

BRITNEY

The photographer
couldn't have arrived
at a worse time

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS

No. 55



Spaniards, Hampstead Heath



Buddy Holly



Hart Church Circa 1800

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS

No. 55 March 2007

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS is an independent, non-profit-making magazine, published three times a year, a miscellany covering various aspects of folklore, ancient and modern traditions, rumour, fortaena and modern culture and belief, mostly clipped from the press, and acts as an information exchange among fellow enthusiasts. Everyone is welcome to contribute, as and when you like, either as simply readers, clipsters, but I would particularly like to print short original articles on matters of folkore interest. FOLKLORE FRONTIERS is edited and published by PAUL SCREETON. Address is 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT. Subscription is £6 for three issues, made payable to P. SCREETON (NOT Folklore Frontiers). If your subscription expires with this issue an "X" will appear on the line below

I'M pleased to welcome on board a new columnist, Antony Clayton. When he became a subscriber I discovered he was also an author. One of his books was on London coffee houses and this triggered the idea in my mind that:

- he might enjoy extending his knowledge of drinking establishments to pubs;
- write about such for *FF*; and
- that his researches might lead him to a pub folklore publishing deal. He enthusiastically agreed with me and this issue unveils the first of his series entitled *STRANGE BREW*. I also requested a thumbnail sketch and this is what Tony has submitted:

ANTONY CLAYTON has written three books: *Subterranean City, Beneath the Street of London* (2000), *London's Coffee Houses, a stimulating story* (2005) and *Decadent London* (2005) – all published by Historical Publications and Phillimore. He often gives talks on aspects of London's history and has lectured at the British Library and the Royal Society of Arts in the last year. Recently he has become interested in folklore, both historical and contemporary, and intends to produce some work in this area over the next few years. As he spends too much of his spare time in various pubs in London and East Sussex, *STRANGE BREW* allows him to combine two major interests. His next book, to be published in autumn 2007, will be *The Book of the London Adventure*, for which he is the contributing editor.

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LITTLE did I realise when I named my annotated bibliography of books and articles *Flagons, Dragons & Wagons* that rocket scientist and ceremonial magician John Whiteside Parsons had also used those three capitalised words in one sentence. Writing in 1943, a poem printed in the *Oriflamme, Journal of the O.T.O.*, notorious Jack Parsons included the prophetic line:

Each wagon a dragon, each beer mug a flagon that brims with ambrosial wine Weird or what!?

(Douglas Chapman, *Jack Parsons: Sorcerer Scientist*, Strange Magazine, No. 6, 1990)

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OLIVER MARRE, in his Pendennis column, wrote:

A driven man

Last week, eco-warrior and Tory leader Dave Cameron appeared on Andrew Marr's programme, filmed at the BBC's White City studios. He was driven there, but had his driver stop his car a discreet distance from the door so that he could appear to arrive by foot. Now, that's classy – proper politics. (The Observer, 21/1/07)

Following this slur on Cameron, I responded by emailing Oliver Marre as follows:

Dear Oliver,
Regarding David Cameron's appearance on Andrew Marr's show which you mentioned (21/1/07), I watched the broadcast and Tony Parsons, reviewing the papers, said he had seen Cameron on his bicycle heading for the studio as he drove along Westway. So no chauffeur and no walking. This tale has been told several times and now constitutes an urban legend, although not as funny as Peter Mandelson supposedly mistaking mushy peas for avocado mousse. I should know, I edit the popular and erudite *FF* magazine. Hope you'll correct this in your column or pass this on to the letters editor.

Of course, nothing appeared in print subsequently, however, he did email with the brief comment:

Ps. I love the Mandelson myth.

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I MUST ADMIT to having had lustful thoughts towards Edwina Currie in the past. She planned to give books to her family for Xmas, specifically Chris Stringer's *Homo Britannicus: The Incredible Story of Life in Britain*. Currie goes on: "(It) shows that the place was empty for aeons; we can trace our ancestry on these islands back a mere 12,000 years. That makes us children compared with most Europeans." (The Times Books, 18/11/06) Not quite true. What Stringer actually wrote was: 'We have evidence that between 500,000 and 12,000 years ago humans were only here for 20% of the time.' Which is rather different and leaves more egg on her face!

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My article this issue, *Wandering Canons*, is reproduced from the winter 1989/90 issue of *Northern Earth Mysteries* (No. 40, under the tutelage of Rob Wilson). Although about 'mystery cults' within the Anglican Church, with the success of Dan Brown's book *The Da Vinci Code*, I believe *FF* readers may find it of current interest. It is followed by a hitherto unpublished response from author Andrew Collins.

STRANGE BREW — London Publore

By Antony Clayton

Spaniards

No. 1

THIS is the first in what I hope will be a series of pieces on the folklore of London pubs. It is part of a larger project looking into aspects of the folklore attached to the capital city. To begin with I have chosen my favourite part of London, Hampstead, and one of its many charming pubs, the Spaniards Inn. Some of the other historic pubs in Hampstead and Highgate with fascinating tales to tell, such as Jack Straws Castle, the Old Bull and Bush and the Wrestlers will be dealt with in subsequent columns.



Illustration
from *London
Pubs* by Alan
Reeve-Jones
(Batsford,
1962)

Spaniards, Hampstead Heath

THE SPANIARDS INN can be found on Spaniards Road NW3 7JJ (tel.: 020 8731 6571), a highway running across Hampstead Heath, that links Highgate with Hampstead. It is situated at a notorious bottleneck on this busy road. On summer weekend afternoons, you may well experience a warm glow of satisfaction from watching the impatient SUV owners queuing and nudging to get through the narrow gap between the listed buildings of the pub and the former tollhouse opposite. They once formed the entrance to the Bishop of London's park, which stretched from here to the top of Highgate Hill, site of another tollgate marked today by a pub called, appropriately enough, the Gate House. In the summer months, drinkers crowd into the extensive and extremely pleasant beer garden. During a recent visit, on a cold January evening, I found the Spaniards uncharacteristically empty; its dark, wood-panelled rooms and quiet corners providing a snug and comfortable refuge.

A trawl through a selection of books on Hampstead and a variety of pub-related web sites reveals a remarkable amount of history and folklore associated with this atmospheric inn, encompassing everything from secret tunnels and drunken riots to Dick Turpin, Dickens and Dracula, but is any of it true?

Firstly, the distinctive name. According to local tradition, Spain's ambassador to the Court of James I had a house on this site, which was later converted into an inn by his valet. It has also been suggested that the building was turned into an inn by two Spaniards in the 18th century; they are reputed to have fought a duel over a woman who spurned them both. Some dubious sources claim that the brothers built the pub, either in the 16th or 17th centuries, and killed each other in the duel. More likely, the name derives from the Spanish licensee, registered in 1721. According to *The Streets of Hampstead*, published by Camden History Society

Readers' letters

From Norman Darwen, Bolton.

I was interested to read about Gram Parsons and his UFO connections in **FF#54**. I never really thought about country-rock as interested in much more than drinking and carousing, but in 1991, in my role as sometime music journalist, I interviewed the (now unfortunately) late Jesse 'Guitar' Taylor, then promoting his solo album though he usually worked with the relatively well-known Joe Ely – both these men were from Lubbock, Texas. My usual question to Texas musicians, to get them to open up and usually exhibit a bit of pride in the Lone Star State, was "What is it about the state that has produced so many top musicians?" When I asked Jesse, he looked at me dead seriously and said to me: "Have you heard of the Lubbock Lights? The Lubbock Lights occurred in 1951, it's one of the finest UFO sightings in history. That's got something to do with it, at least for us musicians in Lubbock." Others from Lubbock included Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison.

A couple of months later, BBC2 broadcast a four-hour (!) programme on Texas music. At one point the famous photograph of the Lubbock lights appeared on the screen, then a newspaper clip on the story, accompanied by the musical sequence from the film *Close Encounter of the Third Kind*. Joe Ely then also stated how he felt the UFOs had influenced the city's musical talent. I wonder if others outside the Joe Ely circle have related the theory?

Maybe Elvis was an alien after all!
(PAUL SCREETON writes: Joe Ely's best-known song is probably *Dallas*. It starts: *Did you ever see Dallas from a DC9 at night, Well Dallas is a jewel, Dallas is a beautiful sight*. The song was written by Jimmie Gilmer. Gilmer was singer on the No.1 U.S. hit *Sugar Shack*, about visiting a legalised whorehouse, for which the state seems famous. The number was credited to Jimmie Gilmer and the Fireballs, a group which enjoyed massive-selling instrumentals in America, such as Torquay. The Beatles and the British invasion put paid to instrumental bands such as The Ventures, Johnny and The Hurricanes, Duane Eddy and, of course The Fireballs. They either got a vocalist or vanished. The question is, was the name Fireballs inspired by the Lubbock Lights? They probably also came from Lubbock, because after Buddy Holly's death, rough acoustic recordings were discovered and the Fireballs added the instrumental backing to Holly's vocals.)

From Jimmy Goddard, Egham, Surrey.

Thanks for the article about George Van Tassel, etc. Yes, his story was interesting - I wish I had been able to go to one of his conventions (saw some film of some

on the *Farewell Good Brothers* TV programme).

(Reviewed *Strange Magazine* 17, 1996 – Paul Screeton) By the way, "Ashtar" is a title, not a name - there are more than one of them. It means "spiritual master" – see the Solexmal glossary in *Earth People, Space People*. I'm reading a book at the moment that I found by Kelvin Rowe, who also mentions the title – and met someone from Jupiter and a woman from Pluto!!

Ostension

Council cleaners jetwash away Banksy's graffiti art

By Nicola Woolcock

WHEN council cleaners spotted graffiti 24 hours before the official opening of a new London square, they enthusiastically removed every trace of the offending

Unfortunately, the two stencils they wiped out were drawn by Banksy, the subversive artist. One of his works fetched £100,000 in auction at Sotheby's this week. To make matters worse, the street cleaners did not deem the graffiti worthy of being photographed before the destruction, as is their usual policy. Nor did they seek permission from the building's owner.

The council has now admitted its blunder and apologised.

The street cleaners, armed with jetwashers, had been ordered to touch up the area before the official opening of Gillett Square in Hackney last November. Two days before the ceremony, Hackney Co-operative Developments (HCD) decided to uncover a 4ft Banksy stencil of a girl wearing a frilly dress and a gas mask. It had been covered by plywood for several months.

It was scrubbed off the day after, along with another Banksy picture on their building of a man's face.

Adam Hart, executive director of HCD, wrote to Hackney Council, complaining that the murals had been removed, saying: Banksy and of considerable value and there is likely to be something of an outcry." He said later: "Perhaps the nature of the whole thing is that graffiti is ephemeral, so maybe Banksy would approve."

The council is now drawing up a list of graffiti artwork in the borough that should not be removed. Mr Hart said: "It's something they need to be aware of so they don't eradicate everything that gives character to the area." (The Times, 10/2/07)

CAT RESCUE PERIL. 'A man died after leaning out of a window in his first-floor flat to rescue his pet cat from a ledge. Richard Hall, 31, overbalanced and fell 30ft to the ground. As he lay dying, the cat fell after him, but survived. An inquest in Rotherham recorded a verdict of accidental death. (The Times, 21/2/07)

“the present pub building dates from the early eighteenth century, when the Spa (once thriving further down the hill in the heart of Hampstead) brought rich custom for the tavern and its pleasure gardens.” (Christopher Wade, *The Streets of Hampstead*, Camden History Society, 3rd ed., 2000, p.86).

ON A BOARD inside the entrance we can read about the pub's most famous occupant

It is believed by some that the notorious highwayman Dick Turpin was born at the Spaniards inn on the 21st September 1705. Whether this be true or not we know that his father was a previous landlord in the early 18th century and that young Dick Turpin allegedly watched passing coaches full of wealthy ladies and gentlemen from the upstairs rooms. It is in these very rooms that Dick Turpin's life of crime began.

Numerous books and web sites state that Turpin stabled his horse Black Bess in the tollhouse across the road and that it was from here that he embarked on his dramatic escape to York on horseback. According to *Camra Full Pint* Issue 5, “The main bar also has on display a bullet fired by Dick Turpin at a Royal Mail coach which was travelling from London to York, along with a family tree of the Turpin family compiled by a recent family member.” *The Streets of Hampstead* notes, “Some even remember the highwayman's very own pistol being fired nightly as a closing time signal.” (Wade, p.86) All very dramatic and impressive, but does it stand up to closer scrutiny?

TURNING to a recent academic biography of the highwayman (James Sharpe, *Dick Turpin, the myth of the English Highwayman*, Profile Books, London, 2004) we learn that

Piecing together Turpin's early history is difficult. At least we know that he was baptised at Hempstead, Essex, one of a number of boys born to John and Mary Turpin, on 21 September 1705, his parents having been married in the same parish in March 1695. John Turpin (the surname was common in that part of Essex) was a butcher by trade, but also kept a public house at certain points, and it seems likely that his son Richard followed him in both these occupations. There is a tradition, probably erroneous, that he was apprenticed to the butcher's trade in Whitechapel, and another tradition, possibly better founded, that he ran a butcher's shop in Thaxted, Essex, for some time. (p.109)

It would appear that there has been some (deliberate?) confusion between Hempstead and Hampstead in accounts of Turpin's nativity – there is certainly an association with pubs, though not with the Spaniards. The same story tells us that Harrison Ainsworth in his

character in a sub-plot, romanticising this violent criminal in the process. Ainsworth is responsible for firmly associating Turpin with a horse called Black Bess, the swift steed that thereafter was believed to have borne the highwayman on his nefarious deeds and is supposed to have carried him all the way from London to York in one night. This famous and improbable equestrian feat was probably based on Daniel Defoe's earlier account of the exploits of another highwayman named 'Swift Nicks'. (Sharpe, pp.74-76)

SHARPE LISTS MANY of the spurious associations between Turpin and London pubs

The Anchor Inn, Shepperton, claims to have been a regular haunt of Turpin, a pistol inscribed 'Dick's Friend' having apparently been discovered in the rafters. A pair of Turpin's pistols are alleged to be immured within the walls of Ye Olde King's Head in Chigwell, Essex, and here too there was reputed to be a tunnel running out of the inn's cellar to aid Turpin when he had to escape pursuers. Turpin is said to have hidden in the cellars of the Flask Inn, in Highgate, and to have been a visitor to the London Apprentice, in Isleworth, and the Trafalgar tavern, in Greenwich – this last institution, if it existed as a public house in Turpin's time, presumably operating under another title, given that the battle after which it occurred in 1805. Turpin is also reputed to have drunk in the White House, on Hackney Marshes, to have planned robberies at the Catherine Wheel, in east London (destroyed by fire in 1895), to have been associated with the White Swan, at Aldgate (demolished in the first half of the 20th century), and to have frequented the Old Bush and Bush, in Hampstead. (p.190) Two of these pubs, The Flask Inn, at Highgate, and the Old Bull and Bush, are fairly close to the Spaniards; perhaps the Turpin connection is again a result of the Hampstead and Hempstead confusion.

Sharpe also notes that, “rebuilding operations undertaken many years ago at the Coach and Horses public house in Clerkenwell revealed a valise with 'R. Turpin' cut into its side.” (p.193) Dick Turpin was executed in York on 7 April 1739, having committed, together with his gang, some particularly nasty and brutal crimes.

DESPITE THE FACT that there is no evidence that connects Turpin with the Spaniards, the web site www.fluidfoundation.com includes him in its roster of the pub's ghosts

On dark evenings, the upstairs room has been known to turn unnaturally cold as a figure, believed to be that of Turpin, drifts through the walls. In the downstairs bar, the spectral hand of 'Black Dick', a moneylender who was run down by a coach and horses on the road outside, has been known to tug at drinkers'

sleeves. Outside the Spaniards Inn, there is a horse that haunts the car park and a female ghost in an ethereal white dress that stalks the garden. It is no wonder the Spaniards Inn is notorious for being one of the spookiest pubs in London.

In a further piece of enticing folklore, the web site www.londontown.com tells us that Turpin, "had a secret tunnel built connecting two Highgate pubs so he could escape his pursuers"; presumably one of these was the Spaniards. Another internet source says that there are interconnecting passages under the buildings which are now sealed." Jeremy Errand, in his *Secret Passages and Hiding Places* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1974) mentions, "the well-known but unlikely story of the passage from Cromwell House to the Spaniards Inn (p.152). Cromwell House (Oliver Cromwell, after whom it is named, never lived there) is one of the oldest houses on Highgate Hill (No. 104), but lies a considerable distance away.

During my very enjoyable evening at the Spaniards (the food is unpretentious, tasty and not too expensive) I searched in vain for Turpin's bullet – the bar staff had never heard of it – and could find no other relics of the highwayman. *(Paul Screeton writes: In London Pubs, Alan Reeve-Jones comments in a short piece about the Spaniards that 'Dick Turpin used the place a good deal, always parking Black Bess in the stable at the back; but he was never really popular. They say he could blow the froth off a barman at 20 paces. Many of his personal belongings, the little things a lonely man will treasure secretly in his bedroom, are still where he left them. A handful of postcards, a lock of hair, his keys, his pistol and the leg-irons he wore at Newgate'. Not particularly serious or erudite.)* I was rather relieved when closing time was announced without the aid of Turpin's pistol – fortunately there was no sign of 'Black Dick' either.

A colourful story associated with the Spaniards occurred during one of the worst periods of social unrest in the capital's history: the Gordon Riots, which broke out on 2 June 1780. Ostensibly protesting at the recent repeal of certain harsh anti-Catholic laws of the late 17th century, Lord George Gordon, president of the Protestant Association, whipped up public hostility to Catholics in London and led a mass protest march on Parliament that degenerated into widespread destruction and looting over a number of days. The houses of Catholics and suspected sympathisers were attacked, as well as prisons and other public buildings. Eventually, 12,000 troops, summoned by George III, fired on the unruly crowds. In the course of the riots around 700 died, 450 were arrested; subsequently 160 were indicted and 25 executed. Gordon was tried for high treason, but was acquitted. He later died in Newgate prison, following imprisonment for libel.

During the riots, one of the mob's principal targets was the Lord Chief Justice, William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield, a Scotsman suspected of being a Jacobite and a Papist. In the late evening of Tuesday, 6 June, an angry crowd arrived at Mansfield's town house in Bloomsbury Square, brandishing a noose. Lord and Lady Mansfield

made a bonfire of the furniture, tossing Mansfield's collection of classical and medieval manuscripts from the windows. Saving only his dinner bell with which to rally themselves, and armed with his iron railings, they marched to Kenwood, his sumptuous villa on Hampstead Heath, not far from the Spaniards. His town house was burnt to the ground.

MARY CATHCART BORER (an unfortunate surname for a writer) in her local history *Hampstead and Highgate The Story of Two Hilltop Villages* (W H Allen, London, 1976) provides one of the fullest accounts of what happened next

Horace Walpole, in a letter to the Countess of Ossory written on 7 June 1780, said that Lord Mansfield's house in Bloomsbury was in ashes and that George Selwyn had just told him that 5,000 men were marching on Kenwood, and that 6,000 of the guards had gone after them.

It was Giles Thomas, the landlord of the Spaniards, who saved Ken House. As the mob approached he went out to meet them, showed sympathy for their cause and invited them into his house and cellars, for free drinks and a rest before they set about storming the gates and burning down the beautiful Ken House. It was a blazing hot day, they had had a long walk and needed no second invitation. Free beer had seldom come their way before, and as they sat around drinking and congratulating themselves on their good luck, Thomas sent messages to the steward of Ken House, John Hunter, for more supplies of beer, and to the barracks for a detachment of horse guards. Hunter ordered yep barrels of beer from the Ken House cellars, which were emptied into tubs ranged along the roadside. William Weatherall, another member of Lord Mansfield's staff, addressed them. Giles Thomas kept them drinking. And soon, undernourished at the best of times, they were all rip-roaring drunk, so that when the guards arrived soon afterwards the mob 'instantly abandoned their intentions, and returned to the metropolis in as much disorder as they had quitted it.' (p.150) According to the official Kenwood House guidebook (Julius Bryant, *The Iveagh Bequest Kenwood*, English Heritage, London, 1990), Lord Mansfield's nephew and heir, Lord Stormont, "saved the house from destruction when, as Minister responsible for controlling the Gordon Riots, he ordered 'a detachment of light horse' to intercept the mob that was advancing on the villa", although it adds that, "Fortunately the landlord of the Spaniards Inn was already rendering them insensible with free ale, assisted by Lord Mansfield's steward, who filled tubs by the roadside from his master's cellar." (pp.61-62, p.64) While it appears that the events relating to the Spaniards may well be true, I have doubts about the timing, as the mob were supposed to have been sacking Lord Mansfield's Bloomsbury home at around midnight and were then said to have proceeded shortly afterwards towards Kenwood, in which case it is unlikely that it would have been a "blazing hot day" when they arrived at the Spaniards, as Mary Cathcart Borer recounts. Anyway, it's a good story.

Finally, the pub prides itself on being mentioned in Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* (chapter 46) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (chapter 15). It is unlikely, as is claimed in many sources, that Hampstead resident John Keats was inspired to write his *Ode to a Nightingale* after hearing the bird's enchanting song while sitting outside the Spaniards. He could well have been a regular drinker at the pub. However, in the garden of the poet's former house, now a museum, in Keats Grove, a plaque records the position of the plum tree by which he wrote his poem, although the tree has been replanted.

* Next time we shall hear about some of the other pubs in the Hampstead and Highgate area that claim to have historic connections with such colourful figures as Jack Straw (the revolting peasant, not the revolting politician), Dick Whittington and Ruth Ellis.

Wandering Canons? (Closer to the light, the larger the shadow)

By Paul Screeton

A secret society within the Anglican Church?

This notion was put to me 20 years ago and at times since I've pondered the possibility. The notion seemed plausible then when it was put to me as fact. I'd taken a shamanic gypsy who'd arrived on our doorstep that day to the ancient church of Hart, near Hartlepool. By luck it was open and we were given a guided tour by Canon D. T. Eastwood, whom I knew slightly.

Tom was an astrologer who had called to show me on a map a terrestrial zodiac he'd discovered in North-West Durham. The canon pointed to ten figures along the roof and two others at the back of the church. He pointedly announced that they were not zodiacal figures. Outside, Tom told me he reckoned Eastwood was one of a select inner sanctum of clerics chosen as guardians of specially-sacred churches. It seemed plausible.

Then I read in Andy Collins' excellent magazine *Earthquest News* about an ecclesiastical underworld. The Anglicans used the term "*Episcopi Vagantes*", translated as "wandering bishops", for a hierarchy of bishops, abbots and other holy men who claimed a divine apostolic succession from obscure Eastern sources. This Masonic-style line of thinking should be referred to be those interested as it is too complicated to follow through here (1). Collins suggested members of the "E.V." may have felt Runwell, Essex, where one of their high-ups was rector, important geomantically. Would the same apply to Hart?

Our story now turns to another village on Hartlepool's outskirts, Greatham. Here lies the Hospital of God, St. Mary and St. Cuthbert, founded in 1272. It was opened on the Eve of Epiphany, January 6th, by Bishop Stichill. It is home and sanctuary for the aged, both clerical and lay brothers. Brothers in alms.

I visited the Hospital of God for a four-page feature on Greatham for the newspaper I work for (2). The Master, Canon Clive Wyngard, showed me around, introduced me to lay brethren but when one of these took ill the visit was curtailed and I did not get to meet the clerics.

One who once lived there whom I knew well was Canon Shepherd, who looked after Seaton Carew parish while the incumbent played soldiers as a Terriers' padre. When he christened my son, Ian, he whispered: "Next time I see you it will be in a better place than this." He meant Seaton Carew Social Club, whose balance sheet was boosted by his rum intake.

After Ian's confirmation at Greatham, during refreshments in the village hall, I was reacquainted with Canon Eastwood, by then another Hospital of God resident.

Briefly, Dennis Townend Eastwood was born in Manchester of well-off parents. However, he turned his back on a managerial career in his father's printing business when he saw a little girl, aged four, cradling a baby in her arms, sitting in front of an empty house in the city's slums. Twenty years old, he realised his vocation was to help others and to that end he became a vicar. After serving several Lancashire parishes, he moved to the North-East to become Vicar of Hart and Rector of Elwick Hall.

A profile of him noted he spent money on little else but books and was married, with two dogs and a cat (3). Perhaps the dogs give a clue to his encouraging Tom to take his wolfhound Avalon into Hart church.

Another step along this curious trail was a re-reading of Collins' book *The Knights of Danbury* (4). In it, Collins focuses on the St. Clere (Sinclair) family. The Somerset branch was associated with St. John's Eve, and Greatham has its week-long feast around St. John the Baptist. Collins concluded: "There is simple evidence to support the view that the St. Clere family were guardians of an esoteric tradition, a form of Christian mysticism which was fused with elements of ancient sun worship of pre-Christian times."

They dance around a maypole at Greatham, and I wondered if the village could have a St. Clere connection. It did. Apparently, the manor of Greatham belonged to the celebrated Simon de Montfort, slain at the Battle of Evesham. Following this, the estate was forfeited and granted by the king to Thomas de Clare. For reasons I cannot discover, the gift was revoked to the claim of Bishop Stichill, who founded the hospital.

In conversation with our local vicar, Bill Worley, who has the freehold of Seaton Carew, he mentioned that Canon Wyngard had been his 'boss' when he was a curate in North-West Durham. More coincidences. Would it be sensible to however caustiously ask pertinent questions of Canon Wyngard? Not politically sound anyway. My editor happens to be a friend of his.

Pieces for a jigsaw; a geomantic riddle; perhaps pie in the sky. Canon fodder for thought.

References: (1) *Earthquest News*, No. 7, 1983; (2) Paul Screeton, "Village Portrait: Greatham", *The Mail, Hartlepool*, 20/6/88; (3) "Friday Profile: Revelation on his doorstep", *Northern Daily Mail*, circa 1964; (4) Andy Collins, *The Knights of Danbury*, Earthquest Books, 1985

From Andrew Collins, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.
(20.10.91):

Dear Paul,

Thanks for the article on the 'Episcopi Vagantes'. I now know an awful lot more about the whole set-up and have read extensively of its origins. Most of it concerns orthodox unorthodoxy and Celtic churches. However, of more importance to the Anglican Church was the Tractarian Movement, ritualism and the Oxford Movement. Their main secretive body was, and still is, the Order of the Corporate Union. It strives to reintroduce pre-Reformation ritualism and church services and possesses many secret signs and symbols known only to members.

Most high church clerics will belong to it, although few will admit it.

A vicar I know who is a member openly supports my work and has listened to psychics on energy patterns in his church. His services are pure occult rituals. He is also into the whole holy blood, holy grail mystery and is psychic himself.

Cheers Andy.



IT'S many moons since I last posted any photocopylore or the more modern E-mail equivalent in the magazine, so here's two which tickled my sense of humour. The first was passed to me by fellow Seatonian Jimmy Macgregor, a Scots expatriate, the second comes via *Letters to Ambrose Merton* folklore magazine, issue 13 of 1998.

The Methilhill Earthquake

Reuters 31 February 2007

A major earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale hit Methilhill in the early hours of last Thursday.

Victims were seen wandering around aimlessly muttering "whit the fook", "a dinna ken" and "ya hoor sir".

The earthquake decimated the area, causing £30 worth of damage. Several priceless collections and mementoes from the Balearics and Spanish Costas were damaged beyond repair. Several areas of burnt-out cars were disturbed. Many locals were woken long before their giros arrived.

The *East Fife Mail* reported that hundreds of residents were confused and bewildered, still trying to come to terms with the fact that something interesting had happened in the area.

One resident, Kelly-Anne Marie Smith, a 16-year-old mother of five, said that it was such a shock.

"My little Chardonnay Mercedes came running into my bedroom crying. I was still shaking when I was watching *Trisha* next morning."

Nevertheless it is understood that looting, muggings and car crime continued as usual.

The British Red Cross has so far managed to ship 4,000 crates of Buckfast and Sunny Delight to the area to help the stricken locals.

Rescue workers are still searching through the rubble and have found large quantities of personal belongings, including benefit books, jewellery from Argos and bone china from Poundstretchers.

CAN YOU HELP?

This appeal is to collect clothing parcels. Clothing such as Fila or Burberry baseball caps, Kappa tracksuit tops (his n hers), shell suits (hers), white sports socks, Rockport boots and much sought after, as is any item sold in Poundstretchers.

Food parcels are equally important. They should include any microwave or frozen meals from Farmfoods, tins of basic baked beans, ice cream, frozen chips and pizza and cans of Special Brew.

Money donations can help also - £2 buys chips and blue fizzy drinks for a family of six.

Please DO NOT send tents for shelter. The sight of upmarket housing suddenly appearing may cause civil unrest in the neighbouring communities of Methil, Buckhaven and Kennoway.



Why beer is better than religion

When Christian students at Texas A&M University donned pro-abstinence T-shirts bearing the legend "Top 10 Reasons Jesus is Better Than Beer", Steve Berry of Texas A&M's Agnostic and Atheist Student Group knew how to respond:

Top 10 Reasons Why Beer Is Better Than Religion

10. No one will kill you for not drinking Beer.
9. Beer doesn't tell you how to have sex.
8. Beer has never caused a major war.
7. They don't force Beer on minors who can't think for themselves.
6. When you have a Beer, you don't knock on people's doors trying to give it away.
5. Nobody's ever been burned at the stake, hanged or tortured over their brand of Beer.
4. You don't have to wait more than 2,000 years for a second Beer.
3. There are laws saying Beer labels can't lie to you.
2. You can prove you have a Beer.
1. If you've devoted your life to Beer, there are groups to help you stop.



The next issue of FOLKLORE FRONTIERS will be published during July 2007



Newslines

LEGENDS ROUND-UP. Following the Stevens Report which debunked Mohammad al-Fayed's accusations regarding the death of his son Dodi and Diana, Princess of Wales, Katie Toms wrote up what she claimed were the five most outlandish conspiracy theories or modern legends circulating:

* The Number of the Beast, 666, has been deliberately hidden in all barcodes. This is a sign that Judgment Day is drawing near and the Book of revelation prophecy, that the Antichrist will use the number to control Earth, has begun.

* A time-travel tunnel was dug on Montauk, Long Island, by the U.S. government in the late Seventies. The participants time-travelled to change the outcome of the American Civil War and tried different scenarios on the Second World War (see my book *Crossing the Line* for an account of this).

* KFC is owned by the Ku Klux Klan, and its chicken is laced with a drug that makes black men impotent. Colonel Sanders left 10% of KFC's profits to the KKK in his will.

* Children with computer chips that suppress their psychic powers have been planted in England and the U.S. by a mystery organisation, the Psychic Energy Commission.

* Suri Cruise is actually the daughter of Katie Holmes's ex-boyfriend actor Chris Klein. Holmes gave birth and then wore padding for months until she faked the birth in April this year.

(The Observer Review, 17/12/06)



Dr Marietta Higgs

'CHILD ABUSE' ANNIVERSARY. Marietta Higgs – night-hag of post-industrial Teesside, The Pied Piper of Cleveland, the woman who brought Salem to Middlesbrough, whose familiars were evil social workers and whose chariot of bones was transformed to a dawn-raiding police vehicle – still has not apologised for 'kidnapping' 121 children, wrongfully accusing their parents of being

paedophiles and still believes her diagnosis exactly 20 years ago was right. Sadly the clock cannot be turned back, although we now know with hindsight that her obsession with reflex anal dilation – originally devised to detect homosexual abuse – was blinkered and that it can appear in any boy or girl quite normally and spontaneously. Twenty years ago, issues of *FF* regularly updated the demonic activities of Australian Higgs and her sidekick Geoffrey Wyatt. Now astonishingly we learn that despite being recommended never again to work with children, this ghastly overzealous remorseless crackpot is back working as a paediatrician. God help the children of Kent. (Excellent investigation by Sue Reid in Daily Mail, 24/2/07)

CREPES OF WRATH. 'Security men were called to a store in Leeds after two devout OAPs disrupted a "pagan" pancake-tossing contest'.

(Daily Mirror, 21/2/07) I know Pancake Tuesday has some old customs attached, such as the annual ball game at Sedgefield near where I live, but aren't the pancakes part of Christian Lenten celebrations, using up ingredients in the larder before a period of fasting?

NITNEY SPEARS. By the time you read this Britney Spears (see also Update this issue) will have done something more crazy even than shave her head because she thought lice were eating her hair extensions. As all parents know, 'nits' are part of family life, but some brainless celebs get panicky. My wife was at her hairdresser's some years ago and was told in all seriousness that when the Beckhams' son Brooklyn had his first birthday party, the proud parents were horrified to find one of the guests – age and gender unspecified – had headlice. In reaction to this taboo topic, Victoria had a bleached cut so as to kill any nits and David and toddler had crewcuts to rid them of possible infestation. At the time Hartlepool was in the grip of a nits panic of epic proportions. Britney could be seen as an extensions ostension, perhaps. (Paul Screeton, *Snips and Nits: A Beckham's Tale*, Letters to Ambrose Merton 23:8-10, 2000)

SEX AND DRUGS. It's the final quote from the spokesman I enjoyed best. 'Argentine model Belen Rodriguez says she's to blame for Milan striker Marco Borriello's failed drugs test after she used



her vaginal cortisone cream on his "inflamed man area". "It is so sad, so wrong. My infection inflamed him, but I just didn't think things through when I gave him the cream. Marco uses no drugs! He is beautiful, serene and just. When we are at home he won't even drink Coca Cola because he's frightened the caffeine will excite him. Our physical joy has proved fatal." "We're aware of these events," say Milan. "We'll get this cleared up". (The Observer, January ?, 2007)

UNDIE SUSPICION. More than 30 items of posh French lingerie, all new, have been draped over road signs, traffic lights, fences and graves in Purton, Wilts., over a two-month period. (The Sun, The Times. 20/1/07)

Crossing the Line +

BRIEF ENCOUNTER *Pity I hadn't this item to hand when I wrote *Crossing the Line: Trespassing on Railway Weirdness*. It was sent by Jimmy Goddard and is from a facsimile of the *Ironbridge Chronicle* for some date in 1895, bought at Blist Hill Victorian Village Museum, near Ironbridge. Jimmy adds: "I don't know if it was ever attempted!" Personally, I doubt it.*

AN INTERESTING RAILROAD INVENTION

The specification of the United States patent, numbered 536,360, and dated March 26, 1895, is an interesting bit of literature (says *Cassier's Magazine*), having been designed to actually secure legal protection for the very simple method, proposed years ago, of enabling two railroad trains to pass each other on the same track without collision. The frequent attempts of trains to thus pass each other have been attended so uniformly with disastrous consequences that the feat has become pretty generally recognised as an impossible one, and most engineers have concluded to desist from further efforts to accomplish it. The plan now proposed in all seriousness seems to be the exact counterpart of the one which, in a spirit of levity, was mentioned in these pages in November, 1893, and of which the appended particulars may be of renewed interest at the present time:- The idea is altogether very simple, as most really great plans and ideas are. The inventor of earlier years proposed, as the present one does, to place on the front of every locomotive going in one direction a long, inclined plane, and on this were to be two rails. These were to come close to the regular track at the forward and lower end of the plane, and at the upper end were to be connected with other rails running along the tops of the cars and down to the main track again on another inclined plane at the rear end of the train. When the train provided with this attachment would meet another train on the same track, the latter would simply go over the former, its weight making the connection of the front of the inclined plane and the rails on the main track perfect, and acting, at the same time, as a brake on the speed of the train underneath. It is, of course, perfectly evident that if this invention had been properly appreciated and generally adopted, the number of double-track roads the world over would not now be half as great as it is. A single track, with occasional switches for heavy freight trains, would have answered all purposes, and the cost of building railroads would have been decreased by an important percentage. However, it is not too late to make up for lost opportunities. We may still live to see the system adopted on all single-track roads, so that before very long the sensation of riding over or passing under another moving train may become so common as to pass almost unnoticed.

THIN EXCUSE. (CtL., pp75-76) Expect to hear this soon: 'Train delayed owing to the wrong diet'. Subway bosses in New York say that women passengers fainting from dizziness from under-eating has become one of the top causes for delays. It seems to rank third, after track work and signalling problems. (The Times body&soul, 6/1/07, via The New York Times)

MANIAC ON THE PLATFORM. (CtL., pp93-96) Turkish schizophrenic Mehmet Bala, 20, admitted pushing commuter John Curran, 52, under a Tube train at London's Highbury and Islington station after walking out of hospital. Construction worker Mr Curran was hit by a 35mph train as other travellers chased Bala, who was a volunteer in-patient. He

admitted manslaughter through diminished responsibility at the Old Bailey and will be assessed for treatment at Broadmoor. (The Sun, 16/12/06)

BAD LUCK. Early representatives of the Southern Railway 'Merchant Navy' class carried on the smokebox door the legend 'Southern' on an inverted horseshoe, afterwards replaced by a roundel to appease superstitious enginemen. The article also discussed the rebuilding of the class and claimed that at one depot 80 men signed a petition claiming that the 'Merchant Navies' were better before conversion, one even claiming that 'the record put up by *Mallard* has been broken many times by these engines of Mr Bulleid'. K S Farr commented: 'There is no authenticated record of a "Merchant Navy", in original condition, reaching even 100mph'. (The Railway Magazine, May, 1991)

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT. A graffiti message scrawled on the lavatory door of a Southeastern EMU has led to the jailing for life of three paedophiles. A journalist travelling on the train triggered a police investigation after relying to the 'advert'. (The Railway Magazine, August, 2006)

TICKLED! Planners attempted to change the name of a railway underpass in Castleford, West Yorkshire, to Tittle Cott Bridge, rather than its traditional name of Tickle Cock Bridge. It is thought that the name derived from when the Victorian under-pass was a secluded spot for lovers. The motion was defeated. (Yorkshire Post, 11/3/06, via Northern Earth)

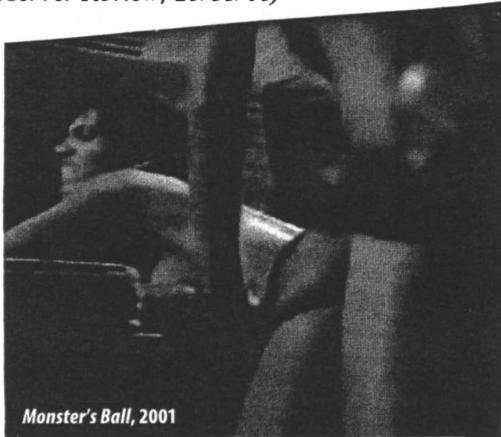
CLASS DISTINCTION (FF54:11; CtL., p131) The redesignation of third-class to second-class was on June 3, 1956. Neil Spinks wrote that it was 'simultaneous with the changeover from three classes of travel, to two, on the Continent'. (Steam World, November, 2006)

HOBOS (CtL., pp96-97) In a reflection on Maurice 'Steam Train' Graham, the obituarist quotes 1930s doctor and former hobo Dr Ben L. Reitman, who remarked that: "The hobo works and wanders, the tramp dreams and wanders and the bum drinks and wanders." Graham recounted his travelling experiences in the 1990 book *Tales of the Iron Road: My Life as King of the Hobos*. Although the word hobo has several competing etymological claims – a contraction of homeward bound, from after the Civil War; a contraction of the Latin homo bonus; or a reference to the hautboy, or oboe – Graham preferred the explanation of 'hoe boy', a boy travelling with a hoe, prepared to work. Graham was elected King five times at the annual National Hobo Convention in Britt, Idaho, and named Grand Patriarch of the Hobos in 1994, a title never before or since bestowed. (The Times, 2/12/06)

JOKE. *A lad was telling his pal about his job as a signalman. "Twice a day I walk up the track checking the lines." His mate said: "It sounds boring." "No way. Last week I bumped into this girl. I took her back to the signalbox and we had sex all afternoon." "Nice," said his pal. "Did she give you a blow-job?" "No," he said. "I never did find her head." (Daily Sport, ?)*

Update

DID/DIDN'T? (FF20:7-9). Tim Adams asked if explicit sex in films and books is no longer shocking. Over a two-page spread celebrating John Cameron Mitchell's film *Shortbus*, which shows unsimulated sexual relationships, Adams reprises the rumour that Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie had full sex in *Don't Look Now*, but also asked if Halle Berry and Billy Bob Thornton also went all the way for real in *Monster's Ball*. (*The Observer Review*, 26/11/06)



Monster's Ball, 2001

Caroline Iggulden returned to the subject. She wrote: 'An insider on the set of Sienna Miller's new film *Factory Girl* claims a graphic sex scene featuring Jude Law's ex and hunky Hayden Christensen was for real.'



MONSTER'S BALL (15): Prison guard Billy Bob Thornton gets up close and personal with Halle Berry – the wife of the last prisoner he executed. Their graphic sex scene lasts a whopping four minutes 28 seconds – and Halle won an Oscar for her magnificent performance in this 2001 movie. **VERDICT:** No billowing curtains here – gritty and realistic.

But Sienna's spokesman denied the couple – romantically linked during filming – got to grips for real.'



Caroline suggested a further six cases with passionate performances may have been full-on rather than fake. Both *Monster's Ball* and *Don't Look Now* featured, along with *Wild Orchid*, *The Black Dahlia*, *Mr and Mrs Smith* and *8 Mile*. (The Sun, 2/2/07)



DON'T LOOK NOW (15): The 1973 film's four-minute love scene between Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie – including a full frontal nude shot of him – has been hotly debated for years. It was one of the first movies to show sex realistically, but Donald has always denied they were lovers. **VERDICT:** Highly sensual and very realistic.

SWEARING TOY (FF54:7). Having remarked last issue that it was a long time since I'd seen a child's gift cause upset, along came another couple of days after publication. Christmas shopper Roy Edensor was stunned when a teddy bear he had bought for his son shouted "Prick" when he took it out of the box. The talking toy is a copy of Nev the Bear – star of CBBC's *Smile* show. It should say "I love you", "Fwightened" and "Yum Yum". Electrician Roy, 34, from Stafford, bought the toy at a local Tesco. Store bosses have removed a batch of the bears and are investigating. (The Sun, 2/12/06)

BRITART (1) (FF42:3-8, passim). In a poll of 500 influential people to find Britain's most popular artist, for BritArt king Damien Hirst received just one vote. Damien, who now describes himself as "more OAP than YBA", can't get away with claiming the survey was ageist. Lucien Freud, 83 years old, won. (The Observer, 26/11/06)

DOLLY PARTON (FF49:6-7) Bosomy Dolly has been hailed the second greatest gay icon of all time. Runner-up in a survey of 5,000 gays by Onepoll.com, she was beaten by Kylie Minogue. Abba were third, Judy Garland fourth, David Beckham sixth and Posh 12th. So where was Peter Mandelson – BOTTOM? (The Sun, 6/1/07)

DARK SATANIC MILLS (FF51:9, passim) Beggaring belief, after I noted last issue that Richard Morrison had misunderstood William Blake's metaphor (Bill meant universities not what L S Lowry painted) the wretched hack has repeated his mistake by claiming the phrase 'dark satanic mills' resonated as Blake's 'battle-hymn for social justice'. (TheKnowledge, The Times, 20/1/07)

TROLLEYS (1) (FF11:4-6) Trolleyspotting.co.uk, which maps abandoned shopping trolleys across the U.K., was named Britain's best 'Weird and Wonderful Website' by Yahoo. (The Times, 6/1/07)

BADGERS INNOCENT (FF53:10). Simon Barnes reiterates something important with: 'Bovine TB is spread by the movement of cattle around the country' and that killing badgers actually increases the problem by causing disruption and movement of the population and causing greater contact with cows. He points out: 'This information comes in a report published this week in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, a leading scientific journal in the United States, so this is not some nutter going off half-cocked.' (The Times, 7/10/06)

RUDE PLACENAMES (FF46:6, passim). Residents of a Swedish hamlet complain that they are suffering from an epidemic of 'weariness, embarrassment and conditional shame' and need official help to escape being constantly 'forced to take a tiresome defensive stance'. The inhabitants of Fjuckby say that the global spread of English means that they suffer constant teasing and low self-esteem. Now they want permission to change the village name – to Fjukeby. (The Times body&soul, 16/12/06)

TROLLEYS (2). Shopping trolleys are the latest item to join the long list of threats to children. Paediatricians are warning us to beware when carrying offspring in supermarket trolleys after a survey found more than 24,000 children were injured in trolley-related mishaps in the U.S. during 2005. (The Times body&soul, 12/8/06)

BRITNEY SPEARS (FF39:3) / **NEW FLASHERS**. One minute she was in a shellsuit and a bad marriage, the next she'd joined the commandos. Barbara Ellen describes this disturbing new sociological trend cum moral panic far better than I could: 'Is it my imagination, or is there a new kind of flasher in town? Not the flashers of legend – those sad, broken men opening their grubby raincoats in public parks to show teenage girls what a mid-life crisis looks like. The New Flashers are generally young, gorgeous, famous and oddest of all, female – girls such as Lindsay Lohan and Paris Hilton, both 'caught' in their time leaving off their knickers to party, revealing themselves to be exhibitionist in a way even battle-hardened paparazzi never bargained for, forcing editors to gulp and reach for their pixelating technology, and to thereby 'save' their readership from the corrupting sight of all those runaway front bottoms.

It seems significant that, joining the 'commando' elite last week, was Britney Spears, freshly liberated from her duff marriage, swanning around with Hilton, in what appeared to be a frontless dress teamed with no knickers. Granted, the word 'classy' failed to spring to mind (talk about advertising one's single status). Then again, remember Mrs Federline, as she was, only a few weeks ago, shuffling around in a grubby velour tracksuit (the uniform, nay the burka, of the depressed housewife). The reborn Ms Spears was a different, happier creature altogether – giggling, staggering immodestly out of the back of a car, leaving nothing to the

rigueur, blushes-saving pixelation. The question being, whose blushes? (Ours?) Certainly not hers. There was a message in Britney's eyes: "I'm free, I'm back, and nothing and nobody is going to stop me having the time of my life."

There are plenty of worrying aspects to the New Flashers. Could it be a horrible sign that young female stars are having to go ever further to guarantee attention – even to the point of flashing their 'bits' in the manner of off-duty porn stars? Indeed, scratch the surface post-feminist bravado, and is there too much pathos in this panty-less mix? One man (who stressed he was in no way 'against' the idea of young women with no knickers on) likened it all to 'baboons in the zoo, displaying their red bottoms'. And displaying them like never before. Indeed, when post-divorce Ulrika was seen wryly flashing her bottom to the paparazzi because it was 'just' the cheeks it would be viewed as lily-livered cowardice by the new fearless breed of commandos. In the film *Basic Instinct*, Sharon Stone (the spiritual leader of the New Flashers, the cultural high priestess of commando) famously gave the public more than they'd bargained for in mainstream cinema.' (The Observer Magazine, 3/12/06)

As I recall, Ms Stone, upon seeing her scene for the first time, exclaimed: "You can see all the way up to Nebraska!" Back with Britney, Ryan Parry regaled readers with how the songstress keeled over at a club on New Year's Eve after revellers chanted "whore, whore, whore" at her. How true it was that after another night out she was spotted repeating "I love myself" is open to conjecture. He stirred it up further with 'some even claim she has become more than just friends with Paris'. (Daily Mirror, 6/1/07)

TROLLEYS (3). A new U.S. law has been created to help the growing number of shoppers who avoid supermarkets because they think they might contract diseases from yucky trolleys. Fred Allen, an Arkansas legislator, has introduced the Health Conscious Shopper Programme, which will push shops to provide sanitary wipes and hand sanitisers for people whose paranoid fear of germs on shopping-trolley handles is turning them into 'emotional basket cases'. (The Times body&soul, 10/2/07)

ALIEN WILDLIFE. Plenty to mull over here. * The Big Cats in Britain group has found 12 lions, 14 tigers and 50 leopards being owned privately in Britain. Mark Fraser, of the B.C.I.B., added: "To my knowledge, there have been no accidents involving licensed pet owners and their big cats." Journalist Emma Wall then commented that the B.C.I.B. says 'that some big cats are kept in secret and let out in the wild to hunt' as if like a household cat they return of their own accord. The B.C.I.B. estimates more than 300 American bison and 6,000 wild boar are roaming our countryside (the boar I can believe, but not the buffaloes). Fraser added: "More and more exotic animals are being seen in the British countryside today, making it an interesting place to be." And scary! (Daily Star, 28/12/06)

Since 2002 the noisy ring-necked parakeets have gone up from 1,500 to 5,900 adults living in the U.K. Collared doves have created 298,000 occupied territories compared with 210,000 (The Times, 14/10/06) In Hartlepool, parakeets have moved on from sightings in the Greatham, Fens and Rossmere Park areas of the town to the more upmarket West Park district, and photographer Dirk van der Werff spotted a group of around eight by Ward Jackson Park (Hartlepool Mail, 10/2/07)

- The Environment Agency claims the goldfish is a more dangerous alien than the grey squirrel or American signal crayfish. Releases into the wild are cross-breeding the 18-inch crucian carp out of existence. The E. A. warns that releasing ornamental fish into the wild is illegal and unwanted goldfish should be killed. (The Times, 30/12/06)

LOST MANUSCRIPTS. (FF46:15) Scientists at the Mayo Clinic say they have revived an ancient therapy used by a South-East Asian culture after they discovered it described by the naturalist Georg Eberhard Rumpf in 1650 in his book *Ambonese Herbal*. Rumpf's dusty text told how natives on the island of Ambon in Indonesia used leaves and extracts from the atun tree to cure sickness. The Mayo researchers used a sophisticated computerised search system to scan the text for possible leads. The Mayo scientists must hope that they have better luck with their discovery than Rumpf: after writing the original manuscript, he went blind, his family died in an earthquake and fire destroyed the only copy of his text. He then had to rewrite it, twice, after the first new draft was destroyed by the French navy. (The Times body&soul, 6/1/07)

TROLLEYS (4). Two men are pushing their trolleys around a shop when they collide. The first man says: "Sorry about that. I'm looking for my wife and I wasn't paying attention to where I was going." The second man says: "That's a coincidence, I'm looking for my wife too." The first man says: "Maybe we can help each other. What does your wife look like?" The second man says: "She's 21, tall, blonde hair, blue eyes, big breasts and is wearing a short skirt and a short T-shirt. What does your wife look like?" The first man says: "Doesn't matter. Let's look for yours." (People's Friend Annual, 2007)

Golden oldies

CHEAPSKATE PANTO. Novelist Simon Brett wrote a new *Mother Goose* to be performed at Chipping Norton. Discussing the perils and pitfalls of pantomime, he noted: 'And though the show doesn't have a large budget, I know no corners will have been cut. You won't hear any money-saving lines like that reputed to have been spoken in a production of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*: "You come through with me. You 39 wait out there".' (TheKnowledge, The Times, 25/11/06)

MELLOW CELLO. I HAVE criticised columnist Richard Morrison elsewhere this issue, and previously, and I suspect he has again got himself mixed up. Commenting on a survey by *Muso* magazine, which polled classical musicians on which type of instrumentalists make the best lovers and which are likely to offer sex on the first date. Regarding the latter, viola players came in at 80%, leading Morrison to note they 'have been the prime butt of musicians' jokes since time immemorial'. I rather think he has confused viola players with the cello players, who topped the best lovers' league at 7.5 out of ten. This relating to the old tale about the conductor chiding a female cellist with a comment along the lines of: "Madam, you have between your legs the finest gift God could give you and you misuse it." Well, that was the best cellist story, but Morrison ploughed on regardless: 'After all it was a cellist who featured in the best-ever story about musicians and sex. Just turned 80, the great Pablo Casals proposed marriage to a twentysomething pupil, and was accepted. On his wedding day his doctor and friends approached him. "You should be very careful tonight, Pablo," they said. "Think of the health risk." Casals brushed them impatiently aside. "I'm going to enjoy myself," he said "And if the girl dies, she dies."

That has been attributed to umpteen pensionable age persons and I don't suppose Morrison's other anecdote has any veracity either: 'There is a wonderful story about the conductor Sir John Barbirolli. He was sitting in his dressing-room in Manchester, waiting to conduct his beloved Halle Orchestra, when the distraught wife of one of his violinists rushed in. "I'm so miserable Sir John," she wailed. "I've just discovered my husband is having an affair." "My dear, there's nothing to worry about," Barbirolli replied consolingly. "He's playing better than ever."' (TheKnowledge, The Times, 10/2/07)

PRIZEWINNING BARD. Alan Thomson emailed: 'A story did the rounds a few years ago of a U.S. college student who, preparing to write an essay, posted a query online, asking if anyone knew what prizes Shakespeare had won during his lifetime. Madness.' (The Observer Review, 29/10/06)

SHOCK BILL. Pensioner Rainer Burchett, 67, was threatened with court action for failing to pay an outstanding bill of £0.00. He was shocked to receive a letter from energy supplier Powergen stating that 'unless payment is made in full within the next seven days, then legal action will be taken against you'. Powergen said the matter was the result of 'computer error'. A spokesman said: "We send out 30 million bills each year and only a small number are wrong." (Metro, 14/11/06)

MOUNTAIN OUT OF A ... A 63-year-old man was killed when he wired up a high-voltage cable to try to wipe out the moles digging up his garden in Zingst, north-east Germany. Police investigating the death said that the moles had survived. (Reuters; The Times, 13/1/07)

BEAST'S REVENGE. Hunter Dragos Mila, 37, was shot dead by a badger when it ran over his gun in Gornji Milanovac, Serbia. (The Sun, 21/2/07)

Did you miss?

FRENCH MAID. According to historians, Joan of Arc was burnt at the stake in Rouen by the English on May 30, 1431, aged 19. It is also generally agreed she was burnt another twice and ashes from the foot of the pyre were supposedly discovered in 1867 in the loft of a Paris apothecary. French forensic anthropologists have confirmed that a piece of cloth may be a fragment of her gown. Further DNA tests are expected to confirm they belong to a female – human – while one bone in the relics showed it was the femur of a cat (tallying with the medieval practice of throwing a black cat on a witch's pyre to appease the Devil). That will upset Ukrainian anthropologist Sergey Gorbenko, who suggested she was not even burnt, but lived to be 57. Also bad news for those who believe she was a man. Her cult is actually quite recent so there are apparently no competing boxes of relics all claiming to be hers. Beatified only in 1920, she supposedly heard voices from a trio of saints telling her to deliver France from her enemies. (The Observer, 17/12/06)

WITCH BOTTLES. Candida Crewe asked retired inorganic chemistry lecturer Dr Alan Massey about his hobby of analysing witch bottles, 200 of which have been found throughout the U.K. Dating from the 1600s and 1700s, people believed illness was caused by a witch's spell, so if someone was ill you made up a witch's bottle to act as a white magic object to attack the witch who had attacked you. Contents could include bent pins, iron nails, locks of hair and even urine (when she weed she removed the spell). (The Times Magazine, 27/1/07)

FUCKING FILM. An exploration of the F-word, *Fuck: A Fuckumentary* by film director Steve Anderson, includes musings on the history, use and etymology of the word from the late Hunter S Thompson. Rowan Walker points out: 'The exact origins of the word are a mystery. They may be Germanic, akin to the synonymous German *ficken*, which means 'to strike'. Its first appearance in the *Oxford English Dictionary* wasn't until 1972, well after D H Lawrence had used it in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1928. Constantly shrouded in controversy, perhaps that's where its beauty lies. Anderson "was always amused by the word fuck". "I thought it would be great to look at the word in all aspects of popular culture," he said. "Some people are very offended by this simple word, but that's the power it has. Some people are intrigued by it – others run for the hills. 'Fuck' polarises public opinion". (The Observer, 19/11/06)

ANCIENT OR MODERN. The Hallaton hare pie bottle-kicking custom discussion came as some surprise in the Observer Sport Monthly. The infamous Cooper's Hill cheese-rolling in Gloucestershire is suggested to have 'evolved out of the pagan ceremony of sun worship'. At least such dodgy credentials were not applied to other featured 'sports', such as the Eton wall game, Cholderton pig racing or Brambles Bank cricket match, played annually on mudflats exposed on a rare occasion in

the Solent. A fine photographic portfolio, 'this interweaving of alcohol, religion and pagan tradition' which 'capture the pride of communal identities and ancient rituals'. (O.S.M., February, 2007)

ANOTHER RHONA RANT. Soccer-crazy lesbian comedian Rhona Cameron voiced what many must have been thinking when she insinuated that the devout Roman Catholic Community Minister Ruth Kelly is a closet gay: 'Maybe there is something deeper driving Kelly's fears. That heavy tweed suit, those eyebrows, that deep voice'. (The Observer, 14/1/07)

TIGGYWINKLE HOLOCAUST. To counter food shortages, Henry VIII put a bounty on each creature listed officially as 'vermin', ranging from a penny for the head of a kite or raven to 12 pence per badger or fox. These were considerable sums compared with the average agricultural wage of four pence a day. The Act priced the head of a hedgehog at four pennies – four times that of a wildcat, stoat, weasel or polecat – this wholesale persecution reflecting the erroneous belief that it sucked milk from the teats of recumbent cows at night. In the latter half of the 17th and first part of the 18th centuries, half a million bounties were paid for hedgehog heads. (The Observer, 7/1/07)

FAST FOOD. 'How much controversy can a single sports event be expected to withstand in one year without exploding into a million pieces?' asked Giles Smith. 'The World Pie Eating Championships. Held in Wigan, were still reeling from a ban on gravy (deemed by the authorities to grant "unfair" lubricative advantage") when there came a hotly-contested format switch, from the traditional marathon-style eat-off, judged on quantity of pies gorged against the clock, to a one-pie sprint (safer, more ethically sound and quite a bit less messy). On top of these upsetting alterations, the introduction into the competition of a low-fat vegetarian option was apparently, for many of the afficianados of the game who turned up at Harry's Bar, almost impossible to swallow. The feeling was that the use of a broccoli, sweetcorn and carrot filling amounted to political correctness gone mad and even spokesman Iain Macauley claimed that it was "making a mockery of the whole competition". To compound the crisis, the world title was taken by an unknown 18-year-old, Brendan Brockbank, who was alleged to have entered the contest "on a whim" and who confessed afterwards to being "not really a big eater of pies".' (The Times, 16/12/06)

CURSE STRIPPED NAKED. According to *The Sun*, the title of Playmate of the Month seems to come with a terrible curse'. The recent death of *Playboy* centrefold Anna Nicole Smith spotlighted for Grant Rollings the fact that 25 women met an untimely death after stripping naked for the mag's centre pages. Three Playmates have been murdered, four have died from overdoses, four were victims of car accidents, 12 died from illness including cancer, and one died in a plane crash. Anna's own tragic end mirrored that of her blonde bombshell heroine Marilyn Monroe, who died at the age of 36 – like Anna, from an overdose. Rollings wrote:

'The official cause of Marilyn's death in 1962 was probable suicide due to an overdose of sleeping pills, but many people believe she was murdered. Her appearance in *Playboy* in December 1953 was not her own decision. Hefner had bought nude photos of Marilyn taken before she became a famous actress.'

And then there was Jayne Mansfield: 'A sex goddess in the 1950s, Jayne appeared in *Playboy* several times. She later became an actress and won a Golden Globe. Three times married Jayne was decapitated in 1967, when the car she was in crashed into the back of a tractor trailer.' But as regular readers (FF16:4-7, *passim*) know, her wig was dislodged – not her head. (The Sun, 12/2/07)

NO MORAL PANIC HERE THEN. Playing video games for an hour a day improves eyesight and can help treat amblyopia, or 'lazy eyes', according to scientists in New York. (The Sun, 10/2/07)

WAYLEEN. Did we all believe the story that Coleen McLoughlin tossed Wayne Rooney's £25,000 engagement ring into a squirrel sanctuary of all places? It seems 'not to be true', according to Peter Conrad, whose musings upon this young woman's ordinariness are pasted across two pages in a bid to prove that Napoleon's axiom that we are a nation of shopkeepers has been substituted by our being a nation of shoppers. (The Observer, 3/12/06) As for 'ordinariness', is she so ordinary that HaperCollins is publishing this month her autobiography, *Coleen: Welcome to my world?*

Proto-legends

TWO for the price of one! The *Wogan's World* column had several dodgy items, but these two were new to me and sound like nascent apocrypha.

First: Coventry opened its new super-hospital, Walsgrave, that cost squillions. A profoundly deaf woman goes there for an appointment with the audiology department. After an hour, she goes to the reception desk to ask how much longer she will have to sit there. The receptionist is dismissive. "Oh, your appointment has come and gone. The doctor did call your name."

Second: A listener, moving house, wished to arrange the connection of a new telephone line. After the usual details, including the traditional, and ridiculous, mother's maiden name, all seemed in order, until the helpful lady at the other end offered extra services. "Would you like to block calls from people who withhold their number?" "Yes, please." "What about withholding your own number?" "Oh, yes." "Would you like to be ex-directory?" "Yes." "Very well, is there anything else we can do for you?" "Well," said the applicant, "I'd like to know my new number." "Sorry sir, I can't tell you that, you're ex-directory." She then promised to send the new number by post. It still hasn't arrived. (The Sunday Telegraph, 31/12/06)

ELEVATOR ORDEAL. Karlheinz Schmidt, 68, was forced to survive on only a packet of biscuits while he was stuck in a hospital lift in Berlin for three days. Ironically a former elevator repairman, he slipped out of his wheelchair during the 80-hour ordeal in which he repeatedly pushed the alarm without anyone hearing. He was discovered after a nurse reported the lift not functioning. (Fortean Times 219 via The Guardian, 15/6/06)

CAFÉ SOCIETY. I doubt this really happened. The Hot Type column reported: 'Perhaps the library was shut: a woman walked into a South London bookshop last week and said: "We are next door in the café with our children. Would you mind if we borrowed some books for them to read?"' (The Times Books, 4/11/06)

RIGHT BUERK. And I doubt this happened, too. "Hegel said that no man should speak for longer than he can make love." BBC presenter Michael Buerk's entire speech at an official lunch. (The Times body&soul, 10/2/07)

TOMATO VARIETIES. Times columnist Ben Macintyre is no stranger to *FF*. Is he right with this claim or has he launched a new legend? He wrote: 'During the Lebanese civil wars of the 1980s, gangs of gunmen would drag people from their cars, hold up a tomato, and demand that the terrified captive say what it was: Lebanese tend to pronounce the word for tomato as "banadura", where Palestinians say "bandura". The word is the same. But the extra vowel sound dictates whether or not the gunmen pulled the trigger.' (The Times Books, 13/1/07)

TRACKED DOWN. I think we'll see a lot more of this one. 'Three thieves were arrested after their haul of GPS tracking devices led police to them in New York State, U.S.A. (Daily Mirror, 20/1/07)

ORIENT EXCESS. A 23-year-old Chinese woman from Chongqing sought plastic surgery to make herself uglier, because too many men were courting her. Her boyfriend had left her because her face was too beautiful and she was luring many other suitors. (Fortean Times 219, via China Daily and Irish Independent, 28/10/06)

CAT AND MOUSE. Neither does this look too good on closer inspection. Here it is in all its unreferenced glory: 'A cat that tried to reach a mouse in a jam jar got its head stuck and was taken to a police station. A motorist in Peterborough found the cat with the jar on its head and the mouse just millimetres from its nose. Police were unable to help but finally the cat smashed the jar on the floor and the mouse escaped.' (The Times, 27/1/07)

COCK AND GHERKINS STORY. Uta Schneider, 65, hacked off her dead husband's penis in a Stuttgart hospital and attempted to smuggle it out wrapped in foil hidden in a lunchbox next to gherkins. A nurse spotted her behaviour and she was arrested for mutilation. Uta told police his penis "was his best asset and gave me so much pleasure. I wanted to pickle it for eternity. It's what he would have wanted." (Fortean Times 219 via The Sun, 12/9/06)

Books

WHAT IF OUR WORLD IS THEIR HEAVEN? THE FINAL CONVERSATION OF PHILIP K. DICK edited by GWEN LEE & DORIS ELAINE SAUTER (Duckworth, £7.99)

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS after his death, Philip K. Dick is finally being lionised as a truly outstanding writer of science fiction, or I would prefer, speculative fiction. Hollywood has been mining his back pages with élan since *Total Recall* and *Blade Runner*. In these several discussion sessions, Dick speaks at length about *Blade Runner*; his literary religious novel *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (he believed narrator Angel Archer had not come from his mind and the pain of losing the character upon the book's completion led to physical gastrointestinal bleeding); unpublished work-in-progress *The Owl in Daylight* (Ozark folk expression for not understanding), the book whose plot gives this book its title; being blinded by a light which became vocal, explained his son's undiagnosed life-threatening medical condition in anatomical terms, continued for a year to guide him and take him back to Jesus Christ's time, finally bidding farewell as a vision of the Golden Section; his writing process and writer's block; metaphysics of music; divine authorship of the Gospels; Greek philosophy; wine and Meat Loaf.

The interviews were carried out over three months by Gwen Lee, who had been a journalism major in college and taping Dick's thoughts form a project for her to re-enter the field. She and Dick were mutual friends of Doris Elaine Sauter, who provides an introduction, and the two women are credited as editors. Another mutual friend of Dick and Sauter, and fellow participant in 'gonzo-theology' conversations also involving K. W. Jeter, was Tim Powers, who provides a pithy foreword.

Gwen Lee, 29, comes across as not particularly bright, but this does not diminish the book. Perhaps a more intimidating or intelligent interviewer might have cramped Dick, although I doubt it. The author largely bypasses her interruptions and inanities with self-indulgent machine-gun ferocity Dickspeak, often bordering as he himself admits as sounding "really nuts".

On a more mundane level, what sounds as if Dick may be trying to create a modern legend of his own, is where he claims someone asked him if the film *Blade Runner* was about ice-skating. After seeing 20 minutes of film segments (Dick died before the film's release) with special effects, he was warned to stay schtum about the tricks of the trade or else – "something about a cement overcoat, I believe, something about floating upside down in the Pacific Ocean", he told Gwen Lee. Describing the sinister-looking citizens in the futuristic film, Dick says they look like the types who would do to humans what "these rumours of what flying saucers have done to cattle", i.e. mutilation. Dick also mentions the dodgy Inuit idea – "Eskimos for instance have, uh, 15 or 20 words for snow, each one defining a slightly different condition of snow, you see."

More importantly, beyond these bits of folklore, there's his proven precognitive abilities, yet

unedited, his stream of consciousness babble will disturb most readers. Undoubtedly there is an element of the suburban shaman, a sort of literary Terence McKenna, but his belief that for eight years he has been touch with God, which is another species resembling a praying mantis, would doubtless alarm the psychiatric profession.

This is a record of those last conversations, published for the first time (he died aged 54 in 1982) and well reflect Dick's strange worldview. Psychedelically radiant.

AUGUSTINE, SINNER & SAINT by JAMES J. O'DONNELL (Profile Books, £12.99)

BORN in what today is Algeria, the son of a minor landowner, Augustine had the good fortune to have a supporter who funded his university education in Carthage and a post of professor in Milan. After he returned to North Africa as a lowly priest he became bishop of Hippo, followed a few years later by his intellectualism flowering in the form of his 80,000-word *Confessions*, for which he is generally best known. The *Confessions* may not be a salacious read, but led to his best-known phrase: "Oh, Master, make me chaste and celibate – but not yet!" He was promiscuous, but no more than others of his physical age and the age he lived in. Anyway, *Confessions* was something of a parody, meant to mislead readers and is questionable on multiple levels. Nevertheless, as O'Donnell puts it, *Confessions* is 'the first modern autobiography and it is a classic of modern literature.' But it was also deeply theological. Also by this stage philosophy had intruded and led to religious zealotry, perhaps spurred by a curious incident not dissimilar to a personal one I describe at the end of my book *Crossing the Line*.

One day, with his 'inner self' feeling like 'a house divided against itself', Augustine sat down in his garden and had what we might now call a nervous breakdown. Weeping, he heard a child in the distance, chanting a nonsense rhyme: *Tolle, lege, tolle, lege* ("Take it and read, take it and read"). Thinking the rhyme as a message from God, Augustine went inside and, employing a bit of textual divination popular in the ancient world, randomly opened a copy of St Paul's Epistles, and let his eye fall where they would: "... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." (Romans 13:14) Augustine snapped. He was born again, a soul free from the urgings of nature by the fleshless message of a book. Humble infotech had booted up his sacred self.

The current biography of Augustine follows an earlier one by the author, the need for revision being brought about by major advances in scholarship and newly-discovered works, necessitating a recasting of Augustinian chronology and reassessment of when the reluctant bishop emerged as 'the great man'. A work of astounding erudition, O'Donnell nevertheless writes a flowing narrative with an easy, conversational style (e.g. 'Manicheism had a bad rap with right-thinking people'), making what could have been hard going accessible. The author also puts Augustine's work and Christianity into a perspective of how it has been influential over

the centuries and into our modern era. In a footnote he even refers to modern misreadings of the man, such as Bob Dylan's *I Dreamed I Saw Saint Augustine*.

This being primarily a folklore magazine, I feel impelled to close with a piece of such from John Michell's own Confessions – *Confessions of a Radical Traditionalist* – commenting: 'We never really took to St. Augustine. He arrived in Canterbury in 597, telling us that we should be more zealous in converting the remaining pagans ... St. Augustine himself had a rough ride in his mission. At Cerne Abbas in Dorset they tied fish tails to his coat, evidently a traditional sign of disapproval.'

None of which, of course, is true.

Anyway, Augustine had died in Hippo way back on 28 August 430.

SACRED PLACES: PREHISTORY AND POPULAR IMAGINATION (Heart of Albion Press, £16.95, + 80p p&p)

THERE is an astonishing insight (at least to me and I bet most other committed earth mysterians) in this book, namely that: 'I think it is not simply coincidence that the earth mysteries movement never really gained momentum in Wales, Scotland or Ireland ... earth mysteries is in part, an expression of implicit aspects of being English.' So true; yet too obvious to have been noted previously, I believe.

During my tenure as editor of *The Ley Hunter*, 1969-1976) (not from 1967 as Bob claims – and I should know), and interest into the mid-Eighties, I played a major role in establishing hermetic topography into mainstream culture. Another very significant point Bob makes is the lack of accessibility to the formative magazines of the early E.M. era. Perhaps I'm sitting on a goldmine for future researchers which when I died will be hurled into a skip my wife. Discussing my autobiographical account of those years, *Seekers of the Linear Vision* (available from me at the bargain price of £4.95, including p&p), Bob chastises me for not acknowledging certain early aspects, which I would challenge, and at least Pennick, Roberts and *Cambridge Voice* and *Arcana* are in my meticulously-detailed bibliographies. I should just mention here a couple of other points: Philip Heselton did not refund *The Ley Hunter* in 1967; it was first published in April 1965 (all this information is in *Seekers of the Linear Vision*). Also the first I knew of the subtitle to my book *Quicksilver Heritage – 'The mystic leys, their legacy of ancient wisdom'* was when I received complimentary copies.

Without the likes of Paul Devereux, John Michell, Tony Roberts, Nigel Pennick, Jimmy Goddard, Philip Heselton, the Bords, Tom Graves, and I humbly submit, myself, today's archaeology would remain short, slow, dull and brutish. We hermetic topographers were the catalyst which enlivened a moribund subject and revealed places as sacred rather than sites for sacreligious grave plunder and landscapes full of vibrant potential rather than sites seen in isolation.

As a loosely linked group we also, for good or ill, created the impression in popular perception that leys – whatever they were – had a 100% validity, were probably straight conduits of some form of earth energy and that flying saucers were somehow related to all this. These heretical notions evolved rapidly and took deep roots. No wonder we were called the 'lunatic fringe', but we saw it as a compliment. Glyn Daniel died and John Barnatt did a poacher to gamekeeper shift. Subsequent professional archaeologists have adopted a more flexible view and they replaced leys with their 'terrain-oblivious straight lines'. Old straight tracker Alfred Watkins would have raised his glass of lager to that irony.

I thought I was going to have much to argue with here, having had my hackles rise with a statement on page two, but after a brief mental contretemps, settled down to agreeing with and enjoying Bob's thesis. However, what bothered me was the assertion that 'modern sense of place has been greatly diluted with people spending so much time in dehumanised places ... such as supermarkets, shopping malls .. airports and motorways.' To my mind, Britain's greatest speculative fiction writer, J.G. Ballard, has imbued such communal places of togetherness landscapes with enormous significance. Sir John Hall's MetroCentre at Gateshead was a 20th century Stonehenge and still a major centre for millions who worship at the altar of Mammon. He is correct, however, in his observation that coloured immigrants shun the countryside; similarly on a holiday in the Algarve we found a family who never moved during two weeks from an 'English bar' even as far as the beach 100 yards away. Oh, and back with those 'negative-valued' places of Bob's, I would argue that their significance to our psyche is reinforced by the rich urban legend lore which attaches to all of them. Back with J. G. Ballard, he observed perceptively: 'If I had to pick a single image which represented the middle and late 20th century, it would be that of a man sitting in a car, driving down a superhighway.'

Perhaps Bob's view was blighted by working for the company Stadium, in Seaton Carew, and looking across at Hartlepool power station and Lackenby steelworks spoiling the view of Cleveland's deliciously-named mini-peak Roseberry Topping.

If not a publisher, formerly marketing plastics, Bob would make a good diplomat. His thesis here calls for bringing together 'alternative archaeologies' and academic orthodoxy into a 'middle way'. This mature, if rose-tinted view, is to be applauded and Bob's scholarship I greatly envy. However, the intellectual breadth of the early chapters morphs into a more personal consideration of particular sites, including Avebury, Stonehenge, Pembrokeshire and South-West Scotland.

Yet however much the geomants and professionals converge and concur, in the public imagination sacred sites will always be populated by Druids and linked by power ley-lines.



