

THE *British & Irish* SKEPTIC

A Publication Dedicated to Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal

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NAME THIS NEWSLETTER

You could still be the winner of a two-year subscription to this newsletter. Please send your suggested titles to the Editor, at the address below before August 15, 1987. So far, the two most popular suggestions are "Occam's Razor" and "The British & Irish Skeptic" (five votes each).

HELP!

Lots of people sent newspaper clippings, information, news, and letters. Thanks to all of you, and please don't stop. We're even beginning to get the occasional video or audio tape. The more of all of these things, and articles, book reviews, TV or radio reviews, cartoons, and so on, we get from you, the more varied and interesting this newsletter is going to be. Please keep in touch! (By the way, please mark all newspaper or magazine clippings with name of publication and date of appearance.)

THANK YOU

UK SKEPTICS UNITE

The British Committee have held two meetings in April for the purpose of discussing the formation of an association. At the first of these meetings, on 8th April, Acting Chairman David Berglas resigned. Thanks are due to him for the work he has done for the Committee.

At the second meeting, on 28th April, Dr. David Marks was confirmed as the new Chairman, and the Committee voted to form an association, to be officially named The UK Skeptics. A number of changes to the draft association document were discussed, and a further meeting is planned to consider the second draft.

ABOUT DAVID MARKS

New British Committee Chairman Dr. David Marks is Head of the Psychology Department at Middlesex Polytechnic. With Richard Kammans, he is the author of The Psychology of the Psychic (Prometheus, 1980), a scholarly and entertaining discussion of psychic performers Kreskin and Geller, and a review of the SRI remote viewing experiments. He was a speaker at the 1985 CSICOP London Conference.

He was founding Chairman of the New Zealand Skeptics. In the September, 1986, issue of the New Zealand Skeptic, the new Chairman, Denis Dutton, writes of David Marks' departure, "We've lost a national asset."

FCCC UPDATE

Following our receipt of the Brazilian article about the Fundacao Cacique Cobra Coral, in which it was claimed that their medium, Adelaide Scritori, had been asked by Buckingham Palace and the BBC to meditate to improve the then extremely cold weather in Britain, we wrote to Buckingham Palace to ask if this was in fact so.

Robin Janvrin, Assistant Press Secretary to the Queen, wrote back to say, "I am unaware of any request from Buckingham Palace to the Brazilian group you mention in your letter."

PLUMMER IN EUROPE

CSICOP Executive Director Mark Plummer goes on to tour some of the European National skeptics' groups after hosting public meetings in London and Dublin. He is scheduled to visit committees and/or host meetings in: San Sebastian, Grenoble, Milan, Zurich, Graz, Frankfurt, Utrecht (to be confirmed), Oslo, and Stockholm. These visits are being welcomed as an important step forward in creating a European skeptical network. He will be accompanied on the tour by Wendy Grossman, editor of the British & Irish Skeptic.

GELLER IN AMERICA

Since Geller's appearance last September on the Wogan show, he has travelled across Europe, back to do the Gay Byrne Late Late Show in Dublin, and now on to America.

His tour began April 3rd and so far has not been crowned with success. It was reported at the LA Conference that his New York appearance had drawn a much smaller audience than expected.

In Boston, magician Henry Gordon, unknown to Geller, was invited to appear on a television show with Geller, and after one initial success with a "happy face" drawing, Geller's powers "seemed to evaporate", according to Providence, RI, journalist C. Eugene Emery, Jr., reporting on the show in the Providence Sunday Journal on April 12 in an article entitled, "Psychic or charlatan: Uri Geller reverses his disappearing act."

Gordon was not the only magician involved with the show, broadcast on Boston's Channel 4 on Monday, April 6. Boston magician Michael Bent had been invited to act as the program's production assistant. Together, these magicians applied controls to rule out trickery. The results? Two broken watches remained broken. Geller was unable to move two compass needles with mind power. Geller also failed to reproduce two more drawings, one made on the show by Gordon, and one made earlier by the host and sealed inside an envelope.

The latest information, as of this writing, is that Geller has been campaigning for greater US Government funding for psychic research. Geller is quoted by Emery as saying, "I believe the Soviets are training teams to be able to erase (American) computer tapes or cause errors in them." Emery goes on to say, "The results, he [Geller] says, would be disastrous for national security."

Hits & Misses (continued)

FREE INQUIRY

The Skeptical Inquirer is not the only journal to emanate from Buffalo, NY. The Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (CODESH) began publishing the quarterly journal Free Inquiry in the winter of 1980. CODESH has announced Free Inquiry's purpose to be "to discuss and clarify for public awareness the principles of free inquiry."

CODESH's announced purposes are "primarily educational: 1) to foster the growth of the traditions of democracy, secular humanism and the principles of free inquiry in contemporary society; 2) to revitalize, nurture and publicize the values and traditions represented by Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine. It seeks to...3) encourage and support the publication of articles, journals, monographs, and books that present a democratic secular humanistic point of view with an educational, literary, scientific philosophic focus."

In 1985, the Academy of Humanism formed the Committee for Scientific Examination of Religion (CSER), an outgrowth of Free Inquiry's Religion and Biblical Criticism Project. CSER in turn initiated the Faith-Healing Investigation Project. It was under CSER's auspices that James Randi began his investigations of Peter Popoff and W. V. Grant, the former of which has been reported on in both The Skeptical Inquirer and The British & Irish Skeptic.

Free Inquiry, Fall, 1986, adds further information about the events following the exposure of Popoff's methods, in an article entitled "Popoff's TV Empire Declines," written by David Alexander, a California publisher and Special Consultant to CSER, formerly a magician and a private investigator.

Alexander, checking each step with Gerald Larue, chairman of CSER, wrote a series of letters to television station managements giving background information on Grant and Popoff, and stressing that the questions he was raising were questions of ethics, not of religion. The result? "Popoff's television empire was, at one time, very healthy. He bought half-hour slots on approximately sixty stations. But now he appears on only nine or ten. This writer could not confirm the exact number at the time this article was written--even Popoff's office is not sure. The receptionist there originally told me Popoff was off television completely."

Free Inquiry is available from Box 5, Buffalo, NY, 14215-0005, and is edited by CSICOP's Chairman, Paul Kurtz.

PREDICTION FESTIVAL

Redge Lewis sent in the programme from this year's Prediction (Magazine) Festival (held 27-29 March at Battersea Town Hall) together with as much free printed material as his daughter could collect. The range of stuff that seems to have been available at this event is astounding. As Redge put it:

"...Aztral Games, Holographic Pendants (trade orders welcomed), Fantasy Candles, Merlin's Cave (Wooden Runes, Pentacles and Ankhs on offer), Powerful Colour Vibrations with Live Energies of Aroma Essences, Training in the study of Kabbalah and its Use in Everyday Life, Charcoal and Occult Sundries, Spook Publications (really!), Crystal Balls and Pyramids, Books and Nice Things for Pagan and Earth Based Folk, Planetary Power Zones, Earth Magic Wands (mail catalogue only £1), Agrippa's three books of Occult Philosophy (first time in print since 1651), Oasis Ionisers, Ritual Paraphernalia prepared by the Wicca for the Wicca..."

My own undoubted favourite is "Living Colour [which]...is an educational, therapeutic and creative body which teaches all aspects of Colour Awareness...by working with Colour through various media which includes [sic] diet, dress, lighting/illumination, exercises (Body Consciousness), counselling techniques, essential oils, crystals, etc." They list products: Pure Day-Light Bulbs, Eye Strengthening Charts, Candles, Colour Seasonal Scarves, and Colour Coded Sweaters (made to order). This sounds like a dinner conversation I had in December in Ithaca, NY, in which we fantasized about an "Invent your own pseudoscience competition". Our entry was to be something very similar to this...it goes to show that it's almost as difficult to invent a pseudoscience that isn't already in business as it is to write a genuinely new, original melody.

One final word on candles, from the Dyfed Foundation's course listings: "Candlemagic...As a candle maker a number of people have asked me 'What can we use our candles for?' Last year candles were used by a number of well known international organisations as a focus and symbol for bringing peace to a troubled world. This is in itself an act of Candlemagic. This workshop will start from ourselves. If you have a problem in life which you want to resolve, you can use this weekend to make your own candle and develop a focus for a new resolve."

Does anyone know how to pronounce Chthonios, as in Chthonios Books? [wg]

The following letter came in the mail from Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex:

Dear Editor,

The BBC1 programme "London Plus" (6:35 PM Friday the 24th April) had a short article about the "Aetherius Society".

Apparently, according to a survey, 63% of the population believe in "flying saucers" (or UFO's) and 10% claim to have seen one.

The Aetherius Society are now operating a "hot-line" for people to report such sightings. While this prompt reporting may aid identification of the real cause of various sightings, the Aetherius Society have no doubts. A spokesman showed a model of a "UFO" explaining that it was a scout ship (how did he know?) from another world, able to materialise and dematerialise (how convenient!) at will.

I predict a series of imaginative reports from this society in the coming months/years. You have been warned!

(signed) A. Bloomfield.

Daily Mail, Wednesday, September 25, 1985

Doctors split over £½m tests

Healers try their hands on patients in hospital

By JOHN ILLMAN, Medical Correspondent

SPiritual healers are to work alongside doctors in Health Service hospitals in a £500,000 research programme starting next month.

The idea is to establish whether the laying-on of hands can

really help patients who do not respond to drugs and high technology medicine.

The controversial move will astonish many doctors, but yesterday the Royal College of General Practitioners backed it—as will Prince Charles, a supporter of complementary methods of medicine such as healing and homeopathy.

Studies of 80 rheumatoid arthritis patients will begin at Leeds General Infirmary.

Further investigations are planned to determine if healing can affect the course of terminal cancer, cataracts and persistent pain. They will involve doctors in London, Ipswich and Liverpool.

DUTCH CONFERENCE PLANNED

The new Dutch group is planning a Conference for the middle of October. Among the speakers will be Paul Kurtz (not all the papers will be in Dutch!). Further information is available from Professor Paul Wouters, ISUW Dodewig 8, 3832 RD Leusden, The Netherlands.

Liberals call for alternative forms of medical care

By Richard Evans, Political Correspondent

Alternative forms of medical treatment such as osteopathy, homoeopathy, herbalism and acupuncture should be available on the National Health Service, a Liberal health pamphlet recommended yesterday.

Public demand for such unorthodox treatment appears to be increasing "and Liberals see this as to some extent a measure of the failure of the NHS to meet all needs".

The pamphlet adds: "The crucial question is whether the various 'alternative' treatments are successful. Some 'orthodox' treatments might not satisfy strict double-blind clinical trials, even though they are widely accepted as helpful to patients.

"Increasing incidence of side-effects from drugs must encourage a search for alternatives. Medicine must remain open-minded and receptive to new ideas (and old ones) whatever their source."

Provided such alternative treatments can be proved to be successful "they should be available for NHS patients subject to the same requirements of proof of safety as applies to traditional forms of treatment".

The pamphlet, drawn up for the Liberal Health Panel, calls for a "controlled partnership" between the NHS and

private medicine which recognizes the demand for private medicine but does not allow it to exploit the NHS or deprive it of resources.

"It is essential that there should be no subsidy from public funds, either directly or through tax subsidies to individuals or companies or other groupings."

Under the present Government the commercial health services have been allowed to "cream off" profitable activities, "leaving the NHS with an unbalanced caseload and organizational difficulties".

Mr Archy Kirkwood, the Liberals' health spokesman, said yesterday: "The availability of private health care cannot be denied. We must beware of the danger that such services may reduce the freedom of NHS patients to get good health care by pre-empting resources.

"The private sector must make a contribution to the training of staff, either via a training levy or by providing agreed levels of training themselves."

The pamphlet says that patients should be given more choice about a doctor.

Freedom in Sickness and in Health (Liberal Party Publications, Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire; £1).

REVIEW AND SUMMARY: Alternative Therapy (a report of the Board of Science and Education of the British Medical Association. BMA, London, 1986.

by Dr. Peter O'Hara.

This report is a picture of orthodox medicine looking at the "alternatives", trying to pick out the very few treatments that are well proved to be effective, and after that describing how the rest may be tested for possible efficiency. It is all set in the context of orthodox medicine and a criterion of scientific proof.

In summary, the report does not suggest that registered doctors take up any treatment at present used only by alternative therapists, or that any recognition or registration be given to the "alternatives". It does recognize the possible use for new registration of spinal manipulators, but only if they act under direction of a registered doctor. It also points out that compassion, counselling, and holism are already present within orthodox medicine. It was produced by a working party of the BMA's Board of Science and Education, which began work in 1983.

The Prince of Wales was president of the BMA in 1982-3 (why they temporarily abandoned their previous practice of having one of their own members as president is not clear), and during his term he urged the BMA to look critically at modern medicine. The Royal Family's interest in homeopathy may be important here. The working party consisted of three pharmacologists, two anaesthetists, two physicians, and one psychiatrist, all except one with academic appointments now or in the past. The terms of reference (p. 1) were: "to consider the feasibility and possible methods of assessing the value of alternative therapies, whether used alone or to complement other treatments and to report on the evidence received to the Board of Science and Education." They began by inviting submissions, and received over six hundred. From these a questionnaire was designed and sent to therapists and their organisations. Finally oral evidence was obtained about six particular therapies.

The report is intended for the medical profession. Although there are many technical words which the average reader would not understand, the style makes it easy to read. The main report takes up only half of the book. There are four appendices, three of which cover aspects of the report in more detail; the fourth appendix is a translated summary of a report made to the Dutch government on the same matter in 1981. There is even repetition within the main report. Sometimes the reader may get the feeling of having read a section already.

There are two pages on the background to the rise of alternative therapy. There are seventeen pages on the history of medicine and two on possible future developments. Next come seven pages on the development of treatments and measurement of their effects. Appendix 1 covers the same matter at greater length (fourteen pages). There is a twenty-five-page alphabetical section describing sixteen alternative therapies. The eighteen pages of discussions and conclusions go over all of what went before, but particularly focus on homoeopathy, acupuncture, hypnotherapy, and manipulation (osteopathy and chiropractic) as the therapies most deserving of careful consideration.

The report attributes the rising interest in to three factors: firstly, a general tide of criticism of progress, bureaucracy, and science; secondly, a desire for "time, touch, and compassion" which was formerly the main skill of ordinary doctors, but which has lost time both in medical training and practice to the numerous effective, sometimes technological treatments; and thirdly, an expectation of cures for all ills prompted by the progress and perhaps the over-selling of orthodox medicine. The report accepts that many alternative therapists give a lot of counselling and support, but not that this is peculiar to them, any more than is the holistic attitude (taking all aspects of the person into account in treatment), which is a regular part of teaching in medical schools. Indeed, some "alternative" therapies as described in the report are clearly anti-holistic, in ascribing all illnesses to a limited range of causes. People consulting alternative practitioners seem to have three groups of problems. First are vague complaints not actually amounting to diseases, plus minor illnesses that improve spontaneously. The report finds no justification for giving any treatment here. Second are patients diagnosed by orthodox doctors, for whom there are no cures. The report notes a doctor's duty to save the waste of money on a false hope of cure, in order to use it better, for example, in modifications to the house to lessen the effects of disability. The third group have serious illnesses partly or fully amenable to orthodox treatment, but go first to the "alternative" therapist, perhaps for fear of the serious diagnosis. These are the patients in most danger.

The historical section shows how orthodox medicine, with theories of disease consistent with physics and chemistry, grew out of

Western folk medicine. Many of the theories used by the alternatives are inconsistent with physics and chemistry, to varying degrees. Here homoeopathy is vigorously attacked because the enormous dilutions of the drugs means that most tablets do not contain even a single molecule of that drug. The homeopaths fully acknowledge this, but claim that the shaking ("succussion") accompanying each dilution transfers the "potency" of the drug to the diluting agent (usually alcohol). That the small alcohol molecules could "remember" the nature of the absent active drug is not supported by present-day physics and chemistry, and indeed is most unlikely in that light. Traditional acupuncture, Bach-flower remedies, Hellerwork, Polarity therapy, Radionics, and Reflexology all postulate forms of energy (whose imbalance underlies disease) which are either inconsistent with physics or for which there is no evidence that they exist at all. Nevertheless the treatment and measurement section points out that for a treatment to be based on a theory is neither sufficient nor necessary for it to be effective. A theoretically effective treatment may fail to produce a worthwhile effect in practice: hence all new treatments must be formally tested. If it passes the test, "orthodox medicine will not exclude a treatment [only] because its mode of action is not understood. There is thus no logical class of 'alternative therapies': there are only therapies with and without good evidence for their efficacy" (p. 27) In my opinion, the report does not adequately stress that knowledge of the mode of action of a treatment or an adequate theory underlying it are not necessary for its introduction. Critics of this position, who feel that the mode of actions should be known before offering a treatment, fail to realise how many well-proved treatments would be abandoned or delayed by the adoption of their standard.

The measurement section is a good introduction to statistics, both descriptive and interpretative. It is as clear and concise an introduction as I have seen to this difficult material. Society fails to educate its members about science as fast as the members benefit from that science's technology: the use of statistics in social science is as sorely missed as any aspect of physics or chemistry. Exponents of alternative therapies often told the Working Party that their therapies "were unique, and...could not be compared one with another or with those of orthodox medicine" (p. 29). That authors felt that these therapists had misconceptions about measurements, their accuracy, and their significance. They point out that repeated measurement of the same thing rarely produces exactly

the same figure, and that patients get better sometimes because of treatment and sometimes in spite of it. "It follows that any treatment persistently applied is bound to produce apparent cures unless it is dangerous" (p. 31). Thus disease variability and spontaneous improvement is the first major cause of the illusion of a treatment being beneficial. The second major cause, the placebo response, also gets a mention on page 31. Unfortunately, although placebo treatments are frequently mentioned in Appendix 1, the nature of placebo response is not explained at all: this is a serious omission. It means where the patient improves because he believes he is getting treatment, or more or better treatment than previously. This section concludes with the recommendation that trials of therapy must include patients being randomly allocated to one of the two or more treatments under comparison.

The report gives special attention to six therapies.

In the case of acupuncture a distinction is made between the traditional Chinese form, practised by a few non-medical practitioners in Europe, and a modified form used (more widely) by conventionally trained doctors in Britain. The former involves meridian lines on the body, with needles inserted at 365 points along these lines. The evidence for the value of this form is very thin indeed. The modified form involves needles at points on sensory dermatomes (the "drainage" area of a segmental spinal nerve), often stimulated electrically. The report says there is evidence for the effectiveness of the modified acupuncture in chronic pain. However, only fifteen percent of such patients benefit, and only five percent actually take less painkillers than before. The other ten percent, while describing themselves as improved, take as many pills as ever. With regard to safety, needles inserted too deeply have caused serious heart infections and have been associated with kidney stones. Some needles have required surgical removal. There have been deaths from puncturing the heart. The Working Party feels that ethical and technical standards need to be as high in acupuncture as in orthodox medicine.

The proponents of herbalism claim that the presence of more than one active substance in the plant extract improves the wanted effect and reduces the side effects. The history of medicine given in the report clearly shows the contrary: that the treatment was improved by separating out the most active ingredient. Examples are morphine (from the opium poppy), aspirin (willow bark), quinine (cinchona tree bark), and digoxin (foxglove). Herbal practi-

tioners seemed unaware of how potent their treatments were, and Appendix 3 describes many adverse reactions to them.

Homeopathy was unfavourably reviewed from a practical standpoint, even apart from the theoretical difficulties. Some of the problems in testing it in trials are covered in Appendix 1.

Hypnosis was found to be widely used by registered practitioners and by alternative therapists. It was felt to be a useful adjunct to other treatments, but only by registered doctors and dentists and qualified psychologists. The Working Party were concerned about the use of hypnosis by other persons, especially by those therapists who do not make any diagnosis.

While orthodox medicine would endorse manipulation of the spine for certain disorders of the spine and its muscles, chiropractic and to a lesser extent osteopathy are based on the idea that some or all symptoms in other parts of the body are due to "subluxations" of the spinal joints. Both diseases of the internal abdominal organs and lower spinal lesions pressing on nerves result in pains at the side and front of the trunk. This similarity may be the origin of chiropractic's mistaken theory of disease. The report notes the dangers of manipulation (paralysis, death), and concludes that after a proper diagnosis by a fully trained doctor there are spinal cases that would benefit from manipulation, by the doctor or by a lay manipulator, but that the latter should not work alone.

There is some approval given for (faith) healing. The Confederation of Healing Organisations gave evidence to the Working Party that they do not examine or diagnose patients and they always tell people to see a doctor beforehand. The Confederation thought healing could not be harmful but was often ineffective. They agreed there was no scientific evidence in their favour, but the report notes that a controlled trial began at Leeds General Infirmary in January, 1986, of laying-on of hands in addition to conventional therapy for rheumatoid arthritis. Thus modesty in their own claim and due respect for orthodox medicine won approval for this placebo treatment.

The report criticizes claims by cults such as the Unification Church (Moonies) and the Church of Scientology to be able to heal their members. These are similar to the criticism of the cults voiced elsewhere.

Many people feel that the disapproval of alternative medicine by registered medical practitioners arises from prejudice. There is no doubt that the prejudice has existed and continues to exist, because, as the historical section shows, today's scientific medicine grew out of the majority or mainstream folk medicine of the eight-

eenth and early nineteenth centuries. Prejudice also continues because the failure to understand science (mentioned above) applies equally to people passing through medical school: they learn today's best treatments but take in little of scientific method (trials of treatments), although this is taught. Fortunately, there is none of this prejudice in the report.

The Dutch Ministry of Health report of 1983 (Appendix 4) is considerably different. In the Netherlands it has been illegal to offer medical services without proper qualification and registration: in Britain and Ireland unregistered practitioners can practise freely provided they do not claim to be registered. Thus the rise of alternative therapy in Holland involved breaking the law. While the BMA report concludes (p. 62) that "orthodox medical knowledge has led to large, demonstrable, and reproducible benefits for mankind of a scale which cannot be matched by alternative approaches," the Dutch commission felt it was "wrong that one particular scientific model should be regarded as the only correct one and all others rejected" (p. 116). The commission recommended legalising and registering many illegal practitioners and teaching them basic anatomy, physiology, and pathology to reduce their hazards. There are separate comments by two members of the commission, appended to Appendix 4, criticising the report for failing to protect the public from bad or dangerous treatment. Both see the recommendation to teach anatomy, etc., to the alternative therapists as hopeless. One good point in the Dutch report is that orthodox medicine still contains some unproved treatments: this gets no mention in the BMA report.

'Acupuncture on National Health' call

By David Fletcher
Health Services
Correspondent

ACUPUNCTURE, osteopathy and similar forms of treatment should have a place in the National Health Service, Prof. James Payne, chairman of the British Medical Association's working party on "alternative therapies said yesterday."

Prof. Payne, writing in the Journal of Medical Engineering and Technology, says patients should have the right to choose their treatments, although he argues that alternative therapies have no part to play in the care of acutely ill patients.

He says the BMA working party accept that osteopathy and hypnotherapy have particular skills to offer orthodox medicine, while acupuncture "undoubtedly has a place in the management of chronic pain."

--The Daily Telegraph,
28 March, 1987.

The BMA report includes a section (Appendix 1) on the proper design of scientifically controlled tests of alternative therapies. The Working Party stresses the need for double blind controls, the need to define treatments "precisely enough for the treatment to be repeated by other practitioners" (p.80), randomisation, both in assigning patients to test and control groups and in recruiting an independent assessor.

Considering the article below in the light of the BMA report, one has to ask what controls are in effect in this experiment. The Observer does not report, for example, whether the control patients are being given the same amount of time and attention as the patients who are seeing the faith healers. If not, this difference could create difficulties in assessing the results of the experiment, at least in some cases. (wg)

THE OBSERVER, SUNDAY 15 DECEMBER 1985

NEWS

Spiritual healers set out to cure the sceptics

Patients put their faith in new hands

ANNABEL FERRIMAN ■ Health Correspondent

ARTHRITIS patients are about to become guinea pigs in an experiment to see whether spiritual healing works.

For the first time, a group of practitioners in alternative medicine has launched a scientifically controlled trial to demonstrate that their methods are effective. They have invited members of the medical establishment to assess the results.

In a controlled experiment, 30 arthritis patients who attend Leeds General Infirmary will receive conventional treatment while another 30 will be given weekly healing sessions for six months in addition to their orthodox therapy.

At the start and finish of their treatment, the patients' arthritis will be assessed by a group of doctors, using X-ray, laboratory and clinical tests. The first patients are expected to start their healing sessions this week.

Not content with tackling arthritis, the Confederation of Healing Organisations is also organising controlled trials on children with cancer and patients with cataracts, a complaint in which the lens of the eye becomes opaque.

While in every case, the rules surrounding the trials are being drawn up by an independent scientist, the healers are being provided by the confederation, which has 7,000 members across the country. Most healers believe their talents have divine origin. Many have differing religious beliefs but all feel they have the gift of being able to heal through their hands or through thought transmission.

Mr Denis Haviland, chairman of the confederation, whose arthritic hip was improved by spiritual healing, is convinced that the trials will show that healing works. He hopes it might then become available on the National Health Service.

He said: "After 25 years, we know it is a waste of time trying to persuade doctors

using our own evidence. We have to meet them on their own terms and let them draw up the details of the experiment.

'The professor of visual science who has drawn up the protocol for the cataract trial thinks we are crazy. He thinks we should have chosen a psychosomatic disorder, where the patient's faith that he is going to get better might have had some effect.

'We know however that healing works, even in this type of disorder, regardless of whether the patient thinks it will or not. That is why we have chosen cataracts.'

IT WAS apparent from the numbers turning up to a healing session at a church hall in Bromley, Kent, last week that many sufferers also believe it works.

Forty patients, including a bus driver, a former cavalry officer, shopkeepers and housewives attended for attention to a wide variety of complaints from cancer and multiple sclerosis to throat infections and migraine.

An orderly booking system ensures that no one has to wait long before being seen by one of the seven healers, who work twice a week at the centre. They listen sympathetically to the patient's symptoms and problems before they lay their hands on the head and affected parts.

An atmosphere of tranquillity pervades the hall, heightened by the playing of taped music, though the white coats worn by the healers add a clinical air to the proceedings. No one is charged for treatment but they are asked to make a voluntary contribution.

Since the cataract trial is being co-ordinated from the Bromley centre, three of the patients attending were suffering from that particular disorder.

They all had their cataracts assessed by the professor of visual science when they came on to the trial. All will have



Treatment by touch: James Ball with his patient Florence Kemp.

them checked again after six months.

Most of the patients assume they will have to have surgery for the condition eventually, but are waiting for it to reach the right stage. Some are hoping that the healing will make an operation unnecessary.

Two patients who have been receiving such therapy said their eyes were now feeling much less red and sore; one

said it had had no effect at all.

Mr James Ball, one of the healers at the centre who has been treating a woman with a cataract, said he hoped to see healing available through the NHS.

'We want to have it established that spiritual healing is of value in the treatment of disease, not necessarily as an alternative, but as a complementary therapy to orthodox treatment,' he said.

Mr Ball, who is a convinced Christian and worked voluntarily for the Samaritans for 15 years, added: "Most people come for spiritual healing because they have not responded satisfactorily to orthodox treatment.

'Many of them are medically incurable, so even if they do not have a 100 per cent cure but their quality of life improves, the value of treatment is established.'

--Contributed by Phil McKerracher

THE MONSTROUS MYTH AT LOCH NESS

Steuart Campbell

In 1933 the world learned of the belief that 'a fearsome-looking monster' had 'for generations' inhabited L Ness. In fact nearly every Highland lake (sic) was believed to be inhabited by a 'water kelpie', an evil spirit which lured travellers to their death by drowning. But now the spirit was incarnated in what the local water bailiff likened to a plesiosaur! Furthermore it had been seen cruising at the surface making a huge wash. Surely this was the zoological find of the century, or any century?

It is curious therefore that in the subsequent half-century, and despite strenuous efforts by individuals and teams, no reliable evidence for the Monster's existence has appeared. Nessie buffs point to the existence of numerous photographs, taken both above and below water, a famous cine film and many sonar contacts as proof of Nessie's existence. However, when subjected to close scrutiny, all this so-called evidence crumbles to dust. It can be shown that all the still photographs are either hoaxes or pictures of conventional objects or phenomena, sometimes both. For example, the famous 'Surgeon's Photograph', taken in 1934, which is repeatedly used to illustrate books and articles (as the definitive picture), shows an object less than one metre high about 30 m from the camera. Furthermore its resemblance to a picture of the tail of an otter as it dives leads to the conclusion that that is probably the explanation. Most of the above-water still pictures are hoaxes, and they are still appearing!

It is less easy to fake cine film and buffs have long exhibited Tim Dinsdale's 1960 film as prime evidence. Their case was strengthened in 1966 when the RAF's photographic interpretation unit (JARIC) unofficially endorsed the film; they concluded that it probably shows an animate object. This endorsement went unchallenged until last year when I showed that JARIC had made a fundamental error. They had assumed that the film was taken as one continuous sequence and their conclusion was based solely on the fact that the unknown blob was moving too fast for it to be a powered fishing dinghy (the only alternative explanation). However, Dinsdale had exposed the film in short bursts and had to stop twice to wind the camera's clockwork motor. Thus JARIC were working to a contracted time-scale; when the correct time-scale is restored the object is found to move exactly at the speed of a powered dinghy. There is no other

evidence inconsistent with the conclusion that this is what the film shows, and there is anecdotal evidence that such a dinghy did cross L Ness at the time the film was taken.

The most recent cine film is that taken by Gwen Smith in 1977, when she and her husband saw a strange pole-like object rise and fall several times about 160 m away along the shore opposite Urquhart Castle. Coincidentally two Yorkshire schoolboys were in the same area, conducting (so they claimed) a school project. It is now suspected that the boys had rigged their 'fishing line' so that it could raise or lower a log or post out in the water. In that event the Smiths were the victims of an ingenious hoax.

Because the results of above-water photography were so disappointing many had high expectations of the underwater flash photography undertaken by the Academy of Applied Science (AAS) from New England. In 1972 this organization obtained two pictures which, when subjected to computer processing, appeared to show the diamond-shaped limb of a large creature. It is alleged that, at the same time, sonar showed the presence of large animals near the camera (although no evidence for simultaneity has been published). Doubt has since been cast on the legitimacy of these pictures; there is evidence that the prime enhancements do not show such limbs and the AAS has not fully detailed the process by which the pictures were obtained. The original (unenhanced) pictures appear to show debris on the bottom of Urquhart Bay caught in the flash as the camera and its support boat drifted shorewards.

It is certain that further pictures obtained by the AAS in 1975 do show bottom debris. Subsequent investigation has shown that the camera rig must have touched bottom and rolled as its support boat was driven onshore by the wind. The AAS has not published computer enhancements of these pictures. Significantly, when the AAS deployed their cameras on a secure mounting they obtained negative results.

Sonar is a tool that ought to be able to locate Nessie. However, the use of sonar in lakes is fraught with problems that do not arise in the open sea. The steep underwater walls of L Ness produce anomalous echoes and the sonar side-lobes produce signals that mingle with the main-lobe signal. Nor have all the operators been expert with the apparatus they have used. The crews of several fishing boats have thought they had detected Nessie and, on one occasion, a sonar hoax was perpetrated.

In 1972 the AAS thought that they had

caught Nessie in a sonar beam aimed horizontally towards the boat carrying their camera rig. In fact the 'Monster' trace was caused by the boat itself, and an overlaid second-time return from the bottom!

Much was made in 1968 of the results obtained by the University of Birmingham, who were testing a digital sonar system. Too late they discovered that some anomalous returns (which they had light-heartedly suggested might be from Nessie) were due to strong refraction of the sound waves as they passed through the thermocline (the layer of water with a large temperature lapse between the warm epilimnion and the cold hypolimnion). The bottom of the lake was appearing in mid water!

Not only have photography and sonar produced no evidence for Nessie, searches of the bottom of the lake have found no remains of the many creatures who must have died there in the last ten thousand years.

The simplest explanation for the repeated failure to obtain evidence for Nessie is that she does not exist! That would also explain why the determined efforts of the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau brought no success. In fact, in 1962 a team of students from the University of Cambridge demonstrated that no monsters live in L Ness. Using several boats they 'swept' the lake from end to end with a sonar 'curtain' that either had to record monsters as it passed or force them to one end where they could be discovered. Nothing was found.

But if Nessie does not exist what is the cause of the repeated eyewitness reports? many of the reports are of a creature which closely resembles an otter. Since otters do inhabit L Ness and since they are rarely seen it may be concluded that the animals observed were indeed otters. They were more numerous before The Second World War, when most of these reports were made. Today the increased activity around the lake must inhibit them. In one case the witness mistook a young deer for the Monster (leading to the belief that the latter has horns).

However, another phenomenon is responsible for the reports which convince people that a monstrous creature lives in L Ness. Because the lake is part of the Caledonian Canal it is used by large and powerful vessels which create strong wakes. These wakes travel great distances when the surface is calm and they can be reflected by the steep shores of the lake so that, behind the vessel, they break as they

encounter the vessel's screw wake. In the 1930s the crews of several vessels reported being followed by what they thought was an enormous creature. Alternatively two opposing reflections can meet to produce interference effects (alternate humps and dips) which must travel parallel to the course of the vessel, although a long way behind. Moreover the two wakes pass through the interference enhanced as if they were the result and not the cause of the disturbance. Observers can be forgiven for mistaking this phenomenon for Nessie. Before the growth of road transport, especially in the '30s, there was much more traffic by water and this certainly must have led to the growth of the myth. Wakes and disturbances will also break in the shallows of L Ness where observers often see a sudden 'inexplicable' upsurge of water. With no vessel in sight it is understandable that such upsurges will be interpreted as the Monster.

Once it was generally believed that a large unknown aquatic species lived in L Ness it was inevitable that reports of such a creature would be received. Such reports then reinforced the myth guaranteeing further reports. Ignorant of the tricks that L Ness can play observers under the influence of the myth are bound to see Nessie in every anomalous stimulus. It is even likely that reports of monsters in other Scottish lakes, and in lakes in other parts of the world, have been generated by the L Ness myth. L Ness has not spawned a Monster but it has spawned a monstrous myth.

The Loch Ness Monster: The Evidence by Stuart Campbell was published last year by Aquarian Press at £3.99

SPIRAL GLASSES give you the ability to see spirals and auras. These amazing glasses allow you to see your friends' and neighbors' actual spirals of energy, and to see whether or not the spiral is going clockwise or counter clockwise. You can finally confirm whether your friend is a man or a woman.—*Adv. in East West Journal.*

--as reprinted in the New Yorker.

The Transcendental Temptation by Paul Kurtz. 500 pp. Prometheus Books, 1986.
(Available in UK from Mike Hutchinson).

Reviewed by Lewis Jones.

QUESTION: who is it?

At his birth, shepherds brought gifts and adored him. In his lifetime, he worked miracles. The cult that grew up in his name began to attract widespread attention in Rome at the end of the first century B.C. Within a hundred years it had spread rapidly through many classes of the Roman world. Priests used candles and holy water. They held communion services where worshippers received consecrated bread and water. They sanctified Sunday and the 25th of December. They talked of heaven and hell, and an atoning sacrifice. After death, they said, all men would appear before the judgment seat. Unclean souls would suffer eternal torment, while the pure would be received into the full radiance of heaven.

Need any more clues? In fact, all religious sects have a set of such beliefs and rituals that they claim are "right", while maintaining that others are "wrong." But with the long-established ones, it can be hard to hack through the reverence and assess the claims coolly.

Paul Kurtz recommends the application of "critical intelligence" to these and other paranormal claims. ("A person can possess high intelligence and yet lack the critical component.")

He applies the method to more recent religions, where it is much easier to get at the facts, and then re-applies the same critical apparatus to some of the old-time cults.

So we get the lowdown on con-man Joseph Smith, who "translated" the Book of Mormon from a set of non-existent plates of gold that he said he'd dug up not far from his home. We meet Ellen G White, who cobbled together the writings of other people, passed them off as her own, and founded the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. There is Christian "Science", with a church based on biblical readings and the revealed word of Mary Baker Eddy. And Charles Tate Russell, the haberdasher from Allegheny in Penn-

sylvania who predicted the end of the world in 1914. The fact that he didn't even get that right didn't stop his followers from abdicating their critical intelligence and becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.

Using the same critical armoury, Kurtz confronts the murderous Moses and Mohammed, and the Jesus whose very existence is unsupported by any sound independent evidence. In ancient times, alas, Sons of God and resurrected deities were two a denarius.

To the pessimists who complain "How can life have meaning if it will all end?" Kurtz makes the counter-proposal: "Why not make the most out of this life, if that is all we have?"

For him, "the two cardinal sins are (1) gullibility and ignorance and (2) cowardice and fear."

A study of the mystics of the past, he says, shows that the ground for their experience is laid "by sensory deprivation, sexual repression, and enforced withdrawal - in short, the preconditions for a psychotic-like reaction are present."

And to those who would put their faith in such revelations, he quotes Bertrand Russell: "From a scientific point of view we can make no distinction between the man who eats little and sees heaven, and the man who drinks much and sees snakes."

He has little use for the hotch-potch of contradictions that make up the Bible, or the facile arguments for a divine Creator. In view of the certain heat-death that will ultimately envelope the world, why not a divine Destroyer?

Mediums, spoonbenders, thought readers, levitators, ghosts, astrologers, and occultists in general: Kurtz lays about them all with a will. In principle, nothing distinguishes their blind spots from those of the religious devotee.

And talking of blind spots, Kurtz's answer to my opening question is: the god Mithras.

Interesting?

SCARNE's New Complete Guide to Gambling by John Scarne. 871 pp. Simon & Schuster, 1986. \$12.95 in US paperback.

Reviewed by Wendy Grossman

John Scarne is the author of many books on gambling, games, dice, chance, and is billed on the cover of this enormous book as "World's Foremost Gambling Authority." I doubt anyone would disagree with that assessment. I first heard of him in the writings of Martin Gardner, whose mathematical diversions I have been enjoying for over twenty years.

In his 1961 collection of mathematical diversions, The Unexpected Hanging (Simon & Schuster), Gardner gives a whole chapter to a discussion of this book's predecessor, Scarne's Complete Guide to Gambling.

What does a book on gambling and cheating have to do with scientific investigation of claims of the paranormal? In Gardner's words, "There are...two large fields of public deception in which many of the principles of magic are employed for less wholesome purposes: the fields of gambling and psychic research. A certain false shuffle, for instance, can be equally useful to a card magician and to a card hustler. A technique for secretly obtaining information written on a piece of paper can be equally useful to a magician who performs 'mental magic' and to a crooked medium. As a mathematician might put it, the principles of deception in the three areas--magic, gambling, and psychic phenomena--form three mutually intersecting sets" (p. 53).

Both Susan Blackmore's The Adventures of a Parapsychologist (reviewed in BIS I.2) and David Marks' and Richard Kamman's The Psychology of the Psychic make absolutely clear the importance in psychic research of understanding how the laws of chance operate. To quote Blackmore: "Years before, I might have considered the possibility that statistics were not the way to get at psi, but now I had seen the powerful effects of chance correspondences on people's beliefs...People chose to see psi in those correspondences when they had made the correspondence for themselves" (p. 107). Persi Diaconis, in his paper on coincidences delivered at the 1984 CSICOP Conference in San Francisco, put it a little differently: "it's easy to fool ourselves by the richness of our pattern recognizing faculty."

Here's what Scarne has to say about chance: "...although modern man has tossed the

superstition that dice can divine the future into the discard, many gamblers still believe that the fall of the dice or the turn of a card is controlled by some supernatural force" (p. 25). He laments most people's lack of understanding of the laws of chance, and then applies this specifically to gamblers: "...they don't understand how chance operates or know what luck really is...anyone who believes that one player has a better chance of winning a bet because he is luckier than another is no smarter than the customers of the sorcerors and witches of the Middle Ages, the African voodoo doctor or the gypsy fortuneteller who reads tea leaves...The supernatural will continue to get a foot in at the door just as long as we try to investigate chance as it applies to a single person."

Scarne's book is genuinely a complete guide to gambling--and why to avoid it. There are careful assessments of the odds in a seemingly infinite series of gambling situations, entertaining stories, details of methods of cheating, and detailed explanations of why various gambling "systems" don't work.

In addition, it's probably the best course in applied probability and statistics you can imagine.

CLEAN ENERGY

Read your "Good 'n' Clean" column in the current Prospect Press. From what you say, buying in flea markets or wearing secondhand clothing may not be a good idea if the former owner's psychic energy still clings to it. We don't all see those lights around objects that you describe so most of us don't know if our secondhand clothes carry the former owner's energy.

Is it safe to assume that by cleaning you replace the former owner's energy with yours? Will hope to see your comments in the next issue.

MARIE COGNATA

Jeanne Smith replies: Yes, I think second hand clothes do carry the former owner's energy, and must be cleaned both physically and psychically. I am no expert, but I find energy very much like the people from whom it came. There are some people with whom I feel compatible and supported, and others whose energy is toxic for me. I have no problem with objects from the former. Regarding the latter, I do one of two things: either get it out of my space, or consciously tune into the energy--hear it, see it, feel it, acknowledge it and experience it (all in an instant); and then love, bless and release it to the higher powers. One's own consciousness is the key. I visualize white light pouring from me to the object, cleansing, renewing and obliterating all darkness.—Brooklyn (N.Y.) Prospect Press.

--as reprinted in the New Yorker

Psychic Diary

Toby Howard

In his editorial column of March 7th Tony Ortzen, editor of *Psychic News*, notes with incredulity CSICOP's recent objections to the Brooke-Bond paranormal card series. "Really you would not think anyone could object to the series. After all, no one can deny that strange phenomena do occur, as they have done in all centuries and in all cultures".

Home Office may scrap anti-psychic statute—The Home Office is believed to be giving "sympathetic consideration" to repealing section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act, which states that

every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes, or using any subtle craft, means or device by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive or impose on any of His Majesty's Subjects

commits an offence under the Act. "Tarot consultant" Alan Venamore is organising a petition for the repeal of the Act, and so far has 1,000 out of a target 7,000 signatures. A spokesman for the Home Office stated that the Law Commission had been approached, and that there would be no difficulties in repealing the Act.

Dial-a-medium service still disturbs—Liverpool medium Billy Roberts' PsychicLine venture has been suffering the wrath of local Christians. His service, operated by *First Call Enterprises* features a series of three and a half-minute talks on clairvoyance, comfort for the bereaved, and advertisements for his "Thought Workshop". British Telecom say they place no restrictions on the contents of privately operated phone services, but expect participating companies to follow a Code of Practice agreed between BT and the Association of Telephone Information Providers. An independent complaints committee has been established, and MP Ken Hargreaves has written on behalf of Hyndburn Christian Fellowship expressing his concern.

Japanese TV crew film Ghostbusters—The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP) reconstructed a ghost investigation for the benefit of a Japanese TV company, at a haunted house in Kent.

Blind woman regains sight—A "legally blind" Minnesota woman has regained her sight after ten minutes of spiritual healing at the hands of spiritualist minister Marilyn Rossner.

Psychic seagulls et. al.—Popular naturalist David Bellamy has written the foreword to a new book *Psychic Animals* by researcher Dennis Barden. The book looks at the incredible psychic abilities of animals, including seagulls, dogs, lions and dolphins.

Some predictions—International clairvoyant and astrologer Fredrick Davies has made five predictions:

- Mrs Thatcher will fall out with President Reagan this year over "nuclear missiles".
- The Princess of Wales will give birth to two more boys and a girl.
- Prince Edward will star in a West End show later this year.
- There will be a cure for AIDS within three months.
- Arsenal will beat Liverpool in the Cup Final.

Scottish ghosts for tourists—Two Scottish Tourist Boards, for the Clyde and Ayrshire Valleys, are competing to find the most and best ghosts to attract tourists; so far Clyde Valley is advertising 15 hauntings.

Plans to contact Houdini—US companies *Multimedia Entertainment* and *Tribute Entertainment* will beam round the world a live seance intended to make contact with Harry Houdini.

Healers respond—Over one hundred healers have offered their services, for healing AIDS patients, to the Confederation of Healing Organisations.

Suffolk healer to get Government grant—Suffolk healer John Hoskins is to receive a one-year grant of £40 a week from the Manpower Services Commission to start a healing service.

Claire Raynor blasts mediums—In her *Sunday Mirror* column, agony aunt Claire Raynor supported a reader's complaint that she had paid £8 to a medium for an hour of "clairvoyant rubbish".

Gloucestershire poltergeist—For the last six years David and Ruby Price have had to put up with countless burst water pipes, exploding light bulbs and more than forty fires, at their self-built home in Oakle Street, Minsterworth. After the local electricity and gas boards found nothing, the family are considering turning to the Church for help.

GP's asked to consider Spiritual healing—The Confederation of Healing Organisations (7,500 members) has distributed, through the Barnet Family Practitioner Committee, a letter to 180 local GP's offering the services of spiritual healers. The FPC agreed to distribute the letters, leaving each GP to make his or her own choice.

SAGB complains—The Spiritualist Association of Great Britain are unhappy about the way the organisation was portrayed in a recent BBC *Forty Minutes* documentary. Secretary Tom Johanson said "they left the best bits out".

More council house trouble . . .—Eerie footsteps, strange noises and self-propelled chairs have caused a Derby woman to flee her council flat. Her solicitor is petitioning the City Council for her to be rehoused. And in Airedale, Yorkshire, a woman contacted a local vicar to have her "poltergeist-ridden" council house blessed. This made the poltergeist activity worse.

Newspapers refuse advertisement for healer—Both *The Times* and *Today* have turned down Hertfordshire healer Sheila Macey's advertisements for spiritual healing at her "Clovers Healing Clinic".

Sheffield psychic poll—ASSAP's journal reports the results of a Sheffield survey to discover how widespread is the belief in the paranormal. Based on 239 questionnaires, 62% reported they had experienced a supernatural or mystical event.

Psychic artist tours UK and South Africa—Peter Hammond, inventor of the "Spiriscreen"—where the psychic drawing is back-projected onto translucent paper—will tour Britain from June to September. Hammond offers a "spirit on request" service, where he attempts to contact and draw the likeness of a specified spirit.

Update on the Chislehurst Caves study being undertaken by ASSAP: the 16-man team is being led by Clive Seymour, and although they didn't actually see the dead black dog which locals say lunges at visitors, or the bothersome workman, "that doesn't mean they weren't present" he commented. However a video machine did mysteriously start to rewind.

Finally, a Christian Spiritualist Church in Swansea wrote to the National Secular Society enquiring about their headquarters, which the NSS had occupied in the Thirties. The NSS Secretary, Terry Mullins, reported that he was unable to help since the relevant records were destroyed in World War II, but added "The secretary at the time has been dead for some years. But if you wish to get in touch with him, his name was R.H. Rosetti . . ."

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

While I probably share the views of your contributor Lewis Jones on most of the subjects depicted on the Brooke Bond cards, I was dismayed by the arrogant dogmatism with which he expressed them. He seems to me to display the same prejudice he criticises in others.

Nowhere in their text do BB indicate that they are, as he continually implies, 'believers' in the phenomena they present. The most that can be said is that they feel them to be subjects about which something remains to be explained - a viewpoint with which no honest skeptic, whatever his personal opinions, should disagree.

Your contributor may feel (as I do) that the Torino Shroud is a spurious artifact, but it is by no means conclusively proved to be so. The fact that alternative explanations have been proposed for the McMinnville and Trindade UFO photos by no means settles either matter, for the skeptics' explanations have themselves been challenged. The evidence for toads found in rock is far too substantial to be dismissed with a sneer, as is evidenced by Bob Skinner's recent compilation *Toad in the hole* with its bibliography of some 100 items.

Your contributor implies that BB go along with early accounts of Nessie, whereas what they say is 'Although legends of a monstrous animal lurking in...Loch Ness date back to AD 565, the modern era of sightings began in 1933'. No belief there, surely? Or does he think it would have been more 'scientific' to omit all reference to the old legends?

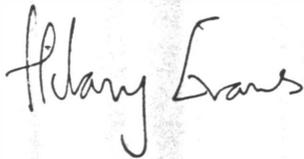
He is fond of such phrases as 'BB believe that people can float in mid-air' or 'BB are still rooting for the Shroud' etc, but these are illegitimate inferences from BB's references to the beliefs of others. Thus, in the case of the 'moving Madonnas' they write 'Ireland in 1985 saw a profusion of what believers have called "miracles" and sceptics called "the power of suggestion"'. I read that not as belief but as an impartial statement that a difference of opinion exists on the matter.

It is on the 'Dogon' matter, however, that he takes prejudice to the point of absurdity, telling us that Ian Ridpath has 'written it off as "riddled with contradictions"'. As though that ended the matter! Did Einstein give up trying to understand the universe because it, too, is riddled with contradictions?

Your contributor has the effrontery to end by asking 'How does it feel to know that the safety of the drink in your teacup is in the hands of people who believe in fairies?', whereas BB acknowledge the Cottingley photos to be 'clever fakes' - the final distortion in a so-called 'report' which is no more than a welter of distortions.

I write this not to defend belief in these phenomena - as I say, in principle I share most of your contributor's views - but because I believe it is this kind of attitude which gets skepticism a bad name. We skeptics deplore dogmatism and prejudice in others: we should also deplore it when it is displayed from within our own ranks. In attacking the BB cards with such distasteful arrogance, your contributor risks making skeptics seem as dishonest and dogmatic - and, I'm afraid, as ridiculous - as the believers we challenge.

Yours sincerely,



Lewis Jones replies:

- 1 Brooke Bond Oxo are fully accountable for any claims they sponsor and allow to be made in their name.
- 2 No one is under obligation to disprove nonsensical claims. It is the claimant's job to back them up with proper evidence.
- 3 It's impossible to give a full analysis of 40 pseudo-scientific claims in a couple of pages. That's why I gave some follow-up references.

For the Dogon myth, see Ian Ridpath's book.

For the Cottingley fairies, see Brooke Bond Oxo, who still account the little creatures among the top 40 Unexplained Mysteries of the World.

For the likelihood of surviving for millions of years inside solid rock, see a toad.

HELLO. MY NAME is Derek C. Sampson and this is *UFO-Line*, where everyday I speak about flying saucers, extra-terrestrial visitors and other great mysteries of our world.

I have studied aerial phenomena for many years and I assure you that UFO's *do* exist. I have interviewed thousands of reliable witnesses and visited sites where they have landed all over the world. And I have seen them for myself. But more than that I have been contacted by aliens. They have sent me important telepathic messages. It sounds strange, I know, and it is strange, but it is real and it is true. On this programme you will hear no fiction. Everything I tell you is fact.

Yesterday I described many different kinds of flying objects which have been seen in our skies. They range in size from small spherical craft to gigantic mother ships. The largest are cigar-shaped. They fly very high in the atmosphere, gliding silently across the heavens. It has been estimated that they are sometimes over three miles long. Their position in the sky appears slightly tilted, almost as if there is more weight at one end than the other. Their function is to act as travelling space stations. They are not unlike enormous cities, sailing across the universe. On board there are whole fleets of smaller spacecraft, which are used for scouting and close surveillance of other planets. Some of these will be flown by extra-terrestrial pilots, while others are controlled by highly sophisticated computers and robots. It is thought that on board each mother ship there are literally thousands of crew and scientists and other aliens.

These vast flying cities present a spectacular sight. Seeing just one is an unforgettable experience. Anyone who has done so will agree. I count myself particularly fortunate. Some years ago, I saw as many as nine mother ships flying together in formation over the Malvern Hills. It was a bright summer morning and though they were high above me I could see them, clearly. Holding position, they glided silently across the sky, and then these giant extra-terrestrial craft began to change position. They reassembled in a new formation. It was one of the most thrilling sights I have ever seen—an aerial display unlike any other. To witness it was inspiring. I count myself very fortunate that I was there.

Strange flying machines have been observed in our skies for thousands of years. There are many references to them in art and literature. In *Gulliver's Travels* there are references to a typical flying saucer. But Jonathan Swift wrote his famous

novel long before anything had been written about flying saucers. It is possible that Swift himself sometimes travelled in one. The evidence suggests that he did.

Call me tomorrow and I will tell you why I believe Gulliver travelled in a flying saucer. On *UFO-Line*. Remember 0898-300-346. *UFO-Line*, where truth really is "stranger than fiction".

§

Yesterday I spoke about nine gigantic mother ships, which I saw flying in formation above the Malvern Hills. Many people have had similar experiences, though some choose not to speak of them. It is intriguing that the great writer Jonathan Swift appears to have known a great deal about flying saucers when he wrote *Gulliver's Travels*, and that was nearly three hundred years ago. We do not know where Swift's information came from, but I cannot help wondering whether he himself actually travelled in a flying saucer.

Several people have reported strange encounters with extra-terrestrials, who invited them to board flying saucers, and flew them across the universe to show them other lands. Those who have spoken of such encounters are often treated as cranks. So is it surprising that some might choose not to reveal such experiences? And in Swift's time, it would have actually been dangerous to reveal such an encounter. There were severe penalties for witchcraft and heresy. Those who were found guilty of either were often put to death. If Swift had spoken of flying away to visit other worlds, he would doubtless have been convicted of one of these crimes. He may have visited distant planets—we do not know. But there is evidence that somehow he knew a great deal more than he was willing to reveal openly.

In part three of *Gulliver's Travels*, his hero makes a voyage to Laputa. Contained within the text of this story are hidden references to a flying machine propelled by an anti-gravitational motor. The great scientist Wilhelm Reich revealed earlier this century that flying saucers are controlled by an anti-gravitational power source called *orgone*. In Swift's tale, the sun is suddenly obscured by what Gulliver at first believes to be a large cloud. He looks up, and sees a huge opaque object between him and the sun. This object appears to be at least two miles above him, and eclipses the sun for six or seven minutes. It is very large. As the object approaches Gulliver, he can see it is solid and made of

a firm substance. Its sides are smooth and curved, and its bottom, which is flat, shines very brightly—so brightly that the light it emits is reflected by the sea. Observing through a small telescope, Gulliver sees many people moving about at different levels. Swift called the strange craft a “flying island”, but his description matches the description many people have given of flying saucers, and Gulliver has conversations with the crew, which are very similar to conversations reported this century by people who have had contact with the pilots of flying saucers.

Call me tomorrow and hear more of this fascinating mystery...

§

I have studied aerial phenomena since an early age, and I have made many discoveries. Evidence of remarkable happenings appears in the most unexpected places. How many people realise, for instance, that in *Gulliver's Travels* there is convincing evidence that the author, Jonathan Swift, knew about flying saucers nearly three hundred years ago? It is possible he may even have flown in one. For in the story *A Voyage to Laputa*, Swift describes a machine which he calls “a flying island”. In almost every respect, this flying island resembles the machines we now call flying saucers. It is interesting to note that Gulliver has conversations with the crew of the flying island, which are very similar to conversations recorded this century by people who have had contact with extra-terrestrials. Whether Swift actually travelled in a flying saucer, or was somehow inspired from afar, we will probably never know. But the evidence suggests that something remarkable happened to him. It seems he knew a great deal more than he ever revealed. He described the flying island as a perfectly circular structure made of solid matter. The exterior is smooth, with curved sides and a flat base. It is three hundred yards from top to bottom, and its diameter is 7,837 yards, which is of course huge. At its center is the power source, which resembles an enormous [unclear] around a hollow cylinder. Its lodestone magnet enables the island to rise and fall, or travel across the skies, smoothly and silently—just as flying saucers travel.

Some may say that it's just coincidence that his description is so similar to descriptions of flying saucers. But there is further evidence of Swift's hidden knowledge. The people who live on the island warn Gulliver that the planet earth is in great danger. As I have explained before, here on *UFO-*

Line, aliens do come to earth for that very purpose. People who have reported close encounters with extra-terrestrials have often spoken of conversations which are very similar to those of Gulliver and the people of the flying island. Did Jonathan Swift travel on a flying saucer? We will probably never know. But somehow he knew more about our universe than any of the astronomers of his time. He wrote of things which were not discovered until years after *Gulliver's Travels* was published.

Call me tomorrow on *UFO-Line* and hear the final instalment of this fascinating mystery...

--Toby Howard sent in this transcription of three days' worth of *UFO-Line*. It seems to me that Derek C. Sampson's very specific statement that everything he says on *UFO-Line* is fact is a claim that could be investigated by anyone who is willing to pay the phone bill.

I don't know whether it's true that “strange flying machines have been observed in our skies for thousands of years”; however it is true that there have been references to them in literature for that long. The classical author Lucian's satirical fantasy, A True Story, is, I believe, generally accepted as the first tale of travel in the skies. Like Swift, he speaks of islands in the sky.

Looking up Gulliver's trip to Laputa. I found that it is true that the Laputans warn Gulliver of possible destruction for the Earth: “These people are under continual disquietudes, never enjoying a minute's peace of mind; and their disturbances proceed from causes which very little affect the rest of mortals. Their apprehensions arise from several changes they dread in the celestial bodies. For instance; that the earth, by the continual approaches of the sun towards it, must in course of time be absorbed or swallowed up...” The catalogue of all the disasters these people worry about is longer than a page; however they are all solar disasters. Perhaps someone with more experience than I have in talking to aliens can tell me if this is a common pattern.

It is worth adding that the Laputans are described as having developed the study of mathematics to a high degree, but in being ignorant of and uninterested in anything else.

Sampson's details about the island (Swift calls it an island over and over again) and its central magnetic lodestone are accurate. However, Swift describes Laputa's geography, and includes a map on which he indicates the capital city, mountains, and in the text he talks about towns, plural. My own ignorance is showing, but is it really true that “flying saucers” commonly have castles on board? (wg)

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