



50 YEARS OF CONSPIRACY THEORY

THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN F KENNEDY THE HISTORY OF A MYSTERY
PARANOIA PORN? THE UNSTOPPABLE RISE OF CONSPIRACY CINEMA
THE TIN FOIL HAT MACHINE CONSPIRACY THEORY'S OUTER LIMITS

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OCTOBER 14

ARROW FILMS



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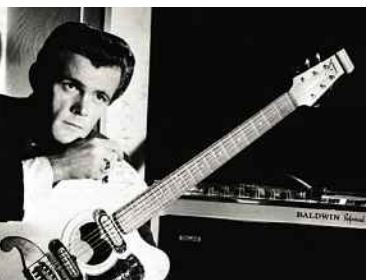
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44 CONSPIRACY CINEMA
From JFK to 9/11

EDITOR
 DAVID SUTTON
 (drsutton@forteanimes.com)

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

ART DIRECTOR
 ETIENNE GILFILLAN
 (etienne@forteanimes.com)

BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
 VAL STEVENSON
 (val@forteanimes.com)

RESIDENT CARTOONIST
 HUNT EMERSON

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES
 www.subsinfo.co.uk
 ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

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LICENSING & SYNDICATION

FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION - CONTACT:

Syndication Senior Manager

ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6132

Anj_Dosaj-Halai@dennis.co.uk

Licensing Manager

CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6550

Carlotta_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk

Licensing & Syndication Assistant

NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6134

Nicole_Adams@dennis.co.uk

YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET

www.forteanimes.com



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30 Cleveland Street

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Tel: 020 7907 6000

GROUP PUBLISHER

PAUL RAYNER

020 7907 6663

paul_rayner@dennis.co.uk

CIRCULATION MANAGER

james.mangan@

seymour.co.uk

EXPORT CIRCULATION

MANAGER

gareth.viggers@

seymour.co.uk

SENIOR PRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE

EBONY BESAGNI

020 7907 6060

ebony_besagni@dennis.co.uk

dennis.co.uk

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

SOPHIE VALENTINE

020 7907 6057

sophie_valentine@dennis.co.uk

DEPUTY ADVERTISING

MANAGER

CIARAN SCARRY

020 7907 6683

ciarán_scarry@dennis.co.uk

SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE

RYAN GISBORNE WEAR

020 7907 6763

ryan_gw@dennis.co.uk

SALES EXECUTIVE

ISABELLA COX

020 7907 6717

isabella_cox@dennis.co.uk

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GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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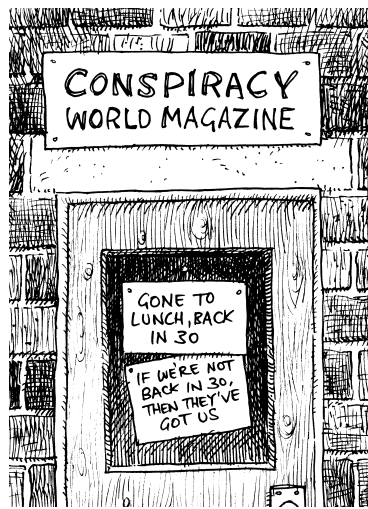
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editorial

50 years of conspiranoia

In the 50 years since President John F Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, conspiracy theories have enjoyed a steady and seemingly unstoppable growth, fed by constant revelations of government-sponsored chicanery and an international landscape shaped by the extremes (or are they?) of globalised capital on the one hand and global terror on the other. The theories have become wider and wilder, encompassing not just political assassination but the New World Order, the Illuminati and reptilian aliens, as



Richard Leon demonstrates in his overview of some of conspiracy's barmier flights (p38). The 'conspiracy theorist' has become a type in his (or, more rarely, her) own right, turning up as a character in films and television programmes, while real-life examples like David Icke and Alex Jones have created mini-media empires around their 'theories'; despite being dismissed by the mainstream media as 'swivel-eyed loons', they have built large audiences who share their views and buy their products. Conspiracy theory, from the humble beginnings in JFK assassination research described by Tom Heywood in his survey of the field (p30), is big business these days.

A new Canadian mockumentary, called simply *The Conspiracy*, has a lot of fun with the obsessions of the theorists. The film has its own 'swivel-eyed loon' in the form of 'Terrance G', who can rant about Bilderberg, 9/11, false flags and chemtrails with the best of them. A pair of young documentary film-makers start off wanting to make a film about Terrance; they are fascinated by conspiracy theorists, not theories. As one of them says, wonderingly: "There's this entire group of people online that believes the world is controlled by secret forces." It's only when their subject disappears that they start to look in detail at his join-the-dots theories - and get sucked in themselves.

As David Ray Carter shows in his article on conspiracy cinema (p44), a host of real-life conspiracy-theorists-turned-film-makers have been distributing their micro-budget movies via the Internet, covering everything from 9/11 and the Illuminati to the infamous 'faked' Moon landings theory.

The *Daily Telegraph* (29 May 2013) recently ran a story about one such film-maker, a young man called Charlie Veitch, whose whole worldview was transformed when he saw Alex Jones's film *Terrorstorm: A History of Government-Sponsored Terror*. Veitch was made redundant and spent his payout on a video camera. Soon he was uploading the results to his YouTube channel and attending anti-capitalist protests. According

to the *Telegraph*, Veitch had another Damascus moment when the BBC featured him on their *Conspiracy Road Trip* documentary marking the 10th anniversary of 9/11. This time, Veitch realised (again) that everything he believed was wrong - and became a conspiracy apostate. Death threats and accusations of child abuse followed from his one-time followers; Icke and Jones no longer wanted to be his friends. But, then, do you trust the BBC (who may have bought him off; he now plans to become a 'documentary film-maker'), or the *Telegraph* (who may have used him to tar anti-capitalist activists with the

same brush as 9/11 'truthers')?

Meanwhile, in an uncanny echo of our articles about *Crook Frightfulness* and Dion Fuller in *FT305* (the latter received the most overwhelmingly hostile reaction to any story we've published in the last 10 years), on 16 September, a man called Aaron Alexis killed 12 people at the Washington US Navy Yard, claiming that he was driven to it after being subjected to attacks by ELF (Extremely Low Frequency) waves; the conspiracy theories have started.

ERRATA

FT305:28. Reader Bill Robinson points out that 'Flying Saucery' locates East Grinstead in Surrey, which should be West Sussex.

FT306: 56. Jerry Clark reminds us that in his Forum piece about John Keel, the opening paragraph has him "driving across New Mexico". In fact, the confrontation described took place in Mexico "on a street in Acapulco as we were driving back to the hotel from a restaurant... The thought of driving across anywhere, including the next block, with Keel sends chills racing through the anatomy." We have no idea how the incident in question migrated the northwards and across the border - Keel's revenge?

David Sutton
 DAVID SUTTON

Bob Rickard
 BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
 PAUL SIEVEKING

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

SEE PAGE 78

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A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

strangedays

Siberian Mowgli discovered

A handsome young hermit is found living alone in the forests of Siberia's remote Altai region

Russian authorities have found a young man living alone in a forest in the Altai region of southern Siberia, after having apparently spent most of his life living there in a one-room hut with his parents. Named Odzhan or 'great soul', he was born after his painter father Alexander and musician mother Elena opted out of society at the end of the Soviet era to live in mud huts and primitive timber houses in the wild. Their motive was not religious, as in the case of the celebrated Lykov family [FT45:52, 126:10].

They had lived in their current hut since 1997. Until this month, Odzhan had met hardly any other humans. His parents educated him in all they knew, and he learned English from a dictionary they took with them when they cut themselves off from society. He craves one thing only: to speak to a native English speaker to improve his use of the language. The Russian media are variously calling him "forest boy" or the "Siberian Mowgli".

The handsome young hermit came to the notice of the authorities when a woman from the remote village of Ulyanovka found him in his forest hut a couple of miles away, and worried that he might not survive the oncoming winter, when temperatures can sink to minus 67°C. She brought him to Roman Fomin, the local prosecutor in Belokurikha, a famous spa and mineral spring resort 155 miles (250km) south of the city of Barnaul. His parents apparently left their hut last May, leaving him alone. According to one report, they had gone to the island of Sakhalin, off Russia's



LEFT: Odzhan, with his parents Alexander and Elena. BELOW: The one-roomed hut in the Altai region where the family lived.

Odzhan had no desire to move closer to 'civilisation'

Pacific Coast. In this version of the story, it was his parents' departure that led him to emerge briefly from his solitary life, though after meeting officials he went back into the wild to await his parents' return, and started to collect firewood. He had no desire to move closer to 'civilisation', complaining about the smell of petrol and pollution. His bearded father had some contact with people, selling mushrooms the family gathered, as well as his paintings; but Odzhan and his mother only met the very occasional hunter in the forest. The family had a small radio to keep in touch with the world they

rejected.

Fomin was attempting to establish Odzhan's date and place of birth so that he can be given a birth certificate and be given welfare support. Odzhan said that he was born in the woods around Kaitanak village in Ust'-Koksinsky district of Altai Republic. "He said that his parents told him that he was born in 1993," said Fomin.

"However, he looks younger. The way he walks is different from a 'normal' man's way of walking. You can see straight away that he spends hours walking long distances. He only spoke slowly, since he doesn't communicate as often as most people. He told me that he has never been to hospital and has no idea what the word 'vaccination' means. I took it that he never had any vaccinations in his life. He looks as though he is only 15 or 16 years old. He has no conception of the world outside of the woods. We don't aim to bring him back to civilisation. I think the way he lives in the woods can perhaps be even better than the lives some of us lead." In any case, contact with people could pose a health risk since he lacks immunisation against common diseases. [AFP] *rt.com*, 10 Sept; *Siberian Times*, 11 Sept; *Sun*, 12 Sept 2013.





NOT SO FUNNY MAN

The mysterious clown stalking the streets of Northampton

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CAT CRIMES AND CAPERS

Feline thieves, arsonists, lookalikes and elder statesmen

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BABY'S ON FIRE

Spontaneously combusting Indian tot alarms parents

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Cursed coconut

Police detain coconut on vote-rigging charge

A coconut was detained by police in the Maldives on suspicion of vote-rigging in a key presidential election. The object in question, described as a *kihah* (immature coconut), was found near a school that was to be used as a polling station on 7 September on Guraidhoo Island, one of the hundreds of islands that make up the Indian Ocean archipelago state. Though the population of the Maldives is Sunni Muslim, continuing belief in magic is widespread in the rural areas. Coconuts are often used in rituals and inscribed with spells.

The local *Minivan News* website reported that police seized the coconut around 7.5am



on 3 September, after they received a complaint about the suspicious fruit near the school on Guraidhoo, which lies 130 miles (200km) from the capital, Male, and has a population of about 2,000. A police source said they had brought in a *ruqyah* practitioner (white magician), who declared the coconut was 'a fake'.

"The 4in [10cm] coconut had a Sura [Qur'anic verse] written in Arabic and was lying on the ground near the school, easy for the public to see," according to a source from Guraidhoo. "When school students saw the coconut they called the principal, who then contacted the police. It was not really *fanditha* (black magic) on the coconut. If it were *fanditha*, there would have been Arabic letters and numbers written, not a Sura. It seems like it was a joke, just a prank, so that people will become aware, learn the moral, and not do it again," he noted, suggesting the coconut was a lesson for islanders not to practise black magic in an attempt to influence voting, and that the polling area would be closely monitored to prevent such activities from occurring.

In July, parents at Guraidhoo School had objected to a polling station for the upcoming

presidential elections, due to concerns over black magic practised by a local witch who, during previous elections, had cast spells to influence the outcome in favour of the Progressive Party of the Maldives (PPM). These spells, they said, had caused headaches and fainting fits among girls in the school. However, the Elections Commission overruled their objections and promised to accept responsibility "if anyone falls under a spell or comes down ill". The fate of the coconut was not reported.

The election has been bitterly contested, with Mohamed Nasheed, the former president, who claims he was ousted last year in a coup, taking on one of the Maldives' biggest businessmen, the outgoing president, and the half-brother of the former dictator, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. *Minivan News (Maldives)*, 4 Sept; *Guardian*, 7 Sept 2013.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

MY GRAN'S BECOME A LAMP POST

Sun, 12 April 2013.

Fox welcomes plan to 'chip' all dogs

The Wicklow People, 3 April 2013.

'Jesus' was insane at time of arson

Metro Herald (Dublin), 1 May 2013.

Tortoise who defied Hitler is back from dead

D.Express, 19 April 2013.

Call for women to fight seats

Kent on Sunday, 10 Mar 2013.

Goldfish patrol to stop pets being dumped in ponds

D.Telegraph, 6 May 2013.

Son of Westboro Baptist Church leader attacked on live TV by naked 500lb man who burst out of bathroom, sat on him and shouted: 'Who's your daddy now?'

dailymail.com, 28 Mar 2013.

Air more deadly than car crashes

Adelaide Advertiser, 10 April 2013.

Anxiety a worry

Canberra Times, 6 May 2013.





LAST OF THE STYLITES

A Georgian monk is spending his days atop a 40m (130ft) limestone monolith in a remote region of the Caucasus, praying and “preparing to meet God”. The Katskhi Pillar is located in the village of Katskhi in the western Georgian region of Imereti, about six miles (10km) from the mining town of Chiatura. Before the arrival of Christianity in Georgia in the 4th century, the rock was thought to represent a local god of fertility. The locals call it the Pillar of Life. At the summit are the remains of a small church built between the 6th and 8th centuries, probably by the stylites – Christian ascetics of the Byzantine world who lived on pillars and eschewed worldly temptation (the word comes from the Greek *stylos*, a column). Stylites occupied the pillar until the 15th century, when the practice was stopped following the Ottoman invasion of Georgia. The only written record of the pillar occurs in an 18th-century Georgian text noting the church for its inaccessibility.

For centuries the pillar lay abandoned and the church fell into ruins. In 1944 climbers led by the mountaineer Alexander Japaridze reached the top and found the skeleton of a stylite who had perished there. The local Christian community constructed a ladder to the summit and since 1993 the pillar has been

home to Maxime Qavtaradze, 59. The monk’s life of solitude came to light after New Zealand photographer Amos Chapple was permitted to photograph the man and his monolith, but only after he had spent four days in intensive prayer.

“For the first two years there was nothing up here so I slept in an old fridge to protect me from the weather,” said Mr Qavtaradze. Later, Christian supporters renovated the church and built a cottage to provide him with a few creature comforts. He makes the perilous 20-minute climb down the ladder twice a week to pray at a small monastery at the foot of the pillar, and to speak with men who seek help and guidance. He relies on daily provisions winched to him by supporters on the ground.

“It is up here in the silence that you can feel God’s presence,” said the ex-crane driver. “When I was young I drank, sold drugs, everything. When I ended up in prison I knew it was time for a change. I used to drink with friends in the hills around here and look up at this place, where land met sky. We knew the monks had lived up there before and I felt great respect for them.” *telegraph.co.uk*, 6 Sept 2013. For an account of *St Simon Stylites (390-459)*, who spent 30 years on pillars see FT259:74-76. PHOTOGRAPHS: AMOS CHAPPLE / REX FEATURES

SIDELINES...

BLESSED DISCOVERY

Professor Gülgün Köroğlu, in charge of an archaeological dig in the Turkish Black Sea province of Sinop since 2009, claims to have found a piece of the True Cross of Jesus inside a stone coffer buried in the ruins of Balatlar church, built in AD 660. [UPI] NBC News, 31 July; D.Mail, 5 Aug 2013.

TELEPHONEY

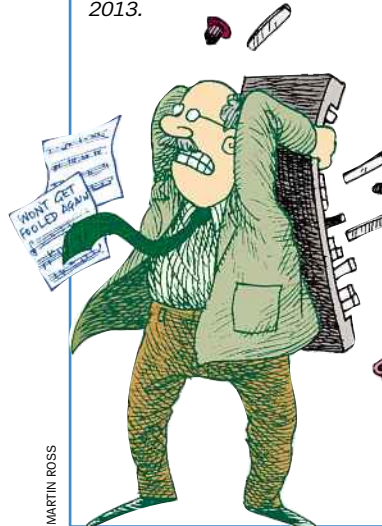
A Moscow call centre where alleged psychics stage rituals over the phone was raided by the police. It conned victims into handing over vast sums of money to 'clean' themselves of bad spirits. Metro, 1 Aug 2013.

HOLE-SOME FAMILY

A father and son from South Texas each shot a hole-in-one on Father's Day. Lonnie Whitener, 57, hit his on the sixth hole at River Pointe Golf Club in Richmond. His son Zach, 13, aced the same hole minutes later. MX News (Sydney), 21 June 2013.

WELL OFF-KEY

Malcolm Hayes, headmaster of Horsmonden Primary School in Kent, was playing an electric organ in assembly when he had a Basil Fawlty meltdown. He began smashing and punching the keyboard before taking it out to the school car park, asking the pupils to follow him. He then ran over the instrument several times with his car. A day or two later, he took medical leave. D.Telegraph, 10 July 2013.



MARTIN ROSS

Mysterious strangers

Creepy figures stalk an English town and a Swiss wood



THE NORTHAMPTON CLOWN

A clown in full costume and make up, with a curly red wig and white face, began appearing in Northampton on Friday the thirteenth of September. He appeared in several locations in the Abington and Kingsley areas, holding a bunch of balloons. A day after a Facebook page was set up ("spot Northampton's clown"), it had 3,000 'likes'. Users posted numerous photos of the sinister figure lurking around the town. He was reported to have knocked on someone's door and offered to paint their sills, despite having no painting equipment. On Saturday evening, he was pictured on St Michael's Road in the town centre, waving forlornly with a clown teddy hanging from his other hand. Some residents accepted the clown with good humour while others said he could be terrifying for people with phobias. Kelly Keen's comment was typical: "You've been spotted now get out of the clown suit and start acting like a grown up." She was responding to a posting from the clown that read: "It's not me in the papers. I don't terrorise people. I just want to be spotted."

Northampton Herald & Post, 14+15 Sept; news.ninemsn.au, 16 Sept 2013.



SOLDIER OF THE WOODS

A strange man in a gas mask and military uniform, known as 'Le Loyon', has been sighted numerous times over the last decade, lurking in the woods in western Switzerland. Alleged to walk the same route through the woods every day, he always wears the same outfit and nobody has ever seen his face. Some believe he could be suffering from a nasty skin condition, is mentally ill or a hermit. There was no evidence of his existence until local news website *Le Matin* published the first known photograph of him in

August, after which police made an effort to track him down. They wanted to ask him to be less threatening, although he's shown no signs of aggressive behaviour. "I came across him near the marches," said the unnamed amateur photographer. "I approached him up to a dozen metres away. He had a military cape, boots and an army gas mask - an antique type, I think. He measured more than 1.9m (6ft 3in). He stared at me, then turned his back on me and left in silence." Other locals told of their encounters. "It scared my children," a woman said. "We saw neither his face nor his eyes behind his big dark gas mask." Another local resident, Marianne Descloux of Maules also saw him: "It was a rainy Sunday. He had on a cap, a dark cloak and gas mask. What goes on in his head? I don't know. It was unpleasant. I hope I never run into him again." The figure was also reportedly spotted clutching what appeared to be a bunch of flowers. Such is the hysteria, that he has been called "Switzerland's answer to the Loch Ness monster". *The Australian*, 10 Sept 2013.

SIDELINES...

SUM TING WONG

Reporting the crash of a Korean jet in San Francisco on 6 July, in which three people died, the local television station KTVU named the pilot as Captain Sum Ting Wong, assisted by Wi Tu Lo, Ho Lee Fuk and Bang Ding Ow. After realising the names were bogus, the embarrassed newsreader revealed that the NTSB (the body investigating the crash) had approved the names. *Sun*, 14 July; *Metro*, 15 July 2013.

MONKEY MYSTERY

The bizarre behaviour of a troop on hamadryas baboons at Emmen Zoo in the northern Netherlands has been blamed on an earthquake, escaped snakes or aliens. Normally seen scampering around on their island, the 112 primates spent five days motionless with their backs to visitors, not even eating apples, their favourite food. The Emmen baboons had similar scares in 1994, 1997 and 2007. *BBC News*, 2 Aug 2013.

JESUS TILE

Pilgrims flocked to an airport in Arizona after a smudge resembling Jesus was found on a floor tile in Terminal 3. "He is here with us always, being our spiritual guide," said Becky Martin, who had visited the site every day for two weeks. *MX News (Sydney)*, 18 June 2013.

WORMNADO

When residents of Colcord, Oklahoma, found tiny red worms flowing out of their taps, local officials cancelled school, told people not to drink tap water, and emptied and scrubbed the town water tower. *NY Daily News*, 29 Aug 2013.

GREEN WEDDING

Nick Meadow married Tamsin Flower with bridesmaid Issy Bloom, and guests Richard Plant and Tom Gardener in Bembridge, Isle of Wight. *Sun*, 13 July 2013.



SPACE HOPPER

NASA's recording of a spacecraft launch at Virginia spaceport on 6 September inadvertently caught a frog in silhouette, thrown skyward by the force of the blast. *D.Telegraph*, 13 Sept 2013.

RIDING AT A SNAIL'S PACE

This frog was seen hopping on a snail's back, apparently out of playfulness, beside a pond in Borneo, Indonesia. Nordin Seruyan, 37, spotted the unusual pairing near his home. *Metro*, *D.Telegraph*, 15 Jan 2013.



NASA



NORDIN SERUYAN / BARCROFT MEDIA



SIDELINES...

YOU SPEAK FOX?

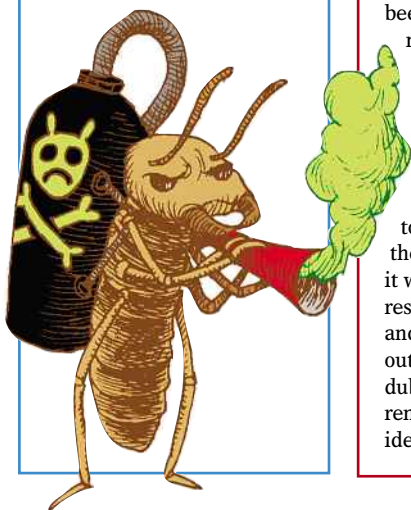
To attract a fox, 16-year-old Norwegian Lars Andreas Bjercke installed an app on his mobile phone that imitated rabbit sounds. After a few nights of seeing the fox circle his yard, Bjercke put the phone down and walked away, whereupon the fox made off with it. Lars's friend was later puzzled to get the text message: Jlv ln ø \a0ab 34348tu åaugjoi zølbmosdji jsøg ijio sjiv . The scribe at geekosystem.com (accessed 29 Nov 2012) commented: "We tried running it through Google Translate, but there's not a Fox to English option."

SYDNEY'S SHELL SHOCK

A tortoise that vanished for 10 months was found alive after being dug up by a mechanical digger laying foundations for an extension to Paul and Yvette White's barn conversion in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. The Whites last saw five-year-old Sydney in June 2012. They think he dug himself into their garden to hibernate after mistaking last year's cool summer for winter. *D.Mirror, 13 April 2013.*

TERMITE GENIUS

The Formosan subterranean termite (*Coptotermes formosanus*) fumigates its nest with naphthalene to repel ants and nematode worms. As it doesn't occur naturally, no one knows how – or from what – it is made. *D.Telegraph, 10 Aug 2013.*



MARINE MARVELS

OUT-OF-PLACE DOLPHINS, SHARK ON THE SUBWAY AND SAD END FOR A HEXAPUS



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

ABOVE: Davina the dolphin leaps from the waters of the River Dee in Chester – more than 30 miles from the sea.

DOLPHINS

A short-beaked common dolphin swam more than 30 miles (48km) up the River Dee in Wales chasing fish, crossing the border into England at Saltney in Cheshire. It was first spotted at Conner's Quay docks in Flintshire on 19 August. Cyclists on the riverbank saw it flip in the air as it swam as far as Chester racecourse and heard its distinctive clicking noise. They tweeted pictures and called a rescue charity. After it feasted on fish, it headed back to sea, but on 21 August the disoriented animal was swimming once more towards Chester. It could have been thrown off course by the full moon, according to Stephen Marsh from the British Divers Marine Life Rescue charity. This can make the tides higher and lower than normal, probably confusing the dolphin, which is used to much deeper water such as the Bay of Biscay. On 22 August, it was stranded on a sandbank, rescued by lifeboat volunteers and released six miles (10km) out into the Irish Sea. Initially dubbed Dave, the animal was renamed Davina when it was identified as female. *D.Mail,*

Cyclists on the riverbank saw the dolphin flip in the air

D.Telegraph, Guardian, 22+23 Aug 2013.

- A family were watching a dolphin from their kayaks off Combe Martin Bay in Devon when it grabbed a 10lb (4.5kg) cod and dropped it in front of them. After leaving the massive fish next to Lucy Watkins, 14, the dolphin nudged it towards her. Lucy, out with her grandparents Mike and Nina, wondered whether they should take it in case the dolphin wanted the cod for itself; but seconds later it resurfaced with its own fish, a sea bass, and began to eat it. "He definitely wanted me to have his fish," said Lucy. "He first dropped it 20ft [6m] away but then pushed it to within 5ft [1.5m] of my kayak." Nina, 52, added: "He was with us for about two hours. It seemed rude to refuse him so we took the fish and

had cod and chips." The dolphin, named Dave by the locals, is a regular sight off Combe Martin Bay. *D.Express, 6 Aug 2013.*

- Surfer Troy Robinson, 43, was enjoying the waves at Ellensbrook, Western Australia, when he found himself surrounded by a pod of 10 dolphins. As he dived to safety, the largest bit a chunk out of his surfboard and broke his arm with a sweep of its tail. He was able to get back on his board and paddle to shore. He guessed the animals were unusually aggressive because it was mating season. *TNT magazine, 22 July; Sun, Metro, 16 Aug 2013.*
- A woman swimming off Doolin, Co. Clare, on 19 July was struck on the abdomen and badly bruised by a bottlenose dolphin known as 'Dusty'. Several other swimmers had been injured by the animal, which first appeared at Doolin in 2011 and seemed to have become territorial about the slipway and steps. Another swimmer was attacked on 28 July. Several of Dusty's victims were hospitalised with significant injuries. *Irish Times, 320 July 2013.*



SHARKS

In July 2013, a movie called *Sharknado* – described as “awesomely awful” and “the best ‘worst movie’ ever made” – became a surprise hit in the US. A freak weather system sucks thousands of sharks out of the ocean and hurls them teeth first at the residents of Los Angeles. One highlight is when the hero cuts a flying shark in half with a chainsaw. *D.Telegraph*, 13 July; *TNT magazine*, 15 July 2013.

- On 7 August, a dead 1.2m (4ft) shark was found under a row of seats on a Queens-bound subway train in New York City. The conductor asked passengers to leave the carriage and the train continued to the end of the line, where a supervisor disposed of the large fish. One traveller who took a photo of the shark said she noticed that the empty carriage of the N train “smelled extremely fishy” when she boarded at 8th Street. Where the fish came from was a mystery, although its discovery coincided with a US TV’s channel’s Shark Week, leading some to brand it a publicity stunt. *BBC News*, 7 Aug; *D.Express*, 9 Aug 2013.

- A German snorkeler in her 20s was swimming off Maken beach in South Maui on 15 August when a shark bit off her right arm and wounded her foot. It was the fifth shark attack in Maui and the eighth in Hawaii this year. *D.Mail*, 16 Aug 2013.

- A starry smoothhound shark was spotted 10 miles (16km)



ABOVE: Labros Hydras and family caught (and later ate) this rare mutant octopus. BELOW: The dead shark discovered under a seat on the New York City subway.

inland on 1 September, in a sluice of the River Stour in Essex. It was photographed in the saltwater section of the river near the village of Cattawade, near Manningtree. Starry smoothhounds, which grow up to 4ft 7in (1.4m), are one of 35 species of shark that can be found in British coastal waters. They are not thought to be dangerous to humans. One of the biggest sharks ever seen in British waters was caught off the Isle of Wight in the last week of August. Measuring 14ft (4.2m) and weighing 550lb (250kg), the thresher shark was

spotted about a mile south of St Catherine’s Point. *D.Telegraph*, 4 Sept 2013.

OCTOPUS

Labros Hydras, 49, caught an octopus while snorkelling off Papa Nero beach on the Pelion peninsula in Greece with his daughter Areti, 10, and son Arion, six. He took it to a taverna to be cooked, but the chef refused because it was a rare mutant with only six legs, strictly a ‘hexapus’. Mr Hydras, a Greek-born US citizen living in Washington DC, fried it anyway and served it up for supper with tomato and lemon.

Later he checked with a biologist friend, who confirmed that his hexapus was only the second one ever seen. The first was caught off North Wales in 2008 and taken to Blackpool Sea Life Centre. Nicknamed Henry (after King Henry and his six wives – six legs – geddit?), it was later released back into the sea, but is probably dead as the maximum life span of *Octopus vulgaris* is five years. Marine biologists assert that hexapuses are the result of a birth abnormality rather than a new species. *D.Mail*, *D.Telegraph*, 27 July 2013.



SIDELINES...

COUNTERFEIT CORPSE

Police frogmen dived into action after reports of a body floating in the River Avon at Saltford, near Bath, only to discover that it was a life-size dummy of Russell Crowe, which had been used during the filming of *Les Misérables* in the city last autumn. *D.Telegraph*, 10 June 2013.

LAST ORDERS

Barmain Tasmyn Burns, 19, was serving pints at the Exmouth Rugby Club in Devon on a Sunday afternoon when the bell signalling last orders rang. “It made us all jump because it was so loud,” she said. “It was really being yanked with some force.” Staff blamed the ghost of Nigel Harris, 64, a former regular. *Western Daily Press*, 19 May 2013.

KAMIKAZE SATELLITES

Scientists from the University of Surrey have invented a shoebox-sized satellite that clings to space junk before deploying large solar sails. These slow the debris down so that it falls out of orbit and burns up in the Earth’s atmosphere, along with the satellite. *Sun*, 2 May 2013.

PERILS OF HOARDING

Noel Rainer, 85, tripped over a 2ft (60cm) pile of papers in his kitchen in Halstead, Essex, and was trapped for 30 hours under clutter accumulated over 20 years. Firefighters rescued him after his daughter raised the alarm. A month earlier, a man in his 70s almost died after being pinned for several days under junk in his Vancouver home. *Adelaide Advertiser*, 17 Jan; *D.Mirror*, 2 Feb 2013.

CAT-ASTROPHE

A family who thought their pet cat had come back from the dead a day after his funeral realised they had buried the wrong animal. Karen Jones, 48, of Ashford, Kent, thought their missing black tom Norman had been hit and killed on a busy road; but after the backyard funeral, Norman returned home. *MX News (Sydney)*, 17 May 2013.

COLD FUSION CONSPIRACY?

The quest for cold fusion has been hampered by unrepeatable results and scepticism from the scientific establishment. **DAVID HAMBLING** asks whether a conspiracy is afoot.

Did a conspiracy sabotage cold fusion? Pons and Fleischmann's announcement of nuclear fusion in a test tube, rather than at millions of degrees, created a sensation in 1989, promising cheap power for all [FT52:12-13]. But when others could not repeat their results, cold fusion was shunned as a fraud by the scientific community. Conspiracy theorists immediately detected an establishment ploy to protect the oil companies' profitable business. As usual, reality is more complex, and cold fusion may be coming back.

Science is led by theory; this is what makes some phenomena forfean. Until there was a theory that could account for meteorites, any observation of a stone falling from the heavens was a highly suspect unexplained phenomenon, likely to be a mistake or a hoax. "Stones cannot fall from the sky," stated Antoine Lavoisier, an eminent 18th century scientist, "because there are no stones in the sky."

This is a perfectly sound principle. When CERN scientists apparently measured neutrinos travelling at faster than the speed of light in 2011, they did not assume it was an amazing new phenomenon, they assumed their measurement was wrong. And so it turned out to be. It's the scientific equivalent of common sense. While not totally reliable, it works well pretty much all of the time, only failing when a totally new phenomenon appears.

When Pons and Fleischmann claimed to detect excess heat in their experiment, there was no theoretical basis for believing fusion was possible at room temperature. So the assumption had to be that their measurements were wrong. Science relies on experimental results being validated by independent teams. When other researchers failed to replicate the results, rejecting cold fusion was a rational enough decision.

Of course oil companies can lean on the scales of science by funding sceptics and scientists working to disprove a theory. In



The controversy over cold fusion made it a toxic issue in physics

the field of climate change, UK blog The Carbon Brief found that nine of the top 10 writers casting doubt on climate change have links to ExxonMobil, ¹ and while the company has scaled back its activities it still supports more than 20 climate change denial groups. Earlier this year the *Guardian* found that two US trusts had spent over \$118m funding climate change denial. A similar campaign prevented consumers from discovering the health effects of smoking for decades. This works as a delaying tactic, but the sheer accumulated weight of evidence won through in both cases.

The controversy over cold fusion rendered it a toxic issue in physics circles. Nobody would fund it, and the field was effectively dead. Books like Gerry Taub's 1993 *Bad Science: The*

short life and weird times of cold fusion and Robert Park's 2000 *Voodoo Science: The Road from Foolishness to Fraud* helped seal its reputation and nail down the coffin lid.

But cold fusion refused to stay buried. A few fringe researchers kept working on it, many of them doing so as a sideline. Scientists at both NASA and the US Naval Research Laboratory were able to carry out 'zero budget' projects, working in their own time and taking advantage of under-utilised lab equipment. They continued for so long because of the encouragement by the odd flicker of excess energy that appeared in something like 20 per cent of experiments.

Getting their results published proved to be impossible. When Peter Hagelstein of MIT submitted his experimental findings, he was turned down by one journal with the comment that they did not accept papers supporting cold fusion. The assumption was that any positive results must be flawed, and after Pons and Fleischmann got burned, nobody else wanted trouble. Hence cold fusion cannot gain credibility, due

to self-censorship rather than conspiracy.

Fast forward to the present day, where researchers use the term Low Energy Nuclear Reaction or LENR so people don't run screaming from the words 'cold fusion'. Recent findings suggest that the surface of the experimental material is vital. The reaction only occurs in flaws, and this may explain why the original results were so random, and current efforts with nano-structured material appear to be getting more consistent results – and generating far more power.

There is still no accepted theory behind the phenomenon. There are many contenders, such as the Widom-Larsen theory involving 'heavy electrons,' but the infighting between their adherents resembles the sectarian struggles of religious or political splinter groups. This bad-tempered wrangling has done nothing to increase the credibility of cold fusion.

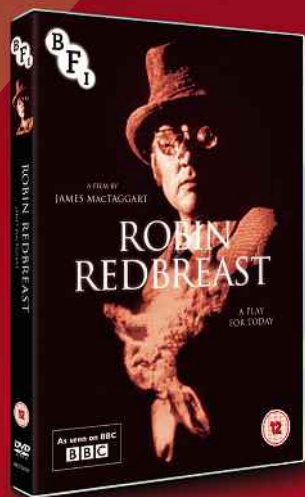
There are now at least three companies – Defkalion², Leonardo Corp³ and Brillouin⁴ – all poised to enter the commercial market with cold fusion devices in the next year. None of them has publicly demonstrated a working cold fusion reactor, though at least two claim to have tested commercially viable multi-kilowatt units. Because the topic is so toxic, the only coverage of these developments in the business press was from Mark Gibbs of Forbes.com. When Gibbs recently split with the publisher, he felt compelled to state that there was no conspiracy to silence him – as far as he knew. ⁵

It is impossible to tell if any of the nascent cold fusion power companies are real. If they fail, it could be because they were only frauds set up to cheat gullible investors, or because their science is wrong, because the technology works but is not mature enough, or any of the dozen other reasons that new start-ups go under. But you can bet that there will be plenty of people claiming conspiracy.

NOTES

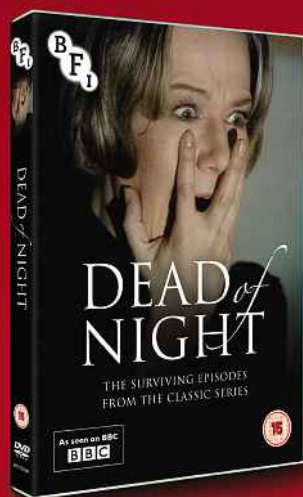
- 1 www.carbonbrief.org/blog/2011/04/900-papers-supporting-climate-scepticism-exxon-links/
- 2 <http://defkalion-energy.com/>
- 3 <http://ecat.com/>
- 4 www.brillouinenergy.com/
- 5 www.mail-archive.com/vortex-l@eskimo.com/msg84681.html

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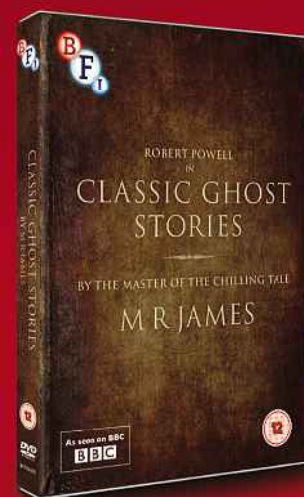
28 OCTOBER

DVD premiere of this legendary BBC TV 'folk horror' from 1970. Widely considered an influence and precursor to *The Wicker Man*.



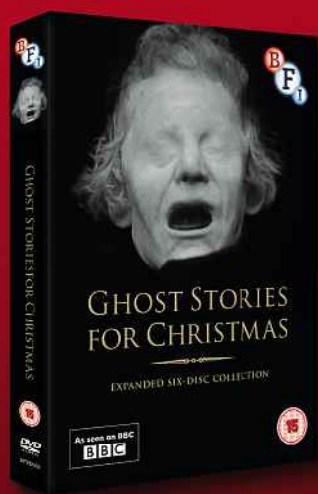
28 OCTOBER

Includes the three surviving episodes from this terrifying BBC horror anthology – first broadcast in 1972 and rarely seen since.



28 OCTOBER

Robert Powell presents five chilling MR James tales – originally shown at Christmas time in 1986. Plus rare episodes from the 1980 *Spine Chillers* series.



28 OCTOBER

This expansive edition collects over 13 hours' worth of terror, including all 12 episodes of the classic *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series.



18 NOVEMBER

Werewolves, vampires and ghosts haunt the living in this long-awaited double-disc set of the much sought-after BBC horror series.



18 NOVEMBER

DVD and Blu-ray edition of this stunning BBC ghost story, based on a short story by Sheridan Le Fanu and first broadcast in 1979.

Cat crimes & capers

Norris the klepto-cat, Bubba the firebug, Hamilton the hipster and two contenders for world's oldest moggy



ABOVE: Cat burglar Norris pictured with a selection of swag. BELOW LEFT: Hamilton and his artistic inspiration. BELOW RIGHT: Waddy, aged 27, looks back on his nine lives.

● Richard and Sophie Windsor were puzzled when clothing started turning up on their doorstep in Bedminster, Bristol. Later, tea towels, baby clothes and a German sausage turned up on the kitchen floor. When they spotted half a pizza wedged in the cat flap, they realised their pet Norris, a two-year-old tabby, had turned cat burglar. He began to bring home food about a year ago, before raiding local gardens and washing lines and venturing into nearby houses. His embarrassed owners have been presented with sports bras, running kit, oven gloves, a bath mat and an unopened tube of gravy paste. "He was perfectly well behaved until the age of one," said Mr Windsor, 26, "then he started to turn to a life of petty crime." He (Mr Windsor, not Norris) has written to all the neighbours, asking anyone who was missing items to get in touch. *D.Mail, Metro, 20 Aug 2013.*



● Hamilton, an 11-month-old cat owned by California comedian Jay Stowe, has a Salvador Dali moustache. *Metro, D.Mirror, 14 June 2013.*

● While carrying out renovation work at their house in Seafeld Terrace, South Shields, South Tyneside, Melanie and Ian Bruce



have uncovered a mummified cat lying under floorboards near the front door. The couple believe 'Tutan-cat-mun', as they call it, is bringing them good luck, and they regularly show it to visitors. "Eventually we might place it in a glass frame next to the door," said Mrs Bruce, 38. "Or we might put it under the bathroom." *The*



Shields Gazette (South Shields), 13 Aug; D.Telegraph, 14 Aug 2013. For other mummified cats immured in houses, see FT52:6-7, 75:13, 77:7, 286:8, 287:10.

● Last March, Wadsworth, known as Waddy, aged 27, was put forward as the world's oldest domestic cat. Born the runt of

SWNS.COM

GETTY IMAGES

GEOFFREY ROBINSON

a litter, he was thrown out by his owners and adopted by Ann Munday, 66, in Ravensden, Bedfordshire. He has been treated by the same vet all his life, so he has records to prove his age.

In August, however, we heard about a black cat called Cola, living in Orpington, Kent, who turns 28 this November. We are told she was “born in the same month as rapper Dizzee Rascal”. Cola was born in Cottage Avenue, Bromley Common, in 1985, and is owned by Mary Goldsmith, 66, of Brow Crescent. “She cannot jump up and down like she used to but she can still get up into her chair,” said Mrs Goldsmith. “She may not be as sprightly as she used to be but she’s still got some zip in her.” Cola enjoys chicken, tuna, milk and cream, but her favourite food is haddock.

The oldest domestic cat ever recorded, according to Guinness, was Creme Puff (3 Aug 1967 – 6 Aug 2005), a female cat owned by Jake Perry of Austin, Texas. Creme Puff died at the age of 38 years and three days. *Metro*, 14 Mar; *This is Local London*, 28 Aug 2013.

- Bubba, a 12-year-old epileptic cat, burnt down his owner’s house on 23 June after accidentally turning on the electric hob during a seizure. Jacky McCuster, 52, and his son Tom, 32, were woken by smoke billowing into their bedrooms. They were rescued by 15 firefighters as Bubba sat calmly watching on a fence in Telford, Shropshire. The smoke alarm batteries had run out and the kitchen was gutted (as were the McCusters). *Sun*, 24 June 2013.



BOTH PICS: PETER SHAH / NEWSTEAM

AOVE: Jacky McCuster with Bubba – and the kitchen he reduced to a smouldering wreck.

So here we are, 50 years on from that day in Dallas, and the odd thing is that the case has been solved, more or less, and hardly anyone has noticed. As I have tried to show in previous columns, there is now considerable evidence showing that JFK was killed to preserve the political career of his vice president, Lyndon Johnson. So why the virtual silence on this?

The three main elements in the official knowledge industry – the major media, the political system and academia – are not interested in any aspect of the case. The mass media can’t deal with this subject: the Kennedy assassination material is now so vast and so complicated that no journalist can ‘research the subject’. To understand it you have to be – by journalists’ standards, anyway – an expert. And journalists have noticed that the experts in this field do not agree. So the major media’s lack of interest in the LBJ’s-people-dunnit thesis is par for the course.

The American political system’s silence on the subject reflects the unspoken agreements among the American (and most of the British) political class that nothing be done to tarnish ‘brand America’ and that the real nature of American politics – i.e. its utter corruption – should not be discussed in front of the voters. While Richard Nixon was taped when President describing the ‘lone assassin’ verdict as “the greatest hoax that has ever been perpetuated,” he did nothing about it while in office and said nothing publicly. Texas governor John Connally, the other shooting victim in the limousine, did not believe the official ‘lone assassin’ verdict, but, like Nixon, said nothing in public.

With a couple of notable exceptions, academic historians stay away from the subject because to get involved risks being labelled a ‘conspiracy theorist’, the academic kiss of death.

The lack of interest among the Kennedy assassination researchers is a more complex phenomenon. The assassination research now resembles an academic subject area, divided up into subsections: Oswald’s intelligence links; ballistics; the autopsy; the cover-up; JFK’s Vietnam policy; the role of the Secret Service; the anti-Castro Cubans, and so on. Hardly any of the Kennedy researchers have been actually looking at who shot Kennedy: in part because some are working in specialist areas, and in part because they have abandoned any belief that we might find out what happened on Dealey Plaza. (And one or two have persuaded themselves that what happened there isn’t so important anyway compared to the insights the event generates into the behaviour of the American state and secret state.)

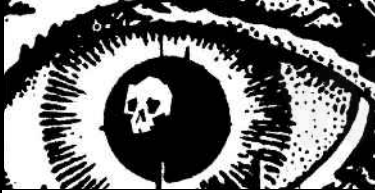
There is one striking difference between JFK assassination studies and academic subjects: academic subjects do not often have to deal with state-sponsored disinformation and the hostility of the three cornerstones of ‘official’ knowledge to the subject’s existence. JFK studies have, so to speak, therefore been forced to develop in a kind of intellectual and political ghetto. (Something very similar is happening to the 9/11 research effort, and for similar reasons.)

Among the assassination researchers aware of the LBJ’s-people-dunnit thesis there is general hostility because it doesn’t focus on the secret state, especially the CIA. JFK researchers are like other people: they form theories and find it difficult to digest new information that undermines those theories; they are prone to ‘confirmation bias’.

Fundamentally, the LBJ’s-people-dunnit explanation seems too parochial for such a big event. In any case, runs the fallback position, even if LBJ’s people *did* do it, they must have received permission from the-powers-that-be. But of this there is no evidence.



GETTY IMAGES



GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE explores the latest research into the survival of consciousness after death



ABOVE: Delegates at the 37th annual conference of the Society for Psychical Research held at Swansea University in September.

The latest findings in studies of apparitions, mediumship, electronic voice phenomena and Near-Death Experiences all featured at the 37th annual conference of the SPR (Society for Psychical Research) held at Swansea University over 6-8 September.

Death for us all is the one certainty in life, and although Shakespeare called it "the undiscover'd country, from whose bourn no traveller returns", this hasn't deterred a number of scientists and researchers from trying to find out more.

One research technique is to examine the accounts from those who have skirted the edges of this mysterious country but made it back, providing data in the form of Near-Death Experiences or NDEs. A leading researcher in this field is Dr Peter Fenwick who gave a fascinating review of such NDE studies undertaken in Britain, Ireland and the Netherlands.

In his lecture Dr Fenwick, author of *The Truth In The Light: An Investigation Into Over 300 Near-Death Experiences* (1995), considered memories coming from patients who have survived cardiac arrest. Around 10 per cent of patients who revive after a cardiac arrest report impressions or memories of leaving their bodies, experiencing entering a tunnel, seeing a bright light or visiting another world, and of being greeted by deceased friends and relatives and spiritual beings. Others report becoming conscious of seeing themselves from outside their bodies and watching the efforts of medical staff to revive them. Such patients can recall specific detailed descriptions of their resuscitation, with details verified by medical staff.

SUCH EXPERIENCES SUGGEST THAT SOME SORT OF CONSCIOUSNESS IS STILL OPERATING

That the brain should be recording or producing anything after a cardiac arrest is currently a puzzle for mainstream science, for as Dr Fenwick explained, NDEs are reported from a point when all brain activity has ceased. Examined from a neurological perspective, when a cardiac arrest occurs, the brain stem of a person ceases to function, which has the effect of switching off the rest of the cerebral cortex. With no brain activity, such experiences suggest that some sort of consciousness is nonetheless still operating. That is certainly the feeling of those who have had an NDE and who may subsequently find such experiences remove the fear of death and lead to personal transformations.

That NDEs are a cross-cultural experience was confirmed by Mika Iwasaki and Tatsu Hirukawa, who presented examples of reports from modern Japan. The researchers looked at the details of 18 cases collected in Japan since 2008 from individuals aged between six and 69. These included the elements of the sensation of entering a tunnel, leaving the body, an experience of reviewing life memories and encounters with deceased people, all of which feature in Western NDE literature. Similarly, Japanese experiencers

tend to have personal transformations as an after-effect, with some undergoing a great change in their approach to life.

Discussions of the subject soon generated further difficult questions. If all brain activity has ceased, where and how are the memories recalled by surviving cardiac patients being laid down? This was a point aptly raised by Dr Shushant Meshram, a neurophysiologist and sleep researcher from India who was speaking at the conference on precognition in dreams. His own suggested hypothesis is that our brains contain a non-physical component, which is involved with both NDE and other psi experiences. Certainly, there is much scope for further research here.

For others, evidence suggestive of survival comes from encounters with those who have died but appear to return or communicate with the living. Such experiences may occur spontaneously and unexpectedly, or be actively pursued, as with investigations into mediumship and the analysis of data from séances. The SPR pioneered the case collection and analysis of personal encounters with apparitions in the Victorian era, and a study of current cases is being undertaken by Aaron Lomas, who is gathering modern sightings collected on-line and via e-mail. Speaking at the conference, he said that as in the 19th century there is no shortage of cases to examine, even if their significance is open to question and interpretation.

The desirability of obtaining accurate witness accounts was an issue emphasised by Tony Percy in a critique of equipment-based apparitional research. He reviewed the many deployments at haunted locations by SPR researchers of a multi-sensor device known

as 'SPIDER' (Spontaneous Psychophysical Incident Data Electronic Recorder), which combined a video camera, sound sensors and vibration and temperature recording system. However, despite many attempts to record ghosts, the results had been negligible. The original SPIDER unit is now believed to be in Nottingham, but it surely deserves a place in a psychical research museum somewhere.

Equally critical of many equipment-based investigations was Steve Parsons, who denounced the general ignorance of many ghost hunters regarding how to take basic measurements such as temperature when investigating a supposedly haunted location, despite agreed international standards used in science. Nor did he hold back from criticising many sceptical psychologists for their lack of understanding in basic physics, and an all-too-ready willingness to accept questionable physical theories providing they endorsed a sceptical perspective (e.g. the suggestion that ghost experiences were caused by infra-sound, postulated in 1998).

Much of the controversy of what ghost investigators may actually be recording arises in the area of EVP (electronic voice phenomena). After 'orbs' there is no more vexed question in ghost hunting, and even after more than 40 years of international study, EVP remains hotly disputed with widely differing opinions. Proponents of EVP maintain recordings can be obtained via tape recorders or picked up via radio sets tuned to white noise, but not everyone appears able to hear or identify the same sounds as coherent voices and many critics ascribe them all simply to misperception and wishful thinking.

The conference heard an interesting set of EVP recordings obtained within a spiritualist circle held at a private home, presented by researcher Rachel Browning. Over an eight-month period, the EVP recordings obtained by the group progressed from seemingly random words to what appeared to be extracts of voices relating directly to phenomena being observed by sitters inside the séance room. Rachel Browning is satisfied that some of these EVP recordings constitute a genuine paranormal phenomenon, even if their ultimate origin remains a mystery. She also mentioned one very curious sound being heard in a séance at the start of the experiments, that of the hoof beats of a horse, which has not – alas – been repeated.

Ultimately, it is the persistence of EVP reports that has forced psychologists to give the issue serious attention, and there was no shortage of insights into the psychological aspects of EVP in two conference papers given by Ross Friday of the University of Greenwich and Ann Winsper from Liverpool John Moores University.

For many, a personal experience of seeing or encountering a deceased love one provides the most compelling evidence of survival after death. Although anecdotal, a case collection approach can again be utilised, as by Cal Cooper, who has previously looked afresh at some of the most controversial psychic claims, such as alleged telephone calls from the dead. In his conference paper, 'Harmful or Helpful?

Anomalous Experiences in Bereavement', he considered the psychological impact of such encounters, building upon the oft-quoted pioneering study by Welsh GP Dr Dewi Rees, who in 1971 found that almost half (46 per cent) of 227 widows and 66 widowers said they had experiences of their dead spouses. Interestingly, Dr Rees himself wrote in 2000 that "people who have these experiences are likely to cope better with widowhood than those who did not," and in his own book on the afterlife, *Pointers to Eternity* (2000), he shared his beliefs on survival after death.

The role that such experiences can play in launching studies of mediums was illustrated in a talk by Trevor Hamilton, who began serious testing following the death of his son Ralph in a car accident. Both at the time of Ralph's death and afterwards, both Trevor Hamilton and his wife underwent a number of strange experiences including smells reminiscent of their son's cigarettes, curious electrical anomalies and odd coincidences. Following a positive experience with a medium, Trevor and his wife decided to look into mediumship more deeply, undertaking a number of sittings and tests with mediums as far away as Australia. A book detailing contacts with his deceased son via mediums, *Tell My Mother I'm Not Dead: A Case Study in Mediumship Research* (2012), followed. He has also embarked upon a re-evaluation of the monumental 'cross-correspondences', a collection of automatic writings from different mediums, which started in 1901. Urging the SPR to encourage more study into survival, he also stated that the emotion of love in such experiences was another dimension that researchers should explore.

The quest for truth can even take the ultimate step of developing mediumistic gifts oneself. This was the approach of David Wilson, who after a career as an international lawyer began training as a medium while simultaneously conducting a social science study of his experiences. He takes the view that training in a spiritualist circle has many parallels with paths taken by apprentice shamans amongst indigenous societies.

Together, these and a number of other interesting conference papers all showed that wide-ranging research into psychical topics is underway, though many scientific efforts are widely separated and under-resourced, as often occurs when no agreed and comprehensive paradigm or framework for research has been established.

Meanwhile, a controversial article suggesting the spirits of the dead can suffer psychological stress and harm like living people has appeared in the 'Open Forum' section of the *Australian Journal of Parapsychology* (vol.13 no.1, pp37-56, summer 2013). In an abstract entitled 'Psychological Phenomena in Dead People: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Murdered People and Its Consequences to Public Health', social psychologist Wasney De Almedia Ferreira argues that there is strong evidence that a dead person may continue thinking and behaving after death as consciousness continues as if still embodied. The fact of death may not be realised for some considerable time. It is proposed that

such a dead person "does not like to talk, remember, and/or explain things related to his/her own death because there is evidence that many events related to death are repressed in his/her unconscious (post-mortem cognitive repression)" and that "as dying can be very traumatic, especially to the murdered... PTSD may even develop." Ferreira, who is based in Brazil, draws on ideas derived from personal experiences and from the field of cognitive linguistics, which interprets language in terms of concepts.

The view that ghosts are troubled spirits is a long-standing one in folklore, as well as the view of many mediums, whilst some parapsychological writers have suggested that the defusing of ghosts by communication "is less an exorcism than a psychoanalytic airing of a repressed complex". (Paul Huson in 'On Seeing Ghosts' in *How To Test and Develop Your E.S.P.*, 1977, chapter 10).

Ferreira's approach has immediately drawn some critical responses from parapsychologists carried in the same issue, not least that from George Van Doorn who, applying the philosophy of Karl Popper, maintains any claim of post-traumatic syndrome amongst the dead cannot be falsified or disapproved and therefore should not be classed as a scientific position. Popper applied the test of falsifiability to the theories of Sigmund Freud concerning psychological complexes amongst the living, rejecting them as unscientific. However, Popper's approach has been challenged by some psychologists who maintain Freudian theory can be validly tested and refuted by data from experimental psychology (Sources: 'Can We Really Talk to Dead People? Comment on Ferreira', 2013, by George Van Doorn in *Australian Journal of Parapsychology*, op cit; Hans Eysenck in *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, 1985).

If some experiments can be conceived, then it might theoretically be possible to test such ideas, but in the meantime, we need to know a lot more about psychical phenomena in general. It remains entirely possible we are confronted by more than one type of survival in the experiences of ghosts and hauntings and apparent communications from the dead. Apart from the possibility of some aspect of personality or consciousness surviving after death, haunting cases may suggest survival of another sort, in the sense of a persisting memory-like trace that is localised in space, and that can later be psychically perceived or 'remembered' by people who enter into that same space. Determining which of these explanations applies in claims of such phenomena is the task of psychical research. As Australian scientist Raynor C Johnson wrote in 1953, there can be no more important philosophical question than "Do the dead live?" (In *The Imprisoned Splendour*, 1953, and *Nurslings of Immortality*, 1957). If such a question could be answered affirmatively with irrefutable proof, this would be the most significant discovery in human history, carrying profound implications for every living individual and every society throughout the world.

MEDICAL BAG

The Indian baby who repeatedly and spontaneously combusts, the man who is permanently happy and the heart attack victim saved by a pothole

BABY'S ON FIRE

In May 2013, a son was born to Rajeshwari Karnan, 23, and her husband, Karnan Perumal, 26, both farm labourers, in Nedimozhinur village in Villipuram district of the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Their first child, born in 2011, was a girl, and they were fervently hoping their second would be a boy. However, the ensuing festivities ceased nine days later. Ms Karnan said that during her stay at her mother's home – as is customary following the birth of a baby – she stepped outside the coconut-palm thatched hut one afternoon to bathe her two-year-old daughter after putting her son, Rahul, to sleep. Then she heard him wail, but before she could go in to check on him, a young neighbour yelled: “Akka [elder sister], your baby is on fire!” Ms Karnan recalled: “There was a flame on his belly and his right knee, and my husband rushed with a towel to put it off [sic]. I got very scared.” She and her husband rushed Rahul to hospital in Villipuram.

After the child had caught fire for the fourth time in late July and the parents had visited several hospitals, their neighbours forced them to move out of the village because of the fire risk, so the family found refuge in a temple in an adjacent village. Following publicity in the local press, the district administration intervened and moved the family 200km (124 miles) north to Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, and in early August Rahul was admitted to Kilpauk Medical Hospital with first and second degree burns and infected skin. Doctors there began considering the possibility of spontaneous human combustion. “We are in a dilemma and haven't come to any conclusion,” said Dr Narayan Babu, head of paediatrics. “We are carrying out numerous tests. We are not saying it is SHC until all investigations are complete.”

The vast majority of scientists are sceptical about SHC although the theory has gained some



ABOVE: Dr Narayan Babu, left, inspecting baby Rahul lying next to his mother Rajeshwari Karnan, right, at Kilpauk Medical Hospital in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

supporters recently. In September 2011, an Irish coroner listed SHC as the cause of death of a 76-year-old diabetic man in Co Galway, found charred to death but with no apparent source of fire [FT281:14-15]; another possible SHC occurred in Co Donegal nine days later. Prof David Gee's ‘candle/wick effect’ hypothesis accounts for neither initial ignition nor the reduction of bones to ash. A novel theory that might account for some, though not all, supposed SHC cases was advanced by Professor Brian J Ford in *Laboratory News* in November 2011. This postulated that a disordered metabolism – for instance from a high-fat diet, alcoholism, or Type 2 diabetes – could lead to ketosis

(the excessive formation in the body of ketone or acetone bodies, due to incomplete oxidation of fats). Highly inflammable acetone could then gather in the fatty tissues and be ignited by a static spark from fabric or hair-combing [FT283:9].

However, test results released on 20 August showed that acetone levels in Rahul's blood were not high. This could mean that the child's acetone had dropped to a safe level; or that the high levels of acetone that can occur in babies are stored in the fat, and do not enter the blood stream – and thus do not show up in blood tests. Or the acetone hypothesis might be a red herring. Whatever the explanation, Rahul's parents were taking no chances. He slept

with a bucket of water next to his cot.

Foul play appears to have been ruled out, with Karnan Perumal saying that he and his wife would never be “crazy [enough] to burn our own baby”. He added, however, that “some people don't believe us. I am scared to return to my village and am hoping for some government protection. There is also the fear that our child could burn once again.” Others suggested the flames were the work of a deity, or blamed the use of phosphorous in the materials used to build the couple's home. (Ms Karnan's mother's house is in a village where in 2004 several homes burned to the ground because of the presence of highly inflammable phosphorous in the building material, a fact confirmed by the local fire department.)

At the age of three months, Rahul clearly bore scald marks on his head and pale leathery burns on his abdomen and legs. The hospital authorities, who had arranged psychological counselling for the parents, said the decision to discharge the baby would be taken jointly with the Tamil Nadu government. *New York Times*, 20 Aug; *D.Mail*, 26 August 2013.

- *FT* recalls a similar case from China. In April 1990, the grandmother of four-year-old Tong Tangjiang saw smoke pouring from his trousers. A one-inch-square hole was burnt through two layers of clothing, and 50 minutes after the boy was rushed to hospital in the southern province of Hunan, he started smoking again. In two hours from 8am to 10am he spontaneously ignited four times. His right hand, armpits and private parts were burnt. Tong's mother, Chiang, said he had set fire to a mattress and narrowly missed setting his grandmother's hair on fire when she got too close. The child was only completely comfortable when naked [FT55:25].



MISTER HAPPY

Malcolm Myatt (pictured above with wife Kath) always looked on the bright side of life, but now he can no longer register sadness because a stroke modified his brain's frontal lobe, where emotions are regulated. The 68-year-old retired lorry driver from Cannock, Staffordshire, spent 19 weeks in hospital in 2004; he lost the feeling in his left side and his short-term memory is impaired, but he said: "I am never depressed. Being sad wouldn't help anything anyway. I would definitely rather be happy all the time than the other way round. It's an advantage really. The stroke could have become my worst enemy, but I wouldn't let it. Now I barely even notice I don't feel sadness." His wife Kath, 67, said: "Malcolm's very childish now. It's infectious. When he starts laughing everyone in the room does. If he's in hysterics, everyone else is too. He livens up any room. Everyone misses him when he's not there. We have been to funerals and I've been on tenterhooks wondering what he might come out with." *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 13 Aug 2013.*

- Mr A, a 49-year-old senior manager of a large Brazilian corporation, suffered a stroke triggered by high blood pressure. This led to bleeding in the subcortical region of his brain, an area immediately below the cerebral cortex, associated with higher-level thinking and decision-making. He found he couldn't stop giving away money and spending cash liberally on sweets, food and drinks for children he met on the street. His wife told doctors her husband's generosity had led to family distress and almost bankrupted

them. Mr A said he was aware of his behaviour and no longer wanted to work because he had "seen death close up [and] wanted to enjoy life, which is too short." <i> 9 Sept 2013.

POT(HOLE) LUCK

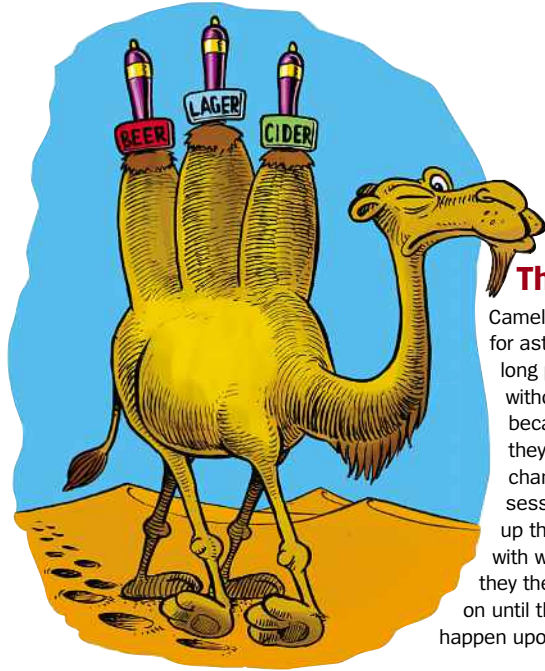
While exercising at home on a cross-trainer, Ray Lee collapsed, having suffered a suspected ventricular tachycardia attack – a potentially fatal heart rhythm. His heart rate soared, causing crippling chest pains, and his wife Christine called an ambulance. "The paramedics gave me an injection and strapped me to an ECG machine, which showed my heart was going at 186 beats per minute," said Mr Lee, 65, a retired operations manager from Wilton in Wiltshire. "We raced along the roads at high speed, with a medic standing in the back, leaning over me. All of a sudden, there was a massive bang as we smacked into a pothole and the whole ambulance jolted. Everyone on board jumped and I was lifted off the stretcher, before falling back into place. After a few seconds I looked over at the monitor to see my heart rate had plummeted to 60bpm. The paramedic looked at me in a state of disbelief, but nobody said anything because we were so focused on getting to hospital."

Arriving at Salisbury District Hospital, Mr Lee was still in pain and was given morphine; but the planned treatment (an injection to stop his heart before restarting it) was not required. "I felt a bit of a fraud by the time I got to A&E, because my heart rhythm was normal," he said. "I guess there are some potholes that ruin your car and others that save your life." *D.Mail, Sun, 5 July 2013.*

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

169. THE CAMEL'S HUMP



The myth

Camels can go for astonishingly long periods without drinking, because when they do get a chance for a session they fill up their humps with water which they then live on until they next happen upon an oasis.

The "truth"

Camels' humps do not contain water (nor, as I was taught at primary school, do they keep water in one hump, and food – ginger cake and Spangles, I always imagined – in the other). In fact, the humps are full of fatty tissue, which will sustain the beast through a foodless journey. This fat does not contain water in a useable form. A saggy, deflated hump is a sign that the camel has temporarily used up its reserves of fat. The other great advantage of having all that fat in one place, instead of distributed around the body, is that it means you're less efficiently insulated, and therefore better able to withstand high temperatures. It is true that camels (unlike, say, writers or cartoonists) can survive without frequent drinking, but this is mainly because they are so well adapted to minimising water loss. For instance, their blood cells are an unusual shape, allowing them to keep flowing during dehydration, and camels' nostrils have evolved to trap and reuse the water vapour from their own exhalations.

Sources

www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/camel.html; www.livescience.com/32366-why-do-camels-have-humps.html; www.djur.cob.lu.se/Djurartiklar/Kamel.html; www.desertusa.com/animals/camel.html

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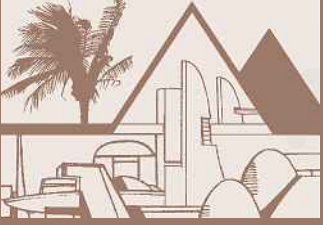
Plenty of sources do still stick to the "water bag" story, or at least to its more sophisticated descendant, which argues that camels process the fat to extract water. There also seems to be some disagreement over whether camels store water better than other animals or merely waste less of it.

Mythchaser

Most of the "goodness" in fruits and vegetables lies either in, or just beneath, the skin; if you strip your food, you're robbing yourself. Can any reader peel away the layers of myth to reveal the nutritious truth beneath?



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ARCHAEOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING presents this issue's round-up of archaeological discoveries and curiosities



CRYSTAL-GAZING

A rough, whitish block recovered from a shipwreck in the English Channel may be a 'sunstone', the fabled crystal believed by some to have helped Vikings and other mediæval mariners navigate the high seas. The Alderney Crystal – a chunk of Iceland spar, a transparent variety of calcite, about the size and shape of a cigarette packet – was recovered in 2002 from an English warship that sank off Alderney in 1592. The wreck was discovered in 1977 after a rusting Tudor musket became entangled in a net cast by a lobster fisherman. Researchers claim that the crystal worked as a kind of solar compass, allowing sailors to determine the position of the sun even when it was hidden by heavy cloud, masked by fog, or below the horizon. That's because of a property known as birefringence, which splits light beams in a way that can reveal the direction of their source with a high

degree of accuracy: rotating the crystal until the light beams converge gives the position of the sun. Vikings are unlikely to have grasped the physics behind the phenomenon, but that wouldn't have presented a problem. The crystal was discovered 3ft (90cm) away from a pair of brass navigational dividers of the sort used to measure distances on charts.

Albert Le Floch of the University in Rennes in Brittany is one of several academics who have suggested that calcite crystals were used as navigational aids (though others are sceptical). He said their use might have persisted into the 16th century, by which time magnetic compasses were widely used but often malfunctioned – partly because of the proximity of large amounts of iron in ships' cannons. He noted that the Icelandic Saga of St Olaf appears to refer to such a crystal when it says that Olaf used a 'sunstone' to verify the position of the sun

on a snowy day – although no such crystals have ever been recovered from Viking tombs or ships. Le Floch argued that one of the reasons for this is that calcite degrades quickly, being vulnerable to acid, sea salts, and heat. The Alderney Crystal was originally transparent, but seawater has turned it a milky white. Sunstones are listed in the inventories of several mediæval churches and one monastery in 14th century Iceland. For a rock crystal lens found at an 11/12th century Viking site in Sweden, see **FT120:6**. For more on sunstones, see "Polar vision" by David Hambling [**FT222:24**]. *Proceedings of the Royal Society A, Independent*, 6 Mar; [AP] 8 Mar; *Economist*, 9 Mar; *D.Mail*, 17 April 2013.

GATES TO HELL

Italian archaeologists have opened the ancient "Gate to Hell" in Hierapolis, western Turkey – and found it is still a killer. They found the ruins of Pluto's Gate (Plutoneion in Greek, Plutonium in Latin) in the ancient pulverised city, which lies next to the volcanic-spring resort town of Pamukkale. Christians had damaged the city in the 6th century and the destruction was completed by later earthquakes. Professor Francesco D'Andria of the University of Salento used ancient mythology to guide him to the legendary portal to the underworld. "We found the Plutonium by reconstructing the route of a thermal spring," he said. "Indeed, Pamukkale's springs, which produce the famous white travertine terraces, originate from this cave."

The Plutonium was Hierapolis's chief claim to fame. It was described by the Greek historian Strabo (64 BC –AD 24) as an orifice in a ridge of the hillside, in front



ABOVE LEFT: A reconstruction of what the Plutonium complex might have looked like. ABOVE RIGHT: A part of the Hierapolis site as it appears today.

CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

168: DOWN TO THE BONE(S)

of which was a fenced enclosure filled with thick mist immediately fatal to any who entered. "This space is full of a vapour so misty and dense that one can scarcely see the ground," he wrote. "Any animal that passes inside meets instant death. I threw in sparrows and they immediately breathed their last and fell." The portal to the underworld seems just as bad for your health today. "We could see the cave's lethal properties during the excavation," said Prof D'Andria. "Several birds died as they tried to get close to the warm opening, instantly killed by the carbon dioxide fumes." The fumes emanated from a cave below the site, which contains ionic columns with inscriptions to Pluto and Kore, gods of the underworld. Excavations have also revealed evidence of a nearby thermal pool and courtyard which was a gathering place for priests and visitors seeking prophetic visions or to speak with dead loved ones. The 'visions' were probably hallucinations caused by breathing diluted fumes wafting up from the Plutonium. A raised terrace overlooking the temple and pool would have held onlookers and initiates as eunuchs led bulls into the cave – and dragged them out, dead. The prophecies of the Pythian priestess at Delphi were also probably inspired by subterranean gases [FT127:21]. *The Sideshow*, 2 April; *news.com.au*, 3 April 2013.

● There are other apparent portals to the underworld. In the Karakum Desert, for example, a fiery pit that has been burning for over 40 years has inspired visitors to Derweze (Darvaza) in Turkmenistan. Soviet geologists drilling in the area in 1971 came across a natural gas cavern. The ground beneath the drilling rig collapsed, leaving a hole 230ft (70m) across and 66ft (20m) deep. Fearing that the hole would lead to the release of hazardous amounts of methane, the team decided to burn it off by tossing a grenade into the crater. The fire still rages, leading locals to dub the site the "door to hell". The flames generate a golden glow that can be seen for miles around Derweze, a village with a population of around 350, situated 160 miles (260km) north of Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. In April 2010 the country's president, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, visited the site and ordered that the fire be doused, but this is yet to happen – if indeed it is possible. *dailymail.co.uk*, 27 July; *Guardian*, 5 Sept 2012.

"Piltdown Poppa sings this song
'Archæology's done me wrong'
The British Museum's got my head
Most unfortunate 'cause I ain't dead"
– Tommy Steele, *Rock With The Caveman*
(1956)

Multiple sources range from Aristotle (genuine and disputed works) and Plato down to Jerome and Augustine via Pausanias, Pliny, Plutarch, and Philostratus. Full inventory with translated extracts in Adrienne Meyer's *The First Fossil Hunters: Paleontology in Greek and Roman Times* (Princeton, 2000; rev. ed. with new intro, 2011).

There were Græco-Roman Piltdown Men. Or were they? Ancient opinions healthily varied. Socrates dismissed giant bone tales: "I have no time for such things. I accept what is generally believed and pursue more serious matters." Pausanias realised "Those who love marvellous stories can't resist adding details, thus ruining the truth by adding lies." He elsewhere admitted that he thought stories of big bones "rather silly" until seeing them for himself in Arcadia, a wild part of Greece also famous for werewolves. Diodorus Siculus saw the problem: "I understand the difficulties of those trying to explain ancient myths. The mere span of time makes legends seem incredible, and some unfairly require the same precision in myths as for contemporary events." The same attitude is manifest in Philostratus's *On Heroes*, which enumerates 15 separate giant bone discoveries, weighing up the respective evidences of myth and autopsy. Aristotle's belief (*Physics*, ch198b paras17-32) in the 'fixity of species' is often thought to have been a death-blow to ancient evolutionary speculations and a malign influence on early Church thinking. Up to a point, Lord Copper. His own disciple, Palæphatus, churned out a volume of 'Unbelievable Tales'. Augustine, via Pliny, harks back to the Homeric axiom that humans and animals had declined in size since earliest times. His own discussion (*City of God*) concludes that strange and giant creatures *had* existed, but died out, being "God's mistakes", an expression of which Darwin, if not Dawkins, would not have been ashamed.

Thus, some scoffed, others gaped, when

Roman general Sertorius claimed (81 BC) to have discovered the skeleton (60 cubits/85ft/26m) of the Greek ogre Antæus at Tingis (Tangier). Likewise, when Marcus Aemilius Scaurus (58 BC) exhibited the purported remains of the sea monster from which Perseus had saved the chained-to-a-rock heroine Andromeda (shades of Honeychile Rider and 007 in *Dr No*) – her fetters were also found, at Joppa (Jaffa-Tel Aviv). Pliny says the creature's spine was 40 ft/12m, its ribs taller than an African elephant. This has been variously described as an actual whale (commonly sighted in Roman times, so perhaps an unlikely confusion) or a downright hoax. Or, as Meyer is frequently willing to entertain, something else.?? – personally, I keep thinking of The Creature from the Black Lagoon...

Augustus, who had a big private collection of giant bones, animal and human, was fond of exhibiting human freaks and rare animals for public delectation. The contemporary astronomical poet Manilius (famously edited by AE Housman) saw "the bodies of animals with human limbs", later dismissed by Aelian (himself often a model of credulity) as frauds of "artificers of nature".

Sea monsters were popular enough for one Demostratus to have written an entire (sadly lost) book on them. Tritons (mermen) were of especial interest, commonly sighted alive or dead. Emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37) was excited when a delegation from Olisipo (Lisbon) reported a live one there. Pausanias enthused that the pickled one from Tanagra (central Greece) he saw at Rome "would really make you gasp".

According to Jerome, Constantine journeyed to Antioch to gaze at a satyr preserved in salt. A dubious interest, perhaps, for the first Christian emperor. Meyer (a Stanford folklorist) originally thought this a probable fake. However, recent discoveries (newspaper reports on-line) of human bodies naturally preserved by Iranian salt mines (pictured above) have persuaded her that these are the "probably basis" for Jerome's satyr.

"Imposture merges away into self-deception so that only relatively has there ever been an impostor" – Fort, *Books*, p669.





NECROLOG

This month, we say goodbye to a Kiwi pilot who went on to become the pre-eminent theorist of UFO 'grid' research and a peace activist and self-declared world citizen



BRUCE CATHIE

was one of the last surviving pioneers of UFO research from the mid-1900s. After leaving school as an engineering apprentice, he joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force. In 1952, while working as an agricultural pilot, he and a group of friends had a prolonged sighting of a UFO, close to Mount Wellington on NZ's North Island. He later said that discussions with other airline pilots convinced him such experiences were not uncommon. The incident made a deep impression and the mystery of UFO propulsion became his lifelong obsession. Cathie went on to qualify for command of airliners in the national airlines, finally retiring from Air New Zealand in 1981.

Inspired by his own sighting and the 'orthoteny' theory of French ufologist Aimé Michel – that UFOs frequently travelled along straight paths in a predictable sequence – Cathie associated these routes with lines of geomagnetic and geodetic significance. These two schools diverged considerably; where Michel's linear UFO routes, based on the French flap of 1954, were mainly short and at variable angles to each other (see his *Flying Saucers and the Straight-line Mystery*, 1958), Cathie's evolved into a globe-spanning net of latitudes and longitudes at the heart of which was his



theory of 'harmonics' and 'energy grids'. Both have been severely criticised by modern researchers for their lack of rigour in including non-specific data that could be meteors or misidentifications of aircraft, balloons, etc.

In his first book, *Harmonic 33* (1968), Cathie used data on local UFO sightings, maths and geometry to introduce the idea that "geometric harmonics of the wave motion of light", and their equivalent harmonics of gravity and mass, formed a grid system that powered UFO flight. In his second book *Harmonic 695: The UFO and Antigravity* (1971), he wrote: "Having satisfied myself that my reasoning and plotting were not false, I considered that I had good proof that New Zealand, possibly other countries, and probably the whole world, were being systematically covered by some type of grid system." Subsequent books – *Harmonic 288: Pulse of the Universe* (1977),

Harmonic 371244: The Bridge to Infinity (1997), and *The Harmonic Conquest of Space* (1998) – extended his system into the Earth's core and far out into space; and, along the way, explained how the ancients could have used sound to lift heavy rocks for their feats of gigantic architecture.

At Cathie's funeral, his son Mark said he was "a quiet soul, a deep thinker" who loved dancing and left love poems to his wife. Fans spoke of Cathie's humility and patience. Cathie's latest collaborator, Rod Maupin – who helped him develop the online *Gridworks* 'harmonic calculator' and *Gridpoint Atlas* – called him "a genius. His legacy is that he drew correlations between past and modern-day events, ancient structures, and UFO sightings, then put them all together in the World Grid system that has been a part of this planet from the very beginning. Much to the disdain of the academic world, he extended Einstein's famous equation." Cathie also claimed to have successfully calculated the

detonation time of an early French nuclear test using his "harmonic mathematics".

Cathie's interests extended to forteana. He cited Fort's works and admired *The Morning of the Magicians* (by Pauwels and Bergier, 1960), declaring: "I am neither a naive fantasy fan, nor a proselytiser of any particular brand of faith." He was a staunch believer in the extraterrestrial origin of UFOs and said "I will not be satisfied until I am able to approach one of the vehicles closely, examine it in detail, and if possible communicate with one of the beings who control it." He also believed that his 'science' of harmonics was known to world governments who actively suppressed general knowledge of it. Through their secret use of it, he said, "I believe it is most probable that a Moon-base has already been established by our own scientists."

Apart from his 1952 sighting, his only other anomalous experience is of fortean interest. On 12 March 1965, he was flying between Auckland and Kaitiā along the coast in "perfect weather". Just north of Helensville, he "dropped to a lower altitude to have a better look" at the harbour. The tide was out and water over the estuary "quite shallow"; then "I spotted what I took to be a stranded grey-white whale". He turned the plane to fly directly over the object. "My 'whale' was definitely a metal fish." According to his notes, it was "streamlined and symmetrical", had no superstructure, control surfaces or protrusions, "appeared metallic", and was about 100ft (30m) long, with a diameter of 15ft (4.6m) at the widest part. Despite the "suggestion of a hatch on top", it was clearly not "a normal submarine". It was in clear view "resting in no more than 30ft [9m] of clear water. The bottom of the harbour was visible and the craft sharply defined". Inquiries made later to local authorities confirmed that no sub of any sort could have got into the harbour. The chief engineer of the Ministry of Works in Auckland surveyed this spot "with

a depth-sounder" in September 1969. He informed Cathie "that a hole had been detected in the harbour bed approximately one eighth of a mile [200m] wide and over 100ft [30m] deep, which I consider would indicate that some activity had been carried out in this position some five years previously". Convinced it was UFO-related, the incident propelled Cathie's investigations "until they culminated in my present findings". (*Harmonic 695*).

Swedish ufologist and AFU blogger Håkan Blomqvist noted that Cathie "also claimed several classic MIB experiences" that "convinced him that we have aliens among us and that their presence is known to some scientists. [Cathie wrote:] 'I have an uneasy feeling that the world is being slowly and surreptitiously taken over by an all-powerful elite.' (*Harmonic 288*)" Inevitably, the rise of the Internet enabled a broad cult to form around Cathie's work, embracing conspiracy theories (especially among those who believe there were sinister attempts to suppress Cathie's research), ancient sciences, anti-matter, anti-gravity and 'free' energy.

Maupin reminds us that Cathie, before the advent of the Internet, "was the first grid researcher. He was the one who painstakingly derived all of the information on his own. Because there were no references out there, there were no books on the subject, there were no classes taught on harmonics in the universities. Every single grid researcher that is around today [is] inspired by him and his work [...] directly or indirectly".

Bruce Leonard Cathie, pilot, author, UFO theorist, born Auckland, NZ, 11 Feb 1930; died Takapuna, Auckland 2 June 2013, aged 83. Bob Rickard

GARRY DAVIS

was a Broadway understudy to Danny Kaye before serving as a B-17 bomber pilot in Germany, which engendered his disgust for war. On 25 May 1948, he entered the American Embassy in Paris,

renounced his US citizenship and declared himself a citizen of the world. He remained a stateless person for his remaining 65 years – entering, leaving, being regularly expelled from and frequently arrested in many countries, carrying a passport of his own devising.

In 1949, he founded the International Registry of World Citizens and was soon inundated with requests to join from around the globe. Tiffany Thayer made him an honorary member of the Fortean Society [FT135:50]. His supporters included three Alberts (Schweitzer, Einstein, and Camus), as well as Jean-Paul Sartre and EB White. Davis spoke about the One World Movement on college campuses and wrote books on the subject. “The nation state is a political fiction which perpetuates anarchy and is the breeding ground of war,” he said in 1990. “Allegiance to a nation is a collective suicide pact.”

Today, more than 950,000 people are registered world citizens, according to the World Service Authority, the group’s administrative arm, based in Washington. More than half a million World Passports have been issued, though there are no statistics on the number of people who have successfully crossed borders with them. They have been formally recognised in Burkino Faso, Ecuador, Mauritania, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia, while more than 150 other countries have honoured them on occasion. Just weeks before he died, Davis had a World Passport delivered to whistleblower Edward J Snowden in Moscow; last year, he sent one to Wikileaks founder Julian Assange.

Sol Gareth “Gary” Davis, world citizen and peace activist, born Bar Harbor, Maine 27 June 1921; died Williston, Vermont 24 July 2013, aged 91.



STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



Seven families who suffocated a two-year-old girl in an exorcism ritual in the northern Malaysian town of Bukit Mertajam have escaped jail. Amid chants in a darkened room, Chua Wan Zuen was pinned under a blanket in an attempt to crush out evil spirits. She was held down by the group lying on top of one another. A Malaysian court in northern Penang state fined the parents, an uncle, an aunt, and grandmother £2,000 each after they pleaded guilty to causing the child’s death by negligence. One cousin was fined £1,000 while another was released on probation. *D.Mail, 5 Aug 2013.*

On 25 April 2013, Chilean police arrested four people accused of burning a baby alive in a ritual organised by sect leader Ramon Gustavo Castillo Gaete, 36, who believed that the world would end on 21 December 2012 and that the baby was the Antichrist. The three-day-old girl was taken to a hill in the town of Colliguay near the port of Valparaiso on 21 November and thrown into a bonfire with her mouth taped up to keep her from screaming. The baby’s mother, 25-year-old Natalia Guerra, had allegedly approved the sacrifice and was among those arrested. Castillo was thought to be the baby’s father. The 12-member sect was formed in 2005. “Everyone in this sect was a professional,” said police investigator Miguel Ampuero. “We have someone who was a veterinarian and who worked as a flight attendant, we have a filmmaker, a draftsman. Everyone has a university degree.” Castillo himself, who believed he was a god, escaped arrest as he had gone to Peru to buy the hallucinogenic brew ayahuasca (yagé). A few days later, Peruvian police found his body with a rope around the neck hanging from a beam inside a house on the outskirts of Cusco. He was identified from fingerprints. “All the preliminary evidence indicates this was a case of suicide,” said the Cusco police chief. [AP] *worldnews.nbcnews.com, 27 April; BBC News, 2 May 2013.*

At least 18 tribal villagers from Guwahati in northeast India were arrested for hacking to death a man they suspected of witchcraft. They claimed they were told to kill the victim by a Hindu goddess who appeared in their dreams. Over the past five years, mobs have killed at least 200 people whom they have accused of sorcery, mainly in tribal-dominated areas of western and northern Assam. [AFP] *NY Post, 9 June 2013.*

Two women from Zimbabwe accused of witchcraft died after being urged by their families to drink a mystery liquid. Jersey Mutero, 83, and Erita Bhebhe, 73, collapsed after swallowing the ‘holy water’ provided by self-styled healer Maxwell Pira. At the time of the report, Pira was on the run. Relatives of the victims believed the pair had cast a spell on a girl to make her ill. *Metro, 10 May 2013.*

An 18-year-old girl beheaded her father with a bush knife after he raped her in their home in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. A local church leader – Pastor Lucas Kumi in the village of Rang – said residents had formed ‘a protective ring’ around the teenager because they agreed her ‘evil’ father deserved to die after raping his daughter repeatedly while the mother and his other children were out of the house. “We’ve all agreed that she is free to stay in the community,” he said, adding that they would not conduct a formal burial service for the father. *D.Mail, 17 June 2013.*

Joao Maria de Souza, 45, was fatally injured on 10 July when a one-tonne cow fell through the roof of his house in Caratinga, Brazil, and crushed him. Caratinga is in a hilly area of Minas Gerais, a south-eastern state traditionally known as a cattle-raising and dairy-producing region. Mr de Souza had been sleeping in bed with his wife, who was not injured, when the cow stepped through the asbestos roof after it had been grazing on a hill. He was taken to hospital but died the next day as a result of internal bleeding. “I didn’t bring my son up to be killed by a cow,” insisted his mother, Maria. “There’s no justice in the world.”

It was the third incident of a cow falling through the roof of a house in the region over the last three years. On the first occasion, there was no one inside the house; on the second, a baby and a small child were sleeping next to the spot where the animal fell, in what was described at the time as a miraculous escape. *Metro, Independent, BBC News, 14 July 2013.*

THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2

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to fake ones) and the opportunity to have Nigel join you for your ghost hunting expedition. Latterly, Mortimer has convinced himself he is channelling a celestial being by the name of 'Sharlek'.

In many ways Mortimer is harking back to the 1950s and early 1960s, when there was a direct link between spiritualism and UFOs. So far, so weird. However, a former colleague of Mortimer's, Paul Bennett, himself no stranger to UFO and supernatural encounters, isn't convinced. Of course, it's easy to dismiss claims of spirit guides, but Bennett goes beyond that. He claims Mortimer told him "numerous times how easy it was to 'make money out of gullible people', by faking Sharlek and speaking as an ET-channeller, charging them money. 'It's a doddle,' he used to say." Shades here of

George King, founder of the Aetherius Society and Scientology founder L Ron Hubbard, who were both overheard claiming it was possible to make a fortune by creating a new religion. Mortimer, obviously, denies any Sharlek charlatanism and claims his contact is authentic, and we are confident he is sincere in his claims, despite being unable to verify them.

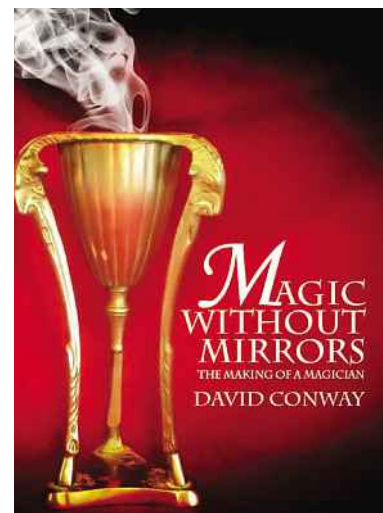
Now, after moving from Ilkley to Settle, North Yorkshire, lo and behold, Mortimer 'discovers' that a folk memory of an 18th century giant stone sun dial on the hill above the market town is actually a lost prehistoric stone row that in turn is – yes, you've guessed it – a portal for 'celestial beings'. In this numinous landscape Mortimer wanders, receives messages from Sharlek and joins more dots from local history, folklore and other sources to create a frothy conspiracy involving Isaac Newton and an early government cover up. It's the stuff of legend, as they say, and Mortimer is creating it here and now, played out across the Yorkshire landscape, Dungeons and Dragons style. Where all this is going is anyone's guess, but it's part of the step change that is taking place in ufology's trenches. Those who wish to learn more are urged to read Mortimer's books, website and Facebook pages and draw their own conclusions: nigelmortimer.weebly.com/; www.facebook.com/#!/groups/openingportals/; www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgy9WUF7KHU

ALIEN MAGIC

Accounts of those who claimed to have encountered aliens are found in the strangest places. David Conway, whose 1972 book *Magic: An Occult Primer* helped trigger a renaissance in the practice of magic, mentions one in his autobiography *Magic Without Mirrors* (CreateSpace, 2011). In this fascinating book he reveals a chance meeting with an individual named Hubert Wattiaux, who he becomes convinced is an extraterrestrial – not a 'grey alien', but a human who is literally from Outer Space.

Accounts of such extraordinary experiences are not uncommon in the flying saucer literature; several contactees claim to have met extraterrestrials in human form, as does UFO writer Timothy Good. Even a former Royal Equerry, the late Sir Peter Horsley, described having once had a long conversation with a telepathic alien in a London flat who was keen to meet Prince Philip.

This type of 'contact' is easy to dismiss, but is surely no less plausible than the stories of those who claim to have met ufonauts emerging from landed flying saucers. In his case, Conway mentioned the encounter to someone who knew Wattiaux well. Her unprompted comment was "He's from Outer Space, isn't he?" Conway eventually confronts Wattiaux with his suspicions, to be told: "I was born, I'll fall ill and I'll die. Like anybody else. But then the real me will go back to where I came from... A number of us have become human beings so as to understand what that means... When we return we'll take the experience back with us."



THROUGH THE PORTAL

In recent years, ufology has become less focused on 'structured craft' arriving here from elsewhere. This is not through any shortage of people wishing these would arrive, but more due to the fact that, despite the plethora of high spec cameras and phones, fewer are being photographed. Grass roots UFO subculture is unconsciously adapting to this situation, becoming diluted and cross pollinated by beliefs and practices which are allowing it to evolve. In **FT294:33** we mentioned the work of Sacha Christie; now it's time to take a look at the minor cult which surrounds Yorkshire's Nigel Mortimer.

Prior to his entry into ufology during the early 1980s, Mortimer experienced some kind of spontaneous supernatural experience involving balls of light. Ufology led him to earth mysteries and he became fascinated with the folklore of Ilkley Moor, leading him to believe he had discovered a 'portal' between worlds. His adventures were written up in *The Circle and the Sword* (2012). On the face of it, this is a rattlingly good yarn, but on closer inspection reveals itself to be a 'join-the-dots' mysteriography, mixing ufology with earth mysteries, New Age philosophy and psychic questing (a subject many believe to be a combination of hoaxing and self-delusion). Mortimer's website offers the kind of services touted by spiritualists, such as 'Genuine Psychic Readings' (as, presumably, opposed

THE REAL DEAL 2: EASTERN PROMISE

As noted last month, the thousands of files now declassified by the Ministry of Defence are not worthless. Despite some UFO buffs arguing that far better cases *must* reside in hidden records, the files made public contain some high-calibre incidents. We know this because a few cases simply filed by the MoD were independently investigated by others.

A startling example from 19 April 1984 involved three air traffic controllers at an English airfield. These highly experienced staff feared a collision between a UFO and a Cessna light aircraft as it came into land. This is just the sort of case that would make headlines around the world if reported openly. Instead, it became a one-page form in the MoD archives, filed away for years like countless others.

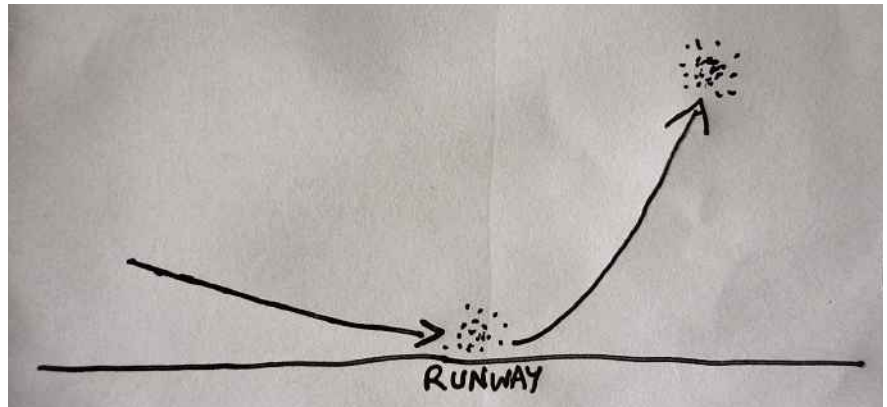
As is typical of MoD releases, this case would be tough for anyone wishing to pursue it today merely from data in the MoD archives. Redaction prior to release usually obliterated helpful clues and names of those involved. However, whilst never reported publicly in 1984, the witnesses in this case *did* report it to local UFO investigator Peter Johnson, and we have the results of this investigation.

Consequently, despite the MoD allowing it to founder, we know the full facts, and the Ministry *did not* spirit it away to a covert location as conspiracy buffs would suggest.

I have a dilemma here, as I know the identities of all the witnesses and the airfield in question. Indeed, I spoke with one at the time and liaised with Peter Johnson on some of the follow-through. I also have a tape of his interview with the chief controller – made 10 days after the events. However, these operators made very clear to us that they did not wish to be publicly identified. Although all the staff soon moved on, even revealing the airfield name might break this confidence. The MoD case file (DEFE 31-1973, p279) supports my reluctance – noting that data is withheld at the ATCs' express request "in case their professional integrity is questioned". I have attempted to find them three decades later to ask permission, but without success. So I must simply refer to the general area – East Anglia – and also use pseudonyms.

At 4 pm on the Thursday immediately prior to the Easter holidays, Andy, the senior ATC at the field for a number of years, entered the control tower to supervise his two on-duty officers. The conditions were perfect: clear skies below 5,000ft (1,500m) and over six miles (10km) visibility. Wind was from west south west, at around 9mph (15km/h). As a result, the field was not using its radar and routinely operating under visual flight rules.

The field had two intersecting runways, and because of the wind that day either could be used. Stan, the deputy controller, who had worked at the field with Andy for almost a decade, was talking to the Cessna as it approached. A third ATC, Carol, who had worked there as an assistant for most of



They both saw the UFO and confirmed that it was real

Andy's tenure, was logging aircraft movements in the flight book near the window where the two men stood.

Not wishing to disturb either officer as they worked, Andy watched for the incoming aircraft as it had just reported 'base leg', meaning it was turning right angles toward the runway and landing was only minutes away. Andy then spotted what he assumed to be the aircraft coming in on one runway but was puzzled by its appearance. In the interview he says: "It was something bright and flashing... [I assumed this] was something unusual on the aircraft about to land. It was about 800ft [244m] above the ground – the right height for an aircraft on base leg... I watched it for about 30 seconds... [But] I looked at it and could only see the light flashing not the shape of the aircraft behind it."

At this point, the radio barked and the landing plane confirmed it was coming in – but on the other runway, *not* the one Andy was watching, creating a potentially dangerous situation.

Andy shouted to his deputy that he had a landing plane on the other runway, but Stan replied "No I haven't". Andy told Peter Johnson: "I now got a little worried as it appeared to be on a collision course with the (incoming) aircraft."

As Stan continued to monitor the Cessna, Andy focused on the unidentified object via binoculars kept in the tower. In interview he described what he saw: "I looked back and it was apparent there was no [second] aircraft. It was something silvery and very small. It appeared about the size of a football and to be landing on the [cross] runway. I got a little worried..."

Instinct and training took over, and he started to tell his deputy to 'break off' the approach of the incoming Cessna. However, as he did so the binoculars revealed that

the UFO had now "come onto the runway, or, if not on it, just a couple of feet above it... proceeding along, and just as I was getting sufficiently worried to do something about it then it rose vertically."

Andy described this climb as very steep, estimated at 3,000ft (914m) per minute at around 80 degrees angle and then headed away to the north east. During this period of 30-40 seconds, Andy alerted Stan and Carol to look across the tarmac some half a mile towards the runways. They both saw the UFO (Carol used binoculars) and confirmed that it was real and very puzzling and resembled a silvery sphere. But they only saw the finale as it headed away at speed. Andy's view had been more prolonged – about two minutes – and he described the UFO as "a silver ball – sort of like silver paper as you get in a chocolate wrapper"; it even looked crinkled.

Moments later, the Cessna landed, but its occupants had apparently seen nothing. Andy asked a few people at the airport, but, again, no one had witnessed anything. Andy believed that had it not been for their elevated position and the fact that they were monitoring the runways, the ATC controllers would also have missed what occurred. No sound was audible during the incident, although the control tower's double-glazing makes that unsurprising.

After the trio discussed the matter for a while, Andy called a nearby RAF base to see if there was any possible military traffic that could have done a 'touch and go' in error or due to an emergency, but there was none. Unfortunately, this RAF station had switched off its radar just 30 minutes earlier as base activities were winding down for Easter.

The three ATCs became increasingly uneasy about what they had witnessed; Carol, in particular, was very concerned by the near miss. After discovering that the occupants of the aircraft had seen nothing, the ATCs chose not to file an air miss report.

Ultimately – after being interviewed by us at BUFORA – Andy did confirm the events by phone to RAF Farnborough. But, as he wryly explained to us, the rulebook stated that ATCs were to fully report any UFO sightings made to them by other witnesses, such as pilots, but did not mention sightings made *by* controllers themselves!

To be continued...

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

47 CODES, CULTS, KILLERS AND CONSPIRACIES

THEO PAIJMANS combs the archives for stories involving bloody murders and bizarre secret societies

In the 1920s and 30s, a number of sensational cases appeared on the front pages of the world's newspapers, involving gruesome murders, strange codes and untraceable secret societies suggestive of international conspiracies. To this day, all the cases presented here remain unsolved.

In 1957, Queens Police Chief Hugh T McGovern handed in his badge and retired. He liked to reminisce, particularly about one case – the infamous 'Lovers' Lane Killings' of 26 years earlier. He had worked round the clock and put in many hours to catch the killer. He never did. "I guess the 3X Killer will never be caught," he sighed. "We figured he was about 50 at the time of the murders. He must be dead by now."¹

In 1930, New York was terrorised by an enigmatic slayer who named himself in communications to the press and the police as '3X'. The killer's letters featured elaborate codes that, although investigated by experts, defied explanation. An example of these codes is found in the manner 3X listed the persons he had marked for death: X 14, X 21, Y 2, O 6, X1, S1, V 4. The only way these persons might be spared, he wrote, was by doing the following: N. J.-C. C. KZMAWEEAA.V.-3X-R.G.-4 MYT-RP 49-6.²

In June 1930, one of many American newspapers summarised the terror as follows: "Two mysterious slayings, a third shooting that may prove fatal, and written threats to massacre 14 more victims have terrorized the entire city and sent 1,000 New York detectives dragnetting the city in the most extensive and frenzied manhunt in years.

"All the searchers know of the killer is that he is well educated, a religious maniac who imagines himself the executioner for an international secret society and seeks his prey from among spooning couples who park their automobiles in lonely sections of



Long Island..."³

While shooting at the men, and killing them both, he accompanied the women to nearby bus stops and let them go after giving them some slips of paper. A series of letters were sent to the press. One, sent to New York newspaper the *Evening Journal*, stated: "A dozen more murders would follow unless some valuable documents were returned to the international secret society."⁴

This international secret society of which 3X was a member, as he explained in one of his rambling missives, was named the Red Diamond Of Russia. It had members of all nationalities. 3X, for instance, claimed to have been a former officer in the German Army. He further wrote that his victims had stolen certain documents that must be returned, and the culprits were to be punished by death. Since 3X had now

Left: a news clipping from the bee, Danville, Virginia, May 16, 1930.

obtained the documents, he had apparently returned to Russia and the slayings were at an end.⁵

In the months to come, police and press received more letters, but it was uncertain if these were copycats or not. His killing spree over, the 3X killer crawled back to the dark recesses whence he came and the city slowly adjusted itself to its day-to-day affairs.

But in 1937 New York was again in a state of turmoil when a murderer named "the Red Circle Killer" began prowling its lovers' lanes. A couple was brutally slain in a parked car; the youth was first shot twice in the head, then the girl was stabbed seven times in the chest with an ice pick or stiletto. The killer left red circles of about half an inch (1.3cm) in diameter drawn in lipstick on their foreheads. Was the 3X killer back, as some newspapers suggested?⁶ Police were baffled.⁷ This case too, was never solved.

In September 1930, a severed hand was found in the Tattermossen well near the village of Malm in Finland.⁸ This was the grisly prelude to the discovery, a year later, of a strange series of murder-mutilations in the Finnish town of Helsingfors, and these were reported in newspapers around the world. In October 1931, a farmer drew water from a well and was horrified to discover an arm, recently severed from a human body. The police were called and when the well was drained, a pile of human remains was found – heads, arms and legs.⁹

Another version has it that a cab driver on a hot September day on the road to Malm stopped to drink some water from a well. Filling his cup, he recoiled in horror as he saw a severed hand in the water. The police were called and found 60 severed hands

in nearby pools and bushes. Simultaneously, several murders were committed in Finland, the press suggesting that these victims had been chosen for "black mass purposes". It was further noted that England suddenly suffered an outbreak of grave desecrations in Essex and Nottinghamshire in the same timeframe.¹⁰

Further investigation discovered that several graves in the nearby cemetery had been disturbed, which ultimately led to the arrest of three men and three women. At least 40, some say 50, bodies had been mutilated. At the home of one suspect, the caretaker of the mortuary of Malm churchyard, "incriminating correspondence and literature on necromancy and black magic" as well as photographs of corpses were found.¹¹ Spending his time in his cell "singing hymns and tunes with cabalistic words", he divulged nothing,¹² but from these documents a trail led to England, so the Finnish government asked Scotland Yard for help.¹³

"The recent discovery... of forty mutilated bodies in a well and a pauper cemetery, believed to be connected with 'black magic' practised by an international sect has a repercussion in London to-day with Scotland Yard enquiring with regard to a man said to be a naturalised Englishman living in London and alleged to be the leader of the Secret Society responsible for the mutilations..."¹⁴

A year later, after a trial, four of the accused were sentenced to two and three years' imprisonment and the others acquitted. Their plea was that they had acted under "instructions from the spirit

world."¹⁵ So what was this strange international black magic cult and who was its leader? We hear no more of it. Montague Summers, who later briefly revisited the case in two of his books, is also silent on the matter.¹⁶ Interestingly, and reminiscent of 3X's Red Diamond Of Russia, the press suggested that the alleged "sacrilegious syndicate" might have had Russian origins, since the type of 'black magic' involved in Finland was, according to some, practised before World War I in Russia. Also, the victims of the murders were all "Communists, Socialists and other holders of radical political beliefs. Thus their extinction served a double purpose."¹⁷

Yet the strangest and most puzzling case is that of the beheading-murder of Arthur Manby of Taos, New Mexico, that occurred in 1929. It has all the ingredients of a hardboiled detective noir: a murder in a closed room; a weird series of unsolved beheadings around Taos; hints of treasure and extreme wealth; a mysterious victim and murmurs of a secret society in the background.

The facts as they were reported at the time of the Manby murder are these: the 62-year-old victim in the case was Arthur Rockford Manby, an Englishman by birth. He came to New Mexico in 1883 and involved himself in mining in the Red River region. In 1895, he became associated with two companions in the Mystic Gold Mine. The mine had a sinister history of murder and decapitations. It never yielded much profit until Manby took control. In 1900, he built a huge but queer house in Taos, surrounded by a formidable wall.

The house had 20 rooms, filled with expensive furniture and art objects. For some reason, Manby always seemed to fear intruders. The windows were barred and the door leading to the street had six heavy locks. Manby also bought a huge police dog to keep him company. As he grew older, his fears increased. A terror of poison led him to fire his cook and prepare his food himself. In the end, he lived alone in the large house.

But his fears still grew; now, he rambled about secret underground passages connected with his increasingly dilapidated house. He was often seen on the roof, sending out incomprehensible signals with coloured flags. On the last day of June 1929, a deputy sheriff called, but nobody answered. Three days later he returned and, with the help of the local authorities, the door was forced open. They found a headless corpse in the bedroom, the dog lying next to it. A further search disclosed the head of the corpse on the floor in an adjoining room. The front door of the house was locked from the inside. The head had been horribly mutilated. At first the dog was held to be the culprit, but a later autopsy found that the head had been cleanly severed, and bore bullet wounds, as did the chest of the body.

The case became even more mysterious when subsequent investigations uncovered that some six other men, all associated with Manby at one time or another, had also been murdered and several of these victims decapitated by their slayers. Then the existence of a 'United States Civil Secret Service' was uncovered, allegedly a secret organisation that numbered as members

hundreds of Mexican farmers and labourers in the vicinity of Taos.¹⁸

The Manby case, unlike the other examples discussed, has the benefit of having two books devoted to it, both published long after the events took place.¹⁹ In the more recent of these, author James S Peters states that "there arose two schools of thought... One sect accepted he was gruesomely murdered, while the second held to the belief that he staged his death and left behind the cadaver of a stranger... Finally for posterity, and as relief to the guilty, it was labelled an unsolved crime. Today it is referred to as the 'Manby Mystery of Taos'."²⁰ And what about that secret society? According to Peters, who sees Manby as a con man and a schemer, Manby concocted the society in his desperate search for financial security: "Somewhere [Manby] came across a questionable, if not inane, idea of a secret society, which actually echoed the crude extortion techniques of the Black Hand thugs in New York City. The New Yorkers called it 'protection'. Perhaps Arthur... in his semi-enlightened state carried it a step further to form his 'United States Secret and Civil Society, Self-Supporting Branch; Grand House Service Number 10'..."²¹

The Manby Mansion is still standing and is currently in use as an arts centre. Some claim that Arthur Rockford Manby's headless ghost can still be seen from time to time. The other unsolved mysteries presented here have grown cold over the years. There are no book length treatments, no leads, just darkness, forgetfulness and the sensationalist press accounts of an era long gone, lost in time...

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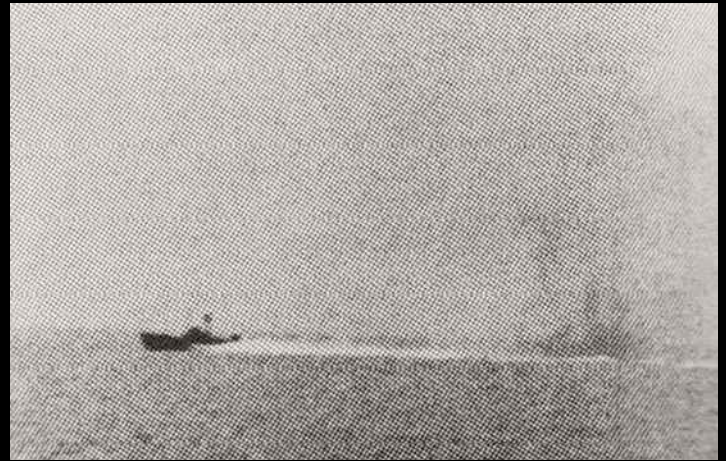
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The conspiracy to crea

7 May, 1915

Aug 2, 1964



Sinking of the Lusitania

“It’s a fact that Woodrwood Wilson’s senior adviser Edward House deliberately sent a passenger ship, the RMS Lusitania, into German-controlled waters with the intention that it be hit by a U-boat – which it was. And that brings America into World War I.”

Gulf of Tonkin Incident

“The Gulf of Tonkin : two US boats are attacked by three Vietnamese boats, and that’s what brings the US into the Vietnam conflict. In 2005 the NSA releases a classified document that states that the Gulf of Tonkin incident never happened.”

False flags and the New World Order

All of the above have been described as ‘False Flag’ operations – those in which governments – or powerful organisations with links to those governments – have staged sophisticated attacks on their own or others’ soil with the purpose of placing the blame on a foreign or domestic enemy. Having created the set-up and fabricated the evidence, the government can then act to fulfill its various covert agendas – including ‘heightened’ security measures and spying on its citizens at home, or invasion and war abroad.

Whatever the specific agenda, ever since the early 20th century, the ultimate strategic aim has always been the same: the creation of a New World Order – a centralised one-world government run by a secret elite and implemented through its various international bodies, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We have already seen the start of this project. The creation of the European Union was an important step; the creation of the North American Union will be another on the road to the NWO.



“If you look at the broad picture of history, staging attacks against one’s own country is one of oldest and most commonly used tactics for starting a war”

Terrance G

te a **NEW WORLD ORDER**

Sept 11, 2001



Attacks on the Twin Towers

“The head of security of Pakistan wires \$100,000 to Mohammed Atta just prior to the 9/11 attacks. Then, on the morning of the attacks, Mahmoud Ahmad is in Washington having breakfast... Why is the guy who bankrolled 9/11 meeting with the CIA on the morning of the attacks?”

Pentagon attack

“As for the 9/11 Pentagon plane crash... The footage from over 100 cameras was confiscated. The only piece of film we see shows an explosion, but no plane...”

Secret societies

This invisible elite transcends national borders; the real centres of power today are no longer vested in the nation state but in a number of non-governmental organisations like the Bilderberg Group, whose secretive conferences play host to the world’s most powerful politicians and businessmen, or Bohemian Grove, where the same captains of industry and influential political figures meet informally, supposedly to relax. Other names are spoken of – the Masons, the Illuminati, the Trilateral commission – but most conspiracy watchers now believe that the most sinister of these bodies is a secret society known as the Tarsus Club. While most have never heard of it, and no one has managed to get inside one of the club’s meetings, it is said that in the guise of an ancient Mithraic cult, the Tarsus Club is where the New World Order agenda is being most forcefully pursued by the invisible rulers of the world.

The truth seekers

For most of the 20th century, the fact that these invisible powers that be controlled the traditional media meant that

they were also in control of what the people knew, or thought they knew. The coming of the Internet changed all that.

Now, there is a whole underground community of truth-seekers online. They have been examining seemingly unrelated events from modern history and revealing the hidden links between them – putting together the pieces of the puzzle to reveal the bigger picture. What has become clear is that meetings of the Tarsus Club have always

predated major shifts in world history, from the sinking of the Lusitania to the 9/11 attacks.

Until recently, one of the most active and vocal of these truth-seekers was Terrance G, who had gathered enough information to go public about the activities of the Tarsus Club. He was said to be collaborating with a pair of young Canadian film-makers on a documentary called *The Conspiracy* before he disappeared earlier this year.

ARROW FILMS COMPETITION

Thanks to Arrow Films, one lucky FT reader can win 10 top movies on Blu-ray: *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Runaway Train*, *Phenomena*, *The Funhouse*, *Time Bandits*, *The Cat o’ Nine Tails*, *All Ladies Do It*, *The Key*, *Black Sunday* and *Forbidden Zone*.

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JFK

THE HISTORY OF A MYSTERY

50 years ago, President John F Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. The conspiracy theories quickly followed. **TOM HEYWOOD** climbs to the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository and provides a sniper's-eye overview of the ever-proliferating literature.

Usually for a piece about the assassination of President John F Kennedy, this article is not about who killed him. Rather, it looks at how the case has been interpreted over time. An event which lasted about six seconds has spawned several thousand books and countless articles and theories in various media. How have these theories unfolded, what have the patterns and trends been over time, and where do we currently stand when examining this event with the benefit of 50 years of debate and reflection?

This is not an exhaustive review, but rather a summary of the key aspects. For foretens, the assassination is a classic example of needing to weigh a range of information and views with an open mind. In Don Delillo's *Libra*, an excellent novel based around the JFK assassination, a character called Nicholas Branch, a retired CIA senior analyst, tries to produce a definitive account of the Kennedy assassination. He has his work cut out, for almost every single aspect of the assassination has been debated in the last half century: the number of shots fired; the nature of the wounds; the timings of the shooting; the feasibility of shots from a variety of locations; the authenticity of key evidence; and, of course, who actually killed JFK.

Reviewing the many hundreds of books about the assassination in my collection, it's apparent that the vast majority of them support the notion of a conspiracy rather than of a single gunman. I would estimate

EVERY SINGLE ASPECT OF THE ASSASSINATION HAS BEEN DEBATED IN THE LAST 50 YEARS



OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: The events of 22 November 1963 shocked the whole world.

that only about one in 15 books posits the lone gunman theory. This theory, of course, is inevitably more static, as it is in a sense a single story retold: clearly lone gunman theorists often differ about some of the mechanics of the crime (for example, the sequence of shots fired by Lee Harvey Oswald), but inevitably their interpretive framework is relatively narrow. Conspiracy theorists have a much bigger field to play in, and there is a wide variety of theories: a crude way of dividing them up might be to say that some believe Oswald was involved as part of a wider conspiracy, while others believe he was a patsy. The potential suspects over time have included the Mafia, the CIA, Lyndon B Johnson, the Russians, the Cubans, a Secret Service agent, and many more.

THE WARREN COMMISSION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The first major interpretation of the assassination came in the publication of the Warren Commission's official Report in September 1964, with its 26 volumes of supporting testimony. The Commission found, of course, that Oswald acted alone, firing three shots from behind Kennedy's limo, from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. One of these shots had, they said, injured both Kennedy and Governor Connally seated in front of him, a notion that became known as the 'single bullet theory'. The Commission's scope was in theory exhaustive, but this hasn't stopped it being derided by many of the conspiracy community, and even criticised by some lone gunman theorists.



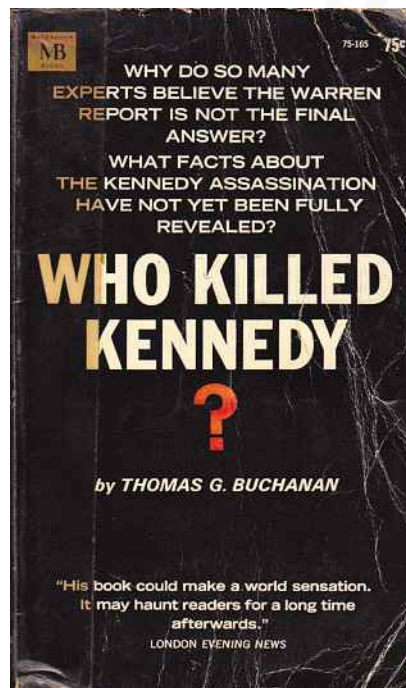
Allegations include that the Commission only interviewed selected witnesses and that they had reached their overarching conclusion *before* they started interviewing them.

It's often thought that the Warren Commission investigation fired the starting gun on JFK assassination research. In fact, some researchers published before the Warren Report even came out, with Thomas Buchanan's *Who Killed Kennedy?*, which appeared in May 1964, regarded as the first published book about the assassination. Buchanan's title asks a question still being posed today. And as early as the week after the assassination, *Life* magazine contained some of the frames of the Zapruder film (albeit in black and white). Early researchers such as Raymond Marcus, like many people at the time, bought this edition and was troubled by what he considered could be evidence of a shot, or shots, from the front of the motorcade.

Once the Report itself was published, early critics of the Commission were soon weighing in. Criticism tended to focus on how the Commission had conducted itself: for example, the fact that it had no independent investigators but relied on existing agencies. A recent book about the early critics, John Kelin's *Praise from a Future Generation* (2007), pays respect to these pioneering authors who critiqued the Report's testimony and findings. At this point, most if not all critics of the Commission were enthusiastic amateurs rather than professional historians or relevant 'experts'. Another word often assigned to assassination researchers is 'buff', implying someone keenly focused and knowledgeable; the term is usually applied to conspiracy theorists, and often in a slightly derogatory way by lone gunman advocates.

Two typical examples of these early researchers are Sylvia Meagher and Harold Weisberg. Meagher, a research analyst at the World Health Organisation, took it upon herself to compile an index to the final 11 volumes of testimony (the first 15 had an index, but the rest didn't). Meagher spent over a year compiling her index, an enduringly useful work for all JFK researchers. She followed this up with another book, *Accessories After The Fact* (1967). She concluded that JFK had been killed by Anti-Castro exiles. Meagher and Weisberg are typical of the early critics: private citizens seeking to make sense of their disquiet at the Commission's findings. Most of these early books go through what their authors regarded as the main problems with the Report: the validity of the single bullet theory, for example, was a much-debated topic. Over time, Weisberg became a long-term critic of the Warren Commission's findings and a renowned collector of information through freedom of information claims. His home became a place of pilgrimage for other researchers looking for data. Weisberg published many books on the case, including his *Whitewash* series from 1965.

Some early books were highly specific, such as Josiah Thompson's *Six Seconds In Dallas: A Microstudy of the Kennedy Assassination* (1967). Thompson examined the killing



from a technical point of view, looking at the ballistics and photographic evidence in particular. Not only the conclusions but also the workings of the Warren Commission were scrutinised in depth, the first major work on this being Edgar Jay Epstein's *Inquest* (1966). Epstein became a political science professor and as such is an unusual example of an early researcher with a 'professional' interest in the case. Incidentally, the Commission is still subject to overt and lengthy criticism, for example recently by Gerald McKnight (a professional historian) in *Breach of Trust: How the Warren Commission Failed the Nation and Why* (2005).

Early media coverage of the

Commission's findings tended to be relatively sympathetic. In the early 1960s there was less scepticism of government in the mainstream media than today, and many of the early books by the critics were ignored or negatively reviewed in the media. Lawyer Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* (1966) was criticised in part – it is argued – because of his civil rights background. His book focuses in particular on the three shots proposed in the Warren Report. Lane interviewed many witnesses who said they thought the shots had come from the 'grassy knoll' to the front and right of JFK's car. By 1967, some of America's main news organisations were beginning to ask for a further probe into Kennedy's death. *Life* magazine had purchased the original Zapruder film (the home movie depicting in graphic colour the death of the President), and in 1966 called for a new investigation. CBS undertook its own investigation the following year. At this point, the issue seems to have been 'loose ends' remaining from the Commission's findings. One of the biggest issues was in the medical evidence: the drawings of the president's wounds did not seem to match the doctors' testimony in the Warren Report. This led to a government review of the medical evidence in 1968 (the Clark Panel).

WATERGATE AND BEYOND

While the media were beginning to ask questions about the Warren Commission's findings, and the early critics were publishing in increasing numbers, one of the case's most colourful figures appeared. Jim Garrison, New Orleans District Attorney, launched a criminal investigation into the assassination. Oswald had lived in New Orleans, and Garrison charged a local businessman, Clay Shaw, as a conspirator. The case ended in an abortive trial in 1969, but Garrison's legacy



TOP: Thomas Buchanan's book was the first about the assassination to be published.

ABOVE: The findings of the Warren Commission are handed to President Lyndon B Johnson.

was rekindled with vigour in Oliver Stone's 1991 movie *JFK* (of which more later), in which Garrison was portrayed by Kevin Costner.

The Commission's critics didn't have it all their own way, with Stephen White's lone gunman-supporting book *Should We Now Believe the Warren Report?* published in 1968 (and answered with a resounding 'no' from conspiracy authors). One of the quirkier and more interesting works of the 1960s was the 'Jackdaw' folder about the assassination ("for adults and older children only" which contained facsimile documents about the case, and a cardboard cutout model of Dealey Plaza! Its popularity showed that people wanted to find out more about the case, even in the days long before the Internet and the sort of easy access to media and information we now take for granted.

While early mass media coverage tended to support the Warren Commission – no one believed the government would lie to its own people – this view changed forever in 1972. The Watergate break-ins and President Nixon's subsequent cover-up revealed clearly that lies could be told and information suppressed at the highest levels – and if this was true of Watergate, then why not JFK? A slew of new studies of the assassination appeared, many of which were edgy in tone and content. Weberman and Canfield's *Coup d'état in America* (1975) proposed that three tramps found in Dealey Plaza on the day of the shooting were in fact rogue CIA agents out to kill Kennedy for his failure to remove Castro from power. The book had transparent overlays which allowed the reader to compare the faces of the tramps with the CIA agents. And the 1973 movie *Executive Action* posited that the 'military industrial complex' was behind JFK's death.

In 1975, another watershed moment in the story of the JFK assassination arrived. Geraldo Rivera's *Good Night America* TV show played the Zapruder footage for the first time on TV, while researcher Robert Groden described what was being seen. Watching Rivera's programme now on YouTube you can hear the gasps of the audience at the moment of the headshot. To many viewers watching Rivera's show, the film seemed to show JFK's head flung backwards, implying a shot from the front: a shot which, of course, the Warren Commission concluded never happened. After seeing the show, 25 members of Congress immediately demanded the investigation into Kennedy's death be reopened.

Watergate, Vietnam, the Rivera show and the increasing doubts raised by critics led to a US Gallup poll in 1976 finding that only 11



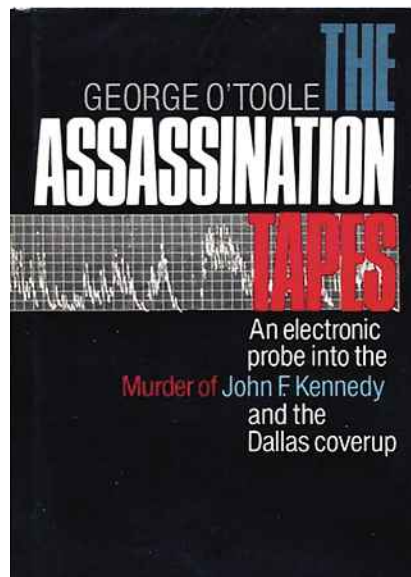
LEFT: The view from the 'Sniper's Nest' in the Dallas Book Depository. BELOW: George O'Toole's 1975 book analysed tapes of Oswald's voice.

per cent of the country still believed Oswald acted alone (an earlier poll, following the Warren Report, had found that 87 per cent thought Oswald had been the lone assassin). Looking at the 1976 poll findings in more detail, 15 per cent of those interviewed said that the Cubans were behind the killing, while seven per cent blamed government officials, with the Soviet Union ranking lower. This, then, was the situation in the mid-1970s: a respected poll found that most people considered it more likely that their own government had killed Kennedy than had the Soviets. Some of the atmosphere of the time is summed up by George O'Toole's 1975 book *The Assassination Tapes*. O'Toole had himself worked for the CIA, and in his book he uses 'psychological stress evaluations' to examine tape recordings of Oswald's voice, concluding Oswald was innocent. This scrutiny of tapes, reexamined through techniques developed for lie

detecting, seems a very fitting addition to the JFK literature at this paranoid time.

In 1976 the House of Representatives voted for a new investigation into JFK's death, along with that of Martin Luther King. The resulting House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) was problematically secretive and never seemed to function competently. However it did review copious amounts of material. It concluded that Oswald was the killer but that he was probably part of a larger conspiracy. The HSCA's focus on that conspiracy was somewhat diluted by controversy over acoustics evidence, which seemed to indicate a shot (which apparently missed) from the grassy knoll. This evidence has itself been criticised since, with the National Academy of Sciences concluding there was only static on the tape: findings which, typically for this case, have themselves been challenged. Aside from the HSCA Report, the supporting testimony was made secret for 50 years. In 1992 Congress passed legislation to open up all evidence related to the case, and set up the Assassinations Records Review Board (ARRB) to do just that.

Perhaps the peak of 1970s paranoia came with the exhumation of Lee Harvey Oswald's body. Author Michael Eddowes (*The Oswald File*, 1977) had long argued that the buried man was a Russian agent, not Oswald. After much wrangling, he got Marina Oswald's permission to have the body exhumed in 1981: it was proven to be Oswald after all. Although Oswald was reburied, unusual



TO MANY, THE FILM SEEMED TO SHOW JFK'S HEAD FLUNG BACKWARDS, IMPLYING A SHOT FROM THE FRONT

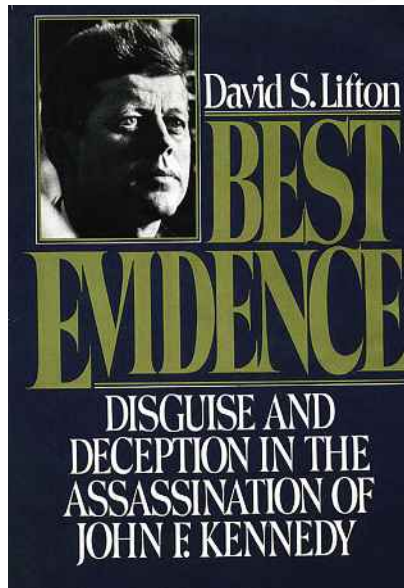
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theories about him refused to die. Indeed, John Armstrong's massive 2003 work *Harvey & Lee* operates in similar territory, proposing that intelligence agencies created 'two Oswalds'.

BESTSELLING EVIDENCE

The 1980s saw some sharply focused conspiracy theories, and some of the most controversial. Some writers contended that the autopsy and medical photographs were doctored to disguise a shot from the grassy knoll. Others drew on older themes: they contended the shots had come from the rear, but from another location than the sixth floor of the Book Depository. In fact, the tone of the decade is perhaps best captured by a UK TV series, Central TV's *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, made by Nigel Turner and first broadcast from October 1988. Well-researched but highly controversial episodes added in subsequent years implicated LBJ and Edgar Hoover, amongst others. However, even in the original programmes there was controversy, with a significant segment devoted to French-based assassins posited as the killers. It was soon revealed that the alleged killers were either in the Navy or in prison at the time of the killing.

In the 1980s, conspiracy authors increasingly seemed compelled not just to criticise the Warren Commission but also to name those they accused of being guilty. A good example is Henry Hurt's *Reasonable Doubt* (1986), which went through the evidence, attacked the Commission's



THE BOOK HAD A CONFESSION BY SOMEONE WHO CLAIMED TO BE INVOLVED IN THE CONSPIRACY

findings and then, in the final portion of the book, produced a confession by someone who claimed to have been involved in the conspiracy. Generally speaking, conspiracy theory moved away from Soviet, Cuban or Mafia involvement in the assassination, and towards an 'inside job' of shadowy military/ industrial figures and politicians.

In fact, the 1980s saw some of the most controversial theories ever published. A high profile example was David Lifton's 1980 book *Best Evidence*, in which he weaves an exciting first-person narrative around his 15-year quest to solve the case. His highly contentious theory is that Kennedy's body was tampered with at some point after leaving Parkland hospital in Dallas and before arriving in Bethesda Hospital for autopsy. The conjecture was that the wounds were altered to fit the idea of a single gunman. Lifton's book is classic JFK conspiracy material; written with pace and energy, in a mode of personal discovery, and foregrounding the notion of 'an ordinary man' solving the mystery. Much criticism of the feasibility of the central 'body alteration' idea didn't stop it being a bestseller. At the other end of the decade, Harrison Livingstone and Robert Groden's *High Treason* (1989) also focused on the faking of medical evidence, and spent five weeks at the top of the bestseller charts.

In the same year, Jim Marrs published *Crossfire*, a large work covering a huge range of conspiracy thinking. It too became a bestseller and was one of the books that



TOP: The 1960s Jackdaw Assassination of President Kennedy pack facilitated DIY research and theorising long before the advent of the Internet.

inspired Oliver Stone to consider making a movie about the Kennedy assassination. One other item of note took place at the end of the decade. The '6th Floor Museum' opened its doors in February 1989. Based in the Book Depository itself, it examines the life, death and legacy of JFK. Over the years, it has gained an impressive array of artefacts, including the copyright to the Zapruder film, which was donated by the Zapruder family. A new book by Stephen Fagin (*Assassination and Commemoration, 2013*) tells its story.

JFK: THE MOVIE

Oliver Stone's 1991 movie *JFK* was the next major spike in the history of the assassination. Stone wanted to offer "an alternative myth to the Warren Commission". With a big-name cast, including Kevin Costner, Donald Sutherland and Gary Oldman, it brought the Kennedy assassination to life in movie theatres worldwide. Stone's obsessional attention to detail mirrored that of researchers into the assassination: he restored Dealey Plaza to how it had looked in 1963 and had the normally busy traffic there diverted for two weeks. Some of Stone's recreated scenes are so good that one still photograph which is used in the Clint Eastwood assassination-themed film *Line of Fire* (1993) is apparently one of Stone's recreated shots rather than the intended original photograph!

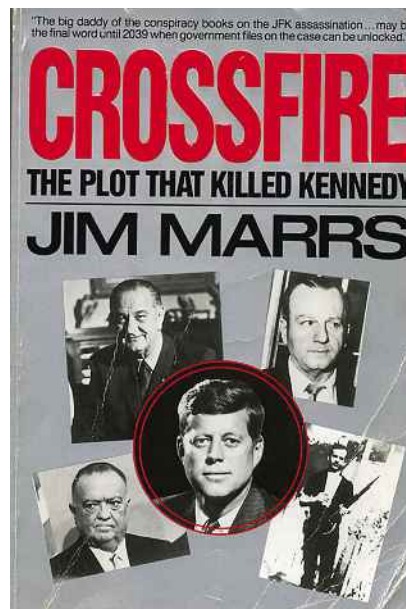
JFK argued that figures at the top of government conspired to kill Kennedy. The movie led to many bitter debates in the media and between researchers and conspiracy theorists. David Wrone (a historian later to write a book on the Zapruder film) called Stone's premise "irrational", and the veteran researcher Harold Weisberg also criticised aspects of the film. For others, the truly irrational theory of the era was that proposed by Bonar Meninger in *Mortal Error* (1992), in which the killer is a secret service agent accidentally firing from a follow-up car. Interestingly, while researching this article, I have found out that a USTV channel is preparing a JFK assassination documentary based on Meninger's 'mistake' theory.

The popularity of Stone's film – and the then upcoming 30th anniversary in 1993 – helped trigger a new wave of studies. Especially prevalent, and building on the movie, were theories that Lyndon B Johnson was the puppet master behind the assassination. The ARRB itself, in fact, was set up in no small part due to pressure to release government documents in the wake of the movie.

Lone gunman theories were still out there, and one of the most controversial came in 1993 with Gerald Posner's bestselling book *Case Closed*. Posner sought to reestablish the theory, albeit he differed from the Warren Commission on the sequence of shots fired by Oswald. Posner also criticised a number of the main conspiracy theory authors. To say that the book polarised



ABOVE: Oliver Stone's 1991 film *JFK* created renewed interest in the case, arguing for a government conspiracy. BELOW: Jim Marrs's bestselling 1989 book *Crossfire* provided some of the inspiration for the movie.



opinion would be an understatement. Some regarded it as the definitive solution to the case: for example, it appeared on the front page of *US News* magazine, with the tag "a brilliant new book finally proves who killed Kennedy". However, the book brought a scathing response from the conspiracy community and Posner was criticised for misrepresenting his interviewees and omitting key facts. Harold Weisberg wrote a book in direct response: *Case Open*. This book sits next to *Case Closed* on my shelves, the two juxtaposed titles neatly summarising the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the conspiracy and lone gunman theories.

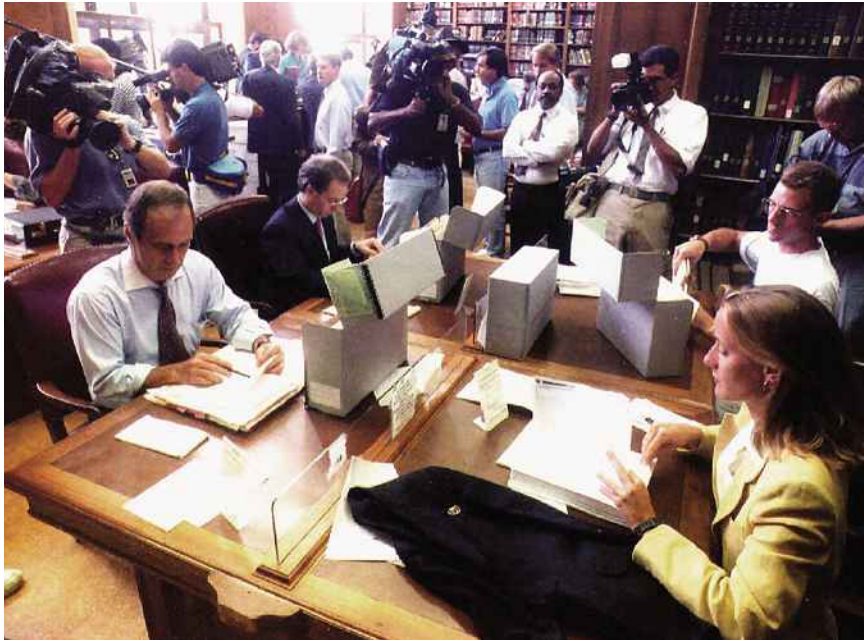
Over the years, there have also been a number of books on more peripheral aspects of the case. Rather than theorising about who did it, these look at more tangential aspects such as what people were doing on the day (*1:33 In Memoriam, 1968*); how

the media has shaped our view of the case (*Covering the Body, 1992*); a 'biography' of the actual gun (allegedly) used in the assassination (*The Gun, 1975*); and an examination of LBJ's conversations about the assassination (*The Kennedy Assassination Tapes, 2004*).

There have also been plenty of encyclopedia-type books too, summarising the case and theories. Bias creeps in inevitably (as it may do in this article). Michael Benson's useful *Encyclopedia of the JFK Assassination* (2002), for example, has the description of the single bullet theory under "magic bullet". Robert Groden published two books focusing on the key photographs in the case, including *The Killing of a President*. One of the most accessible and witty summaries is *Who Shot JFK?* by Bob Callahan (1993).

Accounts have also been written by witnesses in the Plaza at the time, although, unsurprisingly, many of these remain controversial. An example is Beverly Oliver's *Nightmare in Dallas* (1994). For some, Oliver is the 'babushka lady', a headscarf-wearing witness close to JFK when he was shot and captured on films and photos of the day. For others, there is no proof that she was ever in the Plaza that day, and the *real* babushka lady has never been identified. Nothing, it seems, in the world of JFK, is agreed upon.

Fictionalised accounts have been plentiful, too. As well as the aforementioned novel by Don DeLillo, Stephen King, James Ellroy, Mark Lawson and D M Thomas are amongst other authors who have written novels based on the case. Norman Mailer weighed in with *Oswald's Tale* (1995), a 'reconstructed' version of Oswald's story. Even Sherlock Holmes has examined the case (*Sherlock Holmes in Dallas, 1980*), as has TV detective Colombo (*Colombo – The Grassy Knoll, 1993*). The assassination



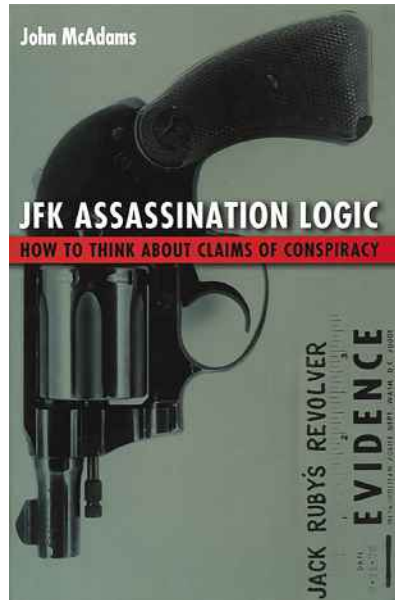
LEFT: Researchers and reporters review documents released by the Assassinations Records Review Board in 1993. BELOW: John McAdams offers an academic perspective in a 2011 book.

JOHN HARRINGTON / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

literature has also created its own lexicon: Umbrella Man; Grassy Knoll; Lone Gunman; SBT (single bullet theory); Badgeman; Babushka Lady; Black Dog Man. These were skilfully and playfully manipulated in Derek Pell's *Assassination Rhapsody* (1989), an intentionally semi-nonsensical deconstruction of the case.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The 2000s saw ever more books appearing. In some cases, the rise of self-published material has led to a decline in the overall standard of research. On the other hand, the idea that, in principle, anyone can weigh in with a theory on the case continues the spirit of the early critics of the Warren Commission. One trend since 2000 has been a number of theories published by professional historians. These include Wrone's *The Zapruder Film: Reframing JFK's Assassination* (2003); David Kaiser's *The Road to Dallas* (2008) and Gerald McKnight's *Breach of Trust* (2005). While it's not true that professional historians have previously avoided the assassination (an example is Michael Kurtz, who has published regularly on the case since 1980), they do seem to have become more prominent. This may be because historians prefer a period of time to elapse before scrutinising the past; or it may be a generational thing, with younger historians feeling more emotionally detached. It isn't an easy subject for the professional historian, given that hardly any single source – primary or otherwise – has not been contested for its authenticity or meaning. Interestingly, all of the above historians are conspiracy theorists. Possibly lone gunman-leaning professional historians (they must exist) may believe there's little new to add in terms of primary research. An exception is John McAdams, author of *JFK Assassination Logic* (2011). McAdams is a lecturer in American politics at Marquette University and a well-known lone gunman



theorist.

Recent years have also seen more reflective studies on aspects of the case that seemed to have waned in popularity. Examples are the revisiting of the Garrison case (Lambert's *False Witness*, 1998, and Mellen's *A Farewell to Justice*, 2005) and the Jack Ruby trial (Dempsey's *The Jack Ruby Trial Revisited*, 2000). Overall, there seems to be an increasing distinction between overarching theories (such as Noel Twyman's *Bloody Treason*, 1997) and those works which focus on a more specific aspect of the case, such as Dale Myers's *With Malice* (1998), which concentrates on the killing of police officer Tippit in the hours after JFK's shooting, and Blaine's *The Kennedy Detail* (2010), which examines the role of the secret service.

The latest major tome on the assassination from the lone gunman side is the massive *Reclaiming History* (2007) by lawyer Vincent Bugliosi, written with his

usual vigour and assertiveness. Wrone's book on the Zapruder film is part of a larger series of books revisiting the film in recent years, with some theorists proposing the film is itself a fake (such as *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax*, 2003) and Livingstone's *Hoax of the Century* (2004), while Richard Trask undertook a significant look at the film's context and history (*National Nightmare on Six Feet of Film*, 2005). Non-historians have continued to contribute weighty efforts, such as Waldron and Hartmann's *Ultimate Sacrifice* (2005) and *Legacy of Secrecy* (2009), both of which see the assassination as a result of JFK's policies towards Cuba and the Mafia. Their work is apparently being used as the basis for a movie starring Leonardo Di Caprio, one of three films with a JFK assassination theme currently in production.

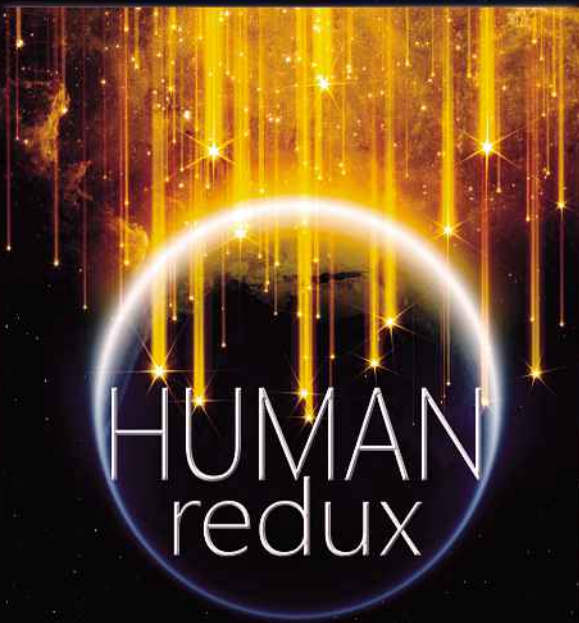
So where are we as the 50th anniversary comes around? For sure, more and more information has been brought to light about the case, often due to the efforts of tenacious researchers. The challenge, of course, is how to interpret this data. The vast majority of records have been released, but the case is never likely to be solved to everyone's satisfaction. Thomas Buchanan, in one of the very first assassination books, presciently wrote that "data is of no value when accorded false interpretation" and "much of this huge mass of data is conflicting". The varying theories are often symbolic of a wider debate about the state, information and power. And the history of the case says something about human nature itself: from the early critics, beaver away with little data, to today's bloggers, the desire to solve a mystery is as common as ever. After a spike of media coverage this year, I would predict a continued interest in the case for the next 50.

Don Delillo's character, Nicholas Branch, struggles to write his definitive account of the assassination. Towards the end of the book, he begins to feel like most of us with a long-term interest in JFK: "There are times when he thinks he can't go on", Delillo writes. "The dead are in the room. But he persists, he works on, he jots his notes. He knows he can't get out. The case will haunt him to the end".

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



TOM HEYWOOD has collected material on the JFK assassination for over 25 years. His particular interest is in how it has been interpreted over time. His previous *Fortean Times* articles have explored the 'Ghosts of Versailles' and the forteen themes in the Tintin Adventures.



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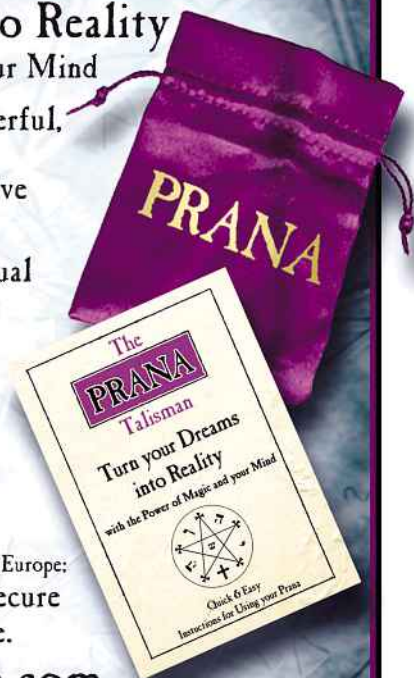
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THE TIN FOIL HAT MACHINE

Did you know that alien freemasons are promoting communism by vaccinating our drinking water? **RICHARD LEON** digs into the wilder side of conspiracy theory.

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

It will surprise no one that US political culture has a long-running adulterous relationship with paranoia. Historians such as Bernard Bailyn have placed conspiracy theories at the centre of the American Revolution, and more recently books like Jesse Walker's *The United States of Paranoia*¹ have tried to trace the historical currents that run beneath a sea of drama and confusion.

In fact, conspiracy theories are the new mainstream history. In a recent study of beliefs about 9/11, researchers Michael J Wood and Karen M Douglas of the

University of Kent discovered that in a sample of the UK population, conspiracy believers outnumbered those who accepted more traditional accounts by two to one.²

Could the 'conspiracy theorist' label itself be a conspiracy used to debunk real conspiracies? According to political scientist Lance deHaven-Smith, the CIA promoted the idea that conspiracy theorists were kooky cranks as a deliberate attempt to distract the public from legitimate questions about the Kennedy assassination.³

If so, dismissing the doubts of those who were unconvinced by the Warren

Commission pushed serious investigators out of the mainstream and into the strange world of fringe beliefs inhabited by UFO contactees, libertarians, survivalists, anti-government agitators, sworn enemies of the Masons, anti-Semites, free energy inventors, gold-bugs, and a motley assortment of other non-conformists and freethinkers.

The result was a unique outbreak of political paranoia blended with pseudo-mystical weirdness. A few theorists were able to carve out a career in the new wild mental spaces by gravitating to the religious and gullible.



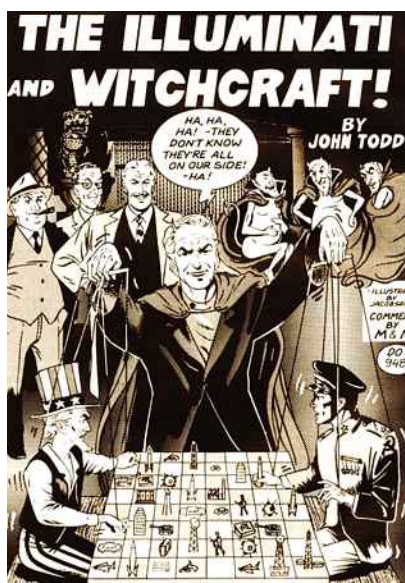
MAD, BAD, DANGEROUS...

One unusually dangerous example was notorious serial occultist and evangelical Christian convert John Todd. His books, comics, and lectures about witchcraft conspiracies, the influence of the Illuminati, and the 'demonic beat' of rock music, were a direct influence on pamphleteering evangelist Jack Chick, famous for his hate-comics targeting evils such as Roman Catholicism, Islam, Freemasonry, Ouija boards, and – worst of all – the creeping horror and evil of 'Dungeons and Dragons'.

Todd's history is complex, and his claims were often contradictory. At various times he was involved in Wicca, Neo-Paganism, military operations, and evangelical Christianity. His adventures followed a familiar pattern. First, he would impress authorities with his sincerity and flair for the dramatic. But gradually his unreliability would make them suspicious. Eventually, most disowned him. When they did, he would integrate them into his fantasies and accuse them of being part of the global network of evil he was crusading against.

His targets eventually included many of the leaders of evangelical Christian movements in the US, including Jerry Falwell, who was allegedly bought off with a \$50 million bribe from the Illuminati, and Chuck Smith, to whom Todd claimed to have personally couriered another \$8 million so he could corrupt Christian youth

AS A WANDERING PREACHER, TODD FILLED HALLS WITH HIS BRAND OF PARANOIAC MELODRAMA



with vile Christian rock music.

In the early 1980s, Todd found a niche as a wandering preacher, filling halls with his unique brand of paranoiac melodrama, and terrifying audiences with sudden interruptions in which he claimed to have heard gun shots from outside the venue, or to have narrowly avoided one of many attempts on his life.

Todd's real secret was that he was a serial sexual abuser, pædophile, and rapist. He used the language of conspiracy and occult knowledge to woo followers, in a disturbingly literal way. In 1987 he was arrested for the rape of a student at the University of South Carolina, and sentenced to 30 years in a state prison. Of course, it's possible the claims were trumped up and he was *really* put away because he knew too much – a suggestion that has been made about other modern conspiracists like Fritz Springmeier, who has also published books about Satanic conspiracies and spent time in jail; in Springmeier's case the charge was the rather more prosaic one of armed bank robbery.

Todd, however, was in the unique position of being investigated independently by military psychiatrists, Christian organisations, and neo-pagans, all of whom concluded that he was both dangerous and delusional. When he died in 2007, he continued to have the support of Jack Chick and the content he contributed to Chick's infamous hate tracts still lingers



ABOVE: (L-R) Crazy Itinerant preacher and fantasist John Todd, cassette-tape prophet Peter Beter and bank-robbing occult conspiracy theorist Fritz Springmeier.

as an influence on some of the more extreme conspiracy websites.

RETURN OF THE ARCHONS

The influence of Todd, Chick and other ‘researchers’ doesn’t just lie in their narratives, but in how they turned conspiranoia into a cottage industry. Modern web sites like Above Top Secret ⁴, Red Ice ⁵ and Godlike Productions ⁶ owe a debt to these semi-professional conspiracy theorists from decades past.

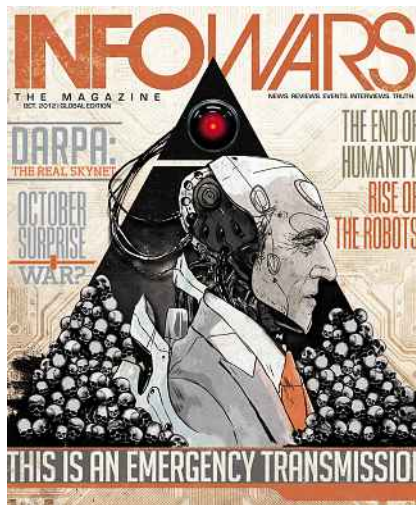
At their extremes, the theories they promote transcend mundane politics with tales of alien manipulations of Earth history organised into complex and complete cosmologies. David Icke famously believes that Earth is run by shape-shifting lizards from another dimension, some of whom take human form as the Royal Family (see FT129:28-32). Less well-known is the Montalk site, ⁷ which includes a library of complex articles introducing readers to the concepts of invisible telepathic alien influence and timeline warfare.

Icke and his co-believers riff off ancient Gnostic beliefs that reality is an illusion created by a race of evil metaphysical demi-gods called the Archons. The ultimate conspiracy is the one between the Archons and their human servants, who are paid off with wealth, power, and sexual rewards offered – not always willingly – by victims or slaves.

Some New Age sites dramatise the continuing conflict between humanity perpetually on the verge of awakening, and the continuing efforts of the Archons – also known as Team Dark, or the Illuminati – to keep humans compliant and asleep. The chief weapons of the Illuminati are religion and various forms of both organised and covert occult abuse and horror.

Inevitably, some researchers believe that conspiracy sites themselves are a tool of the Illuminati, created to spread fear and paranoia among the population. Whatever the truth, the repetitive menu on many conspiracy sites – doom, fear, doom, and more doom, with extra doom and fear – suggests that interest in more serious historical and social research

BETER CLAIMED AN UNDERWATER MISSILE CRISIS HAD NEARLY BROUGHT THE US AND USSR TO WAR



is limited. With most sites dependent on subscriptions and advertising, there’s every temptation to highlight sensationalism over facts.

BETER VS THE ROBOTIDS

The same was true in the past, with the curious result that financial motivations may have done as much to create the modern conspiracy field as paranoia. The archetypal example from recent history is Dr Peter Beter, a lawyer, financier, and creator of more than 80 audio newsletters distributed on cassette from 1975 to 1982.

Beter had a slightly mysterious legal career, working as general counsel for organisations that sound like they belong

in a spy novel, including the Export-Import Bank of the United States and the American Gold Association. He was also involved in mining exploration and – as Wikipedia says – “represented international financial interests in Europe, South America, and the Middle East.”

As an insider, he must have surprised his clients and former co-workers when he began sending out tapes with controversial, even delusional, claims of conspiracy at every level of the US political, military and financial establishment. Transcripts and audio have been preserved for posterity online. ⁸

Modern conspiracy researchers will be astonished how little some of the standard conspiracy fare has changed since Beter’s time. In the first tape, Beter claims that financial collapse is imminent, that President Ford is about to turn the US into a dictatorship, and that all the gold in Fort Knox has been sold off at fire-sale prices. The Rockefeller, the regular villains in Beter’s world, make their first appearance, and Beter implies that by 1976 the US constitution will be suspended and free enterprise will be replaced by government regulation.

In passing, Beter assures his listeners that the Rockefeller were also behind the creation of Saudi Arabia, which was traded for military aid to Great Britain during World War I, allowing Rockefeller’s Standard Oil to create a Saudi puppet government that could exploit Saudi oil for Western profit.

After this promising start, the tapes get weirder and weirder. There are stories of super-secret military preparations for domestic civil unrest in the US, of impending dictatorship, of plans for World War III – a recurring theme – and of mind control techniques so powerful they can fool everyone, including their victims.

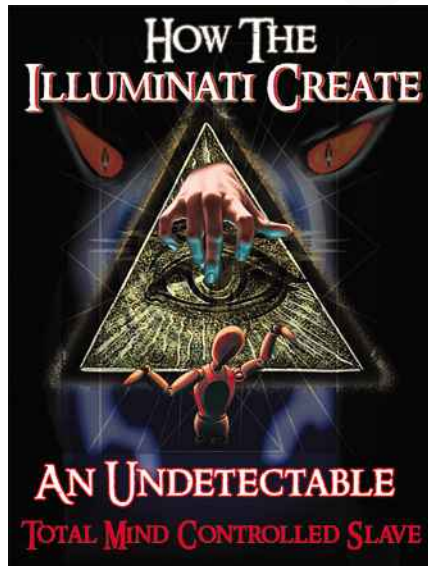
By 1976 Beter was claiming that an underwater missile crisis had nearly brought the Soviet Union and the US to war, with both sides anchoring nuclear missiles in shallow water ready for a surprise attack. Luckily, thanks solely to Beter’s warning, the missiles were removed and war was averted.

But other threats remained. Soviet scientists had already perfected ‘organic

robotoids’ – creatures grown from DNA that look and act like humans but have a limited lifespan of weeks or months. Key figures in the political classes of both the US and the USSR had already been replaced by robotoids working for a secret shadow government run – of course – by the Rockefellers. Not only had President Carter been replaced, but his entire family had been cloned. President Leonid Brezhnev himself was also a robotoid. Not only was the US under clone control, but so was the USSR. Doom was only days away.

Of course, the doom never arrived. Many of Beter’s claim only made sense to the gullible and ignorant. Creating submarine-launched nuclear weapons is difficult enough; designing a missile with targeting and command electronics that can be triggered reliably underwater would be a challenge even for modern designers. The idea that both the US and the Soviet Union had the technology to do this in the 1970s is nonsensical.

Robotoids are similarly implausible. According to Beter they could be programmed “like a computer”. In 2013, the state of the art in Artificial Intelligence is IBM’s Watson, which runs on the usual large room full of hardware and is barely smart enough to win a trivia quiz. While cynics may argue that intelligence isn’t a requirement for success in US politics, most politicians are able to hold a basic conversation. No AI technology can do this. Apple’s Siri, which runs on a large mainframe managed by a specialist AI consultancy, is an impressive consumer product. But no one would mistake it for a real



human.

So the suggestion that squishy biological hardware with human levels of intelligence was already successfully impersonating a president and his family in 1976 is bizarre. Did Beter not realise that the pretence would have to be continued for decades, with the clones seeming to age naturally for all that time? How exactly do you make a pre-aged robotoid?

If Beter was a failure as a credible researcher, he was a huge success as a conspiracist. His newsletters planted many of the conspiracy memes that are still

flourishing today. Hostility to government bureaucracy and regulation, fears that the US gold reserve is either empty or fake, tales of imminent UN occupation, dictatorship and nuclear doom, insinuations about clones and mind-controlled agents; all are still staples of the US conspiracy scene today, especially among paranoid right-wingers more worried about guns, gold and gays than demons from other dimensions.

Were Beter’s motives really financial? The newsletters have a bizarre consistency, creating a parallel reality as complex as the imaginary worlds found in science fiction and fantasy. With a law doctorate, Beter was intelligent enough to keep his storylines untangled. But over the years, the effort required to create or research the content of the newsletters, type it up, record it, and distribute it, must have been vast.

We know too little about Beter’s personal life to understand if he was after kicks, kudos, or cash – or whether, like Todd, he was simply deluded and mentally ill. What is clear is that much of Beter’s more menial distribution efforts would have been unnecessary today – not because his ideas are mainstream, but because he would have found a ready-made audience for them on the Internet.

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

In addition to the mainstream conspiracy sites, it’s now possible to find occult conspiracy theories overlapping with beliefs about capitalist market manipulations and perfidious bankers. Sites like www.zerohedge.com continue a proud tradition of reporting



TOP: One of Fritz Springmeier’s snappily-titled tomes. ABOVE: Alex Jones, whose *Infowars* website and magazine have brought conspiracy theory closer to the mainstream.

AN A-Z OF CONSPIRACY THEORY

RICHARD LEON joins the dots to reveal an alphabetical pattern of conspiratorial belief

AGENDA 21

The official Agenda 21 document was created after various climate summits in the 1990s. Unofficially, it's taken to mean aggressive depopulation of the Earth through war, epidemics, slavery, vaccinations, and so on. Of course it doesn't actually say this - but then it wouldn't, would it?



BEATLES

The Beatles were created by Tavistock (see below) to undermine the morals of an entire generation of US and British teens. And Stephen King killed John Lennon.

COMMON PURPOSE

A cult masquerading as a rather dull management and training consultancy - or possibly vice versa - Common Purpose is pro-Europe. If that isn't damning enough, it also admits to encouraging diversity in the work place.

DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The weird architecture of Denver International Airport (see p72), Astana in Kazakhstan, and the empty cities of China are all proof that the New World Order is a nuclear depopulation of Europe and the US.

EDDY

Prince 'Eddy', the Duke of Clarence and Avondale and Queen Victoria's grandson, was Jack the Ripper. Or possibly Hitler. Or both.



FREEMASONS

Shadowy, sinister, silly, and responsible for the giant broken inverted pentagram in Washington - the one with the White House at its apex. Check it out on Google Maps.

GLOBAL WARMING

A hoax being promoted by compliant media because governments want to use it as an excuse to raise taxes while evil scientists make up bad science to guarantee funding.

HAARP

The Pentagon's High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program is actually a giant machine that uses secret Tesla technology to bring down planes and satellites, create droughts and hurricanes, cause earthquakes, and beam unhappiness into the world's living rooms - like a high tech version of *EastEnders*.

ILLUMINATI

Ironically named secret rulers of the planet - a gold-plated bad-taste mafia associated with royalty, Hollywood, the music business, and all manner of other evils, including sex, drugs, rock 'n roll, paedophilia, war, death, terrorism, Satanism, obelisks, and worst of all, banking.

J EDGAR HOOVER

The Director of the FBI created a hit squad of flamboyant gays to assassinate Kennedy, because no one would believe they could be responsible.

KENNEDY

The family most targeted by assassins, secret societies, secret agencies, and other evil people. Not just JFK, but

Robert Kennedy, Ted Kennedy, John-John Kennedy and others have all been labelled victims of conspiracy.

LAUREL CANYON

LA's ground zero of the rock counter-culture psyop, and of the Manson murders that ended the spaced-out free love idyll. Also, suspiciously close to Mulholland Drive.

MARK OF THE BEAST

Barcodes are the Mark of the Beast mentioned in Revelation. If you count them the right way, the bars split into three groups of six. QED.



NORTH AMERICAN UNION

A planned Satanic theocracy merging Canada, Mexico, and the US - mostly nice people, interesting food, weird and disturbing in the middle. The planned currency is called the Amero, because the word 'dollar' was already taken.

ONE WORLD

Almost, but not quite, an anagram of New World (Order); the Illuminati, the Rothschilds, the Rockefellers and the other usual suspects are keen on removing all country boundaries in favour of a single united planet. Given that the world's countries currently spend more than \$2 trillion a year on defence from all the other countries, it's not entirely obvious that this would be a bad thing.

PROJECT BLUE BEAM

A plot by NASA and the UN to use gigantic sky-filling

hologram technology to simulate the Second Coming of Christ and usher in a New Age religion. Possibly borrowed from US Major General Edward Lansdale, who hatched a plot in 1975 to get rid of Fidel Castro by seeding rumours of the Second Coming throughout Cuba, then 'confirming' them with fireworks launched from a US submarine.

QUANTUM

A useful word that means almost anything it needs to mean, but is often a riff on the old 'You create your reality by thinking about it' New Age trope - which is itself a CIA conspiracy to addle the brains of the idealistic and excessively introspective.

REAL ALIEN AUTOPSY

Ray Santilli's hoaxed alien autopsy had stills from a real alien autopsy embedded in it. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the source for this claim is Santilli himself.



STARS

Clones stalk Hollywood and Washington. Rather like Beter's robotoids, good-looking genetic material is re-used in new bodies. Most stars - and top politicians - have doubles. Or trebles. At least.

TAVISTOCK

Catch-all name for the centre of the global mind-control operation - perhaps because the name is associated with business training, psychiatry, couples counselling, and a

small market town on the edge of Dartmoor.

UFOs

Central icons of conspiracy. UFOs are either a black ops project used by the military to stage abductions of their own, evidence of alien invasion from any one of a number of local empires, or proof that enlightened beings like Jesus in a jump-suit will land and save us from everyone we need to be saved from, except possibly Alan Sugar. No other topic has more Rorschachy conspiracy goodness.

VACCINATION

Vaccines are full of poisons, and will kill you or injure you badly. So will diseases. But viruses and microbes aren't knowingly part of a conspiracy, whereas Big Pharma is. To be fair, there have been occasional vaccine failures, but the meme is more about passivity, paranoia, and unwanted penetration than medical history.

WINGDINGS

The Wingdings symbol font is evil and contains hidden messages.

X-FACTOR

Part of a Masonic plot to desensitise the population to overt bullying and aggressive celebrity condescension.

YURI GAGARIN

Not just the first man in space, but a man murdered by an ungrateful nation when he began to act in an unruly way. Or perhaps he was kidnapped by aliens on that fatal last flight. Either way, one of the few proto-saints in the conspiracy field.



ZAPPA

Frank Zappa was a CIA psy-op. In fact, the entire hippy movement was engineered by the USA's secret police to steer anti-war activists towards self-absorbed pacifism.

suspected corporate manipulation of money markets and economies, while others like The Slog⁹ link financial chicken Littleism with paedophile panics.

Are financial crises deliberately engineered? According to David Viniar of Goldman Sachs – the bank often implicated in financial manipulations around Wall Street and the world – the events of 2008

were “25-standard deviation moves, several days in a row.”¹⁰ In plain English, they were as unlikely as someone winning the lottery more than 20 times in a row. Coincidence or bad planning? You decide.

And while debunkers dismissed lurid stories of sexual abuse by celebrities as insanity, the reality of DJ Jimmy Savile's depravity has made mincemeat of the supposedly sane side of the discourse.

This highlights the chief issue faced by debunkers. While some theories start out mad and get madder, a surprising number turn out to be true. Historically, the US car and oil industries really did kill a functioning public transport in US cities, and deliberately engineered the sprawling rise of suburbia for profit.¹¹ American doctors really did run a 40-year experiment tracing the course of syphilis in an infected coloured population, wilfully denying the victims access to antibiotics.¹² The CIA and other agencies really did run programmes that dosed mental patients, soldiers, brothel customers, and others with LSD without their consent to see if drugs could be used for interrogation and mind control.¹³

Until recently, military involvement in the death of Princess Diana was considered wild and outrageous speculation. Then Scotland Yard was asked to investigate new evidence apparently implicating the SAS, and the conspiracy was suddenly taken seriously enough to appear in the national headlines. Of course it could be a coincidence that the story broke the day after it was announced that Scotland Yard would be investigating News International's links to the phone hacking scandal. Or perhaps the story was just a distraction from the controversy around Edward Snowden's revelations about NSA, GCHQ, and government data collection.

And so on. Historically, the West's post-war peace seems to have been one long series of covert operations, sponsored wars, and assassinations. It's difficult to find a major



event that isn't based on Machiavellian manipulations of governments and populations. And if governments are capable of unthinkable blatant criminality, political conspiracy, and obvious media manipulation,¹⁴ who can be sure that outrageous stories about aliens, demons, and mind control aren't also true? Perhaps Lance deHaven-Smith is right, and the conspiracy

theory label is a deliberately engineered psy-op designed to hide conspiracy facts.

From this point of view, conspiracy theories aren't Rorschach-like interpolations that dazzle the gullible and non-critical, but sane responses to genuine political insanity. The question isn't if or when, but who, and how far. When the answer is 'data redacted' and critical files remain hidden for decades by government order, the rabbit hole becomes a seductively compelling distraction that even stable individuals find hard to ignore. **FT**

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



RICHARD LEON is a pseudonymous author who sometimes wonders if this magazine is a conspiracy.

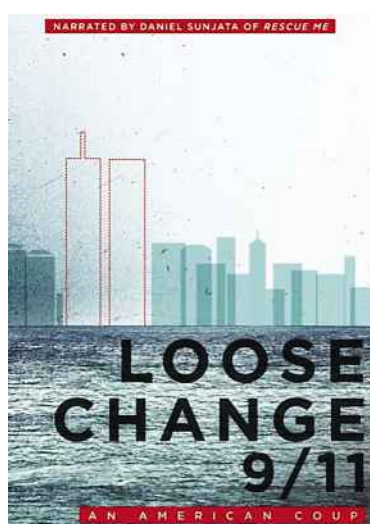
CONSPIRACY CINEMA

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, conspiracy theorists found a vital new medium, using cheap cameras, computer editing and Internet distribution to reach a worldwide audience. **DAVID RAY CARTER** examines the history and development of a genre.

The new film *The Conspiracy* focuses on a pair of documentary filmmakers who unwittingly stumble upon a nefarious group they originally thought was only a “conspiracy theory.” Although a work of fiction, *The Conspiracy* incorporates ideas originally found in the rapidly growing subgenre of documentary film I’ve dubbed ‘conspiracy cinema’. Conspiracy cinema films are works used to promote a specific viewpoint on a popular conspiracy theory or theories. These works are distributed primarily through the Internet, although a growing number are finding their way to DVD and the film festival circuit. Conspiracy cinema can take on any form, from slick, Hollywood-style productions or deftly edited compilations of news footage to simple, narrated slideshows.

There are several characteristics besides subject matter that distinguish conspiracy cinema from standard documentary film. As mentioned above, the choice of distribution channels is perhaps the most noticeable, with the majority of works being available for free. Piracy is not only tolerated but encouraged – a radical divergence from the world of mainstream film. A sizeable

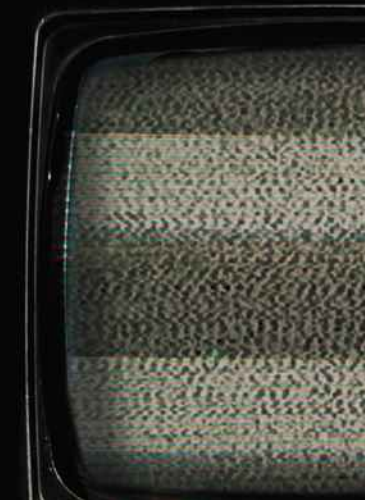
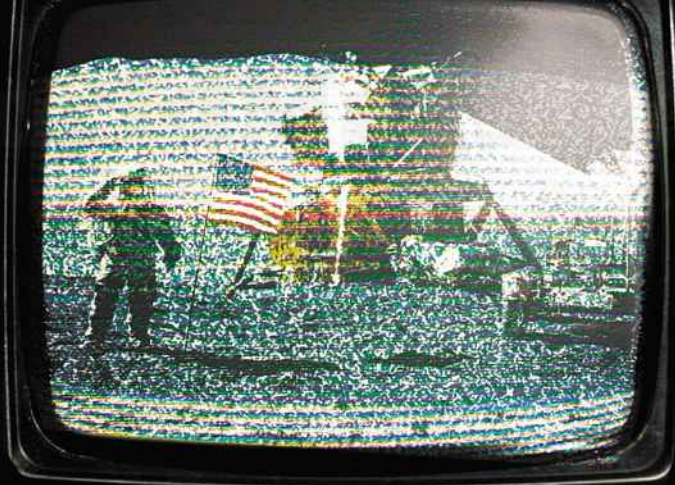
THE FILMS USE MONTAGE AND APPROPRIATED FOOTAGE FROM OTHER SOURCES



number of works are also released anonymously or pseudonymously; the message, not the messenger, is the most important thing. Structurally, the films rely heavily on montage, the use of intertitles and on-screen text, and the recontextualisation of footage appropriated from other sources (often in violation of copyrights) to make their persuasive arguments. Just as a DJ takes bits from various songs to create a new work, so the conspiracy cinema filmmaker does something similar with news footage and clips from other media. It’s also common practice for a work to exist in multiple versions as it is revised to include new information. Finally, conspiracy cinema films have longer than standard running times, with most clocking in around two and a half hours. There are exceptions to this rule at either extreme: to date, the longest single work I have found lasts 14 hours!

PARANOIA PORN?

Chances are you’ve already seen a conspiracy cinema film or two. Some of the more popular films have YouTube view counts in the millions, and there are still more that are distributed via direct download, torrent sites, or on DVD. A version of *Loose Change*,



TOP TEN CONSPIRACY FILMS

The world of conspiracy cinema can be overwhelming to newcomers. Here's a "Top Ten" list of films that will serve as a good introduction to the genre, with an emphasis on lesser-known works.

EVIDENCE OF REVISION

1 An exhaustive six-chapter examination of the assassinations of JFK, RFK, and Martin Luther King Jr and the tragedy at Jonestown. Consisting exclusively of primary source news footage, *Evidence of Revision* presents a much more thorough look at these events than is available in conventional or even conspiratorial histories. The films are exceedingly well made from a technical standpoint and contain a good deal of footage not available elsewhere. *Evidence of Revision* is also one of the more persuasive films because it does not attempt to lead the viewer to a belief in a single conspiracy theory. There's no "villain" in the narrative; the film simply presents the evidence without comment, and asks viewers to reconsider the official story and arrive at their own conclusions.

2 DARK SECRETS INSIDE BOHEMIAN GROVE

Historically important because it is the film that put Alex Jones - the de facto "king" of conspiracy cinema - on the map. Jones obtained footage from inside the exclusive retreat that has become a mainstay of conspiracy theories. Unlike many of Jones's films, *Dark Secrets* feels more akin to investigative journalism than conspiracy theorising and as such is his most convincing work. Jones conclusively proves that there is something going on at Bohemian Grove, and you don't necessarily have to agree with his conclusions about it to feel that the issue deserves further study.

3 THE WORLD ACCORDING TO MONSANTO

An excellent example of a conspiracy cinema film that wasn't intended to be one. Filmmaker Marie-Monique Robin didn't set out to prove the existence of a conspiracy, but that's exactly what this film does. *The World According to Monsanto* gives a behind-the-curtain look at the FDA (US Food and Drug Administration) and the rampant corruption

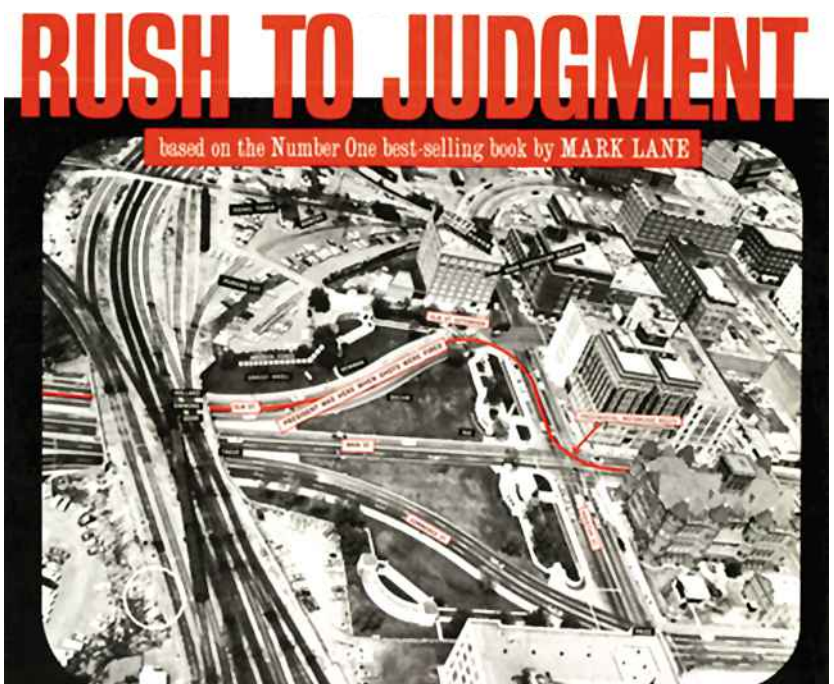


perhaps the most famous conspiracy cinema film, was even broadcast on television in the US and Europe. As the number of conspiracy cinema films grows and filmmakers explore new avenues of distribution, the genre gets increased media attention in the mainstream press. This coverage is almost entirely negative, however, with one American news programme labeling it "paranoia porn." These negative portrayals aside, millions of viewers – not all of whom would consider themselves "conspiracy theorists" – continue to seek these films out.

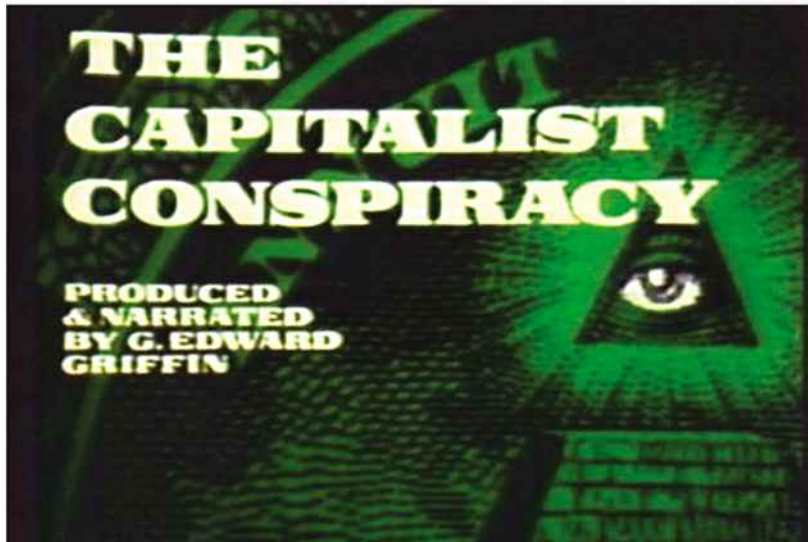
Recent technological advances have greatly aided the spread of conspiracy cinema, but it would be wrong to think of the genre as solely a product of the Information Age. It's almost as old as cinema itself, with the first conspiracy cinema film – 1937's *The Man in the Barn* – coming just a decade after the first talkie. Directed by *I Walked with a Zombie* director Jacques Tourneur, *The Man in the Barn* is an 11-minute "historical mystery" presented by MGM on the conspiracy theory that John Wilkes Booth did not die in 1865, but lived under the assumed name David E George until 1905. The short is packed to the brim with the highpoints of Lincoln assassination conspiracy theories in a quasi-documentary style. Not content to focus solely on the Booth/George mystery, *The Man in the Barn* even implies that the Lincoln assassination was an inside job and that Booth was receiving hush money from his co-conspirators in the US government!

The 1963 assassination of President Kennedy was a watershed moment for conspiracism, and it wouldn't be long until conspiracy cinema reappeared. In 1966,

Mark Lane made a film version of his book *Rush to Judgment*, questioning the official version of the event as explained in the Warren Commission's report. *Rush to Judgment* is a groundbreaking work of conspiracy cinema, both by virtue of the information it contains and the fact that it was shown in cinemas nationwide. Lane is one of the foremost proponents of the "Grassy Knoll" branch of JFK conspiracism, and *Rush* is structured primarily to support that theory. Other aspects of the conspiracy appear as well, and the film features interviews with many eyewitnesses and associates of Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby, making it an invaluable tool for researchers even today. Some of those interviewed, like Lee Bowers, the man who spotted the infamous "three tramps," would later meet untimely deaths under mysterious circumstances; a fact that gives the film an eerie, almost surreal quality for



ABOVE: Mark Lane turned his 'Grassy Knoll' conspiracy book into one of the first and most influential examples of conspiracy cinema; its eyewitness interviews mean it remains an essential resource today.



ABOVE: G Edward Griffin's 1969 film *The Capitalist Conspiracy* was one of the earliest independently produced conspiracy films, and the first to deal with the world of financial conspiracy.

modern viewers.

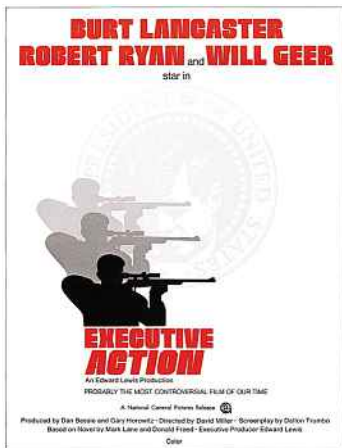
Other conspiracy cinema films soon followed in the wake of *Rush to Judgment*. Theodore Charach's 1973 *The Second Gun* took a look at the assassination of Robert Kennedy. Watergate had recently opened the eyes of many to the reality of political conspiracies, and therefore the film found a more receptive audience than it would have in previous years. 1973 also saw one of the first fictional entries in the conspiracy cinema canon: the drive-in potboiler *Executive Action*. Co-written by *Rush to Judgment* writer/director Mark Lane, *Executive Action* tells the story of the Kennedy assassination from the perspective of the perpetrators!

CONSPIRACY CINEMA GOES INDIE

The first independently made conspiracy cinema films – ones distributed outside the movie theatre or drive-in circuits – began to appear in the late 1960s and early 70s. The most notable were those made by legendary conspiracist G Edward Griffin, who still appears in conspiracy cinema films to the present day. His 1969 film *The Capitalist Conspiracy* was produced and distributed by the John Birch Society, and features Griffin's narration over a montage of animated scenes. *The Capitalist Conspiracy* touches on a number of topics but mainly deals with Griffin's forte, the Federal Reserve Bank and financial conspiracies. The issues addressed in *The Capitalist Conspiracy* are timeless, and this is a rare example of a film that is as intriguing today as it was when first released.

WATERGATE HAD OPENED THE EYES OF MANY TO THE REALITY OF POLITICAL CONSPIRACIES

The next breakthrough in conspiracy cinema would come in the early 1990s, as the increased affordability of home video cameras and computers



made independent film production a possibility for many people for the first time. This coincided with two important events for the world of conspiracism. The first was the release of Oliver Stone's movie *JFK*. While the information presented in Stone's film was old hat for most conspiracy theorists, the renewed interest in the topic, and in conspiracies in general, resulted in a flood of new research

and new conspiracy cinema films. For good or bad, *JFK* brought conspiracism from the "fringe" directly into the heart of American pop culture.

The second event was the election of President Bill Clinton, no stranger to scandals and conspiracies. You can find

found in the organisation, particularly involving bio-agriculture firm Monsanto and its lobbyists. Robin traces the quasi-incestuous relationship between the FDA and Monsanto, with executives regularly bouncing between the two groups to ensure that the company's products are approved for use in the United States despite their questionable track record. It is one of the strongest conspiracy cinema films ever made and perhaps the most chilling. It's worth noting that *The World According to Monsanto* has been released worldwide, but remains unavailable in the United States and the United Kingdom.

4 AMERICAN DRUG WAR: THE LAST WHITE HOPE

Kevin Booth's study of American drug policy is compelling because it is closer to the works of Errol Morris than Alex Jones. It still promotes several conspiracy theories about the War on Drugs, however, focusing primarily on the evidence that the CIA was actively involved in the drug trade during the 1980s. Booth also tackles social issues not typically addressed in conspiracy cinema, such as institutionalised racism, treatment for drug addicts, and the "for profit" private prison system. A sequel, *Cannabis Destiny*, was released in 2013.



5 EVERYBODY'S GOT TO LEARN SOMETIME

The film is based on the (correct) assumption that the bulk of 9/11 conspiracy theories have been covered in great detail elsewhere. Therefore *Everybody's* chooses a different approach and instead focuses on some of the unanswered questions surrounding the event rather than rehashing well-known theories. It's a fruitful approach, and allows filmmaker John J Albanese to cover aspects of the event that will be new to even the most well informed theorists. Albanese begins his examination in Florida, rather than New York or Washington, and focuses on the 2000 Presidential election and subsequent controversy. From here, he connects dots linking the Bush family to Huffman Aviation, the flight school where 9/11 mastermind Mohammed Atta was trained. The Bushes and Huffman are then both connected to the Iran-Contra scandal, and Albanese begins weaving a complex but superbly researched tale of drugs, pay-offs, and cover-ups. Highly recommended for an alternate viewpoint on a key conspiratorial event from a totally fresh perspective.

6 SEPTEMBER CLUES

On the topic of “alternate” versions of 9/11 conspiracies, you’d be hard pressed to find a theory more distinctive than the one presented in Simon Shack’s *September Clues*. The film is the premier entry in the “simulation” theory of 9/11 conspiracism – the idea that the terrorist attacks didn’t actually occur and all footage of the events has been digitally manipulated. It’s a strange assumption and one that even the tinfoil hat crowd scoffs at; yet, when viewed with an open mind, Shack’s film is deftly persuasive. The point of conspiracy cinema is to make the viewer question the official story and *September Clues* takes that one step beyond, causing viewers to question their own eyes and memories. It’s important to note that simulation theories have become dominant in recent events like the Aurora and Sandy Hook massacres. *September Clues* is the film that first introduced this new line of thinking into conspiracism.

7 DARK LEGACY & THE ASSASSINATION OF JFK JR



Conspiracy theories are often dour topics, and most conspiracy cinema reflects this by adopting a sombre tone and occasionally distracting levels of faux-seriousness.

That’s certainly not the case with

these two films by John Hankey. Hankey fills each with darkly comedic moments and a wry sense of humour, and relates his version of JFK assassination theories using animated cut-outs reminiscent of Monty Python. Humour aside, both of these films have serious messages and put forth unique theories unlikely to be found elsewhere. This is especially true for *The Assassination of JFK Jr.*, the only film I’ve been able to find on the topic and one likely to persuade even the most ardent conspiracy sceptic.

8 THE ILLUMINATI, VOL 1-4

British filmmaker Christopher Everard is among the most prolific figures in all of conspiracy cinema, having made several films on a variety of conspiratorial, supernatural and esoteric topics. His *Illuminati* series is his most popular work and is an excellent source of information on the group many claim lurks in the shadows behind every conspiracy. Unlike most conspiracy cinema filmmakers, Everard isn’t opposed to sharing the spotlight with other theorists, sharing screen time with David Icke in many

multiple films dedicated to each “event” that occurred during Clinton’s presidency, and some even contributed to Hillary Clinton’s claim of the existence of a “vast, right wing conspiracy.” The most (in)famous of these films is *The Clinton Chronicles/The New Clinton Chronicles*, produced by Citizens for Honest Government. The film and its sequel were just two of many films produced by the CHG which were so popular with Clinton’s detractors that they caught the attention of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. There are aspects of *The Clinton Chronicles* that are obviously just politically motivated rumour-mongering, but that isn’t true for all of the films in this cycle. Some, most notably *Obstruction of Justice: the*



Mena Connection and *The Death of Vince Foster: What Really Happened*, are fine examples of objective journalism and aren’t easily dismissed. All of the films did well, and *The Clinton Chronicles* sold

hundreds of thousands of copies and introduced the now ubiquitous “Clinton death list” into conspiracy and popular culture.

Not all Clinton conspiracy cinema was as politically biased, however. Some, like the films dealing with the siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, are among the strongest examples of objective investigative reporting in the genre. 1997’s *Waco: Rules of Engagement* is an excellent film and has the distinction of being the first conspiracy cinema film nominated for the Best Documentary Academy Award. While it achieved mainstream recognition, *Rules of Engagement* is still a solidly conspiratorial work, questioning the official version of events and using independent research to validate its points. Also vital are *Waco: the Big Lie* parts 1 and 2, and the sequel to *Rules of Engagement*, *A New Revelation*, all of which should be on your short list of “must see” conspiracy cinema.

9/11 AND AFTER

As had the JFK assassination in 1963, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 sparked a major new wave of interest in conspiracy theories; in fact, more conspiracy films are dedicated to 9/11 than to any other single topic. The

THE ATTACKS OF 9/11 SPARKED A NEW WAVE OF INTEREST IN CONSPIRACY THEORY





ABOVE: *Waco: Rules of Engagement* was the first example of conspiracy cinema to be nominated for an Academy Award. OPPOSITE: 'Conspiracy King' Alex Jones's *Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove*.

forementioned *Loose Change* is doubtless the best known of these and probably served as most people's introduction to the conspiracy cinema genre. *Loose Change* is fast-paced, skilfully edited, and uses a format similar to that of a news broadcast. It's also decidedly aimed at the under-30 crowd, not the veteran conspiracy researchers – a significant departure from earlier conspiracy cinema films. As the best known example of its genre, *Loose Change* is also the most widely criticised, drawing fire from everyone from the US State Department to other 9/11 conspiracy theorists. The criticisms, from whatever side, are essentially the same, and accuse *Loose Change* of being sloppily researched and full of "facts" that are easily debunked. Though less popular in conspiracy circles than with the general public, *Loose Change* was still hugely influential on other filmmakers, and most subsequent films copied its highly effective format. In the years following 9/11, there were dozens of conspiracy cinema filmmakers at work who had honed their craft and had dedicated fans anxiously awaiting their next releases. Films on events like 7/7/05, the election of Barack Obama, and the global financial crises appeared in short order after the events themselves, with multiple films and filmmakers competing for the attention of conspiracy researchers as well as the simply curious. More recently, the movie theatre shooting in Aurora, Colorado, the school shooting in Newton, Connecticut, and the bombing at the Boston Marathon have seen short films made about them within 24 hours of these stories being reported. This new strain of conspiracy cinema focuses more on gut-reactions

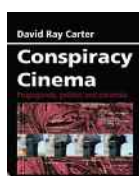
to events than cumulative research, and thus running times are getting shorter and more filmmakers are choosing to serialise their work rather than compiling information into a longer film. There are still a number of filmmakers making more traditional long-format works and breaking into the world of "mainstream" cinema. *A Noble Lie*, a film about the Oklahoma City bombing, *What in the World Are They Spraying?*, on chemtrails/ weather modification, and *TWA Flight 800*, on the 1996 crash, have had successful showings at film festivals and even garnered positive media attention.

This article barely scratches the surface of the wide, wild world of conspiracy cinema. The genre shows no signs of slowing down and new films are popping up daily. Whatever form it may take in the future, it's clear that conspiracy cinema will be around for a long time. **[F]**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



DAVID RAY CARTER is the author of *Conspiracy Cinema: Propaganda, Politics, and Paranoia* and the blog Conspiracy-Cinema.com. He has been a film critic for over a decade, writing for *Film Fanaddict* and *NotComing.com*. He and his wife currently live in the conspiracy capital of the USA – Dallas, Texas.



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entries. Everard reins Icke in, however, focusing more on conspiracism than reptilian aliens. Of special note is the third film, subtitled *Murdered by the Monarchy*, which is dedicated exclusively to theories on the death of Princess Diana. It is the most thoroughly researched of the series and, when coupled with Everard's *Lady Die*, makes essential viewing for those interested in the topic.

9 7/7 RIPPLE EFFECT & J FOR JUSTICE

7/7 Ripple Effect is one of the most famous conspiracy films, but for reasons extrinsic to the film rather than for the information it presents. Filmmaker John Hill (aka Muad'dib) was arrested and prosecuted for interfering with an investigation when he sent copies of the film to several officials. His anonymity had protected him until his true identity was exposed in a 2009 BBC special dedicated to debunking the claims of the film and making many personal attacks against Hill himself. *7/7 Ripple Effect* is noteworthy aside from the controversy, however. It's one of the most convincing conspiracy cinema films on any topic, and the sequel *J for Justice*, made after Hill's release, only adds more weight to the original's theories. So many questions are raised by *Ripple Effect* that it's nearly impossible to refute them all, and being aware of the "debunking" won't impair one's enjoyment of the film.

10 A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE MOON



Bart Sibrel's distilled version of his more exhaustive study of the Moon landing, the near-four hour *What Happened on the Moon?* Sibrel is best known for a 2002 altercation with Buzz Aldrin that culminated in the 72-year-old punching the filmmaker in the face after he was asked to swear the Moon landing was real. "Confrontational" is an apt way to describe Sibrel's usual style of presentation, but the shortened format found here is an easier way for outsiders to check out his theories. The film offers a solid survey of a number of Moon landing conspiracy theories, not just the standard claim that it was a Hollywood production.

HAVE YOUR SAY

forum



Mithraism and *The Conspiracy*

New film *The Conspiracy* posits the idea that a modern-day survival of the ancient Mithras cult is a major player in the plan to create a New World Order. DAVID V BARRETT looks at the history of Mithraism to see if it's just bull...



DAVID V BARRETT is a regular FT contributor and writer on alternative religions. His books include *The New Believers* and *A Brief History of Secret Societies*.

Conspiracy theorists have a field day with world leaders getting together privately in the Bilderberg Group and at Bohemian Grove. In the new faux-documentary film *The Conspiracy* “the people who secretly run things” get together in the Tarsus Club. In the title of a (fictional) *Time* article in the film, it’s “Where the Elite Meet and Greet”. At Bohemian Grove, according to Jon Ronson’s classic book, there’s a ritual with a giant stone owl; ¹ in the Tarsus Club “the drinking and deal-making all end at midnight when the attendees participate in the ritual hunting and slaughter of the bull”.

The bull? “The ritual is based on an ancient and highly secret set of beliefs... the worship of Mithras,” we’re told.

According to the film, Mithraism “was essentially the world’s first truly secret society”. But what was it in reality?

Mithraism was one of a number of so-called mystery religions in the centuries around the time of Jesus. Although some, especially Mithraism, spread far and wide, most were centred around the Mediterranean. They were devoted to a variety of gods including Isis and Osiris, Demeter and Persephone (the Eleusinian mysteries), Cybele and Attis, Dionysus – and Mithras. Some of these taught that there is a spark of the divine deep within ourselves, spirit imprisoned within the gross matter of the body of each person: a concept often found in esoteric movements today.

A mystery religion was a religious-magical cult, or society, which revealed its secrets, its teachings and rituals in dramatic form only to initiated members; the word “mystery” comes from Greek roots meaning “initiate”



ABOVE: Mithras slays a bull in a Tauroctony housed in the Vatican.

and “to close the eyes”. Initiation often involved a symbolic dying of the old life and rebirth into the new life – death and resurrection. Symbolism featured strongly in the rituals; it is thought that in some mystery religions new initiates had to find their way through dark passages until they found the light.

The secrets of the religion were revealed progressively, through a series of initiations, to fewer and fewer people as initiates climbed the “spiritual career path” of the movement – something common to esoteric religions and societies today, from the three initiatory grades of both Freemasonry and Wicca to the more complex spiritual ladders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and its many offshoots, the plethora of higher grades in Freemasonry and the “Bridge to Total Freedom” of the Church of Scientology. As in the present-day organisations, initiates in mystery religions, including Mithraism, had to swear an oath of secrecy.

It was assumed at one time that Mithraism had its roots in Zoroastrianism. Mithra was a Persian god subsumed into Zoroastrianism; he was lord of contracts and agreements. But many scholars today view Mithraism solely within the context of the Roman world. Mithra and Mithras may perhaps be related, or may be completely

separate gods. When *The Conspiracy* speaks of Mithraism being 4,000 years old it’s not keeping up with current scholarship.

Mithraism was the popular religion in the Roman Empire from the 2nd century to the 5th century AD, particularly with soldiers and officials of the Empire. (While Zoroastrianism gave fairly equal treatment to men and women, Mithraism was a religion for men only.) Roman archaeological remains in Britain show that in this period Mithraism was a far more widespread and important religion amongst the Romans than was Christianity.

The problem with our understanding of Mithraism is that as an initiatory religion it has left no written records, only many hundreds of carvings which are open to different interpretations. Foremost among these is the Tauroctony, the well known image of Mithras slaying the bull – not something associated with the Persian god Mithra.

Followers of the religion would meet in an underground cave or cellar (or sometimes a room symbolising a cave) called a mithræum, which some scholars see as representing the cosmos. It contained altars, often in a recess in an apse; in the main room there were raised benches along the walls, where the members would eat a ritual meal. Other carvings depict Mithras and the Sun god feasting on the slain bull.

Ritual meals were a common feature of mystery religions. It is likely that when St Paul wrote his description of the communion service with its ritual sharing of bread and wine representing the body and blood of a god (see I Corinthians 11:23-9) – certainly not a concept familiar to Judaism – he was copying, consciously or unconsciously, from the Græco-Roman pagan ritual meals common in his native town of Tarsus, capital of the province of Cilicia in Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey. One scholar sees Cilicia as where

Mithraism originated.² Is it significant that the film-makers call their secret society the Tarsus Club rather than the Taurus Club?

In *The Conspiracy* it's stated as fact that Mithras was born on 25 December, and that he died and was resurrected three days later: "Many scholars believe this was the basis of Christianity". In fact, Mithras was not one of the dying-and-rising gods (a concept which is now questioned by scholars), and scholars disagree on whether 25 December was the celebration of the birthday of Mithras or whether it was a wider festival for the Sun, near the Winter Solstice. Whichever, there is little doubt that the date was co-opted for the birthday of Jesus, probably for the same reasoning (though considerably earlier) that Pope Gregory the Great told St Augustine of Canterbury to build churches on pagan shrines – that people are likely to continue worshipping where (and when) they always have done, even if the god has changed.

It's clear that as Christianity developed it borrowed several aspects of Mithraism, which began to be popular in Rome and to spread into the Roman Empire just as Christianity was beginning, in the late 1st and early 2nd centuries AD. Mithras was a Sun god and a Saviour god; Plutarch referred to him as the mediator between man and the supreme god. Christianity changed its day of worship from the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday, and as its theology developed Jesus became a Saviour figure.

The rituals and teachings of Christianity did not spring fully-fledged out of nowhere; they came from the historical and geographical context within which Christianity developed – and that included Mithraism as well as Judaism. But by the 4th and 5th centuries, Christianity was strong enough to suppress the religions which had been early influences on it.

Like other mystery religions Mithraism had a progressive initiatory structure: members advanced, through physical testing, from *Corvus* (Raven) through *Nymphus* (Bridegroom), *Miles* (Soldier), *Leo* (Lion), *Perses* (Persian) and *Heliodromus* (Sun-runner) to *Pater* (Father). These were unrelated to men's ranks in the outside world; it would not be uncommon for a medium-ranking soldier of middle years to have progressed to a higher level of initiation than his military superior, perhaps a young noble officer. At least in theory



ABOVE: Modern Mithraists attend a secret ritual in *The Conspiracy*.

Christianity borrowed several aspects of Mithraism

the same principle of equality holds true in Freemasonry and other secret societies today. There is a strong bond between members – “brothers” – who go through the same secret rituals together, and this carries through to the “outer” world.

Not all soldiers were members, and it's likely that those who were – along with merchants and bureaucrats – may have recognised each other with secret signs. In the film *The Conspiracy* one character states that our present-day greeting of a handshake – and every handshake throughout history – comes from Mithraism. “The custom that we have of shaking our friends’ hands when we meet them on the street or when we

seal a business deal comes directly from the secret handshake of Mithraism.” That may be taking it a little too far – but initiates of Mithraism did refer to themselves as *syndexioi*, those “united by the handshake”; there are many carvings of Mithras and Sol shaking hands.

Although historically there is no direct link between them, there are clear parallels between the structure, secrecy, rituals and comradeship of

Mithraism and those of Freemasonry and other secret societies today. For most Freemasons, probably the main reason for their membership is social: a men-only form of companionship and mutual support which has changed little since the days of Mithraism – which was, perhaps, as much a club as a religion.

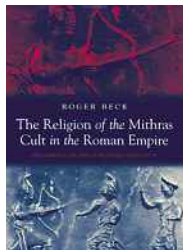
Freemasonry has been accused of many evils, usually unfairly. But the aim of the Tarsus Club in the film, like the conspiracy theorists’ view of the Bilderberg Group, is basically world domination: the New World Order, “a blueprint of a one-world government, a single organisation that controls every nation and every person on the planet”.

Aaron Poole and Jim Gilbert, the actors playing the two documentary makers in *The Conspiracy*, manage to infiltrate the Tarsus Club wearing tie-clip cameras. In Jon Ronson's *Them*, Ronson is asked, “First timer?” when he infiltrates Bohemian Grove. “Yes,” he replies. “You’re going to love the ceremony,” he’s told.³ Similarly at the Tarsus Club Aaron and Jim are asked, “First time?” “Yes.” “Thought so. Ravens. I’m a Lion myself. Enjoy the hunt.”

And what of the Tarsus Club, this present-day secret society supposedly based on Mithraism? The makers of the film have done their publicity cleverly and subtly. On one website, someone who had seen the film wrote: “This group actually exists, or the Internet says it exists at least. It has its own website; the very one shown in the documentary/film. The film features interviews with actual real people, so it is based on some factual evidence.”⁴ How easily people are taken in! The Tarsus Club’s website⁵ is a fake (as were the Wikipedia pages on it which were quickly taken down). But there is one real person in the film, the Canadian academic Prof Roger Beck of the University of Toronto, a leading (if somewhat controversial) scholar on Mithraism, and author of the book shown in the film, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun*.⁶ **FI**

NOTES

- 1 Jon Ronson, *Them: Adventures with Extremists*, Picador, 2001, pp324-8
- 2 David Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World*, Oxford University Press, 1991.
- 3 Ronson, p324.
- 4 <http://facelesspromotions.wordpress.com/2013/08/10/the-tarsus-club-hidden-information/>
- 5 www.tarsusclub.com/
- 6 Oxford University Press, 2006.



I Found Aubrey Mayhew

DAVID THRUSSELL describes how he tracked down the legendary Nashville producer whose obsession with the JFK assassination nearly ruined him



DAVID THRUSSELL is a musician/composer/writer/record label mogul/filmmaker/closet-hillbilly who lives deep in the Australian outback and is best avoided.

Aubrey Mayhew was not an easy guy to find. The legendary Nashville producer had become reclusive in his later years. There was no website, no ‘personal representation’ or management. The trail had gone cold. And then a friend of a friend turned up a phone number that was “probably out of date”. I tried it anyway, and after a few rings an old, frail voice came on the line.

“Is that Aubrey Mayhew?”

“Yes, it is”.

Aubrey Mayhew produced (and most often co-wrote) a clutch of Johnny Paycheck 45s and LPs in the mid to late 1960s. Mayhew was a jazz producer and music industry type who somehow (apparently against his wishes) had been lured to the Nashville DJ Convention in late 1962. After some labyrinthine machinations, Mayhew discovered the golden-throated Paycheck on skid row (literally), sleeping it off under a Nashville bridge, and offered to make him a singing star. Over the years the sides they subsequently recorded together have become legendary as some of the darkest, most haunting (and even psychotic) country music ever committed to wax. The titles give you some inkling: “(Pardon Me) I’ve Got Someone To Kill”, “It Won’t Be Long (And I’ll Be Hating You)” and “He’s In a Hurry (To Get Home To My Wife)”, amongst others.

The lyrics were often the most extreme tales of murder and desperation imaginable, with musical accompaniment that was never less than unsettlingly suitable (Lloyd Green’s ghostly, fuzzed pedal steel on “It’s A Mighty Thin Line Between Love And Hate” and ear-shattering steel swoops and howls on “Like Me, You’ll Recover In Time” for example). The kind of country music that sits uncomfortably at the crossroads of beauty and insanity. The kind of country music I really love.

I’d been keen to drag some of these rare and indeed almost mythical recordings back into availability for some



time; but as I said, Aubrey Mayhew was hard to find (Paycheck himself was long dead) and after months of trying to track him down I’d almost given up. But now that had all changed. I had him on the phone.

I’d done a little research on Mayhew, and the deeper I looked, the more interesting he got. Not only was he responsible for some of the most sublimely extreme music ever recorded, but we also shared one other obsession: the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. My earliest memory of the JFK assassination is a powerful one. At a tender age (I guess around five or six) I was watching television with my father and something came on about Lee Harvey Oswald being the lone assassin of

ABOVE: Aubrey Mayhew.

BELOW: One of Mayhew and Paycheck’s Little Darlin’ 45s from the mid-Sixties.



President Kennedy. My father shook his head and made an exasperated sound: “If you believe that... you’ll believe anything.” In the following years it stuck with me and if the opportunity arose I would read and digest any assassination information that came my way. I’d come to believe it was a watershed moment in our shared cultural and political history – something very important that was hidden in plain sight.

On the day of the assassination (22 November 1963) Mayhew was in Houston. He was already deeply immersed in the music business, having managed jazz great Charlie Parker (and his estate and record label) for a number of years as well as producing notable jazz sides like Mundell Lowe’s fine score to the 1962 sleazefest *Satan In High Heels*. On hearing news of the assassination, Mayhew and an associate rushed out and gathered a number of tape recorders and set about recording every broadcast relating to Kennedy’s slaying. The resultant LP was the first on the market about the President’s murder, and reportedly sold millions.

As Paycheck and Mayhew wrote and recorded jaunty post-apocalyptic ditties (“The Cave”) and surreally jaunted tales of bedlam (“Like Me, You’ll Recover In Time”) for their own Little Darlin’ label in the mid-1960s, Mayhew was also busy pursuing his obsession with JFK, collecting reams of Kennedy memorabilia. He had a background in precious coins and metalwork, and would eventually build his Kennedy collection into a staggering 300,000 (that is not a misprint) individual items. Among those items were Kennedy’s personal letters, political correspondence, the intact PT-59 (patrol boat) Kennedy commanded after his PT-109 was sunk by the Japanese in World War II, Jack Ruby’s appointment book, and so on. Later in life he would house the entire collection (along with a large number of master tapes,

and himself) in the aging Nashville Roxy Theater. In 1970 though, as Mayhew and Paycheck were about to have the last raging fight of their tempestuous career together, Mayhew was also about to add the most astounding item to his already astounding Kennedy collection – an entire building.

The Texas School Book Depository Building is central to the controversy that surrounds the assassination; alleged

GETTY IMAGES



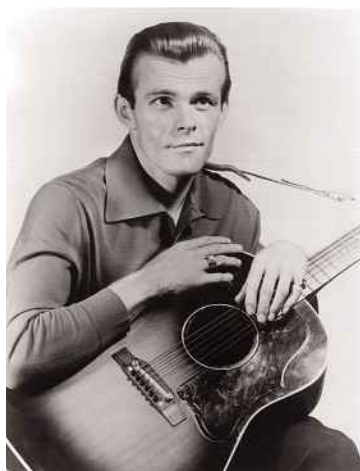
assassin Lee Oswald (whose murder by Jack Ruby ensured there would never be a trial) allegedly fired upon JFK from one of the sixth-floor windows of the building. Allegedly.

Mayhew bought the building at auction from Colonel David Harold Byrd, a wealthy Texas oilman who had owned it since 1937. Byrd was 'interesting' – intimately connected with Vice-President Lyndon Johnson and notorious right-wing oilmen Clint Murchison and HH Hunt. Of further interest, perhaps, was that Byrd was away on safari in central Africa with the Baron and Baroness Alvensleben at the time of the assassination and, also interestingly, would benefit enormously from lucrative contracts awarded to him by the new President Johnson upon his return.

Mayhew felt the book depository building was in danger of demolition and said his purchase was motivated by a desire to save the historic site. It was a decision that would haunt him for decades to come.

Soon after the purchase, Mayhew moved to house his JFK collection and a museum of the assassination there. As he tells it, he was blocked at every turn by the Dallas Council, who announced that the idea of a museum at the site was "exploiting a tragedy" (it should be noted that the same Dallas Council now runs a lucrative Kennedy assassination museum in the same building). Mayhew fought the objections over a number of years but after various intrigues (including a case of arson in the building) he failed and was sent into

He secretly had workmen remove the 'Sniper's Perch'



LEFT: The Texas School Book Depository in Dallas, saved – and later lost – by Mayhew.

CENTRE: The 'Sniper's Perch' window, removed and stored by Mayhew.

BOTTOM: Johnny Paycheck in a publicity photo.

bankruptcy and personal hardship (his wife and children leaving him due to the immense pressure involved).

Mayhew returned to Nashville in 1973 a broken man. But he may yet have the last laugh. For during the period he owned the Depository Building he secretly had workmen remove the alleged assassin's window (dubbed the "Sniper's Perch") from the sixth floor and place it in a secure location. At the foreclosure sale, the building was repurchased by DH Byrd, who had, in fact, also removed windows from the sixth floor soon after the assassination; but according to Mayhew, Byrd removed the *wrong* windows. During the following decades, visitors to the opulent Byrd mansion on Vassar Street reported seeing Byrd's "Sniper's Nest" (framed and surrounded by various relevant newspaper clippings) on display in his trophy room next to the stuffed heads of safari kills.

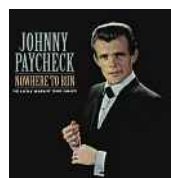
Fast-forward to 2007, and both Caruth Byrd (DH Byrd's son and heir) and Mayhew offered their respective windows for sale on Ebay. Bidding reportedly reached three million dollars before conflicting reports of authenticity and ownership forced withdrawal of both auctions. Naturally, in the 'United States of Litigation' there was only one course of action available – both parties sued the other.

In early 2009 when I first contacted Mayhew the hearings were about to begin. On the phone he sounded very frail (even considering his 81 years). Over the next three months I would speak to him or his assistant Jenna regularly about various details of a proposed Johnny Paycheck CD. I felt time was against us all as Mayhew's health noticeably declined. After some wrangling, I'd sent a final version of the contract over. And then, nothing – silence...

Aubrey Mayhew died on 22 March 2009. Months later, the CD went ahead through the agreement of Aubrey's son Parris. Not unfittingly for the colourful characters involved and the violence behind the music, the CD itself has had a chequered history – glowingly reviewed in the *New York Times* and subject to spurious litigation by dubious Nashville labels (a not uncommon practice when a rights owner dies, I'm told). To this day, the fate of Aubrey's massive JFK collection (and indeed the whereabouts of his "Sniper's Perch") remains uncertain. **ET**

With thanks to Aubrey Mayhew, Jason Odd, Parris Mayhew and Jeanna Scott.

Johnny Paycheck's *Nowhere To Run* (*The Little Darlin' Years 1966-1970*) is available from The Omni Recording Corporation www.worldwent-down.com/omni/



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This month's books, films and games

reviews



Anomalous pre-histories

Recent examinations of historical and archaeological anomalies explore a romantic reimagined past – and even the little people who were here before humans

Ancient Aliens, Lost Civilisations, Astonishing Archaeology & Hidden History

Ed: Preston Peet

Disinformation 2013

Pb, 343pp, illus, refs, notes, ISBN 9781938875038

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.29

Before Atlantis

Frank Joseph

Bear & Co 2013

Pb, 312pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £16.99, ISBN 9781591431572

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.29

The Lost History of the Little People

Susan B Martinez

Bear & Co 2013

Pb, 384pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £16.99, ISBN 9781591431459

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.29

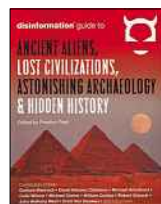
Evidence of the Gods

Erich von Däniken

New Page Books 2013

Pb, 219pp, illus, refs, ind, ISBN 9781601632470

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.29



Before the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, something remarkable happened. As the water withdrew 500m

(1,640ft) or more, spectators on the shore at Mahabalipuram – one of the most templed cities of southern India – saw ruined masonry suggesting that a town or temple complex had once existed on now-submerged land. To Graham Hancock – who, in *Fingerprints of the Gods* (2001), suggested that explorations off the coast of India would reveal

many sunken cities – it was confirmation of his research.

The Mahabalipuram incident is also cited by Preston Peet, introducing *Ancient Aliens* – which is perhaps not the best title if you are hoping to impress mainstream academics – as an indication that there is still much to learn about the time before ‘prehistory’, the genre of lost civilisations and the theories they inspire. The Western idea that Indian civilisation derived from an ‘Aryan invasion’ from the north was invented by Victorian anthropologists to support their favoured linguistic theories, says Dr Navaratna Rajaram. He argues in *Ancient Aliens* that recent genetic studies suggest Indian ancestry is far older than the putative Aryans, and that the ancient Vedic sources point to a colonisation from lands now below the southern ocean, sometime in the Younger Dryas period, around 50,000 years ago. When their homeland was lost to the rising sea-level – a period of global flooding known as ‘the 8.2 Kiloyear Event’ – this rump evolved into the Harrapan culture whose ruins are currently exciting archaeologists as the earliest known cities.

This new edition of Peet’s anthology – originally published in 2005, with articles and papers gathered from fringe publications and genre blogs – is supplemented with specially-written material. It covers catastrophes, ancient technologies, origin myths, cities and ruins, modern explorations, the role of religions, and what is called ‘Ancient Wisdom’. There is a stellar list of contributors including Michael Cremo, Frank Joseph, Erich von Däniken, Graham Hancock, John Anthony

“Ancient Aliens is perhaps not the best title if you are hoping to impress academics”

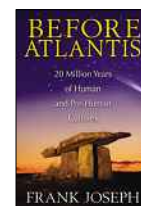
West, William Corliss and Robert Schoch among many others. As each of the 33 articles has references and a booklist, the book is great value and an excellent briefing on the genre and its complexities.

It is precisely the mysterious nature of these historical and archaeological anomalies that allows radical speculation to challenge orthodox explanation. Inevitably, the genre is riddled with feuds, violent disagreements and character assassination between the professionals and mavericks of history, anthropology, archaeology and palaeontology. Critics of the genre – usually establishment historians, anthropologists and archaeologists – are not always vehement opponents, but the extreme among them often resort to more derogatory terms, beginning with ‘fringe’, ‘pseudo’, ‘fantastic’ or ‘cult’.

To be fair, establishment science acting like an established religion burning its heretics (to paraphrase Fort) is a strategy that has ‘kept the centre’ of mainstream science throughout its history. As Thomas Kuhn has shown, it defines establishment science; it is what science does, and will probably be ever thus. The real shame of it, as Will Hart points out in the concluding essay in *Ancient Aliens*, is that the

standard tactic of ‘personalising’ the debate with slander and vitriol is the sort of behaviour you’d expect from defensive cads or politicians.

Hart has a cracker of an example: when the experienced molecular palaeontologist Mary H Schweitzer announced in *Science* (April 2009) that she had found still-soft collagen in a femur of an 80-million-year-old hadrosaur, and had successfully cultured it – something that should not have been possible in fossilisation as organic material is not supposed to survive more than 100,000 years maximum – she was accused of mistaking the substance for “bacterial film”. As Schweitzer points out, “bacteria do not produce collagen”.



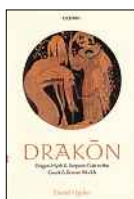
Frank Joseph, who has been writing calmly on the anomalies of American history for many years, opens his nicely illustrated *Before Atlantis* with an examination of the ‘Aquatic Ape’ hypothesis and the hostility that Sir Alister Hardy and Elaine Morgan received as they propounded the theory (the latter had it worse because she was a strong woman and not a scientist).

Similar controversies are dotted throughout these books, suggesting, Hart says, that our heretics are sometimes justified in their paranoia: Schoch’s dating of the Sphinx to far older than conventional Egyptology allows; the knee-jerk condemnation of the ‘Cabrera stones’ of Peru as fakes, therefore not worth even

Continued on page 58

An awful lot of dragons

Two superb works about dragons and their ilk in the classical and early Christian world show their terrifying range



Drakon

Dragon Myth & Serpent Cult in the Greek & Roman Worlds

Daniel Ogden

Oxford UP 2013

Hb, 490pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £95.00/\$185.00, ISBN 9780199557325

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £95.00

Dragons, Serpents, & Slayers in the Classical and Early Christian Worlds

A Sourcebook

Daniel Ogden

Oxford UP 2013

Pb, 345pp, illus, bib, inds, £18.99/\$29.95, ISBN 9780199925117

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.99

As Daniel Ogden points out in his introduction to the first work reviewed here, the Greek term *drakon* had a wide field of meanings in the classical world, from the large snakes of the real world through serpents associated with the underworld, those involved in metamorphoses, oracles and rituals, and so on. All of these are covered in this wide-ranging survey of the subject, although Ogden's major concern is those tales of combat between heroes and what we would more normally understand as 'dragons'. Even then, the dragons of the ancient world were generally portrayed, morphologically, as snakes, though of immense size and power; the legs and wings of mediæval dragons being hardly present at all.

The first three chapters centre on the major varieties of combat, with gods and heroes on one side and on the other,

respectively, 'pure' drakons, 'composite' drakons (often creatures with human upper halves and snake tails, though Ogden expands his classification to include such creatures as the chimæra and the gorgons, where the ophidian element is considerably reduced) and the kotos, the closely-related ancient sea-serpent. Here each combat, such as that between Heracles and the Hydra, is presented in its canonical form, the variants are given and discussed, and then the iconography (mainly vase paintings and sculpture) is examined, in all its various detail. Everything is given the fullest referencing: ancient sources, modern discussions and museum locations for the iconography. And, thankfully, the publisher has opted for footnotes rather than endnotes, which makes for a much more civilised reading experience.

Later chapters tend more to discussion than presentation, covering such subjects as the 'world' of the drakons and their associations with caves, treasure and so on; masters and mistresses of drakons; the symmetries of the battles between them and the heroes and gods; their relationship with the underworld and wealth, and with healing gods such as Asclepius; sacred snakes in ancient cults and, finally, a look at the early Christian tales of dragon-slaying by saints such as George and Patrick, and how they developed directly out of the classical tradition.

Ogden is dismissive (rightly in my view) of the notion that Greek myth was imported wholesale from the Middle East, while allowing that the story of Zeus's battle with the drakon Typhon almost certainly does come from Hittite and Hurrian sources; he's similarly unimpressed with attempts to root the stories in a Proto-Indo-European culture, preferring instead to draw his

parallels from the world of international folktale narratives. One can only be astonished at the breadth and the depth of his research, which travels as far as Indian and Japanese serpent cults. This is an enormously academic work (at an enormously academic price), and although Ogden writes well, it rather demands that the reader bring to it an already fairly comprehensive knowledge of the classical world and its myths, if the best is to be got from it.

Far more accessible, accessibly priced and possibly of greater interest to forteans, is the obvious companion piece of *Dragons, Serpents, & Slayers*. Here we have a sourcebook collecting and translating drakon-related texts from the ancient world, though in this case Ogden has narrowed the focus to those combats discussed in *Drakon*. After an introduction that encapsulates some of the major themes from the previous book, each section relates to an individual story, and we are given an introduction, the earliest account, the most elaborate version and a number of variants, each text accompanied by commentary; there are also source notes, illustrations and further reading lists, apart from the extensive bibliography at the end. Although it would be naïve to think that cryptozoological 'real' giant snakes could be found lying behind these mythical tales, anyone interested in ancient traditions will find these translations, often from hard-to-locate originals, enormously valuable. Daniel Ogden has established himself as one of our leading authors on ancient history, myth and magic, with an impressive backlist, and these are two more superb contributions to the field.

Steve Moore

Fortean Times Verdict

A PAIR OF MONSTROUSLY MARVELLOUS BOOKS

9

Secret Journey to Planet Serpo

A True Story of Interplanetary Travel

Len Kasten

Bear & Company 2013

Pb, 282pp, illus, £15.99, ISBN 9781591431466

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.39



We are expected to believe that a group of US military personnel during the Kennedy Administration made an interstellar voyage to the planet Serpo in Zeta Reticuli (where else?) as guests of an alien race, the Ebens, and stayed for 13 years.

Years after their alleged return, an anonymous whistleblower in the Defense Intelligence Agency broke the story – not to the national media but via some posts to the UFO Thread email network, and via a CD mailed to one of the UFO thread people.

A brief introductory section headed "Credibility" explains that UFO Thread's members weren't just any old ufologist nutjobs, but "extremely well-known names in UFO research", so everything the source said must be true, then. Besides, "the amount of detail" in the posts "could not have been invented". Really? What about the *Hitler Diaries*, then, or *Lord of the Rings* for that matter?

What makes *Serpo* so unconvincing is its very lack of detail.

If we for the moment accept that six servicemen did spend 13 years of their lives in an utterly alien environment, they would have related it with a bit more passion and wonder than the colourless and peremptory "revelations" contained here. (Contrast this with the deluge of data that is the – real – WikiLeaks cables, and how candid, detailed and opinionated are the views expressed in them.)

Even *Serpo's* description of alien sex is boring: "It was believed they formed the act for pleasure or reproduction" is one of only three sentences I could find describing the sex lives of the Ebens.

Even a terrible prude would be hard-pressed to describe the sex

lives of our species in just three unengaging sentences.

Books of this kind are often enjoyable as a guilty pleasure, as gloriously fantastic fiction rather than passed off as fact, but not this one. The anonymous poster on the UFO Thread – whom *Serpo's* author, UFO researcher Len Kasten, quotes so uncritically – could at least have given his aliens dog's heads or made them shape-shifting lizards or something. To be fair, the lizards do get a look in. It is casually mentioned in passing that they live – apparently – in “a huge underground empire... said to extend from southwestern Tibet” all the way to Benares, India. And in equally short and bland fashion, it is claimed that a secret Nazi colony established in Antarctica after WWII had its own ghettos of lizards and Reticulans. That would be the Nazi flying saucer base in the Antarctic that “we know from British intelligence”. We do? The evidence is... where? (No indexes or bibliography, naturally.)

The colour plates exactly duplicate monochrome illustrations we've already seen earlier in the book, and one caption neglects to explain that a “photo” of a Nazi flying saucer is a Photoshop collage reconstruction.

And, apparently, both *Star Wars* and a scene from Spielberg's *Close Encounters* may be “actually true” or at least based on fact (it's not entirely clear which.) The Ebens of *Serpo* have a military government following their century-long Great War with an enemy race, just like in *Star Wars*. Could George Lucas have known about the Ebens, Kasten asks?

Leaving aside Lucas's *Clone Wars* being a political struggle between a multispecies Republic and separatists lasting less than a decade, it's inadvisable to use sci-fi films in support of the credibility of a narrative most would have already dismissed as fictional.

Matt Salusbury

Fortean Times Verdict

NEVER HAVE MADE-UP ALIENS BEEN SO DULL

2

Miraculous images

A lavishly illustrated and sympathetic guide to the beliefs and practices behind the cult of Ligurian miracle-working images



Spectacular Miracles

Transforming Images in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present

Jane Garnett & Gervase Rosser

Reaktion Books 2013

Hb, 311pp, illus, bib, ind, £35.00, ISBN 9781780231051

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £31.50

Spectacular Miracles deals with the subject of religious artwork in Italy from the Renaissance to the modern era. Instead of dealing with the types of paintings that concern art historians, however, Garnett and Rosser deal with images believed to have miraculous powers – specifically, images of the Virgin Mary. These images form the centre of a series of local cults, each of them with its own stories, ceremonies and practices.

Garnett and Rosser focus their book on the Italian region of Liguria, with numerous examples both from the city of Genoa and surrounding communities. Many different images of the Virgin are found throughout this region. Miracles are attributed to these images – not only to the Virgin Mary in general but to the specific image of the Virgin found in a particular location. Garnett and Rosser use examples from dozens of different image cults throughout the region

to demonstrate the importance of this type of devotion.

Spectacular Miracles takes a thematic approach, addressing the different ways in which



people interact with these images rather than looking at specific cults, regions, or images. These different approaches combine to illuminate the role of images in popular piety: an ever-changing, quasi-authorised form of religious practice existing at the boundary between approved veneration of Mary and prohibited superstition. Built from unverified tales, cheap reproductions of images and the constant reinforcement of community participation, this type of religious practice has been condemned or ignored both by art historians, who view it as a distraction from “real” art, and by the enlightened, modernising forces within the church, which view it as an undignified distraction from the serenity and simplicity of proper worship. Tellingly, Garnett and Rosser suggest that popular interest in miraculous images bloomed as the church was cracking down on the veneration of unauthorised saints' relics. Despite this official and elite disapproval, the belief in miraculous images was a vital part of the religious life of Europe throughout the period and continues to be so in some regions today.

Each chapter addresses a different topic, ranging from the church's attempts to regulate image cults to the offerings made by believers to miraculous images. Other topics include the reproductions of images used to create smaller shrines within the protected region and the practices associated with these smaller images. By addressing each topic separately, Garnett and Rosser

help to build up a picture of the complex set of ritual practices and metaphysical beliefs that make up the cults of images.

The book demonstrates the ways in which image cults are built into the fabric of daily life – the images themselves are seen, touched and even tasted, and their representations can be found in all parts of the everyday world. Image shrines can even be collaborative creations – worshippers add pictorial ex-voto offerings to thank the image for answering their prayers, and the large numbers of these offerings seen around image shrines serve both as a testament to the miraculous powers of the image and a way in which the community participates in building its reputation.

Although this is definitely an academic study rather than an introduction to image cults, it's clearly and engagingly written; no real prior knowledge of the subject is needed.

Image cults often rely on overpowering visual stimulation to give their devotional foci power. Fittingly, then, this book is absolutely gorgeous. The paper stock is glossy and heavy, showing off the over 150 images – most of them in colour – to best advantage. The lavish production values and comprehensive, sympathetic view of the topic make this a valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in popular religion.

James Holloway

Fortean Times Verdict

DROP-DEAD GORGEOUS, HIGHLY READABLE AND FASCINATING

9

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Martinez focuses on pale 'hobbit' people who leave traces in the myths of most cultures

Continued from page 55

re-examination; the 'official' reaction to *Forbidden Archaeology* (1993) by Michael Cremona and Richard Thompson, on such fortan geological anomalies as objects found in strata they had no right to be in; the findings of objects in the Americas that pre-date the doctrine of migrations across the 'Bering bridge'; the suppression in New Zealand of discussion of discoveries that pre-date the claims of the Maoris to have been there first; the origin of the enigmatic Caucasian mummies of the Taklamakan Desert; the negroid features of the Olmec stones; among many other cases.

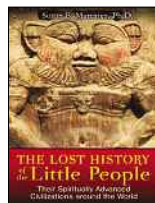
Among the many online sallies against 'pseudoarchæology', accusations of "sensationalism and internal contradictions in their arguments" are prominent; and worse, they are blasted for mimicking scientific arguments and misusing data to construct new theories which were, *horribile dictu*, romantic, not scientific.

It is this romantic re-imagining of the past, and choosing palæoanthropological data to support it, that jibes with most critics, who see it as the secret agenda, the ulterior motive, of Hidden Historians. Tired of kicking Creationists, militant sceptics and other loud bullies on the Internet set about Michael Cremona and his *Forbidden Archaeology* books. Cremona has been quite open about his membership of the Hindu Bhaktivedanta sect and that as "a Vedic creationist" he believes that "humans like ourselves have existed on this planet for tens of millions of years", and that the evidence of which "has been suppressed, ignored, and forgotten because it contradicts generally-held ideas about human evolution".

Similarly, different writers have used the canonical anomalies to support a disparate range of New Age ideologies: pagans, pyramidists, Theosophists, Gaia and Goddess acolytes, Earth Mystery and ley line followers,

the Ancient Astronauts brigade, and Atlanteans to name a few. Most of these are united in their conviction that the conventional timeline of far prehistory is wrong or, at least, incomplete and that the development of ancient human societies came from 'outside' – be it a deity, an alien or an earlier, superior civilisation – during a 'Golden Age' of harmony, wisdom and technological advancement.

Cremona's 2003 paper on 'Human Devolution', reprinted here in *Ancient Aliens*, aims to provide a spiritual alternative to Darwinism based upon ancient Vedic texts of Hinduism. The lack of some sort of spiritual (not necessarily religious) context for Darwinism is a criticism made by most of our authors here. Interestingly, Cremona argues that modern materialism is symptomatic of the devolution of humanity from the 'Golden Age', the descent from 'spirit' into 'matter' – opposing the usual vector of protoplasm to ape to man vector – is rationalised as the process by which the universal protean entity is becoming conscious in every particle in this realm of existence. It is worth noting that Cremona is often complimented by critics on his presentation – one source declaring that the "tone of the work is far superior to that exhibited in ordinary creationist literature", and another called it "useful for fostering debate". It is the completely unscientific 'romance' of it that unsettles the establishment.



While some of these authors ignore or don't buy into the 'high romance' of our 'guided devolution', it – or something like it – is there in the background.

For Martinez, the Golden Age was disseminated by a "spiritually advanced civilization of Little People"; for Joseph it is an unknown "pre-human" culture that seeded communities all over the world; for von Däniken, of

course, it was god-like visitors from the stars.

Frank Joseph and Susan Martinez both use pretty similar data sets – burials, mounds, roads, stone chambers, weapons and tools etc – especially where these are earlier than the Clovis (or Llano) culture of New Mexico, dated to 13,000+ years ago and, until recently, officially regarded as the earliest evidence of human occupation of the Americas. That title has now passed to the Pedra Furada complex in Brazil, where artifacts are yielding radiocarbon dates of 32,000 (and even earlier) years before the present.

However, Joseph is more interested in the evidence that a human culture flourished between 20 and nine million years ago, mainly in South America, long before (he argues) *Australopithecus* was forced by a catastrophic volcanic event in Indonesia – the Toba Event – to "spend one or more evolutionary phases" in coastal waters. So far so interesting, but his conviction that the consciousness of prehistoric folk was significantly developed by the proximity of comets and the use of quartz megaliths, might be too much for the orthodox reader at this stage.

Martinez focuses on her ubiquitous race of pale-skinned 'hobbit' people who are euhemerised – i.e. over time, deified as gods, spirits, heroes, or fairies etc – leaving traces in the myths of most cultures. Large parts of her book are devoted to sound radicals (eg. nan, ba, pan, ihin and men) which make up words in diverse languages all over the world and have roughly similar meanings associated with her "sacred little people". That she finds so many interesting correspondences would be compelling but for the suspicion that she has not established the genealogical or linguistic links between disparate cultures separated by time or geography.

For Martinez, at least, all differences are united by the supposed 'lost continent' of Mu (which straddled the Pacific Ocean – an idea put forward in

the Oahspe Bible and by James Churchward – from which the 'first people' spread eastward to Central America and westward to Asia, India and Africa. The problem in accepting this, according to current understanding of the continental drift hypothesis, is that Pangea – the supposed supercontinent – existed about 300 million years ago, long before any author's 'first people'. Also, before the continents broke apart and began drifting to their current places, they all fitted together quite nicely; there was no huge gap into which Mu or Pan could have fitted.

Von Däniken's slender *Evidence of the Gods* makes no pretence at adding anything new, being simply an opportunity to present a lot of full colour photographs of the sites he has visited and written about over the years. Nevertheless, he still offers the occasional surprise – such as the existence, in the menhirs at Le Méneac, Brittany, of two perfect Pythagorean triangles (with sides in the 3:4:5 ratio), erected around 1,000 years before Pythagoras existed.

Such questions as these writers ask are not new. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), Thomas Jefferson asked "whence came those aboriginal inhabitants of America?" He acknowledged that Alaska was separated from eastern Asia by only a narrow strait and that the peoples on the opposing shores shared a resemblance. His only doubt was the direction of the migration across the Bering Sea. That question may be resolved today, but there are many more archaeological and palæontological anomalies set out in these books that deserve honest examination and proper debate.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

MARTINEZ'S AND JOSEPH'S BOOKS HAVE AS A GOOD SCHOLARLY APPARATUS AS YOU COULD HOPE FOR IN A 'HIDDEN HISTORY'

8

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

War over Lemuria

Richard Toronto

Duckworth Overlook 2012

Pb, 256pp, illus, bib, ind, \$45.00, ISBN 9780786473076

Richard Toronto is eminently placed for this account of Richard Shaver, his editor Ray Palmer and the saga of Shaver's controversial stories of an ancient and sinister civilisation inside our hollow Earth. Toronto had known Shaver for several years before, in 1975 (the year he died), he apprenticed Toronto in the art of writing science-fiction. Despite Shaver's stories – they started out as fiction, but he later seemed to believe them – creating one of the most widespread schisms among writers, critics and readers of SF, almost nothing was known of his life.

After Shaver's death, Toronto spent 40 years searching out such details and this is probably the most definitive biography possible. It is divided into four dense chapters: the first is an account of Palmer, his life, and his pioneering work with Hugo Gernsback in shaping the SF and fantasy pulp genres. Then comes Shaver's autobiography and photos, supplemented with material from those who knew him and Palmer. The third chapter details their working relationship and the development of what Palmer called the "new evolution of science fiction", the fantastic stories of the lost continent Lemuria, the subterranean robots and the enigmatic "rock books" that only Shaver could decipher. The concluding chapter follows the later controversies over the 'Shaver mystery'. This is essential reading for forteans and SF fans as it fills in an all-but-forgotten yet formative strand of our genealogy and philosophy.

Ancient Aliens on the Moon

Mike Bara

Adventures Unlimited Press 2012

Pb, 232pp, illus, \$19.95, ISBN 9781935487852

Yet another conspiracy-mongering rehash about NASA being eco-

nomical with the truth regarding US exploration of the Moon.

Refreshingly, this one opposes the belief that NASA hoaxed pictorial and other evidence of the Moon landings and concerns the SF-type idea of alien ruins there; an indication, if true, that someone or something had been there before us.

Bara makes a grand sweeping case but it's all based upon the shaky premise that the 'real' evidence has been 'covered up' and has to be puzzled out. He claims that the Brooking Report told astronauts to keep quiet about any ET evidence they came across. "But what if they found that," he says, and also "evidence that these god-like ET's got their asses kicked by some unimaginable catastrophe?" Scientific, this is not. He touts his next book, *Ancient Aliens on Mars*. We hope he's not going to work his way through the entire Solar System.

The Murder of Cleopatra

Pat Brown

Prometheus Books 2013

Pb, 263pp, illus, \$20.00, ISBN 9781616146504

Pat Brown heads her own criminal profiling agency in the US and opens what she calls "history's greatest cold case" – the suicide by snakebite of Cleopatra. Much of the book presents the material necessary to paint the historical backdrop to the drama of the last days of Egypt's famous female pharaoh and her Roman lovers Julius Cæsar and Mark Anthony. Then modern profiling techniques are applied to the main characters, analysing their politics, conflicts, intrigues, characters and even sexual mores. After the forensic evidence and a hypothesis – very readable and oddly fascinating – Brown gives us a reconstruction, every bit as dramatic as a film script, and a concluding chapter on what happened to their families and friends after the deaths of Anthony and Cleopatra.

Who dunnit? Read it and see.

Telsa

Rosemary Stephenson

Findhorn Press 2013

Pb, 157pp, illus, £9.99, ISBN 9781844096114

This is the story of Stephenson's boxer dog, whom she credits with a variety of healing skills. The author – a Reiki teacher – uncritically discusses healing humans and animals, experiences of elementals and angels, and rein-

carinations. You can take her word for it... Or not. More interesting are her encounters with more "unusual beings" such as the human-sized emerald green ant-like entity she saw at the end of her bed. Startled, but reassured by the presence of the benign Telsa, now "wearing a pale grey uniform", she lies back in bed as the sky opens to a vision of Mount Olympus and "whizzing lightships". Hmmm.

FORTEAN FICTION

The Adjacent

Christopher Priest

Gollancz 2013

Hb, £12.99, 419pp, ISBN 9780575105362



Two books in less than two years is almost unheard of from Christopher Priest. *The Adjacent* tells a number of apparently unrelated episodes in the lives of different people in different places and times, drawing on several of Priest's favourite themes: near-future post-catastrophe worlds, wartime pilots, invisibility, stage magicians, his own Dream Archipelago and, most of all, ambiguous story-telling.

In a near-future where climate change has wreaked havoc in the world and Britain is now an Islamic Republic, photographer Tibor Tarent has returned from Turkey, where his wife was killed by a mysterious weapon that completely annihilates everything within an equilateral triangle. In World War I, stage magician Tommy Trent is sent to the front line to find a way to protect our planes from German attack, and thinks of adjacency – placing two or three things near to each other, creating momentary invisibility through distraction. Halfway through the book we meet a scientist who created a way to use adjacency to neutralise weapons – which inevitably became a devastating weapon itself. In World War II a young Polish pilot tells her tale of Tomasz, the lover she left behind, to an English engineer, Michael Torrance. In an area of an island in the Dream Archipelago called Adjacent, where people seem to appear with no past history, photographer Tomak Tallant journeys through the wasteland with a mysterious woman; elsewhere a young stage magician, Thom the Thaumaturge, prepares for his act (inevitably involving disappearance) in a local theatre.

These men and the women who, often briefly, are important in their lives (whether by loss or lust), overlap in fragments of tales – but a measure of Priest's skill as a writer is that each one is different and holds our attention completely. As his (and our) grasp of reality becomes more confused, Tibor Tarent encounters people he knows are dead, and a lover who now doesn't know him, and the reader encounters the same or similar characters in different or similar scenarios. Death, sex and ambiguity: another triangle.

Priest's novels are rarely easy, but they're always beautifully written and extraordinarily thought-provoking.

David V Barrett

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FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.



The Wicker Man

Dir Robin Hardy, UK 1973
StudioCanal, £29.99 (Blu-ray) £19.99 (DVD)

It's 40 years since the strange, disturbing, erotic, funny and ultimately horrifying film *The Wicker Man* first appeared.

In case there's an FT reader not familiar with the story (spoiler alert), policeman Sgt Howie (Edward Woodward) goes from the Scottish mainland to a small island to investigate a report of a missing child. A deeply believing Christian, he is shocked to discover that the islanders practise Paganism, particularly celebrating the joy and power of sexuality. A teenage youth is brought to the pub for his first sexual experience with Willow, the landlord's daughter (Britt Ekland). Visiting Lord Summerisle (Christopher Lee), Howie objects to seeing naked young women dancing around a bonfire to ensure fertility – and is told, "It's much too dangerous to jump through the fire with your clothes on." There's the famous scene with Willow dancing naked outside Howie's bedroom, and then it's May Day, with all the islanders dressed up for a procession. Howie discovers that last year the island's apple crop failed, and that a sacrifice is necessary to ensure a good harvest this year. Still searching for the missing girl he joins the procession, culminating in the iconic Wicker Man ending.

The *Wicker Man* has a confused history. Under pressure from British Lion the carefully edited 99-minute (or 102-minute) version was hacked down to 84 (or 87) minutes for its 1973 British cinema release, mangling the timescale of the film and making the story disjointed. The American theatre release had much of the cut material restored. In 2002 a longer version, with lower quality footage patched into the theatrical release, was released on DVD in Britain as "the director's cut", alongside the shorter original.

The soundtrack, crucial to the film, had a similarly chequered history. It wasn't until 1998 that an album was released containing the music dubbed from the 1973 film, with extraneous sounds; then the stereo masters were rediscovered and the proper soundtrack was released in 2002 – with the full version of "Willow's Song", which lost a verse in the released film, and the lovely "Gently Johnny" which had been cut altogether.

But the original footage of the film, containing scenes which weren't even in the director's cut, vanished long ago, allegedly becoming landfill under or near the M3 (or M4) motorway (as in all good mythologies, details vary).

In the commentary to the 2002 version Christopher Lee spoke forcefully of "one of the best British pictures ever made" having been "butchered". "I think it's an

absolute disgrace, and a shame on the British film industry, a major company like British Lion, that a film should disappear 30 years ago, nearly, and never be seen again. How does a film disappear unless it's deliberate?" But he believed that this footage, the original negative and out-takes, would turn up some day. Has it, at last, just in time for the 40th anniversary of the film?

The Wicker Man – The Final Cut is claimed to be the finest and most complete version of the film – the "first ever full restoration". It appears in British cinemas from 27 September, and is released on Blu-Ray and DVD in a three- or four-disc set containing three different versions of the film, an impressive bunch of extras and the wonderful soundtrack CD.

So how is it different? For a start, it's 94 minutes, five minutes shorter than the 2002 director's cut. The supposedly lost footage that Lee fulminated about, if it ever existed, is still lost. But director Robin Hardy says dismissively: "If you count the length of the rough cut of the film, it might be possible that it was 117 minutes. There were scenes which we cut, which are not lost – but cut. These were agreed between the editor, the producer and myself."

"The Final Cut" is basically a cleaned-up version of the 1979 American theatrical release of the film, discovered in the Harvard

Film Archive; the quality of the extra scenes is higher than on the 2002 DVD. It restores the correct time sequence (Howie spends two nights on the island, not one) and several crucial scenes on the island, as well as Howie receiving Communion in his mainland church, emphasising his deep faith and establishing the concept of sacrifice right at the beginning. None of these are in the original British theatrical release. It includes one or two short scenes not in the 2002 version, but it drops the early scenes of Howie at the police station, which Hardy now says "we really didn't need". And completists will be sad to learn that the missing scene where Lord Summerisle explains the propagation of apples to Howie is still missing; Lee liked it; Hardy didn't.

Forty years on, *The Wicker Man* is as powerful as ever, and well worth seeing on the big screen if you can. If you already own the 2002 DVD, you'll have to decide whether it's worth upgrading to the new DVD or Blu-ray; if you're a huge fan, it's probably worth the investment. If you don't have it, rush out now and buy this outstanding British classic. **David V Barrett**

Fortean Times Verdict

A BRITISH CLASSIC IN A NEAR-DEFINITIVE VERSION

9

You're Next

Dir Adam Wingard, USA 2011
On general release

You're Next has proved popular on the horror festival circuit since its 2011 premiere, and reaches these shores with a limited release.

On the eve of their 35th wedding anniversary, wealthy couple Paul and Aubrey Davison invite to their very large and secluded country home their numerous offspring and assorted partners to celebrate the event. Seen initially from the perspective of the younger son, struggling writer Crispian, and his Aussie college student girlfriend Erin, this home invasion frightfest begins with a nasty post-coital *Liebestod* for the nearest neighbour (who lives about two acres away by the look of things) and his lover.

The sibling rivalry between Crispian and his indie film-maker brother Drake, accompanied by his Goth lover Kelly, soon becomes apparent. Director Adam Wingard

does a deft job of winding up the tension indoors, when we already know there's a vicious threat lurking in the night outside. With such a large number of dinner guests gathered and a lean 94 minutes running time, it isn't long before the invasion begins and the blood and gore get served up. Whoever is doing the killing is one (just one?) nasty mother: crossbow bolts through the head, axes cleaving flesh, they're right animals, which is fitting, given the assortment of animal masks that are worn in a nod to Friday 13th (Part III onwards for pedants) and Scream.

You're Next is a witty slasher that moves at a real lick; its shocks are more "Eeew!" than "Aaargh!" and it's easy to see why it has proved so popular on the festival circuit, given the dearth of half-decent slasher films out there. Told in flashback, which you soon forget, the energy and grit of the film is carried by Sharnie Vinson's performance as Erin. Think Ellen Ripley in the kitchen with invading psychos on the rampage. The actual details of who or what is doing the killing is skilfully held back for long enough by Wingard, which adds to the nervy experience of the audience. You are right in there rooting for Erin who, it turns out, is the daughter of an Australian survivalist – something she'd kept from geeky boyfriend Crispian.

The film trips over its own plot twist by the end. What writer Simon Barrett gives us is essentially Agatha Christie with a butt-kicking Miss Marple in attendance, when what I wanted, and up to that point got, was a home invasion slasher that resonated with motiveless nihilism: they came, they killed, they gone. My expectations weren't thwarted so much as frustrated.

But this is a slasher film filled with intentional dark humour and its contrivances can be put aside as long as you go to the cinema with no expectation other than to be entertained by some horrid murders committed by men in animal masks. Perfectly reasonable weekend R&R for hardworking cinema-goers, I'd say.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict

AN INVENTIVE SLASHER WITH WITH AND GORE GALORE

7

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com)

HALLOWEEN

Dir John Carpenter, US 1978
Anchor Bay, £15.99 (Steelbook)

CREEPSHOW

Dir George Romero, US 1982
Second Sight, £15.99 (Blu-ray)

Halloween wasn't the first slasher movie ever made, but it's undoubtedly the film that defines the genre. Killer POV's; a Final Girl; a seemingly indestructible villain; screaming teens; sequel-teasing last shots; a seasonal setting; freaky masks – it's got the lot. The very fact that John Carpenter's formula was so often repeated is testament to the film's power. As if you need telling, it opens with a six-year-old Michael Myers murdering his sister on Halloween night. Fifteen years later, he breaks out of the asylum and heads back home to carry on the rampage.

The second half of the movie, set at night, holds the majority of the iconic scare shots, but watching it again it was the first half that struck me. Those creepy Panaglide shots of leafy Seventies suburbia, the slowly sinking Sun, the functional scenes of conversation when you spot Michael Myers car waiting in the background amongst all the others (his

mask just that bit more visible in HD). In these sunny moments, and those chilling final shots, Myers reminds me of that other more traditional villain, Dracula. This isn't just a killer: it's evil personified, an almost omnipresent threat: the Shape.

A thoroughly modern killer like Myers would end up stealing the zeitgeist from the classic horror movie studios like Hammer. Ironic, then, that Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee were both offered the part of psychiatrist Sam Loomis, but turned it down (Lee's biggest career regret, apparently). Donald Pleasance took the part and brings a loony-eyed sense of fun to the role.

I've lost count of how many times Anchor Bay have released this, but the new transfer (approved by director of photography Dean Cundey) is the best we've seen. Extras-wise, the disc is a little light, but there's a new commentary by Carpenter and Jamie Lee Curtis (in which the director often, and amusingly, both praises and mocks his star).

Also looking lovely on Blu Ray is *Creepshow*, in which George Romero and Stephen King riff on their boyhood love of EC comics. It's this juvenile delight in 'scary stuff' that makes the film such



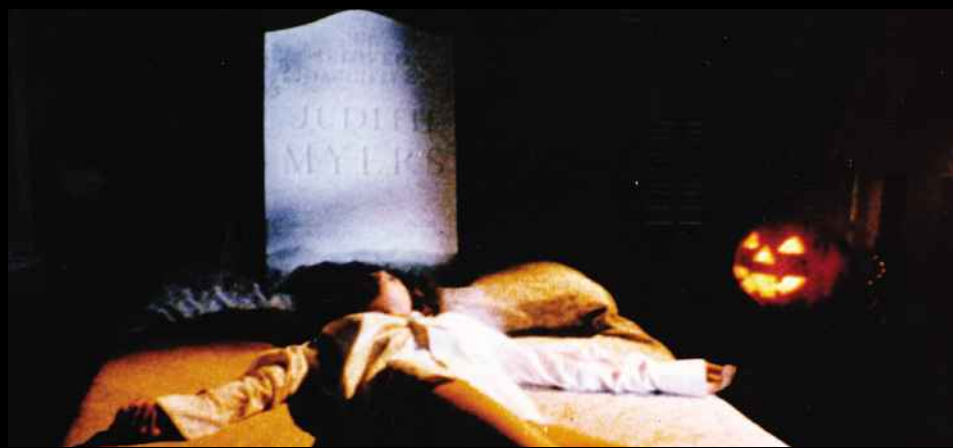
a treat. The garish lighting, the gross-out cockroach scenes, the exceptional squelching synth score by John Harrison: it's all deliciously macabre. My favourite segment? 'The Crate', in which a cryptid from the Arctic inadvertently helps a guy with marital problems. It's a funny, graphic and scary tale with a wonderful creature designed by Tom Savini.

In the wake of *Halloween*, an awful lot of horror became centred on teenagers being hacked to pieces, but here it's the grown-ups who are getting chomped, beheaded, drowned and invaded by bugs. Now I'm pushing 40, I find there's something reassuringly balanced about that.

Fortean Times Verdict

A SEMINAL SLASHER AND A MONSTER-KID'S TREAT

9/8



Frankenstein's Army

Dir Richard Raaphorst, Netherlands/Czech Republic 2013
Entertainment One, £12.99 (DVD)

I'm not sure who first came up with the winning idea of combining Nazis and zombies into one irresistible package (was it gallic sleaze-meister Jean Rollin in *Zombie Lake?*) but it didn't gain much cinematic traction until fairly recently with the Norwegian *Dead Snow*, the Finnish *Army of the Dead* and the British *Outpost* series (a third outing is in the works, apparently, as is another Brit Nazi zombie epic *The 4th Reich* starring Sean Bean and Tom Savini no less).

Meanwhile, we have the Dutch-Czech effort *Frankenstein's Army* to remind us that all of these films have been, to a greater or lesser degree, crap. What worked brilliantly in video games like the *Wolfenstein* series – the genre-crunching thrill of badass Nazis mucking about with the occult and spawning monsters in their secret labs – has been disappointingly flat-footed on film (and until we see the Hitler-in-a-robot-suit from *Wolfy 3D*, it'll stay that way).

Frankenstein's Army, directed by Richard Raaphorst and shot in some atmospheric abandoned mine buildings in the Czech Republic, is far closer to its gaming ancestors than to the recent crop of movies. Its minimal plot has a Red Army recon unit cut off from the main force and stumbling across evidence of atrocities in a German village. They soon discover that no ordinary enemy soldiers are responsible, and that Baron Frankenstein's swivel-eyed grandson has been lashing together dead Nazis with bits of abandoned military kit to create a series of terrifying super-soldiers. Except they're not especially terrifying or super; in the context of a video game, they might have made suitably chilling baddies, but here, what we might call 'Propellor-head', 'Mosquitomensch' and 'Leutnant-Lobster-claws' are visually arresting Steam-punk-cum-Heath-Robinson creations that are not in the least bit scary as they shamble and bumble about. In a film that's so obviously been built from the ground up around its monster designs, this isn't forgivable; and neither is the

logic-and-history-defying found footage conceit so glibly employed.
David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

VISUALLY INVENTIVE BUT PATHETICALLY UNCONVINCING **4**

Pieta

Dir Kim Ki-duk, South Korea, 2012
Optimum Home Entertainment, £14.99 (DVD)

While the traditional image of the Pietà – depicting the grieving Virgin Mary cradling the crucified Jesus – never appears in this haunting Korean drama, it's a motif that underpins the film's many weighty themes. Power and powerlessness, decay and progress, violence and despair, redemption and retribution – all underpinned by a large dose of complex mother-son relationships – make up this latest offering from Korean writer-director Kim Ki-duk.

Kang-do is a blank, amoral young debt-collector whose solitary, almost silent existence is thrown into turmoil when a tearful woman turns up unexpectedly, claiming to be the mother who abandoned him at birth. Kang-do's lifelong accumulation of simmering anger and pain is slowly transformed by the simple acts of motherly love expressed by this mysterious woman. Indeed, it seems that a birthday cake, a knitted jumper and grilling the pet eel can melt the heart of even the most hardened of criminals. Oedipal imagery abounds: at one point Kang-do cuts a lump of flesh out from his own thigh and gives it to the woman to eat, and many such moments in *Pietà* are not for the squeamish. But the lasting impression is of an intensely powerful film, beautiful in its bleakness.

Pietà has received numerous awards, including the Golden Lion at Venice and top prizes at Cannes and Berlin. Korean star Jo Min-su has been getting her fair share of the plaudits. It is the actions of her character that steer the film, and Kang-do's life, from its deeply unpleasant beginning, through some intriguing twists and turns, rises a climax that lingers in the mind after the credits have rolled.

Robert Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict

POWERFUL, BRUTAL AND BEAUTIFULLY BLEAK **8**

SHORTS

THE PARANORMAL DIARIES: CLOPHILL

Second Sight, £14.99 (DVD)



A couple of years ago, my family and I actually visited a few houses in the Bedfordshire village of Clophill in the hope of moving there. Maybe it's just as well we didn't, as it turns out to be a hotbed of grave desecration, Satanic ritual and paranormal shenanigans. At least that's what the makers of *The Paranormal Diaries* want you to believe in this interesting documentary/found-footage mash-up. It's the very definition of the slow burn: nothing much happens, for a long time. And when it does, it's still nothing much. But while this subtle approach might turn off a good many viewers (my mind did wander at times, I confess) the film's sometimes effective blend of fact and fiction might just get under a few people's skins.

Rev Peter Laws 5/10

DRESSED TO KILL / BLOW OUT

Arrow Video, £14.99 each (Blu-ray)



Brian De Palma is either the world's most accomplished Hitchcock rip-off or a director who simply happens to use the same visual language as the master of suspense. I'm happy with the latter reading, so this pair of Blu-ray releases from Arrow is a treat. De Palma's soft-focus erotic thriller *Dressed to Kill* (1980) is like a sillier version of *Psycho*, but possesses wonderful visual flair. The museum scene and the moments in the apartment that follow are a masterclass of film score and image, though the final shot so blatantly photocopies De Palma's own *Carrie* it's a wonder he didn't sue himself. *Blow Out* (1981) stars John Travolta in his best role as a sound engineer who uncovers a political assassination. It rattles along with a cool, conspiratorial edge and story wise it stands more on its own legs than *Dressed to Kill*, but both films are perfect examples of what a director can achieve when he completely understands what the camera can do. Recommended.

Rev PL 8/10 & 9/10

DEATH GAME

MVM, £12.99 (DVD)



Jobs can be hard to find these days in Japan and the competition is tough, but nowhere is it tougher than in the world of *Death Game*. As this comes from Hideo Nakata, the director of *Battle Royale* and *The Ring*, *Death Game* unfolds pretty much as might be expected.

Ten candidates (a mix of the usual social stereotypes) are up for the same job, but there are more hurdles to pass than a simple interview or two... Locked in an underground bunker, the candidates have to survive a series of challenges: whoever is left standing at the end of seven days gets the job. It's that simple! A robot guard supervises them, there's a unique weapon in each candidate's room, and rewards are gained by either committing or solving crimes, such as murder. The set-up is better than the resolution (often the case with 'high concept' ideas like this), and the repeated 'shocks' get a bit wearying after a while. This is enjoyable enough (if you're easily pleased), but a little unevenly paced (there's far too much wandering about corridors). *Death Game*, well made though it is, is certainly not as innovative as *Battle Royale* or as shocking as its maker obviously thinks it is. Still, let's hope that this doesn't give our own Department of Work and Pensions any bright ideas.

Brian J Robb 6/10

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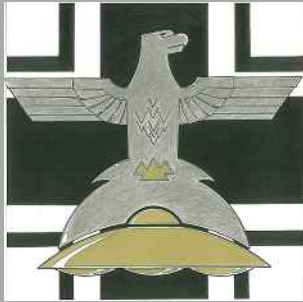
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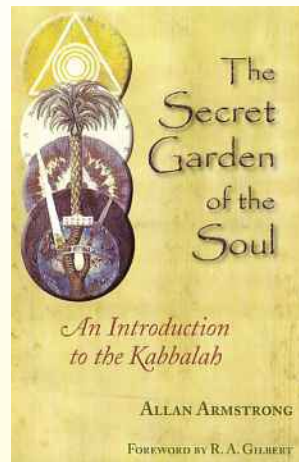


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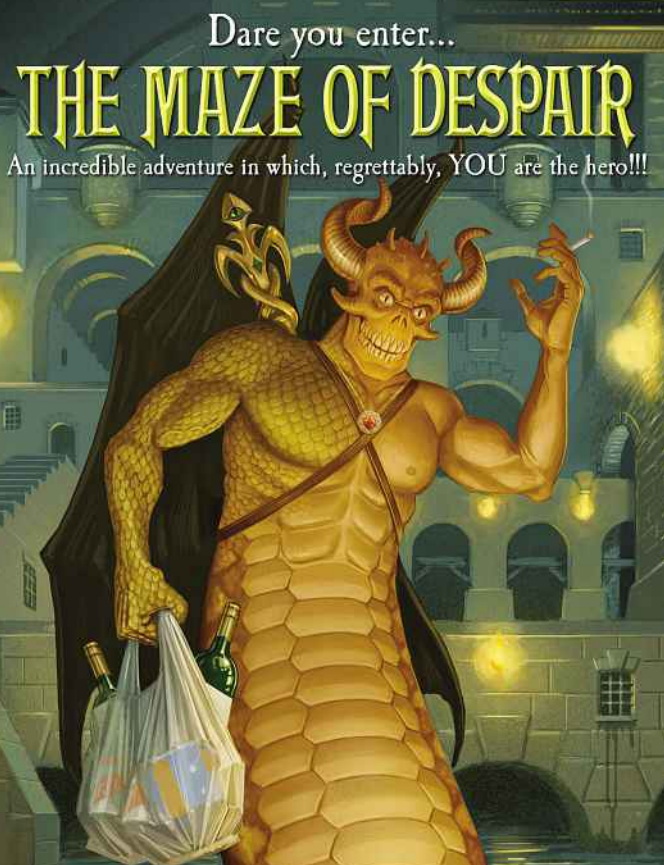
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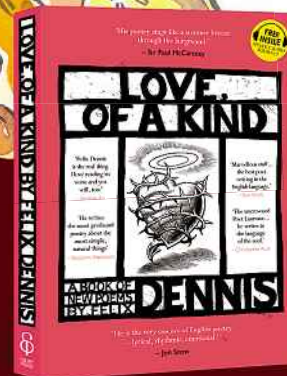
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PRESS

Dear FT...

letters



Animal trials

I was interested to see the article on animal trials [FT304:30-34] giving a reference to a book from 1906. There has been a good deal more recent scholarship in this area, including a lengthy chapter in my 2007 book *The Cat Orchestra (The Feejee Mermaid in the US)*, which quotes two full-length books and 11 scholarly articles on this subject.

Regarding the brief review of my recent book *Those Amazing Newfoundland Dogs* [FT304:63]: I would like to point out that although the reproduction of images in early copies of this print-on-demand publication were of an inferior quality, I have made sure that all later copies are fully acceptable in this respect.

As reported in FT300:4, Laura Anderson Barbata has made sure that Julia Pastrana's remains have been buried in Mexico. She is not resting on her laurels after her recent much-publicised mummy-burying antics, however, but is planning a commemorative volume on the Victorian hairy and bearded phenomenon, which will hopefully find a publisher.

Jan Bondeson

By email, 20 July 2013

Astral cyborgs?

Theo Paijmans's sea monster biplane [FT305:31] reminded me of two other animate machine chimeras: in Falls City, Nebraska, in 1956, a witness claimed to have seen a flying creature with wings like polished aluminium and a "very frightening, almost demonic" face; and in 1961 in West Virginia, two motorists were dwarfed by a figure that "almost looked like a small airplane" (Janet and Colin Bord, *Modern Mysteries of the World*, 1989, p.151ff.) Astral cyborgs, maybe?

Daniel Wilson's piece on auditory hallucinations of the probable schizophrenic Arthur Mills [FT305:32-39] had my EVP [Electronic Voice Phenomenon] antennæ twitching. Mills's claims about his enemies are paralleled

Simulacra corner



Tania Hill noticed this tree stump in the garden of the Sheraton Hotel Toronto, Canada, in February 2010. It reminded her of the molten T1000 Terminator in

Terminator 2, after taking a shot to the face.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and

figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com.

by Friedrich Jürgenson's belief that his contact 'Lena', by means of what he called 'Radar', could read his thoughts and even anticipate them (Anabela Cardoso, *Electronic Voices*, 2010, p.123: Dr Cardoso herself claims to have experienced the same effect). Moreover, Mills's voice "You're radioed, my dear, to every country in the world" (p.39) echoes two samples from the *Ghost Orchid* CD: "We can see Edith by radio" (#51) and "I'm joined to many countries" (#27).

Richard George

St Albans, Hertfordshire

Knotty conundrum

My friend Professor Mike Hennell, Technical Director of LDRA (www.ldra.com), recently told me a curious story about a colleague's

experience at sea. His colleague was researching cosmic rays, and used a scintillation counter to measure them. Scintillation counters exploit the atomic or molecular excitation produced by a charged particle as it passes through matter.

In order to eliminate the 'noise' of low-level energy radiation and be able to focus on high-energy radiation of cosmic origin, his colleague would take measurements deep underground, in mines and suchlike.

His colleague then decided to take further measurements by lowering the scintillation counter into deep ocean. The research ship duly sailed to the Atlantic Trench, where it attached the scintillation counter – Mike understands that this was a fair size and weight – to a cable and lowered it several

miles into the Trench.

When the scintillation counter was subsequently raised using the ship's pulleys, it was found that a knot had somehow been tied in the cable, some considerable distance from the counter. None of the scientists or crew could explain how this could have happened. The only thing that Mike and his colleague could jokingly come up with was that King Neptune himself had somehow tied the knot.

Has a similar phenomenon been witnessed by anyone else? Maybe the explanation has something in common with how computer leads and Christmas tree lights always come out tied in knots no matter how carefully you have put them away.

Rob Gandy

By email

'Habitual Secrecy'

This is a response to Geoff Clifton's comments on MoD secrecy concerning missing UFO files [FT305:72]. Despite his reluctance to accept that files, "particularly significant ones", could go missing or end up in the incinerator, sadly the facts do not support this view. Files that might be 'significant' to ufologists were regarded by desk officers as being of 'transitory interest' and were routinely destroyed as recently as 1990. There is nothing inherently sinister about this as today 90 per cent of all government files are routinely marked for destruction at first review. Mr Clifton's confidence that MoD would conceal records containing "significant or disturbing evidence" of alien visitations is based upon belief, not hard facts. Objective examination of files that have survived – including formerly Top Secret ones such as the report by the Flying Saucer Working Party used to brief Winston Churchill in 1952 – show that MoD never had any such evidence.

Neither does the lost 'gun camera' footage, seen by Ralph Noyes at MoD Main Building, prove that MoD is hiding secret data on UFOs. Noyes was always very clear that the films he saw in 1970 did not show 'structured craft' and he said: "The material was, on the whole, unimpressive: fuzzy greyish blobs in the daylight shots; small glowing globular objects in the night films." (DEFE 24/1966/1). He left the screening with the impression that he had seen 'unusual meteorological phenomena' rather than alien craft. The word 'unimpressive' might explain why the footage did not survive.

Noyes wrote to MoD in 1986 asking what had become of the footage, but no trace could be found of it. Nick Pope looked again in 1994 and drew a blank. Not being a conspiracy theorist, Noyes concluded the films had been "simply scrapped, or pinched for someone's private collection of curios, or conceivably passed to the Meteorological Office". The Met Office, in turn, destroyed all its UFO records as recently as 2006, having decided

they contained nothing of historical value. It is always possible, of course, that some of the 'missing' files and footage might turn up in someone's desk drawer, or other unlikely place. But as much as I would like to believe these files have survived, the cumulative evidence suggests otherwise. It is impossible to disprove the existence of 'secret files' squirreled away outside the formal record system, but the onus is upon those making these claims to prove their case.

David Clarke
Sheffield, Yorkshire

I can offer independent support to David Clarke regarding the gun camera footage.

I first met Ralph Noyes, an ex-MoD under-secretary, in 1983, when investigating the now infamous Rendlesham Forest case. In 1984 and 1985 we jointly wrote letters to politicians such as David Alton (now Baron Alton of Liverpool), Michael Heseltine and defence minister Lord Trefgarne. His willingness to do this in direct conjunction with a UFO researcher demonstrates that he was no government stooge despite his decades working in the Air Ministry, at one point heading the division that included the so-called 'UFO desk' and reaching a civil service rank equivalent of Air Commodore.

Noyes was genuinely interested in UFOs and thought that some unknown natural phenomenon lay behind a small percentage of the cases; he only saw hints that this possessed 'attributes' of intelligence in the way that a poltergeist might be said to do.

He also felt that the MoD were sometimes circumspect over how they dealt with the problem when communicating with the public. "The MoD are much happier investigating these matters quietly," he told me. "They will never lie, so they don't say that UFOs don't exist. Instead they don't go out of their way to say that they do, and emphasise – correctly in my view – that they have no evidence that aliens are coming here".

He never hid the fact that gun camera footage taken from RAF

aircraft existed in the Ministry archives. In an interview for a BBC documentary that I conducted in 1996, he told me that he was shown the film in a briefing session on taking over the running of the relevant department. This was in the mid-1950s when radar was still in its infancy and prone to causing aircraft to intercept what often turned out to be anomalous propagation effects.

That footage remained in the archives from 1956 (the date he specifically recalled being given for the best daylight case) to 1970. Of that 1956 footage he recalled: "A rather fuzzy grey spherical object... Nothing like a flying saucer in popular imagination. Not a fully structured craft, but a fuzzy object behaving with the appearance of intent and certainly moving at great speed and using the kind of acceleration of which no ordinary vehicle should be capable."

Given his opinions about the nature of the phenomenon, David Clarke's suggestion that the footage was passed from the MoD to meteorologists at some later date does seem reasonable.

As to the subject of the 1956 footage, Noyes was sure that it was not the celebrated 14/15 August 1956 Lakenheath/Bentwaters case – though he well recalled how after that incident, "the Ministry buzzed with this story for weeks. Enquiries were held. Nobody was found to be to blame... No explanation had been found. Something had gone on and we did not know what. We had to assume retrospectively that it was a defence threat."

However, there is another candidate. In December 1991 a reader of one of my books wrote to tell me of his own sighting whilst piloting an RAF jet. He later dated this to 30 August 1956, just two weeks after Lakenheath. Moreover, his was a daylight encounter and he had gun cameras on his jet – so, knowing nothing of what Noyes had told us about footage from 1956, he was now revealing a new potential source for the film.

I told Noyes of this and we searched the MoD archives at Kew looking for evidence. Meanwhile, Paul Fuller interviewed

the RAF pilot, Flight Lieutenant Wright, who was by then retired. Wright had flown with the RAF since before the war and in 1944 – at RAF Holme on Spalding Moor in Yorkshire – had seen a UFO whilst walking on the base perimeter late on a summer's night. It was a circle of multi-coloured lights almost at ground level and rolling and rotating as it moved towards him. From the way a ring of stars surrounding it were obscured he thought there was a dark, unseen disc behind the lights. A sound like the rushing of wind accompanied it as it crossed the field and headed away.

Did this event colour the judgment of Wright when he was airborne in his RAF Javelin 12 years later? Wright reports being sent aloft from RAF Odiham on a practice (FI) intercept mission with a second Javelin alongside. They were flying at around 45,000ft (13,700m) – the Javelin's cruise height – above the Isle of Wight in clear weather that offered unlimited visibility.

He reports: "We were flying west in line astern before separating for interception. The other Javelin was the target aircraft... We were using airborne radar with a range of over 20 miles [32km] and a height indication. I was flying (Javelin registered XA 627) north-west before turning south-west for interception, when I saw a disc-shaped object off my starboard wingtip. It was ahead of me."

Wright's navigator (Flying Officer Wallington) had it on radar at 19 miles (31km) and Wright used his fingertip held against the windscreens to estimate the size of the UFO as 600ft (183m). They contacted the second Javelin and asked permission to abandon the FI exercise and head off in pursuit of the target. This was granted. Although they only learned this later, RAF radar at Sopley had apparently already picked up the target on its way across the Channel.

Wright turned north heading towards the UFO but it had slowed right down. The second Javelin was now only half a mile behind and both pilots had simultaneous visual and their navigators' simultaneous radar contact.

As Wright added: "We both banked steeply and confirmed that the object was at 15 miles [24km] dead ahead on radar. It appeared slightly larger in visual size." The two jets closed at full power – 600

knots – and at 10 miles’ distance “the object was now clearly seen as metallic grey in appearance... At 8 miles [13km] the object suddenly climbed vertically too fast for our radar to track, but I estimated its rate of climb at five miles [8km] per second. Soon after it vanished.”

On the ground the four crewmen were advised not to ask further questions or talk even to their colleagues about the matter. However, they were asked to write statements for the Air Ministry.

I made quite a search for evidence to back up this case, studying the PRO archives of the unit at Odiham, which contains a lot of supporting data with photographs of the aircraft and of Wright himself – proving he was there at the time. There were details of his medals and of various incidents involving the unit, but nothing about the sighting. There is a passing reference in an MoD file about radar track cases from 1956/7 that evaded public attention and this implies a previously unknown UFO radar incident did occur around the time of Bentwaters/Lakenheath.

Wright himself supplied a copy of his flight log for the day – which reveals his missions and shows the identity of the Javelin and his navigator. By the side of his flight that day is the word ‘UFO!’ That term would be a fairly new appellation in 1956, so this appears to me likely to have been added later, though Wright could not recall if so or when.

He also says that both Javelins had gun cameras fitted, but is not sure what happened to any footage. I have not been able to establish that this was the case from the Javelin specs, but it seems more than reasonable given the role of these new planes at the time and – given how Noyes independently described what he saw – certainly leaves open the possibility that this case is the very one from 1956 that he recalls being shown on film in 1970.

However, there is another twist, as a further sighting has now surfaced from the MoD file releases. This also involves an incident at RAF Odiham, though with sufficient difference to appear no obvious conflation. It was dated 29 April 1957, when two Hunters from Odiham were engaged in

an FI exercise at a similar height (45,000ft/13,700m) over Hayling Island when one pilot saw an object ahead at around 11.10am. This was slow-moving and at first taken to be a parachute, but then thought unidentified. Nine hours later a Javelin was sent from a routine flight near Odiham to investigate a radar tracking over the same area, but the pilot saw nothing and returned to base.

While I can accept possible confusion if Wright attached his UFO sighting to the wrong log event years later, there are sufficient differences between these two sightings to suspect they are not the same case. Either way this may be the closest we get to discovering what was on any of the missing gun camera film encounters.

Jenny Randles

By email, 19 Aug 2013

Lichfield poltergeist

It looks as though my hometown of Lichfield, Staffordshire, has a poltergeist. It’s an old town with Tudor buildings and a mediæval cathedral and has the sort of ghosts you would expect, such as an old friar haunting the site of the old Friary (now mostly a library) and ghostly Civil War soldiers marching up and down one of the lanes. Now, however, objects seem to be flying around the place in several local shops. Books apparently fly off shelves and stock left locked up over the weekend in a couple of the charity shops rearranges itself. At the Tudor café, a heavy brass pot took off and flew through the air. Strangely, nobody seems bothered. I’ve always thought that poltergeists confined themselves to one building at a time, but this beastie seems to have an unusually long reach.

Lichfield is quite genteel now, but there have been enough dramatic historical events to trigger (or be used to account for) ghostly phenomena, including a couple of nasty sieges in the Civil War. When soldiers from Whittington Barracks were billeted here in the 18th century, it was all pubs, priests and prostitutes. There are all sorts of nasty rumours about dark happenings over the years in the cellars under the shops.

Alan Hinton

Lichfield, Staffordshire



Invisible sign

These two photographs are from a set of 10 taken on a gloomy day. They were taken a matter of seconds apart, and all the other photos show the complete road sign. The angle of the pole where the top part of the sign joins is still the same on the mystery photo, suggesting a very precise cropping of the blue plate. It didn’t just fall off, as it is still present in subsequent photos. I first noticed the oddity a few minutes after taking the photos when I was reviewing them from the camera. I have considered possible explanations, such as extreme reflection or an unwanted and unknown function that automatically masks certain colours – but common sense and a little technical knowledge appear to rule these out. Does anyone have a possible explanation? This reminded me of the photographs of Vic Burnside, one minus his head, which I saw in *The Rough Guide to Unexplained Phenomena* (Rickard & Michell, 2007, p244) [originally at FT78:12].

Dan Worthington, Sheppey, Kent



No, not that one

Kevin Whitesides sent us this picture of Charles Fort (*Dún Chathail* in Irish) in County Cork, Ireland. It was built in the 1670s and 1680s, and named after the English King Charles II.

Cruise delusions

I very much enjoyed the article on *Crook Frightfulness*, the bizarre book by Arthur Mills [FT305:32-39]. I was struck by the similarity of the author's experience to the auditory persecutions suffered by Evelyn Waugh during his psychotic episode of 1953-4 when he went, in his own words, "off my rocker". Waugh was tormented by the voices of a cast of characters who were stalking him, insulting him and spreading malicious gossip about him. He suspected they were somehow connected with a BBC radio interview he had recently given whose questions he had found impertinent, and that they were using some secret technology along the lines of a radionics 'black box', an obsession of one of his neighbours.

Like Arthur Mills, he booked a passage on a cruise liner in an attempt to shake them off, but he continued to hear the voices via the tannoy system and became convinced that his stalkers had followed him onto the ship. He suspected that the ship's captain and radio operator were also in on the plot, and that a dead body was being concealed aboard. Only when the ship reached Ceylon (Sri Lanka) did the persecution even-

tually abate, perhaps because he had reduced the large doses of the sedative chloral hydrate on which he had become dependent.

Waugh turned his experiences into a wonderful comic novel, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957). The Penguin Modern Classics edition includes an appendix with documentary material relating to the real-life episode.

Mike Jay
By email

Spinning statue

The spinning statue story [FT304:5] amazingly closely resembles the plot of a Jeff Hawke comic strip – a story called 'Immortal Toys' first published in the *Daily Express* in 1961-2. It makes me wonder if it's happened before.

Mat Coward
Frome, Somerset

Green Clouds

I was interested to read David Hambling's piece on green clouds [FT304:14]. When Newcastle was hit by a supercell storm (a kind that often generates tornadoes in the US), I was first alerted to this being no ordinary storm when I looked out the office window and realised the sky had gone a

vivid bilious green and was full of roiling grey-green clouds a similar colour to a broad bean skin. A few minutes later, we were deluged with rain so intense it was impossible to see out the window. I hadn't realised this was quite so mysterious!

Ian Simmons
Monkseaton, Tyne & Wear

Royal retribution

Barry Baldwin says that Mrs Thatcher must have envied Elizabeth I's "power to decapitate such real or imagined enemies as Essex and Walter Raleigh" [Classical Corner FT302:27]. This seems to suggest that Gloriana actually had Raleigh done in – probably an unintentional ambiguity, given the author's erudition. Raleigh met his end in 1618, some 15 years after the Queen's death, at the hands of James I.

Andrew Munro
Conna, Co Cork, Ireland

The article "The Law is an Ass" relates that "King James I" had the pickled body of the Earl of Gowrie brought before a Scottish court [FT304:30]. As this happened in 1600, the king should have been styled James VI. It was only after the union of the crowns in 1603 that he became James I of England and VI of Scotland. If logic prevailed, the present monarch should be styled Elizabeth II of England and I of Scotland.

Ann Cowan
By email

The Spread of Vril

Theo Paijmans's article on Vril [FT303:42] omits perhaps its most lasting legacy. When added to the Latin word for cow, *Bos*, it became the name of a brand of salty meat extract that is still around today: Bovril.

Martin Stubbs
London

Dad Was A Dolphin

While reading Brad and Sherry Steiger's *Real Aliens, Space Beings and Creatures from Other Worlds*, I came across an account of the

Bufeo Colorado – a legendary river elemental that inhabits the Amazon in Peru. According to local legend, the Bufeo Colorado falls in love with a girl, then adopts the appearance of a handsome man who woos her with lavish attention and presents. Before long, the girl is drawn to the bank of the river and throws herself into the water to be with the Bufeo Colorado – forever.

In 1966 the now-defunct Marineland of Florida made an expedition to Iquitos, Peru, to collect Amazon freshwater dolphins (*Inia geoffrensis*). In its native waters this dolphin is known locally as Bufeo blanco or Bufeo rojos, depending on size and colour. Adults are often entirely white or pink. After six weeks on the Amazon, the collectors returned to Marineland with several dolphins for research and exhibition. But it was the native superstition surrounding this species that compelled Marineland's curator, Dr David Caldwell, to mention it in his 1969 *Sea Frontiers* article, 'The Ugly Dolphin'.

Unexplained pregnancies among young unmarried women living alongside the river in Peru are attributed to this dolphin, which is said to adopt a human appearance and come ashore to make love with the native girl. <http://math.ucr.edu/home/baez/puzzles/24.html> Also, the pink Amazon dolphin is the only known species of dolphin to bring 'gifts' to its mate. Male dolphins have been observed bringing tree and palm-frond branches to female dolphins in a courting ritual <http://www.eversostrange.com/2011/02/08/amazon-river-dolphins-give-bouquets/>
Greg May
Orlando, Florida



"Yes I'm fine thanks... I've just spent a couple of weeks on an elf farm."

TONY HUSBAND

First-hand accounts of goings-on from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteanimes.com

Alive with spiders

The report about 'raining spiders' [FT302:11] reminded me of an experience I had some years ago. Every summer I pass through Hamburg twice, going on holiday and coming back. I usually dine at the Alster-arkaden, an open-air arcade by the Alsterfleet river. At the start of my holidays one year, the railings along the river were absolutely covered in spider silk – obviously a bumper year for young spiders. This isn't a particularly uncommon phenomenon and I didn't give it much thought.

Coming back two or three weeks later, I went back to the arcade to dine again. It's a fairly grand place with linen tablecloths, silver cutlery and roses on the tables, and the waitress had just served my first glass of beer when something landed on my shoulder with a 'plop'. This was a largish spider. Very strange, I thought, since spiders seldom land on you that way; but I brushed it off and thought no more of it... until another one landed on my table a minute later. Gazing upwards, I saw a scene out of a horror film. The ceiling of the arcade was *alive* with spiders – the young ones from my last visit having grown up. There were literally millions, if not billions, and every few seconds one of them would lose its footing and fall down.

Now, this still doesn't count as a fortean phenomenon with me; nature is infinitely bountiful etc. The interesting thing, though, was that no one – waitresses or diners – was taking any notice. You'd think it rained spiders every day in Germany. Another mystery is why nobody had taken the trouble to sweep them away. Granted, the ceiling is very high, maybe 16-20ft (5-6m), but a broom at the end of a long rod would have done the trick. No matter how stoic the Germans may be in the face of spider attacks, it couldn't possibly be good for business.

Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

Mystery Island

In the summer of 1997 I took a holiday in Northern Ireland and flew from Cardiff to Belfast. The plane initially headed north along the Wales-England border before heading out west over Anglesey and across the sea, leaving the mainland behind. After a while, the Isle of Man loomed into



sight and we crossed over it on the southern edge. However, after another five to 10 minutes, with the Isle of Man left well behind, I caught sight of another island due south and very approximately a fifth the size of the Isle of Man (possibly smaller, but definitely a significant chunk of land). I was unaware of another substantial island existing in the middle of the Irish Sea, so I was very curious as to its name, and who 'owned' it.

However, I have consulted several maps since that trip but never found any other islands plotted in this area, large or small. I should mention that my girlfriend also saw it, so this was not a personal illusion, delusion, or spiritual experience. Incidentally, I believe it was too far out to be a remnant of the 'Welsh Atlantis'.

I don't recall seeing any obvious buildings or settlements, but it didn't appear to be a temporary storm island, as it had greenery all over it and gave the impression of consisting of structured, agricultural field systems. Also, it was not a peninsula as I could see clear sea all around it, and no other land in sight. In fact it was another 20-30 minutes before the Irish mainland came into view. So what did I see?

Is it possible this island is a genuine, permanent, physical presence in the Irish Sea, but is omitted from conventional maps because it is some sort of undesignated political anomaly (i.e. not recognised as part

of the UK or British Isles)? Or did I experience a truly fortean phenomenon?

Alec Barney Page
Chellaston, Derby

Measure for Measure

In 1980 my wife and I were waiting for the birth of our first child. One night I had a vivid dream that I was standing in a corner of a large interior space being used as an art gallery. It was very bright with a richly coloured wooden floor, a white wall behind me and to the side an entire wall of glass. I was looking through this window admiring a lake that came right up to the glass at the exact level of the floor. It was an architectural masterpiece. As I was admiring this my boss from work approached me, full of smiles and offering congratulations. I listened to him pretending I already knew what he was telling me, but was actually gob-smacked with what he was saying. He said: "I hear you've had a daughter and she's come five weeks early. A redhead too and five pounds twelve ounces." I woke up and told my wife in case the dream faded.

A week later my wife gave birth five weeks early to a redheaded daughter weighing 5lb 12oz (2.6kg). There were no scans in those days to tell the sex and no indication that our daughter would come early; in

fact, my wife was still at work when she went into labour. The red hair wasn't anticipated, although being Scottish, my beard, in those days, had a fair bit of red through it – and we both have historical redheads in our families.

John Fowler
By email

Word Synchronicity

I spend some time writing every day, either handwriting or typing on my computer. I create a variety of written material on a wide range of subjects, including emails, letters, educational material, stories, lecture notes, research, gardening blogs, recipes, articles, general notes and lists. The radio is always on in our house, and I listen to Radio 4 (talk radio) as background sound while I write.

I have noticed that, as I write, there is often a synchronicity between a word spoken on the radio and a word that I am writing at the same moment. This occurs regularly and often throughout the time I am writing and listening. On most occasions I am writing about a subject totally different from that of the radio programme.

I started jotting down a list of all the words that were spoken simultaneously on the radio at the moment I wrote them, but soon found this an overwhelming task. The synchronicity happened so often that I filled up sheets of paper with these random words very quickly, and soon gave up the task.

For instance, in a one hour period on 19 February 2013, the following words were spoken on the radio at exactly the same time as I wrote: *garlic, radiator, bungalow, calendar, jumper, terrestrial, Patrick Kelly, chop, draw, charity, reading, Wednesday, sign, skin, flowers, dice, priority, green, perfect, element, twenty-seven.*

Even as I typed this last paragraph the words *chop, garlic, dice, and element* have all recurred, spoken on the television as I write!

It is not only short common words which crop up. Unusual words, technical terms and sometimes combinations of words such as *chiaroscuro, drawing to scale, enigma code, nowhere to go, hand-made paper, in a few minutes, you can't always get what you want*, and many other more complex phrases have been

broadcast as I wrote them.

I have noticed that sometimes the broadcast words are the same as my written words in sound only. For instance, *Phil/fill, stairs/stares, puree/puri, sea/see* etc.

This synchronicity is not confined to the written word. Often our spoken words or a song going round in one's head are simultaneously echoed by the radio.

I don't know if I am alone in noticing this synchronistic phenomenon. [Editor's note: in fact, over the years, several correspondents have mentioned this effect]. It may be that when writing as many words as I do, while simultaneously listening to talk radio, there is a significantly high chance of this coincidence happening. However, the frequency of these occurrences continues to amaze and baffle me.

Mazda Munn

Millport, Isle of Cumbrae

Lifting hands

As an advocate of science and logic, I find it hard to explain the following events; and as I have no wish to reveal them to family or friends for fear of being labelled a 'fruitcake', I shall remain anonymous. I'm not ruling out the possibility they were down to some form of temporal lobe dysfunction or a type of hallucination, but their sheer clarity makes them noteworthy.

To my best recollection it was the summer of 1993. I was in my mid 20s and staying at my parents' house for a few months whilst I was unemployed. Instead of scouring the job supplements, I spent much of my time reading books on out-of-body experiences. I found them fascinating but I like to think I retained a healthy scepticism about all things 'paranormal' as I believed most happenings could be explained by more down-to-earth rationality. Nevertheless, these particular books were captivating reading. They were written objectively and were open to scientific reasoning, but more tantalisingly many contained detailed instructions on how to achieve the supposed state of expanded consciousness the authors claimed to have had. Enthralled by their elaborate accounts, I decided to try it for myself over the course of a few weeks. The main objective was to achieve a state described as 'mind awake, body asleep' – where the par-

ticipant remains alert but their body is in a state of deep relaxation.

I followed the instruction meticulously, but apart from a few weird sensations the results were unremarkable and disappointing. That was until one particular afternoon around 3pm: the weather was warm and sunny, I drew the curtains to block out as much daylight as I could, lay down on the bed and went through the now familiar relaxation instructions. As usual I began to drift off into a sort of borderline state, still aware of the everyday noises of the outside world drifting through the open window but also wonderfully relaxed.

All of a sudden I distinctly felt the sensation of two hands under my back, originating from my right hand side, one just below my shoulder blades and the other near the small of my back. I then felt as though they were gently lifting me up and the sheer surprise and shock of it all made my body jerk and I instantly opened my eyes. My heart was pounding as I sat up and looked around the empty bedroom in amazement. It took a few minutes for my pulse to return to a normal rate as I took stock of what had just happened.

I'm not dismissing for one moment the possibility that I had read about a similar experience somewhere in one of those books and it somehow planted itself in my subconscious, but what was remarkable was the vividness of my experience. It felt very real and startling, and it certainly livened up an otherwise dull afternoon. With hindsight I wish I had stayed calm enough to see what would have happened next, but when it's happening to you the natural reaction is to panic, and unfortunately that's what I did.

Sixteen years later, in 2009, I was back at my parents' house after attending a family funeral. I was with my girlfriend whom I had been seeing for four years and in all that time had never discussed my weird experience since she was a very pragmatic woman who had no time for "any of that supernatural nonsense". That night she slept in my old bedroom on my old single bed and I slept on the sofa downstairs. The next morning I brought her a cup of tea. She looked tired and anxious and told me she hadn't slept at all well. She then revealed that sometime around 3am she was woken up by the feeling of

two hands under her back trying to lift her up and it freaked her out so much she was afraid to go back to sleep. Consequently she had been lying awake for the last four to five hours.

What was just as puzzling was my automatic reply. Without thinking I blurted out "Ha, they thought you were me". I don't know what possessed me to say that and she was as confused as I was by the remark. I quickly tried to make light of it by changing the subject to more mundane matters. I can understand my own imagination creating a scenario like this from all the books I had absorbed, but I find it curious that someone could have such a remarkably similar and vivid experience even though to the best of my knowledge she had no exposure to – or indeed any interest in – that kind of subject.

Marco —

By email

Cornish ghost

My immediate family and I take a holiday in Cornwall most years, usually in a rental cottage with space for six people. As well as both mother and father I have two older brothers, one of whom is married – so two double rooms and two single rooms are necessary. On this occasion in 2002 (I was 21 at the time) I had to share with my middle brother in a twin bedroom. The cottage was a renovated fisherman's granite building (I later wondered if the granite with its potential magnetic properties had an effect on proceedings). The room was fairly small, with two single beds adjacent to each other lengthways. I took the bed on the left, next to the only window in the room. On the second night I had a perplexing dream from which I awoke with a start. Coming to, I realised it was sunrise as there was a small amount of light coming through the curtains and a dawn chorus. Apart from that, heavy snoring was emanating from my brother's side of the room. My eyes adjusting to the light, I could make out a shadowy figure at the end of my brother's bed. I could see the creases of clothing, so I thought it was my brother sleep-walking. I started to get up and assist him back into bed. As I pushed the sheets away I looked towards the other end of his bed, and found to my surprise my brother

snoring away. I quickly looked back to the other end and the black figure had vanished. Feeling scared, I hid under the sheets, and tried to get back to sleep and tell myself I had just imagined it. I did not get back to sleep.

In the morning at breakfast I told my family about the spooky apparition. No one took it seriously, apart from my brother who had during the night awoken suddenly from a dream, gasping with his hands held out in front of him to stop something leaning over him. Both of us felt slightly uncomfortable with this shared experience. I feel if only one of the experiences had happened in isolation I could have dismissed mine as a waking hallucination, and my brother's as a dream. However, with them both involving a figure at the same bed on the same night, I still wonder if there was a paranormal explanation.

Rob Shaw

Portsmouth, Hampshire

Bipedal cats

One night in December 2012, my eight-year-old son woke me, upset by a bad dream. I calmed him down, then took him back to his bedroom and sat with him. The nature of the dream wasn't mentioned: he was only half-awake and ready to go back to sleep, so I didn't want to disturb him by talking about it. When he'd dropped off, I went straight back to bed, where I had an unusual dream myself. Our two cats had become a single large black cat, larger than any normal cat. This cat, I somehow knew, wanted to go outside into the garden with me. To do that, it began walking on its hind legs and, taking me by the hand, led me into the garden where it jumped down into a hole. At that point, the dream faded.

The next morning, as I was taking my son to school, I asked him about the dream that had disturbed him. He said he had dreamed that our two cats had become very big, and were walking on their hind legs, and had frightened him.

Neither of us had seen any report of large cats, or of animals unusually walking on their hind legs. So was our shared dream just a coincidence or the result of telepathy? Or had we somehow accessed the same item from the catalogue of dreams?

Glyn Hincliffe

Blackrod, Lancashire

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FORTEAN TRAVELLER

88. Denver International Airport

NICK PARKS gets off the plane at Colorado's newest airport, and discovers a world of bizarre public art – or is that sinister New World Order symbolism?

For travellers, airports aren't usually a destination, more a necessary evil. Hours of boredom, caged in by bland retail. On the surface then, the shiny new Denver International Airport (DIA) that opened in 1995 has much to commend it: cryptic symbols, curious sculptures, and murals by commissioned local community artists. DIA serves as a refreshing antidote to the usual mind-numbing airport experience – an outlet for the mind to take flight; a curiosity shop window on a world of artistic talent. Minds of a

more conspiratorial bent, however, see the controversial displays as a shop-front of horrors that offers a far less welcoming face to the passing world.

At 53 square miles (137km²) – over twice the land surface area of Manhattan Island – DIA sports the largest aviation footprint in America. Since succeeding Stapleton Airport in the mid-1990s, its audacious scale and location, New World Order symbolism and underground earthworks have led critics to question its underlying motive – its grand design. Why, they ask, would you up sticks from a

BELOW: An aerial shot showing the runways at DIA; do they, as conspiracy buffs suggest, form a sort of swastika?



relatively modest 7.34 square miles (19km²) of international-class airport – located just three miles (5km) due-east of downtown Denver – only to relocate 24 miles (39km) north-east, if not to shield something from prying eyes? You'd be forgiven for thinking this big beast and those who commissioned it had something to hide.

Officially, Stapleton's past strength became its weakness. Its central location became a problem when a need to grow flew in the face of local concerns. Despite boasting a twin set of three intersecting parallel runways, their poor separation and conflicting paths served to hinder optimum traffic and so create inevitable delays. However, with a pending lawsuit over excessive noise issued by neighbouring Park Hill community and legal threats to runway development by Adams County, the hamstrung Stapleton was unable to expand and so take on new airlines and destinations. As the state capital of Colorado, Denver needed its own international-class airport, and the arguments from both sides only continued to grow. The dilemma was stark: live and grow with the times or die with the past. Denver's response, however, has led some to question its motives.

Though worthy of note, the scale and location of DIA are not without precedent. Contrary to popular belief, it's neither the first nor second largest airport in the world, at least not by virtue of land use alone; in fact, were it a contest, DIA would not even win a medal. This big fish is a minnow when factored against the 86 square miles (223km²) of Saudi Arabia's King Khalid International, and the mind-boggling 300 square miles (777km²) of the same country's even more bloated King Fahd. Even at half the size of Fahd, DIA's North American neighbour, Montreal's monstrous Mirabel, dwarfs the Colorado airport.

The argument is that DIA merely mirrors the global trend, to build big and far from dense populations with a view to future expansion. Indeed, the past decade has seen footfall soar from 38 million in 2000 to 50 million in 2011. In fact, today DIA props up the world's top 10 league of busiest airports for combined domestic and international traffic. Why then, sceptics ask, upon opening, did DIA boast only five runways to the retired Stapleton's six?

Situated 1,600m (5,250ft) above sea level, the mile-high city is plagued by weather extremes and an altitude that inversely impacts on aircraft lift. At the time of its closure, only half of Stapleton's runways exceeded 10,000ft (3,000m); of which only two (at 11,500ft\3,500m and 12,000ft\3,660m) were capable of coaxing fully laden Jumbos – often with take-off field lengths in excess of 3,000m (9,850ft)



at sea-level – into the skies. Conversely, DIA had five 12,000ft runways capable of dispatching Jumbo loads into the air.

As if to silence any lingering doubt, in September 2003 the airport opened a sixth 16,000ft (4,880m) runway. But this raised further eyebrows. Was DIA a conventional airport? Or a cover for landing something else? One answer came 18 months later when the uncompromising form of the double-decker, wide-bodied Airbus A380 enjoyed its maiden flight in April 2005. Runway case closed? Well, not quite.

Some say we're too close; that we need to step back to see the truth. In his work *Chariots of the Gods*, Erich von Däniken wrote of strange beguiling art inscribed in the Peruvian landscape: insects, monkeys, creatures so huge that their sense could only be gleaned from the sky. Officially, the runways of Denver International are simply arranged to erase the memories of Stapleton's past, to allow efficient free flow of aircraft from all four points of the compass. Conspiracy theorists, though, say the symbolism is clear: as travellers land at Denver, they do so in the welcoming arms of a swastika.

The pattern, though imperfect, is uncanny. The question remains: is it a fluke, born of necessity, or something more? Perhaps it's simply a Rorschach ink blot saying more about us than about the airport; about how human minds draw order from chaos and choose to interpret the world. But conspiracy theorists think not; they see signs.

If a swastika was intended, what could it mean? After all, nearly 70 years

Some say that we need to step back to see the truth

ABOVE: The triumph of the New World Order in a DIA mural?

BELOW: The 'Blue Mustang' is one of DIA's most terrifying public artworks.



after the end of World War II it still has the power to trigger the global gag reflex. Despite the symbol's positive reputation as a sign of good fortune for 4,000 years of Hinduism, it's certainly had some dark baggage ever since it was co-opted by the Third Reich.

Waters are further muddied by America's unsavoury courtship of Nazi rocket scientists through Project Paperclip, designed to siphon Germany's best minds into covert, often subterranean, military research and development facilities where they would spearhead a New World Order to thwart like-minded Soviet designs on global supremacy.

The subsequent emergence of airborne stealth technologies, and their accompanied UFO sightings, provide ammunition to those who believe that claims of Nazi-inspired black-ops based on alien contact and reverse-engineering have substance (and continue their classified advance under such guises as Project Blue Beam). Bloggers even cite Spielberg's *Close Encounters* and the film's strangely wayward coordinates for Devil's Tower, the site of alien first contact; released 15 years prior to DIA's birth, the map reference 104 44 30, 40 36 10, when plugged into Google Earth W104° 44' 30", N40° 36' 10" in fact hits Denver. Did Spielberg know something?

To conspiracists, one man's crooked cross is another man's X, marking an equally crooked spot. Sufficient motive, they say, for shifting (according to the airport's own estimates) one-third the amount of dirt dug for the Panama



Canal; or 110 million cubic yards of earth, which when dumped into a single pile would cover 32 city blocks a quarter of a mile deep.

Officially at least, such vast quantities of earth were moved in levelling land and creating a vast tunnel network for the airport's underground transit and automated baggage handling system. We are told that nature abhors a vacuum. It's perhaps only natural, then, for the conspiratorial mind to fill in such huge, seemingly cavernous, gaps in credibility.

Hearsay has it that contractors working on these and related projects were summarily hired and fired so as to keep the true scope of the project secret. The curious networks of tunnels lined with sprinklers suggest a transit system in-wait of future expansion; less understood is the level of electromagnetic energy linked with the area and an alleged subterranean six-storey facility. Suspicious minds are quick to let this space out to a heinous array of dubious tenants, intent on ET-derived military black-ops and genetic engineering, civilian detainment and child slave labour camps.

Inside, above ground, the signs are no clearer. A nightmarish Nazi protagonist replete with alien-styled gas mask, probing a white dove of peace with his cutlass, greets travellers. This section of the two-part mural, entitled "Children of the World Dream of Peace", is offset by a feel-good second-act in which the villain, symbolically vanquished, lies underfoot of children sporting, or perhaps giving over, their nation's flags; while a German child beats the cutlass into a ploughshare. Does this represent, as Chicano artist Leo Tanguma describes, a revitalised world and the overthrow of tyrannies past or – as some claim – an overthrow of independent nation states in the



near future? Are we seeing the back of Nazi-style oppression – or the true face and agenda of a secret controlling One World Government taking shape?

What is clear is that whether it's gargoyles emerging from luggage, masonic motifs, or strange symbols etched in its marble façade, DIA offers fertile grounds for contentious conspiratorial debate. In fact, in citing the 'Great Hall' and the airport's commemorative capstone bearing the masonic compass and square, many believe that signs of a controlling order are not merely beneath one's feet. Sceptics argue that cornerstones donated by local masonic orders can be found at the White House, US Capitol

TOP: A nightmarish, Nazi-like figure sticks it to the dove of peace in Leo Tanguma's mural.

ABOVE: Masonic symbols on the DIA capstone.

LEFT: A gargoyle emerges from a suitcase in another bit of 'sinister' symbolism.

and Washington Monument, and that the airport's capstone is simply in line with this tradition. However, headed as it is "New World Airport Commission", in an apparent nod to a faceless group of business and political leaders that sponsored and organised pre-opening events, conspiracists see evidence of a masonic hand in the airport's arrival.

Equally strange are those seemingly sinister coded etchings, "COCHETOPA", "DZIT DIT GAI" and "SISNAAJINI". Well, the Cochetopa pass, creek and canyon of the Colorado region are hardly secret; while DZIT and GAI, though often wrongly translated as the Nazi "Black Sun" are Native American references to "mountain" and "white" and refer, like SISNAAJINI (or White Shell Mountain) to the Coloradan peak of Mt Blanca, the sacred mountain of the East. Though not necessarily sinister, then, this belated tribute would seem to be a slap in the face of the very culture upon whose sacred burial grounds the airport was built.

Other symbols have attracted attention. On the floor near the murals, we find the chemical symbols "Au" and "Ag". To most, these speak of the region's rich mining heritage; to conspiracy theorists, they allude to the Hepatitis B virus/vaccine to be used as a "population control" by the Illuminati. Sadly, Australia Antigen is the non-infectious Hepatitis B surface antigen; it's also usually abbreviated as HBsAg rather than AuAg...

Of all DIA's artistic commissions, the "Blue Mustang", a 32ft (10m) tall garish, nose-flaring, fibreglass horse, has raised the most hackles. Supposedly symbolic of the untamed West, with eyes that glow after dark and an unsettling network of veins that bleed through cobalt blue skin and end at a monstrously puckered anus, the work doesn't sit well with many. Some have dubbed it "the pale horse" – the bringer of death. The tag seems deserved. Artist and creator Luis Jiménez was tragically killed when a section of the 9,000lb (4,080kg) mustang fell on him during its completion leading to the ultimate charge that the statue, and perhaps the airport itself, is cursed.

Today, Denver International Airport remains an enigma, mired in mysterious motives. To the conspiracy theorist, this bewildering, quirky structure offers too many unsettling angles to square. Is it a transparent window on artistic expression – or do smoke and mirrors merely serve to deflect from a hidden, deeper truth? **FT**



NICK PARKINS has a master's degree in philosophy of the mind and likes to live outside the box. He can be contacted at nickparkins@hotmail.co.uk

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By Marian Ashcroft

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Why Fortean?



Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature

of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, FT is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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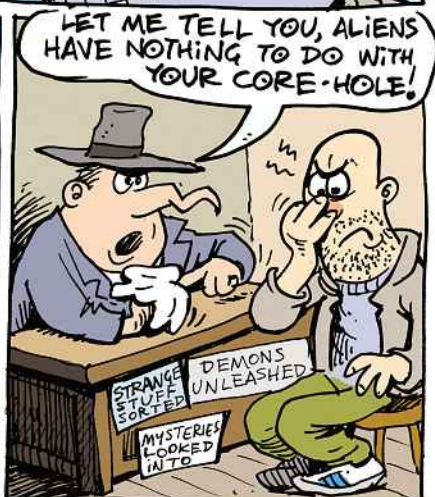
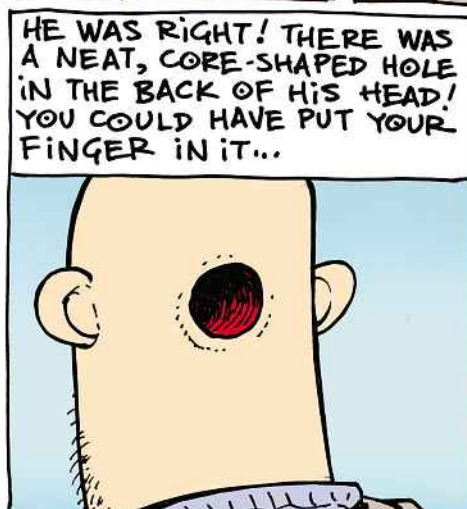
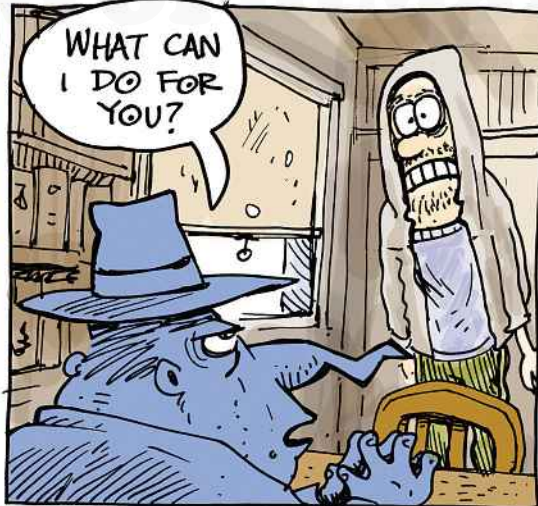
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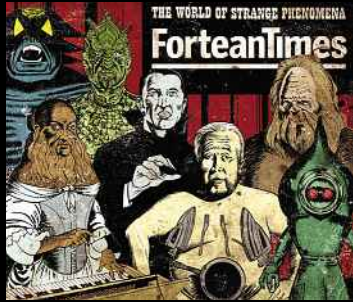
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PHENOMENOMIX "PARANOIA"

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FORTEAN TIMES 308

ON SALE 7 NOV 2013



HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

NOVEMBER 1973

Many of our notes may seem trivial, but we have long suspected that, in the grand scheme of things, we probably have very little idea of what makes something 'important', or even what 'importance' is. This month saw America's first National Trivia Tournament, held in California and organised by Ron Myers. The British entrant was the *Daily Mail* reporter Dermot Purvagie, whose opening shot was that the progeny of a pair of flies, if all lived for a year, would cover the Earth to a depth of 47ft (14m). His emergency reserve was that the national anthem was played 17 times in succession on the platform of Rathnau station in Germany, in 1909, while Edward VII struggled into his uniform. **FT2:19**

The Ginger Cat-man of Denham, Bucks, can't hold a candle to Springheel Jack, but his nightly antics made life hell on the caravan site at Wyatts Covert for three weeks. He moved "like a cat", jumping from roof to roof, banging on doors and smashing windows. Sometimes seen and chased, he always escaped, jumping over cars or 6ft (1.8m) fences at the last. He had ginger hair and wore a black coat and plimsolls. Dog patrols, searchlights and police searches didn't deter him. Frightened residents were contemplating a sit-in at Gerrards Cross police station. **FT2:12**

NOVEMBER 1983

Chile was in the grip of a series of sensational visions of the Virgin Mary (BVM); all the more sensational because the visionary was a 16-year-old glue-sniffer called Miguel Angel Poblete. In June, he and two friends had climbed the hill called Membrillar, in the Peña Blanca district of Valparaiso, and, near the hilltop shrine, they inhaled neoprene. Poblete began convulsing, convinced he was talking to the BVM. Word soon spread and, by this November, more than 100,000 – from "humble farmers to middle-class matrons" – would attend his cultish gatherings on the mountain.

The boy would wander through the crowd, eyes glazed and periodically falling into a trance (or seeming to). A mysterious group of men – identifying themselves only as "lay Catholics for humanity" – relayed Poblete's one-sided conversations to the crowd by microphone and loudhailer, as well as directing prayers and singing. In poses echoing those of the Fátima – head thrown back, staring at the sky, with

tongue protruding as though receiving a Communion Host – he told the crowd to wave to Mary, or raise their crucifixes. Some occasionally stood up, also staring skyward, shouting "Mary is here". He relayed Mary's usual injunctions: no sex outside marriage, pray for Russia and "men should stop dressing like women".

That last is ironic as, according to Internet articles on his cult, Poblete underwent a sex change in 2002, and claimed to be Karole Romanoff, a descendant of Russian Tsars. He died on 27 September 2008, aged 42, from alcohol-induced liver damage. **FT42:45**

NOVEMBER 1993

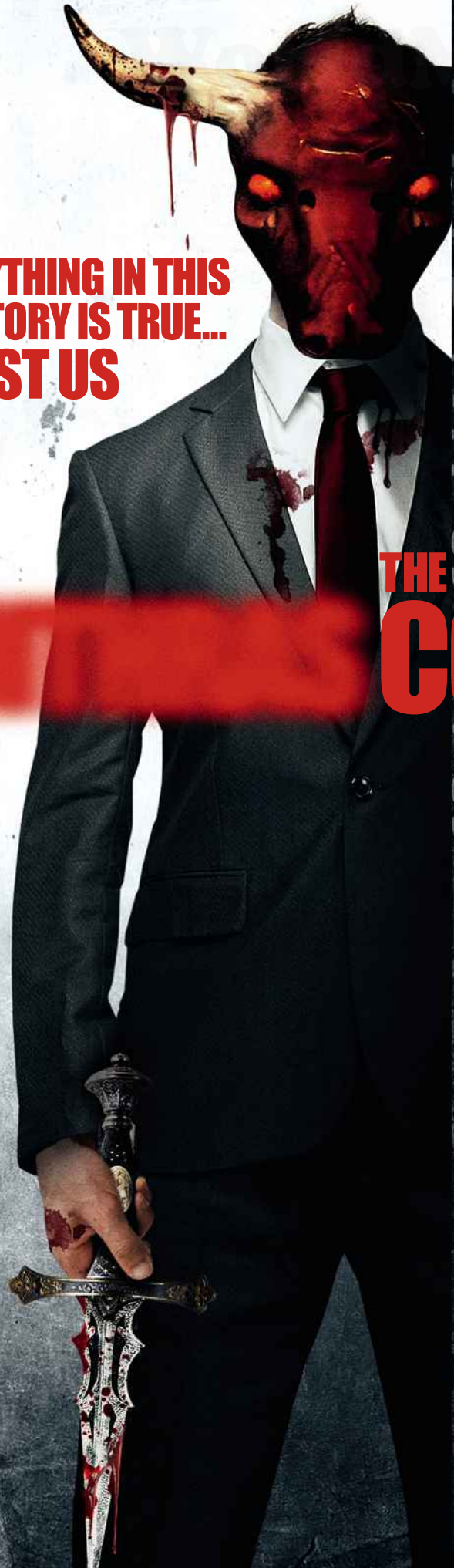
When 10 people drowned in Tanzania's Lake Victoria under 'odd' circumstances, a war of words broke out in the national paper between a Reuters reporter, a police spokesman and a Seventh Day Adventist church. The church insisted the tragedy was an accident. The journalist said he was standing by the report from the policeman who'd interviewed witnesses. Apparently, eight pupils and their teacher – all members of the church's scout-like group, the Pathfinders – were crossing the lake when their boat capsized. They then "tried to prove their faith by walking on the water of the lake like Jesus". **FT73:9**

On the 10th, temple bells throughout South Korea were rung for the funeral of the country's foremost ascetic monk. Lee Song-Chui, 82, was believed not to have slept in 10 years and died sitting up in meditation. He ate only simple foods and rarely left his tiny cell at the Haein-sa temple. The 'saint' was cremated in the biggest public Buddhist rite for 50 years, attended by more than 100,000, including Buddhist and other dignitaries from around the world. **FT73:15**

NOVEMBER 2003

Almost 1,000 years after they were banned, the *Forn Siðr* – an apolitical religious society based on worship of the old Norse gods – was recognised once more as a legal religion in Denmark. These loose-knit followers of the Aesir numbered just 240 at this time; members can marry, receive donations and enjoy tax breaks. They celebrate many of the same solstice and equinox festivals as other pagan groups, with an emphasis on Yule (*jól* or *jul*), between Mother Night (the night before the winter solstice) and Twelfth Night (New Year's Eve). **FT179:10**

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★★★★★
**"A TAUT AND COMPELLING
TERROR-TRIP!"**

BILLY CHAINSAW - BIZARRE

THE
CONSPIRACY

THE BOBOLIC PLAGUE
THE FOUR... OF THE US
THE WAR OF 1812
THE FREEMASONS
THE LINCOLN ASSASSINATION
WORLD WAR ONE
THE MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX
THE ATOMIC BOMB
THE FEDERAL RESERVE
SKULL AND BONES
THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION
SEPTEMBER 11TH
ILLUMINATI



"LEAVES US UNEASILY CONFUSED AS TO WHO EXACTLY IS PULLING THE WOOL OVER OUR EYES"



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OCTOBER 14



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