



DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE



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THE PLACE WHERE EVIL DWELLS



**Merseyside's Only Publication Dealing With
All Paranormal Phenomena!!!**

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EDITORIAL

THE PLACE WHERE EVIL DWELLS...

One of the more sinister legends amidst the rich tapestry of ghostly lore that permeates the British Isles (once dubbed the most haunted country on Earth) is that of the 'discarnate evil entity' that is said to either physically push or at the very least, actively encourage people to leap to their deaths from the roofs of very high buildings or the tops of steep, sheer-faced cliffs...

Thankfully, this type of report is infrequent when compared with say, the many traditional accounts of a White Lady seen wandering the deserted corridors after midnight, wringing her hands in despair over some real or imagined crime. Or the restless spirit of a young child who's doomed to inhabit the twilight zone between life and death because it hasn't yet come to terms with the fact that it should have passed on to that quasi-mythical 'higher plane.'



But just because stories of wholly malevolent supernatural entities are rare, it does not follow that we can simply choose to ignore them or dismiss them as being out of hand: Nothing more than the morbid imaginings of a person who's seen *'THE LEGEND OF HELLHOUSE'* one time too many...

The motif of the inherently evil spirit that delights in the destruction of living human beings is one that is firmly rooted in folklore both ancient and modern.

And who but the most insensitive amongst us can honestly say they have never awoken in the wee hours before dawn in the sweaty, shaking aftermath of a bad dream, feeling suddenly sure, irrationally certain that there is some purely evil presence sharing the bedroom with them. Something standing in the dark with a long, white face that's not quite human.

It might be a demented circus clown with silver coins for eyes and a blood-red gash for a mouth

It might be a formless, capering horror that sits and gibbers at the end of your bed.

Or it might be a black-cowled monk that creeps right up to your bedside and whispers seductively in your ear about how easy it would be to walk on over to the window, to gaze lovingly at the distant drop below and take a jump...

ONE

Listen....

Back in the Winter of 1976, my dad worked as a foreman for The British Leather Company, right next to Cammell Laird's Shipyard, in downtown Birkenhead.

The factory, along with the hundreds of people who laboured and sweated long hours there, has long since stood redundant. In fact, the bulk of what was known as 'The Tan Yard' was burned to the ground several years ago. Nothing but an empty shell remains now. A secret place of burned timbers and collapsed floors. And even those crumbling remnants are facing final demolition. Judging from the way the ex-employees, my

father amongst them, were treated by the firm during its declining years in the early 1980's, I guess it's fair to say no one paused to shed any tears for its passing.

Unless they were the tears born of bitter satisfaction.

I went there only once when I was barely a week shy of becoming a teenager and let me tell you, once was more than enough.

Three days before my 13th birthday, my Dad had promised to take me to the match as a special birthday treat. Liverpool were at home to Ipswich Town, he had two tickets for The Kop, and all I had to do in return was go to the 'Tan Yard' with him that Saturday whilst he worked the morning shift.

'It makes more sense than me having to come back home to get you,' he'd told me the night before. 'And besides, it's only gonna be for a few hours. You can pack some sarnies and bring along one of those books you've always got your head buried in. The time will fly, you'll see.'

I remember telling him I was I was so excited I'd run to hell and back if he asked me.

And as things turned out, perhaps that wasn't so very far from the truth.

You've heard of the phrase 'dark Satanic mills.' Whoever wrote that line I feel sure they must have drawn their inspiration after setting eyes on 'The Tan Yard' If not in real life, then certainly in their nightmares.

As we walked through the front gate with the dawn barely touching the sky and my eyelids gummy from lack of sleep, I remember feeling almost overwhelmed by a sort of desperate sadness. Part of it stemmed from stepping over the threshold and being confronted with a less-than-cheery vista. Two rows of high-roofed buildings, their walls caked with a filth that gleamed wetly in the glare of an arc lamp, stretched ahead for as far as the eye could see. They were little more than glorified cattle-sheds, and maybe that's just as it should have been because 'British Leather' were in the business of refining cow-hides for commercial use. From within came the incessant hammering of heavy machinery that shook the very earth beneath my feet and jets of steam hissed from underground vents in great billowing clouds.

Yeah, part of it was that. But mostly it was the dreadful realisation that my dad actually had to spend so much of his time here. This was where he worked five, sometimes six days a week, 50-odd weeks of the year. How could he stand it? Breathing in lungfuls of that foul-smelling air, breaking his back for a boss he probably never set eyes on and where the only relief from the leaden monotony was the ten-minute tea-break and the chance to swap the same old jokes with the same old faces over a copy of 'THE DAILY MIRROR' and a quick drag on a 'rollie'.

The question weighed heavily on my mind as my dad ushered me into the nearest of the buildings, and I almost asked him out loud, but just then several of his workmates began sidling up and he made a big business of introducing me to them and I had to stand there with a big stupid grin on my face, pummelling their grimy hands until I'd felt sure my shoulder would come away at the socket. And after I'd made the acquaintance of just about every member of staff on the morning shift, the moment had gone. Afterwards, it had felt too imprudent to ask. Especially after my dad showed me, with some measure of pride, his foreman's desk, which contained several family photographs (including one taken the Summer before, featuring yours truly standing on the edge of a football pitch at 'Buttin's' with a battered 'casey' tucked under my arm and a winner's medal draped around my neck). I saw too, that the wall directly behind the battered, graffiti-strewn desk was covered with yet more photographs and a collection of drawings that my younger brothers and sister had produced during art class at school. The sight of those familiar, homely images were enough to bring the first genuine smile to my face since setting foot in 'The Tan Yard'

It was only later, lying in my bed that night replaying the day's events over in my mind that the terrible thought crossed my mind that the main reason my dad kept that assortment of photos and sketches close to his work-desk might not be so innocent, after all. Perhaps in spending more than a few short hours in that damnable place where no blade of sunlight pierced the all-pervading gloom, you simply *had* to have those images close to hand to remind you of the reason why you were here in the first place. Yes, the more I thought about it, the more certain I became that shut up all day within the confines of 'The Tan Yard' it would be all too easy too forget even the faces of those you loved and who loved you right back...

By mid-morning, having fortified myself with a steaming mug of coffee and the tuna sandwiches my mum had thoughtfully packed in a lunch box for me, my spirits had risen enough for me to put down my dog-eared copy of 'THE HOBBIT' and whilst my father was stood talking to some workmate whose name had already slipped my mind, I wandered off to explore the rest of the site.

In truth, I hadn't expected to find anything even remotely noteworthy. Let's face it, when you've seen one factory floor, you've seen 'em all. Twenty minutes or so of poking my nose into those dark crannies of obscure misery was enough to quell my enthusiasm and I was about to return to my dad's 'office' when my attention was suddenly drawn to the sound of raised voices at the entrance to a large warehouse right at the end of what I'd already mentally coined 'Skid Row.'

Curiosity aroused I wandered over to where two men were arguing fiercely about whose turn it was to 'run the hides through Big Bertha', whatever *that* meant. Both seemed equally determined not to back down and it was clear that there was likely to be a fight if someone didn't intervene pretty soon. That someone wasn't going to be me, though. With their faces criss-crossed with scars and lined with the obligatory five o' clock

shadow, they looked for all the world like extras from some 1950's gangster B-movie, who'd swapped their black suits for overalls. And so, trying to appear as inconspicuous as possible, I'd hunched my shoulders and slunk right past them whilst they were busy turning the cold air blue with expletives.

A sign above the open door announced that I was setting foot into 'The Salthouse'. That didn't make an awful lot of sense to me either. Not at first. The room was empty save for several piles of soaking cow hide and a huge circular vat with a metal outer rim and a wooden wheel that revolved slowly like the spokes of some great paddle steamer. There was a steel ladder running up one side that led onto a tiny platform, and in a moment, I was scrambling up those rungs, eager for a closer look. I was awe-struck by the machine's size, its sheer *magnitude*. It nearly touched the ceiling, which must have been at least 30 feet high, and the sound of that powerful wheel rumbling as it turned like Summer thunder, bade me pause half-way, transfixed, remembering one late July afternoon when I was a young child...

TWO

It was my grandfather's 75th Birthday party and my family's friends and relations were hastily packing away the remnants of a barbecue as the storm that had been bubbling up since mid-morning finally threatened to break. The wind had dropped. The humidity level had grown unbearable and the light had taken on a queer flat yellow cast that had thrown everything into sharp relief.

The first crack of thunder had been so loud, just about everyone, my parents included, had instinctively ducked, and I'd promptly burst into tears thinking with a child's logic, that if even the adults were terrified, maybe something truly awful was going to happen...like maybe the very sky was going to cave in and fall on us...

My mood hadn't been helped any by the mad dash rush for the shelter of the house, and as the thunder roared and the lightning cracked and the rain pelted the windows with an unrelenting fury, I went into virtual hysterics. No one could calm me. Not my parents. Not my aunts and uncles. Not even my best friend, Philly, who'd been invited at my request. Ordinarily, my screaming fit would have been the cue for my mum and dad to have called a taxi and shunted me the hell out of there to save any further embarrassment, but on this occasion it must have been pretty obvious that my fear was genuine and that I wasn't just seeking attention. And so, the thunder and I continued our unofficial Loudest Decibel Competition (popular opinion had it down as an honourable draw) until eventually, my granddad took me to one side and sat me down on his bony old knee. He'd reached out both arms in an effort to keep me from squirming away before regarding me with an expression of such kindness and understanding that I'd ceased struggling immediately.

'There's no need to be afraid now, son,' he'd assured me. 'The storm can't harm us in here. You're safe. Safe among family and friends.'

I nodded my agreement, but my body was still racked with dry, heaving sobs.

'I used to be frightened of the thunder when I was kid too, y'know,' he'd continued. 'About a million years ago it seems to me now. My dad used to tell me that the rumble of thunder is nothing but the sound of God's engines of creation hammering away in Heaven. He also said that lightning was merely Jesus taking pictures of the Angels. And I believed him. I really did. Of course,' he added with a chuckle, 'my dad also used to tell me the reason he drank so much whisky was because the sawdust at the timber yard where he used to work got caught in the back of his throat and he was only acting on doctor's orders....But I believed him about the thunder and lightning. Hell, maybe I still do. I mean, here I am, 70-odd years on, and I've never come to harm from either one of them yet....Like I said, you're safe as houses here, son. Now come on and give your ol' granddad a hug.'

Just listening to that gently lilting voice was enough to banish my fears in an instant and I'd reached out to throw my arms round his neck burying my head in his shoulder breathing in the reassuringly familiar aromas of 'Old Spice' and 'Brylcreem' and in later years, whenever there was a storm brewing, I'd close my eyes and I would clearly see flashbulbs popping amongst the clouds and great engines whirring, slowly revolving and a being dressed all in white with the kindest face, my grandfather's face standing at the head of a short flight of stairs, turning a handle on one of the machines ('The Engines of Creation'). He'd smile and beckon me to come on up and join him and give him a big hug and it was the least I could do to thank him for chasing away my childhood terror of the storm and I'd climb the stairs eager to be with him...as the cameras flashed and the engines rumbled...and I felt loved and safe as I reached out my hand to touch...to touch..

THREE

...to touch the smooth, metallic surface of the side of the machine in The Salthouse...To reach out and run my fingers across the outline of a closed gate above which someone had chalked 'BIGBERTHA' in block capital letters.

As if in a dream, I began turning the handle, filled with a sudden desire to see what lay inside, as if there could be anything remotely exciting about that cumbersome-looking mechanism. I couldn't remember

climbing the rest of the way up. Couldn't recall stepping onto the platform. And it didn't much matter to me anyway. I was only concerned with opening that gate, peering in, and quelling my burning curiosity...

I'd actually gotten it about half-way open and had caught a whiff of some bitter fragrance that stung my nostrils and watered my eyes, when someone shouted from below. 'Hey, what the hell do you think you're doing? Get down from there. *Right now!!!*'

I nearly jumped out of my skin and for a second there, just for a *second*, I'd nearly lost my balance and tumbled backwards over the low railing, onto the concrete floor, twenty five feet below.

Attempting to recover my composure, but with my knees knocking together like a pair of manic castanets, I looked down and saw one of the men who had been arguing outside standing at the foot of the ladder. His scowling expression and the clenching of his fists carried with them the promise of extreme violence if I didn't do exactly as he said, and you'd better believe I descended those rungs lickety-split.

When I was finally on solid ground once more, I half-expected to be dragged into some dark corner of the room (and let's face it, he would have been spoilt for choice in trying to select one - 'The Salthouse' was a real haven for shadow-filled corners alright) and kick ten kinds of different-coloured crap out of me. As it was however, although he did lay an arm on me, and my whole *body* began shaking in tandem with my knees, it was only too usher me away from '*BIG BERTHA*' and back out into the freezing February air.

The man's sidekick was stood just outside the entrance, his hands cupped around a flaming match as he tried to light a cigarette. He raised his eyebrows quizzically at the sight of this scared-looking kid being gently but firmly marched off the premises by a hulking great refugee from 'The Mob'.

'I found him sniffing around that damned old machine,' he said in answer to the unspoken question. 'I reckon she had him in her spell there for a little while...It would have been more than long enough though, if I hadn't have come along when I did.'

'He climbed the ladder?' 'Sidekick's' thick, bushy eyebrows arched still higher in surprise. 'All the way to the top?'

'He had the friggin' gate half-way open, if you please!'

'Christ almighty. Have you got a death wish, son?'

I tried to form a reply, but my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth and all that emerged was a kind of strangled 'Ugggg'. My mind was busy conjuring up less-than-enchanted visions of being beaten to a pulp by both 'Hitman' and 'Sidekick': two for the price of one, you might say.

But when 'Hitman' spoke again, his voice was considerably lowered - his tone a mite less aggressive.

'You're Charlie Walker's boy aren't yer? God lad, yer must have at least a little bit of yer father's good sense. This place isn't a playground, it can be very dangerous. Certain areas more so than others.' He cast a furtive glance back at The Salthouse, brooding under a white, late Winter sky.

'My advice to you is to head on back to yer dad's office. He'll likely be knockin' off soon and he'll be lookin' out for yer. Get goin' now, and I won't say nothin' about where you've been if you don't. Have we got ourselves a deal?'

Still unable to find my voice, I nodded vigorously and trying not to break into a run I made my way back to the foreman's quarters just as the noontime whistle sounded. Every step of the way, I remember thinking I didn't know which was more frightening; the threat of a beating from the two hardcases I'd just encountered or the fevered stench of their *own* fear, coming off them in waves so thick it had made me want to vomit....

I had absolutely no idea of what they were so obviously afraid of back then. And as things turned out, I didn't discover the reason until one balmy Summer evening, six months or so later....

FOUR

I remember I was watching '*SCOOBY DOO*' on the TV, with a wet paper towel clutched to my forehead and a glass of chilled lemonade close to hand, when news broke about the tragedy at 'The Tanyard.'

I'd been left in charge of my two younger brothers and sister whilst my mum had gone to work at the '*Vlota*' cake factory and I'd been unable to keep one eye from straying over to the thermometer on the far wall. The temperature hadn't dropped below 85 degrees for the best part of a week, and the whole world had felt like it was slowly melting out of existence.

I was just mentally debating whether I had the energy to get up and plonk a couple more ice cubes in my drink when Grant (my eldest brother), dashed in from the back garden babbling about how there'd been something on the radio about a serious accident at dad's works. I didn't pay him much heed at first. I was sure he was either messing around or else had simply misheard the broadcast. I went right on watching Thelma and Daphne and the rest of '*those pesky kids*' set about solving yet another Haunted Mansion Mystery, until somehow the time had gotten round to six o' clock, and I'd felt a sudden lurching in the pit of my stomach: My dad still hadn't returned from his stint on the day shift. He normally knocked off bang on five, and was always home within a quarter of an hour, even if he stopped to call in at 'The Top Shop' on Pay Day to get us all a bar of chocolate or an ice-lolly (depending on the season), as a special treat.

He was now the best part of an hour late....

I jumped up from my seat and quickly tuned in to 'RADIO CITY NEWS', and heard the announcer confirm, third story in, that which Grant had already told me. The exact nature of the accident and the person's identity were not revealed, or if they were I was too busy listening to a panicky, whispering voice that had crept uninvited into my mind.... 'Someone's suffered a terrible accident at The Tanyard,' it said with mock solemnity. 'Your brother told you so, but you didn't believe him. You wouldn't listen. And while you were sitting there glued to the goggle-box, someone's been very badly injured. Maybe they've had a limb amputated by a piece of machinery, their lifeblood spraying the walls like an honest-to-God geyser. Maybe they've broken their neck falling from atop a pile of assembled cow-skins due out for shipment. Maybe they've been blinded by the scalding steam when one of those endlessly twisting pipes burst open.... Or maybe... Maybe they're already as dead as a doornail, lying there with their eyes wide open staring sightlessly up at the cool, white ceiling of the ambulance as it pulls into the hospital car park thirty seconds too late... And while you're considering that, wonder about this; Why isn't your dad home yet???

With a growing sense of dread hauntingly familiar to anyone who has ever awaited the return of a loved one on a storm-lashed evening on the wrong side of midnight, I stared out of the front room window, trying desperately to will my dad home. I prayed too that the phone would remain silent. In the movies and the soaps, its shrill, insistent ringing could mean only one thing; A cold emotionless tone at the end of the receiver relating a message that began with the awful words; 'I'm afraid I have some bad news...'

Time seemed to stretch out interminably, although I couldn't have been stood there for more than a few minutes lost in an imaginary argument with myself as I watched couples emerge from the blue shade of the park, kids riding their bicycles on their way to somewhere bright, neighbours washing their cars or sweeping their driveways as the day fought a losing battle against the onset of evening.

And then incredibly, my dad was turning the corner, a little sombre-looking, sure, but otherwise as right as rain, and hardly daring to believe my eyes I'd ran to the door to greet him with a hug (something I hadn't done since early childhood, but which I gladly did now without any compunction whatsoever).

'Aye, aye, what's all this?' he'd said as Kearry, Grant and Dale had gathered round eager to express their relief too. 'Do you mind stepping aside for a second and letting me in? I've had one helluva rough day.'

He'd spoken gruffly, but I could see by his eyes that he'd been moved by the reception. We'd had a thousand burning questions to ask of our dad, but we let him pass without another word. He was plainly shattered and in no mood for conversation.

I only gleaned the bare bones of the story later that night when my mother had returned from her part-time job and we'd all been sent to bed. I'd gotten up to use the toilet and half-way down the stairs, I'd overheard my parents talking in deliberately hushed tones. Straining my ears I'd been able to put together the gist of what had happened.

Apparently, a young lad, by the name of Eddie Masters, who'd been assigned to 'The Salthouse' work party just a few weeks earlier, had disappeared without a trace sometime that afternoon. The last anybody had seen of him he'd been busy feeding untreated cow hides into that enormous wheel-like machine ('Big Bertha').

No one had missed him until the shriek of the Five o' Clock Whistle had signalled down tools and Eddie had failed to appear to punch his card. Even then, most people had not been unduly concerned. It was generally assumed that he had sloped off for a quiet smoke somewhere and had simply lost track of time. Doubtless he'd turn up pretty soon wearing a sheepish grin and cheeks the colour of fresh beetroot.

By 5:30 though, when he still hadn't shown, head office had ordered a full-scale search of the premises, and the entire workforce had been mobilised, several of them muttering under their breath about how they had to get home and what they wouldn't do to that 'lazy dickhead' when they got their hands on them. The workers, my dad included, had split up into several groups and they'd dutifully searched the site from top to bottom without success. And as time had wore on, so the threats and curses had died away as the realisation that something a good deal more serious than a mere spot of skiving was going on here.

And eventually, there'd been only one place left to look.

The inside of the very machine Eddie had been toiling on earlier that day.

'Big Bertha'

I'd detected a tremor in my father's voice as he'd described how it had seemed the whole of the day shift had somehow crammed under the high-beamed roof of 'The Salt House'. And in my mind's eye I'd pictured the people gathered like disciples come to worship some vast mechanical demigod, their faces lit with the twin expressions of fear and anticipation...

No one had quite dared to step forward and press the release lever, and when one of the foremen had asked for a volunteer the crowd had begun shuffling nervously and there'd been much staring at their work boots, as if the answers to life's great mysteries were spelled out in the creases.

Eventually, a chargehand had plucked up the courage, and with his jaw set in grim determination he'd unleashed a deluge of wet hides soaked in a mild acid that was used for burning off the fine cattle hairs. They poured out along a twelve foot deep gutter that soon became a virtual river, the hides swept along like so much flotsam until the drains did their work and the level slowly subsided.

And when finally the last of the acid had leaked away, all that had remained were the cow-skins, glistening, ironically enough, like a new-born calf in the middle of a sunbright farmer's field.

And there, half-hidden amongst the piles of slick leather had lain the bloated, hairless body of Eddie Masters, neither skiving, nor sleeping, but dead to the world and forever beyond the muttered threats (empty or otherwise) of mortal men.

The memory of that overheard conversation has remained with me all my life - I guess it's maybe not so surprising when you consider I had never before then been faced with the immutable fact of death in all its hideous glory. I don't need any cheap, dime-store psychologist assuring me of that. But what has since haunted my dreams and ensured I sometimes wake up with a half-formed scream on my lips was that which my father said, just before he changed the subject to something much more mundane:

'If I live to be a hundred, I don't think I'll ever be able to get that poor man's face out my mind. His eyes had gone and the acid had burned his lips clean off. All you could see was this perfect set of teeth and I know it sounds stupid, but it looked for all the world as though he was staring up at us with those empty sockets. Staring up and grinning. Slyly. Like he'd just played some mean, small-minded practical joke on us all. I tell yer love, it gave me the creeps...'

FIVE

Did I say earlier that it took me six months to learn the reason for '*Hiltman*' and '*Sidekick*'s' all too apparent fear of 'The Salt House'? I *did*. Well, you'll pardon me. I'm sure, if I ask you to strike that error from the record and rectify it by saying that it actually a little longer than that to get at the truth. Ten whole *years* longer to be precise. And, as with most revealing discoveries, I stumbled upon it quite by accident, when 'The Tanyard' and Eddie Masters tragic death were the furthest things from my mind...

Two days before Christmas, 1986, I was standing at the bar of '*The Garrick Snug*,' getting the round in for our Grant and Stevie Gee (the former Assistant Editor of this very magazine). We wouldn't normally have set foot in the place. The pub was (and maybe still is, for all I know) one the biggest dives in downtown Birkenhead, but we'd sought refuge from the endless stream of Christmas shoppers, pushing and shoving with a fervour that bordered on the manic. And so, knowing that the pub would be comparatively quiet, even on the very brink of the holiday season, we'd popped in for a swift pint and a chance to unwind. I'd drawn the short straw, hence my standing at the bar whilst my two companions, snickering at their good fortune, went and sat themselves at a table over in the far corner of what passed for a lounge.

Whilst I was waiting to be served, I became aware of a man staring at me intently, and casting a sidelong glance, I saw a bearded, grizzled individual whom I did not recognise. He plainly had business with me however, and worried that he was about to either try and bum a drink off me (bad) or else kick off a fight (worse), I began whistling tunelessly, in an attempt to show I wasn't intimidated. I must have made a pretty bad job of it though, because suddenly he staggered over towards me and breathing a combination of whisky fumes and acute halitosis into my face, he said 'I know you don't I?'

I was about to beg to differ, but before I could open my mouth, he was nodding in agreement with himself. 'Yeah. That's right. You're Charlie Walker's son. I remember you, even though you've sprouted up a deal since I last saw you. Now, how long ago was that, I wonder?' He stroked his thick beard thoughtfully. 'My God, I reckon that must, have been back in that bone-freezin winter of '76...Not long before I left that damned 'Tan Yard' for the last time.

At the mention of my dad's former workplace (he'd been made redundant after a decades loyal service, three years earlier), there was an instant flash of recognition, and I realised I was talking to '*Sidekick*' - The ex-B-movie gangster, now very definitely retired. He looked like he'd aged by about thirty years. His hair was thin and snow-white, and what you could see of his face was deeply lined and careworn. A quick mental calculation assured me he couldn't possibly be a day over fifty, but he'd easily have passed for one of those old-timers (the men who sit at domino-strewn tables in '*The Crooked Billet*' or '*The Standard*', sipping pints of GUINNESS' and who always look as though they've seen too much and carried too great a grief all their lives).

The fact that I now knew him, didn't fill me with any great enthusiasm to start chatting to him however, and after exchanging pleasantries, I made as if to walk away. Before I could do so, he'd shaken my hand and introduced himself as Stewart Mckinley (Stewie to his friends). Despite my protests, he insisted on paying for the round of drinks, and I knew better than to refuse. I didn't want to offend him. He may have looked old, but that still didn't mean he couldn't handle himself.

And so, almost against my will, we'd started up a mostly one-sided conversation, a constant stream of anecdotes centred upon his time at '*British Leather*', interrupted only briefly when Steve had wandered over to find out where the hell I'd gotten to with the ale.

The longer he went on, the more desperate I became to escape this wearisome bore, and I'd been just about to risk all and say I simply *had* to get back to my friends, when Stewart ('*Stewie to his friends*') had said something that had immediately gained my undivided attention.

...but of course, the lowest point, the final nail in the coffin, you might say, was the death of that poor bastard Eddie Masters. It might sound soft, but I couldn't bring myself to set foot in the place after that. I jacked it in about a week after he was found. Some of the lads on the shift took the piss. Said I was scared that his ghost would come back to haunt me or something. That kind of talk might have got to me once, but the truth is I *was* scared, though not of some earthbound spirit bent on revenge. Those guys...They like to think they know it all, but when you get right down to it, they don't know shit.'

'And what was it you *were* afraid of?' I asked, hoping against hope that I hadn't disrupted his flow. I needn't have worried.

'Don't you know?' he smiled incredulously. 'You of all people *should* do. I remember me mate John, barely saved you from its clutches all those years ago. That's not something I'd easily forget.

'Yeah. I do remember,' I assured him. 'But I still don't understand what it was he was supposed to have saved me from.'

'Christ, I thought John did a very good job of explaining it that afternoon outside The Salthouse. Maybe you weren't listening. Maybe you didn't *want* to listen. Whatever...The plain and simple facts of the matter were you were caught under its spell, and if John hadn't have come along when he did...'

'Wait a minute. What are you talking about, spell? You mean a curse or something? Cast by whom?

'The thing that tried to lure you to your death. The same thing that killed young Eddie Masters. That damned machine in The Salthouse. "*Big Bertha*."

'Oh, come on,' I shook my head in disbelief. 'You're not seriously trying to suggest that piece of engineering is directly responsible for someone's death? It was simply an accident. Tragedies like that happen from time to time. And as for me climbing that ladder when I was a kid...That was just childish curiosity. I just wanted to see what was inside, that's all.'

Stewie favoured me with an expression of ill-disguised contempt, leaned a little closer so that the stench of his breath was almost overpowering, and spoke in a hoarse whisper.

'Alright, I'm gonna tell you something now, and it's up to you whether you set any store by it or not. If you ever repeat it though, I'll deny I said any such thing--

John and I were both made up when Eddie was assigned to our shift. He seemed like a good lad, if a little full of himself. We were willing to forgive him for that. Christ, he'd only just turned seventeen, and was planning on going to university the following summer, and besides which, Eddie was an excellent worker. He more than did his share, even when it came to the horrible jobs, like feeding the skins into '*Big Bertha*.' No one liked doing that. It was such bloody, back breakin' work. It was always unbearably hot even in the depths of mid-winter. You had to feed the hides in by hand as fast as you could, and even though they gave you a face mask and goggles, still the fumes would sting your eyes and somehow seep down your throat. And when you got home that night, you wouldn't be able to sleep for fear of coughing your guts up.

Motive enough, you might think, for avoiding that detail for as long as you possibly could. But the *real* reason I dreaded being sent up those ladders was not so easily explainable. I can only tell you what I felt nearly every time I stood before the open the gate at the side of that machine...I'd be lifting the first of the hides and I'd be sure someone was watching me. I could feel this pair of burning eyes glaring at me and I'd whirl around and nobody would be there. I'd curse myself for a fool, and go back to work and sometimes that would be the end of it, but on several occasions, there'd be something else; a soft breath on the back of my neck or the smell of a woman's perfume, sickly sweet like rotting violets...

And once, a week or so before Eddie joined the crew, I'd been busy hauling in the hides when I suddenly felt a gentle push from behind. There wasn't a lot of strength in that shove, but what with the weight of the cow-skin, it was enough to have me cart-wheeling for balance. It was a near thing. I almost went flying over the edge of the platform, and only the safety railing stopped me from doing so. You can be sure I didn't hang around for long up there after that.

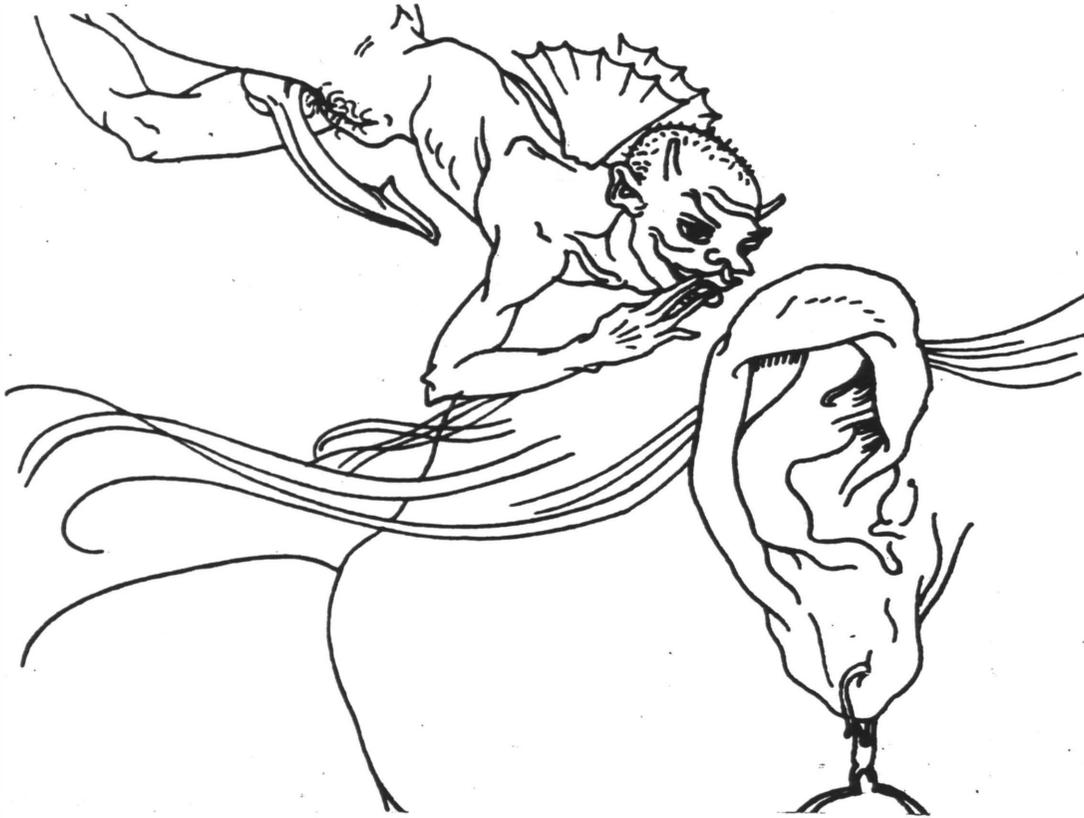
Aside from John, did anyone else on our crew encounter anything unusual when they were working '*Big Bertha*?' I can't say for certain, 'cos I never dared discuss my own experiences. I was too afraid of being laughed at and having my every day on the shift made a misery. They were mostly a good-hearted bunch, but a bigger gang of wind-up merchants you have never met. Besides, once I'd clocked off, I tried to rationalise the incidents, and it was fairly easy to convince myself I'd imagined the whole thing when I was sat at home with the wife and kids or propping up the bar with me mates.

And so when Eddie came to me one lunch hour and started spouting off about how he'd heard voices whispering to him during his fourth or fifth stint on that damned old machine, I'd merely clapped him on the back and told him it was just his mind playing tricks, or maybe the wind in the eaves. "Best keep it to yourself though, Ed's. You don't want people thinkin' you've got the heebiejeebies," I'd said feeling like the world's biggest shit-heel, but what else could I do?

A week or so later, I was sitting in the works canteen reading the paper, when in had walked Eddie, head down, muttering to himself, and looking as though he were carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. He was normally such a happy-go-lucky kid that I knew immediately there was something seriously wrong. This was no sponsored teenager sulk. I went over to him and asked what was the matter, but he refused to

answer. He just told me to go away, that there was nothing I, or anybody could do to help him and I noticed there were dark circles under his eyes and his face was as pale as candle-wax, and to be honest, the thought crossed my mind that he might be on drugs or something. I told him to cheer up and snap out of it...God, how hollow that sounds now.

And that was the last time I ever saw Eddie alive.
I saw him later, of course. Or rather what was left of him. By then, he really was beyond the help of anyone.



I never found the note he'd left me until the following morning when I went to get a set of clean overalls from my locker. It was a crumpled piece of paper on which he'd scrawled just a couple of words;

"The voices

The tricks in my mind

The wind in the eaves

*They keep telling me there's an easy way to find a better life.
All I gotta do is take a jump. And I think maybe they're right.
Thanks for being a friend, Eddie "*

I never showed that note to anyone. I never told a soul about it either and the coroner recorded an open verdict at the inquest into his death.'

'So it wasn't an accident. It was suicide,' I muttered with a mixture of awe and profound sympathy. 'Jesus.' 'Jesus ain't got nothing to do with it,' Stewie retorted. 'I haven't quite finished this cheery little Christmas tale. Maybe when I have, you'll see what I mean.

I couldn't face going back to work immediately after they found the lad's body, so I threw a few sickies in. I spent most of my time in here, drinking myself stupid, trying to drown the feelings of guilt that otherwise kept me awake most nights. It was only a temporary escape, of course. In the end, I had to go back. I've got a family to support, and bills to pay. And though I didn't think I'd ever be able to face it, eventually, I had to take my turn to work 'Big Bertha' again.

I was filled with such feelings of dread the day I stood on that platform, for, as it turned out, the very last time. Cold sweat broke out on my forehead and my stomach was churning with insects to crawl to be butterflies. I tried to mentally prepare myself for any of the things that had happened before; the chilled breath on the back of my neck, the unmistakable certainty that I was being watched, but right up until the end of the shift, nothing untoward occurred. There was no trace of the eerie atmosphere from before, I'd only had a couple more hides left, and it was easy to begin thinking that I maybe I could get over this a lot easier than I'd expected.

And then, just as I was shoving in the last of the hides, I heard someone whisper my name; '~~Stewie~~'

I looked around quickly, but I couldn't see anyone.

And then it came again, a still small voice that reminded me for some reason of dead autumn leaves blowing across an empty school playground. *'Down here, Stewittleeee'*

I slung the heavy cow-skin aside as I realised where the voice was coming from. The depths of that infernal; machine.

As crazy as it sounds now, my first thought was that somehow, somebody had gotten themselves trapped inside *'Big Bertha'*, and I stuck my head through the open gate, squinting into the darkness, unable at first to see a thing. Gradually though, my eyes adjusted to the gloom, and I could make out the mass of animal skins slowly revolving on the spokes of a gigantic wheel. And as I watched, the wheel suddenly juddered to a halt and a body spun into view, lying face down, naked and very obviously dead. It was entirely hairless, and every inch of its skin was covered with open, running sores. I started to yell for help, but then it raised its ruin of a head and I saw, with very little surprise, that it was poor Eddie Masters. He laughed. A deep slow chuckle and regarded me with eyeless sockets as he whispered softly...So very softly...*'Why don't you jump, Stewittleeee? Please jump. It's a wonderful life down here There's everything you ever wanted. Everything you ever dreamed of. And all you've got to do is take a little jump. I did. And I've never looked back. So go on, Stewittleeee Please jumppleasejumppleasejumpplease...'*

On and on it went, like an endless tape loop, and if all I've said before sounds like the ramblings of a madman, I don't suppose you'll think it any more insane if I tell you that as I listened to that voice, I began to see the sense in what it proposed. It would indeed be sorely tempting to leave behind this world with all its worries, all its petty hatreds, all its empty promises and cheap, worthless victories...Down there, with Eddie, there'd be no end of fun. It would be like being a child once more. Lying in the secret darkness making plans and playing games in *'NEVER NEVER LAND'* without a care in the world, for all eternity...

I'd actually climbed half-way through the gate and was preparing to take Eddie's advice and jump, when out of the corner of my eye I saw something flash and go spinning away into the blackness. It was the gold-plated bracelet my wife Denise had bought me the previous Christmas. The one with the faulty clasp that was forever coming undone every time I bent down, and which I'd been meaning to get fixed for weeks. I made a desperate lunge for it and very nearly lost my balance, and suddenly the spell was broken. I realised where I was and what I was contemplating doing, and the shock gave me strength to throw myself backwards onto the safety of the platform. I scrambled to my feet, and raced down the ladder, several rungs at a time, my screams echoing round the old *'Tan Yard'* like the wail of some demented banshee.

I handed in me notice by post the very next day. I was forced to endure a spot of grumbling from me wife and a few degrees more from the scumbags down at New Ferry Job Centre. But I didn't much care. *They* hadn't seen what *I'd* seen grinning up at them out of the darkness of an acid-filled vat, arms stretched wide, ready to receive the unwary...

I never set foot in that place again. I never heard tell of any further 'accidents' taking place there, but I tell you this, the day they knock that godforsaken shithouse down to the ground is the day that I'll personally throw the mother-of-all street parties...

In June, 1994, Stewie *'The Sidekick'* finally got his wish. I hope, wherever he is, he's boogie-ing till dawn...

SIX

And just what are we to make of this story, Constant Reader?

Do we simply dismiss it as the drunken ramblings of a bitter, guilt-ridden man?

Would it be better to relegate it to the shadowy realm of Modern Urban Folklore along with the tales of poodles in microwaves, crocodiles in the sewers, and aliens in abduction mode?

Or do we dare afford it the merest hint of credence...A tacit confirmation of the deep-rooted suspicion some of us have that some places, some areas, are just not *right*.

Places where the atmosphere seems forever tainted. Filled with the embodiment of a hundred, not-quite-realised fears and disquiets.

Places where the light is a dull, ghost shroud of grey that casts dark shadows and still darker dreams.

Places where the very air hangs heavy with some indefinable burden of grief.

Places where *EVIL*, in all its forms and guises, chooses to dwell...

In the cold light of day that contention may seem dangerously paranoid, but oh, in the black watches of the night it seems so perfectly logical.

Listen...

Just across the road from *'The Tanyard'* is a pub called *'The Britannia Inn'*

Standing on the corner of Green Lane, in one of Rock Ferry's less-than-desirable locations, there is nothing remotely special about it. You'd scarcely spare it a second glance should you happen to pass it by. The only thing that may cause a raised eyebrow is the fact that the place is very obviously closed for business and no longer trading.

The few windows that aren't boarded up are so opaque with grime, they look to be the colour of slate and simply reflect the drabness of its surroundings. A broken 'Tetley Bitter' sign sways drunkenly at the slightest breeze. The fly-posters glued to the former doorway advertising some long-ago circus, (and featuring a particularly sadistic-looking clown) are washed out and faded.

It's hard to shake the impression that the pub is part of some artist's unfinished landscape. That they drew the sketch in grey, leaded pencil, but ran out colours before they ever got a chance to paint it.

It's a depressing enough vista, but provides little clue as to the horrors that have reportedly been encountered within...

The history of the pub is mundane and uneventful, although in common with 'The Tan Yard', it's built upon old priory ground, (Birkenhead Priory is less than half-a-mile distant). This may well be relevant when we come to consider the following accounts that were first published in 'DEAD OF NIGHT' #4.

The focus for the stories surrounding the place appears to be a single room on the third floor of the inn. One alleged witness, known only as John, tells of how, when he was twelve years old, he was plagued by what can only be described as 'Demonic Entities.'

The experiences were said to have begun with the sudden appearance of phantom monks in 'John's' bedroom when darkness fell. Initially, these apparitions kept a discreet distance, and indeed they were barely discernible as they lurked in the darkest corners of the room.

With each succeeding night however, they grew ever more defined and the young boy's ears were filled with a monotonous low chanting, as the shapes emerged from out of the darkness.

And worse, 'John' had to deal with the disconcerting fact that on each occasion they materialised, the black-cowled figures began to creep ever closer to his bed.

Eventually, they would gather around 'John's' prostrate form and recite their endless litany, and although these forms were essentially human-like, there were also present, other beings, shapeless forms that were content to observe the 'rituals' from the shadows.

John was naturally terrified of these nightly visitations. He tried to tell his parents (who at that time, owned the pub), but of course, they didn't believe him. Faced with no other option, he learned to accept these nightmarish intrusions into his childhood world.

His mother and father *did* become concerned enough about 'John's' behaviour to set about giving their son's bedroom something of a face-lift. There were apparently layers upon layers of dirty, discoloured paper that had to be stripped from the walls, and when, after an eternity of peeling, they finally uncovered the bare plaster, they found the cold, mildewed surface was completely covered with '*bizarre symbols and diagrams, painted largely in an off-red substance.*'

The walls were very quickly re-decorated to ensure 'John' didn't lay eyes upon the strange set of symbols, but if they'd hoped the renovations would help exorcise their son's 'night terrors', they were to be sorely disappointed.

The figures were back that very night, and in a state of consciousness somewhere between sleep and wakefulness, 'John' sensed himself being '*initiated into something. I distinctly felt something alien enter into me.*'

He later went on to tell Mike McKeown, (Editor of the now sadly defunct 'GHOSTWATCH') that he remained convinced that whatever it was, the entity continued to co-exist within him even after he'd left the pub for the last time.

This is all very interesting. But what relevance, if any, does it have to the previous account of the '*Haunted Machine*' in 'The Salt House'?

Simply this, also resident at the 'Britannia Inn', (according to contemporary accounts) was a '*Whispering Demon*' which was said to seek to encourage guests and tenants alike to *take a run and jump out of the pub's third floor window!!!*

If both of these stories are to be believed, that's *two* suicide-inducing entities (or maybe the same one) active in an area no wider than a couple of football pitches placed back to back.

Some kind of coincidence, wouldn't you say?

And there are other similar stories doing the rounds, from places of equally ill-repute.

Listen...

In 1924, on the island of Skellig Michael, off the coast of Kerry, Tom Lethbridge (the famous psychic investigator), was climbing a hill in order to view the ruins of an eight century monastery. When he reached the summit and looked about him, he could clearly see, directly below, the remains of a rubbish dump. Intrigued, he began making his way back down the hill to see if there was anything worth salvaging from the tip. As he did so, an awful sensation overcame him, and he was filled with a dreadful certainty that something was going to push him off the cliff.

Quickly he climbed back up and walked down a low hill past the monastery. Some type of 'presence' bade him turn around, but as he did so, he was suddenly knocked over by an invisible force. As he scrambled to his feet he saw that the hillside was deserted. There was only the keening of the wind and the sun sliding from behind a patch of cloud...

Listen...

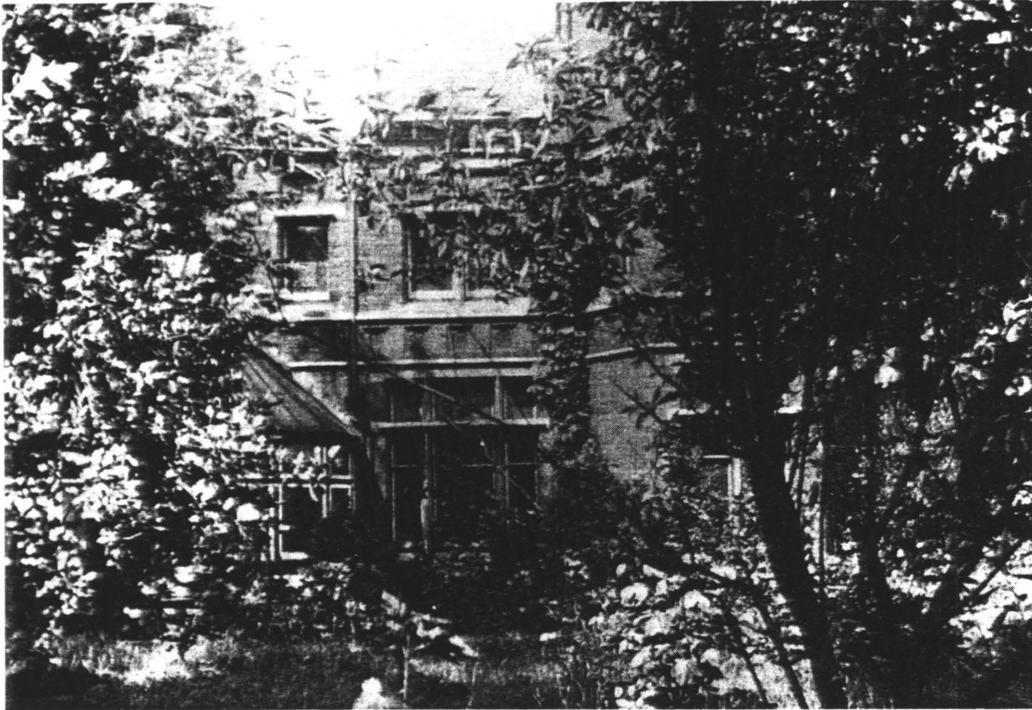
Ebury Lodge was built in 1883, on the crest of a hill (the archetypal 'Hill House' one might say, with apologies to Shirley Jackson) overlooking Ealing, West London.

The site was originally an orchard, and as with the 'The Britannia Inn,' there appears to have been little trace of anything untoward occurring that may have acted as a catalyst for what was later to transpire...Unless it was the erecting of the house itself.

The fact is though, that over a fifty year period, starting in 1883, a total of twenty people killed themselves, (another was apparently murdered), in this one building.

And, mark this, ladies and gentlemen; *all the deaths were caused by people jumping or falling from the top of the seventy foot tower at the front of the house.*

The 'suicides' culminated in 1934, with the 'murder' of a baby thrown from the parapet by a nurse who then 'elected' to take the same route down, killing herself instantly. Not surprisingly, following this latest tragedy, the building stood empty and fell into a state of disrepair. No one would live there and the place acquired an evil reputation.



(Above): 16, Montpellier Place, formerly known as Ebury Lodge, photographed by 'Ghost Hunter' Andrew Green. The site of twenty 'suicides' and a possible murder, the picture is said to feature the apparition of a 'young woman', staring out of the second-floor, middle window.

It is impossible to be certain of the identity of the 'ghost', although it is popularly supposed that it may be the spirit of Ann Hinchfield, who was aged 12 when she met her death under mysterious circumstances.

Andrew Green, the well-known author and 'Ghost-Hunter,' had cause to visit the house, now re-named 16, Montpellier Place, sometime during the Second World War. Andrew, then aged fifteen, went along to accompany his father who was then chief re-housing officer for the area. At the time, all derelict property had to be inspected to see if it could be of any use for storing 'goods and chattels.' Part of Mr Green senior's job was to make sure that the structure wasn't damp or could cause any possible damage to the goods that may be stored there. Being more than aware of the building's local reputation, he asked his son if he would care to see his first haunted house. Andrew, like most teenager's faced with the prospect of adventure, was only too glad to accept the invitation. His chief interest at the time was photography and he thought it might well present an ideal opportunity to get in some practice with his camera.

Apart from a mysterious smell of sulphur (the place had stood empty for ten long years), Mr Green passed the building as suitable for the council's purposes, although, ominously enough, one of the foremen of the removal men 'blacked' the location because of the number of, apparently, supernatural incidents...Such as, mysterious footsteps in empty rooms and tools going unaccountably missing.

Andrew, although intrigued by these events, did not seem to set any great store by their occurrence, and it wasn't until he made his way up the ill-reputed tower that he encountered a *truly* strange phenomenon.

When he reached the top he saw that the parapet wall was level with his waist and from his excellent vantage point he could see right across London. The day was idyllic. The weather perfect. And after the oppressive, almost claustrophobic atmosphere of the old house, the air seemed especially fresh and invigorating.

Suddenly, he was filled with a consuming desire to walk in the large, luxuriant garden of the house and, rationally enough, it occurred to him that the quickest way to go there was to simply step over the surrounding wall on to the grass, which appeared to be no more than a foot or so below.

Eager to stroll across the verdant lawns and sample the heady fragrance of the flowers, Andrew had already cocked one leg over the parapet when he was grabbed by the neck and spun round to safety by his frantic father.

Still unconcerned, Andrew explained that he was only going to take a little walk in the garden below, and it was only when he had asked him to take another look down that a wave of vertigo-induced dizziness washed over him.

There was no blade of grass below.

Only crazy paving.

If Mr Green Senior had not thought to follow him up the tower, Andrew would doubtless have been 'suicide victim' Number 21.

The story doesn't quite end there, however.

Armed perhaps with a teenager's lack of deep-seated fear, Andrew was not unduly shaken by the experience. So unaffected does he appear to have been that as the two of them made their way back down to the ground floor (via the *stairs*, I'm glad to say), he'd had the presence of mind to turn and snap a picture of the back of the house. He'd wanted to show his friends at school the infamous '*House Of Death*.'

It wasn't until the negative had been developed that the chemist asked Andrew the identity of the young girl whose head and shoulders could be seen looking out of an upper story window.

Andrew insists to this day that he has no explanation for the appearance of the ghostly image. He knows from experience that the window directly above the figure is in fact a stairwell, so there is no place for anyone to stand or sit to enable them to peer out off the grime-encrusted glass....

And finally, Usten...

The 600ft coastline of Beachy Head near Eastbourne in Sussex, has gained a dreadful reputation in that it seems to act as a veritable magnet for would-be suicides.

Figures as to the actual number of people who hurl themselves off the sheer, white-faced cliff vary according to their source, but Michael Goss (in issue 55 of the excellent '*Magonia*') quotes an unnamed journalist who writing in 1976, stated that Beachy Head averaged ten deaths a year, of which '*six would be clear cases of suicide, accidental falls being rare,*' therefore making the former figure a cautious underestimate.

This extraordinarily high number has, perhaps not surprisingly, been interpreted as being due to the actions of a dark force, said to manifest in various forms. In 1976, for example, a corgi walking with its owner across the nearby Downs, apparently encountered a ghostly woman in grey. The entity was also seen by the owner, though it was the dog (animals often believed to be extremely sensitive to the presence of otherworldly beings) that was most adversely affected. The badly frightened mutt began to growl and cower as the 'woman' slowly approached, and it eventually ran off howling when the ghost attempted to reach down and stroke it. The spirit disappeared simultaneously.

The most popular incarnation however, (and certainly the most *recent*) seems to be that of a black-cowled monk, which, as we have already seen, is a constantly recurring image in tales of ghostly phenomena.

The legend, mythos, call it what you will, first shot to public prominence in February 1952, and the sensationalistic stories of exorcism during a midnight seance by the medium, Ray de Vekey. But more about this in just a little while.

The locale certainly looks the part, and is not without its historical antecedents. Folklorists and researchers of the paranormal such as Eric Maple in his '*Supernatural England*' (Hale, 1977) are quick to remind us that such places Beachy Head are often associated with '*horrors of all kinds from time immemorial. In pre-Christian ages, human sacrifices were carried out in similar places, and later, in the days of the Anglo-Saxons, it was customary to haul criminals from high cliffs into the sea. One theory that has been advanced to account for the Beachy Head phenomena is the presence there of the earthbound spirit of someone who either committed suicide or was executed on this spot many centuries ago.*'

Author R. Thurston Hopkins makes the first reference (that I've come across), concerning the alleged evil presence haunting the area in '*The World's Strangest Ghost Stories,*' (World's Work, 1955). In the book he relates how he remembers that in '*1938, a young girl almost toppled over the edge of "The Head" and was escorted from the spot by a mounted policeman. The following gives some idea of her unpleasant experience.*

She had set out for a day's rambling on the Downs feeling fit and happy, but after reaching Beachy Head she stretched on the grass for a rest. It was then that the exhilaration which had been with her for the first part of the walk, gradually left her...She began to feel vaguely tired and agitated. A dark shadow seemed suddenly to descend on her. She looked round. A mounted policeman was slowly riding towards her - possibly a quarter of a mile away. No one else in sight, the sun shining brightly, a lark singing high above. Everything around should have given her a feeling of happiness and exhilaration. Yet a feeling of suspended misfortune seemed to cast a blight over the scene. She said she felt herself in an atmosphere she had never breathed before. For the few moments that it lasted she was surrounded by evil influences which overpowered and staggered her. A huge

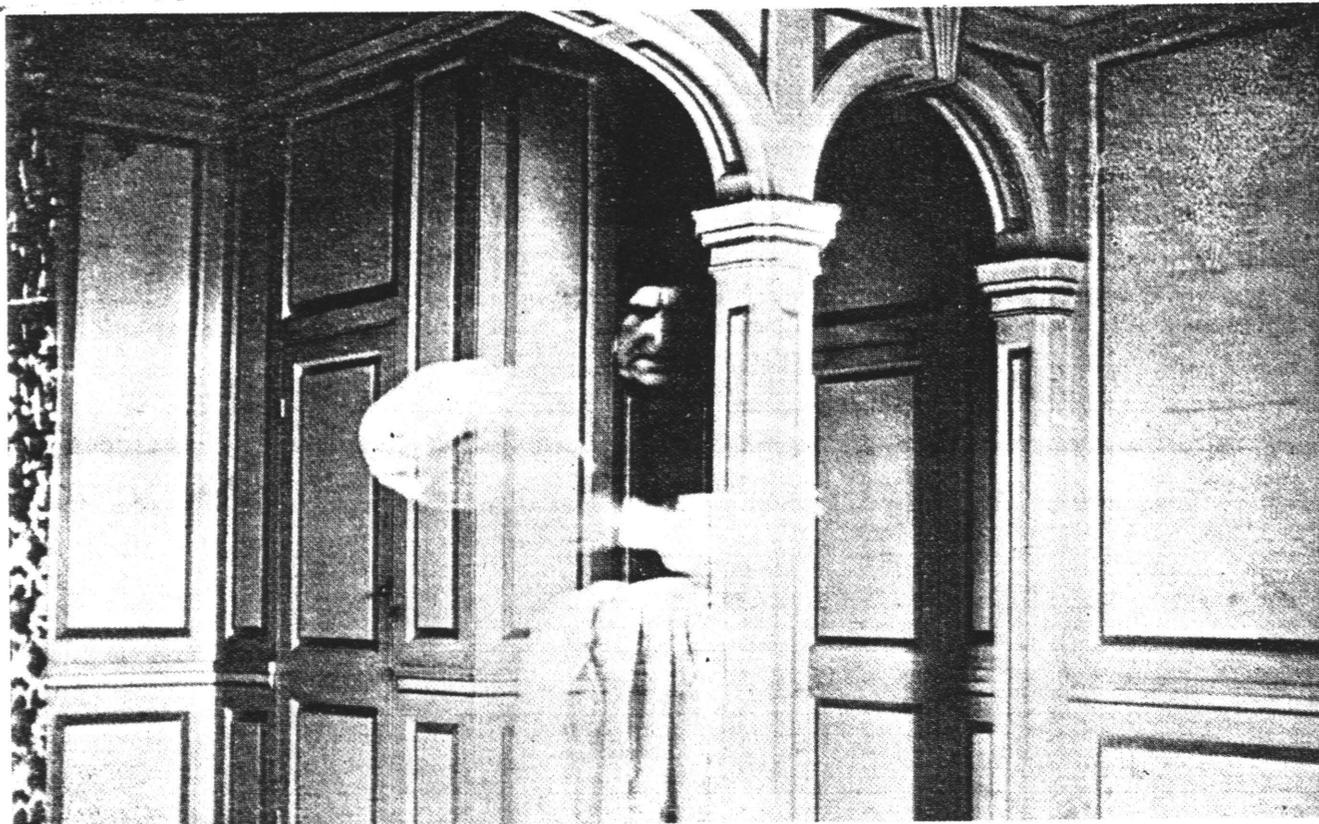
moments that it lasted she was surrounded by evil influences which overpowered and staggered her. A huge menacing form seemed to catch her up in its immensity, rather than touch her. She prayed and shrieked for help, and began to run - run madly away from the cliffs - and after a while stumbled on the side of a down, fell and rolled over and over down the hillside until she sat up before a policeman mounted on a horse.

And our old friend Thurston, doesn't leave it there. He further claims to have met several scramblers who had done a little chalk-climbing on Beachy Head.

'One or two of them agree that the cliff exudes a sense of ancient ferocity and ill-natured life.

"The soft, deceptive chalk is always waiting to hurl you headlong downwards with a horrible suggestion of intelligence, and there is a menacing feeling all around," is how one of the climbers put it.

There can be little doubt that few people can stand near the edge of Beachy Head without feeling that some almost hypnotic power lurks in its towering cliff.



(Above): A photograph purporting to show a ghostly monk, materialising from beneath the arches of a typically 'Haunted Mansion'

'Evidence' that the Phantom Monk motif is not only a firmly established icon in popular folk belief, but can also make itself tangible before the eye of the camera.

But it really wasn't until that much-publicised exorcism that took place in February, 1952, that the legend became more than just some local superstition and helped put the area in the news. The true facts of the matter have gotten more than a little hazy with the re-telling, but what seems to have happened is that a group of spiritualists held a midnight seance in a bid to rid the headline of 'the evil entity.'

Ray de Vekey, a medium who was in charge of the operation, was allegedly attacked by 'a presence' which urged him to jump over the cliff himself.

De Vekey claimed afterwards that the spirit that had seized him was not invisible but was like an elderly bearded man, with an ankle-length robe like a monk's habit, with a black marking on the back.

'It was in chains,' he said. 'Not handcuffs, but ancient wrought-iron shackles. I don't think anyone could have jumped from the cliff in chains like that. I imagine it was the spirit of somebody who had been bound and thrown from the cliff top centuries ago.'

The real object of the service was said to be to attempt to try and establish contact with some of the spirits of the people who had committed 'suicide' at The Head.

And Thurston makes this comment, in 1955, remember *'Over a hundred people have hurled themselves to perdition from this cliff during the last twenty years!!!'*

Witnesses apparently heard De Veskey shout; 'There is a voice calling "Oh, Helen. There is a George Foster being called. Peggy Jordan destroyed herself here. She was to give birth to a child. She is full of tears. There is a bearded man. He is wearing a long flowing robe with a cowl like a monk. It is going back a long, long time. This is evil. He is calling us a lot of fools, blaspheming. Fools, I will sweep you all over.'

Every one happy shall be thrown over. He has lain in wait for years." The medium's movements became more frantic and violent.

After the seance, he said; "This is the strongest influence I have had. It came on almost at once. I seemed impelled towards the cliff edge when it came through to me. It was someone who was bound himself, perhaps a sacrifice, and who has hated and wished ill too all ever since. Later, after prayers had been said there, I could contact nothing. I believe that this unquiet spirit has been laid to rest forever."

I guess Mr De Veskey's confidence was more than a tad premature.

The 'evil' influence of Beachy Head still sings its deadly siren tune. Right up to, and including, the present day, it seems.

On 26th June, this year, an accountant named John Chetwynd, viciously attacked his Vietnamese wife, Thi Le, at home, leaving her for dead. He then drove his two sons, aged three years and nine months, out to The Head, where his car was later found abandoned at seven in the morning.

Once Mr Chetwynd arrived at the cliff-top, it's thought he forcibly pushed the children over the edge, before hurling himself onto the rocks 600 feet below. The bodies were later recovered in a five hour operation.

A police source was quoted as saying; 'We are treating the incident as a double murder and suicide. We don't know what sparked it off but it is an appalling tragedy.'

It's only speculation, of course, but I wonder.

Perhaps something encouraged John Chetwynd to take that trip out to Beachy Head.

Something like a hideous, grinning demon or a vengeful, black-cowled monk, constantly whispering in his ear about how good it would be...How *easy* it would be to take a run and *JUUUUUUUMMMMMPPPP* into the next life.....

Lee Walker. New Ferry, Merseyside.

4th September, 1997.

ABDUCTION WATCH

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CHASING THE UNKNOWN

The Latest Weird And Wonderful News From Around The World

Darkness On The Edge Of Town



The Devil At Work In Lewes

In Issue 10 of 'DEAD OF NIGHT', we featured the story of apparently demonic goings-on in the previously sleepy Sussex town of Lewes.

More details have since emerged concerning the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of one of the inhabitants of the town; Nic Gargani, and the whispered rumours of a Satanic conspiracy that soon after began winding their insidious way along the news-wires. Tales of fear and loathing that would seem more at place in the annals of some superstition-riddled pamphlet of the Middle-Ages, are seemingly being accepted as Gospel Truth by the increasingly frightened populace. Proof, if it were needed, that even in these days of 'scientific enlightenment', when we're confronted with 'The Great And Terrible Unknown', it's all too easy to regress back to childhood. To lie in our beds with the covers over our heads, secure in belief and afraid of the dark...

The horror began, so far as anyone can tell, on April 17th, 1996, with the discovery of the body of 26-year-old Nic Gargani, lying at the foot of the 300ft cliffs at the edge of the Sussex Downs. The local police assumed at first that the young man had been the victim of a tragic accident. The views from the top of the cliffs overlooking the sea and the ancient, endlessly winding streets of Lewes, are said to be well worth the climb. Searching for evidence of identity, the investigating officers searched through the contents of the dead man's pockets and finding his name and address, they went round to his flat in order to inform his next-of-kin.

And that's where things started to get more than a tad weird.

As soon as they set foot into Nic's sitting room, they were able to sense straight away, that something about the place was decidedly off-kilter. Amongst the assembled paraphernalia of a young man's life were signs. Indications. Less-than-subtle hints that normality did not hold sway here. On the right-hand wall, just behind the door, were plastered six pages of The Bible. And written in black, felt-tip pen above and below them were the words; 'I PUT THESE PAGES DOWN TO PROTECT ME FROM BLACK MAGIC. PLEASE, GOD, SAVE ME.'

That was unsensational enough.

What was even worse was the large drawing of a crucifix that dominated the opposite wall with one more message scrawled beneath it; 'I FEAR BLACK MAGIC.'

In the midst of such otherwise homely surroundings, the drawing, those neatly grouped pages and their attendant messages appeared as alien a concept as a string of Christmas tinsel blowing across the deserted mountains of the Moon.

One thing at least was abundantly clear, however. Like the repentant priest in the film 'THE OMEN', it looked for all the world as though Nic had been mortally afraid of someone or something, and had glued this portion of Holy Scripture to the wall in a last, desperate attempt to keep the nameless horror at bay...

This supposition was confirmed when the police then came across a letter, also stuck to the wall, dated April 15th, just two days before Gargani's death.

It was addressed *To whom it may concern.*

It read as follows: *'I am leaving this note for someone to find in case any misfortune may happen to me. Things have been happening recently and I fear for my life. I have been targeted and cursed by a black magician, for what reason I have no clue. There are powerful forces working against me and I am not sure what will happen next. If something does happen to me, I want this to be known, that I am not insane and know that it is by some black magician who has cursed me and has personally confronted me. Furthermore, I am in danger.'*

The letter was signed by Nic Gargani.



Any degree of doubt as to how seriously he regarded the forces arrayed against him could be dispelled by the fact that he'd also compiled a list of friends and relatives whom he would like contacting upon the event of his death.

They police duly carried out Nic's wishes, and called upon his girlfriend, whom newspaper articles have christened 'Michelle' (but whose real name has been withheld for reasons of anonymity). She claimed to have known Nic for about two years and had watched him undergo a transformation from a non-descript individual who worked the nine-to-five treadmill for 'RENTOKIL', into a considerably less materialistic person who cared more about people than worldly goods. He grew his hair long, smoked a little wacky backy, and tried to help homeless people find digs. He became actively involved in local causes and environmental issues. He objected strongly to

motor rallies roaring across his beloved Downs. He threw a well-aimed egg at the former Home Secretary, Michael Howard, (something for which Nic should have been knighted on the spot) and presumably, made more than a few enemies in the process.

Nevertheless, Nic was described by Michelle as being bright and bubbly and nothing really seemed to get him down.

Until, that is, one warm Sunday evening, a mere three days prior to the tragedy on the cliffs, he had come around to her home address in 'a terrible state.' Not knowing what else to do, Michelle had suggested they go for a walk and talk things out. Almost immediately they'd left the house, Nic had burst into tears and in between racking sobs, tried to tell her a bunch of stuff that she simply couldn't understand.

This much he did make abundantly clear, however. Someone was after him. Someone had cursed him. It had been going on for weeks but he hadn't the nerve to tell anyone about it because he'd been warned by a friend who knew about The Black Arts that if you inform someone about a curse that has been laid against you, then you consequently spread its negative power to them. Nic had now, however, reached his wits end, and almost without caring, he blurted the whole story out.

It seemed that the trouble had started with a series of strange telephone calls in the dead of night followed by threatening messages being posted by persons unknown under his door. Photographs had then begun disappearing from his flat, along with a dreadlock that he'd grown and later decided to cut off. He'd left it in his room, but it had mysteriously vanished.

Things had come to a head when he'd found what he described as 'a Voodoo Doll' with what appeared to be his own hair wound around it. Finally, he'd awoken that Sunday morning, and discovered a grisly object shoved through his letter-box along with the morning papers....A cow's heart impaled with nails.

Not surprisingly, his feelings of persecution. Of being watched. Of being stalked, had grown with each incident, and this hideous one had proved to be the final straw.

There was no one left to whom he could turn.

Michelle couldn't ever recall a time before or since, that she'd laid eyes upon a person so desperate and devoid of hope. She promised to try and help him and had asked one of her friends to stay over with him that Sunday night. They'd stayed too on the Monday, and had done their level best to persuade Nic to go to the police. The fact was though, he was too plain-scared to talk to the authorities and anyway, he doubted very much if they'd believe him. He'd destroyed the Voodoo Doll, the letters and the other objects because he had been told that to do so might help repel the power of the curse.

The last time anyone saw Nic alive was as he was walking along the road that leads to the edge of town at about 11:30 on the morning of April 17th.

He had posted a note through Michelle's letter-box in which he thanked her for trying to help him. It looked as though it had been written by someone in a great hurry. Nic said his life was in danger more so now, than ever. He had seen something. A terrifying vision of a shrouded spectre. He needed to see her. He'd be back in a little while. He'd just gone walking to try and clear his head.

Less than half an hour later, Nic Gargani was lying dead at the foot of the cliff.

The realisation dawned upon everyone concerned in the case that it was entirely possible that Nic had either been killed by some unknown assailant or else had committed suicide. Perhaps the fear of the curse had grown so intense that he'd been unable to live with the threat of it hanging over his head like some imaginary Sword Of Damocles.

Whatever the case, there were more than a few people who were determined to make it their business to uncover the truth.

Foremost amongst them was Nic's father, Luigi, who immediately travelled home from his new home in Holland and was so stricken with despair by the awful messages on the wall of Nic's flat that tore down the pages of the Bible and threw them on the floor. Together with Nic's elder sister, Nadia, who lives in Yorkshire, they resolved to find the truth.

It soon became apparent that the whole area had been plagued with strange events. Four months earlier, in the weeks leading up to Christmas, someone had taken it upon themselves to reveal their darkest nature by visiting the churches in Lewes and smashing the model Nativity scenes, tearing the heads off the plaster figures. Meanwhile, over in South Malling, on the outer edges of the town, several stone crosses had been smashed and various churches in the area reported that vestments and chalices had been stolen. At St. John's, someone had torn pages from the altar Bible and ripped off the front of the pulpit.

More horrific still was the discovery, on at least three occasions, of black and white cats killed and mutilated in Lewes churchyards. One had its throat cut at the vestry door of St Ann's. Another was found burned and hanging from a tree at St John's. The third was decapitated and maimed, again at St. Anne's.

Something else that came to light was that in the weeks before Nic's death, a group of young people, drinking in a Lewes pub one Friday night, were involved in a conversation concerning the occult and the supernatural in general, and the welter of weird events that had occurred in the area in particular. As they were making their way home, they got the feeling that they were being followed by someone. Looking over their shoulder they saw a man with a pallid face and slicked black hair, hiding in a clump of nearby bushes, and then walking behind them. They were too frightened to challenge him, but as they made their way into their house, the man suddenly raced across the street and began kicking wildly at their front door, shouting: 'What did you say about me?'

Some time later, in the wee hours before dawn, a blue carrier bag was pushed through their letter-box. It contained the still warm body of a dead hedgehog skewered with eight nails and carrying a message, written in Runes, which when translated, read: 'Hail Satan. By this rune, beware all cursed. So be it.' In the wake of that incident, a tombstone in the shape of a cross was stolen. Two graves in South Malling Church were disturbed. Soil was removed and apparently used to fill a human effigy that lay scorched on the ground nearby in the churchyard. Four headstones were also smashed. This last inspired the local vicar to call for a day of prayer right across Lewes to protect the churches.

And then Michelle began having strange experiences of her own.

On the Wednesday evening immediately after Nic's death, there came a weird series of phone calls that went along the lines of 'Are you Michelle? Did you know Nic Gargani? Then you know what happened to him today.'

Before she could formulate an answer, she was left with nothing other than a click and the impersonal buzz of a dialling tone.

There were several further calls that evening, sometimes with the same level of thinly disguised threat, and at other times there were just strange noises as of a chicken being slowly throttled. And the following morning there was an even nastier surprise; Someone was knocking on her door and when she went to open it she found there was a young man with a sickly pale face and slicked back hair standing on her doorstep. Fortunately, Michelle had friends in the house, associates of Gargani. The stranger insisted that he must talk to her alone. Emboldened by the fact that help was at hand should she need it, Michelle bade him enter and they went upstairs to hear what he had to say in private. Once there, he

stared at her with an unusual intensity whilst he launched into a diatribe about how evil Gargani really was, and that he must have been chased over the cliff by a Demon. A Demon that Gargani himself had called up. He further claimed that he knew Nic had tried to fill her head with a load of nonsense about how he was the one who had been cursed, but now she herself was in danger, the Demon would seek her out and that there was no way she could be saved.

She later stated that there was something intrinsically evil about the man with his piercing black eyes and his ghostly-white face. And before making his exit, he left her with the chilling words; 'There's nothing you can do. It's already happened.'

Michelle was so distressed by the combination of the visit of the stranger and the death of her boyfriend that she upped and packed her bags and left Lewes.

She recovered her nerves however, and returned a few days later, only to find the man was still lurking around haunting her every waking moment. He hung around the street where she lived and followed her around the town, sometimes taking to banging on her door and demanding that she come out so they could talk about the curse. Once, in the middle of the street, he stopped her to ask where Gargani's body lay. Anger overcame her instinctive fear and she struck out him. It had no apparent effect, however. The man merely smirked slyly into her face.



A few days later, he actually managed to force his way into her house and had the temerity to demand; 'Why are you being so hostile to me?'

Michelle couldn't believe his nerve. 'Why the hell do you think? You came around here the day after Nic died and you told me I was going to die because he had told me about the curse. So why aren't you cursed?' She told him she hated him, and he simply shrugged and asked her what she thought he had done. She retorted by shouting in his face; 'I think the Demon that chased Nic over the cliff was something you made up in your head.'

At this, he suddenly lunged forward, grabbed her by the collar of her shirt and shoved her back against the wall.

'Don't you ever say that again,' he hissed at her. 'Or I will have you for slander. I will kill you - but not with my hands. And your God won't save you. No God is going to save you.'

Then he dropped her unceremoniously, made an upside-down sign of the cross in the air in front of her, stared once more into her eyes and strode away into the street.

'Don't you ever say that again,' he hissed at her. 'Or I will have you for slander. I will kill you - but not with my hands. And your God won't save you. No God is going to save you.'

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Eventually, the police were forced to get involved in the complaints about the strange, threat-making man.

They found he was only 16 years old and the press reports called him 'Donald.' (once again, his *real* name was withheld). He was the only child of a strict Catholic mother, whose husband had become extremely violent and had left them both years earlier.

Donald had a reputation for being something of a loner. He was expelled from private school, and had been in trouble with the law for fighting and petty theft. A year or so prior to the events we're dealing with here, he had joined up with a group of Neo-Nazi's in Brighton and he had been suspected of painting offensive graffiti outside the home of a Jewish family. Two detectives were sent to question him but they were met with a wall of silence and an attitude of outright disdain. 'Make sure you drive carefully,' he told them with an air of nonchalance. 'You wouldn't want to have an accident, would you?'

When the police returned later that afternoon, Donald changed his tack. Now he was the ever-helpful, eager to please, young lad, who'd do anything to assist the boys in blue.

He agreed to accompany them to Lewes police station and it was whilst they were there that the phone rang with new information.

The parents of two 13-year-old boys claimed that their children had been confronted in the street earlier that afternoon by a young man answering to Donald's description. Apparently, he had threatened the boys and forced one of them to kneel in front of him on the cold, hard pavement and recite the Lord's Prayer. When the boy had cocked the words up, the young man had told him that was a good thing and he would be able to join his group. Donald, when confronted with this allegation, freely admitted having met the boys, and he was subsequently charged with threatening behaviour.

The police then applied for a search warrant, and having been granted leave, they set off to search his house.

In an old stone coal bunker in the back garden of Donald's house, they found what the press referred to as a '*Satanic Shrine*.'

The inside walls were painted black and on the floor was inscribed a Pentacle. A table was laden like an altar with the chalices and vestments that had been stolen from the local churches. In the centre was a long, shining sword. Standing on top of the altar was the crucifix headstone that had been stolen the previous Spring. It was upside down. Inside the house, in Donald's room, they found a small library of books dealing with all aspects of the occult, including Black Magic.

The police attempted to charge Donald with theft from the churches involved, but he claimed all the stuff had been given to him by Gargami, who in turn had told him it had been purchased from a second-hand shop. The following day though, the police were successful in charging him with Section 47 Assault on his mother (ABH), who had forwarded a complaint that her son had been furious with her for allowing the police to search his room, and had whipped her soundly with a leather belt. Donald was eventually charged and bailed on condition that he lived in a hostel in Brighton, that he did not approach his mother and that he did not enter any church or building used for holy worship.

There was no evidence to support the theory propounded by Gargami's circle of friends, though. Namely, that Donald had driven Nic to his death with all his talk of Demonic curses.

Another former girlfriend of Nic's claimed she remembered having seen Donald at Nic's flat two or three times. And Michelle recalled Nic talking about befriending a guy who had once been involved with a Neo-Nazi group and that Gargami had once lost the keys to his flat. Was it therefore not possible, that Donald had been the person responsible for leaving the less-than savoury items around the place and inflicting the curse upon Nic?

And yet, still the police claimed there was very little evidence that Donald had committed any illegality against the erstwhile Mr Gargami.

However, Michelle and Nic's sister, Nadia, were not to be put off so easily. They continued with their own investigations and they heard of several incidents that perhaps hinted that Donald was actually much closer to Nic than they had previously suspected. They learned of a welter of pointless pranks the pair had played on victims randomly selected by Donald. They also discovered that there was something distinctly odd about Nic's finances. At the onset of February, Nic had suddenly decided to self half the shares in '*RENTOKIL*' that he had taken up when he had been employed there. He had received just over £2,500. But there was no trace of any of that money in his accounts. In April, he had started selling off his personal possessions, his TV, his video and his sofa. In the week leading up to his untimely death, he had withdrawn £370 in cash from his account and arranged to borrow a further £2,000. The money was not transferred into his account, though, until two days after his death. No one who knew Nic could explain why it was he would need such large sums of money.

His bank statements showed two payments; on March 27th and April 2, to the mysterious-sounding '*SORCERER'S APPRENTICE*.' It turned out to be a shady mail-order business, that had its headquarters in Leeds, and apparently dealt a trade in books and artifacts on Witchcraft and The Black Arts.

On at least two occasions, Nic had ordered material from this organisation.

At the time of writing, the death of Nic Gargami remains a mystery. Was it a mere accident? The last desperate act of a man who believes he is cursed beyond salvation? Or was he sent screaming over the edge of the precipice by the sight of something that crawled up from the depths of a rancid nightmare?

Perhaps after all, in this case at least, we're truly better off *not* knowing the answer....

Source: *THE GUARDIAN WEEKEND*. 'April 12th 1997.

Grave Desecration's In Dracula's 'Birthplace.'

The town of Whitby in North Yorkshire, was in the process of preparing to commemorate the centenary of 'Dracula's birth', when it was suddenly hit by a spate of grave-desecrations caused not by any human hand, but by the elements.

Coincidentally enough, the churchyard where the fictional Count claims his first victim appears to have been singled out for destruction. The cliffs upon which the 900-year-old parish church were built have at last started to crumble under a constant bombardment of gale-force winds, driving rain and the cruel sea causing the earth to spilt asunder and spew forth the long-dead corpses and the goods they took with them to the grave.

Fisherman Eric Beacon, 51, was quoted as saying; 'I've seen skulls, skeletons, coins and jewellery sticking out of the cliffs.'

Beryl Upton, who runs the town's self-styled 'DRACULA EXPERIENCE' was moved to comment (doubtless with one eye glancing greedily in the direction of Whitby's thriving tourist industry); *This could be Dracula Himself, getting his own back. It's all very spooky.'*

Thanks for that, Beryl. *Very convincing.*

I'll get me cape.

11th May, 1997. Whitby, North Yorkshire. *THE SUNDAY PEOPLE.'*

The New York City Exorcists

Just to prove that Georgetown, Washington, doesn't have the monopoly on modern-day cases of demonic exorcism, comes the following shocking incident which hit the headlines right across the not-so-good ol' US of A in late May, this year.

Little Amy Burney, aged just five years, had been found lying dead in front of the TV as it blared out 'BUGS BUNNY' cartoons.

Her grandmother, rather than call an ambulance, decided instead to put the body out with the rubbish bins and announce that she had gone missing.

Rosa Wilkerson made this vile confession to police and then went onto make an even more sickening revelation. In a hopelessly misguided attempt to exorcise the demons that the 5-year-old girl's mother believed had caused Amy's perfectly natural infantile tantrums, she had forced her to swallow a lethal portion of ammonia, vinegar, cayenne pepper and olive oil, and taped up her mouth so that she couldn't spit it out...

After Amy tragically died, the women conspired to keep the body in the apartment for a whole week before abandoning it on a the kerb in a plastic refuse bag.

Not surprisingly, the State Prosecutor's were rapidly preparing to build a murder case against Wilkerson, 46, and Amy's 25-year-old mother, the ironically named Angelic Burney.

The city's child protection agency already had their suspicions regarding Amy's well-being, but predictably, they did nothing to prevent her death. Not that they could ever have suspected, of course, that Amy's relatives where a bunch of loony-toons who honestly believed the sweet, innocent girl was possessed by a demonic entity. Neighbours were quick to point out that the youngster was a generally happy child with bright eyes and a ready smile. She and her mother shared a somewhat cheesy apartment in the centre of the Bronx, along with Wilkerson, who had given up her own children to foster care in the late '90's after complaining that they too, were possessed by the minions of Hell.

Wilkerson was constantly telling her fellow worshippers at her church in East Harlem, that Amy was forever throwing tantrums that sometimes sounded for all the world as though she were growling like an animal. Amy took to scratching herself, she claimed, because of the many Demons inside her and they were to blame for all the child's problems. Even the pastor of the church, the Reverend Joe Harris, was aware of the grandmother's suspicions, and she asked him to christen Amy to rid her of the evil spirits. Harris rebuffed her, saying that the church didn't baptise the young.

Reporters covering the story of Amy's supposed disappearance, were horrified to discover that the mother's apartment was filled with crucifixes, votive candles and other religious objects.

There was a bottle of ammonia sitting accusingly, on the kitchen table.

Sobbing, her head buried in her hands, Wilkerson made her confession, acknowledging that her granddaughter was dead, not missing. She asserted that Amy had complained of a stomach ache while watching the television, and had subsequently collapsed.

'She had passed away in our apartment, and we panicked,' she cried. 'We put her in a plastic bag and took her outside. I hate the way I have handled this. I wouldn't want anyone to do me like that.'

Pity she didn't think about that before attempting top poison 'The Devil' out of a five-year-old with her whole future ahead of her.

20th May, 1997. New York City, USA. *'USA TODAY.'*

Burn Witch, Burn

Incredible as it may seem, a man identified only as 'Ivan S', was so convinced that his neighbour was a genuine Witch that he burned her to death on a stake in a vineyard.

The incident happened in the village of Verknesadovoye situated on the Black Sea Peninsular of Crimea. 'Ivan' was arrested on 31st January this year, and immediately confessed that he had killed the woman after suspecting that she was 'a full-blooded Witch who cast evil spells on my family.' He honestly believed that she had caused the deaths of his mother and his dog as well as blaming her for laying a curse that had resulted in him having a bad car accident.



And so, as the instrument of Divine Retribution, and applying the Biblical epithet; 'Thou shalt not suffer a Witch to live,' to the letter, he promptly went around to her house, hit her over the head with a lump hammer and dragged her unconscious body to the seclusion of a nearby vineyard. He then tied her body to a wooden stake and burned her to death. The victim's name was not released.

9th February, 1997. Verknesadovoye, Crimea, Ukraine. *"FT WAYNE JOURNAL-GAZETTE"*

The Flesh-Eaters

A court in Zimbabwe were horrified to learn that a young woman and four accomplices elected to open up a whole series of graves so that they could get at the corpses with the intention of stuffing their mouths full of rotten flesh.

Apparently, they gorged themselves on this less than appetising meal as part of a bizarre Witchcraft ritual.

The 18-year-old woman was sentenced to three months jail, suspended for five years after she confessed (one presumes without the need for excessive torture) to Witchcraft.

29th April, 1997. Zimbabwe, Africa. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

A Sorcerer Out To Make A Real Killing

In Jakarta, Indonesia, police arrested a self-styled witch-doctor whose real name was Datuk Marringi, but who preferred to go by the alias Nasib, after he confessed to killing 42 women. The victims had allegedly paid him money to concoct a series of spells aimed at keeping their boyfriends and husbands faithful in love. The arrest followed the discovery of three bodies buried in shallow graves near to Nasib's home on the outskirts of Medan, the capital of North Sumatra.

He initially confessed to the murder of 16 of the women, aged between 12 and 30, since 1990, in a bid to enhance his own magical powers. However, in the wake of intense police questioning, he eventually admitted the true number was more like 42. The authorities were initially unsure whether to take him seriously or not. Only seven bodies had actually been recovered at the time of going to press. After charging each of the victims anything between \$200 and \$400, he would usher them onto a nearby sugar plantation and then inform them that his ritual required them to be buried in the ground right up to their waist. But rather than cast a spell, once incapacitated, he would calmly set about strangling them with a piece of electric cable, before drinking their saliva, stripping the corpse naked and reburying it with the head pointing towards his home.

Even more unbelievable, is the fact that the police strongly suspect that Nasib was assisted in these horrific ventures by his three wives, all of whom are sisters.

5th March, 1997. Jakarta, Indonesia. 'COLUMBUS DISPATCH.'

'Satanism' On The School Curriculum

In Bedford, New York, an unusual dispute erupted during the early part of this Spring, over, of all things, a rumour that a local school was helping to promote 'Satanism and occultism.' A total of three Catholic families claimed that their religious freedom had been infringed by such accepted school fare as an assembly featuring (horror of horrors) a man dressed up in an Abraham Lincoln outfit, Science Class teacher studying the left over evidence of an owl's lunch and a history lesson taking place in a local cemetery.

School officials were quick to point out that the lawsuit could well 'pose a threat to school's everywhere.'

'We can't take apart the science or the English curriculum because something seems to go against some part of a particular small group's belief system,' said one of the school's supporters, the Reverend Paul Alcron, a Presbyterian minister who himself has two children who attend the school in question.

'We would dismantle public education in this country. Maybe that's what they're trying to do.'

The whole shebang was started by something as seemingly ignominious as a game called 'MAGIC: THE GATHERING' that was initiated by children in 1995. The 'DUNGEON'S AND DRAGON'S'-like strategy game, played with collectible

trading cards, involves the 'supernatural.' Some of the cards feature apparently lurid depictions of Demons and one shows a woman about to be sacrificed.

'It's straight from Satan,' claims Mary Ann DiBari, a plaintiff who has two young daughters at the school. 'Human sacrifice, Devil worship, spells.'



The lawsuit decrees that by permitting the game onto school grounds, the district 'officially promoted and endorsed an occult activity, and also promoted Satanism and occultism, pagan religions and New Age spirituality.'

Aside from the card game itself, the lawsuit also complains that during an excursion to a local cemetery, fourth-graders were instructed to lie themselves upon the graves of dead children. The school district's lawyer, Warren Richmond, was quoted as saying that a volunteer was requested to lie down prostrate on a tomb to demonstrate how much smaller people were in the 18th century.

And then there was the man who dressed as Abraham Lincoln, who frightened some children when he claimed that Lincoln believed in Ghosts.

And finally, third-graders were allegedly forced to study owl pellets, the regurgitated bones and feathers of the birds' prey. The lawsuit included this latter, somewhat bemusingly, under the heading 'Earth worship and New Age spiritism.'

17th March, 1997. Bedford, New York 'THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH.'

VOODOO YOU LOVE?

In New Orleans, no more than a stone's throw from where the mud-stained waters of the Mississippi empties into the Gulf, a woman by the name of Ava Kay Jones, a Haitian-trained High Priestess of Voodoo continues to practice her art.

She happily doles out potions and spells for every occasion. From securing the unrequited love of your dream date to repelling a curse. From bringing good fortune to maintaining one's health.

Just about the only thing she doesn't do, it seems, is place a hex upon some unsuspecting victim, herself.

That would be too negative a task.

She was however, busy telling reporters who stumbled upon her displays, that she would willingly sell them a bag of rare roots and exotic powders that might (or might not) make Drew Bledsoe's (an apparently famous American Footballer) feet that much faster, his arm that much stronger and his wits that much sharper.

'I have gotten calls from people with the NFL,' she claims, although, somewhat predictably, she refuses to name names. 'Confidentiality is of the utmost importance,' she says a mite too defensively.

Voodoo practitioners always expect an upturn in business whenever a big sporting event comes around. Little shops in the notorious French Quarter sell charms both ridiculously cheap and exorbitantly expensive: Dried chicken feet, grotesque figurines, and bags of roots.

Jones's gris-gris or Mojo Bags are made up of red flannel crammed full with dried John The Conqueror Root, Lucky Hand Root and assorted powders. They range from between \$30 to \$75 in price.

And what do you get for your hard-earned money? A great big dollop of confidence, according to the ever-smiling Jones. She is in the business of making people feel they have the potential to accomplish anything they want to.

Well, it's a nice thought, in theory.

CONCEIVED DURING THE WITCHING HOUR

Here's a tale that will doubtless soon become very much a part of urban folklore...

A childless couple who elected to male love in the middle of the Cerne Abbas Giant - the ancient fertility symbol carved into the chalk downs of Dorset - discovered that their love ritual actually bore fruit.



Karen, 30, and Andy Sutton, braved the freezing late-December temperatures for the pre-dawn encounter on Midwinter's Day. The Sutton's had been trying for a baby for the past six years without success. In desperation, they turned to White Witch Kevin Carlyon. The High Priest of British Witches and his partner, Sandie Jeffrey, led 12 other Witches in a 20-minute ceremony before leaving the hopeful couple for an hour (doubtless it would have taken them that long just to (ahem) warm up for action...The Cerne Abbas Giant has long been held as sacred to the gods of fertility. And this story won't have harmed it's reputation any.

1st January, 1997. Cerne Abbas, Dorset. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

STRANGE HUMAN BEHAVIOUR



WEIRD CRIME

Mario Moreno is certainly one of the candidates for this issue's Doomed To Failure Before You Even Start Award...He paid a one day rental fee for a boat at a Fort Lauderdale, Florida, marina, and then had the nerve to sail over to Cuba to smuggle out his daughter from under the nose of Mr. Castro.

Unfortunately for him, he was caught by Cuban authorities and was sentenced to five months in jail on the island.

When he eventually returned to Florida, he was promptly arrested once more for stealing the boat.

22nd December, 1996. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. *THE BOSTON HERALD.*

A HOST OF HOPELESS BURGLARS AND ROBBERS

An extremely hard-faced bank-robber raided the same bank in New Mexico two days in a row.

He claimed he had been given too many one-dollar bills the first time round...And demanded that they give him only 100-dollar bills on the second occasion.

2nd February, 1997. New Mexico, USA. *'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'*

*** Pathetic shoplifters Paul and Donna Hood (any relation to Robin, we wonder) elected to take their young son with them when they went on a pilfering spree. Unfortunately for them, they went and left him behind in a shop they had just stolen from. And yes, you guessed it, the tearful child went directly to the store detectives and gave them his parent's name and address. They were later arrested and charged.

30th March, 1997. Washington, USA. *'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'*

*** A totally stark-naked man gave customers and staff palpitations when he set about robbing a bank in Miami, Florida.

A female cashier who got herself a good eyeful was later unable to describe his face.

13th April, 1997. Miami, Florida. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

*** Frank Smythe got himself arrested by a store detective in New York...After asking the security man to keep lookout while he calmly stole a bottle of whisky.

16th April, 1997. New York, USA. 'DAILY SLUR.'

*** In Merced, California, a would-be crook entered a bank and attempted to rob the contents. Steven King (no, not that Stephen King) entered the Bank Of America brandishing his uncovered finger and thumb at a bank teller and demanded that he hand the money over.

On being told to wait awhile King did just that, allowing the teller to walk away.

King eventually got tired of hanging around and eventually went across the street to another bank. Once there, he decided to switch tactics, jumping over the counter and trying to get the key to a cash drawer. An employee grabbed the key and told him to 'get out of there.'

The completely hopeless robber was arrested empty-handed after being found sitting in a clump of nearby shrubs.

20th April, 1997. Merced, California, USA. 'BOSTON SUNDAY HERALD.'

*** And a burglar who has broken into the same flat on four occasions for nothing more than a quick shower, is being hunted by completely baffled police officers in Bad-Wuert, Germany.

22nd May, 1997. Bad-Wuert, Germany. 'DAILY MANC.'

*** Ram-raiders smashed into a warehouse near Paris, France, and stole ten barrels of black olives worth little more than sod-all.

The only theory put forward as to motivation by police was that 'perhaps they were having a party.'

4th June, 1997. Paris, France. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

*** Also in France, when arrested for burglary Jacques Louvet, 41, proffered the excuse to police in Rouen, that he had to carry a screwdriver, pliers, file and a hacksaw to keep his artificial arm in good working order.

6th June, 1997. Rouen, France. 'DAILY SLUR.'

*** Big kid burglar Jan Heuse was quite literally stopped in his tracks by police in Utrecht, Holland, after he hung around to play with a huge train set during a break-in.

12th June, 1997. Utrecht, Holland. 'DAILY SLUR.'

*** And finally, thieves who broke into a post office safe in Geelong, Australia, found it empty. So they left five dollars with a note telling the postmaster to invest it.

18th June, 1997. Geelong, Australia. 'DAILY MANC.'

Total Over-Reactions

A 55-year-old Dutch woman was 'forced' to take drastic action after constantly beseeching her husband to stop singing the hymn, 'Silent Night'.

He refused to pay her any attention and instead, went right in singing away merrily for hour after hour. In the end, enraged beyond the limits of sanity, the wife grabbed a knife and plunged it into his chest. Luckily for him, he survived the attack.

29th December, 1996. Holland. 'THE BOSTON HERALD.'

*** In Indianapolis, USA, Sherrell Russell, 26, was so upset that she had to drive her hopelessly drunken roommate home from a night on the town that she sprayed her with gas from a convenience store pump and then set her ablaze.

By the time the police arrived on the scene, Nicole Dickens, 22, had died from suffering third-degree burns over 98% of her body.

Sherrell was, unsurprisingly, being held on suspicion of murder.

10th February, 1997. Indianapolis, USA. 'USA TODAY.'

*** High farce (or should that read *farts?*) occurred during a Turkish Airways flight last May....

A co-pilot resorted to attacking his captain after the latter had openly accused him of, what's known in modern parlance as 'letting off a sly one.'

Captain Irgum Camlik, 53, had just taken off when suddenly noticed a decidedly unpleasant smell permeating the inside of the cockpit.

'I didn't make a big fuss,' he explained later. 'I just turned to my companion and asked discreetly whether he'd farted. I wasn't accusing him.'

He may as well have done, however, because his touchy co-pilot, Arthal Hamuz, began vigorously denying the allegation (you know what they say about guilty consciences) and much to Captain Irgum's surprise, he quickly seized the cockpit microphone and announced to the bewildered passengers that if anyone had farted it was the captain himself. Events descended into total chaos when a full-scale fight ensued, and the two pilots began wrestling on the floor prompting the astonished stewardess to pull them apart.

12th May, 1997. Turkey. 'THE BIG ISSUE.'

*** A born-again Christian by the name of Jacqueline Clinton, decided to shoot dead her boyfriend after a raging row over a passage in the Bible.

She was jailed for six years in Toledo, Ohio, for the crime of manslaughter.

Boy, was she strict on the words of the Scripture!

13th April, 1997. Toledo, Ohio, USA. 'DAILY SLUR.'

*** Also going mad with a gun was a 41-year-old Louisiana man from Baton Rouge, who faces up to 50 years in the can after attempting to murder his girlfriend's brother. He shot the man, who luckily survived, for the heinous crime of daring to eat a slice of his lemon meringue pie....

26th April, 1997. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

*** In a pique of anger over her neighbour always borrowing items from her and never returning them, Betty Wainwright elected to 'lend' Diana Tarnish a jar of strawberry jam containing six live wasps. Betty was subsequently fined £200 by an Arkansas court.

4th May, 1997. Arkansas, USA. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** And how's this for a tale of an out-and-out spoiled brat... When her husband refused to buy her new clothes, Carol Hooper, 26, elected to stand in the street in Geelong, Australia, and strip off her clothes to the highest bidder.

She was down to her knickers when the police arrived on the scene, but she wasn't too bothered...She'd managed to raise just enough cash for a new wardrobe.

1st June, 1997. Geelong, Australia. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** Gangster George 'Animal' Perry was so bored with the closing address at his trial at Rhode Island, USA, that he took a leak in the middle of the court room in order to show his displeasure.

He is currently on trial for murder, and was promptly given the additional charge of contempt of court for his troubles. .

4th June, 1997. Rhode Island, USA. 'DAILY SLUR.'

In the wake of a turning down of his marriage proposal to the girl he loved, Suliman Kush vowed to hate *all* women from that day forward. He must have stuck true to his promise because a court in Kabul, Afghanistan, sentenced him to three months imprisonment for spitting at every female that had the misfortune to pass him by in the street.

8th June, 1997. Kabul, Afghanistan. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

***Roderick Baker reacted more than a little crazily after sanitation workers called round at his house to insist that he immediately clear up his refuse-strewn yard. He quite literally, went berserk, and the 50-year-old antiques dealer held 140 chickens at knife-point, before threatening to kill one of the birds every minute until the authorities got the hell off his property.

After a total of three chickens were slaughtered, the police arrived and arrested him. The surviving chickens were later moved to a nearby farm 'to live a normal chicken life.'

Whatever that entails...

June, 1997. 'VIRGINIAN MAGAZINE'

*** Rosie Lee Hill of Pensacola, Florida, USA, went straight away to her local police station after she had paid \$50 for two 'rocks' of cocaine...The problem was, when she'd sampled it, she thought that it tasted a lot like baking soda. The police, not too surprisingly, were less than sympathetic, especially after the substance did in fact prove to be the real thing.

'It's amazing. We've never had someone call and say they've been ripped off on a dope deal. We've checked it, and it actually was cocaine,' said Jerry Potts, assistant police chief. 'I guess stranger things have happened, but I have not seen them.'

28th April, 1997. Pensacola Florida,, USA. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

*** Spanish Sergeant-Major Juan Carlos Miravete was messing around aiming his gun at a group of reserves, jokingly asking them if they were prepared to die.

Eventually, he ordered one to take his gun and shoot him. When Corporal Samuel Ferrer, 19, refused, the Sergeant-Major shot him dead (an incident that bears a remarkable similarity to a 'MONTY PYTHON' sketch about a ex-army unarmed combat instructor who shoots down his pupils for refusing to attack him with an item of fresh fruit).

An investigation was immediately ordered into the tragedy, and it was found that Miravete was drunk at the time...

5th May, 1997. Spain. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

*** A driver charged with the task of delivering a busload of mental patients from the centre of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, to the Bulawayo Mental Hospital, panicked when, after having stopped for a wee tippie, found the patients had done a runner. In desperation, the driver drove the now empty bus to the very next stop and offered a free ride to those waiting. His new passengers were then delivered straight to the mental home with the warning that they were extremely excitable and prone to inventing stories.

Incredibly, if the press reports are to be believed, it took three whole days before the hospital discovered the truth.

At the time of going to press, the real patients were still listed as being missing...

2nd April, 1997. Harare, Zimbabwe, South Africa. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

***And finally, for this issue at least, comes the story of Mary Dade, who set fire to her husband's snooker table because she spent so much time on it. She was later jailed after she

succeeded in her task, but also managed to reduce their house to ashes in Calgary, Canada.

11th June, 1997. 'Calgary, Canada. 'DAILY SLUR.'

THE CRAZIES ARE OUT THERE!

Invisible Men, Anti-Social
Neighbours, TV Addicts
Unwitting Cannibals And
Live Canary-Eaters...



The Neighbours From Hell

French home-owner Marcel Aloux took up residence in a quiet suburb of Bordeaux, and almost immediately, set about making life a misery for his next-door neighbours.

'He used to dress as Jesus,' said one of those aforementioned neighbours, Jean Trigedard. 'And he used to walk around with a giant cross. Then, whenever we had a barbecue, he would hammer on the fence and scream "Repent!" It was very disturbing.'

Over the next few months, Mr Aloux went from bad to worse, posting fish and leaves through his neighbour's letterbox and tethering a donkey in his front garden. Things finally came to a head when he daubed "Moneylenders" on Mr Trigedard's front door. Exasperated beyond measure, he felt he had no option but to ring for the gendarmes.

Only then did it emerge that Mr Aloux was not Mr Aloux at all, but Marcel Pavel, an out-of-work actor employed by a local estate agent to drive residents out of their homes, and therefore allowing them to buy up property cheaply.

12th May, 1997. Bordeaux, France. 'THE BIG ISSUE.'

Would-be opera singer Antonio Bartolini was thrown in the slammer for being drunk and disorderly. But police in Naples released him less than an hour later. The reason why? They couldn't stand his singing.

12th February, 1997. Naples, Italy. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** And a 27-stone lawyer who was jailed for five years for defrauding clients was freed after serving just two weeks...It was decided he was sooooo fat and his medical problems were costing the prison too much for them to justify keeping him locked up.

19th May, 1997. Johannesburg, South Africa. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

*** Still on the subject of people being too obese, it took a forklift, a flat-bed truck and a 7-foot-wide hole in the wall before medical workers could extract the wonderfully named Tom Parameter, 47, from his home one Saturday afternoon. He was taken to hospital for treatment related to his 800-pound weight.

24th March, 1997. Pennsylvania, USA. 'USA TODAY.'

*** A store worker from Iowa, USA, whose job it was to welcome customers to the shop, was sacked for calling one customer a snob and another a fat elephant.'

25th May, 1997. Iowa, USA. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

A REAL SQUIRREL NUT

From Germany comes the following tale of hazelnut mania...

Herman Arseberg, 34, a mild-mannered accountant from Munich, began feeding the squirrels in his local park as an act of ordinary kindness. *'They were so gentle and trusting,'* he said. *'And they didn't laugh at me. I just wanted to make them happy.'*

Pretty soon though, his harmless activities became transformed into nothing short of an obsession. He began taking more and more time off work to visit his new-found furry friends, and as he discovered there were countless hundreds to feed, he started fiddling the company's books so he could afford the extra nuts required.

He was eventually arrested driving through the Black Forest in a van loaded up with eight tons of hazelnuts in the back. He was later sent to prison.

'There are no squirrels here,' he was moved to lament from his four-walled cell. *'But there are lots of pigeons, and it's up to me to find them Caraway seeds.'*

12th May, 1997. Munich, Germany. 'THE BIG ISSUE'

AND A REAL TV ADDICT

We've all heard of people whose lives are so sad, they've become virtual couch potatoes, glued to their TV screens, regardless of the quality of the programming schedule...

But here's a story to make even the most avid viewer shudder a little.

According to the Russian News Agency Tass, a family who live in the small village of Ramenye, 50 miles north east of Moscow, were so engrossed in the horror movie they were watching (it's not recorded exactly which film they were viewing... We'd like to think, in the interests of the Cosmic Joker, that it was 'FIRESTARTER' or maybe 'THE BURNING'), that they remained completely oblivious to the fact that their house was ablaze.

The family, presumably only alerted when the power to the TV finally conked out, did the only sensible thing....They left in a hurry...After carrying the TV set to safety, of course.

No one was hurt and, though the house burned right down to the ground.

Even more worrying, was the disturbing story of a young British man who simply lost the will to live after four years' addiction to the goggle box.

2nd April, 1997. Ramenye, Russia. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

Woman Killed By Water Binge

Equally unmeriting is the account of a manic depressive named Emily Sheaves who managed to drink herself to death with common tapwater.

It seems she downed about three gallons of the liquid for no apparent reason. The water caused increased pressure on the brain and Mrs. Sheaves, 37, fell into a coma from which she never recovered.

Her father, Peter Cottrell, of Ottery St Mary, Devon, said; *'On the day she died she stood at the kitchen sink and drank gallons of water. She drank so much, she made herself violently sick.'*

The coroner at the inquest into her death at Exmouth told the hearing that her condition was extremely rare.

23rd April, 1997. Ottery St Mary, Devon. 'DAILY MANC.'

*** An unknown intruder planted a total of 20 trees around a cricket ground overnight, including two in front of the scoreboard.

Baffled officials at the club near Skipton, North Yorkshire, had to set about digging them all up again.

14th April, 1997. Skipton, North Yorkshire. 'DAILY MANC'

*** And lonely Janet Thompson grew so fed up with men walking out on her at the vital moment that she elected to marry herself at a Los Angeles ceremony.

8th June, 1997. Los Angeles, USA. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

THE INVISIBLE SCAM

Two men caught red-handed in women's changing rooms at a swimming pool in Changsha, China, had apparently taken a bunch of pills that they had previously been told would render them totally invisible.

And they bought the line, believing themselves to be beyond the sight of mere mortal man...

18th June, 1997. Changsha, China. 'DAILY MANC.'

THE MAN WHO BOUGHT BANANAS AND SPLIT

In Plainville, Connecticut, USA, car dealer Chris Pio ran an advert for a 1983 Cadillac that said that the 'First 10,000 Bananas Takes It.'

Tony Quiron of Bristol, in the same state, saw the ad and took it quite literally. He called up a fruit wholesaler and proceed 10,000 bananas... Approximately \$1,100 - less than half the price of the Caddy.

Quiron duly showed up at Chris' Auto Wholesalers one Saturday afternoon with the mountain of bananas and was given the car.

'I had to hold myself to my word,' was one of the more printable quotes Pio intoned later that day.

20th May, 1997. Plainville, Connecticut, USA. 'ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH.'

HUMAN FLESH SOLD DOWN AT THE MARKET

Police in Russia were forced to launch an in-depth investigation after a woman who bought cheap meat for her dog at a local market discovered to her horror that it was human flesh.

The Itar-Tass News Agency said the butcher who served the pensioner cannot be traced, and no body was ever found.
25th January, 1997. *Russia. 'DAILY TELEGRAPH.'*

CHOKING ON A CANARY AND A FISH

Drunken Arnd Hansen thought it might be a good idea to swallow a live Canary to 'impress' his friends.

It's hard to harbour any sympathy for him when we tell you that he died when he choked on the feathers. He was unable to breathe because the bird's frantically flapping wings blocked up his air tubes. Police in Copenhagen, Denmark, said; 'Doctor's removed the bird but it was too late for him...And the poor canary.'

22nd April, 1997. *Copenhagen, Denmark. 'DAILY SLUR.'*

*** A similar fate befell 36-year-old Steven Hill Epperson, who also made the mistake of popping a helpless creature into his mouth to give his mates a laugh.

In this case it was not a bird but a six inch Jack Dempsey Fish that brought about the untimely demise of a human being. Epperson of Los Angeles, USA, was rushed to hospital but was declared dead on arrival.

21st April, 1997. *Los Angeles, USA. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'*

The Cosmic Joker Strikes Again STRANGE DEATHS

A farm worker was killed when a bale of hay fell on his head. The 52-year-old man was apparently helping unload the killer hay from a lorry in Rochdale, Greater Manchester, when the strangest of fates befell him.

He died instantly.

10th February, 1997. *Rochdale, Greater Manchester. 'DAILY MANC.'*

*** Tourist Joseph Peterson, 47, on holiday from Belfast, bent over to pick a 'lucky' four-leafed clover on a cliffside near Lake Como in Italy...And promptly fell 150 feet breaking both legs and an arm.

This tale is somewhat apocryphal, because I remember encountering an uncannily similar report back in the mid-1980's.

22nd May, 1997. *Lake Como, Italy. 'DAILY MANC.'*

*** Mohammed Al-Assad was found dead in his bed after he died of gas poisoning...Entirely by his own doing.

His so-called healthy diet of beans and cabbage combined to produce large quantities of methane. A neighbour described 'the continuous sound of material being ton followed by intense screaming.'

According to the coroner at the subsequent inquest, the man had repeatedly passed wind, and managed to successfully gas himself in his small, airtight bedroom.

June, 1997. *THE VIRGINIAN MAGAZINE'*

*** Furious Bruce Weiss, 28, got his just desserts when he died trying to batter the family cat with a loaded shotgun for the heinous crime of peeing on the carpet.

Fortunately for the cat, unluckily for him, the gun went off and blasted him in half.

12th June, 1997. *New York, USA. 'DAILY MANC.'*

*** Heart patient Haram Gholampor, 49, made a full recovery from his operation until the doctors handed him a £3,738 bill for 12 days' care....He immediately dropped dead from shock.
20th June, 1997. *Tehran, Iran. 'DAILY SLUR.'*

*** When Australian accountant Arthur Roberts accidentally wiped his company's sales figures off his computer, he threw the machine out of the office in a fit of frustrated anger.

It killed a passer-by named Peter Mullins. Just to add to the fun, Roberts was later charged with manslaughter.

June, 1997. *Australia. 'THE VIRGINIAN MAGAZINE.'*

THE FINGER OF FATE

Pool player Mik Farelly looked to have lost half a finger in a newspaper picture of him taking part in a contest. And incredibly, just hours later, he really *did* lose it.

Mik, 28, of Westgate, Kent, chopped off his right hand index finger in a circular saw accident at work. He was quoted as saying; 'It was spooky. It looks like I've lost part of the same finger in the photograph.'

25th April, 1997. *Westgate, Kent. 'DAILY MANC.'*

FAST FOOD REALLY IS BAD FOR YOU...

In France, eight people were injured by, of all things, an out-of-control sausage.

The item in question was a 10-foot plastic banger which was in the process of being hoisted into position on the roof of a restaurant high up on the Alpine snows.

'It was almost in place,' explained workman Rene Faltulle, 'when it slipped out of its harness and into the slope. I jumped on top of it, but it started sliding downhill. I just couldn't stop it.'

As the by now, thoroughly terrified Mr Faltulle held on for dear life the sausage gathered speed, whizzing past a group of gobsmacked skiers for almost a quarter of a mile before eventually crashing through a barrier and into a bunch of Nigerian civil servants, eight of whom were seriously injured.

21st May, 1997. *France. 'THE BIG ISSUE.'*

SHURELY SHUM MISHTAKE

Sandra Dean, of Gravesend in Kent, opened her front door early one morning to find a mysterious bundle of sticks tied to a longer branch left on my doorstep.

To her, it looked like a miniature Witch's broom. Coincidentally, she had just read a book about the subject of Witchcraft, and she decided that she'd been sent a bad-luck charm by someone she'd managed to get on the wrong side of. She waited until darkness had fallen, and then poured salt all around her house (an ancient protective measure against all forms of Black Magic and curses, as salt is of course, a preservative and therefore anathema to the Devil).

So great was her haste, that as she spread the salt all around the perimeter, she collided with several items of furniture hurting herself in the process.

The next day a neighbour came round to ask her how she liked the new perch and apple twigs she'd left for Sandra's pet parrot...

May, 1997. *Gravesend, Kent. 'YES MAGAZINE.'*

*** A lifeboat crew who were called out to rescue a body adrift in the waters off the coast of Cornwall, were somewhat

relieved to find that the victim was nothing more than an inflatable teddy bear.

14th January, 1997. Cornwall, England. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** A human scalp matted with mud sparked an alert after it was found in a hedge in Snodland, Kent.

However, forensic experts later revealed that the scalp was in fact somebody's toupee.

28th May, 1997. Snodland, Kent. 'DAILY SLUR.'

*** Scientists in Oga, Japan, thought they'd discovered a rare Giant Squid, but their initial excitement was soon tempered when they realised that accidentally hooked marine biologist Kendo Sesako, who was, funnily enough, disguised as squid whilst trying to catch one himself.

4th May, 1997. Oga, Japan. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** A funeral service in Kent ended with Rod Stewart warbling the words; 'If you want my body, and you think I'm sexy...'

The curate had forgotten to wipe the tape clean - which also played the deceased's requested piece of music; 'Nessun Dorma.'

June, 1997. Kent, England. THE VIRGINIAN MAGAZINE.'

*** Two unemployed men who chopped up and stole £22,000 worth of metal sculptures at a university in Madras, India, sold their haul for a not-so-grand total of just £33. They thought it was nothing more than scrap metal.

1st June, 1997. Madras, India. SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** When Andrea Brunnoli reported a robbery to her local police station he was shocked to see the culprit...Sitting behind the desk.

Officer Paolo Pallozi later confessed to two other robberies in Latina, Italy.

8th June, 1997. Latina, Italy. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

HEROIC FAILURES

The Lancaster family were so fed up with living in a crime-ridden area of Arizona, that they finally upped sticks and moved out to Ohio.

Unluckily for them, their removal van containing all their belongings was stolen from outside their house on the very day that they left.

2nd February, 1997. Arizona, USA. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

The (Cosmic) joke was certainly on two Estonians who spent a grand total of 61 hours telling non-stop gags to attempt to set a new world record.

Unfortunately, their copy of the 'GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS' was out of date and they later discovered that the true record is currently held by a Peruvian who somehow managed 100 hours back in 1990.

3rd June, 1997. Estonia. 'DAILY MAIL.'

SUICIDE'S NOT SO PAINLESS

Ronald Opus's bid to take his own life certainly didn't go according to plan.

Frustrated that his plot to have his father 'accidentally' shoot his mother had apparently failed, Rommie threw himself from the 10th storey of his parent's apartment building. As he passed their window, his father fired what he thought was an unloaded shotgun at his wife, slipped, and the bullet, missing his wife, fatally wounded Ronald as he flew on by.

Ironically, his body wound up being caught in a net set up by window cleaners which would likely have saved his life.

15th April, 1997. USA. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

Ghostly Tales

AT THE 'WHITE HART HOTEL' SOMETHING STIRS...

A reputed Ghost that is said to haunt the 13th Century 'White Hart Hotel,' in Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, has apparently made a recent appearance, much to the chagrin of certain guests.

The latest victim is said to be Mr Leo Bullbrook, a project engineer with the TWR Racing Team, who are building a new Le Mans racing car nearby.

According to Leo's testimony he was awoken at 4.00 am by a cold, clammy invisible hand gripping his wrist. Leo was even more shocked to see that there was an impression of a monk lying next to him on the bed. He leapt out from beneath the covers at a pretty respectable speed, and as he did so, the phantom monk did likewise.

Leo was unable to return to that bed that night (or, so far as we know, any immediate night after).

Mr Paul Clayton-Smith, the manager of the hotel, was quoted as saying: 'We've had several reports over the years of a Ghost in this particular room. The room is panelled in very old oak and the four-poster bed is similarly constructed in old oak. On occasions I have personally noticed a very cold sensation in the room as have some of my staff. In fact, some of our clients categorically refuse to stay there.'

Mr John Dyson, Managing Director of Birmingham-based Parade Direct Marketing is one of those aforementioned clients.

Said Mr Dyson, somewhat shakily, 'I asked for a change of room after having the sensation of a disembodied hand on my shoulder and then learning a bit about the history of the room.'

Interestingly enough, when renovations were being carried out in 1979, a secret passageway was discovered at the bottom of the main flight of stairs. When the passage was traced it was found to lead directly to the old church, a distance of about 150 yards.

3rd March, 1997. Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire. 'PSYCHIC NEWS.'

WEIRD TALES FROM THE PAGES OF THE SUNDAY PRESS

According to that bastion of good, honest reporting, THE NEWS OF THE WORLD,' the following stories are genuine encounters with the otherworldly....

Les Harrald and his wife Carolyn, were attempting to get down to some serious love-making when suddenly, their bed began shaking forcing them to cool their ardour.

The frightened couple blamed the spirit of an angry old lady dressed in a flimsy white night-gown, who appeared to have come out of the wardrobe.

Foreman Leslie, 40, was moved to comment; 'It was like something out of THE EXORCIST. I jumped out of bed and saw the ghost howling and swaying from side to side. We ran from the room starkers.'

The Harralds live in a Victorian semi in Market Harborough, Leicestershire, and have made the somewhat disconcerting (for them at least) discovery that the spirit only puts in an appearance when they attempt to make love at night. 'Now, we are forced to do it in the daytime,' Les was forced to concede.



DON'T GO INTO THE BASEMENT...

An 18th-century, two-bedroomed cottage in Caine, Wiltshire, is said to be the focus for a poltergeist haunting. Handyman Robin Mitchell attempted to knock down walls in his new home, but as he was doing so, something invisible began throwing pieces of his tool kit at his head.

'It was like being in the middle of a battlefield,' Robin, 43, later told reporters. *'One hammer missed my head by inches as I covered under a workbench.'*

Robin is now of the opinion that he has inadvertently disturbed the entity in the basement when he tried to make alterations to the original structure. And now, *'the Poltergeist announces its arrival with the smell of rotting eggs. There's no spectral figure just a dark mist.'*

THE HOUSE THAT BLED TO DEATH

An extremely rare, not to say heavily disconcerting phenomena was said to have plagued the house of Thomas and Gill Forsyth, according to an account published in the aforementioned newspaper.

Their house began (in a curious echo of an 1980's episode of the consistently excellent TV series, *THE HAMMER HOUSE OF HORRORS*) quite literally, to bleed from the walls. On a day like any other, and for no reason that they could discern, a slight splash of red appeared on their wallpaper. In a few moments the stains started to spread and appear just about everywhere, and not merely on the walls.

Initially, Thomas assumed it must mean that their pet dog was injured and was bleeding profusely, but when they examined him, they soon found that he was entirely unharmed. Things took a decided turn for the worse when Gill emptied a fresh batch of washing from the machine and discovered that her nighties were covered in blood.

'Blood was everywhere, she said. 'All over my hands and arms. I dropped the washing and keeled over in shock. We've even come down in the morning to find the walls and door frames smothered in blood.'

The couple have no trouble in accepting the belief that their mock-Tudor home is haunted by the ghost of a young child who was said to have died in the basement shortly after the building was erected in 1939.

'We've seen him walking around howling and screaming. He can't be any older than twelve. And we can't sleep at nights.' They've considered having the house exorcised, not least because, as Thomas points out; 'Our washing bills have gone right through the roof.'

Ghost To The Rescue

From Gravesend in Kent, comes the following heart-warming story, which 'proves' that not all spirits of the departed can be classed as vengeful phantoms out to make the living suffer at their expense...

Artist Chris Strickland and his wife Ann, both believe that a spirit saved their baby from a house fire. Chris, 34, takes up the story; *'I rushed to the cot and found it was surrounded by an overpowering smell of lavender - so strong it masked out the smoke. Our baby, Delphine was lying face down with her head to one side. Her body seemed to be pressed into the cot's mattress as if she was being shielded from the flames. When I picked her up, the pressure suddenly disappeared, and the lavender smell simply melted away.'*

All Clippings, 1st June, 1997. NEWS OF THE WORLD.

Dark Angel Pass By

Margaret Cookney claims she was visited not once, but twice, by the Grim Reaper Himself in the wee small hours before dawn...

The 44-year-old mother had been suffering from severe bouts of stomach pain for weeks on end, and she awoke one night to be confronted with the most terrifying apparition of all; Death itself personified. It resembled a skeletal figure garbed in hooded monk's clothes.

The entity, if that is truly what it was, re-appeared a few nights later, but Margaret refused to heed either of the episodes as being anything other than stress-related hallucinations.

However, not long after the second visitation, she was rushed to hospital with a burst appendix and an ovarian cyst.

'I'd been suffering violent attacks for some time,' Margaret related. 'My marriage was a bit on the rocks at the time, so the doctor and I put it all down to stress. Then one night I woke up trembling and bathed in sweat, and there was this shimmering figure in silverlight at the foot of the bed. I knew I was awake because Paul was snoring beside me. I was frozen with fear and could only watch as it glided slowly towards me, then pushed its hood back to show its grisly skull face grinning at me. When it stretched out its skeleton hand and beckoned to me, I thought I was either going mad, or was going to die.'

On the second occasion that the entity appeared, it again beckoned to her with its bony finger of presaged death. It was only then that Margaret's son Max, advised her to go and see a doctor.

Margaret, however, still felt somewhat sceptical about the whole incident. *'I could hardly tell the GP that I'd had a visit from the Grim Reaper and ask what he was going to do about it. I tried to ignore it and go into work. But that afternoon I was exhausted, and another wave of agony hit me. I got myself home on the bus then collapsed in a heap. When Paul came home he called the doctor who told him to get me straight to a hospital - not even to wait for an ambulance. I was on the operating table within the hour and I was later told that at one point it was touch and go.'*

Now fully recovered, Margaret's apparent encounter with 'The Angel Of Death' has taught her one thing; *'If he ever re-appears, it's straight down the surgery for me.'*

THE GHOSTLY NUN WITH A BAD HABIT

A rest home for the elderly is, it is alleged, also the home to a light-fingered spirit of a nun. The ghost has been blamed for stealing missing items of cutlery, and has also been accused of pinching people.

It all started when Debbie Boucher's parents bought three Victorian houses in Birmingham 20 years ago, and set about converting them into an old people's home. *'Before we bought them, the previous owner, who ran the place as a guest house, warned us about the nun,' said Deborah. 'She said she was first alerted to the uninvited guests when one of her tenants asked her why the nun in the room opposite never came down to the dining room for meals. The owner was stunned - the room had been unoccupied for years. Then another guest came up with a strange tale - she said the nun had listened to all her problems. When some visiting musicians started talking about a guitar-playing nun, the woman realised there must be a ghost in the house.'*

Deborah's family took little notice of the tales and worked hard on setting up their residential home. But they were baffled when things started to go missing.

'They were small items to begin with: cutlery, documents, keys and such. We tried to shrug it off, until, one day, things came to a head. I was in the dining room when suddenly things began to move off the shelves. Everything came crashing down, books, clocks, plates, ornaments, in twos and threes until every shelf was cleared. I couldn't move, I just sat there quaking, surrounded by wreckage.'

There was worse to come, however.

Deborah and her sisters were walking up the stairs late one night when something began pinching them.

'We each felt it in turn,' Deborah later recounted. 'But there was no one there and we weren't playing tricks on each other.'

The family still maintained a healthy dose of scepticism and didn't still didn't accept that the house was haunted. At least until a Gypsy paid a visit to their home.

This Gypsy used to come by every year and tell fortunes. She was so accurate that residents and staff would queue up to see her. As she was leaving that day she told us that there was no need for her to come back again. She said she'd seen someone sitting on the stairs - she was certain it was a spirit who was taking care of us. We asked her for a description and she said; "It was a nun who looked very playful. Don't worry, she won't cause you any harm - she's only here to look after you.

We never saw the Gypsy again, but the nun's still well and truly here.'

8th June, 1997. Mosely, Birmingham. 'EVA MAGAZINE.'



THE HAUNTED WORKSITE

The demolition of an old building that once housed a bank and doctors' offices is said to be gaining a less-than-savoury reputation after reports of slamming doors, disappearing tools and ghostly voices and footsteps on the fourth-floor of the 94-year-old building.

After six weeks of similar accounts, D.J. Demo President Ralph Unis was considering bringing in a hired psychic to visit the former department store. Rumours of an old suicide or murder on the fourth floor have been predictably circulating amongst the populace of the town of Connellsville, Philadelphia.

'It's scary, this fourth floor, said Unis. Since work began last February, several workers have reported doors slamming and a cold spot at the entrance way to the fourth-floor. In one case employees were unable to open the unlockable door to the dreaded fourth-floor. After obtaining some tools to gain entry, they returned to find the door standing wide open.

Employee Harold Palinski was quoted as saying that he once dropped a sledgehammer on the haunted landing but couldn't locate it when he stooped to pick it up. Other workers have also reported missing tools and later found them in the most unlikely of locations (one is reminded of the folkloric accounts of the capricious ways of Faeries, Brownies, and other entities

of The Middle Kingdom). On another occasion, several wooden boards were tossed into the air, by an apparently invisible agency. The boards very nearly hit the some of the workers sitting outside.

31st March, 1997. Connellsville, Philadelphia, USA, 'INDIANA GAZETTE.'

The Invisible Hitchhiker

For some reason touted in the Sunday press as an encounter with an ET-type entity, the following account sounds more to me like something that would be more at home in this section of ghostly phenomena....Whatever that entails, precisely.

Jennifer Parlane and her five-year-old son Lawrence, were driving along the newly-opened Blackwater Valley relief road near Aldershot in Hampshire.

Jennifer relates what happened; *'Suddenly, the temperature in the car dropped even though the heater was full on and all the windows were closed. My son Lawrence, who was in the back, began shivering. Then we both heard a low moaning sound that gradually grew louder. It was definitely human. It sounded like a cry for help Lawrence went absolutely hysterical. He was in a real state. There was definitely a presence there. I could feel it. I turned the light on but could see nothing. Lawrence was as white as a sheet. He was just shaking with fear. I put my foot down to get to the end of the road as quick as I could, then everything returned to normal.'* Upon arriving home, she immediately called her local vicar, even though it was getting late in the evening.

'She was terribly upset by what had happened and little Lawrence was extremely frightened and couldn't sleep,' said the Reverend Stanley Zeal.

Jennifer was moved to add; *'It has completely changed Lawrence's personality. He was a fun-loving, normal child. Now he's so edgy.'*

22nd December, 1996. Blackwater Valley, Aldershot, Hampshire. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

THE SPIRIT-HOUND

Ellen Lloyd appears to be convinced beyond doubting that her long-dead parents have seen fit to send her a guard-dog with a difference to watch over her, when she needed it most.

'I was a single mum bringing up three children on my own,' Ellen, 47, remembers. *'I used to work very late at a theatre club in Birmingham, and the road I lived in was all terraced houses with covered alleys leading to the back gardens. The street had some lighting, but the alley was in complete darkness. As I walked down the street on this particular night, I had the feeling I was being watched. I walked faster and faster, convinced that I wouldn't make it home in one piece. I was in such a panic that I thought I'd burst, but suddenly there was this big black dog padding beside me. It came from nowhere but looked as solid as a rock - nothing ghostly about it at all - and immediately my fear dissolved. I think I even patted it on the head.'*

Much to Ellen's undoubted relief, her impromptu escort stayed with her all the way to her front door. *'But just as I put my key in the lock it vanished into thin air. I couldn't believe my eyes. It looked so real. But then a sudden vision of my parents, who'd been dead for some years, flashed before me. I just knew then that they'd sent the dog to protect me.'*

Not long after, Ellen learned that the very next night, a young woman had been attacked by a stalker lurking in the darkness of the alleys.

'A passer-by chased him away, so she escaped too. But there was no one around when I was there. Without Mum and Dad's "Minder" I wouldn't have been so lucky. I never saw the big dog again, but he was just right for the job.'

4th June, 1997. Birmingham, England. 'EVA MAGAZINE.'

Old Soldiers Truly Never Die

We came across the following account of a ghostly soldier haunting an abandoned railway platform deep beneath the surface of Liverpool's James Street Station, in an old collection of newspaper clippings.

We include it here as part of our ongoing series featuring the Ghosts and Devils that walk our fair counties borders.

According to the piece in *THE LIVERPOOL DAILY POST*, cleaning staff and signalmen at the station described the apparition as wearing a full khaki battle dress, webbing, and carries a rifle slung over his shoulder. No sound of a train has filled the emergency tunnel which has lain under the River Mersey since 1875. The cleaners however, still keep it in goo order.

Merseyrail Electric cleaner Les Pinto was one of the witnesses who was convinced that he had seen the ghost.

'I was working down here late at night cleaning the old emergency platform. The soldier was on the really old platform on the other side of the tracks which has not been used for decades. At one time, trains went to Birkenhead from there, but that's a long, long time ago.'

Mr Pinto, of Sandhurst Street, Aigburth, Liverpool, saw the soldier and shouted to him to wait were he was.

'I ran up the stairs and back down on his side, but by the time I got there he was gone. There's no way out of James Street except for the lift and those emergency stairs I came down, so there's just no way he could have got past me. He wasn't a misty, ghostly sort of thing. He looked solid.'

When Mr Pinto told the signal staff about the strange man they were not in the least bit surprised.

'They just told me, "Oh yes, that's the James Street Ghost."

The spectre stood beneath the an eerie mural in a deafening silence broken only by the sound of water dripping from the ceiling.

Merseyrail Electric were quoted as saying that they had no idea as to the identity of the ghost, though they believe he may be a man forever waiting to make it home from the horrors of the trenches of the Somme, during the First World War.

The station is reported to have a long-standing reputation for ghostly occurrences and Kelly Green, an employee at the station for 23 years, says doors regularly swing open without any visible reason.

October, 1994. James Street Station, Liverpool. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

THE TRENDY SPIRIT OF WELLINGTON ROAD

Karen Brown of West Derby, Liverpool was in her car waiting at the traffic lights at the junction of Wellington Road and Rathbone Road on April 6th, 1997, when she noticed a tall youth aged somewhere between 20-25 walking around the corner from Picton Road, near the Wellington pub.

He was wearing a blue baseball cap, black leather bomber jacket and jeans. As he walked a few yards down the road, she glanced at the lights to see if they had changed, then looked back - and to her surprise the youth was simply nowhere to be seen.

There were no alleyways or doorways he could have gone into. The following evening whilst drinking in her local pub, the conversation had turned to ghosts and a bus driver mentioned

a spirit motorists had seen on Wellington Road; a young, pale-looking man with a baseball cap.

The driver said the ghost may be that of a teenager killed in a car crash in the area several years ago.

22nd April, 1997. Wellington Road, Liverpool. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

THE HOWLING DEMON OF HUNT'S CROSS

According to a typically lurid account in *THE NEWS OF THE WORLD*, divorcee Charlotte Alexander and her family have been subjected to two years of unrelenting terror due to a malignant entity that is haunting their home.

In desperation, she has called in three different priests to help exorcise 'the Demon', but each time their attempts have ended in failure. Charlotte believes that the identity of the evil spirit is that of a middle-aged railway worker.

On one occasion, the entity tried to kill her by pushing her down a flight of stairs....

'I was standing on the landing when I suddenly felt two hands on my shoulders,' she told reporters. 'Next moment I was at the bottom of the stairs.'

Charlotte, 44, who was badly bruised, looked up and glimpsed a grey-faced figure in railway uniform before it vanished into a wall.

Despite this attack, Charlotte, and her son Ryan, 18, and daughter Christina, 13, refused to give in to the 'ghost'. *'I am damned if we are leaving. We won't let this thing win. We are determined to see it off. It is our home.'*

The trouble began, as it so often does, when Charlotte started working on the house, an old railway cottage, at Hunt's Cross, Liverpool.



(ABOVE): Charlotte Alexander prays for deliverance from the 'Forces Of Evil' that have taken over her house...

The family claim, that in the wake of the alterations they were subjected to Banshee-type wailing as one of the hapless priest's attempted exorcism blessing, furniture being hurled across various rooms by an invisible agency. Stones

mysteriously being thrown down the stairs (a common feature of Poltergeist phenomena), deafening screams that filled the house and weird tremors which shook the building to its very foundations, once more as priests said prayers.

Father Anthony McCafery, of nearby St Andrew's Catholic Church, blessed the house after Charlotte asked Liverpool Cathedral officials for some respite from the terror that came by day and night. He was quoted as saying, somewhat cryptically, *'There is some kind of nasty presence in the house, but that is all I want to say.'*

Charlotte, much put-upon, was more forthcoming.

'Incidents with the Poltergeist have become so bad that the children slept with Rosary beads in their beds to ward off Evil. Once, a message was scrawled on my daughter's blackboard that read; "I WANT YOU OUT" It sent a chill right through me. We go weeks without an incident. Then it returns with even more horrifying force. We hope the blessings will eventually triumph.'

8th July, 1997. Hunts Cross, Liverpool. *'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'*

Religious Phenomena

The Virgin Of Guadalupe

Just two weeks shy of her 465th anniversary, Mexico's revered Virgin of Guadalupe, also fondly known as 'Lupe', has stepped into the modern age with her very own page on the Internet called, predictably enough, *THE INTERLUPE.'*

'Nearly 500 years after she first appeared to us, we're embarking upon a new way to send her message of peace, harmony and salvation,' claimed Juan Homero Hernandez, a scholar and member of the Guadalupean Studies Centre in Mexico City.

The Virgin's Home Page serves as an example of how modern science can advance ancient beliefs, Hernandez was quick to point out to any would-be sceptics.

The Virgin, a dark-skinned version of the Catholic Madonna, is credited with bringing Roman Catholicism to Mexico's indigenous population. Today, more than 90 per cent of Mexico's 90 million residents are Catholic.

Worshippers believe the patron saint of Mexico first appeared to the peasant Juan Diego, in the Winter of 1531 on a hill just outside of Mexico City. Juan told the city's bishops he had seen the Mother Of Jesus, but they didn't believe him, of course.

The peasant returned to the site, at which point the Virgin told him to pick roses she had made bloom on the hillside in midwinter as proof of her existence. When Juan opened his cloak before priests in Mexico City, the roses fell out, revealing a perfect image of the Virgin stamped on the cloth. The cloak still hangs today in Mexico City's Guadalupe Basilica. The Virgin remains the country's most important religious tradition.

Some academics have doubted the existence of Juan Diego and the Virgin Herself, arguing that she was probably an invention of the Spaniards to convert the population to Catholicism. Hernandez dismisses such doubts.

'The Virgin's image toady holds the same power as when she first appeared,' he said. *'And now, with the lights shed by modern technology, we will be able to spread the Christian beliefs stamped on Juan's cloak.'*

Just four months later, Hernandez's words were being echoed by workers in Central Washington state farm fields.

Rainbow images of Mary were being reported as being seen on two highway signs near Yakima and (the aptly named) Moses Lake. The images were said to bear a remarkable likeness to Our Lady Of Guadalupe.

Large crowds gathered in early April to try and see the vision for themselves on the backside of the highway signs, and local law enforcement officers were forced to prepare their forces for thousands of out-of-towners each and every weekend.

There were many theories as to what this means in the farming communities whose large Hispanic populations include many migrant workers and immigrants from Mexico.

Road engineers say the metallic stains on the signs are probably nothing but discoloration from oxidation. It happens all the time, they say.

A spokesman for the Catholic Diocese of Yakima, was at pains to point out that there were no indications that anything remotely supernatural was going on. He added that the Church were not bothering to investigate.

Believers however, are not so easily dissuaded from clinging to their versions of the truth. They say they're not surprised that Guadalupe has shown up to be with her people in central Washington.

7th December, 1996. Mexico City, Mexico. *THE SUNDAY ENTERPRISE'* 12th April, 1997. Central Washington, USA. *THE SEATTLE TIMES.'*

THE BANNING OF THE 'NUN BUN'

Featured on the very first edition of *'FORTEAN TV,'* the so-called 'Nun Bun' has been the subject of a ban by the real Mother Teresa. She has apparently got something of an (ahem) cob on because the owner of the cafe where the 'miracle bun' is currently housed is making a great deal of money out of it.

The cinnamon-flavoured anomaly was discovered when it popped out of the oven at the Bongo Java cafe in Nashville and a customer spotted that the folds of pastry resembled the 86-year-old nun's face. Predictably, it was enshrined in a counter display. Not long after, the inevitable merchandise including T-shirts, mugs, prayer cards and other items emblazoned with an image of the 'Nun Bun' went on sale.

The exploitation of something as innocuous as a lump of pastry might be laughable in other circumstances, but Mother Teresa was certainly not amused. She penned a letter to the owner, Bob Bernstein requesting that he put an immediate stop to the merchandising and he's agreed to comply...For a little while at least.

Mother Teresa wrote from Calcutta; *'My legal counsel has written asking you to stop and now I am personally asking you to stop. I do know that you have not done anything out of ill will, and so trust that you will understand and respect my wish. God bless you.'*

Her lawyer was quoted as saying: *'If the goods do go on sale again, Mother Teresa will pray over it and we'll weigh the options.'*

24th May, 1997. Nashville, USA. *'DAILY EXPRESS.'*

Message From God Inside a Tomato

Fairly hot on the heels of the holy message found inside a common or garden aubergine (see DON #11) comes news of a similar 'sign from God' hidden away inside a tomato. Shaista Javed, 14, discovered the message when she took the several of the vegetables out of the fridge.

She began slicing them up and was just about to start on her third when she asked her granddad how he would like his done. He told her to cut it in half, which she duly did, and was amazed to find that the two segments appeared to contain the Arabic message; *'THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD,'* on one side, and *'MOHAMMED'* on the other.

Shaista, a devout Muslim, took no persuading that she had been the blessed witness to a miracle.

'God made me buy that tomato,' she said. *'These words are a message from God.'*

Since finding the 'words' the Muslim community felt compelled to converge upon Shaista's father's humble abode. The segments were sealed in clingfilm to keep them fresh and they were later placed in a freezer for long-term preservation.

Shaista's mother, Shamim Javed, believes sincerely that her daughter has been chosen to spread the word.

'It was an incredible twist of fate that the tomato ended up with Shaista,' she said. *'Someone else could have easily sliced the tomato the other way round, or even eaten it without noticing the message inside.'*

Shopkeeper Shahida Parveea, who runs the local general store has noticed, with one beady eye fixed on his cash register, that there has been a marked increase in the number of tomatoes sold in his shop.

'There's no shadow of a doubt that it was a message from God,' he was quoted as saying.

12th June, 1997. Huddersfield, Yorkshire. *'DAILY MAIL'*

THE TURIN SHROUD'S 'MIRACULOUS' ESCAPE

Fire-fighters managed to rescue the infamous Turin Shroud from a raging inferno at the San Giovanni Cathedral in downtown Turin, thereby adding to the cloth's aura of mystery and reverence.

Dozens of residents of the city applauded enthusiastically as the Shroud's saviours carried the silver-and-glass reliquary holding the sacred linen.

About 200 fire-fighters battled the flames, which were still burning fiercely three hours after it initially broke out. The cause of the fire remained a mystery at the time of going to press.

The 14-foot-long linen has been kept enshrined in the cathedral since way back in 1578. As it well known, the actual cloth bears the faint yellowish image of the front and back of a man with thorn marks on the head, lacerations on the back and bruises on the shoulders. Though a bunch of radiocarbon tests that were carried out in 1988 suggested the Shroud was no more than 700 years old, researchers have still failed to reach any firm consensus on how the images was originally created. The Roman Catholic Church (unusually for them) has never claimed the cloth as a genuine Holy Relic.

To reach the reliquary, fire-fighters had to use a hammer to shatter the bullet-proof glass protecting the linen.

Mario Trematore, the fireman who saved the cloth, collapsed as he rushed outside. *'God gave me strength to break those glasses,'* he was moved to say.

12th April, 1997. Turin, Italy. *'ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH'*

Creationism; Fact Or Fantasy?

A prominent Australian geologist has been forced to sell his house in order to finance a legal battle against a Creationist who claims Noah's Ark has finally been located, without a shadow of a doubt, in Turkey.

The case is believed to be the very first involving a mainstream scientist taken on an old-school Creationist over the interpretation of scientific data to support a literal interpretation of the Holy Bible.

Ian Pilmer, head of the School of Earth Sciences at the University of Melbourne, maintains that videos, tapes and literature sold by an organisation called 'ARK SEARCH,' based in Canberra, are *'misleading and deceptive,'* and are therefore in breach of Australia's Trade Practices Act. He also questions the validity of the doctorate held by 'ARK SEARCH's founder, Allen Roberts of Sydney.

Roberts gained international fame and recognition after he was captured in September, 1991, by Kurdish guerrillas. At the time, he'd been in Eastern Turkey searching for the mythical Ark.



(ABOVE): *The remains of Noah's Ark on the summit of Mount Ararat? Or an entirely natural formation of rock created by something as prosaic as a mudslide?*

Roberts claims that the rotted remains of Noah's Ark lie at a spot some 20 kilometres from the summit of Mount Ararat. He firmly believes that the remains contain petrified wood, fossilised animal droppings, rusted brackets and rivets, as well as lines of iron deposits indicating the ribbing of an ancient vessel.

Pilmer however, states that after visiting the area for himself, he is equally vehement that Roberts's claims are wholly false. He argues that the structure is nothing more than a block of rock brought down in a mudslide from a glacial lake higher in the Kurdish mountains.

Other Creationist groups, some of which also dispute Roberts's claim to have found the Ark, are very quickly distancing themselves from 'ARK SEARCH.'

'The case doesn't involve anyone in the mainstream Creation Science movement,' says Carl Wieland, head of the Creation Science Foundation in Brisbane.

clung desperately to life for four agonising days. Her liver and kidneys failed, she drifted into a coma and doctors told her devastated parents that her chances of survival were at the best, slim.

More in desperation than any real degree of hope, they began to pray to Sister Teresia Benedicta and amazingly, their daughter made a sudden recovery. Despite being diagnosed with irreversible liver damage, she is today, a healthy 12-year-old.

In April of this year, the Vatican officially declared that her recovery was nothing short of a miracle - the last stage before making a saint of Sister Teresia.

'The choices are either that it's an accident or purposeful - there's nothing in between,' said the girl's father, the Reverend Emmanuel Charles McCarthy. *'This is not an accident. It is purposeful and it is within the providence of God.'*

Even the doctor who treated Teresia at a Boston hospital has seen fit to testify to Vatican representatives that her recovery was otherwise unexplainable.

'You have to acknowledge that there are other forces in play that are beyond what we're capable of doing,' he said, somewhat humbly.

12th April, 1997. 'DAILY MAIL.'

For the likes of Cardinal Paul Poupard, head of the Vatican's Pontifical Council For Culture, all of these events are merely signs of our times. Ours is an age, he has said, that has moved beyond purely rationalistic answers.

'Today we realise the science explains the mechanical nature of things., but remains silent in front of basic questions like; Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going?'

In 1996, the Vatican's doctrinal congregation noted the large number of apparitions and 'miraculous' signs being reported around the globe, and felt compelled to emphasise the responsibility of local bishops in such matters. At the same time, the Vatican maintains a role of 'orientation and vigilance' over these events.

In the meantime, we watch and we wait...

The Holy Hobo

A tramp, who quite literally stinks to high heaven, is apparently being revered as a Holy Man.

Joseph Stawinoga, who lives in a tent pitched on a West Midlands traffic island, has become a cult figure for worshippers at a nearby Hindu temple.

The disciples take him food in return for the somewhat dubious gift of receiving his blessings.

Joseph was born in Poland, and is known to locals as Fred. He has lived under the sheet of tarpaulin for nearly 40 years.

He is notoriously aggressive to strangers and shuns any idea of company at his home on the busy St. John's Ringway.

Nevertheless, members of the Shree Krishna Temple in Wolverhampton have chosen to adopt Fred because he lives a simple life similar to Indian Holy Men.

11th May, 1997. Wolverhampton, Midlands. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

THE BIBLE CODE - REVELATION OR FABRICATION?

In late May this year, *'THE DAILY MAIL'* ran a two-part series that featured the work of a mathematician who has, so he reckons, managed to crack a secret code 'hidden' for 3,000 years within the pages of The Bible.

Using computer technology, he believes the evidence is irrefutable and has been endorsed by some of the World's leading academics.

If you didn't read it for yourself, the following synopsis should help you glean enough of an idea for you to make up your own mind as to the authenticity and/or accuracy of the 'findings.'

The code is said to reveal the details of events that occurred thousands of years after The Bible was actually written. It was discovered by Dr Eliyahu Rips, one of the World's leading experts in group theory, a field of mathematics which underlies quantum physics. The code has apparently since been replicated by a senior code-breaker at the U.S. Department Of Defence, who tested it with his own computer program.

It is said to have predicted the assassinations of Yitzhak Rabin, the Kennedy's and Anwar Sadat. Other, world-shaking events are claimed to have been foretold too. The collision of the comet Shoemaker-Levy with the planet Jupiter, Man's Apollo Moon landings, the Gulf War, you name it.

'THE DAILY MAIL'S' reporter who compiled the original articles, and therefore broke the news of the cracking of the code to the British public, was Michael Drosnin. He claimed to have personally investigated this case for five years and spent weeks at a time in the company of Dr Rips. He learned Hebrew and checked the code out on his own computer every day. He didn't dare give too much credence to the results of his investigations until the news came down the wires that Rabin had been shot dead by an assassin's bullet. Drosnin had written a letter to the former Israeli prime minister in November, 1995, warning him that the code had revealed his name appearing in The Bible, with the words 'assassin that will assassinate' crossed over it. He genuinely believed that Rabin was in dire danger and of course, he was proved right.

Rabin's name appeared only once in the pages of The Bible. As Drosnin delights in pointing out, the odds against his name appearing together with the prediction of his assassination were at least 3,000 to one. *'Mathematicians say 100 to one is beyond mere chance; the most rigorous test ever used is 1,000 to one. Moreover, the code had revealed in advance when it would happen. "In 5756, the Hebrew year that began in September, 1995, crossed "Rabin assassination". The code also revealed where it would take place; "Tel Aviv"*

Unfortunately for Rabin, he obviously never took Drosnin's warning seriously.

Significantly, however, Drosnin readily concedes that the Bible Code is not 'some sort of crystal ball - you can't find anything without knowing what to look for.'

Drosnin first met Dr Rip in Jerusalem in 1992. The self-effacing genius explained to an initially sceptical reporter that the code had been discovered in the original Hebrew version of the Old Testament. The Bible as it was first written. The code exists only in Hebraic, because that is the Bible's original language.

The good doctor further explained that the first indication that a code even existed had emerged over 50 years ago when H.M.D.Weissmandel, a rabbi in Prague, found that if you skipped 30 letters, and then another 50, and then another 50, the word 'Torah' was spelled out at the beginning of the Book Of Genesis. Using the same skip-sequence, the same word was found to be contained in the Book Of Exodus, Book Of Numbers and Book Of Deuteronomy.

Dr Rips was quoted as saying; *'I heard about it totally by chance, 12 years ago. I tried just counting letters like Weissmandel. You know, Issac Newton also tried to find the code in The Bible, and he considered it to be more important than his theory of the Universe.'*

Drosnin maintains that Isaac Newton was so obsessed with the idea of a code that he spent half his life trying to crack it.

Undeterred however, Pilmer also intended to challenge the evidence used by all Creation scientists to support their central beliefs - in particular, that the Earth was created sometime between 6000 and 10,000 years ago and that 4000 years ago, a huge flood wiped out all existing life except the bunch of animals saved by Noah and his family.

'For what the Creationists say to be true, you would have to discard all geology, astronomy, physics and biology,' says Pilmer.

'During the flood, the weight of water needed to submerge the continents, approximately 4.4 billion cubic kilometres, would have shifted the Earth out of its orbit. To provide enough rainfall, the atmosphere would have had to have been about 99.9 per cent water vapour, making it well-nigh impossible to breathe.'

Pilmer and Roberts have been at each others throats since 1992, when Roberts began a lecture tour of Australia to increase funds for ARK SEARCH. In May of that year, Roberts issued a defamation writ after Pilmer attacked him on a Melbourne radio station. Eight other defamation cases have since been served on Pilmer by Creationist groups in both Australia and the U.S., although these have since been withdrawn.

May, 1997. Mount Ararat, Turkey. 'NEW SCIENTIST.'

THE DAYS OF MIRACLE AND WONDER ARE NOT YET DONE

As he head at near breakneck speed towards the new Millennium, the interest in all things paranormal grows at such a rate the shelves in my local newsagents are literally groaning beneath the combined weight of publications dealing with all aspects of the unexplained.

Little wonder then, that the lore of signs and miracles, that great foundation of credulous belief upon which the church of times gone by was built, has once more thrust itself back into the limelight, like a kid seeking attention at a spoilt brat's convention....

The snippets reported here, and in previous issues, provide more than ample proof that the vast majority of the human race will cling to the most basic of faiths in times of change and uncertainty. And Church officials have been quick to jump on the spiritual bandwagon. In Italy, a theological panel concluded in February last that a 15-inch tall statue of The Virgin Mary which has been said to shed real tears of blood, was a bona fide *'supernatural phenomenon.'*

Though this announcement brought about the all-too-predictable split between the believers and the sceptics, Pope John Paul II stood up and bravely (or foolishly, depending on your point of view) stated that he, for one, believed implicitly in the reality of miracles.

'If one prays with faith, the Lord will not fail to perform miracles of healing,' he was quoted as saying on February 9th, 1997.

But meanwhile, at the Vatican's Doctrinal Department, the so-called Guardians Of The Faith claimed that they were faced with a near-impossible task just keeping up with the rapidly growing number of alleged apparitions, faith-healings, ecstatic visions and crying icons.

Other churches too are apparently undergoing a similar plethora of apparent signs.

In January, 1997, a deputy was assigned to direct the heavy traffic at Warren and Doris Ougel's home in Thibodaux, Louisiana, USA, on Highway 1.

The reason? People were visiting in droves to stare in open-mouthed wonder at a cross beaming from the frosted glass of a bathroom window.

Believers were sure they were witnessing a real miracle.
10th January, 1997, 'USA TODAY'

And on Cyprus, in early February, thousands of pilgrims led by the country's Archbishop (Greek Orthodox Church) gathered at a mountain monastery to pray before an icon of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus that reportedly had begun to weep.

Many Greek-Cypriots regard the 400-year-old icon's tears as both a miracle and a sign from God that a major calamity is on the horizon (isn't it always?)

Monks at the Kykko Monastery were the first to report that they noticed tears forming in the eyes of both the Virgin and Jesus and flowing slowly down the icon. Hundreds of the faithful soon began making the pilgrimage. Reports of such icon-related 'miracles' are not that uncommon in Cyprus, an island constantly in the shadow of the threat of war between the Turks and the Greeks who 'share' the sun-drenched land.

10th February, 1997. 'THE COLOMBUS DISPATCH.'



The faithful too, flocked to a suburban Chicago home to see a weeping portrait of the Virgin Mary and a window image of her cradling Baby Jesus. Antiochian Holy Orthodox Christian Church Bishop Demetri Khoury, of Toledo, Ohio, promptly declared the incident as miraculous.

The paper portrait of Mary seems to be crying oily tears; her image holding Jesus appears in condensation on a storm window. Homeowner Sam Najjar first noticed them at the beginning of May.

Church leaders were keen to point out that the weeping images may be connected to the Miraculous Lady Of Cicero, a weeping icon at a church in the nearby town of Cicero.

23rd May, 1997. 'USA TODAY.'

Across the South Pacific islands of Western Samoa, sightings were reported of the Virgin Mary, in the flesh, so to speak.

28th May, 1997. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

And over in Mexico, something as innocuous, and decidedly unglamorous as a tube station has become a religious shrine after an image of the Madonna was found in, of all things, a puddle.

6th June, 1997. Mexico. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

On the miraculous recovery front, the story of Teresia Benedicta McCarthy makes for fascinating reading...

Ten years ago, when she was just a next to helpless two-year-old, Teresia lay dying of a paracetamol overdose in a U.S. hospital. The young girl, who was named after a Jewish-born nun who perished in the Auschwitz gas chamber,

The major reason why Dr Rips succeeded where Newton failed was entirely a question of technology...Namely, a computer. The hidden text of The Bible was encoded with a kind of time-lock. It could not be opened until the computer had been invented. 'When I applied a computer, I made the breakthrough,' Dr Rips claims. 'I found words encoded far more than statistics allowed for by random chance, and I knew I was on to something of real importance.'

But it wasn't until he met up with a fellow Israeli physicist, Doron Witzum, that he acquired the final proof that he required. Witzum completed the mathematical model. What they did together was to search for the names of 32 great sage, wise men from Biblical to modern times, to determine whether their names, and the dates of their birth and death, were encoded within Genesis. They looked for the same names and the same dates in the Hebrew translation of 'War And Peace' and in two original Hebrew texts. In The Bible, the names and the dates were encoded together. In 'War And Peace' and the two other books, they were not. And the odds of finding the encoded information by random chance were ultimately found to be one in ten million



(Above): *The Great Beast rises from the Eternal Sea at the beginning of The End Times. Does the Bible Code prove the existence of God and the possibility that future events can be foretold? Including the fall of mankind?*

A senior code-breaker at the U.S. Department Of Defence named Harold Gans heard about the code and decided to investigate it for himself. He too, was originally highly sceptical about the authenticity of the code. He wrote his own computer program, and he sought out the same information that the two Israelis had apparently found. He was amazed to find that it was all there,

exactly as they had insisted it was. The dates that the sages were born and died were encoded with their names. The Defence-Department code-breaker had managed to replicate the Israelis' results independently and using his own computer. Meanwhile, Rips and Witzum were busy submitting their paper to a leading American mathematics journal, 'STATISTICAL SCIENCE.' The Editor, Professor Robert Kass, refused to lend any credence to the theory at first. But he allowed the paper to be checked by other experts. And the paper duly passed all the tests to which it was subjected with flying colours.

'Our referees were baffled,' said Kass. Their prior beliefs made them think the Book Of Genesis could not possibly contain references to modern-day individuals. Yet, when the authors carried out additional checks, the effect persisted.' Donsin was keen to explain how the code actually works....

'Imagine that The Old Testament is constructed like a giant crossword puzzle. It is encoded from beginning to end with words that connect to tell a hidden story.

Each code is a case of adding every fourth or twelfth or fiftieth letter to form a word. Skip X spaces, and another X spaces, and another X spaces, and the hidden message is spelled out. This is best explained by reading the photograph below, skipping every three letters.

"Rips Explains that each code is a Case Of adding Every fourth or twelfth or fiftieth letter to form a word. The hidden message is, of course, READ THE CODE.

But it is much more than simple skip code. ~~Over~~crossing the entire known text of the Bible, hidden under the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, is a complex network of words and phrases, a new revelation. There is a Bible beneath the Bible.

To find the code, Rips first eliminated all the spaces between the words and turned the entire original Bible (the first five books) into one continuous letter strand, 304,805 letters long.

In doing that, he was actually restoring the Torah to what some believe was its original form. According to legend, it was the way Moses received the Bible from God - "contagious, without break or words". The computer searches the strand of letters for names, words and phrases hidden by a particular skip code. It starts at the first letter of the Bible, and looks for every possible skip sequence - words spelled out with skips of one, two, three, all the way up to several thousand.

The computer then cuts the letter strand into rows of equal length, and stacks them one upon another, so that the hidden word appears vertically, or diagonally, with each letter highlighted in a circle or square. After it finds the key word, the computer can then look for related information. The computer scores the matches between words, using two tests - how closely they appear together, and whether the skips that spell out the search words are the shortest in the Bible.

Rips explains further, using the Gulf War as an example; "We asked the computer to search for Saddam Hussein. Then we looked for related words to see if they came together in a way that was mathematically significant. With the 'Gulf War', we found 'Scuds' with Russian missiles', and the date the war would begin encoded with the name 'Hussein'.

The words formed a crossword puzzle. Consistently, the Bible code brings together interlocking words that reveal related information. With Bill Clinton; "President" With the Moon landing; "Spaceship" and "Apollo 11". With Hitler; "Nazi" With Kennedy; "Dallas".

The greatest upheaval in recent times in America, the fall of Richard Nixon in the Watergate crisis, is also encoded.

"Watergate" appears with "Nixon" and the year he was forced to resign; "1974".

Religious and academic authorities have never agreed on the origins of the Bible. Spiritual leaders say the first five books were written more than 3,000 years ago by Moses. The academics say they were written by many hands over many hundreds of years.

The argument, however, turns out to be irrelevant. The Old Testament has been a settled text for at least a thousand years. There is a complete version from AD 1008 (the Leningrad codex), and every Hebrew Bible that now exists is the same letter for letter.

So the text used in the Bible code computer program has not changed in at least 1,000 years. A hoax is simply ruled out because it would have required a forger who could see the future.

I asked Rips how anyone, man or God, could see what did not yet exist. I had always assumed that the future didn't exist until it happened. Rips replied by saying that the Creator is not confined by time or space. For us the future is non-existent. For the Creator, the whole Universe from beginning to end was seen in one stroke.

No one knows if the Bible code accurately predicts what is yet to come. But some ancient intelligence may have encoded the Bible to leave us a warning: that we are about to face the real Armageddon, nuclear World war....'

'28-29th May, 1997. THE DAILY MAIL'

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The Hunter Of The Wildwood

Strange Events In The Heart Of Scotland

Back in the dark, misty days of 1988, I was a 33 year old mature student. I had been married for 14 years and was the father of three children. We could be considered as a normal family in every sense of the word, with no particular problems or cares. Although I had many keen interests, including the shadowy world of the arcane and the paranormal, little did I suspect that I was about to confront the subject head on.

Due to the fact that I was training to become a registered nurse and that the college was situated in a remote area, my wife and I decided to purchase a small family car. This was the first vehicle that we had owned, and the children loved to be taken on jaunts to the nearby Bathgate Hills.



(ABOVE): 'The Hunter Of The Wildwood... Throughout recorded history, the dark, primeval forests have been rumoured to be filled with all kinds of strange, supernatural entities. From Faeries to Werewolves From Wilbmen to Eivish folk. From the restless spirits of the dead to Dryads and Wood Nymphs... And here, Herne The Hunter, the sinister leader of The Wild Hunt, which is said to roam abroad on stormy nights seeking out the souls of the damned...

It was during one of these unplanned night excursions, prompted by the children, that I turned the car northward and headed for the proverbial hills. The night was pitch dark and cruel, diamond-chip stars twinkled in the clear sky. We were driving on a familiar road, running parallel with Raven Craig Wood, popularly known as the Knock Forest (O.S. Pathfinder map 405 ref: 9977) situated less than a mile from our home. The children were chattering happily in the back seat whilst my wife and I discussed the days events. Up to this point, nothing remotely unusual had occurred, nor was it expected.

For now at least, sanity held sway.

I have said that this road was familiar to me. Aside from living in the area all my life, I had previously experienced *two* weird events at that particular spot on the road. In my teenage years I had harboured a passion for motorcycles and owned a vintage Sunbeam S7. As a sixteen year old I delighted in careering along the local country lanes. One day, as I approached the aforementioned spot on the forest road, the Sunbeam's engine suddenly stopped and the giant machine

glided silently to a halt. The rotor arm in the distributor had simply disintegrated. Despite many replacements and many hours of work, the motorcycle never ran again.

This, I believe, was the beginning to a strange and mystifying trilogy.

My second experience occurred sometime during the Summer of 1973. Together with a female friend named *Ann*, (pseudonym), who had her own motorcycle, I decided to drive over the Bathgate Hills to Linlithgow, seven miles away, to purchase a bag of chips. We set off at around 10pm. I was driving well in front because *Ann* was a tad less daring and was more careful about her speed. We rode past the Clinkin Stane, an ancient standing stone, and approached the beginning of the Knock Forest. The last 'normal' recollection I have before the crash is checking my speedometer and noting that I was doing nearly 60mph.

From this point on, things began to go decidedly awry.

I have a memory of slowly opening my eyes and there, in the full beam of the headlight, was a telegraph pole looming ominously before me. The whole scenario had a fluid, dream-like quality and I can remember the comforting feeling as I simply closed my eyes and accepted the inevitable impact with complete serenity. I do not recall any sensation of drowsiness, fatigue, or even of my eyelids becoming heavy at all. I *do* remember the eerie silence that permeated the episode, almost as if I had been watching a slow motion playback on the television. I was quickly snapped out of this trance-like state when a searing pain suddenly struck me on the left side of my neck. My body crumpled as I crashed against the wire of the roadside fence. Due to the impact and the fact that my crash-helmet was ripped from my head, my eyes opened, and I saw, again almost in slow-motion, the cart-wheeling effect of the Honda, red light over white light, flying over the fence to land with a sickening crash in the adjoining field.

As I lay there on the narrow verge, I distinctly heard *Ann* roar past. I listened silently as she wheeled her motorcycle around and remember thinking aloud; *Where the f---in hell are you going?*

I heard her drive off at high speed back toward Bathgate, two miles distant. I struggled to my feet and somehow managed to clamber across the fence, my neck and left arm wracked with pain. I could see the prostrate cycle, lights gleaming in the darkness, the engine still running. I reached down in a futile attempt to pick the bike up from the ground and was burned severely on the arm by the exhaust for my troubles. The shock of this new pain sent me falling violently backwards towards the ground, and as I lay there, cursing my luck and feeling extremely sorry for myself, *Ann* arrived in a van driven by several of my friends. The implications of this did not occur to me until a few days later when the shock of the crash had sufficiently receded.

When at last the time came for me to relive the accident, I asked *Ann* just how long she had taken to gather the people together. She replied that she had been gone for approximately 30 minutes!

I was aware of only a few minutes elapsing between her leaving the scene of the accident and returning. Enough time only for me to get to my feet, climb the fence, get burned and be thrown to the ground. I had not been, to the best of my knowledge, unconscious at any stage. It appeared that I had lost a period of time lasting approximately 30 minutes.

Back in those days I was interested in the Occult and the supernatural. I had no real leanings towards Ufology however. And I had never even heard of missing time and Allen Abduction cases. I soon succeeded in convincing myself that the hole in my neck had been caused by nothing more sinister than a nail sticking out the fence post.

I do not know why I should be so certain about that as I never actually looked for or, later discovered such a nail on the fence post. I have, to this day, a scoop-type scar that has gravitated from the centre to the base of my neck and left shoulder. The injuries sustained to my left shoulder and upper arm left me with an appearance similar to someone has been half-flayed alive.

Despite having had numerous motorcycle accidents both before and since this incident, none has ever left me with such a vivid and surreal recollection as did the events of that strange night.

A strange postscript to this event is that *Ann* states that from her position behind me, she observed my brake light come on. She also insists that I indicated to pull over as my left indicator began to signal. *Ann* continued; *'That was strange as there was nowhere for you to go... Only a grass verge and a fence. This made me think that you were slowing down because you were in trouble with the bike or you must have spotted something.'*

When I pressed *Ann* as to why she gave me no immediate assistance before seeking help, she replied; *'I had driven a good distance before I realised that you were nowhere to be seen. I thought you had driven further up around the bend and had simply driven out of sight. When I realised you were totally out of my sight, and could not possibly have possibly driven so fast or that far, I became frightened. It was as if you had quite literally vanished and I could find no sign of you or the Honda! You simply vanished from sight almost as if you had entered into another dimension or something.'*

To this day, I can think of no reason why I would wish to stop in the middle of that dark, lonely stretch of road. To date this matter remains unexplained to me and throws up more questions than answers. After a period of 23 years the mental and physical remain with me, as do *Ann's* frightening re-collections of the incident.

Whilst I readily accept that time has an effect on accurate recollections, the events of that and the subsequent night were so real that they continue to replay in both our thoughts. With my arm cradled in a sling and my motorcycle adventures curtailed, *Ann* cheekily asked me if I wanted to go to Linlithgow for another bag of chips expedition. Being something of a greedy devil, I agreed awkwardly clambered onto the back of *Ann's* motorcycle. On this occasion, we arrived safely in Linlithgow and enjoyed a bag of hot chips, talking and laughing about the previous nights' accident. On the return trip to Bathgate, *Ann* crashed her motorcycle sustaining a heavy facial injury. I myself survived this accident with only my pride affected and an extremely sore arm. As *Ann* was in no fit state to drive, I managed to get her on the back seat of her bike. Discarding the sling, my left arm aching, I set off for Bangour Hospital. There her wounds were treated and thankfully healed. Although the second accident was not on the Knock Forest Road, and there did not appear to be anything strange about the incident, apart from a weird driving decision an *Ann's* part, I feel that it warrants a mention as I have learned not to believe in coincidence.

The Silver Man

All that had occurred in my past was not in my mind as we drove along the side of the Forest that fateful Summer night in 1988.

This was a normal, carefree drive, something that had become usual for my family and I. As I headed for a small, but steep incline topped with a dangerous right hand bend, that effectively ends the straight road, my attention was quickly drawn to my right side. In a split second I managed to register a large glowing figure, braced in a classical

running posture, moving *extremely* fast, possibly between 50-70mph. The figure which presented as a negative would in photography, ran in an arc along a small clearing in the wood. It was well over 6 feet in height and appeared to have substantial form. As it ran in the opposite direction from the vehicle, it had its 'head' turned back towards us and *appeared* to be scowling. Its demeanour indicated that we had annoyed or disturbed it in some way. Its features were basically dark patches, but seemed to be representative of facial characteristics, how else could it scowl?

I negotiated the dangerous corner in silence, my heart confirming what had just happened, my mind insisting that it could not possibly be. The once silent vehicle came alive when my wife asked; '*You did see that didn't you?*'

I replied; '*See what?*'

At this the children spoke up as one and began excitedly shouting, '*You saw the Silver Man, Daddy.... You saw the Silver Man!*'

These quotes are the exact same words that were actually spoken at the time. I know because I have the entire incident engraved on my brain. I must stress that the being, entity or elemental was not silver in colour, although it would certainly appear that way to children.

For two days, I attended to my ward duties, aloof and in silence.

In retrospect I was suffering a type of after shock, my rationale in disarray. I now recognise and understand that this state of mind exists in people who witness strange and inexplicable phenomena. My intellect and reasoning would not and could not accept the surreal imagery of the facts. Although I attended to my work, the events of that night haunted my every thought. I endured this taxing period, telling myself again and again that these things do not happen. That type of being does not exist. I almost succeeded in convincing myself that I must have somehow dreamed the whole incident. In reality, I knew that what we had witnessed was real and this somewhat begrudged acknowledgement had the effect of turning my cosy little world and my long held beliefs on their head. After all, I was a hard-headed Scot and did not, despite my interest in the arcane, have much time for mumbo-jumbo. If another person had come to me with this weird tale I would probably have thought that they were mentally unstable. Therefore, I determined to push the incident to the back of my mind, say nothing and get on with the day-to-day business of my career and family. It didn't take long however before yet another sinister tale emerged from this strange road.

Bob And Mary's' Story

There appeared in the local newspaper, a harrowing account by a man and wife, with whom I was acquainted, telling of their late night journey over the Bathgate Hills. The couple *Bob and Mary White* (once more, pseudonyms) had been travelling along side the Knock Forest and had witnessed a strange and inexplicable sight. The hair on the back of my neck began to rise as I read on. They observed seven misty halos, glowing as they travelled through the Forest.

At this point I would normally have turned the page in disdain, but due to our own strange encounter, I read on, eagerly consuming the article. Yes, it looked as though *Bob and Mary* had suffered a similar experience to our own.

At that point I didn't realise just how similar it had been. I resolved to speak to *Bob*, but on each occasion I met him I could not bring myself to ask him about his sighting. It would be several years before I finally plucked up the

courage and managed to speak to *Bob* about our respective encounters.

I met him one day as he walked his dog. After pleasantries had been exchanged, I explained how I was now involved in paranormal research, especially UFO encounters. At this *Bob* smiled. '*It's not going in the papers is it? It's just the last time I spoke about our sighting it appeared in the paper.*'

I assured him that I would do nothing without his prior permission. I went on to explain that I too had encountered 'something' on that stretch of road, and that I was seeking out others who had had the same or similar encounters in the locality.

I asked *Bob* if he and his wife would complete a sighting form for me. He agreed, and I eagerly awaited the information.

I was not to be disappointed.

What follows is a synopsis of *Bob and Mary's* story....

(Mary): 'We were driving alongside the Knock Forest at around 10pm. We were approaching a slight dip in the road before going up the hill with the right-hand bend when we saw eight or nine silver or misty halos' travelling around the edge of a small circular clearing in the Forest. They looked like the Olympics sign, but there were too many of them.

I thought at first that it was a herd of something travelling through the trees. I was really frightened. They were each about four to five feet in length.'

Bob decided to report the incident and an investigator called to interview the couple. The next thing they knew, their story was in the local paper. *Bob* was not too pleased about this. '*I look some ribbing about that,*' *Mary* joined in. '*To this day I get ridiculed if I wear something green because I met a wee green man... Get it!!!*'

I am certain that all the witnesses who do come forward in these circumstances have undergone, at some time or other, the same childish mockery. In that respect I am therefore grateful to *Bob* and *Mary* for being so open and for supplying information about their encounter despite having a rough time of it with investigators in the past.

Ordeal By Fire

I was contacted by telephone by *Mr John Howard* (pseudonym), a chap who lives near Blackburn, West Lothian, which is approximately two miles from Bathgate. *John* wished to recount to me a strange sighting that he's had back in October, 1991, when crossing the Bathgate Hills.

'After leaving Queensferry, where I had visited friends, I decided to drive home via Linlithgow and over the Bathgate Hills. This was a journey I occasionally took as the view at night from the Hills is pretty spectacular. As usual, I passed Cabnapple and approached the Knock Hill which overlooks the Knock Forest. As I drove past the Knock Hill, I spotted a small light on the Forest bed. I stopped the car in the small car park at the Knock Hill. At first, the small light was the only thing visible but after about five minutes I saw what I can only describe as several small halo-type lights which seemed to be rising from the light source to about two meters above the rooftop. They would then descend back into the trees only to come popping back out again. After a further five minutes I decided to get a closer look from further down the hill. As I turned the car lights on and began to move, the lights in the wood stopped.

I was now at the foot of the hill looking up at the wood. Again, after what seemed like five minutes, the light show started again. This time the light was moving away from me to the other side of the forest. Then all of a sudden, the light started to come back in my direction, all the time popping

these small halos of light up and down above and below the trees. I wondered if I could see anything from the other side of the wood, so I drove off slowly following the road which skirts the edge of the forest. I could see nothing so I decided to return to the original viewpoint. Again I saw the light. I decided to get out of the car and at first saw nothing. Then after a few minutes, the light started moving about the forest floor and soon afterwards the little halo lights resumed their manoeuvres. Throughout this event there was no sound. Then suddenly the whole thing started on the other side of the wood. I drove round to discover a very intense fire sweeping through the trees affecting the scrub and bushes. I moved to a better vantage point and noticed that the fire was very fierce. I returned to the other side of the wood, which gave no indication of either the fire or the lights.

I hurried back to the scene of the fire and passed the flames as they licked the side of the forest.

Fifteen minutes had elapsed since the start of the fire which was gradually beginning to diminish. After about 20 minutes the fire had more or less stopped as quickly as it had started.'

Rational Explanations?

Only within the last year (1995) have I spoken openly about my families encounter. I had hoped to someday meet someone who had had a similar experience. This I believe would give substance to a waif-like phantom that has followed our every waking day since that night in 1988.

We have since found it difficult, virtually impossible to eradicate the memory of the aforementioned events. My wife and I have discussed, debated, argued and tried to come to a reasonable and rational explanation without success. The additional accounts of encounters in and around the Forest have given me heart and belief that this particular forest has been, or may be being, visited by something not of this world.

Bob and Mary's encounter mirror exactly my own sighting, a Close Encounter of the Third Kind. The only difference in our reports are the actual entity observed. Their encounter occurred on the exact same spot, in the same clearing as did my family's encounter with the 'Silver Man.' We were both struck dumb until the corner had been negotiated. Albeit John observed his sighting from a different angle, he would have been looking in the same areas as Bob and I. John had a different type of encounter, possibly a CE1 and 2, but observed the same halo lights as did Bob and Mary.

Conclusions?

We have returned to the scene of my accident and measured the length of time it would take me to climb the fence in order to reach the crashed motorcycle. We found that at an injured snail's pace it took just approximately 30 seconds to reach the spot where the Honda lay. We left the scene and returned to Bathgate in an attempt to re-create the time span of Ann's rescue mission. We managed in a simulation to take 20-30 minutes, just as Ann had stated.

My wife and I have returned in darkness to the scene of the 'Silver Man' incident, in order to attempt to make the car headlights reflect off the trees from different angles. Bob and Mary did much the same thing after their encounter. Like ourselves, they had no success.

I remain perplexed and completely at a loss to explain what happened to us in the Bathgate Hills on those strange night. It maybe that someone who has experienced a similar encounter is suffering in silence alone at this very

moment. I am here to tell you...*you are not alone... We are not alone.*

David Colman. Scottish Unexplained Phenomena Research

(See review of David's magazine 'COVER UP' on Page 61)

THE CANALS OF MARS

There could be no doubt about it. Percival Lowell, the renowned American astronomer had never been in any doubt. He had always been convinced of the reality of the Martian Canals. Even the most hard-nosed of sceptics could hardly doubt the existence of the Canals now. The photographs were the best obtained. The evidence was plain.

It was the year 1907. A series of photographs appeared to clearly show that the Martian Canals were of great length, of uniform width, and in the eyes of Lowell, of considerable beauty.

Conversely however, they seemed to be evidence of a tragic story. They could only have been constructed by an advanced society. A race that was technologically proficient. A civilisation that was doomed.

The purpose of the Canals was plain. The planet was being systematically overwhelmed by an eroding desert. The Canals had been built in an attempt to irrigate the parched planet with water from the sole remaining source: the Polar ice-caps.

The first astronomer to report the Martian 'Canals' was the Italian, Schiaparelli. He had actually called the Canals "Canali", which literally translated means "Channels".

Giovanni Schiaparelli had been one of fifteen scientists who had attended a series of seances at given by the Italian medium Eusapia Palladino. Schiaparelli had been one of the vast majority of those academics who had fully endorsed the mediumship of Palladino as being genuine. There was only one amongst the group who openly dissented from that view.

Percival Lowell had established the then-modern observatory at Flagstaff, Arizona, for the express purpose of studying that 'remote, forbidding planet'. It was equipped with a new 24-inch telescope. That Lowell was indeed a brilliant astronomer can be in little doubt. He correctly predicted the position of an unknown planet, later known to all mankind as Pluto. The planet was not officially located until 1930, a whole fourteen years after Lowell's death.

However, Lowell does seem to have been horribly wrong about the reality of the Martian Canals, and the dramatic scenario of the doomed advanced civilisation. There had always been vociferous supporters of Lowell's observations, but so too had there been an equally strident group of dissenters. And sadly, it's the latter who were later proved to be right.

Lowell's artificially constructed Canals, and the associated conclusions, appear to have been purely psychological misperceptions - wishful thinking in other words, although the truth of the matter wasn't finally revealed until the original Mariner Space Probes were launched in the 1960's. The final nail in the coffin came when, in 1971, photographs of the surface of Mars revealed that even someone blessed with intelligence and academic brilliance can just as easily be misled by an obsessive illusion...

One wonders what fate awaits the advocates of the reality 'Face On Mars' in the region of Cydonia??? The Mars Surveyor may well provide a similar disillusionment on that one too....

Al Hunt. London, 1997.

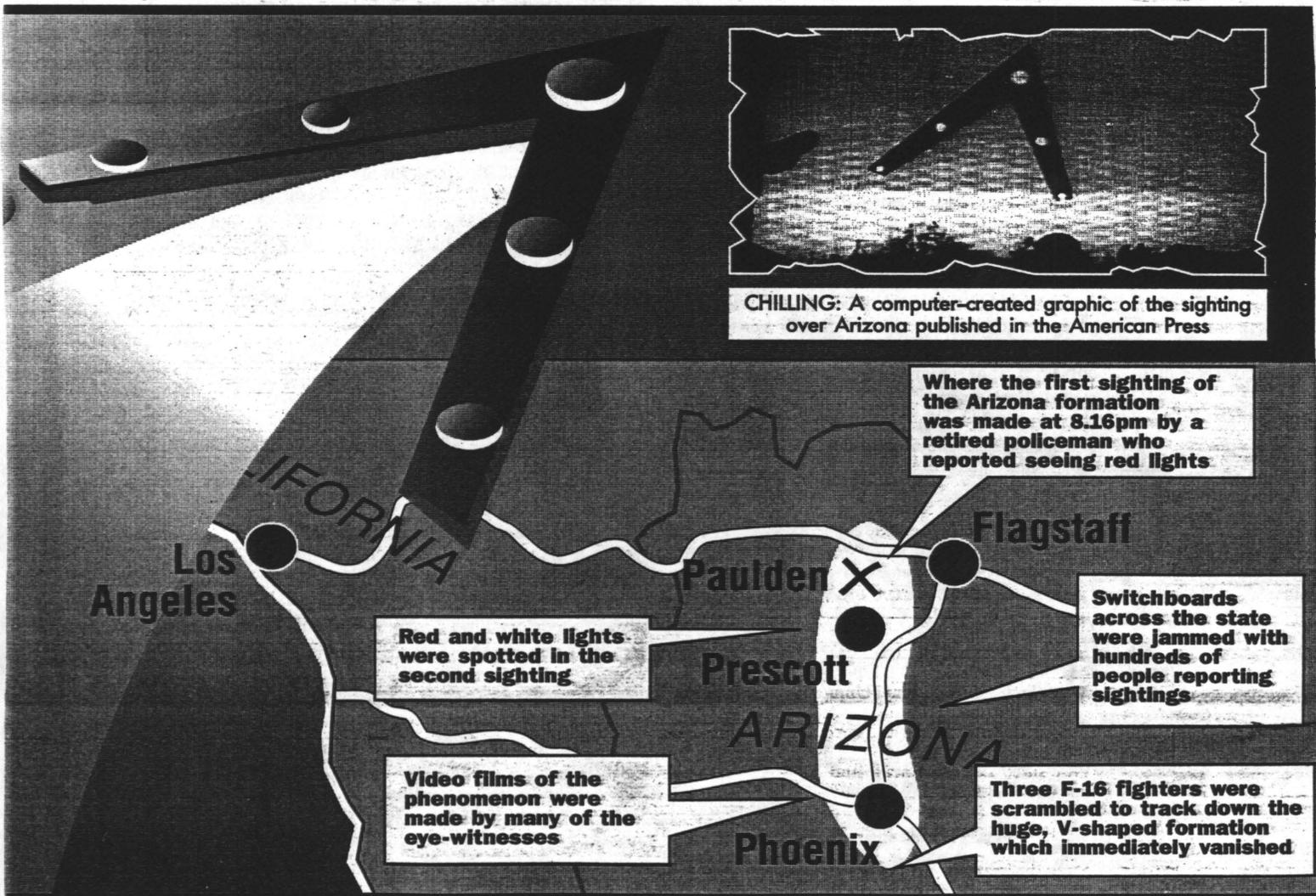
KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!!!

UFO UPDATE

OUT OF THE AGE OF WONDERS: GIANT UFO'S OVER ARIZONA

One of the most dramatic UFO sightings in recent years took place in the skies over Phoenix, Arizona, USA, on March 13th, 1997.

What made the accounts of a 'gigantic, triangular-shaped object' even more intriguing was the fact that it was seen by so many normally reliable witnesses including doctors, lawyers, and police officers. It was also captured on video, and the pictures screened by 'SKYNEWS' two months after the actual sightings took place, were certainly pretty convincing in that they appear to show an anomalous object (or objects) flying above the city lit up like a Christmas tree. Indeed, the pictures are so affecting, that they shocked a noisy Spanish bar into awe-struck silence when they were screened on TV, according to sometime contributor, Davey Kirkwood. (He was holidaying there at the time).



Press reports were quick to point out that the military had ruled out any conventional explanation for the lights, although it was later rumoured that they were in fact, flares sent up by nearby Luke Airforce base....

Computer picture analyst Mike Tanner, however, stated upon viewing the video footage that he believed the unexplained lights were different in shape and brightness to mere flares. I guess you'll have to see the film yourself, (it's soon to be made available to the general public - at a rather exorbitant cost, of course) to make up your own mind on the validity of that assertion.

The first reported sighting of the anomalous lights seems to have been made by a retired police officer in Paulden, Arizona. He encountered a 'cluster of red-orange lights' that appeared to be heading in a southerly direction. This was

sometime around 8:15pm. Another similar report came buzzing down the wires a quarter of an hour or so later from the nearby town of Prescott. This time the witness spoke of one red light and four white ones that all hovered silently in the clear night sky. A boy scout stood in awe-struck wonder on the outskirts of Phoenix as he looked upon a strange aircraft that he later compared to being shaped like a Stealth bomber. *'It was in a V-shape with three lights. It was moving very slowly. It must have been a UFO.'*

The boy telephoned the police who were all too soon flooded by a literal deluge of sighting reports. A truck driver by the name of Bill Griener was driving along Interstate 10 at approximately 10pm, when he was shocked by the sudden appearance of *'two illuminated spinning toy tops'* with red rings around the outer edges. He then claims he saw three F-16 fighter jets scream into the March sky from the aforementioned Luke Air Force base. *'One of the jets started to close in on the toy top object, which was glowing and pulsating with a red rim around it. As the jet tried to intercept it, the object just went up and disappeared.'*

Lieutenant Colonel Hauer from the base was later quoted as saying that there were in fact fighters up in the air that night, but that they were merely engaged on a routine training exercise.

Meanwhile, Sky Harbour Airport reported that the skies were clear. No trace of the object, whatever it was, was picked up on radar, which may, or may not tell us something about its true identity...

Interestingly however, is the account of pilot and air traffic controller Bill Grava, who was on duty at the airport at the time of the sightings. He had this to say; *'It was incredible. I have never seen anything like it. The whole thing has no explanation.'*

A young mother, lost for an explanation as to what she was seeing, (along with her children), gliding silently above her back garden, telephoned 'America's National UFO Reporting Centre' A spokesman from the group told the press; *'The woman informed us that the cluster of lights was directly overhead her house and was larger than her clenched fist when held at arm's length.'*

The object appeared to have lights along its side, which gave the impression of a boomerang or arrowhead shape. It was totally silent.

After five minutes it moved slowly to the south. But before it disappeared from view it appeared to fire out a red laser beam of light for an instant. Then the lights seemed to dim and just fade away.'

In the wake of these quite astonishing series of reports, not to mention the impressive video footage, there was a predictable scramble for both rational, conventional and highly exotic explanations as to what actually occurred.

A man by the name of John Greenwald forwarded a request to Luke Air Force Base for Freedom Of Information documents pertaining to the case be released immediately.

He received the predictable response that they had no reason to become involved in the investigation of the lights because they were (presumably) deemed of no defence significance. A more than familiar line to those of us living here in Britain.

There have, reportedly been further sightings in and around the areas of Tucson, Phoenix and Sedona.

We await further developments with great interest, but with no real hope that we'll ever get to the bottom of the mystery...

22nd June, 1997. Phoenix, Arizona. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'/CNN-SKY NEWS.'

ROSWELL ALIENS WERE CRASH TEST DUMMIES

Just prior to the 50th Anniversary of the purported UFO crash retrieval in Roswell, New Mexico, the U.S. Airforce, in its infinite wisdom, decided to finally 'come clean and tell the real truth' about the incident...

In a 231-page report released to the world's press on 24th June, the compiler of the document stated that the supposed Aliens were in fact dummies with latex skins and steel skeletons that had been used for special high altitude tests.

They were, according to the Airforce, carried by research balloons and dropped in parachutes for scientific tests. *'This comprehensive examination of the so-called Roswell Incident found no evidence whatsoever of flying saucers, space aliens, or sinister government cover-ups.'*

But if they honestly expected that statement to be an end to the matter, they were sorely mistaken.

The report is a little hard to take at face value when you consider the whole welter of alternative explanations put forward by the Air Force in the aftermath of that highly embarrassing gaffe back in 1947. Whatever the truth of the matter, why did those in authority choose to feed the public a plainly unacceptable line (not to say patently untruthful) for nigh on fifty years? First it was a genuine crashed saucer. Then it was a common or garden weather balloon. Then it was part of Operation Mogul. Now it's crash test dummies being used in, one would assume, fairly routine parachute experiments. Hardly the stuff of high secrecy, the divulgence of which would compromise national security.

And so, like the road in Tolkien's 'LORD OF THE RINGS,' the tale rolls ever on and on.....

25th June, 1997. Roswell, New Mexico. 'DAILY MANC.'

RENDLESHAM - THE TRUTH LEFT STANDING AT EAST GATE?

According to Larry Warren, the former U.S. Air Force corporal, the truth about Britain's most infamous UFO encounter has finally been revealed to a largely unsuspecting world.

At the time of writing, Larry was 'on tour' promoting the release of his book of the incident; 'LEFT AT EAST GATE.' He even showed up at the recent UFO conference here on Merseyside, and what he has to say is either evidence of one of the most ground-shaking events of all time, or is a gigantic hoax aimed at raking in a big fat profit from a gullible public willing to believe in anything in these dreadfully uncertain times.

Or maybe, just maybe, the truth lies hidden somewhere in between.

As is the usual policy of this magazine, we suggest you judge for yourself...

Larry claims that he and his co-author, Peter Robbins, were prevented from appearing on ITV'S 'STRANGE BUT TRUE LIVE UFO DEBATE' (See full review elsewhere in this issue) by a former USAF colonel who completely refused to appear on the show if they did.

And what was this colonel so afraid of that he'd resort to such (ahem) underhand tactics? Well, Larry was anxious to tell the world (the ITV-watching section of it anyway)

about 26th December, 1980, when Mr Warren was working as a security police corporal. He alleges that a UFO landed at RAF Bentwaters, in Suffolk, a well-known NATO installation. The incident has already been so well-documented within the pages of countless UFO publications that it has in itself become part of modern folklore. But Larry, who was then aged just 19, provides something of a personal insight.

'Hundreds of Air Force personnel were involved in this incident. A search party was ordered out. They encountered a triangular object which darted between trees and appeared instantaneously in front of them. When the group was finally found by a second search party four hours later, they believed they had only been missing for sixty minutes. I became involved on the third night. We were driven out on a truck to a field where we saw a perfect circle of mist 50ft across and a foot high. At that moment, movement became slow and I saw one airman sink to his knees, clasp his hands his forehead and burst into tears.'

Larry further alleges that both video and movie footage of this phenomenon was being shot by USAF personnel throughout the duration of the 'encounter'

'We saw a red light in the sky. Then, in a flash, the mist disappeared and in its place stood a pyramid-shaped object 20ft high and 30ft across. It was a kind of mother-of-pearl colour, and if you looked straight at it the image dissolved. We became aware of three non-human beings floating about a foot off the ground. They were 4ft tall, with ghost-like faces, were dressed and had arms but had no legs.'

Larry then maintains he was later taken back to RAF Bentwaters. *'We were taken into underground areas, brainwashed and treated with drugs for 24 hours. We were told, "keep your mouth shut. You have witnessed something that is classified. You can be silenced with bullets if necessary, they are very cheap."*

'They tried to make us so confused and scared in a 24-hour debriefing session that we would sound like lunatics if we ever decided to tell the truth.'

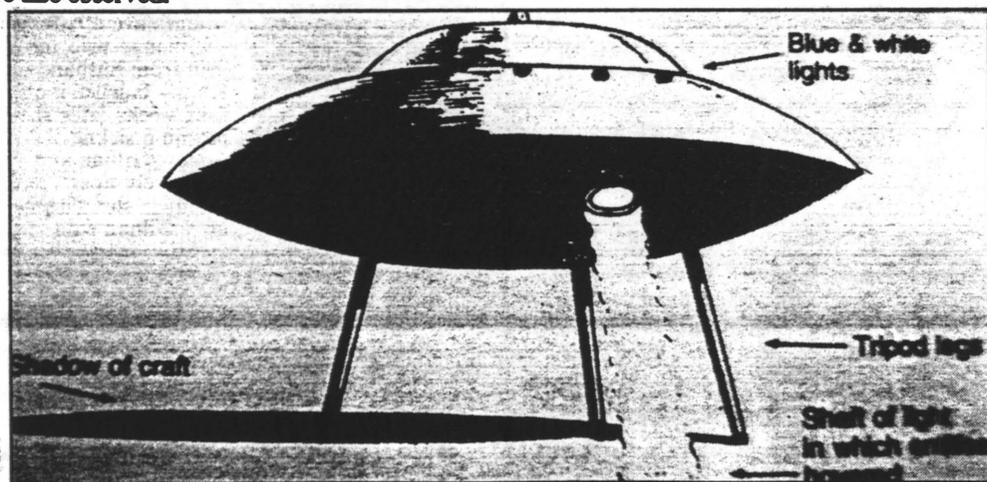
Seems he's since elected to take the risks and to hell with the consequences....Maybe the threat of bullets and accusations of lunacy don't carry the weight that they used to...Consider Malcolm Robinson of the SPT's highly positive review of Larry's book below...

'LEFT AT EAST GATE' - THE BOOK REVIEW

The first major scientific discovery by mankind (so the history books tell us) was the wheel. Now comes the second most amazing discovery; *this book* and the facts it contains. This is such a riveting read, that you'll find it impossible to put down. It surely must rank as the most important and influential tome of the last forty years. This is not an understatement. This is a fact!!! This book tells the story of the infamous Rendlesham Forest incident. back in 1980 by one of the people who was actually there. Not a friend of a friend, but someone who was touching close to what could possibly be a machine that originated from another world.

To try and do a short review of this book would be well-nigh impossible. The Rendlesham Forest affair is well known to anyone with an interest in the paranormal, and the question that has haunted ufologists like the most persistent of ghosts ever since is that did a crash and running repair of a UFO occur in the forest next to RAF Bentwaters?

Witnesses claim to have seen a strange unidentified object rest above the grass, then zoom in and out through the trees. Small beings with large, black cat-like eyes who 'floated' and conversed (telepathically) with American Air Force personnel were also observed.



(Above): 'The craft' reportedly sighted at Rendlesham on the night of 26th December, 1980, by Larry Warren and other security men and Air Force officers at the American NATO base.

Several of the witnesses of the events that night were later reportedly debriefed and shown cine films of UFO's at various locations throughout the world (and also on the surface of the Moon). A Commander Nicholson then informed the men that what they had seen in the forest represented technology far superior to that of mankind, and that the American government had known about it for some time.

Larry Warren claimed he was drugged and taken to an underground base at RAF Bentwaters where he maintains that he saw similar UFO's and conversed using telepathy with one of those ubiquitous Grey's who told him numerous things, including the revelation that they have bases here on Earth, and that they have been in existence at least since World War II.

Religion was created for the human race,' he was told, a statement that really unnerved young 19-year-old Larry. Ignoring the dire warnings that were ringing in his ears, he decided to embark on a one-man crusade in order to educate the general public about what had happened.



(Above): The authors Larry Warren and Peter Robbins pose for the camera on the edge of Bentwaters...Scene of a Britain's most infamous UFO encounter.

The book tells the story of how Larry and later his co-author Peter Robbins, were faced with a monumental struggle with authority to try and get to the bottom of the mystery. Not surprisingly they were thwarted at every turn. Both men believed that their phones were tapped, most likely by the NSA (National Security Agency). Unmarked helicopters hovered over Larry's property filming and taking photographs of his house. During all this time, Larry was receiving 'visits by small beings' who would enter his apartment on occasions and then 'dissolve'. The book then picks up on Colonel Charles Halt and his role in the incident, he also apparently saw the 'beings' and made a live audio tape as he and his men pressed on through the woods in search of the mysterious object. A copy of this tape was later sold by Dot Street and Brenda Butler (the British researchers who studied this case), to *'THE NEWS OF THE WORLD'*, for £2,000. Indeed, Manchester lawyer and UFO researcher Harry Harris, also sold a copy of the Halt Tape for \$2,000 to Nippon TV. Early British investigation of this case in 1983 by Ian Mrzygold and Martin Shipp, concluded that this matter did not require further investigation!!!

Larry's battle to get at the truth behind this increasingly bizarre set of circumstances makes up a goodly-sized portion of this book, and makes for fascinating reading. However, I was amazed to learn that although Larry had managed to photograph an 'alien', albeit inadvertently, on a holiday snap, he failed to include it within the text of this work...

Larry was apparently, none to enamoured with Jenny Randles, Dot Street and Brenda Butler's attempts at writing the definitive book on the subject. British readers

will know this book as *'SKYCRASH'*. Larry, in a less than complimentary reference, re-named their book *'SKYTRASH'* due to certain statements made within the pages.

The book then goes on to discuss, of all things, an honest-to-goodness Cloudbusting machine. He alleges that devices of this kind were found at RAF Bentwaters, and the authors are moved to speculate that a particularly large Cloudbuster (straight out of a Kate Bush video/single) may have acted as the catalyst for the tremendous damage caused to various parts of the forest and other areas of England during the Great Storm of October, 1987. (So that's why Michael Fish was left with egg on his face after dismissing the prospect of a British hurricane afflicting Southern England).

But for this reviewer at least, the most amazing chapter of all contains references to Larry and Peter's return to Rendlesham Forest back in 1988. No sooner have they arrived on the scene when they start witnessing UFO's all over again. A transcript of the events of the night they spend in the forest is included in the text, and it makes for a very intriguing read. Especially when a 'wall of light' illuminates the woods, an account that bears a striking similarity to a recent incident that is said to have occurred in Fife, Scotland (currently under investigation by the SPI). To add a human touch to Larry's eternal struggle for the truth, it's tragic to see the effect it has on his family life; the break up of his marriage and an attempted suicide bid. However, it is encouraging for us all, to learn that with the help of some good friends, he realises that he simply must go on, for this is still much to be done...

The book concludes with an expose of the role played by the NSA, and co-author Robbins does an excellent job of achieving this, even though trying to get at the truth was sometimes like *'trying to fight a tank with a spider's web.'*

But was this incident all some drug-induced event?

We know that after they were de-briefed, they could well have been fed some kind of hallucinogenic drug or some form of hypnosis could have been used. Drugs, hypnosis, or even a combination of the two could have been utilised during this de-briefing, and might have led to the witnesses believing that they had seen a UFO and alien beings.

The big question of course, would be why?

Peter tells us that RAF Bentwaters and Woodbridge secretly housed the largest stockpile of tactical battlefield nuclear weapons in the whole of the NATO infrastructure, and that RAF Greenham Common, the site of many anti-nuclear demonstrations in the early 1980's, was in fact, nothing more than a diversion and cover. If something untoward happened to the weapons stored at Bentwaters, it's pretty clear the Americans would do everything in their power to keep it quiet. Therefore, a spot of UFO/Allen entity scenario was introduced to cover up the truth.

That's just pure speculation on my part, however.

This book is a giant and will doubtless be a best seller. Once you read this, you will be left with the distinct impression that something of immense importance occurred in those woods over those three fateful nights in December, 1980. Larry Warren and Peter Robbins are to be congratulated for producing an extremely important book.

As Colonel Charles Halt says; *'There are more things that went on in that forest that night, than you'll ever know.'*

WHAT ARE THE MOTIVES OF 'THE ABDUCTORS'?

Assuming, just for the sake of argument, that there is anything to this phenomenon other than False Memory

Syndrome, Temporal Lobe Epilepsy, and sleep disorders (otherwise known as 'The Terror That Comes By Night'), we may be well advised to consider just what could be the motive behind these supposed abductions.

Two of the biggest names in the 'Allen Abduction' believers corner decided to fight it out in an attempt to answer that very question at the John Hancock Hall in Boston, USA, last March.



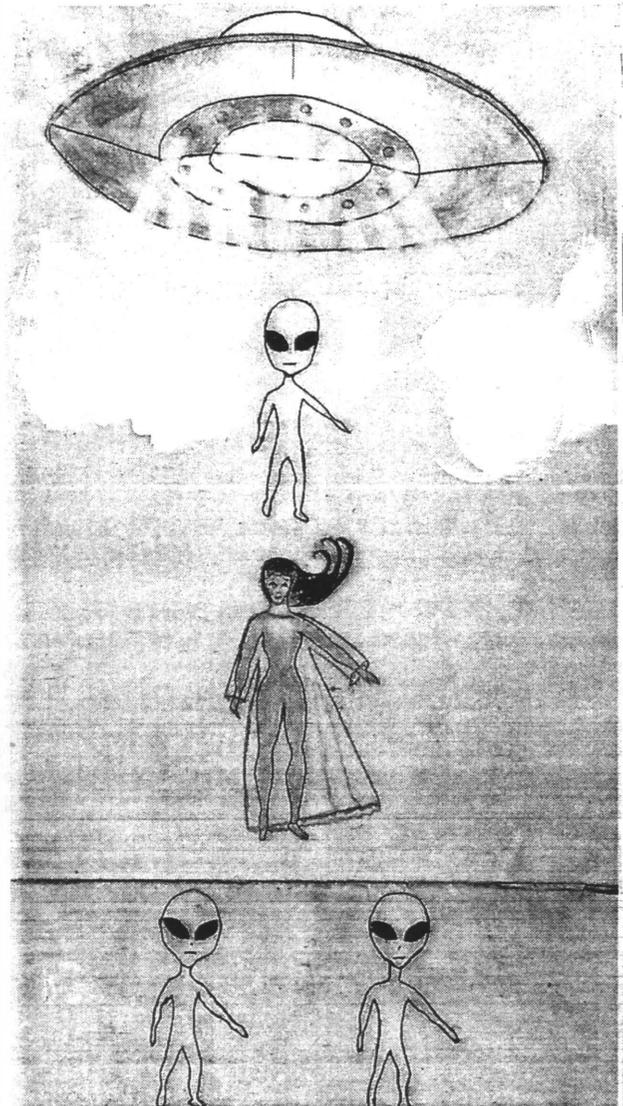
Budd Hopkins and John Mack, (two men who should need no introduction to anyone remotely interested in the phenomenon) are apparently deeply divided in their belief of motive. Hopkins seems convinced that the 'Aliens' are essentially malign in their intent with their penchant for prodding and probing 'Abductees' before playing untold havoc with their memories.

Whilst on the podium, Hopkin's voice was said to have shaken in barely restrained fury when he set about describing how some 'Aliens' tell their victims that they are their real parents.

'The Allens are extremely deceptive and operate in a covert manner,' Hopkins said as the sound system crackled and wailed. *'We can't trust what the Allens are saying.'*

Mack, however, claimed he has seen 'Abductees' who were entirely transformed (to use Whitley Strieber's phrase and subsequent book title), by the experience, who formed a spiritual bond with the 'Beings' and who believed they were trying to help mankind adopt a more civilised attitude toward one another.

'We're on top of something that is rich, vast, and that we don't even admit exists in this country,' Mack countered.



Mack of course, is the Pulitzer-Prize winning biographer who astounded his colleagues at Harvard University, when he published his best-seller *'ABDUCTION: HUMAN ENCOUNTER WITH ALIENS'*

The book has been somewhat harangued for the fact that it takes at face value the notion that human beings have been systematically abducted by extraterrestrials, and that through hypnotic regression (a notoriously unreliable method of arriving at just about any level of truth) he can resurface the hidden memories of the 'Abductee' from their subconscious.

Whilst Mack and Hopkins are not exactly at opposite end of the Great Allen Abduction Debate, their marked difference in style was apparent even as they sat on the stage. The white-haired Hopkins was beaming, affable and relaxed. Mack on the other hand, was intense, acerbic, and a compulsive note-taker.

Both readily agreed however, that many 'Abductees' or 'Experiencers' report that 'Aliens' show them terrifying images of the Planet Earth being totally devastated by pollution, nuclear war, and a host of other man-made disasters. Another difference is that Mack believes these

less-than-comforting visions could be representations of what happened to the alien's own ravaged home world. It may also be a warning sign that we had better take better care of Mother Earth, or we may find ourselves sharing the same fate.

'Aliens are making a desperate effort to communicate something about us to ourselves,' Mack was moved to comment.

'John is an idealist,' retorted Hopkins. 'Abductees are often heavy smokers and if the visions are ecological warnings, "they've" failed miserably.'

Nevertheless, Mack firmly believes that 'experiencers' that he's personally treated have been inspired to become environmentally active. Hopkins suggests that 'aliens' show such images to gauge human reactions. 'They are extremely curious about human emotions and interior life which they don't seem to have themselves.'

The inevitable Question And Answer Session threw up some interesting, if somewhat bizarre enquiries of the two men. One man, in the style of an old Deep South Bible-basher, announced that The Good Book urged us all to fight the evil aliens. 'Are you ready for that?' he thundered.

Hopkins replied gently. 'I think John and I are ready to do the best we can.'

A young man asked, a tad too eagerly, if the pair knew of anyone who actually wanted to get abducted by aliens. 'Yes, said Hopkins, cheerfully. 'But I've never been able to arrange it.'

Asked if aliens, being technologically superior, were already among us, Mack, a bit impatiently said it would be impossible to tell. He hadn't seen any little bald-headed men with big black eyes running around Boston lately although, he conceded, there have been reports of aliens disguising themselves in hat and coats.

And on that note, I think it's best we move on to discuss that other champion of 'Alien Abduction Reality' David Jacob's.

The learned historian who has allegedly analyzed the stories of more than 60 'abductees', has compiled the following identikit picture of the archetypal 'Grey'. The descriptions have all been given under hypnosis, and Mr Jacob's makes a big issue of the fact that none of the people involved knew each other. They each gave their representations independently.

The Grey is commonly said to be between three and a half to four and a half feet in height, with a disproportionately large head, rather reminiscent of an upside-down pear. They are completely hairless, and have skin that is leathery in texture. There is only the smallest protuberance for a nose and the moveless mouths are lipless. They communicate using telepathy. The most striking feature however, are the eyes, enormous (in proportion to the rest of the body) almond-shaped and as black as the night from which they are said to emerge. These twin obsidian pools never blink or move in their sockets, but by staring into them they seem to generate an incredible power to frighten, to mesmerise, to disarm. Greys are normally devoid of any article of clothing, but then they have no trace of genitalia to conceal. They are uniformly frail looking, with spindly limbs that scarcely seem capable of performing even the most rudimentary of tasks. They have three fingers with no opposable thumb.

The Greys are by far the most frequently reported entity during these 'abduction' scenarios, but of course, there are other species, also said to be responsible for this taking away without consent. There's the Nordics, the antithesis of the Grey's, tall, blonde, and almost God-like in appearance. They seem to be predominately female.

There's even an incredibly bizarre account of a woman 'abductee' being asked by her captor whether the alien could try on her high-heeled shoes.

In a later article published in the sensationalist Sunday press, Hopkins was to go further with his theorising...

He believes aliens are abducting people as young children and then watching them throughout their lives as they inevitably become friends and/or lovers. He thinks too that the systematic kidnapping of generations of the same family is part of some cosmic alien masterplan.

To bolster this belief, he cites an example from 1993, when he interviewed a New Hampshire couple called Jack and Sally, who met and felt a sense of instant recognition. After they moved in together Jack asked her about a birthmark. Sally replied; 'We've had this conversation before.'

Days later, Sally experienced another flashback. 'Jack, we were in a strange room together once, with boxes all around the floor.'

Jack stiffened. 'I know what you're talking about. Let's forget about it.'

But the couple could not simply forget. Under subsequent hypnosis, they 'recalled' even what the other had looked like as a child and their nicknames for each other - Pizza Face and Froot Loop.

A further example concerned Jennifer and William who had met at a conference in 1992 and had begun having flashbacks of their sexual antics on board a UFO. However, they were both married and had children of their own.

Hopkins put forward the explanation that these, and countless other 'abductees' have been tampered with, altered, shaped by some kind of alien experimentation and interest in human genetics, sexuality and reproduction. He said; 'Their human emotions have been tainted, leaving each of them, at best, confused, and at worst, devastated.'

9th March, 1997. Boston, USA. 'THE BOSTON HERALD'/May, 1997. 'DAILY MAIL' 30th March, 1997. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'

New Nightmares For Old

Ones:

The Abduction Mythos Goes Into Overdrive

With the 50th anniversary of both Kenneth Arnold's ground-breaking UFO sighting and the alleged saucer crash at Roswell very much in the news, it was hardly to be wondered at that the Sunday supplements would run a whole welter of 'Alien' dominated articles. Even less surprising was the preponderance for abduction stories, as the following accounts bear witness.

Joyce Bond was watching 'CORONATION STREET' when she was suddenly interrupted by frightened neighbours who told her that a formation of strange lights were hovering over her Lincolnshire home.

For accountant's wife Joyce and her three daughter Laura, Jayne and Susan it was an evening they are not likely to forget in a hurry. Joyce takes up the story; 'Nothing before or since has had this effect on me. I was shaking like a leaf and I'm not usually the sort to panic. I opened the front door and saw it. I said "There it is!" and pulled my daughter back by the collar. To say we were terrified is an understatement.'

Laura, then aged 14, was quoted as saying; 'It was very large, almost as big as our house, hovering just above the

stable opposite. It was just a mass of red and orange lights and was totally silent. I felt it was watching us.'

Jayne, who was aged 12 at the time of the incident, was so overcome by fear that she tried to make good her escape through the bathroom window at the back of the house.

As the family hastily gathered up the courage required to flee the premises and head for their neighbours' home 200 yards away, the circling object seemed to accelerate. Flames burst on the ground beneath as it zoomed over the horizon followed by what appeared to be a smaller craft.

Almost immediately fighter jets that had been scrambled from RAF Finningley streaked across the sky.

Since the encounter, all four witnesses have experienced feelings of what has been described as a 'ghostly presence' whilst sleeping in their beds ever since the incident which took place in 1979.

Susan said; *'On one occasion I woke with a start to find I was being strangled. I remember being in pitch darkness. I was pinned down with additional pressure on my neck unable to move (an oft-reported feature of 'Night Terror's' and of attacks by otherworldly folkloric entities such as the Incubus, the Night Hag and the formless, crouching horror that sits on the chest of the victim, paralysing them so that they feel they are being slowly suffocated, which may say a lot about the true origin of this and countless similar reports...)'* *'I don't remember struggling or how long the sensation lasted, but I certainly do recall a feeling of peace afterwards.'*

Jayne added: *'Both Mum and I felt something in bed with us. I would wake up bit by bit realising I was pinned to the bed. It felt as if someone were playing the piano with their fingers up and down my body. When I tried to scream my voice wouldn't work.'*

The mysterious phenomenon has haunted the girls right through into adulthood and has even affected their husbands and children.

Under hypnosis, Jayne's recollection of their encounter suggested strongly that the whole family had been 'abducted' into the 'alien craft' before being returned safely to their home.

*** On April 29th, 1995, company boss Malcolm and his wife Samantha were driving in Southern France with their baby daughter Lizzie, when they were suddenly dazzled by the appearance of bright lights in the sky.

They'd been attempting to negotiate a winding mountain road in thick fog and sheets of ice-cold rain near a place called Annecy. Samantha decided to take over the wheel, and as they reached a section of deserted motorway, at approximately 11:45 pm, the set of blazing lights shone through the murky gloom from out of nowhere.

'It didn't make sense,' Malcolm said later. *'I thought at first it was a helicopter but I couldn't imagine why it should have eight beams of light. We opened the sun roof to listen for the rotor blades but there was nothing. Then I thought it might be a train. I kept looking for railway lines but again there was nothing.'*

The lights then moved to a position behind them and followed them up the motorway pulling off whenever they approached other cars.

Samantha was quoted as saying; *'The only thing I've ever seen which mirrors the movement of that thing was a scene from 'STAR WARS', where a small fighter comes down to the surface of a planet.'*

The now frightened couple raced after a convoy of articulated lorries and continued their journey at 60mph between two juggernauts. Later, they realised that their journey of 40 miles across the mountains had taken more than three hours yet consumed almost no fuel.

Even more mystifying was the fact that both Samantha and baby Lizzie were bleeding from unexplained wounds to their face and bodies.

Following hypnosis, Samantha recalled images of being inside a large black cone.

'But then we were on the autoroute they were not trying to catch us, they were saying goodbye. I don't think they meant us any real harm. If they can wipe out two hours of our memory, they could just as easily have wiped us out permanently.'

The timing of their story has been verified by records of their credit cards used at specific times along their route.

*** After a spectacular day out at the Tall Ships Parade in Liverpool's Albert Dock (*just over the water from the Editor's home - fact fans*), in August, 1992. That evening they were to endure a night of 'absolute terror' as Janet was racked by spasms. She later made the sort of sensational claim that would raise the eyebrows of even Villas Boas...She says she was raped by an Alien.

Jane asserts she was taken to a 'Never Never Land' *Somewhere*, and then landed back in bed - not thrown but gently put back.

'I was taken away and remember a small, pale man with huge oval dark eyes. When I looked into those eyes I experienced incredible longing to be inside them, with him. They seemed to contain the whole universe and I could have lost myself in them, like being swallowed up by a wonderful work of art. He seemed to possess great knowledge - it was as if he was passing some of it on. Another man told me: "We are going to alter you because something is not working correctly.'

Although Janet had suffered problems trying to conceive a child for many years, that night she fell pregnant.

***One of the most unconvincing stories it has been this writer's misfortune to encounter concerns Milk Burley's sincere belief that Aliens have saved his life not once, but twice, and as such, have mankind's well-being at heart.

The 32-year-old trucker says: *'I'm convinced they mean us no harm and that everything will be revealed in my lifetime.'*

Echoing the current worries about what the new Millennium may bring, the message Milk received contained hints of great changes ahead. *'Those prepared to accept will evolve, those who are not will fall on stony ground. Consider the result of your actions before you act. The decision is yours.'*

Mr Burley, who hails from Teesside, says the first time the ET's saved his life was when he was born three weeks overdue, starved of oxygen.

'The midwife gave me up for dead but I pulled through. I think the visitors were looking over me before I was even born. My mother said she had an odd feeling of being watched while she was pregnant.'

Milk claims he was abducted by Aliens when he was just 10-years-old, playing footy at school. He was hit in the face by the ball and lay down out of sight on the grass. He became aware of a bright light, then darkness and a sensation of floating.

'When I opened my eyes, there was a large bright light above me and four small figures wearing what looked like monks' cowls (shades of our opening 'KILLER MONKS' article...I wonder if they at some point told Milk to jump???)'

Only able to move his eyes, Milk saw a pen-sized object sticking out of his side.

'One figure dabbed my forehead with something that made me lose consciousness. When I came to I was on the field. I

was left with a scar in my side which has never been explained. I believe I was given an implant so they can monitor my physical state.'

The second time they saved his life was when his truck crashed early in 1997.

'I passed a slip road and a voice told me: "Turn off now," but I kept right on going. Seconds before the smash the voice said; "It's too late now." The crash was terrible and I had multiple injuries. When I came round, the paramedics were astonished because they were convinced that I had died.'

Recently Mik was reunited with the Allens who abducted him when he was 10 years old.

'I touched a female, the leader. Her body felt cooler than that of a human's.'

Mik, the name Allens advised him to use instead of Michael, says: *'I think my role is to be a bridge, to prepare the way. I have reached the stage where I don't care what people say. They can judge for themselves.'*

Just as well, really.

*** Bridgit Kelly is an equally obsessive individual who says, a tad too defensively; *'I don't care whether anyone believes my story. I know what happened, and though I have no idea why it happened to me, I believe it made me a stronger person.'*

Bridgit and her husband were returning to their home in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, from an evening out. Suddenly, they saw what they originally took to be an ordinary shooting star traversing the heavens of an August night sky.

'Then we saw it wasn't falling and was more like a bright ball. After a few minutes, it hurtled towards the ground and we fully expected it to crash. But it stopped and hovered in front of us. We were not afraid. It was a glistening, metallic, 30ft saucer-shaped spacecraft. A bright white light was flashing on the top and to one side at the front, there was a lighted window. The next thing I remember we were standing outside our front door and I had this strange feeling that whoever was on the craft was saying goodbye. The feeling of sadness was overwhelming as it swung backwards and took off towards the rooftops. I sat up staring out of the window all night, hoping it would return.'

Bridgit's husband didn't want to even talk about their experience, so after confiding only in their immediate family, they never thought to mention it again. They even kept quiet when a curious circle of dead skin appeared on Bridgit's stomach a day after the sighting.

'Back in 1967, you didn't talk about that kind of thing in case people thought you were mad,' says Bridgit, aged 53.

After her husband's death in 1992, she suffered a flashback from that strange night and decided to investigate further. Bridgit contacted BUFORA, and just one session of self-hypnosis convinced her she had not only met 'Allen beings' but that they had performed some kind of operation on her whilst she was aboard their craft.

'Under hypnosis I drew a tall, muscular slim man in a grey jump-suit with reddish golden hair and wrote his name: Aplouff. He was standing at an instrument panel with a clipboard and I recall him telling me his name. I could see faces around me while something was being done to my stomach. There was no pain - just faces with large eyes - ordinary people, not little green men.'

And even after thirty years have elapsed, Bridgit still yearns to repeat the experience.

'There is no doubt in my mind that there is a far more advanced race living in another galaxy. I don't think my

spacecraft will visit me again. But if there was a remote chance for me to go with them, I'd be off like a shot!!!'

*** And finally, for this section, we come full circle. Consider if you will, the case of Debbie Jordan-Kauble, who it is said, still shudders at the memory of 'losing' one-and-a-half hours of her life. She also recalls feeling as though she was about to die.

It began one night in June when Debbie set out to see her friends. En route, she saw a strange light near the swimming pool in her garden.

Arriving at her friend's home address, she rang home to check that her mum was okay. *'She said she was fine at first. But then she phoned back and said; "I want you to come home right now." She was badly frightened, but she refused to tell me why'*

Debbie, who lives in Kokomo in the US state of Indiana, legged it home, grabbed her dad's shotgun, and went to investigate. *'I thought at first it was burglars.'* She found her dog cowering terrified by the pool.



Then she began to search the garage. *'Suddenly, a sensation came over me as if my body was on fire. It was like somebody was firing a blowtorch on me. I thought; "I've got to get out of here. I'm going to die." As I reached for the garage door, I was hit on the chest by a light so intense that my whole body vibrated. I dropped the gun and thought; "Oh God, I'm dead." I could hardly move. Then someone behind me pulled down on my shoulder, shaving something in my ear. It felt like a really hot needle. I could hear someone saying it was unfortunate that I had to feel pain. Then I was lifted about 10 feet onto the patio where I saw a dark green egg-shaped thing about 10 or 12 feet tall, bobbing about. There was also a ball of light about the size of a basketball at about the level of my head (Debbie, we are told, is 5ft 3in). And there were six little people with big heads. They moved into the light and disappeared. Then I don't remember anything except someone saying; "It's over."*

She recalls only about 15 minutes of what appears to be an hour-and-a-half time span of that night in 1987. During that time, her mother was in a stupor and later she couldn't recall why she'd even rung in the first place (*maybe Agent Kay, from 'MEN IN BLACK' had fired his memory-erasing gadget at her?*).

The next morning Debbie's eyes were swollen shut and her face was red. A doctor told her she had conjunctivitis and asked her if she had looked into the arc of a welder's torch because her cornea had been burnt.

'I developed allergies and my hair fell out. I had rashes, bowel trouble and an irregular heartbeat. My dog died after all her hair and teeth fell out over the course of a month.'

Debbie decided to contact the ubiquitous Mr Budd Hopkins, who subsequently examined her. He arranged for her to be tested for epilepsy or brain tumours, and he apparently also ordered psychological tests to be carried out.

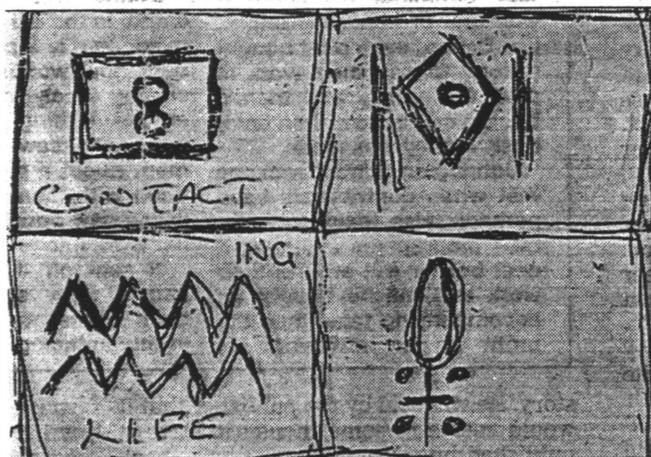
'They said I wasn't crazy or making it up. Budd also spoke to my neighbours. Two said their houses shook on that night, their pets went crazy and clocks stopped. It must have been contact with something quite extraordinary.'

From 'MAIL ON SUNDAY MAGAZINE'/'SUNDAY PEOPLE MAGAZINE' June 1997.

THE ALIEN ABDUCTION COUNSELLOR

Eric Morris has elected to become a self-appointed counsellor for all those people out there who claim, for one reason or another, to have been taken away by ET'S.

'I receive dozens of calls and letters from people who have inexplicable missing hours or say they have been abducted by aliens,' says Mr Morris, the 43-year-old who runs the grandly titled 'British UFO Studies Centre' from his home in Winsford. Such was the demand for help from a public increasingly disconcerted by the phenomenon, whatever its real origins. We're pleased to hear that he shies away from employing hypnosis, which, he rightly claims, can be extremely dangerous if performed by a novice. Eric champions the safer method of relaxation techniques to achieve regression. The results though, have been equally bizarre.



(ABOVE: These images are said to be 'strange hieroglyphics' drawn by someone who later claimed they were abducted by extraterrestrials.

One 64-year-old woman from Essex believes she was abducted by a blue, reptile-like alien (a so-called Reptoid), who had the decency to teach her a strange language called *Sensar*. Eric has obtained tapes of the vowel-like sounds

and has taken them round various colleges, but so far, no one has been able to identify them.

Another teenager encountered a mysterious aerial object whilst cycling home. He called his mother, two hours later, shaking with fear unable to put into words what had happened to him. The boy was later found to have an unusual lump on his knee, which Eric believes has been implanted, (although, one assumes, he could just as easily have gotten the lump falling off his bike?).

Eric, who served 15 years in the Royal Navy and has counselled Falklands veterans, said; *'To people who think I'm a nutcase, I would say "Fine, but come along to one of our meetings, and hear what's being said.'*

19th February, 1997. Winsford, Cheshire LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

OBSESSED 'SAUCERMAN' KILLS HIMSELF

Electrician David Downing was so taken with the subject of UFO's, that he elected to time his suicide to coincide with the partial eclipse of the sun, believing (not unlike the members of the 'HEAVEN'S GATE' cult, with their interpretation of the appearance of the Comet Hale-Bopp) it to be a sign...

In the days leading up to his death, he was said to have walked around both inside and outside his house stark naked. Just before taking his own life, he'd held his wife Dorothy's hand and whispered; *'I don't want to do this.'*

David, a father-of-three, aged 47, was found dead by his wife at their home in Win Gardens, Middlewood, Sheffield. His naked body was found beneath a stairwell on October 14th, 1996.

He had wrapped a bare electrical cable around his left wrist and right ankle and plugged himself into the mains.

Family friend Wendy Booth told a Sheffield inquest into David's death that he was *'completely normal until two or three weeks before his death.'*

It seems he became interested in ufology after he'd sighted a strange object in the sky some years ago. Mrs Booth was moved to add: *'I saw him some days before he died and he was shaking and holding his head. His thoughts were elsewhere. In the house there were (omigod, jeppers creepers) fourteen books on UFO's and Aliens, along with charts and maps drawn by David about the sun and the stars.'*

The partial eclipse of the sun that weekend was a sign to him. His behaviour was so bizarre. The books and papers talk of passage into the afterlife if the sun strikes the body at a particular angle. There were drawings of a map in Sheffield and calculations charting the relationship of the sun to the body after his death.'

Assistant Coroner Dr Robert Forest said; *'His body was found in a particular spot in relation to other objects in the house.'*

The body was placed in that position to achieve a certain effect. I have no doubt that Mr Downing knew he was going to kill himself...'

1st March, 1997. Middlewood, Sheffield YORKSHIRE POST.'

PLEA FOR GOVERNMENT HEARING ON UFOS

On April 14th this year, in Washington D.C., a meeting was held behind closed doors to attempt to secure a congressional hearing to establish the truth about the UFO phenomenon.

Dr. Steven M. Greer, Director Of The Centre For The Study Of Extraterrestrial Intelligence, along with former NASA astronaut, Edgar Mitchell, organised the impromptu conference and began by spouting out that '90 per cent of what people are exposed to on this subject is rubbish, complete and utter nonsense.'

In a series of confidential briefings held behind closed doors, congressional officials were informed that their assessment of extraterrestrial activities, although widely disputed, requires urgent federal attention (pause to ensure suitably dramatic effect)...For the good of mankind.

Greer, Mitchell and a panel of alleged witnesses contend that not one, but several alien civilisations - working together from bases within the Solar System and possibly from temporary outposts beneath the surface of the Earth's vast oceans. They maintain too, that these alien races regularly visit our planet and more than prepared, after countless years of avoiding the issue, to make that final, irrefutable contact.



All that stands between such a momentous intergalactic event (for we humans at least. For the ET's it might be an experience that carries with it all the charm of a biologist studying anew species of sea slug), is human civilisation reaching out with a new foreign diplomacy.

'What has been lacking is an appropriate response from planet Earth,' reckons Greer, an emergency room physician from Asheville, North Carolina, who has spent 'several' years determining whether or not UFO's are real. *'Look at our response so far: ridicule by the media, denials by our officials and frequent shooting by our military assets.'*

The group's push for hearings into alien matters and the government's role in the phenomenon comes amid, yet another sci-fi, media-inspired craze, with films like *INDEPENDENCE DAY*, *MARS ATTACKS*, *THE ARRIVAL*, *CONTACT*, *THE X-FILES MOVIE* and *MEN IN BLACK* - to name but a few, flooding the cinema screens the world over. To say nothing of the plethora of TV documentaries and printed publications dealing with the subject. And all this, despite the negative fallout from the 'HEAVEN'S GATE' tragedy and the resurgence of cult-related activity.

Among the testimony that Greer's group presented was that of former military pilots and radar operators and radio engineers who told tales of close encounters with decidedly anomalous craft. One purported incident was said to have involved a UFO hovering over a cluster of B-52 bombers one night in 1969 at Loring Air Force Base, northern Maine. The group also put forward several hundred pages of UFO reports and related documents,

most of them obtained from government agencies under the Freedom Of Information Act.

Air Force Secretary Harold Brown told the House panel in 1996 that there was no evidence of visitors from space. Nor is there any new evidence to change that view now, according to NASA officials and several scientists studying the possibility of ET life.

Ed Weiler, chief scientist for NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, and Director of the agency's Origins Investigation Of Life In The Universe, said astronomers know there are hundreds of billions of galaxies, each with hundreds of billions of stars.

'In my personal opinion, the odds that somewhere in the universe there is life that is at least as intelligent as us are 100 per cent,' Weiler was quoted as saying. *'But I haven't seen any hard evidence that extraterrestrial life or spacecraft has visited us.'*

Officials at SETI were quick to agree. After years of research, the California project has yielded no firm evidence to support the idea that we have been contacted by an alien race.

Predictably equally dismissive, were the US Air Force. A Pentagon spokesman by the name of Kenneth Bacon trundled the same old line that the USAF had investigated 12,618 reports of UFOs between 1947 and 1969 and found no indication that they were 'extraterrestrial vehicles.'

Well, they would say that, wouldn't they?

Bacon also dismissed long-standing assertions made by Greer's group and countless others that the US Government continues to hold wreckage of an alien spacecraft and the bodies of its occupants retrieve by the military, perhaps as early as 1947. (They were simply crash test dummies, dontcha know...Er, or was that debris from Operation Mogul...No, no wait, I've got it. It was a weather balloon. No a genuine flying disc..Oh, please yourselves!!!).

At the White House, where President Clinton has recently requested \$1 billion over five years to fund the NASA Origins search, there has been no formal response to a written request by Greer's group to convene hearings on the group's assertions. Clinton's spokesman, Michael D. McCurry, citing the Pentagon findings, said there would be no push for congressional hearings.

'The White House is pushing a lot of things on Congress,' he said. *'But that is not one of them.'*

No one in government it seems, is prepared to willingly support Greer's campaign...Now why doesn't that surprise us?

Nazi's Scare Away The Arrival Of The Aliens

A spacecraft piloted by fugitive aliens from another galaxy was apparently due to land in Erica and Wolfgang Recker's back garden last April..But predictably, they failed to show.

The couple had arranged a party to celebrate their arrival in Seiffennersdorf, near Goerlitz, in Germany, and duly invited the whole village. According to the gullible couple the aliens' planet was threatened by an impending ecological disaster and were seeking asylum. When they didn't turn up, Erica was quick off the mark to come up with a corker of an excuse: They had refused to land because impatient neo-Nazi gate-crashers had begun shouting *'Allens go home. Germany for the Germans,'* before setting about smashing up the couple's home.

15th April, 1997. Seiffennersdorf, Germany. 'DAILY EXPRESS'

Chasing The Unknown Part 2 Strange Days In The Animal Kingdom Tails Of The Unexpected



When RSPCA inspectors called at the flat of a woman in her forties, they were confronted with the sight of over 70 cats gathered in the hallway.

The woman tenant had posted her keys to a cattery saying that she was planning on moving.

RSPCA officer Nigel Shelton was quoted as saying: *'The smell was terrible.'*

Luckily for the abandoned cats, based at the flat in Bow, East London, new homes were being sought for each and everyone of them.

6th June, 1997. Bow, East London. *'DAILY MANC.'*

Free-Fall Fresians Sink A Ship

A story so unbelievable you'd swear it'd been snipped from the pages of *'The National Enquirer'* or *'The Sunday Sport,'* actually appeared in several (slightly) more reputable newspapers...

A Japanese fishing cutter sailing off the coast of Sakhalin Island in the Russian far east, was suddenly struck amidships by a herd of cows falling from the sky!

One of the shocked fishermen claimed: *'One moment we hadn't a care in the world. The next we were being bombed by these cows. An animal hit our ship and went straight through the deck and the hull and capsized us.'*

Officials were understandably sceptical of the fishermen's story. They assumed at first that the whole thing was merely some outrageous tale, dreamed up as part of some elaborate insurance fiddle.

However, investigators later discovered that a Russian army plane had been overflying the area at the time, and it emerged that a platoon of soldiers, desperately short of cash had commandeered a large transporter to enable them to rustle up a herd of cows. Unfortunately for them, the scheme backfired when they found that the stolen cattle were unaccustomed to air travel. The animals became extremely agitated and the suddenly frightened soldiers realised that they might pretty soon have a stampede on their hands. Panicking, they opened the rear door and sent the poor cows plunging to their deaths 20,000ft below.

30th April, 1997. Sakhalin, Russia. *'DAILY SLUR.'*

Python-In-The-Potty

Loretta VanDyue, 20, will doubtless never forget to leave the lid down on the toilet again after she found a 3-foot python glaring up at her from out of the depths.

She encountered the snake as she was running bath water for her children, Junior, 2, and Leeann, 1. Both kids kept on saying *'Mama, mama, mama, and were looking up at me,'* Loretta said later. *'They knew something was there, but didn't know what it was.'*

Perturbed, but not really knowing what to expect, she walked cautiously over to the bowl and peered in.

She nearly fainted with shock when she saw what it was the kids were so frightened of.

'I looked in there, and it looked up at me and my first thought was to get the kids out of there.'

She then called on her mother, Betty Ruby, who lived downstairs. Betty proffered the advice that they try and flush the snake away, but Loretta considered that would be too dangerous a prospect. Instead she called the police, and officer Anthony Spencer duly arrived in time to capture the python without too much trouble.

The questions that remain are where did the snake come from and how did it get inside Loretta's toilet bowl?

Merril Tawse, a naturalist at Gorman Nature Centre, believes that the snake could have been there for some time. *'They can go a year without eating. But more likely it came in through the walls. They can get through a minute opening. Pythons are popular with pet lovers. But*

sometimes people tire of them and thoughtlessly flush them down the toilet.'

(Much the same has been said, of course, about pet crocodiles and alligators, thereby instigating a whole bunch of modern urban folk tales about giant reptiles thriving in the dank darkness of the city sewers and storm drains...)

Loretta meanwhile, gratefully thanked the authorities and imparted this advice as they left; *'Always keep the toilet seat down and look in the toilet before you use it.'*

18th February, 1997. Mansfield, Ohio. COLUMBUS DISPATCH.'

A Real Bug-A-Lugs

Dave Burton awoke to a terrible crackling noise and a splitting headache after a Flame-Shouldered Moth crawled into his ear whilst he slept.

Dave said the sound was like *'someone scrunching up a giant bag of crisps inside my head. I was having spasms. Then the buzzing started. It was horrendous.'*

He was afraid he was having a brain haemorrhage and dashed to his local hospital from his home in Hatfield Peverel, Essex.

He had to wait a further four hours in the casualty department of Chelmsford's Broomfield Hospital while the trapped moth struggled to get free.

Eventually, a nurse deemed it wise to peer down his lughole and in doing so, exclaimed; *'There's an insect in there.'*

The resourceful nurse poured water into his ear and the moth with a wingspan the size of a two-pence piece dropped out still alive.

'The sound of the moth flapping its wings inside my ear was driving me mad,' Dave said after the impromptu operation to remove the insect. *'It was everybody's worst nightmare - having something inside your head and not knowing what. When I learned it was a moth, I was terrified it might have laid eggs or eaten away part of my brain like in a horror movie. I've heard of people getting a flea in their ear but a moth was something else.'*

9th July, 1997. Hatfield Peverel, Essex. 'DAILY SLUR.'

A Right Trio Of Out-Of-Place Animals

In Wren, Alabama, USA, retired trucker Tom Hutton bagged a seven pound, tailless Capybara, the world's largest rodent. Trouble was, no one had any idea how the creature got into the lake on his property, since it's usually found only on the banks of South American rivers.

23rd April, 1997. Wren, Alabama, USA. 'USA TODAY.'

*** Shocked mechanic Mike Vickery opened the bonnet of a Ford Capri to service the car in Poole, Dorset, only to find the reason for the spell of car trouble was plainly obvious...It was a family of mice nesting merrily in the air filter.

22nd, May, 1997. Poole, Dorset. 'DAILY SLUR.'

*** And even more anomalous was the case of a strange find in the front garden of a Kelso, Washington, USA, resident. A two foot long Sturgeon was discovered flopping around on the lawn. Rain had formed a puddle there, and the police theorised that some angler, suffering from a guilt trip after illegally catching the fish, had dumped it there.

The sturgeon was still alive and was later released into the nearby Cowlitz River.

14th March, 1997. Kelso, Washington, USA. 'THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR.'

INCREDIBLE JOURNEYS

In two separate incidents, cats named Sooty and Ninja, displayed remarkable devotion to their owners by travelling astonishing distances to be reunited...

Starting with Sooty, she managed to walk 90 miles across Wales, including the Severn Bridge, just to reach her old home in Swansea.

Succumbing to a bout of homesickness, the cat had disappeared from Jenny Mountford-Davies's new house in Bristol, and had made its way through town and countryside to reach its former address.

17th April, 1997. Swansea, Wales. DAILYMANC.'

*** And as for Ninja, he managed to trek 845 miles across burning desert plains, rivers and deep forests to return to his old house in after his owners moved from Utah to Seattle in the U.S.

9th June, 1997. Seattle, USA. 'DAILY SLUR.'

ANIMALS TO THE RESCUE

Four dogs that managed to rouse their master to alert him of a fire, sadly died in the blaze.

After successfully awakening Harry Gray, he went to phone the emergency services, but heavy smoke prevented him from going upstairs to save the brave dogs.

He was so moved by their courageousness that he later said, *'I wish it was me and not them.'*

26th November, 1997. Pennsylvania, USA. 'USA TODAY.'

*** Dolphins saved the life of a swimmer who choked after swallowing sea water whilst snorkelling.

Five of the highly intelligent creatures managed to nudge Doris Svornic, 28, to the surface and let her rest on them as they guided her back to the shore in Durban, South Africa.

23rd April, 1997. Durban South Africa. 'DAILYMANC.'

*** A wildly quacking Mallard jumped out in front of a moving police car, and after the car pulled over, the female Mallard led the officers over to a nearby storm drain where nine baby ducks were trapped.

'It was going berserk,' said Officer Christopher McMullin of the suburban Philadelphia force.

The duck confronted McMullen's cruiser on a quiet access road. The officer initially tried to drive around the distressed bird, but it kept walking around in circles trying to block the vehicle.

Exasperated, McMullin got out of the car and heard the sound of cheeping baby ducks off to his left.

With the mother duck quacking away in the background, McMullin and two other officers pried off the storm grate and managed to reunite the family.

8th May, 1997. Bensalem, Philadelphia, USA. 'ST LOUIS POST & DISPATCH.'

The Dog Who Died Of A Broken Heart

One of the most moving animal stories I've yet come across concerns the unlikely relationship between Bucky the pony and K.C. the Alredale Terrier...

They'd been inseparable for seven years, until in late June this year, Bucky, the 29-year-old Palomino and a former lead pony at Belmont Park Race Track, became incurably ill and sadly had to be put to sleep.

K.C. unable to find her friend during a night-long search, returned to the empty stall, returning in all-too apparent mourning.

About 3am the next day, a groom found seven-year-old K.C., alone in Bucky's stall..It seemed she had died of a broken heart.

Even more tragic, was the revelation that although K.C. quite obviously thought the world of Bucky, the pony, quite frankly, couldn't give much of a damn about the dog.

'Nevertheless, they remained inseparable,' said William 'Red' Terrill, a horse trainer and the animal's owner. 'K.C. slept by the stall. Nobody could ever get near the pony. When Bucky first got sick, a vet treated him, but the pony just got worse. At the Vet's suggestion, the horse was put to sleep.

Before the pony could be led away, the dog was taken to a back room, locked in and fed. After she was let out she slipped out, visiting every stall looking for the pony.

It was a very story. We were all attached to both of them.' 6th July, 1997. Elmont, New York, USA. 'SAGINAW NEWS.'

ALIEN ANIMALS

The Terror Of The Wolf Woman



Pam Dennis recounted in a national tabloid how, in the gin-soaked aftermath of a few drinks with her new friend Alice, she came 'face to face with pure evil'

I'll let Pam take up the story as she told it to the magazine herself...

'We'd met on a flight returning from holiday. We had a lot in common, even our ex-husbands had the same names. When we got back to Britain, we kept in touch, and one day, I found I had an interview near the village where she lived in Yorkshire.

I was about to ring her when she actually telephoned me to suggest I visit her and stay the night.

She lived in a 400-year-old house. After dinner, we settled down with our drinks in the front room. It seemed colder than the rest of the house and Alice said the plants in that room always died.

Suddenly, the lamps dimmed. Then came the most horrific moment of my life. Instead of Alice sitting there, I was face to face with a wolf-like creature. Its eyes turned from red to yellow and it had foul breath. I was too terrified to scream.

It loomed over me, then said in a throaty voice; "You're not getting out alive."

I tried to struggle, but this beast held me down. I managed to wrench myself away and staggered to the door, but I wasn't able to open it. As I turned back to face my attacker, it collapsed to the floor - and crouching there instead of the beast, was Alice, who started sobbing. She said she's been "transformed" twice before.

I was in a total daze. It seems incredible, but I just made my way to bed.

The next morning I thought I'd dreamt it. But then I noticed three marks on my neck where the creature had held me.

Alice and I only spoke briefly, but she told me she felt a hundred years old.

Afterwards, I spoke to paranormal experts who said if Alice had been depressed, it would have been possible for an entity to take over her body.

It seems too outlandish and bizarre for words, but I'm convinced it really did happen. I've not been able to bring myself to speak to Alice again.

And every 25th April, the anniversary of the date it happened, I go cold at the thought of that strange encounter.

June, 1997. 'BELLAMAGAZINE'

The Devil Dog Of Dartmoor

To compliment the story printed above, and to perhaps lend some degree of believability to a seemingly preposterous account of an impossible creature, consider if you will the following tale from our files which was said to have occurred back in 1982.

One Spring evening, not long after full dark had descended, Dartmoor farmer, Maurice Knowles, encountered what he initially thought was a 'large black dog' while searching for a ewe just about to lamb on his land near Lydford.

As he approached the animal however, he could clearly see that it was not a dog at all, and was instead confronted with something out of a nightmare...A three foot tall abomination with a long face, ears turned forward and a pig-like snout.

What puzzled the farmer, even more than the terrifying nature of its appearance was the fact that although he shone his torch full on it, the creature took no notice and simply continued snuffing the ground.

It was only when the beast looked up that Maurice realised why it had paid him no heed...It had no eyes. Only a black line where the eyes should have been.

The creature, a hideous combination of pig, dog and young horse, eventually loped across the field until lost to sight.

Mr Knowles was later convinced that the thing he later (not surprisingly) referred to as 'The Devil', couldn't see him but had caught his scent and ran off.

Researcher Bob Boyd, who visited the farm after the alleged sighting, found a footprint and scratches on a wall where the animal ran away.

The Wild Puma Of East Wittering

A prime example of the capriciousness of the power that seems to lie behind all aspects of strange phenomena made itself apparent once more in early April this year.

East Wittering, in Sussex, was the site of an alleged black puma sighting which resulted in the deployment of an armed response unit totalling ten officers, who set out to hunt down the beast.

Robb Young, 53, had initially raised the alarm after he saw what he took to be an Allen Big Cat when he was working at the village pub, 'The Thatched Tavern.'

'I saw a puma, no doubt about it. It was on the edge of the field towards the edge of the copse, just strolling along. It looked as if it was just being lazy and enjoying the warm weather.'

I was about 250 yards away from it, but to me it looked about three feet high. I came running into the pub and asked if anybody had a pair of binoculars but nobody had them. Then I saw a man taking a large Collie dog for a walk. I compared the size of the two and this cat was larger than the dog.

I was quite amazed. I have seen all these things about the Beast Of Bodmin in the papers and on the news but this was the real thing. I was worried for the man with the dog so I drove round to warn him off.

We then phoned for the police because there is an old folk's home nearby and I was worried about it being on the loose.

The RSPCA sped to the scene along with the armed officers, and after a tense 90-minute search of the one-acre Hilton Park copse, the alert was suddenly cancelled when the searchers found what they took to be the culprit...An ordinary domestic black cat that was pretty angry at being treated rather harshly, but could hardly be described as wild.

Sergeant Bill Bryant of the Sussex police was quoted as saying: *'I assume that the person that spotted it must have been a long way from it. The armed response vehicle was brought it, just in case, but the armed officers were not deployed. I think the person who spotted it must be a bit embarrassed. But it is better to be safe than sorry.'*

Robb Young was unimpressed by the revelation that the thing he'd seen was an ordinary cat...

'They may say now that it was a normal cat but I have no doubt that it is still out there.'

10th April, 1997. East Wittering, Sussex. 'DAILY EXPRESS'

And The Latest On 'The Black Beast Of Essex'

The corpse of a Labrador found left in a pool of blood, was suspected of being a victim of the so-called 'Black Beast Of Essex.'

A vet apparently confirmed that its horrific injuries could have been caused by a giant wild cat. The dog, five-year-old Jemma, had its stomach slashed and one leg was bitten down to the bone.

'Many of the injuries were caused by large fangs,' claimed vet Helena Rymaszewska, who spent three hours attempting to stitch the terrible wounds. *'There were tears in the dog's flesh that could have been caused by razor-sharp teeth.'*

We recently treated a domestic cat which had been similarly savaged. Its hip bone was broken by a single bite.'

Jemma's owner, farmer David Cleal, of White Notley, near Braintree, Essex, was in agreement.

'The dog was in a terrible state. The fang marks led us to believe that some sort of huge cat was responsible. Several people have said they have seen one in the area recently.'

There have indeed been periodic sightings of a black cat the size of a puma roaming across Essex, and police have received a string of calls from people who claim to have spotted the 'Beast.'

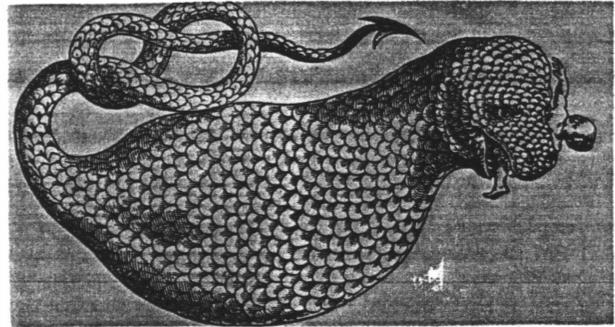
The Cleal's neighbour, Hazel Ward, is one such person. *'I've seen a black animal...Definitely a big cat running into the woods.'*

1st June, 1997. Braintree, Essex. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

Horror Of The Deep

South African villagers in a remote rural backwater are said to be living in abject terror of a man-eating river-monster said to have characteristics of both a fish and a horse.

Ezra Sigwella, agriculture minister in the Eastern Cape region, told an astonished legislature that the beast had gorged itself upon at least seven victims in the Umzimhlava River, situated to the north of the former Transkei black homeland.



He promised to dispatch officials in a bid to hunt down the creature. His remarks drew a predictable amount of scorn from the assembled lawmakers, amid slightly more serious calls of "Mamlambo" - a reference to a beast from Xhosa tribal mythology, that is said to live in rivers and, if caught, provide great wealth.

11th May, 1997. Umzimhlava River, South Africa. 'COLUMBUS DISPATCH'

Hot On The Trail Of China's Bigfoot

Researchers hunting for the elusive, definitive proof for the existence of the Chinese BHM (Big Hairly Monster), may have found footprints of the legendary creature.

Hundreds of very large prints resembling those of a man have been reportedly seen in the forests of the mountainous Shennongjia National Park in central Hubei Province.

Wang Fangchen, head of the Committee For Research On Strange And Rare Creatures said; *'We have made preliminary conclusions that they were left by two animals walking in two legs. The biggest footprint is 15 inches long, quite larger than a man's, and different from the footprints of any other identified animals.'*

The creature was believed to weigh about 440lbs. *'Progress toward unravelling the mystery of the Wildman would be of great scientific importance,'* Fangchen concluded.

25th June, 1997. Shennongjia National Park, central Hubei Province. 'DAILYMAIL'

Weird Science

The Frog That Won't Fall To Earth

Anyone even remotely acquainted with Fortean phenomena will be more than familiar with mysterious showers of live Frogs falling from the sky - The works of the late, great Charles Fort are filled with such accounts and whilst such a phenomenon is indeed truly wondrous, even more bizarre is the report in *'THE NEW SCIENTIST'* that features the incredible photograph of a frog that openly defies gravity. Using a magnetic field, scientists at the University of Nottingham along with their colleagues at the University of Nijmegen in Holland, have apparently caused a frog, nick-named Yuri, to hang suspended in mid-air.



The process works because giant magnetic fields slightly distort the orbits of the electrons contained within the amphibian's atoms. The resulting electric current generates a magnetic field in the opposite direction to that of the magnet. A field of 16 Teslas created as attractive force so strong that it could make the frog float....At least until it made good it's escape. The same team were also responsible for the levitation of plants, grasshoppers and fish.

And before you ask, yes, efforts are already underway towards finding a practical use for the new discovery.

'If you have a magnet that is big enough, you could levitate a human,' says Peter Main, one of the researchers. He also answered another question almost before it was uttered...*'The frog did not seem to suffer any ill-effects. It went back to its fellow frogs looking perfectly happy.'*

23rd May, 1997. Nottingham, England/Nijmegen, Holland. 'NEW SCIENTIST.'

Attack Of The Cell From Hell

Scientists in the USA have discovered a deadly bacteria that preys on fish and humans.

Millions of fish in North Carolina's marshlands have been found dead with open sores apparently caused by the micro-organism dubbed *'The Cell From Hell'*. It said to feed on the blood of its victims, be they animal or otherwise.

Fishermen, divers and other people whose lot it is to submerge underwater to make a living have often found sores on their bodies and felt faint or suffered memory loss after coming into contact with water fouled by dead fish.

The organism killing the fish, known as *pfiesteria*, could eat a piranha for breakfast. Biologists say the tiny organisms secrete a toxin that eats holes in fish, then slowly paralyses their muscles and suffocates them.

North Carolina State University researcher Joanne Burkholder, who helped discover the creature in 1990, is convinced the toxins made her and nine other researchers sick after laboratory tests in 1993.

State health officials insist however, that although they are still collating evidence, there is no concrete proof of the bug ever attacking humans....Well, they would, wouldn't they!

Pfiesteria, a one-celled organism, has probably existed for millions of years, but Burkholder's research indicates that it proliferates and takes on a lethal form when exposed to high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous - by-products of human and animal waste.

She believes the bug originally became a big problem in North Carolina waters as the state's pig farming industry soared over the past decade. It has since been found as far north as Delaware and as far south as the Gulf Of Mexico, and it can live in fresh or salt water.

Cheery news for swimmers in the area, and I don't think!
18th April, 1997. North Carolina, USA...And spreading... 'THE EXPRESS'

The Crack In The World

In Ozark, Missouri, (Site of more New World Order conspiracy theories than a whole series of *'THE X-FILES'* - See elsewhere this issue)) late last year, a mysterious crack in the ground was discovered about three miles north of this southwestern Missouri community.

On 10th October, 1996, construction workers widening a bridge on Christian County NN came across a 150-foot long crack in the earth. It certainly hadn't been there the day before.

The fissure, as wide as four inches in some places, ran under the bridge and in and out of Farmer's Creek, a riverbed that is dry nearly all year round.

Four days later, the workers noticed that the bridge's north approach slab - a 20-foot-wide chunk of concrete about two-feet-thick-had somehow tilted.

The result was a two-inch bump where the road meets the bridge, and a dip and a crack in the road about nine-feet from the bridge.

'I've been around a long time, and I've never seen the ground move like this around a construction site,' claimed Joe Warren, who has worked the roads for nigh on 25 years. *'It's a strange situation. It's definitely an oddball.'*

It sounds like the beginning of one of those classic, black and white Sci-Fi B-movies of the 1950's to me...

27th October, 1997. Ozark, Missouri, USA. 'ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH.'

Zapped By Meteorite's

A meteorite travelling at 1,000 mph smashed into a car parked in the centre of a French town in mid-April.

Residents sleeping in a nearby block of flats at Chambrey, in the midst of the French Alps, were shaken from their sleep by the sound of *'a deafening explosion and dazzling white light,'* as the 3lb molten rock crashed into the car and set it ablaze.

The Renault Clio's horrified owner, a 54-year-old woman, called the police because her first thought was that someone had placed a bomb beneath her vehicle. *'When I heard it was a rock from outer space I felt much better,'* she was quoted as saying. I'm not surprised. She has since put in an insurance claim based on an *'act of God'* clause.

14th April, 1997. Chambrey, French Alps. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

*** And over in Beaumont, Texas, USA, a heavenly visitor arrived unannounced at the home of the Reverend Howard Cameron...A marble-sized rock slammed through the roof as he was shaving on the morning of 2nd May. Cameron was shocked by the sound of the meteorite punching a hole clean through the ceiling of his bedroom closet and embedded itself in a wall.

'At the time I thought it was a plant explosion,' recalled Cameron. It took several days and the intervention of a geology professor from Lamar University to find out what exactly had crashed into his house that morning.

His wife, Marilyn, and 7-year-old daughter, Caitlyn, both said the noise woke them up. Mr Cameron turned on the radio expecting there to be news of some kind of disaster in the area, but there was nothing. He'd forgotten all about it by the time the next day came rolling around, and it was only when he was in the process of cleaning his gutters that he came across a half-dollar-sized hole in the roof.

'It was as neatly cut as if somebody had used a punch,' he said. Looking around inside, he found a hole in the ceiling of his bedroom closet.

Although something like 3,000 meteorites strike the Earth every day, only a few thousand have ever been found, and only a mere handful have been actually observed as they fell.

Jim Jordan, the aforementioned geology expert, arrived on the scene and found fragments of the rock embedded in the closet wall.

'The meteorite had taken a right-hand turn,' Mr Cameron said. 'It had ended up behind some picture albums.'

Nothing inside the closet was damaged. If the rock had not turned, it might have landed near his wife who was sleeping nearby. Cameron thinks, not surprisingly perhaps, that an Angel deflected the meteor's path.

13th May, 1997. Beaumont, Texas, USA. 'COLOMBUS DISPATCH.'

Smurf Dolls Banned For Swearing

Hot on the heels of the 'Cabbage Patch Doll's' that were withdrawn because they showed a penchant for ripping out children's hair, comes the following account from Brantford, Ontario, Canada, of a Wal-Mart store being forced to withdraw their range of 'Smurf Dolls' because they succumbed to a bout of foul language...

Deborah Osborn of Scotland, Ontario, bought a 'Berry Luv'n' Baby Smurf' as a Christmas gift for her two-and-a-half year old granddaughter, Amber. The family later claimed that following a squeeze of the doll's hand, the Smurf giggles and utters a garbled sentence that sounds an awful lot like an obscenity.

'My poor grandchild has been punished for saying these words and she got it from this stupid doll,' complained Osborn. The Wal-Mart store which sold the offensive doll, removed six remaining boxes from its shelves and sent one to head office to undergo testing.

The Smurf's doll face is supposed to change colour and say 12 different things, according to the manufacturers, Irwin Toys. Osborn, however, said Amber's doll had only one, decidedly uncouth expression, and it most certainly wasn't 'I run on hugs!!!'

7th January, 1997. Brantford, Ontario, Canada. 'KALAMAZOO GAZETTE.'

MEDICAL ANOMALIES

A giant baby boy weighing 19.8lb, with the body of an 18-month-old toddler, has reportedly been born in China.

After some unsurprising problems surrounding the actual birth, both mother and 'child' were said to be doing fine following a Caesarean operation.

Doctors in Henan Province described the baby as 27.6 inches tall but otherwise completely normal.

'He's not only huge, he has a gigantic appetite to match,' a doctor informed the 'CHINA DAILY' newspaper. 'He consumes vast amounts of milk and his mother finds it difficult to keep up with the demand.'

10th April, 1997. Henan Province, China. 'DAILY EXPRESS'

Archaeological Missives

Thousands of stone tools discovered in Ethiopia, appear to be the oldest objects yet found that were actually created by our human ancestors.

According to a report in the respected journal 'NATURE', the fist-size stone tools, which may well have been utilised as a means of cracking shells or for cutting flesh, are dated at 2.5 million years old, a staggering quarter of a million years older than the previous record for such tools.

Paleoanthropologist Sileshi Semaw, Rutgers University, says the tools show 'surprisingly sophisticated control of stone fracture mechanics,' equal to that seen in tools made as much as a million years later. They are almost identical to those found in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania dated at 1.7 million to 1.8 million years old.

The nearly 3,000 stone tools were located between 1992-94 in the Gona region of Ethiopia, which is widely considered to be one of the most productive areas for finding traces of the earliest human evolution.

The tools are mostly made up of circular stones used for smashing objects and stone flakes, which were presumably used for cutting. The scientists are left with the premise that humans evolved a lot earlier than had first been supposed.

However, no fossils were found at the site to reinforce the belief that man really did emerge much sooner, and it leaves the identity of the toolmakers in some doubt.

23rd January, 1997. Ethiopia, Africa. 'USA TODAY.'

And Ape-Like Creatures May Have Roamed The Earth Much Earlier

Fossils discovered during expeditions launched in the 1960's and more recently in 1994, are believed to have belonged to a large, ape-like creature that may just be the oldest known relative of humans...

The fossils from Uganda, are dated at least 20.6 million years ago. They belonged to a one hundred pound creature that could stand upright and swing from trees, says Laura MacLachy from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

'The fossils show features of the shoulder and vertebral column that are significantly similar to those of living apes and humans,' she says, confidentially.

The precise date pushes back the appearance of an simian-like being by at least 5 million years. Contemporaries 20 million years ago were more monkey like, walked on all fours and were unable to swing and compete for food in the same way.

'This is the earliest evidence for a significantly ape-like body plan in the primate fossil record,' says Daniel Gebo, lead author of the report that appeared in a recent issue of 'SCIENCE.' The fossils, discovered in the 1960's, consisted of facial bones, teeth and vertebrae. The facial bones and teeth were primitive like others from the period, but the vertebrae resemble those of modern apes. On return expeditions in 1994-95, the team found shoulder bones and two partial femurs with modern features.

The proposed new genus and species name for the elder relative is *Morotopithecus bishopi*. Moroto is the site in Uganda where the fossils were found and W. Bishop is the name of the scientist who initially discovered the fossils.

'All other forms of hominoids known from 20 million years ago are much more generalised in their body proportions and don't show the specific adaptations that the apes have. These are certainly the oldest fossils that show characteristics that resemble those of living apes and humans.'

18th April, 1997. Uganda, Africa. 'USA TODAY.'

U.N. Concentration Camps Being Set Up In The Backwoods Of America?

The rumour-mills of the Ozarks, Missouri, have been busily churning out a whole series of conspiracy theories at such a speed you'd almost think it was going out of fashion (In the increasingly paranoid late 1990's? Fat chance).

Fuelled by one William F. Jud, the theory that the United Nations has designated hundreds of what it calls 'Biospheres' around the world, some in the United States. These are said to be environmentally important areas because they haven't yet been extensively developed or farmed.

This part of the theory at least, is undeniably true.

The U.N. did set up a Man In The Biosphere Programme back in 1970, and since then, 337 biosphere reserves have been established in 85 countries. The United States has 47 of these, many of them national parks and other areas where an ecosystem is still largely intact. The idea is to help residents manage an entire ecosystem so that all its inhabitants - plants, animals and people - survive into the future.

What is a good deal more debatable is Jud's assertion that the ultimate goal of the biosphere movement is to forcibly move people off 50 per cent of the land in the U.S. and return it to the wilderness with all humans banned. Roads will be torn up, power lines downed, bridges and dams destroyed, mines closed, wells plugged, pipelines removed, towns burned and the ashes buried.

When you got right down to it, it would amount to an all-out invasion by the U.N.

Environmental laws would be enforced so strictly that people will have no choice but to leave. For those who continue to refuse, U.N. troops currently being trained in the U.S. will force the stragglers into concentration camps situated on the very fringes of the major cities. These troops will be guided in their movements during the invasion by secret codes stamped into the back of road signs.

Jud and his compatriots have not been prepared to sit idly by whilst this fiendish plot was in the process of being hatched. After stumbling upon news of its inception, they have issued self-produced leaflets proclaiming the planned invasion to car windshields, in which they warn the people that they had best enjoy their freedom now, because the whole region of the Ozarks was soon to be declared off-limits to humans. Only wildlife would be permitted to remain.

Whilst the threat may be based more on paranoia than any degree of hard fact, the fears of Jud and his not-so-merry-men (and women) are real enough and have subsequently created a climate of distrust in Southern Missouri. Militia members have begun showing up at local meetings, as has racist and anti-Semitic literature.

Proponents of the take-over theory cite as 'proof' articles from magazines backed by the mining, ranching and timber industries or private properties rights groups like 'People For The West.' And of course, the Internet has become a source for somewhat dubious information to be imparted

to anyone equipped with a computer modem. Most sceptics believe that the so-called plot is a symptom of the end of the Cold War, and the fact that there no longer exists a common enemy on which to focus ones petty hatreds.

Jud and his followers held a meeting at West Plains High School, during which they voiced their fears that United Nations troops were already training for the invasion in camps based around the Dakotas, that 5,000 retired Hong Kong policemen have been hired to do the 'dirty work' the U.S. army will refrain from taking part in, and that *'those damn black helicopters are U.N. troops on practice manoeuvres.'*

400 people turned up for the meeting, a reflection on just how seriously local residents view the threat of a take-over. Jud maintains that they have good reason to be afraid.

'The U.N. will bring in the Endangered Species Act and find some little bug on your lawn. And the ultimate goal is to depopulate completely 50 percent of the United States for wilderness areas. Another 25 per cent will be a buffer zone, where people will have the level of freedom you'd find in the average Chinese commune.'

A multitude of federal and state agencies - including the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service and Missouri Department of Conservation - are in on the conspiracy, according to Jud. *'Stuff like this is so far out that I can't sit here and make it up.'*

He believes that the immediate threat of the Ozarks invasion was only averted due to the intervention of groups like 'People For The West,' soon after they uncovered evidence of the plot.

'It came within weeks of happening in Arkansas, but we caught it and shut it down.'

The suspected agencies and groups are of course, equally adamant that this conspiracy theory is just utter nonsense. As with all things, only time will tell who's right, I guess.

6-9th April, 1997. Ozarks, Missouri, USA. ST LOUIS-POST & DISPATCH

Asteroid Chasing The Earth

An asteroid 5km wide has been sighted by astronomers, shadowing the Earth's orbit around the Sun, and is due to cross the Earth's path in 2,750 years time.

There is believed to be little chance of a collision however. 'Experts' at York University in Ontario, Canada, have christened the lump of rock with the imaginative name; 3753. They assert that the asteroid moves in a spiralling kidney bean shape circle and gets closest to our planet every 385 years. It last neared the Earth 100 years ago. Even then it is still 40 times the distance between the Earth and the Moon, and is more likely to smack into Venus, in 8,000 years time than make a crash landing here.

12th June, 1997. 'DAILYMANC.'

Death Comes In The Still Of The Night

In Caldwell, Idaho, USA, area doctors have been forced to call upon state and federal health 'experts' to help solve the mysterious deaths of seven County Canyon residents who have died in their sleep over a five month period.

'There were some unusual findings in the cases that suggest they might be tied together,' said Mercy Medical Centre pathologist Thomas Donndelinger... Typically frustrating in matters of this kind, he refused point blank to elaborate...

6th February, 1997. Idaho, USA. 'USA TODAY.'

When Fate Turns Its Back

Police In 'Stick-Up' Farce

Police officer Magnus Villskar, 29, managed to make a complete and utter mess of an arrest in Helsinki, Finland, recently.

He was chasing after a pair of muggers and had cornered them in an alleyway when they started shooting. 'I returned fire and then dived behind a refuse container, pushing my face against the side so that they couldn't see me.'

A good idea, you might think...Except unfortunately for Magnus, in the sub-zero temperatures his bare forehead stuck fast to the icy metal, rendering him completely immobile. At first he tried to bluff it out, shouting out that tired old classic of a million gangster B-movies; 'I've got you covered,' and firing his gun into the air.

Eventually however, the muggers discovered his predicament and after removing his trousers and underpants, made good their escape.

Magnus was left to muse over the bungle and sigh with philosophical sadness...*'It wouldn't have been so bad, except last week I got my penis stuck to a lamp post.'*

Don't ask...

21st May, 1997. Helsinki, Finland. 'THE BIG ISSUE.'

*** Talking of people getting parts of their anatomy stuck in places where they really shouldn't, drunken Gunther Anthrobus tried to pee through the letter box of a deserted house in Bavaria.

Unfortunately, he got his penis stuck, and was trapped overnight until a passing postman came to his rescue.

4th May, 1997. Bavaria, Germany. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE.'

Unlucky In Crime

When Patrick Manning showed up for jury duty at a Tulsa, Oklahoma, courtroom, a routine check revealed that he was in fact, himself a wanted man.

He was immediately arrested for a murder that took place back in 1987 during the robbery of a drugstore.

23rd March, 1997. Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA. 'BOSTON SUNDAY HERALD.'

*** A would-be hero by the name of Paul Emerson, was hit with a bottle by the shoplifter he tried to prevent stealing from a San Jose store.

The manager's dog then bit his ankles and finally, another shopper mistook him for a thief and hit him with her handbag.

One wonders why the hell he bothered.

6th April, 1997. San Jose, USA. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE.'

*** Burglar Wayne Ferris accidentally crashed through the ceiling of a California shop he was in the process of stealing from...And promptly choked to death on the torch he was carrying in his mouth.

13th April, 1997. California, USA. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE.'

*** An incredibly unlucky thief's false leg fell off as he attempted to make a getaway on a bicycle after grabbing a woman's handbag in Viareggio, Pisa. He fell flat on his face onto the pavement and was later arrested.

26th April, 1997. Viareggio, Pisa, Italy. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

*** Thierry Pennard hit his head on a beam at the house he had illegally entered in Marseille.

He was later found unconscious by the owners, who promptly called the police.

11th May, 1997. Marseilles, France. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE.'

*** Porky bank robber Yukio Ozawa was easily apprehended by Tokyo police after the braces on his trousers snapped, sending him sprawling on the footpath along which he was trying to escape.

18th May, 1997. Tokyo, Japan. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE.'

*** German bank manager Luther Sprach, 53, of Stuttgart, unwisely informed cashier Hans Bumlich (unfortunate name, but there you go) that *'the day you get promotion is the day I stick a pineapple up my arse!'*

Mr Bumlich took Luther at his word, and came to work the following day with armed with a shotgun and a vicious-looking pineapple. He commanded the cowering Mr Sprach to shove the piece of fruit up where the sun don't shine, or else he'd happily blow his head off.

'It was a huge pineapple,' recalled one witness. *'It had very prickly sides. It made you wince just to look at it.'*

Despite a host of determined efforts, and some sterling assistance from the deputy manager, the by now, very red-faced Mr Sprach was unable to make much of a headway with the pineapple. Eventually, his tormentor grew bored of his puny efforts and fled into the street. Mr Bumlich was later bundled to the ground by passers-by.

Maintaining an admirable sense of humour, Luther was quoted as saying; *'The next time I use a fruit metaphor, I'll choose something small...Like a bilberry.'*

21st May, 1997. Stuttgart, Germany. 'THE BIG ISSUE.'

*** Heinz Kramer robbed a bank in Radstad, Austria, wearing a wetsuit, and then dived into the nearby river. Unluckily for him, he was easily caught when the chasing police simply followed the trail of air bubbles.

25th May, 1997. Radstad, Austria. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE.'

*** Robber Jack Austin decided to wear a motorcycle helmet to disguise his features when he raided a restaurant in Jackson, Alabama, USA.

He was soon nabbed however when diners spotted his name painted on the back of his headgear.

1st June, 1997. Alabama, USA. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE.'

***Burglar Boris Sudimir couldn't resist having a tinkle on the piano in the luxury flat he'd broken into in Tula, Russia. Not surprisingly, the off-key racket attracted the attention of the neighbours who called the police, who caught him red-handed.

13th June, 1997. Tula, Russia. 'DAILY SLUR.'

Thief Jeffrey McLeod was caught after he robbed a petrol station in Tampa Florida...He ran out of fuel as he tried to speed off into the night.

6th July, 1997. Tampa, Florida. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

*** Mignel Antonias hit upon the novel idea of wearing a condom over his face when holding up a bank in Maturin, Venezuela.

He maybe had time to reflect it wasn't such a great concept after all however, when he found he was unable to get the condom off and subsequently died of suffocation.

27th July, 1997. Maturin, Venezuela. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

*** And finally, New Yorker Mike O' Donnell simply followed his nose to track down a burglar.

The crook had farted while hiding and such was the pungency of the odour, Mike easily traced the smell to a cupboard.

3rd August, 1997. New York, USA. 'SUNDAYPEOPLE.'

Exchange Mag Reviews

The Goblin Universe # 5

From the team that brought you the ever-excellent 'ANIMALS AND MEN', Jonathan Downes brings us another equally fascinating publication.

The latest issue features on 1997's latest batch of Crop Circles, Communication With UFO's, The Haunting Of Glamis Castle, Psychic Detectives, Animal Mutilations, and a typically outlandish article from Tony 'Doc' Shields on 'Sea Heads.'

All this, plus lots of news clippings from around the world, makes 'THE GOBLIN UNIVERSE' a compulsive read.

Available from; 15, Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter, Devon, UK. £8 for four issues.

Cover Up # 7

David Colman's intriguing publication continues to (in the words of Harry Hill) 'dazzle and excite.'

The latest edition includes Alien Big Cats in West Lothian, UFO investigator Bob Oechlar's resignation from active study in the field, The New World Order Conspiracy, Local (Scottish) UFO reports, a selection of news clippings, and a report on the SPI's victory in the recent 'We The Jury' UFO TV debate.

Highly recommended.

Available from; David Colman, 49, Limesfield Crescent, Bathgate, West Lothian, Scotland. EH 48 1RF. Sample Issue £1:25

Wirral Paranormal Investigations Monthly Magazine #18

My first encounter with this splendid publication, which is something of a surprise, seeing as how it's just about the only other local-ish paranormal magazine on the market, but better late than never as the saying goes... The latest issue carries articles on the Amityville Horror, Electronic Voice Phenomena, the 1994 USAF report on the infamous Roswell Incident, and a selection of poetry, news clippings, and a interesting piece by Wally Barnes on Warrington sightings of the eternally elusive Spring-Heeled Jack.

The mag is actually the mouthpiece of the Wirral Paranormal Investigations group. We hope to feature more on this extremely worthwhile organisation in subsequent issues.

Available from; Mike McManus, 21, Victoria Rd, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, L65 8BU. Sample Issue; £1.

Haunted Scotland #7

One of my favourite Fortean publications, featuring as it does, a whole welter of strange phenomena, much of it original. The latest issue is no exception and includes pieces on Faerie Crosses, The Final

Roman Empire, The Disappearing Lighthouse Keepers Of The Flannan Isles, the latest reports from Loch Ness (including a fascinating anomalous sonar reading from Loch Lochy) and a tantalising snippet about a man who was let off with a speeding fine because he claimed he'd been terrified by a large black and white unidentified animal, that ran out of the road in front of him.

There's lots more besides, and I really can't recommend this magazine highly enough to anyone who's even remotely interested in examples of the magic that surrounds everyday life.

Available from; Mark Fraser, 35, South Dean Road, Kilmarnock, KA3 7RD. Ayrshire, Scotland. £12 for 6 issues

ABDUCTION WATCH #1

At last, a publication that takes a sceptical, intelligent look at the alien abduction mythos in all its myriad forms.

Kevin McClure (former editor of the equally erudite, but now sadly defunct magazine, 'PROMISES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS'), has produced a highly literate and informative newsletter that I sincerely hope will prove to be the perfect antidote to the current rash of increasingly wild claims made by people who should really know better concerning the phenomenon, whatever its true points of origin.

'More Scully than Mulder - More anger than sorrow' runs the headline on page one. And more power to you, Kevin.

Essential reading for sceptics and believers alike.

Available from: 3, Claremont Grove, Leeds, LS3 1AX. Subs: £5 for five issues.

The Fortean Times# 102

As consistently excellent as ever. The flagship of Fortean reporting and investigation sails on unrivalled and unchallenged into its second century (and doubtless, millennium catastrophes permitting, way beyond).

The latest issue at the time of going to press included major articles on Identifying Flying Objects, The Essential Guide To Lake Monsters, Vatican Roulette, The Devil In Lewis, the ever-intriguing Forum, and Strange Days weird news round-up.

Absolutely indispensable!!!

Available from: Freepost, Bristol, BS21 OBR 12 issues £30. Sample Issue £2:50

Magonia

The latest issue was, in this humble reviewers opinion, the best yet, featuring as it did an absolutely fascinating article on Contemporary Conspiracy Theories...Unfortunately, one of my friends read it and lent it out to some unknown somebody, and I haven't had it back to review properly...Ah well. Suffice to say, you should rustle up the cash and send for a copy today to John Dee Cottage, 5, James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW14 8HB. Subs: £5 for four issues.

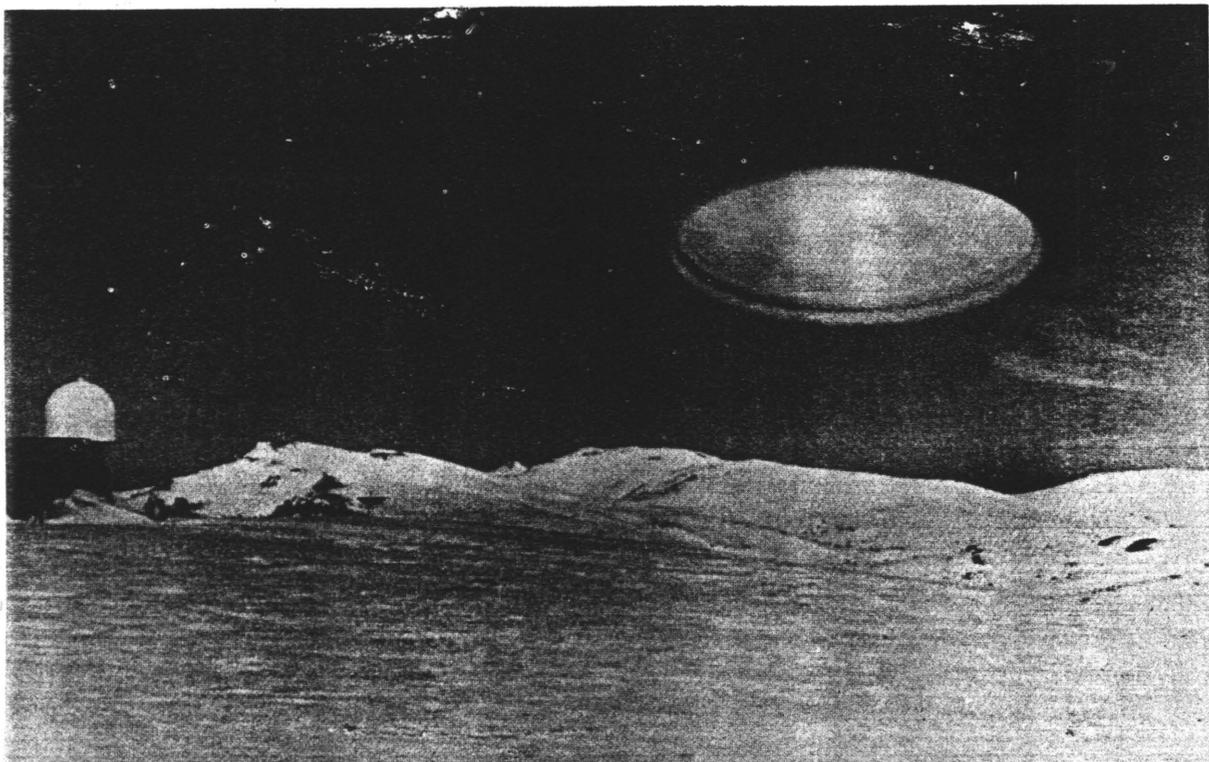
STOP PRESS!!!

INSTRUMENTS OF THE IMPOSSIBLE CIA ANNOUNCES 'SPY PLANES' BEHIND UFO PHENOMENA.

A recent report in the pages of the daily press went almost unnoticed by the general public, featuring as it did, a rather lame and reluctant admission that more than half of the UFO sightings recorded in the 1950's and 60's could be explained away as U.S. secret military aircraft.

According to the accounts coming out of America, the disc-like objects sighted in such large numbers throughout those two decades, were spy planes flying top-secret reconnaissance missions from bases in Nevada and California at the very height of the Cold War.

The aircraft, the Lockheed U-2 and the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird, flew at extremely high altitudes - the latter capable of more than 2,000 mph at up to 85,000ft. Little wonder, the military say somewhat condescendingly, that the ordinary man in the street mistook the unconventional aircraft for something even more exotic.



Duplicity had been necessary, the CIA reasoned, in the interests of national security.

The Air Force had made misleading and deceptive statements in order to allay fears and to protect an extraordinarily sensitive project. So the public were fobbed off with those infamous, half-hearted explanations of the sightings... Weather balloons, atmospheric phenomena, swamp gas and the like.

The optimists in the CIA hoped that this (ahem) slightly belated admission in documents initially published on the Internet, would serve to dispel the rumours of extraterrestrial craft visiting this planet, and go some way towards discrediting the 'UFO-nuts' who have been a constant source of embarrassment to the Air Force, and just about everyone else in authority.

The realists amongst them realised however, that far from defusing the issue, it has only added to the web of intrigue.

The question that will now be asked is as pertinent as it is obvious.... Why, after so many years of fooling the public, should anyone give an ounce of credence to *anything* the CIA says now?

And hot on the heels of that one, we can ask this, why has the CIA decided to suddenly come clean about a subject in which it had always previously denied any involvement whatsoever?

We'll have a good deal more on this amazing about face in our next issue, due out Halloween, 1997.

Next Issue: A FOAF Tale For Halloween, The Yeti - Proof At Last? Ghosts And Devils Over Merseyside, Crop Circles, What Do Aliens Look Like? Near Death Experiences, Trips To Hell And Back, And Lots More!!!