

**COLIN WILSON**  
**WHY IT'S TIME TO**  
**EMBRACE OUR**  
**NEANDERTHAL**  
**COUSINS**

PAGE 38



**GOD IS DEAD**  
**- AGAIN!**  
 CAN SCIENTISTS  
 EVER GET RID OF  
 THE BIG GUY?



**SEASON OF**  
**THE WITCH**  
 THE AMAZING  
 CONFESSION OF  
 ISOBEL GOWDIE



**UNNATURAL**  
**DISASTERS?**  
 DO MASS BIRD  
 DEATHS MEAN  
 THE END IS NIGH?

THE WORLD'S **WEIRDEST** NEWS STORIES

INTELLIGENT SLIME • HOLY THORN FELLED • MYSTERY IMPLANTS • ORBS: JUST BALLS?

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

# ForteanTimes

FT272 MARCH 2011 £4.25

## PSYCHIC SPIES

WHATEVER  
 HAPPENED  
 TO AMERICA'S  
 REMOTE  
 VIEWERS?



**+** UFOS IN CATHAR COUNTRY **RETURN OF THE TATZELWURM** THE ARCHÆOLOGY OF BOOZE

THE 4 chapters from HELL  
 NEW TOUR CELEBRATING 15 BLOODY YEARS

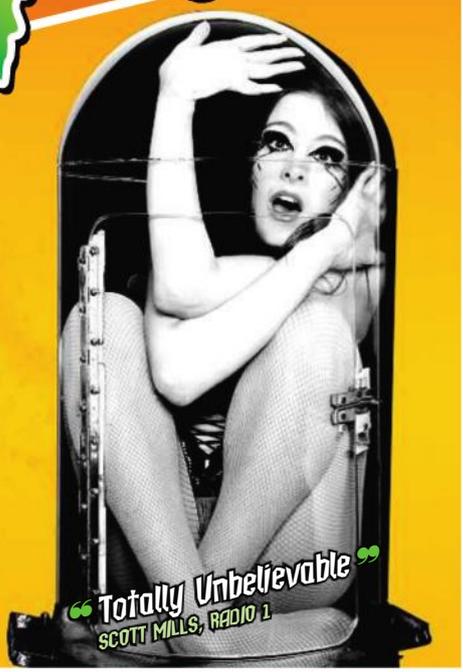
# CIRCUS OF HORRORS

"All Killer,  
 All Thriller,  
 No Filler"  
 GOREZONE MAGAZINE

**2-FOR-1  
 OFFER FOR  
 FORTEAN  
 TIMES  
 READERS**  
 Send an SAE to:  
 Circus of Horrors  
 PO Box 4538  
 London  
 SW19 8XU



"Aaaaaarrrghhh!"  
 JYETTE FIELDING



"Totally Unbelievable"  
 SCOTT MILLS, RADIO 1



"Barnum Would  
 be Proud"  
 TIME OUT

The GREATEST Hits! The GREATEST Acts! The GREATEST Shocks!  
**THE GREATEST SHOW!**



"If Quentin  
 Tarentino directed  
 Cirque du Soleil THIS  
 WOULD BE IT!"  
 DOKTOR HAZE



[circusofhorrors.co.uk](http://circusofhorrors.co.uk)

CARDIFF, New Theatre	Thu 3, Fri 4, Sat 5 FEB	02920878889	www.newtheatrecardiff.co.uk
ROTHERHAM, Civic Theatre	Mon 7 FEB	01709 823621	www.ROTHERHAM.gov.uk/theatres
BIRMINGHAM, Alexandra Theatre	Tue 8 FEB	08448472293	www.alexandratheatre.org.uk
OXFORD, New Theatre	Wed 9 FEB	0844 847 1585	www.newtheatreoxford.org.uk
BURNLEY, Mechanics,	Thu 10 FEB	0128 2664400	www.burnleymechanics.co.uk
DUMFRIES, DG One	Fri 11 FEB	01387 243 550	www.dgcommunity.net
HALIFAX, Victoria theatre	Sat 12 FEB	01422351158	www.victoriaattheatre.co.uk
WHITLEY BAY, The Playhouse	Sun 13 FEB	08442772771	www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk

**A VALENTINE'S DAY MASSAGE**

ABERDEEN, Music Hall	Mon 14 FEB	01224 641122	www.boxofficeaberdeen.com
KILMARNOCK, The Palace	Wed 16 FEB	0156354900	www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/comser/theatre/programme.asp
FALKIRK, Town Hall	Thu 17 FEB	01324 506850	www.falkirk.gov.uk/cultural
GLENROTHES, Rothes Halls	Fri 18 FEB	01592 611101	www.fifedirect.org.uk/atfife
DUNDEE, Whitehall Theatre	Sat 19 FEB	08717 029 486	www.whitehalldundee.co.uk
GREENOCK, Arts Guild Theatre	Sun 20 FEB	01475 723038	www.artsguildtheatre.co.uk
EDINBURGH, Playhouse Theatre	Mon 21 FEB	0844 847 1660	www.edinburghplayhouse.org.uk
SCARBOROUGH, Futurist Theatre	Wed 23 FEB	01723 365789	www.futuristtheatre.co.uk
SKEGNESS, Embassy Theatre	Thu 24 FEB	08456740505	www.embassytheatre.co.uk
BOLTON, Albert Halls	Fri 25 FEB	01204 334400	www.alberthalls-bolton.co.uk
DARLINGTON, Civic Theatre	Sat 26 FEB	01325486555	www.darlington.gov.uk/Culture/arts
BLACKPOOL, Grand Theatre	Sun 27 FEB	01253 290190	www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk
MANCHESTER, Palace Theatre	Mon 28 FEB	0844 847 2484	www.manchesterpalace.org.uk
NEW BRIGHTON, Floral Pavilion Theatre	Tue 1 MAR	0151 666 0000	www.floralpavilion.com
BRECON, Theatr Brycheiniog	Wed 2 MAR	01874 611622	www.brycheiniog.co.uk
SWANSEA, Grand Theatre	Thu 3 MAR	01792 475715	www.swansea.gov.uk
CHELtenham, Town Hall	Fri 4 MAR	0844 576 2210	www.cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk
TORQUAY, Princess Theatre	Sat 5 MAR	0844 847 2315	www.princessstheatre.org.uk
BOURNEMOUTH, Pavilion	Sun 6 MAR	0844 576 3000	www.bic.co.uk
New WIMBLEDON Theatre	Mon 7 MAR	0844 871 7646	www.ambassadorickets.com
CHELMESFORD, Civic Theatre	Tue 8 MAR	01245 606505	www.chelmsford.gov.uk
WORTHING, Pavilion	Wed 9 MAR	01903 206206	www.worthingtheatres.co.uk
HORSHAM, Capitol Theatre	Thu 10 MAR	01403 750220	www.thecapitolhorsham.com
FOLKESTONE, Leas Cliff Hall	Fri 11 MAR	0844 847 1776	www.leascliffhall.co.uk
MARGATE, Winter Gardens	Sat 12 MAR	01843 296111	www.margatewintergardens.co.uk
SWINDON, Wyvern Theatre	Sun 13 MAR	01793 524 481	www.wyverntheatre.org.uk
GLASGOW, King's Theatre	Mon 14 MAR	0844 871 7648	www.ambassadorickets.com/King's-Theatre
HARLOW, Playhouse	Wed 16 & Thu 17 MAR	01279431945	www.playhouseharlow.com
IPSWICH, Playhouse	Fri 18 MAR	01473 433100	www.ipswichregent.com
CLACTON, Princes Theatre	Sat 19 MAR	01255 686633	www.essex-live.co.uk
DARTFORD, Orchard Theatre	Sun 20 MAR	01322 220000	www.orchardtheatre.co.uk
SOUTHSEA, Kings Theatre	Mon 21 MAR	02392828282	www.kings-southsea.com
ST ALBANS, Alban Arena	Tue 22 MAR	01727 844488	www.alban-arena.co.uk
NORTHAMPTON, Royal and Derngate	Wed 23 MAR	01604624811	www.royalandderngate.co.uk
KING'S LYNN, Corn Exchange	Thu 24 MAR	01553764864	www.kingslynncomexchange.co.uk
WOLVERHAMPTON, Grand Theatre	Fri 25 MAR	01902429212	www.grandtheatre.co.uk
WOOKEY HOLE, Theatre	Sat 26 & Sun 27 MAR	01749 672243	www.wookey.co.uk

Reggie maidens BIZARRE ROCK HAMMER kinDeep Le Maitre

**WARNING:** The Circus of Horrors contains some nudity & language of an adult nature, it is not suitable for children, sissies or chavs. This show contains nuts!



# FORTEAN TIMES THE DIGITAL EDITION!

NOW AVAILABLE ON  
iPAD, PC AND MAC

VISIT [WWW.ZINIO.COM](http://WWW.ZINIO.COM) TO ORDER  
YOUR COPY OR SUBSCRIBE

# CONTENTS

the world of strange phenomena



JONATHAN BURTON

**38 A 100,000-YEAR-OLD CIVILISATION?**  
Colin Wilson explores the 'damned' data of the late Stan Gooch's works



**27 THE LIGHT FANTASTIC**  
UFO witnesses glimpse a new energy phenomenon



**30 PSYCHIC SPIES**  
What became of Remote Viewing?

BOTH IMAGES: ETIENNE GILFILLAN



**56 CONFESSIONS OF A WITCH**  
Re-examining a witchcraft trial



**28 THE BLACK BALL OF TRUNDLE HILL**  
World War II tale of an unidentified energy form

CAPUCINE

# Fortean Times 272

## strange days

Mass animal deaths; bird on a shelf and labelled cat; Holy Thorn chopped down; Armageddon escape hatch; medical embeddings; lucky escapes; witches threaten taxman; Nazis feared 'Hitler' dog – and much more.

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 12 SCIENCE          | 20 GHOSTWATCH        |
| 15 ALIEN ZOO        | 23 KONSPIRACY KORNER |
| 16 ARCHÆOLOGY       | 24 NECROLOG          |
| 17 CLASSICAL CORNER | 25 STRANGE DEATHS    |
| 19 MYTHCONCEPTIONS  | 26 THE UFO FILES     |

## features

### COVER STORY

### 30 PSYCHIC SPIES

Remote Viewing was once a cherished project of the US military and intelligence services, a psi technique that appeared actually to work – so why was it ended? Where did its sciers go? And what has become of the psi spies in the post-9/11 world? **JIM SCHNABEL** provides the answers.

### 38 A 100,000-YEAR-OLD CIVILISATION?

**COLIN WILSON** celebrates the pioneering work of the late Stan Gooch, and explains how Gooch's theories about Neanderthal civilisation inspired his own work – even as they were being dismissed by palæontologists. Ironically, some of Gooch's claims have since been confirmed from archaeological evidence.

### 46 THE DOUBLY DIVIDED SELF

Before his recent death, maverick psychologist **STAN GOOCH** sent us one of his final articles, which we're pleased to publish for the first time. Controversially, he suggests that the roots of human conflict can be traced to mankind's dual ancestry and divided brain.

### 48 STRANGE STORIES FROM A WORLD OF WONDER

**MATT SALUSBURY** concludes his nostalgic look at *fortean* for the children of the 1970s with a collection of sea serpents, emu wars and unusual odysseys, as presented in the pages of *World of Wonder*.

## reports

### 28 BLASTS FROM THE PAST

No. 29. The black ball of Trundle Hill by Peter Hassall

## forum

**55 The tatzelwurm lives!** by Ulrich Magin

**56 Confessions of Isobel Gowdie** by Emma Wilby

**58 This just in: God is dead (again)** by Gary Lachman

## regulars

- |                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 02 EDITORIAL     | 78 READER INFO          |
| 54 SUBSCRIPTIONS | 79 PHENOMENOMIX         |
| 61 REVIEWS       | 80 TALES FROM THE VAULT |
| 73 LETTERS       |                         |

MAIN COVER IMAGE: ETIENNE GILFILLAN

OTHER COVER CREDITS: Neanderthal: GETTY IMAGES / AFP / SEBASTIEN WILLNOW  
Stephen Hawking: GETTY IMAGES / NASA / PAUL E. ALERS

**EDITOR**

DAVID SUTTON (david\_sutton@dennis.co.uk)  
TEL: 020 7907 6235 FAX: 020 7907 6139

**FOUNDING EDITORS**

BOB RICKARD (rickard@forteanimes.com)  
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteanimes.com)

**ART DIRECTOR**

ETIENNE GILFILLAN  
(etienne\_gilfillan@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6236

**SUB EDITOR**

OWEN WHITEOAK  
(owen\_whiteoak@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6237

**WEB EDITOR/PICTURE RESEARCHER**

JEN OGILVIE  
(jen\_ogilvie@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6238

**BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR**

VAL STEVENSON  
(val\_stevenson@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6239

**DESIGN ASSISTANT**

NICK WATTS

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

GEORGE BINNING  
ftworkexperience@dennis.co.uk

**RESIDENT CARTOONIST**

HUNT EMERSON

**SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES**

0844 844 0049  
www.subsinfo.co.uk  
ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

**SYNDICATION**

FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION - CONTACT ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI: 020 7907 6132 anj\_dosaj-halai@dennis.co.uk

**YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET**

www.forteanimes.com



**PUBLISHED BY**

DENNIS PUBLISHING,  
30 Cleveland Street  
London W1T 4JD, UK Tel: 020 7907 6000

**PUBLISHER**

RUSSELL BLACKMAN: 020 7907 6488  
russell\_blackman@dennis.co.uk

**CIRCULATION MANAGER**

james.mangan@seymour.co.uk

**EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER**

garth.viggers@seymour.co.uk

**SENIOR SUBSCRIPTIONS EXECUTIVE**

BARBARA ABIS: 020 7907 6145  
barbara\_abis@dennis.co.uk

**CIRCULATIONS ADMINISTRATOR**

PAULINE MOLYNEUX: 020 7907 6153  
pauline\_molyneux@dennis.co.uk

**PRODUCTION CONTROLLER**

EBONY BESAGNI: 020 7907 6060  
ebony\_besagni@dennis.co.uk

**GROUP SALES DIRECTOR**

DAN REEVES  
020 7907 6752  
dan\_reeves@dennis.co.uk

**GROUP ADVERTISING MANAGER**

JAMES CLEMENTS  
020 7907 6724  
james\_clements@dennis.co.uk

**ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE**

CIARAN SCARRY  
020 7907 6683  
ciarán\_scary@dennis.co.uk

**PRINTED BY BENHAM GOODHEAD PRINT LTD**

**DISTRIBUTION**

**Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide**

by Seymour Distribution Ltd.  
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT  
Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001

Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to  
info@seymour.co.uk

**Speciality store distribution** by Worldwide Magazine  
Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 7881272

**STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

12 issues: UK £35.10; EU £37.50;  
REST OF THE WORLD £45; US \$79.99

**Fortean Times** (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom. The 2008 US annual subscription price is \$79.99.

Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434.

Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.

US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

**DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED**

**GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR**

**FINANCE DIRECTOR**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**CHAIRMAN**

IAN LEGGETT  
BRETT REYNOLDS  
KERIN O'CONNOR  
JAMES TYE  
FELIX DENNIS

**Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.**

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2011

# editorial

## What the flock?

If God really does see every sparrow fall (Matthew 10:29), then he'll have had a busy time of late, with an extraordinarily large number of cases vying for his attention.

And not just sparrows, but blackbirds, starlings, crows, pigeons, turtledoves, cowbirds, wattles and honeyeaters, all falling out of the heavens and raining on the Earth below.

And they fell all over - from Beebe, Arkansas (4,000 red-winged blackbirds on New Year's Eve), to Esperance, Western Australia ("thousands" of birds in the last week of 2010), and Falköping, Sweden (up to 100 jackdaws on 4-5 January 2011).

These mass bird deaths weren't the whole story, either, with large-scale die-offs of fish and 40,000 dead crabs washed up in Thanet, Kent, all adding up to what, for some people, appeared to be a natural disaster of unnatural - nay, even apocalyptic - proportions (see pp4-5+14 for a full account).

If Charles Fort were alive today, he'd no doubt have been collating these recent data with great interest. His books, of course, are full of mysterious falls - of frogs and fish, sand and blood - but, somewhat surprisingly, he didn't find many accounts of bird falls. "I have industriously sought data for an expression upon birds, but the prospecting has not been very quasi-satisfactory," he lamented.

*The Book of the Damned* yields "a bird (puffin) that had fallen to the ground with a fractured head", leading Fort to wonder "what solid object, high in the air, had that bird struck against?"

Further on, in a discussion of red rains (see FT152:21; 209:16; 212:16; 271:28-29) he mentions that in one instance, along with a bloody shower, "larks, quail, ducks, and water hens, some of them alive, fell at Lyons and Grenoble and other places." This is by far the oddest case in Fort's limited collection of bird falls, although he also notes a case for which he could "find no parallel" - "That, in the summer of 1896, into the streets of Baton Rouge, La., and from a 'clear sky', fell hundreds of dead birds. There were wild ducks and cat birds, woodpeckers, and 'many birds of strange plumage,' some of them resembling canaries. Usually, one does not have to look very far from any place to learn of a storm. But the best that could be done in this instance was to say: 'There had been a storm on the coast of Florida'" (Fort, *Complete Books*, pp251-253)

Fort would surely have noted, too, that his 1896 Baton Rouge fall was mirrored by one of the recent reports; that on the night of 2-3 January about 450 birds - a mixed flock of red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, grackles and starlings - dropped dead from the

sky littering a highway in Labarre, Louisiana... about 30 miles (48km) northwest of Baton Rouge.

Scientists and ornithologists have reassured us that there's nothing unusual about thousands of birds falling out of the skies - storms, fireworks, disease, alcohol poisoning and indigestion (!) have been among the explanations put forward - and that it happens all the time. Whether Fort would have found these explanations more convincing than his Super-Sargasso Sea, or merely have detected

the avian equivalent of his famous mad fishmonger at work, we'll never know.

### RIP Stan Gooch and Ion Will

In this issue, we pay tribute to the late Stan Gooch, a truly maverick figure given to thinking so far outside the box that he found himself in impoverished, self-imposed exile from the academic establishment he'd once been a part of, firing off a series of mind-boggling books on everything from psychic phenomena to Neanderthal man. It's this latter interest that we focus on here.

We're proud to bring you a feature by another maverick author with similarly wide-ranging interests, Colin Wilson, who recounts how Gooch's insights about Neanderthals inspired Wilson's own research but were deliberately written out of a book he co-wrote. Recent discoveries, though, have started to build up a picture of Neanderthals much closer to Gooch's vision than anyone would once have suspected possible (pp38-44). We round things off with Stan's own final article, sent to us before he died last year. As ever, he didn't shy away from controversy and offers something to annoy and infuriate everyone - happy reading!

Finally, we were sorry to hear of the death of legendary Fortean correspondent and raconteur Ion Alexis Will on Boxing Day. An appreciation will appear in a future issue.



MARTIN ROSS

DAVID SUTTON  
BOB RICKARD  
PAUL SIEVEKING

## Why Fortean?

Everything you always wanted to know about Fortean Times but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE 78



FREEPHONE  
0500 000 880



FREE  
CATALOGUE

SPIRALDIRECT.COM



FOLLOW SPIRAL DIRECT ON FACEBOOK, MYSPACE & TWITTER NOW!!!



SPEND OVER £20 AND  
GET A FREE T-SHIRT

Ref NAME	CODE	SIZES	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	Ref NAME	CODE	SIZES	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
A = BONE FINGER	WM112600	XXL XL L M	T-SHIRT	£11.99	F = DEVILS MARK	TR179619	XXL XL L M	WHITE T-SHIRT	£11.99
B = SCARRED	DW177709	XXL XL L M	LONGSLEEVE LACEUP	£16.99	G = LITTLE HOWLER	DT190520	0-3 3-6 6-9	BABYGROW	£8.99
C = DEATH RIP	TR227961	ONE SIZE	WALLET	£13.99	H = INFERNO	WR123704	XXL XL L M	LS ALLOVER PRINT	£19.99
D = STOLEN HEART	DT187170	XL L M S	LS MESH GLOVE	£13.99	I = LITTLE DEATH	DW118520	0-3 3-6 6-9	BABYGROW	£8.99
E = DARK ANGEL	TR291227	XL L M S	ONESHLD R VISCOSE	£17.99	J = LACE CORSET	PL243	XL L M S	DRESS	£29.99

COMPLETE THE ORDER FORM BELOW, DETACH & POST TO US WITH YOUR CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER TO: SPIRAL DIRECT LTD, SPIRAL HOUSE, 29 - 35 GLADSTONE ROAD, CROYDON, SURREY, CR0 2BQ.  
OR BY CREDIT CARD SIMPLY ORDER ON OUR FREEPHONE HOTLINE 0500 000 880 DURING 10AM & 8PM WEEKDAYS. WWW.SPIRALDIRECT.COM

## Order Form



CODE	PRODUCT EXAMPLE	SIZE	QTY	VALUE
T R 1 6 0 1 2 3	One Shoulder	L	1	11.99

\*PLEASE ADD 95P + £1 PER ITEM FOR POSTAGE & PACKAGING (E.G. 2 ITEMS = £2.95)

**SPIRAL GUARANTEE!**  
FULL REFUND OR EXCHANGE WITHIN 10 DAYS OF PURCHASE IF YOU ARE NOT FULLY SATISFIED.

\*P & P  
TOTAL

£ 0.95P  
+ £1 PER  
ITEM

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ TEL NO \_\_\_\_\_  
PLEASE FILL ALL DETAILS IN CLEAR CAPITAL LETTERS  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_

PAYMENT METHOD: \*SIGNATURE \*REQUIRED TO AUTHORIZE ORDER

CHEQUE (UK ONLY)  POSTAL ORDER  MASTERCARD  VISA  MAESTRO  AMEX

CREDIT CARD NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

START DATE \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRY DATE \_\_\_\_\_ ISSUE No \_\_\_\_\_ CV2 No \_\_\_\_\_

CV2 = THE LAST 3 DIGITS  
ON REVERSE OF CARD  
(4 DIGITS FOR AMEX)

SPEND OVER £20 & GET A  
QUALITY T-SHIRT FREE >>>

MEN'S (BLACK) [XL] [L] [M]  
LADIES' (BLACK) [L] [M] [S]

# strangedays

## Aflockalypse now!

Recent mass bird and fish die-offs around the world have stimulated apocalyptic speculation, but wildlife experts are blaming a wide variety of causes.

In the half hour up to midnight on New Year's Eve, up to 4,000 red-winged blackbirds – most of them dead – fell out of the sky over the city of Beebe in Arkansas. A few grackles and a couple of starlings were also among the dead – these species roost with blackbirds, particularly in winter. An aerial survey indicated that the dead birds were confined to an area of 1.5 sq miles (4sq km), covering rooftops, pavements and fields. In some places the ground was turned almost black. Cleanup crews wore white suits, gas masks and rubber gloves as they spent the holiday weekend gathering the carcasses.

Karen Rowe, an ornithologist with the AFGC (Arkansas Fish and Game Commission), said the birds showed physical trauma and could have been hit by lightning or high-altitude hail. Later speculation suggested that New Year fireworks could have made the shortsighted birds leave their roosts, fly low to avoid explosions, and then crash into buildings, trees, and each other, or dive-bomb to the ground. But fireworks go off every year, so why hadn't this occurred before? Another idea was that the birds were disoriented by tornadoes that swept through Arkansas and neighbouring states earlier that day, killing seven people; or perhaps they had been hit by a microburst, a sudden fierce downdraft of wind; or had Little Rock Air Force Base, 20 miles (32km) away, been conducting secret tests?

Several cats and dogs that ate the dead birds suffered no ill effects. Dr George Badley, state veterinarian for the AFGC, said: "Almost every one of [the birds]



LEFT: Asst State Vet Dr Brandon Doss examines dead red-winged blackbirds in Little Rock, Arkansas, 3 Jan 2011.

BELOW: Drum fish by the Arkansas River.

FACING PAGE: Spot and small croakers on the sand on Chesapeake Bay, Maryland, on 3 January.



### The dead birds covered rooftops, fields and pavements

had multiple internal hæmorrhages, which would mean it was trauma and not a disease process. Their stomachs were empty, which would rule out toxicity from eating some kind of poison grain." He said red-wing blackbirds flew in large, tight groups, and if they were pulled into a turbulent thunderstorm they would be literally beaten to death. Several hundred thousand red-winged blackbirds have used a wooded area in the town as a roost for several years; they are regarded locally as pests.

● In the previous couple of days, around 83,000 dead drum fish

washed up on a 20-mile (32km) stretch of the Arkansas River near Ozark, about 125 miles (200km) from Beebe. As only one species was involved, the deaths were blamed on disease. Meanwhile, about two million dead fish – almost all juvenile spot fish – washed up on the shore of Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. They were thought to have been killed by extreme temperature fluctuations coupled with overbreeding.

● In the final week of 2010, thousands of crows, pigeons, wattles and honeyeaters fell out of the sky in Esperance, Western Australia; the

local Department of Environment and Conservation said the deaths were unconnected to a severe storm that had struck the area, as the birds had started dying before then. Other bird and fish die-offs – as these mass deaths are called – were reported as far away as Japan and Thailand. Some people rushed to conclude that the Apocalypse was nigh, quoting Zephaniah 1:3: "I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord." Or they could have quoted Hosea 4:3: "Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away."

Others mooted the idea of collisions with UFOs or biological warfare; natural geomagnetic perturbations in the New Madrid Fault earthquake zone (covering much of the US Midwest and South); solar flares or microwaves from Mars; government testing of satellite-powered electromagnetic weapons or some experiment at HAARP (the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Programme). Another theory is that the rapid movement of the Magnetic North Pole towards Russia – at about 25 miles (40km) a year – could have affected the



## HOLY THORN IS CHOPPED

Famous Glastonbury sacred relic vandalised

PAGE 8



## TOP OF THE FORM

Slime moulds demonstrate intelligent behaviour

PAGE 12



## ROUND IN CIRCLES

Orbs – the motes in the eyes of the ghost-hunters

PAGE 20–21

PA PHOTOS / AP / MARYLAND DEPT OF THE ENVIRONMENT / CHARLES POLKISH

creatures' innate navigation systems, resulting in delayed migration and exposure to extreme low temperatures.

● As a prelude to the Arkansas bird deaths, nearly 70 Mexican free-tailed bats were found on the ground in Tucson, Arizona, on 27 December. All but seven were dead. Game and Fish officials said the bats should have migrated to Mexico two months earlier; they speculated that the deaths were due to unseasonably *warm* temperatures in the city. Later investigation showed that the animals had been shot with a 4mm BB gun (air rifle).

● On the night of 2–3 January about 450 birds – a mixed flock of red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, grackles and starlings – dropped dead from the sky littering a highway in Labarre, Louisiana, about 30 miles (48km)



northwest of Baton Rouge and about 300 miles (480km) from the Arkansas fall. Many had head, neck, beak or back injuries and the speculation this time was that they were ill or startled from their roost, and then had crashed into power lines or vehicles. On the same day, a woman in

Gilbertsville, Kentucky, found dozens of dead birds in her yard.

● It should be pointed out that mass bird deaths aren't uncommon. On 13–14 March 1904, an article in the *Quarterly Journal of Ornithology* reported at least 750,000 migrating Lapland

Longspurs were found dead in Worthington, Minnesota. Some were said to have flown against buildings, electric lights and wires, and others to have dashed themselves on frozen ground and ice. The dead birds were sprawled over 1,500 square miles (3,885 sq km). In 1999, several thousand grackles fell from the sky and staggered about before dying in north Louisiana. It took five months to get the diagnosis: an *E. coli* infection of the air sacs in their skulls.

The US Geological Survey's website listed about 90 mass deaths of birds and other wildlife from June to 12 December 2010. There were five deaths of at least 1,000 birds, with the largest near Houston, Minnesota, where parasite infestations killed about 4,000 water birds between 6 September and 26 November.

*Continued on p14*

# EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## Blow for bishop as orgasm church flops

*The Local (Sweden), 25 Aug 2010.*

## China mourns worker's heroic death in lavatory

*Independent, 26 Aug 2010.*

## Universe to keep going

*MX News (Sydney), 23 Aug 2010.*

## Radioactive boars on the rise in Germany

*Associated Press, 19 Aug 2010.*

## Jack the Ripper visits town pub

*Downsmail (Maidstone), –Sept 2010.*

## Monkeys hate flying squirrels, report monkey-annoyance experts

*Christian Science Monitor, 30 July 2010.*

## Historic park skips out of city

*Shropshire Star, 19 Aug 2010.*

## Library invaded by aliens

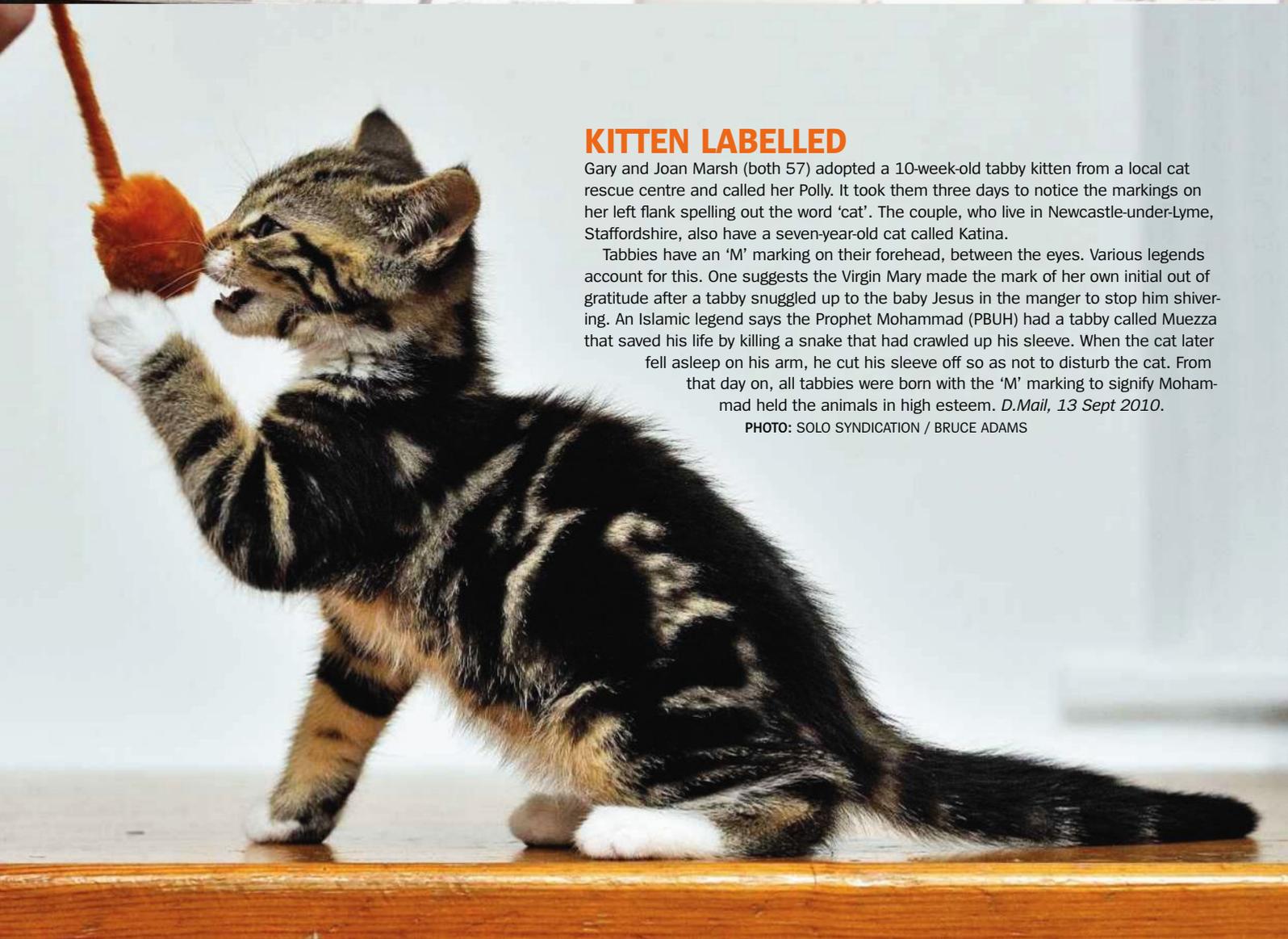
*Princeton Times, 19 Aug 2010.*

## Non-religious doctors less opposed to death

*Western Daily Press, 26 Aug 2010.*



**WORDY BIRD**  
This little robin chose just the right spot to perch when it visited a branch of Tesco's – in among the Bird's range of dessert toppings. A family of the birds was nestling in the storeroom in Osterley, west London. Staff managed to evict them without harming them. *D.Mail*, 25 Oct 2010.  
PHOTO: LONDON MEDIA



**KITTEN LABELLED**

Gary and Joan Marsh (both 57) adopted a 10-week-old tabby kitten from a local cat rescue centre and called her Polly. It took them three days to notice the markings on her left flank spelling out the word 'cat'. The couple, who live in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, also have a seven-year-old cat called Katina.

Tabbies have an 'M' marking on their forehead, between the eyes. Various legends account for this. One suggests the Virgin Mary made the mark of her own initial out of gratitude after a tabby snuggled up to the baby Jesus in the manger to stop him shivering. An Islamic legend says the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) had a tabby called Muezza that saved his life by killing a snake that had crawled up his sleeve. When the cat later fell asleep on his arm, he cut his sleeve off so as not to disturb the cat. From that day on, all tabbies were born with the 'M' marking to signify Mohammad held the animals in high esteem. *D.Mail*, 13 Sept 2010.

PHOTO: SOLO SYNDICATION / BRUCE ADAMS

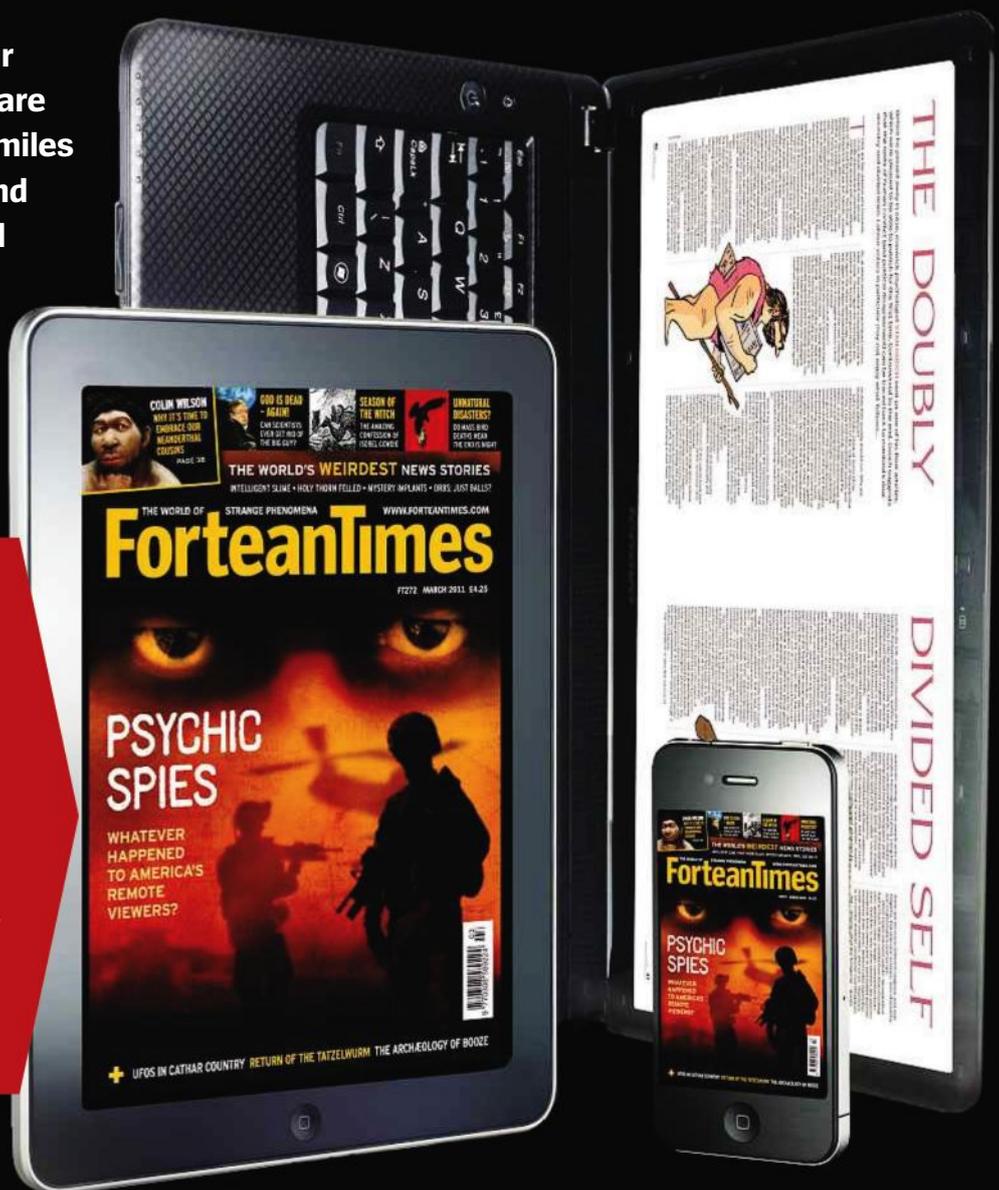
# ForteanTimes

DIGITAL EDITION NOW AVAILABLE  
**WWW.ZINIO.COM**

Trouble finding your regular fix of FORTEAN TIMES at the newsagents or bookstore? Well, your problems are at an end. Now you can buy digital copies of FT through our partner, Zinio – wherever you live!

Delivered instantly over your Internet connection, these are exact, high-resolution facsimiles of the print edition. You'll find the same great articles and images, ready to view on your PC, Mac, iPad or iPhone complete with the ability to zoom and search through the content.

You can view these digital copies on your PC or Mac, or on your iPad or iPhone. We're offering single issues and 12-month subscriptions – find out more by heading to:  
**WWW.ZINIO.COM**



PC • MAC • IPAD • IPHONE • MAC • IPAD • PC

## SIDELINES...

### RETURN TICKET

A motorist caught speeding on the A5 in north London in 2008 was booked again for speeding near Christchurch in New Zealand last September – by the same policeman, PC Andy Flitton. Both men had emigrated and their paths crossed again, 12,000 miles (19,000km) away. It was (supposedly) the only two occasions the unnamed driver had broken the law. He had been in New Zealand less than two weeks. *D.Mail*, 9 Dec 2010.

### REAL OUTSIDERS

Census takers in Serbia have included a new section for extraterrestrials to declare their presence in the survey next April. The aliens won't have to give details of their gender, religion or ethnicity. *Metro*, Sun, 14 Dec 2010.

### LUCKY SHAKEDOWN

Following a magnitude-5 aftershock in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 19 October, Jennifer Graham returned home to find \$2,300 in an envelope on her bathroom sink. Police tracked down the house's previous owner, who remembered hiding the money behind the bathroom mirror five years earlier. It had been dislodged by the tremor. *MX News (Brisbane)*, 22 Oct 2010.

### WRONG CORD

A fifth of 2,000 people aged 18 to 25 polled in Britain think the umbilical cord is a musical note, the same number who think a human pregnancy lasts a year; 10 per cent think the placenta is a vegetable and 12 per cent believe a caesarean is a religious group. *Metro*, 7 Oct 2010.



# Holy Thorn cut down

## Tree is said to have grown from Joseph of Arimathea's staff



GETTY IMAGES / MATT CARDY

**O**n the night of 8 December, someone cut down the Glastonbury Thorn on Wearyall Hill in the shadow of the Tor. One of the most famous trees in England and in former times one of the most famous in all Christendom, it is a Middle Eastern species distinct from English hawthorns because it flowers twice a year – around Christmas and Easter. Thousands pay homage at the site and leave tokens of worship. According to legend, the tree sprouted from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea, the great uncle of Jesus, when he visited Glastonbury around AD 63.

In *The Lore of the Land* (2005), Westwood and Simpson tell us: "The legend is first hinted at in a poem of 1502, which mentions three hawthorns on Wirral Hill that have buds at Christmas. By 1645 some people were saying they had sprung from a thorn taken by Joseph from the Crown of Thorns, while in 1722 a Glastonbury innkeeper produced the version popular today – that Joseph, climbing Wirral Hill, exclaimed to his companions, 'We are weary all!' (thus giving the place its name), and stuck his staff in the ground,

## The vandals are unlikely to be prosecuted even if caught

where it took root as a hawthorn."

In some versions of the story, the staff was made from the wood of the cross on which Jesus was crucified; in others it had belonged to Jesus himself. Several specimens of the hawthorn still survive, including one at Glastonbury Abbey, all grown from cuttings (or possibly roots) from the original Holy Thorn hacked down by Puritans during the Civil War in the 17th century. The one on Wearyall Hill was replanted in 1952, replacing one planted the previous year during the Festival of Britain, which had not survived. Does this mean that there was no actual Holy Thorn on Wearyall Hill for the three centuries up to 1951?

Every year on 8 December, four flowering sprigs from a tree in the graveyard of St John's Church are

**ABOVE:** The sorry scene shows the remains of the Glastonbury Thorn.

cut by children from the neighbouring primary school and sent to the Queen for her Christmas dinner table (a tradition about a century old). It was on the day of the cutting ceremony that the Wearyall tree was felled. The crown was left trailing on the ground beside the almost severed trunk. The vandals also tried to uproot the ribbon-festooned iron cage that was supposed to protect it, but failed. As the Thorn was not the subject of a preservation order, the vandals are unlikely to face criminal prosecution even if they are caught.

The land on which the tree stood is owned by Edward James, who was arrested the same week that the tree was felled in connection with an investigation into a firm called Crown Currency Exchange, of which he is director. According to the administrator's report, Crown Currency collapsed owing £16 million with little more than £3 million in the bank. There was speculation that the vandalism might have been part of a vendetta against him. *Times*, *Guardian*, *D.Mail*, *Independent*, 10 Dec 2010.

# Last place on Earth

## New Agers seek refuge from the End of the World in 2012



GETTY IMAGES / AFP / PASCAL PAVANI

**B**ugarach, a small village of 189 people in the Corbières hills, about 6 miles (10km) south-west of Rennes-le-Château in south-western France, has recently seen an influx of New Agers hoping to escape the end of the world on 21 December 2012, allegedly the end date of the ancient Mayan calendar. Jean-Pierre Delord, Bugarach's mayor, said that in the last decade the place has attracted visitors seeking alien activity, but now rumours were circulating that it offered shelter from the impending Armageddon, and he worried that inhabitants would be overwhelmed by visitors. He has sounded the alarm over the "chaos" he fears will result: "It may be necessary to call in the military to control the crowds," he said.

Many of the New Agers believe that a group of aliens dwells in a vast cavern inside the 1,230m (4,000ft) Pic de Bugarach, an outcrop of rock that has inspired legends since the Middle Ages. It is supposed to have inspired Steven Spielberg to make *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* – although the actual mountain he used in the film is Devil's Tower in Wyoming.



It is also claimed that Jules Verne based the Icelandic entrance for *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* on the location. There are rumours that the late President François Mitterrand was heliported onto the peak, and that mysterious excavations were conducted there by Nazi archæologists and later by Mossad. Reports of alien sightings began following a post to a UFO website by a local man, who has since died. According to the mayor,

ABOVE: Mayor Jean-Pierre Delord.  
LEFT: The cavern in Pic de Bugarach.

"He claimed he had seen aliens and heard the humming of their spacecraft under the mountain." Some say the hidden spacecraft will spirit the chosen few to safety. Pilgrims have set up homes in tepees and yurts around the village. Mareva, 19, clad in a sari, told a radio station: "I feel something very strong, as if nature is telling us a lot of things here."

Several ufologists have bought properties in the small hamlet of Le Linas in the shadow of the Pic de Bugarach for "extortionate" prices, and local people complain they are being priced out of the market. Sect-like courses are held for up to 800 euro (£677) a week. "For this price, you are introduced to a guru, made to go on a procession, offered a christening and other rubbish, all payable in cash," said M. Delord. Sigrid Benard, who runs the Maison de la Nature guesthouse in Bugarach, said: "At first, my clientele was 72 per cent ramblers. Today, I have 68 per cent 'esoteric visitors'". *Telegraph.co.uk*, 21 Dec; *BBC News*, 22 Dec; *Times*, 23 Dec 2010.

## SIDELINES...

### ADVERT BAN

Witches, wizards and faith healers are to be banned from advertising in Russia over concerns that they are giving false hope to cancer sufferers. According to the Orthodox Church, Russia has 800,000 practitioners of the occult, many of whom place classified advertisements. *D.Telegraph*, 23 Sept 2010.

### DREAM GIRAFFE?

"Some sixty years ago as a young lad," wrote D Jones to *The Countryman* (Feb 2009), "playing near a water hole for cows in a small stream fed from a spring, I saw a small creature which looked like a miniature giraffe... very bright in colour. It frightened me and I ran away... I did locate this in a reference book once; it indicated it was very rare and was poisonous... Does it exist or am I dreaming?"

### WEEPING VIRGIN

A statue of the Virgin Mary belonging to Bassam Ibrahim in Windsor, Ontario, became a focus of pilgrimage in October after Mr Ibrahim's wife, Fadia, said the statue smiled during the day and wept tears of healing oil at night. When the crowds became overwhelming, the statue was moved on 6 November to Windsor's St Charbel Maronite Church, which serves Lebanese Catholics. (*Toronto National Post*, 5 Nov; *NY Post*, 26 Nov 2010.

### EEL A REAL BUMMER

Fishmonger Li Chang, 43, slipped into a giant tank of eels at a warehouse in Guangzhou, southern China. "Several shot up my trouser leg and then I felt one go up my bottom," he said. He was so embarrassed he carried on working, but then collapsed in agony and was hospitalised. Surgeons took five hours to remove the eel and repair severe internal trauma caused by its thrashing about. "The eel was as wide as two fingers and as long as a man's arm," said a hospital spokesman. *MX News (Sydney)*, 4 Aug 2010.



## SIDELINES...

### LANGUAGE PUZZLE

Dimitrije Mitrovic, from Nis in Serbia, woke up one morning when he was three and began talking to his mother Dragana in English, despite never having been taught the language. Dimitrije, now 11, said: "I dream in English, speak it, and if I stub my toe I'll curse in English too." *D.Mirror, 14 Oct 2010.*

### CATHEDRAL FOSSIL

A fossilised dinosaur skull has been discovered in the pink rock of a Communion rail in the Cathedral of St Ambrose in Vigevano, a town 20 miles (32km) from Milan. Teeth and nasal lobes can be seen in one part of the rail while another segment of the skull can be observed on the other side of the balustrade. *Catholic Herald, 5 Nov 2010.*

### DOLPHIN AID

John O'Donnell (18) and Nathan Flannery (20), crab fishing off the north Mayo coast in Ireland on 30 October, spent 12 hours on a life raft after their boat sank in a swell. As darkness fell, a pod of dolphins appeared and swam with them, occasionally nudging the raft, until a coast-guard helicopter spotted the raft around 1.30am – when they swam off. *Irish Times, 1 Nov 2010.*

### STRANGE ASPIRATION

Hugh McFall, 48, from Oswestry in Shropshire, who last February killed his wife and daughter before hanging himself, left a note reading: "I hope I rot in hell". *D.Telegraph, 3 Sept 2010.*



## FOREIGN BODIES

EMBEDDED OBJECTS FROM SHEFFIELD TO CHICAGO AND FROM CHINA TO AUSTRIA



GETTY IMAGES / AFP



EUROPICS (GEN)

**ABOVE LEFT:** LT Ariyawathi had nails and needles hammered into her body by her abusive employers over the course of five months. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Chinese toddler 'Ting Ting' kept on excreting nails, causing doctors to think she had an ailment making her eat metal.

A Saudi couple tortured their Sri Lankan maid by hammering 24 nails and needles into her hands, legs and forehead after she complained that she was being overworked. LT Ariyawathi, a 49-year-old mother of three, returned home on 20 August after five months in Saudi Arabia. Her family took her to the doctor when she complained of pain. The nails and needles were surgically removed. Some of the nails were up to 2in (5cm) long. Mrs Ariyawathi said her employers allowed her no time to rest. "The woman at the house heated the nails and then the man inserted them into my body," she said. *[R, AFP] D.Mail, 27 Aug 2010.*

An 18-month-old Chinese girl called Ting Ting (not her real name) repeatedly excreted nails, and pediatricians from Xi'an, capital of the northwestern Shaanxi province, speculated that she was suffering from pica, an eating disorder characterised by persistent cravings to eat non-foods such as

## Ting Ting had swallowed 20 steel nails as well as five pins

dirt, metal or cigarette ends. "Pica is likely, but we need to carry out further research," said Prof. Gao Ya. "It's very strange where she got all these nails." Ting Ting's mother, Liu Xiaoya, claimed they had no such nails at home. "Her grandfather said he had some, but didn't know whether any were missing," she said.

Pica is often caused by a deficiency of zinc, iron or other trace elements, and can result in serious health problems such as lead poisoning or iron-deficiency anaemia. However, blood tests indicated that Ting Ting's zinc, calcium and magnesium levels were normal; only her iron level

was slightly low. She excreted 21 nails and a steel pin during the month leading up to 12 June, but showed no sign of an ailment and ate and drank as usual. She continued to excrete nails in hospital and X-rays showed she still had a nail and a steel pin in her stomach, according to *China Daily* on 12 June 2010. However, (London) *Metro* on 6 July said the girl, whom it named as "Yi Ting of Yulin City", was taken to hospital suffering sharp stomach pains and was found to have swallowed 20 steel nails and five pins.

It took two laser blasts for doctors to kill a worm that had made a nest for itself in an American man's eye. John Matthews of Chicago first noticed two spots obscuring the vision in his left eye in December 2009 and underwent a series of tests before doctors made the gruesome discovery. "I could see it from behind, moving, trying to dodge the laser," he said. The worm was killed but could not be removed from his eye. His

body was absorbing the worm's remains, but he had suffered permanent damage to his retina. [AFP] 22 Sept 2010.

For more than 30 years, Stephen Hirst, 47, was in constant pain and partially deaf because of excruciating earache. "I've been plagued by earache since I was about 14," he said. "When I was younger, I used to just sit and bang my head on the wall because it hurt that much. I would be screaming in pain," said the former miner. After countless appointments to ear, nose and throat clinics, a nurse at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield used a microscope probe and discovered a tooth lodged deep in his right ear. How it got there was a mystery. He had had all his teeth extracted (from his mouth) some time before. It appeared to be a milk tooth, a lower incisor. With its removal, the pain disappeared, but he could hardly hear anything with his right ear as the eardrum had disintegrated. *D.Mail*, 18 Oct 2010.

Calvin Wright, 46, went to hospital in Athens, Georgia, suffering from bronchitis, and a nurse noticed a pearl stuck in his ear. He was referred to a specialist, who removed it. Wright recalled

that when he was five, he and his younger sister Regina got hold of their mother's necklace. Regina broke the necklace and the pearls went everywhere. Regina stuck two of them in her brother's ear. His mother took him to hospital, where a doctor removed one pearl but failed to see the other one. Mr Wright had always wondered why he struggled to hear himself speak and people regularly told him he spoke too loudly. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 21 Dec 2010.

A man involved in a car accident 30 years earlier discovered a piece of the Ford Cortina windscreen still embedded in his chin. Thomas Entwistle, 52, from Halliwell, Bolton, had always thought the one-centimetre lump on his chin was a cyst, but a shard of glass popped out when he cut himself shaving. *D.Telegraph, Metro*, 8 July 2009.

**"I used to bang my head on the wall – it hurt so much"**

A 26-year-old woman visited a clinic in Vorarlberg, Austria, several times to ask for help regarding the agonising pains in her right foot. X-rays failed to spot a 4cm (1.6in) splinter from a toothpick embedded deep in her flesh, and doctors concluded she was insane. The splinter was eventually discovered during a MR (magnetic resonance) examination. The woman had accidentally rammmed the toothpick into her foot 10 years ago; she managed to removed part of it, and assumed it was gone. She forgot about the incident, but was later plagued by serious pain. *Austrian Independent*, 9 Dec 2010.

Surgeons at Tongji Hospital in Shanghai operated on a 50-year-old Chinese man to remove a chopstick he swallowed 28 years ago. The man, identified by his surname Zhang, had gone decades without having the chopstick removed as it had not caused him any trouble. In fact, he thought he had completely digested it until he started having stomach problems and sought medical attention after he passed out. The implement was slowly extracted through a small incision in his stomach. *South China Morning Post*, via *D.Telegraph*, 3 Nov 2010.

## SIDELINES...

### OH MONSIEUR GRIMSDALE!

During a European parliament debate about a minor quota infringement in Normandy, a French MEP said that this could be sorted out privately by "la sagasse Normande". MEPs from other nations were surprised when British colleagues began to fall about (aptly, in the circumstances) when the translation came through the headphones: "This can be dealt with locally by Norman wisdom." *Guardian*, 19 May 1998.

### FROGFALL

Shoppers in Rákócziútföld, Hungary, were puzzled when a shower of frogs fell on them in a thunderstorm on 20 June. Local weathermen provided the standard (but never witnessed) waterspout explanation. *hubbpages.com; Romanian Times*, 22 June 2010.

### FORTEAN PREDICTION

This weird announcement appeared as a 'news' item in the *Sun* (7 Oct 2010): "HEAVY WEATHER – Fish and frogs sucked out of lakes by tornadoes will fall as rain in Kenya".

### WAITING TO HAPPEN

An overflowing sewer in Sheffield caused a freak accident when a wave of effluent drenched a motorist. Estate agent Linda Crapper, 47, was driving through the flood on Butterthwaite Road, Ecclesfield Bottom, when a car sped past and sent the sewage crashing through her open window. *Sheffield Star*, 15 Nov 2010.

### SWITCH ON BRAIN

When an office worker in Brisbane, Queensland, turned on his computer on 12 October, there was a bang and a smell of smoke. He rang the IT department, who told him to turn the computer off at the wall and they would investigate. An hour later, having heard nothing, he called again only to be told that they had sent him an email and, as he hadn't replied, they thought the problem had been solved. (*Queensland Sunday Mail*, 17 Oct 2010.



ABOVE: Miner Stephen Hirst had a tooth lodged in his ear for more than 30 years, causing deafness and constant pain.

# OOZE AROUND THE MAZE

Philip K Dick may have written about intelligent slime moulds, but, discovers **DAVID HAMBLING**, these days they're even showing up in laboratory testing.

When Japanese researchers claimed to have discovered intelligence in slime mould, it sounded like a science-fiction nightmare from the fringes of science. But their study was eminently respectable, and further work to understand the anomaly is turning our understanding of intelligence upside down.

Slime mould is a long way down the evolutionary ladder. It's a fungus-like organism that spends part of its life-cycle as a large number of free-roaming single-celled organisms like amoeba. Under some conditions, the individual cells join together into a unified organism that roams the damp forest floor seeking food, in the form of a slime which has been described as looking like dog vomit. A slime mould has no nervous system or any physiology for intelligence.

Toshiyuki Nakagaki of the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research in Nagoya, Japan, decided to see whether the slime moved at random or whether it showed some sort of decision-making capability, by putting it in a maze.<sup>1</sup> Mazes have a long history in psychological research as intelligence tests, as they give a convenient objective measure of ability. They were most famously employed with rats (part of the basis for the term 'rat race'), but everything from worms to insects to human have been exposed to maze testing at some point. Mazes are still used to assess humans. The Porteus Maze Test<sup>2</sup> is a nonverbal intelligence test, mainly for children but which can also be administered to adults. The mazes are on paper, and the subject traces a path between the entrance and exit, trying to avoid blind alleys. There is no time limit.

Nakagaki carried out the test by putting sections of a slime mould in a maze with food at the entrance and exit. The slime mould joined itself together, which was predictable. What was surprising was that it ended up in a single path, invariably along the shortest route between entrance



and exit. Nakagaki concluded that the slime mould's behaviour demonstrated a "primitive intelligence" which apparently evolved to make foraging as efficient as possible.

Bartosz Grzbowski at Northwestern University in Illinois decided to take the experiment a step further.<sup>3</sup> Grzbowski is a chemist, and rather than using a living thing, his trial involved a drop of oil. The maze was filled with water so the oil drop could float around freely. The exit of the maze was made acidic, and this set up a slight acidity gradient within the maze. The side of the droplet closing the exit would be slightly more acidic than the opposite side. This affected its surface tension, causing it to gravitate towards the exit. While it might be tempting to credit the slime mould with some sort of primitive intelligence, surely this would not apply to an inanimate drop of oil?

Both the slime mould and the oil might be described as analogue computers, which solve problems by using physical forces rather than brainpower. Slide rules, mechanical calculators and astrolabes for predicting the movements of the stars and planets are also analogue computers. A mechanical calculator doesn't work in the same way as a human brain, but it still gets to the same answer (generally much more rapidly).

The fact that you can arrive at an 'intelligent' answer without apparent intelligence led to a split in the world of artificial intelligence research. The aim of AI is to recreate actual intelligence. If you have a system that behaves in an intelligent fashion and gives all the right answers, then one school – 'Hard AI' – says that it really is intelligent. The other school, 'Soft AI', says that unless it's working

something like a brain it's just a simulation of intelligence and not 'really' intelligent.

This distinction holds well enough if you take humans as your paradigm of what it means to be intelligent; but nature clearly has other ideas. For example, a colony of ants can find the optimum route to food sources,<sup>4</sup> changing paths when the environment changes. This seemingly intelligent process is based on the ants laying scent trails. The more efficient a route is, the more ants will use it and the stronger the scent becomes, until only the best route is being followed. It's not our type of intelligence, but it gets the right answer every time. However, the intelligence only emerges in the interaction of the slime mould with its environment, as both are part of the problem-solving system. The same might be said of humans, whose 'extended mind' includes various external items from shopping lists to computers.<sup>5</sup>

The ants' technique for solving problems is so efficient it is used by robot designers. And even the slime mould itself is now being studied so that its methods can be copied for network design.<sup>6</sup> It has genuine problem-solving ability for real-world problems, so it can certainly be described as intelligent according to the principles of soft AI. An aircraft doesn't fly like a bird, but we can accept that the aircraft is really flying rather than just simulating flight. Equally the slime mould is not just simulating intelligent behaviour.

While the scientists may be happy with this resolution, it does leave the rest of us in a slightly awkward situation. If mazes are a valid test of intelligence, and a slime mould or an oil drop can solve them with ease, does it mean that they might be more intelligent than us?

## NOTES

1 <http://tinyurl.com/45ysh9> (*New Scientist*).

2 Website on IQ tests: <http://tinyurl.com/35u2vpb> (kids-iq-tests.com).

3 <http://tinyurl.com/ya7hyk6> (*New Scientist*).

4 Ant Colony Optimisation, University of Brussels: <http://tinyurl.com/2vc5dyb> (iridia.ulb.ac.be)

5 "The Extended Mind" original thesis: <http://tinyurl.com/ydo78rx> (consc.net).

6 "Slime mold (*Physarum polycephalum*): A paradigm for self-assembly of robust networks": <http://tinyurl.com/37ba8zz> (math.udel.edu).

## MSc Parapsychology (by Distance Learning)

This two-year part-time course is delivered entirely online and offers a unique opportunity for training in the theories, methods and empirical findings of this most controversial field of psychology. The programme includes modules covering the following areas;

- o History, Philosophy and Parapsychology
- o Research Methods in Parapsychology
- o Anomalous Experiences
- o Extrasensory Perception and Psychokinesis
- o Dissertation Planning and Proposal

And in year two;

- o Transpersonal Psychology
- o Studies of Survival of Bodily Death
- o Final Year Empirical Dissertation and Thesis.

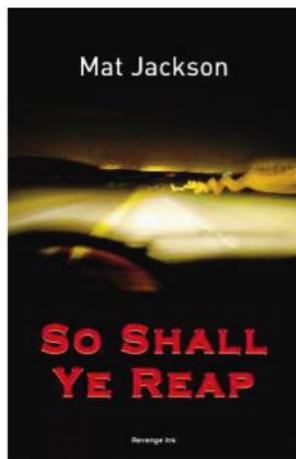
For more information about the course and the entry requirements, visit our website or call us on

**024 7679 5959**

**[www.coventry.ac.uk/parapsychology](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/parapsychology)**

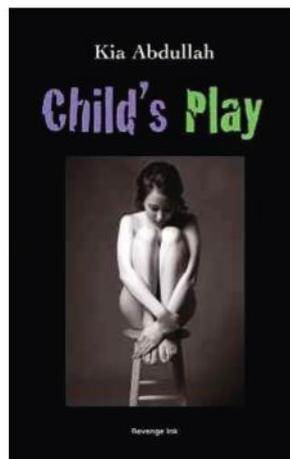


## REVENGE INK BOOKS: Dark Brooding Fiction



**SO SHALL YE REAP**  
**MAT JACKSON**  
£6.99 ISBN:978-0-9565119-0-4

Jessica Balans is a stable accounting partner in a posh London firm. Her brother-in-law Dave is a humble lorry-driver. Jessica, a married woman, falls passionately in love and must choose between her family and her lover. Dave must struggle against a deeper darker taste for underage flesh. On a trip to France, their stories intermingle as Dave gives in with brutal violence to his horrific desires while Jessica finds she can no longer lie to her husband. Their lives meet in a terrifying way on the highways of France where it appears as if the only man fit to take care of Jessica's little daughter might be her uncle Dave, the paedophile...



**CHILD'S PLAY**  
**KIA ABDULLAH**  
£7.99 ISBN:978-0-9558078-5-5

A sexual thriller that challenges sexual and moral boundaries. 25-year-old Allegra Ashe has an adoring boyfriend, a loving sister and a secure career, but a disturbing offer from an alluring stranger threatens to shatter her perfect life. She becomes entangled with a govt unit that uses unscrupulous methods of catching paedophiles. A tale of twisted sexuality and tortured morality, Child's Play places a telescope into the darkest recesses of the human mind and forces you to take a look.



Available online and in stores  
When genius is dead, everyman counts...

**[WWW.REVENGEINK.COM](http://WWW.REVENGEINK.COM)**

## Aflockalypse now! (CONT.)

PA PHOTOS / AP / BJORN LARSSON ROSVALL



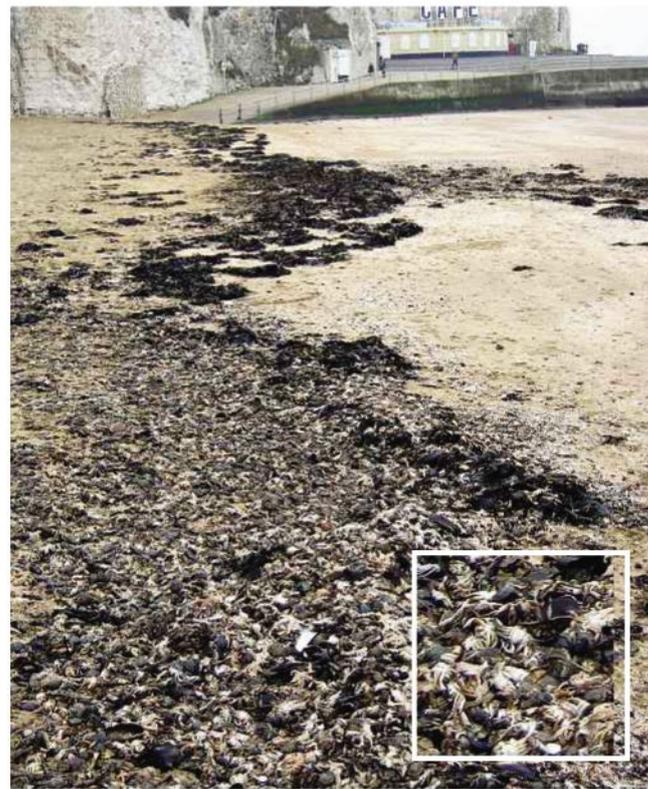
DALE BOWMAN

**TOP LEFT:** Rescue chief Christer Olofsson holds a dead bird in Falköping, Sweden, on 5 January. **TOP RIGHT:** Thousands of young gizzard shad were found frozen and dead in Chicago harbours in January. **BELOW:** Some 40,000 dead crabs and other sea creatures washed up on beaches in Thanet, Kent, including these at Palm Bay.

*Continued from p5*

● On 4 January, more than 40,000 dead crabs – along with smaller numbers of whelks, sponges and anemones – were washed up on the Kent coast around Thanet. The velvet swimming crabs, also called devil crabs, were thought to have died from hypothermia following Britain's coldest December for 120 years. Elsewhere in the world, hundreds of dead snapper – many with their eyes missing – washed up on Coromandel Peninsula beaches in New Zealand; about 150 tons of red tilapia (fresh water fish) were found dead in Vietnam; at least 100 tons of sardines, croaker and catfish washed up dead along the Brazilian coast at Paranaguá, Antonina and Guraqueçaba Pontal do Paraná, starting on 30 December (blamed on cold weather or chemical leaks); and thousands of dead fish were found rotting and floating in Spruce Creek, Florida. On the avian front, around 200 American coots were found dead on a highway bridge crossing Lake O' the Pines in Big Cypress Creek, Texas (cause of death unknown); and dozens of grackles, sparrows and pigeons dropped dead on two streets in Austin, Texas.

● On 4–5 January, between 50 and 100 jackdaws were found lying in a residential street in the Swedish town of Falköping. Some were said to have been hit by cars but others had no visible injuries. There had been no storms; one



report said that fireworks had been set off nearby, although this was contested. Other factors included difficulties in finding food and unusually cold weather. There were no signs of infection.

● Between 1,000 and 8,000 turtledoves (account differ) rained down on roofs and cars in the Italian village of Faenza, near Ravenna, between 2 and 6 January. Among the turtledoves was the odd dead pigeon.

Residents described the birds falling to the ground one by one, and then in groups of 10s and 20s like “little Christmas balls” with strange blue stains on their beaks. Initial tests indicated that the blue stain was due to poisoning or hypoxia – a lack of oxygen that can confuse animals. The birds might have been swept up to deadly high altitudes by freak winds. Rodolfo Ridolfi, of the regional zoological institute, suggested they were killed by

indigestion after gorging on sunflower seeds.

● On 6 January and the days following, thousands of gizzard shad (members of the herring family) between 3in and 5in (8–13cm) long, were found frozen in the ice of Chicago harbours (including DuSable and Diversey), or floating around in open patches of water. Canada geese and mallard ducks were busy eating them. Thick ice had come early to the harbours in December and the shad are more sensitive to drops in oxygen levels than most fish.

● On 8 January, California Highway Patrol officers found more than 100 dead birds – described as small with brown and black feathers – clustered together just off Highway 101 near Geyserville. They were intact and had not been shot. On the same day, Residents of the Black Sea port of Constanta in eastern Romania found dozens of dead starlings on the outskirts of the city. They alerted authorities, fearing the birds had avian flu; but analysis of the birds' gizzards indicated they had died from alcohol poisoning after eating grape ‘marc’ (the leftovers from the wine-making process).

Sources: *azcentral.com*, 28 Dec 2010, 7 Jan; [AP] 2+3+4 Jan; *BBC News*, 3+4+5+8+12 Jan; [CNN] 3+6 Jan; *wpsdlocal6.com*, 3 Jan; *D.Mail*, 3+4+5+6+7 Jan; *nzherald.co.nz*, 5 Jan; *Sun*, 5+8+10 Jan; *Metro*, 6 Jan; *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mirror*, 8 Jan; *Sunday Telegraph*, 9 Jan; [AP] *Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 Jan 2011.

THANET COAST PROJECT / EILEEN HOOPER / WWW.THANETCOAST.ORG.UK

# A<sup>Z</sup> ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER's regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden includes an unlikely tale of a bear's bushy tail and a strangely transparent manimal



ABOVE LEFT: From this angle, the bear appears to have a long bushy tail. ABOVE RIGHT AND BELOW: Here the 'tail' is clearly seen as a paw.

## TAIL END OF A MYSTERY

Patience is indeed a virtue, especially in cryptozoological investigations. Back in 2002, I reported [FT162:22] the presence at the Antlers restaurant (bottom), in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, of a particularly unusual taxidermied bear – for, according to correspondent Larry Tribula who had lately dined there and had observed it, this bear sported a long bushy tail. I asked if anyone could supply further information, but none was forthcoming – until 20 November 2010, when fellow cryptid investigator Richard Muirhead kindly shared with me a revelatory email concerning this enigmatic exhibit. It had been emailed to one of his own correspondents, Andrew Ste Marie of Manchester in Michigan, by the restaurant's proprietor, Chris Szabo, who had recently investigated the bear himself. Although on first sight it did indeed appear to possess a long bushy tail as reported by Tribula, when Szabo examined it close up, he discovered that this was an optical illusion. As can be seen in the photos above, the 'tail' was actually one of the bear's hind legs, but with its foot obscured by fur, by other taxidermied animals close by, and by the precise angle of observation. So this intriguing bear's mystery tail is no longer a tale of mystery.

## SEE-THROUGH THAI MAN-BEAST

Coincidentally, on the same day that he informed me of Szabo's ursine exposé, Richard Muirhead posted online another very notable revelation, this time concerning a truly extraordinary entity that I'd previously never even heard of, and which had certainly not been brought to cryptozoological attention before. Tucked away on pp294–5 of William SW Ruschenberger's tome *A Voyage Round the World: Including an Embassy to Muscat and Siam in 1835, 1836, and 1837* (1838) was the following fascinating paragraph:

*Among the strange animals belonging to Siam, there is one described under the name of Khon Pää, which belongs to the known genus of natural history. This animal has been seen by the prince and hundreds of others, yet we must confess, we are inclined to doubt the accuracy of description.*

*The Khon Pää resembles a man; it is five feet [1.5m] high, walks erect, has no knee joints, and runs faster than a horse. Should he accidentally fall, he is forced to crawl to a tree or something else, by which he again raises himself on his feet. His skin is transparent as a China horn lantern; his entrails are distinctly seen through it, and his abdomen shines like a looking-glass – credit qui vult, non ego. Under the superstitious notion, that the presence of the animal in Bangkok [sic] was unlucky, his owners were bamboozed, and all their property was confiscated by the king for bringing him there. This treatment caused so much terror, that no one has since ventured to bring a specimen of the beast from his native lurking places.*

Assuming (and it is a big assumption) that the above report was based upon a genuine creature rather than a figure of folklore or a complete invention, what can this transparent, knee-less man-beast have been? Even if we discount its pellucid skin as an exaggeration of some rather less spectacular feature, such as skin exhibiting a pallid sheen, it still doesn't match any known species. Nor can



I find any trace of it in any of the many man-beast books and articles in my archives, and a Google search also drew a blank. So once again, gentle reader, if you can shed any light upon (rather than through!) the contentious khon pää, I'd love to hear from you! Richard Muirhead, <http://tinyurl.com/4bnrmsd> (forteanzoology.blogspot.com), 18 Nov 2010.



BOB STARES

BOB STARES

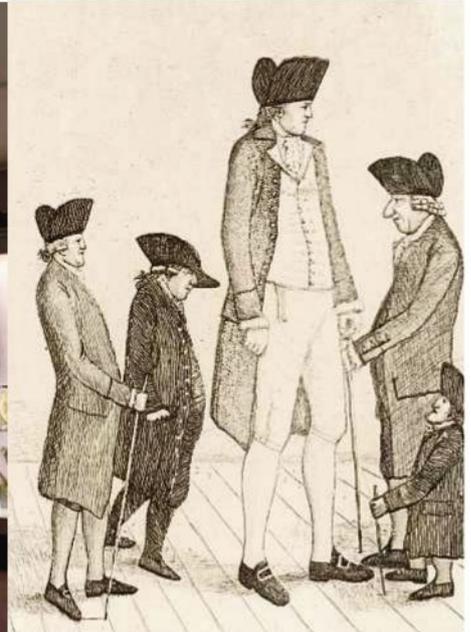
BOB STARES



# ARCHAEOLOGY

Our archaeological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, a founding co-editor of the peer-review *Time and Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* ([www.bergpublishers.com](http://www.bergpublishers.com)).

BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE HUNTERIAN COLLECTION



ALAMY / MARY EVANS PICTURE COLLECTION

**ABOVE LEFT:** The skeleton of Irish giant Charles Byrne in London's Hunterian Museum. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A contemporary drawing of Byrne with English notables.

## A TALL IRISH TALE

Legend states that the giant Finn McCool (Fionn mac Cumhail) built the Giant's Causeway on the north-east coast of Northern Ireland in an attempt to cross the sea to Scotland to fight a giant there. This is, of course, a mythical tale to explain the spectacular array of mainly hexagonal basalt pillars formed by ancient volcanic action, but is the motif of giants in archaic Irish lore similarly fanciful? Recent research led by Dr Marta Korbonits of Barts Hospital, London, and reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, suggests perhaps not.

Korbonits and team examined DNA taken from the teeth of Charles Byrne, an 18th-century Irishman suffering from gigantism whose skeleton is displayed in the Hunterian Museum, London. Byrne grew to a height of 7ft 7in (2.3m) and was famous as "the world's tallest man". The researchers found he had a rare and mysterious genetic mutation called AIP – only identified in 2006 – that can cause tumours in the pituitary gland, potentially leading to gigantism.

In testing Byrne's DNA, Korbonits admits she was acting on a hunch after a Northern Irish family who consulted her in 2008 presented with the mutation. She has

subsequently identified five Northern Irish families who also possess it and who share common ancestry with Byrne. The mutation itself is thought to have originated some 1,500 years ago, and possibly even as far back as 3,700 years ago. Korbonits has reportedly commented that she was struck by the prevalence of giants like Finn McCool in Irish mythology. "It was folklore up to now, but we have identified the gene that has caused the gigantism that has been going around Ireland for at least 1,500 years," she said. "There might be a grain of truth in the folklore." *New York Times*, 5 Jan; *Irish Times*, 7 Jan 2011.

## M16 SECRET REVEALED

Using the pop mythology of today, it could be said that there was something of a confrontation between James Bond and Indiana Jones in February 2010, when armed police surrounded archaeologists in the Thames tidal silt immediately adjacent to the M16 building at Vauxhall. The police were acting on reports of there being a suspicious group of people armed with shoulder-mounted rocket launchers. In fact the "terrorists" were just archaeologists from the Thames Discovery programme, whose job it is to survey the entire pre-historic foreshore of the river. They were taking advantage of exceptionally low tides at that time, and it paid off, because they uncovered something remarkable – the

**RIGHT:** Ancient timber posts were found near the M16 headquarters by the Thames.



THAMES DISCOVERY / NATHALIE COHEN

# CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 134: PIE IN THE SKY

oldest wooden structure ever found along the Thames. M16 was sitting almost right on top of it. Six substantial timber posts were extracted from the river muds (along with some stone tools), and carbon-dating work on them has only now been completed.

The timbers date to almost 5,000 BC – structures as old as this are rare anywhere in the UK. It is thought they had been part of a structure that had originally stood on dry land, perhaps a riverside spur or islet when the Thames was narrower and deeper.

“At the moment we don’t have enough timbers to give any kind of alignment, they’re not in a straight line or a circle,” commented archaeologist Gustav Milne. They could have been part of a platform, perhaps for a dwelling, he mused. Or possibly for a shrine, for the location is at the confluence of the Rivers Effra and Thames. Near the timbers, there was a find of later Neolithic pottery and a Bronze Age jetty not far away, so the whole place may have been deemed significant over many centuries. A major research project is now under way at the site. *Guardian*, 6 Jan 2011.

### CHEERS!

Picking up on our occasional theme of the archaeology of booze, some archaeologists are now contending that beer contributed to the rise of civilisation (as every regular pub-goer already suspected). Brian Hayden at Simon Fraser University in Canada feels that the domestication of wild cereals at the birth of farming in the Neolithic era some 11,500 years ago was driven as much by the urge to brew beers as for the need for food. “Beer is sacred stuff in most traditional societies,” he says. The archaeologist notes that there wasn’t a great involvement of cereals in pre-Neolithic diets, but extraordinary efforts to obtain cereals marked the start of the “Neolithic revolution” and the rise of civilisation. Various cultures worldwide invested exceptional time and labour in cultivating and preparing or obtaining cereals by trade. The brewing of alcohol seems to have coincided with the initial domestication of cereals in Neolithic China and Sudan and elsewhere. It isn’t beer drinking and brewing by itself that helped start cultivation, Hayden explains, but its link with socially crucial feasts that helped in the emergence of complex societies. Fancy a pint? *Live Science*, 5 Nov 2010.

(Titular honours shared with policeman-cook Henry Crabbe)

“Every mathematics master dreads the day when he will have to explain the Theorem of Pythagoras” – HF Ellis, *The World of A. J. Wentworth, B.A.* (Penguin, 1964), p18.

Not that the square on the hippotamus, as we schoolboys dubbed it, plays any part here (anyway, the Babylonians had cracked it long before). Go to Plato’s *Meno* for an ancient geometry lesson, and for a modern novel Arturo Sangalli, *Pythagoras’ Revenge: A Mathematical Mystery*, Princeton, 2009). Pythagoras (below), who like Socrates and Christ wrote nothing – some late forgeries did circulate – was the archetypal numbers rather than letters man, thinking them key to the Universe (touch of *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*) and everything else – good man to have beside you when doing the lottery.

Sources for Pythagoras (sixth-century BC, no precise dates) date long after his death, Plato largely ignoring him and Aristotle’s treatise on Pythagoreans being lost. Chiefly, the biographies of Iamblichus, Porphyry, and (most detailed) Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* (bk8). Best modern thumbnail sketch is Bertrand Russell’s (*History of Western Philosophy*, NY, 1945, p31): “He may be described as a combination of Einstein and Mrs Eddy. He founded a religion, of which the main tenets were the transmigration of souls and the sinfulness of eating beans.”

Our sage claimed several pre-existences, including that of Trojan War warrior Euphorbus. He once stopped someone beating a dog, claiming to hear an old friend’s voice in its yelps – a very doggy dogma. Living acquaintances included his slave Zamolxis, later equated with Saturn and worshipped by the Getæ tribe (Herodotus – sceptically, *Histories*, bk 4 ch93).

The bean-ban, one of a long list of his sectarian taboos, coming oddly from the strict vegetarian Pythagoras (direct link with Adolf H here), was variously explained by their flatulence potential or physical similarity to testicles – a lot of balls?). It was his eventual downfall. “The unregenerate hankered after beans” (Russell), Crotoniates rebelled, the fleeing Pythagoras refused to cross a bean-field to safety, and was lynched – thus the no-have-bean became a has-been.

Another reason for local discontent was probably his ideological objection to fucking, declaring it a sin, especially if indulged in summertime – no beach-orgies on the Costa del Pyth, then.

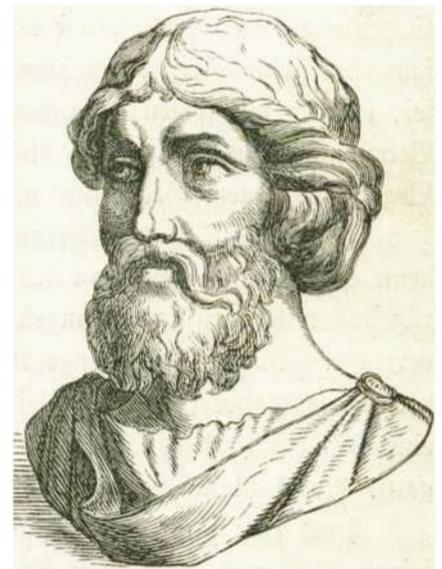
Admirers called him the wisest man who ever lived. However, his near contemporary,

Heraclitus ‘The Weeping Philosopher’, gibed (fr40) “Much learning does not bring intelligence, otherwise it would have taught Pythagoras” – classic academic back-biting, a bit rich from one who (Diogenes Laertius, bk9 ch1) thought being buried in cow-dung would cure his drosy – literally in the shit.

Born on Samos, Pythagoras spent time on Lesbos and Crete, learned his lore in Egypt, and ended up heading a pre-Platonic dictatorship of the philosophers at Croton in southern Italy. For good measure, he is credited with an educational trip to the Underworld. Samos was then ruled by Polycrates, famous for flinging a ring into the sea and having it returned via the belly of a fish (Herodotus, bk3 ch42 – “The ring lost in a lake, and what was found when a fish was caught...” – Fort, *Books*, p864).

Apart from his trip to Hades, Pythagoras was also credited with space and time travel and omnipresence, making him an ancient combination of Dr Who and Hermione Granger. When terrestrially crossing the River Nessus, bystanders swore they heard it address him by name. Though no ordinary author, he claimed the ability to write on the Moon, achieving this lunography by tracing letters in blood on a looking-glass, which he then reflected on to its disc. He comported a glowing bodily aura, along with a publicly displayed golden thigh. This gained literary gloss through his public utterances, written down by his disciples with the pioneering tag *Autos Epha (Ipse Dixit)*, and circulated as his ‘Golden Sayings’.

“...Tomorrow we must have a real go at Pythagoras...” – Ellis, p21



## LUCKY ESCAPES

Rescued from falls by a bridge parapet, a speedboat, parked cars, a refuse heap, cliffside undergrowth, a bus roof, and a little boy's ears



BOTH PIX: CHRIS MURPHY

### BY A TYRE THREAD

A truck driver cheated certain death after he lost control of his vehicle along a major road somewhere in rural China, clipped the concrete wall of a bridge and flipped over the edge. Thanks to a single punctured tyre and some torn sheet metal on the road near the diesel tank, the truck somehow managed to cling to the concrete barrier, albeit upside down, over a 200ft (60m) gorge (above). Rescuers tentatively approached the vehicle and managed to pull the driver to safety, despite the fact the tyre could have given way at any time. It is unknown if the vehicle was recovered, or allowed to fall into the gorge. The pictures,

which circulated over a year ago on the Internet, have just emerged within China, which has strict curbs on Internet use. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 5 Jan 2011.*

### SPEEDBOAT

A girl survived a 30ft (9m) fall through the roof of a derelict building in Cinderford, Gloucestershire – after landing in the padded seat of a speedboat. Tiffany Watkins, 11, was playing with friends when a plastic skylight gave way. She broke an elbow and twisted a foot ligament. A fire service spokesman said: “If the boat hadn’t been there she could have died as – apart from the concrete floor – there were old engine

blocks lying about.” *D.Mirror, 9 April 2010.*

### DODGUM CRASH

Thomas Magill, 22, an aspiring actor, wrote “I hate my life” on Facebook before throwing himself off the 39th floor of an apartment block in New York’s Upper West Side on 1 September. He plunged more than 400ft (120m), reaching an estimated terminal speed of 125mph (200km/h), and landed feet first on a red Dodge Charger sports car parked alongside the building. He escaped with two broken legs and a bruised lung. Eyewitnesses said he was still conscious, screaming “My leg! My leg!” as he lay slumped on the back seat of

the car, having crashed through the rear window. Construction worker Guy McCormack, who had parked the car, said he thought divine intervention had saved Magill from death. He believed rosary beads kept in the vehicle were behind his survival. *Telegraph.com, Sun, 1+2 Sept; D.Mail, 3 Sept 2010.*

### GOOD PARKING SPOT

A 10-year-old Chinese boy survived after falling 20 floors from an apartment window. He landed on a parked car, shattering its back window. A doctor at a hospital in Guizhou said he suffered skull fractures and bleeding on the brain and remained under close observation. The fall was

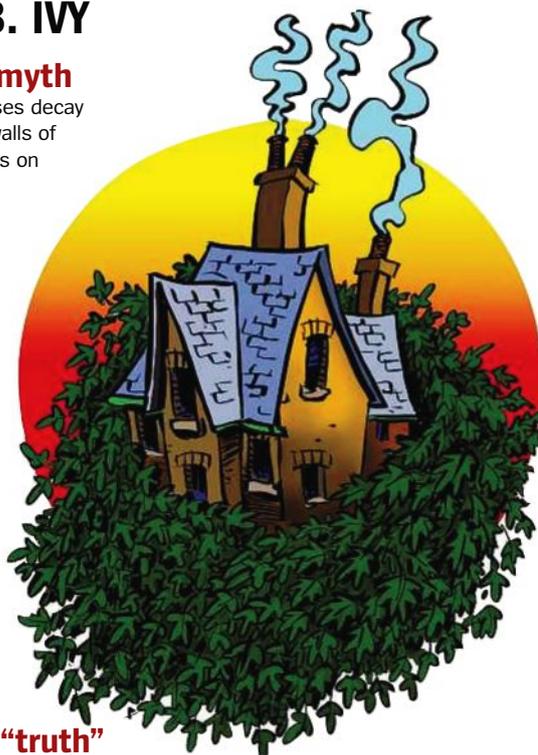
# Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

## 138. IVY

### The myth

Ivy causes decay in the walls of buildings on which it grows.



### The "truth"

Not only does ivy not generally harm buildings, according to research commissioned by English Heritage, it may actually be good for them. It's long been assumed that ivy damaged masonry as its supporting roots worked their way into the pointing, loosening the bricks. Latest findings suggest that this belief comes from observers misunderstanding the order of events – in other words, that the plant establishes especially well on already unsound walls, and then gets the blame when their decay becomes visible. A three-year study by Oxford University biogeomorphologists concluded that ivy-clad buildings enjoyed significant advantages over naked ones. The covering helped regulate the temperature of the masonry during brick-cracking extremes of both hot and cold weather, as well as absorbing some of the harmful pollutants in the air. The parallel myth – that ivy is a parasite which "strangles" healthy trees – has long been dismissed by arborists. Ivy isn't parasitic, and its excessive presence on a tree is almost always a symptom, rather than a cause, of decline.

### Sources

*Independent*, 17 May 2010; <http://s.coop/medievalnews>;  
<http://s.coop/sciencedaily>; <http://s.coop/arborecology>; *Garden Bird News*,  
Oct 2009; <http://s.coop/Scotsman>.

### Disclaimer

The researchers pointed out that there may well be specific circumstances under which ivy is harmful to buildings, but that the old idea that it's automatically a menace doesn't stand up. If you have further information, please creep over to the letters page.

### Update

It may not be possible to tell which way is north by looking at moss on trees [FT259:19], but according to Tristan Gooley, an expert on "natural navigation" (<http://s.coop/birdshit>), you can find south by searching for bird droppings. Most of a tree's branches will be on the south, he says, since that's where the light is best; thus, the south side is where most bird perching, and therefore crapping, will take place.



FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:

[www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters](http://www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters)

assumed to have been accidental. *Metro Herald (Dublin)*, 27 Oct 2010.

### PILE OF RUBBISH

A man worried about being evicted from his ninth-floor apartment in New York jumped out of a window on 2 January – but survived after landing on a pile of rubbish. Vangelis Kapatos, 26, plunged 100ft (30m) from his building on West 45th Street wearing pyjamas and landed on his back. He was taken to Bellevue Hospital, where his condition was said to be stable. Mounds of rubbish more than 6ft (1.8m) deep were choking the city's streets a week after a massive winter storm blanketed the area in nearly 2ft (60cm) of snow. [R] *D.Mail*, 3 Jan 2011.

### BUSHY TALE

As dusk fell on 2 December, a 54-year-old man cheated death when he accidentally fell off a 600ft (180m) cliff at Golden Gap near Lyme Regis in Dorset – the highest sea cliff on the south coast. He bounced off a near-vertical face after 120ft (36m), then tumbled 140ft (43m) through thick undergrowth before landing upside down in a large bush. He was doubly lucky because a woman saw his fall and alerted the Coastguard, who abseiled down the cliff and rescued him. An air ambulance took

him to hospital with chest injuries and two broken arms. *Sun*, 3 Dec 2010.

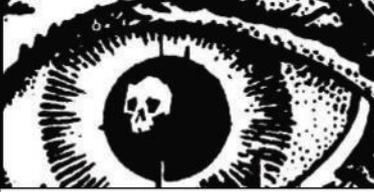
### BUS BOUNCE

A man in his 20s survived a 30ft (9m) plunge from a bridge in Southend, Essex, after a single-decker bus drove by at the perfect moment and broke his fall. Passengers heard a bang as the man hit the roof of the bus and then toppled off into the road. He was taken to hospital with a suspected broken ankle. It was not known if he was trying to take his life or fell by accident. *D.Telegraph*, 10 Dec 2010.

### SAVED BY HIS EARS

A boy in China was saved from a fatal eight-storey drop when his head got stuck in the bars of a window as he was falling through (below). Ming Ming, six, was asleep when his grandfather went out briefly on an errand. He woke up and went to the window to see if he could see his grandfather, but tumbled out. He was prevented from falling by the width of his ears. Neighbours called police after hearing the boy's desperate cries as he dangled about 100ft (30m) above the street. Rescuers forced the bars apart and pulled him back into his family's flat in Yichang, Hubei province. *Metro, MX News (Sydney)*, 6 May 2010.





# GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE believes “orb phenomena” aren’t balls of mysterious energy, just balls...



BOTH PIX : STEVE PARSONS VIA WWW.ASSAP.ORG

What ought to be the passing bell for ‘orb’ phenomena rang in the autumn in the form of research published by Steve Parsons of the group Para.Science. Photographs of anomalous luminous spheres and dots have dogged ghost-hunting since the end of the 1990s, and most informed opinion now considers them nothing more than artefacts generated by modern cameras. The reflections of tiny particles in the air appear on pictures because the typical flash unit of a camera in use today is much closer to the lens than with older models. Thus, those particles of dust you see in a beam of sunlight, bobbing around with air currents and Brownian motion, show up as orbs when digital cameras are used.

In findings presented at the conference of the Society for Psychical Research in September 2010, and published in the November 2010 edition of *Anomaly*, Steve Parsons reports the results of his exhaustive experiments using a Fujifilm W1 3D digital camera, whereby matched stereo images are taken of the same view. A total of 1,870 stereo pairs of images were taken at over 20 locations in the UK and Eire, including a number of allegedly haunted sites. Some 630 orb-like images were obtained. If orbs are not reflections of particles less than 2–3cm (roughly an inch) from the lens, then the orb should appear in both images. In 491 pairs obtained, the orb was only present on one image, and in 139 pictures orbs were present on both images, but not in a position that corresponded to the individual orb being the same object. Steve Parsons concludes that “all 630 that we obtained in the survey were readily explained using the stereo photography technique. That is 0 per cent paranormal but 100 per cent explainable.” At the end of the article he expresses the hope “that this extensive series of pictures will finally

## “This will finally remove much of the confusion surrounding orbs”

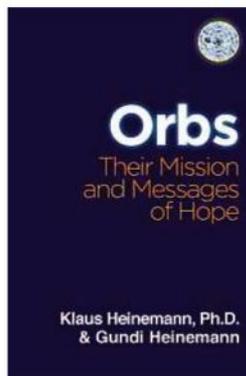
remove much of the confusion and nonsense that has surrounded the orb.” (Source: “Orbs!... Some Definitive Evidence That They Are Not Paranormal” by Steve Parsons in *Anomaly*, the Journal of ASSAP, vol.44, Nov 2010). However, I suspect this won’t happen just yet, given the widespread wish to believe orbs are paranormal.

In October 2010, the *Scotsman* newspaper carried a remarkable claim that “Voices of the dead and ghostly orbs of light ‘prove airbase is haunted’” [FT265:4]. Two Scottish-based paranormal researchers, Cat Perks and Linda Williamson, claimed to have obtained conclusive evidence that a former airfield near Montrose is “a major centre of paranormal activity” based upon orb photos and some strange audio recordings.

“We are scientific researchers and not ghost-hunters and we were using a range of voice recorders as well as night vision camcorders and digital cameras” Ms Perks told journalists. (*Scotsman*, 14 Oct 2010)

Similar claims were being made a month later and hundreds of miles away along the Suffolk

coast, at Languard Fort, Felixstowe. The fort is a favourite site with ghost-hunting groups, and on 11 November 2010 a special “Connecting to the orbs” fund-raising evening took place with a prize for the best orb picture. The event was promoted by Peggy Weber, who until recently ran an interesting website arguing that orbs are spirits. This site displayed many images of orbs, including an emerald-coloured one that Peggy considered



ABOVE: Left and right stereo images taken by Steve Parsons to show orbs are close to the lenses.

FACING: Photo taken at an airbase near Montrose.

held the likeness of the face of her husband. Ms Weber previously appeared at a 2008 gathering in Glastonbury entitled “Orbs: Interacting with Other Realms Prophets Conference”. A similar conference was held in Arizona, and in the same vein, a book appeared in autumn 2010 entitled *Orbs Their Mission and Messages of Hope*, receiving widespread publicity in the United States. Written by Klaus and Gundi Heinemann, it argues that orbs are spiritual energy with a special revelation for humanity. Heinemann holds a PhD in physics and is a specialist in electron microscopy. He states: “There is no doubt in my mind that Orbs may well be one of the most significant ‘outside of this reality phenomena’ mankind at large has ever witnessed”. He has previously co-written *The Orb Project* with Dr Miceal Ledwith, who discovered “orbs through the teaching of Ramtha”. Heinemann warns that some orbs have ordinary explanations, but others are a vehicle of revelation, emanations from non-physical entities.

Like many people, I was initially intrigued by the appearance of the first orb photographs during the course of investigations at haunted sites using digital cameras. But soon it became apparent that the alleged orbs were very common and were turning up in mundane situations. Paranormal phenomena tend to be elusive and unpredictable – orbs were just showing up too often. In 2005, a short film by photographer Philip Carr, *Riddle of the Orbs*, demonstrated that anyone who wanted orb photos could obtain them by taking pictures in a dusty environment. Or just thump a pillow, take photographs and you may get some orbs. It is hardly surprising orbs appear in pictures taken in dusty old buildings and ruins that ghost-hunters like to frequent.

A piece of negative evidence supporting the view that orbs are artefacts caused by modern technology is their almost total absence in photographs taken before digital cameras. Occasionally, you can see what might be taken

as an orb in an old photograph – for example the 1973 photograph of the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire/Warwickshire in Anthony Hipplesley-Coxe's *Haunted Britain*. But this photograph was an attempt to catch sunrise at the stone circle, with the 'orbs' produced by sunbeams hitting the camera lens. More significantly, prior to digital photography, no one suggested spirits of the dead routinely took the form of luminous dots. Before the 1990s, ghost-hunters taking photographs expected (and indeed claimed) that their pictures would show recognisably human shapes and features, not specks of light. But the real difficulty with accepting orbs as a paranormal phenomenon is that the notion is belief-driven rather than evidence-driven.

Over the years, I have noticed that regardless of any explanation put forward, believers in orbs insist that *their* orb photograph is a genuine one. Regrettably, the criteria for distinguishing a natural orb from an allegedly paranormal one is nowhere clearly defined, suggesting identification rests purely on personal belief, not on any independent evidence.

Such attitudes are similar to those displayed during the 19th-century heyday of spirit photography and which ultimately contributed to its demise. Even some spiritualists gave up on spirit photography. By 1875, the medium Stainton Moses had personally examined some 600 alleged ghost photographs, showing just how widespread such images were. But his conclusions were damning: "Some people would recognise anything. A broom and a sheet are quite enough for some wild enthusiasts who go with the figure in their eye and see what they wish to see... I have had pictures that might be anything in this or any other world sent to me and gravely claimed as recognised portraits" (*Human Nature*, May 1875, p202). In no more than about a dozen of his 600 examples did Moses think that psychic activity had been captured on film. Despite his views, he himself was fooled by the French spirit photographer Jean Buguet, who confessed to faking pictures at a sensational trial the same year. Nonetheless, despite Buguet admitting his guilt, many of his victims pathetically continued to assert that *their* photo of a deceased loved one was genuine; they were never interested in learning more.

This lack of curiosity was in marked contrast to efforts at investigating other mysterious radiations detected by physicists at the close of the 19th century. These included Roentgen with his detection of X-rays, Henri Becquerel's discovery of radioactivity and the Curies with radium. Indeed, a number of notable physicists of the period were interested in psychical research, including the Curies themselves, Sir JJ Thompson (discoverer of the electron), and Sir Oliver Lodge. Yet despite the creation of a Society for the Study of Supernormal Photographs in 1919, spirit photography failed to make any advances. As the public became more visually sophisticated, spirit photographs were recognised as double exposures. The arrival of infra-

red photography from 1945 also seemingly terminated many alleged séance room phenomena such as ectoplasm.

These lessons should be remembered today by proponents of orbs. Certainly, it would be highly significant if orbs were a genuine paranormal phenomenon capable of being recorded on camera. It would tell us something about the energies underlying psychic phenomena, indicating they can take the form of light radiation, or some component of the electromagnetic spectrum. If these energies are capable of interacting with digital technology, better ways of detecting or measuring such effects might be developed, leading to testable theories. There are many directions in which research might go, but no one seems intent on making any progress.

Just this reluctance beset the previous generation of believers in spirit photography, with a few exceptions such as the 1930 investigation by Dr Eugene Osty into the Schneider brothers, two Austrian mediums. Another exception was Cyril Permutt who built up a large collection of alleged paranormal images, some of which are being republished today (see the *Ghosts Caught On Film* series 2007 and 2009 compiled by Dr Melvyn Willin). In his own book, *Beyond the Spectrum* (1983), Permutt suggested: "The date of a supernormal photograph can often help us determine the wavelengths of the radiation recorded in it. When the first psychic photographs were taken, in the days of wet plate photography, the active ingredient in the emulsions used were silver chloride, which is only sensitive to ultra-violet and violet light, and silver bromide, which extends the sensitivity to include blue light, and only these shorter wavelengths could be recorded."

Today, advocates of orbs do not seem interested in thinking along these lines or about how research could develop. Indeed, no one seems to want to take on the mantle or title of 'discoverer of the orbs' (if orbs are a genuine psi effect, surely there is a Nobel prize waiting!).

Instead, many advocates of orbs seemingly want them to remain a mystery, content to go on snapping them without gaining any further insight. Instead of being used as equipment for investigation, digital cameras are being deployed

as ritual objects to gather what believers interpret as traces of a spirit world. Effectively, spiritualism has moved from the séance room to photography. Meanwhile, non-believers and people who have no interest in the topic simply dismiss orbs as glitches spoiling their pictures.

Why should believers want to keep orbs a mystery? At the most basic level, orb photos add excitement to otherwise uneventful evenings. As at Languard Fort, participants gain a feeling they have got something for their money. This is illustrated in an account by journalist Tan Parsons of a "psychic dinner" at the Down Hall Country House Hotel, near Hatfield Heath, in February 2007. He wrote: "Much was made of 'orbs' that appeared in some of the photographs taken in the cellar – little white blobs seemingly floating in the air. What some might call photographic abnormalities caused by dust or mote of reflected light are actually, according to the experts, bubbles of 'spiritual energy'." ("Is there anybody out there or is it just imagination?" *Harlow Citizen*, 16 Feb 2007).

Orbs can also provide an excuse for showmanship and one-upmanship. Any ghost-hunter or medium can expect an orb photograph and claim it as a result, even before the investigation takes place. For example, members of "Light Pen Ghost Club" attended the Sandrock Pub in Shirley, Surrey, after landlord Steve Gilmour tired of jokes about his pub being haunted. He had not seen any ghost and complained: "[T]he locals are always going on about it and making ghost noises." Investigator Julian Dryden told journalists: "We're going to be focusing on the cellar of the pub, because that's where staff say they are experiencing strange feelings and seeing twinkling lights, or as we would say, orbs." Thus, before the investigation had even occurred, orbs were already identified as manifesting. (*Sutton and Epsom Advertiser*, 25 May 2007).

Certainly, it will be interesting to see how the research by Steve Parsons is received by believers in orbs. Will proponents of orbs be prepared to use stereo photography or eschew its use?

Dr Heinemann states: "But in the end, the paradigm will have been shifted. The authentic orbs in your and my pictures are leading the way toward inevitable recognition and acceptance that there is more to *Life* than life. The movement in this direction is unstoppable!"

Unfortunately, without knowing more, such an assertion perhaps provides yet further grounds for rejecting orbs as any kind of revelation. Obviously, I will have to read the Heinemann's book, but if this is all that orbs mean, it is a rather disappointing notion. Why would entities create emanations merely resembling dust and water droplets if they are attempting to convey an intelligible message to humanity? Such revelations are clearly surpassed by the innumerable spiritual and religious communications accumulated over the centuries, all of which are far more impressive, inspiring, and aesthetically pleasing than snaps taken in dusty locations with digital cameras.



## REBELS WITH CAUSES

Black magic threatens the Romanian government, a bandit survivor, plus a dog that annoyed Nazi authorities



LEFT: Witch Mihaela Minca with her apprentice, daughter Casandra.

BELOW: Salvatore Giuliano surrounded by his henchmen.

FACING: Tor Borg with Jackie.

a fire on the Chitila river in southern Romania and threw corn into the water to celebrate Epiphany. They praised the new measure: "It means that our magic gifts are recognised and I can open my own practice," said Mihaela Minca, while her sister Melissa chanted a spell to call for a good harvest, clutching a jar of charmed river water, a sprig of mistletoe and a candle.

Superstition is widespread in Romania; back in September, legislators rejected the plan to tax witches because they were

### WITCHES THREATEN TAXMAN

In an effort to crack down on tax evasion and collect more revenue, the Romanian government has imposed income tax of 16 per cent and health and pension payments on a number of professions not previously listed in the labour code, and therefore until now not subject to tax. These include witches, astrologers, fortune-tellers, embalmers, car valets, and driving instructors. The witches, at any rate, are not taking this lying down; they hurled poisonous mandrake plants into the River Danube to bring "evil" on Romania's president. Alisia, one of a dozen witches at the protest, said her income was so small that the idea of taxing it was "foolish". Payments to witches and astrologers are usually not more than 30 lei (£6) per consultation.

Sitting cross-legged in her villa in the lake resort of Mogosoaia, just north of Bucharest, surrounded by potions, charms, holy water and ceramic pots, queen witch Bratara Buzea said she planned to cast a spell against the government using a particularly effective concoction of cat dung and a dead dog. "My curses always work," said Ms Buzea, 63, who was imprisoned in 1977 for witchcraft under the Ceausescu regime. "We do harm to those who harm us. They want to take the country out of this crisis using us? They should get us out of the crisis because they brought us into it."

Meanwhile, other witches gathered round



### Witches hurled mandrake plants into the Danube

scared of being cursed, according to Alin Popoviciu, who proposed the measure (why they changed their minds is not explained). Mircea Geoana, who lost the presidential race to Traian Basescu in 2009, performed poorly during a key debate, and his camp blamed attacks of negative energy by their opponent's aides. Mr Geoana's aide Viorel Hrebenciuc alleged there was a "violet flame" conspiracy during the campaign, saying that Mr Basescu and some of his aides dressed in purple on Thursdays to increase his chances of victory. Such superstition has long been tolerated by the Orthodox Church in Romania; even the tyrannical Ceausescu and his wife Elena had their own personal witch. *Metro Herald (Dublin)*, 10 Sept 2010; *BBC News*, 6 Jan; *Scotsman*, 7 Jan 2011.

### BANDIT SENSATION

The celebrated Sicilian bandit and separatist Salvatore Giuliano led a band of about 50 desperadoes in Sicily during and after World War II, robbing rich landowners and helping impoverished peasants. His life formed the basis of *The Sicilian* (1984), written by Mario Puzo, author of *The Godfather*, and Francesco Rosi's film *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962). The official story is that he was shot dead on 5 July 1950 by Gaspare Pisciotta, his cousin and lieutenant, who was persuaded to carry out the killing with the promise of a reward and a pardon for previous crimes. (Pisciotta died in

prison four years later after drinking a cup of strychnine-laced tea.)

However, there have long been claims that the Sicilian Robin Hood staged his own death, the body in the grave being another man killed on his orders. Having eluded police and soldiers who had been hunting him for years, Giuliano, 27, supposedly fled to Tunis and later went to the United States. Historian Giuseppe Casarrubea, whose father was among Giuliano's victims, spent a decade researching the case and persuaded the authorities to exhume the body in Montelepre in western Sicily. Casarrubea and another historian, Mario Cereghino, claim that photographs of the corpse bear no likeness to the man who was nicknamed "King of Montelepre".

The grave was duly opened on 28 October. Relatives of Giuliano insist he was at least 5ft 9in (175cm) tall, but the skeleton taken out of the ground was between 5ft 2in and 5ft 5in (157–165cm) tall. It is planned to compare DNA samples with those of Giuliano's living relatives. The bandit was born on 16 November 1922 – so, if still alive, he would be 88. *D. Telegraph, 28 Oct, 3 Nov 2010.*

### DOG MOCKED HITLER

At the height of World War II, the Foreign Office in Berlin commanded its diplomats in Nazi-friendly Finland to gather evidence on a dog trained to imitate Hitler. Historians had not been aware of this before some 30 files about the affair were recently found at the political archives of the German Foreign Office. "Just months before the Nazis launched their attack on the Soviet Union, they had nothing better to do than to obsess about this dog," said Klaus Hillenbrand, an expert on the Nazi period, who described the episode as "completely bizarre".

The dog, Jackie, was a mutt owned by Tor Borg, a businessman from the Finnish city of Tampere. Borg's wife Josefine, a German citizen known for her anti-Nazi sentiments, dubbed the dog 'Hitler' because of the strange way it raised its paw high in the air like Germans greeting the Führer with a cry of "Heil Hitler!" On 29



January 1941, Willy Erkelenz, the German Vice Consul in Helsinki, wrote that "a witness, who does not want to be named, said... he saw and heard how Borg's dog reacted to the command 'Hitler' by raising its paw." Borg was ordered to the German embassy in Helsinki for questioning. He denied ever calling the dog Hitler, but admitted that his wife had. He maintained the paw-raising had only happened a few times in 1933 – shortly after Hitler came to power.

The zealous diplomats in Helsinki didn't believe him. The various ministries involved in the dog scandal meticulously reported all their findings. The Economic Ministry announced that the German chemical conglomerate IG Farben, which had supplied Borg's wholesale trade with pharmaceuticals, offered to eliminate his company by ending their cooperation with him, while the Foreign Office was looking for ways to bring Borg to trial for insulting Hitler. In the end, however, none of the potential witnesses was willing to repeat the accusations in front of a judge. On 21 March 1941, the Foreign Office asked Hitler's Chancellery whether to press charges against Borg; five days later came the reply: that "Considering that the circumstances could not be solved completely, it is not necessary to press charges." Mr Borg died in 1959 aged 60. His company eventually became the leading pharmaceutical company in Scandinavia. *[AP] 7 Jan; Scotsman, 8 Jan 2011.*



## KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER MAGAZINE,  
REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...  
POSSIBLE EVIDENCE FOR THE USE OF MIND CONTROL

In 2004, when conspiracy theories still seemed exciting to the major media (or, perhaps, offered a relatively cheap and politically safe way to produce "documentary" television), Channel 5 put out a programme on the 'top ten' conspiracy theories. The top ten was compiled by counting Google hits and, much to his surprise, the producer of the programme discovered that the topic with the biggest score was... mind control.

It had been a long time getting to the top of this particular 'chart'. Twenty years before the programme, I received a pamphlet, originally written in 1981, from Martti (or Martii) Koski, a Finn living in Canada, in which Koski claimed to be the victim of experiments by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police – who were engaged in "surreptitious testing of a telepathic amplifier that works with microwaves to control people's minds and bodies". Koski said he had been hearing electronic voices since 1975.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after becoming aware of Koski's story I received material from a Swede called Robert Naeslund which included photographs apparently showing the removal of an implanted device from his skull in 1978.<sup>2</sup>

At the time, I knew a little about the CIA experiments during the Cold War (MK Ultra, Delta, Naomi and so on) though nothing I had read spoke of implants or microwaves. When I met a third 'victim', the American Harlan Girard, who told me he had been the victim of microwave mind control and gave me a large collection of photocopied articles and scientific papers, I mentally filed his story in the 'unverifiable' category; then I read the photocopies and concluded there was *something* going on here, and very cautiously began writing about 'mind control' in the columns of *Lobster* in 1989. I now have a filing cabinet drawer full of papers on this subject, most of it either scientifically beyond my ken, or implausible or uncheckable firsthand accounts by 'victims'; and there are thousands of pages on this subject on the Internet.<sup>3</sup> Yet more than 20 years after Harlan Girard sat in my living room and told me his story, I'm still where I was when I first wrote about this subject: *something* is going on, but I'm not sure what it is.

This may be about to change. In 2009, a San Francisco law firm filed a lawsuit against the CIA and the Department of Defense (and others) on behalf of a group of US military veterans who were guinea pigs in military medical trials. *Inter alia*, the initial claim refers to "the insertion of septal implants in the brains of subjects".<sup>4</sup> As far as I can see from reading the documents filed with the court, the implant claim has been made by only one soldier,<sup>5</sup> and may prove to be a red herring. But the lawyers are convinced by the X-rays/scans that the implant *is* there; and if it was done, it was done in 1966!

Does this matter? Scientifically, no: contemporary medicine now has implantable chips for a wide range of conditions. But the incontrovertible evidence of just one brain implant would go a long way to dragging this subject in from the farther shores of crankery. And Robert Naeslund might just persuade someone in the Swedish media to take seriously his claims that the Swedish security service, SAPO, was responsible for implanting him without his permission all those years ago.

### NOTES

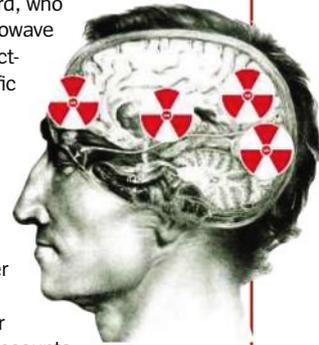
<sup>1</sup> See <http://tinyurl.com/3xwgnz3> (netti.fi).

<sup>2</sup> These pictures can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/35r56hx> (raven1.net).

<sup>3</sup> I got 164 million Google hits for 'mind control' in early January.

<sup>4</sup> See the press release at <http://tinyurl.com/35f7f99> (edgewoodtestvets.org – PDF).

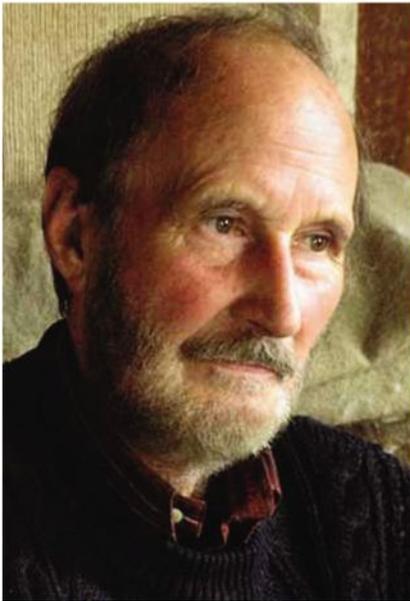
<sup>5</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/38s7w3e> (edgewoodtestvets.org – PDF). See para 34.





## NECROLOG

We note the passing of a highly controversial author, and a woman who, as a young girl, was carried off by an eagle to its nest yet, survived the ordeal.



### STAN GOOCH

Stan Gooch died, in isolation and poverty, just as some elements of his long-held theories were beginning to gain support from recent discoveries. He had spent his latter years in a dishevelled caravan in South Wales, and died in hospital in Swansea. He had always afforded special significance to Monday the thirteenth and, curiously, he died on Monday 13 September.

Gooch's life and career constitute a grim reminder of what can befall those who venture from academically safe topics into the wilderness of damned data. Born in Lewisham, south London, he went through a number of early career shifts until he focused on psychology, and became a well-known and well-respected child psychologist. And so he might have continued, into the comfort of obscure eminence; but his octopus intellect, and an early encounter with the paranormal, would not allow it.

He was 26, living in Coventry and working as a schoolteacher (his first degree was in modern languages) when a friend invited him to a séance. He accepted the invitation, despite his scepticism, and went along. As Gooch himself described it: he was sitting facing the medium, when his head, and

then the room, filled with wind, then the sound of running water; he passed out and, when he came to, he was told that he had acted as a medium, and that several ghost entities had spoken through him.

While he never came to believe in ghosts *per se*, Gooch was determined to investigate the phenomenon that had so affected him. He theorised that most of the activity we think of as coming from the 'otherworld' in fact comes from the cerebellum. But this was only the beginning of his odyssey into the odd.

He gave up his career in psychology and became a full-time writer. His books (initially still focused on psychology) were well received, but not especially good sellers; he had stumbled upon the unenviable trick of writing in a manner too weird and populist for the academics, too academic and closely worded for the popular audience. But he persevered, and produced a string of original and fascinating books, broadening his scope all the time.

He turned his attentions to the origins of human culture. This was the subject that inspired (in this writer's opinion) his finest work. Gooch's theory is that human culture is much older than the current consensus; that early culture was dictated by women; that the encounter between Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons was the source of the "great leap forward" in the development of human consciousness. He brought a dazzlingly wide array of evidence to his argument, producing a radical tapestry of orthodox and damned.

Gooch wrote 11 books, and co-authored three others. His best and most comprehensive exposition of his culture theories is *Cities of Dreams: When Women Ruled the Earth* (1989). If you want to know how spiders and snakes, red hair and left-handedness, red ochre and bear pelts, the Moon

and the number 13, combine to reveal an occulted seam in our history, read it: 20 years on, it is still a mind-expanding experience.

At one of his later séance visits, Gooch (and, apparently, all the other attendees) sensed the presence of a figure – a 'caveman' – in the corner of the room; the caveman appeared to be aware of them too, and was terrified. For Gooch, this was a confirming vision; and for those familiar with his theories, it is a perfect metaphor – the tiny, vital trace of Neanderthal in all of us, cowering in the cerebellum until the Moon rises. But it also harbours an irony, or something more mystically recursive; the metaphor, the confirming vision, preceded the work.

Colin Wilson has said of Stan Gooch that "...his work represents one of the most impressive and exciting intellectual structures of the second half of the twentieth century" (source: <http://tinyurl.com/2adyevc> (aulis.com)). In recent months, geneticists have claimed that up to four per cent of our genome is Neanderthal, and palæoarchaeologists have over the past several years uncovered physical evidence of interbreeding. I hope that Stan Gooch got to hear this in his insubstantial hermitage, and that hearing it gave him pleasure.

*Stan Gooch, maverick psychologist, born Lewisham, London, 13 June 1932; died Swansea, Wales, 13 Sept 2010.*

**Noel Rooney**

### SVANHILD HARTVIGSEN

Better known to English-speaking media by her maiden name Svanhild Hansen in a small fishing village on one of the many small islands in the Hortavær complex, some 12km (7.5 miles) NNW of the large island of Leka, off the coast of Norway's North Trøndelag county. In early June 1932, Svanhild's family came to stay at the Soeraa farm at Kvaløy, on Leka, so that her little brother could have a church christening, there being no churches on Hortavær. After the christening on Sunday, 5 June, she was out playing with other children when, shortly after 3pm, the other children moved away, leaving her alone. At around 3:30pm, the family noticed she was missing.

More than 200 people were mobilised to search the environs; she was found seven hours later, relatively unharmed on a high shelf on the Hagafjellet, a mountain towards the centre of the island, nearly 2km (1.2 miles) away from the farm. Three men, noticing some unusual behaviour around an eagle eyrie there, had gone to





FOR MORE STRANGE DEATHS GO TO:

[www.forteanimes.com/strangedays/strangedeaths](http://www.forteanimes.com/strangedays/strangedeaths)

# Strange deaths

## UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

investigate. Finding one of her shoes and a handkerchief on the way, they pressed on up the steep and sharp crags. One, Jentoft Svendsen, stood on the others' shoulders to examine a ledge below a known nest, and there she was.

While her four layers of clothing had some tears and her hands were bloodied, Svanhild herself was relatively uninjured. She was asleep from exhaustion. Interviewed in 2007, Svanhild said she remembered nothing of being carried through the air. Coming to on the ledge, she crawled under the shelf for protection and threw stones at the eagle whenever it tried to reach her. "It would probably have torn me to pieces and carried me up to the nest to feed its kids," she said. When they roused her, she screamed in terror at being surprised by strangers; then relief took over and she was carried once more, this time to safety.

There being no witnesses to the avian abduction, the story was, inevitably, questioned. Experienced ornithologists, especially, protested that years of close study of the hunting behaviour and lifting power of large eagles demonstrated that the birds simply could not carry off a child of her weight. Svanhild was said to weigh 19kg (42lb) at that time, but it was later admitted that the doctor who examined her could have confused imperial with metric calibration and misread a reading of 19lb (8.6kg). Even so, exclaimed Alv Ottar Folkestad, president of the Norwegian Ornithological Society who heads their Sea Eagles Project, "This is well above the maximum lift of 3.2kg [7lb]."

"It makes me so angry," Svanhild said of her doubters like Flokestad. She married and moved to Rørvik, where she worked in a seafood factory, retiring at the age of 75. She said the experience left her afraid of being out in the open, and disturbed by the sight of eagles. In the late 1970s, she was taken to the mountain site where she had been found. "It's the only time I've been there since," she said. "It was a terrible trip and very stressful. How could a three-year-old get up here alone?" She brought back a huge eagle wing-feather (facing page). "What happened will pursue me all my life, whether I like it or not... so I thought I might as well bring back a souvenir."

A more detailed and illustrated account of Svanhild and her avian abduction can be found in Bob Rickard's blog at: <http://blogs.forteanimes.com/>

*Svanhild Hartvigsen, avian abductee, born Hortavær, Norway c.1929; died Rørvik, North Trøndelag, Norway 12 Nov 2010, aged c.81.*  
**Bob Rickard**

**BOBBY FARRELL WAS THE FRONT MAN OF Boney M, the disco group that achieved wide popularity in the 1970s, but didn't actually sing on the group's hits – he mimed to the singing of the group's producer, Frank Farian. 'Rasputin', one of the Boney M hits, reached number two in the British charts in 1978. Farrell died suddenly from a heart attack in a St Petersburg hotel on 30 December 2010, aged 61 – on the same date and in the same city as the "mad monk" Grigori Rasputin, murdered in 1916. Sun, 31 Dec 2010; D.Telegraph, 1 Jan 2011.**

A 210lb (95kg) PIG IN Kerkakutas, Hungary, bit its owner on 11 August when he tried to separate it from its food for a health check in its sty. The giant porker severed an artery in 29-year-old farmer Imre Kovac's leg and he bled to death in less than five minutes. *Austrian Times, 12 Aug 2010.*

**KEVIN KIRKLAND, 44, from Newport, Shropshire, died on 30 December 2009 after tying himself naked to a tree. He was found with a rope around his penis and wrists. An inquest in Telford was told the computer engineer had injured his wrists in a desperate attempt to free himself. Death was caused by hypothermia and blood loss. Sun, 10 Aug 2010.**

A RUSSIAN WOMAN HOUSE OWNER, HER SON, a male roommate and an unnamed male relative got drunk on a litre (2.1 pints) of pure alcohol mixed with snow. The son then argued with the two other men about the existence of God, and ended up stabbing both of them to death. We are not told whether the son believed in God or not. *MX News (Sydney), 14 Dec 2010.*

**RETIRED MINER ERIC OLIVER, 85, DIED IN Rotherham District Hospital, South Yorkshire, after junior doctor Jonathan Hurst tried to drain fluid from the wrong lung because he had the X-ray back to front. Mr Oliver, who had more**

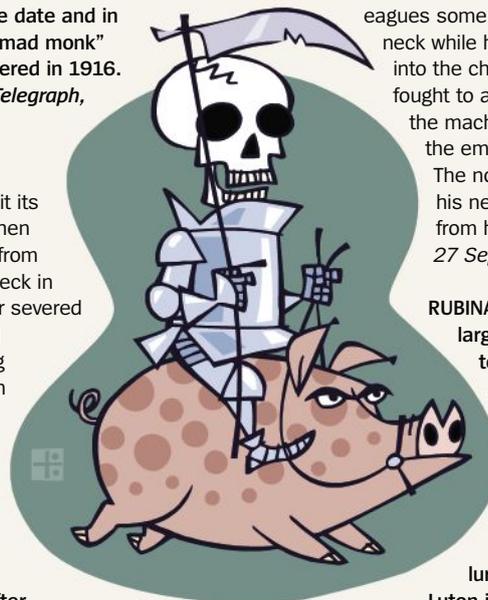
than 100 grandchildren and great grandchildren, suffered from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. *Sun, 9 Oct 2010.*

**MIGUEL VARGAS, 44, WAS BEHEADED WHEN a rope used by one of his colleagues somehow slipped over his neck while he was feeding branches into the chipper. He desperately fought to avoid being pulled into the machine, but couldn't reach the emergency shut-off button. The noose tightened around his neck and pulled his head from his body. Telegraph.co.uk, 27 Sept; Sun, 28 Sept 2010.**

**RUBINA MAROOF, 30, PAID A large amount of money to Alfusaine Jabbi, 22, a witch doctor, who promised to "ward off evil spirits" by sacrificing camels in his native Gambia. The magic apparently failed to work, so she lured Jabbi to her home in Luton in April 2006. When he**

refused a refund, he was beaten with an industrial-sized roll of tinfoil, stabbed and had salt rubbed in his wounds before his body was dumped in a nearby car park. Maroof fled to Pakistan but was arrested at Heathrow in May 2010 and jailed for 10 years in November. *D.Telegraph, 22 Nov 2010.*

**ENERGY KAMURUKO, 20, WAS OUT TRACKING with dogs in Zimbabwe on 10 October when he noticed a rabbit dart into a tunnel near the village of Mandipaka. He peered inside but his head got stuck. A neighbour found his body the following day and a post mortem confirmed he died of asphyxiation. It was the second hunting-related accidental death in Zimbabwe in recent months. In August, Tamsen Lucius, 36, impaled himself on his own spear while chasing wild boar. He had climbed a tree to get a better spear-throwing angle, but lost his footing and impaled himself through the chest. *Metro, 15 Oct 2010.***



TERRY COLON



# the UFO files

**FORTEAN TIMES** presents our monthly section featuring regular sighting reports, reviews of classic cases, entries on major ufological topics and hands-on advice for UFO investigators. **The UFO Files** will benefit from your input, so don't hesitate to submit your suggestions and questions.

To contact **The UFO Files**, write to: [nufon@btinternet.com](mailto:nufon@btinternet.com) or **UFO Files, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD.**

## FLYINGSAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT  
THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND  
FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

### RENDLESHAM'S THIRTIETH

The 30th anniversary of the Rendlesham Forest UFO incident saw "Britain's Roswell" (see **FT204:32-37** and **FT262:28**) reach new levels of absurdity. In December, two of the key witnesses visited Suffolk to "obtain justice" after what they believe are three decades of government cover-up. But the only real development was Jim Penniston's revelation that he is a contactee who receives telepathic communications from UFO occupants. The circus that surrounded this announcement neatly displaced Charles Halt from his role as key media spokesman for the case. Now Penniston and John Burroughs (pictured at right, with usual suspect Nick Pope) have sidelined Halt, they can begin to write their own script for the Rendlesham legend that reads even more like a science fiction movie. Before the latest bizarre developments, sceptics had highlighted numerous inconsistencies that riddle the evolving narrative. And during his visit Penniston added more to the list by identifying yet another new location for the UFO landing site (distinct from the one famously visited by Col Halt in 1980). He also admitted that he had previously led TV crews to the wrong place in the forest. Then there's the unresolved question of his notebook entry that gives the wrong date for the "close encounter" in the woods. At the public meeting held in Woodbridge Community Hall on 28 December 2010, Penniston sidestepped this problem by producing a new and more elaborate story. The former airman now claims that the day after his encounter he received a "download" of 12 pages of binary code that he felt compelled to write down. Somehow, though, he overlooked mentioning this vital piece of evidence to anyone for 30 years! If that wasn't hard enough to swallow, his decision to finally speak out just happened to coincide with the schedule of a History Channel series on ancient astronauts. The existence of an exclusive contract with a TV show meant the expectant audience in Suffolk had to wait until the programme was aired to discover more about this tantalising new "evidence". But the show provided no answers and simply added to the growing confusion and farce surrounding the whole event. On the programme we learned how an expert on binary code revealed that one reading (or force-fitting) of the sequence could be translated as a set of geographical co-ordinates. This led viewers on a wild goose chase, firstly to a mythical island in the Atlantic and then back to the circus tent



GORDY GOODGER

at Woodbridge community centre. The aftermath of the 30th anniversary saw even some diehard proponents willing to admit that these new embellishments had damaged the credibility of both the original story and its narrators. Who knows what wonders Penniston's magical notebook will produce next, or which direction Britain's rival to the Roswell legend will take? <http://tinyurl.com/3yyhrrj> (YouTube - History Channel); <http://tinyurl.com/36n5v6l> (rendlesham-incident.co.uk - footage from the Woodbridge event).

### HILL OF DREAMS?

As we near the 37th anniversary of the alleged Berwyn Mountain UFO crash (**FT252:30-35**), yet another piece of information has surfaced, one which may help solve - or perhaps further confuse - the events of 23 January 1974. A document originating with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) says: "During the late afternoon and early evening of 23 January 1974, there was an exercise from Jerby Range on the Isle of Man. [This] was called 'Photoflash' and coastguards were advised to expect at least 10 aircraft taking part and at least 80 flashes around the Liverpool Bay area and the North Wales coastline." At first glance, there is little to connect this exercise to the events on the Berwyn Mountains. But ufologists can always find a way to join the dots between unrelated events to create a new picture, and this is exactly what has happened with 'Photoflash'.

Investigator Russ Kellett, who has studied the Berwyn events and reached considerably differing conclusions to Andy Roberts, believes that UFOs were the focus of the military

activity that night. Kellett said: "The photoflash operation was used to light up the coast so they could see submerged craft in the sea." Kellett believes that three extraterrestrial craft were driven from the sea that night and shot down during an engagement with military craft, live aliens being retrieved from one spacecraft. Kellett claims to have a letter from a group of men who were moved on by military personnel involved in retrieving a UFO and its occupants. Kellett's story is the stuff of ufologists' dreams, but his actual evidence for either the two downed UFOs or live aliens is flimsy and unsubstantiated. For his book on the Berwyn case, *UFO Down*, Andy Roberts had access to numerous eyewitnesses to the event, police and coastguard records, newspaper archives and original TV film footage. Many flashes of light were reported that night, but all were seen over the Berwyn Mountains and had their origins in bolide meteors that were seen travelling across the British Isles. Not one of these sources reported seeing any flashes over the North Wales coast or in the sea between the Isle of Man and Liverpool. FlyingSaucery thinks that what we are seeing here, as with the latest developments in the Rendlesham Forest case, are new and radical storylines developing to satisfy the needs of those who cannot accept that extraterrestrials are not the root causes of either event. The Rendlesham Forest and Berwyn Mountain stories are modern legends that cannot die but will constantly mutate to suit the changing patterns of belief and interpretation that make up the wider UFO myth. <http://tinyurl.com/27j26d6> (North Wales D.Post, 28 Dec 2010); <http://tinyurl.com/323bylm> (ufocasebook.com).

## IT'S LIGHT, JIM... BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

Whereas the Rendlesham Forest case [see opposite] has just been celebrating three decades of tying itself into ever more confusing knots, we've just passed the 30th anniversary of another, lesser-known episode which reveals some interesting aspects of the UFO mystery.

It happened on 31 August 1980 at Golborne, Lancashire, when a woman who was a bit under the weather was sleeping on the settee to avoid disturbing her husband. She was awoken by flames outside, and hurried to investigate. But this fire was in the sky, and a spectacular sight greeted her. Hovering above a nearby reservoir was a rounded object with a triangle of bumps in the base and a dark band round the middle. Sparks were emerging and the surrounding sky was a misty pink. As she watched, a light was slowly lowered from the main object towards the water's surface and retracted upwards before the object silently moved away. Others who lived nearby independently reported the same thing, so the case looked promising.

Peter Hough investigated for NARO (Northern Anomalies Research Organisation), and we then assessed possible explanations. Two options were considered. We had investigated sightings from near Rochdale in which glowing orange lights had been traced to youths mischievously launching home-made hot-air balloons using plastic bags and candles. We saw similarities here – but many differences.

Another possibility centred on the fact that we were getting other similar reports from this part of south central Lancashire, often in the early hours, about small triangular objects and peculiar glowing lights. One of our contacts was an MoD police officer who hinted that new technology was under development and being flown on test at night; thus, if seen, it would be reported as a UFO and effectively disregarded. This was a form of prototype unmanned surveillance device. Was this what had hovered over Golborne?

NARO had no real way to decide, of course, as officially there was no such research project; whereas home-made balloons were very real.

However, the case took a mysterious turn when the main witness told Peter that a scientist with an American accent working for Jodrell Bank science centre had called and advised she not have anything to do with 'cranks' from the UFO field, but invited her to go to Jodrell to assist in further investigation.

We were puzzled for many reasons – not least because we worked with Jodrell and knew their interest in UFOs was peripheral (they were even routing sightings received at their switchboard to me for follow-up, and still do decades later).



### It dropped a solid light that unfolded like a rope ladder

Ultimately, the witness just stopped cooperating. She had agreed to meet us, but appeared to flee the house when Peter and I arrived, leaving the back door open and food cooking on the grill. Later she told me she was called away but now did not want to talk further. At a dead end, we wondered why this witness had suddenly become so uncooperative.

I was never able to forget the Golborne case, because the following year there seemed to be a rerun in the Rossendale Valley, about 30 miles (50km) north-east of Wigan. This time there were four independent sets of witnesses.

A Moon-like glow was first seen around 10.45pm on 15 June 1981 at Stackteads. It was heading into the wind (with the Moon itself also visible through breaks in the cloud). Three miles (4.8km) west at Rawtenstall, an orange/yellow mass was seen by a woman through her curtains; she watched as it hovered over an artificial ski slope, again surrounded by a glowing mist, then dropped a glowing light towards the ground. The woman promptly called the Lancashire police, who logged the call at 1.05pm.

Meanwhile, two other women close by the ski slope had a much clearer view of this behaviour. They saw the golden object approach and described what it dropped as

unfolding like a rope ladder but made out of seemingly solid light. A second projectile then emerged from the base of the oval mass and again behaved unlike any ordinary light beam. The oval was last seen – by another witness – disappearing into the distance over Helmshore.

The parallels were immediately obvious and I have since documented a small but consistent group of these cases that describe what UFO researchers term "solid light". The beam appears sharp and well defined like a laser, but opens and retracts quite differently from any mundane beam, acting like a solid object that can be unfurled. Witnesses have used terms such as "rope ladder", "snail feelers" and "expanding telescope of light" to describe it.

Our initial theory about home-made hot air balloons seemed to work. We knew that if you warm the air in a plastic bag it causes it to rise skyward, but the flame from the candle can then melt the plastic, causing it to dribble away and seem from a distance like a burning probe or ladder being released towards the ground. But with the emergence of further 'solid light' evidence over the years, we have had to reconsider. Objects seen moving into strong winds or hovering (as at Golborne) for up to 15 minutes negate the idea of any type of fire balloon. Moreover, as regular reports in FT over the past three years have shown, we now have much evidence of how witnesses report actual fire balloons in the form of Chinese lanterns, and they behave in a markedly different way from the 'solid light' reports here.

So what was responsible for these intriguing cases? Was it really some kind of covert research project? Or could they have been examples of UAPs (unidentified atmospheric phenomena)?

That possibility is enhanced by an odd report I received recently. It occurred at St Margaret's Bay, Kent, in July 1966 as a man was driving during a torrential rainstorm. The terrible conditions caused him to stop, and as he did so the air around him became heavily charged and a hissing noise began. Then, a swirling column of opaque light appeared in the form of a mist. It formed a 'beaker' and – incredibly – the rain that was pelting down was hitting the sides of this glowing 'beaker' of mist and bending at sharp angles, as if it the opaque light were a solid barrier.

In my latest research, I am finding suggestions that this phenomenon shares attributes with ball lightning. Perhaps these cases are of some kind of 'super ball lightning' so odd in its manifestation that it gets reported as a UFO. Hopefully, scientists will look at this intriguing data.

# BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

## 29 THE BLACK BALL OF TRUNDLE HILL

**PETER HASSALL** uncovers an unearthly tale from World War II, when an isolated group of soldiers stationed by an ancient hill fort had an eerie encounter with a moving black ball that could shift timber.

Every once in a while, I discover a seemingly unique fortean story that gets under my skin. One such account is the tale of a very mysterious *something* – not quite a UFO, not quite a ghost; in fact, not exactly like *anything* else.

There is a possibility that the report is a complete fabrication that was written to stimulate the imaginations of teenage boys and leave them shivering under the covers at night. After all, the source is a children's annual – hardly the type of thing to be considered of unimpeachable reliability.

In any event, here is the gist of the story, followed by my attempts to get to the truth of it. According to the account, it happened one night in 1940, at the beginning of World War II. The scene is set with an eerie description:

"Bright moonlight gleamed upon the desolate Sussex countryside and on the top branches of that strange wood known as Birdless Grove, so called because, for as long as local man had recorded such things, no bird had ever nested amongst its trees.

"Rising high above Birdless Grove, its bowl-like top giving it the appearance of a small volcano, was Trundle Hill. A man-made hill, for it was in fact a series of earthworks built one upon the other. They were perhaps the oldest earthworks in Britain, for excavations had revealed evidence of man going back to the very dawn of history. Only wiry grass and a few stunted bushes grew upon its steep sides, which undulated here and there to show the edge of each successive earthwork.

"An ancient and somehow sinister place, Trundle Hill. And lonely, too, for the lights from the nearest cottages could only just be seen, small and far away between the trees and lesser hills.

"Suddenly, for no reason he could think of, for he had heard not a sound, the soldier by the radio felt his hair rise and an inexplicable shiver sweep his body from head to toe..."

"In the centre of the 50ft [15m]-wide bowl at the top of Trundle Hill, the Army had erected a small wooden shack, placing this upon a loose layer of massive timbers, each one much bigger and heavier than any railway sleeper."

In this spooky setting, four soldiers "of a famous rifle regiment" huddled around a radio in the isolated hut. They had been assigned to report on any enemy aircraft that they spotted in the area.

The night was still. Only one man was on duty, while the others rested in their bunks.

It seemed very unlikely that there would be anything at all to report that night.

"Suddenly, for no reason he could think of, for he had heard not a sound, the soldier by the radio felt his hair rise and an inexplicable shiver sweep his body from head to toe.

"His first thought was that the door of the hut had been blown open to let in the high, chill night air. But the door was closed, fastened from the inside.

"Then he saw that he was not alone in the eerie sensation he had experienced. His companions were sitting bolt upright on their beds, their eyes reflecting the same nameless fear that he felt. One man had even been aroused, seemingly without cause, from a deep sleep."



They swiftly moved to investigate what had roused them.

"Conquering his nervousness, one soldier thrust up the latch and pushed.

The door would not budge. Peering through a crack, he gasped and whirled

around.

"It's one of those flaming great timbers! It's jammed up against the door!"

"Don't be crazy! It'd take two men to lift one of those things. And we'd have heard them if some twits were playing a daft joke on us."

"Look, I don't get it either. But it's there, I tell you!"

"For a moment, there was only the sound of laboured breathing up there on the top of high Trundle Hill... It took three attempts before the enormous slab of wood was toppled. The door crashed open, outwards.

"For a second, as they stumbled out from the brightly lit hut, they could see nothing. But the air was icy cold; far colder than they had ever known it before on their earthworks lookout.

"Then they all saw it! Lying at the foot of the wall of the hollow. A round ball... black and glistening... perfectly round... at least 3ft [1m] in diameter.

"And as they gaped, it began to move up the slope to the top of the hollow. For a second it

paused on the very lip of the bowl, then disappeared over the other side.

"The four men stood transfixed, amazed... as the ball seemed to defy the laws of gravity!"

After exclamations of amazement at what they had just seen (undoubtedly toned down for publication in this children's book!), the men ran up the slope of the hollow where the hut nestled.

"Hearts pounding, they dashed to the spot where the ball had rolled itself over the top of the wall. Far below, glistening in the white moonlight they saw it bouncing, bouncing... until it vanished into the lifeless gloom of Birdless Grove. For ever!"<sup>1</sup>

I was 22 when this British hardcover annual came out. Even at that age, the story made an impression on me. Was it true? If so, what was the mysterious black ball? Some sort of UFO? Then why did it bounce instead of flying away? It was a story quite unlike any other I had ever read before.

*Action Annual 1983* was, as the title suggests, an annual book that sprang from the weekly British comic of the same name. *Action* attracted controversy from the start – garnering unwelcome attention from the likes of the *Sun* and *Mary Whitehouse* – and in the event ran for just under two full years from February 1976 to November 1977. Its mainstay was violent stories inspired by popular films – 'Hook Jaw' was a Megalodon-sized shark clearly inspired by the massive popularity of *Jaws*, while 'Death Game 1999' was an equally brazen rip-off of *Rollerball*.

'The Mystery of Trundle Hill', though, was a different proposition; could it have been based on a real event?

Trundle Hill (or simply 'the Trundle') is a real-life Iron

Age fortification in the west of the English county of Sussex. Today, "...the north-east side of the Trundle is also popular as a good and relatively cheap vantage point for racegoers when there is horse racing at Goodwood. There are some excellent old photographs of the Trundle Enclosure being absolutely packed in the mid-20th century and there must have been a terrific atmosphere back then. Even today, it's a pleasant, but slightly distant point from which to view the races. You can drive to the car park near the top of the Trundle, meaning that you can get right up to the very top of this part of the South Downs very easily. The Trundle is 206m [676ft] high."<sup>2</sup>

Birdless Grove also exists: "The 3rd Duke of Richmond inherited just 1,100 acres [445ha] of land, including a park around the house of 200 acres [81ha]. He carried out a huge planting programme, adding to the plantations his father had originated behind the house. Like his father, he used exotica such as tulip trees and magnolias, and he added more cork oaks. From 1761, he planted a thousand cedars of Lebanon. Some of the evergreen plantations over to the right of the racecourse had grown well by the 1830s, but the area at the top of the hill was later replanted with beech, becoming known as Birdless Grove."<sup>3</sup>

Despite living on the other side of the world (in New Zealand), I have attempted to get to the bottom of this mystery using the Internet and email.

Rosemary A Gilmour (the Social History curator at the Chichester District Museum) confirmed that: "The places and descriptions are reasonably correct. The Trundle is a natural hill north of Chichester utilised by man in pre-Roman times; a Neolithic causewayed camp and Iron Age hillfort. It lies adjacent to the Goodwood Estate which was used for troop manoeuvres. Birdless Grove is a small woodland plantation nearby (SE of Trundle) in Goodwood Park."<sup>4</sup> She also suggested contacting the County Archives in Chichester for information on WWII troop movements.

Alan Readman (the Assistant County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester) replied in detail:

"It is an interesting account which I have not before heard. I can find no reference to it in printed or documentary sources here, I am afraid. The Trundle



"Lying at the foot of the hollow. A round ball... black and glistening... perfectly round... at least 3ft in diameter. And as they gaped, it began to move up the slope to the top of the hollow."

during the War was the site of a ground-to-air communications unit attached to RAF Tangmere. We have recollections of local people who remember the Americans – the 4th US Cavalry – who were based at Grove House and in Nissen huts in the woods at Charlton and Singleton. But all this was during the build-up to D-Day, so too late for any relevance to this incident. As to units which were based around Goodwood earlier in the War, we have no specific knowledge, other than what might be derived from ancillary sources (e.g. where units are recorded for bridegrooms in parish registers). Official records of the location of units in WWII, including war diaries, are more the province of The National Archives at Kew. However, it is likely you may be best served by contacting Richard Pailthorpe, who in 2005 co-ordinated a Lottery-funded project to record and publish the wartime

memories of people living in the Goodwood villages."<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, despite attempts to contact him, I never received a reply from Mr Pailthorpe. As the author of several books about the history of Chichester and the surrounding area, he would be the most likely person to have heard the story if locals remembered the event. I also contacted the National Archives and was told that: "Second World War service records for all armed services are still with the Ministry of Defence."<sup>6</sup> I tried the Veterans Advice Team, who pointed me towards the documents department of the Imperial War Museum in London, who in turn directed me back to the West Sussex County Council Record Office at Chichester. My investigation was going in circles.

Other avenues of research turned up nothing new. The *Chichester Observer* ran a small feature detailing the story and

my investigation, but nobody came forward with further information.

I contacted Martin Barker, author of the book *Action: The Story of a Violent Comic* (1990, Titan Books), but his research did not extend past the initial run of the comic. I also contacted a couple of enthusiasts who had created web sites about *Action*, but they too were only interested in the original run of the weekly comic. Various writers and editors worked on *Action*: Pat Mills, John Sanders, Steve MacManus and others worked on the title, but it is unclear if they were involved with the later annuals or not. I have been unable to find contact details for any of them.

So there the matter lies. Perhaps *FT* readers can help discover if this intriguing story ever really happened or is simply total fiction.

#### NOTES

1 Anon: "Tales Of Terror: The Mystery Of Trundle Hill", *Action Annual* 1983, IPC Magazines Ltd, 1983, pp102-103.

2 <http://tinyurl.com/39fvfca> (westsussex.info).

3 <http://tinyurl.com/2vpdhdq> (goodwood.co.uk).

4 Personal email, 30 May 2007.

5 Personal email, 2 June 2007.

6 Personal email, 2 June 2007.

# PSYCHIC SPIES

The Remote Viewing programme was once a cherished project of the US military and intelligence communities, a psi technique that appeared actually to work - so why was it terminated? Where did its star performers go? And what has happened to psychic spying in the post-9/11 landscape? **JIM SCHNABEL** provides the answers.

**O**n the last day of June 2009, a 23-year-old US Army private, Bowe Bergdahl, carrying only a compass and a bottle of water, disappeared from his unit's forward operating base in eastern Afghanistan.

Why and how he had done this wasn't clear. But the risk that he would fall into the hands of the Taliban was obvious. As soon as his absence was discovered, senior US military officials at Bagram Airbase in Kabul sprang into action. They scoured the airwaves and the nearby terrain with the latest surveillance technology, sent out patrols to try to find Bergdahl, and even distributed leaflets to Afghans in the area, warning them to inform the army if they saw him.

And eventually, they called John Alexander.

Alexander was a retired army colonel, living in Las Vegas. In the 1980s, as a staff officer at the Army's Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), he had been one of the insiders in the Pentagon's remote viewing programme (see **FT186:34-44; 263:42-44**).

The programme had been shut down in the mid 1990s - largely for political reasons, some said - and its trained psychics had gone on to conventional assignments or into retirement. Now the military, out of other options, wanted to see if remote viewers could help.

It was not an official project, just an informal request. "They were saying, we've tried everything else, why not this?" recalled Alexander.

He agreed to do what he could. And, with some difficulty, he did arrange, via a third party, for several trained remote viewers to target the missing soldier. In accordance with the usual procedure, each viewer was told merely that there was a target of interest, and that he or she should provide

**"We've tried everything else, why not remote viewing?"**

## ELUSIVE SUCCESS

In 2007, Paul Smith, a former Pentagon remote viewer with his own remote viewing company in Austin, Texas, organised a similar search - in this case for Keith Maupin, a US Army private who had been captured by Iraqi insurgents three years earlier.

"We were approached by some folks," Smith told me. "And I thought the project was fairly successful."

The remote viewing data produced by

Smith's team was detailed enough to indicate that Maupin was probably dead. Smith's analysis of the data was that Maupin's "remains are located near a cluster of structures somewhat isolated from others in a mostly desert-like setting, with one particular structure of interest that features curved or arched openings nearby - perhaps an abandoned or disused mosque."

Unfortunately, as in the Bergdahl case, the information did not strongly suggest a particular location, and wasn't used. "The task force whose job it was to look for Maupin knew the source of the data, and apparently were dubious of it," Smith said.

As these cases illustrate, remote viewers clearly have continued to do work for the government in the years since

the official programme was killed. "Especially after 9/11, a lot of the individual remote viewers [from the programme] were re-contacted by various federal authorities and asked for help," said Hal Puthoff, who ran the scientific side of the programme at SRI International (previously the Stanford Research Institute) in the 1970s and early 1980s.

There have been commercial and law-enforcement projects too. But, at least for those projects discussed publicly, success seems to have been mostly elusive. The results of a recent corporate espionage project, Smith told me, "at least according



**ABOVE:** Private Bowe Bergdahl in the hands of his Taliban captors. Remote viewers were used in an attempt to locate him; the results were "garbage".

whatever impressions came to mind.

The result?

"Most of the input that came back was pure garbage," said Alexander. "They gave location information that could have been anywhere within hundreds of miles. And they had an impression of somebody standing on a balcony. It was so non-specific; what could you do with it?"

In the end, Alexander decided not even to forward the remote viewing data to Bagram.

Private Bergdahl was captured by the Taliban, and is apparently still being held by them.





ABOVE: A trio of military personnel who participated in the US remote viewing programme: (l-r) Paul Smith, John Alexander and Lynn Buchanan.

to the client, were kind of disappointing.” Lyn Buchanan, another former military remote viewer, set up a project in the late 1990s – the Assigned Witness Program – in which a team of remote viewers would solve crimes, but apparently has since abandoned it. Other remote viewers have aimed their techniques at esoteric targets such as UFOs, or have used them to make dramatic predictions about world events. Ed Dames, a former member of the military remote viewing unit who is now a fixture on late-night paranormal-oriented talk radio, claimed recently, on the basis of his remote viewing data, that President Obama was born in Kenya, not Hawaii; that the Antichrist – a male politician – is alive today; and that Israel will attack Iran by... October 2009.

### WAS IT THE SCEPTICS' FAULT?

Thirty years ago, one might have thought that remote viewing was on its way to becoming the ultimate intelligence-gathering technology. The RV programme had offices in the huge Department of Defense complex at Fort Meade in Maryland, with dedicated staff that included analysts as well as the remote viewers themselves. There were standard lines of assigning tasks and distribution, as well as a substantial research arm, run by one of America's most respected defence and intelligence think-tanks. Thus institutionalised, remote viewing was an ongoing source of information to agencies throughout the US intelligence

community.

The programme had supporters at virtually all levels, from junior intelligence analysts and operations officers up to senior agency officials and even key senators and their staff. “If you didn't believe that remote viewing was real, you hadn't done your homework,” a retired major general, Edmund Thompson, once told me. Thompson, as the Army's assistant chief of staff for intelligence, had directed the establishment of the Fort Meade unit in the late 1970s, based in part on the results of an earlier CIA project.

Thompson and other champions of the programme believed it made sense for two clear reasons: first, there was ample evidence that the Russians and the Chinese, among other potential adversaries, had been trying to make use of ESP and other psi phenomena for espionage purposes; second, there was evidence that ESP could be of real use.

Some of the targets said to have been “remote viewed” with sensational accuracy in those early days included a secret US government communications-monitoring facility in the Appalachian mountains; a suspected low-yield nuclear test facility in Soviet Kazakhstan, with features confirmed only later by a spy satellite; the location of a Soviet bomber that had crashed in the jungles of Zaire; the construction of a new kind of Soviet ballistic missile submarine; the activities of a Soviet intelligence officer

in Washington, DC; and the code room of a foreign embassy. Puthoff memorably told me that at times senior military and intelligence officials “wanted to push buttons and drop bombs on the basis of our information”.

Yet for all its promise, the remote viewing programme eventually lost support, and was terminated. Later, it was almost entirely declassified – as if to emphasise that US intelligence agencies would never venture into the parapsychological realm again.

To understand what has happened to remote viewing since the death of the programme, it helps to understand why the programme was killed.

One set of reasons, obviously, had to do with embarrassment and entrenched scepticism. Scientists and engineers in the intelligence community tend to reflect the wider culture of science and engineering, which long ago effectively rejected parapsychological phenomena as spurious and “pseudoscientific”. Supporters of RV were constantly running into this attitude. In the 1970s, for example, the one agency where the programme really seems to have belonged – the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) – threw up a wall of scepticism and refused to get involved, despite pleas from CIA officials and a pile of classified evidence that remote viewing worked.

The CIA itself terminated its direct involvement with remote viewing research in 1975, not because it hadn't enjoyed success with RV but, rather, in spite of its success. The Agency itself was coming under scrutiny from Congress for some of its questionable activities in the 1950s and 60s, and wanted to distance itself from anything else that might cause embarrassment. The CIA would continue to have access to the programme but, like many other agencies, it didn't want to take responsibility for it.

That fear of embarrassment (the “giggle factor”, some called it) would follow the remote viewing programme wherever it went, and despite periods of relative stability, it was always a bureaucratic hot potato. Initially tossed from the CIA to the Air Force, it thereafter went from the Air Force to the Army, from the Army to the Defense

LEFT: One of the buildings at Fort Meade, Maryland, where the remote viewing unit worked.



Intelligence Agency (DIA), and then from the DIA back to the CIA, which finally declined to catch it. Robert Gates, the CIA director (now Secretary of Defense) who effectively killed the programme in 1995, had long been sceptical about its potential.

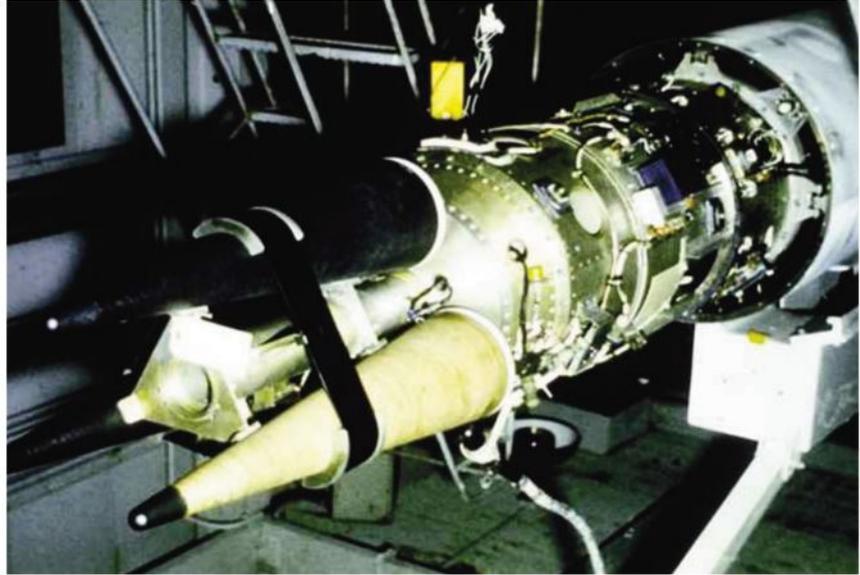
The demise of the programme didn't prevent people from continuing to practise remote viewing. The technique required little in the way of equipment and expense. But the loss of organisational support meant that remote viewing projects effectively had to be *ad hoc*, arm's-length ventures. And few could afford to do it full-time. "Finding people who've consistently kept up with their remote viewing practice is a challenge," Smith told me. "And even when you find someone who has been practising, it can be hard to arrange anything at short notice. They're like, 'sorry, I gotta take the dog to the vet, I can't get the session done today.'"

Possibly an even more important reason why remote viewing undershoots expectations today is that those expectations are too high. The programme, over its 23-year existence, generated some spectacular successes, but on a day-to-day basis, RV seems to have been less than robustly useful. Somewhat like cold fusion, it was fluky, and tended to depend on the participation of certain individuals. Even the best of those, such as Ingo Swann and Pat Price at SRI, and Joe McMoneagle at Fort Meade, were inaccurate much of the time – and even within their more successful remote viewing sessions. For the suspected nuclear facility in Kazakhstan, for example, a CIA official would later write that: "[M]ost of Price's data were wrong or could not be evaluated."

Even Hal Puthoff, who has no doubt that remote viewing is a real phenomenon, told me: "I agree that it's not ready to be a major intelligence source."

### IT'S NOT MENTAL RADIO

In the beginning, the SRI remote viewing programme, like most parapsychological research programmes, used subjects who seemed to have unusually strong psychic abilities, and had manifested them spontaneously from an early age. Among these subjects were Swann, Price, McMoneagle,



## "Most of Price's data were wrong or could not be evaluated"

and even Uri Geller (whom SRI briefly studied in the early 1970s, at the CIA's informal request). These "naturals" seemed able to relocate themselves to a target, in some sense, and report consciously what they perceived, often in considerable detail. (Price, to the amusement of his CIA handlers, claimed to psychically "see" better when wearing his glasses.)

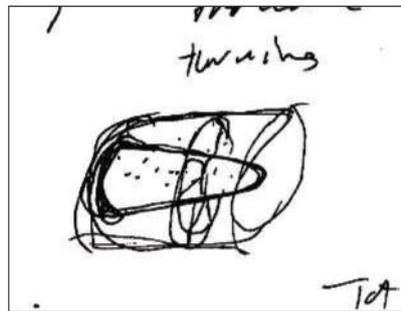
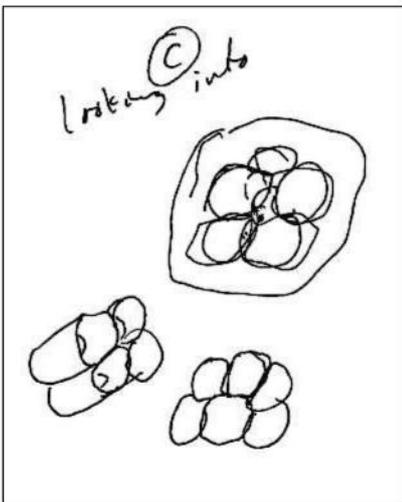
Price seemed so talented that the CIA pulled him out of SRI and worked with him directly on operational missions, until he died suddenly in 1975 (see panel). McMoneagle and others continued to be given tasks by multiple agencies over the years. But from an early stage, the researchers at SRI and their funders in the intelligence

community wanted to move beyond the traditional reliance on gifted individuals. They wanted to systematise remote viewing, ideally so that almost any trained person could do it.

There already was evidence that many people could do it well, perhaps in the same way that many people had innate musical ability. One example was Gary Langford, a young SRI physicist who showed some remote viewing ability after impromptu testing in the mid 1970s; he later performed the Zaire bomber viewing, which reportedly enabled the US government to recover the aircraft before the Soviets could get to it.

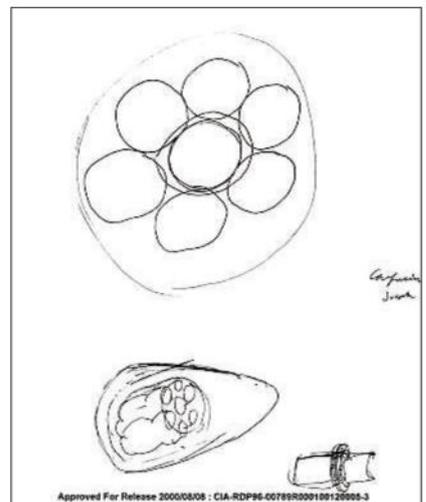
In any case, systematising remote viewing meant discovering the factors that made it more – or less – accurate. In engineering terms, the researchers wanted to "characterise the information channel".

To some people, relocating psychically to a target and reporting back seemed almost effortless. For the less gifted, considerable effort was required. Particularly for the latter, the perception seemed largely of the subliminal kind, as if the remote viewer's sensory exposure to the target were too fleeting to be directly accessible to conscious awareness.



TOP: The target in this RV exercise was the nuclear warheads in a missile.

LEFT, ABOVE, RIGHT: Declassified sketches by Fort Meade remote viewers in the 1980s demonstrate what appears to be a remarkable similarity to the target.





LEFT: Remote viewing has moved out of the military and into the wider world. Ingo Swann and John Alexander share a sofa with practitioner of 'psychic archaeology' Stephan A. Schwartz.

BELOW: Hal Puthoff still believes RV works.

Even if it doesn't enter consciousness, this kind of perception can influence one's actions in various ways. Dowsing and automatic writing represent attempts to harness this influence; and marketers once tried to use "subliminal seduction" techniques to get people to desire products without knowing why. Conceivably, the remote viewing faculty evolved to work this way – that is, through relatively primitive, pre-conscious, action-oriented brain circuitry, as a subtle, survival-related influence on decision-making. But could such a primitive, low-bandwidth information channel be usefully tapped to obtain detailed verbal and visual information about espionage targets?

At SRI, researchers found that when a remote viewer strained to bring target-related information into awareness, he was liable to get only the simpler features of the target, such as basic shapes and colours and emotional associations. As his brain automatically tried to fit these features into a recognisable pattern, it was likely to generate errors. If the target were a silvery, domed stadium, for example, the remote viewer might get the basic shape and colour right, but might mistakenly sense that he was perceiving a flying saucer. And of course that "recognition" would trigger a host of further mental associations, so that the remote viewer might now perceive alien occupants – and would be off on a merry chase from one set of imagined percepts to another.

Ingo Swann, who as both subject and researcher took the lead in systematising remote viewing at SRI, called such pattern-recognition errors "analytical overlay". Remarkably, this same type of error showed up in the more detailed reveries of natural psychics, as if much of their talent lay in the ability to generate internal imagery – imagery that wouldn't necessarily reflect a stronger psi-mediated access to the target.

Swann developed a structured remote viewing technique that was meant to enable the remote viewer to recognise and label, and thus separate out "analytical overlay" information. In this way, he hoped, analysts would have some idea of the reliability of a

**"It reached a certain level and didn't get much better"**



given set of remote viewing data, and would feel more comfortable using it to guide other intelligence-gathering assets such as satellites or human spies.

But in the end, it appeared that Swann succeeded only partially. Whether structured and trained or performed willy-nilly by apparent natural psychics, RV was still highly prone to errors. Puthoff and his SRI colleagues eventually conducted electroencephalograph and even magnetoencephalograph studies of remote viewers, to see if there was some deep, brain-activity signature indicating when they were

on-target. But Puthoff told me he never found one: "It just reached a certain level of quality and didn't get much better, and we never got correlates that allowed us to sift signal from noise."

In fact the "noise" that obscured the RV signal was multifarious and mental, and bore little resemblance to the mostly random electronic noise with which engineers and physicists were familiar. Sometimes, RV noise seemed to be "analytical overlay" because it reflected a basic feature of the target. But at other times it seemed that the remote viewer's attention had simply wandered off-target, like a dog finding a new and more interesting scent. On the occasion at SRI when Price and Swann described the secret government facility in the mountains, the real target had been a CIA officer's vacation cabin in the woods several miles away. Some of the anecdotes from the programme suggested that a remote viewer's attention also could inadvertently wander in *time*.

To top things off, remote viewers came to believe that they sometimes inadvertently cribbed from each other's sessions; they called this "telepathic overlay", and in principle it hopelessly complicated any attempt to boost the signal-to-noise-ratio by combining remote viewers' data.

A large and systematic research programme might have enabled scientists and engineers to understand and control all these sources of error, to the degree needed to make remote viewing routinely useful in intelligence-gathering – or anyway to delineate its limitations. But the programme that did exist wasn't very large, and couldn't possibly have done all the required research. Some in the intelligence community found RV useful anyway. But clearly, it wasn't useful enough to persuade the top brass and the espiocrats that they couldn't live without it.

"I have a problem with people who say that their remote viewing is nearly 100 per cent accurate," Alexander told me. "It works *sometimes*."

### WHERE THE MONEY IS

After the programme was cancelled, some of those who had served in the Fort Meade unit, including Smith, Buchanan, and Dames, set up their own remote viewing training companies. Within a few years, some of their trainees set up their own companies, and some of *their* trainees did the same, and enthusiasm for the phenomenon spread, particularly in the US but also in the UK and Europe.

Although there is an International Remote Viewing Association (IRVA), which publishes a monthly newsletter and holds annual conferences, RV enthusiasts' allegiances these days have become somewhat tribal. Alexander told me the situation

## PAT PRICE: DOUBLE AGENT

He believed that he could evaporate clouds and make red stoplights turn green. At night in bed, he said, he could close his eyes and drift above the oceans of the world, spotting the dark shapes of submarines beneath the waves. Sometimes he spotted UFOs; he was convinced that their secret bases riddled the globe. He had been a gold-panner in Alaska, a Christmas tree salesman, a building contractor, and somehow a town councilman in Burbank, California.

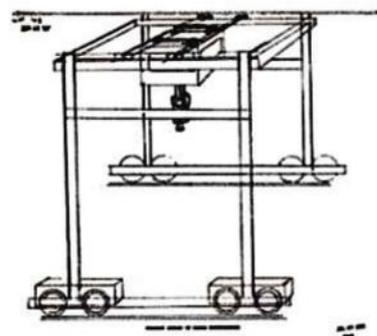
His name was Pat Price, and starting in the summer of 1973, he got the US government's attention. Hal Puthoff, who knew him slightly, asked him to check out a set of geographic coordinates in West Virginia. The target was informal and unclassified – a CIA employee's vacation cabin. But Price came back with a lengthy description of something else entirely: "...large underground storage areas... Looks like former missile site... Personnel, Army Signal Corps... Folders inside cabinet labelled: Cueball, 14 Ball, 8 Ball, Rackup..."

What Price had described was a secret National Security Agency communications-intercept facility, tucked into the hills a few miles away from the vacation cabin. Ken Kress, a young CIA officer helping to monitor the work at SRI, would later write in an official memorandum that "Price, who had no military or intelligence background, provided a list of project titles associated with current and past activities including one of extreme sensitivity. Also, the codename of the site was provided. Other information concerning the physical layout of the site was accurate."

Price began to work in the SRI research program, but for operational remote viewing, he soon began dealing directly with the CIA. One of the Agency officers who worked with him coined the phrase "an eight-martini evening" to describe how shaken up he was after one of Price's performances. Another, years later, would tell him simply that Price "was extraordinarily accurate, unbelievably accurate".

In July 1975, in the midst of a lengthy CIA RV project relating to a suspected Libyan terrorism facility, Price died of an apparent heart attack while visiting Las Vegas. His death served as a convenient excuse to terminate the Agency's official connection with remote viewing. Two years later, when CIA Director Stansfield Turner was asked about stories of the Agency's dabbling in parapsychology, he dismissed the subject by saying that the CIA had once briefly worked with a man who appeared to have some rudimentary psychic ability, "but he died and we haven't heard from him since".

In a sense, though, Price has refused to



US GOVERNMENT



ABOVE: An RV target (a crane in a top secret facility) and Pat's sketch.

LEFT: Pat Price (left) with Hal Puthoff.

alleged infiltration of US government offices and theft of documents. This naturally raised the question: had Price's sensational "remote viewing" data – some of which he claimed to have generated at home, in private – been fed to him by a Scientology spy network within the US intelligence community?

Puthoff and others have dismissed the idea, since many of Price's remote viewing sessions

were done with CIA or SRI officials present. But Kress did wonder, years later in a brief essay, whether Price's initial remote viewing of the NSA site in 1973 had been merely "a dangle, that is, real information supplied by others so that a psychic double agent ingratiate themselves and achieves a penetration which eventually returns even more important information to his handlers?"

Kress also suspected that Price had elicited some target-related information directly from CIA officers: for example, in the midst of a foreign embassy-related project by "Frank", a CIA man, "Pat would say he liked the subdued red and green decor surrounding the stairs and Frank would respond that he also was impressed with the lavish use of Italian marble."

At one time, Kress had been criticised within the CIA for his enthusiasm about Price and the SRI effort. By the time of his essay, published in 1999, he had become a "skeptical agnostic", and had concluded that the most real and remarkable talent of psychics such as Price was their ability "to instil the belief in unexplained capabilities" in the unwary.

A few years later, the Price story became even more complicated, after the FBI raided the Los Angeles office of the Church of Scientology. Among the documents they found were records of briefings that Price, a Church member, had routinely given to a senior Scientology official about his SRI and CIA activities. These included descriptions of highly classified operations and the names of covert Agency personnel that Price had agreed, in his CIA and SRI contracts, to keep secret.<sup>1</sup> (Puthoff, who was informed of all this by government officials in the late 1970s, described it to me as "the biggest betrayal I have ever experienced".)

The FBI's raid on the Scientology offices had been part of a lengthy investigation – eventually resulting in plea deals and jail terms – that concerned the Church's

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> K Kress: "Parapsychology in Intelligence: A Personal Review and Conclusions", *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 13: 1, pp69–85 (1999).

~~SECRET~~ NOFORN STIPPLED  
SPECIAL ACCESS REQUIRED

PROJECT SUMMARY: PROJECT # 9091

OPERATION: CA-1 (On-site)

TASK: (16 Jul 90) Determine which of the following vessels are carrying illegal drugs: [REDACTED] SG1A

REPLY: The vessel [REDACTED] is carrying white, clumpy contraband in a corrugated metal walled space about 21 feet by 10 feet. This space is located on the starboard side just aft of mid-ships. SG1A

ACTION: [REDACTED] SG1A

EVAL: Strong correlation of description and location of contraband aboard vessel.

reminds him of what goes on in the martial arts training world: "There's a lot of 'who's your teacher, and what's your pedigree?' And 'my instructor can whip your instructor' and that sort of thing."

It's tempting to conclude that all this emphasis on training reflects remote viewers' failure to earn a living from more direct uses of their talents. As the saying goes, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach."

But this may not be a fair assessment. From browsing RV-related websites and speaking to people who are still connected to that world, I get the impression that money-oriented remote viewing – in trading and betting contexts – is an activity on the increase.

The basic protocol for this sort of thing, "associative remote viewing", or ARV, was developed at SRI in the 1970s. It is supposed to be precognitive: the remote viewer's assistant secretly associates the possible outcomes of interest (say, stock-price-up and stock-price-down) with images or other targets (say, an apple and a banana). The ARVer then attempts to describe the target the assistant will show him when the outcome occurs – in other words, tries to remote-view his own future feedback, and in this way learn the outcome in advance.

This might seem absurd. However, experiments at SRI in the 1970s and 80s suggested that remote viewing forward in time – perhaps for outcomes that were in some way already determined – could be just as easy as remote viewing in the present. The simplicity of the ARV protocol also seems better matched to remote viewing's "low bandwidth" than detailed intelligence

gathering ever was.

Most importantly, Puthoff told me, ARV works.

For a busy month and a half in 1984, he used the technique to play the silver futures market, the goal being to raise \$25,000 to save the finances of a start-up private school that his wife had founded.

"We did this for 30 market days, and correctly predicted the market's movement on 21 of those days," he said. But the \$26,000 he netted represented only 10 per cent of the trading profits. The other 90 per cent went to the local investor who had put up the capital. "He made nearly a quarter of a million dollars," said Puthoff. "And he was enraged that we stopped."

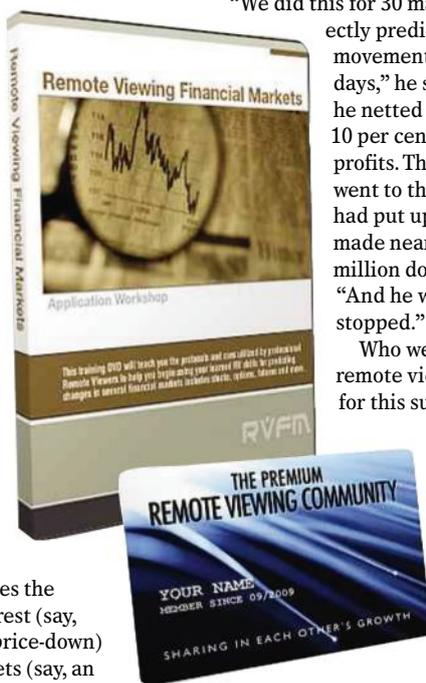
Who were the seven expert remote viewers Puthoff used for this successful venture?

Members of the school's board, for whom Puthoff gave a one-evening training course.

Unsurprisingly, Puthoff's project was followed by others, and today ARV seems far

and away the most popular practical use of remote viewing. "I think some people are making some money with it but are not advertising it," said Puthoff.

Paul Smith told me that his own ARV team, drawn from his training-course students, has used the technique to predict the outcome of sports betting contests, stock index futures, and even the Texas state lottery (which awards small amounts for partially correct number-guessing). Their track record has never been perfect, but Smith has claimed that they perform consistently better than chance. He also said that his son recently did an ARV sports



LEFT: According to this declassified memo, RV was being used to intercept drug trafficking. BELOW: These days, it's also being promoted by ex-RVers like Ed Dames and Paul Smith as a way of playing the markets or winning sports bets.

betting project with fellow students at his university: "Of 13 students in the group, 11 predicted the correct outcome of the game," he told me. That quickly led to a larger project, in which a teaching assistant kicked in some capital and, in seven trades of a stock index-tracking security, he said, "They earned \$18,000."

Similar feats have been described by others in the remote viewing world. There are rumours of ARV teams that ply unsuspecting casinos, and even of hedge funds given over to ARV-guided trading.

Some of these tales can be hard to believe. It's also a safe bet that money-losing ARV projects get little mention. But perhaps the most sobering observation one could make here is that remote viewing in gambling and trading, as in spying, doesn't seem to offer a decisive edge over the conventional techniques of modern professionals. Consider what Bloomberg News, among others, reported earlier this year:

*Goldman Sachs Group Inc.'s traders made money every single day of the first quarter, a feat the firm has never accomplished before.*

*Daily trading net revenue was \$25 million or higher in all of the first quarter's 63 trading days, New York-based Goldman Sachs reported in a filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission today. The firm reaped more than \$100 million on 35 of the days, or more than half the time...*

*The lack of trading losses could add to the perception that Goldman Sachs has an unfair advantage in the markets, said one shareholder.*

So are psi faculties headed for evolution's dustbin? Not necessarily, according to Puthoff, who suggested to me that the techniques used by successful traders and other businesspeople may not be as conventional as they seem: "People who make it to the top of the [economic] food chain are probably using intuitive abilities in making decisions without even realising it."

Which, even if true, leaves remote viewing pretty much where it ended in the mid-1990s; that is, still in need of a comprehensive and conclusive research programme to find out whether it can be useful in the modern world and to understand its implications for the nature of reality. **FT**

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**JIM SCHNABEL** is the author of *Remote Viewers: The Secret History of America's Psychic Spies* (1997), *Dark White: Aliens, Abductions and the UFO Obsession* (1994) and other books on paranormal subjects.



# A 100,000-year-old civilisation?

**COLIN WILSON** celebrates the pioneering work of the late Stan Gooch, and explains how Gooch's theories about Neanderthal civilisation inspired his own work – even as they were being dismissed by palæontologists. Ironically, many of Gooch's claims have since been confirmed from archaeological evidence.

Main illustration: **JONATHAN BURTON**

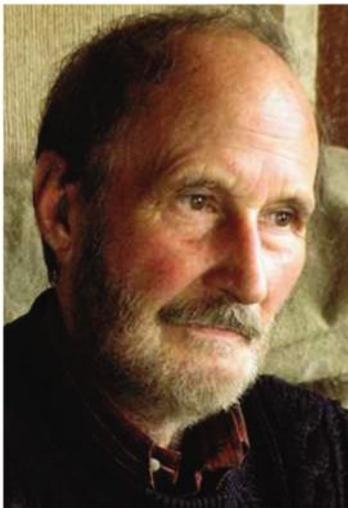
**M**y friend Stan Gooch (below) spent his last years living on an old age pension on a caravan site in Wales. For a long time, his letters to me had revealed increasing cynicism and weariness, and friends who went to visit him – deeply impressed by the visionary scope of his books – were shocked to find him in an obvious state of indifference and discouragement. When tired of exchanging letters by 'snail mail', I offered to provide him with a computer; his reply was that he would never use it. It seems astonishing that this brilliant writer, author of more than a dozen books (some of them, like *The Paranormal*, classics in their field), should have been allowed to sink into the condition that the saints used to call *accidia*, but I suppose it has been the fate of many men of genius.

Now he has gone (see p24 for a full obituary), perhaps Stan's highly original work will one day be given the credit it deserves. Certainly, it seems that the safe, academic world he turned his back on is catching up with him, as recent findings appear to confirm some of his long-held theories about the sophistication of Neanderthal man (see pp41–42).

## *Cities of Dreams*

In 1999, I was engaged in pursuing an intriguing little problem. Charles Hapgood, best known as the author of *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings*, had died as the result of a car accident that happened in December 1982. Two months earlier, he had written to a librarian named Rand Flem-Ath telling him that he had made "recent exciting discoveries" that had convinced him that there had once been a 100,000-year-old civilisation with

*The academic world Gooch turned his back on is catching up with him*



"advanced levels of science". And since I had agreed to collaborate with Flem-Ath on a book about Atlantis, I set out to pursue Hapgood's contacts to see if I could find out what he meant.

Finally, through a tip-off from one of Hapgood's acquaintances, I found myself in touch with an archaeologist and science writer from New England, who staggered me when he

declared that it was he who had given Hapgood this information. What he had told him, he said, was (a) that the Greek measure of distances proved that they knew the exact size of the Earth a millennium or so before Eratosthenes discovered it (around 250 BC), and (b) that Neanderthal man had a remarkable degree of culture, and was studying the stars by 100,000 BC or earlier.

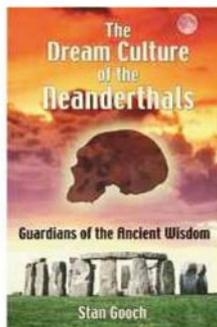
Now, I had already stumbled on the information about the Greeks in a book called *Historical Metrology* by AE Berriman (1953), to which the historical researcher Henry Lincoln had introduced me. And the second assertion had been made by Stan Gooch in 1989, in a book called *Cities of Dreams*.

Gooch was arguing that Neanderthal man had possessed a complex civilisation, but that it was not a civilisation of bricks and mortar, but of 'dreams'. That hardly seemed to make sense. Surely civilisation is our defence against nature? Dreams are not much use against a hurricane or a sabre tooth tiger.

Gooch launches his argument by comparing Neanderthal man with Native Americans, pointing out that in spite of their complex culture, the latter had no written language and built no houses. What would have happened, Gooch asks, if they had been exterminated by disease or

some catastrophe, and had simply vanished? Archaeologists would find their skeletons and dismiss them as 'primitives', just as we dismiss Neanderthals.

Speaking of the Seven Sisters, Gooch remarks: "The Pleiades are the only [star grouping] noted and







V. MOURE

named by every culture on Earth, past and present, from the most advanced to the most primitive". He points out the similarity of the legends of Australian aborigines, Wyoming Indians and the ancient Greeks. In the Greek legend, Orion the Hunter pursues the six maidens and their mother through the forest, until Zeus takes pity on them, and changes them all (including Orion) into stars. In the Australian legend, the hunter is called Wurrunna, and he captures two of the seven maidens; but these escape up trees that suddenly grow until they reach the sky, where all the maidens live forever. According to the Wyoming Indians, the seven sisters are pursued by a bear, and climb up a high rock, which grows until it reaches the sky.

Gooch goes on to mention that the Seven Sisters play an equally important role in the legends of the Aztecs, the Incas, the Polynesians, the Chinese, the Masai, the Kikuyu, the Hindus and the ancient Egyptians. This worldwide interest in the Pleiades, he argues, surely indicates that it originated in some very early and once central culture.

In Gooch's view, that culture was Neanderthal. We may doubt this, and prefer to

## *New evidence shows Neanderthal man possessed his own technology*



REUTERS

TOP: The site at Capelles, north of Barcelona, where 15 Neanderthal furnaces were found. ABOVE: An 82,000-year-old bone flute found in Slovenia suggests Neanderthals had their own music.

believe that it was our own ancestor, Cro-Magnon. But Gooch certainly had accumulated some impressive evidence of Neanderthal man. He speaks, for example, of a find made at Drachenloch in the Swiss Alps, where a 75,000-year-old bear altar was discovered in a cave. In a rectangular stone chest, whose lid was a massive stone slab, archaeologists found seven bear skulls, with their muzzles pointing towards the cave entrance. At the back of the cave, there were niches in the wall with six more bear skulls.

Now seven is, of course, a number associated with shamanism. The Drachenloch cave was clearly a place of ritual – in effect, a church. Moreover, as historian of religion Mircea Eliade tells us, there is a worldwide connection between the bear and the Moon. And this might have been guessed from the fact that the number of skulls in the cave was 13 – the number of lunar months in the year. This, and many other clues, led Gooch to infer that the religion of Neanderthal man was based on Moon worship, and Neanderthals were the first 'star gazers'. He argues that, among much else, the knowledge of precession of the equinoxes, noted by Giorgio de Santillana and Herta von Dechend in *Hamlet's Mill*, probably originated with Neanderthal man.

A 'church' implies a priest or shaman, so Neanderthal man must have had his shamans, 'magicians' who played an important part in the hunting rituals, as shamans do worldwide. Is it chance that the Moon goddess is Diana the Huntress? Is she perhaps also a legacy from Neanderthal man?

### *Neanderthal culture*

Since Gooch's book came out in 1989, new evidence has accumulated indicating that Neanderthal man also possessed his own technology. In 1996, it was announced that scientists from Tarragona's Roviri i Virgili University had unearthed 15 furnaces near Capelles, north of Barcelona. Professor Eudald Carbonell stated that they prove that Neanderthal man possessed a skill level far more advanced than anyone had supposed. *Homo sapiens*, he said, was not an "evolutionary leap" beyond Cro-Magnon

*Continued on p43*

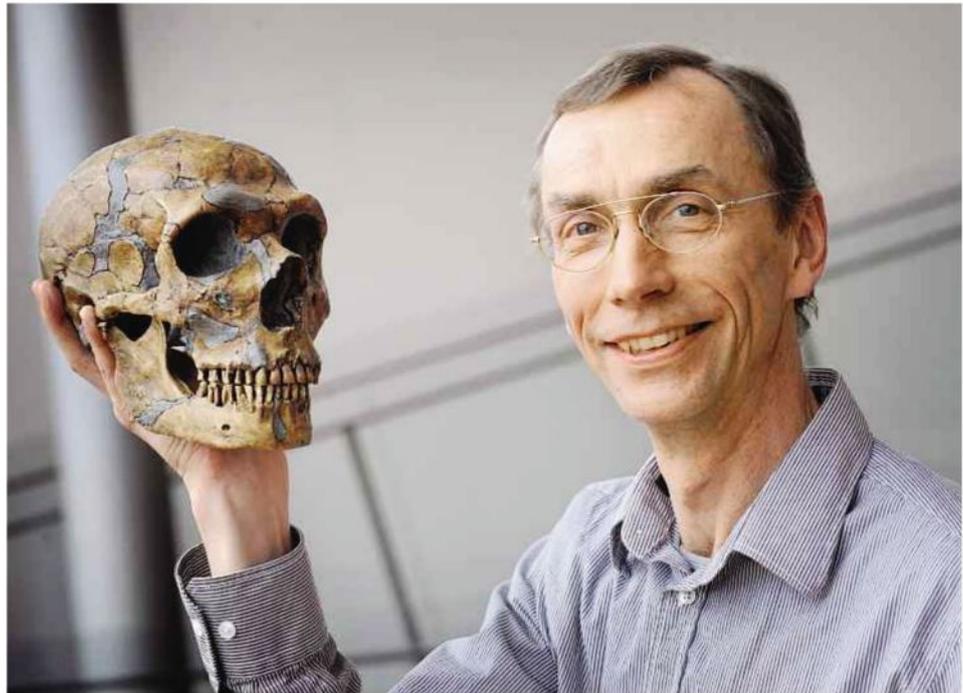
# NEANDERTHAL NEWS

PAUL SIEVEKING surveys recent discoveries that have modified the unflattering image of our close human cousins.

Neanderthals have perplexed and intrigued us ever since the first bones were found in Engis, Belgium, (1829), in Forbes's Quarry, Gibraltar (1848), and in the Neander Valley outside Düsseldorf in Germany (1856). A degree of interbreeding between *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals in Europe would not be surprising given that the species overlapped there from about 44,000 BP (before the present), when modern humans first arrived in Europe, until the Neanderthals' extinction, sometime between 37,000 and 28,000 BP (the latter date from Gorham's Cave in Gibraltar). Archaeologists have been debating for years whether the fossil record shows evidence of individuals with mixed features.

Last May, however, a team of biologists – led by Svante Pääbo of the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig – reported in the first detailed analysis of the Neanderthal genome that interbreeding had indeed taken place, contradicting their conclusions a year earlier. They have recovered about 60 per cent of the genome, and by comparisons with the DNA of five people from France, China, southern Africa, western Africa and Papua New Guinea, they concluded that about one to four per cent of the genome of non-Africans is derived from Neanderthals.

They had identified only about 100 genes – surprisingly few – that have contributed to the evolution of modern humans since the Neanderthal-*sapiens* split between 400,000 and 600,000 BP. While there was apparently “gene flow” from Neanderthals to *H.sapiens*, there was no evidence of any genetic exchange in the opposite direction, suggesting that the resulting offspring were raised by modern humans. Since no sign of Neanderthal mitochondrial DNA has turned up in modern humans, it seems likely that the interbreeding was between Neanderthal men and *H.sapiens* women. The genetic analysis suggests that this didn't occur in Europe but in



ABOVE: Svante Pääbo of the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology with a reconstructed Neanderthal skull.

the Fertile Crescent region of the Middle East some 100,000 to 60,000 BP, soon after the initial migration of *H.sapiens* out of Africa, but before the modern human populations of Europe and East Asia split. This hypothesis, however, has no *archaeological* corroboration.

Dr Pääbo has pioneered the extraction and analysis of ancient DNA from fossil bones, overcoming daunting obstacles in the last 13 years in his pursuit of the Neanderthal genome. A major difficulty is that most Neanderthal bones are extensively contaminated with modern human DNA. The fragmentary strands of DNA he has analysed come from small bones found in the Vindija cave in Croatia belonging to three Neanderthal females who lived around 40,000 years ago, and other bones excavated at 16 sites across Europe and Eurasia.

Geneticists have been making increasingly valuable contributions to human prehistory, but their work depends heavily on complex statistics that make their arguments hard to follow, and it lacks the solidity of archaeological evidence – so there is no consensus. For

example, quantitative analysis of hominid teeth from the last four million years, conducted by Aida Gómez Robles at the National Centre for Research on Human Evolution in Granada, Spain, indicates that the Neanderthal-*sapiens* split occurred more than a million years BP, roughly twice as long ago as the widely-accepted estimate. (*London Times*, *Irish Times*, 13 Feb 2009; *BBC News*, 6 May; *NY Times*, *Guardian*, *Independent*, 7 May; *Economist*, 8 May; *Science Daily*, 23 June 2010.



Researchers from George Washington University and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History have discovered evidence to debunk the theory that the Neanderthals' extinction was caused in part by a deficient diet, lacking variety and over-reliant on meat. Starch granules from plant food trapped in the dental calculus on Neanderthal teeth from 40,000 BP excavated from Shanidar Cave in Iraq and Spy Cave in Belgium suggested they ate a wide variety of plants including date palms, beans, roots, tubers and grains such

as barley – and the grains showed evidence of cooking. Their diet was evidently closer to that of their *H.sapiens* rivals than previously thought. Previous excavations found that Neanderthals living on Gibraltar ate deer, wild boar, bear, mountain goat, rabbit, quail, duck, pigeon, and tortoise. They also consumed seafood when it was available, including dolphin, monk seals and shellfish. There is evidence that mussels were warmed to open their shells. *BBC News*, 23 Sept 2008; 27 Dec; *D.Mail*, 28 Dec 2010; *Science Daily*, 2 Feb 2009, 1 Jan 2011.



Pioneering research at the University of York suggests that Neanderthals developed deep-seated commitments to the welfare of others, illustrated by a long adolescence and a dependence on hunting together. There is also archaeological evidence of the routine care of the injured or infirm over extended periods. These include the remains of a girl with a congenital brain abnormality who was not abandoned but lived until five or six years old and those of

Continued on p42

Continued from p41

an adult with a withered arm, deformed feet and blindness in one eye who must have been cared for, perhaps for as long as 20 years. Compassion was extended to strangers, animals, objects and abstract concepts, according to the research, led by Dr Penny Spikins and published in the journal *Time and Mind*. *Science Daily*, 5 Oct 2010.



In 1985, excavations at the Cueva de los Aviones, a cave in Murcia, south-east Spain, found cockleshells perforated as if to be hung on a necklace and an oyster shell containing mineral pigments, hinting that the cave's Neanderthal residents had a taste for self-adornment and makeup. In 2008, excavation at another Murcian cave, Cueva Anton, turned up a pierced, orange-coloured scallop shell, again probably part of a necklace, that bore traces of a yellow foundation-type pigment, together with a red powder which had been mixed with reflective black material. Excavation leader João Zilhão, professor of palaeolithic archaeology at Bristol University, speculated that this was some kind of glitter makeup. The cave finds were carbon-dated to 50,000 BP. Black sticks of the pigment manganese, which may have been used as body paint by Neanderthals, have previously been discovered in Africa; but the Spanish finds are the first secure evidence of Neanderthal cosmetic use. *BBC News*, 9 Jan; *Guardian*, 12 Jan 2010.



An analysis of bones found in the Sidrón cave complex in Bares, Asturias, north-west Spain, and from Monte Lessini in Italy, showed that some Neanderthals had human blood group "O", while the presence of gene MC1R suggests some were fair-skinned, perhaps with freckles, and had red or ginger hair – though there was probably the whole range of hair colour and pigmentation that we see today in European populations. The research also confirmed that Neanderthals and modern humans (though



ABOVE: A perforated cockleshell that some archæologists believe may have been part of a Neanderthal necklace.

not chimpanzees) shared a version of a gene called FOXP2 that is known to be involved in language. This suggests that Neanderthals may have been able to talk, though speech would also involve other genes and we can't tell if they had much in the way of language. However, they had a hyoid bone in the throat, which is anatomically important for articulating words, as it anchors the tongue and allows a wide variety of movements of the larynx. *Int. Herald Tribune*, 19 Oct; *Economist*, 20 Oct; *BBC News*, 25 Oct; *D.Mail*, 26 Oct 2007; *D.Telegraph*, 30 Dec 2008.



Research by anthropologist Julien Riel-Salvatore from the University of Colorado Denver shows that Neanderthals were far more resourceful than previously thought. He spent seven years studying Neanderthal sites throughout Italy, with special focus on the vanished Uluzzian culture. About 42,000 years ago, the Aurignacian culture, attributed to modern *H.sapiens*, appeared in northern Italy while central Italy continued to be occupied by Neanderthals of the Mousterian culture, which had been around for at least 100,000 years. At this time, a new and quite distinct Neanderthal

culture – the Uluzzian – arose in the south. Riel-Salvatore identified projectile points, ochre, bone tools, ornaments and possible evidence of fishing and small game hunting at sites throughout southern Italy. These innovations emerged in an area geographically separated from modern humans. At the time, southern Italy experienced a shift in climate, becoming increasingly open and arid. Neanderthals living there began using darts or arrows to hunt smaller game to supplement the increasingly scarce larger mammals they traditionally hunted. Riel-Salvatore rejects the theory that Neanderthals were exterminated by modern humans. *H.sapiens* might simply have existed in larger groups and had slightly higher birthrates, he said. *physorg.com*, 21 Sept 2010.



Research conducted at the ANO Laboratory of Prehistory in St Petersburg and reported in the October 2010 issue of *Current Anthropology* suggests that climate change following massive volcanic eruptions drove northern Neanderthals to extinction and cleared the way for modern humans to thrive in Europe and Asia. Evidence for the catastrophe

comes from the Mezmaiskaya cave in the Caucasus Mountains, a site rich in Neanderthal bones and artefacts. Recent excavations revealed two distinct layers of volcanic ash. Sediment samples from the two layers reveal greatly reduced pollen concentrations compared to surrounding layers, indicating a dramatic shift to a cooler and dryer climate. The second of the two eruptions seems to mark the end of Neanderthal presence at Mezmaiskaya.

The ash layers correspond chronologically to what is known as the Campanian Ignimbrite super-eruption, which occurred around 40,000 years ago in Italy, and a smaller eruption not long afterwards in the Caucasus Mountains. These eruptions are thought to have caused a "volcanic winter" that might have lasted for years, possibly resulting in the mass death of Neanderthals and their prey animals.

"Early moderns initially occupied the more southern parts of western Eurasia and Africa and thus avoided much of the direct impact of the eruptions," according to researcher Liubov Vitaliena Golovanova. And while advances in hunting techniques and social structure clearly aided the survival of modern humans as they moved north, they "may have further benefited from the Neanderthal population vacuum in Europe, allowing wider colonisation and the establishment of strong source populations in northern Eurasia." While the researchers stress that more data from other areas in Eurasia are needed to fully test the volcanic hypothesis, they believe the Mezmaiskaya cave offers "important supporting evidence" for the idea of a volcanic extinction. It need hardly be pointed out that Neanderthals could have died out in different places from a variety of causes. *Science Daily*, 7 Oct 2010.

For more on the Neanderthal/*H.sapiens* interbreeding debate, see **FT204:56-57, 206:71**.

For more on Stan Gooch's views on Neanderthals, see **FT199:73, 202:73** and pp46-47.

Continued from p40

man, but only a gentle step from Neanderthal. Each of the furnaces served a different function according to its size: some ovens, some hearths, some even blast furnaces. The team also discovered an “astonishing variety” of stone and bone tools, as well as the most extensive traces of wooden utensils. (*Times*, 3 Sept 1996.)

One of Gooch’s most amazing statements is that in South Africa, Neanderthal man was digging deep mines to obtain red ochre 100,000 years ago. “One of the largest sites evidenced the removal of a million kilos [2,205,000lb] of ore.” Other mines were discovered dated to 45,000, 40,000 and 35,000 years ago. In all cases, the site had been painstakingly filled in again, presumably because the Earth was regarded as sacred. Neanderthal man seems to have used the red ochre for ritualistic purposes, including burial.

In 1950, Dr Ralph Solecki of the Smithsonian Institution had excavated the Shanidar cave in Iraqi Kurdistan and discovered evidence of ritualistic burial by Neanderthals, in which the dead had been covered with a quilt of woven wild flowers. His book *Shanidar* (1971) is subtitled *The Humanity of Neanderthal Man*. He was the first of many anthropologists to conclude that Neanderthal man was far more than an ape.

Gooch points out that red ochre has been in use since at least 100,000 years ago until today, when it is still used by Australian Aborigines. He quotes one authority who calls it “the most spiritually rich and magical of all substances”.

Now, red ochre is the oxidised form of a mineral called magnetite, which, as the name suggests, is magnetic. If a small sliver of magnetite is floated on the surface tension of water, it swings around and points to magnetic north. And in 1000 BC, the Olmecs were using it as a compass needle, floating on cork, a millennium before the Chinese invented the compass.

Gooch points out that many creatures, including pigeons, have a cluster of magnetite in the brain, which is used for homing, and asks if it is not conceivable that Neanderthal man also had a magnetite cluster in the brain, which may have enabled him to detect hæmatite under the ground. This, of course, would be simply a variant of the power dowzers have to detect underground water.

For whatever reason Neanderthal man sought red ochre, it seems clear that he must be credited with some kind of civilisation.

In January 2002, it emerged that Neanderthal man made use of a variety of superglue. It was a kind of blackish-brown pitch discovered at a lignite-mining pit in the Harz Mountains, estimated to be 80,000 years old. One of the pieces bore the imprint of fingers and impressions of a flint

tool and wood, suggesting that the pitch had served as a sort of glue to secure the wooden shaft to a flint blade. The pitch, from a birch tree, can only be produced at a temperature of 300–400°C (570–750°F). Prof. Dietrich Mania of the Friedrich-Schiller University in Jena said: “This implies that Neanderthals did not come across these pitches by accident, but must have produced them with intent”.

Now clearly, all this is revolutionary. We take it for granted that human culture



## Neanderthal man carved a female figure, probably the Moon goddess

began with Cro-Magnon man, *Homo sapiens*. Our Cro-Magnon ancestors began making drawings in caves about 30,000 years ago and so, we had always assumed, our civilisation had its beginnings. But if the Pleiades were recognised 40,000 years ago, then Neanderthal man could have got there first.

Again, an 82,000-year-old bone flute, discovered by Dr Ivan Turk of the Slovenia Academy of Sciences in 1995, demonstrates that Neanderthal man had his own music. It begins to look more and more as if Gooch’s comparison of Neanderthal man to Native Americans is valid. A 26,000-year-old bone sewing needle, complete with a hole for thread, was discovered at another

BELOW: The Berekhat Ram figurine, the ‘Neanderthal Venus’ discovered on the Golan Heights in 1980 by the Israeli archaeologist Professor Naama Goren-Inbar.

Neanderthal site.

But perhaps the most staggering piece of evidence so far is the small, carved statue known as the Berekhat Ram figurine, discovered on the Golan Heights in 1980 by the Israeli archaeologist Professor Naama Goren-Inbar. Its age was established

because it was found – along with 7,500 scrapers – between two layers of basalt, known as tuff, that could be dated. And the date was between 250,000 and 280,000 years ago. It resembles the famous Venus of Willendorf, but is far cruder. And examination under an electron microscope revealed that it was not just some odd-shaped stone, but that it had been carved – by Neanderthal man. His flint tool had left powder in the grooves.

So Neanderthal man was carving a tiny female figure, probably the Moon goddess, more than a quarter of a million years ago. The implication is that he had already developed the religion to which the bear skulls in the Drachenloch cave bear witness – but 200,000 years earlier.

In *Uriel’s Machine*, Robert Lomas and Christopher Knight also turn their attention to Neanderthals, and point out that they had larger brains than modern man, adding the startling information that they were around for 230,000 years before they vanished. Neanderthals thus had plenty of time to acquire a high level of sophistic-

ation. They clearly believed in an afterlife, for they buried their dead with every sign of religious ritual, and with tools and meat to supply their needs in the beyond. They buried them in cloaks covered with ornate beads (with buttonholes), decorated caps, carved bracelets and pendants. They manufactured at least one perfectly circular chalk disc, which is almost certainly a Moon disc.

And if Neanderthal man conducted religious rituals, played the flute, studied the heavens, and built blast furnaces, he must have had some form of language other than grunts.

So Stan Gooch’s insights, which struck most people as crazy in 1989 (they certainly struck me as crazy when I first read *Cities of Dreams*), are slowly being justified.

## The mysterious ‘Carl’

But to return to my New England academic, who claimed to have been the source of Hapgood’s statement that civilisation was 100,000 years old...

I shall not give his real name, for reasons

that will become clear, but shall call him Carl.

During that first conversation, it was soon apparent that there was an unforeseen problem. Although our talk lasted two hours, I couldn't understand more than one sentence in 10. Like certain brilliant people, whose heads are crammed with knowledge, Carl was unable – or unwilling – to express himself clearly and to the point. It was obvious that when I asked him a question, he wanted to say 30 things at once, and it was like a crowd trying to push through a narrow doorway. Nevertheless, I had no doubt that I had solved the problem of Hapgood's "100,000 years". I could hardly wait to telephone my collaborator.

Here I was in for a surprise. Instead of the congratulations I expected, Rand reacted with deep suspicion. Who was this man, and if he had been Hapgood's source, why had Rand not come across his name while studying the Hapgood papers at Yale? I pointed out that Hapgood had said: "In certain recent discoveries..." Probably Hapgood had not had time to write about them yet. But Rand made it clear that he felt Carl was some kind of fraud. But why should he be? I asked. What possible motive could he have for lying to me? Rand said he didn't know, but he intended to find out.

As to the suggestion that Neanderthal man might be more intelligent than we suppose, he was dismissive. And he told me later that he had mentioned it to a girl who taught in a nearby university, and she had burst into screams of laughter.

I had arranged to ring Carl back in two weeks, and to install a recording machine that would play for an hour. But this proved to be quite inadequate. Carl simply talked non-stop for an hour, and when I told him the tape had ended, just went on talking – for another hour.

But at least he said some fascinating things – basically, that the antiquity of civilisation was proved by its measures. And if these measures could be shown to date back to the La Quina disc, carved by a Neanderthal 100,000 years ago, then the point was proven. I had to agree. He also talked about linguistic evidence in Greek, Hebrew, Sumerian and Sanskrit, and cited the exact words. I had never come across a man of such immense erudition. His theory was incredibly difficult, involving music, planetary distances, archaeology and atomic numbers. His articles – of which he sent me several – might range from the Great Pyramid, Ice Age art and Chaco Canyon to alchemical symbolism.

But I soon realised that I could not simply present him to the reader as an unrecognised genius, for some of his views left him wide open to the accusation of being a crank. He not only accepted the reality of the 'Face on Mars' (which I am also inclined



ABOVE: A reconstructed Neanderthal group in the Museum of the Krapina Neanderthals, Croatia.

JOHANNES KRAUSE / ATELIER DAYNES / MUSEUM OF THE KRAPINA NEANDERTHALS

to do), but believed it had been created by human beings, and that one of the satellites of Mars was some kind of artefact.

Just as I was beginning to wonder if Rand could be right, and Carl might be an extraordinary and plausible fraud, I was confronted with evidence of his genuineness. An old friend, Andy Collins, came past our house on his way to see the eclipse in Cornwall, and when he overheard me telling someone in the pub about Carl, said he knew him. I was fascinated and asked for details. It seemed Andy had met Carl at a London party, and that Carl had quickly monopolised the conversation, until he held the whole room enthralled. Andy agreed that Carl was undoubtedly brilliant.

He mentioned a friend of his who lived in the Midlands, and who had been on an archaeological expedition with Carl in Mexico. I rang him up, and as a result received some more interesting first-hand information about Carl. As a travelling companion, he could apparently be exacting, obsessive, and infuriating. In spite of which he was – as I had deduced from those long phone conversations – erudite, a brilliant loner, and certainly no fraud.

Some of his claims, my informant agreed, might be startling – such as his story about meeting Einstein when he was 10 years old and having a conversation about the lost tribes of Israel – but then, he was a child prodigy, and came from a distinguished family who might well have had Einstein to tea.

### *Atlantis rising*

Unfortunately, Carl learned that Rand had been making enquiries about him, and was understandably infuriated. Although I assured him that I did not share Rand's suspicions, Carl's attitude cooled perceptibly. Then I began to understand what Andy's friend meant about him being

exacting and infuriating. As hard as I tried to shore up our relationship, it quickly went to pieces. And after further exchanges, he ended by telling me that he would prefer to have his name removed from the book. I was unhappy at the idea, for it was obvious to me that he *had* to be the person who had told Hapgood about the "100,000-year-old civilisation".

But Rand remained convinced that Carl was some kind of conman, and our collaboration reached a deadlock. In due course, our book *The Atlantis Blueprint* was published in a hacked and truncated form. Every reference to Neanderthal man had been excised, and in one paragraph, had been altered to "people like us", implying that I was talking about Cro-Magnon man. This upset me, not only on my own behalf, but on Stan Gooch's, for I knew how much he was hoping to see his theories given an airing. All mention of Carl had gone too – although no reviewer seemed to notice that the book therefore failed to fulfil its promise to explain Hapgood's 100,000-year-old science.

I was much saddened, of course, but then a consoling thought occurred to me. So much of the book had been slashed that I was left with enough material to form the basis of another. In 2006, I published *Atlantis and the Kingdom of the Neanderthals*; this time, I made sure that the achievements of Neanderthal man formed a central part of this thesis, and Stan Gooch finally received the credit he deserved. **FT**

### Author Biography



**COLIN WILSON** was a factory worker, a Civil Servant and a tramp before achieving overnight literary fame with his 1956 book *The Outsider*. Since then, he has written books on crime, philosophy, science and the paranormal. He regards himself primarily as a philosopher concerned with the meaning of human existence. Unlike many 'existentialists', his outlook is basically evolutionary and optimistic.

JOIN US FOR A FEAST OF DECADENT NAUGHTINESS...

# BIZARRE SUMMER 2011 BALL

---

**SATURDAY 21ST MAY 2011**

**THE SCALA, 275 PENTONVILLE ROAD, LONDON N1 9NL / 8PM - 3AM**

**LIMITED EARLY BIRD OFFER - £15 +BF (UNTIL 31ST JAN)  
STANDARD - £22 +BF / STUDENTS/SUBSCRIBERS - £17 +BF**

---



---

**GUESTS AND ACTS TO BE CONFIRMED**

---

**FOR MORE INFO AND TICKETS VISIT  
[BIZARRE.MAG.COM/BIZARREBALL](http://BIZARRE.MAG.COM/BIZARREBALL)  
[WEGOTTICKETS.COM](http://WEGOTTICKETS.COM) [SEETICKETS.COM](http://SEETICKETS.COM)**

---

# THE DOUBLY

Before he passed away in 2010, maverick psychologist **STAN GOOCH** sent us one of his final articles, which we're pleased to be able to publish for the first time. Controversial to the end, Gooch suggests that the roots of human conflict (and political disagreement) can be traced back to mankind's dual ancestry and divided brain. Labour voters in particular may not enjoy what follows...

There are two reasons why humanity is so deeply divided into permanently opposed and constantly conflicting groups with very different views on life and its meaning. The first of these reasons is that we are hybrids, a cross between two very different species: Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon. I made this claim many, many years ago in my early books; it was, however, always totally denied by the scientific establishment. But recent fossil finds in Portugal and elsewhere have now forced the establishment to agree that Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon did interbreed.

There are two major consequences when widely separated species are interbred, as we know from professional animal breeders. One of these consequences is that the new hybrid species possesses totally new abilities shown by neither parent. So Darwin got it completely wrong when he said *natura non facit saltum*. Evolution *does* proceed by sudden and dramatic leaps.

And this is why in Europe some 30,000–40,000 years ago, when Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon met up and interbred, we had a sudden explosion of new tools, the sudden emergence from nowhere – in other words, with no gradual historical development – of detailed cave paintings, and so on. Modern civilisation begins suddenly at this point. Prior to this time, neither Neanderthal nor Cro-Magnon tools had shown any advances or changes for tens upon tens of thousands of years. Both species had been completely static.

But aside from this positive aspect, there is another equally important one. The offspring of crossbreeding between two widely separated species often display two sets of opposing instincts, with which the offspring struggles (often in vain) to come to terms.

An actual example: the peach-faced lovebird carries its nesting material in its beak.

Fischer's Lovebird carries its nesting material tucked into its rump feathers. The crossbred offspring of these two different species, when it reaches the point of wanting to build a nest, holds the nesting material in its beak and gets ready to fly.

But then its Fischer instinct says, hang on, you're supposed to have the material tucked into your rump feathers. The bird now tucks the material into its rump and gets ready to

fly; at which point the peach-faced instinct says, no, the material is supposed to be in your beak. Once again the bird takes the material into its beak and gets ready to fly. But again the other instinct says, no. Again and again and again the hybrid offspring changes the location of the nest materials, but all in vain. It struggles to reach a final decision, but cannot.

Does this remind us of anyone?

The reason why modern humanity has two opposing political views – left-wing against right-wing – is certainly due to our dual ancestry. But nobody ever asks why we as humans should have two such dramatically and diametrically opposed sets of political views. For, surely, if elephants evolved into intelligent beings there would be just one party – the elephant party. All elephants would agree

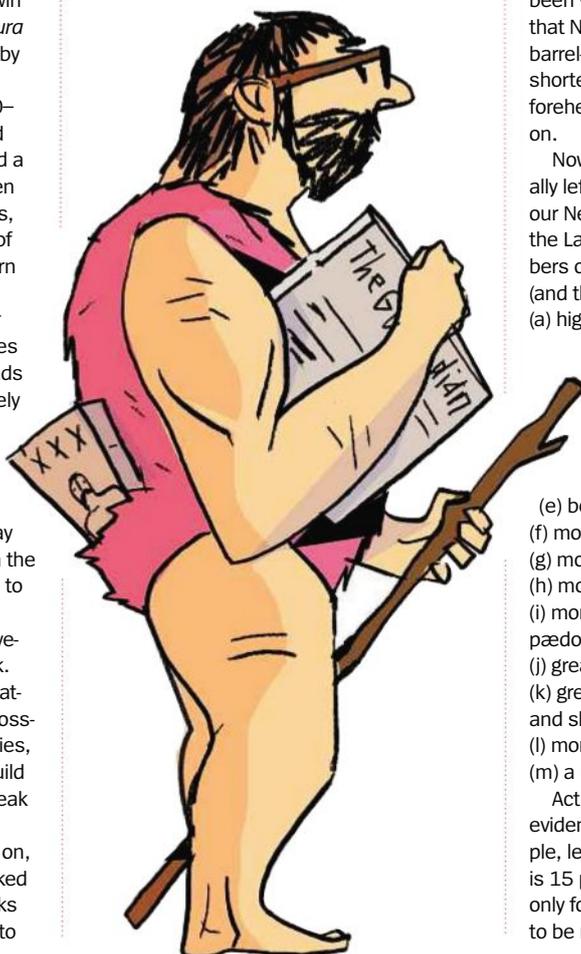
on how their society should run. Why are humans different?

Let's now take a look at some of my detailed claims on the nature of Neanderthal society. I say that Neanderthal society was matriarchal, nocturnal, worshipped the Moon, and practised totally promiscuous sex (with no pair-bonding whatsoever) including lesbianism, homosexuality and pædophilia. Now guess what? The recently discovered bonobo chimpanzees are led by the females and practise totally promiscuous sex (with no pair-bonding), including lesbianism, homosexuality and pædophilia. I also claimed that Neanderthals were left-handed, were gatherers rather than hunters (and, in fact, mainly vegetarian). My claim that left-handedness would be more common among lesbians, homosexuals and pædophiles has also now been verified statistically. And we also know that Neanderthals were short in height, were barrel-bodied (the pyknic type), had a big toe shorter than the second toe, a recessive forehead and chin, a jutting mouth and so on.

Now if my claims are correct, then politically left-wing movements are expressions of our Neanderthal instincts, and members of the Labour Party when compared with members of the Conservative party would show (and this is not a complete list):

- (a) higher incidence of left-handedness
- (b) shorter average height
- (c) greater incidence of big toe being shorter than the other toes
- (d) less male pattern baldness (it's a fact that left-handed men almost never go bald)
- (e) better night vision
- (f) more short-sightedness
- (g) more vegetarianism
- (h) more sexual activity and promiscuity
- (i) more lesbianism, homosexuality and pædophilia
- (j) greater incidence of the pyknic body type
- (k) greater incidence of the recessive chin and sloping forehead
- (l) more time spent dreaming when asleep
- (m) a larger cerebellum (see below)

Actually, there already exists tangential evidence for some of these claims. For example, left-handedness among Arts graduates is 15 per cent, among Science graduates only four per cent, and arts graduates tend to be more left-wing in their views. More



# DIVIDED SELF

specifically still, all Welsh members of the London Parliament are Labour, and the dominant party in the Welsh Assembly is Labour. And Wales just happens to have double the left-handedness found in England. Also left-handedness among Chinese is double that found in Europe; and China just happens to be a Communist state! (Also, take a look at Chinese chins and foreheads).

Again, most working-class people in Britain would tend to vote Labour, while most of the upper classes would vote Tory. And, of course, working class individuals are on average shorter in height than upper-class individuals (the Welsh are also on average shorter than the English; the Chinese are on average shorter than Europeans).

We come now to the second reason why humanity is so deeply divided. This is because we have two brains: the cerebrum (the front brain) and the cerebellum (the back brain). The ancestor of all mammals had two pairs of eyes – one pair on top of the head and connected to the cerebellum. The second pair was in the front of the head and connected to the cerebrum. Originally, the cerebellum was the main brain. But in the course of time the pair of eyes on top of the head fused together and sank down into the skull to form what is today called the pineal gland, which is still actually light sensitive (of course the pineal gland is the ‘third eye’ of ancient Hindu mysticism). Now the cerebrum and its pair of front eyes became the main brain. But when did you ever hear these astonishing evolutionary facts discussed?

The cerebellum appears today to be much smaller than the cerebrum. But in fact, due to its deeply convoluted structure, the surface area – that’s the cortex – of the cerebellum is almost equal to that of the apparently larger cerebrum. Moreover, the cerebellum makes more inner inter-cell connections than the cerebrum – it is more complex. And also, the cerebellum has full access to all the information contained in the cerebrum.

The cerebellum is the source of dreaming. It is also, I claim, the source of neurotic conditions such as multiple personality disorder and the source of all psychic phenomena, such as the ability to foresee the future or access the lost past. It is the source of the ability of an individual, in trance, to produce complex and serious wounds in the body in the space of a few minutes (a process which has been recorded on camera, and is gradually being admitted to and discussed by scientists). It is the source of poltergeist phenomena, the ability to cause objects to move without actually being touched. It is the source of ‘spirits’, the other personalities which speak through a medium in trance.

The cerebellum is also the source of

automatic writing. Some people write two complex messages/narratives using both hands simultaneously while, for instance, reading aloud from a newspaper at the same time. Sometimes the words and sentences are written backwards and as mirror images! This is the work of the so-called ‘unconscious’ – our alternative consciousness.

I have reported on all these matters in detail in my various books. And, just in case you think dreaming is unimportant, several scientists have made major advances by seeing them in dreams. The cerebellum is also the source of religious beliefs. Religion is effectively a form of dreaming. (This is why



there are so many different religions and sub-religions, but only one science, one chemistry, one mathematics and so on).

Other major relevant points: Neanderthal had a much larger cerebellum than Cro-Magnon; women have a larger cerebellum than men. And this is why more women are psychic mediums than men (and in fact better psychic mediums than men). Women also hypnotise more readily than men, and so on. Hypnosis is of course another cerebellar manifestation.

Yet – despite all of the foregoing – guess what? The cerebellum is almost totally excluded from the physiological textbooks used in our universities. That’s physiological psychology, never mind ordinary psychology textbooks. I did a survey of physiological psychology textbooks used in universities some years ago. The ‘winner’ – the one with most mentions of the cerebellum – had only 15 pages out of a total of 750 devoted to the subject.

One last point. It’s possible that a strong/dominant cerebellum is actually responsible for left-handedness. A right-handed person who has either the right or the left cerebral hemisphere removed for medical reasons nevertheless remains right-handed.

A left-handed person who has either of the cerebral hemispheres removed nevertheless remains left-handed. So, the cerebrum has nothing to do with handedness.

Furthermore, connections from the right cerebral hemisphere go to the left cerebellar hemisphere. And connections from the left cerebral hemisphere go to the right cerebellar hemisphere. So the cerebellum is reverse handed – left-handed, *vis-a-vis* the cerebrum, just like our own mirror image.

So each of us is really two people – the cerebral person and the cerebellar person.

The majority of us opt for one and exclude the other. And so science denies religion, while religion excludes science, left fights right, and so on. So the cerebrum/cerebellum relationship is the second source of human division and conflict, in addition to our dual Neanderthal/Cro-Magnon ancestry with its two sets of instincts. With these two major sources of human conflict, it’s something of a miracle that humanity – fond though it is of mass slaughter – has survived at all.

And the situation seems to be getting worse rather than better. We urgently need to face up to our duality – to our *double* duality in fact – and take both sides of our personalities on board, on their own terms. **FT**

We appreciate that the highly speculative and ‘challenging’ nature of Stan Gooch’s ideas usually elicits a robust response from readers; but before putting pen to paper, please refer to “Sinister rejoinders” (FT202:73) for objections already raised to Stan’s letter in FT199 on the subject of Neanderthal/Cro-Magnon hybrids, left-handedness and the origin of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ in political discourse.

A RICHARD ALLEN

# STRANGE STORIES FROM A WORLD OF WONDER





**MATT SALUSBURY** concludes his nostalgic look at  
fortean for the children of the 1970s with a collection of  
sea serpent sightings, emu wars and unusual odysseys as  
presented in the pages of *World of Wonder*.

All illustrations: Bridgeman Picture Library / @ Look & Learn / Private Collection

**A**s self-defined prophet and former newsreader Jeron Criswell King, *aka* The Amazing Criswell, notes in his bizarre prologue to the 1959 film *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, “You are interested in the unknown, the mysterious, the unexplainable, that is why you are here.”

For many fortuneans, there was a catalyst in their early lives that kindled their interest in the world of strange phenomena, and set them on the road to high strangeness. Asked what that formative experience was, a number of today’s 40-something weirdness-watchers would answer that what first got them hooked on “the unknown, the mysterious, the unexplainable” was reading *World of Wonder*’s ‘Strange Stories’.

*World of Wonder* (*WoW*) magazine appeared every Saturday – usually dropped through the letterbox by the paper boy – in the first half of the 1970s. It dealt with science, history, geography and technology (especially Spitfires and the latest cutting-edge developments in “the mighty transistor”). But by far its strongest section was ‘Strange Stories’, which gave the kids of the 1970s a firm grounding in all the fortunean staples: the *Mary Celeste*, the Abominable Snowman, Sasquatch, the Cardiff giant, Kasper Hauser, Indian wolf children, the “Devil’s footprints”, the Hollow Earth theories of John Cleve Symmes, Spring-heeled Jack, the Man in the Iron Mask, the Oak Island Money Pit, James Churchwold and his alleged Lost Continent of Mu and the Tunguska explosion (*WoW* 156 carried a splendid illustration of alarmed Trans-Siberian Railway passengers witnessing the explosion from afar). Less well-known mysteries that seem to have been forgotten in the intervening 40 years were also given space in the pages of ‘Strange Stories’.

*World of Wonder* was a slightly text-heavier spin-off from its sister publication *Look & Learn*, founded in 1962 by Leonard Matthews, who had launched several children’s comics and brought in some of the best of the comics illustrators to draw children in to the worlds of history, geography and science. *WoW* shared several illustrators with *Look & Learn*. British children’s comics expert Steve Holland recalls that *WoW* was an attempt to produce a format that, it was hoped, could be sold on to publishers in Germany, France, Italy, Holland and Yugoslavia. In the event, there was only an English version, under the editorship of Robert Bartholomew, and a Dutch language edition. Eventually, publisher Fleetway (a division of IPC) absorbed *WoW* into a ‘new look’ *L&L* with some extra pages, and ‘Strange Stories’ continued in *L&L*, for a while, at least...

## CREATURE FEATURES

It was the illustrations that made ‘Strange Stories’ – and its occasionally fortunean sister series ‘Talking Point’ – so striking, and thus made the biggest impression on its pre-teen audience. “There Are Giant Serpents in Every Sea” declared *WoW* 26, depicting a colossal long-necked plesiosaur swimming in bright green waters, dwarfing a sailing ship of the Olden Days, as well as a sea serpent spotted by a startled

boater- and-blazer-wearing holidaymaker and his wife at the English east coast seaside resort of Skegness in 1966. The fearsome Serrano Cay giant octopus featured on the cover of *WoW* 179, menacing two Mexican lighthouse keepers when it suddenly came out of the depths in 1905. According to 'Strange Stories', the octopus killed one keeper, Diego Alvez, before his colleague Ferdinand Moxo managed to shoot it with a rifle. Another giant octopus, spotted from the French sailing frigate *Alecton* (*WoW* 76) was depicted in brilliant pinks. There was also the narrative of James Bartley (*WoW* 58), a British harpooner swallowed by a sperm whale off the Falklands in 1891, and cut out alive from its corpse the next day – after his funeral! His hair was bleached by “gastric juices” and he went briefly insane before he resumed harpooning duties. *WoW* 58 filled a whole page with the gaping mouth of the whale closing in on the helpless Bartley, with the appropriately leviathan-sized headline “SWALLOWED BY A WHALE”.

Other 'Strange Stories' from the annals of natural history and cryptozoology included (*WoW* 35) a decade of disbelief at Sir Harry Johnston's discovery of the okapi in the forests of the Congo, until he finally came up with photos of it in 1909. The Parisian pet derby of 1909 (*WoW* 78) was a race involving the exotic pets of *fin de siècle* aristocratic ladies in Paris; contestants included an Egyptian dung beetle, a goose, the Princess of Lucinge's lion cub, a tortoise and a monkey, with some prize pets depicted held on leads and with girly bows round their necks. After a short race, which descended into mayhem as the competitors tried to strangle or eat one another, Mademoiselle Yturbe's monkey proved the winner. The illustrator got a little carried away with the French gentlemen's top hats, some of which obscured part of the text.

Stranger still was *WoW*'s short and wilfully obscure “Birds that cannot fly” series, which covered (*WoW* 224) the “Emu War” of 1932,

in which the attempts of the Australian Heavy Battery artillery unit of the Australian Army to exterminate a huge, crop-

## ALARMED RAILWAY PASSENGERS SAW THE TUNGASKA EXPLOSION FROM A DISTANCE

devastating flock of emus were outwitted by the nimble birds running around in all directions. An emu-proof fence eventually proved slightly more effective.

### LIVING GODS & U-BOATS

Incredible journeys were another favourite theme of 'Strange Stories'. In *WoW* 141, Apsley Cherry Gerrard made *The Worst Journey in the World* (as his 1922 book had it) across Antarctica over five weeks in 1911 to collect three penguin eggs; meanwhile, 13-year-old Mark Poltorctzky walked 700 miles (1,130km) across Russia in 1714, surviving trees falling on him and exposure in the snow to reach Moscow and take up his post as an Imperial Choirboy (*WoW* 146). The coffin containing the body of actor Charles Coughlan, (*WoW* 135) who was buried in a coastal cemetery in Galveston, Texas, in 1899, was swept out to sea in a hurricane the following year to finally come ashore on Canada's Prince Edward Island, close to his birthplace, on 15 September 1927. Coughlan's coffin had made a journey in which it averaged 65–80 miles (105–130km) a day.

Then there was former Italian diplomat Felice Benuzzi and his two compatriots, interned in Camp 354 in Kenya as prisoners of war. The POWs escaped and underwent an 18-day ordeal ending in a climb to the summit of Mount Kenya, where they planted a homemade Italian flag, before returning to Camp 354 to give themselves up; apparently, they'd been bored in captivity. But my favourite incredible journey story has to be the one from *WoW* 130 of the extraordinary hardships endured by Frenchman René Caille,

who made a year-long odyssey in

1828, disguised as a runaway Egyptian slave, to become the first white man to gaze on the legendary splendours of the forbidden city of Timbuktu, thereby claiming a 10,000-franc prize. After many life-threatening episodes, Caille finally arrived at his destination to discover that latter-day Timbuktu was a complete dump.

For those who found school history lessons boring, there was plenty of 'Strange Stories'-style historical revisionism. *WoW* 7 speculated on the possible survival of Louis XVII, the nine-year-old crown prince who went missing during the French Revolution. *WoW* 108 asked whether an American school teacher of French origin called Philip Ney could really have been Napoleon's Marshall Ney, who had emigrated after surviving a firing squad. *L&L* 692 wondered whether Joan of Arc had survived, not having been burnt at the stake after all, while *WoW* 33 presented claims that Guy Fawkes was a patsy, an innocent tenant of the Westminster cellars caught in an anti-Catholic plot to convince James VI / I that 'Papists' were trying to blow him up. *WoW* 46 offered alternative authors of Shakespeare's plays, while *WoW* 57 suggested that missing American aviatrix Amelia Earhart was a spy who fell into Japanese hands. 'Strange Stories' was an advocate of the teaching of what we would now call 'critical thinking'. Always sceptical, 'Strange Stories' gave these revisionist history theories the time of day but suggested to impressionable young minds that such theses should be taken with at least a healthy pinch of salt.

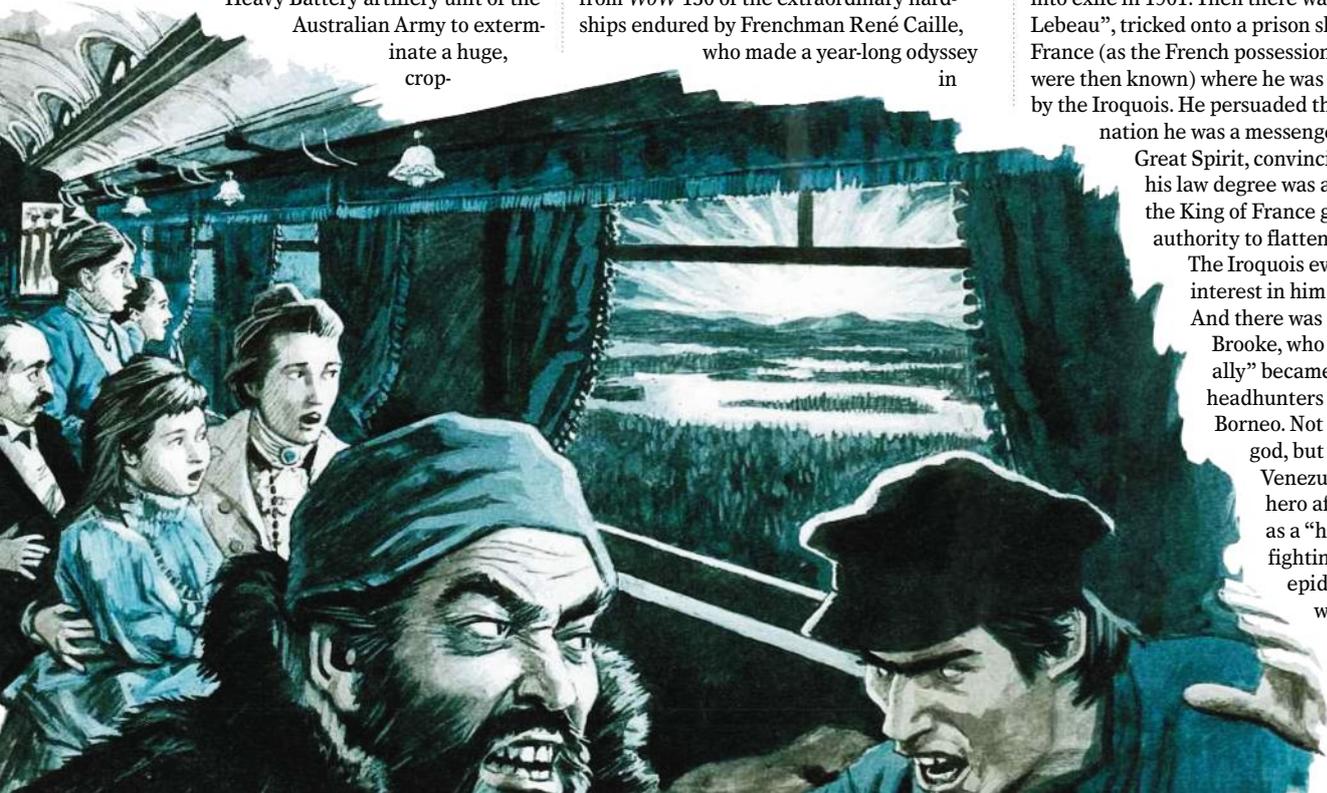
'Strange Stories' seemed to have a particular affection for chancers and adventurers who became living gods. These included penniless Irish sailor David O'Keefe, shipwrecked on the South Sea island of Yap and welcomed as its king. O'Keefe displaced the German agent active on the island at the time, built a trading fleet to export coconut kernels direct to Hong Kong, and saw off pirates and Dutch colonists before a German battleship and troops finally forced him into exile in 1901. Then there was “Lawyer Lebeau”, tricked onto a prison ship to New France (as the French possessions in Canada were then known) where he was captured by the Iroquois. He persuaded the Iroquois nation he was a messenger from the Great Spirit, convincing them

his law degree was a letter from the King of France giving him authority to flatten mountains.

The Iroquois eventually lost interest in him (*WoW* 257). And there was also James Brooke, who “accidentally” became king of the headhunters in 1920s

Borneo. Not quite a living god, but certainly a

Venezuelan national hero after his work as a “hero doctor” fighting a plague epidemic in Peru, was Pierre Bougrat,



whose story featured in *WoW* 158. While esteemed in Latin America, right up to his death in 1962, Bouget was regarded by the French as a fugitive convicted murderer, having escaped to South America from France's Devil's Island penal colony on a small boat with five other convicts.

Timeslips – especially Parisian timeslips – were another theme, including that experienced by two British tourists at Versailles in 1901. Then there was the apparent timeslip involving the disappearance – along with all records of her having been there – of a Mrs Randolph from Room 343 of the Carillon Hotel during the 1899 Paris Exhibition. The ever-sceptical 'Strange Stories' told its young readers that there was a likely rational explanation – Mrs Randolph's disappearance from history, right down to her vanished entry in the hotel register, was actually due to her being discreetly spirited away to hospital by the Parisian health authorities, eager to avoid panic in the streets after being alerted that she had caught "the plague" in India.

But for an obscure fortaean sub-genre, nothing comes close to the magazine's pre-occupation with strange phenomena associated with German U-Boats of World War I (see also *FT173:42–49*). 'Strange Stories' catalogued *four* such cases.

One round-up of maritime mysteries featured U-Boat *U236*, which survived a mid-Atlantic torpedoing from a British sub in 1917 after one torpedo malfunctioned and jumped right over the lucky *U236*. A year later, another (unnumbered) U-Boat fired a torpedo at the British Q ship *Stock Force*, only for the torpedo to slew back and blow the U-Boat up. *WoW* 39 described how *UB-65* (see *FT173:47*), reportedly haunted by the ghost of a dead officer, was beset by inexplicable disasters, and was spotted floating apparently abandoned by a US sub in 1918. ('Strange Stories', perhaps wisely in view of possible parental surveillance, generally steered clear of ghosts.) *WoW* 25's 'Talking Point', alongside better-known sea serpent sightings, had a dramatic illustration of Captain Georg van Forstner, on the bridge of yet another WWI U-Boat, this one on active service in 1915, witnessing a strange, 60ft (18m)-long "crocodile-like creature" being blown out of the sea and into the air by the explosion of a sinking British steamer the U-boat had recently torpedoed.

Normally sceptical, *WoW* refrained from presenting a perfectly logical explanation for the "crocodile-like creature"; but the fleetingly glimpsed, decaying corpse of a basking shark or whale as it shot past Captain Forstner before plunging beneath the waves springs to mind.

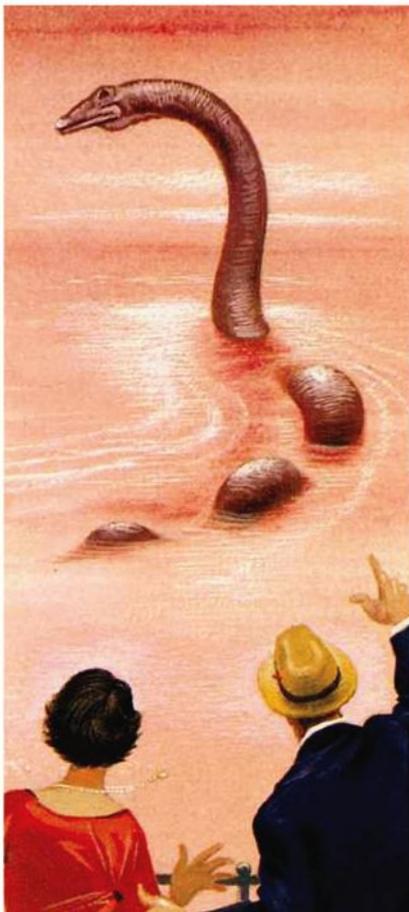
## THINGS TO COME

Some 'Strange Stories' weren't all that strange at all – Cardinal Wolsey's rise to power, the invention of jeans by Levi Strauss, Napoleonic prisoners of war making intricate models out of bone – and the only mystery is what they were doing in this section of the magazine at all. Just as



ABOVE: The Serrano Cay giant octopus strikes! BELOW: A 1965 sea serpent sighting in Skegness. FACING PAGE: Passengers on the Trans-Siberian Express witness the Tunguska event from afar.

newspapers have the odd "slow news day", 'Strange Stories' clearly had the odd "low strangeness week" in which presumably already-commissioned historical features – such as the dramatic yet not particularly strange rescue of Mussolini by powered glider, or the noteworthy but hardly



eyebrow-raising Operation Valkyrie plot against Hitler – had to be hastily rebranded under a dubious 'Strange Stories' masthead. There is, after all, only so much weirdness out there suitable for a young audience, and *WoW* had to find enough of it to fill at least a full page every week for over five years.

And indeed, the strangeness supply did eventually run dry. *WoW* was taken over by *Look & Learn* in February 1975, with only a week's warning to subscribers. While 'Strange Stories' was among the limited number of *WoW* spots that made the transition, other regulars finished abruptly, mid-series, when *WoW* 258 was suddenly followed by *L&L* 686.

The first *L&L* 'Strange Stories' was the Turin Shroud, which had *already been done* a couple of years before, back in the *WoW* glory days. It was a sign of things to come. 'Strange Stories' went into decline under *L&L* proprietorship; it ceased to be a weekly event and became more and more occasional, until it finally stuttered out of existence and faded from view forever around *L&L* 649 in 1975. The short series "Haunted Britain" (featuring Gef the Talking Mongoose – see *FT270:32–40* – and Drury Lane's numerous theatre ghosts) followed, but *L&L* was a less nurturing environment for fortaena than *WoW*, and it lived on only in the memories of young fortaens of the day. *Look & Learn*, having gobbled up *WoW* and several other kids' "knowledge" weeklies – *Treasure*, *Tell Me Why*, *Speed & Power* – finally bit the dust in 1982, killed off by, of all things, soaring paper prices.

## STRANGE BUT NOT TRUE?

Most 'Strange Stories' were presented to a young audience in good faith, and if the editorial team felt a story wasn't grounded in some kind of fact, they said so. After all, they would have faced the wrath of angry parents if they'd passed off fantasy as sort-of-possibly-fact to innocent kids. But, in retrospect, it seems one or two 'Strange Stories' that were groundless tall tales may have slipped through the net, probably copied from other secondary sources that had also been unwittingly duped. In this category of 'probably made up' was the alleged Parisian pet derby – did this aristocratic extravaganza *really* happen?

And, finally... there is the most intriguing 'Strange Story' of the Chinese invasion of Monterey, California, in the 1870s (WoW 228). Imperial China under the Qing Dynasty sent a fleet of junks on a punitive expedition to America in revenge for the way the US had cruelly exploited its Chinese immigrant workers. So hopelessly antiquated was the Chinese invasion fleet that its navigators ran into trouble after underestimating the breadth of the Pacific Ocean, and headed for Monterey, which had earlier, briefly, been the state capital of California, though not anymore. On landing, the Chinese invaders could not get the good citizens of Monterey to understand that they'd come to punish them, and the locals seized them and carried them shoulder-high through the streets in welcome, as depicted by the 'Strange Stories' illustrator. The

invaders quickly assimilated into the immigrant Chinese community of Monterey.

The brutal Qing dynasty certainly wouldn't have given a damn what happened to the hordes of peasants risking life and limb to flee the feudal miseries of China and its rulers in the first place. But Qing China's formidable foreign ministry, the Zongli Yamen, had been in operation since 1861, and its intelligence-gathering section would have been informed of the correct distance across the Pacific. Any fleet of war junks China could have raised would in all likelihood have been blasted out of the sea by the numerous European, American or Japanese fleets that had taken up residence in the "Treaty Ports" they had carved out along China's coast. And the Internet is suspiciously silent on the subject of any alleged 1870s Chinese invasion of Monterey, California. This begins to look awfully like one of the small town 19th-century American newspaper tall tales made up to fill space, or a faintly racist satire on contemporary Chinese immigration. Can any *FT* readers enlighten us as to whether this particularly 'Strange Story' is anything more than a pack of porky pies?

Of course, as a nine-year-old, I believed every word of it. I had read it in the totally groovy, cool and fab *World of Wonder*, after all, so it *must* be true. I even vigorously defended the veracity of 'Strange Stories'-sourced evidence, 13ft (4m)-high Peruvian giant skeletons and all, against contemptuous, doubting *Look & Learn* readers in the

back of the car on the school run.

While there have been compilations of *Look & Learn* published since its demise, back issues of *World of Wonder* seem to command little value or interest – so little interest in fact, that I wasn't even able to find out from eBay how much I could get for the complete bound volumes of *WoW* that earlier this year were still knocking around my boyhood home. My mum wanted to throw them out, so I donated them to the offices of *Fortean Times* for safekeeping – a suitable home for what Charles Fort called "damned data." **FT**

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

*World of Wonder* bibliography:  
<http://tinyurl.com/35uoqz9> (26pigs.com).  
Reminiscences on *World of Wonder*:  
<http://tinyurl.com/3215brq> (26pigs.com).  
Official *Look & Learn* website: [www.lookandlearn.com](http://www.lookandlearn.com).  
*The Bumper Book of Look and Learn*, selected by Stephen Pickles, Century/Random House, 2007.  
*World of Wonder* is held in the British Library serials collection (<http://catalogue.bl.uk>), shelf mark P.993/58. The *Fortean Times* office holds a complete bound set of *World of Wonder*.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**MATT SALUSBURY** is news and features editor of English language teaching trade paper *English Language Gazette*, an NUJ activist and a regular contributor to *Fortean Times*.



# WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES

## WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES

FROM THE PAGES OF FORTEAN TIMES



THE BURGLAR WHO  
HID IN A TV



MAGBOOK



GONAD-GRABBING GRANNY

FINED FOR KEEPING  
A PET GHOST...



AND MANY MANY MORE

ForteanTimes

WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

ONLY  
£7.99



Here are the news stories that don't usually make the headlines, from the bizarrely improbable and wildly surreal to the plain hilarious.

Meet the Indian brothers who were fined for keeping a pet ghost, the Chinese woman who crashed her car while giving her dog a driving lesson, the French bank-robber who dressed as an aubergine and the talking goat with a message from God...

**TO ORDER YOUR COPY PLEASE CALL 0844 844 0053  
OR GO TO [WWW.MAGBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.MAGBOOKS.COM)**

ALSO AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

WHSmith



**YOURS FREE!**

**YOUR FREE GIFT**

Made from 98% recycled materials with the latest eco friendly technology, it's ideal for both optical and wheel mouse. Ultra slim with a non-slip base, it'll look smart on your desktop while you investigate the unknown...

**FREE FORTEAN TIMES MOUSE MAT WHEN YOU CLAIM 3 TRIAL ISSUES**



**Order online:** using offer code below  
[www.dennismags.co.uk/forteanimes](http://www.dennismags.co.uk/forteanimes)

**Order by phone:**  
**0844 844 0049**

or complete and return the form below

**Your Phenomenal Offer:**

- **3 trial issues** to start your subscription – if you're not completely satisfied, simply cancel during your trial period and claim a FULL REFUND
- **FREE** Exclusive Fortean Times Mouse Mat.
- **SAVE up to 21%** on the shop price
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops

**ForteanTimes FREE Fortean Times Mouse Mat**

**BEST DEAL**

**YES!** Please start my subscription to Fortean Times with 3 trial issues and send me my FREE Fortean Times Mouse Mat. I understand that the first 3 issues of Fortean Times I receive are on a no obligation trial basis. If I'm not completely satisfied, I can write to cancel during my trial period and claim a FULL REFUND. The trial issues and FREE Mouse Mat are mine to keep, whatever I decide.

I am an existing subscriber. Please extend my subscription with this offer.

**YOUR DETAILS:**

Mr/Mrs/Ms Forename \_\_\_\_\_  
 Surname \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mobile \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_ Year of birth \_\_\_\_\_

**CHEQUE & CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: £39.98 FOR 12 ISSUES (SAVE 20%)**

I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd.  
 Please charge my:  Visa  MasterCard  AMEX  Switch/Maestro (issue no. \_\_\_\_\_)

CARD NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ START DATE \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRY DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_ TODAY'S DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT: £19.99 every 6 issues (SAVE 21%) – UK ONLY**

**Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit**

Please complete and send to: Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 800 Guillat Ave, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne ME9 8GU  
 Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the manager: Bank name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Originator's Identification Number  
**7 2 4 6 8 0**

Ref no. to be completed by Dennis Publishing

Account in the name(s) of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Branch sort code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bank/Building Society account number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account.

Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website [www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/](http://www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/) or call us on 0844 844 0053. If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise, that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, e-mail and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via [www.subsinfo.co.uk](http://www.subsinfo.co.uk) or [privacy@dennis.co.uk](mailto:privacy@dennis.co.uk) or 0844 844 0053.

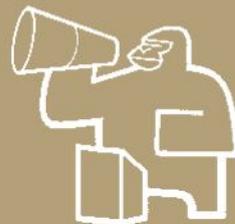
Gifts limited to first 100 orders. Please allow 28 days for delivery. UK only. This offer is limited to one offer per household

**Return this order to:** Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR, Fortean Times, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU (NO STAMP REQUIRED)

OFFER CODE: P1103

HAVE YOUR SAY

# forum



## The tatzelwurm lives!

**ULRICH MAGIN** wonders whether a spate of recent European reports of mystery lizards heralds the return of the legendary tatzelwurm to its traditional alpine haunts.

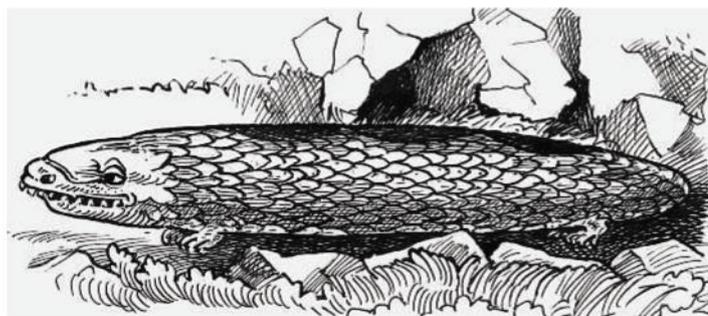


**ULRICH MAGIN** has written books on ufology, geomancy, cryptozoology and Charles Fort. He lives near the Black Forest with three budgies.

Although the *tatzelwurm* – or clawed serpent – is the best-known Central European cryptid (see FT208:46–49), it tends to be dismissed as a thing of the past. However, sightings of the creature, or at least of large and unusual reptiles, continue to this very day. Because the *tatzelwurm* (with its regional names – *stollenwurm* in Switzerland, *bergstutzen* in Austria, or *basilisco* in Italy) is now generally regarded as a “mythical beast”, sightings tend to be reported as escaped crocodiles or “dinosaurs”. Yet they happen in the same regions as the traditional *tatzelwurm* reports, and are merely updated to fit current tastes.

So, when a boy observed something that once would have been called a *tatzelwurm* in April 2007 in Upper Austria, where *tatzelwurms* were seen repeatedly in the 19th century, it was reported as an escaped exotic pet: “A Lizard 50cm [20in] long. Unknown reptile in the Enns Valley. The observation, by a 12-year-old boy, has caused quite a stir. He claims to have seen a brown lizard, 50cm long, on the bank of the Enns River near Ternberg.”

The boy had found parts of dead snakes along the riverbank before, and on this occasion lay in hiding, waiting for whatever killed the snakes. Before his eyes, a lizard shot out of the undergrowth. Shocked, the boy fled, then returned with a camera to take the picture that would confirm his story. But there was no longer any trace of the creature. As usual, “reptile experts” were quizzed for their opinion, and, as usual, they thought it was an escaped pet monitor. Fire fighters searched the river in a boat, without luck. The incident was widely reported in the Austrian press, but the description



remains sketchy. It might have been a large ordinary lizard, an escaped pet... or a *tatzelwurm* – an idea not mentioned in any of the reports.<sup>1</sup>

Over several years up to 2009, the people of Tresivio, in the Valtelina Valley, a region of Italy on the Swiss border, made repeated sightings of an unusual creature, described as an “agile bipedal lizard, about a metre tall and nearly two metres long [3ft 3in – 6ft 6in].” In short, a dinosaur straight out of *Jurassic Park*! The first sighting, the papers reported in the summer of 2009, “was regarded as an isolated incident”, and had been made “a few years ago”. A young student of agricultural sciences spotted the animal, but at that time nobody believed her. Now an assistant researcher, she stands by her report. “I was not dreaming! I saw it clearly with my own eyes. It approached me, walking on its hind legs. The anterior legs were very small. It resembled a prehistoric velociraptor, and generally it was like a monitor lizard. Yet while monitors move on four legs, this one went upright. Its back was nearly 80cm [2ft 8in] above the ground, with the head nearly a metre. I guess it was one and a half or two metres long [5ft – 6ft 6in].”

These memories were published because the monster reappeared in July 2009, observed on several occasions by local witnesses from Tresivio and Ponte. “It is not an iguana, it is less massive, and we saw it running,” they told a local paper, which noted that “Many

people now no longer doubt it. With the summer and the warmth the strange reptile comes out of its hiding place...” A fruit farmer from Ponte had seen it, in July: “I had parked my tractor above the village on the road into the Val Fontana. It looked like a lizard with a long tail. It resembled a kangaroo... but it had scales, therefore it must have been a reptile.”<sup>2</sup>

In Italy, the *tatzelwurm* is often called *basilisco* (basilisk) or the milk-serpent, as it is believed that the creature milks the cows on the pastures, sucking on their udders. Several regions also use the term cat-snake, as the *tatzelwurm* has a cat-like head. Venetia, where the next and most recent group

of sightings happened, is a north-eastern province of Italy bordering Lake Garda to the west and Venice to the east. In October 2009, an anonymous witness called the local newspaper to report that he had encountered a very curious reptile on the banks of the Longhella river between Marostica and Vallonara. He had seen it on two occasions, on 4 and 5 October. He thought it was a monitor lizard, an iguana, or possibly a caiman – but he was certain it was a reptile about a metre long. It had previously been noted that ducks had disappeared in the river, and there had been talk of a giant carp which some claimed to have seen. Police mounted a futile search for the giant reptile.<sup>3</sup>

Then an earlier witness came forward. On 28 September 2009, at 2:30pm, Giovanni Pianezzola noticed a large reptile in the garden of his house at Vallonara. It measured a metre (3ft 3in) in length, he said, and was of a brown colour. It ran through the garden and jumped into the river Longhella. The witness thought it had been an alligator. But the villagers, when asked by reporters, saw no reason for alarm. This was not an escaped crocodile, they explained, only the “cat-serpent” or *basilisco*, a harmless animal they knew well!<sup>4</sup>

Whether these sightings imply a real unknown animal, hoaxes, misperceptions and escaped pets, or simply places where the old *tatzelwurm* tradition is not yet extinct, I don’t know. But it’s reassuring to think that the legendary beast still roams our landscape. **FT**

ABOVE: A late 18th-century engraving of the *tatzelwurm*.

### NOTES

1 *ORF*, 3 May; *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 3 May; 4 May; *Standard*, 8 May 2007.

2 *Il Giorno*, 7 Aug 2009.

3 *Giornale di Vicenza*, 6 Oct 2009.

4 *Giornale di Vicenza*, 7 Oct 2009.

# Confessions of Isobel Gowdie

**EMMA WILBY** argues that the unique trial testimony of Isobel Gowdie – accused of witchcraft in 17th-century Scotland – offers us a tantalising glimpse into a lost world in which Christ rubbed shoulders with elves and fairies and church-going coexisted with traditional shamanistic practices.



**EMMA WILBY** is a research fellow in History at the University of Exeter. Her latest book is *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, (Sussex Academic Press, £35).

**H**istorians have always lamented the difficulty in gaining insight into the inner lives of the peasantry in pre-19th century Britain. All our records, by definition, derive from the small proportion of people who were sufficiently educated and had enough leisure time to write down their experiences. The thoughts and perceptions of the vast, non-literate majority remain largely unrecorded.

But occasionally a text comes along that's an exception to this norm – and the trial testimony of Isobel Gowdie is just such an example. Tried for witchcraft in Auldearn in north-east Scotland in 1662, Isobel gave four long and detailed confessions which, since they first came to public attention in 1833, have been celebrated by historians and folklorists as the most remarkable of their kind to have emerged in Britain throughout the whole witch-hunting period. Unlike most contemporary archives, these documents give us a vivid first-hand glimpse into peasant mentalities in the 17th century.

Like all witchcraft records, the confessions cannot be taken at face value. After arrest, Isobel was probably beaten and deprived of sleep before being kept in solitary confinement for over a month. During this time, on four separate occasions, she was interrogated by local ministers Harry Forbes and Hugh Rose in the presence of at least a dozen witnesses. As a consequence, her testimony bears the heavy imprint of the prosecutorial mind. Anxious to convict and having plenty of preconceptions about the kinds of things witches did, Forbes and Rose undoubtedly pressed her with “When did you meet the Devil?” and “Who else was in your coven?”-type questions. Worn down by the pressures of imprisonment and hoping for leniency, Isobel is likely to have told them what they wanted to hear and, in the light of recent psychological studies into the phenomenon of false



## Isobel gave details of the magic rituals she employed

**ABOVE:** Impression of a late 17th-century ‘fermtoun’ (farm town) similar to where Isobel Gowdie lived, by Forres artist Kris Sangster.

**BELOW:** Isobel’s first confession, given on 13 April 1662.



confession, we can also speculate that she may have actually developed false memories of having performed some of the crimes alleged against her. It's hardly surprising, then, that Isobel's testimony contains stereotypically demonological accounts of making pacts with the Devil, attending the witches' sabbath and performing harmful magic.

But the confessions also contain a wealth of folkloric and idiosyncratic detail that can only have come from Isobel herself. Her descriptions of harmful magic, for example, are vivid and personalised. That she attempted to destroy her neighbour's crops is standard stuff, but the fact that in order to do so she yoked a plough with frogs, made traces out of dog-grass and went “up and down” his field so that “thistles and briars might grow there” is not. Her claim to have attended the witches' sabbath is conventional, but less conventional is her claim that while there the members of her coven were waited on by spirits clothed in yellow and grass-green who had colourful nicknames names like ‘pickle nearest the wind’, ‘Thomas the fairy’ and ‘roaring lion’. Like many other witches, Isobel claimed to have performed image magic, but unlike most she described in forensic detail how she kneaded the clay for the figure “very hard like rye meal” and then gave it “all the marks and parts of a child such as head, eyes, nose, hands, foot, mouth and little lips” and that “the hands of it folded down by its side like a

scone or sucking pig”.

Even more remarkable are Isobel's depictions of fairy-related activities. She claimed that she feasted under the local fairy hill with the fairy king and queen; the king being a “braw man well-favoured and broad-faced” and the queen “brawly clothed in white linens”. She claimed that, transformed into the likeness of a crow, she slipped into the cellars and kitchens of local castles and houses to eat good meat, steal ale from barrels and perform magical rituals. She maintained that she travelled to the “elves’ house” where she saw “hollow and boss-backed” elf-boys sculpting elf-arrow heads and, perhaps most dramatically of all, that she and her companions charmed corn straws and “windlestraws” into horses and then, crying “Horse and Hattock in the Devil’s name!” flew through the air shooting elf arrows at passers-by. Throughout, Isobel accessorised her dramatic accounts with no less than 27 charms, the majority of which are unique in British folklore.

We can safely assume that these unusual and fairy-related elements came directly from Isobel. While the interrogators are highly likely to have asked her “Did you make a pact with the Devil?” or “Did you attend the witches’ sabbath?” they are highly unlikely to then have followed such questions with “Did you have a familiar spirit called ‘pickle nearest the wind?’” or “Did you yoke a plough with frogs?” or “Did you feast with the king and queen of the fairies under the Downie Hill?”

But while this unconventional content clearly makes Isobel's confessions unique, the challenge for any historian or folklorist is to try and put Isobel's statements into some kind of context: to distil her voice out from its contaminated source and work out why she said all these extraordinary things and what she meant by them.

We have moved on from the 19th century, when it was common to dismiss Isobel as mentally ill, as illustrated in Walter Scott's memorable claim that “It only remains to suppose, that this wretched creature [Isobel] was under the dominion of some peculiar species of lunacy”. Recent analysis suggests that much of the extraordinariness of her confessions can be attributed to the fact that her primary interrogators, Harry Forbes and Hugh Rose, possessed exceptionally curious minds and developed listening abilities, while Isobel herself was an oral performer or village bard, these factors converging to make her interrogation sessions unusually creative. Certainly, this explanation



LETTERS ON DEMONOLOGY BY SIR WALTER SCOTT, 1830

would account for the confessions’ vivid narrative style, wealth of detail, profusion of charms and breadth of subject matter.

It has long been suggested that Isobel may have been a magical practitioner, with her claims to have performed charms and rituals to cure fevers and broken bones suggesting that she functioned as some kind of wise woman who, in the absence of doctors, saw to the medical needs of the poor. But more recently, comparative analysis with anthropological studies invites us to speculate that Isobel may also have performed some of her magical rites through the medium of dream or trance, in a manner that can be loosely termed “shamanistic”.

Like peoples in indigenous, pre-industrial cultures in all periods of history, Isobel clearly believed that the world was invisibly orchestrated by a wide array of powerful spiritual agencies that could be petitioned for aid – and that these agencies could be encountered, face to face, on a visionary level. For her, God and Christ would have played a prominent role, but they also shared their spiritual podium with a wide range of other supernatural beings, from angels, saints and spirits of the dead to a colourful array of fairies and heroes from epic tales and legends.

Isobel's wild claims to have flown through the air on a corn stalk, transformed into an animal, feasted in fairy hills and performed magic in the company of fairy monarchs, folkloric heroes and the dead certainly seem less strange when we compare them

ABOVE: “Elvin Arrow Manufactory” by George Cruikshank, from *Letters on Demonology* by Sir Walter Scott, 1830.

with accounts from Siberia, Scandinavia and the Americas, where shamanistic practitioners claim to have undertaken journeys to the ‘spirit world’ or the ‘world of the dead’ in order to gain magical help from nature spirits and ancestors to benefit their communities.

From this perspective, we can entertain the possibility that Isobel's more fantastic claims were memories of shamanistic acts, undertaken prior to arrest in order to effect healing or community-protection, that were retrieved during interrogation and woven, thread by thread, into the dense tapestry of folkloric belief, demonological stereotype and real-life experience that made up her complex testimony.

Isobel's is a lone voice, and the dearth of complementary sources means that many of the conclusions reached concerning her confessions can only remain speculative. But there is no doubt that her narratives give us a tantalising glimpse into a largely uncharted world. While it is clear that Isobel considered herself to be a Christian, her Christianity was something we cannot recognise or understand, just as it was not recognised or understood by the university-educated Presbyterian ministers who interrogated her. Isobel may well have attended church, sung psalms and listened to sermons one day out of seven, but she would have worked in the fields and sat by cottage firesides listening to charms, folk tales and ballads for the remaining six. Her confessions are ample testament to the fact that these rich, unwritten influences made the inner world of the 17th-century peasant more vivid and uncanny than many of us might imagine. **FT**

The author's *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Sussex Academic Press, £35), reviewed **FT270:57**, contains a full transcription of all four of Isobel's trial confessions.

# This just in: God is dead (again)

**GARY LACHMAN** is mightily unimpressed by Stephen Hawking's latest pronouncements on the origins of the Universe, and wonders why scientists can't stop flogging a horse they have repeatedly declared quite dead...



**GARY LACHMAN** is a writer on music and the occult, and a regular *FT* contributor. His latest book is *The Quest for Hermes Trismegistus: From Ancient Egypt to the Modern World*.

On 2 September 2010, the news media tripped over themselves spreading the word that the Universe had no need of God. In a new book, *The Grand Design*, the physicist Stephen Hawking had announced that: "It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the Universe going." Hawking's remark struck a hefty blow against the Creationists, who argue that the Universe is the work of an old gentleman with white hair and a long beard. Some years earlier, in his bestselling *A Brief History of Time*, Hawking seemed to allow for some compatibility between The Big Guy and The Big Bang, when he spoke of a "theory of everything" clueing us into the "mind of God". Now it seems that he really means a "theory of nothing"; as that, according to him, is all it took to get things going. "Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something", he tells us. "Because there is a law such as gravity, the Universe can and will create itself from nothing".

*Creatio ex nihilo* used to be credited to the Deity who, with a snap of his cosmic fingers, let there be light, and everything else followed. Now, according to Hawking, *ex nihilo* is sufficient. For the many whose knowledge of cosmogony is limited to what mainstream scientists and religious fundamentalists tell them, the choice, then, boils down to on the one hand nothing, and on the other a numbingly literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis.

As I trudged London's streets that day, and saw Hawking's revelation blaring from countless newsagents, I felt increasing irritation, both at the hubris of his remarks, and at the media's contention that this was news. When Hawking says that "Spontaneous creation is the reason there's something," all he is saying is that the Universe "just happened", which is about as edifying an answer to the question of why it exists as "Because". Where, I wondered, did the "law of gravity"



ABOVE: Hawking contemplates the big nothing.

## 'Creatio ex nihilo' used to be credited to the Deity

come from, when there was nothing to exert it? Earlier in the year, I was equally piqued by Hawking's remarks about aliens, his ominous belief that they are out there, all right, but we should avoid attracting their attention, as they would probably ravish our planet for its resources. The discovery of other planetary systems, he argues, is compelling evidence that the Earth wasn't carefully designed to "please us human beings".

Now God (or Nothing) forbid that we should consider some ideas about the Universe *other* than Hawking's or the Creationists', but the scientist and religious thinker Emanuel Swedenborg (see **FT220:40-45**) – who made some remarkable contributions to cosmology – argued that there were innumerable worlds like ours, and that God wouldn't have been so stingy as to produce only one planet capable of sustaining life. The hermetic philosopher Giordano Bruno also argued that the Universe was full of living worlds; and in the last century, philosophers like Henri Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead argued that the Universe itself was in some way *living*. But philosophy doesn't make for soundbites or headlines, while the simplistic 'God/No God' argument

is just the kind of thing you can fit on a bus hoarding.

But what was worse than the philosophical ignorance in which this non-debate rages, was the media's belief that it was *news*. Anyone with a passing familiarity with the history of astronomy would know it wasn't. In the early 1800s, the French physicist, mathematician, and astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace presented Napoleon with a copy of his *Celestial Mechanics*; the title alone suggests Laplace's worldview. After examining the book, Napoleon – who had been told that the scientist had left God out of his equations – remarked, "M. Laplace, they tell me you have written this large book on the system of the Universe, but haven't even mentioned its Creator." Laplace replied, "Sir, I had no need of that hypothesis." But even then Laplace's remark wasn't particularly new; by the time he made it, the necessity for some divine Prime Mover was seen – at least by determinist scientists – as increasingly redundant, and the clockwork Universe we still live in today was ticking loudly away. Yet two centuries later, we have our own Laplace making headlines with the same revelation. Why, I wonder, do scientists feel the need to beat horses they've already declared quite dead? Is it some kind of repetition-compulsion disorder, something we can see in the history of parapsychology, with Amazing Randis 'proving' over and over again that telepathy is bunk? They'd probably say that people are credulous and need to be told repeatedly that God, or ESP, is an unnecessary hypothesis. But are we really as stupid as that? And were the hundreds of scientists who devoted themselves to psychical research also that dumb? And was their evidence for psychic phenomena so shoddy? I doubt it, and tend to believe that the reason these unnecessary hypotheses keep turning up is that they are, well, actually *necessary* – and *this* is why scientists like Hawking keep 'proving' they are not, hoping they'll go away. It would take too long for me to explain *why* they are necessary,<sup>1</sup> but one thing seems certain: we won't be seeing headlines saying "Retraction: Scientists Wrong. Universe Needs God After All" anytime soon. **FT**

### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> It's something I've tried to do in my books.

Dennis Music and Back To The Phuture proudly presents

# BACK TO THE PHUTURE

**TOMORROW IS TODAY**

FEATURING FULL LIVE SETS FROM

# GARY NUMAN

WITH VERY SPECIAL GUESTS

MANCHESTER

# RECOIL

# MOTOR

PLUS DJ's

**MARK JONES**  
(BBC 6MUSIC)

MANCHESTER  
**ACADEMY**

Academy 1,  
Manchester University Students Union,  
Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PR

**FRI 1ST APRIL 2011**

Doors from 6pm

**TICKETS £25.00 + BF**

LONDON

# JOHN FOXX

# MOTOR

PLUS DJ's

**MARK JONES**  
(BBC 6MUSIC)

**TROXY**

The Troxy, 490 Commercial Road,  
London E1 0HX  
(Nearest station, Limehouse DLR)

**SAT 2ND APRIL 2011**

Doors from 7pm

**TICKETS £27.50 + BF**

FOR INFO AND TICKETS VISIT



**BACKTOTHEPHUTURE.NET**

BACK TO THE  
PHUTURE

TICKETWEB.CO.UK  
0871 153 5353

WEGOTTICKETS.COM

SEETICKETS.COM  
0870 264 3333

# EXPERIENCE SOME *REAL* PARANORMAL ACTIVITY



The man who foresaw 9/11 in a dream

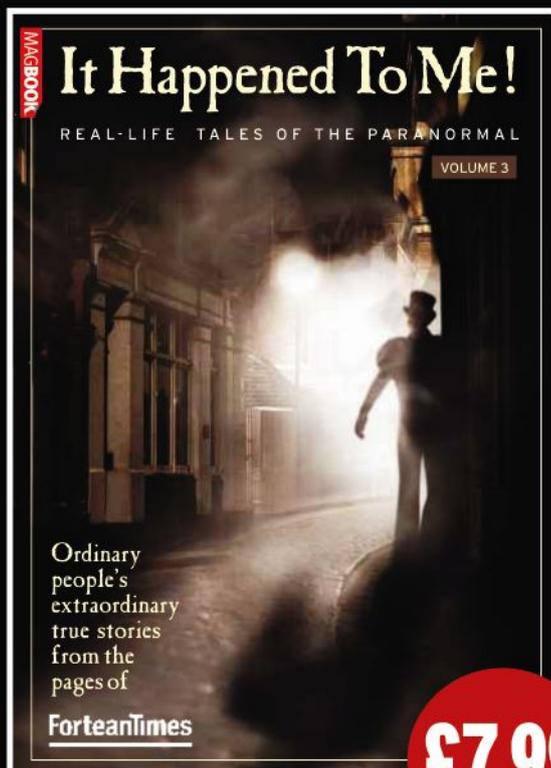


The strange old woman who haunted a family's staircase



The man who woke to find a demon in his bedroom

## ALL THESE STORIES AND MORE IN..



**£7.99**

IT HAPPENED TO ME VOLUME 3

**ForteanTimes**

presents more true-life encounters with the unexplained

TO ORDER YOUR COPY

**CALL 0844 8440053**

ALSO AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM

**amazon.co.uk**

**WHSmith**

This month's books, films and games

# reviews



## A portrait of a giant among men

An even-handed gathering of the evidence for – and the speculation about – those bigger-than-Bigfoot giants of aboriginal folklore and modern police reports



### True Giants

Is *Gigantopithecus* Still Alive?

Mark A Hall & Loren Coleman

Anomalist Books 2010

Pb, 174pp, illus, notes, refs, \$15.95/£10.95,  
ISBN 9781933665498

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £10.95

Bigfoot, if it exists, is... well, big. Eyewitnesses describe hairy bipeds 7–9ft (2–2.7m) tall, which leave humanoid footprints averaging 14–16in (36–40cm) long. Luminous eyes and rank body odour are optional. The total package is remarkable, particularly when it lurks around stylish American suburbs, as opposed to Himalayan peaks or steaming 'Third World' jungles.

But what if there was something else prowling the woods as well? A creature resembling Bigfoot, perhaps, but much larger – say, 10–15ft (3–4.5m) tall, with feet 20–30in (51–76cm) long. Tales of such towering giants have featured in aboriginal folklore and modern police reports. Coupled with claims of Bigfoot popping in and out of UFOs, they have bemused, confused, and frequently embarrassed authors who seek to present cryptozoology as a serious discipline.

Simply ignoring these hirsute Goliaths hasn't made them go away, nor has incessant ridicule of either eyewitnesses or of the authors who report their sightings. Now, at last, veteran cryptozoologists Mark Hall and Loren Coleman have tackled the

problem head-on, with startling results.

Most students of cryptozoology recognise the prehistoric ape *Gigantopithecus* as a favourite Bigfoot/Yeti candidate, though many may not be aware that three species are known: *G. blacki*, *G. bilaspurensis* and *G. giganteus*. Initially described in 1935, they are known today exclusively from fossil teeth and mandibles found in China, Vietnam and India. Extrapolation from the evidence available suggests an ape 10ft (3m) tall and weighing some 1,200lb (650kg), but incomplete remains have spawned ongoing debate over maximum size, locomotion, and sexual dimorphism. All species of *Gigantopithecus* are presumed to be extinct, although the date of their demise – and the possibility of their territorial expansion beyond the Far East – present further bones of contention.

Ivan Sanderson was among the first to propose *Gigantopithecus* as a Bigfoot suspect, ranking the creature as a 'neo-giant', one of four unrecognised hominid strains in his classic work *Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life* (1961). Professor Myra Shackley followed Sanderson's lead two decades later in her book *Still Living* (1983), while palaeoanthropologists Russell Ciochon, John Olsen and Jamie Janes considered Bigfoot tangentially in their 1990 work *Other Origins: The Search for the Giant Ape in Human Prehistory*. Grover Krantz endorsed an evolved and altered species of *Gigantopithecus* as Bigfoot in 1992, naming it *G. canadensis*.

But still, the hulking giants that outstripped Sasquatch in size were largely ignored, until

### "Honest sceptics can question each and every sighting of jumbo-sized bipedal monsters"

Mark Hall addressed them in his book *The Yeti, Bigfoot and True Giants: An Introduction* (1992). Seven years later, Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe incorporated Hall's "true giants" into their taxonomy of unclassified primates, *The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti, and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide*. Collaboration between Hall and Coleman was the logical next step, *True Giants* its ultimate product.

In this volume, spanning the globe from biblical times to the 21st century, Hall and Coleman explore the possibility that tales of giant hominids should not be automatically dismissed as myths, delusions, or hyperbole. From their preface – which explains the striking cover art by Alika (Monique Watteau) Lindbergh, former wife of Bernard Heuvelmans – to the book's seven appendices (including classic essays by Ivan Sanderson), the authors round up all the evidence related to "true giants" and present it for the first time in a single cogent volume.

The portrait that emerges is, of course, an exercise in speculation. Honest sceptics – not to mention various professional debunkers – are at liberty to question each and every reported sighting of jumbo-sized bipedal monsters. They will doubtless note, as Hall and Coleman forthrightly acknowledge, that

various discoveries of giant skulls and other bones inevitably end with the intriguing relics stolen, lost, or simply vanished. Critics may even resurrect the shades of chronic liars Raymond Wallace and Rant Mullens to explain the giant footprints found worldwide, spanning centuries. After all, they "know" that Wallace "invented Bigfoot" in 1958. What more remains to be said?

Something, perhaps.

We may wish to recall that 20 years before Ivan Sanderson set pen to paper on Sasquatch, German anatomist-anthropologist Franz Weidenreich examined teeth from *G. blacki* and renamed their late owner *Gigantropus blacki*, operating on a theory that primitive forms of man were larger than more recent species. Weidenreich's view did not prevail against Edward Cope's rule that population lineages tend to increase in size over evolutionary time, but dissenters persist – like Australian cryptozoologist Rex Gilroy, who maintains that *Gigantropus* still haunts the Outback.

Whether or not readers of *True Giants* finally agree with Hall and Coleman, the authors deserve top marks for collecting all the available evidence and reviewing it evenhandedly.

The final product is a handsome volume, including 23 black-and-white illustrations, with all material fully sourced. A descriptive table of contents compensates for the lack of an index. Overall, *True Giants* is a valuable addition to the literature of Sasquatchery and natural mysteries.

Michael Newton

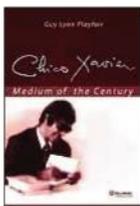
### Fortean Times Verdict

FOR FANS OF SASQUATCH AND ALL THE OTHER BIG GUYS

8

# Medium rare

A fascinating introduction to Brazil's unassuming and generous national hero



## Chico Xavier Medium of the Century

Guy Lyon Playfair

Roundtable Publishing Ltd 2010  
Pb, 98pp, £9.99, ISBN 9780956449313

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.99

2010 was the centenary of the birth of Brazilian Spiritist medium Francisco Cândido Xavier, better known simply as Chico Xavier. He has been celebrated as a national hero, with documentaries, exhibitions, a stamp issued on his 100th birthday in April, a commemorative medal, a biopic and a screen adaptation of his best-known novel *Nosso Lar (Our Home – The Astral City)* in English.

He was not well known outside Brazil until recently, but that is changing as more of his books are translated, and this short introduction to his life and works by Guy Lyon Playfair will help to promote his name further.

Chico left school at 13, and most of his working life was spent as an office worker for the Ministry of Agriculture. However, he devoted all his spare time to producing books in a variety of genres, which he did in industrial quantities. In all, he produced over 45–50 million copies (and rising) of them. This is a significant achievement by any standard, except that Chico claimed that authorship rested not with him, but with discarnate entities. He did not write 'his' books, but rather took dictation. He said that if he claimed authorship, it would be a fraud for which he would have to answer in the afterlife. The words "dictated by the spirit of" were always included on the

title page.

In support of the contention that Chico was not responsible for the content, Playfair states that Chico frequently claimed that he did not understand what he was writing, the implication being that as it was beyond the level of his modest educational attainment, it was evidence that the books were emanating from independent intelligences rather than his own subconscious.

As soon as he had finished a book, he assigned the copyright to charitable causes and took no further interest in it. As the books were hugely popular in Brazil, this meant that they generated a significant income which was used for good works around the country. Meanwhile, Chico lived modestly on his salary and then pension.

As a consequence of his selflessness, he was much loved in his own lifetime and has continued to be revered since his death in 2002.

About two-thirds of the present book comprise the chapters devoted to Chico in Playfair's *The Unknown Power* from 1975 and *The Indefinite Boundary* from the following year. This has resulted in some repetition, though the chapter taken from *The Indefinite Boundary* is more philosophical in tone.

In his conclusions, Playfair acknowledges that much needs to be done to analyse Chico's literary output and philosophy.

In the meantime, this is a useful, if somewhat uncritical, introduction for English speakers, but its limited space does not allow a rounded assessment of Chico's undoubted achievements. The subtitle's claim that Chico is the 'Medium of the Century' remains to be proved.

Tom Ruffles

### Fortean Times Verdict

TOO SHORT TO DO CHICO JUSTICE, BUT A USEFUL INTRODUCTION

7

## Slaughter on a Snowy Morn

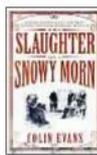
The Death Penalty Case that Revolutionised Forensic Science

Colin Evans

Icon Books 2010

Pb, 372 pp, notes £12.99, ISBN 9781848311657

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69



On 21 March, 1915, a wealthy farmer in a rural backwater of New York State lay dying in his kitchen, beaten brutally around the head and shot. His housekeeper died outside from a gunshot wound after staggering a few yards in the snow.

To help solve the savage double murder, DA John Knickerbocker and Sheriff Chester Bartlett employed a private investigator and a self-proclaimed 'expert witness' in forensics, then in its infancy.

The private investigator used dubious methods and the expert witness made fundamental mistakes. But in the frenzied atmosphere engendered by WWI, Knickerbocker built a case against Charlie Stielow – a 39-year-old illiterate German immigrant farmhand – and his 19-year-old brother-in-law Nelson Green. After sleep deprivation, round-the-clock interrogation and bullying, Stielow, who was – to put it mildly – none too bright, verbally confessed. Under considerable pressure, Nelson, who was even more mentally retarded than his brother-in-law, also admitted to the crime.

Stielow refused to sign the confession, yet still came within 40 minutes of frying in the electric chair. Yet almost everyone – fellow prisoners and warders alike – believed Stielow innocent. A movement, led by a charismatic female lawyer, gained pace, determined to overturn this injustice. They succeeded – albeit after numerous setbacks.

*Slaughter on a Snowy Morn* is a brilliant read. The narrative drives forward with the vigour of a thriller. The characterisations are worthy of a novelist. But *Slaughter* is also salutary reminder that not all conspiracies are global or involve 'big government'. Political ambitions blinded

local authorities to evidence that could have cleared Stielow. Prejudice prevented the pair's fair trial.

Private investigators and the expert witness put money before justice. And *Slaughter* delivers a powerful indictment of judicial murder: how many innocent people who didn't attract the attention of campaigners die or languish in prison?

Scientific testimony that Stielow's gun hadn't been fired in years was central to freeing the pair. The testimony was the first time scientific evidence aided attempts to overturn a murder conviction and the case helped form the foundation of modern forensic ballistics. But, despite the subtitle, this element is only one strand in *Slaughter*. Evans weaves a remarkable, compelling and moving tapestry that raises the bar for true crime books.

*Slaughter* is one of the best two or three books I've read recently and I can't recommend it highly enough.

Mark Greener

### Fortean Times Verdict

COMPELLING, BRILLIANT AND SIMPLY ESSENTIAL

10

## Shakespeare's Secret Book

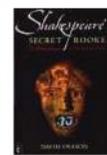
Deciphering Magical and Rosicrucian Codes

David Ovason

Claireview 2010

Pb, 247pp, illus, notes. £14.99, ISBN 9781905570263

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.49



Despite the title, only the first two chapters of David Ovason's latest book concentrate specifically on Shakespeare mysteries, before he moves on to examine codes and hidden meanings in a variety of mostly esoteric literature of the 16th and 17th centuries. He has some interesting material on the alchemists and Rosicrucians, and what he has to say about the interpretation of John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*, the *Centuries of Nostradamus* and the work of Jacob Boehme is really quite enlightening. And the book's exceptionally well-illustrated.

One of the reasons these

chapters shine is that they are relatively free of Ovason's obsession with the number 33, which he takes to refer variously to Christ (Jesus's age at the crucifixion), to the entry into other worlds, or to the ego; a flexibility of meaning that doesn't bode well.

Unfortunately, the chapters on Shakespeare concentrate on little else than this 33 symbolism, shown in verse lines of 33 letters and speeches or title-pages of 33 words, and so are by far the weakest sections in the book, as probably about half the examples given rely on some form of special pleading. Thus abbreviations and numerals are counted in some cases, in others not. Sometimes capital letters are counted, but not necessarily all of them. Consecutive lines of 32 and 34 characters are taken to imply the number 33.

The most ludicrous example is to be found on page 75 where, separating out an incomplete part of the title of an alchemical work by Khunrath, he finds it to be composed of 33 letters, if we "ignore the italic V" in one word, even though there's an identical "italic V" in one of the other words. Items appearing on the 33rd line of a page in the First Folio edition, of course, rely on the collusion of the printer, some years after Shakespeare's death. And why, given that a play is primarily intended to be heard, rather than read, would Shakespeare bother with 33-letter lines anyway? Who'd notice?

To say that this stretches the reader's credulity is putting it mildly.

Ovason's obsession with this is extremely damaging to his credibility overall, which is a shame because, when he can let go of it, some of his material is really rather good.

The lack of an index is annoying, as is the constant misspelling "bilateral" when referring to Francis Bacon's "bilateral" coding. Don't authors proofread their books any more? Or is there perhaps a hidden meaning here?

Steve Moore

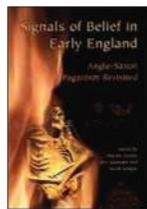
### Fortean Times Verdict

TOO OFTEN, A MONUMENT TO MISGUIDED INGENUITY

5

# Anglo-Saxon attitudes

## New light on the archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon spirituality, animistic paganism and the pervasive supernatural



### Signals of Belief in Early England

Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited

Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark & Sarah Semple

Oxbow 2010

Pb, 212pp, illus, ind, bib, £30.00, ISBN 9781842173954

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £30.00

Pagan Anglo-Saxon objects have been studied ever since Thomas Browne's 1658 *Hydriotaphia* used misidentified cremation urns as a starting point for a discussion of mankind's relationship with eternity. The beliefs of the early Anglo-Saxons have been the subject of dozens of popular and esoteric books. Despite this, there hasn't been a major archaeological work devoted solely to their study since David Wilson's *Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (1992). This volume sets out to bring new approaches to old and new data relating to the pre-Christian religious practices of Anglo-Saxon England.

Each of the nine chapters covers a different aspect of the topic. Martin Carver outlines the overall archaeological approach, followed by chapters from nine contributors on specific aspects of the subject. Ronald Hutton provides an afterword, discussing this book's place in the history of the subject and analysing some of the ways in which such studies have reflected the concerns of their own periods.

It's simplest to begin with what this book isn't: it isn't a one-volume introduction to Anglo-Saxon paganism. Instead, it explores a variety of different ways in which beliefs about the supernatural pervaded early Anglo-Saxon culture. The approach is modelled on recent studies of religion in other

periods, and attempts to use material culture, if not to reconstruct exact spiritual beliefs, then at least to learn something about how the Anglo-Saxons related to the cosmos through ritual practices. Carver argues that this was a period of "ideological experiment and inventive thinking", and that the archaeological evidence reflects people using a shared (or mostly shared) set of spiritual ideas to adapt to different local circumstances and changing needs, creating "localised variants of pagan practice geared to the construction of cosmologies, ancestors and social memories". All the articles share this basic viewpoint, and the result is an analysis of paganism as a way of thinking about the world rather than an organised body of religious doctrine.

The idea of paganism (though the term is not necessarily useful) as a method rather than a bounded category separate from everyday life is present in most of the articles, each of which has new light to shed on the archaeological evidence for spirituality. Several chapters tie into each other: Sarah Semple discusses the religious meanings of landscape, including monuments from earlier societies such as barrows and megaliths, while Julie Lund's article focuses more narrowly on rivers and wetlands, arguing that the water's edge was a literally liminal environment with sacred properties. Howard Williams's discussion of funerals as "mnemonic performances" concerned with transforming the identities of the dead stands more or less alone. So does Jenny Walker's discussion of the

role of halls and temples, making use of recent work from Scandinavia, including the remarkable temple site at Uppåkra. But the next three articles tie into each other: Aleks Pluskowski discusses the role of animals, both actual animals and their depictions in art. He argues for an animistic paganism in which warrior elites adopted predatory and aggressive animals – rare in daily life – as supernatural totems. Chris Fern focuses on the role of the horse. In addition to being a major element in Anglo-Saxon art, horses are found in some high-status burials. Horse-heroes blur the line between human and animal. Alexandra Sanmark discusses the same imagery, among other subjects, in arguing that ancestor cults were an important part of the spiritual life of the early Anglo-Saxons. Lastly, Sue Content and Howard Williams cover the history of the study of Anglo-Saxon paganism, showing how perceptions have varied, often according to the political and religious attitudes of the day. This leads into Hutton's afterword, which raises the same point about modern approaches.

*Signals of Belief in Early England* is a hugely welcome addition to the literature of Anglo-Saxon paganism. Any reader interested in the subject will find new and thought-provoking arguments, as well as superb examples of current archaeological approaches to understanding religion.

James Holloway

### Fortean Times Verdict

ESSENTIAL FOR FANS OF ANGLO-SAXON LIT AND PAGANISM

9

To order any of these titles – or any other book in print – contact the

### FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP

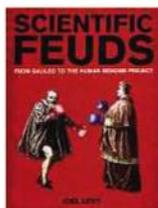
Telephone: 08430600031 Fax: 01326 569555 Email: FT@sparkledirect.co.uk

Address: Fortean Times Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 0TP.

We accept all major credit and debit cards including Switch & Amex. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to the FT Bookshop. Delivery is 7–10 days, subject to availability. Postage & packing is free within the UK.

# Fight club

A handsome study of professional mud-slinging from alchemy to astrophysics



## Scientific Feuds

From Galileo to The Human Genome Project

Joel Levy

New Holland 2010

Hb, 224pp, illus, refs, ind, £17.99, ISBN 9781847735140

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.19

Scientists like to portray their field as one of steady progress: new theories replace defective ones through a process of rational enquiry and peer scrutiny. Alas, people are people, so science is riven with fights and mud-slinging. It is this aspect that Joel Levy explores. Feuding goes back to the beginning of science, and was well established among natural philosophers and alchemists before that. Paracelsus's career was one long spat. Tycho Brahe fell out with his assistant Kepler and carried on a lively feud with fellow astronomer Ursus. Galileo loathed him.

It's no different today: the unravelling of the human genome was defined by a long-running scrap between two teams racing to complete it; President Clinton brokered an uneasy truce between Craig Venter's commercially-driven group and a publicly-funded one under John Sulston and Francis Collins.

Levy has selected 27 classic feuds from across the years and the scientific spectrum. Some (eg, Galileo vs Pope Urban) are famous; others, though less known, turn out to be classic scraps over important science (e.g. Kelvin vs Darwin and friends over the age of the Earth). He is good at summing up the essential science, giving quick thumbnail portraits of the personalities and

their positions, then mapping out the feud, and why it mattered.

He is also good at disentangling reality and myth, which is particularly useful in cases like that of the infamous Huxley/Wilberforce clash over evolution. The most famous alleged comments do not appear in any contemporary accounts and the importance of the fight seems to have been vastly exaggerated in the intervening years.

Some people were particularly inclined to feuding. It is no surprise to find that Newton's epic disagreements with Flamsteed and Leibniz made the cut – from what we know of Newton, he seems to have been unappealing. Nor is it surprising that Freud was two entries (feuds with Adler and Jung), given how determined he was to establish his approach to psychoanalysis as pre-eminent.

While Levy concentrates on mainstream science, some more fringe arguments get a look in. One entertaining chapter looks at the feud between Alfred Russel Wallace and John Hampden and his 'Planist' colleagues over Flat Earth theory, centring on surveys of the Old Bedford Level canal – an exemplum of why it is unwise to tangle with fixed-belief obsessives. There is also a brief but perceptive section on fringe science, which warns that science that appears 'fringe' to one generation may later return to respectability. He cites ball lightning, Tesla's wireless transmission of electricity and panspermia as examples.

This glossy hardback looks like a coffee-table cash-in, but it brings real insight into the fissiparous world of scientific discovery and is a useful addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of ideas, science or human nature.

Ian Simmons

### Fortean Times Verdict

DON'T GET BETWEEN A SCIENTIST AND HIS PET PROJECT...

8

## Scientific Paranormal Investigation

How to Solve Unexplained Mysteries

Benjamin Radford

Rhombus Publishing 2010

Pb, 312pp, \$16.95, ISBN 9780936455112

VIA [HTTP://WWW.RHOMBUSBOOKS.COM/](http://www.rhombusbooks.com/)



Radford is a hard-core sceptic who, as the title suggests, applies rigorous scientific principles to the investigation of mysteries. This

attitude may be anathema to fortune tellers who take a more inclusive approach to anomalies; however, his rigour is not that of a debunker but rather a carefully structured approach, taking the reader through the history and psychology of the paranormal and how 'mysteries' are formed, develop and spread.

There is much of interest here about the two key elements of anomalous experience, eye-witness testimony and the flaws of perception. All too often, we hear investigators stating, "But they were experienced observers, they knew what they saw, they weren't lying."

This misses the point completely. No sceptical investigator would dream of denying the primacy of witness experience. But the stimulus causing the experience isn't necessarily what the witness believes it to be, one example being the frequent misperception of natural phenomena as spacecraft.

Radford uses numerous case studies to illustrate his point along with short essays by several experienced sceptical investigators such as Richard Wiseman and David Clarke who give their own perspective on aspects of paranormal investigation; Daniel Loxton's advice about the need to use original source material should be heeded by anyone who considers themselves a fortune teller.

As Radford says, quoting Mark Twain, "Supposing is good, but finding out is better."

Andy Roberts

### Fortean Times Verdict

A GENUINELY USEFUL BOOK YOU WILL RETURN TO OFTEN

8

## Sudden Genius?

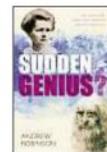
The Gradual Path to Creative Breakthroughs

Andrew Robinson

Oxford University Press 2010

Hb, 371pp, notes, bib, ind, £18.99, ISBN 9780199569953

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.09



This unsatisfying book claims to be an investigation into genius and creativity, but given their subjective nature, it was probably doomed from the start.

The first of three sections examines what other writers and scientific studies have to say, and the answer is very little. Looking at his synopsis of the scientific studies, one wonders how much of this stuff got to be called science in the first place.

Robinson concludes – and this is the book's only insight (mirrored by the subtitle) – that geniuses do not make their breakthroughs with just a sudden flash of revelation, rather they have worked on the task for many years. Well, whaddyaknow! The second section contains a detailed look at a particular work of 10 chosen geniuses, and it is here that the problems of subjectivity become all too apparent. Few would argue with his choice of Leonardo, Mozart and Einstein, but some of his others are odd. From the world's literature he selects Virginia Woolf. Her work of genius is *Mrs Dalloway*, a novel which even her admirers called shallow and which Robinson describes as "fatally flawed". Literature deserves better. One could also question his inclusion of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Satyajit Ray.

The third section searches for patterns and common features in the lives of the chosen 10. Unsurprisingly, there are none, except that the genius had spent at least 10 years thinking/working on their subject.

Robinson got a research grant to write this book. In these cash-strapped times, I would suggest that the donors ask for a refund.

Andy Munro

### Fortean Times Verdict

NO GENIUS HERE, JUST MEDITATIVE SCRIBBLING

5

### Evolution of Island Mammals

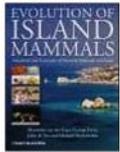
**Adaptation and Extinction of Placental Mammals on Islands**

Alexandra van der Geer, George Lyras, John de Vos & Michael Dermitzakis

Wiley-Blackwell 2010

Hb, 496pp, £45.00, ISBN 9781405190091

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £40.50



Here's a challenge. Can an enthusiast with a biology 'O' level deal with a book pitched at zoology or palaeontology postgrads? There comes a time in pursuing forteana when you have to confront literature so technical it leaves you behind. I approached *Evolution of Island Mammals* warily, but found it surprisingly easy going. I only had to look up 'parietal' (bits on the side of your skull) and called my sister – an osteopath – to explain “synostotic fusion”.

That aside, there's a lot of material in here that's fascinating to the non-specialist. Much of the research is new, or a new assessment of existing material, the result of painstaking work by the Dutch-Greek authorial team who travelled the world's obscure museum collections measuring and comparing old bones and teeth.

There's a few laughs too. Intrepid British naturalist Dorothea Bate arrived in Cyprus at the turn of the 20th century and revealed that the miraculously preserved relics of the “300 Marionites”, the legendary founding fathers of Cypriot Christianity on display in churches, were the fossilised bones of pygmy hippos. That can't have been well received locally.

Some of the larger mainland mammals – especially the good swimmers like hippos, elephants and deer – evolved quite quickly into cute miniature island versions. The smallest of the pygmy elephants, at just under a meter high, was proto-Sicily's *Elephas falconeri*, the biggest mammal on an island it shared with mice, rabbits and not much else. The authors consider the controversial pygmy human 'hobbits' of the Indonesian island of Flores, *Homo floresiensis*, to be a distinct species. A volcanic

eruption 17,000 years ago apparently finished off the 'hobbits' and *Stegadon sondaari*, a dwarf relative of the elephants, and may have killed off the island's giant cave rats too.

*Island Mammals* concludes that most of these island dwarf mammals died out before humans arrived, although Majorca's early humans may have domesticated the 20in (50cm)-high *Myotragus balaericus*, the “mouse goat”.

The same evolutionary forces that produced cute miniature versions of mainland megafauna also drove the evolution of scary giant versions of normally cute little mainland mammals. The Cretan deer *Candiacervus major*, at 5ft 5in (1.65m) at the shoulder, was slightly larger than the Irish elk. Malta has *Leithia*, a double-sized dormouse, preyed on by outside owls. Madagascar once had knuckle-dragging ground lemurs, and Sardinia had *Megalenydris barbaricia*, a flat-tailed otter that was “truly a giant... much larger than that of a living otter”, though its remains are too fragmentary to tell just how much bigger. What really kept me awake at night was the thought of *Diogaronyx*, the terrier-sized “monster hedgehog” from a Miocene archipelago that's now part of Italy.

While the scholarship of *Island Mammals*'s research is excellent, its presentation and structure is more 'postgraduate'. This – and the price tag – make it more a work of reference than pleasant bedside reading for forteans. The illustrations are mostly black and white, with small colour plates confined to the middle. This is a pity, as the authors have shown they can write a more coffee-table type book on this subject – *Island Mammals* evolved (excuse the pun) out of the Dutch-language *Hoe Dieren op Eilanden Evoluen*, a sumptuously-illustrated 2009 Darwin anniversary celebratory work aimed at the general reader. Surely this subject is broad and engaging enough to deserve an English-language work for us non-specialists.

Matt Salusbury

#### Fortean Times Verdict

GOOD, AND A SPECIALIST WOULD PROBABLY GIVE IT A 9...

7

## Not related

Alan Moore's tribute to his friend Steve Moore plays with the ideas of biography



### Unearthing

Alan Moore/ Crook & Flail / Mitch Jenkins

Lex Recordings

2hrs approx, 3xCD, 3xLP box set, £50

VIA LEXRECORDS.COM

One of the highlights of Iain Sinclair's gargantuan 2006 anthology *London: City of Disappearances* was 'Unearthing', Alan Moore's biographical portrait of his friend and mentor Steve Moore who, amongst other things, happens to have been an early co-editor of *FT* (back when it was a few stapled-together sheets of paper known as *The News*), editor of several *Fortean Studies* volumes and *FT*'s first heroic indexer.

But as *Unearthing* reveals, there's a great deal more to the modest Mr (S) Moore. He was a key protagonist in the world of SF fandom, publishing the zine *Vega* in 1965 and the UK's first comic zine, *Ka-Pow*, in the same year. He's spent a career writing comic strips for IPC (including *2000A.D.*), *Marvel*, *Warrior* and others and, along the way, found time to transform an enthusiasm for the I-Ching and Chinese mysticism into a deep knowledge that led to a fellowship of the Royal Asiatic Society. And let's not overlook his many curious, sometimes steamy – and entirely true – adventures in oneiric occultism and tulpa-generation, all documented here.

Now, in a twist of his tale that's as deeply improbable and entirely sensible as the ceremonial magic that both Moores indulge in, Steve's life story, read in gruff, Northampton-beatnik-hipster

style by Alan (below), has been transformed into an epic work of audio art and packaged in a monumental box set containing multiple CDs, LPS, posters, transcripts, cactus seeds (really), a colour drawing by Steve and photography by celebrated snapper Mitch Jenkins.

Underpinning Alan's narration is a soundtrack of swirls, squeals, scrapes, drums and drones that periodically coalesce into more familiar musical themes before returning to abstraction; this is not Steve Moore the rock opera. Devised by Crook and Flail (aka American musicians Andrew Broder and Adam Drukker), assisted by rock underground veterans including Stuart Braithwaite (Mogwai), Justin Broadrick (Godflesh) Zach Hill (Hella) and Mike Patton (Faith no More, *Fantomas et al*), the quietly epic score does a fine job of fleshing out the text's themes

and – like Steve himself, still living in the same Shooter's Hill home in which he grew up – perfectly conveys the sense of *Tayy al-Ar*, the Islamic notion of 'travelling without moving'.

The resulting mix is sensitively assembled and never obscures the

all-important word but, if such musical avant-gardism isn't to your taste, the package's multiple discs also contain the narration without the music, and *vice versa*.

As unique and idiosyncratic as it is richly detailed and sumptuously packaged, *Unearthing* is biography as history, psychology as geography and person as poetry; it's also a glowing tribute to a remarkable man and a wryly tender account of an enduring friendship.

Mark Pilkington

#### Fortean Times Verdict

A GLOWING TRIBUTE TO A LONG AND DEEP FRIENDSHIP

9



SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS AND GAMES TO:  
THE EDITOR, FORTEAN TIMES, DENNIS CONSUMER DIVISION,  
30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD, UK.



### Confessions

On UK release from 18 Feb  
Dir Tetsuya Nakashima, Japan 2010

Tetsuya Nakashima's films are growing increasingly dark and disturbed. 2004's *Kamikaze Girls* was a candy-coloured popstastic riot; *Memories of Matsuko*, in 2006, was a tale of mental collapse leavened by surrealistic flights into a more cheerful dreamworld; *Confessions* – now slated to be Japan's official entry in this year's Oscars – is a tightly controlled, vicious and intense account of cruelty, murder and revenge. It might be built out of some fairly standard Japanese movie furniture – a school setting, a smart-but-evil boy, bullying, a mobile phone-mediated and death-fetishising youth culture – yet it's a work of powerful originality and psychological truth.

In the film's opening segment, teacher Yuko (Takako Matsu) stands at the front of her middle school class and tells them about the recent death of her four-year-old daughter, drowned in a swimming pool. The police judged it an accident but, Yuko says, it was murder; what's more, she accuses two of the children – a psychotic genius with a mother fixation, and a bullied weakling – of being the killers. Because of their age, she goes on, the law is powerless against them, and so instead she has injected HIV-infected blood into the milk cartons they just drank, in order that over the next

few months they learn to appreciate the value of life. The rest of the film is about a fixation with death, as Yuko's revenge plays out. Gradually, Nakashima reveals the twisted depths of his characters, teasing out the flaws that pull them all down into hysteria, savagery and despair.

As in *Memories of Matsuko*, there is a strong emphasis in *Confessions* on storytelling and delusion. "You're all so good at lying", Yuko says to her class in her opening speech; and, indeed, the characters deceive others and themselves, with their doubtful truths being woven into the story right from the start, when what was thought to be an accident becomes a murder. The film is told by a series of narrators, or rather as a series of 'confessions' which run into each other as each character attempts to exert some power over the story, to be the star of his or her own drama. The solipsistic, self-pitying, competitive world of childhood is of course the perfect setting for this. And Nakashima the filmmaker is himself complicit, refusing to give us an overview of events, presenting flashbacks as they appear in his characters' heads.

With its initial set-up of Yuko calmly addressing the children, *Confessions* takes a while either to emerge as believable or pick up pace. But its palette of cold blues and greys, its insistent soundtrack, and Takako Matsu's still, intense

central performance, means psychological tension and a sense of barely-contained violence build steadily as the film's lonely characters are funnelled towards an explosive climax.

Nakashima is a visually and structurally inventive filmmaker, and in *Confessions* he gets some strong performances out of his young cast. He also proves himself a masterful storyteller with a disquieting insight into the darkest recesses of the human psyche.

Jen Ogilvie

### Fortean Times Verdict

NAKASHIMA'S LATEST IS A  
MASTERPIECE

9

### Dark Skies: The Complete Series

Dir Tobe Hooper et al., US 1996-97  
Mediumrare, £39.99

Slated for a multi-series sojourn on our TV screens in the second half of the 90s, *Dark Skies* only lasted one season. Coming as it did in the midst of *The X-Files*'s nine-season run of chain-smoking conspiracy theories and alien visitation to Earth, it's impossible not to make comparisons, if only because they both cover much familiar ufological territory. The first big difference – apart from no classic stand-alones in *Dark Skies* – is that there's no will-they-won't-they Mulder and Scully sexual tension between

idealistic Congressional aide John Loengard (Eric Close) and his Kennedy administration intern girlfriend Kim Sayers (Megan Ward), because they already have. The second is that *Dark Skies* is a period drama set in the 1960s and has the sort of fun with iconic historical figures of the time (tied to the tagline "history as we know it is a lie") that wouldn't be entirely out of place in an Austin Powers film. Loengard uncovers the existence of aliens in our midst and also the typically sinister secret government of Majestic-12, here created to counter the invasion. Matters are further complicated by the evidence of the Ganglion Hive parasite within the alien 'Grays'; the aliens themselves have been invaded. Mankind is next. Loengard enjoys an uneasy relationship with Majestic-12's Captain Frank Bach (JT Walsh) for whom Loengard acts as a loose cannon ally because it becomes clear that the parasitic Ganglions have infiltrated the ranks of MJ-12 as well.

This is one series in which turning immediately to the extras is a must, because that's where you'll find the feature-length pilot episode, directed by Tobe Hooper and without which Episode 1 proper will remain largely unintelligible. After the initial intrigue, early episodes settle down to a repetitive and formulaic pattern, still standard practice for US TV series intent on a long run. Here, it could easily be any one of innumerable early episodes (following in the footsteps of David Vincent in *The Invaders*) in which our intrepid duo comes close to exposing the alien invasion in our midst but never quite manage it. But then, midway through, the series throws in a decent bit of torque and the infiltration of the parasitic Hive comes much closer to home for the intrepid truth-seeking duo of John and Kim, while the conspiracy is revealed to have vast implications worldwide. They weren't kidding when they told us that "history as we know it" is a lie. Throw in everything from crop circles to cattle mutilations and The Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show (as suggestive of some sort of Hive meme-and-mind screw) and the 1960s-set *Dark Skies* is certainly swinging. Having just read Mark Pilkington's *Mirage Men* – which posits the idea that, among other things, Majestic-12 was nothing

but a shaggy dog story served up to the UFO community by government agencies keen to obfuscate the actual reality of advanced weapons-testing – and in the wake of the recent WikiLeaks furore, the re-release of *Dark Skies* came at the right time for me. That the final ‘Bloodlines’ episode ends amid the Summer of Love with an unresolved season cliffhanger is rather apt with historical hindsight; because in our Dreamland idiot box, the truth is still out there.

Nick Cirkovic

### Fortean Times Verdict

SHINY, HAPPY TIMES UNDER DARK SKIES

7

## 252: Sign of Life

Dir Nobuo Mizuta, Japan 2008  
MVM, £15.99

A scant two years after *The Sinking of Japan*, Japanese cinema audiences again face their destruction, this time courtesy of a mega-typhoon (with a side-order of skull-splitting, baseball-sized hailstones, please), in *252: Sign of Life*.

Foregoing the aforementioned’s obsession with the science and visuals of a disaster, *252* looks at the human and humane faces of tragedy and is an ensemble piece more akin to 70s blockbusters *The Towering Inferno* and *Earthquake*. Like those, it’s also a who’s-who of famous faces, which anyone with even the slightest knowledge of Asian cinema should enjoy.

Seen (mainly) through the eyes of men of the Tokyo Fire Department, *252* is concerned with heroism, duty, loyalty, redemption and countless other perennial values, which have always seemed to resonate especially strongly in the Japanese psyche, with its echoes of the Samurai code of Bushido.

Add a genuinely terrifying flooding of the Tokyo underground, the most harrowing blood transfusion in cinema history (anyone got a broken biro?) and you’ve got a highly entertaining picture. And, as a friend said, “is there anything hotter than a crying Japanese fireman?”

Tim Weinberg

### Fortean Times Verdict

JAPANESE DISASTER MOVIE WITH A HUMAN EMPHASIS

8

## I Spit on Your Grave

Dir Stephen R Monroe, US 2010  
Anchor Bay, £15.99/£19.99

Even with Hollywood’s desire to ‘reimagine’ every pop-cultural artefact in our collective memory banks, I was surprised to see a new version of Meir Zarchi’s ‘shabby little shocker’ (as someone once called another famous tale of attempted rape and female revenge). Actually, the crude, widely reviled and oft-banned *Day of the Woman* – as the 1977 *ISOYG* was originally titled – isn’t quite the ‘video nasty’ it was labelled, and attempts to rehabilitate it by feminist critics deserve some credit. In my review of the 2004 DVD (FT183:63), I argued (pretentiously) that the film’s real feminist subtext has less to do with the ostensible story of gang rape followed by bloody, castrating revenge and more to do with notions around women, writing and nature in American culture; and, yes, I did invoke Transcendentalism and Emily Dickinson to make my case.

Watching Stephen R Monroe’s remake, I was hard pressed to find anything to stimulate argument, pretentious or otherwise, in an efficiently made but empty film. Jennifer Hills (Sarah Butler) is still a writer who seeks peace and quiet in a backwoods cabin and ends up the prey of local rednecks; left for dead, she still returns to mete out, measure for measure, her vengeance. Somehow, though, despite being infinitely better made than the clunky original, the new *ISOYG* is just mechanically nasty rather than shocking. It seems to buy unquestioningly into the notion of revenge in a way that Zarchi’s film did not, making the gruesome punishments fit the crimes with leering relish. If Zarchi’s Jennifer is a semi-catatonic cipher going through the motions, then Monroe’s is a kick-ass chick with a talent for crafting Heath-Robinson killing machines out of backwoods detritus to pleasure an audience brought up on *Saw* movies. It’s cheap catharsis, only serving to make Zarchi’s original look far, far better than it actually is. Avoid.

David Sutton

### Fortean Times Verdict

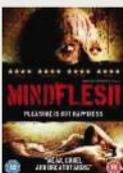
SLICKLY MADE SHOCKER, BUT WITH NO POWER TO SHOCK

3

## SHORTS

### MINDFLESH

(4Digital Media, £15.99)



Robert Pratten’s first film, the interesting but uneven *London Voodoo*, created some interest among fans of homegrown British horror, and with *Mindflesh* he returns with something even more interesting, and possibly more uneven too. The tale of taxi-driver and struggling writer Chris (Peter Bramhill), tormented by a childhood trauma and haunted by visions of a mysterious woman (no, definitely not a lady) in red, *Mindflesh* moves further and further away from the genre’s norms as it unfolds. We enter a hallucinatory world of sexual obsession, dangerous delusion and off-the-wall fortan philosophy (as delivered by Prof. Verdain, whose book *Materialization: A Casebook of Threshold Phenomena* warns us that our minds are creating the Universe!). The story veers constantly and dangerously towards silliness, and the film seems rather to lose its way as Chris becomes increasingly unhinged, but this bizarre fusion of Cronenbergian body horror and Lovecraftian interdimensional weirdness is certainly a refreshingly unique contribution to an increasingly moribund genre, with Chris’s deliciously squelchy alien tormentors offering a perfect antidote to CGI blandness. **DS 5/10**

### OUTCAST

(Momentum Pictures, £12.99)



A surprise hit at last year’s FrightFest, this debut feature from writer/director Colm McCarthy is a pleasing change from much contemporary horror, playing ancient magic and urban decay off one another to often powerful effect. Young Fergal (Niall Bruton) and his overprotective witchy mum Mary (Kate Dickie) are a pair of Irish travellers holed up on a grim housing estate on the edge of Edinburgh. The reason for their reclusiveness soon becomes clear(ish); they are being pursued in some sort of ritual hunt by Mary’s ex-lover Cathal (James Nesbitt). As a magical battle involving sigils, spells and dead birds ensues, a terrifying monster stalks the estate and puts the wind right up the local chavs. An unexpectedly appealing cross between Clive Barker and Ken Loach, this is both a successful supernatural horror and a twisted coming-of-age tale that succeeds in keeping its various strands compellingly intertwined until an unfortunately lame final reel that disappoints on a number of counts.

**DS 6/10**

### LA CIENAGA (THE SWAMP)

(ICA Films, £12.99)



This debut feature from Argentinian writer-director Lucrecia Martel has been compared to the work of Luis Buñuel, and centres around a middle-class family who, during a sweltering summer heatwave, turn to alcohol to help pass the day. Sitting drunk around their stagnant pool, they ignore their children, who are left to their own devices: hunting, sharing bedrooms, drinking, fighting and driving illegally. The only adults who seem to care are the powerless Indian servants, who are harassed by the other adults. This stark and haunting film looks, like a hidden camera, at the relationships within the family, from secret, lesbian infatuations to incestuous affairs. There isn’t much plot or action, but what it lacks in energy, it makes up for with Martel’s ability to conjure an eerily bleak vision of a middle-class family in crisis.

Darren Buck **6/10**



### GoldenEye 007

£34.99 Nintendo Wii, Activision/Eurocom

Now listen carefully 007: this is not the much-loved *GoldenEye* for the N64, or *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* for Game Cube, nor is this *GoldenEye* the movie. This is a total remake of the classic 1997 Bond game. Gone are “I’m invincible” Boris the computer nerd and Tina Turner belting out that iconic tune. The Facility level? Not quite as you remember it. A very different game awaits you. Confused advertising and lack of Brosnan aside, it’s one of the best Bond games ever made and a great FPS in its own right.

Updated for the *Call of Duty* generation, the gameplay features many scripted action scenes, yet doesn’t fall into the trap of strictly linear *CoD* level design. *GoldenEye 007* features multiple routes and rewards stealth or clever use of the environment to take down enemies. Shoot out ceiling fans above their heads or reprogramme surface-to-air missiles to swat that pesky helicopter raining fire on you. The variety and invention here provide plenty of classic Bond moments that, crucially, aren’t forced upon the player but seem to occur naturally, as a result of one’s exploration and ingenuity: sneaking through air vents in a missile bay, then turning on the loading conveyer and shooting the missiles to detonate them as they pass by loitering enemies is a typically

enjoyable sequence of this kind. It’s refreshing to play a game that respects its player’s curiosity and problem-solving.

After wrestling with all the possible control types, the ‘classic’ controller is the one for winners. The Gamecube controls suffer from the poor C stick with its tiny nub and ridged movement degrees. The fiddly D-pad can make swapping weapons and gadgets a hassle in combat, with not enough buttons for all in-game actions resulting in curious finger-bending combos to activate some commands. But the wealth of control options are a testament to the developer’s attempts to attract a range of players either not used to Wii-mote FPS gaming or without four Wiimotes for local multiplayer outings.

*GoldenEye 007* brings Wii multiplayer up to date with online party options *à la Halo* and split-screen play for those retro real world parties. There’s a wealth of game types, including *Golden Gun*, a history of Bond characters to unlock and even character levelling (those inimitable combat awards such as ‘Mostly Harmless’ have even been included). Online performance is good and the levels are based on the campaign, although I do miss the aforementioned N64’s Facility level.

Offering some of the most

impressive graphics on the Wii, Eurocom have used every trick in the book to squeeze out large dynamic levels that attempt to rival those seen in similar FPS games on the HD consoles – from snowy Arctic bases to a hot, humid jungle of rich colours and foliage that reacts to gun fire.

It’s a Bond game right? Need a dark swanky club packed with partying peeps? You got it. OK, fine, the dancers are 2D silhouettes but the illusion works on the low definition Wii!

Daniel Craig sounds neither shaken nor

stirred, providing a dour vocal delivery. Dame Judi Dench is far better as M, as are other members of the supporting cast, and although Nicole Scherzinger’s cover of the title song is little more than a karaoke number it helps bring this remake up to date.

Due to the mess at MGM, the only Bond we’re going to see this year is on our TV screens. Although the characters and plot have been watered down somewhat, *GoldenEye 007* remains a worthy successor to the N64 original. It offers great combat, exciting missions and robust multiplayer for seasoned 00 Agents and rookies alike.

Do I expect you to keep reading? No, Mr Bond, I expect you to buy. Alexander Norman

#### Fortean Times Verdict

A SATISFYING REMAKE OF A BONA FIDE BOND CLASSIC

8

### James Bond 007: Bloodstone

PC 34.99, Xbox360, PS3 £49.88, Activision/Bizarre Creations

Like any self-respecting third person spy shooter, *James Bond 007: Bloodstone* slipped below the radar at the end of 2010 under the cover of bigger beasts. It came out at the same time as the revamp on Wii of the classic *GoldenEye* (see Alexander Norman’s review).

*Bloodstone* sports the vocal talents of Daniel Craig, Judi Dench and, after the game’s opening set

piece, includes one of those classic Bond film title sequences belted out by Joss Stone, who is also the love interest. The story is by Bond screenwriter Bruce Feirstein, and quickly settles into the familiar contours of any Bond outing. 007 charges all round the globe, allowing for many and varied environments from Monaco to Siberia, delivered with solid production values. It looks good for the most part, be it up-top tropical splendour or seedy underground skulking, of which it has to be said there is a tunnel or 10 too many. The *melée* combat (the game’s best feature) is as snappy as a spine-crunching neck snap, the vehicular mayhem (including that gorgeous Aston Martin DB5), while by no means innovative, is fun (even though, whether in a speedboat or that babe magnet of a car, it feels much like a fairground ride on rails, entirely dependent on the right gamepad twiddle here or there). But given Bizarre Creations’s pedigree in the *Project Gotham Racing* series, you feel yourself to be in safe hands, even as you write yourself off behind the wheel (usually at the climax of a level). Cover mode during shootouts has long since ceased to be the selling point in a game, but is slickly done. Another element is Focus Aim (think Mark and Execute in *Splinter Cell: Conviction*) in which you can target multiple enemies.

The plot involving biochemical terrorists is one Feirstein probably knocked up on a napkin while he was out to dinner one evening. Meanwhile, Craig delivers his contractual lines as if that permanently compacted jaw had been fused together by gobbets of beluga caviar. At around six or seven hours (is this some sort of unspoken industry-set standard now?) with yet another multiplayer add-on afterthought, *Bloodstone* is neither so long that it outstays its welcome, nor compelling enough that you wish it had. By now, the price has probably dropped like a stone and might be worth the outing; pay zirconia prices for it, though, because it’s hardly a real diamond.

Nick Cirkovic

#### Fortean Times Verdict

NOT QUITE THE POLISHED GEM IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN

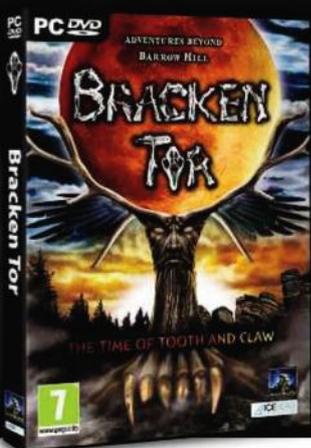
5

ADVENTURES BEYOND BARROW HILL

# BRACKEN TOR



## THE TIME OF TOOTH AND CLAW



COMING  
LATE NOVEMBER 2010

FROM THE CREATOR OF BARROW HILL, comes Bracken Tor, set in a neighboring part of Cornwall to Barrow Hill. Shiver once more as English myths break through reality and tear up the tranquil life of Cornwall in this suspenseful point and click adventure.



AVAILABLE AT:



OR VISIT: [WWW.ICEBERG-INTERACTIVE.COM](http://WWW.ICEBERG-INTERACTIVE.COM) OR [WWW.ICEBERG-SHOP.COM](http://WWW.ICEBERG-SHOP.COM)

## How We Were Made

A book of revelations

by William Neil

THIS IS A MUCH ENLARGED EDITION

"..... Neil demonstrates a host of dazzling numerical correspondences, mostly extrapolated from the famous number 666; multiplied out (6 x 6 x 6), it gives a key number 216, which produces other fundamental constants when it is divided or multiplied. ... Neil applies his findings to show how 666 and related numbers can be found in the human form... in monuments like the Great Pyramid and Stonehenge, in the Earth's position in the solar system, and in ancient and modern measuring systems. It can even be seen in the "building and placing" of the moon. ... If you're fascinated by numbers and sacred geometry, this book will be a treat."

Nexus Magazine review, Aug/Sept 2007

"Highly recommended"

David Icke

Order this best seller now!

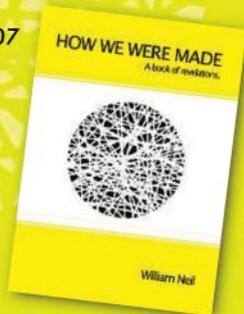
ISBN 978-0-9545957-2-2

williamneil.co.uk

Send a cheque or postal order for £15, with your details, to:

Oracle Books, P.O. Box 2467, Reading, England, RG4 7WU

Also from Waterstone's, or any bookshop, and amazon.co.uk



## AUTHORS

PLEASE SUBMIT:

synopsis, plus sample chapters (3) for consideration.

Olympia Publishers

www.olympiapublishers.com

60 Cannon Street, LONDON, EC4N 6NP

## Your Book Is Written To Be Read

Books published – novels to academic

Submissions to: Janus Publishing Company Limited

105-107 Gloucester Place, London W1U 6BY

Email: publisher@januspublishing.co.uk  
www.januspublishing.co.uk  
+44 (0)20 7486 6633



## OCCULT KNOWLEDGE & TRUTH

An announcement for genuine seekers only

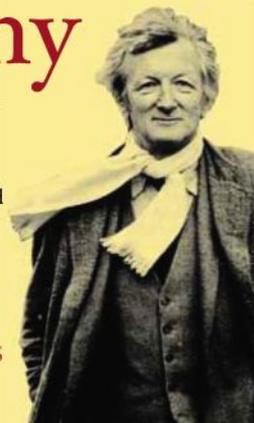
Study the Ancient Mystery Teachings in their entirety as never before revealed

www.isohtm.com

## Michellany

A John Michell Reader

A few copies now available to FT readers • Contributors include FT founder Bob Rickard & Rupert Sheldrake • Numbered memorial volume for family & friends • New material about the celebrated author of *A View Over Atlantis* & *Flying Saucer Vision*



NOT AVAILABLE IN BOOKSHOPS

Send name & address to:

michellany@johnmichell.com

## WWW.BLADES-UK.COM

Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm 0845 226 5514



Also Accept Paypal, Nachex, Moneybookers & cheques.

## AUTHORS

before paying to publish look at all the options. Send for our free booklet.



Indepenpress  
25 Eastern Place  
Brighton, BN2 1GJ

Tel: 0845 1080530

e: info@penpress.co.uk  
www.penpress.co.uk

## BOOKS BLOW MINDS

We have thousands of titles on Fortean, mysteries & mind/body/spirit.

New, secondhand & bargains.

Browse & order through our website

www.innerbookshop.com

Or contact THE INNER BOOKSHOP  
111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford OX4 1RQ  
Tel. 01865-245301 for catalogues.

## NEW AUTHORS

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK ALL SUBJECTS INVITED WRITE OR SEND YOUR MANUSCRIPT TO:

**ATHENA PRESS**  
QUEEN'S HOUSE, 2 HOLLY ROAD,  
TWICKENHAM TW1 4EG  
www.athenapress.com  
info@athenapress.com

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA  
ForteanTimes

Made to Measure Custom Tailors

From GBP 159

AMBASSADOR & SMART FASHION  
www.ambfa.com

SPECIAL OFFER:  
1 Suit 1 Extra Pair of Trousers  
1 Shirt 1 Tie

Email: ambfa19@gmail.com  
Phone: +662 253 2993

Gazelle ESOTERICA

ADVENTURES UNLIMITED

World-famous publishers of Ancient Knowledge, UFOs, Suppressed Technology, Conspiracies, now available from Gazelle Books.

For your catalogue please contact: Gazelle  
White Cross Mills, Hightown, Lancaster LA1 4XS  
Tel 01524 68765  
Email sales@gazellebooks.co.uk

## TO ADVERTISE HERE

Call Paul on

0207 907 6682

or Ciaran on

0207 907 6683



New and Secondhand Books on  
Witchcraft, Magic, Mystery History,  
Crowley and Spare.

**THE ATLANTIS BOOKSHOP**

49a Museum Street London  
WC1A 1LY

ATLANTIS

020 7405 2120

atlantis@theatlantisbookshop.com  
www.theatlantisbookshop.com  
www.theatlantisbookshopevents.com

**GOLDEN KING**  
**DEEP PROCESSOR RADAR**

TARGET IDENTIFICATION

REAL TIME GRAPHICS

ORDINARY DETECTION 60cm

DEEP PROCESSOR RADAR SYSTEM

REAL TIME CAVITY DETECTION 10m

**WORLD'S FIRST DETECTOR WITH RADAR TECHNOLOGY**  
**TARGET: SHAPE-SIZE-METAL ID-DEPTH- IN REAL TIME GRAPHICS**  
EVERGREEN DETECTORS www.uk-metal-detectors.co.uk 01588 620259  
THE CANN BARN MELLINGTON POWYS SY15 6TQ

Adult DVD's/Toys/Novelties - Men & Stag - Smoking Gear - BB Guns -  
Gothic & Fantasy - Replica Swords - Gadgets - Boys Toys & Much More

**WWW.DEVILS DEN.CO.UK**  
Sales Enquiries Hotline  
**01373 452666**

[www.forteantimes.co.uk](http://www.forteantimes.co.uk)

**ALCHEMY**  
1977 Gothic

**NEW RELEASES OUT MARCH 2011**

Exciting new range of jewellery, accessories & giftware available **VERY SOON!**

Order Online: [www.ul13alchemy.com](http://www.ul13alchemy.com)

Order Online: [www.alchemygothic.com](http://www.alchemygothic.com)

**Alchemy**, Hazel Drive, Leicester, LE3 2JE.  
Tel: 0116 282 4824 Fax: 0116 282 5202  
mailto:order@alchemygothic.com (please quote FT Mar 2011)

For your mail order pack which includes: Alchemy Gothic 1977 catalogue plus UL13 brochure & flyer and UL17 flyer, please send your name & address plus a cheque or P.O. for £3.00 payable to: "Alchemy".

Please quote **FT Mar 11** in response to this advert. Trade & wholesale enquiries welcome. Contact the sales team: Lyn, Matt or Georgia.

**HAUNTED Hampshire**

**DARK ENCOUNTERS**  
be prepared to be scared.

Did you know that the South has a hidden haunted heritage? Are you brave enough to join the team at Dark Encounters for a night of paranormal research in some of the South's Most Haunted locations?

Join our experienced investigators on a ghost hunt with a difference - real paranormal research. Don't just watch it on television... do it for real!

Or do dare to take a Ghost Walk of Medieval Southampton and explore the underground vaults. A unique way to explore Southampton's ancient monuments with this fascinating mix of history and street theatre.

The walks are very popular and places are limited, so pre-booking is essential. Visit our website for a full list of future events and offers.

[www.darkencounters.co.uk](http://www.darkencounters.co.uk)

Partsmouth Dockyard

Southampton Medieval Vaults

Ghost Walk Spice Island

Ghost Hunting

Live Internet Investigations

Ghost Workshops

Call 0808 1201020 for more details

private bookings + special events + an unusual gift

 CELESTRON

 MEADE

Sky-Watcher

 AstroTrac

Vixen

# ASTRONOMIA



The South East's Dedicated Astronomy Centre...  
A huge range of telescopes, binoculars, books  
and accessories.



246 High Street  
Dorking  
Surrey  
RH4 1QR

Tel: 01306 640714  
mail@astronomia.co.uk  
www.astronomia.co.uk

Dear FT...

# letters



## Runic inscriptions

Marco Bianchi of Uppsala University in Sweden claims that the runemasters of Viking-era Scandinavia were largely illiterate – that most of their inscriptions were meaningless and it was more important to the aristocracy to fool *hoi polloi* about being literate [FT268:21].

There is an alternative explanation that fits what is known about runes. In many examples of runes in written rather than inscribed sources, it is clear from context that a single rune could substitute for an entire word. Runes are grammalogues, not merely letters. For example, instead of writing 'kyr' [cows] it is quicker to write f – the rune for 'fehu', which means 'cattle' in Old Germanic. Furthermore, there are Anglo-Saxon examples of magical riddles where an entire string of concepts are replaced with a string of runes. Why spend time chipping out the Old Norse equivalent of "the god rides in company, destruction flows from his knowledge" when the runes 'a r m d l k' will do? Phonetically this would read as "armdlk", which is indeed nonsense, but the runes mean "deity, riding, fellowship, hail [of missiles], water, knowledge".

Unfortunately, a magical inscription of this sort can be expressed conceptually in more than one combination of runes, dependent on the mindset and cultural associations of the time, place and individual runemaster doing the inscribing. As such – to the modern reader it remains indecipherable, but it is not nonsense and almost certainly was intended to carry an invocation, the meaning of which was beyond the mere marking of an event in stone.

**Derek Wood**  
*Cambridge*

## Health and safety

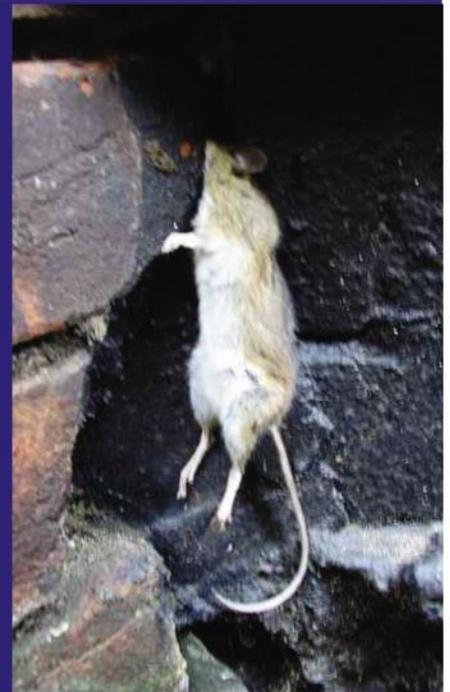
The story that the game of conkers had been banned from British schools [FT270:17] is just one of a range of "elf and safety" myths that the press has happily promulgated. Others include tales of workers being banned from putting up Christmas decorations, trapeze artists having to wear hard hats,

## Wall mice

We live in a 200-year-old timber-framed cottage in Westleton, East Suffolk. Four times in the last two years we have found field mice hanging dead, with their heads jammed into the same hole in the outside wall. The wall is hollow and cement-rendered, and the hole into the void is much too small for a mouse to enter. We find the mice forced in so tightly that it takes considerable force to pull them out, usually decapitating the poor little devils in the process.

The fatal hole is about 15in (38cm) off the ground in a dark corner, underneath a "bell drip" (a curved edge in the rendering to keep rainwater from dripping onto the foundations). We have a healthy population of birds in our back garden, including crows, jackdaws, jays, and woodpeckers. Could they be stuffing the unfortunate rodents into a crevice, planning to eat 'em later? Could something be dragging mice *into* the hole from within? We have grass snakes and adders around here, but I don't think one could climb up (carrying a mouse), enter the hole backwards, and then pull the little critter in after it. This seems to happen only in autumn or early winter. This latest one was photographed on 11 December 2010. Any ideas?

**Robert G Cox** *Westleton, Suffolk*



and health and safety law banning everything from throwing snowballs to toothpicks. There's a potential book in this! In a probably doomed attempt to stem the flow of misinformation, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have produced a "Myth of the Month" cartoon with text on their website ([www.hse.gov.uk/myth/dec08.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/myth/dec08.htm)) for every month since April 2007 and published them as calendars. HSE managers and inspectors also regularly write to the press correcting mistaken, or simply false, reports and these can also be read on the website (the Media centre/ putting the record straight). Even if the letters are published, they fall, of course, on deaf ears, for as every fortean is aware, a good story always outweighs good facts.

**Ron Gardner**  
*Ludlow, Shropshire*

## Manx weirdness

I found the article on Gef the talking mongoose on the Isle of Man [FT269:32–40] very interesting, as I have visited the site myself and found only some drainpipe debris and the remains of the garden in the form of a few rows of blackberry

bushes. The reaction of the cattle was also strange, as they surrounded us and like a Mexican standoff they eyeballed us before charging our position. This led us to take a wider route through boggy fields to escape.

Gef sounds like the Manx Brownie who used to do useful chores around the farm. The area has many ancient monuments and folktales, especially around Glen Rushen. The whole area has numerous strange tales recounted in WW Gill's Manx scrapbooks, all of which I have looked into over the years. Current ghost and poltergeist activity is reported to the local Manx Ghostwalks. Apart from Gef, the Moddhey Dhoo of Peel Castle is the most famous ghost on the island; but my personal favourite is a hybrid called "Jimmy Square-foot", who allegedly haunted Grenaby Bridge.

**John Hall**  
*By email*

## Jewish burial

May I correct a common, non-Jewish, misunderstanding, as raised by David Pudewitts-St.Albans

[FT268:72]? The Jewish prohibition against touching corpses is only applicable to kohens (priests before the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70). Every Jewish community has its Hevra Kaddisha (literally 'Holy Society') which deals with the dead, transporting the body, washing and clothing it, and ensuring it is never left alone from death to burial. If Jesus were not a cohen – and the New Testament lineages infer he was a Benjaminite – he'd have no problem handling a corpse. He would just do the ritual cleansing afterwards.

• The 'Ugly One' [Alien Zoo, FT264:25] is almost certainly a juvenile Tasmanian Devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii* – Harris's meat-lover). The cadaver has signs of the Devil Facial Tumour Disease, a transmittable cancer currently decimating the Tasmanian population and putting the species on the 'Endangered' list. I checked with the local zoo, and although a white-faced devil is very rare, they are known. How extraordinary to have found one south of Hudson Bay in Canada!

**Richard Seary**  
*Cairns, Queensland*

## Apparition triggers

The suggestion by Emma McNeil that temporal lobe disturbances may underlie apparition and entity experiences [FT270:54–55] would have been of great interest to the late Andrew Green (1927–2004), who for 60 years was one of Britain's most active ghost-hunters. Andrew occasionally suffered from mild epilepsy, and from the early 1970s came to believe in a possible connection between certain psi experiences and temporal lobe disturbance. He had a number of personal ghost encounters, one of the most memorable being an incident at a now demolished haunted house in Ealing in September 1944. Andrew went into a trance-like state and seemed to receive a mental instruction to leap off a high tower at the back of the building. Fortunately, for both Andrew – and the future of modern ghost-hunting – his father plucked him back from the parapet of the tower in the nick of time (see *Our Haunted Kingdom*, Wolfe, 1973).

Another researcher who believed in links between psi and temporal lobe disorders was the psychiatrist Dr Arthur Guirdham, who suggested that certain patients suffering from migraine, *petit-mal* and epilepsy were particularly likely to evince paranormal cognition. In his book *Cosmic Factors in Disease* (Duckworth, 1963), Dr Guirdham said of epilepsy that “the disease is... associated with true religious experience.”

However, although a link may exist, it arguably cannot provide a full explanation for all haunting phenomena, including another incident experienced by Andrew Green in 1951. Staying at the house of an uncle in Sidmouth, Devon, he was surprised during the night to see a small black dog in his bedroom. The dog vanished without explanation. The next day, he learned from his uncle that over the previous 12 months a number of other guests had made similar reports of a black dog in the bedroom. Tracing the previous owners of the house, Green met a childless couple who told him they had sold the property after losing



their beloved pet dog, a black terrier, in a road accident outside. Surely it is stretching the concept of coincidence (and the postulated effects of temporal lobe seizure) to believe that what Green classed as the one definite apparition of his life should be a hallucination identical with that of other witnesses, and that all should occur at the same location with such a recent history?

Reviewing the literature on apparitions, there is arguably a better case for linking such experiences with hallucinations and dream imagery that occur when entering or emerging from sleep, rather than temporal lobe disturbance.

As with Green's ghost dog, the majority of sightings occur at night. Examining reports of hundreds of ghost experiences, one soon realises that people seldom ever see ghosts at breakfast time. No ghost stories ever seem to begin: “I was eating my corn flakes when I saw...”. But as one goes through the day, the frequency of sightings seems to increase, reaching a peak between midnight and 4am. Part of this may be psychological – I have been in haunted properties that have seemed quite menacing during the night, only to be curiously flat as dawn approaches. However, statistical evidence collected from the 19th century onwards indicates many apparitions are encountered when witnesses are either in bed or in the process of waking up or going to sleep. Such a connection was demonstrated in the *Census of Hallucinations* (1894) undertaken by the Society for Psychical Research, and which remains the largest survey of its kind ever undertaken. In a study

entitled “Six theories about apparitions” published in 1956, Professor Hornell Hart found that 69 per cent of apparitions occurred in conditions conducive to sleep (see *Proceedings of the SPR* vol.50, 153–239).

A survey conducted by Andrew MacKenzie for his book *Ghosts and Apparitions* (1982) demonstrated that about a third of apparitional experiences occurred just before or after sleep, or when the percipient was in a state of relaxation. Similar results have been reported for other types of entity experiences, e.g. “Survey of claimed encounters with the dead” by Erlendur Haraldsson in *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* (1988) 19, pp103–113; and “Close encounters: An examination of UFO experiences” by Nicholas P Spanos, Patricia A Cross, Kirby Dickson, and Susan C DuBreuil (1993) in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, vol.102, no.4, pp624–632. From ufology, Dr Jacques Vallée also records marked nocturnal peaks in reports of close encounters (see Appendix in *Revelations*, Souvenir Press, 1991).

A link between apparitions and a dream-like state was also noted by GNM Tyrrell in his classic study *Apparitions* (1943) and is also endorsed by other long-standing investigators of spontaneous cases such as Dr Peter Hallson (pers. comm., 13 Dec 2010).

Such evidence suggests that nocturnal brain chemistry may be a key factor in many apparitional encounters, rather than temporal lobe effects. In this direction, Dr Serena Roney Dougal has proposed that night-time is conducive to apparitions and psi state because of lower levels of serotonin in the brain. (“Recent findings relating to the possible role of the pineal gland in affecting psychic ability”, 1989, *JSPR* vol.55, pp312–327).

As Emma McNeil admits,

temporal lobe disturbance can be used as an all-purpose catch-all, but it fails to account for all aspects of apparitional experiences, particularly those suggesting a psi-component. Aspects where temporal lobe disturbance is insufficient as an explanation include cases of: (1) crisis apparitions coinciding with the moment of death or trauma for the individual who manifests; (2) collectively perceived apparitions; (3) the reactions of animals apparently responding to apparitions; and (4) identical apparitions experienced at the same location but on different occasions by different witnesses.

Furthermore, although satisfying a materialist weakness for gadgetry, experiments with metal helmets and magnetic stimulation of the temporal lobes may be no more than straying down an intellectual blind alley. Such experiments and connections between fluctuating geomagnetism and human brain states have recently been criticised by John D Ralphs, who goes so far as accusing some researchers of being “completely ignorant of the physics underlying both of these processes” (Letter, *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, Oct 2010, vol.71, no.901, p288).

So, rather than concentrating upon laboratory-based experiments with devices to stimulate the temporal lobes, perhaps a more productive approach might be to expand ways of studying the brain at the points of waking up and going to sleep – so-called hypnopompic and hypnagogic states. It would be even more interesting if such experiments and tests could ever be conducted with volunteers sleeping in haunted houses...

**Alan Murdie**  
*Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk*

The only possible response to the suggestion that temporal lobe epilepsy is the forteen “theory of everything” [FT270:54–55] is to quote Henry Louis Mencken: “There is always a well known solution to every human problem – neat, plausible, and wrong.”

**Martin Jenkins**  
*London*

## Pastrana and Froggy

In 1973, the American author Frederick Drimmer published *Very Special People*, a history of sideshow freaks. This book was based on considerable original research, and enjoyed great success at the time, in spite of the author's infelicitous language and mawkish sentiments. In August 1974, Drimmer received a long letter from a fellow sideshow enthusiast who corrected what he felt to be numerous mistakes in the book. Drimmer's book included a lengthy section on the celebrated bearded and hairy lady Julia Pastrana. After she died in childbirth in 1860, her body was mummified to continue its dismal career of exhibition. Drimmer had tried, and failed, to find her mummy. The letter writer claimed to have new and startling information on this subject: when he had visited an obscure Russian village in 1968, he had actually seen Pastrana's mummy being exhibited! He described this experience in lurid terms: the corpse had been partially clothed in mouldy animal skins, and emitted an unpleasant odour: "The general countenance was that of a spider monkey, wanting its tail and having grown to human size".

In 1979, Drimmer visited London to meet Professor AEW Miles, a distinguished scientist who shared his interest in Pastrana. Being annoyed by his correspondent's forthright criticism of his work, he only brought with him a photocopy of the part of the letter that concerned the fate of the Pastrana mummy. Drimmer and Prof. Miles discussed how much the letter could be relied upon. The writer had signed his letter 'Frog Gwynplaine MacIntyre, Carnival Man', but had not provided any address. Drimmer had learned that an individual with that name had acted in a sideshow as 'The Human Frog'.

The writer must surely have been the unfortunate author and weirdo Fergus 'Froggy' Gwynplaine MacIntyre [obituary FT268:26]. The letter from Froggy would suggest that in the early 1970s he was living in the United States, performing in the sideshow, and taking a lively interest in its history. But was there anything in his alleged discovery of the Pastrana mummy? No, not in the slightest. The mummy had been

in Oslo all along, where I discovered it in 1990. Together with Prof. Miles, I managed to determine Pastrana's correct diagnosis, as described in my Cabinet of Medical Curiosities. Prof. Miles provided me with copies of his correspondence with Drimmer, including the truncated letter from Froggy. It may well be that some enterprising Russian showmen had constructed a bogus Pastrana to bolster their tawdry collection of freaks; it is equally possible that the mischievous Froggy, who was not a novelist for nothing, had made the whole thing up.

In recent times, I have taken an interest in the celebrated Edinburgh dog 'Greyfriars Bobby', said to have kept vigil at his master's grave for 14 years. There were many other stories of excessively faithful dogs mourning their masters in a similar manner; a French author even commented on the communal groaning of the cemetery dogs when he entered a Paris churchyard. If any FT reader possesses curious information about Greyfriars Bobby, or yarns about other cemetery dogs, feel free to share them with BondesonJ@cf.ac.uk.

**Jan Bondeson**  
By email

## Portraying Jesus

I'm not entirely sure how Yowann Byghan can be so confident about God's genetic makeup [FT270:70] and how that would have affected the appearance of His Son. Even if you aren't a believer, the Bible makes it pretty clear that Joseph wasn't Jesus's father, and if, for example, the suggestion that He was the son of a Roman soldier is true then he could have had any variety of hair or eye colour.

Being less literal-minded, many religions fashion their gods in their own likeness. The history of the iconography of Christ is a reflection of the changing ideas of beauty. Michelangelo's blonde Roman God in the Sistine Chapel might not appeal to the politically correct, but He personifies the artist's idea of perfection, and I'd expect someone to have a pretty good grasp of the complexities of Michelangelo's genius before they started criticising his perceptions of God.

The idea that Christ had chestnut hair and blue eyes comes from

an apocryphal letter said to have been sent by a Roman eyewitness, Lentulus. It's been discredited now, but for a long time it was considered genuine and was the basis of many of the representations of Christ. Rather than being a stereotype, the Jesus on the cover of *Fortean Times* follows a long tradition which influenced Western secular representations of men, such as Dürer's self portrait. Seen as part of that wider context, I can't see it as stupid, dated or racist.

**Penelope Rafter**  
London

Re the 'Bacon Jesus' [FT266:7]: why is it that whenever a simulacrum of a Caucasian, long-haired male with a moustache and/or beard is discovered in the Western world, people automatically see the face of Jesus? Why not someone else? The image in the frying pan looks more like Frank Zappa to me.

**Brett Smithson**  
Nashville, Tennessee

## UFO Alley

In the second part of their article on the Alan Godfrey case [FT270:46-49], Peter Brookesmith, David Clarke and Andy Roberts refer to Jenny Randles's suggestion that Godfrey may have witnessed an 'unidentified atmospheric phenomenon' (UAP). They note that UAP is a broad term and includes manifestations such as 'earthlights', ball lightning and atmospheric plasmas.

The authors claim that there have been "literally thousands" of UAP sightings in what has been dubbed "UFO Alley", a part of the Pennines that straddles the Lancashire/West Yorkshire border. They cite no reference for this assertion, but they may be drawing on a short article by Jenny Randles,<sup>1</sup> who refers to a 10-mile (16km) strip running from the Rossendale Valley (Lancashire) into the Calder Valley (West Yorkshire), and where, according to Randles, there have been "literally thousands" of sightings, many involving phenomena such as electrical disturbance, car stops and time lapses.

"UFO Alley" may have

been something of an anomaly hot spot, but this remarkable claim about the large number of sightings there receives no support from figures that Randles herself provides. In Appendix II of her book *Supernatural Pennines*,<sup>2</sup> she refers to 10,278 UFO sightings reported from the British mainland between 1947 and 2000. She indicates that 1,076 of them were from what she calls the "Pennine window". (Unfortunately, she doesn't define this area precisely, but it includes "UFO Alley" and other parts of the central and southern Pennines.) She explains that 12 per cent of the cases from the "Pennine window" were rated as unexplained. In other words, there were only about 129 unexplained reports from the whole of the "Pennine window".

Brookesmith *et al.* mention some of the figures that appear in Randles's book, but without indicating their source, and without apparently recognising that her data don't support the claim that "UFO Alley" has been the setting for thousands of reported UAP sightings.<sup>3</sup> This is ironic, because Brookesmith, Clarke and Roberts generally portray themselves as being sceptical about claims pertaining to anomalous phenomena!

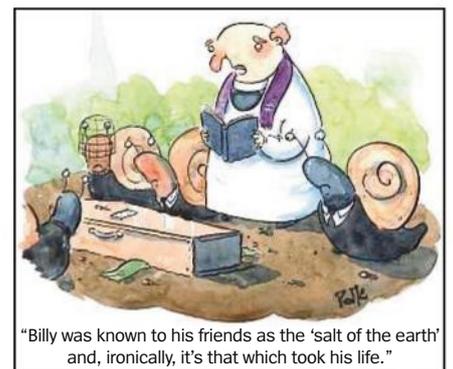
**Dr Peter A McCue**  
By email

## NOTES

**1** Jenny Randles: "British window areas". In RD Story, (ed.), *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Extraterrestrial Encounters* (Robinson, 2002, pp142-145).

**2** Jenny Randles: *Supernatural Pennines* (Robert Hale, 2002).

**3** Brookesmith *et al.*'s discussion of the figures appears slightly confused. I think they have failed to keep in mind the distinction between "UFO Alley" (which is just part of what Randles calls the "Pennine window") and the 'window' as a whole.



"Billy was known to his friends as the 'salt of the earth' and, ironically, it's that which took his life."

PETER AKING

## First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of [www.forteantimes.com](http://www.forteantimes.com)

### Bathed in light

At 9 o'clock one clear night in late September 1999, I set off from my mother's house in Alyth, Perthshire, Scotland, for my house in Dundee, a half-hour trip I made every week. I relaxed, turned on Radio 4, waved goodbye and set off.

The road was quiet. I knew the route like the back of my hand and it was normal for me to make the journey almost on autopilot – that feeling when you drive somewhere and you're surprised you've arrived as you can't remember driving that far. This was a fairly common occurrence on these trips. But this night was different. I was about 20 minutes into the journey, listening to the drone of the radio, when I started to feel slightly odd.

Quickly, I sat straight up in my seat and looked around the car. Nothing in my headlights, nothing behind, as I sped along at a steady 60mph (100km/h). I listened intently to see if the car had started making any odd noises. Nothing. I realised that the radio was off. I glanced at it, turned it up full; no noise. I cursed and stared at the road ahead. Bloody radio's gone, I thought. The road at that point dropped downwards into a long left curve. As I started my descent, something bizarre happened.

An incredibly vibrant flash of white light engulfed the car, brilliantly white. It wasn't a car coming in the other direction, or from a side street, or from behind. I wasn't blinded by the flash, and I noticed that the car clock had reset itself. Then, about 15 seconds later, the radio screamed at me, as I had left it on with the volume turned full up. I can only assume it was some sort of electrical strike, but with the sky being clear... well, who knows?

**Gordon —**  
By email

### Orange alien

I live in Visalia, California, near South Tipton Street. At about 2pm on 1 November 2010, I saw a cigar-shaped UFO high in the sky. Later on the evening travelling down 198 into Milo, I saw it again. At some point it appeared to be following me. Then the strangest thing happened. I saw an orange-skinned boy in the middle of the street. He was wearing a blue suit or overalls and



### It looked very much like the burn-off plume seen at an oil well head

had black hair in a crew cut. His eyes were huge and catlike, as if the pupils were in a vertical line. As soon as I saw him, my truck stalled. He stared at me for what seemed like an eternity and my headlights started dimming. I think it was really only about a half a minute. Then he darted away in a Z pattern. He moved so quickly, it was a blur. I saw him at approximately 200 yards near a tree in a matter of seconds.

**Russell —**  
Visalia, California

### Fire in the sky

In the latter part of summer 2001, my wife and I were travelling to a camp near the Saskatchewan-Alberta border to meet some friends. We had been driving for about four hours, and were nearing the end of our trip. We were travelling on one of the long, straight stretches of road that Saskatchewan is noted for. It was about 11pm and a clear night before

moonrise, but in summer at this latitude there's generally a hint of the Sun's position below the horizon, so it shouldn't have been inky-dark.

It was, however, inky-dark – the headlights were illuminating the road ahead, but seemed to be having less than their usual effect to the sides, which was somewhat unsettling. As the van rose out of a dip, we saw directly ahead, and slightly above our sightline, what can only be described as a ball of fire, equal in visual dimension to a fingernail at arm's length. It looked very much like the burn-off plume one sees at oil refineries and at some oil well heads. We assumed initially that this was what it was, joking that right in the middle of the road is a duff place for an oil well.

Some three minutes later – at 60mph (100km/h) about 3 miles (4.8km) – the object seemed no nearer, but remained directly ahead, at what seemed a comfortable distance, without any apparent movement either lateral or vertical. We again commented to each other on this, in the vein of "OK, just what is it, then?"

The ball held its apparent position for another two or three minutes, when the van again descended into a dip (Saskatchewan, contrary to legend, is not flat, but slightly wrinkly). When we rose, there was

no sign of the object. A bit less than 10 minutes of ruler-straight road later, we entered a town without any sign of anything which would produce such an effect; this would put us 6–8 miles (10–15km) from where it was last seen, and there wasn't a lot of cover on either side of the road. Once we passed through the town, the oppressive nature of the darkness abated.

I didn't investigate it at all, because the short version of this story is, in essence, "nothing much happened" – but it was a curious effect that I thought your readers might find interesting. It certainly fits Mr Fort's thesis of something having sport with us monkeys.

**Dirck de Lint**  
Saskatchewan, Canada

### The mother ship

When I was coming home from school one day in 1965 or 1966, accompanied by a handful of compatriots, I saw a gigantic 'mother ship', floating between some clouds. It was several hundred feet long and clearly visible for at least 10 minutes. Strangely, although I stood transfixed by the sight for the entire time, the others (including a cousin and the form captain) walked on as if nothing odd was happening. When I caught up with them at the swings nearby, nobody mentioned it and as far as I know it didn't enter the *Diss Express*, our local [Suffolk] newspaper.

A few years later, I read *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* by John Keel. In it there was mention that this particular UFO had been seen all over the world as well as an illustration of it (a big black needle shape at a 45-degree angle). Later still I read one of Douglas Adams's sequels to his *Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which mentioned The Ashes being stolen from Lords cricket ground under everybody's nose and only the two main protagonists seeing the UFO and occupants that did it: This, Ford Prefect explained to Arthur Dent, was a SEP (Somebody Else's Problem) and that was why it was invisible to them. This made a sort of sense to me and explained the mysterious reaction of my chums – it was none of their business, so why acknowledge its presence?

**Tony Sandy**  
By email

# simulacra corner

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409 or to [sieveking@forteanimes.com](mailto:sieveking@forteanimes.com). If your photo is published, we'll send you an exclusive *Fortean Times* gift.

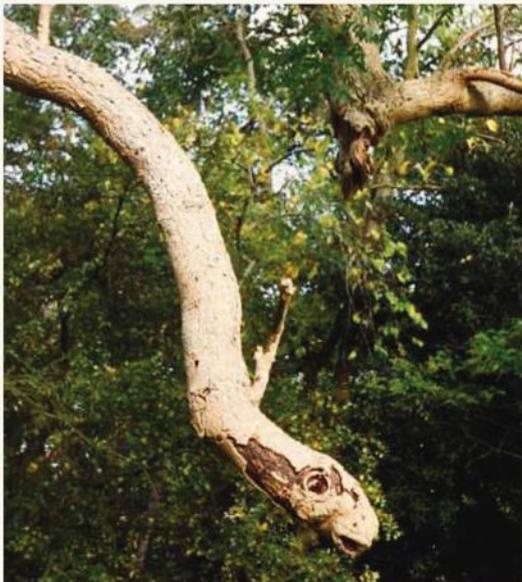
A selection of wooden reptiles sent in by FT's observant readers.



A nonchalant twig creature found in Ku-ring-gai National Park, Sydney, Australia, by Adriana Wall.



Bradley Adams saw this tree serpent after taking a wrong turn near Nomansland in the New Forest.



Gail MacEwan noticed this tree serpent in the grounds of Powys Castle in Wales.



A driftwood snake found by Christopher, George Alderslade's grandson.



Ant & Niki Marriott sent in this picture of a smiling 'river serpent' taken on a tributary river of Jumbles Reservoir just outside Bolton in Lancashire.



Colin Fernandes, deputy editor of *Maxim India*, sent us this picture of a "wooden snake" from Virat Khai in Uttarakhand.



## Why Fortean?

### how to subscribe

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £35.10; EC £37.50; USA \$79.99 Rest of World £45. Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

#### North America (US & Canada)

Subscribers should contact: IMS, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 888-428 6676. or 800-428 3003; Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at [www.imsnews.com](http://www.imsnews.com).

#### UK, Europe & rest of world

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times** Dovetail Services, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU, UK. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.

Telephone payments and queries: 0844 844 0049.

Fax payments and queries: 0844 815 0866.

E-mail payments and queries: [ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk](mailto:ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk)

### how to submit

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by FT readers and contributors in any medium or format.

#### Illustrations

Contact the art director before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

#### Article & forum submissions

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK or email [david\\_sutton@dennis.co.uk](mailto:david_sutton@dennis.co.uk). As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate. A contributors' guide is available. For the latest version of this please contact us on one of the numbers on the editorial page or consult our website at [www.forteanimes.com](http://www.forteanimes.com).

#### Letters

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email [sieveking@forteanimes.com](mailto:sieveking@forteanimes.com). We reserve the right to edit submissions.

#### Books & periodicals for review

Send to: Reviews Editor, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK. Send DVDs and games to the Editor, as above.

#### Caveat

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. FT can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.



### Clippers wanted!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets

of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 8 Mar 2011. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

**Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK**  
**E-mail: [sieveking@forteanimes.com](mailto:sieveking@forteanimes.com)**  
**or post on the FT website at [www.forteanimes.co.uk](http://www.forteanimes.co.uk), where there is a contributor's guide.**

**F**ortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature

of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, FT is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

**FT** toes no party line.

### Special Correspondents

**AUSTRALIA** Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC). **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Neil L Inglis, Michael Newton, Steve Scanlon. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Bobby Zodiac. **FINLAND** Heather Fowler. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin, Cliff Wren. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson, Leslie John Thomson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Chris Williams. **TURKEY** Izzet Goksu. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Ron Rosenblatt (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

### Fort Sorters (who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Steve Moore, Liz Parratt, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

### Clipping Credits for FT272

Richard Alexander, Barry Baldwin, David V Barrett, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Bert & Betty, Rachel Carthy, Brian Chapman, Tim Chapman, Peter Christie, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Deirdre Counihan, Mat Coward, Mike Dash, Tom Easten, JD Evans, John H Evans, Paul Gallagher, David Gamon, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Alan Gibb, Tony Healy, Hugh Henry, Nigel Herwin, Kevin Hubbard, Neil Langdon Inglis, Martyn P Jackson, Tony James, Bill & Louise Kelly, Richard Lowke, Kevin Lynch, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Steve Moore, Andy Munro, John Palazzi, Dolores Phelps, Jim Price, Simon Ramshaw, Sven Rosén, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Steve Scanlon, Paul Screeton, Tony Smith, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Joe Trainor, Dave Trevor, Rob Turville, Carole Tyrrell, Len Watson, Ion Will, Chris Williams, Rosemary Williams, James FR Wright, Bobby Zodiac.

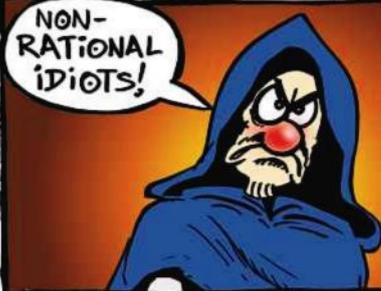
# PHENOMENOMIX

The Life of

# GIORDANO BRUNO Part 4

HUNT EMERSON  
and KEVIN JACKSON

GIORDANO BRUNO WAS A PASSIONATE BUT SECRET ENEMY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH! HE HATED SUPERSTITION AND BELIEF IN MAGIC...



HE WAS PRIVATELY BLASPHEMOUS - IT WAS A SORT OF HOBBY FOR HIM -



-BUT PUBLICLY CAREFUL NOT TO BE DELIBERATELY HERETICAL!

SOMEONE WAS BOUND TO NOTICE... HE WAS ARRESTED IN VENICE IN 1592...



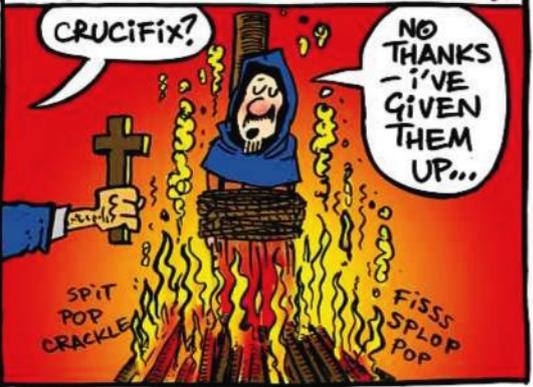
HE WAS HELD AND INTERROGATED BY THE INQUISITION FOR SIX YEARS!



AND IN 1600 HE WAS FINALLY SENTENCED FOR HERESY... THE INQUISITION WAS UNABLE TO CONDEMN BRUNO'S IDEAS ON THEIR OWN EVIDENCE...



...BUT THEY DECIDED THAT IT WAS PROBABLY BEST IF THEY BURNED HIM AT THE STAKE!



BUT HE WAS NOT FORGOTTEN! IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY BRUNOMANIA GRIPPED A NEWLY UNITED ITALY, AND HE WAS HAILED AS A NATIONAL HERO - LIKE SOME COMBINATION OF SHAKESPEARE, NEWTON, NELSON, DAVID BECKHAM, JOHN LENNON, STEPHEN FRY, JADE GOODY...



WELL, MAYBE NOT JADE...

A STATUE OF GIORDANO BRUNO WAS ERECTED ON THE SPOT WHERE HE WAS BURNED!



AND TODAY HE IS RECOGNISED AS A MAJOR HERMETIC PHILOSOPHER!



# COMING NEXT MONTH



## RELIC RAIDERS

OTTO RAHN AND THE NAZIS' QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL



## MEDIA MEDIUMS

FADS AND FASHIONS AMONG AMERICA'S CELEBRITY PSYCHICS



PRECOGNITIVE DREAMS DEBUNKED, TEXAS BLUE DOGS, MYSTERY IMPLANTS AND MUCH MORE...

# FORTEAN TIMES 273

ON SALE 3 MARCH

RICHARD STANLEY



HUGO PIETTE

# TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

## MARCH 1981

Strange doings in China. An old apocalyptic book was being passed around in Tibet and gaining such a following among the credulous that Lhasa Radio felt it necessary to denounce it as nonsense. *The Book of Heavenly Prophecy* was first noticed years earlier but its message – encouraging people to eat as much as they could and spend on luxuries because doomsday was coming with famine, drought and flood – was not too popular at the time. However, China was currently appealing for international help with its famine; and there was drought in Hebei and flooding in Hubei provinces. **FT35:36**

Paul Watson, a Texas cattle-farmer, lost his gold watch in a river while fishing. Three days later, his son Jack, fishing with friends near the same spot, caught the only fish of the day. On gutting the fish in preparation for roasting on an open fire, they found Jack's father's lost watch. **FT39:18**

## MARCH 1991

A US District Judge was so annoyed with jurors being unable to attend his court in San Francisco in 1986 because of heavy rains that he solemnly declared: "I hereby order that it cease raining by Tuesday." The weather duly obeyed, initiating a period of drought that lasted five years. Towards the end of last month, the Judge was reminded of his decree, and he promptly proclaimed: "I hereby rescind my order of February 18, 1986, and order that rain shall fall in California beginning February 27, 1991." Later that day a fierce Pacific storm drenched the city with the heaviest downpour in a decade. Judge King said this was "proof positive we are a nation governed by laws". **F58:11**

A South Korean sailor on a ship carrying grain from Liverpool to Bangladesh fell overboard in the Bay of Bengal. He was found alive and well six hours later. He had the great luck of landing in the water near a large turtle, which he grabbed and hung on to. "The turtle was very friendly," he later told his rescuers. They used a crane to haul man and reptile aboard in a net. After a meal of meat and bananas, the sea-going saviour was returned to the waves. **FT58:21**

The Indonesian government announced they were

sending a 17-member expedition to the interior of Irian Jaya, a province in New Guinea (now called West Papua), to investigate rumours of a fierce tribe of women who had a settlement by the remote Volita Lake (the Lake of Women). The women were said to capture men from villages in the region to father their children, killing the men after they'd served their purpose. They were also said to kill male babies. Mainstream reports failed to mention how many of the expedition were to be men, but they carried salt, sweets and cigarettes as gifts. The *Weekly World News* write-up of this story was typically lurid, calling them "a blood-thirsty tribe of sex-crazed muscular women who hate men". We waited for news, but nothing appeared. Did the team ever return? **FT58:29**

## MARCH 2001

Modern American descendants of the ancient Chaldean and Assyrian civilisations of Mesopotamia launched a challenge in the US courts over a decision to lump them together in the 2000 census. Their mutual animosity goes back to AD 431 (some argue 1551) when the Nestorian church (accused of being a Christian heresy) itself split; the Chaldeans looked to the Patriarch of Babylon, while the Assyrians followed the Patriarch of Antioch. American Chaldeans, who number around 120,000 (mainly around Detroit), had petitioned for separate categorisation. After losing their objection, the American Assyrians (mostly around Modesto, California) accused the Chaldeans of being Iraqi agents. **FT148:11**

An unusual and touching story of a premonition closed the month. Thirteen-year-old Naftali Lanzkron – whose parents had emigrated from London to Israel in 1971 – was watching TV when he suddenly told them: "There's going to be a bomb on my school bus tomorrow". During that night, he woke up his mother with two small glasses of Drambuie and said: "Let's drink to life". His parents hugged him and he fell asleep between them. The next day, 28 March, a Palestinian suicide bomber boarded a school bus and blew himself up. Naftali and a school friend died while many were injured. The incident led to Ariel Sharon's first attacks on Palestinian targets since becoming prime minister earlier in the month. **FT147:9**

# Write Your Way To A New Career!

## Writers Bureau Celebrates Twenty-two Years of Helping New Writers

by Nick Daws

When distance-learning pioneer Ernest Metcalfe founded The Writers Bureau in the late 1980s, he can hardly have dared hope that twenty-two years on it would be acknowledged as Britain's leading writing school. Yet so it proved, with thousands of Writers Bureau students seeing their work in print for the first time. And, for many of those who persevered with their writing, the dream of becoming a successful writer has turned into reality.

Students such as Tim Skelton. An engineer by profession, he had always harboured an ambition to write, and at the age of 40 signed up with The Writers Bureau. The decision changed his life: "My writing career took off exponentially. In 2005 I started appearing regularly in lifestyle and in-flight magazines. The following year I was commissioned by Bradt Travel Guides to write a guidebook to

*"My writing career took off exponentially."*

Luxembourg. I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated guidebooks for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA."

Another student who benefited was Hazel McHaffie. Hazel wanted to make her academic work in Medical Ethics more accessible to people, and decided to write the themes into novels. Following her Writers Bureau course, Hazel has had five novels published, and appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2008. She also has her own website at [www.hazelmchaffie.com](http://www.hazelmchaffie.com).

Sometimes studying with The Writers Bureau takes students down new and unexpected paths. Patricia Holness originally enrolled on The Writers Bureau's Writing for Children course. However, she soon realised that what she was learning applied to other types of writing as well.

She is now a full-time writer, regularly selling short stories for both

children and adults. She also has a monthly column in Devon Life.

These are just a selection from the inspirational true stories from students of The Writers Bureau. There's no reason why YOU couldn't be their next success story. With a 15-day free trial and money-back guarantee, there is nothing to lose and potentially a whole new career to gain! So why not visit their website at [www.writersbureau.com](http://www.writersbureau.com) or call on Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

Hazel McHaffie



Tim Skelton

## How To Become A Successful Writer!

As a freelance writer, you can earn very good money in your spare time, writing the stories, articles, books, scripts etc that editors and publishers want. Millions of pounds are paid annually in fees and royalties. Earning your share can be fun, profitable and creatively most fulfilling.

To help you become a successful writer we offer you a first-class, home-study course from professional writers – with individual guidance from expert tutors and flexible tuition tailored to your own requirements. You are shown how to make the most of your abilities, where to find ideas, how to turn them into publishable writing and how to sell them. In short, we show you exactly how to become a published writer. **If you want writing success – this is the way to start!**

Whatever your writing ambitions, we can help you to achieve them. For we give you an effective, stimulating and most enjoyable creative writing course... appreciated by students and acclaimed by experts.

It's ideal for beginners. No previous experience or special background is required. You write and study at your own pace – you do not have to rush – as you have four years to complete your course. **Many others have been successful this way.** If they can do it – why can't you?

We are so confident that we can help you become a published writer that we give you a **full refund guarantee**. If you have not earned your course fees from published writing by the time you finish the course, we will refund them in full.

If you want to be a writer start by requesting a free copy of our prospectus 'Write and be Published'. Please call our freephone number or visit our website NOW.

### COURSE FEATURES

- 30 FACT-PACKED MODULES
- 3 SPECIALIST HANDBOOKS
- 20 WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS
- ADVISORY SERVICE
- TUTORIAL SUPPORT
- FLEXIBLE STUDY PROGRAMME
- STUDENT COMMUNITY AREA
- HOW TO PRESENT YOUR WORK
- HOW TO SELL YOUR WRITING
- 15 DAY TRIAL PERIOD
- FULL REFUND GUARANTEE

[www.writersbureau.com](http://www.writersbureau.com)

**FREEPHONE 24 HOURS**  
**0800 856 2008**

PLEASE QUOTE REF. AT3211

email: [11W1@writersbureau.com](mailto:11W1@writersbureau.com)  
Please include your name and address



AWARD WINNING WRITER  
Christina Jones, Oxfordshire

"So far, I have had eighteen novels published. The Writers Bureau helped make this possible for me. Within six months of enrolling on my course I was having work commissioned by editors and I still work regularly for magazines."

Michael Foley, Essex

"Completing The Writers Bureau course has made it possible for me to attain my life-long ambition of becoming a published writer. The level of success I have achieved has far outweighed what I was hoping for when beginning the course. By the end of this year I should have eight books already published and hopefully two more finished."



Cindy-Lou Dale, Kent

"I thought you'd like to know that seven years since doing my course at WB I've been published in more than 150 magazines around the world. I've now got to the stage where I'm turning down all-inclusive exotic press trips!"

Please send me free details on how to become a successful, freelance writer:

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

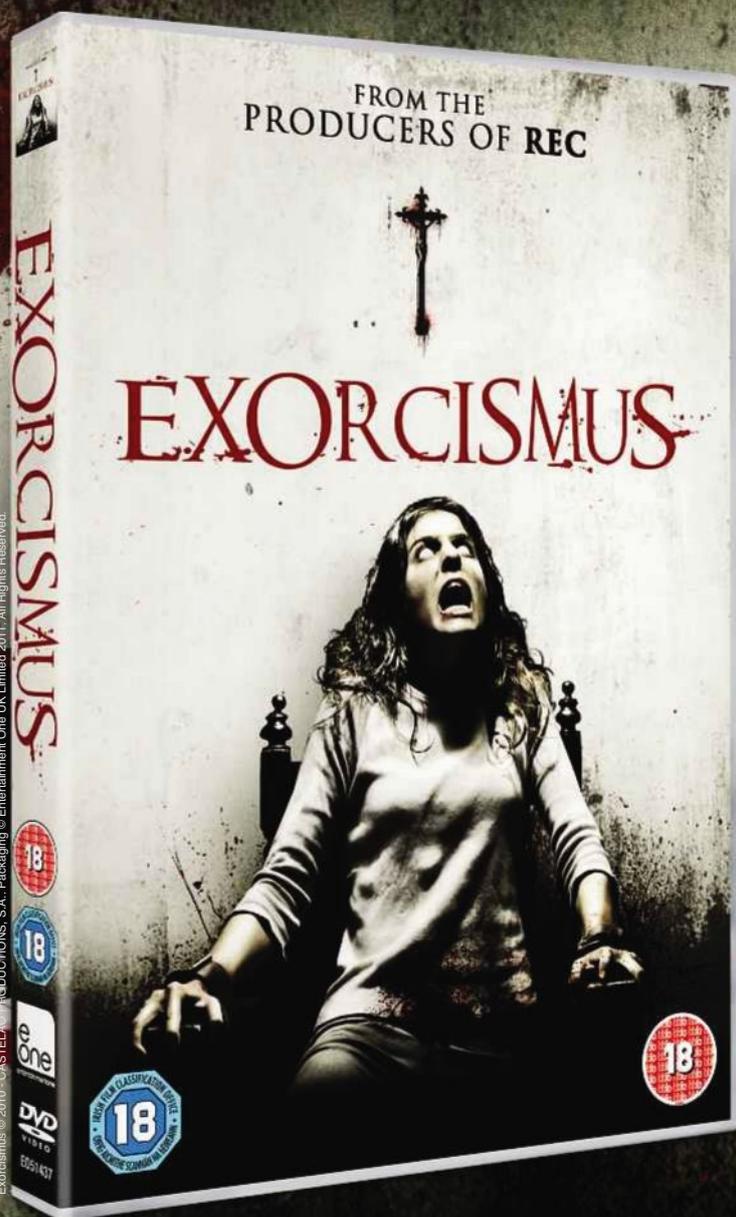
POST CODE .....

EMAIL .....

**The Writers Bureau**  
Freepost AT3211,  
Manchester, M1 9HZ



FROM THE PRODUCERS  
OF [●REC]



“A MIND-TWISTING TALE OF  
POSSESSION AND DECEIT”

- GOREZONE MAGAZINE

PRE ORDER NOW  
[amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)<sup>®</sup>



Free Super Saver Delivery and Unlimited Free One-Day Delivery with Amazon Prime are available. Terms and Conditions apply. See Amazon.co.uk for details.