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THE FILE
P14



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ONE WOMAN'S
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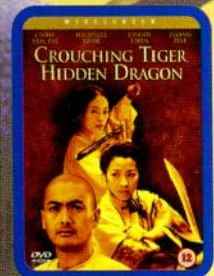
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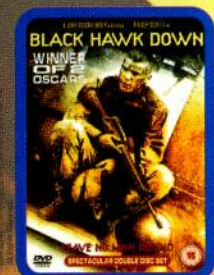
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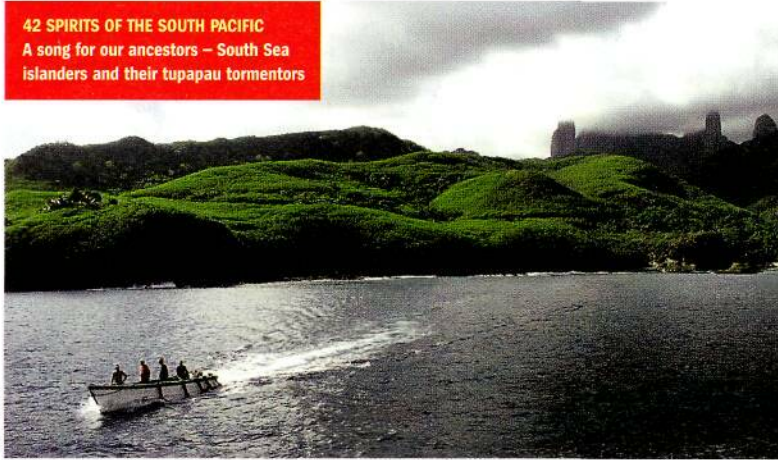
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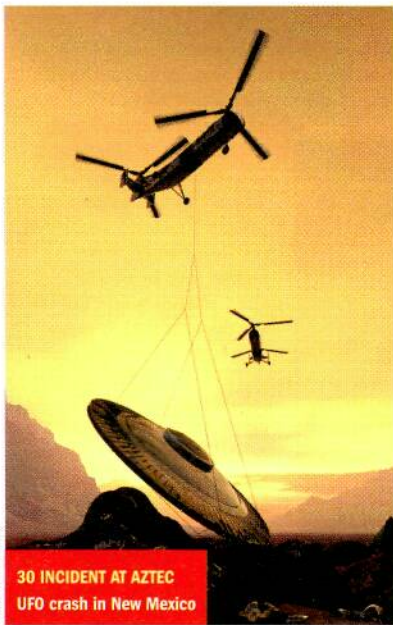
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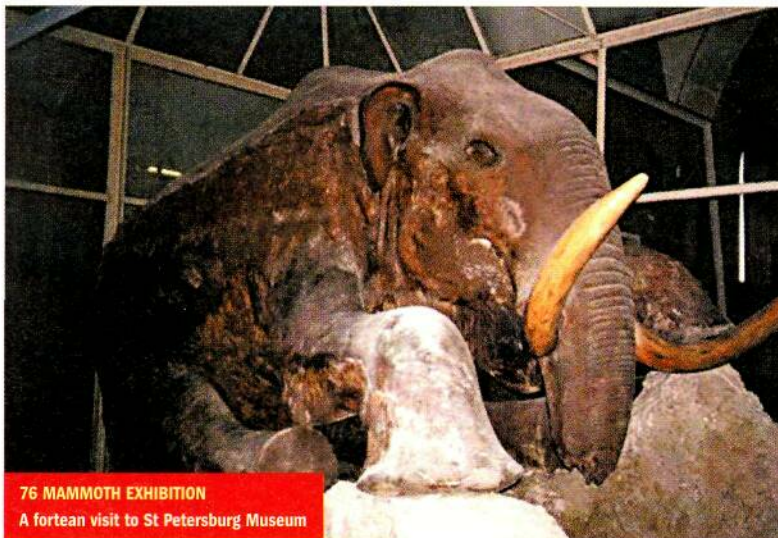
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MIKE SHAW / WWW.NICHECOM.COM/~MINAT/TRIP2.HTML

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AP PHOTO / JAMAR LENIHAN

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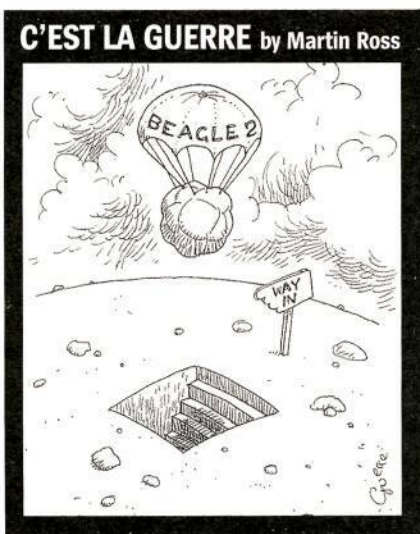
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FEBRUARY 2004

editorial

UnCon 2004 and a lost Beagle



the editor at david_sutton@dennis.co.uk and we'll see what we can do.

Also, remember to keep an eye on the website - www.forteanimes.com - for updates and the earliest chance to book.

Crash Landings

The loss - probably for ever - of the Beagle 2 probe has been a blow for Britain's space exploration programme. Having generated a level of public awareness and interest we rarely see for a home-grown project of this kind (after all, space exploration is virtually a cottage industry in the UK), Beagle 2's high-profile vanishing was a major disappointment. Never mind, though - President Bush soon stepped forward to announce grandiose plans for a permanent Moon base and a manned mission to Mars.

Perhaps, though, we should sound a note of caution. We can't help wondering, in the light of some of the stories in this issue, if the poor old Beagle made a crash landing on the Martian surface and is currently being hushed up and hauled off to some ET military facility on the Red Planet, to be picked over by mysterious alien scientists and fed into the disinformation super-highway.

This month Nick Redfern takes a look at the celebrated 1948 'UFO crash' at Aztec, New Mexico, while Eris Andys shares her own brief close encounter with a member of the extraterrestrial advance guard. All this plus Princess Diana, the Delphic Oracle and some

persistent ancestral spirits haunting the inhabitants of the Marquesas Islands...



COVER IMAGE ALEX TOMLINSON

UnConvention 2004

We know some of you have been wondering - and indeed worrying - about this year's UnConvention. Well, we'd like to put your minds at rest.

UnCon is taking place this year, but with some significant changes. Firstly, our annual get-together won't be happening in its familiar April slot; a change of publisher, an office move and other disruptions have meant that inevitable delays have affected UnCon planning.

We can now reveal that the suitably spooky date for UnCon 2004 is the Hallowe'en weekend of 30-31 October. So, put it in your diaries, cancel any trips to Whitby and get ready for two splendid days of weirdness and wonder.

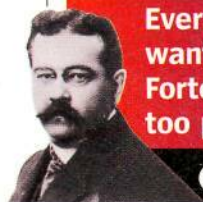
As well as a new date we have a new venue - this year we move to the Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London. While somewhat smaller than the cavernous Commonwealth Institute, this offers us a far more central location for UnCon and should make life easier for all those visitors coming from outside London - little more than a step away from mainline rail stations and very close to London Underground stations on many lines.

We're working on the line-up of speakers, workshops and other attractions - so watch this space for further news over the coming months. We're interested to know just who (or what) you'd like to see at this year's event, so email your suggestions to

Why fortean?

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

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as drunk by Van Gogh

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A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

strangedays

Seismic wavelength found

Astronomer claims that interruptions in VHF radio frequency can forecast impending earthquake activity



AP PHOTO / KAMARAN JEBRELI

SHATTERED: Relatives grieve for lost family members following the recent earthquake in Bam, southern Iran, which may have taken over 35,000 lives.

ground water levels, sunspots, the Moon, the tides, the behaviour of dogs, catfish, the minds of psychics – all without success. According to the experts, earthquakes cannot be predicted. “I don’t predict,” protested Kushida, “I forecast. My research is new and incomplete and the mechanism is not clearly understood, but the data clearly show that earthquakes give warnings before they happen, and I have to let people know.”

The “mechanism” is based on the premise that the electron density in the upper atmosphere changes before a quake, a phenomenon that can be picked up by VHF radio waves. “Most of the scientists who criticise my work have never come here or read anything I’ve written,” said Kushida. Faced with scientific hostility, he abandoned his work on comets (he had discovered two, and his wife Reiki was Japan’s leading supernova

Toshio Kushida, 46, a self-taught scientist, started out as an astronomer in Tokyo before deciding to abandon the city and build an observatory in Yamanashi, about 90 minutes west of the city. One night in August 1993, while recording VHF radio echoes to monitor the passing of meteors, his machines recorded what he called “an extraordinary baseline fluctuation”. Convinced the equipment was faulty, he ignored the data but remembered the anomaly a few days later when there was a large quake in Hokkaido, northern Japan. “I assumed that the correlation between VHF waves and earthquakes was known, so I thought little of it,” he said.

The same thing happened on 14 January 1995, followed three days later by the Kobe earthquake, which killed 6,433 and left about half a million homeless. He called a press conference to announce his findings, “but the

Earthquake scientists reject his work out of hand

journalists talked to earthquake scientists who dismissed my work out of hand.” The next time he called the press, about a quake in Sakhalin in May 1995, he said he was “laughed at”.

In the quest for earthquake indicators over the last century, vast sums of money have been spent studying rocks, ground temperature,

researcher) and borrowed 10 million yen to buy new equipment. “I had to collate a lot more data to prove this worked,” he said. Since then, he has worked 16-hour days without a break, and has forecast 36 major quakes.

In August 2003, the machines started telling him a devastating quake was imminent. He announced that it would hit Tokyo between 14 and 19 September. He was a day out. At 12.55pm on 20 September, the city was shaken by a quake of 5.5 on the Richter scale. It was a big one, but not the Big One. According to Professor Keiji Doi of the University of Tokyo’s Earthquake Research Institute, it was mere coincidence: “There are quakes all the time in and around Tokyo.” Then, six days later, the world’s biggest quake in over two years struck Hokkaido, hundreds of miles to the north of the city, injuring hundreds and causing widespread power cuts. *Irish Times*, 4 Nov 2003.



A RIGHT ROYAL PLOT

Will the inquest into Diana's death reveal a conspiracy?

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PURR POWER

Can cats help to heal themselves – and their owners too?

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CHARLES BERLITZ: RIP

Man who made the Bermuda Triangle famous ships out

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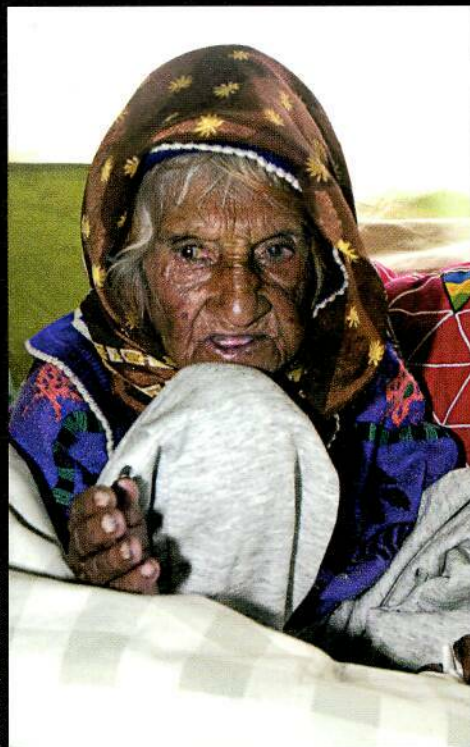
The day before the Kobe quake in 1995, Takeshi Yagi, professor at Osaka University in western Japan, and his colleagues noticed that their laboratory mice were acting strangely. They formed a hypothesis that electromagnetic pulses generated ahead of an earthquake would disrupt a mouse's internal clock.

At a meeting of the Bioelectromagnetic Society in Honolulu last June, they announced that strange mouse behaviour was indeed caused by such pulses. They had exposed mice to low levels of electromagnetism below the threshold of human perception. "The mice then became unstable and ran around inside the cage, scratched their faces and stuck their heads into sawdust in the cage," Yagi said. "More experiments are needed to solidify the results, but it is quite significant that it was

the first time, as far as we know, to show scientific data proving animals' ability to sense signs of big earthquakes." [AFP] 25 June 2003.

In October, Japanese doctor Kiyoshi Shimamura announced that for years he had noticed a jump in dog bites and other dog-related complaints before and after earthquakes. He found that accounts of dogs barking "excessively" went up 18 per cent on average in the months before the Kobe quake. Above the epicentre on Awaji Island, there was a 60 per cent increase in complaints compared with a year earlier. However, canine behaviour cannot be used for accurate quake forecasting. After all, dogs bark for all sorts of reasons. *Guardian*, 2 Oct 2003.

Wrested from the wreckage



EIGHT DAYS LATER: Shar-Banou Mazandarani recovering in hospital.

Eight days and nights after the devastating 6.5 Richter earthquake that flattened Bam in Iran on 26 December, a 97-year-old woman was dug out alive on 3 January. She was located by sniffer dogs in the ruins of a collapsed building. Soldiers saw a hand protruding from the rubble and then

heard a weak voice. It took three hours to dig her out. Shahr-Banou Mazandarani's first request was for a cup of chai. She also asked: "Has there been an earthquake?" She was said to be in good health despite broken limbs and dehydration. Her family had left food by her bed; she was wearing a lot of clothes and had a blanket over her. "She had been half sheltered in a corner by a bit of wood that toppled on top of her and created an air pocket," explained a rescuer.

Another survivor, identified only as Jalil, 56, was pulled from the rubble in the early hours of 8 January, 13 days after the quake. However, he quickly slipped into unconsciousness after being discovered under a wardrobe. He appeared bruised but not emaciated by his days without food. The wardrobe had formed an air bubble in the rubble, allowing him to breathe, and he had a source of water to hand. He was treated at a Ukrainian field hospital at the site, but physicians' initial hopes to keep him alive proved to be in vain.

Yadollah Saadat, 27, was also saved by a wardrobe. He emerged dazed and with a broken hip six days after the quake. Others found alive at the same time were a man aged 40, an 80-year-old blind and deaf woman, a pregnant woman and a girl of nine. A six-month-old baby, known only as Nassim, was pulled from the rubble on 29 December, cradled in the arms of her dead mother. She had been breastfed shortly before the quake, which probably saved her life. It is feared that the final death toll will exceed 35,000. There were about 30,000 injured and an estimated 75,000 homeless.

The record survival time following a quake is probably 14 days in the case of Pedrito Dy, rescued from the basement of the collapsed Hyatt Hotel in Baguio, Philippines, in July 1990 [FT56:20]. *D. Telegraph*, 30 Dec 2003, 9 Jan 2004; *Sun*, 2 Jan; *Independent on Sunday*, *Sunday Mirror*, 4 Jan; [AFP] 5 Jan; *Metro*, 12 Jan 2004.

EXTRA EXTRA

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM NEWSPAPERS AROUND THE WORLD

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS CAN MAKE YOU SAD

Times, 4 Mar 2003.

ATLANTIS YIELDS MORE TREASURE

Melbourne Herald Sun, 11 Feb 2003.

SHEEP SPONSORS FOR SHOW CONFIRMED

North Devon Journal, 6 Mar 2003.

DOGS OF WAR TAKE ON THE TRAITOR MONKEYS

Metro, 6 Mar 2003.

OUTLOOK FOR LOGS REMAINS CLOUDY

Southland Times, 15 Mar 2003.

ANTS AND PIGEONS READY TO CELEBRATE

Irish Times, 15 Mar 2003.

DOLPHINS IN BID TO WOO RUGBY STAR

Irish News, 17 Mar 2003.

RESIDENTS FEAR FLATS PLAN FLOOD

Ryedale Mercury, 19 Mar 2003.

FLESH-EATING BUG ENDS ARCTIC TREK

BBC News, 24 Mar 2003.

GHOST ON GOVT'S PAYROLL WORRY MPS

Times of Swaziland, 29 Mar 2003.

HYPNOTIST WAS BAD FOR MY ELF

News of the World, 30 Mar 2003.

DEVILS, DUCKS ARE LIKE MIRROR IMAGES

Minneapolis Star Tribune, -April 2003.

SAINTS AIMING FOR INSTANT REVENGE

Bridgwater Mercury, -April 2003.

TRASHED BOBCAT FOUND SMOKING IN CREEK BED

Queensland Times, 2 April 2003.

DEATH 'IS A MYSTERY'

Bradford Telegraph & Argus, 9 April 2003.

ALIEN VIRUS SEALS OFF CSIRO LAB

The Weekend Australian, 12-13 April 2003.

Amicable animals

Fur meets feathers in a round-up of extraordinary friendships from the animal kingdom



REUTERS / SUKREE SUKPLANG



REUTERS / SUKREE SUKPLANG



IAN TURNER / FSP



ACTION PRESS/REX FEATURES

PIEK AND POM

Abandoned at a temple in Ayutthaya, Thailand (85km/53miles north of Bangkok), in 2001, by their owners, Piek, a four-year-old monkey and Pom, a one-year-old cat, have become bosom buddies. They are constant playmates and take good care of one another. Here, Piek checks Pom for lice. [R] 7 Aug 2002.

'PUSSY' AND 'LITTLE MOUSE' REUNITED

Muschi ('pussy') the cat first paid a visit to the Berlin zoo bears' enclosure in 2000, and struck up an unlikely friendship with a female Asiatic black bear called Maeuschen (which means, oddly enough, 'little mouse'). Over the last three years, the pair had become firm friends, but in October 2003 they were parted when Maeuschen was put in a cage while her living space was extended. The distressed Muschi took to sitting outside the cage and pining, until, in January 2004, zoo staff took pity on her and allowed her in. "They greeted each other and had a cuddle and now they're happy" said a spokesman for the zoo. "She appeared from nowhere in 2000 and we decided to leave them together because they got on so well. They sunbathed together and shared meals of raw meat, dead mice, fruit and bread." The two are seen here on 15 April 2003. EPA/NY Daily News, 5 Nov 2003; [R] 9 Jan 2004.

FLEDGLING FRIENDSHIP

Elsie the eagle owl and Malsia, a four-year-old Italian spinonie dog, have been virtually inseparable ever since Elsie was hatched in June 2003 at the Gentleshaw Wildlife Centre in Eccleshaw, Staffordshire. *Sunday Express*, 7 Sept 2003.

BONOBO AND BULLDOG

Kia, the first bonobo (*Pan paniscus*) born in Britain, was rejected by both mother and grandmother and had to be hand-reared at Twycross Zoo, Leicestershire. Chimpanzee expert Molly Badham took her home, where she formed an instant bond with a bulldog called

Bugsy. "They're special friends and Bugsy won't leave the room when Kia is there," said Ms Badham. Kia, three months old in January 2002 and weighing 3lb (1.4kg), was due to return to the zoo eventually. Bonobos, from the Congo basin, are smaller and darker than chimps. *D.Mall*, 26 Jan 2002.

ODD FAMILY

Roti, a three-month-old monkey, is seen here playing with a tiger cub at a zoo in Siracha, on the outskirts of Bangkok. The two have grown up together in the zoo and now appear to consider each other members of the same family. [R] 20 Dec 1999.

SIDELINES...

STARLING KAMIKAZE

Stuttgart residents out for a Sunday stroll saw hundreds of starlings fly over the city before nose-diving to the ground from a height of 65ft (20m) with a loud "thud". Around 100 dead and injured birds covered the busy Steinhalden Street. "I've never seen anything like it in my life," said ornithologist Guenther Schleussner from the Wilhelma Zoological and Botanical Gardens. He blustered that it could have been down to a sudden squall or a "freak accident". *Ananova*, 3 Nov 2003.

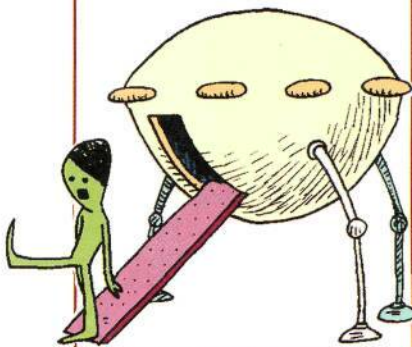
HOT LINES

When Synneva Kjellevoll, a 17-year-old Norwegian, tried to make a call from her Nokia 3310 mobile last July, it became very hot and burst into flames when she dropped it. Her hand was slightly injured. A month later, a 33-year-old woman in an Amsterdam record shop dropped her Nokia mobile, which switched itself off. When she picked it up, turned it back on and held it to her ear, the battery exploded and flames shot out. She was treated for burns to her face. [see also **FT172: 10**] *Expressen* (Sweden), 25 July; [ANP] 21 Aug 2003.

NAZI ALIENS?

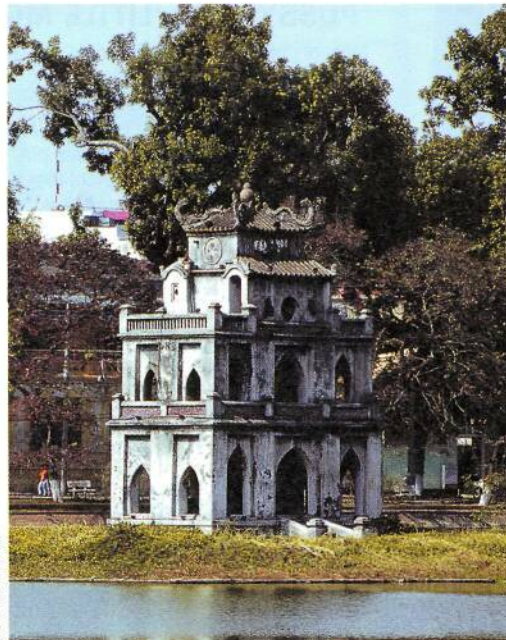
Last September, a police helicopter pilot discovered a 65ft (20m) diameter swastika-shaped crop circle in a cornfield near the Berlin-Schoenefeld airport as he was flying back to base. The drawing or promoting of swastikas or other Nazi symbols is illegal in Germany. *Ananova*, 15 Sept 2003.

MARTIN ROSS



Vietnam shell game

Ancient legend tells of golden lake turtle with a propensity for magic weaponry



LONEY PLANET IMAGES / ANSON FLORENCE



WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY / D HENDRIE



According to legend, King Le Loi of Annam (Vietnam) defeated Chinese invaders in the mid-15th century with a magic sword given to him by the gods. After the victory, he was boating on a lake in Thang Long (Hanoi) with his courtiers when a giant golden turtle rose to the surface and grabbed the sword in its mouth before plunging deep into the water to return it to its divine owners. From then on, the lake was known as Ho Hoan Kiem, which means "Lake of the Returned Sword" and the tale became an important part of Vietnamese culture that continues to be taught in schools and performed at popular water puppetry shows.

In real life, the last giant soft-shell turtle living in Hoan Kiem Lake will probably die alone, and at least one biologist says the species will then be extinct. So scarce were its appearances that until recently it was thought to be a genie – but video footage taken in 1998 (above right) finally established its existence beyond doubt. It occasionally pokes its wrinkled head out of the murky waters of the downtown lake to take a breath, but few Vietnamese are lucky enough to glimpse it. Conservationists are determined to do all they can to prevent the legendary creature, so important to Vietnamese national identity, from

dying out. In November, researchers from Hanoi National University and the US-based Wildlife Conservation Society planned to scout lakes in Thanh Hoa province, 100 miles (160km) south of Hanoi, where other giant turtles have been sighted but never confirmed. Turtles remain fertile until death, so it's possible for even very old animals to mate.

Vietnamese biologist Ha Dinh Duc, who has studied the lone turtle since 1991, reported in 2000 that it was a new species and named it *Rafetetus leioii* after the king. Other scientists dispute his conclusion, saying at least five other turtles of the same species, *Rafetetus swinhoii*, have been found in zoos and a monastery in neighbouring China. But Duc said no one has spent more time researching and viewing the Hoan Kiem creature than he has. "There are no other types of turtle like this in other countries," he said. "Their assessment is totally wrong."

According to Duc, the creature weighs about 440lbs (200kg) and its shell is 6ft (1.8m) long and 4ft (1.2m) wide. Its gender remains a secret along with its age because only Duc has been lucky enough to

view it completely out of the water a few times as it rested on an island in the middle of the small, shallow lake. Douglas Hendrie, turtle conservation co-ordinator in Asia for the World Conservation Union (WCU), who has worked in Vietnam since 1996, said the turtle could probably live up to 100 years,

but Duc believes it could be old enough for Le Loi himself to have released it into the lake, which was once part of the Red River.

The WCU says that 74 per cent of Asia's 90 freshwater turtle and tortoise species are endangered due to continuing demand for food and traditional medicine. The prospects for the Hoan Kiem turtle look bleak. Duc said three others like it emerged from the lake in the 1960s, but all of them died and all of the scientists agree only one remains. One huge stuffed specimen is displayed in a small temple on an island in the lake (above left), but not even Duc is bold enough to disturb the revered creature that will undoubtedly have its own legend centuries from now. "No one is allowed to touch this turtle," Duc said, sitting by the water. "If something went wrong, who would be responsible? It would be a big deal that would impact the soul of a nation." [AP] *Guardian*, 3 Nov 2003.

Courtly ghost on film

CCTV camera captures spooky image at Henry VIII's 'haunted' Hampton Court Palace

On three successive days last October, alarms rang at about 1pm near an exhibition hall at Hampton Court Palace in south-west London, indicating that fire doors had been opened. On the first occasion, CCTV footage showed the doors flying wide open, but no evidence of why they had. On the second, security guards were stunned when a ghostly figure suddenly appeared on the screen and closed the doors. On the third occasion, the doors were seen opening, but no figure appeared. An Australian tourist had recently noted in the visitors' book that she thought she had seen a ghost in that area.

In the screen grab reproduced here, the figure of a man in a hood and long, fur-trimmed black cloak is shown stepping from the shadowy doorway, one arm reaching out for the door handle. The area around the figure is somewhat blurred, and his face appears unnaturally white compared with his outstretched hand. "It was incredibly spooky because the face just didn't look human," said James Faukes, one of the palace security guards. "My first reaction was that someone was having a laugh, so I asked my colleagues to take a look. We spoke to our costumed guides, but they don't own a costume like that worn by the figure. It is actually quite unnerving."

The Sun decided on the advice of "experts" that the figure could be the ghost of "notorious King Henry VIII". However, it bears far more resemblance to the figure of Death in Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* than to anyone's idea of a fun-loving monarch.

The huge Tudor palace, built in the 1520s on the River Thames, has been the scene of many dramatic royal events, and there are legends of around 30 ghosts. Henry VIII's third wife, Jane Seymour, died there in 1537 12 days after giving birth to the future Edward VI, and her ghost is said to walk through one of the cobbled courtyards carrying a lighted taper. Her son had a nurse called Sibell Penn who was buried in



HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

A ghostly figure was seen to close doors

Hampton Church in 1562. When the church was pulled down in 1829, her tomb was disturbed, and around the same time an odd whirring noise began to be heard in the southwest wing of the palace. When workmen traced the strange sounds to a brick wall, they uncovered a small forgotten room containing an old spinning wheel, just like the one Penn used to use.

Henry's fifth wife, Catherine

Howard, condemned for adultery, was held at the palace under house arrest before her execution at the Tower of London in 1542. On one occasion she broke free from her guards and ran to her husband to plead for her life. Her ghost is allegedly seen running down what has been called the Haunted Gallery, uttering terrible cries – although Professor Richard Wiseman, the ubiquitous paranormal investigator, has blamed draughts and suggestibility [FT136:10, 137:24-25]. Regarding the October CCTV footage, he said: "If this is a ghost, it's one of the best images ever." However, he thought it was more likely to be an oddly-dressed member of the public. *FT* correspondent Nick Warren regards the whole business as "ghostly nonsense", pointing out that Hampton is a perfect anagram of phantom. [AP] *Ananova*, *Metro*, 19 Dec; *Times*, *D.Mail*, *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mirror*, *Sun*, 20 Dec 2003.

SIDELINES...

UNSAFE SEX

The tourist attraction known as the London Dungeon has provoked outrage by selling novelty Jack the Ripper condom sets. The rubbers bear the slogan: "Because you never know who's coming around the corner". Meanwhile, durian-flavoured condoms, funded by the German government, are establishing a market niche in Indonesia. (The durian is a highly prized, football-sized green fruit that smells of drains.) *Metro*, 4 Dec; *Melbourne Sunday Age*, 5 July 2003.

CANNY CANINE

A dog out for a late night walk with its owners in Marseilles defused a powerful home-made bomb outside a bank. The dog started to play with the bomb, a petrol can wired to several sticks of dynamite, and pulled it apart. Firefighters said it would have caused considerable damage. [AFP] 20 Oct 2003.

ONE-SIDED THIEF

Ichiro Irie, 45, was arrested on 25 October on suspicion of having stolen two leather shoes during one of his twice-weekly visits to a private hospital in Usu city, 500 miles (800km) south of Tokyo. In his home, police found a box containing 440 women's shoes – including high heels, patent leather pumps and sandals – all for left feet. For two years, the hospital (which asks visitors to change into slippers) had been receiving complaints about shoes going missing from the entrance hall. [AP] *BBC News*, 26 Oct 2003.

SURPRISE INGREDIENT

Hospital cleaner Sophie Matlala, 60, chose a plate of goulash for lunch at Medforum Hospital in Pretoria, South Africa, on 11 May 1999 and found a lump of meat that she couldn't cut or chew. Close inspection showed it was a piece of cooked penis. She was violently sick and became a vegetarian overnight.

It could not be established whether the penis was human or animal. In August 2003, a court turned down her claim for £210,000 as more than three years had elapsed. *Ananova*, 6 Aug 2003.

SIDELINES...

MYSTERY MOLLUSCS

Hundreds of huge molluscs, weighing up to half a kilo each, have been appearing by the Billings dam at Ribeirão Pires in São Paulo, Brazil. "We are astonished," said specialist Virgílio Alcides de Farias. "We have never seen anything like this before." Local resident Joana da Silva said they were really nice and tasted like chicken, but a municipal spokesman said a law would be introduced to stop people removing them until they were identified. *Ananova, 9 Sept 2003.*

WASP HUNT BACKFIRES

A man used a whole can of insect spray on a wasp nest underneath an overhanging roof outside his apartment in Zurich. When he tried to fend off the angry wasps with his lighter, the fumes ignited, burning down his apartment and two neighbouring flats. [R] 27 Aug 2003.

'FISH' HEAD CLEARED

On 2 October, Norwich magistrates threw out an assault charge against widely respected headmaster David Watkins, accused of trying to stuff a cod's head into a disruptive pupil's mouth. The 11-year-old boy had brought the fish into the playground in November 2002. Watkins denied the charge. *D.Telegraph, Guardian, 3 Oct 2003.*

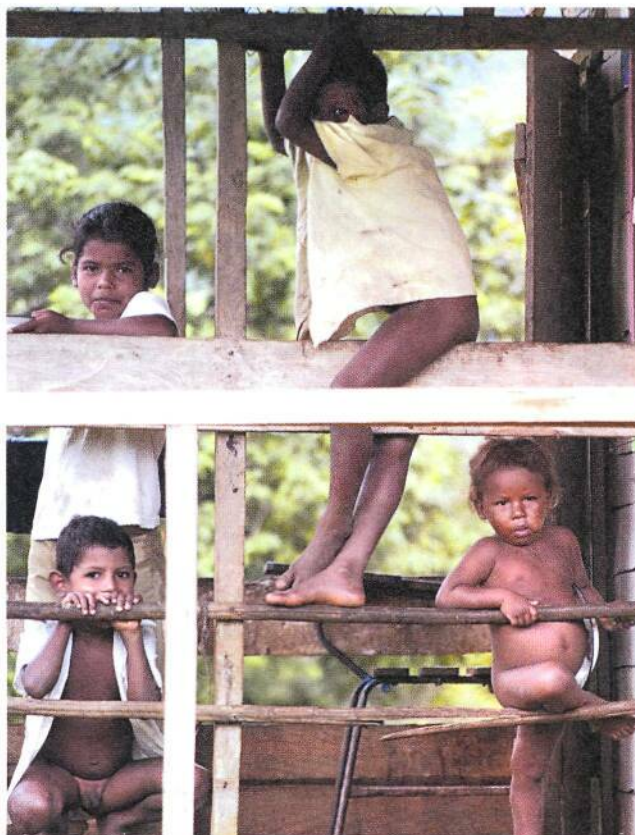
FISH RETRIBUTION

Missouri's rivers have been invaded by carp that jump into boats and attack fishermen. One state biologist near Columbia had a filling knocked from a tooth by a high-flying fish that hit him on the head. *Yorkshire Post, 30 Aug 2003.*



The grisi siknis

A "collective madness" strikes village community in Nicaraguan jungle, causing frenzied behaviour



ERA/PA PHOTOS

Last November, 60 people in the remote Miskito community of Raiti in the jungles of northern Nicaragua were gripped by a "collective madness" known as *grisi siknis* in the local Miskito language and said to be the result of a curse. Seven cases were reported in neighbouring Namahka in mid-December, all girls aged 14 to 18. One of these, 15-year-old Isabel Wislop, fled across the Coco river into Honduras, reaching the village of Panzap where she died. Further cases appeared in three other nearby communities.

All the victims have the same symptoms: long periods of coma-like unconsciousness, interrupted by sudden bouts of frenzied behaviour. During the attacks, sufferers attempt to flee

including anthropologists and five traditional healers. The Nicaraguan health minister, José Antonio Alvarado, said the traditional remedies of Miskito healers were getting better results than anti-convulsive drugs or anti-depressants. "There's not much our doctors can do," said Florence Levy, leader of the medical team. "We are giving support to the healers as they know the problem better than us... The illness is more spiritual than physical."

Three years ago about 80 people were affected in the community of Krin Krin. Many were successfully treated by a healer, Carlos Salomon Taylor, a member of the team now working in Raiti. He claims that his treatment, which involves local plants and ancestral rituals, cures most sufferers in 15 to 30 days. Twenty-five of the 60 sufferers in Raiti were said to be responding well to treatment.

The medical team took samples of water from local wells and recommended that people only drink coconut juice until they had tested the supply. The last major outbreak of *grisi siknis* began in 1910 and affected dozens of Miskito communities throughout the region for 20 years. Mr Alvarado said a medical report carried out in the late 1950s after a similar outbreak concluded that deliberate contamination of wells with hallucinogens was one possible cause.

Grisi siknis bears many similarities to *pibloktoq*, or "arctic hysteria", found in indigenous peoples of Greenland. Professor Phil Dennis, an anthropologist at Texas Tech University who spent two years studying the phenomenon in Nicaragua in the late 1970s, says the attacks are very serious to those experiencing them and their families, and often to entire Miskito communities. He witnessed four attacks during his research and said the patients were "clearly in another state of reality". He said it was a "culture-bound syndrome" unique to the Miskito, comparable to anorexia nervosa which is known only in the affluent West. *Guardian, 17 Dec 2003.*

All the victims have the same symptoms

their communities with their eyes closed, seizing any weapon they can find with which they appear to try to defend themselves against invisible attackers. According to local press reports, they have extraordinary strength and often four people are required to restrain them.

The Nicaraguan government sent a medical team to Raiti

PETEY & JAYDEE 'GO EXPLORING'

As seen on



VIOLENCE, MAYHEM AND DOMESTIC POWER TOOLS THE ALIENS HAVE LANDED!



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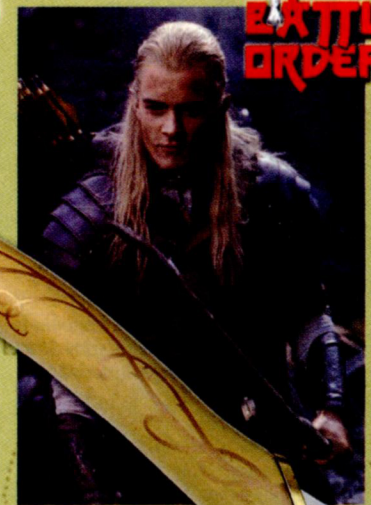
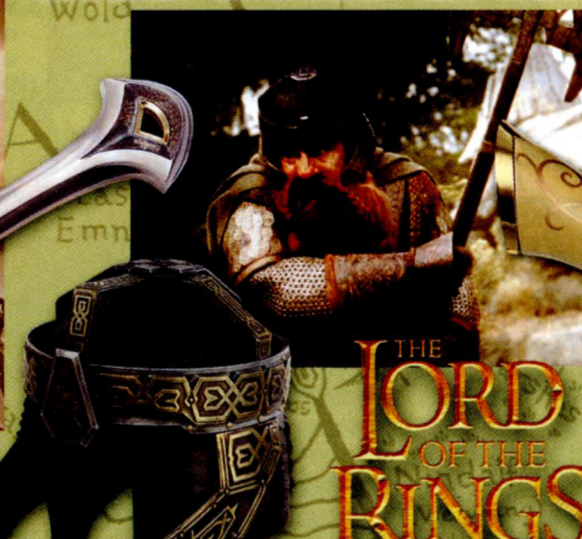
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SIDELINES...

CRAPPY BIRTHDAY

Chris Gravez of Shanklin, Isle of Wight, watched as a bulldozer ripped up his beloved garden, confident that it was part of a TV makeover, a surprise from wife Jenny for his 58th birthday. However, when she got home and started screaming, it transpired the digger driver had the wrong address. By then, the garden was a wasteland of exposed roots. *Metro*, 12 Sept 2003.

PREACHING POLLY

Days before he was due to address a Christian jamboree in Alberta, Solomon the evangelical parrot went missing from his home in Medicine Hat. The African grey has an extensive vocabulary of phrases such as "Repent now!" and "Are you ready to meet the Lord?" His owner, hairdresser Dale Doell, said: "Satan terrorised him into leaving." *Independent on Sunday*, 28 Sept 2003.

A WORM A DAY

Paisit Chantain, 39, a fireman in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand, has eaten a live worm every day for 30 years after getting a taste for them while using them as fishing bait. He claimed the diet kept him healthy and that the worst illness he has had is a cold. *Metro*, 3 Sept 2003.

LEGLSS ESCAPE

François Johannes Pieterse, serving a 10-year sentence in Durban, South Africa, for fraud and impersonating a doctor, was taken to hospital in July, but escaped "unnoticed" even though he has no legs. "Two months later he is still 'on the run' and the authorities appear to be stumped," the *Saturday Star* reported. *Adelaide Sunday Mail*, 14 Sept 2003.

WEE SPOT OF BOTHER

A man who got out of his car in Queensland to urinate stood on a nest of meat ants, which swarmed out and bit him. As he scrambled away he lost his footing, slid down a 100 metre (330ft) slope and stopped on a ledge above a sheer drop. Eventually, paramedics abseiled down the slope to rescue the man, who suffered only minor injuries. *Adelaide Advertiser*, 22 Oct 2003.

Ageing wildman of Oz

Tarzan of North Queensland may change his ways but he keeps on jogging.



CARRIS POST / ANNE WATTS

BEEFCAKE: Michael Fomenko continues to pound his beat – is he slowing down?

Michael Fomenko, the Tarzan of North Queensland, is approaching his 74th year but has vowed to jog on for the rest of his days. *FT* first took note of him in 1982, when he had stopped hunting wild boar with a knife after one of the porkers ripped open his leg, and had taken to shooting game with a rifle, bought with his tiny disability allowance [FT36:13]. After more than 50 years in the jungle, he is still living in a remote cave, eating bush tucker and running more than 30 miles (46km) a day despite heat and drenching tropical rains.

He has been spotted in recent months indulging in the occasional overnight stay at a local hotel. Arriving unannounced, he gorges on fish and chips, washed down with a soft drink and a two-litre tub of ice cream. Then he leaves by the back door in the morning. He carries his supplies in a hessian sugar bag everywhere he goes. Some have suggested he was becoming "civilised" after exchanging his pigskin lap-lap for black football shorts and track shoes, and even occasionally wearing a tattered shirt when in town.

Michael Fomenko is the son of Russian Princess Elizabeth Machbelli, who fled from Georgia after the Bolshevik Revolution. The family travelled through Japan in the 1930s before settling in Sydney before World War II. Mr Fomenko made a name for himself as a top Sydney GPS college graduate and was training to represent Australia in the Olympics in the decathlon. In 1951, he suddenly quit the only job he ever held, at a Sydney shipping company, and walked to Cape York to live in the jungle. In the following years he became internationally famous and was once arrested after terrified farmers' wives reported seeing him swinging from trees clad only in an animal skin. A song about his exploits has recently been released, and a book is in the offing. *Brisbane Courier-Mail*, 23 Aug 2003.

Another two-header

A young two-headed tortoise held by its owner Noel Daniels in Wellington, South Africa. Tortoise expert Dr Ernst Baard of Cape Nature Conservation said that two-headed tortoises are most unusual and that he knew of only one other. However, Fortean Towers receives a photograph of such prodigies about once every two years. *Ananova*, 29 May 2003.

AP PHOTOS / GREG ZILWA



Cloud puzzles experts



Larry Gessell was near his farm just south of Moosomin and the Pipestone Valley in southern Saskatchewan, Canada, on 13 August when he saw a thunderstorm coming from the west and a long, low cylindrical cloud preceding it, unlike

anything he had seen on the Prairies. He managed to take 12 photographs. The clouds passed very low over him and were followed by weather typical of a Prairie thunderstorm. A picture of the cloud was emailed to Jay Anderson, a meteorologist with

Environment Canada in Winnipeg. He had never heard of or seen such a cloud on the Prairies; such a cloud was usually formed over mountainous terrain. (Moosomin, Sask.) *World-Spectator*, 1 Sept 2003.

Wonder woman Lisa

Jean-Luc Archer, seven, was knocked down by a BMW 318 in Cheetham Hill, Manchester, and trapped by his pelvis after running into the road on Hallowe'en. Lisa Hodgkinson, 30 (right, with Jean-Luc), a sales rep from Warrington, saw the accident and tried to lift the car's back wheel off him, but failed. Then she tried heaving the car forward and summoned up emergency adrenaline that gave her almost superhuman strength. She weighs about 133lb (60kg) and is 5ft 7in (1.7m) tall, but somehow shifted the 1.5 ton vehicle even though the driver was so traumatised he still



had his foot on the brake. She then gave the boy mouth-to-mouth resuscitation until the ambulance arrived.

He had damaged pelvis and lungs, two broken arms, a broken leg and a torn ear and was initially given only a 30 per cent chance of survival. He was unconscious for four days, but

was fit enough to return home after three weeks. Ms Hodgkinson received an award for reviving a truck driver on the M62 in July 2002. Jean-Luc's mother Maggie said: "He wouldn't be here if it weren't for Lisa. He calls her Wonder Woman and that's what she is." *D.Mail, Ananova, Star*, 25 Nov 2003.

John Morris, 27, a fruit and veg seller from Sunderland, called on his emergency powers when he lifted a one-ton car off his stepson. The 182lb (82kg) man held the one-ton Ford Fiesta at waist level for 20 seconds as others dragged Blaine Hammond, four, to safety. Blaine had run into the road and got his head stuck between the tarmac and a tyre. Hearing his scream, Mr Morris rushed out of their house nearby. "Half his scalp was hanging off and the bone was showing," he said. Blaine was taken to hospital, but amazingly suffered no serious harm. *D.Mirror*, 3 July 2003. [For other examples of emergency strength, see Peter Hassall's letter in FT1173:74.]

SIDELINES...

NASAL BEAN

Romanian doctors found a bean growing in the nose of a four-year-old boy from a mountain village in Vrancea county. He was only in the surgery for a check-up. "As the boy didn't cry or tell his mother anything, it sprung to life and had little leaves when we found it," said Dr Nicolae Moise from County Hospital in Focsani. *Ananova*, 4 Nov 2003.

DEATH DEFIED

A 28-year-old man referred to as Balram was nearly decapitated by a metal rod when he crashed into a truck in Fatehabad, Uttar Pradesh, India, on 5 July. With blood oozing and eyes popping out, he tied his head in place with a cloth and drove 18 miles (29km) to a bone clinic in Agra, where he fell unconscious. "Had there been some delay, death was a certainty," said Dr DV Sharma. Balram recovered in two weeks, but was having trouble speaking. *Indo-Asian News Service*, 21 July 2003.

DIVINE WARNING

Jim Caviezel, the actor playing Jesus in Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of Christ*, which has drawn complaints from religious leaders, escaped injury after being struck by lightning during filming. Smoke was seen coming out of his ears. The bolt also hit the umbrella of assistant director Jan Michelini, who had already suffered light burns on the tips of his fingers when struck by an early bolt during filming on a hilltop months earlier. [AP] *BBC News*, 23 Oct; *NY Post*, 24 Oct 2003.



SPECIAL REPORT



The Diana Conspiracies

Rumours of the involvement of the Intelligence services and even members of the Royal Family have persisted since the car crash which ended the life of Diana, Princess of Wales. **ROBIN RAMSAY** summarises the case as an official enquiry opens in Britain.



THROUGH THE MANGLE: The wreckage left after the car in which Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed were passengers hit a wall.

- MI6 INDUCED THE CRASH.
- HENRI PAUL WAS AN MI6 INFORMANT.
- PAUL'S BLOOD SAMPLES WERE DOCTORED OR SWITCHED TO MAKE IT APPEAR THAT HE HAD BEEN DRUNK.
- A NOW DEAD PHOTOGRAPHER, RICHARD ANDANSON, WAS DRIVING THE FIAT UNO WHICH COLLIDED WITH THE MERCEDES DRIVEN BY HENRI PAUL.
- THE CCTV CAMERAS COVERING THE ROUTE FROM HOTEL TO THE TUNNEL WERE DELIBERATELY TURNED OFF.

Fayed derived much of this material from the former British intelligence officer Richard Tomlinson, who gave him an affidavit which made three main points (see www.conspiracyplanet.com/channel.cfm?channelid=41&contentid=88&page=)

1. A senior MI6 officer known to Tomlinson was posted to Paris just before the death. Tomlinson stated: "I believe that there may well be significance in the fact that Mr X was posted to Paris in the month immediately before the deaths."
2. While part of MI6, Tomlinson had seen a proposal put forward by a senior MI6 officer to assassinate the then Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. The idea was to cause Milosevic's car to crash in a tunnel by using a strobe flash-gun to blind the driver. This struck Tomlinson because a witness in Paris claimed to have seen a bright light in the tunnel.
3. Tomlinson also learned that MI6 had an informant on the security staff at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, the hotel in which Dodi Fayed and Diana were staying. He wrote: "I cannot claim that I remember from this reading of the file that the name of this person was Henri Paul, but I have no doubt with the benefit of hindsight that this was he." [sic]

The third point is widely accepted as probably true. Henri Paul was found to have over £100,000 in a number of bank accounts (and £2,000 in his pocket when he died), while earning only £23,000 per annum as assistant head of security at the Ritz.

The second point would certainly be interesting

For watchers of that popular and long-running soap opera known as the British Royal family it has been an exciting few weeks. On 6 January, the day that the Royal Coroner began the inquest into Princess Diana's death, the *Daily Mirror* revealed that Prince Charles was the person Diana had named in a 1996 letter as planning her death in a car crash. In any circumstances, the allegation by his ex-wife that the heir to the British throne had been plotting to do away with her by having her car sabotaged would have been a sensation; that the ex-wife *had* actually died in a car-crash a year after the letter was written re-ignited the conspiracy theories surrounding Diana's death in Paris.

The death of Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed (as well as Henri Paul, the driver) in Paris in 1997 initially looks like an enormous conspiratorial quagmire. Asking Google to search for 'Diana + conspiracy' produced 54,000 hits, almost half as many as asking it for 'JFK + conspiracy'. But a perusal of the websites in question shows that a relatively small core of material is being endlessly recycled in cyberspace.

Although the official report by two French magistrates has not been released, the summary

A small core of conspiracy is being endlessly recycled in cyberspace

concluded that the crash occurred after the Mercedes driven by Henri Paul collided with a Fiat Uno in the tunnel while trying to overtake it; and that Henri Paul was drunk at the time of the accident.

Driving the conspiracy agenda is Dodi Fayed's father, Mohamed Fayed, and at his Website – www.alfayed.com/ – he expounds the case for a conspiracy, as he sees it. From the information there we can infer that Mr Fayed believes the following (though the Website doesn't state it quite this boldly):



SNAPPED: Henri Paul (left) with Di and Dodi (backs to camera) at the Ritz hotel.

if there were any evidence of the use of a strobe flash-gun in the tunnel – but there is no such evidence. Witnesses saw a bright light in the tunnel, but – unless anything more substantial should emerge – this is quite adequately explained by the presence of the paparazzi pursuing the car.

And Tomlinson's first point, about the presence in Paris of a particular senior MI6 officer shortly before the time of the accident, tells us precisely nothing.

The idea that Henri Paul's blood samples were doctored, or switched with blood from some other person, is impossible to check. Mr Fayed refuses to believe that Paul was intoxicated because no one at the Ritz noticed that he was drunk and he didn't smell of alcohol. But Paul smoked cigars, which might have masked the smell of alcohol, and some drinkers, especially alcoholics, learn to conceal their intoxication and can apparently function almost normally. There is also evidence that Paul had been taking tiapride, usually given to someone trying to quit drinking; but the detectable quantities of tiapride were so small that one alcoholism expert has suggested he had been trying to stop drinking but had "fallen off the wagon". (see <http://alcoholism.about.com/cs/diana/a/blpaul05.htm>)

So that, essentially is the core of the conspiracy theory – and pretty flimsy it is, too.

There are, though, three other substantial loose ends. The first is the apparent absence of any pictures from the CCTV cameras covering the route from the hotel to the tunnel. It is widely



Some assert that CCTV cameras were switched off on Diana's route

asserted, by Mr Fayed among others, that these cameras had been switched off or were not pointing at the road. It is unclear at this stage, without seeing the full report of the French investigation, if this is true or not; or indeed if the cameras were real or merely dummies.

The second is the curious story of the carbon monoxide levels in Henry Paul's blood when it was tested – levels high enough to have incapacitated him. Again, without access to the French investigation we can merely note a curious anomaly.

Finally, there is the death of paparazzo James Andanson, who owned a white Fiat Uno whose paintwork is reported to have matched evidence recovered by police from Diana and Dodi's Mercedes.

Andanson was questioned by police but apparently convinced them that he was not in Paris at the time of the accident. However, in May 2000 Mr Andanson's body was found in a burned-out car in a French wood; the French police then searched his studio and took away various items (the details of which have not been made public). The French police think Andanson's death was suicide but his widow doesn't buy it. (See Greg Swift, 'How did Diana paparazzo die?' *Daily Express*, 9 June 2000, available at www.aljayed.com)

Mr Fayed, of course, believes Andanson was murdered: "The guy who pushed the car with his Fiat Uno, James Andanson, they burned him alive in his car." <http://members.fortunecity.com/ticketyboo/ndec42003.htm>

And there, to all intents and purposes, the story peters out for now. The Royal Coroner has opened and adjourned the inquest, to enable him to read the thousands of pages of the

French investigation. He

has asked the Metropolitan Police to investigate the conspiracy theories, and it's said that they will be questioning Prince Charles and other members of the Royal family. While we can safely assume that the Royal Coroner is not going to return any verdict other than one of 'accidental death', Mr Fayed, and the hundreds of

other amateur conspiracy theorists, will undoubtedly continue to recycle the existing fragments outlined above.

Political conspiracies are routine nowadays – and that is not surprising, in a world where we know (and where there is evidence) that organisations like MI6 *do* kill people and that, possibly, real conspiracies have resulted in the assassinations of John F Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King and others. But there is no evidence that MI6, or any other organisation, was involved in Diana's death, and such involvement does seem highly unlikely.

Diana was undoubtedly a pain in the posterior of the House of Windsor and – with her high-profile campaign against land mines – of the manufacturers of munitions. All manner of groups, in fact, had good reason to raise their glasses when they heard she was dead. Even so, there is no reason – yet – to conclude that this was anything other than an accident; and one she would probably have survived had she been wearing a seatbelt. **FT**

AP PHOTO / APTV

REC FEATURES



science

DAVID HAMBLING reveals the possible medical benefits of being nice to your cat.

The power of the purr



The FT Pussy Posse: Brutus relaxes (above) while Oscar plans this year's ABC round-up (below).

Fortean Times has reported how sound and infrasound have been used as weapons [FT153:30-35, FT169:49] and for psychological influence [FT174:56]. Now research shows that sound can be used to heal as well as to hurt. It has even been suggested that this could be the evolutionary reason for the feline purr, which is credited with curative powers.

In 1999, Dr Clinton Rubin, Professor of Biomechanical Engineering at Stony Brook University in New York, published findings showing that low frequency sound (20-50 Hertz) aided in bone healing in chickens¹. Further research found that vibrations of this frequency increased the strength and mineral density of the bones in sheep's legs. Even though the vibration used was thousands of times weaker than forces that the sheep's legs experienced when running, it had a strong effect.

Work with rabbits and other animals confirmed the beneficial effects of vibration on bone repair, and the technique is being tested on humans. Dr Rubin has patented this technology as a means of promoting fracture healing for preventing osteoporosis. Meanwhile, Russian sports medicine has been using "biomechanical stimulation" – basically a vibrating pad – to improve the healing of muscles and tendons. Using a frequency of 18-35 Hz appears to have a therapeutic effect.

Elizabeth von Muggenthaler of the Fauna Communications Research Institute² has put forward the hypothesis that this might explain why cats purr. All small cats purr, from the cheetah to the domestic moggie, with a frequency range of 25-150 Hz. The exact source of the purr has been a mystery for centuries. Some believe that it comes from the voice box and is controlled by special nerve signals causing the vocal cords to vibrate at the right frequency. Others say that the sound comes from vibrating blood vessels rather than the voice box itself.

The exact source of the purr has been a mystery for centuries

It is not clear why cats purr. It isn't just a sign of contentment; they also purr when they are in pain or distress. Purring may be a signal of submission – 'please don't hurt me' – or there may be more to it. Cats are robust creatures, possessing a toughness that has given rise to the proverb that they have nine lives. A study of "high-rise syndrome" recorded the outcome of cats falling from balconies. In spite of falling an average of 5.5 storeys, 90 per cent of the cats studied survived the experience. Broken bones were common, but in cats these tend to heal quickly and completely. Veterinary experience shows that fractures in cats are more likely to heal fully than similar injuries in dogs.

The Fauna Communications Research Institute quotes a saying that "if you put a cat and a bunch of broken bones in the same room, the bones will heal." Analysis of vet records suggested that cats really do recover better than dogs. Comparison of fractures is hard, but neutering provides a baseline for comparison, as the animals involved are usually healthy. One



study found that 17.4 per cent of dogs suffered complications after spaying compared to 8.4 per cent of cats – less than half as many. For castrations, only 1.2 per cent of cats suffered complications, but 9.8 per cent of dogs.

Could this be a sign of the therapeutic power of the purr? I consulted Caroline Reay, Head Vet at the Blue Cross charity's animal hospital in south London. Having treated thousands of cats and dogs, her view was that the study was like comparing apples and oranges.

"Fracture repair time in dogs has a lot to do with size," she explained. "The bigger the dog, the longer it's going to take to heal." But it seems that even with cat-sized dogs, there are huge variations between breeds. "Some types have very thin, fine bones and non-union fractures (where the ends of the broken bone do not meet up) are common. They take a long time to heal."

However, some small breeds like Jack Russells are tougher and their breakages tend to heal much more quickly. She was also sceptical of the comparison with spaying times. "The operations are completely different for cats and dogs... With cats it's a 20-minute operation, with a small dog it's more like 40." The comparisons might be questionable, but she agreed that in general cats have comparatively short recovery times.

There is also evidence that cats are beneficial to their human companions. Pet ownership is known to reduce stress and can improve

cardiovascular health, with pet owners having lower blood pressure than non-owners.

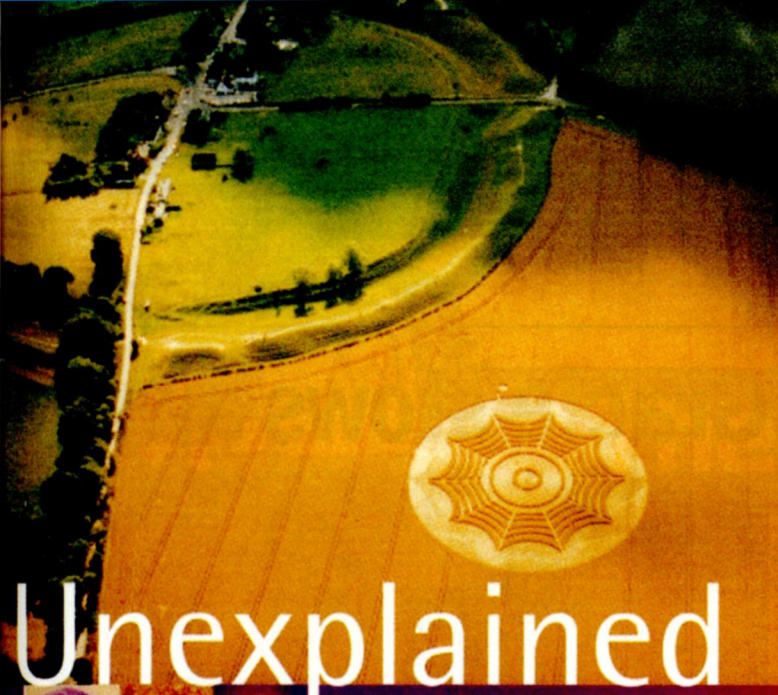
A study of 6,000 households found that dog owners made 8 per cent fewer visits to the doctor than those without dogs, but cat owners made 12 per cent fewer visits and had correspondingly lower rates of medication for blood pressure, cholesterol and sleeping problems. For dog owners the benefit may be connected with the exercise of dog walking, but it is harder to explain the influence of cats.

Is it the power of the purr? Dr Rubin himself likes the idea, but believes the only support it has is 'guilt by association'. More research is needed into the effects of vibration and the properties of the feline purr. But cats seem

to have something working in their favour, and it isn't a love of exercise and green vegetables...

1 See Dr Rubin's homepage www.bme.sunysb.edu/bme/people/faculty/c_rubin.html

2 Homepage www.animalvoice.com/



ining of the

Visit the shadowy zone
between the known
and the unknown

Unexplained

Phenomena

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CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD
COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

47. FATHER OF HISTORY/ FATHER OF LIES

[All references are by page numbers from the current Penguin translation, revised edition by AR Burn, 1972, omitting items previously covered in *FT*.]

Herodotus (c.490-425 BC) had both the above titles in antiquity. Not the earliest Greek historian, he is the first whose work has survived; in full, too, unlike most ancient Greek writing. Written by a Hellene unusually interested in and respectful of non-Greeks, it includes a generous sampling of forteana: p49. Arion on the dolphin's back, a story repeated by Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights*, bk6 ch8 & bk16 ch19) who adds yarns of dolphins falling in love with humans, and perpetuated by Shakespeare (*Twelfth Night*, Act1 sc2 v15). Modern zoology confounds the mockery of Edward Gibbon, 'Marginalia in Herodotus' (1790) in (ed.) Patricia Craddock, *The English Essays of Edward Gibbon* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, p365): "a most unphilosophic fable since it presupposes the friendship of a man and a sea-fish and the exquisite sensibility of a deaf animal to the sound of the lyre."

p62. Cauldrons containing sacrificial flesh and water boil over before the fire is lit; cf Fort (*Books*, pp656-62, 928-30) for people mysteriously combusted without flames.

p67. A 10ft-long coffin, with corpse as big, possibly Orestes'. There are many such in Phlegon's *Book of Marvels* (tr W.Hansen, Exeter Univ.Press, 1996). By contrast, Fort (p169) mentions 17 coffins, only 3-4in (8-10cm), found in 1836 near Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh (now on display at the Royal Museum of Scotland).

p76. Cræsus saved from burning pyre by sudden rainstorm from a cloudless sky; Fort (pp191-2) records such downpours.

p210. Mysterious appearances of meat. Fort (p44) has one tale of falling beef.

p280. Thick falls of feathers. Herodotus suggests this was really snow. I see no plumed plummetings in Fort, but he (p62) has one account of falling wool.

p299. Giant footprint, over a yard long; Fort (pp164-5) has a similar one, from Nevada.

p480. Artachæes the Persian was 8ft 2ins (2.5m) tall, and had the loudest voice in the world.

p527. Though Herodotus himself did not believe it, most Greeks swore that Scyllias (pronounced Silly Ass) the diver swam 10 miles (16km) under water without once surfacing, to bring good war news, thus outdoing James Bond in *Thunderball*.

p536. Weapons mysteriously appear, invading Persians are struck by lightning, and attacked by two giant phantom warriors, all in one paragraph.

p544. Mysterious dust cloud, from which human song was heard; plenty of dust in Fort, notably (p81) a cloud containing hot air that asphyxiated nine people.

p623. Fish come back to life whilst being barbecued. Fish frequently fall in Fort without ever being thus resurrected.

There are many other strange things in Herodotus. Some he believes, others not. Like Fort's "data of the damned," he gives his readers the stories and leaves the rest up to them.

"The thrice-accursed Greeks said it long ago" - Fort (p55)

(NB: For a longer look, see my "How credulous was Herodotus?" in *Studies on Greek & Roman History & Literature* (Gieben, Amsterdam, 1985), pp3-13)

Gracie stows away



REX FEATURES / GARY ROBERTS

This tiny black and white kitten, known as Gracie, escaped war-torn Iraq by stowing away in a British Army tank somewhere near Baghdad. The tank crossed hundreds of miles of desert to Saudi Arabia before being shipped back to Britain, which took six weeks. Gracie is thought to have survived the ordeal by eating insects and lapping up condensation from the vehicle's walls. Troops found the very thin kitten at Southampton docks and she is now recovering at the Willowslea Farm quarantine cattery

at Heathrow airport. She was due to be found a new home in January. Sun, 1 Dec 2003.

Cats have phenomenal powers of survival. Earlier this year, a cat named Cecil was locked inside an abandoned house in Monroe, Louisiana, for two months without food or water. Officials said he was "nothing but skin and bones" when rescuers finally broke in and found him hiding under a chair. He made a good recovery. *NY Post*, 26 Sept 2003. See **FT154:18** for more examples of feline survival.



The Hierophant

IN HIS FORTRESS OF ARROGANCE, DEEP BELOW THE HIMALAYAS, THE IMMORTAL ASCENDED
MASTER KNOWN AS THE HIEROPHANT TRAVELS THE MORE DISREPUTABLE PATHS OF FORTEANA...

Last month, we passed on details of a rather intriguing holiday opportunity, courtesy of an organisation by the name of Stardoves. I'm pleased to say they're back with further excitement; this time, following on from their conference for Lightworkers, they've announced a "FANTASTICALLY AMAZING EXPEDITION TO Ancient Atlantis and the BERMUDA TRIANGLE" (their caps, naturally). Again, I'm afraid news reached me a trifle too late for inclusion before the event, but from the sound of things, it must have been quite a beano. According to something answering to the name 'Sananda' – a no doubt entirely real and wholly non-made-up entity – this is no mere psychic tourism, as the future of the planet itself is in the balance. "The disappearance of people from your surface world," he sort-of explains, "including the horrific latest wave of child kidnappings, pregnant wife/mistress slayings, even the genocide in the Middle East, has its generating roots in the terror that is let in from the hell dimensions in the Devil's Triangle and we can help you stop that now. These disappearances are due to an intelligent, technologically advanced negative-based alien culture living under the sea. They are involved in assisting sky borne negative aliens in dragging certain DNA off the surface Earth by force." We like that "certain DNA". Sananda

further warns that "in the past 1,000 years, the Bermuda Triangle has probably taken over 10,000 lives," but neglects to mention where he found the thousand-year-old shipping records from the Bermuda area which this claim would appear to require.

But have no fear, for the Devil's Triangle's reign of terror is at an end! Sananda and his chums will see to it: "There are certain negative alien technology that we will disable during this Expedition. I will guide you, as will Monka, Hatonn, Soltec, Lady Venus, and Ashtar. These ones will come forth from the SPACE CONFEDERATION to assist in the cleansing of the Bermuda Triangle..."

Of course, you might be worried that the open ocean might perhaps not be the best place to enter into a two-day duel with an evil alien race, and you'd be bang on the money, as they "will NOT be going out very far in the Ocean... This Expedition work will be done in the shallows off the beaches in ancient Atlantean waters that one can wade in for miles." Quite how this squares with the claims that thousands of people have been drowned in violent storms in the Triangle is somewhat unclear. Plus a day of swimming with dolphins, all for the bargain price of \$352.22, including Gala Aquarian Graduation Banquet. I do hope that their next missive arrives in time...

Staying with the holiday theme, a French correspondent has been in touch regarding some curious phenomena in his holiday snaps. More specifically, the presence of Christ and Moses in some of them. I shall allow him to explain: "Coming down from Mount Sinai in April 1997, I caught on film two rainbow-like colored spots. After a closer look with a magnifying glass, the first looked like an old man with the head covered with a veil, the other like a Christ-like figure with a beard and long hair. Both were profiles. I had these colored spots enlarged. I photocopied the results with a Xerox color machine and enlarged them again. I even went to a world famous photo lab to have the negatives processed a second time.

Every time, both profiles stood out even more as they were processed through increasingly sophisticated machines. So finally, I decided to share my beautiful secret with my fellow human beings and show the pictures to the world." Now, less charitable commentators than me might try to tell you that in fact the photos on show at www.sinaieternal.com in fact show light refracted in some sort of flaw in the lens. I, however, have a sufficiently-developed taste for the mysterious to say, yes, you're right, they almost certainly are some sort of flaw in the lens. Oh well.

KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF *LOBSTER*, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER

The outstanding feature of the contemporary American conspiracy subculture is the way it regards virtually all initial reports of politically significant events as dubious. It assumes that all states lie routinely, all politicians are corrupt, and nothing is as it is presented by the corporate media, whose sole aim is to disinform us. When the Americans claimed to have found Saddam Hussein hiding in a hole, disbelief was inevitable. After all, it was just what the faltering US occupation needed! It was just too convenient!

But wasn't there TV footage of

the capture? Yes, say the conspiracy buffs, but how old is it? Saddam might have been captured months ago and the footage saved until now for maximum impact. www.gulufuture.com/saddam-tricks.htm

The presence of ripe dates on a tree in the background of Saddam's hiding place seemed to offer a clue: ripe dates in December? I asked someone who used to live in Iraq to look at the picture and she was of the opinion that that they were picked dates being stored on the tree. But how do we know this *is* Saddam? It might be a double or a relative, so how can we be sure?

<http://aztlan.net/saddamcapture-hoax.htm>

Well, we could compare the 'captured' Saddam with an earlier version. See www.centcom.mil/Operations/Iraqi_Freedom/saddampicts.htm for the 'captured Saddam' and http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1100529.stm for the 'real' one. Is this the same man? I can't tell. But even if it isn't, which is the real Saddam?

In any event, it appears that it wasn't the Americans who captured him, but the Kurds who – despite a \$25 million bounty – may have left him for the Americans to 'capture' again.

www.sundayherald.com/39096

Getting into the spirit of things, Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State during President Clinton's term in office, suggested to a reporter in mid-December that she thought it was a possibility that the Bush administration had already captured Osama Bin Laden and was going to 'find' him just before the forthcoming Presidential election. (Under pressure from the media, Albright back-tracked the following day, claiming she meant it as a joke.) Albright's suggestion seemed to be refuted when another tape recording from Bin Laden appeared a fortnight later. But, "hey," say the conspiracy theorists, "how difficult would it be to fake a Bin Laden tape?"

And the answer is: probably not very difficult at all.



alien zoo

DR KARL SHUKER's monthly look at the animal kingdom reveals a quandary over 'manimal' hair, new whale and bird species, plus an extremely dubious marsupial addition

New beasts for old



KEN IRWIN / WWW.FAIRFAIRPHOTOS.COM

Gunning for the gunni

Australia is famous for marsupial mammals that have evolved by convergence to resemble ecological counterparts elsewhere in the world, for instance marsupial mole, marsupial wolf (thylacine), marsupial mice (albeit more like shrews), and flying phalangers (closely paralleling flying squirrels). Now, however, it seems that Down Under can even boast a marsupial counterpart to that most infamous of fraudulent fauna, the jackalope. Known as the gunni (and pronounced 'goon-eye'), this horned wombat-like beast is proudly represented by an ingenious taxidermy specimen on display in the visitors' information centre at the tourist town of Marysville, Victoria. Its wombat body is additionally adorned with stripes on its back and hindquarters, plus a tail, and it bears deer antlers on its head. It was recently presented to the centre by local ranger Miles Stewart-Howie as a private project, along with a detailed account of the gunni's fictitious history, which is now also displayed by the centre alongside their newest and certainly most entertaining wildlife exhibit. www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/10/04/1064988455505.html

Hair of the cat

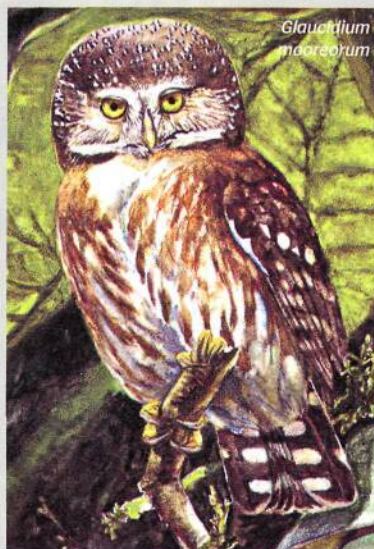
During summer 2003, CFZ cryptozoologist Richard Freeman, together with Dr Chris Clarke and Jon Hare, spent three weeks in Sumatra searching for the elusive *orang pendek* or 'short man'. Although they obtained photos of possible *orang pendek* footprints, the hair samples that they brought back turned out to be feline in origin. However, these are still very interesting, because when later checked by Danish zoologist Lars Thomas against all but one of the known cat species from the region in which the team had been exploring, no positive match could be made. The only known felid now left to check with these intriguing hairs is the Asian golden cat *Felis temminckii*, and if there is still no correspondence the team is hoping that they may have obtained the first physical evidence for the reality of Sumatra's leonine mystery cat, the cigau – a fierce, maned felid reported by natives from the Mount Kerinci area of Sumatra. *CFZ Newsletter, Dec 2003.*

And then there were eight

Traditionally deemed to comprise six species, those large baleen whales known as rorquals are now all at sea, taxonomically as well as physically. In 1970, eight adult rorqual specimens (five females, three males) were killed by Japanese whalers for research purposes in the eastern Indian Ocean and the Solomon Sea, and were assumed to be undersized fin whales *Balaenoptera physalus*. Eighteen years later, a female rorqual was accidentally killed in the Sea of Japan. Since then, DNA samples from these nine whales have been studied by Japanese scientists, as have their anatomical features, which include fewer baleen plates in the mouth than the fin whale, and a relatively broad, flat skull. Now in a recent *Nature* article, the team has announced that the nine specimens represent a hitherto-undescribed, distinct species, which they have dubbed *Balaenoptera omurai* – in honour of Japanese whale researcher Dr Hideo Omura. They also proclaimed that Bryde's whale actually constitutes two separate species, hereafter to be referred to respectively as *B. brydei* and *B. edeni*, and thereby restoring the original two-species classification of such whales that was ended in 1950 when a Norwegian scientist lumped the two into one. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/11/1119_031119_rorqual/whale.html 19 Nov 2003; <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/TECH/science/11/19/japan.whale.ap/index.html> 19 Nov 2003.



GILL CARTER



CARL TOFFE

Cryptic aviary

In August 2003, a new species of small forest-falcon was announced from the rainforests of southeastern Amazonian Brazil. Aply dubbed the cryptic forest-falcon *Micrastur mintoni* by its discoverer Andrew Whittaker, it was first spotted by Whittaker after hearing an unfamiliar forest-falcon call while birdwatching at Caxiuanã, and he later uncovered several preserved specimens at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi in Belém. Two months earlier, in June 2003, Brazil had seen the formal naming of a new species of owl – the Pernambuco pygmy owl *Glaucidium mooreorum*, a tiny bird measuring a mere 6in (15cm) from beak-tip to tail-tip, weighing just 2oz (57g), and first known from a specimen collected back in 1990 but which had not been recognised at that time as a new species. www.birdlife.net/news/news/2003/08/cryptic_forest-falcon.html 4 Aug 2003; www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-06/ci-nos061303.php 13 June 2003.

Is this the world's biggest snake ever?



On 29 December, officials at a primitive zoo in Curugsewu village, central Java, announced that they had a reticulated python they claimed was 48ft 8in (14.85m) long, with a maximum body circumference of 33in (85cm) and a weight of 985lb (447kg), making it the longest and heaviest ever found. It was captured in mid-2002 in a forest in Sumatra's Jambi province by a python expert with the help of 65 villagers.

The python was purchased by Imam Darmanto, 58, and christened Kembang Wangi or Fragrant Flower. It was initially impossible to verify its length as the only photos available were of the black and brown reptile curled up, apparently asleep. It was said to eat three or four "fierce brown dogs" a month and shed its skin every 35 days, taking 10 days to do so. About 700 people were visiting the zoo every day to see the giant snake.

Rohmad, a keeper at the zoo, told the *Republika* newspaper that the snake was 19m (62.3ft) long when captured, but four metres (13ft) had to be severed after a rotten deer was found undigested in its stomach. Retic (reticulated pythons), found across south-east Asia, are considered the longest snake species, but adults usually measure only between 3m (10ft) and 6m (20ft) long. They kill their prey by biting it, hanging on with their 100 teeth and then squeezing it to death by wrapping their bodies around it. It is a rule of thumb among snake-catchers that retics more than 25ft (7.6m) can open their jaws wider than the width of human shoulders – the necessary width to eat a man whole.

If Fragrant Flower is longer than 30 feet (9m) then its hunters could qualify for a \$50,000 (£28,200) prize, instituted by Theodore Roosevelt in 1912. Robert Twigger, who wrote about his two attempts to win the prize in his book *Big Snake*, was suspicious about Fragrant Flower. "Really long snakes look twice their length," he said. "Ask someone how long a three-metre snake is and they will say six metres. They just seem bigger psychologically."

Twigger's suspicions were borne out by journalist John Aglionby who visited the zoo a few days after the news reports. He reckoned Fragrant Flower was between 6.5 and 7m (21ft and 23ft) and weighed no more than 100kg (220lb). The imprecise estimate was due to his reluctance to stretch out the menacing reptile.

Dave Barker from Texas, probably the owner of the world's largest python collection, has two theories to account for the record claim, both based on Darmanto's assertion that Fragrant Flower is the spiritual ruler of a remote Sumatran tribe called the Kubu, and that it took a year of negotiations with the elders before he could take it away. "If this is a spiritual ruler snake then perhaps it really can stretch and change size," he said. Alternatively, "the true giant snake remains in the jungle with the admiring tribe and it took them the year of negotiations to find another retic large enough to give to the government."

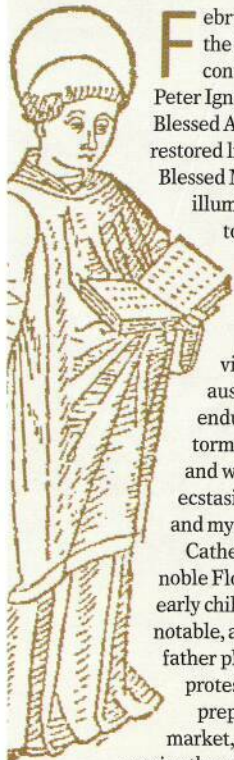
The Guinness Book of World Records lists the longest captured snake as a 32ft 9.5in (10m) retic found on the Indonesian island of Celebes (Sulawesi) in 1912. The heaviest snake previously recorded was a female anaconda shot in Brazil in 1960 and estimated to weigh about 500lb (227kg). The heaviest currently in captivity is a 403lb (182.76kg) Burmese python kept in Gurnee, Illinois. [AP, AFP, R] 29 Dec; *Guardian*, *Times*, *D.Telegraph*, 30 Dec 2003; *Guardian*, 5 Jan 2004.



FOR ALL THE SAINTS

FORTEAN TALES FROM THE CHURCH
COMPILED BY GRENADINE GRAY

THIS MONTH: CATHERINE DEI RICCI († 1590)



February is a busy month for the fortean hagiographer, containing the feasts of St Peter Igneus, the fire-walker; Blessed Andrew Conti, who restored life to his roast dinner; and Blessed Marianus Scotus, whose illuminated hand enabled him to write at night. On 13 February Catherine dei Ricci is commemorated – the very quintessence of fortean sanctity. A virgin with a fondness for austerity and discipline, she endured many bodily torments, including stigmata, and was remarkable for her ecstasies of the spirit, bilocation and mystical marriage to Christ. Catherine was born in 1522 to a noble Florentine family. Even in early childhood her piety was notable, and, at the age of six, her father placed her in a convent. She protested at her removal to be prepared for the marriage market, and, at 14, returned to receive the veil at the Dominican convent at Prato. It was here that Catherine was incapacitated by a seemingly incurable mystery illness from which, after two years, she made a miraculous recovery. She then spent the rest of her life thanking God for her health by

fasting and wearing a sharp iron chain.

When she was 20, Catherine began to experience the visions that would transform the lives of herself, her convent, and her devotees throughout the world. For 12 years, from Thursday noon until 4pm on Friday, whilst meditating on Christ's torments prior to his crucifixion, she was ecstatically carried into the scenes she saw in her mind. In this altered state, as Christ, she acted out his Passion from the arrest in the garden of Gethsemane onwards. She accompanied her enactment with fervent preaching to her sister nuns "with a knowledge, loftiness of thought and eloquence not to be expected from a woman."

As well as visions, Catherine was gifted with the complete stigmata. This is a rarity, as it is more common to suffer one or two of the wounds than the whole package: hands, feet, side and crown of thorns. To each witness, the miracle appeared differently: to some it seemed Catherine's hands bled from a deep penetration, others saw dazzling light emerging from her wounds, while others saw livid scars.

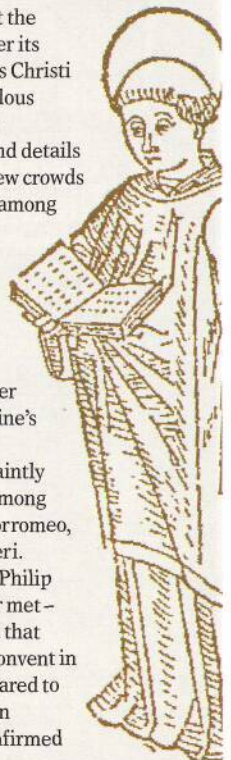
On Easter Day 1542 Catherine received another extraordinary grace. Christ himself appeared and drew from his finger a ring, with which he betrothed her. Numerous people saw Catherine's ring, although descriptions varied: some noticed a red mark; some, her "flesh raised up like a ridge"; another witnessed a bright gold ring; and still another saw a gold ring with a brilliant stone. Catherine, however, always saw a gold and enamel ring set with a

diamond. No matter what the differences of opinion over its appearance, every Corpus Christi the ring exuded a miraculous perfume, detected by all.

Catherine's sanctity, and details of her manifestations, drew crowds of people to the convent, among whom were bishops, princes, and cardinals. Despite having elected her their prioress, the other nuns disapproved of this interference in their lives and, after prayer and supplication, Catherine's visions ceased.

Catherine had many saintly and influential friends, among whom were St Charles Borromeo, St Pius V and St Philip Neri. Although Catherine and Philip corresponded, they never met – nevertheless, he testified that Catherine, while at her convent in Prato, miraculously appeared to him and spoke with him in Rome. Five witnesses confirmed this bilocation.

Her marriage to Christ lasted until the end of her life. Though one of the sisters attempted to wash the ring-mark from her finger, it never disappeared and, even after her death, at the age of 68, was still clearly seen by witnesses.



HOPE AGAINST HOPE

A distraught woman kept her 27-year-old daughter's mummified corpse in her apartment in Pavlodar, northern Kazakhstan, for three years, hoping she would be resurrected by aliens. Police spokeswoman Nina Tsys said the daughter, known only as Olga, was believed to have died from an autoimmune disorder after her mother failed – or declined – to call for medical help. Olga's cousin, worried by her long absence, had repeatedly tried to see her, but the mother always refused to let him in under various pretexts. Finally police broke in and made the gruesome discovery.

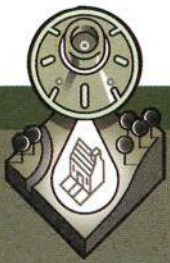
The popular Kazakh daily *Vremya* carried a picture of the mummified body and suggested the mother – a former nurse – could have known how to treat the body to preserve it. Tsys said the mother appeared to have been influenced by a sect preaching "cosmology" that promised resurrection of her child with the help of a "third cosmic eye" or by aliens. [R] 17 July 2003.

A religious Arizona woman kept the body of her dead husband, James Killeen, 50, for weeks while friends prayed he would be brought back to life. She had refused to let family or friends speak with him for more than two months. Killeen's brother and colleague, Christopher, asked police to

check on him after he failed to report to work. When they arrived at the house, incense and rotting flesh could be smelled from the street. Killeen's body was found badly decomposed and wrapped in blankets in his bedroom with an open Bible and religious music playing. His wife, Eleanor, and members of the World Ministries Church were in the house. [AP] 4 Mar 2003.

Edwin Rowlette, 75, stored his wife's body in an old freezer in his back yard for nearly six years, hoping that someday science could bring her back to life. After receiving a tip from his daughter last September, police went to his home in Prescott, Arizona, where they found Marcia

Lynn Rowlette's body packed in dry ice and insulation and stored with the bodies of 10 dead cats, which Rowlette said he used for research. He was arrested on a charge of crimes against the dead. Investigators were trying to determine if he had legally acquired the body from a funeral home and whether he had submitted the proper documents. Marcia Rowlette was wheelchair-bound and lived in a nursing home before she died of respiratory failure aged 38 on 15 December 1997. The body was released for medical research to the McCandless Research and Development Foundation, which Edwin Rowlette had created in 1985. [AP] 12 Sept 2003.



ufology

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE present their regular survey of the latest fads and flaps from the world of flying saucery

Shot in the dark room



PICTURE THIS: A photo from the 1970s said to show spacecraft from the Pleiades; and Billy Meier in his Swiss home.

BILLY LIAR?

Billy Meier – the UFO witness even the most gullible ufologists love to hate – is back in the news again. From the 1970s onwards Meier, a supposed contactee since 1942, took hundreds of photographs and shot 8mm footage of UFOs. Far from the blurred, out-of-focus blobs of light generally associated with UFOs on film, these were crystal-clear depictions of fantastic saucer-shaped craft. In short, they were just too good to be true and were quickly denounced as ‘obvious’ fakes. Yet Meier persisted in his assertions, which have drawn vehement controversy and accusations of rampant hoaxing.

The latest challenge to these cosmic camera capers came from Vaughn Rees, of the Los Angeles branch of the international sceptics’ organisation CFI (Center For Inquiry). Rees claimed that, in his opinion, Meier’s photographs were “easily duplicated hoaxes”, and offered to back this up by replicating one of them.

Rees chose part of an 8mm film taken on 18 March 1976, showing two lights seen flashing alternately from two different parts of a UFO in the film. He claimed Meier had accomplished this effect by scratching the film with a pin. (www.figu.org/us/ufology/videos.htm)

However, over a two month period, Rees consistently failed to come up with the goods, despite being able to use any computer package he wished. It was also suggested that if he *really* wanted to replicate just one of the hundreds of images snapped by Meier he should use only one hand – Meier being one-armed.

More than three years have now passed and Rees has yet to replicate even one of Meier’s photographs. Meier’s supporters are jubilant, claiming that this failure indicates “the most important event in human history, the existence of, and contact with, extraterrestrials.”

While we wouldn’t go quite that far, there’s an important lesson to be learned here. Meier’s

Rees has yet to replicate one of Meier’s photos

photographs – any photograph depicting fortetean phenomena – *may* be hoaxed. But however fantastic the images are, it’s the duty of any sceptic to be able to replicate them before calling any witness’s integrity into question. www.andyettheyfly.com

EWES MUST BE JOKING

Intelligence analysts at GCHQ, Britain’s top secret eavesdropping centre, were left baffled when they picked up a mysterious high-frequency signal emanating from one of their listening stations on the North York Moors. Were aliens trying to make contact with the British Government, or were spies or terrorists responsible for the signals? Clearly, this was one X-File that could not be ignored. GCHQ’s in-house paper, the *Daily Observer*, said the noises were unlike anything encountered before. Inquiries found the signal was only detected during the daytime, went across all the high frequency bands and only the aeriels at Scarborough could pick it up. A team sent to the listening post found no trace of alien visitation but they did find an amorous ram which “in between servicing some local ewes was partial to rubbing its horns against the aerial masts.”

Spokesman Bob McNally said the solution came as a relief as the signals “could have been a potentially dangerous threat.” He added: “It’s possible the ram was attracted to the mast which may have given off some kind of tingling sensation, but it was probably just a post to rub against.” [AP] 5 Nov 2003.

AURORA OR UFO?

A recent sighting from the International Space Station underlined the fact that there are many natural phenomena as yet undiscovered by scientists that may explain some UFO sightings. Edward Lu returned from a six-month tour as science officer on the International Space Station at the end of October with stories about mysterious flashes of light he had seen while studying the Earth’s aurora from orbit.

The American astronaut was a research astrophysicist before being selected by NASA for astronaut training in 1994. He estimates that he spent 100 hours watching the spectacular auroral light show during his six months in space. The northern and southern lights occur well below the station’s 380 km [236 mile] altitude in orbit, with shimmers and pulses waxing and waning depending upon variations of the incoming solar particles trapped by the Earth’s magnetic field.

Although Lu was an expert on the aurora, on three occasions during the expedition – 11 July, 24 September and 12 October – he saw phenomena that he was unable to explain, in the form of flashes as bright as the brightest stars. Although they only lasted a few seconds, on one occasion he called crewmate Yuri Malenchenko to the window to see them.

Lu was also able to rule out obvious explanations such as retinal flashes caused by cosmic rays, dust particles, meteors, satellites and other orbital objects. The flashes appeared only in the direction of the aurora and checks with weather maps found no evidence of lightning storms below them at the times of the observations. As a result, he had to conclude that he saw some previously unknown natural phenomenon associated with the aurora itself. *Guardian*, 30 Oct 2003.

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/research/story/0,9865,1073527,00.html>

MYSTERY ON THE MOORLAND

Have the mysterious Longdendale Lights – Derbyshire’s equivalent of the Hessdalen UFOs – appeared again? That was the question Mr W Skinner asked himself as a pulsating yellow light bore down upon his car as he drove home alone across the bleak Peak District moors one dark, snowy night. “This was eerie and I felt a sudden fear,” he wrote to a national newspaper. “It had obviously spotted me and was rapidly approaching head on. Two white lights had now appeared below the yellow to form a blazing triangle which began to dazzle and fill my windscreen. I looked desperately for an exit out of its path but there was no escape.” But as Skinner prepared himself to be whisked away by aliens there was a deafening roar and the length of his car was swept with what sounded like pebbledash. It was then that he realised his “UFO” was just a grit lorry. *D Mail*, 12 Nov 2003.

Necrolog

LOREN COLEMAN looks back at the impact of CHARLES BERLITZ's bestsellers

Charles Frambach Berlitz, 90, of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, author of several popular books on unexplained phenomena, died 18 December 2003, at University Hospital in Tamarac, Florida.

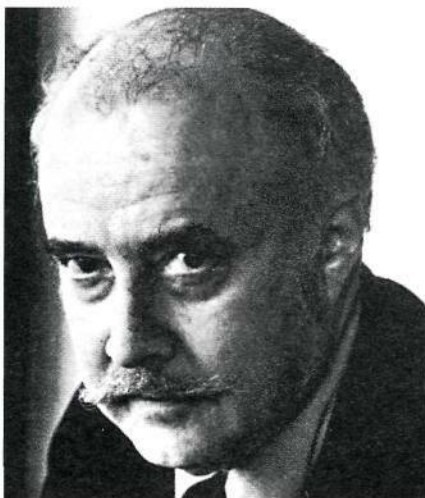
A respected linguist, Charles Berlitz is to be credited with internationally popularising the phenomenon known today as 'The Bermuda Triangle', due in large part to a 1974 book.

Berlitz had been interested in mysteries before penning his bestseller. During visits to Florida, he had begun looking into local phenomena, and his first book in the forteen field was *The Mystery of Atlantis* (1969), in which he examined Edgar Cayce's prediction that part of the lost continent of Atlantis would rise from the sea near Bimini in the late 1960s. Berlitz's main source (and a future collaborator) was Dr J Manson Valentine, who had first reported the mysterious 'Bimini Wall', advancing it as evidence of Atlantis. In 1970, Berlitz's book *Mysteries from Forgotten Worlds* was written during the ancient astronaut mania, and covered similar topics to Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods* (1968). However, rather than blaming space visitors for constructing the Bimini Island ruins, the Easter Island statues, the Nazca lines, and other monuments, Berlitz theorised that such structures were the remnants of lost civilisations.

Berlitz's most famous work, *The Bermuda Triangle*, was published in 1974 by Doubleday, and enjoyed great popularity. Berlitz's account of the plane and ship disappearances specific to an area roughly between Florida and Bermuda captivated readers. Although book reviewers took Berlitz to task for sensationalising the vanishings, sales were not diminished by such critiques – the book sold 5,000,000 hardback copies around the world, in many languages, and the paperback edition accounted for many more sales.

While most people believed that Berlitz had christened the location and done the original research on the subject, he was not responsible for coining the term 'Bermuda Triangle.'

The first known media reference to a hotspot of disappearances off the coast of Florida began with an article by E V W Jones which appeared on 16 September 1950 via the Associated Press. Then, in October 1952, *Fate* magazine published an article, "Sea Mystery at our Back Door," by 'George X Sand' (probably a pseudonym). As his examples, he used the infamous loss of Navy Flight 19, consisting of five TBM Avenger torpedo bombers and 14 men, on 15 December 1945, and other reports of ships disappearing. In the article, Sand observed that these "strange



His books introduced new enigmas to a wide public

marine disappearances" were happening in a "watery triangle bounded roughly by Florida, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico." Then, in 1962, the term 'Deadly Triangle' was coined by author Dale Milton Titler in his book *Wings of Mystery*.

The actual naming of the 'Bermuda Triangle', can be traced to the creative collaboration of forteen writers Vincent Gaddis and Ivan T Sanderson. Sanderson, in the 1960s, was an editor at Chilton Books and the Science Editor at *Argosy* Magazine, and was thus responsible for shepherding Gaddis to these two publishing forums. In the February 1964 issue of *Argosy*, Gaddis wrote a thorough and thoughtful account of the disappearances in an article

entitled "The Deadly Bermuda Triangle", which he reworked into a chapter of his 1965 book *Invisible Horizons: True Mysteries of the Sea*.

Several authors would follow with accounts of the mystery before Berlitz's book was published. Sanderson continued the examination with an August 1968 *Argosy* article, "The Spreading Mystery of the Bermuda Triangle", and in his 1972 *Saga* magazine article, "The Twelve Devil's Graveyards Around the World", as well as examining the topic in his 1970 book, *Invisible Residents*. Other notable books were John Wallace Spencer's *Limbo of the Lost* (1969), Adikent Thomas Jeffrey's *The Bermuda Triangle* (1973), and Richard Winer's *The Devil's Triangle* (1974). In the post-1974 wake of Berlitz's overnight bestseller, previous accounts were more or less forgotten, although the term 'Bermuda Triangle' would eventually spawn discussion of other 'triangles', including Jay Gourley's *The Great Lakes Triangle* (1977), Japan's 'Devil's Sea Triangle' in Jerome Clark's *Unexplained!* (1998), and "The Bridgewater Triangle" in my own *Mysterious America* (2001).

After the success of *The Bermuda Triangle*, Berlitz went on to write (in addition to many linguistic texts and guidebooks) *Without a Trace: New Information from the Triangle* (1977), *The Philadelphia Experiment - Project Invisibility* (1979), *The Roswell Incident* (1980), *World of Strange Phenomena* (1988), *The Dragon's Triangle* (1989), *Charles Berlitz's World of the Incredible But True* (1991), *Charles Berlitz's World of the Odd and the Awesome* (1991) and *Charles Berlitz's World of Strange Phenomena* (1995).

Later Berlitz books made an impact too; Robert Durant, of Ivan T Sanderson's Society of the Investigation of the Unexplained, remarked: "I can certainly point to his Roswell book, co-authored with William Moore, as the reason the word 'Roswell' has huge resonance with an international public. Without the advance Berlitz's name procured, Moore and Stan Friedman could not have done the initial detective work. And the vast literature that followed depended on the original book."

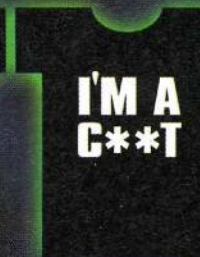
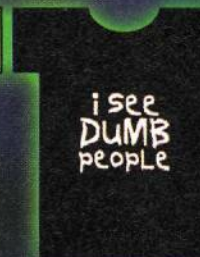
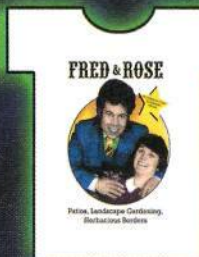
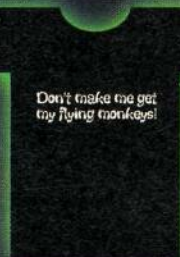
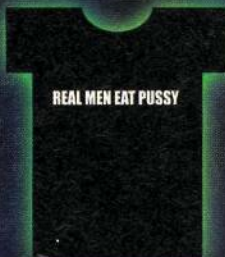
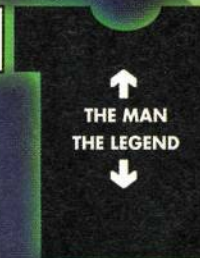
Whatever one thinks about the specific factual content of Berlitz's books on the inexplicable, they introduced new enigmas to a wide cross-section of readers worldwide. The public's continued affection for the riddles of Atlantis, The Bermuda Triangle and Roswell owes much to Berlitz's popularising of these classic mysteries.

Charles Berlitz remained committed to an open-minded inquiry of phenomena throughout his life, and became an anonymous benefactor of organisations investigating reports of the strange and unknown.

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... and this is one I made earlier...

Some recent discoveries which appear to be the earliest known examples of their kind



H. JENSEN / UNIVERSITÄT TÜBINGEN



AP PHOTO / ANNA BRAITHWAITE

Three small ivory figurines discovered in Hohle Fels Cave near the Swabian town of Blaubeuren in south-western Germany are the oldest undisputed examples of figurative art in the world, dating to about the same time as the oldest cave paintings, such as those at Grotte Chauvet in France. The sculptures, representing a flying cormorant or duck (top), a horse's head and a man-lion hybrid (right), were delicately carved in fragments of mammoth tusk between 30,000 and 33,000 years ago. Although there are no human remains at the site, nearby finds suggest the artists were early modern humans rather than Neanderthals.

Each figurine is about 2cm long and has been carved with a delicacy and skill not expected at such an early date. Nicholas Conard, professor of early prehistory at Tübingen University, who describes the figurines in *Nature*, said they are consistent with shamanism, and complemented the collection of more than 20 similar ivory figurines found at other Swabian sites in recent years. Birds, especially

waterfowl, are known to be favourite shamanistic symbols. "It may be the oldest representation of a bird anywhere," he said. The half-lion, half-man depicts the transformation of a human being into an animal spirit which is central to shamanism. It is the second "lowenmensch" or "lionman" to be discovered in Germany. The three figurines went on public display at a new museum in Blaubeuren on 19 December. *Nature*, *Int. Herald Tribune*, *Independent*, *D.Telegraph*, 18 Dec 2003.

What might be the world's oldest cosmetic face cream (above) was revealed on 28 July 2003 inside a tin pot, 2in (5cm) high and 2.5in (6cm) in diameter, found a week earlier at a mid-second century AD temple complex in Southwark, south of the Thames in London. Two square Romano-Celtic temples – along with a possible guesthouse, an area for outdoor gatherings, plinths for statues and a column base – have been found at the site, named Tabard Square, which sits at the



junction of roads from Chichester and Dover. Last year, a stone with the earliest known inscription of Londinium was found at the site.

The pot is believed to have been hidden deliberately in a drain, possibly as an offering to the gods, accounting for its pristine condition. It was opened by Liz Barham, the Museum of London's conservator. "It seems to be an ointment and it has fingermarks in the lid," she said. "If this is a sealed Roman container,

those are Roman fingermarks. A somewhat sulphurous smell, highly characteristic of waterlogged deposits from that site... and cheesy," she added, unable to stop her nose from wrinkling as the paste warmed under the camera lights. Chemical tests will reveal if it is face cream, face paint, or something completely different. *D.Telegraph*, *Independent*, *D.Mail*, 29 July 2003.

Archaeologists excavating an early Western Han tomb in the city of Xi'an in western China have discovered five earthenware jars of 2,000-year-old rice wine along with several drinking vessels, bronze bells, more than 100 jade pieces and part of a human skull. Almost 1.3 gallons (6 litres) of clear, blue-tinted alcohol were found, enough to allow researchers their best opportunity yet to study ancient distilling techniques. Its bouquet was still strong enough to perk up the nose. Wine from the period has been found in other tombs, but this is the best preserved and largest quantity ever discovered. *Dayton (OH) Daily News*, 22 June; *Scotsman*, 30 June 2003.

The world's oldest wine in a barrel is also said to still have a fine bouquet. With its bright shades of golden amber and its aromas of vanilla, hazelnut or camphor, the 1472 vintage of white Alsace wine has been ageing for over 530 years in an oak barrel in the cellars of the Strasbourg Hospice in eastern France. It has an alcohol content of 9.4 per cent and a particularly high percentage of dry matter (the solids in a wine), which guarantee the persistence of the original wine. "About one per cent of the volume evaporates each year, it's the angels' share, so we add a bottle of dry white wine every three months," said Philippe Junger, who is in charge of the cellars. "But in this barrel there is dry matter from at least 300 litres [66 gallons] of 1472 wine, so it remains a 1472 vintage. It is extraordinary but should be drunk sparingly." *[AFP] 19 Sept 2003.*

FBI FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



56. Questcon 2003

In search of Atlantis and the real origins of Britain, **NOEL ROONEY** set off for Andrew Collins's annual conference... and a tour of secret London

The woman across the table was having a go at me for criticising Lynn Picknett's book on Mary Magdalene. She thought the book was resurrecting feminist history; I thought it was playing bagatelle with the facts. My critic seemed at least as familiar with Mary Daly as Marieja Gimbutas or Madame Blavatsky; but then an increasingly eclectic blend of people are going to Questcon these days.

Andrew Collins, the mercurial, dapperly gothic *maître d'*, regularly puts together a high-class cast for his annual foray into the leading edges of alternative theorising. In the investigative arena, Collins is no slouch himself, and the conference he engineers at the austere Cecily Sharp House is a highlight of the fortean calendar.

The conference runs for two days; the second (a four-hour walk around secret London with Adrian Gilbert) only for the perseveringly intrepid – a quirky gaggle of recondite tourists peering into abandoned doorways, looking at familiar things from odd angles, sketching ghost edifices in the air in the middle of the gutless, international-style modern metropolis (but more of that anon).

Day one is a series of lectures in the main hall, and a concurrent series in a fringe hall. There are stalls for books, magazines, videos and mystical paraphernalia. There are 40 middle-aged British people doing Slovenian folk dancing in a room downstairs – you get your money's worth at Questcon.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a strong Atlantean theme in this year's talks (Collins's recent *Gateway to Atlantis* is a decent addition to the eldritch canon). Greg Lyttle, of the ARE (a research arm of the Cayce Foundation) gave a fascinating (and very funny) talk on mitochondrial DNA and what it might tell us about Atlanteans (the aptly-named Haplogroup X); he also gave us a gleeful account of the collapse of the Clovis



convention in American archaeology – though, judging by the standard text books, it's taking a while to die.

Lyttle and Collins share an interest in Caribbean archaeology, particularly marine archaeology around the Bahamas and Cuba. Lyttle touched on some of these themes in his talk, since his current research on DNA groups seems to support the thesis that ancient people lived there and then migrated (to all sorts of places, including the Gobi Desert). If you believe in the accuracy of Cayce's readings, this is evidence for Atlantis.

Other highlights of the day included Crichton Miller talking about the Celtic cross as an ancient surveying tool; Miller's idea leads, I think, to a broadly intriguing hypothesis that many ancient symbols, now seen as mystically derived, may have an eminently practical origin (the square and compass of the freemasonic lore offer a more recent parallel).

Colin Wilson spoke about his life as a writer, and how he came to investigate the occult and paranormal. It was a warm, personal, deeply engaging talk, hinging on his accidental discovery of the value of meditation, and the real and simple possibility of happiness. Wilson is a national treasure, and deserves much wider recognition for a

life of eclectic – and above all humane – scholarship.

ABOVE: Adrian Gilbert hobnobs with King Lud in the porch of St Dunstan's, Fleet Street.

BELOW: Andrew Collins holds court in the great hall.



I came away from C# House with a bag full of books and a head full of ideas familiar and strange, not just from the talks, but also from conversations with all sorts of curious and interesting people, each with a different reason for being there.

Next morning, I trudged off to the Museum of London for Adrian Gilbert's tour of London's true origins – the real matter of Britain, ignored for centuries by an Augustan establishment in love with a spurious myth of Roman hegemony.

For those of you unfamiliar with the original story of British origins, here's the (very) potted version. The British (now the Welsh) are the descendants of Brutus, a notable survivor of the siege of Troy. Brutus and his followers are advised by an oracle to sail beyond the Pillars of Hercules and turn right, eventually arriving at a verdant, temperate island, where they establish a home and a nation. The capital of the new state is called New Troy (Trinovantum, as Tacitus has it) and it's sited in (or rather under) a familiar location – London. Gilbert's tour took us to the vestigial remains of this original capital, and as we wandered, he introduced us to a number of Brutus' more interesting descendants, such as King Lud, the first builder of a walled city here, celebrated in stone by Elizabeth I (though now sadly marooned in a church porch in Fleet Street).

After the great fire of 1666, Wren and his esoteric coterie of Masonic planners designed a new capital, incorporating elements of Trinovantum into a cityscape envisioned as the New Jerusalem (a newly ancient home for the lost tribes of British Israelites). This, sadly, was the last hoorah for the British history of Britain. Within a few decades, the Augustan style, and its sycophantic love of all things Roman, obliterated most of the traces of New Troy.

Adrian Gilbert led us on an entertaining and enlightening trek around what's left of our original capital, from gnomic pillar to curious post. By dusk, keen but exhausted, we were in Trafalgar Square, considering midsummer shadows and whole-number realisations of pi. Afterwards, I had tea with a couple of fellow travellers, a fantasy fiction buff and a pagan feminist. We'd all got a great deal, principally enjoyment, from our quizzical ramble, and we were all eager to come back for more next year. **FT**



NOEL ROONEY is a London Irishman and a denizen of New Cross. He is a writer, local historian and community development worker.

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

68. COCKROACH SURVIVAL



The myth

Cockroaches are the only animals that would survive a full-scale nuclear war.

The "truth"

It's quite possible that the charming little scuttlers would survive longer than humans; they are remarkably adaptable, can live on very little food and water, are physically tough, and, because cell division is slow in all adult insects, they can withstand much higher levels of radiation than we can. However, this is true of many creatures – including, rather delightfully, goldfish – and all, including cockroaches, would be rendered sterile, and in any case would eventually succumb to radiation poisoning. Significantly, this story seems to date from the 1950s, when many still believed that a nuclear war would cause little more than a brief, if dramatic, interruption of normal life. No animal, according to modern theories, could possibly survive a nuclear winter. The enduring popularity of this myth, whether as a genuine or ironic belief, is probably due to the fact that infestations of roaches are notoriously difficult to eradicate.

Sources Zoologist Stephen Tobe, interviewed at www.newsandevents.utoronto.ca/bios/askus14.htm; David George Gordon, author of *The Compleat Cockroach*, interviewed at http://wildcat.arizona.edu/papers/90/106/21_1_m.html

Disclaimer Chances are President Bush will give us an opportunity to field test this one in the near future, but meanwhile, indestructible evidence pro or con the proposition would be welcomed by FT's letters column.

Mythchaser

Last summer, several newspapers reported that the Metropolitan Police were investigating claims

that "Eastern European asylum-seekers" had been trapping swans on rivers and in parks in London, and barbecuing them. Unsurprisingly, police investigations revealed the stories to be entirely false – but this has the feel of a legend with much older roots. Can anyone supply earlier examples of persecuted groups being accused of illegal swan-downing, or similar?

Circus feat



German circus trainers Jorg and Maike Probst have managed to get a donkey, goat, monkey and rooster to form a pyramid. The animals could be seen performing the trick at the 27th Monte-Carlo International Circus Festival in Monaco in January 2003. The week-long event featured more than 100 performers and 130 animals. *Ananova, 17 Jan 2003.*

Strange deaths

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THE MORTAL COIL

THE MUMMIFIED BODY OF A CANADIAN DISC JOCKEY who went missing on 12 October 2002 was found in early December 2003 between two walls in a night-club. The remains of Eduardo Sanchez, 21, were found in the basement of the Village Cabaret Club in Winnipeg after neighbours complained of a bad smell. Police said they didn't know why Sanchez was between the two walls, but ruled out foul play.

"Some time while he was in there he either fell or passed out," said Constable Bob Johnson. "He got himself positioned in a place where he was unable to breathe properly due to the restrictions on his chest. It wouldn't have taken a long time. He probably would've been dead within minutes." He said Sanchez had entered a gap between the walls from an opening at one end and had managed to wriggle through almost its entire 75ft (23m) (75ft) length, through a gap ranging from 8in (20cm) to 24in (60cm). Nothing was found behind the wall other than his body. "People will, I think for years, be asking the question: what the heck was he doing in there?" said the policeman. *[CP] (Toronto) National Post, 6 Dec 2003.*

AT LEAST 64 PEOPLE DIED in the remote Congolese village of Bosobe, 300 miles (483km) north-east of Kinshasa, after drinking an oily potion given to them by their priest to ward off evil spirits. The Roman Catholic priest fled the village in late November after people started falling ill, according to health minister Yagi Sitolo. *Ananova, 4 Dec 2003.*

BASANTI TRIPURA, 38, WAS COLLECTING FRUIT WITH A friend in a forest in the Rangamati district of Bangladesh on 18 November when she was attacked by a 10ft (3m) python. By the time her companion had raised the alarm and rescuers had arrived on the scene, the snake had crushed her in its coils and swallowed her headfirst up to the waist. Villagers retrieved her body after beating the snake to death with iron rods and sticks and cutting it open. Rangamati is a region of forests and rugged hills, 135 miles (217km) southeast of the capital Dhaka. *[R] 21 Nov; D.Mirror, 22 Nov 2003.*

NICKOLAS SANDOVAL, 24, WAS CHANGING A FLAT TYRE on Interstate 35 near Corinth, Texas, about 45 miles (72km) northeast of Fort Worth, on 19 November when police stopped to help him. In a panic, he stuffed a

plastic bag of marijuana down his throat in an apparent attempt to hide it from them, but started choking. Sandoval, 24, of Ponder, was rushed to hospital, but was pronounced dead on arrival. *[AP] 20 Nov 2003.*

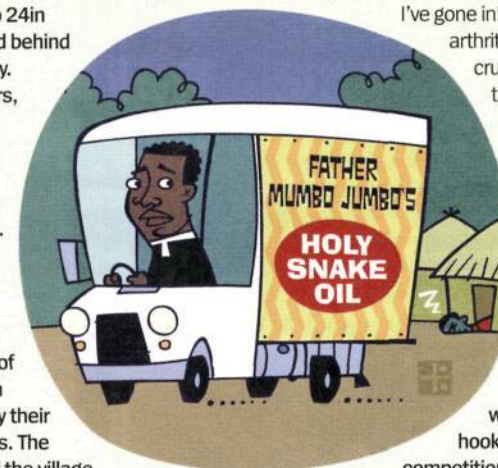
AN ANGLER DROWNED IN THE THAMES ONE NIGHT last August when a powerful barbel tugged on his line. Stanley King, 60, who was recovering from an operation, was dragged into the water by the 3.5lb (1.6kg) fish. He then became tangled in the line of his second rod and the hook became embedded in his trouser leg. His body was not found until the following morning and his gumboots were recovered separately. Mr King, of Harpenden, Hertfordshire, was at his favourite fishing spot in Windsor, Berkshire, with a friend of 38 years, John Speer, 82, testing new equipment. Mr Speer heard a splash and his friend frantically calling: "John, John,

I've gone in!" Crippled with rheumatoid arthritis and able to move only with crutches, he could do no more than shine his fisherman's lamp through the trees and shout to his friend to swim towards the light. The rod was later found downstream with the fish still attached. *D.Telegraph, Sun, 6 Dec 2003.*

ANOTHER ANGLER WAS killed on 17 August when he was swept out to sea after hooking a giant conger eel in a competition. Farm labourer Albert

Marshall, 43, was standing on an outcrop known as Fox's Snout in Kirkcudbright Bay, Dumfries and Galloway, when he was hit by a freak wave and dragged away. His companion, who was fishing nearby, raised the alarm, but a rescue attempt involving a helicopter and four lifeboats was unsuccessful. Conger eels are notoriously strong and can put up a tremendous fight when hooked. They can grow up to 10ft (3m) long and weigh as much as 250lb (113kg). They also have extremely sharp teeth and strong jaws and are said to eat just about anything that moves. *D.Mail, 18 Aug 2003.*

A 39-YEAR-OLD CONSTRUCTION WORKER BECAME buried in a 16ft (5m) trench on 15 December at the intersection on Staten Island when its walls collapsed. Colleagues tried to free him and another trapped worker with a backhoe, but accidentally decapitated him. It was not known whether the man was already dead when he was beheaded. *[AP] Newsday, 16 Dec 2003.*



HUNT EMERSON

HUNT EMERSON



Incident at Aztec

Did a UFO crash to Earth in the New Mexico desert in 1948? Did the US military recover charred alien corpses from the site and cover up the incident?

NICK REDFERN uncovers the FBI's involvement in the case and finds that, more than 50 years later, the Aztec UFO affair is anything but a closed book.

Next to the so-called 'Roswell Incident' of July 1947, the most talked-about, dissected, championed, promoted and discredited 'UFO crash' case of all is that which is alleged to have occurred in the vicinity of Aztec,

New Mexico, in 1948. According to information related to the author Frank Scully in the late 1940s (and subsequently published in his best-selling 1950 book, *Behind the Flying Saucers*), a number of incidents in 1947 and 1948 had led to US authorities recovering the wreckage of four alien spacecraft and no fewer than 34 alien bodies, all of which were being studied under cover of the utmost secrecy at various defence establishments in the United States.

As Scully was willing to admit, the bulk of his information had come from two sources: Silas Mason Newton (described in a 1941 FBI report as a "wholly unethical businessman") and one 'Dr Gee', the name given to protect eight scientists, all of whom had supposedly divulged various details of the crashes to

Newton and Scully. According to Scully's sources, one such UFO was found in Hart Canyon, near the town of Aztec, in March 1948.

Located in the spectacular Four Corners Area, where New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona meet, Aztec lies 180 miles (290km) northwest of Albuquerque and 300 miles (480km) southwest of Denver. Surrounded on three sides by Indian reservations (Navajo, Ute, and Apache) Aztec sits at the heart of Indian Country. Sandstone mesas overshadow lush river valleys, the snow-covered

Scully's source was wholly unethical

peaks of the San Juan mountains shimmer in the north, the unique badlands of the Bisti Wilderness lie to the south, and, heading west,

you cross the Navajo reservation, passing Shiprock on the way to Monument Valley. The town is also home to the famous Aztec Ruins National Monument, a 12th century, 450-room pueblo ancestral to the modern Pueblo communities of New Mexico. But what of the most controversial aspect of the town's history?

According to the story, after the Aztec saucer had crashed, it was located, essentially intact, by elements of the US military that gained access to the object via a fractured porthole. Inside were found the bodies of no fewer than 16 small, humanlike creatures, all slightly charred and undoubtedly dead. The UFO was then dismantled and transferred, along with the bodies of the crew, to Wright Field air base, Dayton, Ohio, for study.

At the time of its release, Scully's book caused a major sensation. In 1952 and 1953, however, JP Cahn, a reporter who had previously worked for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, published two detailed exposés which cast doubt on the claims



ALEX TOMLINSON





FAR LEFT: Silas Mason Newton.



LEFT: Dr Gee, aka Leo Gebauer.



RIGHT: Frank Scully.

BELOW: The plaque marking the site of the crash and a view of the area as it is today.

of Newton and 'Dr Gee' (identified by Cahn not as 'eight scientists' but as one Leo Gebauer, whose background was as dubious as Newton's).

Yet, as the passing years have only gone to show, the Aztec UFO crash refuses to roll over and die – indeed it has gone on to spawn a whole industry. In 1974, for example, Professor John Spencer Carr revealed that he had in his possession what was deemed to be credible information relating to the case, including testimony from a senior US Air Force officer who was allegedly involved in the UFO retrieval. A year later, however, the event was once again demolished, this time by one Mike McClellan, in a persuasive paper titled *The UFO Crash of 1948 is a Hoax*.

In view of this, it came as something of a surprise when, in 1987, the researcher William Steinman published the book *UFO Crash at Aztec*, in which he asserted that the incident *did* occur and that Frank Scully's book was in essence factually correct. And just to compound things further, following the release of the Steinman book, *Fate* magazine reported that: "[the book] draws on speculation, rumor, unnamed informants and unbridled paranoia to defend and elaborate on the original story."

Here we see the major problems with the Aztec story: both Newton and Gebauer were, at best, dubious commenters. Scully published their testimony without question and Steinman looked at the affair from the perspective of a believer. As a result, the story remains unresolved – even after more than half a century has passed. Did a UFO crash to Earth in the harsh deserts of New Mexico? Were diminutive alien bodies recovered at the crash site? Was the incident successfully concealed by a concerned US military? Were the key players in the story all that they appeared to be? And if not, then exactly what *did* occur at Aztec, New Mexico, on that fateful day in 1948?

To answer those questions, we have to turn – perhaps surprisingly – to the US Government. While documentation pertaining to the allegedly similar events at Roswell nearly 12 months

What exactly did occur in Aztec on that fateful day in 1948?

before is practically nonexistent, precisely the opposite can be said of the Aztec affair.

Born on 25 February 1903, Leo Arnold Julius Gebauer – Frank Scully's mysterious 'Dr Gee' – is the subject of an FBI file no less than 398 pages long (to put that in perspective, Eleanor Roosevelt's FBI file ran to 3,271 pages). Interestingly,

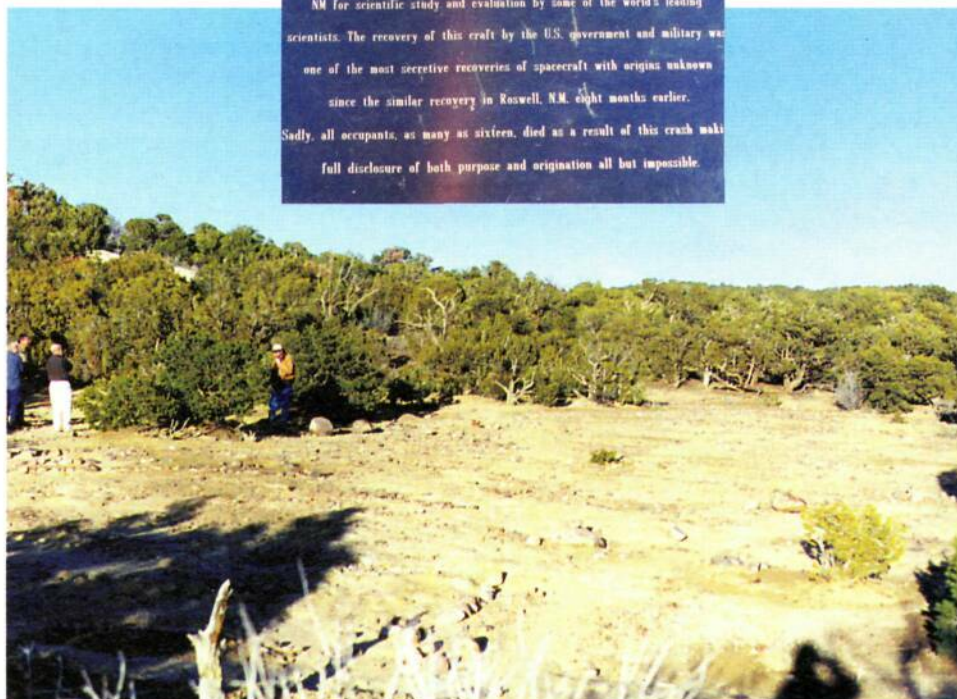
RECOVERY AT HART CANYON

On or about this site on March 25, 1948 a spacecraft of origin unknown crash landed on this mesa. The 707 A&W Radar Base in nearby El Vado, NM tracked the errant landing to this site. A high security recovery operation took approximately two weeks with all remains being taken to Los Alamos, NM for scientific study and evaluation by some of the world's leading scientists. The recovery of this craft by the U.S. government and military was one of the most secretive recoveries of spacecraft with origin unknown since the similar recovery in Roswell, N.M. eight months earlier. Sadly, all occupants, as many as sixteen, died as a result of this crash making full disclosure of both purpose and origination all but impossible.

fewer than 200 pages of the file have been declassified under the provisions of the US Freedom of Information Act. Nevertheless, as the available papers demonstrate, Gebauer was, to put it mildly, a colourful character.

To begin with, he went under numerous aliases, including Harry A Grebauer, Harry A Gebauer, Harry A Greybauer, Harry A Barbar, Leo AJ Gebauer, Leo Arnold Julius Gebauer and Arnold Julius Leopold Gebauer. And as a Confidential FBI report of 19 December 1941 states, Gebauer had made some disturbing statements some seven months previously: "What this country needs is a man like Hitler; then everybody would have a good job... It would be God's blessing if we had two men in the United States to run this

country like Hitler. The English people are nothing but a dirty bunch of rats. We should stay home and tend to our own damn business and let Germany give England what they had coming."



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

(2) 16 Jan 50

A I R F O R C E

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED BY [redacted]
BY AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR OF [redacted]
BY [redacted] X KUNZE, Capt, USAF
Historian
DATE 4 DEC 1975

INSPECTOR GENERAL USAF
DISTRICT OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATION
Offutt Air Force Base, Omaha, Nebraska
MT/RES/arb
16 January 1950

SPOT INTELLIGENCE REPORT

SUBJECT: Flying Saucers from Venus Come to Earth

TO: Director of Special Investigations
Headquarters USAF
Washington 25, D. C.

UNCLASSIFIED

1. **SYNOPSIS:** Article in Wyandotte Echo, Kansas City, Kansas, 6 January 1950, states Kansas City auto dealer, [redacted], while in Denver, met an engineer named [redacted], who claimed to have seen two "flying saucers" which had crashed at a radar station near the New Mexico and Arizona border. These craft, each carrying a crew of two, were constructed of some unknown metal, and were stocked with food in tablet form. [redacted] said about fifty (50) of these craft had been found in the United States in a two year period—forty (40) of them being presently in the United States Research Bureau in Los Angeles. [redacted] stated it was assumed the craft had come from the planet Venus. Evaluation - unknown.

2. **DETAILS:** newspaper article appearing in the Wyandotte Echo, Kansas City, Kansas, January 1950, stated that two weeks ago [redacted], well known Kansas City auto dealer, stopped in Denver where he called on the manager of the Ford Agency. Their conversation was interrupted by some engineers arriving for a meeting. One of these arrivals, a man named [redacted] revealed the following information:

He, [redacted] "crashed the gate" at a radar station near the New Mexico and Arizona border. While there he saw two of the highly secret flying saucers which had crashed near that site. One was badly

Classification cancelled or changed to [redacted]

By authority of Chief of Staff, USAF UNCLASSIFIED
By: [redacted]
Date: 24 JAN 1950

3763

JAN 26 1950

TR# 44940

Even more controversially, Gebauer went on to describe Hitler as a "swell fellow", adding that: "the guy who shoots President Roosevelt should be given a gold medal". As FBI Special Agent JJ McGuire noted: "Gebauer is always pointing out the good points of the German Government over the English and our democratic form of Government."

Controversy continued to surround Gebauer, as a memo from the Denver office of the FBI, dated 14 February 1969, shows. It refers to an unnamed source who "threatened to do bodily harm to Gebauer and demanded \$50,000 as part of commissions due him".

Silas Mason Newton, Frank Scully's main source for the Aztec 'crashed UFO' story, attracted his own fair share of controversy. An FBI document dated 30 September 1970 states: Newton was born on July 19, 1887, at Shelby County, Kentucky. He is divorced and is a college graduate. He has claimed his occupation was that of a geologist, who has an income of \$500 a month. He claims

Gebauer described Hitler as a 'swell fellow'

to have a Bachelor of Science in geology from Baylor University and to have studied for six months at Oxford University.

Newton's geological credentials sound very respectable, but a further FBI report of 1970 reveals: Silas Newton, presently under indictment in Los Angeles, California, for fraud, returned to Silver City, New Mexico, area January 1970, and began to organize what appears as a mining swindle.

Newton and Gebauer were clearly somewhat shady characters, but what brought them and the whole crashed UFO story into the world of Frank

ABOVE: part of the United States Air Force file relating to the Aztec saucer crash story... (continued on p36).

Scully? The FBI took a keen interest in the intricacies of the Aztec affair and its files of 1952 tell a notable story:

Regarding the saucer story in July 1949 Gebauer, as a specialist in geomagnetics, became consultant to Newton, an alleged geophysicist, using instruments of his own design to make microwave surveys of oil pools. Newton had been a friend of Scully, who writes a weekly column for Variety; and in the fall of 1949, Gebauer discussed saucers with Newton and Scully at which time he claimed to have conducted secret inquiries with the government and other scientists on several saucers which had landed in New Mexico and Arizona.

Gebauer claimed to have recovered from these saucers the tubeless radio, some small gears and small disks, all of which material had been secreted by Gebauer from the other scientists and government investigators. The three men agreed to publish a story of Gebauer's discoveries, but because of Gebauer's connections with the matter, he was to be identified only as Dr Gee. To determine the reaction of the public to an unauthenticated story of the actual existence of flying saucers, on March 8, 1950, Newton, as Scientist X, appeared as a guest lecturer before a science class at Denver University.

Newton told of Dr Gee's findings, and the substance of the lecture leaked out to the newspapers. As a result, Scully wrote his book setting forth Dr Gee's discoveries and revelations.

After reading the saucer story, JP Cahn noted several inconsistencies, and he determined to make an investigation to determine whether the story was based on facts or a hoax. In the beginning he went to Scully, but was unable to obtain the identity of Dr Gee, and Scully was reluctant to produce Newton. Cahn met Newton in Scully's home at which time Newton claimed to be a graduate of Baylor University and Yale University, and a post-graduate of the University of Berlin. Newton promised to discuss with Dr Gee

the proposition to disclose fully an authenticated announcement that space ships were landing on Earth, together with photographs, metals, and other evidence.

Newton exhibited a couple of gears, fine-toothed and about the size of pocket watches, and two disks of unknown metals, all being tied up in Newton's handkerchief. He alleged these items were obtained from one of the saucers. Newton also told Cahn of seeing secret detailed plans on the Airflow system of B-26s in Dr Gee's laboratories in Phoenix on which the mysterious Dr Gee was doing research for the government. Dr Gee had developed a magnetic fog, rain and darkness dispelling screen to be fitted on the windshields of airplanes to enable the pilot to see through any weather.

While, in Scully's book, Dr Gee said to have degrees from the University of Berlin, Gebauer only claimed electrical engineering degrees from Louis Institute of Technology in Chicago in 1931 or 1932; that while the book claimed from 1943 to 1945 Dr Gee had headed 1,700 scientists doing experimental work in the secret magnetic research, Gebauer was merely

chief of laboratories of Air Research Company in Phoenix and Los Angeles, mainly in charge of maintenance equipment.

Cahn talked with Gebauer and obtained a signed statement from him denying that he was Dr Gee mentioned in Scully's book, and stating that he had no connection with Scully, his book, or statements, and had given Scully no authority to infer that he was Dr Gee. Gebauer did state that he was acquainted with Newton.

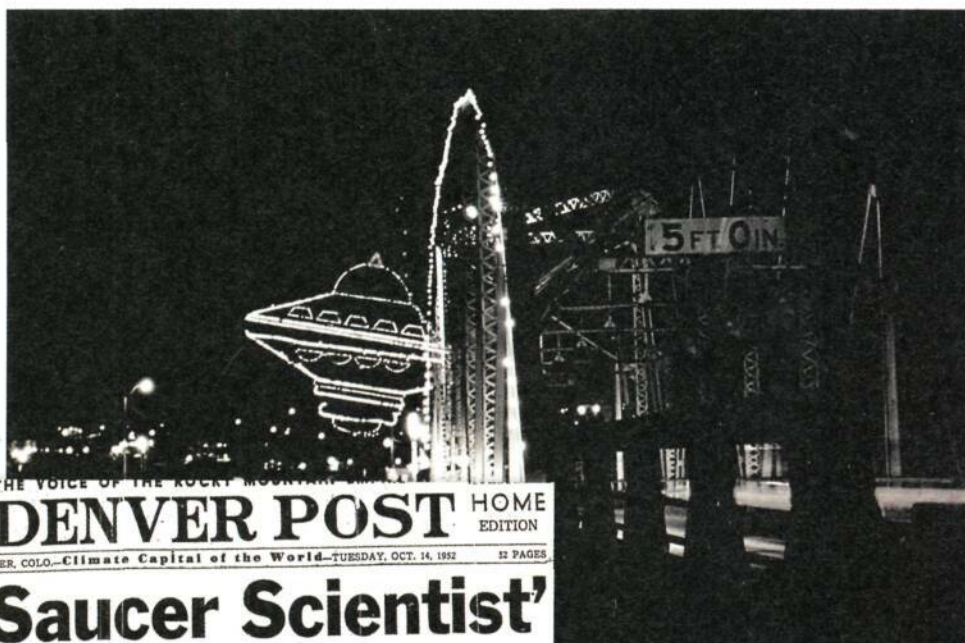
On 8 March 1950, Newton delivered a lecture at Denver University, where he was billed as *Scientist X*. If the lecture was not attended by agents of the FBI, it was certainly monitored by them. An 'Urgent' teletype of 9 March from the FBI office at Denver confirms their awareness of Newton's talk:

Two sources advised today that Silas Newton has given at least one and possibly more lectures before classes at Denver University yesterday or today in which he discussed flying saucers which he allegedly personally observed. This person claims to have seen several such objects, one of which allegedly landed in New Mexico. He also claims to have observed occupants of saucers described by him as of human form, but about three feet [90cm] tall.

Newton had been escorted to the lecture by George T Koehler, a staff-member of the Rocky Mountain Radio Station. Curiously, in *Behind the Flying Saucers*, Frank Scully reported that within two hours of Newton's lecture, US intelligence agents were asking questions about Newton and the nature of his talk, and what the general consensus of opinion was with respect to Newton's revelations. In addition, there is evidence to show that George T Koehler was 'relieved' of certain audiotapes after he had the foresight to surreptitiously record an interview between himself and a representative of the US Army. "We know you have been recording these interviews," Koehler was told. "Now hand them over."

Matters took an even more bizarre turn when a Kansas City car dealer, named Rudy Fick, began telling stories to the effect that Koehler had informed him that he, Koehler, had "crashed the gate" at a radar station near the New Mexico-Arizona border and had seen two flying saucers the military had in its possession. One of the craft was supposedly badly damaged, while the other was relatively intact. Once again, officialdom took note, as the following extract from FBI records makes clear:

According to the information given



The military base held two flying saucers

Koehler found 50 of these flying saucers have been found in the United States in a period of 2 years. Of these, 40 are in the US Research Bureau in Los Angeles. Each of the craft had a crew of 3. The bodies in the damaged ship were charred, but the other ship's occupants were in a perfect state of preservation, although dead.

All were uniform height of 3 feet, beardless and their teeth were completely free of fillings or cavities. They wore no under-garments but had their bodies taped and were dressed in a sort of wire. Mr Fick feels that the security department of the military fear that the sudden shock of a surprise announcement that interplanetary travel is possible might cause mass hysteria. OSI District 13 will interview Fick. The editor of the Kansas City Star stated that while they were aware of this story they did not dare publish it in the paper because it is too fantastic.

A partly censored FBI document of 22 March 1950 shows that a story very

TOP: They say the neon lights are bright in Aztec. "Fantasy of Lights", a local organisation, decorates this bridge each year.

ABOVE: Newton's dubious business career exposed in the Denver press.

similar to the one told by Fick was also in circulation in Washington, DC. A one-page report from the FBI Special Agent-in-Charge at Washington, Guy Hottel, to J Edgar Hoover, reveals that:

An investigator for the Air Forces stated that three so-called flying saucers had been recovered in New Mexico. They were described as being circular in shape with raised centers, approximately 50 ft [15m] in diameter. Each one was occupied by three bodies of human shape but only 3 feet tall, dressed in metallic cloth of a very fine texture. Each body was bandaged in a manner similar to the blackout suits used by speed flyers and test pilots. According to Mr [Deleted] informant, the saucers were found in New Mexico due to the fact that the Government has a very high-powered radar set-up in that area and it is believed the radar interferes with the controlling mechanism of the saucers.

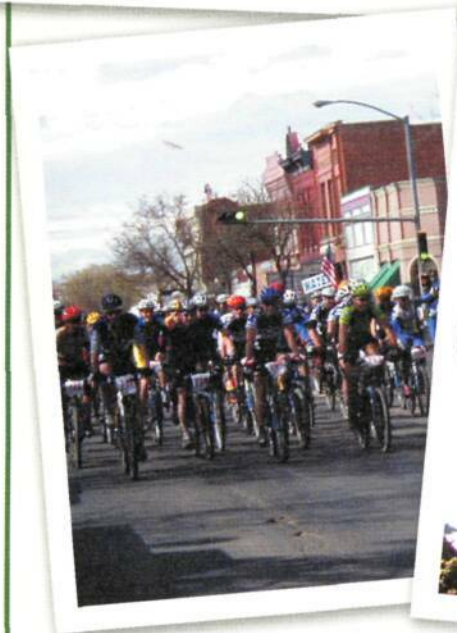
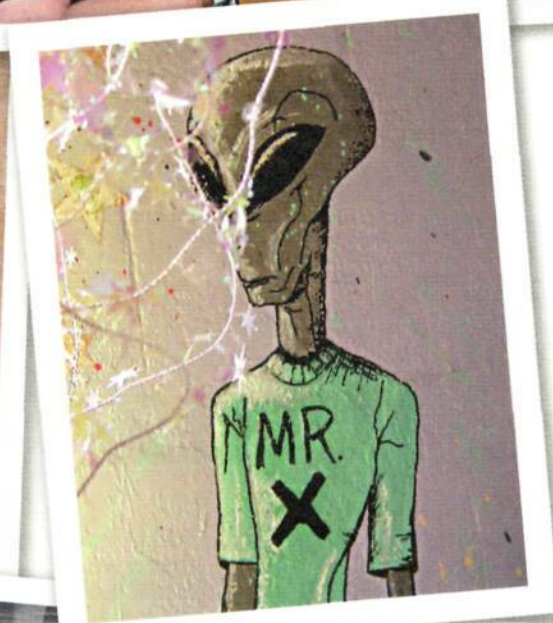
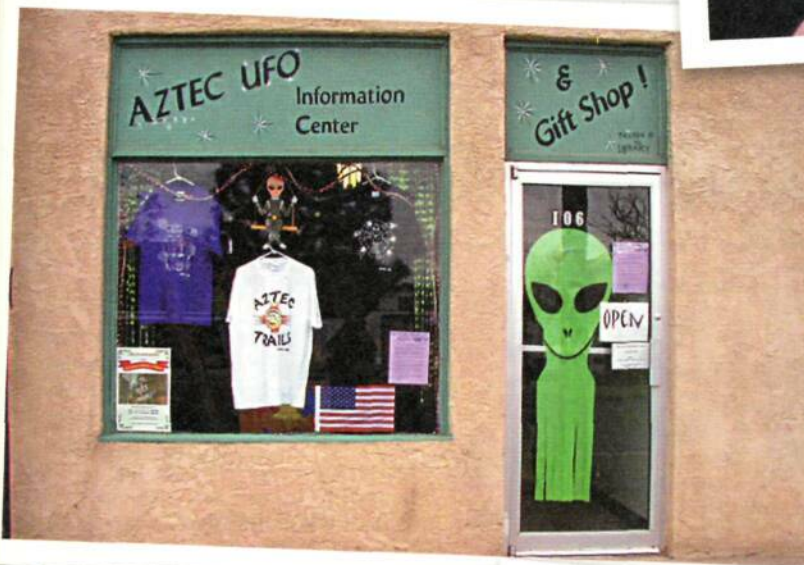
Although its contents appear, at first glance, eye-opening, investigator William Moore (co-author, with Charles Berlitz (see obituary, p24), of *The Roswell Incident*) asserts that the document is largely worthless, since its origins can be traced from Fick, to Koehler, and ultimately to Newton, whose testimony has to be examined very carefully. Of course, pro-Aztec researchers maintain that if Newton and Gebauer were in possession of information that was even remotely accurate, then the memo of 22 March 1950 should not be ignored outright.

So was the Newton-Gebauer-Scully story factually correct? Was Gebauer really the elusive Dr Gee? Or was the entire matter without foundation? Here, things become decidedly murky. In 1953, both Newton and Gebauer received suspended prison sentences for their part in defrauding one Herman Flader, a Colorado businessman who owned the Stay Put Clamp and Coupling Factory on the outskirts of Denver, which doesn't exactly inspire a great deal of confidence in their word.

A TOWN LIKE AZTEC

Whatever the truth behind half a century's worth of stories, the Aztec UFO crash is serious business for the people of the town. Flying saucer-related memorabilia can be found in numerous stores throughout Aztec, including the *Aztec UFO Information Center and Gift Shop*, located on Main Avenue. The town is also home to the *Alien Run* – a mountain-bike trail that was developed by Aztec citizens Al and Deral Saiz. Designed in response to the *Friends of the Aztec Library's* call for a mountain-bike rally as a fund-raising event, the trail circles the alleged crash site at Hart Canyon. In addition, the town now boasts a yearly UFO conference held at the Aztec Civic Center that attracts, in droves, both the faithful and the curious.

For further information on Aztec visit:
www.aztecufo.com



TOP: Alien-inspired goods on sale in support of the Friends of Aztec Library.

MIDDLE LEFT: For the benefit of the curious tourist, the town boasts the

Aztec UFO Information Center and Gift Shop.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Representation of an alien, as depicted in the Aztec UFO Information Center and Gift Shop.

BOTTOM LEFT: 'Alien Run' – the annual mountain-bike race.

BOTTOM RIGHT: 'Diorama' of the crash site, located in the Aztec UFO Information Center and Gift Shop.

All pictures are courtesy of Leanne Hathcock at the Aztec Public Library.

damaged, the other almost perfectly intact. These craft consisted of two parts: the cockpit or cabin, approximately six (6) ft. in diameter; and a ring, 18 ft. across, and about 2 ft. thick, surrounding the cockpit. These craft were constructed of a metal resembling aluminum but the actual components of the metal could not be defined. [redacted] had a small piece of this metal in his possession and gave it to the Ford man to send to the Ford Dearborn Plant for analysis. Each of the two craft had a crew of two. In the damaged ship the bodies were charred. The occupants of the other ship were in a perfect state of preservation, although dead. They were almost identical with human beings, were of a uniform height of 5 ft, uniformly blonde, beardless, and their teeth were completely free of fillings or cavities. The bodies were dressed in a fine material, the threads in the cloth seemingly a sort of wire. They did not wear under-garments but the bodies were taped. There was a quantity of food in the ship in tablet form and water found in the craft had a weight double that of water here on earth. [redacted] showed the group, including [redacted] a clock or automatic calendar taken from one of the craft, consisting of two pieces of metal. On the face of one piece of this metal appeared an indentation which rotated around the disk, completing a cycle each twenty-eight (28) days. According to information given [redacted] there have been fifty (50) of these craft found in the United States in a two year period. Forty (40) of these are in the United States Research Bureau in Los Angeles. It was assumed the craft came from the planet Venus because that is the only planet having an atmosphere in any way similar to ours, and also Venus seems to have magnetic properties which would make it the logical home base for these space ships. [redacted] assumed the reason behind the apparent lack of security is that the government desired this information to be spread from unofficial sources until people are more or less familiar with the facts. He feels that the security department of the military fears that the sudden shock of a surprise announcement that inter-planetary travel is possible might cause mass hysteria. Editor of the Kansas City Star, Kansas City, Missouri, stated that while his newspaper was aware of this story, they did not dare put it into their paper because it was too fantastic. Reputation of [redacted] is that he is well known locally and has a number of friends on the Kansas City Star. SCULLY was not otherwise identified but apparently can be readily located through the Ford Agency in Denver, Colorado.

5. ACTION: Initial "Spot Report" transmitted to Headquarters, OSI, and to DO #14 and #17 by TWK on 13 January 1950. DO #13 will interview FIEB and make additional inquiries in Kansas City. Copies of this report are being sent to DO #14 for locating and interviewing SCULLY, and to DO #17 for inquiry as to the radar station on the New Mexico and Arizona border, the possible site of craft from the planet Venus.

Copies furnished:

DO #14
DO #17

Paul C. Sparks
Lt Colonel, USAF
District Commander

And yet, for all Newton and Gebauer's seeming unreliability, there are a number of intriguing pointers that continue to breathe life into the Aztec affair. As far as Gebauer is concerned, it is a proven fact that in the 1940s he most definitely was employed as chief of laboratories at the Air Research Manufacturing Company, Phoenix.

It so happens that of the four alleged UFO crashes discussed in Frank Scully's book, one allegedly occurred north of Phoenix, at Paradise Valley, in 1947. The researcher Timothy Good has revealed that he has spoken with a private pilot, Selman Graves, who described witnessing aspects of an operation to retrieve a "large aluminium dome-shaped thing" in the Paradise Valley area, around which were "pitched buildings—tents—and men moving about." Given that, in the early 1940s, Leo Gebauer had been employed in the aerospace industry relatively close to where this event supposedly occurred, the possibility that he may have gleaned details of the alleged event from former colleagues at Air Research cannot be dismissed.

And, with respect to Gebauer, there is

one final point that should not pass without comment. Of the portions of his FBI file that remain classified, a number of pages are exempt from release "in the interest of national defense," according to the FBI.

Concerning Silas Newton, a number of issues should be noted. First, although a 1970s FBI file on Newton describes him as "an accomplished con man of many years standing, who is knowledgeable in the field of petroleum and mining, and has exploited this knowledge in swindling people," earlier FBI papers refer to an interesting statement made by Newton in the 21 October 1952 issue of the *Denver Post*. According to the newspaper: "Newton had advised that he had never seen a flying saucer nor had he ever pretended to have seen one. Newton stated he was merely repeating what he had heard from other sources."

Considering that Newton was "an accomplished con man," why, on this occasion, did he seem curiously intent on playing down his role in the Aztec case in general and the UFO controversy as a whole? If Newton suspected that he was possibly in possession of classified information,

ABOVE: ... more from the United States Air Force file relating to the Aztec saucer crash story.

things become clearer.

Secondly, a further fascinating piece of documentary evidence relative to the Aztec case has surfaced, thanks to the investigative author and (shock-horror!) former CIA man, Karl Pflock: namely, extracts from Newton's personal diary from the 1970s. In the diary Newton revealed that, in the early 1950s, he was contacted by US military officials who wanted to speak with him about his crashed UFO story. Newton was told that the military knew that his UFO-crash-at-Aztec story was bogus. Incredibly, however, they wanted him to continue spreading the story far and wide, and to whoever would listen. Newton asserted in his diary that while he might not have known too much about crashed UFOs, he had no doubt that his mysterious contacts certainly *did* know a great deal about the subject. This raises a number of important questions:

Was Newton (as a convicted and known con man) asked to continue telling his largely discredited tale because it acted as a convenient smokescreen behind which the military could hide a *real* crashed UFO? Or is there another reason why the military would want to spread fake stories about the US Government being in possession of a crashed UFO?

Well, possibly. The US Intelligence community is known to have made use of the UFO controversy as a tool of psychological warfare in the 1950s. Is it conceivable that such stories were deliberately spread—at the height of the Cold War—to try and convince the Soviets that the US had access to a technology the like of which the Soviets could only dream of? Or is this yet another of Silas Newton's grand games—a game designed to ensure that even from beyond the grave he continues to stir the Aztec cauldron?

The key figures in this puzzling and bizarre story—Silas Newton, Frank Scully and Leo Gebauer—are all long dead, but their legacy ensures that whatever did—or, indeed, did *not*—occur at Hart Canyon in March 1948, the legend of the little men of Aztec, New Mexico, continues to live on. **FT**

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED READING

- Charles Berlitz & William Moore: *The Roswell Incident*, 1980
- Timothy Good: *Beyond Top Secret*, 1996.
- Karl Pflock: *The Day After Aztec*, self-published
- Frank Scully: *Behind the Flying Saucers*, 1950
- William Steinman & Wendelle Stevens: *UFO Crash at Aztec*, 1987
- Clearwater Sun*, 27 October 1974
- Fate*, February 1988
- Official UFO*, December 1975

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



NICK REDFERN lives in Texas, USA. He and Karl Pflock are working on a book on the Aztec affair and they invite anyone with information to contact them at: skywatcher4u@aol.com

A quiet invasion

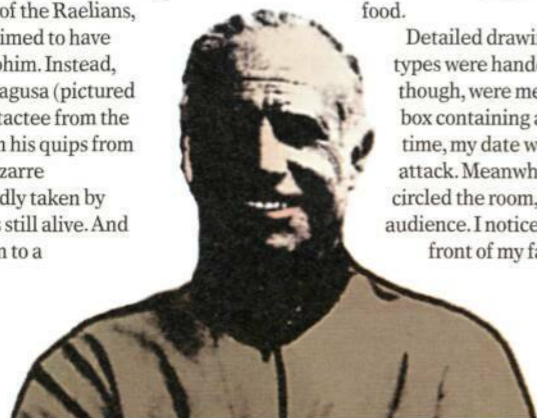
Is our Solar System already home to alien bases and mother-ships? Are extraterrestrials walking our high streets disguised as human beings? **ERIS ANDYS** recounts how a series of bizarre events, and a startling encounter, turned her into an alien hunter. Main illustration by **GERARD DUBOIS**

How soon we forget. In 1988, *Omni* magazine covered the story of a saucer crash off the Brazilian coast, and how debris washed ashore to be recovered by local fishermen. Somehow, the hunks of an unknown alloy found their way to Cornell University... and not another word was written about the case anywhere.

That was the same year that a cargo plane bound for Anchorage, Alaska, had a UFO as an escort for several hours. Data relating to the episode, in the form of a transcript and air-to-tower recording, was freely available for 10 or 20 bucks.

It was on the back of this story that there appeared the weirdest newspaper ad I'd ever seen. On page three of the *Los Angeles Times* was the face of an alien with what looked like light blasting out of its mouth. One penetrating eye was visible. The caption read "I am not of this world - listen to me!" There was a post box address to which one could write for more information.

A package arrived within days. It concerned the 'Elohim', aliens said to resemble the subjects of the Santilli 'alien autopsy' footage. Curiously, there was no mention of the Raelians, whose leader Rael claimed to have actually met these Elohim. Instead, there was Eugenio Siragusa (pictured right), an obscure contactee from the slopes of Mt Etna, with his quips from beyond. There were bizarre photographs, supposedly taken by aliens when Jesus was still alive. And there was an invitation to a



Photographs taken by aliens when Jesus was still alive

lecture.

Upstairs in an industrial park rent-a-building in Silverlake, California, an event occurred which must have changed some lives. Not many, admittedly, as the mysterious ad had attracted perhaps 50 people. What made the whole thing so very odd was the fact that the one-off 'indoctrination' which the lecture turned out to be was conducted by a serving US Air Force Colonel named McKenna. He conducted the talk in uniform, telling us that the Earth was being visited by some dozen different species of extraterrestrial life - one of which, apparently, regards us as food.

Detailed drawings of the various alien types were handed round; the bad guys, though, were merely represented by a box containing a question mark. By this time, my date was having a major panic attack. Meanwhile, two cameramen circled the room, videotaping the audience. I noticed they had shot the front of my face, both profiles, and





THE APOSTLE JOHN AND PETER ON THE ROAD TO THE TOMB. PHOTO REMITTED BY THE SPACE TRAVELLER, ABSU YSMAILY SWANDY TO THE MESSENGER OF THE EXTRATERRESTRIALS, EUGENIO SIRAGUSA.

the back of my head. When I asked one of them about the purpose of the recording, he backed away and left the room. By the time we got to the Q&A session, the other cameraman had gone as well.

I was spooked, but curious. I proposed that we follow the Colonel but, as my date was the driver, this was firmly vetoed. So McKenna slipped through my fingers.

Something he'd said kept running through my mind. He'd shown us which beings used which craft and, always, the crews were small and the ships clearly not designed for deep space travel. Maybe that meant they hailed from bases and mother ships hidden throughout the Solar System, suggesting that it was already colonised on a large scale and explaining the profusion of UFO sightings and close encounters over the centuries.

Perhaps it also meant that what we saw and understood of our own Solar System has been carefully controlled; that our satellites and exploratory craft are not giving us the whole picture; and that, if McKenna was leaking something genuine, the establishment knew this – and in a big way!

It made sense to me – after all, I'd witnessed Navy fighters turning back rather than firing on three UFOs moving out to sea (see FT165:49). According to Siragusa, President Eisenhower had been warned against the folly of firing on alien craft by the beings themselves, as, later, were Reagan and Soviet President Chernenko.

President Eisenhower had been warned

ABOVE: One of Eugenio Siragusa's 'photographs' of Biblical events.

BELOW: Part of an alien warning to World leaders from 'Woodok and Maclero'.

Now that we've seen the lengths to which certain world leaders will go to conceal their reasons for invading other countries, a UFO conspiracy shouldn't surprise us at all. True helplessness comes when, as we have learned, those with a different agenda infiltrate themselves into the centre of our affairs. The Elohim, according to thousands who believe in them, look just like us; to pass for high street shoppers, all they would need is a hat, a long coat, mittens and glasses to conceal their eyes.

Later that year I was strolling down just such a high street, a world away from Silverlake, when I suddenly felt I should stop. I turned, and there, directly behind me, was one of them – an Elohim. It just stood there, with no "excuse me", no attempt to get around me. Its skin was a waxy grey, with no pores and no hair. It looked damp. The mouth was small, the nose tiny, and the chin pointed. I recognised 'him' immediately, from contactee Betty Hill's bust of her UFO captain. The most amazing thing was the pair of glasses 'he' wore – made of some yellow reflective stuff, they wrapped around the sides of the head like some futuristic ski-wear.

When I craned my head to try and see the sides of 'his' face, 'he' made a sudden move, stepping out into the passing traffic, which seemed to slow in anticipation, and vanishing down a side road.

I was stunned. For years, I debated with myself whether to tell anyone about the incident. And then, going over the Siragusa materials, I spotted something: "And those who, on your planet, represent us, are scrupulously followed and protected."

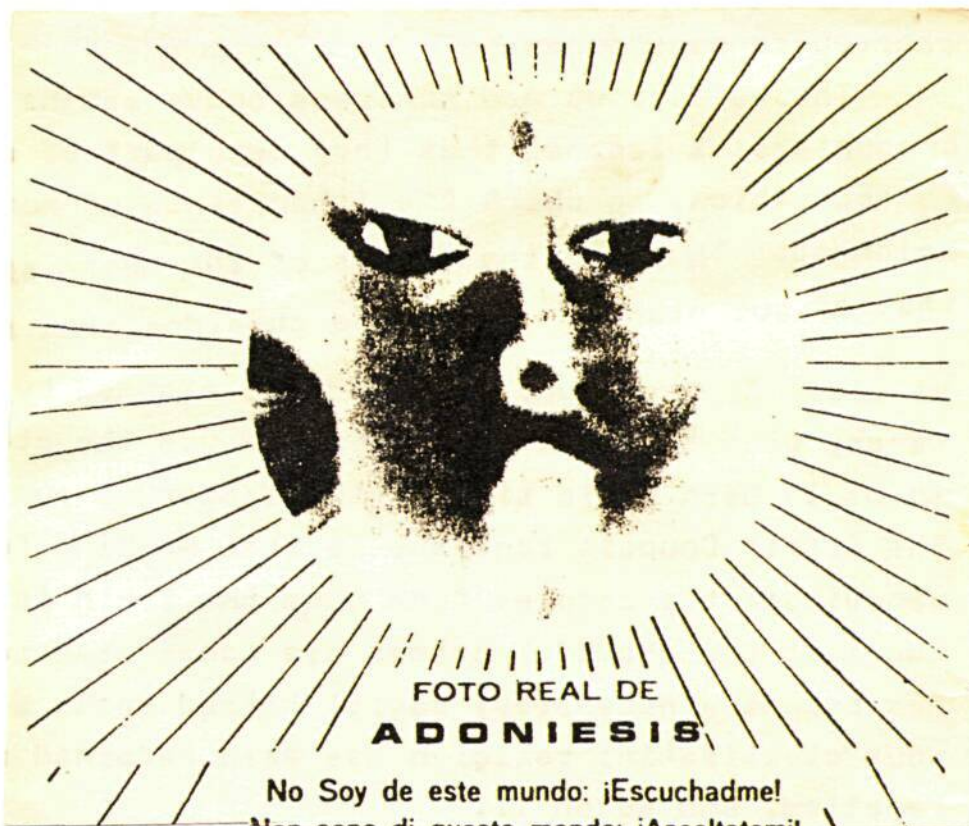
It got me thinking, wondering whether a quiet invasion had been going on for years. Are they walking around,

AND THE CONSEQUENCES ON THE SIDES OF YOUR PLANET BEYOND THE GRAVITA -
TIONAL VALUES OF THE PLANETS OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM TO WHICH THE EARTH IS
BOUND TO WOULD BE UNFORSEEABLE.
WE KNOW YOUR PLANET VERY WELL AND WE KEEP THE COMPLETE CHARTICLE
OF ITS ORIGINS. WE ALSO KNOW PERFECTLY WELL THE STARTING PROCESS OF THE
PRIMATES OF YOUR SPECIES.
IT IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT WE INTERVENE AS NOW IN THE ATTEMPT TO
HELP YOU. WE HAVE DONE IT IN THE PAST AND WE WOULD LIKE TO DO IT AGAIN IF
YOU WILL ALLOW IT.
WE ARE PART OF A PLANETARY CONFEDERATION OF THIS GALAXY AND OUR SCIENCE
IS YET INCONCEIVABLE FOR YOUR SCIENCE.
WHAT MATTERS MOST TO US IS TO EXHORT YOU:

a) DO NOT ATTACK OUR CRAFTS!
b) WE DO NOT TOLERATE THE UNJUSTIFIED VIOLENCE!
c) WE CAN JUSTIFY AN ERROR BUT NOT THE PERSEVERANCE IN ERROR!

DO NOT FORCE US TO SHOW YOU THAT WE POSSESS VERY CONVINCING MEANS
TO TURN YOU AWAY FROM ANY WARLIKE IDEA TOWARD US AND THOSE WHO, ON YOUR
PLANET, REPRESENT US AND ARE SCRUPULOUSLY FOLLOWED AND PROTECTED.
JUSTICE, PEACE, LOVE, AND BROTHERHOOD ARE OUR REAL RELIGION.
WE EXCLUSIVELY VENERATE THE "OMNICREATING SPIRIT" (THE HOLY SPIRIT, AS
YOU CALL IT). WE HAVE BEEN GODS SINCE TIME REMOTE.
YOU COULD BE ALSO, BUT YOU HAVE ONCE AGAIN REFUSED. OUR TEMPLE LIVES IN
THE HEART OF ALL THE LIVING BEINGS OF ALL THE GALAXIES OF THE COSMOS.
SOON THE TIME OF A NEW OFFER FOR YOU WILL COME AND WE HOPE THIS
MIGHT BE THE RIGHT TIME. IT IS UP TO YOU TO ACCEPT OR REFUSE.
YOUR ACCEPTANCE WOULD BE A GREAT RELIEF FOR THE CONFEDERATION WE REPRESENT, AND A GREAT AND BENEFICENT MERCY FOR THE HUMANITY OF THIS PLANET.
WE ENTRUST THIS MESSAGE TO OUR MOST DILIGENT AND APPRECIATED EMIS-
SARY WITH THE ORDER TO HAVE IT REACH ITS ADDRESSEES. WE HOPE VERY MUCH
IN YOUR SERIOUS AND RESPONSIBLE CONSIDERATION. "PEACE ON EARTH"
WOODOK AND MACLERO

Nicolosi July 2, 1984. 17 hours



What would a cash-strapped alien leak to the World?

the middle of it – a sort of bed maybe. It was soft, as though made of foam rubber, and was covered with a thick grey material, also soft.”

By the time I'd started making these connections, it was 1998, and an edition of *Tomorrow's World* on BBC1 presented the following story: The owner of a failing upholstery factory in Rouen, France, is approached by a man who wished to be known simply as “a scientist”. Soon, the factory is busy once more, churning out a bizarre and completely new type of soft, thick, grey fabric which will not burn.

Instead of picking up on what was clearly the real story here, *Tomorrow's World* simply blinded its viewers with science and tried to set fire to the stuff! Now, this same textile is being used to cover the wiring on the Space Shuttle engines. Soon, perhaps even now, it may be in your sofa.

Unfortunately, the BBC has been less than helpful in tracking down this episode of *Tomorrow's World*; not so much a conspiracy of silence, I suspect, as a mixture of televisual transience and corporate red tape. So, the only way to follow this up would be a trip to Rouen. Maybe there's a French *FT* reader out there who would care to take this investigation a step further – although I would urge both caution and stealth and remind you that some investigations are doomed to failure.

I advocate taking a fresh look at both our planet and our Solar System – my idea for an experiment to ‘remote view’ a UFO ‘hotspot’ in *FT174* would be one way of going about this. Maybe the Russians, too, are thinking along similar lines; before it was mysteriously scrapped, they were planning to send a probe to the Martian moon Phobos, which they very much suspected to be hollow and artificial.

In the end, ‘they’ must know that things will eventually reach critical mass, and there may well be nowhere left to hide. **FT**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



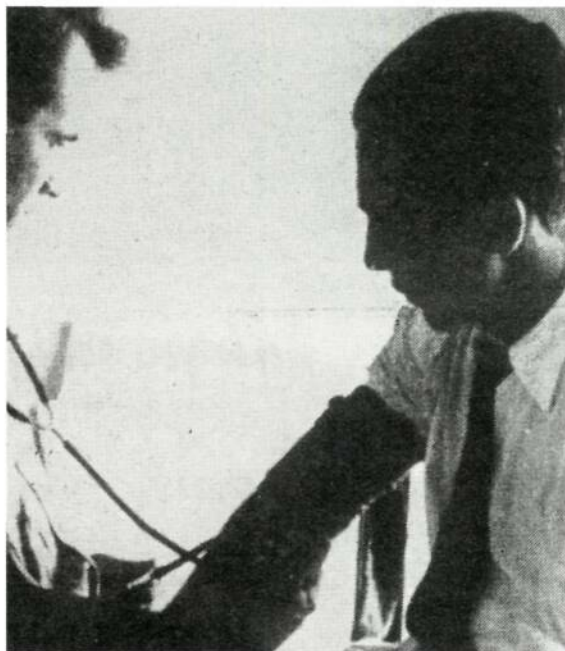
ERIS ANDYS is a screenwriter with a long-standing interest in ufos and ufology. This is the first time she has shared her very own close encounter in print.

like my high street Elohim, with impunity, sometimes thought to be odd or deformed, but never actually inhuman? What about the people next door? They could be from Orion for all we know.

I thought about the notorious Santilli film too. After all, what I'd seen was, in every way, identical to the humanoid being shown in the footage – was it really a fake, as so many ‘experts’ had claimed? My worldview had been changed on the day of my encounter, though it has taken me all these years to accept it. Now, I am just one of the thousands of people who claim to have seen a humanoid in broad daylight.

They may be a minority, but I'm in the minority of a minority, because – once I'd accepted the reality of my experience – I vowed to find ‘them’ wherever ‘they’ live. It's logical to assume, though, that ‘they’ would keep on moving around in a bid to evade us, finding temporary homes in remote and far-flung spots. How, then would one go about tracking ‘them’?

UFO abduction cases seemed to offer one avenue of exploration, and the best one of all, for my purposes, was that of Brazilian farmer Antonio Villas Boas, with his amazing visual memory and detailed descriptions of alien technology. Why not follow these high-tech gadgets: look for the kind of inventions that a cash-strapped alien might leak to the world. A good example is Boas's account of 22 February 1958, some two decades before the appearance of holographic paper: “For all (five) members of the crew wore, at breast level, a sort of round red shield of the size of a slice of pineapple, which from time to time gave off luminous reflections. There were no lights from the shields themselves, but reflections like



those of the pieces of red glass that are above the rear-lights of automobiles, which reflect the headlights of another car just as though they contained lights themselves.”

But the best example was the textile Boas described – which led me to abduction-rich France. (As I pointed out a few years back (*FT81:23-27*), the French UFO wave of 1954 had been a blatant, agronomy-curious intervention – a sudden, concerted effort to access food supplies; in Scotland in 1995 it was the water).

Boas's textile happily intersected with a fluke. His account continues: “All five were dressed in very tight-fitting overalls made of a thick but soft cloth, grey in colour...” and later: “The room was empty, except only for a large couch in

TOP: A Spanish-language version of Siragusa's ad, referred to on p38.

ABOVE: Brazilian farmer Antonio Villas Boas being given a medical examination by investigators following his reported abduction in 1957.

SPIRITS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Despite the predominance of modern attitudes and Catholic faith in the islands of the South Pacific, the people of the Marquesas Islands still have close encounters with terrifying, shape-changing ancestral spirits. PAUL ROSS travelled to the land of the *tupapau* to hear their stories. All photographs by the author



Fifteen-year-old Tahiatohiupoko Hita (sometimes known by his obligatory Western nickname of 'Martin') used to be just like most contemporary Marquesans: modern, staunchly Catholic and unbelieving of Polynesian legends and superstitions – largely because he didn't know them. But all that changed late one afternoon during a ride across his home island of Ua Pou. At dusk, as he approached a high ridge, his mount balked; eyes wide, nostrils flared, its neck fought the tightened reins as Martin struggled to keep control of the terrified animal. He looked around, but could see nothing unusual. Despite the hot trade winds there was a distinct chill in the air. The hair stood up on the back of his neck.

Without consciously knowing why, Martin looked upwards to a nearby cliff face and noticed a small cave he'd never seen before. Suddenly, an enormous black cat bounded from the opening, landing silently only two metres from where Martin and his horse were now frozen to the spot. The cat looked directly at him for a few seconds that seemed an eternity, then turned, walked off slowly in the opposite direction, and vanished from sight as though it

SUDDENLY AN ENORMOUS BLACK CAT BOUNDED FROM THE OPENING OF THE CAVE

had never been there. The horse instantly calmed down; its rider, though, could not. He knew that there were no big cats on the island.

He was still visibly shaken when he arrived home, and his mother asked what had happened. When he told her, she immediately, and with great concern and secrecy, sent for a senior family member. The relative told Martin about the *tupapau*, ancestral spirits that can take many forms, both animal and human. The hillside cave, it turned out, was an almost forgotten ancient burial site. Foreign archaeologists had never violated it, and so the spirits were still strong. Martin was a lucky boy, the old woman exclaimed; sometimes the *tupapau* do bad things to people.



LEFT: Even today's live Marquesan islanders can be menacing. How much more so are their dead ancestral spirits when they return as *tupapau*?

BELOW AND BOTTOM

LEFT: 'Martin' guides tourists around his Marquesan home island of Ua Pou, but doesn't volunteer stories of the *tupapau*. It was in these ancient burial caves where he encountered one in the form of a big black cat.

Nearly 20 years later, Martin retells the story as though it were yesterday. He's still Catholic, but now he's also a believer in a very old tradition.

As well as appearing, as in Martin's experience, as ABCs, *tupapau* are also said to favour the animal forms of dogs and pigs, all black and very large. Dr Robert Suggs, a leading authority on Polynesian culture and published specialist on the Marquesan Archipelagos¹, says that belief in the *tupapau* goes back to the very origins of the Pacific island peoples and their ancestral home on the south China coast some 6,000 years ago. *Tupapau*, he explains, "have tremendous spiritual power." The word itself, common in both the Marquesan and Tahitian tongues, can mean 'spirit' or 'cadaver' in its original Austronesian form which, Suggs states, "is the most widely distributed (pre-European) language on Earth ...from Madagascar to Easter Island." Along with the language, many of the religious underpinnings of the culture survive today.

Sometimes the two worlds, ancient and contemporary, meet, as when, just a few years ago, ghostly drumming and ancient chants were heard at

ONE FEMALE SPIRIT OFTEN MATERIALISES WITH A PET OCTOPUS ON HER SHOULDER

night in the jungle on Nuku Hiva, another Marquesan island. The unearthly racket was driving the locals to sleepless distraction, so a Catholic priest was prevailed upon to perform an exorcism. According to local reports, the rite proved successful. It seems, then, that the *tupapau* can be subject to the outside influence of *papa'a* (non-natives). If such cross-cultural contact is possible and, as islanders allege, *tupapau* favour the ancient places that are

tapu (sacred), had Dr Suggs or any of his fellow archaeologists ever experienced anything of this netherworld? After all, they were excavating in bone-filled burial caves and *maea* (ceremonial places), probably the most sacred sites of all.

Despite oral history claiming that departed spirits always rally at a beach site on Nuku Hiva as a takeoff point for the next world, Dr Suggs says he has never experienced anything more than an "uneasy feeling" at certain times during his explorations there. But his co-workers, outsider and native alike, have reported seeing and hearing strange things, and finding that objects are randomly moved about in classic poltergeist fashion. Dr Suggs hastens to add that, based on his research, *tupapau* are not perceived as inherently evil, but they are extremely touchy when it comes to people trespassing on sites that are *tapu*. In the old days, he says, "there were so many *tapu* places that locals had to zigzag around them to get anywhere on the island." Even today, he tells me, at one *vahi-mana* (place of supernatural power), there is a female spirit that regularly materialises... with a pet octopus perched upon her shoulder. Sounding like a cross between a Disney character and Casper the Friendly Ghost, she's friendly, helpful and "appears to people in the state between awake and asleep" to aid in healing.

Western-raised and educated Teikimaa-kautoua ('Pascal') Erhel Hatuuku returned home to his Marquesan island after completing schooling, contracted a fever and was in a hypnotic state when he saw an old man standing outside his room, staring in at him intensely and repeatedly asking in a whispered rasp, "Aren't you afraid of me?" When Pascal replied that he wasn't, the old man began citing the evils that Pascal had committed during his lifetime. This litany was designed to instil fright, but in his semi-conscious state Pascal remained curiously detached. Their conversation continued through most of the night. Nobody else in the house - including a relative sleeping in a hammock adjacent to the room - heard anything. Pascal reflects that, through the experience, he has learned deep and profound things about his culture and experienced a personal reconnection to it; he has refused to tell anything further to any outsider.

This is far from the case with effusive, charismatic Raymond Graff. He too came back after an education in the world beyond the islands, and stays connected to the modern world through his presidency of the local Harley-Davidson Club. A controversial





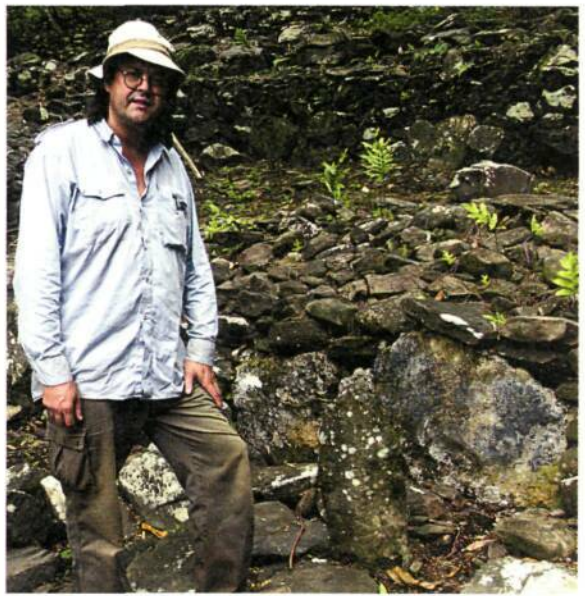
character, Graff is either viewed as a fire-walking *tohua* (spiritual leader) spearheading a return to ancient traditions or, conversely, as self-promoting, opportunistic and, in one particular instance, detrimental to scientific work.²

Graff's personal *tupapau* anecdote is even more confrontational than Pascal's. Graff relates the adventure as if it were a spiritual pro-wrestling match... albeit one without a predetermined outcome. Alone on a jungle river bridge one moonless night, Graff "sensed something" and instinctively knew what it was. He shouted out a challenge: "If you want to fight me, I'm ready!"

In one corner, shadow spirits and, in the other, a human. Graff added that

he had allied ancestors in the other world who would aid him in battle. Then – nothing. He walked on that night without incident. "*Tupapau* are more afraid of me...!" he concludes. Local legend often credits "strong *mana*" (a composite of soul and life-force) with providing protection from *tupapau* but Graff claims that, in his case, it probably helped being born at night near a sacred *tupapau* stomping ground where his mother saw "a flying coffin."

The *tupapau* are also said not to like water and more than one tale is related about a 'friend of a friend' whose spiritual possession was instantly reversed by an ocean baptism. This trans-cultural religious permeability is not a total surprise in a country where statues of Jesus and Mary are openly referred to as "Catholic *tikis*." In French Polynesia, as in many colonised and missionised places, pre-European contact beliefs became syncretised with dominant Christianity or merely went deeply underground. The siege against indigenous practices has been going on for a long time. In his first novel *Typee*³, which was based upon his experience of jumping a whaling ship in the Marquesas and includes a lot of historically accurate material, Herman Melville bemoans the fate of the "poor Hawaiians" whose culture and identity were being destroyed by missionaries, and this is in mid-1840! The latest ongoing crusades have



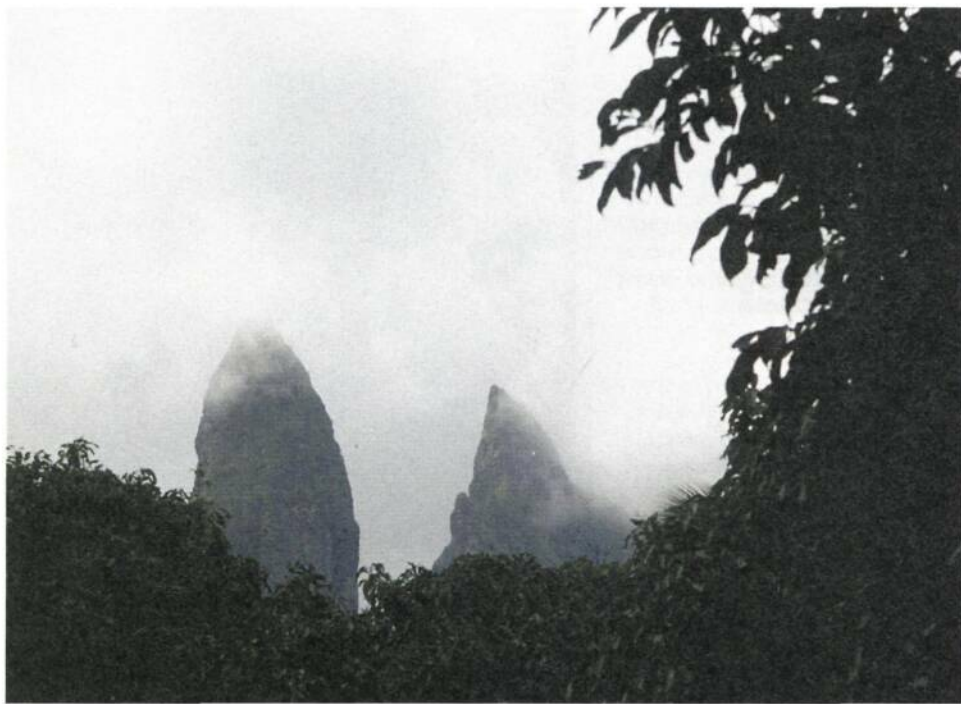
TOP LEFT: The ancient and modern worlds exemplified in the half-and-half tattooing of artist George Barff.

ABOVE: Dr Paul Wallin stands before the digsite on the Maeva Hill complex.

BELOW: Now reclaimed by jungle, this ancient ceremonial site on the island of Huahine is one of the most important in all of Polynesia.

RAYMOND HAD ALLIES IN THE OTHER WORLD WHO WOULD HELP HIM IN BATTLE





come from contemporary Christian evangelicals and the Mormon Church.

Raymond Graff and a few select others are attempting to lead a renewal of commitment by French Polynesian islanders to their traditional roots, even to the point of rejecting European dress and religion. (Similar actions are being undertaken by native peoples all over the world, from New Zealand to America.) While some aspects of this ideological battle, such as the recreation of ancient spiritual rites, can be dismissed as minor rear-guard skirmishes, others – political actions and legal confrontations – cannot.

Despite increasing amounts of bureaucratic red tape, brand new excavations have recently taken place on the Mara'ire'a hill complex on Huahine, carried out by Dr Paul Wallin of Norway's Kon-Tiki Museum⁴ and Dr Reidar Solsvik of the University of Oslo. Extending the fieldwork of the eminent Polynesian archaeologist Dr Yoshihiko Sinoto⁵, a series of 35 large stone foundations (*pi-pi* or *pae-pae*) for walls, terraces,

THE ANCIENT SPIRIT OF THE ISLANDS IS STILL ALIVE HERE

houses, *marae* and burial platforms have been cleared from the jungle. Preliminary carbon dating indicates occupation as far back as the 13th century and supports current theory about centuries of Pacific migration emanating from the island of Ra'iatea, some 18 miles (29km) eastward⁶.

While this research is ongoing, questions of authenticity, ownership, preservation, reconstruction and tourism are drawing definite lines between island authorities and outside scientists.

"There is no local funding to contin-

ABOVE: Mysterious, evocative and foreboding, the throats of old volcanoes form the peaks of the Marquesan island of Ua Pou.

TOP RIGHT: Scientist and *tohua* Raymond Graff is a pivotal figure in the ongoing struggle between modern archaeology and traditional island mores.



ue (to preserve) the new dig site," says Dr Wallin, whose personal commitment to Polynesian island culture includes a new ankle tattoo, which is partly for decoration and partly for unspecified protection. When asked if he believed in *tupapau*, he merely smiles and shrugs enigmatically.

"Even if you don't believe in indigenous traditions," begins Paul Atallah, a transplanted American who is one of Raiatea's top tourist guides⁷ and is married to an islander, "you should respect them." He once innocently made the mistake of whistling at night. This completely terrified his then girlfriend, who told him that the act could literally "whistle up a ghost" just as certainly as evil thoughts could summon a *tupapau*.

So the ancient spirit of the islands is still alive in the remote Marquesas. Gauguin painted it,⁸ local natives remain wary of it, and even visitors occasionally have a brush with the phantom phenomenon.

If you want to take the chance, the distant islands and atolls of French Polynesia can be accessed surprisingly affordably aboard the hybrid freighter/cruiseship *Aranui III*. **FT**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



PAUL ROSS is a travel writer and editor whose work has appeared in the *LA Times*, the *Miami Herald* and the *Denver Morning Post*. His website can be found at: www.globaladventure.us

NOTES

1 Dr Robert Suggs, *The Island Civilizations of Polynesia*, New American Library, New York, 1960.

2 A prominent ceremonial site, painstakingly reconstructed after research by leading Polynesian archaeologist Dr Sinoto from Hawaii's Bishop Museum, was reconfigured by Graff "from a vision" in a move that's as political as it is controversial.

3 Herman Melville, *Typee*: A

Peep at Polynesian Life, 1846

4 www.kon-tiki.no (Ironically, Thor Heyerdahl's groundbreaking premise about Polynesian origins in South America has been discounted. There are, however, remaining mysteries, like how the New World sweet potato found its way to the middle of the South Pacific ocean.)

5 YH Sinoto and E Komori, *Settlement pattern survey of Mata'ire'a Hill, Maeva, Huahine, French Polynesia*,

Department of Anthropology, BP Bishop Museum, Honolulu, 1988. Dr Sinoto is the recipient of Japan's highest cultural honour, the Order of the Rising Sun, and was knighted by the President of French Polynesia for his lifetime of work.

6 Ra'iatea's ancient name was Havai'i and is thought to be the emanation point of Polynesian all'i culture through present-day French Polynesia (which includes the Society Islands as well

as the Austral, Gambier, Tuamotu and Marquesas Archipelagos and atolls) and from Aotearoa (New Zealand) to Rapanui (Easter Island) to Hawaii. Many people may have migrated to flee the theocratic rule and human sacrifices of the priests of 'Oro, the war god. Both Raiatea and Fakarava islands are sources of new archaeological and history-changing information to be scientifically presented over the course of the next couple of years.

7 www.island-eco-tours.com

8 *Manao Tupapau* [literally "to remember the spirit"] (1892). A new Gauguin museum, complete with a reproduction of his infamous *Maison du Jouis* (House of Pleasure), debuted during the recent 100th anniversary of the artist's death at the village of Atuona on the island of Hiva Oa, not far from his gravesite and just a headstone's throw from the final resting place of the great Belgian singer-songwriter Jacques Brel.



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Occupation _____

Religion: _____

Build: _____ Attractiveness: _____

Slight V. Attractive

Medium Attractive

Large Average

Your Personality

tick which traits closely describe you

Affectionate Fashionable

Serious Practical

Considerate Conventional

Shy Reliable

Romantic Adventurous

Your interests

Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.

Wining/Dining Jazz/Folk music

Pubs Classical music

Sports/Keep fit Theatre/Arts

Politics/History Watching TV

Reading Smoking

Travelling Mixing with friends

Science/Tech Children

Cinema Homemaking

Pets/Animals Gardening

Pop music Countryside

Your Attitudes

tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly

I prefer town life

I involve myself in community activities

I have many friends of my own sex

I am interested in current affairs

I am looking for one special relationship

I like team activities

My work makes it difficult to meet new people

I want to extend my social life as well as finding a special relationship

Your Ideal Partner

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Height: min. _____ max. _____

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Pythons and Prophecies...

Was the prophetic priestess of Delphi inspired by hallucinogenic gases issuing from a fault line? Or was she drawing up serpent power from the subterranean realm of Dionysos? Quite possibly both, argues **JOANNA LEHMANN**

The famous Greek oracle at Delphi has been the focus of particular interest over the last few years, due to the recent discovery of two fault lines in the earth which cross directly beneath the temple to Apollo where the priestess gave her prophecies. Underground gases, including the hallucinogenic ethylene, were found close by. This seemed to explain the legend of Delphi's vapours, which rose from a fissure in the Earth and induced the priestess's trance state. (see FT127:21)

These findings are of great significance, for they would seem to support the most ancient clues and therefore point to the hub of the oracle's power. Its origins are shrouded in the mists of time but, as the geological discoveries suggest, its inspiration was the living Earth. In Delphi's mythology, it was Ga or Gaia, the Mother Earth goddess, who ruled there before Apollo. However, the secret of her mystery can only be revealed through clues from the site of Delphi that hark back to a time before the ancient Greeks.

Beside the shining marble temple to Apollo where the oracle delivered her prophecies stood a tall column that supported a stone sphinx. Looming above the Sacred Way, she watched every pilgrim climb up towards the temple's entrance in search of an answer. As an ancient symbol of paradox and transformation, the sphinx sheds light on the source of the oracle. This awesome anthropomorphic monster of Greek mythology had a woman's head, for part of her aspect was the Mother Earth goddess of Bronze Age Greece. Finds from the Bronze Age period at Delphi included many goddess figurines, and also a lion-shaped rhyton or drinking vessel. The sphinx's body was that of a lion, as the symbol of summer and the force of life, while her serpent's tail represented winter. Within her being she contained the power of life, death and rebirth.

This mystery lay at the root of the Delphic oracle. Like the lion, the radiant, golden haired Apollo ruled the summer, while Dionysos, a god so connected to the power of the serpent that he was able to transform himself into one, took over as a subterranean force during the three winter months. Apollo was the patron of prophecy and the main ruling deity of Delphi, so the oracle has generally been viewed as his inspiration.

However, it was Dionysos who provided the driving force – the source of Apollo's prophetic power – from below. As the god who ruled the winter months, Dionysos held the secret of regeneration, of life springing from the apparently barren ground, which had absorbed

It was Dionysos who provided the real source of Apollo's prophetic power

all that had died. As the annually returning sun, Apollo enabled Dionysos to reveal his miracle.

As the spirit of Life in Death, Dionysos was unusual, for the other Olympian gods of the Greeks never died. He followed the pattern of the seasons. He died and was reborn in a continuous cycle in the manner of gods from the previous epoch, like the Cretan Zeus, who had both a cave of birth and a cave of death. The Delphic Dionysos had his roots in that distant past, as the dying and rising consort of the Mother Goddess, like the Sumerian god Dumuzi with the goddess Inanna, or the Egyptian god Osiris with the goddess Isis. Even in late antiquity, the Delphic priest Plutarch likened Dionysos to Osiris.

This rebirth was an essential element in the prophetic process. During the winter months, a group of women, the Thyades, abandoned themselves to the wild rites of Dionysos on the slopes of Parnassos above the Delphic sanctuary. Then, at the point when winter was turning to spring, they performed a rite of awakening the god in the Korykion Cave. Simultaneously, the male priests of Apollo went through their own ritual to revive Dionysos in the inner sanctum of Apollo's temple, where it was believed that his remains lay. It was only once these ceremonies had taken place that the oracular priestess gave her prophecies, also in the inner sanctum. This happened on Apollo's birthday, the seventh day of the month of Bysios at the beginning of spring. Originally, this was the only day of the year on which the oracle operated. The awakening of Dionysos's spirit

LEFT: Apollo, the god for whom Delphi's celebrated Temple was named, has usually been seen as the source of the oracle's power...

FACING PAGE BOTTOM: ... but it may have been the chthonic powers of Dionysos that provided the driving force behind the prophecies.

FACING PAGE TOP: The 'Pythia' in full prophetic flow.



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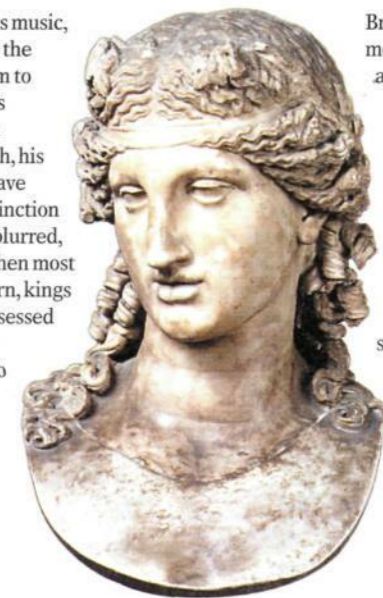
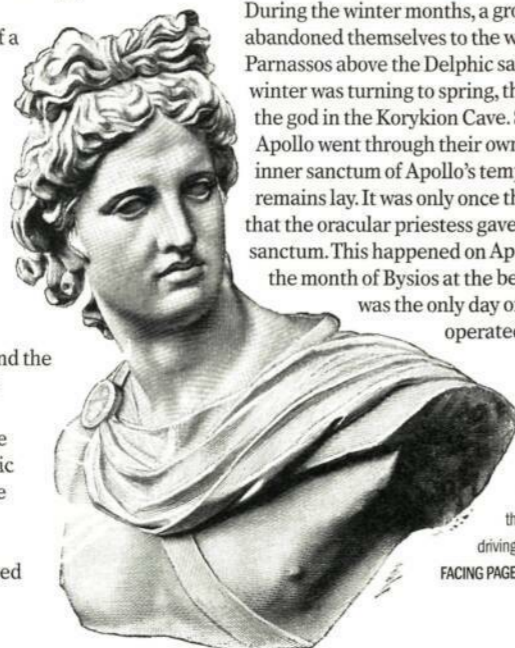
from his tomb and the prophetic answers were intrinsically connected.

The belief that the bones of the dead god-hero revealed prophetic messages had its roots in a primitive spiritual connection with ancestors, and was widespread in the ancient world. In Europe, skulls were often seen as possessing oracular powers; examples include the head of the Celtic god-king Bran, the Scandinavian Mimir, and the Greek hero Orpheus. Appropriately associated with both Dionysos and Apollo, Orpheus held the secret to the mystery that built the bridge between apparently

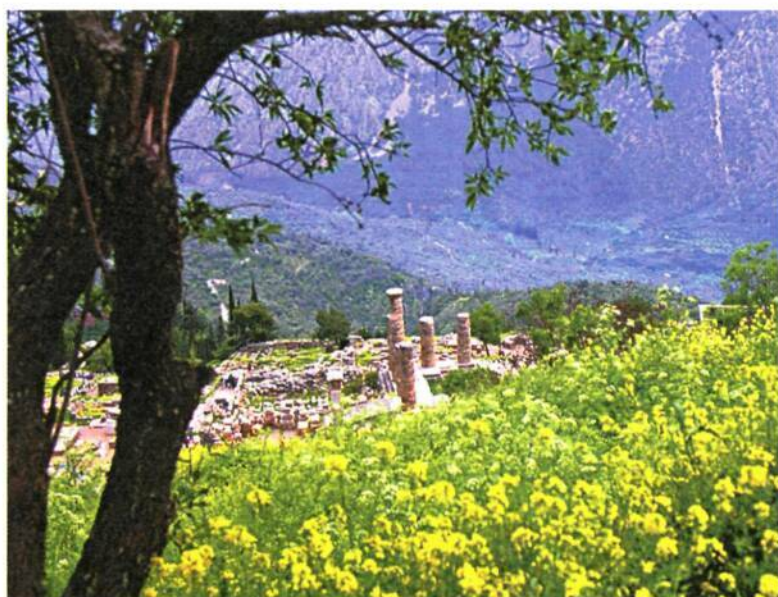
irreconcilable opposites. His music, which even charmed Hades the god of the dead, enabled him to make a journey into Hades's realm, thus joining life with death. After Orpheus's death, his head gave prophecies in a cave sacred to Dionysos. The distinction between hero and god was blurred, for in the Bronze Age era, when most of the Greek myths were born, kings were often priest-kings, possessed of spiritual status as well as temporal power. Heroes who performed brave deeds were also deified. Moreover, many oracular hero-gods like Dionysos,

Bran and Orpheus, met a violent end, most probably as part of the tradition and practice of human 'sacrifice', literally meaning 'to make sacred'. For the Greeks, this custom was a dark and distant memory, but they still believed that the power of the spirit was held within the bones.

The remains of Dionysos were said to be buried beneath the omphalos, the great stone situated before the oracle in the inner sanctum of Apollo's temple. Like the Bronze Age Mycenaean tombs, the omphalos had a beehive shape (bees were an ancient symbol of resurrection), while the pattern of a net covered the stone. The net – in



CORBIS



ABOVE: Two views of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi.

Greek, *Dictyon* – was a symbol of the womb (Zeus was believed to have been born in the Cretan Dictæan Cave). Even the name Delphi (Delphyne) originally meant ‘womb’. So, Delphi’s sacred stone, the omphalos, was both a tomb and a womb. Like the sphinx, it was the embodiment of death and rebirth.

In depictions of the omphalos in Greek art, a serpent was painted either on or beside it. The cult of the Earth Goddess that originally ruled Delphi involved serpents as possessors of the secret of death and rebirth, and also of life in death. In the early days of Athens, the spirit of the hero-god Erichthonius rose from his tomb and spoke prophecies through the mouths of serpents. In the myth of Delphi’s past, Apollo killed the serpent Python and took over from him. This must have been an oracular serpent, for Apollo named his oracular priestess the Pythia, and placed her on Python’s throne, a cauldron on a tripod.

The cauldron contained lots in the form of pebbles holding the essence of the cooked bones of both Dionysos and Python. Using the Pythia as his vessel, Apollo drew the subterranean force up through the cauldron, which was the point of metamorphosis. With the assistance of Apollo, god of enlightenment and civilisation, the chthonic god/serpent power was transformed from dark hidden knowledge into the light of inspired revelation. As a vessel, it had similar properties to the Holy Grail, which has also been traced back to a cauldron in its pagan origins. Through the Grail, that which was dead was transformed into a living force. Tom Chetwynd in his *Dictionary of Symbols* writes that

Delphi’s sacred stone was both a tomb and a womb

“inanimate wine was turned to living blood” in the grail by Jesus at the Last Supper. In Greek theology, Dionysos was the god of wine, as an aspect of his wild nature, while Apollo, as the god who heralded the seasonal return to life, was his ‘saviour’.

Delphi itself acted as a grail, drawing pilgrims who were prepared to travel many miles, invariably on foot, to find the inspired answers to their problems. It was special in its own right as a place that celebrated the miracle of life bursting forth from the apparently barren rocks, with the craggy mountain Parnassos looming over the sanctuary and a ravine plunging below. Moreover, beneath the heart of the sanctuary was the fissure itself, with its gaseous vapours. Even the serpent’s name ‘Python’ originally meant ‘fissure’.

Recent studies have suggested that many ‘psychic’ experiences appear to occur over fault lines in the earth; perhaps the gases released at Delphi

served to open the Pythia’s mind to the world of Spirit.

From the raw and magical power of the Earth Goddess’s womb rose the essence of the reborn god Dionysos, curling upwards like a serpent rising from a dark crack in the rock. In later centuries, Apollo took over the rite with his annual return as the life-giving Sun that reawakened Dionysos’s spirit from the realm of the Dead. Inspired by the rising vapours and hours of meditation, the Pythia absorbed Apollo’s essence as, through the cauldron’s power of metamorphosis, he brought the mystical knowledge she was receiving to the full light of consciousness, and so enabled her to interpret it.

Thus, Dionysos as inspiration and Apollo as revelation had become symbiotically linked. By connecting the opposing forces of the gods with Nature’s eternal cycle, Delphi held the key to resolving the paradox of the relationship between Life and Death. Moreover, the deep past of the ancients reveals that Delphi’s potent source of psychic energy, which enthralled the ancient world for over 1,000 years, came from the transformative power of the Earth itself. **FT**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



JOANNA LEHMANN studied Drama and Classics, before going on to write various film and video scripts, some of which she also directed. She has written articles on archaeology, psychology and the supernatural for various journals. She is currently completing *The Wake of Medusa*, a novel set in Crete, and a non-fiction book, *The Dark Twin*, which explores the duality of both the spirit world and the human psyche.

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A saloon with a view

JOHN FORD swallows his London Pride and presents his exploits in the challenging field of remote viewing



JOHN FORD works in the computer industry and education. He was born in Stoke-on-Trent, grew up in Wales, and lives in East Sussex.

Now I don't know about you, but when I consider the world of paranormal research it occurs to me that the main problem confronting us is that of evidence – or, more precisely, the *validity* of the evidence, which is nearly always a matter of someone's word of honour.

The only way around this problem is for every interested individual to carry out the experiment for him or her self, thereby creating some kind of consensus of opinion. I've tried many techniques over the years – automatic writing, astral travelling, ouija boards and so on – without success. Recently, though, I found a technique that works for me.

It all started when I was searching through a secondhand bookshop for some reading matter to keep me occupied on a long journey. My eyes (or at least my good eye) fell upon a paperback entitled *The Mind Race*.¹ This book, by Russell Targ and Keith Harary, concerns the fashionable subject of remote viewing, but unlike other authors on this much-discussed subject, Targ and Harary give some very useful instructions about how to actually *do* it.

The first requirement, of course, is to find a suitable target. A location that you've never visited before, and never seen in a photograph or even heard described.

This is harder than it sounds. After giving the matter some thought, I realised that there are certain places ideally suited to our purpose: pubs! They are, by definition, open to the public, and they tend (unlike, say, churches) to differ in their internal layouts, decoration and contents. And pubs, it occurred to me, are good places to celebrate success – or to drown one's sorrows in the event of failure.

After a bit of searching, I found the



JOHN FORD

ideal hostelry, a place called The Old Pump House in nearby Hastings, a mediæval building especially well suited to the experiment because I had never been inside it and it is impossible to see into it from the street.

So, how did I do?

Well, I made several attempts at 'remote viewing' the Old Pump House over a period of about two weeks and made notes during each session – all before I finally visited the place 'in the flesh', so to speak. What I saw was as follows:

I was standing in the front room, looking towards the back.

There were windows to my right and behind me, and to my left there was a square black object on the wall, which I thought might be the surround of a dartboard.

In front of me, there was some sort of obstruction half way down the room, though it didn't prevent me from seeing to the back of the building. The bar was on the left, beyond this obstruction.

To my right there was also a wooden railing or low partition, the function of which I could not understand at the time.

At the back of the room there appeared to be a row of brightly lit windows.

At the first opportunity, I visited the 'real' Pump House; the result was

1. Keith Harary & Russell Targ: *The Mind Race*, Villard Books, USA, 1984 (Published in the UK by New English Library, 1986).

startling.

The 'square object' turned out to be a ventilator, (black, with a round central hole). My 'obstruction' was indeed there; it is a curious sort of fireplace forming a tunnel in the middle of the building.

The 'railing' is there too; it protects a stairway, because the saloon bar is above street level, something I could not have guessed.

Those bright windows at the opposite end might have been – wait for it – a collection of video game machines propped up against the back wall!

And the bar is, as I had 'seen', on the left – so mine's a pint!

Well, this was a great and satisfying day out, and left me convinced that remote viewing was possible. But how does it work? Well... quantum entanglement... er... hyperspace... Argand plane... all that Mandelbrot stuff... er... astral light... Carlos Casteneda... you know!

Perhaps we can, though, define the *technique*, the keys of the Kingdom, and anyone who has studied occultism will find some of it familiar.

I have divided the procedure into six stages:

Relax, physically and mentally, using any of the usual methods.

Think of the target venue and allow the visions to appear.

Ignore any images that spring to mind instantly – they are simply your own memories or imagination at work.

When images of the target drift into consciousness, do not attempt to examine them too closely – they are as delicate as puffs of smoke. Be passive, let them form in their own time, and this will be the evidence of their validity.

Don't be afraid to run the procedure several times. Don't be discouraged by failure; some 'targets' don't provide much to work on and you won't know this until you visit them at the end of the process.

Keep detailed notes at all times, or the exercise is pointless.

Of course I can't prove that I had never been inside the Old Pump House before I 'RV'd' it. As I said at the beginning of this article, it's down to each of you to establish a climate of opinion to challenge the current ideology of crushing materialism that turns us all into hopeless, alienated drones. Success at any 'paranormal' undertaking suggests that the world is a much more interesting place than you might have been led to believe. So let's get viewing. **[i]**

Terrapin Station

JON DOWNES asks for your help in identifying some previously unknown relatives of the Mutant Ninja Turtles



JON DOWNES is the director of the Centre for Fortean Zoology. He lives in Exeter with his adopted daughter and an ever-shifting population of exotic reptiles.

The late, great Bernard Heuvelmans once wrote that “there are lost worlds everywhere”. It is a dictum which has been quoted many times in the last 40 years by cryptozoologists determined to prove that many new animal species still remain to be discovered. It is, of course, true. A multinational marine census which hopes to catalogue all the animals and plants in the world’s oceans recently announced that they are discovering an average of three new fish species a week. Even the zoology of the British Isles – arguably the best explored place on the planet – is in a continual state of flux. Within the last year or so, it has been proven that at least two new species of reptiles and amphibians – the pool frog and the European green lizard – are indeed British residents. A fascinating article in the *Herpetological Review* even suggests that there may be up to seven taxa of European water frog resident in the UK. It is probable that these are mostly introductions, but in the light of recent discoveries it would be unwise to reject the possibility that at least some of these may well be native to Britain.

However, to return to Heuvelmans’s “lost worlds”, I feel it unlikely that when the ‘father of cryptozoology’ made his memorable statement that he was thinking that some 40 years later there would be a pair of *bona fide* species of unknown animal residing in a home-made garden shed tacked onto the back of a mid-terrace house in Exeter.

In the early summer, while my colleague Richard Freeman was tramping around the jungles of Sumatra in search of the *orang pendek* [a report will appear in a future *FT*], I had a telephone call from my old friend Darren Naish. The department of Portsmouth University in which he works had become home to a number of



terrapins, including two specimens that nobody had been able to identify. Would we, he wondered, be interested in taking them on?

A few weeks later Darren and his boss arrived for lunch, and with them came the three large turtles. The female, called Gladys, was a very large red-eared terrapin. These animals have been commonly kept as pets for over 50 years, and Gladys’s only fortetan significance is that she is a fine example of the species that, since the craze surrounding the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* movie about 13 years ago, has become naturalised in various parts of the UK.

The other two turtles were something else entirely. Both males, Cuthbert and Spots (I take no responsibility for the names), appear to be members of the same species, but nobody at the CFZ, nor any of the zoologists who have visited us in the last six months, have been able to identify them.

They are particularly attractive-looking reptiles. They have broad, flat

TURNING TURTLE:

Two views of the unidentified swimming objects.

If you have any information regarding the turtles described, please contact Jon Downes by e-mailing him at cfz@eclipse.co.uk

heads covered in a striking pattern of grey and brown spots. Both of them have a tendency to turn pink on various occasions. When Cuthbert first exhibited this propensity, we panicked. When a semi-aquatic turtle turns pink it usually means that it is suffering from serious blood poisoning. We rushed him to a friendly neighbourhood vet who gave him a course of antibiotic injections, and told us to keep him segregated from the others. This we did, and to our great delight he slowly recovered his normal coloration and carried on eating heartily. A week later he turned pink again.

They have now been living with us for nearly six months and we still have no idea what they are, which is why we have prevailed upon *FT* to print this account. From the configuration of the scutes on their shells and plastrons, they appear to be *Emydids*, from the same family as Gladys and all the other North American fresh water terrapins. However, they don’t look like any of the known species. Their provenance is very murky indeed. Together with Gladys, they were donated to Portsmouth University when they outgrew their homes in suburbia. Because all three turtles are roughly the same size, it is reasonably safe to assume that they were purchased at the same time, probably from a pet shop. However there is no way of finding out for sure.

They may, of course be either a rare colour morph of the red-eared terrapin or a hybrid hitherto unknown to science, although the similarity between the two unknown animals makes the hybrid theory unlikely. However, it is not impossible. Over the past 30 years or so, a large proportion of the red-eared terrapins imported into the UK have come from farms in Singapore, the Philippines and Hong Kong. It is not impossible that they are a hybrid between the red-eared terrapin and some Asian species. The best explanation seems to be that they are either a hitherto unknown North American species or an Asian species that merely resembles its distant cousins from the New World.

Our job as cryptozoologists is to find out the truth, however prosaic it turns out to be. I am hoping that somebody reading this article will recognise the mystery terrapins in these pictures and be able to tell us to which species Cuthbert and Spots actually belong. If they turn out to be members of a well-known species, I apologise to *FT*’s readers for having wasted their time. And if not, then any suggestions as to how we can resolve this mystery will be gratefully appreciated. **ft**

The magickal Mr Smith

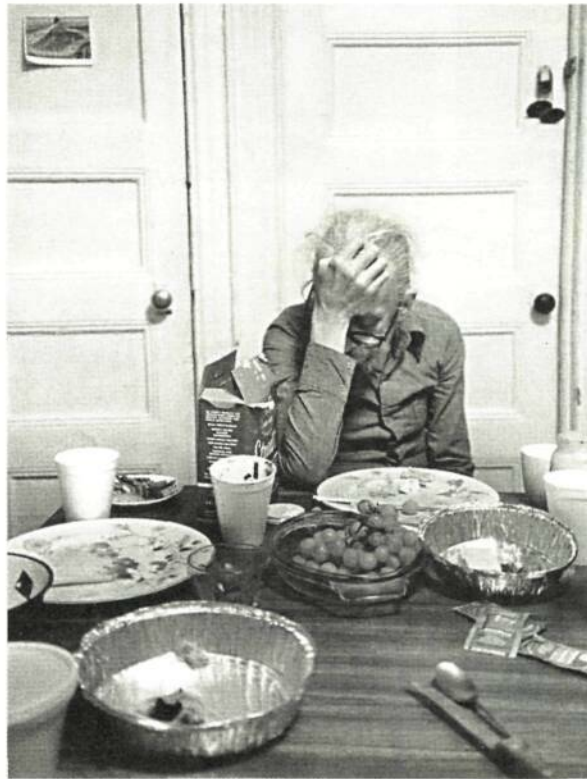
IAN SIMMONS looks back at the eccentric career of Harry Smith – filmmaker, musicologist and magician



IAN SIMMONS is a Contributing Editor and frequent contributor to *Fortean Times*. He currently works at a science discovery centre in Wales.

It isn't often that a single figure makes as pivotal a contribution to as many seemingly disparate areas as did Harry Smith. And perhaps it's even less often that such a figure sinks into such relative obscurity as had Smith until recently. As an experimental filmmaker, his work inspired, among others, Andy Warhol and Kenneth Anger, and laid the foundations of the psychedelic lightshow (the original Grateful Dead lightshow used Harry's old equipment). He was a talented and original painter, although much of his work is lost (an unpaid landlord consigned a huge quantity to landfill). As a collector, his archive of paper aeroplanes was so definitive the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum sent a special courier for it when he donated it in the 1980s. As a folklorist, his ethnographic recordings, begun in his early teens, broke new ground in the study of Native American traditions – and as a music anthologist he could be said to have changed the face of modern music. His legendary six-LP *Anthology of American Folk Music*, collecting obscure pre-war American folk, blues and gospel recordings and released in 1953, proved to be a major catalyst for the American folk revival, inspiring the likes of Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and many more, as well as allowing later musicological magpies like Garcia and the Grateful Dead to incorporate the full range of these American musical traditions into the remit of rock 'n' roll. More recently the reissue of these collections on CD and the release of the missing fourth volume have helped fuel the alt.country boom and provided the impetus for the *O Brother Where Art Thou?* soundtrack. In this area, at least, Smith's reputation has enjoyed something of a revival.

Diverse and scattered though his interests seem to be, what united them was Smith's life-long dedication to the



occult. He saw all the facets of his activity as aspects of his magical quest. Born into a Theosophist family in Portland, Oregon, he would later assert that Aleister Crowley was, in fact, his real father, claiming his mother had been seduced by the Great Beast on a Pacific beach. What does appear to be true is that on Harry's 12th birthday his father presented him with a complete blacksmith's shop, exhorting him to use it to complete the alchemical quest of transmuting lead into gold. He seems to have taken the challenge seriously, and from then on his quest for gnosis governed everything he did. Shortly afterwards he began his folklorist career, recording unique rituals, immersing himself in the shamanic traditions of Native American tribes and later becoming an associate of Voodoo initiate and film maker Maya Deren. He was still deeply involved up to his death in 1991, aged 68 – his final job was as a shaman-in-residence at the Naropa Institute, Boulder, Colorado.

SHAMAN IN RESIDENCE: After being hit by a car, which fractured his knee, Harry Smith was evicted from his hotel, lived in Bowery shelters and was rescued from life on the streets when Beat poet Allen Ginsberg gave him use of a spare room for nine months. Smith is shown here, exhausted at 3 am following a Chinese take-away meal.

**Further Reading/
Listening/Viewing:**

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Anthology of American Folkmusic Vols 1-4, Smithsonian Folkways/Rykodisk.
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Early Abstractions, Video.

Much of Smith's occult inspiration, though, came to him through his path as a Crowleyan initiate. He became involved with Crowleyan magic in New York in 1950 as one of the last initiates of the influential New York adept Charles Stansfield Jones. He eventually became a Gnostic bishop in the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica of the Ordo Templi Orientis, producing a set of Crowleyan Tarot cards and an in-depth study of Enochian, Dr John Dee's angelic language, for which he compiled the only known concordance. He also studied highland tartans, correlating them with his Enochian working and producing artwork integrating both.

He viewed his film work as another aspect of his quest, in the tradition of Robert Fludd and Athanasius Kirchner, who used primitive animation techniques for magical purposes. There was even a shamanic dimension to his celluloid experiments. When asked why he made films he replied: "Because an old woman with a bullroarer that had a snake drawn on it, swung it and I heard it." Even his musical anthologising was guided by his magical understanding. Early editions of the discs came in a sleeve decorated with Smith's Crowleyan paintings and he was fully conscious of the shamanic potential of music and its power for transformation. In the sleeve notes he quoted: "Civilised man thinks his way out of his difficulties, primitive man dances out of his difficulties" and followed this with Crowley's maxim "Do as Thy Wilt Shall Be The Whole Of The Law".

In later years he developed a propensity for truly heroic levels of substance abuse, taking heroin, alcohol, speed, acid, crack, and solvents in massive quantities and various unwise combinations. This, along with the associated financial difficulties and his ability to drive everyone, including his most ardent supporters, spare (something he excelled at even in his drug-free prime) probably contributed considerably to the eclipse of his reputation in later years. But he always retained a core of devotees who revered his achievements, helping to preserve his surviving works and rehabilitate his standing.

Harry Smith was a startlingly talented polymath driven by magickal imperatives, an astonishing and unique individual whose achievements and influence have yet to be fully appreciated.

And I haven't even got on to The Fugs, String Figures, Thelonious Monk, Billie Holliday, Jackie Gleason's library of the occult, Ukrainian Easter Eggs and much, much more... **LI**

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Darkness at the Sun King's court

Witches, poison, disembowelled babies, devil worship and the occult at the French court: how different, how very different, from the home life of our own dear Queen...

The Affair of the Poisons

Murder, infanticide and satanism at the court of Louis XIV

Anne Somerset

Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003
Hb, 377pp, illus, ind, £20, ISBN 0 297 84216 1

The Affair of the Poisons was one of those macabre but faintly embarrassing episodes which occasionally happen to the most sensible societies for no discernible reason, and which, like Britain's own satanic abuse scandal a few years back, turn out to be a storm in a teacup. Louis XIV was the most regal and charismatic monarch the world had ever known, whose court can be best compared to the madcap parties of pre-war Hollywood for glamour, vanity, brilliance and extravagance, while the peasantry groaned under punitive taxes and France declared a series of pointless, self-aggrandising wars on its smaller neighbours; and this was the 17th century, when all of Europe (and, infamously, parts of the American colonies) was gripped by a frenzy for witches, poison, devil worship and the occult like nothing seen before or since. Presses put forth streams of volumes on alchemy, divination and astrology, and for a while there was a boom in investment resembling the South Sea Bubble or the dotcom craze as the credulous poured money into backroom schemes to unlock the secret of the philosopher's stone. It was all bound to end in tears.

The royal court at Versailles, under the circumstances, might have thought itself lucky to get off so lightly. The fashionable diversion of the time was to visit a fortune teller of one sort or another, who would not stop at reading palms but might, as the authorities were horrified to discover, be able to arrange abortions,

provide poison, conduct black masses on their patrons' behalf or even draw up a pact with the devil if so desired. When one of their number was arrested for a silly, transparent fraud, she discovered that the best way to prolong her life was to hint at dark matters involving devilish plots on the King's person and implicating all the prominent courtiers she could think of. When her case came to the notice of Louvois, one of the King's senior ministers, he began using her allegations, consciously or unconsciously, as a stick to beat his rivals with, ruthlessly investigating them while passing over the slurs directed at his favourites and supporters. Added to which, the King himself, a consummate statesman of heroic sexual appetites, seems to have had a gullible streak of surprising proportions and did not hesitate to institute a special commission with a mandate to stamp out this nastiness no matter what.

As more and more fortune-tellers were arrested, two emerged as the stars of the unlikely saga: 'Lesage', a red-wigged conman who had somehow escaped from a sentence of perpetual confinement as a galley slave, and 'la Voisin', his plump, ugly ex-lover. When questioned, it began to appear that each had been part of a grand conspiracy of poisoners: to judge from la Voisin's accounts, every unhappily married woman in Paris had come to her for help in poisoning her husband and every ambitious courtier had asked her to arrange for his rivals to die in agony. Each successive interrogation brought ever wilder claims, and one by one the arrests began, cutting a swathe through the great and good of the era, or at least through those not prudent enough to flee the country. The court, at first, was eager to have such evil wrongdoers brought to justice, regardless of rank or privilege; but as the comically slight nature of the allegations became clear – a simple

The stars: 'Lesage' a red-wigged conman and 'La Voisin', his plump, ugly ex-lover



denial was usually enough to render the authorities powerless, since there was never the slightest scrap of actual evidence – the murmurs of discontent in government circles began to grow. Surprisingly, a number of prison sentences and executions were handed down since a certain amount of unsavoury practice really had been uncovered, but Louis and Louvois made the mistake of taking the fortune-tellers' claims at face value, whereas the courtiers involved knew perfectly well that most of what they and their accused friends had been up to was more or less harmless.

The real crunch came when the King's long-term mistress Mme de Montespan was accused by la Voisin's deranged accomplice of having had several black masses said during which her naked body was used as an altar while babies were sacrificed and disembowelled. The King's moral zeal was, not surprisingly, dampened. He ordered the evidence to be struck from the

record, which meant that his prize witnesses could no longer be used: but the end of the commission was in sight, and sweeping changes affected the court. *The Sun King*, to everyone's astonishment, took up with (and later secretly married) a virtuous middle-aged lady who considered it her duty to save his soul by providing him with sexual services so as to prevent him committing the sin of endless casual sex, and a decade later the court was noted for its quiet sobriety.

Ann Somerset's telling of this tale is, like many examples of the recent craze for popular history (see also Anthony Beevor, Orlando Figes and Simon Sebag-Montefiore) doorstep-thick and admirably thorough. A little nit-picking: though a very capable historian, she is not a natural writer, and material as colourful and dramatic as this is just begging for a novelist's touch. The many pages of exposition and background explanation are very well done where they could easily have been dull and intrusive, but in general the whole thing has obviously been written piecemeal and put together at a late stage, and occasionally comes across as a collection of (admittedly excellent) postgraduate essays rather than a purposeful narrative. Mainly, though, it's too long: although undeniably fascinating, this is a very slight episode from European history. A shorter book would have been a diverting read, but such weighty treatment has meant stretching the material to – occasionally – exhaustive lengths. Still, anything with satanic masturbation and disembowelled babies in it is worth reading: well worth it for anyone interested in European history or the occult, and if you habitually buy history or biography you'll love it.

Jonathan Russell

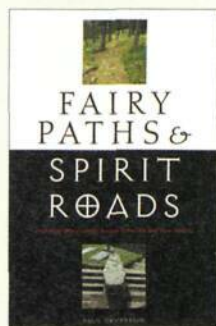
Fortean Times Verdict

INTERESTING, IF OVER-LONG,
GLIMPSE AT A PASSING FRENZY

7

Super(natural)highways

A treasure trove of evanescent, fragile Irish folklore complements Devereux's mature and robust psychogeographical hypothesis



Fairy Paths & Spirit Roads

Exploring otherworldly routes in the Old and New Worlds

Paul Devereux

Vega, 2003

Pb, 224pp, ind., refs, £12.99, ISBN 1 84333 704 5

Paul Devereux has travelled a long way since his early days as editor of the now-defunct *Ley Hunter* magazine. This book marks the pinnacle of his thinking on the subject of the function and purpose of ancient alignments, which have now become the "spirit roads" of the title. The author was one of the first to recognise that the concept of ley lines as invisible lines of power was a product of the 1960s counterculture and the idea would have been meaningless to previous generations. Drawing lines on maps and dowsing for energy lines has been abandoned in favour of Devereux's broader, more mature concept, which places emphasis on the empirical evidence of archaeology, concepts of ritual landscapes and the folk tradition.

The book is in two sections. The first is an "overview" discussing and summarising the multifarious strands of evidence that make up the author's hypothesis. This draws in a range of supernatural traditions connected with sacred roads and paths from many cultures widely separated in space

and time. Parallels and connections are woven between ancient roads long associated with the dead, such as the Irish fairy paths, mediæval European corpse-path traditions, aboriginal songlines and the shamanic routes of Asia and the America. The Irish fairy paths and the spirit lines "flown" by the shaman were part of a living tradition almost within living memory, and Devereux notes that the stories were slipping out of memory almost as quickly as he tried to collect them. Similar roads of the dead are found in the remains of long-lost cultures such as the cursuses and stone rows of Neolithic Britain and retain clues of a lost belief in the control of spirit movement which echoes the Chinese system of *feng shui*. The theory links all these strands of belief and material culture together to form an ancient psychogeography, a form of land-based spirituality that spanned the whole of the Asian and European continents.

While some of the material in the overview will be familiar to seasoned readers of Devereux's earlier books, the "sampler of otherworldly routes" which makes up the bulk of the second half is original fieldwork. The sampler supplements the theoretical overview by tracing the theory on the ground. It introduces the reader to a body of fieldwork which places meat on the bones of the theory carefully constructed in the overview. The gazetteer contains 55 examples of spirit roads and fairy paths and is split into two sections, the first covering Old World routes and the second taking in examples from Australia, Costa Rica, Mexico and the US. Devereux has mapped most of the examples he describes in the New World, where an array of mysterious straight roads and causeways remains. They do not seem to have been routes for

everyday traffic, but were apparently used by shamans and sorcerers for their out-of-the-body journeys and were believed to be the paths used by spirits and other supernatural creatures.

The highlight of the book is the rich body of fairy lore and tradition collected in rural Ireland by the folklorist and story-teller Eddie Lenihan of County Clare. Thanks to Devereux, the work of Lenihan and colleagues such as Bob Curran is presented here for the first time and is a treasure trove of disappearing knowledge. Within living memory, the fairy folk, or "Gentry", were as real to the Irish as aliens are to many in Western society today. The fairies haunted special places and had their own special paths linking the hills and forts. Mortals who upset the natural order by building upon these paths or interfering with fairy thorns would be plagued with bad luck, and as a result there was a host of social taboos concerning the right and wrong place to build. The fragility of the old ways is exemplified by the story of the Latoon fairy tree. Due to Lenihan's efforts, the solitary whitethorn was protected when a highway intersection was built beside it. But in 2002 the tree was attacked by vandals, who sliced off the ancient tree's canopy and most of its branches. (FT128: 24; 169: 8; 175: 11)

Fairy Paths & Spirit Roads is a treasure trove of hidden history and while the theory which holds the strands together will remain speculative, there is much of interest here for the armchair researcher and for anyone who wishes to explore the ancient and mysterious routes of the world for themselves.

Dave Clarke

Fortean Times Verdict

TRANSFORMS LANDSCAPE INTO A MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

8

Landscapes and Desire

Revealing Britain's sexually inspired sites

Catherine Tuck & Alun Bull

Sutton Publishing, 2003

Hb, 246pp, illus, gazetteer, notes, bib, £20.00, ISBN 0750929391



This book, in landscape format, is a lavishly illustrated romp through Britain's

libidinous vistas and licentious buildings. The first half focuses on the pre-Roman (or "Celtic", as Tuck insists on calling it) era. Thereafter, the Romans get a chapter, then the mediæval period, the libertine 18th century, Victorian Britain and finally the contemporary scene. Each chapter is profusely illustrated and the text is aimed at the non-specialist. Tuck refers to "natural" landscape features and those constructed by people, with the emphasis on the latter.

Tuck and Bull have roamed far and wide for their sites (all personally visited): there are plenty of upright standing stones, fatter triangular ones, caves and grottos (natural and artificial), rude mediæval carvings (secular and clerical), assemblages (in particular the West Wycombe wonders) and solitaires. The modern section seems geared towards the more romantic as opposed to functional, with no space for the Great Phallic Object Tower, Nelson's stupendous column (or "Willy" as per the famous *Not the Nine O'clock News* sketch), Canary Wharf and other urban protuberances.

The photos (taken using natural light for exterior shots) are generally of a high standard. Tuck makes good use of available guidebooks for her descriptions of places, but there are alarming errors. A description of a Victorian villa with a labyrinth (pp226-7) in Oxfordshire is spoiled by Tuck forgetting to say what the house is called or where it is. (Nor does it feature in the gazetteer, as far as I can see.) Some errors should have been picked up by the legions of people featured in the acknowledgements: the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace was 1851 not 1881 (p212). I also wouldn't use the term "Renaissance Britain" as Tuck does (p205) to describe the late-18th to mid-19th centuries.

Few people will be familiar with all the places mentioned in the book, and

the gazetteer (arranged by region rather than alphabetically by place or county) will help those wishing to visit them. The notes are brief and unnumbered, the further reading abbreviated and there is no index. Overall, the photographs are of higher quality than the text, but I wouldn't let this put you off getting a copy, especially if your local library pays for it.

I'm not aware of a better book on the subject, but this one leaves scope for more detailed work.

Richard Alexander

Fortean Times Verdict

AN ATTRACTIVE – IF SLIGHTLY
FLAWED – BOOK

6


A Giant

The definitive TC Lethbridge

The Sons of TC Lethbridge

Aegir Recording Co, 2003 (30 Colegrave St, Lincoln LN5 8DR)

2-CD + 36pp booklet, £19.99. Available from
www.headheritage.co.uk/merchandise/



Many *FT* readers will know that TC Lethbridge was one of the 20th century's foremost paranormal investigators.

Quite apart from his pioneering research into the nature of ghosts, dowsing, dreams and time, Lethbridge's life is a delicious tale of an orthodox archaeologist turned scientific outlaw. Not that Lethbridge would have seen himself in those terms; a true fortean, his psychical studies were simply an expression of his practical, brilliantly enquiring mind. If his journey took him to strange places, so be it.

Lethbridge died in 1971 and it was not many years before all of his books were out of print. His name fell into relative obscurity, although Colin Wilson was a notable champion, and a popular anthology of his writing, edited by Tom Graves and Janet Houlst, ensured that Lethbridge's name wasn't entirely forgotten.

Fast-forward to 2003, and a musical collective called The Sons of TC Lethbridge has released *A Giant*, a double CD in honour of Lethbridge. Members include Julian Cope (who is also the project's executive producer), Spiritualized's Doggen Foster and Kelvar Bales, Welbourn Tekh... and Colin Wilson.

A Giant is divided into two phases. CD 1 contains 13 tracks of rock'n'roll, varying from pastoral mellowness to demented guitar histrionics and even a scuzzy garage shout-along. It's a fine collection, which can be enjoyed in its own right or as a series of discussions of matters Lethbridgean in the most unlikely of settings. CD 2 two is Colin Wilson's show, in which he talks about the life and work of Lethbridge (apart from the last track, which is a touching reading by Wilson's wife Joy). Wilson's insightful words are backed by an unobtrusive ambient soundtrack, and, in the somewhat limiting format of spoken word, CD 2 is a great success.

A Giant's gorgeous packaging includes a 36pp booklet with an introduction by Julian Cope, a foreword by Colin Wilson and Welbourn Tekh's substantial bibliographical review of Lethbridge's published works.

A Giant is an erudite and mind-expanding tribute to a neglected, although still influential, figure who, as Colin Wilson says, "gave us a glimpse of what we could be".

Neil Mortimer

Fortean Times Verdict

STRIKING MEMORIAL TO A
PIONEER OF THE PARANORMAL

9

Creeping Flesh

The horror fantasy film book

David Kerekes

Headpress, 2003

Pb, 160pp, illus, £13.99/\$17.95

There are fortean faves – *Ritual* (which inspired *The Wicker Man*) and *Ghostwatch* among them – and the contributors really know their stuff, but the main pleasures are the book's obscure facts and rollicking humour. I hadn't known – nor would have guessed – that some of the dialogue of *Killer's Moon* ("Not well received on its release in 1978, and generally no better regarded now.") was by Fay Weldon, according to its director Alan Birkinshaw, who confides: "We had a massive casting session for a three-legged dog." This book is a ripe treat for film nerds.

Val Stevenson

Fortean Times Verdict

LIMITED USE AS A REFERENCE
WORK, BUT VERY APPEALING...

6

Out of time

The fascinating and often fortean story of three of England's most idiosyncratic bands

England's Hidden Reverse

David Keenan

SAF, 2003

Hb, 303pp, index & CD, £35, ISBN 0946719403

For over two decades, Coil, Current 93 and Nurse With Wound have formed a backbone to England's musical underground, and their influence has infiltrated art, music and film the world over.

The bands' combined influences – occultists, eccentrics, writers on the supernatural, visionaries, saints, poets, musicians and artists – stray regularly into the fortean field, and many of the players are no strangers to our kind of phenomena. Current 93's David Tibet had visions of huge crucified Noddies and the Angel of Death escorting a departing soul from a nearby hospital bed, and Coil shared studio space with shared hallucinations of all manner of entities, including Aztec mummies and Babylonian kings, even letting them record whole albums. It's perhaps no surprise that some of them are long-time *FT* readers.

Members of the groups found themselves swept up in the early '90s Satanic Ritual Abuse scare after evangelical Christians paraded one of their performance videos on television as evidence of a Satanic baby-killing rite. Ironically, the film, made in the early '80s while members of Coil and Current 93 were in the band *Psychic TV*, was intended to show how easily media images can be manipulated to alter their meaning.

David Keenan, a regular

contributor to music magazine *The Wire*, weaves a richly-layered, elegantly-written and thoroughly engrossing tapestry which reflects the dense complexity of their combined outputs and clarifies their intentions as artists.

Crucially, Keenan also manages to humanise these often enigmatic musicians. They've come a long way from their origins in the dark satanic mills of the early '80s 'industrial' scene, surviving a vortex of sex, drugs, mysticism and more than occasional madness.

The book might have benefited from a deeper examination of the cultural explosion from which the groups emerged, but it is already heavy enough. It is also beautifully produced – hence the hefty price tag – with a wealth of photographs, and a CD of well-selected pieces by each of the bands.

What horror writer Thomas Ligotti says of David Tibet could be applied to any of the players: "You can take him or leave him but he absolutely stands above criticism because he is completely true to his visions, beliefs, obsessions... evaluation of him in the conventional terms of music or literature (is) beside the point." Their diverse musics are not to everyone's taste, but their expressions of otherness are the key to their enduring appeal and near cult-like following.

Keenan's book is an important reminder of why, in an age of medi(a)ocrity, we should be grateful for their very existence.

Mark Pilkington



Fortean Times Verdict

A COMPELLING JOURNEY INTO
SOUNDS FROM WAY OUT

9

Bodies and blowflies

"Bloated, blasted, burned, buggy, rotten, sawed, gnawed, liquified, mummified": stories and science so real you can almost smell them...

Death's Acre

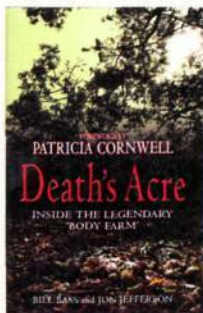
Inside the legendary 'Body Farm'

Bill Bass and Jon Jefferson

TimeWamer, 2003

Hb, 318pp, illus, ind, gloss, appx, £16.99, ISBN 0 316 72527 7

The legendary Bill Bass has looked death in the eye – literally and figuratively. His father committed suicide. He lost his first wife. His mother and his second wife died in quick succession, after which he lived for his work. He married a third wife and will let her and his sons decide what to do with his body, which has survived a heart attack. One option: install his remains at the Anthropological Research Facility he founded at the University of Tennessee in 1981. The Body Farm, as it is better known, was begun in the absence of any forensic anthropological data on the time since death of decayed corpses. "I would need to track death deep into its own territory, observe its feeding



habits, chart its movements and timetables," Bass writes. The ensuing decomposition studies involved donated bodies placed in the woods, in cars, in shallow graves, and in water, and resulted in information invaluable in solving crimes. And he has done exactly that by consulting and testifying. He dispels the myth of friction between forensic scientists

and police. And he comes across in the book as a very personable man.

It's no wonder Bass has won teaching awards. His style is conversational as he weaves personal history, case histories, and scientific epiphanies of his own and his students, who include one third of

the board-certified forensic anthropologists in the US. Bass is the first to acknowledge when his students surpass him. He also admits his own shortfalls, for instance once mistaking the body of a Confederate soldier for a modern murder victim. And Bass and Jefferson sprinkle the book with collegial humour: DNA evidence gathered from cigarette butts is "one more way smoking can kill you." In his profession, "give me a hand" means sever and bag one from the victim for later fingerprinting.

The bodies Bass has observed over the last 40 years have been "bloated, blasted, burned, buggy, rotted, sawed, gnawed, liquified, mummified, or dismembered." He treats us to stories about floaters, adipocere, trophy skulls, and hair mats. There is only a single mention of dermestid beetles, but maggots – whose inevitable mention begins on

page 91 – wriggle their way through the book (and the bodies).

By mid-1999, the Body Farm had processed 300 corpses, compiling a database and collecting a documented modern skeletal collection. Bass and the Body Farm have seen their share of controversy. Having excavated some 5,000 Great Plains burials earlier in his career, Bass was known to Native American activists as "Indian Graverobber #1." There have been protests at the Body Farm and objections to the exposure of veterans' bodies. But Bass has thoroughly demonstrated the need for such a facility. And it has only benefited from association with best-selling crime-writer Patricia Cornwell, who used the location and the knowledge gleaned from its breathing and non-breathing inhabitants in one of her novels. The publicity has been distracting, but body donations are up (check web.utk.edu/~anthrop/index.htm if you're interested).

Bill Bass views tragic crimes as puzzles to solve. In his line of work he admits that there are no happy endings, just "grim satisfaction". Although crime-solving TV programmes may idealise the field, he welcomes the spotlight on forensic anthropology's role in bringing killers to justice and in identifying the dead, a challenging task in the joint effort to sort out the 339 corpses on the grounds of Georgia's Tri-State Crematory (see **FT158: 6-7**). By the time that story is relayed, we are entirely convinced of the profound differences between the Body Farm's purposeful planting and Tri-State's negligent dumping of corpses, and how the former helps solve the latter. We have become students of Bass.

Christine Quigley

Fortean Times Verdict

GLOOPY, GRISLY AND VERY ENGAGING

9

The Mammoth Book of Prophecies

Damon Wilson

Constable & Robinson, 2003

Pb, 501pp, £7.99, ISBN 1841196924



There has not been a comprehensive study of prophecy for some time and this certainly fits the bill. Wilson divides the subject into two main

parts: prophecy proper, and precognition. The first is a pretty good briefing on the oracles and prophets, beginning with Roman and pre-Roman visionaries, and ending with Jesus and Mohammed. The second deals mainly with characters from Yorkshire's Mother Shipton and Scotland's Brahan Seer, to Nostradamus and Edgar Cayce. More modern are Wolf Messing (who worked for Stalin) and Jeanne Dixon (who sat for the Kennedys). Wilson avoids the usual credulous worship of these 'great names' and leavens his presentations with just the right amount of questioning.

A brief third section closes the book and is concerned with precognition of danger. Rick Rescorla, a security officer for Morgan Stanley, foresaw a car-park bomb in the World Trade Center in 1990. Three years later, when the attack occurred, Rescorla coordinated the evacuation of 20 floors and was the last man to leave the building. In the late 1990s, Rescorla began warning about the possibilities of suicide attacks on NY city buildings. He was in the South Tower on 9/11 when the first plane hit the North Tower and began the evacuation contrary to Port Authority advice that workers remain at their places. Thanks to him, nearly 3,000 were saved before the second plane hit the South Tower. He was last seen heading back in and died in the building's collapse. Rescorla never claimed to be psychic, but he constantly worried about the potential danger and was alert to it. If he was prescient, it took a very practical form and Wilson rightly calls Rescorla a "prophet for our age".

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

A GOOD INTRODUCTION TO A COMPLEX SUBJECT

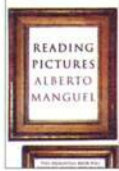
7



Reading Pictures

Alberto Manguel

Bloomsbury 2003
Pb, 352pp, illus, £18.99, ISBN 0747565562



Art attracts much tendentious rambling dressed up as criticism. The language of art criticism is increasingly abtuse,

making the language of art increasingly impenetrable. In these wonderfully entertaining and enlightening essays, Alberto Manguel tries to "read" not only pictures but other works of art – sculpture, mosaic, photography, architecture. Whether or not he succeeds is another question (one which Manguel modestly deflects), but the attempt is brave and gives these glittering essays a common thread that acts as a sort of backbone.

As befits a friend and fellow countryman of Jorge Luis Borgés, Manguel displays a dizzying erudition. From the emergence of the "undeserving poor" in Renaissance Europe, to the utopian architectural dreams of C-N Ledoux, to the "hairy child" Tagnina and her family (who were a sort of resident freakshow in 16th century European courts), to the ancient roots of the refusal to communicate the incommunicable which lies at the heart of abstraction, Manguel's book can equally well be read as a primer on the history of images and of forgotten histories.

He has a sympathy for the forgotten – the female artist Lavinia Fontana who painted Tagnina and was seen as almost an equal monster, an unknown soldier in the mosaic of Alexander the Great defeating Darius at Issus trying to catch a glimpse of himself in his shield before dying, "trying to see who he is." Manguel combines erudition and empathy so well that neither is ostentatious nor smacks of an effort to persuade the reader how clever or what a nice man he is.

Well illustrated, *Reading Pictures* is a highly recommended treasure trove of wonder, fascination and stimulation.

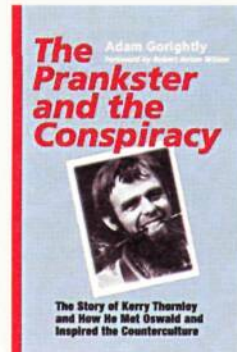
Seamus Sweeney

Fortean Times Verdict

THE SORT OF BOOK WHICH GIVES ART CRIT A GOOD NAME **9**

Just 'cos you're paranoid...

...it doesn't mean that someone's out to get you. The co-founder of the Discordian Society was more a casualty of the counterculture



The Prankster and the Conspiracy

The story of Kerry Thornley and how he met Oswald and inspired the counterculture

Adam Gorightly

Paraview Press, 2003
Pb, 290pp, illus, bib, notes, \$16.95/£11.50
ISBN 1 931044 66 X

About halfway through this book I started asking myself why I was reading it. The press release informed me that Kerry Thornley was one of the "1960s counterculture's most fascinating figures" and responsible for bringing the term 'paganism' into wide use. He also inspired Robert Anton Wilson's and Bob Shea's metafiction trilogy *Illuminatus!*; and, with Greg Hill, was co-creator of the spoof religion *cum* mindgame called the Discordian Society, a haven for psychedelic anarchists and other consensus reality dropouts. Thornley's credentials, then, seemed promising, and I was curious to find out about a seemingly major 1960s character who, to me at least, had so far remained a dark horse. But although Gorightly quickly places Thornley at the centre of several happenings, Thornley's activities left me with a distinct feeling of "So what?" However I soon saw what this book is really about. Like other readers, I sometimes find myself

prey to a morbid fascination with seeing how low the poor soul at the centre of a sad story might sink. Thornley's trajectory from early 60s dada prankster to certifiable paranoid schizophrenic is an often entertaining but wholly regrettable cautionary tale about the dangers of ferreting out the increasingly implausible strands of a nonexistent conspiracy.

Thornley's downfall was to have known Lee Harvey Oswald during his time in the US Marines. Through this, and through his vociferous criticisms of JFK, he was drawn into the knotty world of Jim Garrison's investigations into the alleged conspiracy behind Kennedy's death. For someone with an already tenuous grip on reality, this had disastrous consequences. Thornley had a voracious but flighty mind, downing large helpings of Marxism and Ayn Rand without a burp, turning from conservative libertarian to radical anarchist between two puffs of a spliff. To Gorightly this argues for Thornley's philosophical 'extremism'; others, like myself, might see in it an inability to follow through a set of ideas beyond their initial cerebral thrill. Thornley's fickleness however, combined with a 60s predilection for powerful psychedelics, made him a good candidate for paranoia. His impulsiveness forged connections between disparate materials: strange meetings with dubious characters, ambiguous conversations about mysterious events. Added to this was his supposed likeness to Oswald himself, something, I have to admit, I don't gather from the photos in the book. Although ostensibly a writer, Kerry drifted in and out of menial jobs and increasingly found himself on the margins of society. At one time he lived in a refurbished chicken coop; on another occasion, it was a

storm drain. Drugs, solitude and an already suspicious mind helped Kerry to reinvent his back story. At some point, he was subject to the manipulations of the CIA. Radio receivers were implanted in his head and his likeness to Oswald was put to good use. The weave of absurdities has a certain hypnotic pull and for all its madness – or because of it – makes a good read. But unless your own mind works along the lines of Kerry's, it doesn't take long to realise that at some point along the way he checked out of reality and left the rest of us behind.

Like most paranoid schizophrenics, Kerry saw conspirators everywhere, even among his close friends. Robert Anton Wilson, he believed, had been murdered and a substitute put in his place. Greg Hill, a friend of many years and fellow Discordian, pleaded with him to get help. Hill's solicitations were ignored and his name entered on the list of suspects. The powers behind Kerry's mind control ranged from some unspecified military industrial complex to occult Nazis. The hipster capable of uniting capitalism and communism without batting an eye had no problem in finding the subtle connections between any number of hidden hands. Like other 60s figures, Kerry threw himself into an assortment of lifestyles; sex was at the centre of most of these, and his tastes included inanimate objects (there is a photograph of him getting intimate with a chair) as well as pædophilia. This last is a reminder of how easily 60s liberationism could drift into darkness, something that Kerry, with his head full of voices, knew all about.

Gary Lachman

Fortean Times Verdict

ONE FOR FANS OF POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE... **5**

Toothsome treat

A forgotten Hammer treasure returns

Captain Kronos Vampire Hunter

DVD DD Video, £15.99 Dir Brian Clemens, UK 1974

The early 1970s saw Hammer Films attempting to inject as much new blood – and heaving flesh – into its productions as the censors would allow, resulting in some of its most memorable, if not financially successful, releases. *Demons of the Mind*, *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde* and *Hands of the Ripper* all stand as bold and inventive films in their own right, while at the other end of the quality scale, the likes of *Dracula AD 1972* and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* are not without their charms.

Captain Kronos, shot in 1972 but not released until 1974, falls somewhere between these two stools. A curious hybrid of swash-buckling adventure and Gothic vamp-fest, set in an unspecified middle-European village, it feels like the pilot to a sadly non-existent TV series. This is perhaps hardly surprising, as writer-director Brian Clemens had been a writer and producer on *The Avengers* and *Danger Man*.

Kronos (played by inscrutable Aryan beefcake Horst Janson) and the hunchback Professor Grost (an enthusiastic John Cater), are summoned to a village where beautiful young women are being reduced to horribly withered corpses by an evil hooded entity. En route, the aromatic (if you like the smell of garlic, that is) duo pick up the ever-charming Caroline

Munro, who spends a lot of time sitting around smiling to herself before bedding the Captain and ultimately serving as bait for the vampiric scourge. Kronos himself is the strong silent type, preferring to engage with people from behind his sword, and leaves the audience, and Caroline Munro, in the company of the sardonic Grost as he sets vampire traps and chuckles to himself.



The film has a character of its own that sets it apart from Hammer's usual horror fare, coming across as engagingly fresh, even innocent, though it's not without its gallows humour and eerie moments. The studio

deliberately sought an AA rather than an X rating for *Captain Kronos*, perhaps explaining its lightness of touch, but in the end confined the film to an early grave, releasing it on a double bill with a reissue of a Shaw Brothers martial arts film. As a result, it has always remained something of a lost treasure.

A genuine British genre curiosity, it's great to see *Captain Kronos* getting this fresh airing on DVD, complete with commentaries and excellent booklets containing rare publicity stills and detailed production notes.

Mark Pilkington

Fortean Times Verdict

WELCOME AIRING FOR THIS HAMMER CURIO

8

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen

Dir Steven Norrington, US 2003
DVD 20th Century Fox, £15.99



Special effects boffin turned director Steven Norrington apparently has a new film in pre-production. This is a great shame; on the strength of this abomination, he

should never be allowed to work again.

Not being a great consumer of 'graphic novels', I have never read Alan Moore's original tales of adventure set in an alternative Victorian age and populated by some of the era's best known literary figures. However, I have it on good authority that they are erudite, witty and playfully intertextual re-readings of some of the essential works of our lost Empire, from Rider Haggard's *Allan Quatermain* series to Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*.

I'm sure that Mr Moore's readers, having seen similar travesties of his work on the 'big screen', will have the good sense to avoid this latest crime against both devotees of the comic book and the much put-upon cinema-going public, but if other, less well informed souls should think watching *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* a good idea, let this serve as a solemn warning to them.

All that is worst in contemporary cinema – excessive and imagination-sapping CGI effects, a succession of crassly unfunny one-liners masquerading as a script, Mr Connery sleepwalking through yet another performance as a simulacrum of himself – is here, and here, as they say, in spades. A playful, post-modern, re-interrogation of popular texts can be hugely successful – witness Kim Newman's splendid *Anno Dracula* for one – but this presupposes some engagement with, and understanding of, the texts themselves rather than the series of misreadings and misrepresentations piled one atop the other by *TLOEG*; should fictional characters ever take to litigation, we'll be seeing some very costly actions being brought against the perpetrators of this particular farrago of inanities.

Lapses in logic, in historical verisimilitude, even in storytelling – all are here *en masse* – can be tolerated if the end result ever takes on a life of its own; but a fundamental lapse in

conviction will undermine any cinematic undertaking – and there's not one iota of conviction apparent in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

This is a film with dollar signs for eyes, shit for brains and a big empty space where its heart should be – joyless, cynical and to be avoided at all costs.
RC Samson

Fortean Times Verdict

STANDS INDICTED FOR SERIOUS CRIMES AGAINST CINEMA

1

The Happiness of the Katakuris

DVD Tartan Asia Extreme £19.99

Dir Takashi Miike, Japan 2001



Even in a career notable for its riotous, genre-splicing experiments, *The Happiness of the Katakuris* stands out as Takashi Miike's oddest movie by quite a long chalk. A remake of the earlier Korean black comedy *Quiet Family*, Miike's film lifts the original's story of a downshifting urban family who open a rural guesthouse only to find that their guests, a succession of oddballs, have a habit of dying on them. Rather than jeopardise the dream they've worked so hard for, the family pull together and decide to bury the bodies in the woods.

Miike throws in sinister claymation sequences, cod pop-videos and musical numbers and neo-Brechtian visual tricks galore; the result is a film in which you not only don't know *what* will happen next but can't begin to guess how, in cinematic terms, it will be treated.

Such a wilfully promiscuous approach to film-making can have you thinking, at one moment, that this is an utter dog's breakfast of a movie, and reeling in amazement the next. Certainly, in the wrong hands, this could have been an unmitigated disaster: imagine the lame-brained press blurbs – "*The Sound of Music* meets *Night of the Living Dead*" – translated into cinematic reality by a Western 'ironist' and you'd have an idea. Thankfully, though, Miike doesn't think in such PR-friendly formulæ. Yes, there are filmic antecedents here – a debt to Jan Svankmajer being the most blatant – but Miike manages to contrive something refreshingly new out of his throwaway Bunuelian absurdities, Dennis Potter-ish staging of musical numbers and old fashioned tale of a

COMPETITIONS SEE PAGE 65
WIN COPIES OF CAPTAIN KRONOS AND MANGA IN MOTION

family unity triumphing against the odds. The result is largely indescribable, mostly perverse, and definitely worth seeing.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

MIIKE'S ODDEST TO DATE; BOASTS ONE OF CINEMA'S BEST DOGS

9

The Last Great Wilderness

DVD Universal £12.99
Dir David Mackenzie, UK 2001



The greasy Vince (Jonathan Phillips), a Spanish lothario on the run from some thugs, blags a ride from Charlie (Alastair Mackenzie) at a service station. Charlie

grudgingly takes him along. He is, he explains, on his way to Skye to burn down the country retreat of the pop star his wife ran off with. Both men, we realise, are completely consumed by their respective missions, and as we watch their journey we become aware of a tense and unsettling undercurrent of pent-up violence waiting to explode. *The Last Great Wilderness* seems to be setting itself up as a typical odd-couple road movie, but the story soon changes gears.

Just as this unlikely duo begin to bond (in their own twisted way), they run out of petrol and are forced to seek refuge at an eerie hotel in the middle of nowhere.

The odd assortment of inhabitants is initially hostile, and before the men can (or, indeed, we) can figure out what is going on, the movie threatens to turn into a paganistic rural nightmare. However, Charlie and Vince are slowly accepted and become part of a place that turns out to be a haven for damaged souls, run by the well-meaning Rory who administers his own brand of psychotherapy.

Vince, however, fails to escape his past, and the violence that has been simmering erupts in a horrific scene of vengeance. Despite this, the movie ultimately ends on a life-affirming note. By this time, so much weirdness has gone on that it isn't too hard to believe that Charlie can suspend his cynicism long enough to absorb Rory's soul-searching message.

Winnie Liesenfeld

Fortean Times Verdict

CONSTANTLY CONFOUNDS ALL YOUR EXPECTATIONS

7

East versus East

From slapstick comedy to extreme gore, this trio of manga-derived Hong Kong movies has something for everyone



story's hero – in this version a mild-mannered Manchurian street performer living in Russia – is turned into a ruthless assassin with no memories of his previous life – including, of course, the woman he once loved, who inevitably winds up as a witness and, therefore, one of his potential targets. This being the Hong Kong

version, humour, sentimentality and spectacular action replace much of the original's explicit sex and ultra-violent killings. The storyline gets a bit muddled in places, but this is a hugely enjoyable movie, with nice performances from Sam

Hui and Maggie Cheung.

Story of Ricky (aka *Ricky-Oh*, Ngai Kai-lam, 1990) offers the most extreme culture clash of the bunch; the original comic's dystopian, prison-set gore-fest sits particularly uneasily within Hong Kong cinema's usual modus operandi and moral universe, resulting in *Ricky-Oh* being the first non-sex film in the industry's history to receive an '18' certificate. Lead actor Siu Wong Fan was uneasy about starring in such a blood-drenched, brain-spattered anomaly, especially as his considerable martial arts skills were largely relegated to punching out blood-filled mannequins. The scene in which a dying man employs his own intestines as a weapon is fairly unforgettable, and the film has a crude charm, but *Ricky-Oh* really has very little to do with the strengths of Hong Kong cinema and more to do with manga's particular 'theatre of cruelty'.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

A MIXED, BUT FASCINATING, BAG OF CROSS-CULTURAL OFFERINGS

7

Manga in Motion

City Hunter/Dragon From Russia/Story of Ricky

DVD Hong Kong Legends, £24.99

A collection of Hong Kong movies derived from Japanese manga comics is a fascinating opportunity to observe national relations played out through pop culture, and the dance of Chinese and Japanese elements in these three films is an intriguing – though sometimes uncomfortable – one.

Jackie Chan stars in Wong Jin's 1992 *City Hunter*, an adaptation of a popular manga series about a womanising private eye who gets into one scrape after another. It's essentially a very silly action-comedy which attempts to visualise comic-book conventions in cinematic terms and tacks on plenty of more typical Hong Kong martial arts elements. The film is crammed with sight gags, slapstick and outrageous mugging from Chan and his co-stars – but the fight sequences are genuinely inventive and often hilarious – standouts include a nice homage to Bruce Lee, in which Jackie takes on some bad guys in a cinema showing *Game of*

Death and defeats them by copying the Little Dragon's moves from the screen – and a sequence in which Jackie and his opponent are transformed into a series of *Street Fighter II* videogame characters. Such bravura performances serve to demonstrate Chan's absolute pre-eminence in the field of physical comedy and underline his status as the true heir of Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd.

Other elements, though, such as the strain of juvenile, sexist humour running through the film, sit far less comfortably in the context of a cinema that has given us consistently strong female characters and stars. The leering innuendo and barrage of breast jokes, while perfectly familiar to those of us whose cultural heritage includes the *Carry On* films, is one of the areas where *City Hunter's* manga roots provide a less than perfect fit with Hong Kong traditions.

Dragon from Russia (Clarence Ford, 1990) is a loose adaptation of the *Crying Freeman* manga series, already filmed as a Japanese animé title in 1988 and later as a live action movie by Christophe Gans in 1995. The

Combat Mission: Afrika Korps

CDV, Mac/PC £19.99



Battlefront's *Combat Mission* series has already gained a considerable reputation on the back of the previous two instalments – *CM: Beyond Overlord* and *CM: Barbarossa to Berlin*, both released in the UK by CDV – and this latest bulletin from the front line should cement its status as the best tactical WWII combat simulation to have appeared in many years. It focuses on the Mediterranean theatre, from the German airborne assault on Crete to Rommel's North African exploits to the Allies' long slog up through Italy.

It's a turn-based game, although as both sides' orders are carried out simultaneously it could not be said to sacrifice realism to abstract gaming conventions, or to abandon tactical finesse in an RTS free-for-all; if anything, the sense of realism is heightened by the way chains of command break down, unforeseen events or enemy actions come into play and your own men decide whether to fight it out or beat a hasty retreat.

OK, the graphics are a bit primitive by the standards of the latest blockbusters, but this is soon forgotten as battle is joined and you're absorbed in the challenges the game throws up – from small infantry platoon actions in vineyards of Crete to massive armoured battles in the Libyan deserts. With nine nationalities (how often do you actually get Aussies and Kiwis in a game?), more tanks, vehicles and weapons than you can shake a panzerfaust at and enough battles to keep you going well into 2005, *CM: Afrika Korps* can't be recommended highly enough. It is released in Britain by CDV, but you can order it direct (Mac or PC format) from Battlefront.com (and support this excellent independent outfit in the process) for £35.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

INDEPENDENT STRATEGY GEM
WELL WORTH CHECKING OUT

9

The Max Payne factor

An exciting new *Game Noir* for the grown-up boy that dwells within



Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne

Take 2 Interactive, PC, £34.99, PS2 or Xbox £39.99

Max is back. A hallucinogenic prologue in flashback finds Max on a hospital bed with bullet holes in his body and blood on his hands. Next thing you know he's up and running for his life, pursued by balaclava-clad hitmen who simply ignore all those rules about bringing certain types of fruit and firearms onto the ward. Flash further back: Max answers a callout to a warehouse late at night. Within minutes someone – shockingly – is dead and Max finds himself fighting for survival, all guns blazing through hoodlum-infested corridors and stairways.

Fans of the original game will be on familiar territory here: the hard-boiled graphic novel cutaways, the gorgeous looks and slick gaming engine that purrs and roars as if Schumacher is at the wheel; the twisted *Pulp Fiction* storyline; that gorgeous (now better than ever) *Matrix*-like bullet time. And love. And sex.

Enter Mona Sax, latest addition to a growing chorus line of gun-toting pixel babes. Mona shares a dark passion with our leather-caped, wisecracking crusader, although she always seems to be

one step ahead of him, too – at one point quite literally and spectacularly. In between their prickly exchanges Max tries to figure out just what the hell is going on. As do we. Not that it matters much of the time in another stunning, too-busy-trying-to-stay-alive,

third-person shooter from the Rockstar Games stable and Remedy development team. They give us a sequel which improves on its predecessor in every department, lacking only the shock-of-the-new factor (by definition always a one-off) of that first outing which so wowed gamers.

Once again, class wins over sprawling quantity. Those expecting vast levels of gameplay will need to go elsewhere. Never mind the width, Payne fans, feel the quality. You can pack a hell of a lot into a 'New York Minute'. The

dialogue is superb, the digital surround sound pristine. The new Havok 2 physics engine means that objects bumped into will now topple and smash; flying bullets, bodies and Molotov cocktails alike impact on whatever they hit, which makes Max's

virtually real world more, well, virtually real. You even get to control Mona at one point: sniper rifle in her elegant hands, a dark angel to watch over Max's gleaming bouffant. If you liked *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, you'll love this.

Set pieces are magnificent: Max's nightmare; Max in Mona's Fun House (not what you might think!); Max's escape through a blazing inferno; Mona, heard but not seen, having attached a radio mike to her fiercely swept-back

brunette head, guiding Max through a maze of mayhem. It has to be said that (the latter example being a case in point) AI isn't quite up to the breathtaking sophistication of the rest of the game; they move and jump when you shoot at them, but that's about it.

The game proclaims itself as: 'A Film Noir love story' and the dark psychological tangle of Max's mind and the current of sexual innuendo are often very adult and noir-like indeed. The content of the game, as we have come to expect from Rockstar is witty, violent and disturbing, often all three at once. Thus, certain games become more like certain films with each new bar-raising outing; the added attraction is that we actually get to star in them.

Ultimately, games still have a long way to go before they can match the depth and scope of cinema as an experience though. *Max Payne 2* is still essentially a bloody shoot'em up for grown-up boys, who get to play cops and robbers in ways they could well imagine but until now were never able to realise. Is this good or bad? Who knows? It's just a game after all, but so brilliantly rendered that at times you forget and feel you are living it.

Max Payne 2: the fall of Max Payne? No, this rises like a vengeful phoenix from the ashes of last year's dodo game sequels. A Film Noir love story? Even with Mona (and one Detective Winterston) involved, like most character-driven action games it is still a male-centred experience, lacking a consistent female perspective in its dangerous adult world ("No One Lives Forever 1 & 2" came close but was tempered by Austin Powers-type humour). Not quite Film Noir, then. Not quite a criticism either. Hmm, a possible Mona Sax spin-off on the way? Can't wait!

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict

MAX IS BACK – AND BETTER
THAN EVER

9

COMPETITIONS PAGE

MANGA IN MOTION



Hong Kong Legends' latest excellent collection is a triptych of live-action movies inspired by Japanese manga comics and taking in everything from one of Jackie

Chan's funniest films to a brutal and blood-splattered prison story. City Hunter, Dragon from Russia and Story of Ricky are all presented in brand new digitally restored

prints and crisp 16:9 transfers, and each film is accompanied by a host of extras including interviews, behind the scenes footage and original trailers.

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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 was 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."

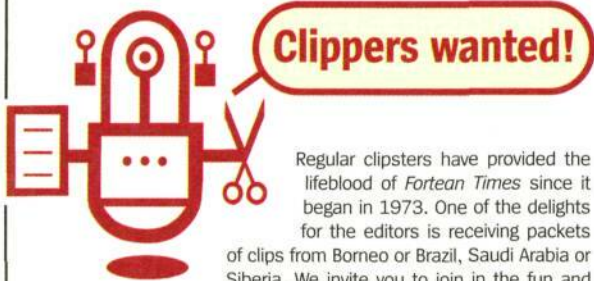
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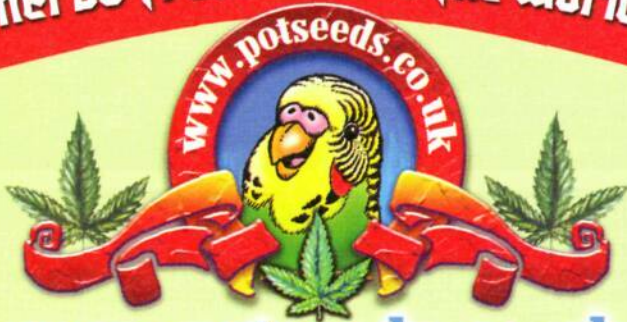
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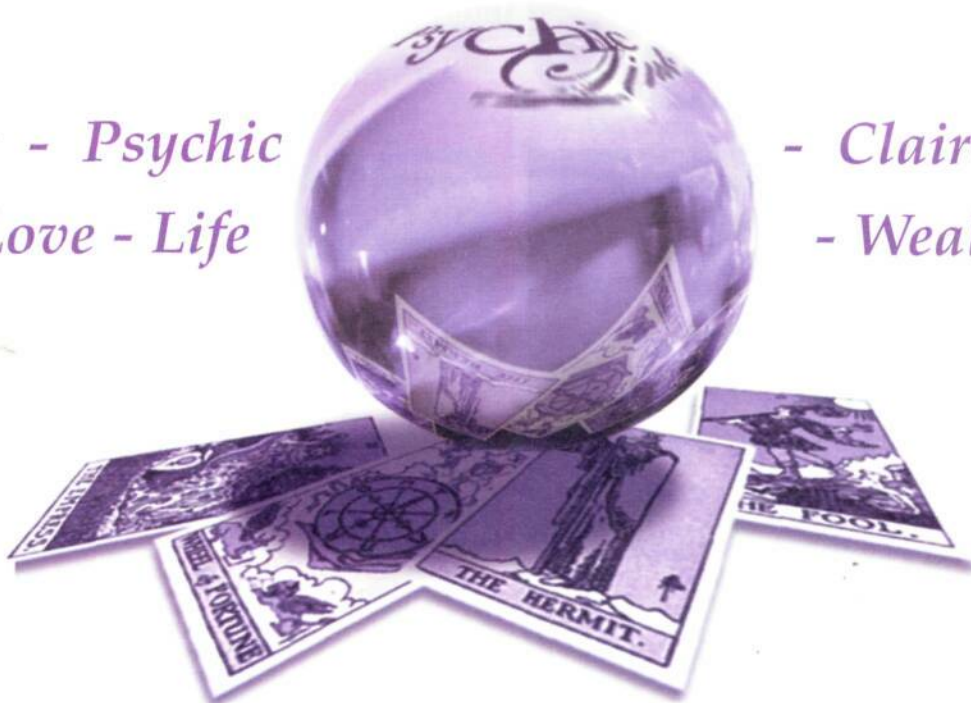
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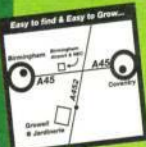
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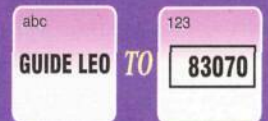
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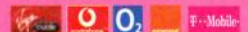
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Dear FT...

letters



Madam Blavatsky

In response to Leslie Price's letter concerning Mme Blavatsky [FT179:74], I'd like to throw in my own tuppenceworth. While Theosophy was, as far as I know, banned by the Nazi administration, Mme Blavatsky's writings found themselves in the paradoxical position of being inspirational to certain high-ranking Nazis, as Christopher Hale rightly said [FT175:37]. This was probably because of her virulent anti-Semitism, as demonstrated ably in her own *Secret Doctrine* – for example in vol.2, pp.240ff, Theosophical University Press Verbatim Edition, California 1974, where she tells us that the Bible shows plainly that the Jewish people are in fact in thrall to the forces of evil. I'd love to read her version of Scripture.

And then there are her racial theories. HPB states that black people are the degenerate remnant of the Third Root Race (ibid. p.162); this, combined with the assertion later on that Victorian scientists were correct in stating that people of African, Caucasian and East Asian ethnicity constituted discrete species (ibid. pp.249f); her suggestion that human souls were not incarnated in human bodies until well into the progress of the Fourth Root Race's evolution (aka the Atlanteans) leads one to conclude that in her cosmology, black people don't even have souls. With East Asians basically being dismissed as the evolutionary dead-end of Root Race Four, this leaves the Aryans as the superior race.

It's not all bad news. The people of the Indian subcontinent were, of course, Aryans, too, and so they were welcome in HPB's New Cosmic Order. So I suppose you could argue that her take on religion was interracial; it depends on your definition of "interracial".

And about Mme Blavatsky's charlatanry: I honestly don't know about the letters; Peter Washington's excellent book *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon* (1993) does retell a wonderful incident where, in HPB's absence, a group of

researchers descended upon the Theosophical Society's Indian HQ at the instigation of a disgruntled house servant. Checking out the room where HPB was wont to produce apports for secret panels, the story goes that HPB's major domo, convinced of HPB's authenticity, banged on one of the walls himself, only to inadvertently open up HPB's secret panel, containing all her "apports"! (I'm afraid I don't have the book to hand). However, it should be added that HPB's real genius was in her charisma – in the above incident, she managed quite easily to convince her followers that this was a wholly necessary deception and that it made no difference. And it didn't.

Mme Blavatsky was a fascinating figure, who deserves to be studied thoroughly, warts and all.

Howard Ingham
Swansea, South Wales

Brainwashing

I enjoyed Barry Kavanagh's review of *The Air Loom Gang* [FT176:59], but take issue with his assertion that many Korean War POWs stuck to their stories when returning

home. The fact that the US government was conducting biological weapons exercises against North Korean and Chinese populations is now proven and backed up by declassified American documents. While some of the confessions made by captured US soldiers were certainly false or embellished, almost all returning POWs recanted their stories under threat of court martial and were held for lengthy de-briefing sessions before being allowed to speak to the US media.

Many soldiers who refused to change their stories out of remorse for their involvement in the germ warfare project were placed for torture using "Project Artichoke" techniques, a programme developed in West Germany by US Intelligence with the assistance of ex-Nazi agents. Project Artichoke was indeed a brainwashing programme, but was more concerned with working information out of captives and then wiping the subjects' memories of their interrogation, rather than programming people with false memories or to carry out actions against their will (something which belongs to the realms of

fiction). After all, information is more useful when your enemy doesn't know you possess it.

Project Artichoke involved one of the earliest uses of LSD in attempting to break down and influence subjects. This unfortunately receives more publicity than the project's massive human rights violations, frequently having fatal results for the suspected Soviet agents held without trial who were used as guinea pigs in its torture research.

Andrew M Potts
Newtown, New South Wales

Near-death memories

I was delighted by David Hambling's report on unreliable memories [FT176:14]. It was nice to see this information presented as a warning to those who investigate strange phenomena. I recently read an article about the experiences of those that have "come back from the dead", which included all of the usual explanations – medical drugs, endorphin release at times of physical stress and so forth. It occurred to me that there might be another explanation for these experiences. By definition, the reports of after-death experiences are the recounting of memories; nobody who is dead can give a contemporary report of the events.

Therefore, bearing in mind the unreliability and suggestibility of people's memories, could it not be that these reports are to some degree constructed by both the dying person and the people who conduct interviews to gain accounts of the experience? Assuming that the majority of these reports are gleaned by those that have a vested interest in promoting afterlife experiences (believers in the afterlife of any persuasion), should we not be very careful about assessing the validity of these reports, despite their undoubted sincerity? I wonder if any work has been done on this thesis and would be interested to know what other readers thought.

Saul
By email

Simulacra Corner



Michele Blazeby of Newark, Nottinghamshire, photographed this paving slab in central Greece. She thought the bird image resembled a long-billed wader.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box address at the top of the page (with a SAE or international reply coupon) and we'll pay a tenner or 20 dollars for any we use.

A family affair

[Editor's note – The following letter was buried unpublished and forgotten in the vaults of Fortean Towers for the last 10 years and only came to light recently. Our apologies to Ros.]

In the summer of 1993 I spent a few days in Edinburgh with a friend. On 1 June we paid a visit to Rosslyn Chapel in the village of Roslin just south of the city, owned by Clan Sinclair – the Lowlands branch rather than the Orkney branch. The chapel is world famous for its symbolic carvings, including numerous Green Men, generally held to reflect continuing pagan interests, and features such as knights mounted two to a horse, which is a Templar motif; a rendition of St Veronica displaying the Mandylion; and numerous Masons' marks.

The most famous feature is the 'Apprentice Pillar', an 18in- (46cm-) diameter sandstone pillar depicting branches, leaves and tendrils spiralling up to the Green Man-infested capital and, at its base, some extremely Norse-looking dragons chewing at what appear to be roots. This is not precisely Christian symbolism; the Sinclairs started off as Jarls of Orkney and it looks as though they retained a certain attachment to the religion of their ancestors. The guidebook disingenuously refers to the pillar as a depiction of the Tree of Life, but it does not say *which* Tree of Life.

There is a legend attached to the pillar about the apprentice who carved it and was murdered by his jealous master – a transparent version of the myth of Hiram Abiff, the foundation myth of speculative Masonry. It's all perfect fodder for conspiracy theories, as in *The Sword and the Grail* (1993), by Andrew Sinclair (a clan member). The book alleges among other things that it was the Sinclairs who discovered America and that the Templars never died out in Scotland, but became the originators of the Scottish Rite Masonry – you know, all the usual stuff.

In 1993 it was not possible to see all the carvings. Many of the most interesting ones – including that of the two knights on one horse and several of the best Green Men – were covered in silicon rubber, because someone was in the process of taking casts. As we inspected the Apprentice Pillar (which, fortunately, was not covered in rubber) one of the cast-makers asked us if there was anything we wanted to know about any of the covered-up carvings. From his accent, he was Canadian, probably French-Canadian. We asked how he became involved in the project, thinking that he seemed a long way from home.

"Oh, I'm family," he said.

"Are you a Sinclair, then?" my friend asked. We wanted to carry on and ask him whether he was from the Orkney or the Lowlands branch and whether he knew anything about why Yggdrasil formed part of the decoration of a Christian chapel.

"No," he said. "I'm Lorraine."

There was a short silence. I think (though I may have imagined this in retrospect) that the man gave us both a speculative glance. It took me several seconds to work out that he was using the word "family" in a slightly different sense from that in which I would have used it. He wasn't family; he

was *Family*. He gave his name as -- Lorraine [full name on file, withheld by request of Ros Calverley] and stated that while he was French-Canadian he now lived in Atlanta, Georgia: "I'm the only Lorraine in the Atlanta phone book".

He talked about how his ancestors had emigrated to Canada in about 1910 in order to ensure the continuation of the bloodline if some disaster should befall Europe. The boys in his branch of the Family were all baptised on the third day and circumcised on the eighth. He talked about learning some things from his grandfather, but being otherwise raised as a Catholic: "We all go to Catholic schools, but if you don't work it all out by the time you're 16, you're disinherited!" He spoke at length about other branches of the Family and the Jacobite connection (via Marie de Guise, the mother of Mary, Queen of Scots) and how care had always been taken down the centuries, whenever things looked dangerous, to ensure at least one branch of the bloodline was sent somewhere safe in order to ensure its continuation. I'm sorry that I can't recall more of what he said verbatim.

He may have been a nutter. This impression was chiefly given by some of the things he said and by his frenetic manner: he was a skinny, hyperactive type who found it difficult to stop talking once he had started (my friend later said that she wondered if he was "high" on the fumes from the casting material, which might have had a similar effect to glue-sniffing). I'm fairly sure, however, that he wasn't *just* a nutter. He really was in charge of the project to plaster-cast all the interesting carvings and several of the other workers were relatives of his: "Family." And his surname really was Lorraine; I heard one of the others call him this. I can't be sure there was no truth in the things he said.

I am a long-time conspiracy buff. I love hearing about new conspiracy theories; I find them extremely entertaining. I have long regarded *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (1982) as the consummate work in this territory, the paradigm of everything a conspiracy book should be: plausible, well-referenced, utterly loopy. However, I had never expected more than merely to read about these things. But now it seems that whether the 'conspiracy' is founded on fact or simply on the desire of the French to be Top Nation, there are people out there who are involved and who believe in it, and who appear to have a network of associates, all related in some way and all belonging to some of the oldest and most aristocratic families in

Europe, who also believe in it. Unless "Lorraine" was a nutter...

Ros Calverley
Wolverton, Buckinghamshire



APPRENTICE PILLAR



A GREEN MAN

Mothball hazard

When I was a young lad, my mother became fanatical about the smell of mothballs and every evening I was asked to crush up two or three and scatter the 'crumbs' onto her pillow. After about a week, she asked me to light her cigarette one morning, but with a rather astounding result. A sheet of fire billowed out from her mouth to the accompaniment of her screams. The flame was extinguished when she shut her mouth, of course, but had the flame 'reverted', so to speak, I assume she would have been severely burned.

Mother ceased her interest in mothballs from that day, but I understand that a constituent of some Victorian perfumes was camphor – the main ingredient of mothballs. Could this have a bearing on some cases of Spontaneous Human Combustion? I believe many SHC victims were smokers.

Andrew Green
Mountfield, Sussex

Electrical drains

I was interested to read Mark Chadborn's response [FT174:71] to the Bill Love article on bizarre electrical phenomena [FT171:48]. I live in an old house and, ever since we moved in, our electrical bills have been horrendous compared with friends and neighbours, including one who runs a carpentry workshop and is using power tools all the time. We have had the house checked; the electricity board merely say the meter is fine and our use is constant. I cook using an oil fired Aga which also furnishes my hot water, so unless I'm inadvertently supplying the whole farm, my bills should be somewhat less than they are.

I agree that the wiring, like everything else about the house, is haphazard and largely inexplicable, and there was a noticeable drop in the bills when my daughter moved out. Even so, maybe there should be more research on the links between "haunted houses" and excessive electrical use. Our "ghost's" latest trick seems to be changing the password on the computer. I'm kind of anxious about what they will think is funny to come up with next.

Lo! Morecroft
By email

Nazi UFOs

I read Kevin McClure's article "Nazi UFOs" [FT175:42-47] with interest, but would like to point out a few areas worthy of further investigation. Concentrating too much on English language sources while neglecting a host of German material leads to some inconsistencies. At the same time throwing all "Nazi UFOs" into one pot does not help.

First of all, I think one has to separate the investigation into three distinct areas: the 'nuts and bolts' area of circular or semi-circular (but otherwise conventional) aircraft; the slightly less 'nuts and bolts' and more 'mad scientist' area of unconventional circular aircraft; and the world of science fiction.

There has been at least one 'nuts and bolts' circular aircraft, the AS6, which didn't really convince in terms of flight performance, but is documented in a handful of photos. Other craft like the Go229 (Horten Flying Wing) were very similar to some UFOs observed after World War II and there are frontal photos of the Me163 in flight. The last two aircraft were captured and evaluated by the allies.

Unconventional aircraft that are similar to the Piasecki 59 'Airjeep' or the old chestnut Avrocar VZ-9 (the 'Omega Diskus', see below) might or might not have been developed in Germany. Most of these are more correctly described as helicopters or ground effect aircraft – the fanciful drawings for Schriever's 'Flying Disc' found in old magazines are more or less describing a rotary wing aircraft (helicopter) with crew compartment in the middle. Anything else I would rate as science fiction, be it the 'Vril' and 'Haunebu' craft, the spaceships heading for Mars or the German bases on the Moon.

What makes it so much more complicated for the layman to follow the arguments about Nazi UFOs is the confusion around those three distinct areas, which also makes it easy for (sometimes self-proclaimed) aviation experts to bring in each and every fanciful notion. A recent German book (based almost entirely on Renato Vesco and thus outdated from the start) still proclaims Canadian

space supremacy; another book features a drawing of a "massive rocket plane" (an 'Enzian' surface-to-air missile, so much for aviation expertise); a former teacher of religion sees German UFOs as responsible for shooting down *Challenger* and sinking the *Kursk* (the jury seems to be out on the *Columbia*); several German writers claimed that Saddam nearly defeated the allies during Desert Storm by using German UFOs and even Nick Cook in *Hunt for Zero Point* hints that the Nazis built a time machine.

In addition to the usual suspects, from the truck driver Schriever to the rocket scientist von Braun, German readers have found a new, if slightly unlikely, hero in the late 1990s: Joseph Andreas Epp. This man also puts paid to Kevin McClure's sweeping statement on page 42 that there are only "fuzzy post-war photos" of Nazi UFOs, as he provided a wartime photo of a Flying Disc in flight – or of another object against the sky. The whole rignarole around the dating of this photo makes it unreliable evidence to say the least.

Who was Epp? Most of what we know about him is filtered down through his own recollections – he was a post-WW1 aviation enthusiast and joined the Luftwaffe in the 1930s, never achieving any prominence anywhere but having, so he claims, a direct line to the corridors of power, namely a "friendship" with Udet himself. He presented his plans and ideas for a flying disc, plus a scale model, to Udet and has seen

this (or another) disc in flight (when he also took the photo mentioned above). After the war, Epp became obsessed (again) with the idea of circular aircraft, even building a massive model of his 'Omega Diskus' in his home (pictorial evidence seems to show a 6ft/1.8m diameter 'thing' in his living room). In his spare time he wrote his

autobiography plus several tracts on German flying discs and their post-war development – hinting at tests in Peenemünde, at German scientists slaving away in the USSR and generally providing no proof.

Epp came to be known widely in the German-speaking world when magazines picked up his stories and presented him as an eyewitness of the 'Reichsflugscheiben' (literally 'Imperial Flight Discs', which sounds better than Nazi UFOs), taking his writings and words as gospel. What was conveniently ignored was the fact that Epp was living in relative poverty (not a problem in itself, but always a good starting point for wild claims); that he was getting on in age (and confusing things, making contradictory claims at times); and that he seemed to have had a history of mental instability. Despite all this he was fêted by the esoteric / conspiracy press, brought out for a coffee with "the other eyewitness" Schauburger (actually Schauburger Junior, but the legend lives!) and became a posthumous bestselling author. His tracts are unbeatable in entertainment value, but do not provide any tangible proof.

Up to now he has, however, been absent from Kevin McClure's excellent investigation into the Nazi UFO myth, as have people like Schneider, Rothkugel, Ratthofer, Gehring, Eckardt and van Helsing – all 'experts' writing on Nazi UFOs in recent times.

Bernd Biege
Dunboyne, Co. Meath, Ireland



Invincible Norse Spears

Concerning Roy Bainton's article "The Spear Carriers" [FT175:48-52], I would like to add that there are similar and corresponding Norse legends about invincible Viking spears and swords. For instance, there is the Norse god Odin's spear called Gungnir, its staff made from a branch of the sacred tree Yggdrasil, its spearhead obtained by Loki and made by the dwarf Dvalin, son of Ivaldi. In battle, it is a merciless slayer of the enemy, never missing its mark, and when thrown always returns to its owner.

The same dwarves also forged the mythical sword owned by Angantyr called Tyrting, which could penetrate iron and stone. Once drawn, this weapon, like Frey's sword, fought by itself and could not be sheathed until it had tasted fresh blood. Associated with swords were the Sun gods, as the shining blades resembled the rays of the Sun, while the glint of lances was likened to the aurora borealis. Many of the invincible weapons have similar origins and attributes, making them almost interchangeable.

Additionally there was a sword called Tyr, and according to legend, "whoever wielded it would conquer the world and come to his death by it." The rune symbol for Tyr, the god of the sword, was often engraved on sword blades. In Roman times, a mysterious stranger (Odin in disguise?) gave the Roman prefect Vitellius the spear, telling him it would bring him glory and great renown. He was soon gloriously elected Emperor of Rome. But Vitellius left the spear unguarded, and it was seized by a German soldier who promptly used it to cut off the emperor's head. Thereafter this soldier was triumphant in battle. When he grew old, the German



secretly buried the spear on the banks of the Danube.

Years later, Attila the Hun was passing the spot when he saw that a cow had wounded its foot. As he drew closer, he saw the spear's point sticking out of the ground. He grabbed the spear and held it aloft, proclaiming that with it he would conquer the world. Attila took as his bride the German princess Ildico (whose father he had slain); on their wedding night the princess, with the spear, slew him in his nuptial bed. For a time the weapon disappeared until it was unearthed by the Duke of Alva (general to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V) who thereupon became skilful in battle. The legend culminates with the sacred spear being guarded by the Archangel Michael.

Another magic sword called Balmung was forged by the renowned smithy Völund. The evil King Nidud of

Sweden captured Völund and stole his sword. Nidud forced Völund to forge weapons and construct a labyrinth for him. (To this day an enigmatic maze in Iceland is known as Völund's House.) One day, Völund cleverly switched swords, leaving a forgery for the king. With his magic sword regained, Völund lured the king's sons into his forge, where he decapitated them and made ornate chalices of their skulls. This is why Scandinavians say "skål!" before they drink.

Völund escaped the grip of the evil king; however, Odin gave his sword to Sigmund. Later, Odin shattered the sword in a rage, but the pieces were gathered up and reforged into a new sword called Gram. Sigurd used this to slay Fafnir the dragon (or possibly one of the last living sauropods). It is said that Völund also forged the mighty sword Joyeuse for Charlemagne.

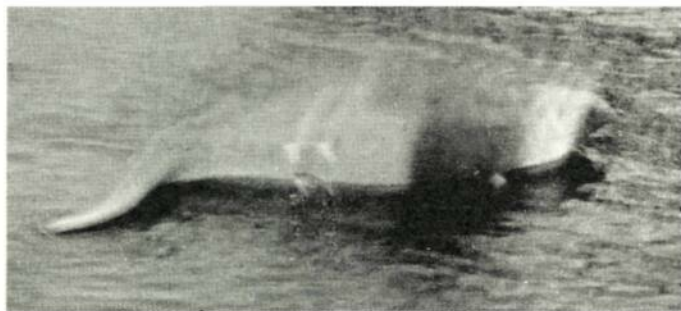
And finally, a hero named Viking, grandson of the trickster Loki, owned a miraculous sword called Angurvadel, whose blows always proved fatal. The blade was inscribed with runes, which were dull until brandished in battle—flaming red like a fighting cock's comb. Viking's descendants became the Berserker Vikings, and in their hoard was a winged lance strikingly similar to the Heilige Lance now preserved in the Hofburg Museum in Vienna. The Norsemen in their dragon ships (shaped like a swimming dragon or pleiosaur) carried the sacred spear to Iceland before going on to discover America. Could the Vikings landing in America be a harbinger of the day when the US would come into possession of the Spear of Destiny? The Germanic legends concerning the Spear of Destiny seem to have much in common with the Norse sagas.

Jeffrey Vallance
Visiting Professor of Art, UCLA, California

First Nessie photo

If Adam Eli Chem really believes the photograph taken by Hugh Gray at Loch Ness in November 1933—widely accepted as the first photo of 'Nessie'—shows a giant squid [FT174:73], he should look again. It is no more mysterious than an out-of-focus snapshot of a swimming dog fetching a stick. The dark shape he supposes to be the photographer's shadow is the black muzzle of a Golden Labrador, with the eyes and right ear easily discernible. I am sure the sinuous shape that runs across the picture is a piece of driftwood formed from a tree root clamped in the dog's mouth. Perhaps the dog actually belonged to Mr Gray!

This identification was pointed out to me in 1985 by Tony Harmsworth, curator of the Official Loch Ness Monster Exhibition in Drumnadrochit, when at the age of 15 I won a trip to Loch Ness. I subsequently assumed this was common knowledge, although I've



never seen an exposé in print. Many experts have expressed their doubts, such as Ronald Binns in *The Loch Ness Mystery Solved* (1985).

Catherine Wallace
Birmingham

Editor's note: Stuart Campbell (*The Loch Ness Monster: The Evidence*, Aquarian Press 1986, p.37) says that the canine interpretation of Gray's photograph is persuasive. Back in 1933, Gray said in the *Daily Record* that it showed "an object of considerable dimensions"; zoological opinion ranged from

bottlenosed whale, shark, to "mere wreckage" or rotting tree trunk—but, curiously, not dog.

Seeing a griffin

In her excellent article on the griffin [FT170:50-55], Mahalia Way says: "Remarkably, belief in griffins flourished without the aid of a single sighting, or mythological tale to tell around the hearth."

Well, believe it or not, I found one. While going through an old Canadian newspaper for 1893, I came across the following. Two

women in Cincinnati, Ohio, were out for a buggy ride to enjoy the autumn air when what they describe as a horrible monster with wings, a beaked head and clawed legs climbed down from a tree and began to pursue them. It left scratches on the rear of the buggy. The people of the vicinity didn't know what to make of it, and nowhere in the article is the idea of a griffin even mentioned. The women were mentioned by name and were apparently well known in the district for their honesty.

How could two individuals in 19th century America be attacked by something that everyone (including Victorian naturalists) had long regarded as being completely mythological? It appears that no one, including the newspaper editor of the day, realised that it was something that should not exist, which adds to the apparent truth of the account.

W Ritchie Benedict
Calgary, Alberta

It happened to me...

First hand accounts from FT readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com



Sketch of best glimpse of creature I had!

Seeing a pixie?

At about 3.30 on a late autumn day, my wife and I were out walking the dog near Stourport on Severn. As the light was fading, we decided to take a short cut home along a disused rail track, overgrown with silver birch. Suddenly my wife looked to her left and said: "S—t, what the hell was that?" I caught a glimpse of an upright two-legged creature about 3-4ft (90-120cm) tall running across the path about 12ft (3.3m) away and disappearing into the trees. It had the appearance of a child, but its head was too large for its body. It moved as fast as a cat running at speed.

I had an overwhelming urge to get as far away as possible, a feeling that I wasn't supposed to bear witness to what I had seen. I legged it, calling to my wife, "Just keep running!" This sketch of the creature is an accurate image burned into my memory.
Amos –
Stourport on Severn, Hereford and Worcester

Action replay

Around noon on 1 October 2003, I was sitting at a traffic light in the left turn lane waiting for the green arrow. I was first in line and there was a lot of lunchtime traffic flowing in both directions across the intersection in front of me. I was staring straight ahead, but I kept an eye on the traffic flowing from left to right as I waited for the left turn signal. I noticed a white 'SUV' crossing the intersection at about 30-40mph (48-64km/h) – and then it "jumped back" about 10ft (3m) and went across again.

I didn't see it jump back, it was just going across – then it was going across again. It definitely wasn't two different cars of the same type. There was a continuous line of traffic moving across at the time. The scene simply repeated itself. Had I blinked, changed the radio station, looked away or up at the light and then back at the traffic, I would have missed it.

It seemed as if a dimension

overlapped or possibly a time warp occurred. It didn't feel like déjà vu – but that's exactly what it was, only in the physical. It reminded me of the scene in the first *Matrix* movie when the cat walks across the doorway, and then repeats itself – the glitch in the Matrix. Any ideas?

Anna Webb
Cincinnati, Ohio

About five years ago my ex-girlfriend was working in a bar in the centre of Dublin. She usually worked until the bar closed and would then walk about a mile home to the flat she was sharing on the outskirts of the city. One night as she was walking home, a car pulled up slowly behind her, the driver pulled down the window and asked her for the directions to a nearby hotel. She gave the man directions, walked home and went to bed, thinking nothing of this brief incident. However, the following night, at exactly the same time, in exactly the same place, the same man, wearing the same clothes asked her for the same directions and headed off that way once again. Needless to say, it freaked the hell out of her as it did me.

Jamie Davis
Dalkey, Co. Dublin

In 1990, when I was about 10, I was walking down the street past my friend's house. Ahead of me, a white van pulled into the driveway of a house. I remember the sound of the engine, then the engine stopping. As I walked past the house, I saw four people get out, walk inside and shut the door. I continued walking and I heard the sound of an engine behind me. I looked backward

and saw the same white van pulling into the same driveway. It pulled up, and the same four people got out, walked inside, and shut the door. You could say this was all just a matter of delayed cognition – though I don't know how, as it was all from a different perspective.
Ryan Egesdahl
Houston, Texas

It's Simon!

In 1998 I was working at a tourist attraction in Manchester when, at the end of a long Thursday, I was getting ready to go to a works party. It was a sunny evening in mid-June. My colleague Chris and I went into the centre of town to get some cash from a machine. We were walking along Deansgate past Demitries when a young boy around 10 years old ran past us. He then turned round and looked for his mother who was some way behind us. In doing this he saw me, screamed "It's Simon!" with a look of complete terror on his face, and shot past us back to his mother.

Chris turned to me and said: "Bloody Hell, mate! What was that about?" I was speechless, and simply laughed the incident off. Though my name is Simon, I had never seen the child before, and couldn't possibly imagine where he would know me from.

At the time I remember saying that he had probably met me at the attraction, but I was an actor, my own name was never used, I had no close contact with visitors, and had only been working there for a few weeks. It puzzles me still.

Simon Garlick
By email

FORTEAN TRAVELLER



30. THE ZOOLOGY MUSEUM, ST PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

DANIEL HUMPHRIES continues his tour of St Petersburg's odder landmarks with a peek at the Zoological Museum's unique collection of woolly mammoths.

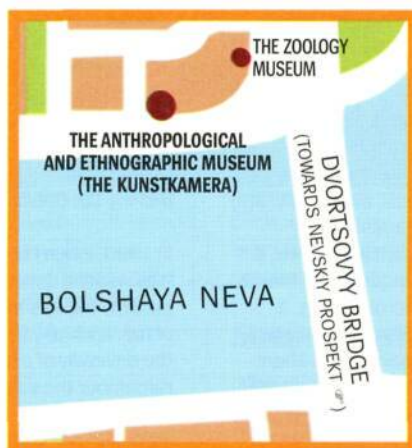


PETER Y. SOBOL/EVERETT COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

The Zoological Institute in St Petersburg was originally a part of the Academy of Sciences and shared its space with the *Kunstkamera*, Peter the Great's gruesome collection of mutants, living and dead (see FT172:76-78). Wonders of the natural world were set alongside its most abominable mistakes in these halls, but in 1832 it was decided to relocate the zoological collection to a museum of its own. Collections were transferred, and a new building sprouted alongside the *Kunstkamera*, a Siamese twin, similarly full of strange jars, dusty rejects and monsters.

Today, the Zoological Museum is the largest of its kind in Europe, and strives to be a serious academic institution. There are some 40,000 animals on display in its halls, and beneath, in the catacombs, another 15 million specimens lurk in boxes on dark, rarely visited shelves. The pride and joy of the museum, though, is its incomparable mammoth collection.

Peter the Great himself was the driving force behind the earliest scientific attempts to study mammoths. In the late 17th century,



stories circulated in St Petersburg and beyond about the monstrous bones and skulls to be found in the eastern territories of Peter's empire. Some said they were the remains of antediluvian giants, which had been swept to Siberia during the flood and preserved under

the permafrost. Travellers to the east, meanwhile, were returning with incredible stories of the terrible behemoths that lived there, feasting on mud and blood.

These tales probably had their origins in the reports of the nomadic Dolgan, the tribe indigenous to the forbidding region. The Dolgan claimed that, while hunting, they came upon huge bones... bones that, on at least one occasion, were "somewhat red, as though... tinged with blood". More terrifying still, they had seen entire monsters in the hills, encased in ice. The Dolgan believed they were colossal moles, which lived beneath the earth, and that their tunnelling was responsible for earthquakes. If the mole-behemoths broke through to the surface, however, the light killed them instantly – hence the fresh corpses in the ice. To gaze upon the face of one of these horrors was to invite death, plague and calamity.

Peter gave Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt the job of travelling across Siberia and unravelling some of the mysteries of the frozen lands. For many years, Gottlieb sent back examples of flora and fauna and descriptions of native customs, but he saw no monsters. Then, in 1727, while exploring the area around the Indigirka river, he met Michael Molochowicz, a garrulous Pole who claimed to have seen a mammoth. Molochowicz provided the German scientist with a sketch and description, which was duly dispatched to the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg. Later, Messerschmidt managed to acquire a skull, tusks and some hair, which became one of the first exhibits of the *Kunstkamera*. His findings eventually made their way into *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, volume 40 (Jan-June 1737) in a paper entitled 'Observations on the Mammoth Bones and Teeth Found in Siberia'.

Subsequent expeditions uncovered more bones, tusks and skulls, and these too were added to the collections of the Academy. But the Dolgan's monsters remained elusive.

Then, in 1799, a hunter, one Osip Shumahov, was tracking an animal along the banks of the river Lena in Siberia when he stumbled upon a massive block of ice. He stopped, startled and mystified by the huge, black object he saw buried within. Shumahov was a patient man. He waited a year before returning. The block, however, had not yet thawed, and he still could not identify the thing in the ice. Undaunted, he returned the following year. This time the block had thawed enough for him to make out an enormous mammoth. It wasn't until 1804, however, that it thawed completely and he found the creature lying on the bank of the river. Shumahov wasn't particularly bothered about the monster's curse: he cut off its tusks, and brought them to the market in Yakutsk, where he sold them to a merchant for the huge sum of 50 roubles.

Two years later, MI Adams, a scientist from St Petersburg, arrived in Yakutsk. He met the merchant, who told him the story and led him to the river, but when they arrived they found that the beasts of the forest had made a feast of the 60,000-year-old carcass. A few patches of skin, the eyes (dried), the feet, one ear and the mammoth's brain were all that remained of the fleshy parts, but the skeleton was intact. Adams brought it back to St Petersburg where, in 1808, it was mounted and put on display in the Academy of Sciences.

It's still on display today, alongside two other complete mammoth skeletons. They march through the centre of the hall, three mighty



LEFT: "They march through the centre of the hall, mighty behemoths that tower over the smaller beasts."

hunter named Tarabikinrezovka. He found it with its huge hairy head and forelegs sticking out of the ice. Its nose, he reported, was the length of a year-old reindeer calf.

This time, however, the scientists in St Petersburg were notified much faster, and in 1901 the Academy sent Otto F Herz to excavate the remains and oversee their transportation to the imperial capital. It took a month to excavate the mammoth and then another four to transport it back: 10 pony-drawn sleds had to haul the cut up carcass 2,000 miles south to the Trans-Siberian Railway, which hardly provided one of the fastest train rides in the world. When the Berezovka mammoth finally arrived in the capital its stinking cadaver was treated to an audience with the royal family. The Tsar was impressed by his 45,000 year old visitor, but the Tsarina held her nose and asked to be taken "as far away from this as possible."

The Berezovka was the first mammoth to have its age calculated by counting the rings in its tusks: it was 45 when it died. Scientists found 241 pounds of undigested vegetation in its gut, and over 40 different species of plant. It had been deep-frozen almost instantaneously, before the enzymes in its stomach had begun to break down the food. They found too that several ribs, a shoulder blade and the pelvis were broken. The long bone in the right foreleg, meanwhile, had been crushed into about a dozen pieces.

The creature had spent its last moments of consciousness in excruciating pain, struggling to escape from the pit into which it had fallen. The director of the Zoological Institute instructed his specialists to preserve the mammoth forever, in this final position of agony.

In the display, he sits heavily on his backside, his spine brutally curved and his eyes wide open, glaring in alarm through the glass. His forelegs rest upon rocks as he struggles to lift himself up. He has a huge bulbous head and his trunk is half-rotted. In many places the hair has worn off, but around the lower areas, you can see long, coarse ginger strands. He seems rather stunted, certainly not as tall as his skeletal brothers.

For a long time I accepted the mummy's authenticity unquestioningly. The rotted trunk was the detail I found particularly compelling. It was so bizarre I simply assumed it was real – why would the museum fake such an ugly and unpleasant detail, which only served to make its prize exhibit look rather sorry and pitiful? I reasoned: animals had been protruding from the ice when the rest of the body was frozen, and thus had decomposed while everything else was preserved.

When I returned to the museum recently, however, I took a good hard look at the mammoth and was assailed by doubts. Firstly, he was far too small. Some parts looked as if they had been moulded from clay. I studied the surrounding cabinets and found, in one of them, a small black and white photo, in which three little men wrapped in furs are posing in the cold Siberian void beside the carcass. The skull was exposed: animals had eaten it. Suddenly, I realised that the rotted trunk was completely fake, simply part of a rather perverse 'imaginative reconstruction', the bane of my museum-going life. I walked around him, looking for other signs of outrageous falsification.

The most alarming thing was his colossal

behemoths that tower over the smaller beasts languishing behind glass – imposing – incredible visitors from another time. It's a thrill to walk down the line, peering through their cavernous ribcages, looking up at the enormous leg-bones, the colossal skulls, the astonishing twists of the 4 m (13ft)-long tusks. Pieces of leathery hide still cling to one side of the front mammoth's skull, complete with a few strands of straggly hair. A hole in the skin gives the illusion of an eye, peering down. What it's peering down at is the rotted stump of a mammoth's foot – 53,000 years old, standing behind glass like an ice-age umbrella stand.

Here there are no plaster reconstructions, no fragments with imaginative additions, such as one finds in other museums. The bones are black, thick and heavy. Everything you see is 100% *bona fide* dead monster. The power, the colossal strength of the Dolgan's ice-moles is still tangible even 50,000 years after their demise.

It is estimated that more than half a million tons of mammoth bones lie buried along a 600-mile stretch of Arctic coast in Siberia. In fact, there is so much of the stuff that Russia legally exports a set quantity of it each year. One of the buyers is Leonardo D, a German firm that manufactures spectacle frames from mammoth ivory. These are available from upscale eyewear boutiques around the world.

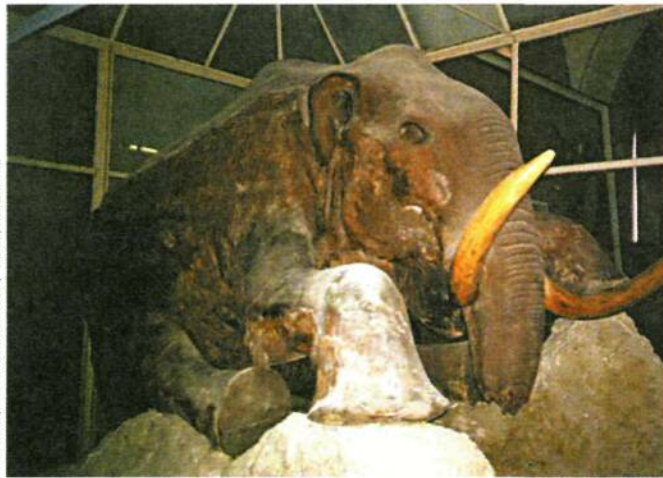
After the line of skeletons you come to the real



The Berezovka mammoth, from 1900, is the real jewel of the museum

jewel of the museum: the Berezovka mammoth. Since 1800, at least 11 expeditions have excavated mammoth remains where the flesh was still preserved. The Berezovka specimen, found in 1900, was the most succulent of them all.

It was discovered on the banks of the river Berezovka, a tributary of the Kolyma, by a Yakut



ABOVE LEFT: The Berezovka mammoth.
 ABOVE: The museum's resident thylacine.
 LEFT: The author beside the cabinet of crows.

penis, which some small children were having a good chuckle over. It is a truly fearsome organ. Three feet long, it sits on the rocks between the mammoth's legs, erect, but flattened horizontally into an unlikely cudgel shape. Its excited state suggests he died of suffocation. For those who collect such facts, at least three other, similarly aroused mammoths have been found in the hills of Siberia. The more I looked, however, the more I doubted that this shiny, smooth object could be his original inflamed member, even taking into account the monstrous things taxidermy can do to an animal.

Perhaps some of the bones beneath his exterior or parts of the hide are authentic. Perhaps nothing is. Or perhaps, like the Lenin thing lying in the mausoleum in Moscow, the Berezovka mammoth is half mammal, half synthetic replicant.

In addition to the Berezovka, the museum has two baby mammoths. The best preserved, Dima, is slightly flattened and emaciated, indicating he was already starving to death when he drowned in a lake. He was found in the Sakha republic in 1977, by gold miners. Several of them fell mysteriously ill after the discovery, recalling the ancient Dolgan superstition that looking a mammoth in the face brings bad luck.

Masha, the most recent mammoth to be added to the museum's collections was discovered in 1988 by a sailor. Her flesh was grey and dry, and she looks pretty rotten. Unlike the tasty Berezovka, who was immediately set upon by the hunter's dogs, no animal, it seems, would touch her.

Although the main attraction is the mammoth display, the museum affords the visitor other pleasures. At the entrance are the oldest exhibits, which betray its origins in Peter's enthusiasm for the bizarre and the dead. To the left, by the stairs is an enormous anaconda, now going on 300 years old. The centuries have not been kind. It's difficult to tell which end is which, as it lost its head long ago and now resembles nothing so much as an enormous, mutant earthworm.

Mounted beside it is Peter's beloved horse, Lizeta. In the Russian Museum you can see a painting of the same horse rearing up, strong and proud, and bearing little resemblance to this sad monster, which has lost most of its hair and now stands stiffly with huge glass eyes bulging out of its head. Facing Lizeta is Peter's hunting dog, Tyrant, and another little dog, also called Lizeta. Balding and bursting with sawdust, they are bizarre, and so distanced from life that it's difficult to believe they were



DANIEL HUMPHREYS

The most alarming thing was his colossal penis, three feet long

once loved and petted by the great Tsar.

Beyond them is the huge skeleton of a blue whale, which is impressive, but rather distracting. You might be so overwhelmed by its size that you could miss the three little yellow jars sitting on a table at the top of the stairs. They're from the *Kunstkamera*, and contain mutant animal foetuses. There's a duck with four legs, a pig's trotter with five toes, and a calf with a huge tangle of legs under its body. I counted eight. Not allowed to rot and vanish, forbidden even the company of their fellow abortions next door, they languish on a little table, as if someone left them there a century ago and forgot to come back.

The rest of the museum is an unrelenting onslaught of torment and horror, an endless tableau of violent death, of tearing, gouging, and silent screams. Baby foxes devour a goose,

a mongoose tears the throat from a snake, and a snake swallows a fox whole. Elsewhere a huge white bird is feeding a struggling frog to its young, a fox is attacking another bird, and lizards are devouring mice. This is nature red in tooth and claw, or it would be if the animals contained anything except sawdust.

Even those not actually engaged in killing are menacing and aggressive enough. A king-sized Japanese crab lunges at you, claws swinging, ready to rip you open. And, whereas living crocodiles tend to lie around in swamps all day doing nothing, the dead ones here all snap their jaws, roaring, hungry for the kill. Next to them, laid out haphazardly, is a pile of skulls belonging to their brethren.

After all this, at the end of the hall stands the cabinet of crows. Thirteen different types of crow, from huge Japanese hooded specimens to the more familiar British garden crow, are presented sitting in a dead tree, like an international symposium of scavengers come to gloat over some triumph.

The Zoological Museum is excellent value – entrance costs the equivalent of one US dollar. It is located on Vasilievsky Island, at #1 Universitetskaya Naberezhnaya, across the bridge from the Hermitage. It is closed on Fridays. The nearest metro is Nevsky Prospekt/Gostiny Dvor. Those who find themselves in Yakutsk, in the Siberian Republic of Sakha, may want to pay a visit to the Museum of Mammoths, which is entirely devoted to the beasts. **FT**



DANIEL HUMPHREYS was born in the Kingdom of Fife, Scotland in 1974. He has lived and worked in Russia, Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic. Currently based in Moscow, he's working on various projects, among them a book about some of the more bizarre republics that constitute the Russian Federation.

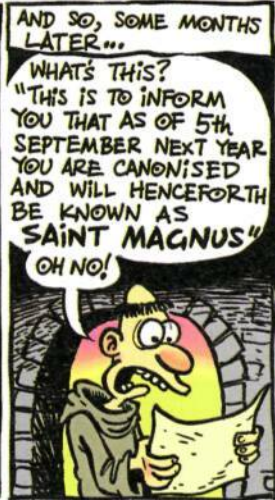
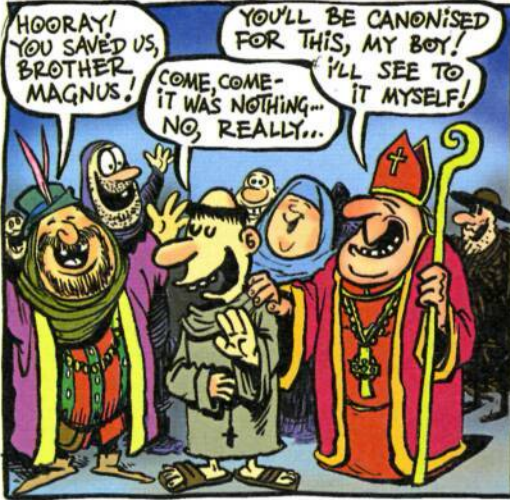


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 or to david_sutton@dennis.co.uk

PHENOMENOMIX

HUNT EMERSON

SCENE - THE PAST! SEPTEMBER 5TH, A TOWN IN GERMANY...



BUT IT WASN'T ALL LOCUSTS, BLIGHT AND INCLEMENT WEATHER -- IN 1729, 1730 AND 1749 THE PETERS CHAPEL IN LUCERNE WAS INFESTED WITH WEEVILS...



THE TOWN COUNCIL ORDERED ANNUAL PROCESSIONS TO BE MADE ON ST. MAGNUS' DAY TO EXPEL THE INSECTS...



BUT THEN IT WAS BACK TO...



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 1974

Two months back, I told of a water-monster spotted in Peru's Lake Nahuel Huapi. That was in January 1994; we reported another, much earlier sighting, in March 1974. Villagers in Peru's northern region around Los Angeles Lake reported that a "fat, shiny, silver" monster came out of the icy lake on moonlit nights to devour sheep. Interestingly, the incidents began after a strong tremor that caused some landslides near the lake. **FT4:17**

The rapturous welcome to the young spoon-bender Uri Geller was beginning to fade. This month, claiming to have received death threats, he fled back to Israel, where he was greeted by a new controversy. A Swedish woman blamed him for her pregnancy. Her copper IUD coil bent, she said, while watching Uri on TV. Her doctor confirmed that it was quite buckled and rendered useless as a contraceptive device. No legal suit followed and Uri toughed it out. **FT5:6**

Passers-by routinely ignored the old tramp who sat on the wall outside the railway station at Kingston, Surrey. Ron Hallard would have passed by too, but something made him look up. The tramp was his long-lost dad. The old man had been traumatised by the WW2 blitz and finally disappeared in 1958 without a word to anyone. Ron had made many attempts to find him over the years, but always drew a blank. **FT5:15**

MARCH 1984

Bald farmer John Coombs reckoned he had found the long-anticipated cure for baldness. When he carried sacks of feed to his cows, dust would settle on his pate to be licked off by cows as he bent to feed them.

SOON HAIR WAS SPROUTING AGAIN AFTER MANY YEARS

Soon hair was sprouting after an absence of many years. John advised caution, however, as cows' tongues are rough and just as likely to pull out new growth. **FT42:19**

New York is not the only city haunted by errant crocodiles in its sewers. This month, a 1m- (3.3ft-) long young croc was found in one of the many old dark tunnels under Paris. A posse of 10 firemen trapped it and took it to the Jardin des Plantes, where it was displayed in a vivarium. **FT42:26**

This month also broke news of one of the most interesting – and tragic – of modern poltergeist cases. The disturbances in the home of the Resch family in Columbus, Ohio, included the full repertoire of objects

moving or switching on, disappearing, flying through the air, noises and electrical interference. In particular, objects would fly at Tina, their adopted 14-year-old daughter. Priests were called (to no avail) and a stream of reporters camped there day and night, and their reports recorded many more baffling incidents. Tina was famously snapped, sitting in a chair as a telephone receiver flew past her. Matters were not helped when Tina was observed to have shoved and thrown a few things herself. She was annoyed, she confessed, at the continued presence of the reporters. Top CSICOP guns Paul Kurtz and James Randi visited with the declared intention of proving the phenomena fraudulent; Mrs Resch would not let them in.

Tina was studied by psychic researcher William Roll, who declared that he had observed objects sliding, falling and flying. Tina went on to have two failed marriages and in 1992 was convicted of the murder of her daughter. Experts remain divided about the case: for some, the fact that Tina had seen the movie *Poltergeist* six times is enough to dismiss her; others see the phenomena as being precisely what might be expected from an emotionally disturbed but intelligent adolescent. **FT42:10-12; 83:16**

MARCH 1994

Ten years ago this month, a bombshell was dropped on those who believe in Nessie, as two researchers (Dave Martin and Alastair

Boyd) revealed that surgeon Robert Wilson (who took the famous photo of Nessie in 1934) had known Nessie hoaxer Marmaduke Wetherell. Martin and Boyd further alleged that

Wetherell and his model-maker stepson Christian Spurling made a floating model monster. This model was photographed and the images transferred secretly to Wilson's film prints. Some doubt the validity of this explanation, pointing to the differences between Wilson's photo and the unlikelihood of there being two different top-heavy models. **FT76:15**

The US embassy in Guatemala was advising Americans not to travel in the country after rumours spread that Americans were kidnapping local children for their body parts. One tourist, Melissa Larson, had to be rescued by police from a potential lynching. The next day the police station was burned by a mob and the army called in to quell the riot. Two other foreigners had narrow escapes from frightened mobs and, in April, a woman was hacked to death after stopping to talk to a child. "Unregistered nurseries" and "bandit clowns" were also targeted in rumours. **FT76:48**

COMING NEXT MONTH

Mission to Mongolia
In search of the fabled Death Worm

Safari to Sumatra
On the trail of the Orang Pendek

Chasing Champ
New light on an old lake monster

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