

Mars<sup>®</sup>



# FOLKLORE FRONTIERS

No. 59 September 2007

*Folklore Frontiers* is an independent non-profit magazine, published three times a year, being a miscellany covering various aspects of folklore, primarily contemporary legend (i.e. urban myths), ancient and modern traditions, rumour, conspiracy, fortaena, modern culture and belief, mostly clipped from the press and commented upon here. This is an information exchange among fellow enthusiasts. Contributions always welcome, from clippings to letters of comment and articles. *Folklore Frontiers* is edited and published by PAUL SCREETON, to whom cheques should be made out. Subscription is £6 for three issues. Address is 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT. If your subscription expires with this issue, an "X" will appear on the line below

## JHF DIARY

By a curious coincidence the two titular elements of my latest book, *Mars Bar & Mushy Peas: Urban legend and the cult of celebrity* (hereafter in the mag **MB&MP**), are also involved with the British-born author (also TV chat show host and actress) of an exploration of filth which topped Germany's literary charts this year. Charlotte Roche, 30, born in High Wycombe, has scored with *Feuchtgebiete*, which translates as *Wetlands* or *Humid Zones*, about sex fantasies, polemics against the use of deodorants and detailed passages of genital and scatological description. My mushy peas relates to politician Peter Mandelson allegedly mistaking a steaming tub of which with avocado mousse, whereas Roche writes of avocado cores grown specially for use in masturbation. Dr Claudia Nesuss, of Berlin's Humboldt University, said: "I think it is liberating that she is writing about masturbation, anal intercourse, sexuality, sickness, about things you don't talk about in public. People like to discuss it, people like to write about it. Even me, I look at an avocado core differently since reading *Wetlands*." As for Mars bars, Roche's father moved to Monchengladbach to build factories for Mars. As fortaens would observe, weird shit happens! (Jason Burke, 'Publishers battle to sign up Europe's erotic star', *The Observer*, 25/5/08)

I seem to have stumbled upon a variation of a motif. Years ago in shortlived magazine *LM* (it claimed not to have been named after founder Lloyd Mangam) there was a food column where the pub spy visited Somerset. In a townie V yokels tale, the outsider ate the advertised Flatholm puffin pie, which amused the locals, because as one chortled: "He was fooled. There are no puffins on Flatholm." Well, it went something like that. In 2008, I have found a hybrid under the subheading 'Village idiocy'. It closed Veronica Lee's Edinburgh diary and was written-up as true, I suppose. But judge it on its own provenance: "Spoof country singer Wilson Dixon (alter ego of New Zealander Jess Griffin) announces during his act at the Stand that he hails from Cripple Creek, Colorado. When an American

woman came up to him after his show and said: "You're not from Cripple Creek - I'm from there and I know everybody in town", he though he'd been rumbled. Huge sigh of relief when she added: "So where in Colorado are you from?"

As an avowed climate change and global warming sceptic who believes that cyclical patterns and our Sun's activity are the primary causes of weather, it was a pleasant irony that it was publication *The Sun* that nails this global myth. Journalist Tim Spanton has given 'climate change alarmists' some inconvenient data that 'recent global warming is not so unusual after all. The new evidence was uncovered by the Met Office and other experts. They scoured more than 6,000 Royal Navy logs dating from the 1600s. Maritime historian Dr Sam Willis says "Ships' officers recorded air pressure, air and sea temperatures and other weather conditions. From these records, scientists can build a detailed picture of past weather and climate." The findings are startling. They show we went through a similar period of global warming in the 1730s and that could **NOT** have been man-made. And freak storms like the ones experienced recently also occurred in the 1680s and 1690s. They were the coldest decades in what is known as the Little Ice Age - so could not have been caused by global warming. Many doom mongers have pointed to freakish patterns in modern hurricanes as more "evidence" of the effects of man's environmental damage. Hurricanes that form in the eastern Atlantic normally track westwards. So weathermen were shocked in 2005 when Hurricane Vince headed north east and hit Spain and Portugal. But we now know exactly the same thing happened with a hurricane in 1842 thanks to logs left by our seafaring ancestors. Evidence from the many logs, which are still being studied, will be published in respected science journal *Climatic Change*. Geographer Dr Dennis Wheeler, of Sunderland University, said: "British archives contain more than 100,000 Royal Navy logbooks from around 1670 to 1850 alone. They are a stunning resource. Global warming is a reality, but our data show climate science is complex. It is wrong to take particular events and link them to carbon dioxide emissions. *These records will give us a much clearer picture of what is really happening.*" (*The Sun's* italics and bold capitals - 4/8/08)

The very title of the film, *Expelled*, makes me dubious about 'The IOS diary' story (and annoyed that the intelligent design documentary was called 'a creationist film') of how out of two atheists one got in and the other was refused entry. It continues: 'It's not a joke, but what happened when Professor Richard Dawkins went to a private screening of *Expelled*, a documentary alleging academics who believe in "intelligent design" are discriminated against. Curiously, it wasn't Dawkins who was barred, but his friend P Z Myers, of the University of Minnesota. Apparently he was marched away by security staff on the orders of the producers, but staff didn't recognise Dawkins so they let him in.' (*The Independent* on Sunday, 30/3/08) The story had also been aired the day before by Nicholas Clee in his Hot Type column as: 'A new film, *Expelled*, claims to show that academics sympathetic to the theory of intelligent design have suffered at the hands of the scientific establishment. At a queue for a test screening, a security guard picked out P. Z. Myers, an evolutionary biologist, and barred him. But the guard overlooked Dr Myers's guest: the somewhat better-known Richard Dawkins.' (*The Times* books, 29/3/08) Either very satirical or rather apposite.

(Continued in Page 8)

# A time-slip? at 'Thornaby Tor'

By PAUL SCREETON

MY LIFE, on a daily basis, is both enlightened and blighted by what we committed fortune-tellers would call 'weird shit'. Perhaps I attract it as some form of suburban shaman. Maybe I should share with you some experiences at 'Thornaby Tor'?

I call this mound of earth such, but unlike Glastonbury Tor it is modern, overlooks North-East England's Tees marshalling yard and doomed traction depot, being created when the University of Durham on Teesside campus and main road were built on the opposite east side.

In addition to the land formation climbing to a peak, vaguely resembling Glastonbury Tor, without its church tower, Thornaby Tor shares another earth mysteries aspect, this being the track stretching from near Thornaby railway station to what one of my trainspotting buddies terms Anorak Bridge, a wide road crossing the huge freight yard, frequented by middle-aged rail enthusiasts. Spotters' boots have created a near linear path so as to resemble a Watkinsian ley or perhaps a South American ceque.

If as West Country folk believe Jesus Christ walked to Glastonbury, on one visit I spotted what at first appeared to be an aged brown-skinned holy man sitting cross-legged. From a distance, he looked to be meditating or in a trance. As I got closer he looked up, smiled and took a can of beer from a large open bag and offered me it. Never one to refuse a gift, I thanked him, opened it, took a swig and said "cheers". He nodded, grinned, dipped in again, persuading me to take another beer and a Red Bull chaser.

However, this was not the only encounter I have had along the path with Asians; twice in one week I came across a boy and girl engaged in midday copulation. Each time the same pair, presumably recharging their batteries between lectures at the campus below, showed no intention of interrupting their alfresco practical biology field trip.

In addition to spotters, boozers and fornicators, the path is used by dog-walkers and excluded schoolkids, a couple of whom gave me verbal abuse, while another enthusiast was savagely beaten up on Anorak Bridge a couple of years ago. One time I came across a young man behaving oddly, who admitted he was probably a sadder character than locospotters for seeking an object the size of a cigarette packet buried by others, which he explained that by locking on to three satellites, his global positioning system would lead him to the hidden goal. Or so he said.

Wildlife is varied, but the only creature worthy of mention here would be a hedgehog I discovered in daylight. To put it out of harm's way, I rolled it energetically down the side of the mound, only to find it upon my return 20 minutes later, it having climbed back upon the path.

Vegetation either side of the path is lush and affords a haven for partridges while skylarks and kestrels can be seen overhead. On 17 October 2005, with no one around, I was nonchalantly relieving myself when I casually

thought to myself, "I hope I'm not passing on a four-leaf clover." When I had finished and looked down, I'd just missed such. I had never previously found a four-leaf clover at Thornaby, nor since.

Telling such a tale and ascribing importance to it sounds like some parody of psychic phenomena. Trivial it may be, but true.

Jeff McBride, a talented and respected stage magician who also blends performance magic with alchemical 'magick' and traditional shamanic rituals, has stated in conversation: "The major thing that happens in ritual space is synchronicity. You notice the synchronicity. For me, yes, I could name instances for you that, in recounting, might seem minor but that had thunderous impact internally. You know, you can never really measure interior depth by recounting the surfaces." (1)

Equally trivial is a recollection that on one particular day I realised I had travelled without a pen to take numbers of the locomotives on the depot and in the yard. After cursing my misfortune, I offered a silent Manichaean prayer to my good guardian angel, walked on for awhile before my eyes alighted upon a scruffy, partially-broken Century Radio pen, which is still functional and by me as I type.

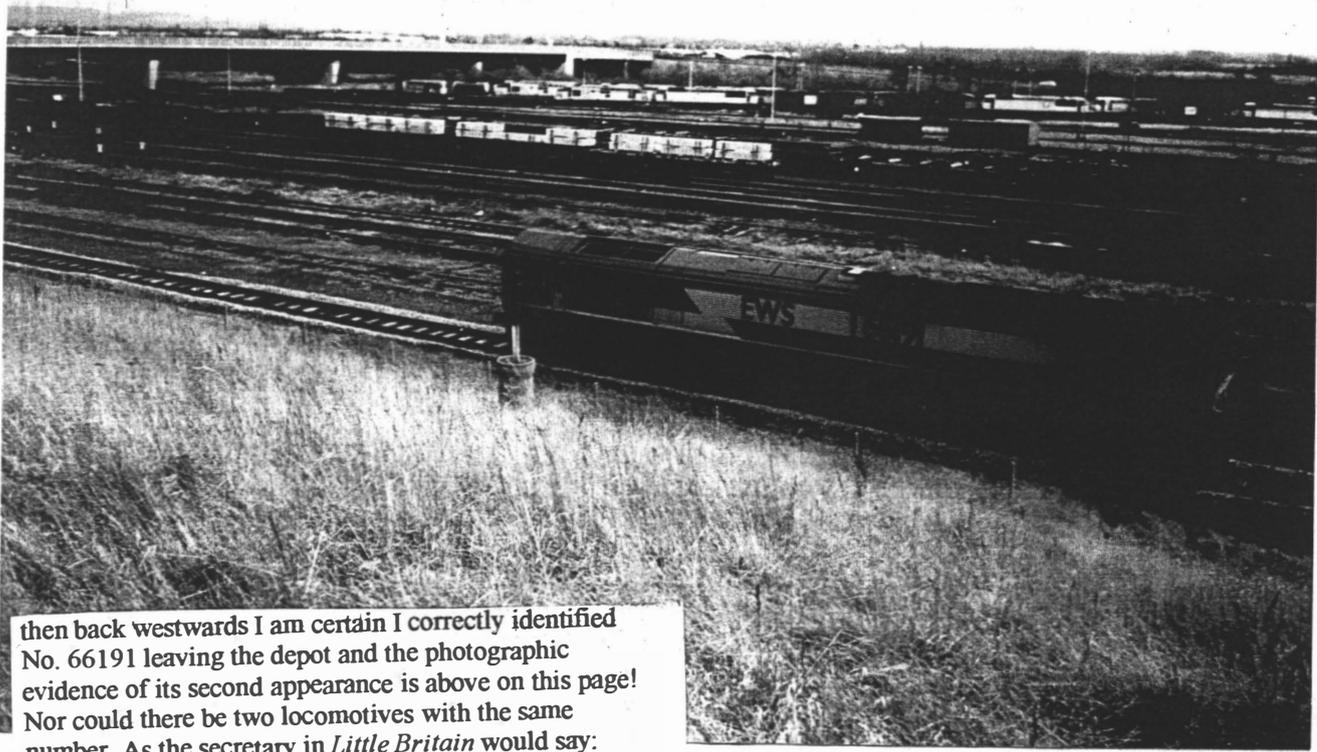
Back with bodily functions and loco numbers, on another occasion I felt the urgent needs of nature and made an Olympic dash along the path and into The Dubliners pub, committing an epic No. 2 to the toilet before discovering there was no paper. Bad guardian angel (or just incompetent staff). I had no choice but to use the sheets of paper carrying my day's sightings before realising I should have copied them on to the back of my hand. My incompetence. Also unfortunate shit happens!

Retracing one's steps from that superb little pub, (2) the first object along the path is a spot where spotters congregate, mentioned on the enthusiasts' internet bush telegraph as 'The Rock' by railway photographer Andrew Pearson; it being a large, dolmen-like bricks and concrete slab. Another interesting internet claim was that the area was to be enclosed by spiked metal palisades, but after much forum agitation the originator admitted it had all been a hoax.

To the south on the horizon lies Roseberry Topping, another tor-shaped landmark, and the North York Moors.

However, the weirdest occurrence was on 9 March 2006. Thornaby Traction Maintenance Depot, a state-of-the-art steam centre when new in 1958, went on to become one of the ten largest diesel depots. It is memorable for its allocation of Class 37 locomotive No. 37069 *Thornaby T.M.D.*, whose spooky reputation has been written up by one of the depot's fitters and also yours truly. (3) Its closure by English, Welsh and Scottish Railway in 2007 sent shockwaves through the freight industry. (4) A fuelling facility remains. Platform end rumour has suggested that another operator will take the depot over, whereas more mundane speculation suggests that the university wants the land to expand its campus.

That March day I watched through binoculars E.W.S. Class 66 locomotive No. 66191 power off the depot and head eastwards towards the steelmaking complex at Lackenby. Yet a couple of minutes later it passed on the freight avoiding line immediately below me, again heading west. There was no way it could have got to this second position so quickly nor without me seeing it go east and



then back westwards I am certain I correctly identified No. 66191 leaving the depot and the photographic evidence of its second appearance is above on this page! Nor could there be two locomotives with the same number. As the secretary in *Little Britain* would say: "Computer says 'no'."

In fact, I managed to scan the TOPS computer used for all railway movements throughout Great Britain and no other Class 66 in the vicinity of Thornaby had a number which I could have mistaken for a second '66191' nor would have been working on the south bank of the Tees at the time of my sighting.

I am not suggesting that I had one of those hypothetical 'missing time' experiences or that an E.W.S. Class 66 locomotive was being used in some latterday Philadelphia Experiment, where No. 66191 played the role of the USS Eldridge. Yet it suggests that time is not necessarily always linear.

To close, I found a comment from that extraordinary U.S. anomalist John A. Keel which might shed (incidentally, Class 66s are nicknamed 'sheds') some light on the seeming bilocation of No. 66191.

In conversation with the then *Fortean Times* editor Bob Rickard, Keel controversially ventured: "I have a theory about all this. Most anomalous phenomena are in fact demonstrations of Black Magic powers or something intended for just one or two people. It doesn't make any sense to the rest of us." (5)

Which eerily resonates with Jeff McBride's comment.

#### References:

- (1) David Jay Brown, *Conversations on the Edge of the Apocalypse*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005
- (2) Paul Screeton (as Pub Spy), "It's definitely on the right track", *The Hartlepool Mail*, 9/9/00'
- Paul Screeton (as Pub Spy), "Variations on an Irish theme", *Hartlepool Mail*, 15/12/01
- (3) "Old 69", Hugh Watson, *Folklore Frontiers*, No. 15:13-15. Paul Screeton, CtL.
- (4) *The Railway Magazine*, June, 2007; *Steam Railway*, issue 339, 2007.
- (5) *Fortean Times*, No. 65, 1992

## MINUTIAE

### Urban myths about cartoons



★ **Aladdin** (1992) Our hero is supposed to whisper: 'Good teenagers, take off your clothes' to Rajah, Princess Jasmine's tiger. His actual words: 'Nice kitty, take off and go, go on'

★ **The Lion King** (1994) Pumbaa and Timon gaze at the stars. Simba throws up a cloud of dust which swirls into the letters S-E-X. Though it really spells 'SFX', an acronym for special effects

★ **The Little Mermaid** (1989) The wedding scene was marred by the priest, who looked like he had an erection

★ **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs** (1937) Accusations that the personalities of the dwarfs represent the seven stages of cocaine use remain unproved

★ **Who Framed Roger Rabbit** (1988) Donald Duck calls Daffy Duck a bad name in the duelling pianos scene. Subtitles list the insult as 'god damn stupid nitwit'



2 December 2007 *The Observer Magazine* 9 ★

\* That mysterious low-frequency sound known to folklorists as 'The Hummadruz' has resurfaced. Officials are probing a mystery humming noise stopping people sleeping in Sudbury, Suffolk.

\* That scourge of The National Trust Rodney Legg has attacked the N.T. after it stepped up a cull of 1835-planted beeches in Wimborne, Dorset. Author and subscriber to *The Ley Hunter* during my watch, Legg, who believes the N.T. should save land and not historic buildings, fumed: 'This is health and safety paranoia'.

\* Troubled Milan Fabac, 83, fell in love with a tree and shot himself dead after it was cut down in Zlatar, Croatia. (all *The Sun*, 21.8.08)

# *Strange Brew* - London Publore - No. 5

By Antony Clayton

## What's in a name?

Pub names are a perennial source of fascination and amusement and, in many instances, offer an insight into local history, notable characters and London legends. Sadly, during the 1980s in particular, numerous unusual and interesting pub names disappeared amid a proliferation of newly-minted pairings, such as the Frog and Nightgown or Goose and Granite; crass abridgements whereby a pub called the Shakespeare's Head would transmogrify into "Peers"; or slangy alternatives: for example, the Beehive in Roman Road, Bethnal Green was rechristened 'Stingers'. In the process many genuinely historic and unusual names with distinctly local resonance were lost.

To provide one instance: in Warwick Way the Royal Gardener pub commemorated Henry Wise (1656-1738) who, apart from designing the gardens of Blenheim, Chatsworth and Castle Howard, laid out the grounds and gardens of Neat House, which once graced the local area. In the 1980s, no doubt to the horror of gardeners everywhere, it became the Slug and Lettuce. Fortunately, some of the London pubs affected have since reverted to their original names.

A number of books and websites can be consulted which give the derivation of the more popular pub names and their accompanying signs. The following have been selected mostly for their specific associations with London locations, customs and folklore.

Archaeological discoveries could occasionally provide pub names, if one account of a significant discovery made in the 1690s is to be believed. In Samuel Palmer's history of the Borough of St Pancras we learn that, "Mr John Conyers, an apothecary in Fleet Street, who was an enthusiastic local antiquarian, and who made it his chief business to collect local antiquities, which at that time were often being discovered in and about London, consequent on the extensive building operations then going on, was one day digging in a field near to the Fleet Brook and Battle Bridge, and not far from St Pancras Workhouse, when he discovered the remains of an elephant, an animal totally unknown to the ancient Britons. Near the same spot was also found an ancient British spear, consisting of the head of a flint fastened into a shaft of considerable length. It is from this curious fact that the public-house called The Elephant and Castle derives its name." [Samuel Palmer *St. Pancras, being antiquarian, topographical, and biographical memoranda, relating to the extensive metropolitan parish of St. Pancras, Middlesex: with some account of the parish from its foundation* (Samuel Palmer, London, 1870) p.158]

This is an interesting variation on the disputed origins for this popular pub name, the other theories being that it is a corruption of the Infanta of Castile (married to Edward I) or more likely that it is derived from the arms of the Cutlers' Company, granted in 1622, which show an elephant and castle. Once standing at 1 King's Road, Camden Town, the Elephant and Castle has long since disappeared. The flint artefact has now been classified as a hand axe and dated to the Lower Paleolithic period, making it around 350,000 years old; it can be seen in the British Museum. [The 'Gray's Inn Axe' was included in *Making History: Antiquaries in Britain 1707-2007* a joint exhibition organised by the Royal Academy of Arts and the Society of Antiquaries of London at the Royal Academy from 15 September to 2 December 2007. Cat. No.14 (Royal Academy of Arts, London)]

The Five Bells and Blade Bone at 27 Three Colt Street, Limehouse, E14 got part of its distinctive name from the fact that, at one time, building work unearthed an animal's blade bone - possibly from an abattoir on the site - which was put on display in one of the bars. This historic hostelry has suffered a recent drastic abridgement to the 5B Urban Bar. Another tavern known as the Blade Bone, this time situated at 185 Bethnal Green Road, E2 and a public house since 1823, is said to have been the scene of a grisly murder at some point in its history. Rather carelessly, after the victim's remains were supposed to have been removed, a single shoulder blade was discovered, "which the landlord seized and placed in his bar parlour for all the patrons to see". [Stanley Jackson Coleman *Treasury of Folklore: London Recreational Aspects (Tavern Lore & Children's Games)* (Folklore Academy, Isle of Man, 1954) n.p.] According to nineteenth-century English folklore sources the blade bone of an animal could be used in divination, to discover a future lover, or to attract him or her to you. The Blade Bone closed in 2000 and is currently a noodle bar.

Although it did not influence the name of the pub, for many years a horse's thighbone could be seen hanging from a tree outside The Brockley Jack in Brockley, SE24. A history of London pubs published in 1957 recounts that, "when the house was rebuilt over fifty years ago, this queer relic was reproduced in plaster in the top façade." [Louis T. Stanley *The Old Inns of London* (B. T. Batsford, London, 1957) p.40] The Brockley Jack is named after a notorious local highwayman Jack Law.

Wealthy entrepreneur Frank Crocker oversaw the construction of his grand Crown Hotel, at 24 Aberdeen Place NW8, in 1898-1899. Sumptuous, even by the standards of that distinguished decade of pub building, the Crown boasted a luxuriously appointed saloon with a majestic fireplace and walls covered in fine polished marbles; the bar counter was clad in white marble; other rooms featured imitation Jacobean plaster ceilings. Crocker was convinced that the Great Central Railway, the last of the Victorian main lines to be carved through London, would terminate in St John's Wood, almost on the doorstep of his magnificent hostelry and

that passengers would flock from the station to sample the delights of his pleasure palace. Tragically for Crocker the railway terminus was built some distance away in Marylebone; bankrupt and despairing he jumped from an upstairs window of his ruinously expensive *folie de grandeur*. So ran the legend of the ill-starred tavern subsequently given the name "Crocker's Folly", complete with a sign that depicted the elusive railway locomotive of the proprietor's dreams.

Histories of the Great Central Railway's construction reveal, however, that the residents of St John's Wood were vociferous in their opposition to the line and that the station at Marylebone eventually opened in March 1899, around the same time that Crocker's Crown Hotel was being built. Frank Crocker died of natural causes in 1904 at the age of forty-one and was buried in Kensal Green cemetery. When this was pointed out to the pub's owners they changed the sign to one showing a crown, but the unjustly disparaging name remained. Crocker's Folly closed its doors for the last time in March 2004. [Geoff Brandwood, Andrew Davison and Michael Slaughter, *Licensed to Sell, The History and Heritage of the Public House* (English Heritage, London, 2004) p.171. In 2007 this stunning Grade II-listed building was on the market for £4.25 million; it was advertised as being capable of accommodating "20 self-contained studio flats" – the fate of many similar grand London pubs in recent years.]

A similar tale was told to account for the imposing size of the Doctor Johnson, built between 1937 and 1938 in Longwood Gardens, Barking, IG5. It was expected to serve as a substantial hotel and pub on a planned major road into the capital, which was eventually diverted, leaving the pub stranded. The Doctor Johnson is a typical example of one of the large inter-war 'improved' public houses that sprang up to cater for the thousands of people living in the burgeoning housing estates around the city's rim, and that was its intended function all along.

The association of pub names and the English royal family has endured for many centuries; local London folklore has also made a contribution. The name of the Queen's Elm (once standing at 241 Fulham Road), according to William Gaunt in his history of Chelsea, "recalls that here Queen Elizabeth was supposed to have sheltered under an elm in the company of Lord Burleigh whom she was visiting at Chelsea: the Queen's tree being mentioned in the Parish Books in 1586, when loyal Chelsea planted a commemorative 'arbour' or ring of nine elms, the spot being referred to by Swift in 1711 as the "Nine Elms". [William Gaunt *Chelsea* (B.T. Batsford, London, 1954) p.68. See also Thomas Crofton Croker *A Walk From London to Fulham* revised and edited by his son T. F. Dillon Croker (William Tegg, London, 1860) pp.87-89]

The sign for the Queen's Head and Artichoke in Marylebone Park, considered ancient by the nineteenth century, consisted of, "a much weather-beaten, though perhaps once a tolerably good portrait of Queen Elizabeth." By local tradition the house had, "been kept originally by one of Her Majesty's gardeners." [John Thomas Smith *A Book for a Rainy Day or Recollections of the Years 1766-1833* edited, with an introduction and notes by Wilfred Whitten (Methuen & Co. London, 1905) p.22] Another source says that the sister of Henry VIII, widow of Louis XII of France (Mary Tudor) was passionately fond of artichokes and persuaded her chief gardener to call the tavern by this name. [Leslie Dunkling and Gordon Wright *A Dictionary of Pub Names* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987) p.213] The pub was demolished in the second decade of the nineteenth century, but a tavern of the same name exists at 30-32 Albany Street, NW1.

At 114 Campden Hill Road, Kensington, W8 the Windsor Castle is said to have been so named as it was once possible to see that prominent royal residence from this vantage point before the area was heavily developed; it is a common pub name in London.

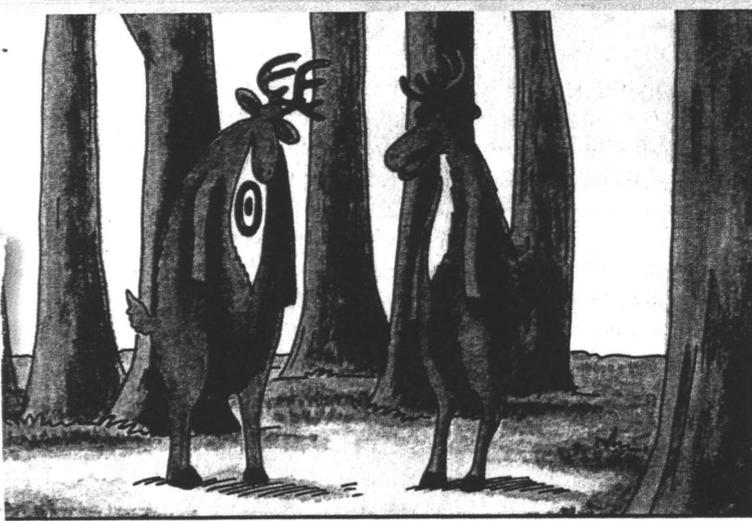
A number of pubs in the vicinity of St Paul's Cathedral are reputed to have been built on the orders of Christopher Wren expressly for the benefit of his thirsty workmen. These included the Salutation at 17 Newgate Street (no longer there) and The Old Bell, a cosy retreat at 95 Fleet Street, EC4. Ye Olde Watling on the corner of Watling Street and Bow Lane was said to have been designed by Wren around a frame constructed from old ship's timbers. Wood taken from the historic *Mayflower* is supposed to have been used in the construction of the pub of that name at 117 Rotherhithe Street, SE16. Captain Christopher Jones and other members of the *Mayflower's* crew are buried in the nearby churchyard. [The original pub on the site called the Shippe was built around 1550, rebuilt as the Spread Eagle and Crown in 1780 it was renamed The *Mayflower* in 1957.]

Certain publicans have themselves entered London folklore: three examples will have to suffice. The Salisbury at 90 St Martin's Lane was opened in 1890, the name deriving from that of the ground landlord the Marquis of Salisbury (it was also known as the Salisbury Stores). It replaced a public house called the Coach and Horses where, in 1843, Benjamin Caunt became the licensee. An imposing (his height was six feet two and a half inches), ferocious and renowned boxer, Ben Caunt is said to have inspired the name of the world-famous bell in St Stephen's Tower of the Palace of Westminster, though Sir Benjamin Hall – Chief Commissioner of Works during the period that the bell was cast and recast after a crack was discovered – is the generally accepted candidate. Tragically, on 15 January 1851, two of Caunt's children died during a fire at his public house. The formidable pugilist passed away in the Coach and Horses on 10 September 1861 from a cold caught during a pigeon shooting match. The comfortable interior of this wonderful metropolitan survivor still contains some fine examples of Victorian etched glass.

When the Belgian Victor Berlemont took over a pub in Soho's Dean Street in 1914 he turned it into an idiosyncratic Parisian-style drinking establishment later patronized by the likes of Francis Bacon, Dylan Thomas and other members of the Soho bohemian crowd. Officially called The York Minster, it became known as "The French pub" under the management of his popular son Gaston. The barrel-shaped clock of nearby St Anne's church is rumoured to have been constructed from two large tuns once residing in the cellars of the pub. Just around the corner, Norman Balon, who retired from the Coach and Horses in Soho's Greek Street in May 2006, had become a legend in his own lifetime, with his hard-won reputation as 'London's roughest landlord'.

(Continued from Page 2)

Last issue I wrote about birthmarks in general and birthmark trauma in particular. Within days an issue of *Zoo* or *Nuts* republished this apposite cartoon:



"Bummer of a birthmark, Hal"

The 65<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sir Mick Jagger on Saturday, 26 July this year was good enough reason for newspapers to resurrect the Redlands raid and Jagger allegedly eating a Mars bar out of Marianne Faithfull's snatch. Alan Hamilton, also 65, regaled readers of *The Times* thus: 'Mick has had his brushes with recreational pharmaceuticals, leading to a memorable *Times* leading article in his defence of nearly 40 years ago, about breaking a butterfly on a wheel. But at 65 he has become a spicy mixture of ageing bad boy, who once did unspeakable things with a Mars bar, and respectable gent, with his holiday chateau and love of cricket.'



The *Daily Mirror*'s tribute that day was a 'look at his life in women' and there were dozens. As for Marianne 'They dated for four years, but rumour had it that she really loved Keith. And as for Mars bars ...'

By accident I found another internet entry on the Redlands raid where police 'supposedly found Mick Jagger chowing a Mars Bar out of Marianne Faithfull's nay-nay. A delicious nougaty rumor, for sure...' ([www.nerve.com/dispatches/nerveeditors/40celebrityrumors](http://www.nerve.com/dispatches/nerveeditors/40celebrityrumors))

It was considered controversial when biographer Tom Bower called Prime Minister Gordon Brown a ditherer during the 2007 Labour Party conference. His fellow guest on TV was the Labour apparatchik and *Mail on Sunday* Black Dog columnist Derek Draper, who retorted: 'Brown is a most decisive man.' (The Sunday Telegraph, 20/4/08). Since satirised as 'The Man Who Came to Dither', my focus here is not Brown, but his defender Draper. As a spindoctor he was known as

## Derek Draper



'Dolly' Draper, but his downfall came with Lobbygate, nervous breakdown and rehabilitation as a psychotherapist. Married to busty GMTV presenter Kate Garraway, he ended an article with his email address. Cheekily I sent him a missive explaining my forthcoming book on contemporary legend and asking what Peter Mandelson thought about the mushy peas/avocado mousse rumour. He emailed back asking me to telephone. When I caught up with him he was walking in the street, but said he would ring back with his thoughts. He never did. My point is that it is he who is a ditherer. He could have easily sent an email at any point or commented 'on the hoof' even. Not that it mattered, I was more intrigued to see if he would respond at all. See later...



The French House (above) is famous for its associations with de Gaulle's Free French and more so for being a favoured hangout of the likes of Brendan Behan, Dylan Thomas and similar boozerati. This Dean Street, Soho, London pub is one of several inns mentioned in this issue's regular column by Antony Clayton. Already the author of several books, Antony will be celebrating having published this autumn a book all readers should watch out for, *The Folklore of London*, from the redoubtable Historical Publications. Hopefully a review will appear in the next issue of *Folklore Frontiers*.

# Newslines

**STONED HENGE.** Latest in a long line of replica Stonehenges has been constructed in the back garden at the home of hardman actor Ray Winstone. The 50-year-old *Beowulf* star had a model of the sacred site built at his £2m Essex mansion as a place where he can go to relax. He insisted upon an exact replica of the Wiltshire landmark. Actor daughter Jaime, 22, said: "It's a sanctuary where you can cleanse your soul." This spiritual oasis of calm is alongside the former boxer's bar, Raymondo's, where he boozes at home with pals. Stone circles and ale: if he had a miniature railway it would be perfect! (*The Sun*, 12/1/08)

**PICARESQUE OF THE POPS.** A rumour has crossed the Atlantic that chart-topper Duffy (a Dusty Springfield for the 21<sup>st</sup> century) that she is the lovechild of Sir Tom Jones. Duffy, 23, and Tom, 68, both grew up in Wales and fans in the US, where she has been touring, reckon proof of parentage is that they both have powerful voices. But Duffy said: "I'm dealing with this every day here. It's kind of bizarre. You've got to laugh." She had a No. 1 hit with *Mercy* and says her father is John Duffy, who runs a bar in her hometown of Nefyn, North Wales. (*The Sun*, 7/7/08)

**PIG TRADITION.** Teachers may live in fear that they might make a pig's ear of it when the dreaded school inspectors call, but that fear became reality when Ofsted staff were stopped in their tracks by a piglet let loose in the playground by mischievous pupils. The culprits, three 16-year-olds celebrating their last day at Old Buckenham High School in Norfolk, claimed the caper was part of a village tradition. However, they became under investigation by the police and RSPCA. (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 18/5/08)

**WATCH THE BIRDIE.** Model Carla Bruni, wife of French President Sarkozy, told the world: "When my picture's taken I say 'sex' not 'cheese.'" (*The Times body&soul*, 10/5/08) This was doubtless the reason for Tim Sayer, of London, writing the missive: 'Sir, Norman Parkinson told me that he asked his models to say "lesbian" when being photographed. It avoided the fixed expression achieved by "cheese".' (*The Times*, 17/5/08)

**GHOST BIKES.** Last year I found single bunches of flowers in cellophane tied to the pedestrian bridge south of Seaton Carew railway station and another on the footbridge immediately south of Stockton-on-Tees station. No messages. No identification. Did they mark a suicide spot or murder scene (the latter wouldn't have surprised me). Such tributes were supposed to have some silly or trivial name involving the word 'Interflora' I recall. Tom Whitwell wrote about this behaviour in his *Microtrends* column:

**'Britain is addicted to cellotaphs: those ad hoc dead-flower memorials taped to lamp-posts near where a cyclist or pedestrian has been killed. However, hip cyclists (no strangers to sudden death or injury) have a more chilling way to remember their dead. A ghost bike is an old bike, painted white and locked near the crash site with a small plaque. Activists make them for strangers,**

**whose families are often touched by the gesture. The first ghost bikes appeared in St Louis, Missouri, in 2003, but they have been spotted in 30 cities, from Brighton to Sao Paolo. The campaign website ([www.ghostbikes.org](http://www.ghostbikes.org)) collects pictures of the memorials with short tributes to the dead cyclists.'** (*The Times Magazine*, 13/5/08) Morbid but with a moral.

**DEAD MARKET.** Also morbid and in bad taste, sales of headstones equipped with video panels, launched last year, have proved rather disappointing, retailers report. The screens show videos of the graves' occupants in livelier times, but the innovation has failed to catch on. Sales of the solar-powered 'serenity panels' have been in single figures. In fact, some US undertakers say that the single figure is zero. (*The Times body&soul*, 15/12/07)

**SMITH'S STING.** How often have we seen Johnnie come lately claiming to have written hit songs in retrospect and claiming plagiarism. A chef who claims he helped Sting write two of his biggest hits, *Roxanne* and *Message in a Bottle*, is seeking royalties for them. Roy Smith, 48, says he met singer in 1977 or 1978 and told The Police frontman about an ex-girlfriend called Roxanne, who was a prostitute. He also said he once wrote a message to his mother, put it in a bottle and flung it into the sea. Smith claims Sting used his tales to pen The Police classics – and vowed to pay him if they were commercial. He said Sting did call years later, but ironically his mother failed to pass on the message. Smith filed his complaint in Nevada. Idaho Polygraph Associates say he passed a lie-detector test. Sting's lawyers deny Smith's allegations. (*Daily Mirror*, 19/4/08)

**TITS AND THE TOFF.** A Page 3 model has been getting something off her chest. Keeley Hazell was singled out by David Cameron as one of his 'eco heroes' at the end of 2006. She told how she'd been brought up a Conservative and thought Dave was taking the party in an "interesting direction." However, she no longer seems to be a supporter. Having posed for a set of pictures for *FHM* mag, she got in touch with the editor to point out that, contrary to the mag's report, she thinks Dave is "too much of a toff." (Pendennis column, *The Observer*, 13/4/08) See **MB&MP**, p. 154)

**MORAL PANIC.** Outrage followed the news that fitness instructor Laraine Riddell was teaching pole-dancing classes to children as young as nine at her studio in the Northumberland village of Choppington. Ms Riddell argued that it was graceful, akin to gymnastics, helped children to lose weight and gain confidence, and she insisted child pupils wear T-shirts, shorts and leg-warmers for the hour-long, £2.50 session lessons. One newspaper condemned it in its editorial and paraded predictable rent-a-quoters to make it sound sleazy. Sorry, but only to paedophiles and media attention seekers would this look overtly sexual. (*Sunday Express*, 12/8/07) Meanwhile, the glamour model and former *Love Island* contestant Alicia Douvall believes herself to be a fantastic role model for her daughter. She has boasted how the girl wants a special gift for her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday – breast implants. "I'm happy for her to have a boob job because it will give her a modelling career," Alicia says. Being a responsible mum, though, she adds the girl will have to wait ..... until she's 16. (*The Times body&soul*, 19/4/08)

# Update

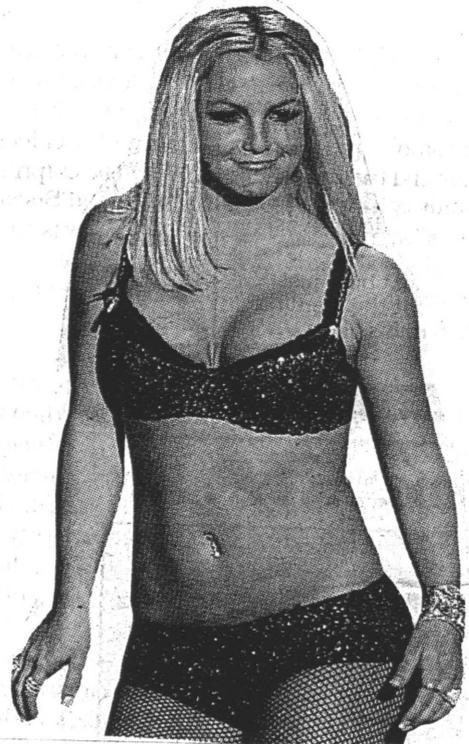
**STAGS AND HENS** (FF57:7, *passim*). Breaking with convention at weddings is a new trend, such as having a best woman, mum walking the bride up the aisle and the hag do – the stag and hen combined.

Anushka Asthana wrote: 'Jeremy Skidmore, a 45-year-old journalist, chose a female friend, Emma Wilkinson (both pictured below) – who is also an ex-girlfriend – as his chief lieutenant to organise the stag, carry the rings and make the speech. Emma arranged a stag night which included food at Kettners, a restaurant in Soho, London, tenpin bowling and a visit to lapdancing club Stringfellows. "She was the only woman – an honorary bloke," says Skidmore, who added that it was "just logical" to choose Emma as his best woman. The pair went out together in the early Nineties and have been close friends ever since. "I chose Emma because she is my best friend, but for all kinds of reasons it was a good thing," says Skidmore. "I knew that everyone would love her. I knew she would do a brilliant job and it was something different. I also think women are more reliable." Skidmore said he had 'groups' of male friends he had gathered while growing up, at university and through work, making it harder to single out a male friend. On the day itself, Wilkinson dressed in a fitted tuxedo. "She decided to dress as a man," says Skidmore. "It was a bit of a joke and added to the comedy value."

Last month, Lisa, 31, from Walthamstow, east London, acted as best woman to her friend and former boyfriend, Trev. "I was really chuffed and I did not think it was particularly odd as I've been good friends with him for years, but I did ask whether Cathy, his wife, was OK with it," she said. "I felt much better when he said that it was partly her idea. Maybe she just thought I would be a reliable bet for getting him there on time and not losing the rings." Lisa admitted that people were surprised: "When I told people, the reactions ranged from the odd raised eyebrow to someone asking me if it was a lesbian wedding. His male friends were most taken aback, I think, especially when they realised I was organising the stag do. Some of them were not too happy about that." (*The Observer*, 4/5/08)



**PERCY SHAW** (FF53:6; FF54:10). Whether the inventor got his road safety device from a felid has long been challenged and debated. Latest claim is that this son of a dyer's labourer, who supported his family of 16 on £1 per week, had his fortunes change while driving 'on a foggy night in 1933, when he avoided crashing after his headlights reflected in the eyes of a cat. And so the reflecting roadstud, or cat's eye, was born.' At its postwar peak, Shaw's company was producing one million per year for export, paying for his two Rolls-Royces and mansion in Boothtown, Yorkshire. (*The Times Magazine*, 8/12/07)



**BRITNEY SPEARS** (FF39:3). Talk of kicking someone when they're down, in one (anonymous) profile we are told: 'There were constant rumours: the bodyguard who claimed he saw her snort cocaine and regularly walk around the house nude, the 21-year-old college boy she made out with topless in a hot tub on the roof of a hotel in LA. Supposedly, she feeds soft drinks in baby bottles to her toddlers (whose teeth she also asked a dentist to whiten); her choice of poison is vodka, Red Bull and NyQuil; and she has a sex dungeon in her Beverly Hills villa' (*The Sunday Times*, 9/3/08; published first in *Rolling Stone*, 2008) Sex dungeon? Her father Jamie, according to one source: "He has cleared her home of sex toys and wants her to clean up her act. There had been things lying around in the open, and he just put them in the trash. He didn't make a big deal of it, but he didn't think they should just be out like that where anyone could see them." (*London Life*, 13/3/08)



Jeremy Skidmore asked 'best man' Emma Wilkinson, above, to organise his stag do.

**SCOTS PONTIUS PILATE** (FF57:10). The series on the UK's finest attractions continued with prominent trees recently, beginning with Perthshire's Fortingall Yew. The Woodland Trust wrote: 'Up to 5,000 years old and believed to be the oldest living organism in Europe. According to local legend, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea who oversaw the crucifixion of Jesus, was born in the shade of this tree and played beneath it as a child.' The ten examples also posed a question regarding an Oriental plane tree in the grounds of a Wokingham supermarket and believed to be about 800 years old, but 'mysteriously absent from a 1739 engraving of the area.' The tree or Tesco? (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 13/7/08) Meanwhile, a profile on the Holy Land governor commented: 'Little is known of Pilate's true life story. He has been identified as coming from Spain, Germany, even Scotland, although it is most likely that he was a native Roman from central Italy.' (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 23/3/08)

**KEIRA KNIGHTLEY** (FF47:5-7&18). The actress has confessed to not enjoying being photographed as herself, adding: "Australian Aborigines say that with every photograph, a piece of your soul goes with it. There are some days when I believe that." Perhaps that explains her wraith-like appearance. (*The Times body&soul*, 1/3/08)

**GLOBAL WARMING** (FF16:22, passim). When Arctic ice-cover, at three million square kilometres hit a record low in September 2006, G.W. propagandists got very vociferous. However, since the latest data has revealed that after the northern hemisphere's coldest winter for 26 years, ice-cover is now 14 million sq km they have been strangely silent. Elsewhere, the 'emissions trading scheme', the EU's flagship in the war on G.W., shows that it cost £22billion last year, while EU CO2 emissions rose only slightly. This system costs we Brits about £22billion a year in higher electricity bills, so it is consoling to know that the problem it aims to solve seems to no longer exist. Christopher Booker also pointed out that Antarctic sea ice-cover is at its highest-ever level. (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 4/5/08). Also in Antarctica – which was ice free only as long ago as 2000BC – areas have been getting steadily colder over the past two decades (*Fortean Times*, No. 158:8(3) via *Nature*). Booker also highlighted a disgusting tale of how spineless Roger Harrabin, the BBC's chief reporter on climate change censored his own item on the BBC website after being harried by Ms Jo Abbes, of the Campaign Against Climate Change, revealing how an honest reporter can be whipped back into line by a pressure group (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 13/4/08). Crackpot journo Robin McKie was chosen to do a hatchet job on Nigel Lawson's *An Appeal to Reason: A Cool Look at Global Warming* (Duckworth Overlook), claiming 'whingeing, paranoia is the hallmark of the climate-change denier' and in addition to Lawson 'several other individuals, usually, male, elderly and right wing still deny climate change is happening.' In a pot calling the pot black moment, McKie charged sceptics with using 'cherry-picked, distorted data.' (*The Observer Review*, ?, 2008). Meanwhile, during July, Channel 4 was rebuked over its *The Great Global Warming Swindle*, which had dared to suggest G.W. might not be man-made. Simon Heffer put the following hoo-hah into perspective: 'It was as if it had said that Nelson Mandela was a paedophile. Eco-bores carpeted over acres of

newsprint banging on about how it ignores "the science". (At school we called it science. I don't know where the pompous definite article came from.) I remain convinced that global warming is nothing to do with me driving a gas guzzler, or cows breaking wind. It does, though, give the eco-bores a fabulous opportunity to undermine capitalism – what really motivates them.' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 26/7/08) \* for more of Heffer's forthright views on G.W. see **MB&MP**, pages 149-150.

**CHASTITY BELTS** (FF6:2). An unnamed man had to be freed from a chastity belt by firefighters after losing the key. Either he dialled 999 (*The Sun*, 7/6/08) or his girlfriend called them (*News of the World*, 6/7/08) when she arrived home to find him trapped in the kinky bondage device. The man, in his forties, had spent all day trying to free himself in Kingstons, Surrey. Throughout his hour-long ordeal the man slipped in and out of consciousness due to the pressure on his groin. After using three high-powered saws, leading firefighter Brennan Healey said: "He was very embarrassed."

**PENGUIN STABILITY**. Previously FF has covered efforts to discover if low-flying aircraft over the Falklands caused penguins to topple backwards while planespotting (they don't). Now Houston University has found that in a natural setting they wobble, but don't fall over. In a paper entitled 'The penguin waddling gait pattern has a more consistent step width than step length' they concluded that, contrary to expectations, the apparently ungainly birds are just as stable when they walk as humans are. In other words, no need to p-p-p-pick up a penguin. (*The Times body&soul*, 5/7/08)

**FUCKING SOMEWHERE**. Also somewhere previously I covered this Austrian village called Fucking, near Salzburg, whose name goes back to at least 1070, but whose residents are angry that Brits are stealing their signs on a regular basis. Consequently they have now been set in concrete to deter Anglophone souvenir hunters. (*The Times Magazine*, 29/3/08)

**MIGRANT POACHERS** (FF56:8, passim). Carp have been fitted with microchips to deter thieves stealing them from Peterstone Lake, near St Mellons, Newport. (*Daily Mirror*, 15/3/08)

**BESTIALITY** (FF46:13, passim). A pervert has admitted downloading 30,000 depraved images – including sex acts with an octopus. Rodney McLagan, 48, was also caught with material showing sexual activities with tigers. He pleaded guilty at Hobart Supreme Court, Tasmania, to possessing bestiality products plus other more serious porn offences. He was to be sentenced later. David Barclay, defending, said the bachelor sought bestiality images because he "identified himself as a beast." (*The Sun*, 5/7/08)

**ANORAKNOPHOBIA** (FF25:6-11, passim). What can be described as unintentional irony appeared when Steve 'Interesting' Davies was asked if he ever still listens to his top ten single *Snooker Loopy*. "It wasn't a bad idea at the time, but anyone that still listens to it obviously needs to get out more. It's very trainspotter-like to know the words to it nowadays, but unfortunately I still do. I don't think even Chas 'n' Dave, who wrote it, can say that." (*The Observer Sport Monthly*, April, 2007)

# Oldies but Goodies

I once saw Valerie Singleton on a platform from a Tube train. Not a big deal as celebrity-spotting goes, I suppose, but I had not heard then (c1978) or since for that matter the Val & Joan rumour. Nor that she was even gay. I recall her being engaged to DJ Pete Murray. William Langley, profiling Val as she publishes her autobiography which details her male conquests, reveals how this oldie has spanned 30 years (and would have been ripe for illuminating my **MB&MP** book). Langley begins: 'How long should a rumour be tolerated? To what depths of scurrility must it sink before someone has the decency to put it down? Take poor Joan Armatrading, dogged for 30 years by the story that she was in a gay relationship with Valerie Singleton. What serious cred can a rock singer expect if the fans think you go home after gig and make periscopes from Pringles packets?' He went on: 'The Joan Armatrading rumour dates from 1978, when Val interviewed the singer in Manchester for a BBC TV show, *Tonight in Town*. They got along well, but when the interview was over, Joan disappeared chastely into the night, buzzing – as Valerie discovered – with romantic possibility. "Joan's American backing group were staying in the same hotel as me," writes Ms Singleton, "and we sat chatting for ages in the lobby. One of the guys said he was impressed with my interview, and walked me to my room... hoping. I said 'No' but agreed to show him London that Sunday, when we had a lovely time and ended up in bed together." Whether the bandsman resembled the frizzy-haired Armatrading, or if the story simply mutated from wishful thinking or mischief, Valerie doesn't explain. Soon, though, she was hearing it everywhere. Even in exotic, far-flung holiday resorts where men assumed there was no point in trying to chat her up. "Many years later," she writes, "I was approached by Joan as I was leaving Broadcasting House. She said: 'Hello Val, do you remember me? I'm Joan Armatrading'. I thought: 'Oh, my God, I can't be seen talking to her in the middle of BBC reception,' so I rudely rushed past her, shouting: 'Sorry, but I can't stop as I'm late for the theatre.' She must have thought me very abrupt. The truth is that I have always been the very opposite of gay." (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 29/6/08)

**LEWD COCKER.** The claim that the U.S. FBI spent 18 months trying to decipher the lyrics to The Kingsmen's *Louie Louie*, allegedly most the most covered song of all time, was resurrected by popstar Jarvis Cocker during a lecture at the Brighton Festival. The Blur frontman delighted his audience by quoting the line 'I felt my boner in her hair' from the somewhat unintelligible and supposedly lewd lyrics. (The Browser column, *The Observer Review*, 1/6/08)

**LATE CALL.** In my book *Crossing the Line* I mentioned a traveller running late who made a hoax bomb call to delay his train. A new version has a 27-year-old German doing likewise to delay his flight from Verona, Italy. Police said they received the call five minutes before the Vienna-bound flight was scheduled to leave. They closed the airport. The man responsible was identified by tracing the call to his mobile and faced up to a year in prison. (*Hartlepool Mail*, 14/6/08)

**MARIAH'S LUNGS.** Researching Mariah Carey recently, *Snopes*, the online urban legends site, dismisses as untrue claims regarding her singing range. Latest perpetrator is Mike Parker, who claimed she is 'renowned for her amazing seven-octave vocal range.' (*Sunday Express*, 20/4/08)

**WEE FREES & BEES.** Columnist Jenny McCartney is the latest to regurgitate the tale regarding the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, a member of those firm believers in moderation the Scottish Presbyterians, also known pejoratively as the Wee Frees. McCartney claimed: 'One evening he was reportedly hosting a gathering for the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh during which the hungry lawyers were served microscopic pieces of toast with a minuscule pot of honey. Eventually, one wag could stay silent no longer: he stared at the tiny honey-pot, and observed: "I see your Lordship keeps a bee".' (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 18/5/08) A check on the internet shows the story may have originated from that laudable TV show *QI* and monitored by *Apiary News* (12/7/06) and *alastair's heart monitor*.

**VEGETATING.** Arguing that great satire has cruelty at its core, as ITV launched the unfunny *Headcases*, columnist Matthew Parris recalled the earlier *Spitting Image* and its puppets: 'It was not without wit: Thatcher, dining with her Cabinet and ordering steak, and in response to the waiter's "And the vegetables?" replying, "They'll have the same as me".' Parris also trotted out the old belief that the 'Victorians covered piano legs lest the piano appeared to show ankle.' (*The Times*, 4/4/08)

**SWASTIKA SPAG.** New to me, but seemingly an oldie, arises from an apology in lads' mag *Loaded*, which 'persuaded itself that Heinz once supplied the Nazi regime with a version of alphabet spaghetti consisting tiny swastikas. This is an urban myth. "We now accept that Heinz has never produced swastika-shaped spaghetti nor did it support the Nazi regime in any other way. Indeed, we accept that Heinz was a major contributor to the Allies' war efforts, supplying rations for the troops," the mag admits dolefully.' (*The Times City Diary*, 5/4/08)

**NUISANCE CALLS.** This from the Rebecca Tyrrel column, and I include it as an oldie as I recall seeing it elsewhere. In fact, I would bet in an earlier Mrs Matthew Norman column – and I had the original by the phone in case I could you use it, but wifey must have tidied up. Here we go: 'Theirselves are taking no notice. They rang Matthew again today and he was delighted because it gave him a chance to use a technique he has stolen from an episode of *Seinfeld*. "Ah Steve," he said, "how lovely to hear from you, but it is a little inconvenient at the minute. Can we speak later? Great. Give me your home number and I'll cal you for a nice chat this evening. What? You don't want to discuss this at home? Well, now you know how I feel. Goodbye".' (*The Independent*, 10/3/08)

**CONS' CAKE.** Previously known from home economics pupils baking for teachers, now four jail guards ended up in hospital after eating a cake baked by inmates and laced with drugs in Nyborg, Denmark. (*Daily Mirror*, 15/3/08)

# Letters

From Mick Goss, Fakenham, Norfolk.

I enjoyed *FF* as usual and here are a few random remarks on No. 58's contents.

The white-crowned sparrow at Cley (which is ten miles up the road from us) was every bit the crowd-puller you describe. I'm probably one of the few who did not go to see it, but one local birder told me the police had to act to clear the too-easily clogged road through the village, but also to break up fights: birders and/or twitchers are notorious for becoming over-excited when their view and/or digi-scopes are obscured. The UK had a string of weird rarities ("firsts", as we style them) over winter, not least the oddly-named longbilled murelet. How a bird found in the sea off Japan made it to Devon is hard to explain – they're not great fliers. Nearly as odd as the Welsh kiwi of 1870 ... but than, unremarkably, was a hoax.

So Derby County's Pride Park has a ghost dog? They should've stayed at the Baseball Ground, which only laboured under a gypsy curse – cf Elland Road (Leeds) UTd.0, St Andrews (Birmingham City), Priestfield (Gillingham), Dorchester ... Oh, and Highbury had its legendary horse. What's the Emirates Stadium got apart from Fabrejas?

Fuchs Off... I bet you recall the classic (totally incredible) alleged WWII headline: "British Push (advance) bottles up German rear." I only wish I could find the newspaper that printed it. (Paul Screeton writes: also allegedly printed were "McArthur flies back to Front" and while Minister for Armaments, Emmanuel Shinwell played truant to judge the Miss Crimdon beauty contest in his constituency, leading to the headline "Shinwell puts legs before arms.")

Destroyed Art (albeit not due to someone's ignorance of the fact the item in question was Art): Andy Warhol stated that he was disappointed to learn the fate of a picture of his that he'd given to Bob Dylan: he was told that Dylan had used it as a dart-board. Warhol reported this in *Popisms*, a 1981 memoir he supposedly penned with Pat Hackett (and which, according to Ultra Violet in her Warhol-heavy autobiog, W. later said he'd not only not written but had never read). Warhol explained he'd been told that Dylan blamed him for the destruction (sic) of Edie Sedgwick whose romance with Dylan (NOT NAMED as such) formed part of the recent Sienna Miller movie *Factory Girl*. Later Dylan cringingly told W. he'd not make the same mistake. Warhol didn't act on the hint, however.

From Norman Darwen, Bolton, Lancs.

I thought the following might be of interest to *FF*.

Following on from the 'ghost dog of Derby County FC' story in *FF* no. 58, here is another football and folklore story. The *Manchester Evening News* of Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008 reported that Manchester City FC are employing feng shui to improve their luck ("Now crystal balls could help City to change in fortune"). The paper reported that "magic crystals have been buried under the pitch" and symbols are to be placed at strategic points inside and outside the stadium. Not only that, but "the club's shop is selling buddhas and three-legged toads as they crank up their bid for success on the pitch." Chief

putting a crucifix on the wall." I hope they remember to employ a geomancer to alter the placings when the teams change round at half-time! Incidentally, this story was widely reported in south-east Asia, as some are saying that club owner Thaksin Shinawatra (from Thailand) is responsible for this action.

However, they story continued with a reference to the "curse" put on the club's old ground, Maine Road, which they used from 1923 to 2003. The story is well-known in the city – probably because the newspaper trots it out two or three times a year at least! "Rumour has it that their old Maine Road ground in Moss Side was cursed. Some say it was built on a old travellers' site – a rumour that grew when the club struggled on the pitch.

Perhaps most interesting though, and familiar from stories of railway bridges, etc., is the final quote from the former player and radio pundit Fred Eyre regarding burying things under the pitch: "The old groundsman at Maine Road, Stan Gibson, reckoned there was a horse and cart buried under Maine Road." That one I hadn't heard before – or at least not in this context!

\*\*\*\*\*

## Lost Islands (Continued from Page 18)

'island' refers to any ecosystem isolated from the wider world; thus there is a wide sweep, taking in all science-fiction per se and identifying the same dynamic in Doctor Who as Merlin. Hence the author navigates wider shores than mere lost Atlantis, drowned Lyonesse and so many mythic isles to the West.

Like the curate's egg this book has its good points – the scope of literature covered is eclectic and admirable and his analyses of modern literature appealing, folklorismus at Glastonbury and discussion of special islands and aspects of the Edenic – and its bad points – particularly the jarring ancient bardic slabs of irrelevant prose about Oisín at the beginning of each chapter. Doubtless I would have enjoyed it more and derived greater intellectual stimulus had I a greater interest and background in bardic study, but the author does touch such bases familiar to me as the Wachowski brothers' *Matrix* film series and books by Garner and Ballard.

Where Manwaring allows his 'global chaos' apocalypticism to run riot is in factual distortion: Hurricane Katrina did not 'hit' New Orleans (it missed it, but was responsible for the devastation and hurricanes since have decreased and there is no evidence they will increase in frequency). But most glaringly he believes alarmism over sea level rises threatening Pacific islands and causing mass eco-exodus. Most likely the cause is the movement of tectonic plates causing sinking, also many such islands were created by an erupting volcano and they eventually subside due to the underlying volcanic rock being worn away. Ironically for me it was Charles Darwin who was the first to propose such a system of initial creation and eventual submergence of such paradisaic islands. Hence mankind is not 'destroying Eden', but natural geographical forces are. Equally our 'inventing Avalon' is man-made, but a rather whimsical fictional/folkloric neo-colonialism.

I can certainly empathise with both the physical attraction islands hold, having been sent by my editor to Berneray to dig up potatoes planted by Prince Charles, and the metaphorical 'island' inventions of writers such as Ballard's psychogeographic concrete public enclaves.

This book certainly reflects the zeitgeist and will appear to all those of a down in gloom persuasion

# Books

**MARS BAR & MUSHY PEAS: URBAN LEGEND AND THE CULT OF CELEBRITY** by PAUL SCREETON (Heart of Albion Press, 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough, LE12 6UJ. Softback. £14.95)

Promises made in subtitles or back-cover blurbs are all very well, but it's much better when an author sets out his stall in the preface. As far as *Mars Bar & Mushy Peas* is concerned, Paul Screeton leaves no room for doubt from his very first page:

"Celebrities are at the core of this book on contemporary legends ... urban myths which have become associated with personalities, be they from the worlds of stage, screen, literature, sport, politics, religion, trade unionism or reality TV shows".

Actually, *MBMP* goes a considerable way beyond that. Don't anticipate a potpourri of jocular, tabloid-style paragraphs, although Paul's tone is generally jocular (or, as he prefers, "avuncular") and much of the material could be described as 'tabloid' in origin. It looks at the perennially awkward subject of fact versus fiction versus faction. It looks at narrations which canvass belief while perhaps not caring too much whether they are literally true or not, far less whether we believe them or not.

So what is a celebrity? A 'personality' – a living personality larger than life; someone who spends many years striving to be recognized in the street and then dons dark glasses to avoid being recognized in the street. Or in another cynical but not inapt definition, a celebrity is someone who is famous for being famous. That would not have occasioned much argument from one subteen girl quoted in a recent Sunday paper article. When asked what she wanted to be when she left school, grew up (or both) she replied: "A celebrity". And she seemed genuinely puzzled when the interviewer pointed out that you had to do something extraordinary to become a celebrity. To the unnamed interviewee, being a celebrity was an occupation, a career – a thing in itself. You didn't have to do anything extra to be a celebrity, did you?

We'd like to reply: 'Well, yes – of course you do. Being a celebrity implies you have a certain ... talent. Thanks to that talent, people accept that you've achieved something beyond the common run – preferably something admirable'. We recognize and process celebrity by means of simple labels – life achievement labels, maybe. Wayne Rooney is a celebrity because he is a more than average footballer. Russell Brand is a comic. Jade Goody is (or was) a reality TV star. And so on. And yet, celebrity being what we and the media have made it, there are times when we become vague as to what the person in question has done exactly to achieve celebrity. What exactly has Paris Hilton done apart from being Paris Hilton?

Well, all else aside, Paris Hilton has achieved celebrity as subject of rumour legends. According to one of these,

she was lined up to play Mother Teresa in a film and in order to research the part she asked to meet Mother Teresa's children [pp.164-165]. Perhaps the idea of Ms Hilton playing this particular nun is only marginally less ludicrous than the idea of her not knowing that a nun was not likely to have children. I'm no expert, but I suspect that most don't. Certainly not Mother Teresa. But in celebrity-legend context, that's irrelevant. Here is a characteristic of modern celebrity-dom: whatever he or she has done to earn the title – or has not done – the Celebrity is prone to be the focus of contemporary-, urban- or rumour-legends, the function of which is to comment upon the cult of modern celebrity itself. In a somewhat circular process, the celeb is part-defined by the legend while the legend's relevance depends on our recognizing the protagonist *as* a celebrity. And paradoxically, the legend may have little or nothing to do with whatever that protagonist may have done to gain the title of 'celebrity'.

Paul opens his account with the Marbarianne Faithfull episode, the progress of which he has charted for almost as many years as Ms Faithfull has been making records. (He also coined the cognomen, by the way). This is a thoroughly scurrilous rumour-legend and if you don't know why, you must be one of very few people who haven't heard it. It also demonstrates what Paul styles the "limpet-like tenacity" of some legends that renders them defiant of how many times they have been denied and/or refuted. Go to pages 5-10 and you will see that the story *has* been refuted many times and not merely by Marianne Faithfull herself – yet it is still with us, just as virile and just as filthy. The durability and currency of Marbarianne is attested in one of the neat panels which adorn the book, making the traditional and often too-lengthy, too-digressive foot- or chapter note redundant. Thus Paul has found the legend in nine books, seventeen newspapers, twenty magazines, three TV programmes ... and 16 times in his own *Folklore Frontiers*. Frighteningly, Yahoo has 96,800 references to it "and rising daily" (p.12).

This perverse persistence surely tells us more about celebrity legends – certainly more about ourselves – than about Marianne Faithfull's musical and dramatic career. It suggests, for example, that however much we admire or even worship our heroes and heroines, we also love to see them deflated, demeaned, turned into objects of smutty amusement. Catching them adrift in some bizarre, risible sexual game brings them within our critical orbit. It may not be too much to say that the highest percentage of celebrity legends accuse the feted famous of sexual abnormalities. The rumour-monger isn't likely to be satisfied with the orthodox or obvious slur. Accusing a celebrity of being a homosexual has lost much of its bite, be the target in or out of the closet. More effective, then, to claim he or she delights in shoving small rodents up rectal orifices. Cue rumour legends starring the Pet Shop Boys and Richard Gere [pp.14-16].

Interestingly and commendably, the victims of the legends presented in the opening three chapters do not respond with anger or threats of legal action, but with

weary, perhaps affected good humour. More positively, Chapter Two finds that Arthur Scargill “basks in the reflected glory of rumour .. knows them all, repeats them willingly and finds them amusing in a wry, self-centred way [p.19]. The inference is that he has found a way to weaken the impact of these derogatory (even demonizing) stories by retelling them as self-evident jokes – jokes against himself, maybe, but against their media promoters definitely. And the fact is that such legends help to keep the celebrity in the public eye. They are Publicity and according to the hoary truism there is no such thing as bad publicity.

The Celebrity may even utilize or appear to endorse the legend for that purpose. Facing yet another media interviewer, he or she will have anticipated that the rumour must inevitably put in an appearance. The star’s response is prepared: why not stage a pre-emptive strike by being the first to bring it up in conversation?

Dolly Parton [Ch.3] seems to be a past-mistress in the art of rumour redirection. She is all too aware that an interviewer will feel obliged to make some reference to our fixation with her more-than-ordinarily developed breasts. Are they really insured for \$1 million? do they impose such a strain on her back that she has to wear counterweights developed by NASA? And there will be other rumours about cosmetic surgery and sexual liaisons. The eminently quotable Ms Parton not only responds to these with unequivocal refutations [“A crock of shit”] or sly evasion [“Plastic surgery? ..It’s really cosmetic, there’s very little plastic about it.”]. Significantly, “it is she rather than her interviewers who nudge the subject back to her bust again and again.” [p.29]. While conceding that the big breasts, wigs *et al.* may distract attention from her music, she admits they are part of her stage persona. Rumours and jokes about her breasts are part and parcel of being Dolly Parton. Her reward is to find she has (as she claims) “taken up more room in the tabloids than a sumo wrestler.” [p.29 again.]

Arguably once as famous for her bust-line as Dolly Parton is for hers today, Diana Dors was just as willing to talk about the rumour legends attracted by her sexual persona. I doubt whether Paul Daniels and Debbie McGee are quite as eager to keep confronting the doggie-doings allegation involving them (but more specifically Debbie McGee) but it seems that the media give them little choice in the matter. They, too, have responses prepared in advance. And so, past them – past George Best. who may have recited his ‘Where did it all go wrong?’ anecdote too often for our satisfaction - we arrive at Chapter 3 and another Screeton speciality: Peter Mandelson and his Mushy Peas gaffe.

“Tracking down the origin of an oft-repeated contemporary legend is like seeking the genesis of a dirty joke,” writes Paul. “Hopeless as the task may seem, I have attempted to track the spoor of the mushy peas myth for many years.” [page 38]. You may read the results here; the story of how the hapless politician is supposed to have mistaken the mushy peas purveyed by a north England fish and chip shop for avocado mousse (or guacamole dip – I hadn’t realized there is a

gastronomic difference) is more complicated than you might suppose. Quite apart from the query as to whether Mr M. did or did not err as the legend insists, there are issues of the intent behind the repetitions of the story. Some go beyond the suggestion that we are dealing with another humorous deflation of a celebrity or parable of middle class southern softie unable to smarm his way into gritty northern working class culture; there are plain hints of malicious opponents within the Labour Party for whom the story had a certain utility. More complicated, yes – but then the legend-persona of Peter Mandelson is more complicated than this single narrative can carry. On one hand he is portrayed as a failed would-be Machiavelli - “Iago played by Kenneth Williams, in the words of one journalist [p.47] - and on the other he is several leagues above Machiavelli as a member of a cryotconspiratorial New Order staffed by industrialists, media moguls and bankers who are seeking to rule the world.

Will Mr Mandelson ever be free from the mushy pea legend? Would it be better for him – might History think more of him – were he to be free from it? For there are cases, perhaps many of them, where a person’s memorability and hence celebrity depends in whole or part on his/her appearance in a rumour legend.

For instance, it seems just possible that History may recall James Hewitt [pp.24-28] only in terms of his relationship with Princess Diana and in especial as the rumoured father of Prince Harry. It’s even more possible that some folk in Chapter Four will be recalled exclusively, if at all, by virtue of their starring roles in penis legends; I’m thinking now of John Bobbit, unlucky main player in “the most celebrated case of ‘depenetration’ in modern history, publicity accruing from which made him “one of America’s top hard-core porn stars.” [p.73]. Or ask yourself: will we remember John Bindon as fairly minor film actor or as the man who (allegedly) “showed the late Princess Margaret his noble knob”? [p.59].

It must be said that we don’t associate many of the great or not-so great names included in this section (John Dillinger ..Napoleon ..Hitler) purely with legends of “legendary length and gross girth .. solitary sex. oral orgasms ... fertility and contraception .. shrinking, severance ..and erectile dysfunction.” [page 56]. After all, there was a lot more to Jimi Hendrix than what Cynthia Plastercaster recorded (in plaster, needless to say). Not all the people featured here are ‘big names’ and many have no names at all – that is, the rumours are not decisively linked with named celebrities ...which is fair enough, given the typical anonymity of the central figures in your average urban legend. At very least we find out who the ‘Mr Gorsky’ was whom moon-walking astronaut Neil Armstrong wished good luck as TV audiences around the world marvelled over not long after that giant leap for mankind. Personally, I don’t wish to know the name of the man tortured by having a tortoise bite his private parts, though. I read that one out to my wife. She laughed. We have a pet tortoise, you see.

If celebrities repeat these self-focussed legends themselves (which, as we have seen, they sometimes do if only to refute or pretend to refute them) is there not a suspicion that they may hope we will infer those legends may be nonetheless true? Chapter 5 is devoted to ostension, pseudo-ostension, proto- and quasi-ostension; the last two terms are coinings of the author but perfectly valid. We are looking here at the texts of contemporary legends which appear to have been enacted, wittingly or knowingly, in real life.

Paul's main celebrity example here implies that Kerrang 105.2 disc jockey Tim Shaw, his wife and glamour model Jodie Marsh collaborated to bring the almost too-familiar Philanderer's Porsche into living existence. Prof. Jan Harold Brunvand chose this legend as a lead-in to his *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* collection, one of the first books to present urban legends to non-academic audiences. You probably know that already. You may be less *au fait* with Ms Marsh but Paul provides her CV in one of those useful side-panels; go to page 82. There's a photo as well.

If you know Professor Brunvand's book – and most likely, even if you don't – you won't need me to tell you that the Porsche of the eponymous Philanderer could as well be a Corvette or any other high-performance, high-status, high-cost auto you prefer. You're already aware that this highly-prized vehicle gets sold by his spurned and vengeful wife for a derisory sum. He has run away with another woman, instructing deserted spouse to sell the car and send him the proceeds. Which she has done. He gets exactly what he asks for but not in the way he intended and unless my memory of Eng. Lit. fails me, that is an example of irony. I am quite confident that you didn't need me to retell you the story, nor to insist that regardless of how many times it is retold as veritable fact, it is a thoroughly tried-and-convicted urban legend. As such, it is public property. And as such, what is there to prevent someone – a real-life spurned wife, for instance – using the scenario in real life?

This is what we are told happened in the Shaw, Shaw & Marsh episode. A less well-known, less frequently told legend has the protagonist eating cremated human remains in mistaken belief they are condiments, spices or similar. Alternatively, he/she may smoke them in the equally erroneous misbelief they are drugs. Re-entering what most of us accept as the Real World, we read the ghoulish allegation that Keith Richard(s) snorted the incinerated ashes of his own father [pp.87ff.] Or not, the story allegedly given to the *New Musical Express* (by Richard) having been promptly retracted (by Richard).

The narrator's motives in telling or refuting a story against him- or herself are debateable. We might think that Richard was teasing us, employing his marketable image as a wild rock 'n' roll drug consumer – and enhancing it at the same time. Shaw/Marsh may have seen the value of the Philanderer's Porsche as self-promotion; equally, they could have been having a laugh. When Anthony Burgess claimed to have invented the original Stolen [Granny's] Corpse legend in the

1930s, he may have been honest, honestly self-deluded, or indulging in a spot of "originator ostension" – [p. 101 – that term is another happy invention of Paul's].

The employment of legends for promotional purposes has a respectable history and History itself – history adapted into promotional legends – is the theme of "Llewellyn and Folklorismus" [Ch.6]. This chapter moves away from the celebrity-fixated material of the previous 100 pages to show how an imagined Past – golden, romantic and let it be said sanitized – is evoked to create a sense of continuity which in turn fosters opportunities for commercial exploitation. Ploughman's lunches .. clan tartans ... ghost tours ... Jack the Ripper: we should not fall too hard upon this folklorismus (or as Paul prefers when the machinery is engaged for promotion of a particular site, locale or area, 'tourismus'). It may not matter very much if those heroic hounds Gelert and Greyfriars Bobby were not unique localized celebrities but modern relocated variants of widespread and antique legend themes, nor that Christ was never anywhere near Cornwall [pp.115-116] or that Loch Ness harboured nothing more than a monster hoax [pp.118-119]. As Venetia Newall is quoted as saying at the end of the chapter, the importance of this "complex phenomenon" resides not in his historical validity but in the "psychological function it serves for those involved ..." [p.120].

That said, invention of folk narratives or adjustments to existing ones – any manoeuvre which suggests they are veritable historical fact – blurs the distinction between what we accept as reality and its fictional counterpart. This presents a challenge to folklorists and forteans alike. They are dealing with what looks like the same material, albeit from different perspective: "material whose tellers are reporting what they believe to be true." [p.128].

Folklorists and forteans represent a very small proportion of the population. But nobody is absolutely immune from the implications of whether what we are being told is legend per se (fiction as fact) or anomalous-sounding fact that resembles legend. So to the penultimate chapter. In his Introduction, Paul promised this would be a chapter where "there is no fence-sitting, no attempt at balanced argument." [p.2]. It is a chapter on global warming as "a bona fide, if inflated urban legend" or "a contemporary legend writ large." [pp.137-138].

And how do our celebs come into all this? A recurring character in many contemporary legends, as Paul notices in a short-list of the "defining components" of such narratives, is the Authority Figure – police spokesperson, scientist, politician or similar pundit – whose insider knowledge entitles them to endorse what might otherwise seem an incredible allegation. Notwithstanding the deflationary thrust of a good many celebrity legends, our celebs can function effectively in that role. We take global warming all the more seriously because they are telling us that *they* are taking it seriously. If we took a step or two back, if we thought for a minute or two longer, we might decide that the

celebrity spokesperson may not have the best credentials for pronouncing on matters scientific, political and environmental. Too often we don't take a step back or think a bit longer, however.

Celebrity endorsements may have genuine value in promoting wider responses to the world's problems. But they are not beyond criticism on factual grounds; they may be open to charges of having used non-factual, disputable data in the creation of something awfully close to Rumour Legend. Read Al Gore's much-publicized contributions to the global warming debate on pp.1488ff. These, like the endorser's credentials for speaking on the issue at all, were challenged by various journalists. They didn't believe in Mr Gore; they didn't believe in what he had to say on global warming and some did not believe in global warming itself. Most were out-gunned – quoted but ignored – simply because they lacked Al Gore's media profile. If any of them approached celebrity-status, he was still less of a celebrity than Al Gore.

And yet it is perfectly feasible to make be a celebrity *and* to make negative statements on global warming without sacrificing your authority figure status. You might define it as a myth, for instance, or poppycock; David Bellamy is quoted doing so (and in those very words) on page 146. Jeremy Clarkson went as far or even further; "Global warming started out as a lie and became an industry ... bonkers ... A complete fairy story" [p.151].

Quite a few people stand to gain from the global warming myth, declares Mr Clarkson and the news media not least among them; for one thing, "they can print terrifying maps of what Britain will look like if the sea levels rise by 600 feet." And ignoring grand old stereotypes wherein they walk always in the paths of Truth, said news media don't feel disgusted with themselves if they discover that the stories they handle are less than 100% accurate. That journalists do not stop at reporting news but create grisly versions of it seems a given of celebrity reporting.

Paul's final chapter studies 'satirismus'; pseudo-news of a sarcastic, jibing and frequently scurrilous variety, manufactured by writers, printed in the style or guise of genuine news .. and then repeated and reprinted by other writers in other papers. Ideally, journalists always check their facts; it's one of the credos you often hear from members of the profession. In practice a few don't. They take on trust what other journalists have written. They may not believe what those other journalists have written, but they recycle it anyhow. Perhaps, unlike Mr Gradgrind in *Hard Times* or Joe Friday in *Dragnet*, they don't want the facts . Especially if the facts stand in the way of a good story – another credo you may have heard from members of the profession.

In their defence, the guilty parties might protest that, like many of the celebrities they write about, they are in the entertainment business. Celeb legends *are* entertainment;

the celebs themselves understand that and as we've seen, they may use it to their advantage. We understand it, too. So what if the story may not be true, strictly speaking? who cares if it is a rumour and at best no more than a quarter or one-sixteenth true? so what, who cares, if it resembles a species of distortion? "Wanton inaccuracy," warns our author, "is what the public wants". [p.157]

As regards celebrities: we can't get enough information about them. Maybe we will accept information barely deserving of the name, derogatory rumour legends depicting the idols as stupid, eccentric, egocentric, depraved, self-indulgent. Thus "the sheer accumulation of oddball anecdotage attached to .. Mariah Carey is awesome [p.162] – ditto Britney Spears – and absurd assertions that George Bush has been endorsed by space aliens. "And we know what to believe," concludes Paul [p.165]. Ultimately we can make up our own minds about Marsbarianne Faithfull, Peter and the Peas, Jimi Hendrix's penis. We are not obliged to worry about the factual, fictive or folkloric standing of these stories; we can simply enjoy them even if we feel mildly guilty about enjoying them.

There are types and motifs of celebrity lore that could have expanded *Mars Bars* to three times its length: dead celebrities who are really alive, live celebrities who are really dead (besides Paul McCartney –see pages 52-53), celebrities who are not recognized when they appear amongst us incognito or out of their usual glittery context (and who suffer humorous insult and deflation as a result). I don't think we need them here, though. The material is too vast to avoid being repetitious. For Mariah Carey is certainly not unique in generating an awesome body of rumour legends. Think of Bob Dylan ... Frank Sinatra .. Tom Cruise ... any celebrity you like. Chances are there's a book of legends in any one of them. It may be a long book, at that.

This 166-page opus, as beautifully presented as we've come to expect from the Heart of Albion Press, doesn't leave us missing very much. It has wit as well as muscle; when Paul Screeton isn't an admirer of a person or a thing, he doesn't attempt to hide the fact. "I have approached my material as a lifelong journalist thence aiming at being entertaining as well as erudite," he tells us on his first page. You won't want to argue with that.

### *Michael Goss*

**Mick Goss read English at Leeds University and received an M.Phil. from Birmingham University for his thesis on supernatural literature. He is the author of *The Evidence for Phantom Hitch-Hikers* (The Aquarian Press, 1984). He contributed a column entitled 'Folkjokeopus' to *Folklore Frontiers* and currently runs a coffee shop cum secondhand bookshop with his wife Sheila in Fakenham, Norfolk.**

It's not many years ago that urban legends (ULs) were treated as little more than jokey asides in newspaper diarist columns. Since then, courtesy of books by Jan Harold Brunvand and web sites such as Snopes, ULs have been brought into the area of serious, often academic, study. *Folklore Frontiers* and its editor Paul Screeton have added enormously to our knowledge of ULs and more so because of Paul's fortean beliefs, his experience as a journalist and his interest in fertile areas for ULs such as rock music.

In 2006 Paul published a book about ULs and railways and now, in *Mars Bars & Mushy Peas* (MB & MP) he has turned his attention to urban legends and the interface with celebrity. Britain is a nation obsessed with the minutiae of celebrity and so there is no shortage of material which Paul marshals into meaningful chunks, kicking off with a hoary old classic, Marianne Faithfull's alleged encounter with a Mars bar – it helps you work rest *and* play you know – at a party raided by police chez Keith Richards in February 1967.

Out of the Redlands Bust, as it has become known in rock circles, came a curious rumour; one Mick Jagger had been found enjoying cunnilingus with Ms Faithfull, who had strategically placed a Mars bar to add flavour and texture to the act. Faithfull herself allows that the Mars bar legend will follow here forever, and so it has. It is immaterial who started the legend – most probably a disgruntled *News of the World* reporter, as it was they who tipped the police off that drugs would be present at the party. The value of this star-studded salaciousness is that although we don't actually know what goes on in the drawing rooms of the rich and famous (well, we do, because everyone knows Keith Richards hurt himself falling from a ladder in his library!) we like to believe that debauchery exists at this sort of level.

Celebrity = sex and as an entrée to the world of celebrity ULs. Marianne and the Mars bar gives the reader a sweet tooth for a panoply of other celebends. Dolly Parton's boobs, Princess Diana's sex life and the penis stories of the rich and famous all jostle for position in your attention. Often, as with Marianne Faithfull's debauchery at the hands of his satanic majesty, part of the thrill of celebends (see what I did there?) is the juxtaposition of perversion with purity; heard the one about magician Paul Daniels's wife Debbie McGee? Suffice to say it involves a dog and a rumoured photograph of their tryst.

All the ULs in this book are fascinating and well worth reading. But if they were just stories the novelty would wear off after a while. ULs are nothing if not set in some form of context and in the latter half of the book Paul presents us with just that. Folklorismus, a term coined to describe how ULs of the past, are shackled to more modern offerings to provide insight into how some ULs are formed and Paul tells us how an ancient folk tale was welded to the need to increase tourism in Snowdonia in the nineteenth century and voila, the legend from which the village of Beddgelert draws sustenance to feed legend-hungry tourists. This is manufactured folklore (ahh, but how do we know the difference with *real* folklore?) and is as worthy of study,

for this is the genesis of many of our most enduring 'true' legends such as the Loch Ness Monster. Paul then delves deeper into the interface between ULs and the general weirdness, showing Charles Fort's influence on the gathering of stories that don't quite fit our perceived notions of reality.

The book winds down with an intriguing look at the beliefs and 'certainties' which have sprung up about global warming. We hardly dare to question it as the 'facts' are rammed down our throats by TV and the Sunday supplements, the very science which is allegedly destroying the planet now coming up with ever more ingenious and costly ways of reversing the looming disaster. Is global warming just a global myth designed by capitalism and fuelled by minor ULs? Keep an eye on any scare stories you read because they just might not be as true as you'd like them to be. Urban legends are the Petrie dish in which we can observe the birth and growth of a story. The story (Faithfull and the Mars bar for instance) might be inconsequential in the great scheme of things or it could be the pivot on which our fate balances (Global Warming) but ultimately they are about the nature of consensus reality, what is, what isn't and what might be. Thus MB & MP is a truly fortean book. Now, if I can only find that Debbie McGee photograph on the internet!

*Andy Roberts*

**Andy Roberts will be familiar to readers as a regular contributor to *Fortean Times*. He formerly edited *UFO Brigantia* and is the author of several books including *Ghosts & Legends of Yorkshire* and perhaps most importantly his collaborations with Dr David Clarke on *Twilight of the Celtic Gods* and *Flying Saucerers: a social history of UFOlogy*. He lives in Wales with his schoolteacher wife Gaynor.**

\*\*\*\*\*

I also received feedback from author and philosopher *John Michell* "I'm delighted to have your new book, MB & MP, in which I've found much pleasure and interest. Thank you. It's bold of you and quite right I think, to include the global warming scare among the legends you expose (chap. 8). I've just done a similar piece for *The Oldie*." Also a brief e-mail from lobbyist/spindoctor turned psychotherapist *Deek Drape* "would love to review the book but just don't have the time. good luck with it though..."

As *Folklore Frontiers* goes to press I have been promised reviews by Mike Amos in *The Northern Echo*, Chris Cordner in the *Hartlepool Mail* and Mike Hallowell in the (South) *Shields Gazette*. I also approached for a review former president of the National Union of Mineworkers Arthur Scargill, but have so far had no response.

\*\*\*\*\*

The following page is blank due to the editor's sheer bloody incompetence.

**ALBION DREAMING** by **ANDY ROBERTS** (Marshall Cavendish Editions. Hardback. £18.99)

Turn on. Tune in. Drop out. Here is the story of the drug LSD's influence on British culture, as bizarre and entertaining as Lewis Carroll's Alice adventures, which were absorbed into hippiedom just as the drug permeated blotting paper doses. Consciousness expanding or mind bending? Good trips, bad trips. Reaching its zenith during the period when England as Albion reappeared at the centre of the cosmos and the counterculture dream of a glorious future burned brightly. Only to be snuffed out by a repressive regime and a populist shift to a whole new cornucopia of less personalised drugs.

I thought that through subscribing to *International Times* in the Sixties/Seventies I had a good grounding in the early days of LSD culture, but what an eyeopener the early chapters here were. Comedian Frankie 'Infamy, infamy, they've got it in for me' Howerd of *Up Pompeii!* Fame, rather than as his most famous utterance suggest paranoia, found LSD calming and insightful. Away from the posh London clinics (Sean Connery was another celeb taker), there was the mysterious military establishment Porton Down on Salisbury Plain where squaddies were dosed with LSD on the promise of no active duties and an extra ten shillings to spend on the less controversial drug alcohol (as with urban legends, copies of the poster calling for volunteers or newspaper advertisements have not been found). Uncomfortable reading for those 67 tricked; more so perhaps those who devised these tests.

The book discusses a vista of visionaries beginning with LSD creator Albert Hoffman (who died recently aged 102, proof that drugs kill), who chose chemistry as a vocation after an entire childhood filled with the magic of transcendental experiences leading to a neo-Gnostic thirst for knowledge of the true reality which was hidden from everyday sight and a desire to crack the structure and essence of matter. Critically Hoffman expanded upon earlier reserved comments on LSD to become in his old age more outspoken about the positive aspects of LSD, cheerfully accepting the mantle of elder statesman of the psychedelic generation.

Historically there is much here to surprise even those with more than a casual acquaintance with the drug counter-culture, such as that the first LSD philosophers were two Britons, Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard, and that the person responsible for turning on America was another Brit, known by his pseudonym Michael Hollingshead, a rascally trickster who turned on a malleable university professor, Timothy Leary, and whose involvement was crucial to the acid evangelism which followed. In the other direction came American writer and philosopher David Solomon, a psychedelic pioneer and major presence in Britain's LSD culture, going the course until pulled up by the cops of Operation Julie.

Where my new book **MB&MP** and Andy's converge is coverage of the Redlands bust, with Andy concentrating on the LSD aspect and the role of the shadowy American will o' the wisp 'acid king' David Schneiderman. To his credit, Andy ignores the salacious gossip about Marianne Faithfull in the fur rug and the subsequent Mars bar rumour (he's seen the relevant raid documents, he tells me, and

there is no mention therein of confectionery cunnilingus taking place).

Then along came the Seventies, with 1971's Glastonbury Fayre, followed days later by what *The Times* dubbed the 'mystics' picnic', a gathering outside Hereford (dis)organised by John Michell and myself, at which fayre organiser Andrew Kerr was present along with at least one of Lord Harlech's daughters and the ley hunting cognoscenti. Can't recall any LSD, not even a spliff or even alcohol.

In 1977, Operation Julie culminated in raids across 84 locations in Britain and a show trial in Bristol. Severe sentences were handed out and the acidhead community shamefully did nothing to support those who had given them psychedelic sustenance. Each served their sentences without incident. At the behest of John Michell, I sent magazines to David Solomon during his incarceration, although never receiving acknowledgment. He died in April 2007.

Summing up Op Julie, Andy pertinently asks how on a tight budget, if the police could smash an LSD ring set up by what Julie's boss called 'the intelligentsia', why could not a similar operation be mounted to counteract the truly evil and harmful heroin trade?

The final chapters are a dispiriting resume of the Establishment's crushing the ethos and actuality of free festivals (publically advertising drug prices being an own goal) although to some extent the spread of ecstasy (first synthesized before LSD in 1912) and rave culture filled the gap. It was still possible to buy cheap LSD, but ecstasy had advantages in that its effects were less intense, bad trips almost unknown and unlike LSD it appealed to women. Also in our compensation culture, it seems many claimants for psychotherapeutic damages were and would always be mentally-ill and masked the attempts the sincere attempts of those to free them from psychiatric imprisonment.

In conclusion, Andy is correct in identifying the emotive phrase 'war on drugs' as meaningless. Similarly that the 'war' is actually on consciousness expansion and liberty. He also argues that legalisation and appropriate regulation of all drugs would be essentially beneficial to society, and is it is hard not to agree.

Andy, *FF* longtime readers may recall, wrote an article on druglore in the first issue back in 1986 (he is 52). Also there is much here to intrigue the contemporary legend buff such as the urban myth that LSD users feel the urge to jump out of windows, believing they can fly (here drug squad officers on an unwitting trip and in a hospital asked for beds away from the windows!), while the conspiratorialists will find references to dark doings alleged by some to be at the heart of LSD culture, including prime individuals' association with covert intelligence operations and the mysterious death of free festivals organiser Wally Hope. That notion that terrorists could spike Ullswater or some such Lake District reservoir and turn on every water consumer in Manchester is reflected in Hollingshead claiming that anyone could take control of London in fewer than eight hours by introducing LSD to the water supply. Polluting Birmingham's supply surfaced at the Operation Julie trial. Rumours specific to the Op Julie train fallout which Andy feels may have some substance are that Princess Margaret was involved with one

of the main suspects and that the police hierarchy delayed the swoop until she was well out of the way.' Also that Francis Crick took LSD to untangle the mysteries of DNA; somewhat dubious as the drug was little known in the UK in 1953.

Echoing my favourite Strategic Steam Reserve myth of locomotives hidden under a Welsh mountain or the Cotswolds, internet discussion groups have recently chatted about the possibility that there may be LSD and money still buried deep in the Welsh hillside from the Op Julie chemists.

No review can dodge the question of whether LSD is Heaven or Hell: the beckoning doors to perception or slammed doors of the lunatic asylum. Holy sacrament or holy shit! The overall impression here is that in the right circumstances and taken with a trusted guide, LSD will be positively life-enhancing, but there are acid casualties, such as musicians Syd Barrett and Vince Taylor (the template for David Bowie's alter ego creation Ziggy Stardust). Obviously an advocate and proselytizer of LSD, Andy is of the opinion those who have been damaged already had a predisposition to mental illness. By all accounts LSD is neither physically nor psychologically addictive. The dire warnings of the Sixties – as with all drugs and human behaviour changes – reflected the Establishment's kneejerk reaction to any and all popular movements which had the potential for personal and/or social change (unless, of course, it could be diluted and taxed). Andy also notes that not all of those taking LSD received spiritual wisdom nor were 'dogged by existential doubt' (contrast The Beatles and the post-amphetamine Small Faces). Yet awesome for alternative history author Graham Hancock and top publisher Tom Maschler, neither returned to LSD. Yet for others it is a lifestyle and at the bottom line, basically a victimless offence. Whatever, LSD became illegal to possess in the UK on 9 September 1966, followed a month later in the USA.

This book is a classic in the making and will join the pantheon of truly great drug books: *Writing on Drugs* by Sadie Plant, *Shroom* by Andy Letcher, and somewhat similar ground *The Brotherhood of Love* by Stewart Tendler and David May.

It is written with clarity, authority, wit and sympathy. In fact, Andy probably missed his true vocation – taking the role of residential social worker rather than investigative journalist. For anyone seeking a balanced overview of the lysergic lotus eaters of Albion, this book passes the acid test of authenticity.

\* The book is published on 30 September and Andy points out that the best place to buy it from is Amazon.co.uk as it has discounted it to £12.53. He is at the very early stages of creating an accompanying website, [www.LSDBritain.com](http://www.LSDBritain.com), which will act to advertise the book and give him a place to put new research. Keep watching for new inputs.

**MINOS AND THE MODERNS** by **THEODORE ZIOLKOWSKI** (Oxford University Press. Hardback. £29.99)

To win over Cypriots in its euro currency campaign, the Cyprus government resorted to Green mythology. It was Christmas 2007, but Santa Claus was. A festive promotional blitz was conducted to prepare Cypriots for the arrival of the euro on 1 January, as many were not convinced that the new currency would not have a negative impact on the economy. Santa's role in bearing gifts was replaced on seasonal posters by Europa, a naked, full-figured woman who, according to legend, was seduced by Zeus in the guise of a white bull (as shown on book's cover of bare-breasted woman and decorated bovid), who carried her away on his back. In gratitude for bearing him three sons, the Greek god named the continent after her, Europe. In fact, it was a Greek folklorist, Demetrios Loukatus, who coined a new term, 'archaeofolklore', to represent the Greek tendency to extol the wonder of events and characters of the great classical era, following archaeological excavations with mythological motifs would into weaving, embroidery and pottery, with local people and visitors alike reliving the resonance of early culture by dressing in ancient style, revitalising functionally the life of the people into a 'living archaeofolklore.'

This occurred after the book was written and its time framework, but the campaign mentioned fits perfectly well with the theme. Of course, this book is not about Cyprus, but Crete and Minos (of Minoan culture fame), he the first son of the union of Zeus and Europa.

This work examines what folklorists call folklorismus, the appropriation of ancient myth by modern day entrepreneurs, artists, writers and popular culture. In fact, on page 22, the author tackles this under the names 'mythanalyse' and 'mythocritique.' In other words, classical myth is transfigured into classical modernism; a process not always appreciated by purists.

Subsequently the book relates the Cretan myths of Europa and abducting bull, the minotaur and his labyrinth/maze, another bull coupling with Pasiphae and the aeronaut Icarus. Each theme is set against these tales inspiration for writers, painters and composers. The result is a thoughtful examination of the power myth exerts upon the artistic mind. Excellently researched and written.

**LOST ISLANDS: INVENTING AVALON, DESTROYING EDEN** by **KEVAN MANWARING** (Heart of Albion Press. Softback. £14.95)

Manwaring's definition of a lost island is 'a zone that is hidden, obscure, inaccessible, endangered or destroyed' – also it encompasses the imaginary and mythic, nor need it be surrounded by water, for to an ecologist, the word

(Continued in Page 12)