show' and told listeners he would leave his family for the glamour model. His wife promptly sold his £50,000 car for £5. Scanning the internet revealed discussion as to whether it was a publicity stunt based on an urban legend (pseudo-ostension) and if the sale could be done on eBay as described. There are loads more variations on the legend at www.snopes.cpm/love/revenge/porsche/asp

On an earlier occasion at the radio station, Tim almost choked to death on a sausage which broke in half while simulating a sex act. He was investigated in the past for pretending he was doing a live mercy dash to rescue a suicidal listener when he worked for Birmingham's BRMB station.



JOURNALIST David Rowan pointed out at the end of last year the peril of printed satire being taken at face value, citing the 'now famous interview quote from a pregnant Britney Spears (FF39:3, passim), which found its way into such respectable publications as The Washington Post: "Like omigod, I have to tell the maid to buy diapers and get the pool boy to walk the dog? Can't I just make out with Kevin all the time? Being married sucks." Alas, this was a newspaper columnist's satire that was picked up widely as genuine. How much more marketable would newspapers be if they went out of their way to pack their pages with such nonsense.

'Wanton inaccuracy, clearly, is what the public demands. Too many journalists nowadays are using the internet to check their facts, when fake news is what appeals to those elusive younger readers. Sometimes, true, misreporting can get out of hand: let's ignore the teensy bit of trouble that Newsweek caused over that supposedly toilet-flushed Koran. Instead, just recall the widespread interest last year in "toothing", the new craze, as defined by Reuters, whereby "strangers on trains, buses, in bars and even supermarkets hook up for illicit meetings" using messages sent via Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones. "Toothing" existed only as a transparent hoax by a few web mischief-makers, but its salacious promise hooked newspapers from Birmingham to Beijing.'

It also caught me out and has ended up in the sexual encounters section of my forthcoming book, *Crossing the Line* (see Page 13). It never crossed my mind to check -- breaking the first rule in journalism. I had filed the cutting away with a note to check out the comments made by Mariah Carey wishing to be thin like Africa's starving children but without the dirt and flies -- possibly satirical journalism rather than actual comment, though she does seem to be a few notes short of an octave (FF47:3). By the time I had resurrected the item it was too late in the book's schedule to delete what had duped me.



PENRITH PENDOLINOS. It looks genuine enough, but could, I suppose, have been doctored. Hopefully won't get fooled again. A sign on Penrith station warning of the danger of passing 120mph Pendolino trains states

Keep back from the platform edge

or you may get sucked off

The *double entendre* had been sent in by Boff Douglas. One wonders if it is for real, whether the joke helped put the warning message across. (Zoo, 17-23 March 2006)



Darwinism: ⚡ Just Another Creation ⚡ Myth? ⚡

BY PAUL SCREETON

PERHAPS pomposity hides subliminal running scared doubts when Mark Henderson warns 'the creationist movement, and its cloak of "intelligent design" theory' is perceived in the UK as a peculiarly American phenomenon. (1)

For if this 'science correspondent' is what he claims to be, I see scant 'science' in his reasoning. The terms 'creationism', 'intelligent design' and 'evolutionism' are mutually exclusive.

Creationists believe God created the world in six days, intelligent design posits that biological 'irreducible complexity' can only be the work of a designing intelligence and Darwinism relies upon random mutation coupled with natural selection. Henderson's pitiful inability to distinguish between creationism and ID is similar to the public's general lack of differentiating between paganism and Satanism. Henderson goes on to warn of the consequences of 'evolution denial', which is an emotive phrase echoing the 'global warming denial' attack upon Bjorn Lomborg, (the statistician who believes he has proven greenhouse effect believers to be alarmists), and both of which seek to lump those of opposing camps alongside Holocaust deniers. His paranoia even extends to seeing *The Daily Telegraph* as a propaganda sheet for ID and creationism.

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**For a fair-minded article on how creationists find the new idea of ID as repugnant to them as evolution read Brian Regal in Fortean Times issue 202 page 57**  
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Without any axe to grind, I have, however, long suspected Darwinism to be just another creation myth, little better cognitively acceptable than the Earth being created during a busy six-day period during 4004BC. It may not be perfect, but ID is surely the way forward. The fossil record is punctuated by embarrassing gaps; evolution proponents guilty of faked data (melanised peppered moth) and many fraudulent fragments. As for survival of the fittest, the physically-sickly, psychiatrically-ill Darwin (see précis of article by James Le Fanu next page) does not engender the alpha male model.

As for creationists, to them allegory is a dirty word and the Bible a literal record of our beginnings.

With so much of interest within the fortean sphere and life in general, the origins of life has been a subject I have hitherto neglected. However, having noted an increasing reportage in the media of evolutionary conundrums and refutations, I felt it apposite to take notice. It may as of now only be a minor tidal shift, but the evolutionary debate is back on the agenda.

Extinction theories galore

As for scientists themselves, Charles Fort noted perceptively that for every expert there is an equal and opposite expert. I've just read that 'there are more than 90 different scientific theories on how dinosaurs became extinct' and here's me thinking scientists try to get everything down to one theory rather than expanding options willy-nilly. (2)

And here's another. A German team claims they did not survive because their sleeping patterns meant their brains did not learn new skills properly. Unlike birds and mammals, reptiles do not experience slow-wave sleep, which helps the memory process needed for learning new tasks. (3)

Anyway, evolutionary science would seem to my untutored brain to play some kind of chicken and egg game. Is it me, but do they date rocks by fossils or fossils by rocks? I ask this as a previously dated footprint 40,000 years old left in volcanic rock in central Mexico and believed to belong to the first American immigrants, is now believed to be more than 1.3 million years old and so cannot, scientists say, be human. I ask you, is that logical? Talk about moving the goalposts, even playing fields, open minds ... (4)

Red rumpy pumpy

Here are a random selection of recent findings/thoughts/beliefs from the cutting edge of evolutionary science.

🐒 We developed colour vision not to help hunt food but spot when partners are sexually aroused (blushing primates' reddened bare rumps to human facial blushing). (5)

*** A study by the University of London's Queen Mary College showed bees were drawn to the blue in paintings, despite being raised in captivity and never having seen a real flower, a colour associated with high-nectar blooms and which may 'help explain evolution'. (6)

*** Ernst Haeckel created his 'tree map' of evolutionary relationships in 1870, but now a computer model has been utilised to fill in the missing gaps. (7) Wishful techno thinking?

*** They cannot agree whether we are still evolving; 'proof' being that one in five people today has impacted wisdom teeth, while prehistoric humans appear to have had no such problem accommodating these third molars. So has increased brain size come at the price of smaller jawbones or genetic mutation 2.5 million years ago led to smaller jaws and consequently more space for brain growth? (8)

*** 'Just where did humans originate? The discovery of the first-ever chimpanzee fossils close to those of early human species could blow a hole in the theory of human evolution. Anthropologists at the California Academy of Sciences say it is the first evidence the two co-existed in the same place in the past. It was previously thought evolution occurred when humans moved away from the jungle. But now scientists may have to rethink how humans originated.' (9)

DARWIN DIAGNOSIS 175 YEARS TOO LATE

"I have had a bad spell," Charles Darwin wrote to his friend the botanist Joseph Hooker, "vomiting every day for 11 days and sometimes after every meal." This was the illness that first afflicted him at the age of 22 while waiting to sail on HMS Beagle. At sea he was well, but on his return he became ill again and his 'diary of health' recorded not only the vomiting but diarrhoea, flatulence, rashes, headaches, boils, mouth ulcers and palpitations. He consulted more than 20 doctors but after his death his son Francis recorded that he "for nearly 40 years never knew one day of health of ordinary men." He also had the distinction of being labelled with effectively the full spectrum of psychiatric illness – hypochondriasis, chronic depression, anxiety state, panic attack and (from the psychoanalysts) bereavement syndrome due to the loss of his mother when he was only eight. Just 175 years too late came a seemingly correct diagnosis. Professor Anthony Campbell and Stephanie Matthews, of the University of Wales College of Medicine, reported in the *Postgraduate Medical Journal* that Darwin's symptoms 'match exactly' those of intolerance to the sugar lactose present in milk and dairy products. Darwin's misfortune, besides four decades of ill health, is that the cause of his illness is a potent argument against his own theory of evolution. The likelihood that the human body had the correct enzymes and hormones to break down foods before absorption could all have evolved by chance is infinitesimally small; the more so when we see, as in Darwin's illness, the devastating consequences when just one is missing or not functioning properly. James Le Fanu here ends: 'Sam Wilberforce rules, OK!' If you have missed his point, Wilberforce, nicknamed 'Soapy Sam', became Bishop of Winchester and in 1860 took part in the famous debate at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History with Thomas Huxley, attacking the theories of Darwin. No wonder then, with Le Fanu and the open-minded scientist contributor Robert Matthews, that Mark Henderson gets paranoid reading the Telegraphs! (The Sunday Telegraph, 15/5/05)

*** Same day as the above – synchronicity? – Mick Hume cogitated upon 'what makes us human', 'human and chimpanzee lines first separated several million years ago' and because fruit flies share 50% of their genes with humans, should we start treating them as half-cousins too? (The Times, 2/9/05) (10) And they say philosophy is dead.

*** A team of Dutch and American scientists believe genetic loneliness stems from prehistoric times when hunter gatherers led a solitary existence so as to avoid sharing food and thus increasing their chances of survival. (11) So much for the generally-believed team effort to snare large game.

*** Steve Jones, Professor of Genetics at University College London, hailed the bicycle's impact upon human evolution by its ending of the inbreeding that was once endemic in village communities. (12) He has also been quoted as saying a long way back in evolution the male chromosome was big and strong. "Now it's a shagged out version of the X," he confides. (13)

Plssed hic as a hic newt

*** Parisian scientists suggested human hiccups are a hangover from our evolutionary past as amphibians. Although our frog-like breathing abilities have gone, we retain the necessary nerve circuitry and it is this that bursts back into life when we get hiccups. (14)

*** Female fireflies recognise that the longer the flash the healthier the male, thus breeding will pass on the strongest genes. But the variety *photinus greeni*'s puny males have learned to trick females giving long flashes. "It may have evolved to provide false information," said US researcher Sara Lewis. (15)

*** Not to forget those diminutive creatures found by fossil-hunters in Indonesia and dubbed 'Hobbit Man'. The bickering among scientists became an unwholesome display akin to football hooligans at their worst, most bloodthirsty and territorial. Professor Maciej Henneberg, of the University of Adelaide, appeared to be a voice of sanity, pointing out that scientists have around 200 specimens of early man believed to represent ten different species, making 20 specimens per species; with only a single skull for 'Hobbit Man'. "The problem is there are far more palaeontologists than fossil specimens," he noted wryly. (16)

☛☛☛ Lastly a bizarre one. Maybe, like me, you were unaware that all 3,000 species of centipede have an odd number of leg pairs, 15 to 191, but an example found in Whitburn, Tyne & Wear, has 48. Chris Kettle's chance discovery means a rewriting of science text books. (17)

The Triple-Breasted Whore of Eroticon Six

Recent reading in several scientific fields – not my normal literature – has left me perplexed as to how often logic is swept metaphorically under a carpet (a magic one perhaps which could lift off at any moment and expose the uncomfortable facts to the delight of fortune and fair play).

I was heartened that no lesser personage than the Astronomer Royal, Professor Sir Martin Rees, has suggested that "life, the universe and everything" may be no more than a giant computer simulation. Our role being reduced

to bits of software. Such a cosmology seems reasonable. It does not prejudice my brand of Christian Gnostic belief. That the world we see is an illusion, as popularised in the film *The Matrix*, I can live with. My preference as a cosmology is 'steady state' or 'metaverse' as opposed to 'big bang', and although many scientists prefer to imagine intelligent design as a pseudoscientific stalking horse for Christian fundamentalism, the fine tuning (apart from fortean events) and variety of lifeforms and richness of human behaviour must be taken as evidence for some kind of creator at work. Not necessarily the most rational one, but the best we've got. You only have to look at the duck-billed platypus to know that whoever created life on Earth has a sense of humour. But from a Gnostic point of view, I ask you, whatever did his creator think of it?

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* Note: Metro is quoted here so frequently because it has brief extracts supplied by New Scientist (I pick up copies of Metro travelling to Stockton for ferroequinoligical research).

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Ancestry, Sex doggy-fashion & the G-spot

BY PAUL SCREETON

THE THEORY goes like this. Our remote ape-like ancestors were more likely to have had sex in rear-entry rather than missionary positions. Once we had evolved so that we walked on two feet, sex was easier, and more emotionally satisfying, face to face. However, the lower anterior vaginal wall retained its sensitivity because that is the area that is maximally stimulated in rear-entry positions.

In the 1950s, a German gynaecologist called Ernst Grafenberg carved a lucrative practice by also

becoming a sexologist: It is he and his w3ife who posited a spot on the wall which swelled as if engorged during the woman's orgasm. It became known as the Grafenberg spot; later Goddess-spot or abbreviated to G-spot.

Opponents of its existence point to a lack of concentration of nerves in the G-spot area. As sexologist Suzi Godson pointed out: 'In 2002 Dr Terence Hines, a professor of psychology at Pace University, New York, published a report in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* which claimed that evidence for the existence of the G-spot was no more than anecdotal. He reviewed all the research and concluded that the G-spot was "a sort of gynaecological UFO: much searched for, much discussed, but unverified by objective means".' Suzi notes that despite the confusion, lots of women have discovered a soft area just behind the pubic bone that just needs to be touched for great pleasure and explains how to find it, despite making 'you feel as if you need to pee' and if close to orgasm you may replace the hand with a 'curved G-spot vibrator or dildo'. Or 'alternatively find someone with a nice bedside manner'. (Suzi Godson, 'That really hits the spot', *The Times body&soul*, 10/12/05)

Desmond Morris, whose take on human evolution has been called 'chimpomorph' by one derisory scientist and who has been accused of writing the same book 30 times over, is in no doubt that the G-spot and knows where, too. Morris writes that Grafenberg explained its significance was lost when the missionary position became a dominant feature of human sexual behaviour. Other sexual positions being 'far more efficient stimulating this erogenous zone and therefore achieving vaginal orgasms'. It is beyond the scope of this article, but Morris adds that 'astonishingly, there have been recent reports that some women have been undergoing "G-spot enhancement", involving injecting collagen to enlarge it. 'According to one source, "One of the latest procedures to catch on is G-spot injection. Similar substances to those injected into the lips to plump them up can now be injected into your G-spot. The idea is that this will increase its sensitivity and so give you better orgasms".' If you think I'm simply being lascivious and dirty-minded, remember that Folklore Frontiers is the leading organ in the study of contemporary legend. As Dr Morris goes on: 'This sounds more like an urban myth than a surgical reality, but where female sexual improvements are concerned, almost anything is possible'. (Desmond Morris, 'The Naked Woman: a study of the female body' Jonathan Cape, 2004)

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TESTS ON ANIMALS

ANOTHER aspect of science which bothers me as I read unfamiliar literature is the extraordinary, to me at least, way in which animals are tested upon as if the results are always meaningful to the human condition. Surely, despite DNA similarities and genetics, findings from animal experiments cannot be reliably extrapolated to humans.

# Jodie Marsh, DJ & £25,000 revenge

BY PAUL SCREETON

DURING a live radio broadcast, Kerrang 105.2's Tim Shaw told glamour model Jodie Marsh he was prepared to leave his wife and their two children for her.

Whether the presenter was besotted or barmy, serious or joking, wife Hayley, who was at home listening, was far from amused. After downing a few drinks and while her flirtatious husband was still in the studio presenting his show, she posted an advert on eBay for his £25,000 sports car with a 'But it Now' option for a princely 50p.

The item description for the Lotus Esprit Turbo read: 'I need to get rid of this car in the next two to three hours before my husband gets home to find it gone and all his belongings in the street.'

Within five minutes she and the car had a buyer.

She later described disc-jockey Tim's saucy interview as the 'last straw' in their relationship. "When he said he would leave me and the kids for Jodie Marsh, that was it for me. I am sick of him disrespecting this family for the sake of his act." She commented.

"The car is his pride and joy but the idiot put my name on the log book so I just sold it. I didn't care about the money, I just wanted to get him back. There is no hope of a reconciliation."

The disrespect for his family has included Tim upsetting Hayley when she was pregnant by ringing her sister live on air and saying that he thought about her while having sex with his wife.

At Kerrang 105.2 a spokesperson said the DJ was 'absolutely gutted'. The station had earlier suspended him after he broke into programme director Andrew Jeffries' house during a live prank, damaged the property and wrote obscenities on the wall. (1)

Maybe some readers will find this tale of the scorned wife's revenge familiar. I first heard a version of it applied to the posh West Park area of Hartlepool in the early Sixties, but when a well-known contemporary legend such as this is acted out in real life it is called 'ostension'.

American folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand named the tale 'The Philanderer's Porsche'. In an early book, Brunvand traced its literary credentials back only so far as 1959 version, believed as true by its monitor and repeated. In this instance a California newspaper advertised an 'almost new' Porsche for \$50. Suspecting a typographical error, a would-be buyer arrived to see the possible

bargain. After a test drive and exchange of documents and \$50 bill, the new owner inquired as to why the car was so cheap. The woman told him: "My husband ran off with his secretary a few days ago and left a note instructing me to sell the car and the house, and send him the money."

Brunvand adds that in other versions the car is sold for a song because the proceeds would go to her late husband's mistress as decreed in his will. (2)

The folklorist *par excellence* notes that both treatments dramatise the undeniable pleasure in 'getting even'. As is the case with the true events concerning the Shaws.

Brunvand also noted that the story had been known in England since 1948. Thirty years later, Rodney Dale went into print with a suitably succinct telling, worth repeating for its brevity but with all the elements.

A foaf saw a motor-car advertised in the local press for £5. Of course, he couldn't believe his eyes – this year's model? All those extras? Well, if it was true, he was on to a good thing; somebody had to be there first and it could be he. So he rushed round to the address, and there was this woman, and she showed him the car, and the registration documents and so on, and it all seemed to be in order. Without asking too many questions, he gave her the fiver, and she gave him a receipt, and he drove it away. Later, he found out the truth – the woman's husband had left her, and asked her to sell his car and send him the proceeds. (3)

In a completely different style, with embellishments, the Trotters of Only Fools and Urban Mythology, Healy and Glanvill, have a guy spotting a Porsche with a sign on the windscreen proclaiming '**£5 – everything must go!**' He knocks on the door, does the deal for the car and is asked if he needs golf clubs, hi-fi, designer gear, exercise bike, all dirt cheap. "Why?," he asks. Her cheating husband had claimed he was leaving on business, but she had discovered he was having a liaison with his secretary in Venice. So she 'was selling off everything he owned for sod all.' (4)

Recording artist John McCutcheon sings the song *The Red Corvette*. The album track ides, of course, about a jilted wife selling her husband's expensive car cheaply.

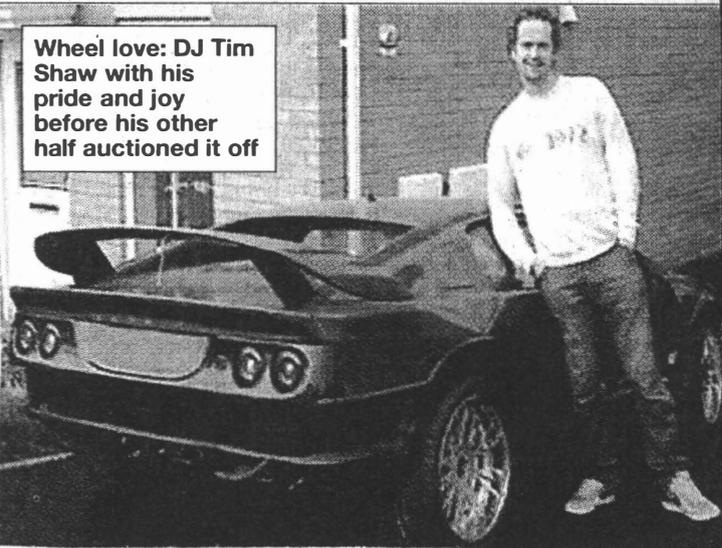
If Kerrang 105.2 has a requests show, maybe Hayley Shaw could dedicate the song to her errant husband.

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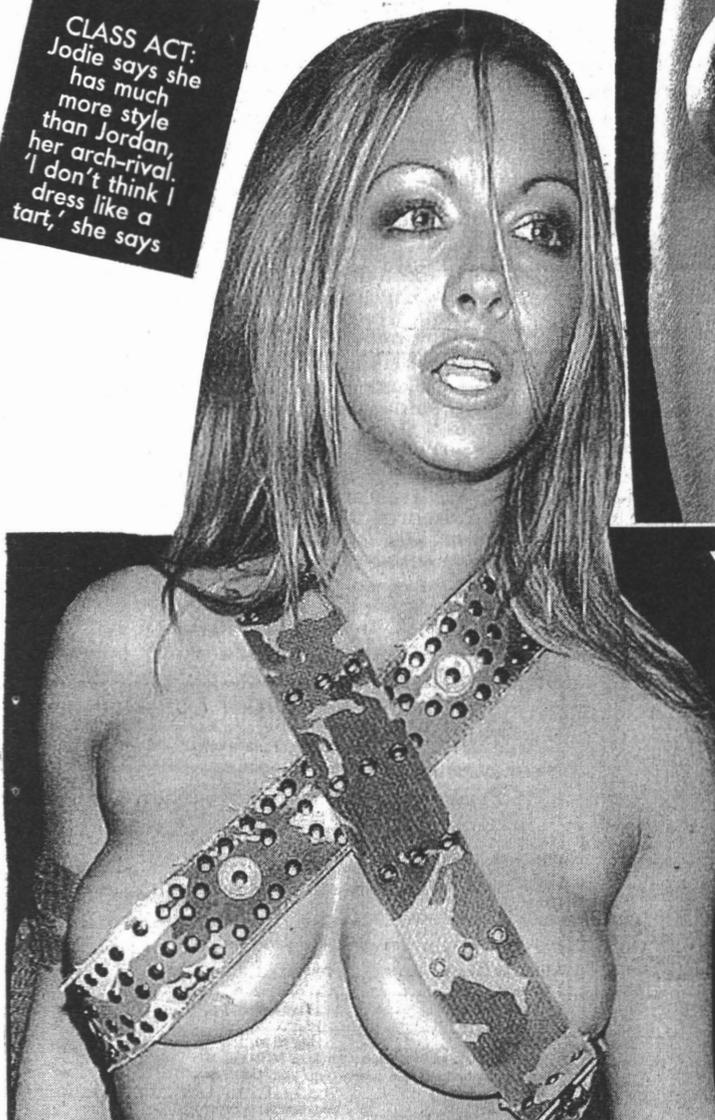
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Wheel love: DJ Tim Shaw with his pride and joy before his other half auctioned it off



CLASS ACT: Jodie says she has much more style than Jordan, her arch-rival. 'I don't think I dress like a tart,' she says



## You're just tit for tat Jodie

JODIE Marsh, the media's latest (t)it girl, had this to say about her sartorial elegance: "I've got more style than Jordan. I don't just wear a bra and knickers. I've got more imagination than that."

Yeah, but not much!



### JODIE

|                   |                                             |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| AGE               | 24                                          |
| VITAL STATS       | 32D-24-32                                   |
| REAL OR SILICONE? | Implant-free. Had nose job when schoolgirl  |
| STYLE             | Desperate, tacky, less-is-more              |
| BIG BREAK         | Pole-danced on to TV screens in Essex Wives |
| BIGGEST MOMENT    | Wearing "belt" top to London party          |



# Newslines

**POLISH CUSTOMS.** The Tunguska event reverberates still. Polish Customs officers seized a bizarre consignment – around half a tonne of meteorites. A Russian lorry and its illegal load was stopped en route to the Czech republic. The haul included three meteorites weighing 176kg, 150kg and 80kg. A spokesman said: "They probably came from the same place in Siberia where a meteor crashed in 1947." (Metro, 12/9/05) That's unless you believe it was a crashing UFO or Nikola Tesla testing out his latest invention ....

**LEFTIES.** The Russian biological sciences doctor Alexander Dubov says that twice the proportion of left-handed babies are being born than a decade ago. He says that this is welcome because the IQs of left-handers tend to be higher and, he argues, left-handed people are also significantly more likely to have extra-sensory powers. (Pravda, so it must be true; The Times body&soul, 9/7/05)

**GARDENLORE.** Remember how singer Phil Collins was supposed to have texted wife No. 2 to say their marriage was over? Darren Hayes, of Savage Garden, was asked if it was true that he split the Aussie pop duo up during a radio interview without telling colleague Daniel Jones. "No, it's an urban myth. Daniel left the band the week before the *Affirmation* record was released. He told everyone; the band, the managers, that he just wasn't happy. I did that interview eight months later and he told reporters: 'That's the first I've heard of it.' I felt that I was going to get strung up by Savage Garden fans for leaving poor Daniel and not telling him, but it was actually the other way around." (Metro, 14/11/05)

**RAIN GODS.** Long-time readers will know I'm a dedicated herpetologist, so I was intrigued to read that 400 people cheered and blew conches as two giant toads were married in a traditional Hindu ceremony in eastern India by villagers hoping that the rain gods would end a drought. Regional temperatures have topped 44C, drying up water supplies and damaging crops. "Our forefathers used to organise marriages of toads to get rain. We hope rain will be coming very soon," said Konica Mandal, an organiser of the wedding. After the ceremony the toads, in bright red clothes, were released into a pond. (The Times, 11/6/05) So bosses at Three Valleys Water, Southern Water, Sutton and East Surrey Water and Mid-Kent Water, get pairs of toads to the register office pronto – or face the consequences. Or get a rain shaman.

**MIDRIFF CRISIS.** Cheerleaders have been banned from baring their midriffs in case they make girls worry about their weight. The British Cheerleading Association has ordered members to wear more modest outfits and stand with their arms by their sides so as 'not to affect the self-esteem of others'. Chairman Bob Kirafly said: "Cheerleaders are not there to add glamour." Excuse me, but I thought that was their purpose! Hannah Jones, who coaches the Spirit Shockers team in Glossop, Derbyshire, moaned: "We will have to raise funds all over again to pay for new uniforms." (Metro, 29/3/06)

**THE LAST SALOON.** Beer-lover Mick Stokes, 57, made one last visit to the pub – as his coffin was taken from the Barge and Barrel to his final resting place in a horse-drawn beer wagon. More than 400 family and friends then went on a pub crawl in Halifax, West Yorkshire, to mark the life of the *Pub Paper* editor. (Daily Mirror, 15/3/06)

**MONSTER ALBUM.** Rob Halford, frontman with legendary heavy metal band Judas Priest, was interviewed by Andrew Williams, who asked: Why did you include a 13-minute epic about the Loch Ness Monster on your last album: "We were in Scotland playing a show in Inverness in the early 1970s. We hardly had enough money for petrol so we spent the night by Loch Ness to save fuel. I can remember sitting by the loch at 3am and feeling the atmosphere and vibe of the place. In the daytime, it has a completely different personality but at night you can't help but think what might be going on under the eater. That idea never left me. It became this monumental metal epic we're really proud of. People must have thought: 'Ohm my God, Priest is singing about the Loch Ness Monster.' But it makes you curious and half the effort is about maintaining interest from fans." (Metro, 27/3/06)

**AIR GUITAR.** Another person to claim his place in heavy metal legend is 16-year-old Chinese metallor Li Xiao Meng, who literally rocked himself to death by air guitaring so furiously that he fell out of a third-story building. "He was hyped up with exhilaration while imitating a rock guitarist," reported coroner Tan Boon Heng. "He was jumping up and down on the bed placed against an open window when he fell out." Heng then ruled death by misadventure while making devil horn hand signs and wagging his tongue at the assembled journalists. (Zoo, March 17-23, 2006)

**HUMAN FERTILISER.** Italy's Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, angered China, which was marking the Year of Italy in 2006, with a gaffe about the Chinese boiling babies to create fertiliser. The Chinese Foreign Minister said the country was "dissatisfied with such groundless words." This came after Berlusconi told a rally: "Read *The Black Book of Communism* and you will discover that in the China of Mao, they did not eat children, but had them boiled to fertilise the fields." Trying to calm the furore, he told Italian TV: "It was questionable irony, I admit it because this joke is questionable. But I did not know how to restrain myself." The *Black Book*, published by six academics in 1997, concluded that communism killed at least 85 million in the Soviet Union, China, Cambodia and elsewhere. (BBC News, 29/3/06; D. Mirror, 30/3/06)

**LUCKY COW.** When vets gave sick cow Lottie little chance of recovery from a stomach blockage, their only suggestion was to give her brewer's yeast. If you believe the internet version farmer Tony Baskett was given a barrel of Adnams which just had the dregs in the bottom and he fed the cow with a bottle. Aidan McGurran, however, claimed the cow was cured with six pints of real ale a day, leftover slops from his local pub's slops and made a 'miraculous' recovery, gave birth and her calf has been named after the brewery. (Daily Mirror, 30/3/06) I presume his local is the only pub in the village, Theberton, East Sussex, the Lion Inn.

# Update

**HUNTING LEY MISUSES** (FF49:2, passim) Gaz Mayall, son of legendary British bluesman John Mayall, was reminiscing about the Sixties, criminals such as the Krays and bent police-men. Charismatic founder of Gaz's Rockin' Blues club night, he also waxed lyrical about seedy Soho. "People talk about sacred places and 'ley lines'," Mayall continues, "Soho is like that for me. It's the heart of London. Thank God these buildings have preservation orders, so all that history that survived the Blitz won't be replaced with glass and steel shopping malls, like Shepherd's Bush." (The Knowledge, The Times, January 14-20, 2006) Meanwhile, it sounds like ufologists and earth mysticians should go along to their local cinema to watch *Evil Aliens*, in which a cable TV crew working for a show about strange phenomena turn up on a Welsh island on which a woman claims that she has been impregnated by aliens. The media folk become involved in a battle with the crew of a flying saucer that needs to channel the energy of the local ley lines to power up their spacecraft. At one point aliens are threshed under the blades of an agricultural machine to the tune of the Wurzels' *I've Got a Brand New Combine Harvester*. There also *E.T.* and anal penetration jokes. (The Knowledge, The Times, March 11-17, 2006)

**PUNCH & JUDY** (FF10:9-11) Tony 'Doc' Shiels wrote knowledgably on his profession in FF and the husband and wife puppet team made the government's official list of 12 great English icons, along with the Spitfire, Routemaster bus and *Alice in Wonderland*. But some people are paralysed with fear and/or paranoia by puppets. For them the Change That's Right Now clinic in the USA offers courses to rid victims of puppetphobia, in ten hours or less, using individual therapy and relaxation. How does the phobia arise? "in your past, there was likely an event linking puppets and emotional trauma," it claims. However, Mr Punch might respond: "Oh no there wasn't!" (The Times boy&soul, 17/12/05)

**ANORAKNOPHOBIA** (FF25:6-11, passim) Yet again I focus upon the lazy journalists who use the term 'train-spotter' as a derogatory term for anyone with a deeper interest than they can appreciate. Step forward first Kitty Empire: "With their inexplicable appetite for crackly demo versions and slightly rubbish live cuts, only these train-spotters really cared enough to invest a small fortune in a box set put together callously by a record company keen to milk fans,

again and again, for the same basic material.' (The Observer, 18/12/05) Cliché does not enhance best-selling novelist Robert Harris, bemoaning inaccuracies in the TV series *Rome*: 'Some are fairly trivial, and likely only to annoy historical trainspotters such as myself.' (The Sunday Telegraph, 6/11/05) Nor does the description of John Baxter's book *A Pound of Paper* as 'A trainspotterish world of book-collecting and dealing' make one want to add it to one's library. (Independent on Sunday, 27/11/05) Jeanette Winterson is a pseud to boot. 'I like to touch their spines from time to time, or pull out a page here and there, and just look at it for pleasure.' Or 'another's failure to love your favourite is a moral defect, or an eccentricity you can abide, like train spotting.' (The Times Books, 21/1/06) Then there's Richard Morrison: 'Because I possess a trainspotting mentality but not the stoicism actually to go trainspotting, I make other sorts of list.' (The Knowledge, The Times, March 11-17, 2006)

**DOLLY PARTON'S BIG RUMOURS** (FF49:6-7) Tim Cooper writes: 'On January 19 this year, Dolly Parton celebrated her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, though some parts of her – two, in particular – are undeniably of a more modern vintage. As if to prove the point, the country legend spent the day at her doctor's, in Los Angeles, instead of celebrating. "I had some things I had to take care of," she says. "So I spent the week having, as I call it, my 100,000-mile tune-up – gittin' ready for the next 60." Encountering her in the flesh, you wouldn't rule it out. Dolly's extraordinary physique is a tribute to modern plastic surgery. "Whatever I need to do," she explains, "if I need a nip and tuck here and there, now and then, I'm gonna do it." Ah, yes, we've been talking for only a few minutes and she has already brought it up – brought "them" up. Today, they are restrained beneath two layers of clothing and, quite possibly, a cantilevered corset constructed from the ribs of an entire school of whales. Yet they still loom over our conversation. The Parton bust has long been Dolly's USP and went on to inspire the name of the world's first cloned sheep (because mammary cells were used). I thought that was great," she whoops. "I was so honoured by that.' (The Sunday Times culture, 19/2/06)



**PARAKEETS** (FF44:12, passim) Apparently the flight of the now naturalised ring-necked parakeet has reached Hartlepool. These exotic birds are now roosting in Rossmere Park and are particularly prevalent in the town's Greatham and Fens districts (Hartlepool Mail, 30/1/06)

Meanwhile, Derwent May called them rose-ringed parakeets and mentions that they have now discovered bird tables and can be seen hanging from garden peanut feeders. (Feather report, The Times, 25/3/06)

BONO ( FF48:9). Bob Dylan is certainly mesmerised by the Irish pop star (*Chronicles, Volume One*), but the U2 frontman who said "I think I could make a cool Pope" (The Times, 7/1/06) does not impress multimillion-selling novelist Cathy Kelly. The Irish are not pushed about fame, she explains: "There's the story – you're walking down O'Connell Street in Dublin and you see Bono. Either you just nod and say 'G'day there Bono', keep walking, no fuss. Or you say to your friend 'There's Bono ... Fuck you, Bono'." (The Times, 26/11/05)

SNIFFER DOGS (FF3:3-9) Mick Goss wrote of purported canine junkies, dogs supposedly addicted deliberately by Customs & Excise staff. Seeking the Tonbridge multi-million raid money, the authorities are very proud of their 'cash dogs' – Labradors and spaniels which can sniff out wads of notes. Nick Cohen wrote that he had heard from a handler in London that so much cocaine was snorted off notes, the dogs smelled the drug. But a man at Customs told Cohen they had been trained to smell the ink and would find the notes, cocaine or no cocaine. (The Observer, 5/3/06)

MUSICAL AURAL SIMULACRA (FF42:9-14) Metro newspaper asked readers for their best examples of misheard song lyrics.

☛ In Bohemian Rhapsody, they sing "Beelzebub is a devil on a sideboard for me". It should be "Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me."

☛ Bonnie Tyler sings "it's a hard egg", when it's "it's a heartache" is correct.

☛ The Beatles' All You Need Is Love says "Nothing you can do in County Durham" when "Nothing you can do that can't be done" is right, and Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody says "Sparing his life for his warm sausages" when it should be "Spare his life from this monstrosity."

☛ Steve Winwood sings "Bring me an iron lung" instead of "Bring me a higher love."

☛ Robert Palmer sang "Gonna have to face it, you're a dickhead to love" when "Gonna have to face it, you're addicted to love" is correct. (Metro, 6/3/06)

RUMOURS OF NAMES (FF40:4-6, passim)

DELTICS. The prototype Deltic was given the number DP1 internally, but not externally. According to Murray Brown's article 'Five decades of the incomparable Deltic', the name **ENTERPRISE** had been mooted, but in the event it carried **DELTIC** along each bodyside. (Rail Express, December, 2005)

CLASS 47. A Google found an example previously unknown to me. The naming of an unspecified Class 47 was planned by Waterman Railways and **Alecto** plates are believed to

have been struck; however the name was never used. The same source gave **Brinsworth Demon** as proposed name for another Class 47. Plates may or may not have been cast, but were certainly not applied. A Tinsley machine, 47187, was, however, named **Catcliffe Demon**. (Class47.co.uk)

PAUL IS DEAD (FF31:7-8) Flaming Lips' frontman Will Hodgkinson on the Paul McCartney paradox: "I was sitting in my brother's bedroom at 2am, listening to *Strawberry Fields Forever*, again and again, especially the line when John seems to say, 'I buried Paul'. I remember thinking that he really is dead, and the Paul we see is a fake one ... Always hovering above us is the idea that Paul McCartney is dead. And how could they be so smart back then when Paul McCartney is so dumb now? How did he create so many turns of genius and then do nothing interesting for so long." (The Observer Music Monthly, March 2006)

SEX ON THE TRACKS (FF50:4-5) Reproducing an unidentified clipping headlined *Lesbian lovers in train loo*, editor Nigel Harris commented particularly on the policemen who was alerted by 'moaning and groaning', but only told them to desist and get dressed after several minutes. He looked over a cubicle wall at Manchester Piccadilly station and saw Ann-Marie O'Neill, 29, naked from the waist down, kneeling and caressing a topless Nicola Hudson, 22. The romping pals had been waiting for a train after a boozy night out. Hudson, of Manchester, admitted sexual activity in a public toilet and was given a six-month conditional discharge by the city's JPs. O'Neill, of New Mills, Derbys., failed to appear and a warrant was issued for her arrest. (Rail, No. 534, 2006)

CONCEPTUAL PISS ARTISTS (FF45:5) Tokyo artist Tomoko Takahashi (aka Anti-Cool), a one-time Turner Prize nominee, put on a memorable exhibition at the Chapter Arts centre in Cardiff – paid for by a £5,000 state subsidy. Wearing high heels and a smart black business suit, she drank several dozen bottles of lager, periodically lurching towards a beam 2ft off the ground, which she attempted to walk along without falling off. She explained that the exhibition was a comment "on the availability and use of mass-produced products". Daily Telegraph, BBC News, 26/10/05; Fortean Times, No. 207, 2006)

DRINKING URINE (FF43: 4-5, passim) Julie Walker, 22, from Watford, Herts., has invented a flash which turns urine into drinking water after 15 minutes. The idea helped her get a degree in design from Derby University. The bottle uses iodine to kill germs and a carbon filter to remove the taste and smell. (The People, 31/7/05; Fortean Times, No. 207, 2006)



TATTOO BLUNDERS (FF33:15, passim) Not a blunder exactly, but interesting. Tattoo artist Chris Nunez told Ed Pottton: "People get quirky things that I would never want on me. One guy swore that he'd been abducted by aliens and wanted crop circles on his back. But I try not to be judge and jury of what somebody wants." So where did he draw the line? "Well, I try to avoid tattooing men's genitals. That doesn't really appeal to me." (The Knowledge, The Times, March 11-17, 2006)

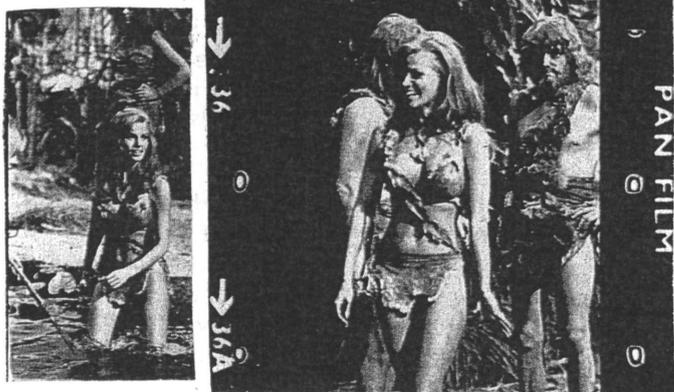
KATRINA CONFUSION (FF51:8) Last issue I reproduced an article on wild stories from storm-hit New Orleans. Media guru Peter Preston has commented: 'Meanwhile, we have weighty case studies (in the *American Journalism Review* and other research areas) about another horror too far, the one in New Orleans. Ten thousand did not die as early reports portended: it was under a tenth of that. Children were not raped or had their throats cut: that was wild rumour. Rescue helicopters were not shot at: meticulous checking shows that wire service reports recording such attacks were wrong (and that the false information hampered relief efforts). OK. It was all chaos and confusion as Hurricane Katrina pound-ed in. 'Citizen journalists' exaggerated wildly. So did the public officials. So, haplessly, did reporters on the spot. Everybody did what came naturally. But the outcome of all that was bad information, lost belief and lost relief for a city that needed help. Some-times you don't look at the sky and start spouting; you need to start, carefully, methodically, from the ground up.' (The Observer, 11/12/05)

BOX TUNNEL (FF33:6-11). Over the years I have written many articles on the Strategic Steam Reserve (SSR). Rory Lushman has written on Box Hill Tunnel for FF and the location has been in the news as it is up for sale. The 240-acre complex at Corsham, Wilts., with underground town including its own pub and above ground the mysterious Rudloe Manor of conspiratorialists' captured alien craft fame, is now surplus to requirements (so where's its replacement?) Here's an excellent resume of the SSR myth: 'For many years, a lineside myth about a secret store of ex-BR steam locomotives buried beneath Salisbury Plain did the rounds, based on supposedly missing numbers for lists of withdrawn locomotives sent to scrapyards in the 60s. Conspiracy theorists claimed that, because diesel or electric power might not be available following a nuclear attack, or because electromagnetic surges from nuclear explosions could potentially damage electric circuits in diesel locomotives, the Government had held back a fleet

of steam locomotives as a strategic reserve, away from the public gaze. It was said that 8Fs, 9Fs and GWR Granges were spirited away by the powers-that-be for use in the event of a nuclear holocaust. However, no evidence of the existence of such a fleet or, indeed, any standard gauge main line locomotives buried by the Government, has ever come to light.' (Heritage Railway, December, 2005) The SSR was mentioned in another rail enthusiasts' magazine piece on the radiation-proof Burlington bunker to protect top government and royalty. Sky News reporter Geoff Meade checked miles of tunnels and found – a single narrow gauge four-wheel shunter. (The Railway Magazine, November, 2005)



FUR BIKINI (FF51:6) Photographer Terry O'Neill has recalled taking publicity shots of Raquel Welch on the set of *One Million Years BC* at Elstree in 1966. According to the snappa: "She felt those bikini pictures haunted her for years. She told me she felt she was being crucified." (The Times Magazine, 10/12/05)



# Did You Miss

**GHOSTWRITING.** A fascinating insight into ghostwriting for sport/pop/film/crime celebrities included this snippet from Tim Adams, which struck me as apocryphal: 'Whenever my bank balance appears to tempt me towards ghosting, I'm haunted by the story of an indefatigable ghost who used every desperate resource to make it to the end of his contracted 70,000 words about a particularly prolix Yorkshire cricketer. No routine catch at midwicket or unsuccessful lbw appeal was left unexplored. There were paragraphs about the sound of birdsong at various county grounds, and about favourite groundsmen. When he delivered his manuscript and felt the burden of word-count despair briefly lift from his shoulders, he received a call from his publisher. "This is terrific stuff. Do you think you can do another 30,000 words?" (The Observer, 19/3/06) I assume Geoffrey Boycott was the subject

**REALLY WILD.** A national survey conducted with the help of hundreds of visitors to the canal and river network by British Waterways recorded 3,700 sightings of 60 different species. Most strange sightings included seals, dolphins and porpoises on Scottish waterways and a small crocodile on the Cotswold Canal. Other non-native species included mink, terrapins and Chinese mitten crabs. For further information about the survey visit [www.waterscape.com/wildlife](http://www.waterscape.com/wildlife). (Towpath Talk, December, 2005) In the same boaters' newspaper, now on news-stands, Harry Martin looked at unpleasant naturalised predators, chief of which is mink, introduced in 1929 by 'profit-propelled people who imported it and asinine animal activists who released it into the wild.' He also covered American signal crayfish, coypu and zander. (Towpath Talk, 9/3/06) A separate article urged sightings of the Chinese mitten crab, which arrived in ships' ballast water, to be reported on [www.marlin.ac.uk](http://www.marlin.ac.uk)

**PEASANT PLUCKER.** In feudal times it was traditional for the lord of the manor when a local peasant girl was to wed that he invoke his right to spend the night before her wedding copulating with the girl. Until I read Amelia Hill's piece on Sir Benjamin Slade I had not realised the custom had lasted into the last century. Sir Benjamin, with the aid of a reality TV company, is seeking an heir to take over the costly family pile. He said: "There are swarms of illegitimate Slades right under my nose in our local village because until 1911 we continued the tradition whereby the reigning Slade could have his wicked way with a village maiden before her wedding nuptials." (The Observer, 19/2/06)

**WORLDS IN COLLISION.** Reprise a letter by Eric Crew (Society for Interdisciplinary Studies Workshop, Vol 5 No 1 of 1982): "just as some only read the file *Worlds in Collision* and assume it means the Earth actually collided with another

on Random's *The Age of Velikovsky*) may have led them and others to think it is seriously believed that planets have bounced against each other like billiard balls! It would be worth making a disclaimer about this on a suitable occasion." Yet the latest 'expert' notion is that: 'When solar systems are created it can be just like a big game of billiards, scientists claim. They say baby planets bang into each other during a solar system's infancy. They do not always fuse together to make bigger planets but often lose their crusts and huge chunks go hurtling off into space. U.S. scientists have now built a model in an attempt to recreate the physics of the planet-making era.' Immanuel would have loved that! (Metro, 20/1/06)

**GREAT BALLS OF FIRE!** One for the earthlights theory fans. Ball lightning – one of nature's and fortune's great mysteries – has been created in a lab using a microwave oven. Scientists redirected the oven's microwave beam to heat a solid object. When the beam was pulled away, it dragged super-heated material with it, creating a fire column that collapsed into a ball. The Tel Aviv researchers said: "It confirms ball lightning originates from hot spots in the ground created by normal lightning." (Metro, 24/2/06)

**SIMONS SAYS.** In *The Times'* Weather Eye column Paul Simons occasionally covers fortune topics (at least on Saturdays, the only day that I buy it): such as mirages of cities or mountains in the sky known as *fata morgana* after Morgan le Fay of Arthurian legend (24/12/05); the Grey Man of Ben MacDhui, either a Scottish yeti or large version of your own shadow (10/12/05); the Barmouth area aerial phenomena and local religious revival found in earthlights literature (9/7/05); and British mistrust of the evil French metre and our preference for wind speeds in miles per hour (25/2/06)

**OWN GOALS.** In an essay on whether sexual inadequacy or deprivation can turn angry young men into terrorists, Ian Buruma turned to the common view that sex with women takes the fight out of men, even in less bloody pursuits, such as football. He wrote: 'Among the great myths of Dutch football is the story of the 1974 World Cup. Deprived of female company, some of the players allegedly took their pleasure with local floozies, and therefore lost the final against Germany.' (The Guardian, 25/2/06) Reminds me of the old joke.  
**Q:** Why don't boxers have sex before a fight?  
**A:** Because they don't fancy each other.

**SINISTER SYNCHRONICITY?** I don't listen to the radio, so it was sheer chance that I noted Tom Lubbock's review of a Radio 2 programme: 'I know a man who was sick of a colleague and asked his wife to get rid of him. She spent an evening with her sister, a homemade doll and a box of pins, and they did the necessary. Nothing happened. But then, within a month, they read of the death of a retired high-court judge who bore exactly the same name. Coincidence? Or something more sinister?' (The Sunday Telegraph, 23/10/05).

# If you buy only one book this year...

YOUR EDITOR sees the publication of his latest book this June. It is a miscellany of forteana, folklore, fun and general strangeness culled from the wacky world of railways. It is published by a house with a huge reputation, Heart of Albion Press, and is priced at £14.95.

Originally to be titled *The Maniac on the Platform*, after a contemporary legend overheard on the London Underground by Mick Goss, the events of 7/7 rendered the title unsuitable. Much toing and froing of ideas between myself and publisher Bob Trubshaw (I was keen to use as title the motive power bashers' encouragement *Thrash Horses, My Lords!*) has resulted in *Crossing the Line: Trespassing on railway weirdness*.

The blurb reads:

This is a book about railways such as has never been told before. Wonders and blunders, supernatural experiences, ritual customs, and a wealth of weird tales that sound as if they might be true. But surely they aren't? Or are they?

A lifelong interest in both trains and folklore, a willingness to sit sharing a pint or three with fellow enthusiasts, plus the practised ear of a professional journalist. All these have given Paul Screeton the unique ability to collect and write about this wonderful web of weirdness and ever-evolving lore.

*Crossing the Tracks* provides a wealth of tales to make even the delays on a train journey enjoyable. Then take an active role in keeping these tales alive by recounting the more perturbing ones to fellow passengers or unsuspecting 'gricers'...



To which I might add: **Curiosity about railway folklore has created chapters ranging from ghosts and fairies to prophecy and inspiration; commuters' trials; crimes by the Krays, Great Train Robbery and mythical 'Maniac on the Platform'; legends surrounding locos and the strategic steam reserve; fortean phenomena: trainspotters and pedants; traditional folklore and contemporary legends.**

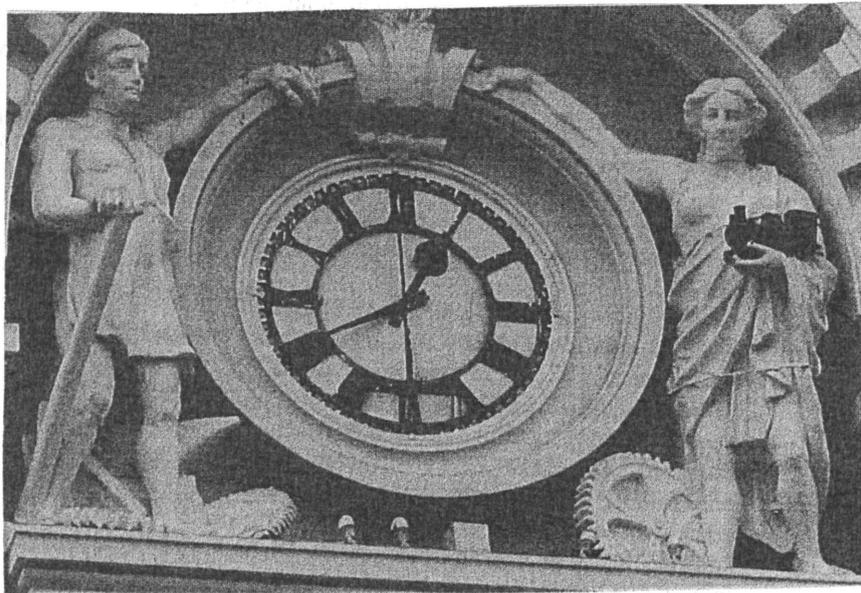
**The result is entertaining and erudite, broad and iconoclastic, scholarly but frequently nicely naughty. The range is stunningly eclectic and style easy, evocative and witty.**

**As Hunter S Thompson liked saying: "buy the ticket, take the ride."**

To take the ride, buy the book. Cost is £14.95 post free from Heart of Albion Press, 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough, LE12 6UJ (cheques payable to 'Heart of Albion'). Picture of cover and more details at web site: [www.hoap.co.uk](http://www.hoap.co.uk)

FF readers might expect that I somehow managed to wangle a picture of a topless girl into the book on some pretext. By chance I came across this picture while on the second round of proof-reading, too late for inclusion. Readers of *The Railway Magazine* (June, 2005) were asked to identify the location. The answer was as follows: 'Statues featuring bare-bosomed ladies are pretty common overseas - viz Gare de l'Est in Paris, which has several - but this rather fine example is somewhat less-known, having been spotted by one of our vigilant readers above the main entrance to the disused Desamparados station in Lima, Peru. The inclusion of the model locomotive in the crook of the woman's arm makes the statue even more unusual. Further details would be appreciated.' Zilch response. However, my book does show someone topless - a man at Bristol's (geddit?) Temple Meads station.

As for why, buy the book!



# Book reviews

**CONFESSIONS OF A RADICAL TRADITIONALIST** by JOHN MICHELL  
(DOMINION PRESS, £20. DISTRIBUTED BY TURNAROUND [www.turnaround-uk.com])

CHANGING TRAINS in an unfamiliar town, John Michell chose to kill the two-hour wait by having a drink. For him it was a dystopian Adlestrop moment. Noisy music deterred him from 11 of a dozen pubs and he sat among what he viewed as truculent alcoholics. Michell earlier deplored the Reformation's sweeping away the chanting of monks in their abbey churches, but aren't our pubs and discotheques a secular all-day, all-night licensing renaissance of those perpetual, 24-hour chants throughout Merrie England?

Long ago, staying with John in Bath, he played a Fifties melody on a woodwind instrument and turned to me with the enthusiastic entreaty: "Let's have a Buddy Holly revival!" And why not indeed? Chuck Berry, too. Holly recorded Berry's *Brown-Eyed Handsome Man*, but from the opinions in **CONFESSIONS OF A RADICAL TRADITIONALIST**, Michell would not endorse the First Poet of the Jukebox's rallying call: "Hail, hail rock 'n' roll / deliver me from the days of old".

As a tavernologist *par excellence*, I admit to seeking out non-music J D Wetherspoon chain inns, but find most pubs today convivial microcosms of mankind and an improvement upon the scrumpy-sodden rural hostelries of yore or urban Hogarthian gin palaces.

Michell dwells much upon our presumed Arcadian past, of an organic, pastoral, pre-capitalist life before the Industrial Revolution, even better before the Dissolution of the Monasteries and perfected during the time of the Bronze Age druid priesthood, but even a would-be romantic revivalist such as he realises that ultimately there is no longer anything to revive.

In the section on 'Albion', Michell writes how the St. Michael line appeared to him as a 'revelation' over 30 years ago, stretching from Land's End to Suffolk and joining many major sites dedicated to Saint Michael, although certain members of the earth mysteries coterie deride this 'super-ley' as over-wide and/or spurious. He also suggests that a young Jesus and uncle Joseph passed along such a trackway to Glastonbury to trade. The author acknowledges the poetic truth, and when people insist the folktale is true he reminds them there is no proof, but when the notion is denigrated he argues vehemently for probability, adding: 'As a philosopher you have to be ruthlessly perverse.'

As a fellow fortean, I doubt if on the subject of phenomena Michell and I would argue at all, although I am still uneasy about the significance given to the weirder shores of cereology. Here we have opinions on daimonic reality, demonic possession, alien abductions, bogus social workers (John contributed a detailed article on this in FF12), superstitions and particularly coincidences. Michell believes the world is basically spiritual, hence he sees an intelligent design and not a human one behind crop circles, and finds the 'ape-man' notion real only in its interstitial creation of phantom bigfoot and yeti thoughtforms.

His section on individuals encourages the reader to seek out the thoughts and writings of those he particularly admires: Rupert Sheldrake, Philip Blair ('The problem with modern man is that he shies away from his manifestly spiritual dimension and seeks security in protesting an animal identity'), Bruce Chatwin, William Cobbett, Julius Evola, St. Catherine, Prince Charles, hermetic topographers Martin Brennan and Jack Roberts, finally Jesus Christ, acknowledged here as a holy prophet but not as the Son of God.

There's also two philosophers he regards as guiding beacons, Charles Fort and Mr Plato (personal joke. Paul Screeton pointing to bust: "Is that Mr Plato?" John: "No, it's Mr Socrates."), although the latter believed in a Creator and the former that the universe is our reality (while I suspect the earthly realm to be illusory).

Although Michell sees the Queen as 'a sour little woman called Elizabeth Windsor', he proclaims her constitutional necessity, but not her relations. His wry sense of humour notes there is no 'papal' family 'consisting of His Holiness's random aunts and cousins' and that the Holy Family only had three members.

But Michell is particularly interesting when dealing with topics where the current status quo is challenged, and where I generally concur, as with his censure of anti-hunt legislation, compulsory state education, modern art establishment, European Community enthusiasm, race relations embarrassment, 'filthy lager' and squabbling 'experts'. In the section on 'sacred cows', he prefers a status quo on drugs, fascinatingly scoring the effects of various pharmaceuticals and portraying drug dealers as heroes rather than villains.

Back with ubiquitous old Plato, I must say I agree with *The Oldie's* literary editor whom Michell notes had urged him not to mention Mr P anymore.

Also the book could have done with closer proof-reading.

On a personal note, when mentioning his *Euphonics: A Poet's Dictionary of Sounds*, Michell remarks that 'no one reviewed or bought it'. Well, it may not have sold any copies, but it was reviewed. I know so because I was the reviewer and my appraisal appeared in this very magazine (FF9 of 1989). Yet for a man with such an obvious love of words, irritatingly he occasionally lets himself down with sloppy phrases such as 'the more I read of this stuff' and particularly grating use of the lazy noun 'thing' (not described in *Euphonics*).

Sadly, to some extent, Michell comes over as a typical grumpy old man (he's 73), railing at modern society, music, art, science and any amount of personal hobby-horses. As he admits himself: 'It is obvious that everything today is going downhill, or to hell.' In company he is not a rambunctious gloompot and I suspect his tongue is often firmly in cheek as he carps at callow youth, Matt Ridley and Richard Dawkins, for without these windmills he would have less amusing subject matter to tilt at, write about and have fun with.

Summing up, this is a wonderful selection of columns from *The Oldie*, selected and introduced by Joscelyn Godwin. The 108 essays are punchy, vibrant, pugnacious, classical yet topical, wide-ranging yet having a commonality of mankind's role in the scheme of THINGS.

All hail, John Michell, Cosmic Master!

**THE ENCHANTED LAND** by JANET & COLIN BORD (HEART OF ALBION PRESS, £14.95 [www.hoap.co.uk])

WIFE and husband team Janet and Colin Bord have amassed an enviable reputation and corpus of work over the past 30-odd years. Back when they produced *Mysterious Britain*, certain figures within the embryonic earth mysteries movement derided its coffee-table format and presumed lack of substance. Over the years the duo have consolidated their credentials as knowledgeable commentators on a wide range of subjects, ranging from geomancy to folklore, the alien bestiary to manimals, ufology to the paranormal.

This latest work, a revision of a 1995 edition, covers much of the type of material utilised in their *The Secret Country* of 1976 (unknown to one another, Leslie Grinsell, the Bords and myself were all writing books on the folklore of ancient British sites, and when the first two appeared in print, publishers told me my work, *The Living Stones*, was too similar). However, this book concentrates not upon tales and legends associated with man-made constructions, particularly prehistoric megaliths, but Britain's natural landscape features.

Janet Bord seems particularly drawn to sacred water features such as wells, and these are featured here along with springs, streams, rivers, lakes and lochs. Higher ground sees the chalk hill figures, Arthur's several resting places and the spectral Grey Man of Ben Macdhu. Around the 6,000 miles of coastline are cliffs, coves, caves, sea-and-wind weathered rocks and offshore islands and drowned lands, many associated with mermaids, fairies, ghosts and monsters.

There's the Parson and Clerk rocks off Dawlish I see as I take an annual holiday in Devon, which came by their position through the machinations of the Devil. Ever since encountering leys and Watkinsian-style landscape appreciation, solitary stones have attracted my attention, and there's plenty here to feast upon.

But these sections are mere culinary appetisers, for metaphorically speaking the 'places to visit' gazetteer forms the main course, split county by county into easily digestible portions of places with titbits of information. These include Glastonbury Tor, St Michael's Mount, Mother Shipton's Cave and Petrifying Well (on a guided tour, a volunteer was sought to sample the water and I stepped forward. Oh how the others laughed when, after I had taken a good swig, we were told it reportedly caused diarrhoea) and Brimham Rocks.

A small point, but when it comes to the Lambton Worm (I am the author of two books on the subject), I become uncharacteristically pedantic. Usually authors erroneously relate that the dragon curled itself around Penshaw Hill rather than Worm Hill, at Fatfield. The Bords' misdemeanour is to have it 'stretching ten times round the hill' (page 12) and then correctly 'twining nine times' (page 33).

That quibble aside, the book serves its purpose well and offers a fine introduction to the tales which have accumulated around many of the natural features which have captured the imaginations of generations of countryfolk and visitors. Bringing the landscape to life in evocative illustrations and fluent prose, the Bords have again summoned up the spirit of enchantment.

**TALIESIN'S TRAVELS: A DEMI-GOD AT LARGE** by MICHAEL DAMES (HEART OF ALBION PRESS, £16.95 [www.hoap.co.uk])

WITHIN that famous collection of Welsh legends, *The Mabinogion*, is the enchanting story of Taliesin. It tells how Gwion left his farmhouse home and ends up employed to stir the magic cauldron of the witch Ceridwen, by accident burns his thumb and sucks the three drops of inspiration, is reborn as Taliesin and rescued from a weir.

Taliesin had been stalking Wales looking for a host body to fuse with and take over, being a wandering demi-god who 'belongs everywhere and nowhere', somewhat like the hippie chick in Jeff Beck's *Hi Ho Silver Lining*, who as the 'sometimes drunken pioneer of language', perhaps Taliesin could be encouraged to sing at a karaoke session.

There is a spirit of spiral time, linking the child Gwion and man Taliesin's support for battle with the prehistoric cairns of the past and 20<sup>th</sup> century parish monuments to the boy-warriors who fell in two world wars. In his role of reincarnation as Taliesin, son of a fairy mother and warrior, Gwion was required to deliver a placatory peace that had eluded his previous forms.

Dames uses this union of mortal and supernatural to easily flit between the two worlds and time itself becomes a fluid medium. The history of places Gwion/Taliesin travels to are viewed at various stages of their past, as can be seen in the fictional works of Alan Garner.

Human generations have a linear history, but the faery otherworld pulse beats to the sound of a different drum. Yet Gwion/Taliesin can shift endlessly between each just as Dames is our go-between, enlivening past ages with their dates, battles, kings and peasants, while always lurking is the shadowy persona and personages of a liminal reality glimpsed occasionally from the corner of the eye.

This is a twilight world of dragons and monsters, mermaids and sea serpents, migrating salmon and submarine horses, corpse candles and sheela-na-gig. There's the DNA-associated incest between twins Tegid and Ceridwen, a union not taboo in the form of creation myths.

Dames alludes to The Mabinogion's Dream of Macsen Wledig, Helen/Elen and her roads which criss-cross Wales and which Taliesin travels. In an early issue of *The Ley Hunter*, under my editorship, a writer suggested the straight roads and dream related to a shamanic journey in astral form. Dames, around this time, contacted me as a new subscriber, musing that back numbers should be bound in leather or vellum. I wasn't sure if he was serious, being frivolous, patronising or taking the piss. I hope that the magazine's contents were inspirational and may have had some influence on his writings, but the article gets no bibliographical mention.

The author also mentions Gwydion and the woman he makes out of flowers, Blodeuwedd, who are prominent in Alan Garner's fictional *The Owl Service*, the television series of which blighted the lives of many involved. (I have written a lengthy article on this and Garner's shamanism – *Alan Garner and the Shamanic Process*, *Common Ground*, No. 6, 1982). Garner is not mentioned in the bibliography and nor is Robert Nye's book *Taliesin*, which introduced me to the legendary tale.

As with earlier books on Avebury and Silbury Hill, which I enjoyed, Dames brings the past to life.

He wears his scholarship lightly and draws the reader into the multi-faceted and timeless world of Taliesin by evoking both distant and near past, including a wide selection of black and white illustrations.

A tour de force of using an ancient myth in a timeless relevance.

# Magazines

## **MAGONIA.** Interpreting contemporary vision and belief.

Six issues £9.50. Cheques payable to John Rimmer: 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW14 8HB. **No. 90.** Extraordinary cover illustration of a man fleeing on horseback faeryfolk attempting to abduct him within their barrow with dolmen atop, rising on beams of light like a rocket blast, by 19th century Danish artist J.T. Lundbye. (I Googled and found the drawing at [www.trollmoon.com/](http://www.trollmoon.com/)) Is it there only to illustrate David Sivier's overview of fairytale motifs in UFO narratives and anyway why no analysis of the painting? The ubiquitous Martin Kottmeyer details the UFO's ability to disable car engines, tracing the roots in a voluminous literature of future science fantasies and war rumours. I recall the topic being aired in Magonia 25 years ago when someone said it couldn't happen in California because it was always hot and dry; until some bright spark recalled the lyrics "hate California, it's cold and it's damp." **No. 91.** David Sivier (?) suggests the USA is a 'medieval society with modern technology' using 1940s Ozarks' backwoods beliefs as model and precursor for national and international Satanic panics four decades later; vanishing X15 pilot saga from issues 88 and 89 rumbles on; alternative explanation to 13 in a coven; 1964 Socorro saucer sightings reviewed. Book reviews; what was published in magazine 25 years ago; Pelican column; editor's comments on back page.

**MAGONIA SUPPLEMENT.** Limited printed private circulation print copy to what editor John Harney describes as 'the favoured few', but can be read on-line at [www.users.waitrose.com/~magonia](http://www.users.waitrose.com/~magonia)

**No. 59.** Martin Kottmeyer gives Dr David Jacobs a slapping for seemingly being unaware of the corpus of previous published material pertaining unambiguously to *Grays'* digestive systems being atrophied so they absorb nourishment through the skin and excrete back through the skin, even discovering this process in a 1950 Dan Dare cartoon strip and H.G. Wells writing as far back as 1893. **No. 60.** Nigel Watson finds inconsistencies and gaps in abductees' narratives and abductionists using techniques, terminology and templates to shoehorn the former's experience into a format. Martin Kottmeyer resurrects a 1934 sci-fi story replete with many exotic pre-UFO era foreshadowings of *Gray* mythology, including their passage through solid walls as in abductions. Book reviews.

**NORTHERN EARTH.** £7.50 for 4. Cheques payable to Northern Earth Mysteries Group. From 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, N. Yorks., HX7 5NP.

**No. 104.** Hidden face of West Yorkshire issue. Ideas as to how Huddersfield's Ark Hill got its name; boundary stone thoughts; Phil Rushworth's otherwise excellent piece on the Spenn Valley quotes a piece by me from FF39:10 mentioning a 'Loch nam Vanh' viaduct, whereas it is 'Loch nan Uamh.' Hummadruz explained as 'speed dating' by bees! Hickleton lych-gate skulls. Folk or mumming plays, past and present, not pagan myth/ritual revivals but 18th century continuities; ancient Egypt in Britain; new thought on the Long Man of Wilmington; site of Camlann speculation. Each issue miscellany, archaeological round-up, letters and book reviews

**FORTEAN TIMBS.** Newsstand. £3.60. **No. 203.** Best piece imaginable on Nelson and 200th anniversary of Trafalgar, giving thoughtful commentary to hero myth attached to him; excellent overview of fortean falls from the skies; utility suppliers baffled by fortean phenomena 20 years

ago; horror writer's TV project; mythchaser cases revisited. **No. 204.** Cheering support for 'steady state' over 'big bang' cosmology with overview of Halton Arp's heretical stance; similarly the furor over Bjorn Lomborg's criticism of environmental alarmists; while anthropologists argue whether Homo Sapiens and Neanderthals mated and the 'Out of Africa' theory is trashed by evidence from the Czech Republic; what must surely just about wrap up the Rendlesham Forest UFO case finally, is a thoroughgoing analysis of the facts, the fiction, the pitfalls, yet investigator Brenda Butler still regularly sees UFOs and creatures in the forest, including hairy bipeds (surely her psyche is worthy of serious psychological examination); Rendlesham research on a 1880s nearby will o' the wisp query and how Lantern magazine reported the 1981 case on its Page 17; Peter Brookesmith's family ghost stories reinforced my belief that others' spooky experiences are as mind-numbing as others' relating their nocturnal picture shows; lucky bullet deflection; evocatively-descriptive nocturnal trek through Rendlesham Forest in the wake of Lieutenant Colonel Halt and his spooked airmen. **No. 205.** Mysterious apports (particularly in religious connection); London in the shit over horse manure prediction; Christians eaten by lions debate roars on in classical corner; woman's goat birth after 25-year pregnancy. Letters include contribution by Paul Screeton on countryfolk's knowledge of eel migration. **No. 206.** Paul Devereux discusses the vision quests of Native Americans, the last section of which is particularly impressive, although I am happy to believe that alien abductors are 'us', I am not so sure our entities 'are not of this Earth'. Robin Ramsay points out that official attacks on conspiracy theories have the opposite effect of amplifying and legitimising the subject, be it in book or Internet form; fears of doppelgangers; ghost story writer M R James dragged into Rennes soap opera; UFO hoaxing; Tower of London ravens; extraordinary story of the two men behind the original film of King Kong. **No. 207.** Novel chamber where human guinea pigs are used in parapsychological experiment with infrasound and electromagnetic effect to see if ghost hallucinations can be induced; ancient Peruvian women's brewery; long convivial evenings of beer and cheese consumed by Charles Fort and Theodore Dreiser reveal a close friendship which lasted from 1905 and 1932, described by Doug Skinner and illustrated with rare photographs of Fort; Gothic movement of 1770-1820; bridegroom-stopping Welsh custom 'melliith'; the strange history of public relations in Britain; 'Baghdad batteries' given credence and Ark of the Covenant science explained, but all for what purpose and anyway do any readers agree that sex can sometimes produce a more stimulating static electricity? (readers' letters welcome).

**TOUCHSTONE.** Newsletter of the Surrey Earth Mysteries Group. £2 for 4. Cheques payable to J. Goddard. From Fostercourt Lodge, 192 Stroude Road, Egham, Surrey, TW20 9UT. **No. 72.** More religious buildings suggested to be 'unconscious sighting' by editor Jimmy Goddard, being a mosque in Wimbledon and a woman with resources who upon seeing boys playing cricket had a strong feeling a church should be built on the spot near Dorking. Ley hunting and dowsing in Surrey and Somerset.

**AMSKAYA.** Newsletter of the STAR Fellowship. Cost and address same as Touchstone. **No. 65.** Editor Jimmy Goddard outlines the content of an interesting BBC Hampshire web site and watches a TV documentary which suggested a top US aerospace company interviewed UFO contactees in the hopes of learning extraterrestrial technology; Russian boy's claimed previous life on Mars and piloting his spaceship to Lemuria for trade and research; UFOs over Mitcham and Mexico.