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FORTEAN TIMES 309

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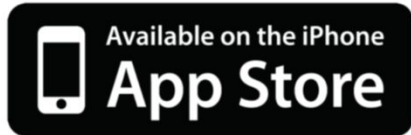
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strange days

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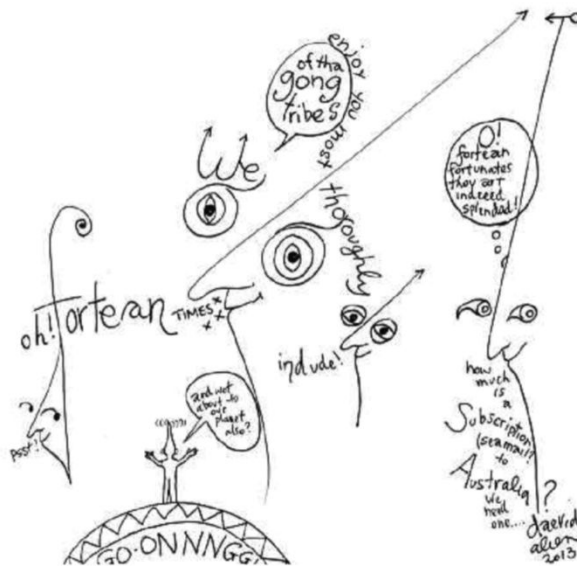
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editorial

Tis the season...



Gilli Smyth, who had been in Japan and missed all the anniversary excitement. This really tickled us, and we reproduce it here.

All these kind messages reminded us that in the rush to get last issue to the printers – and with all the space taken up by Bob Rickard's encomium to his blushing successor – we didn't get round to saying a few important thank yous. One such is to our peerless reviews editor Val Stevenson, who for over a decade has ensured that *FT* has sorted the weird wheat from the credulous chaff so you don't have to – not to mention smoothing the ruffled brows of authors, publishers and literary PRs all anxious to announce their latest offerings to the reading public. We know

Welcome to a special Christmas issue of *Fortean Times*, in which we invite you to join our heaving table of festive delights and enjoy some fortean crackers. Angeline Adams and Remco van Straten provide a uniquely Dutch take on the evolution of 'Sinterklaas' from an obscure fourth-century saint to the chief seasonal outrider of contemporary consumerism – even if he is currently mired in controversy thanks to one of his little helpers (p34). SD Tucker unearths some peculiar instances of Santa being summoned by supernatural means (p54), while photographer Charles Fréger shares some of his remarkable portraits of the 'Wilder Mann' in centuries-old traditions that are still celebrated across Europe (p6); they really are astonishingly odd and strangely beautiful. In our cover feature, Roger Clarke presents some compelling hauntological digging, arguing that the basis of Henry James's classic novella *The Turn of the Screw* can be found in a real-life haunting from 18th century Hampshire (p28), and David Sutton celebrates the Benjamin Britten centenary by taking a look at the composer's dark and disturbing opera based on James's spooky tale (p33) – singing ghosts, anyone? All this, plus Fu Manchu, Princess Caraboo, Kenneth Grahame and a visit to the Prince Philip worshipping South Sea islanders of Tanna. What more could you possibly want in your Christmas stocking?

the reviews pages are a very popular section of the mag – because you've told us – and Val is the reason why.

We also wanted to give a big shout out to our loyal army of clipsters (see p77 for how to become one), as well as their Internet equivalents who email and tweet us news stories from all over the world every day. Thanks, people – we rely on you.

And finally, we raise a glass of Babycham to the many absent friends who have helped produce *FT* over the years – especially Owen Whiteoak, Jen Ogilvie, Winnie Liesenfeld, Jane Watkins, Jonnie Bryant and many others. A merry, fortean Christmas to one and all!

ERRATA

FT307:24: The photograph in the 'Through the Portal' item in Dave Clarke and Andy Roberts's 'Flying Saucery' column should have been credited to Nigel Mortimer.

FT308:18: Despite our confident assertion that last issue's archaeology column was by Paul Sieveking, it was in fact the work of Paul Devereux, to whom we extend our most humble apologies.

David Sutton
 DAVID R SUTTON

Bob Rickard
 BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
 PAUL SIEVEKING

FEELING THE LOVE

We're still basking in the great pleasure of the many 'happy birthday' messages we received for our 40th anniversary (celebrated last issue) via email, Facebook and Twitter. It's heartening to know that – at least most of the time – we're doing something right; your messages have made us more determined than ever to keep going for another 40 years if we possibly can. One belated missive arrived from the legendary inhabitants of Planet Gong, Daavid Allen and

Why fortean?
 Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE 77

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN **HORROR** UNTIL
YOU'VE SEEN IT **LIVE**



GHOST STORIES

BY JEREMY DYSON AND ANDY NYMAN

ghoststoriestheshow.co.uk

WARNING: PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT GHOST STORIES CONTAINS MOMENTS OF EXTREME SHOCK AND TENSION. THE PLAY IS UNSUITABLE FOR ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 15. WE STRONGLY ADVISE THOSE OF A NERVOUS DISPOSITION TO THINK VERY SERIOUSLY BEFORE ATTENDING.



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strangedays

0 lucky/unlucky man

Attacked by a shark, a snake, monkeys and a tree, but still alive...



Erik Norrie (above), 40, of Largo in Florida, went spear fishing off the Abaci Islands in the Bahamas on 29 July, accompanied by his wife and four daughters. He was standing in about 5ft (1.5m) of water when a shark took a 2lb (900g) chunk out of his leg. He hobbled to a sandbar where he fashioned a tourniquet to stem the bleeding using rubber bands off his Hawaiian sling spear. "There was blood squirting in three directions, like a pumping heartbeat – squirt, squirt, squirt," he said. He was flown to a Miami-area hospital, where he was awaiting skin graft surgery at the time of the report.

Mr Norrie thanked God during the ordeal. "Something great will come from it," said the determined optimist. "I gotta believe thus is part of my journey." He should be well prepared to face misfortune – as a 10-year-old in Seminole, Florida, he was blown off his feet but unhurt when an oak tree he

It jumped on his head and bashed him with his keys

was sheltering under during a storm was hit by lightning – but it was wildlife that really had it in for him. Three years later, he was bitten by a rattlesnake while walking with friends. He spent two weeks in intensive care and nearly lost his right leg. During a work trip to Brazil, he wandered too close to a monkey in the Amazon, and copped a primate-punch to the head. Then, as a joke, his wife locked him in a cage in Honduras with a small feisty simian. It jumped on his head and chest, bit him and bashed him with his own keys. *MX News (Sydney), 7 Aug; Irish Examiner, 9 Aug 2013.*

- In June 2011, Matthew Hawksley, a 23-year-old welder from Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, was on a corporate weekend away in Grange, Co Sligo, Ireland. The amateur triathlete dived off a high pier, not realising the sea was only 3ft (90cm) deep at that point, and shattered his fifth vertebra on sharp rocks, which brought on a heart attack as his lungs filled with water. He was resuscitated four times in the half-hour before arriving in hospital. When he awoke from a five-week coma, he was completely paralysed. "I could only see black-and-white shapes and could only communicate by blinking and sticking my tongue out," he said. "My family was told it was unlikely I would speak again and I probably would spend my life in a wheelchair controlled by my chin."

Hawksley spent months recovering, while also beating bouts of the MRSA superbug

and pneumonia. Five months after the accident, he took his first steps, but while recovering at a care home in April 2012 he was diagnosed with testicular cancer and had his right testicle removed. By May 2013 he had been given the all-clear and planned to run, swim and cycle in a triathlon in aid of cancer and spinal cord injury charities. "I feel like the unluckiest man I know," he said, "but in lots of ways, I suppose, I'm the luckiest man in Britain... You have to pick yourself up and work with what you've got." *Metro, D.Mail, D.Mirror, 9 May 2013.*

- At the last count back in January, Terry Butler, 67, from Walsgrave, Coventry, had broken 15 bones and undergone 34 operations (including six hip replacements and two shoulder ops). His tale of woe also includes a heart attack and kidney failure. "I've almost died on the operating table more times than I remember," he said. "I know all the nurses by their first names and feel like we've almost grown up together." As a token of his gratitude, he gave a trophy to the nurses at University Hospital, Coventry – but three days later he was back after he slipped in the shower and broke his knee. He said: "I used to read Mr Bump to my grandchildren and now they say I'm the real-life version of him because I'm always in plaster or bandaged up." *Sun, 12 Jan 2013.*

- In February 2012, Robert 'Choc' Thornton, 33, of Stowe-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, was declared Britain's most accident-prone jockey, after suffering 267 falls in his career. At the time of the report, the National Hunt rider was laid up with a broken arm following a tumble at Hereford the previous December – his 42nd injury since he began riding professionally in 1995. Over the years, he has



BORN TO BE WILD MEN

Europe's strangest seasonal celebrations

PAGE 6



CARRY ON DICK

On the trail of Dick Turpin the ghostly highwayman

PAGE 14



UNNATURAL WORLD

Star rot, toad rain and other strange phenomena

PAGE 18

broken all 24 ribs, shattered his left collar bone three times and his right collar bone six times, broken and lost several teeth, and torn ligaments and tendons. "All jockeys expect to take a fall and be sat out once in a while," he said. "But I think – well, hope – I have probably had my fair share for now." His longest spell in hospital had been the five days with his latest injury. Even then he thought he was OK after hitting the deck – until the horse behind trod on him, breaking his arm. Despite being laid up so often, Thornton is one of Britain's leading jump jockeys. He has ridden 1,037 winners from 8,023 starts with wins in more than 20 top jump races, including 16 Festivals. He has also taken part in 13 Grand Nationals, although he completed the course just four times. "I haven't thought about giving up and the day I do will



be the day I retire," he said. "You can't ride with thoughts like that in your head." *Metro*, 16 Feb 2012.

- The classic "lucky" man is the Croatian music teacher Frane Selak. He survived a train accident (17 dead), a plane crash (19 dead), and a bus crash (four dead). In 1970 his car caught fire but he escaped before it exploded. In 1996 he was driving in the mountains when he turned a corner to see a UN truck coming straight for him. His Skoda crashed through the barrier and over the edge, but he jumped out and landed in a tree as his car exploded below him. Then things looked up: in 2003 he won the jackpot of £600,000 with his first ever lottery ticket. In 2010, aged 81, he was planning to build a shrine to the Virgin Mary. [FT176:12, 264:10].

GETTY IMAGES

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Aggressive foreign cows 'a threat to walkers'

D.Telegraph, 10 June 2013.

Police have to tackle a spot of bother with giant genitalia

Central Somerset Gazette, 20 June 2013.

New guidelines for confirming death

Guardian, 3 June 2013.

God really is above law, rules Supreme Court

D.Telegraph, 16 May 2013.

Greyhound gets council bin contract

Irish Times, 1 July 2013.

Shark's insanity plea in murder trial

MX News (Sydney), 18 June 2013.

Robber thought axe was a donut

(Sydney) Sunday Telegraph, 30 June 2013.

Zombie Saves Terrified Times Square Cat

care2.com, 8 April 2013.

DUCK TOURS MUST END SAYS MAYOR

Liverpool Echo, 18 June 2013.

Masquerade of the Goat,
Manastirea Humorului, Romania



Habergeiss (Goat),
Tauplitz, Austria



Krampus,
Bad Mitterndorf, Austria



Cerbul (Stag),
Corlata, Romania



Arapides,
Monastiraki, Greece



Certi (Devil),
Nedašov, Czech Republic



FESTIVE WILD MEN

Each year, throughout Europe, performers join masquerades that stretch back centuries. By becoming a bear, a goat or a stag, a man of straw, a devil or a monster, they celebrate the cycle of life and the seasons. Their costumes are made of animal skins or plants, and are decorated with bones, encircled with bells, and capped with horns or antlers.

In Romania, The Masquerades of the Goat take place at New Year. The Goat and his master, the Old Man, are joined by a variety of characters (Turks, Horses, Stags, Devils, Priests). The Goat dances, dies and is then resurrected.

In Austria, Saint Nicholas is the pretext for processions and masked games. On the evening of 6 December, Krampus breaks the silence of the winter night by sounding bells that announce the arrival of the procession. Over 60 characters entertain the crowds, including Death and the Goat, which tries to pinch members of the audience with its movable jaw or tease them by

taking their hats.

The Krampus have affinities with figures of devils and animals, and at Advent they accompany Saint Nicolas on his journeys or participate in processions which are exclusively reserved for them. They scare children who have been bad and pursue and whip the audience in a roar of deafening bells.

In the Czech Republic, Saint Nicholas visits residents on the evening of 5 December, accompanied by Devils adorned with bells and a large bag for carrying off naughty children.

In Greece, the period from Christmas to Epiphany sees the Arapides going from house to house wearing animal skins and conical masks. According to tradition, the sound of their bells helps drive out evil spirits.

Over two winters of travel through 19 countries, photographer Charles Fréger captured what he calls "tribal Europe". His latest book, *Wilder Mann: The Image of the Savage*, was published in 2012 by Dewi Lewis publishing.

SIDELINES...

MYSTERY RULES OK

A survey of 2,000 Britons for the religious think tank Theos found that almost 80% agreed that “there are things in life that we simply cannot explain through science or any other means”. A majority (59%) believed in the existence of a “spiritual being”; one in six were convinced that they or someone they know had experienced a miracle, but only a quarter said they believed in angels. *D.Telegraph, 17 Oct 2013.*

MIRACLE EXPECTED

In an assessment for Employment Support Allowance, Gary Swift, 40, from Chesterfield, Derbyshire, who was born without a right arm, was asked (in all seriousness): “Do you expect your condition to improve... do you expect your arm to grow back within the next two years?” The interviewer was an employee of Atos, a company that runs the assessments for the Department for Work and Pensions. *D.Telegraph, 30 May 2013.*

SATANIC PEACE LOGO

A group of schools in the Dutch Bible Belt (the towns of Kampen, Staphorst and Urk) has destroyed 3,000 back-to-school diaries after parents complained that the ban-the-bomb logo on the cover might have ‘Satanic’ origins – or be “one of the signs of the Antichrist”. The cover featured six students wearing T-shirts, one of which bore the logo designed in 1958 by Gerard Holtom for CND. *Irish Times, 18 Sept 2013.*



MARTIN ROSS

Lion (son of a bitch)

Fake animals and artefacts in Chinese museums and zoos



AP / PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

ABOVE: A Tibetan mastiff poses as a lion in the People's Park Zoo, Luohe City.

Liu Wen and her six-year-old son, visiting the People's Park Zoo in Luohe City last August, felt something was not quite right when the “African lion” began barking. It turned out to be a Tibetan mastiff, a prestigious breed of domestic dog famous for its full coat and fur around its face. In fact the cash-strapped zoo, in China's Henan province (entrance fee 15 yuan/£1.50), had been replacing exotic species with substitutes, including two coypus in a snake's cage, a white fox in a leopard's den and a common dog in a timber wolf's pen. In the reptile house, two sea cucumbers were doing their best to look like a pair of snakes. There have also been recent reports in other Chinese zoos of officials painting dogs black and white to make them look like pandas. Liu Suya, chief of the Luohe City zoo's animal department, said that the actual lion has been temporarily sent to a breeding facility. The mastiff belonged to an employee and was housed at the zoo because

Sea cucumbers did their best to look like a pair of snakes

of safety concerns. “The African lions will be back,” said another official. “They went to another zoo to breed.” Shortly afterwards, the zoo was forced to close – at least temporarily. *[AFP] 15 Aug; Metro, Independent, Sun, 16 Aug; Irish Independent, 17 Aug 2013.*

● A month earlier, another Chinese museum was obliged to shut. The Jibaozhai Museum, with 12 exhibition halls, opened in 2010 in Jizhou city, Hebei province, costing 540 million yuan (£56 million) to develop. It was initially deemed a patriotic education centre and was given a respectable “Grade 3A Tourist Attraction Rating”. China is experiencing a cultural boom with

about 100 museums opening every year. The Jibaozhai Museum's humiliation began when Ma Boyong, a Beijing-based writer, noticed a series of discrepancies during a visit and published his findings online, along with pictures of exhibits. One was a vase, labelled as a Qing dynasty relic, which was decorated with bright green cartoon animals, including what appears to be a smiling octopus. Other artefacts were engraved with writing purportedly showing that they dated back more than 4,000 years to the time of the Yellow Emperor – but in fact the writing appeared in simplified Chinese characters introduced by the Communist Party in 1949. A five-colour porcelain vase was labelled ‘Tang dynasty’, despite the fact that this technique was invented centuries later, during the Ming dynasty.

Wei Yingjun, the museum's chief consultant, said he was “quite positive” that at least 80 of its 40,000 exhibits had been confirmed as authentic. He maintained that objects of “dubious” provenance had been “marked very clearly” so as not to mislead visitors. Deputy curator Shao Baoming was more optimistic, saying “at least half of the exhibits” were authentic, while the owner, Wang Zonquan, blandly claimed that “even the gods cannot tell whether the exhibits are fake or not”.

Regional authorities closed the museum on 15 July. An online wag suggested it should reopen as a museum of fakes – “If you can't be the best, why not be the worst?” All museums have a couple of fakes in their collections. Sometimes they own up to them, sometimes they put any dubious artefacts in storage, and sometimes they just don't know. However, a collection that its accusers claim is entirely inauthentic is in its way a masterpiece of museology. *D.Telegraph, <i> Guardian, 17 July 2013.*

Sasquatch stupidity

Bigfoot's 'skull', manimal madman and hunting disaster

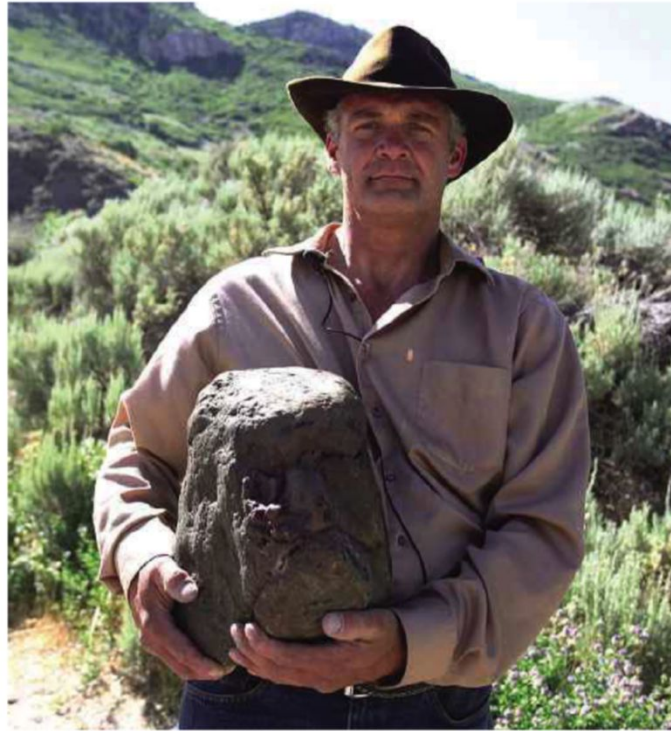
FOSSILISED MANIMAL HEAD – OR JUST A ROCK?

Bigfoot enthusiast Todd May is seen here holding what he believes to be a fossilised head of a Bigfoot. The semi-retired private investigator from Ogden, Utah, said he was looking for fossils when he found the 70lb (32kg) rock near the mouth of Ogden Canyon in May 2013. May, 49, made his discovery public by bringing the rock to the offices of the Ogden *Standard-Examiner*. "The rock looks vaguely like a smaller version of one of those Easter Island heads," wrote journalist Mark Saal. "Pronounced forehead. Large, flattened nose. What could only be described as a chiselled chin and jaw line." The newspaper sent a photo of the "fossilised head" to palaeontologists at Utah State University, who (unsurprisingly) concluded it was just a rock and suggested it was an example of pareidolia, where people see faces in inanimate objects.

May has long been curious about the legendary primate, which he believes he has encountered twice. In April 2011 he said he spotted a creature with a black silky coat moving quickly in Ogden Canyon, and initially thought it was a gorilla. "Then it dawned on me what it was," he said. His second supposed sighting was at 2am one night last May. "It was tall, it was big, it was big around – pretty good size," he said. "It kind of looked back at me and I was just frozen." *MX News (Sydney)*, 1 July; *Int. Business Times*, 13 Sept 2013.

SASQUATCH CLAIMANT

Jeff McDonald, 58, was out in the woods behind his house in rural Washington County, Oregon, on 10 October when he spotted a naked Linus Norgren, 20, the son of his neighbour, near his all-terrain vehicle. The young man hit McDonald repeatedly on the head with an apple-sized rock, while claiming he was descended



ABOVE: Todd May holding what he believes to be a fossilised Bigfoot head.

from a long line of Sasquatch. McDonald suffered broken fingers, a dislocated shoulder and an eye injury before he managed to fight off his attacker. He then held Norgren at bay with his hunting rifle and called for help. County deputies and state police troopers were stymied by the dense forest, and took 90 minutes to find the two men. Norgren was arrested and faced various charges. Investigators believe he was "under the influence of something", but what exactly remained to be determined. McDonald was not an avid hunter, according to his daughter, and after his traumatic experience it was unlikely that he would be out in the forest any time soon. *Time*, 11 Oct 2013.

BOGUS BIGFOOT HUNT GOES PEAR-SHAPED

Three people in Oklahoma were arrested in November over a supposed manimal hunt that put

a man in hospital with a nasty gunshot wound. Omar Pineda, 21, told Rogers County deputies that he shot his friend in the back when a "barking noise" spooked him during a hunt for Bigfoot late at night on Saturday, 2 November. The bullet entered the victim's back and went through his stomach. He underwent surgery and is expected to survive. Pineda's father-in-law, convicted felon Perry Don James, 53, was also arrested. Police said he had thrown a gun in a pond, which divers then had to recover. Lacey Jane Pineda, 22, the wife of the shooting suspect, was charged with obstruction after allegedly lying to police about the shooting. Omar Pineda is charged with careless use of a firearm.

Oklahoma is not known as a hotspot for Bigfoot sightings in the US, although more than a few encounters have been reported there over the years. *Huffington Post*, 4 Nov 2013.

SIDELINES...

BANSHEE BOTHER

Villagers in Kantari, Bosnia, have been kept awake for months because of screams coming from nearby woods, attributed to a banshee-like spirit known as Drekavac. At night they stuff their ears with paper and lock all doors and windows. "Dogs get scared and run and hide," said Persa Zgonjanin, 62. "It chills the soul." *Sun*, 3 Oct 2013.

SOY FORCE

A woman aged 52 burst into a Chinese restaurant in Seattle, Washington, and covered diners with soy sauce. *Sun*, 29 Aug 2013.

DRASTIC CURE

A remorseful thief rid himself of the temptation to steal by waiting with his hands outstretched on a railway line until a passing train cut them off. Ali Afifi, 28, from Tanta, Egypt, began his life of crime by stealing schoolmates' lunches before graduating to mobile phones and jewellery. *Metro*, 29 Aug 2013.

WAKE UP CLARENCE!

On 14 January 2013, Vincent Bright, 48, dug up the body of his 93-year-old father Clarence from Detroit's Gethsemane Cemetery and stored it in his freezer, hoping to bring him back to life. Police seized the body after a tip-off from family members. Bright Jr was found competent to stand trial and avoided prison by pleading guilty. *Independent, Adelaide Advertiser*, 29 Aug 2013.





SIDELINES...

COMICAL ERROR

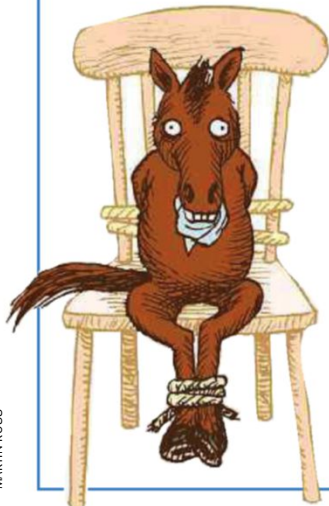
Andrew Vickers spotted a box in a skip overflowing with comics from the 1960s. He thought the old issues of *The Avengers* would help create a 6ft (1.2m) sculpture of papier maché over chicken wire for a superheroes exhibition in Sheffield. Only later was he told the comics he had used for this were worth up to £50,000. The sculpture is worth no more than £500. *Independent, Metro, 9 July 2013.*

SHEIKY SCIENCE

Sheik Saleh Saad al-Leheidan, a Saudi cleric, has announced on the website el-Sabq that driving is dangerous for women because "medical studies show that it automatically affects ovaries and pushes the pelvis upwards." This leads to long-term damage that hampers the ability to reproduce and can lead to babies with "clinical disorders". *Sun, 29 Sept; Scotsman, 1 Oct 2013.*

MINI-PONY KIDNAPPED

What is claimed to be the world's smallest pony was kidnapped in Italy on 12 September. Charlie, just 63cm (25in) tall, was attending the 47th National Horse Show in Città di Castello, Umbria, with his owner Bartolo Messina when he was snatched from his stall at night after thieves cut through a wire fence. Police suspected the Mafia might be holding him for ransom. *D.Mail, 14 Sept; The Sideshow, 16 Sept 2013.*



Mystery marsupials

WALLABIES AND KANGAROOS HOP UP IN CEMETERIES AND PHARMACIES

A wallaby was spotted on Sunday 20 October among the tombstones of Highgate Cemetery in north London, in the part to the west of Swains Lane, which is surrounded by high walls and large iron gates. Cemetery staff christened the marsupial Jean after the late Jean Pateman, who chaired the cemetery's charity for four decades until her death in 2012. "There is a possibility that there are two of them," said visitor services manager Melanie Wynyard. "Someone said they saw it at the top end of the cemetery, while around the same time it was spotted at the bottom end too." What's more, a few days earlier, there were reported sightings of

a wallaby on nearby Hampstead Heath.

Ms Wynyard said the staff suspected it might be an escaped pet. "It is used to humans," she said. "It will take apples from the hands of staff and lets you get quite close." On the other hand, it might have wandered from one of several wallaby colonies in the UK – Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Devon, etc – the best known being the red-necked Tasmanian wallaby colony in Derbyshire's Peak District, founded in World War II. There were several wallaby sightings in Cornwall and Devon in 2009 and 2010, and in September 2010 one was photographed in a garden in Keighley, West

Yorkshire. There's also been a wallaby colony on the Isle of Man for many years, while in Scotland, a colony of about 60 live on an island in Loch Lomond [FT274:11].

Highgate Cemetery's ecologist, filmmaker Maurice Melzak, caught a – or the – wallaby on film on 21 October. "People are very excited and want to look after it," he said. "The staff are leaving out apples and carrots to supplement its food." He thought it was a Bennett's wallaby (*Macropus rufogriseus rufogriseus*), a sub-species of the red-necked wallaby. According to Dan Carrier, reporting in the *Camden New Journal*, "Naturalists say the Highgate wallabies could have



ABOVE: "What the –?" A curious fox atop a tomb in Highgate Cemetery watches the exotic visitor.



found their way down from the Home Counties and the fringes of north London.”

At 5am on 31 October, Oscar Chettleborough, an 18-year-old carpenter making his way home from a friend's house, spotted a wallaby bounding around the York Rise estate in Dartmouth Park, a few hundred yards from the cemetery (and not far from the house of *FT* founding co-editor Paul Sieveking). By the time RSPCA officer Leigh Summers arrived from Harrow at 7am, the wallaby had found a way into the estate's playground, where children fed it apples while parents took photographs. Mr Summers managed to corner and capture it. He said it was in “fine fettle” and was probably a male adult. It was taken to an exotic animal holding centre at Heathrow Airport. Sadly, it died on 8 November after an operation for a broken foot. It had to have hours of surgery to repair the injury, which could not have been left untreated. Vets were unable to revive the animal from anaesthesia. *Sun*, 23+24 Oct; *Camden New Journal*, 24+31 Oct; *D.Mail*, 24 Oct, 2 Nov 2013.

• There hasn't been such marsupial excitement in the capital since the “Beast of Beckenham”, a 6ft (1.8m) kangaroo – thought to be *Macropus giganteus*, an eastern grey – spotted several times in Beckenham Place Park, near Lewisham in southeast London, in October 2000. When prints were found on the golf course there, the story went global [FT142:17]. News of its capture never reached Fortean Towers; perhaps a reader might provide further data.

• An injured kangaroo hopped into the Qantas Airways domestic terminal in Melbourne on 16 October 2013, and made its way



ABOVE: The injured kangaroo that turned up in a Melbourne airport pharmacy.

Deep Creek Conservation Park along South Australia's rugged Fleurieu Peninsula, seven-year-old Simon Kruger wandered into the bush to pick flowers for his mother. Distracted by a wallaby that hopped past, he followed it into the bush and soon became lost.

The kangaroo lay down and fell asleep beside the boy

to a pharmacy on the second floor. Given the name Cyrus after one of his rescuers, the male eastern grey kangaroo was bleeding after being injured by a vehicle on a nearby road. It also appeared to have injuries to its teeth. It was tranquillised and taken to a vet for treatment. (*Dublin*) *Metro Herald*, 17 Oct; *TNT Magazine*, 21 Oct 2013. For other animals (deer, turtle, puppy and cat) seeking medical help, see FT257:24.

• On 2 June, a 5ft (1.5m), 200lb (90kg) kangaroo was seen beside US Highway 301, about an hour outside Tampa, Florida. It eluded police and wildlife officers, even after being shot with tranquilliser darts, but eventually a bystander tackled and caught it. John Chatfield, owner of a kangaroo-breeding farm on Mickler Road in Lacochee, told investigators it was not one of the more than 50 he keeps on his property. At the time of the news report, the roo's provenance was a mystery. *Orlando (FL) Sentinel*, 7 June 2013.

• On 10 August last, while picnicking with his parents in the

As night fell, his parents, together with a team of 40 people and two rescue helicopters, scoured the area in vain. Simon was wearing a light fleece top and tracksuit trousers and was not equipped for the Australian winter – but on that chilly night, according to his account, a kangaroo approached him. After munching the posy of wildflowers he had been collecting, the animal lay down and fell asleep next to him, offering a bit of comfort and body-heat. It wasn't until 24 hours later that Simon was discovered and airlifted back to civilisation. His mother knew his story was true as soon as she smelled his clothing: “I think it was a miracle, when I smell his jacket, I smell kangaroo – bush and kangaroo,” said Linda Kruger. “I couldn't stop laughing. It was happiest moment since his birth.”

It's impossible to say if the roo was displaying altruism, or if its natural behaviour was merely interpreted as such by an imaginative child – but it wouldn't be the first time one has stepped in to help a human. In 2003, a rescued orphaned roo came to the aid of its keeper who had been knocked unconscious by a falling branch while out on his property. It sounded a distress call by yapping frantically until his family arrived to find him. The animal went on to win the National Animal Valour Award. *Care2.com*, 12 Aug; *Irish Independent*, 13 Aug 2013.

SIDELINES...

DOUBLE WIN

Local man Kevin Lewis claimed a \$1 million jackpot when he heard his name called at the Horseshoe Casino in Cincinnati, Ohio. But while he posed with a giant cheque for photos, bosses realised it had been won by another man with the same name. They ended up giving both Kevins a million each. *D.Mirror*, 14 Aug 2013.

NO HAND SIGNALS

A Hungarian man of 37, referred to as Tibor A, had his arm ripped off below the elbow by recycling machinery in Purbach, eastern Austria. He retrieved his arm and drove 15 miles (24km) to hospital in Eisenstadt, blood pouring from the wound. He put his severed limb on the reception desk and asked doctors to sew it back on. *D.Telegraph*, 13 May; *Metro*, 14 May 2013.

WATCH OUT BELOW!

Priests blessed Rostov, Russia, by dropping holy water on it from a plane. *Sun*, 4 Sept 2013.

METRE & TWO VEG

To raise money for a European tour, Colombian poet Raffael Nedina Brochero, 52, being interviewed on a radio show in the city of Magdalena, offered to sell his testicles for £13,000. *Sunday Times*, 23 June 2013.

GRAND PLAN

Ten people dressed as ninjas were detained after they arrived at Malaysia's royal palace in an attempt to claim the throne. The unarmed group carried a document calling for the formation of a three-million-strong army to “set the stage for the return of Al Mahdi... the prophesied Muslim leader.” <i>9 Aug 2013.

SANGUINE TRAVELLERS

Boarding flight 666 to HEL on Friday 13th might seem to be tempting fate, but Finnair passengers on AY666 to Helsinki on 13 September were not too bothered. The flight was almost full. [AP] 14 Sept 2013.

CREATING SPIES IN THE SKY

Recent reports from the Middle East have seen birds 'arrested' as enemy secret agents. **DAVID HAMBLING** asks whether any truth might lurk behind such seemingly daft ideas.

Reports from the Lebanon, Turkey, Sudan and Egypt about birds being 'arrested' as Israeli spies (see **FT308:4-5**) drew amused responses from Western media. The birds, ringed and sometime carrying GPS devices and transmitters, were identified as subjects of university projects studying migration. Are the arrests simply a sign of ignorance and paranoia, or could there be an element of truth to the allegations?

Needless to say, intelligence agencies are adept at using every means available to them, and that has included drafting in avian agents in the past. As far back as World War I homing pigeons were fitted with miniature cameras for aerial photography. The technique was developed before the war by Julius Neubronner, a German pharmacist.¹ He used carrier pigeons to deliver prescriptions to some of his patients, and realised that the latest cameras were small enough for a bird. He developed the Doppel-Sport Panoramic Camera with a timer to take pictures at regular intervals; the most advanced model weighed just 40g and took 12 exposures. Some of Neubronner's results were impressive, but getting pigeons to fly over military objectives was difficult, and the results were haphazard at best.

Pigeon spies were made redundant by aircraft, but the idea has emerged again at intervals. Further work was carried out in Germany in the 1930s and in the US in the 1950s. Pigeons blend in with the background; a familiar sight in every major city in the world, they pass unnoticed practically everywhere. The CIA admits to having used spy pigeons, and details of their missions are still classified.² A modern version might still be in use somewhere.

However, there may be other options. Electronics means that everything is smaller, and you don't need to have your camera flying around at random. One of the aims of DARPA's Hybrid Insect Micro-Electro-Mechanical Systems (MI-MEMS) programme was to create a cyborg moth that can be



The CIA admits to having used spy pigeons and their missions are still classified

remotely controlled. The research had three strands: implanting electronics into insects, drawing power from the host to run them, and controlling the insect's flight. The aim was to have a moth that could be directed to fly 100m (330ft), land 5m (16ft) from a specified target and stay there. The programme apparently ceased after 2010, but there have been

many related research efforts since then.³ One day we might see an entire zoo of radio-controlled animals.

Birds are relevant because, unlike moths, they have sharp eyesight and a highly developed ability to spot objects from altitude. Back in the 1970s and 80s, the US Coastguard carried out a project called Sea Hunt with pigeons to spot survivors floating in open water. Three pigeons were restrained and housed in a transparent bubble on the underside of a helicopter. They were trained to recognise red, yellow or orange objects floating on the water – likely to be lifejackets – and to respond by pecking a key. In tests, human observers spotted a lifejacket 38 per cent of the time, but the pigeons managed an impressive 93 per cent, with a low rate of false positives. Sea Hunt was cancelled in 1983, but it showed the value of a bird's eye view.

The Centre for Applied Animal Behaviour for Security Purposes at Tel Aviv University is known for its work with sniffer dogs. But, under the leadership of Professor Joseph Terkel of the Zoology Department, they have carried out a project involving birds. Terkel notes that, like humans, birds have a 'search image' of what they are looking for; when you are looking for your mobile phone on a cluttered table, your brain automatically matches what it sees with this stored

image. This means that when you change phones, you can easily fail to spot your new phone even when it is right in front of you. The bird's search image can be developed through a period of days or weeks of training.

Terkel's team have trained birds either to sweep over a wide area, or to remain over a particular location; in either case they will respond with a trained behaviour when they see a particular target.⁴ For example, a bird that flies over a concealed surface-to-air missile battery might circle clockwise and then anti-clockwise before moving on. This behaviour would be noted by a handler tracking the bird via a GPS-enabled transmitter. With this arrangement the bird need not carry any additional incriminating electronic gear, and would look just like a wild bird whose migration was being tracked.

Professor Terkel was not able to give any details his work, other than to confirm that it existed, and that it was not funded by DARPA as the university newspaper claimed. (He could not say who did fund it.)

There are also plenty of spies disguised as birds. Ever since the Aquiline project of the 1970s, spy agencies have been camouflaging their small drones to look like soaring birds. These typically mimic vultures, which are abundant in many parts of the world, and can circle, their electric motors inaudible at a few hundred feet, attracting little attention. A number of such drones have been recovered from Pakistan over the last few years.⁵

The recent scares over feathered Zionist agents are most likely all based on misidentification. But it would be naïve to think that a combination of training and technology could not turn a bird into a useful intelligence source – or that such a source would not be employed by intelligence agencies if they had a need for it.

NOTES

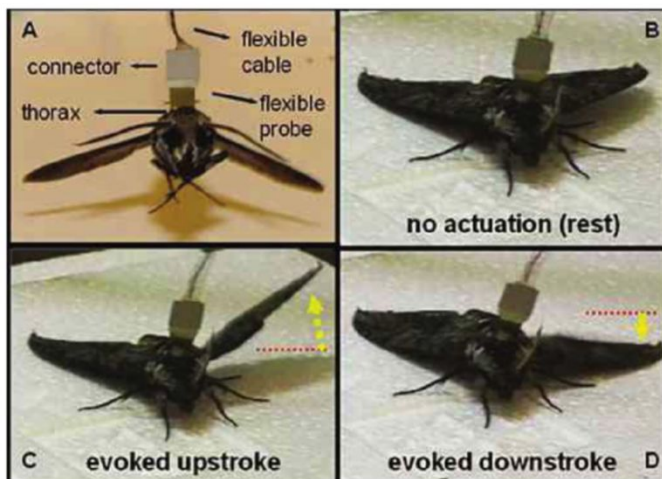
1 www.slate.com/blogs/behold/2012/10/29/julius_neubronner_and_the_amazing_world_of_pigeon_photography.html

2 www.cia.gov/about-cia/cia-museum/experience-the-collection/text-version/collection-by-subject/aerial-reconnaissance.html

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4 <http://k9.fgcu.edu/articles/Gazit-Goldblatt-Terkel.pdf>

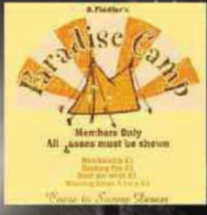
5 <http://defensetech.org/2011/08/29/mystery-drone-crash-in-pakistan/>



TOP: A replica of Cher Ami, the US Signal Corps pigeon awarded the "Croix de Guerre" in WWI. ABOVE: DARPA's remote-controlled cyborg moth programme ended in 2010.

Yes, she got a dress instead of a Nerdoh Tee this Xmas.

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GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE follows the trail of hauntings left by Britain's most famous highwayman

CARRY ON DICK

After Anne Boleyn and possibly Nell Gwynne, the spectre of highwayman Dick Turpin is claimed to appear at more locations across England than any other identified historic ghost. An Essex man, born at Hempstead in 1705 and hanged in York in 1739, Dick Turpin has thundered across the collective imagination of the English ever since the 19th century novelist William Harrison Ainsworth turned the highwayman, horse thief and thug into a folk-hero with his romantic tale *Rookwood* (1834). Numerous hotels, inns and taverns claim to have been associated with Turpin in his lifetime, and his popularity as a roving ghost coincides with the rise in haunted pub stories that began at the start of the 20th century.

Edwardian ghost book writer Charles Harper wrote in 1901: "If only one quarter of the deeds assigned to Turpin were true, his would be a very gallant, as well as phenomenally busy, figure on the roads of England. Although by no means a mythical person, the stories told of him nearly all belong to the regions of romance and history shows him to have had few redeeming qualities." (Harper, *The Norwich Road*, 1901)

Proving that you can't suppress a good legend by facts and reasoned arguments, when in September 2013 staff at the Chequers Inn at Smarden, Kent, reported being disturbed by a ghost, the local press immediately revived the pub's tradition of being "haunted by the spirit of notorious highwayman Dick Turpin" even though Mr Robert Stratford, the current manager, suggested the latest ghost might be a French criminal called Barnard. Turpin is said to have drunk regularly at the Chequers and could make quick getaways through tunnels from its cellars; other tales have him exiting up the back stairs or hiding from pursuers in a four-poster bed.

Female staff staying overnight in the Chequers have been bothered twice in 2013 by strange noises. In February, Jaime Smith was sleeping in the spare bedroom upstairs, in the old part of the pub, when around two or three o'clock she was woken by footsteps and a key turning in the lock of the door. Initially, she thought a member of the staff had returned, but then realised alarms had not been triggered. At the beginning of August, an assistant manager named Emma underwent a similar experience whilst Mr Stratford was away. According to the latter, "Throughout the night the door kept being blown open and she heard footsteps but when she looked out no one was there." Emma ended up pushing her suitcase against the door, but was awoken "by the case being knocked over and the door



GETTY IMAGES

DICK TURPIN'S GHOST MIGHT BE STALKING THE HOME OF ONE DIRECTION STAR HARRY STYLES

pushed wide open." (Sources: *The Gazette, News Shopper* etc, 17 Sept 2013).

These manifestations are just the latest in a long history of incidents at the pub. In 2008 another manager, Mr Danny Goldsborough, recounted his own experiences of hearing footsteps, published under the headline "Spirits alive at Dick Turpin's old haunt?" though he believed the footsteps he heard were those of a female in high heels (Dick Turpin in disguise perhaps?). Recalling the incident, he stated: "I looked over my shoulder but there was nothing there – and nothing on the CCTV either. Little things are happening all the time. Things move. A lot of the activity is in the bathroom. Once I heard my two-year-old girl talking to 'a little boy' who didn't exist. Even a friend visited who had no idea

ABOVE: Dick Turpin clears the Hornsey Gate.

BELOW: An unlikely tale of a Turpin haunting from the *Daily Express*, 31 May 1963.

about the ghosts... was pinned to the floor upstairs and had to crawl out of the room to stand up." (*Bromley Times*, 29 Oct 2008).

Going further back, similar testimony was collected from staff in the early 1970s, when landlord Albert Gordon stated he had often heard strange noises, including that of an inner door opening and slamming shut, followed by footsteps running up the stairs. Interestingly, he also noticed that the noises occurred particularly when he was away, stating that friends who ran the pub in his absence experienced the same sounds. A male figure in green velvet was 'seen' by a psychic visitor, and a barmaid named Florrie Taite told Jack Hallam, author of *The Haunted Inns of England* (1972), that this "could be Turpin's ghost".

The latest reports from the Chequers Inn come just one year after the announcement that Dick Turpin's ghost might be stalking the North London home of One Direction star and *X-Factor* TV show winner Harry Styles. According to the *Sun* (30 Sept 2012), the £3 million property bought by Styles is "known to be haunted by highwayman Dick Turpin". The basis of the claim are stories that a ghost has been seen inside the four-bedroomed property and looking from an upstairs window, and (citing an un-named source) "according to legend you can hear the sounds of his horse Bess's hooves' outside". Thus, the media link one fantasy figure with another, with journalists and publicists making the most of vague stories of hauntings at a domestic property connected with "this especial hero of the Penny



Dreadful and the romantic imagination of the average errand boy" (that's Turpin, not Styles), in the same way numerous hostelrys have exploited the slightest Turpin association since Charles Harper first aired his complaints.

Despite the disapproving Harper having omitted all mention of Turpin "the cowardly ruffian" from his classic *Haunted Houses* (1907), in the same year another book appeared that seems to have started the whole spectral Turpin phenomenon. This was *Lays and Legends of the Forest of Essex* by Edward Cunningham, which proclaimed Turpin's ghost rode down Trap's Hill at Loughton three times a year. Remarkably, at a certain point, the ghost of a thin old woman jumps on his back or is dragged behind him. She is supposed to be the ghost of an elderly widow whom Turpin tortured in life by holding her over a fire to make her reveal where she had hidden her gold. Not surprisingly, "she shrieks mournfully" and it is an omen of misfortune to see the apparitions. It is claimed Turpin inflicted this hideous act of brutality upon the old lady at Alderton Hall, where her spirit appeared in the 20th century as a white lady ghost to the family of film and TV actor the late Jack Watling. (See "'White Lady' walks the landings of Alderton Hall", *Essex Gazette and Independent*, 22 Dec 1972).

Other haunted sites in Essex associated with visits from Turpin include the now vanished Fremnell's Manor at Downham, where he supposedly rode his horse up the stairs and stabled it in an attic, and where a phosphorescent male form was seen in 1951, shortly before the building was lost beneath the Hanningfield Reservoir. His ghost supposedly once galloped along the Stock Road at Billericay between St Andrew's hospital and Hill House, according to Jessie K Payne in her *Ghost Hunter's Guide to Essex* (1987). This autumn, over a century on from Cunningham's story, a charity ghost walk was being arranged in Epping Forest, where Turpin's ghost "is said to roam". (*Southend Echo*, 7 Oct 2013).

Turpin's ghost has been variously placed on the Great North Road where "any spectral horseman on the A1 has, ever since Dick's death in his early thirties, been dubbed Dick Turpin" (John Harries in *The Ghost Hunter's Road Book*, 1968). Dr Eric Maple had Turpin galloping through Leicestershire and the eastern counties in his *Supernatural England* (1977).

A ghostly Turpin wearing a tricorn hat and jacket with scarlet sleeves appeared riding up the A5 between Nuneaton and Hinckley (Watling Street), with claimed sightings in 1927 and 1979. He was also said to gallop through the once remote Wroughton-on-Green, though by the 1960s it was expected he would face competition with heavy traffic from Milton Keynes. However, even Heathrow airport was being haunted by Turpin in 2009, though claimed sightings



ABOVE: The Spaniards Inn, Hampstead, one of many pubs said to have been haunted by Turpin.

were limited to a single passenger (*D.Telegraph*, 28 Sept 2009).

The area around Maidenhead, Berkshire, claims several Turpin phantoms, notably at 'Hangman's Corner' in Pinkneys Green, which horses allegedly will not pass. Here, highwaymen were executed and there once was a "Turpin Lodge". His ghost also frequented the site of "Aunt Turpin's Cottage" in the Maidenhead suburbs and the village of Stubbings where he supposedly fired pistol shots at the vicarage. In Hampshire, at Waller's Ash near Winchester, Turpin appears as one of a pair of ghostly riders, the other being his confederate Sam Waller with whom he concealed loot inside a hollow tree (see Philip W Sergeant, *Historic British Ghosts*, circa 1936).

In October 1947 a tale of Turpin's ghost was used by a house owner in Bedfordshire to try and obtain a reduction in rates (the form of local property tax before 1990). Mr Key, owner of 'Woodfield', a large house at Aspley Guise, appealed to the Luton Council's Assessment Committee for a reduction of his rates. One of the grounds of his appeal was that the house had a reputation for haunting, lowering its rental value. In his letters to the Assessment Committee, he quoted a legend that a previous owner shut up his daughter and her lover in a cupboard where they starved to death. Years later, Turpin broke into the house and found the skeletons in the cupboard. As the price of his silence he demanded the use of the house as a hideout. In return he helped dispose of the skeletons and in the 20th century it was claimed he returned as a phantom.

The appeal prompted what was labelled the first 'official' investigation into a haunting, an early highlight in the career of ghost-hunter Peter Underwood, although he considered the case unproven. Even less impressed was veteran psychical researcher Professor DJ West, who was also present. Organised with backing from local Councillor HWM Richards, two séances were held at the house in which a

Mrs Florence Thompson, a trance medium, became controlled by what was said to be a distressed spirit, calling out: "Let me go. Let me go. You are killing me. Don't shoot me." Mrs Thompson is reported to have said that she got the impression of a 'tied up' condition and that two lovers were concerned. However, as Peter Underwood pointed out, the precautions taken to ensure that the medium knew nothing of the legend were insufficient and it had actually been mentioned in the local *Luton News* on 25 September, the day before. Despite a second séance a fortnight later, the appeal failed. (See Peter Underwood, *Nights in Haunted Houses*, 1994; DJ West, *Journal of the SPR*, vol 34, Dec 1947).

Peter Underwood seems to have had more luck at the Spaniards Inn, Hampstead, the most famous inn connected with Turpin, stating: "I actually heard the clatter of horses' hooves, just for a second followed by complete and utter silence. I am satisfied that no actual horses were anywhere in the vicinity at the time." (See *Peter Underwood's Guide to Ghosts and Haunted Places*, 1996). The Spaniards Inn certainly made much of its Turpin links over the last century, at one time displaying pistols, a pistol ball and bent cutlery as the highwayman's relics, and today remains one of the top attractions on London's ghost tourist circuit.

Fifty years ago, in May 1963, Turpin's ghost was said to be walking through the Bell Inn at Stilton, Huntingdonshire, every Wednesday night, terrifying a 10-month-old boxer dog named after the highwayman. Pub landlord Malcolm Moyer told the *Daily Express* how he, his wife and baby daughter had all been disturbed along with neighbours by the dog's howling "like a madman" every Wednesday night after midnight. Mr Moyer refused to sleep in a room where Turpin had reputedly hidden because of its strange atmosphere and after a fire set in the grate spontaneously burst alight. The frightened dog was put on tranquillisers, but none of this stopped Mr Moyer from dressing up as a highwayman when serving drinks in the street the following year when the pub closed temporarily for repairs (*Daily Express*, 31 May 1963; *Morning Advertiser*, May 1964).

Turpin met his end on the gallows in York, and is traditionally said to have been buried near St George's Church in the city, though this has been doubted. The poor maintenance of what is purportedly his grave has been an issue since the mid-1970s. Elliot O'Donnell also recorded in his *Haunted Churches* (1939) 'a curious rumour' about the same St George's Church that "occasionally a phantom rabbit is seen at night, or in the early hours of the morning, scampering about the aisles. Attempts have been made to catch it, but always without success." Yes, you've guessed it. It's Dick Turpin!



ARCHAEOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING shines a light on some Roman treasures – an exceptional eagle and a remarkable chalice



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ABOVE LEFT: The splendid Roman eagle unearthed at the Minories, London. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Lycurgus Cup – evidence of Roman nanotechnicians at work?

THE LONDON EAGLE

In September, a 26in (66cm) statue of an eagle claspng a serpent in its beak was found 12ft (3.6m) down in a Roman drainage ditch at the Minories, between Aldgate and the Tower of London. Unearthed by Antoinetta Lerz and David Sankey in the final hours of an excavation that had lasted eight months, it probably adorned the tomb of a wealthy citizen of the 1st or 2nd century AD, when Londinium was exploding in population and wealth. Its back is flattened and plain, suggest it was sheltered by a niche. Made of limestone from the Cotswolds, it symbolises the struggle between good and evil, and triumph over death. Scattered animal bones and pottery nearby suggest funeral feasts or that kinsfolk revisited the tomb to dine with the spirits of their dead.

The eagle was a Roman symbol of power, while the serpent represented danger and the power of the underworld. The motif was inherited from an ancient Greek prototype. The only comparable find in Britain is the sad stump of a bird, lacking head, wings and feet, found at a Roman villa site in Keynesham, Somerset, in the 1920s; the statue it most closely resembles is an eagle and serpent discovered in Trans-Jordan in 1937, now in the Cincinnati Art Museum. Eagles are found across the Roman Empire, usually as symbols of imperial clout, but they were also used as

funerary emblems: there are contemporary accounts of live eagles trapped within the funeral pyres of emperors, freed to soar towards the sky as the flames crackled, symbolising the moment when the dead man became a god.

“[The statue’s] condition is extraordinary, as crisp as the day it was carved,” said Rev Prof Martin Henig, an expert in Roman art from Oxford. “All it has lost is the surface paint. The sculpture is of exceptional quality, the finest by a Romano-British artist ever found in London.” In fact, its condition is so pristine that archaeologists briefly thought they had found a Victorian garden ornament. Michael Marshall, finds specialist at the Museum of London (where the statue is on display), said: “Funerary sculpture from the city is very rare and this example, perhaps from inside a mausoleum, will help us to understand how the cemeteries and tombs that lined the roads out of the city were furnished and the beliefs of those buried there.” *Guardian, D.Telegraph, Independent, D.Mail, 30 Oct 2013.*

NANOTECHNOLOGY PIONEERS

A 1,600-year-old Roman glass chalice – known as the Lycurgus Cup because it bears a scene involving King Lycurgus of Thrace – appears jade green when lit from the front but blood-red when lit from behind. This

property puzzled scientists for decades after the British Museum acquired the cup in the 1950s, but in 1990 researchers examined broken fragments under a microscope and discovered that the Roman artisans were nanotechnology pioneers: they had impregnated the glass with particles of silver and gold, ground down until they were as small as 50 nanometres in diameter, less than one-thousandth the size of a grain of table salt. The exact mixture of the precious metals suggests they knew what they were doing. When hit with light, electrons belonging to the metal flecks vibrate in ways that alter the colour depending on the observer’s position. Furthermore, they understood that different thicknesses of glass would exhibit different colouring. New research has suggested that the cup also changes colours when liquid is poured into it – although the researchers did not do so as it might have caused damage. Instead, they undertook lab experiments to replicate the makeup of the cup, then applied various liquids. Their results suggest the cup might have displayed a variety of colours depending on which sort of beverage was poured into it. The cup depicts King Lycurgus ensnared in a tangle of grapevines – penance for treachery committed against Dionysus, god of wine. The cup is the key to a super-sensitive new technology that might help diagnose disease

CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

170: TYANA-SAURUS REX

“So in they hurried all, ‘mazed, curious and keen:

*Save one, who look’d thereon with eye severe,
And with calm-planted steps walk’d in austere;
‘Twas Apollonius: something too he laugh’d,
As though some knotty problem, that had daft
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt: – ‘twas just as he foresaw.”*

– Keats, *Lamia*, from Philostratus, via Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621)

The prime source (scattered allusions apart) for Apollonius of Tyana (in Roman Cappadocia) is his biography by Philostratus (third-century AD), best read in CP Jones’s annotated Penguin translation (1970).

Apollonius is often dubbed the pagan Christ. It helped that they were contemporaries. The first Englisher, Reverend Edward Berwick (1809), was responding to Edward Gibbon’s

“sneer of ludicrous scorn”. The latter had written: “Apollonius of Tyana was born about the same time as Jesus Christ. His life (that of the former) is related in so fabulous a manner by his fanatic disciples, that we are at a loss to discover whether he was a sage or an impostor.”

In 1832, German theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur argued that Philostratus’s biography was intended as anti-Christian propaganda. Despite Jones (“No reputable scholar would hold this opinion any more”), he had a point: anti-Christians such as NeoPlatonists Porphyry and Hierocles promoted Apollonius’s miracles as equal if not superior to Christ’s. Baur’s notion was vigorously pro-Pounded in Ezra’s *Cantos*.

Apollonius’s birth was accompanied by a tremendous lightning bolt. Nearby was a mysterious well: if perjurers drank from it, they immediately contracted dropsy or consumption. His first recorded miracle was curing a dying young debauchee with simple words of good advice – would cut NHS costs and waiting-times.

The first demonstration of his extrasensory perception was to predict the exact date of the murder by public slaves of Cilicia’s brutal ruler. In India he encountered: cups

made from wild asses’ horns, drinking from which made one immune to illness and pain; a woman black from head to breasts, then white down to toes; a rival thaumaturge who healed a blind man; and a woman prone to miscarriages.

The locals warned him about “a fearful mermaid” destroying ships in nearby waters – female Somalian pirate? At Corinth, Apollonius unmasked a beautiful bride-to-be as a vampire – this *lamia* the source for Burton-Keats – dubbed by Philostratus “the most famous story about him.”

By contrast, he then raised a girl from the dead, albeit Philostratus allows that she might have just been unconscious, thereby showing that he was not boundlessly credulous. At Syracuse, he saw on show a three-headed baby, “each on its own neck but the rest belonged to a single body.” In Egypt, he Pythagoreanly

detected in a tame lion the soul of former Pharaoh Amasis, upon which the beast sobbed human tears – variant of the Androcles story, if you read between the lions.

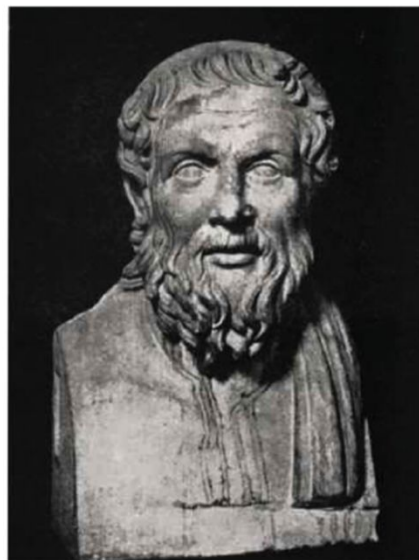
Ethiopia produced a tabloid excitement, a satyr who had killed the two women it most lusted after. Apollonius tracked it to its lair and talked it into reform – Philostratus insists that “satyrs exist and have love affairs,” perhaps expecting some reader scepticism. He then simultaneously healed a boy bitten by a rabid dog and the canine

itself, by getting Rover to lick the wound then swim across the river Cydnus’s curative waters.

The biography concludes with the double dénouement of Apollonius saved from his persecutor Domitian by suddenly vanishing from the interrogation room – Beam Me Up, Scotty! – then seeing that emperor’s assassination at Rome in real time from faraway Ephesus in Turkey.

Apollonius finally repeated his vanishing trick, transported up to heaven – Well, he would be, wouldn’t he? His reputation lasted well into Byzantium, extended to India and Islam, and has persisted to modern times, from (e.g.) de Sade and Schiller to the *7 Faces of Dr Lao* and TV’s *The Fantastic Journey*.

“Supernatural is a word that has no place in my vocabulary” – Fort, *Books*, p655



or pinpoint biohazards at security checkpoints. *Smithsonian magazine*, Sept; *phys.org*, 27 Aug 2013.

OLDEST CALENDAR?

The world’s oldest lunar ‘calendar’ may have been discovered in Aberdeenshire. Excavations at Warren Field near Crathes Castle found a series of 12 pits that appear to mimic the phases of the Moon and track lunar months, as well as aligning on the Midwinter sunrise – so that the lunar calendar could be annually recalibrated to bring it back into line with the solar year. The pits, first excavated in 2004, may have contained wooden posts. Archaeologists suggest the ancient monument was created by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers about 10,000 years ago, a good five millennia before the formal time-measuring monuments of Mesopotamia. Vince Gaffney, professor of landscape archaeology at Birmingham, said the pit alignment “illustrates one important step towards the formal construction of time and therefore history itself.” *BBC News*, *Independent*, 15 July 2013.

CHARACTER-FORMING

Fragments of two ancient stone axes found at a site in Pinghu, just south of Shanghai in China, could display some of the world’s earliest primitive writing, dating back at least 5,000 years to the Neolithic Liangzhu civilisation, some 1,400 years older than the earliest known written Chinese characters found on Shang dynasty ‘oracle bones’. Each shape has two to five strokes, but Chinese scholars are divided on whether they are proper writing or a less sophisticated stream of symbols. The broken axes are among thousands of fragments of ceramic, stone, jade, wood, ivory and bone excavated from the site between 2003 and 2006, more than 200 bearing the supposed ‘writing’, but it has taken years to examine everything. “There are six symbols arranged together and three of them are the same, resembling the modern Chinese character for human beings,” said lead archaeologist Xu Xinmin, referring to markings on one of the axe fragments. “This clearly is a sentence expressing some kind of meaning”. Other archaeologists said there was insufficient material to draw conclusions. [AP] 10 July; *BBC News*, *Metro*, 11 July; *Irish Times*, 12 July 2013.

UNNATURAL WORLD

Champion swimming boar, escapologist pony, monster rat, a rain of toads and jelly from the stars



ABOVE LEFT: Alisdhair Currie-Crawford with one of the tiny toads. ABOVE RIGHT: The jelly-like substance found at the RSPB's Ham Wall Nature Reserve in Somerset.

KEITH HEPPEL

RSPB

TOAD RAIN IN CAMBRIDGE

On the afternoon of 23 July, hundreds of toads covered Stourbridge Common in Cambridge and boats moored along the River Cam as cyclists and walkers tried to tiptoe through the amphibian mass. It was 24 hours after the birth of Prince George and – at a stretch – could be seen as some kind of fortean royal tribute. As the *Cambridge News* (24 July 2013) referred to “tiny creatures”, the plummeting critters were presumably *baby* toads. “I have never seen anything like it in my life,” said Alisdhair Currie-Crawford, 56, who lives on the narrow boat *Sweet Alice* on the Cam. “The whole path was just covered in them and extended onto the grass. You couldn’t walk around without it becoming genocide. There were hundreds of them all over Stourbridge Common and they were all over our boat on the deck – it was the most incredible sight. They were jumping around everywhere. I can only think they came from the sky because they suddenly appeared from nowhere.” No one has come forward to say they witnessed the toads actually falling, but the phenomenon has been well attested for the last few centuries.

The very first issue of this magazine carried a report of tens of thousands of small toads falling on Brignoles, a village in the south

of France, on 23 September 1973 [FT1:9]. *FT* has reported many other such falls, the most recent being a witnessed ‘frog fall’ in Serbia in 2007 [FT225:14].

STAR ROT

A classic fortean phenomenon, first described in the 14th century, was some *pwdre ser* (Welsh for ‘star rot’) found at a number of locations on the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) Ham Wall Nature Reserve near Glastonbury in Somerset the same week that the Chelyabinsk (or Chebarkul) meteor smashed into Siberia (15 February 2013, FT300:7). The jelly measured on average 4in (10cm) in diameter, and was found on grass banks away from the water’s edge. Samples were sent to the Identification and Advisory Service at the Natural History Museum in London. “The slime is a genuine mystery,” said Chesca Rogers, who is leading the effort to identify the gelatinous material. “There are stories in folklore that link it with meteor sightings. Some people think it might be unfertilised frog spawn, others think it is a fungus, or a slime mould, or that it is plant-related.”

Other popular hypotheses suggest it is a form of cyanobacteria called *Nostoc*, or remains of the regurgitated innards of amphibians such as

frogs and toads (including their spawn).

Speculation that the jelly-like substance from Somerset had an extraterrestrial origin heightened after an amateur photographer announced he had filmed a mysterious object in the sky above the reserve itself. The strange streak looked like another meteor but was not confirmed by astronomers. More slime was found in mid-October (presumably at the same general location), at a time when frogs were not spawning. Dr Hanna Hartikainen, who had been conducting experiments on the original slime samples, said: “We extracted some DNA from the jelly and tried to identify where it came from using probes for frog and bird DNA but were not able to find any of those.” For more on *pwdre ser* (aka astral jelly, astromyxin or fairy butter) see “Return of the blob” [FT283:22]. *BBC News*, *D.Mirror*, 18 Feb; *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 Oct 2013.

UNLIKELY SWIMMERS

A wild boar has been found on the Channel Isle of Alderney. No foxes or badgers, let alone wild boar, are indigenous to the island. Alderney, which is only three miles (4.8km) long, has strict livestock importing laws, so anyone bringing the boar ashore would have been obliged to apply for a licence – but officials say no such application was has been made. The 330lb (150kg)

black animal was only making fleeting appearances at dusk, so islanders have named it ‘Ghost Pig’. Jake Woodnutt, 19, tracked it to a farm and managed to catch it on camera at the end of October. “We put out some food and I hid in a trailer and it came in to feed,” he said. “There’s no doubt it was a wild boar.” His father Alan, a farmer, also snapped a picture of a boar-like animal on his phone. Alan’s wife Tess said: “It looks like there could be two different pigs. Jake’s photograph looks like a sow, it’s smaller than the one my husband pictured, which we think is male. It came trotting towards him and was a scary-looking beast. We’ve not had simultaneous sightings, so we can’t be sure, but that only adds to the mystery.”

The wild boar population in France has exploded in recent years and is estimated to stand at more than a million. They are regularly hunted in Normandy, the region closest to Alderney. Steve Parsonage, a wild boar farmer in Cheshire, said the seven mile (11km) crossing from France would be possible for a fully-grown boar. Mrs Woodnutt said the boar (or boars) could also have been smuggled in during a motoring festival at the end of September, when revellers’ vans were craned onto the quays. “There’s no way it came in by plane and there’s no ferry,” she added. *D.Mail*, 2 Nov 2013.

A^Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the crypto-zoological garden

• On 3 October, a 20-year-old Shetland pony called Reggie vanished from a field in Advie, Moray, which was surrounded by an electrified fence. On 11 October, after more than a week of frantic searching, local gillie Robert Mitchell spotted the animal on a small, 100-yard long island in the River Spey. Reggie's owner Carol Excell and her husband Chris managed to coerce the reluctant animal into waddling across the river and back to Advie. "He was more than a mile down the river from his field and the island he was on is very inaccessible," said Mrs Excell. "There is one calm backwater, but I needed waders to cross it and the rest is all channels and streams and a lot of it is very deep. I really cannot see a Shetland pony crossing the width of the Spey. He doesn't even like the water. It is completely odd." (*Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 15 Oct; *Metro*, 16 Oct 2013.

GIANT RAT

A rat 20 times normal size was seen snatching 3kg (6.6lb) fish from a pond in a village in Shaoyang, in China's Hunan province, before swallowing them whole. Local farmers caught the metre-long rodent, weighing 5kg (11lb), but when they tried to cook it they broke two knives trying to hack through its skin and bones. *MX News (Sydney)*, 2 Oct 2013.



DROPPING IN ON AUSTRALIA'S LOST WORLD

Three new species of vertebrate have been discovered in what has been dubbed a 'Lost World' in Australia. The rainforested top of the rugged, virtually impassable Cape Melville mountain range in Cape York Peninsula had remained largely unexplored until biologist Dr Conrad Hoskin from Queensland's James Cook University and a film crew from *National Geographic* were dropped down onto it by helicopter earlier in 2013, and were amazed by what they found there. One was a lizard of the skink family with bright gold scales, another a yellow boulder-inhabiting frog dappled with brown blotches, while the third was a gecko with huge eyes and a very large leaf-shaped tail, which it uses for camouflage. This last-mentioned species has been formally dubbed the Cape Melville leaf-tailed gecko *Saltuarius eximius*. It was deemed by Hoskin to be a relic species, and as such the highlight of their expedition of discovery to this largely uncharted high-altitude realm. <http://news.yahoo.com/lost-world-discovered-remote-australia-024127998.html> 28 Oct 2013.

CROSSBRED CURIOSITIES

Two notable yet unexpected firsts featuring hybridisation in the wild have been confirmed recently, and both of them involve very sizeable marine species. A joint team of researchers from the University of Oviedo's genetics department and the Project of Marine Mammals of the Spanish Institute of Oceanographics (IEO) were examining genetic samples from whales living in various stretches of sea in Europe as well as in French Polynesia when they discovered to their great surprise via their analyses that a certain whale individual inhabiting the waters off the Spanish coast was a definite pilot whale hybrid, and was itself fertile. The first hybrid pilot whale ever confirmed scientifically, its mother was a common (short-finned) pilot whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus* and its father a tropical (long-finned) pilot whale *G. melas*.

And following a scientific research trip during October and November 2012 to the Dungonab Marine Park in the Sudanese Red Sea, the world's first confirmed manta ray hybrid was formally identified by marine biologists from the Great Lakes

Institute for Environmental Research (GLIER) at the University of Windsor. A total of 22 manta rays were successfully tagged, sampled genetically, and then released. When their genetic samples were analysed, the biologists discovered that one was from an unequivocal hybrid of the giant manta *Manta birostris* and the reef manta *M. alfredi*. This was quite unexpected, because although the geographical ranges of the two manta species overlap, they generally exhibit different habitat use and movement patterns, so that it had been assumed that they would be reproductively isolated from one another – but apparently not. http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&RCN=36215 4 Nov 2013; www.cousteau.org/news/manta-ray-hybrid-sudan-red-sea 22 Oct 2013.

ALL SHOOK UP IN THE SOLENT

A thornback skate *Raja clavata* recently caught alive in the Solent caused considerable surprise, not only for the fishermen who hooked it but also for the Portsmouth Blue Reef Aquarium's staff who received it shortly afterwards – due to its extra fin. Because this structure resembled a quiff, it was not long before the ray was dubbed Elvis. Rays are related to sharks, and there was some initial speculation that perhaps Elvis's extra fin was an atavistic dorsal fin, comparable to that of sharks. However, following closer observation by fish curator James Maclaine from London's Natural History Museum, an oddly shaped and out-of-place additional pelvic fin seemed a more plausible explanation. Elvis is now a permanent exhibit at the Blue Reef Aquarium. www.nhm.ac.uk/about-us/news/2013/october/mutant-skate-named-elvis-caught-by-portsmouth-fishermen124280.html 4 Oct 2013.



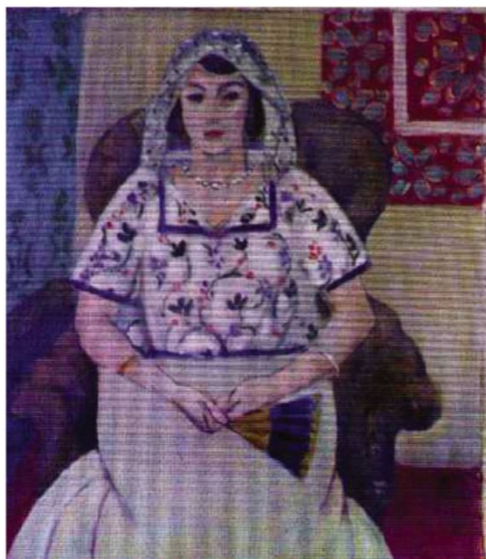
DR CONRAD HOSKIN

BLUE REEF AQUARIUM, PORTSMOUTH



LOADSAMONEY!

BAFFLING BILLIONS IN A MOSCOW AIRPORT, A BOX FULL OF JEWELS ATOP MONT BLANC AND A HOARD OF ARTISTIC MASTERWORKS HIDDEN IN A MUNICH APARTMENT



ABOVE: The 1,406 paintings found in Cornelius Gurlitt's Munich flat (below) included works by (left to right) Matisse, Chagall and Otto Dix.

NAZI PAINTING HOARD

Cornelius Gurlitt, 80, was stopped on a train to Switzerland in 2010 carrying 9,000 euros (£7,600) in cash during a sweep by customs officers against Germans with undeclared bank accounts across the border. In the spring of 2011, a follow-up search of his flat in Munich uncovered 1,406 paintings by Canaletto, Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Klee, Renoir, Courbet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Otto Dix, Max Beckmann and many other masters, stacked behind piles of rotting food and said to be worth more than a billion euros (£847 million). Why the Bavarian government waited until November 2013 to publicise this amazing find is unclear. It later emerged that Gurlitt had a dilapidated second property in the affluent Salzburg suburb of Aigen; incredibly, at the time of the reports, this has yet to be searched; it might hold further artistic treasures.

Tracked down by two *Paris Match* journalists, shopping for groceries near his Munich flat on 8 November, the reclusive Cornelius Gurlitt declined to be interviewed, offering only the cryptic comment: "Approval that comes from the wrong side is the

1,406 works were stacked behind piles of rotting food

worst thing that can happen." He is the son of Hildebrandt Gurlitt, a prominent Munich art dealer who helped Goebbels sell part of the 20,000-item 'degenerate art' collection exhibited in 1937 to showcase art of which the Nazis disapproved. Goebbels later appointed Gurlitt to be

the director of a 'super museum' the Germans hoped to build in Linz, the Austrian city where Hitler grew up. Gurlitt also bought many works at knockdown prices from Jews fleeing Germany. After World War II, he was allowed to continue in business. He told Allied investigators that the artworks were destroyed when the family mansion was ruined in the firebombing of Dresden in February 1945. Gurlitt Senior died in 1956, and over the years his son is thought to have sold about 15 works, including a Kandinsky, as a means of support.

According to Ekkehart Gurlitt, 65, Cornelius's cousin in

Barcelona, Cornelius has always claimed to know the whereabouts of the famous amber room, installed by the Tsarina Elisabeth in her new Tsarskoye Selo Palace outside St Petersburg in 1755 and looted by the Nazis in 1941 [see FT237:21-22], and has promised to reveal it to the public before he dies. Although it is widely believed that the 100,000 amber panels, weighing six tons, were destroyed in a fire at Konigsberg Castle in April 1945, there has never been any definitive proof of this. Over the decades, there have been countless investigations into the whereabouts of the room. One of the most outstanding pieces of art ever created, the panels, we are told, would now be worth more than £200 million. *D. Telegraph*, 4+5+6+12 Nov; *dailymail.co.uk*, 6 Nov 2013.

MASTERWORK MINE

More masterworks destined for the Linz 'super-museum' were on the point of being found according to press reports last year. In May 2012, Viennese art historian Burkhart List, 62, was due to lead an expedition into an old silver mine in the Erzgebirge Mountains, near the Czech-German border, where he



believed over 150 works seized from the Hungarian Baron Ferenc Hatvany – including paintings by Monet, Manet, Cezanne and many others – had been stashed by the Nazis in the 1940s, along with sculptures, carpets and tapestries. The trove was thought to be worth a cool \$800 million. The lack of subsequent headlines suggests the expedition was fruitless. *D.Mail*, 26 Mar; *bluinartinfo.com*, *D.Express*, 30 Mar 2012.

AIRPORT BILLIONS

For most of us, high finance falls into the realm of unexplained phenomena. We have to take it on trust that *someone* understands it. Take the 20 billion euros in cash allegedly sitting for the last six years in Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport – or rather don't, it's not yours. That's enough dosh to cover the EU's predicted budget shortfall for 2013. Some believe it was sent there by Saddam Hussein, who allegedly had 12 billion euros in cash brought to Moscow in 2002 and invested in real estate. Many people, however, doubt its very existence.

The story, as told by the newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, is that on 7 August 2007 security company Brink's flew from Frankfurt to Moscow and delivered 200 wooden pallets with 20 billion euros in 100-euro notes owned by one "Farzin Kororian Motlagh", according to a Sheremetyevo delivery document that does not list a recipient. Several Russian intelligence agencies took control of the shipment, which remains unclaimed. The banknotes, we are told, would completely fill five London double-decker buses.

In a subsequent article in the same newspaper, an intelligence source calling himself 'Ivan' spins an intriguing backstory. Long ago, he tells us, the US government sent two Federal Reserve officers to Iran with a money-printing press to pay for oil it had bought. When US-Iranian relations went sour, the Iranians were left with six trillion euros in cash they couldn't use. This was transported to Frankfurt, where it was converted at a disadvantageous rate into three trillion euros. Brink's then delivered the money

to 27 countries, including Russia.

Motlagh was one of three people the Iranian government entrusted with picking up the money, but he tried to steal one of the shipments in Abu Dhabi and then suffered a suspicious heart attack in the custody of Iranian intelligence. A Facebook page for "Farzin Kororian Motlagh" created in 2012 shows a man resembling the one shown on an Iranian passport published by *Moskovsky Komsomolets*. Fraudsters including Armenians, Chechens, Turks, Kurds, Japanese, members of al-Qa'ida and even the Knights of Malta have tried to claim the Moscow money mountain, as did a foundation called "World of Kind People" run by Ukrainian intelligence agents, according to Ivan. *Independent*, 3 Oct 2013.

MONT BLANC TROVE

Last September, a 20-year-old French alpinist scaling Mont Blanc came upon a metal box poking out of the ice on the Glacier de Bossons. Inside were about 100 emeralds, rubies and sapphires with an estimated value of £207,000. They were neatly packed into sachets, some bearing the stamp "Made in India". The climber, who prefers to remain anonymous, handed the treasure to gendarmes in the nearby town of Bourg-saint-Maurice. The French authorities contacted their Indian counterparts to trace the owner or heirs of the jewels. If the search is fruitless, under French law the treasure may be given to the finder (or divided 50/50 with

the French state).

Two Air India planes have crashed into Mont Blanc in the past 70 years – in 1950 and in 1966. Since then, climbers have found a jet engine, newspapers, human body parts and other objects. Last year, India was given a diplomatic bag that had been on board the Kanchenjunga, the Boeing 707 flying from Mumbai to London that crashed in fog on Mont Blanc's southwest face on 24 January 1966. The crash killed 117 people, including the pioneer of India's nuclear programme, Homi Jehangir Bhabha. Police believe the jewels were on that flight. *D.Telegraph*, 27 Sept; *D.Mail*, 28 Sept 2013.

RAINING MONEY

It was "raining dollar bills" on a construction site in the Dutch city of Tilburg when workers knocked down a building with a digger. Dozens of local people swarmed over the rubble looking for cash. Residents claimed that the windfall amounted to £1.5 million. "I spent the whole night burrowing between the sand and stones," said one local. The owner of the property – and presumably of the cash – was unknown. "We do not rule out that it is a big joke," said a police spokesman. *D.Telegraph*, 13 Sept 2013.

\$2 MILLION CHEQUE

Maintenance staff on the Madrid metro in Spain were checking a train's faulty door on 25 September when one of them spotted a leather wallet jammed in the frame. Along with a credit

card and a California driving licence, it contained a Bank of America cheque for \$2 million. Police presume the wallet was stolen and were trying to trace the owner. *Sun*, *Metro*, 27 Sept 2013.

ONE GOOD DEED...

Glen James, 54, a quietly spoken bespectacled man and former courthouse clerk, had subsisted on government food stamps and spare change from passers-by since falling on hard times and becoming homeless in 2005. In September he found a bag outside the Boston shopping mall where he spent each day with his begging cup. It contained \$2,400 (£1,500) in cash and nearly \$40,000 in traveller's cheques, plus a passport and personal papers. He immediately waved down a police officer. The authorities reunited the bag with its frantic owner, a visitor from China who had reported its loss. In recognition of Mr James's altruism, Boston police commissioner praised his "extraordinary show of character and honesty". After reading about the homeless man's action, Ethan Whittington, a 27-year-old from Virginia, launched a fundraising effort on the *gofundme.com* website to give him a new start in life. At the time of the news report, this had raised \$130,000. *D.Telegraph*, 21 Sept 2013.

CRIMINAL CASH CACHED

Which just goes to show that honesty does sometimes pay – though not for Steven Fletcher. In September 2011, while renovating a burnt-out property in Leicester, Fletcher found a metal box concealed under a kitchen unit. Inside was £17,940 in cash – £20 notes neatly packaged into £1,000 bundles. He passed the money to the police. The flat had been empty since a fire gutted it six months earlier.

At an inquest, Leicestershire's Chief Constable Simon Cole successfully argued that the money probably came from "unlawful criminal conduct". Fletcher challenged the verdict at Leicester Crown Court, but lost. Fletcher got zilch, even though no one else has laid claim to the cash. *D.Telegraph*, 5 Nov 2013.



ABOVE: The Indian diplomatic bag found on Mont Blanc in 2012.

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

More slow TV, Forest Boy's benefit fraud, humming fish and Nessie hoaxer fesses up

NORWEGIAN 'SLOW TV' [FT302:9]



Apparently, the 12-hour reality TV programme about sawing, stacking and burning firewood that gripped Norway

last February is part of a growing trend in that country. It began in 2009, when millions tuned in to a seven-hour programme by NRK, the Norwegian public service broadcaster, showing the view from the roof of a train during chugging from Bergen to Oslo. "It was the 100th anniversary of this route and we'd planned a couple of documentaries," said Rune Møklebust, the head of programming at NRK. "Then someone said, 'why not film the whole trip?' We thought it would be something completely new... and cheap."

In the event, it was up against *X Factor* and the Norwegian *Have*

I Got News For You, but it got more viewers than either. Buoyed by this success, Mr Møklebust positioned 11 cameras on the side of a cruise ship and broadcast the views throughout a five-and-a-half-day journey along the Norwegian coast in 2011. This attracted 3.2 million viewers and a 36 per cent share of the country's TV viewing market. Since then, the channel has delighted viewers with a 24-hour salmon fishing special and last summer's hit: a boat trip spanning 379 hours.

The latest sensation was a nine-hour show on knitting broadcast on 1 November. In an attempt to beat the world "sheep to sweater" record, a team of Norwegian yarn enthusiasts sheared a ewe before spinning its wool and knitting a jumper, all against the clock. The previous record, held by Australians, is four hours and 51 minutes. *D.Telegraph*, 1 Nov 2013.



BOTH PICS: NRK

HUMDINGER [FT45:17]



Amorous fish may be responsible for a mysterious humming that keeps residents in Hythe, Hampshire,

awake. For weeks last summer, it started at 10pm and droned on all night. Some people moved away from the affected area and slept on friends' sofas to escape the nightmare. New Forest District Council received more than 30 complaints. "I thought I was going mad," said Linda Zammit. "I hear it every night unless it's windy or raining." Maria Dennett added: "It pulsates through the house." Scientists say the sound could be amplified by bouncing off buildings and ships.

A similar noise – "like an electric razor, but 10 or 15 times louder" – that in 1985 had been maddening the houseboat community in Sausalito, California, every summer night for over a decade, was blamed

on the mating call of 'singing toadfish'. The sound heard on the English south coast was also said to resemble the so-called 'Seattle hum' that plagued parts of the US city in the summer of 2012, which was reportedly identified as the mating call of midshipmen fish (a species of the genus *Porichthys* of toadfishes). The Scottish Association for Marine Science has announced that the Hythe hum might also be caused by midshipmen fish in a nearby estuary. Midshipmen males let out a distinctive drone to let females know they are searching for a mate. The noise often increases in volume as competing males attempt to out-hum each other. They are normally nocturnal creatures and can be found buried in mud during the day. The hums the fish are known for can last up to an hour and are produced by two muscles contracting on the swim bladder. *MX News (Sydney)*, *Sun*, 24 Oct 2013.

TOWER RAVENS [FT206:32-36]



Legend has it that ravens have been at the Tower of London since the 13th century and were protected by royal decree in the 17th century: if ever the number of ravens falls below six, then the kingdom will fall. In May 2013, a fox broke into the Tower and ate two of the ravens, Jubilee and Grip, just before they were due to be locked up in their cages overnight. According to a yeoman warden showing visitors round in October, there are in fact "usually nine held in the Tower; the six required by Charles II and three spare – not that we're superstitious or anything."

An annual budget of £4,000 is set aside for their care. Security, we are told, has been beefed up and pest control measures reviewed. Jubilee was named to mark the 60th year of the Queen's reign and Grip was called after

the raven in Charles Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* that inspired Edgar Allan Poe's famous poem. Two replacement ravens have been given the same names. The current avian guardians are named as Hugine, Erin, Merlin, Munin, Portia, Rocky, Jubilee, and Grip – so there are only eight at the moment. The tame birds often live into their 20s, with some reaching 40.

In fact, the whole Tower raven story is thought to be Victorian whimsy – though of course absence of evidence isn't solid evidence of absence. A royal menagerie was kept at the Tower for at least 600 years until 1835, when it was evicted to become the foundation for London Zoo, but there was never any mention of ravens. The earliest depictions of ravens at the Tower date to 1883; and there is no written reference to them before an 1895 article in an RSPCA journal, *The Animal World*. One Edith Hawthorn referred to the Tower's pet cat



KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER,
REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...

THE POSTMODERN NARRATIVISING OF
HYPERREAL BEHINDOLOGY

being tormented by the ravens, Jenny and a nameless mate. *Sunday Telegraph*, Sun, 27 Oct; *D.Mail*, 28 Oct; *D.Telegraph*, 30 Oct 2013.

FOREST BOY [FT292:11]



The Dutchman Robin van Helsum, 21, who turned up in Berlin in 2011 claiming to be a teenager called Ray who had been

living wild in a forest for five years, admitted benefit fraud when he appeared in court in Berlin on 26 September. Having cost the German authorities almost £25,000, he was ordered to perform 150 hours of community service and to undergo counselling. *D.Mail*, *D.Telegraph*, <i>27 Sept 2013.

MONSTER MASH! [FT293:14]



When George Edwards, skipper of the cruise ship *Nessie Hunter IV*, claimed in August 2012 to have seen the Loch Ness Monster on 2

November 2011 and taken a photo of its hump, a friend of veteran Nessie hunter Steve Feltham said

it looked a lot like a fibreglass prop he owned, which had been used in a 2010 *National Geographic* film about the monster. Now, under rigorous questioning by a reporter for the *Inverness Courier*, Edwards admitted that the hump he photographed was indeed the aforementioned prop. The whole thing had been a hoax staged to boost tourist numbers. *Guardian*, *D.Express*, 5 Oct 2013.

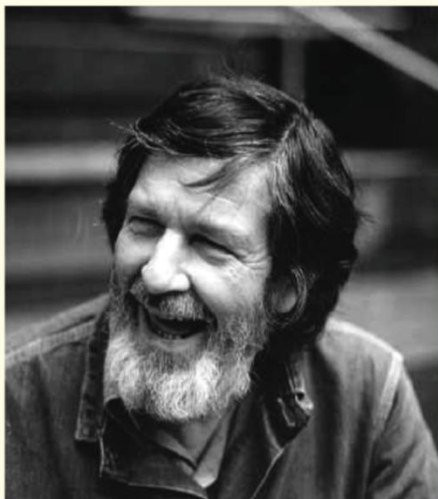
In August, another supposed Nessie image appeared. David Elder, 50, from East Kilbride, Lanarkshire, was on the pier head at Fort Augustus on the southwest bank of the loch, focusing on a swan, when he noticed a bow wave about 15ft (4.6m) long, which he claimed was caused by a "solid black object" gliding beneath the surface. He managed to take a five-minute video. "Water was definitely going over something solid and making a wave," he said. "It looked like the sort of wave created by a windsurfing board, but there was nobody on the loch at the time – no boats, nothing. The disturbance in the water began moving in the loch sideways. It is something I just can't explain." *D.Star*, *D.Mirror*, 27 Aug 2013.

PLENTY OF NOTHING [FT291:12]

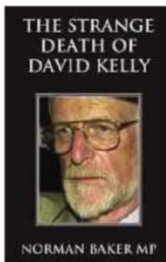


A CD of the sounds of silence inside a village church reminds us of the John Cage (below) composition 4'33" (1952), the double CD of Armistice Day silences (2001), and *One Minute Silence* (2002) by Wombles creator Mike Batt. The 30-minute recording was released to raise funds for repairs to the 12th century St Peter's Church in Seaford,

East Sussex. The only sounds that can be heard are the odd squeaking of the wooden pews, some footsteps and the distant hum of passing traffic. The CD sold out at a church open day and orders have come in from as far afield as Germany, Austria and Ghana. Roger Bing, 74, from Seaford, who came up with the idea, said: "Everybody seems to live busier, noisier lives. People sometimes like to sit down and just have a bit of peace and quiet. This CD is great for that." *D.Mail*, 28 Jan 2013.



HUTTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES



Is there any other subject in which a writer's opinion will be taken seriously even though he professes total ignorance of what he's commenting on?

Unlike Mr Hodges I did read – OK, I skimmed – Norman Baker's book. And no, I don't think he comes within shouting distance of making his Saddam's-people-did-it case. But he did at least try to work with the evidence that was available.

Asked by the BBC how he felt about being called a conspiracy theorist, Baker replied that people "tend to use the term when they want to insult people". True enough. What Mr Baker may not know, and Mr Hodges certainly will not know, is that the use of the term "conspiracy theorist" to dismiss someone and the claims they are making was introduced by the CIA in a 1967 memo sent to all its stations and assets, titled "Concerning Criticism of the Warren Report". Another road that runs out of that day in Dallas. ⁴

- 1 Conference details and participants are at: www2.winchester.ac.uk/ccs/events/launchconference.htm
- 2 www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-magazine-monitor-24442313
- 3 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/danhodges/100240167/conspiracy-theorist-norman-baker-is-new-home-office-minister-this-is-bonkers/>
- 4 Document text at: www.jfkclancer.com/CIA.html

ART ATTACKS

TATE BRITAIN'S NEW EXHIBITION ON ICONOCLASM IS FASCINATING, BUT DOESN'T QUITE DELIVER THE (DAMAGED) GOODS, REPORTS DAVID V BARRETT



ABOVE LEFT: John Van Nost's statue of George I in Leicester Square, London, c.1872, having lost its royal rider. ABOVE RIGHT: 'The Dead Christ', c.1500-20, with its crown of thorns and arms smashed off. BELOW: A newspaper cutting from 4 June 1914 referring to the suffragette attack on artworks at the Doré Gallery, London.

ENGLISH HERITAGE

COURTESY THE MERGERS' COMPANY

Iconoclasm: the deliberate destruction, damaging or changing of an image or artwork for ideological reasons rather than just vandalism. That was the definition given by the curators of 'Art Under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm', at Tate Britain. It's a bit of a mish-mash of an exhibition, as it seeks to bring together religious acts, political protest and two different versions of "cultural iconoclasm".

The religious section contains surprisingly little, because "so little survived; so much was destroyed," in the words of Tate Britain's director Penelope Curtis. It's been estimated that over 90 per cent of pre-Reformation religious art has been lost. Perhaps the most poignant piece is an early 16th-century life-size statue of the Dead Christ, with crown of thorns, arms and feet smashed off, but with its tortured face and carved flowing blood from its side still bearing witness to its original message. It was found under the ruins of Mercers' Hall in London after World War II, apparently hidden away to prevent further damage.

There's a painting of the interior of Canterbury Cathedral by Thomas Johnson, showing men up ladders smashing the stained-

The new faith was based on the Word, not the image

glass windows with hammers. In Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries much was lost for the most pragmatic of reasons: books and furniture were piled up in great bonfires to melt the valuable lead in the roofs.

But Henry's disputes with Rome were political and organisational rather than spiritual; we shouldn't forget that the title *Fid Def*, Defender of the Faith, was awarded to Henry for his defence of the Catholic faith – before, of course, he began fancying a new wife. Most of the more targeted Protestant iconoclasm happened during the reign of the boy-king Edward VI.

The exhibition explains why, simply and clearly. The new Protestant faith, especially its more Puritan strain, was based firmly on the Word, not the image.

Images were not only suspect because Catholics venerated them, they were blasphemous and against God's clearly stated law in the Commandments. In some illustrated devotional books of the late-16th and early-17th centuries there are neatly cut holes where God the Father, looking down from the clouds, has been excised. Paintings of saints would have their faces scratched through to prevent their veneration – though perhaps a lingering superstition or devotion often caused the face of Christ to escape damage.

The political section is perhaps



MUSEUM OF LONDON

170. PORCUPINE PROJECTILES



The myth

Bats are blind; they use echolocation in place of sight.

The “truth”

No species of blind bat has ever been discovered. Some varieties of bat are as small as a bumblebee, some have six-foot wingspans, but all of them can see – some better than humans. The 1,200 or so known species of bat are subdivided into megabats and microbats. Generally speaking, megas eat fruit while micros eat insects. Micros hunt and navigate using echolocation, which is absent in the megas, who use sight and smell to find fruit. But even the micros rely on good night-vision to avoid large obstacles, to spot landmarks, and to work out their flying height. Vampire bats have such good eyesight that they can spot their prey (a cow) from 400ft (122m) away. This seems to be a “fairness” myth – since bats have the extraordinary advantage of sonar, surely they must be lacking eyesight, so as to balance things up; the way that really good-looking people are always stupid, you know? That echolocation is probably the most-researched aspect of bats may well have contributed to the myth. With that in mind it would be interesting to know how old the belief in bat blindness is. Did people say “blind as a bat” 1,000 years ago?

Sources

www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/life/mammals/bats/; www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/10/061028092920.htm; www.batrescue.org.au/website/index.php; <http://thecourieronline.co.uk/myth-busters-blind-as-a-bat/>; www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/nmnh/batfacts.htm; <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/animals/creaturefeature/vampire-bat/>

Disclaimer

This column claims no particular batting prowess, and is always glad to have its errors and omissions corrected via the letters page.

Mythchaser

How long does it take a human to form a habit – good, bad, or indifferent? A reader wants to know whether or not this is known or knowable, since she has seen several varying answers, all claiming absolute authority, on the Internet. (Bad habit, the Internet. Magazines are much better for you.)



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ABOVE: The remains of 'Christ Bearing the Cross', C. 1400-1425.

easier for modern sensibilities to comprehend. A statue of William III in Dublin could not be expected to fare well; it was frequently attacked over the years until it was finally destroyed in 1928. A statue of George III in Manhattan was toppled by Washington's troops, who then melted it down to make musket balls to use against the British. A 1748 statue of George I in Leicester Square, London, was often defaced; in 1866 the horse was painted with black spots and George given a dunce's cap and broomstick. By 1872 the horse had lost its royal rider and was sold for scrap.

The Suffragettes brought attention to their cause by attacking paintings of idealised women, from Edward Burne-Jones's *Sybilla Delphica* to Velasquez's *Rokeby Venus*, which was slashed with a meat cleaver by Mary Richardson in 1914 in protest against the imprisonment of Emmeline Pankhurst. "You can get another picture but you cannot get another life," Ms Richardson said – and was completely unrepentant as a still fiery old

lady in a 1961 interview on the BBC Home Service, which you can hear through headphones as you gaze at a photograph of the damaged painting.

Both the religious and the political sections could have shown far more exhibits. Instead the last three rooms are given over to what the curators call "cultural iconoclasm". The pile of bricks that someone threw blue dye over, and a chair made from a semi-nude figure which someone else chucked paint-stripper at. These were protests, legitimate or not, but to call them iconoclasm is stretching the definition until it creaks. And then there are two rooms of artists damaging copies of previous works of art to make their own; creation out of destruction is a perfectly valid artistic technique, but again it's not iconoclasm.

And so, scratching your head in the final rooms, you return to the beginning and think: this exhibition could have been so much better.

'Art Under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm' is at Tate Britain, London, until 5 Jan 2014.



the UFO files

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FLYINGSAUCERY

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FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY



SALFORD SAUCERS SPOOK SINGER

Happy Mondays front man Sean Ryder freely admits he's spent much of his life 'off his head' but is adamant that the UFOs he's seen are real. He saw his first when he was 15, flying over Manchester's noted UFO portal, Little Hulton. In language that wouldn't be out of place on a Black Grape album, Ryder described it thus: "At first it was still, and then it went, 'Voooooooooom!' And then again: 'Voooooooooom!' Classic zig-zag, hovered, then went off at 10,000 miles an hour. Like *Star Trek*. Boom. Gone. Yeah!" His second sighting, of saucers over Salford, was much more impressive and was validated by the following day's media: "Hundreds of lights going across the sky really slow, and I'm thinking, 'God, are we being invaded?'" The next day in the papers it said: 'Mysterious lights in the sky – lights at Salford rugby ground have gone mad.' And that was bullshit because when the lights at rugby grounds start moving around, it's nothing like these." Drug fuelled hallucinations from his time with the Mondays and Black Grape notwithstanding, Ryder has always held flying saucers close to his heart; he's got a new book out on the subject (the aptly-titled *What Planet am I On?*) and is presenting a TV series about his search for extraterrestrial life. In his series for the *History* channel Ryder travels to key UFO sighting locations such as Chile and interrogates the usual saucer suspects, including abductee Travis Walton. Quizzed

by the *Guardian* he was steadfast in his belief. "It's not that I want to believe, it's just impossible not to. We're not the only life in the Universe. We're just not. It's ridiculously impossible." FlyingSaucery wishes Shaun well with his investigations but hopes he will bear in mind the title of one of his albums, "It's great when you're straight – yeah!" *Guardian*, 2 Nov 2013.

PERUVIAN INVESTIGATIONS

Reports of UFOs have emanated from South America since the earliest days of the flying saucer era. From 'earthlight' type ball-of-light phenomena to fully fledged 'motherships', saucers from the sea and alien bases in the jungles and mountains, all alien life appears to lurk in the geographic diversity of the continent. A dramatic increase in UFO sightings reported in Peru have concerned the government so much they have reopened the department known as the Department of Investigation of Anomalous Aerial Phenomena (DIFAA). Explaining its purpose, the DIFAA's Colonel Julio Vucetich said: "Many people don't report UFO sightings because they fear they will be labelled mad or made fun of, but nowadays with new technology – cellphone videos, Facebook, Twitter – they can be much more open, without feeling that they are the only ones who have seen what they've seen". Whilst his comment is valid, the fact remains that despite the plethora of cheap, high-quality optical recording devices now carried by almost everyone, there have actually been fewer 'good' photos of UFO than ever before. Wisely, the DIFAA have added sociologists, archaeologists, astronomers and air force personnel to the team (of which flyingSaucery believes that sociologists will be the most useful). The problem faced by the DIFAA will now be that the Peruvian public (and the global UFO believing fraternity) won't accept any conclusion they offer unless it validates the reality of ET spacecraft. FlyingSaucery predicts that the DIFAA will find themselves as befuddled about the nature of the Peruvian UFOs as those who see them. Unless, of course, they ask the sociologists! *Guardian*, 28 Oct; www.latintimes.com/articles/9932/20131105/peru-reopens-ufo-department-crash-sightings-landing.htm

DRONING ON (AND ON)...

America's National UFO Reporting Centre has claimed that UFO sightings increased 42 per cent between 2011 and 2012. Good news

for saucer buffs, you might think. Not so, says expert Lee Spiegel, the *Huffington Post's* self-described paranormal expert. Lee believes the increase is due to the use of remote-controlled aerial drones of the type that caused UFO sightings in the UK during the 1980s (see **FT308:24**). Drones being misperceived as UFOs can be the result of accident, where a military drone is witnessed and reported as an unknown object. But they can also be part of the hoaxer's armoury. As Spiegel says: "You can make them look like UFOs. You can go to the local hardware store, and for not a lot of money, you can pick up the materials you need...to make people go crazy." *Huffington Post Weird News*, 6 Nov: <http://tinyurl.com/l2j9ejg>

ICELAND ENIGMA

Videos of unusual aerial phenomena are always instructive, not least because they provide believers with the raw material from which UFO stories are often forged. A 43-second film shot over the Icelandic village of Akureyri on 29 September shows a ball of light hurtling over mountains to seemingly crash land behind houses. What was it? Suggestions on websites include a Chinese lantern, a flare, a helicopter, a meteor, a hoax and even a light from a laser pen. Whatever it is, the enigmatic image has caused a stir in the media and on UFO web sites. At the moment, it is literally an unidentified flying object, like so many others. What it clearly isn't is a structured craft of unknown origin and it will be interesting to see if the more susceptible ufologists try to hammer this mystery into a fully-fledged crash of an alien craft. <http://metro.co.uk/2013/10/20/video-of-burning-fireball-ufo-could-prove-we-are-not-alone-4153767/>



PROFESSOR RONALD AUSTIN

THE 'WES' EFFECT 1: THE HUT THAT FLEW

Some readers may wonder why modern ufology seems to be deconstructing itself out of existence. Of course, these columns will always tell it like it is; and if that means more explanations than mysteries, then so be it. True research has to follow the clues wherever they lead and present the answers that emerge, however unpalatable they might be to one's treasured hypotheses.

Apropos this issue, reader David Cooper recently wrote to FT to ask about old-school CE3 cases: those in which aliens and their UFOs were appearing together. These seem to offer a stark choice. Either these events happened as described or someone is telling porkies, because how do you misperceive seeing an alien? To qualify slightly: it can happen (I have cases where telegraph poles and cows were genuinely misperceived in this way), but this option is much less likely than with simple UFO sightings.

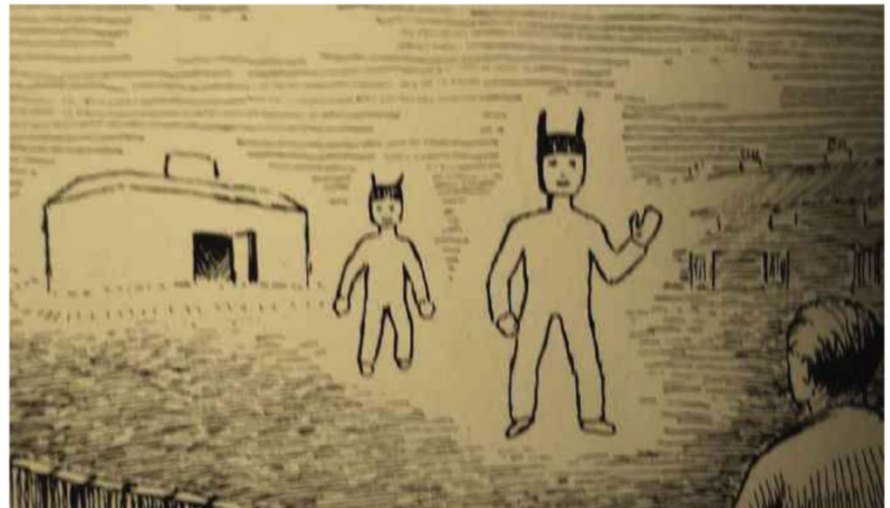
Such old-school CE3s predate the anal probes and mystic messages that arrived once regression hypnosis 'unlocked' the wonders of alien abduction. They hark back to the days of Charles Bowen's classic book *The Humanoids* and cases from the 1950s and 60s when alien exploratory activities were simpler. David wondered how such cases fare now in the face of the trend towards demythification?

Of course, abductions started as far back as the late 1950s, and the ebb and flow in the patterns of activity by these reported visitors might also be judged alongside the changes that our own collective consciousness has experienced; from post-WWII fears and deprivations, via the optimistic exploration of our Solar System in the 1960s, into the modern era, where violence and assault seem an integral part of everyday life. These trends parallel phases in the alien contact story which may be important: where we move from aliens who disabled witnesses with ray guns, via visitors from the stars taking soil samples (just as NASA were doing) and then onto punk rock violence perpetrated upon helpless victims by beings with a seemingly savage agenda.

This is just one psychosocial way of looking at things, of course; so, to be even-handed, I will take it back beyond even Charles Bowen, to Charles Fort – and a case that he would surely have included in his pioneering books if he had but known about it. It is the earliest CE3 that I have heard direct from any witness.

Frank was 10 in the summer of 1901 and lived in Bournbrook, near Birmingham. At the age of 87 he shared what happened to him in a letter, as if it had occurred the day before. I got him to talk to Phil Barnett and David James, from his local UFO group, and his story to them was consistent.

In 1901 Frank lived in an end terrace house and on that warm evening was walking alone down a path behind his rear garden when he saw a "strange hut" sitting there on the



Frank saw a "strange hut" sitting there on the grass

grass. His drawing shows that it had a small turret on top and a tiny door in the centre. It was greeny-blue and with a metallic sheen. Reconstruction suggested its dimensions as no more than 4ft (1.2m) high by 6ft (1.8m) long.

As he approached the object, Frank saw two small beings (less than 4ft tall) come from the door, which opened outwards. One stayed by the door, but the other moved slowly towards him, arms outstretched, waving in what seemed to be a 'stay away' gesture. Frank obeyed and took a few steps backwards.

These two beings looked human, with normal features. They were clean-shaven (at a time when many men were not) and wore closely fitted, military-style uniforms of a grey-green colour but with no markings to suggest their origin. By far the oddest feature of this uniform was the helmet – a dark cap that covered the ears without means of support. From the top came two wiry extensions, either side of the head, each about 9in high.

As soon as Frank had retreated, the being that had emerged went back toward the 'hut' and both he and his colleague re-entered. Within moments there was a bright flash and something occurred that the youngster would only recognise many years later to be like electrical arcing. This bluish glow encircled the object, slowly tracing a ring before growing very bright. At that point the 'hut' took to the air with a whooshing sound and at great speed disappeared over the rooftops, a pulsing red light visible as it streaked away.

Frank said that a few locals had heard this unusual sound, and that one claimed to have seen something in the sky also, but had

dismissed it as a thunderbolt. He reported to us that he suffered no ill effects from his close encounter and saw no marks on the grass, but had never thought to look for any at the time.

What was interesting to me was that Frank never saw a UFO again and declined to use that term even when reporting this event to me. 'Funny Vehicle' was his preferred terminology. He recalled that a few years later he saw a newspaper article predicting the future of air transport. These imaginative depictions showed airships with huge propellers floating over cities – nothing like the structure that he had witnessed.

Frank was quick to point out that the UFOs he was seeing on TV these days were nothing like what he saw either; though, after thinking for a moment, he added: "Perhaps flying saucers are an improvement on the vehicle I saw."

At no point did he ever consider that the figures were aliens. He also tried to talk himself out of the experience as he grew older, telling himself that it must have been a daydream. But whilst nobody else appears to have reported this incident, the existence of other locals who had experienced something on that day left him unable to dismiss the events as anything but real. He told me: "How could I dream about something that I had no interest in or had read nothing about but which is coming true many, many years later?"

When you put yourself in the mindset of a child who, in 1901, had never seen a car, let alone an aircraft, and for whom even electricity was science fiction, you can see why Frank might think this way.

So is this case unimpeachable? No, because a witness who was so young at the time and who first reported it decades later is never going to persuade a rightfully cautious scientific establishment. But it does give a tantalising glimpse of a sighting from after the age of the mystery airships of the late 1890s and before the earliest alien encounters of the UFO-rich 20th century. In that respect, it possesses great interest. Indeed, it helped me to appreciate what I call the 'WES' effect, which may be a key to understanding CE3s and which I will explore further next issue.

THE HOUSE THAT WAS HAUNTED TO DEATH

ROGER CLARKE goes in search of the real-life ghost story that inspired Henry James's classic novella *The Turn of the Screw*.

In 1871 an account of a country house haunting was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, just in time for Christmas.

The abbreviated version goes something like this. In 1771, Mary Ricketts, the wife of a Jamaican estate owner, became so exhausted from a parade of inexplicable terrors at her Hampshire home that she fled the scene with her three children. The house was demolished not long afterwards, after it proved impossible for anyone to live there without being badly haunted.

There are many reasons why the story of Mary Ricketts is so fascinating, but perhaps most gripping of all is the possibility that this story forms the basis for Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, and is actually the famous 'lost' ghost story supposedly related to James by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, EW Benson, one winter evening after dinner in 1895.

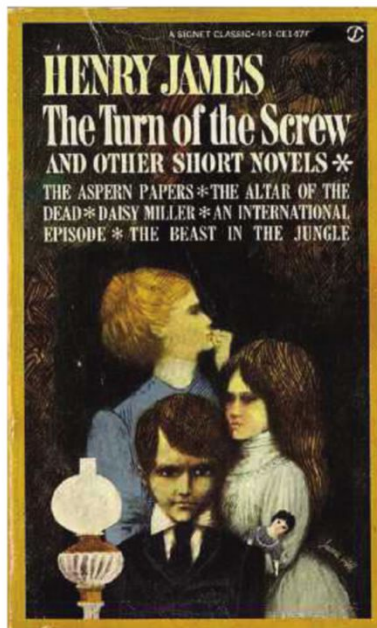
These days, Hinton Ampner is a National Trust property open to the general public, sold very much as a garden with a house attached. On a sunny day, all is well with Hinton Ampner. In the guidebook for this later neo-Georgian house there is no hint of what went on there, 200 years before, merely a mention in passing of the vanished 'haunted Tudor house'.

So what happened here? What was it that makes Hinton Ampner a strong candidate for the most haunted house in England?

THE MAN IN THE DRAB-COLOURED SUIT

The Ricketts arrived here in January 1765 – husband, wife, one child, servants. "Soon after we were settled in Hinton," Mary Ricketts was later to write in a private

"I TREATED IT AS THE EFFECT OF FEAR OR SUPERSTITION," MARY WROTE



ABOVE: Whether or not Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw* was based on a real ghost story has been much debated.

journal intended for her descendants to read, "I frequently heard noises in the night, as of people shutting, or rather slapping doors with vehemence... I could conceive no other cause than that some of the villagers had false keys to let themselves in and out at pleasure." Locks were changed; it made no difference. The doors continued slamming at the dead of night.

Bam, Bam, Bam, BAM.

A favourite cat began to behave strangely. In the downstairs parlour "when sitting on a table or chair with accustomed unconcern she would suddenly slink down as if struck by the greatest terror, conceal herself under my chair, and put her head close to my feet. In a short space of time she would come forth quite unconcerned."

Summer came, and one sultry June evening a nursemaid was sitting next to the baby in the nursery upstairs when she happened to look up. She saw a man in a "drab-coloured suit" go past in the corridor and into what was called The Yellow Room in the household, a room, we are told, "usually occupied by the Lady of the House".

When the housemaid appeared with the nursemaid's food shortly afterwards, they realised a stranger was in the house. Both women went, with some trepidation, into the Yellow Room, but found nothing. They did not immediately tell their mistress, and when they did, they found she didn't take them very seriously, as was the lot of most servants of this period and beyond. "I treated it as the effect of fear or superstition," Mary Ricketts later wrote, clearly with some regret, "to which the lower class of people are so prone, and it was entirely obliterated from my mind".





Some months later, as autumn came, George, son of Richard Turner the groom, happened to be crossing the great hall to go to bed when he also saw a man in a “drab-coloured suit” which he “took to be the butler who wore such coloured clothes, he being lately come and his livery not made”. But when he got upstairs to the servants’ quarters he noticed that the butler was actually in bed, and consequently the man he had seen remained unaccounted for.

In July of 1767 we have, yet again, another early evening apparition.

At about seven in the evening, the cook was washing up some pots and pans in the scullery and a postilion called Thomas Wheeler, two maids and a fourth individual named Dame Lacy were sitting in the next-door kitchen. The first thing was something heard; the sound of a woman’s heavy silk dress – someone in it clearly coming down the back stairs and entering the corridor that led to the kitchen. Before they knew it, a female figure hurried into the room and they distinguished a tall figure in dark-coloured clothes, but the spell was broken as the cook, finished with the dishes, suddenly re-entered the kitchen from the scullery, prompting the woman in silks to vanish in plain sight.

Curiously, another male servant, making his way in from the yard outside, saw absolutely nothing. But picture it: two doors open, midsummer, two people coming in, four people sitting, and a ghost vanishing at the touch of sunlight.

THE MURMURING

In November 1769, Mary Ricketts’s husband was called back to the family estate in Jamaica. The ghosts prowled in the corridors. Mary found herself constantly searching the cupboards for whoever was walking in there, and whoever it was whose silks rustled against the door – not a gentle rustle of softly falling fabric but “so loud and of such continuance as to break my rest”.

She was in the Yellow Room when she heard the footsteps. It was the summer again, the dog days favoured by the Hinton ghosts. She had only been in bed for half an hour



LEFT: Hinton Ampner as it is today. BELOW: Mary Ricketts. BOTTOM: Captain John Jervis.

when she distinctly heard the heavy footfall of a man walk right up to the end of her bed, and her alarm was so great that she fled the room.

Soon after Christmas, the murmuring began. It was a kind of deep susurration. People were talking. Lots of people were talking. It was a noise in the back of the house’s throat. “I was frequently sensible of a hollow murmuring that seemed to possess the whole house,” Mary wrote. “It was independent of wind, being equally heard on the calmest nights”.

By May, the susurration was growing in volume. “The murmur was uncommonly loud,” she complained, and it was stopping her from sleeping.

Restlessly, she moves around the house, sleeping for an hour with the children in the nursery, then back to (presumably) the Chintz Room, for she is roused again by great crashes hammering the front door. She jumps out of bed and cranes to look down at the porch, and since it is now dawn, with the grey light on the white lawn, hoping to see the cause. The door is examined and found to be locked and bolted.

“After Midsummer the noises became every night more intolerable”. They would last until daybreak, sometimes slightly beyond. Mary could now distinguished people talking. There was a woman with a shrill voice. There were two others, men, one with a deep tone. One night it seemed as if someone was brushing past the curtains of her four-poster bed.

Her brother came to stay. John Jervis was a captain in the Royal Navy who would later rise to become First Lord of the Admiralty. He was probably the most distinguished sailor the Navy ever produced, mentoring Nelson. She told him everything. He was a sceptic by nature, but he must have seen that the household was, for whatever reason, falling apart. Just as she finished her account a neighbour named Luttrell came to call, and both Luttrell and Jervis had resolved to stay up that evening and catch out the imposture, since imposture it must be.

Every bedroom was occupied on that floor that night. The children were in the nursery. “I bolted and locked the door that opened to that floor from the back stairs, so that there was no entrance unless through the room where Luttrell kept watch,” recalled Jervis later.

They didn’t have to wait long. Luttrell had also heard footsteps and threw the door open saying “who goes there?” as “something flitted past him”. This had in turn woken Jervis. At breakfast, Luttrell declared that the house was “unfit for habitation for any human being”.

Every night for the next week saw Jervis sit up, waiting and watching, no doubt angry and disturbed. Since he was up all night he was now sleeping during the day, and one afternoon, when Mary was reading in a downstairs parlour and the children were out on a walk, she heard the bell to her brother’s room ring very violently. She found him

uncharacteristically dishevelled. He had heard a noise of shocking loudness in his own bedroom – hearing “an immense weight fall through the ceiling to the floor”. No one else had heard anything.

Apart from general sleeplessness and dealing with the various forms of panic and upset with the servants, Mary Ricketts was doing remarkably well, all things considered. What was giving her most cause for anxiety was her children, who almost incredibly were the only inhabitants of Hinton Ampner who had experienced nothing of the hauntings. Mary was dreading the moment when her children would hear or see the ghosts. They were most active in what they called the ‘lobby’ outside the nursery.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

It was August 1771. Captain Jervis was becalmed off Lymington, one of those dream-like summer days when the Solent is smooth and green as a millpond. He dashed off a note to his sister. “The more I consider the incidents, the stronger I see the necessity of the decisive step, and I almost think there will be propriety in giving up the house etc at Christmas”. He concludes, of the house, “I beg you never to enter it again.”

She took his advice and left. She went to stay with her friend the Reverend Newbolt while another more august friend, the Bishop of Winchester, arranged for the whole family to move to the Bishop’s old palace at Wolvesey Castle. When she was to leave Winchester, the Bishop of St Asaph, in turn, offered her his house in London.

Mary sent the children ahead to Winchester, finally out of harm’s way, and lingered a while in Hinton, staying in the village and visiting the house only to arrange for her things to be packed and moved. Her brother had warned her not to go back. But she did. “When I returned to the mansion I was soon assailed by a noise I never heard before, very near me, and the terror I felt not to be described”.

It’s as if the act of describing it would somehow preserve it. That sound would remain locked inside her till she died.

When she was old, and she did live to a great age, she did not readily talk on the subject. However, she does record how she told the Bishop of Winchester about a ghost standing outside and looking into the house: “I related that [butler] Robert Camis had been thrice called at the window by a voice he well remembered, that of the steward of Lord Dartmouth [Isaac Mackrell] ... this steward stole his Lord’s gold buckles, and was much suspected of other dishonesty”.

This snippet was first made known to the general public in 1943 in Sacheverell Sitwell’s book *Poltergeists*, where he reproduced much of the extra documentation round the case. It’s the clue as to why the Hinton Ampner ghost story is the one behind *The Turn of the Screw* – the only people who would have known this detail were members of the Ricketts and the Camis families, and senior members of the Church of England. In *The Turn of the Screw*, the approach of the corrupting ghost of the dead servant Quint to the window of Bly is one of the key scenes.

It is not surprising such a story, backed by a brace of bishops, should end up being whispered in the ear of the Archbishop of Canterbury some decades later. Benson had connections with Winchester too, travelling there once a year to visit the grave of his son. During his visits to Winchester it is perfectly plausible that he stayed in the Bishop’s Palace, where Mary Ricketts had lodged all those years before.

The male apparition is the key one. He’s wearing a drab, or snuff-coloured coat, which is usually associated with the uniform of servants in this period. Hence when George Turner sees him in the hall some years later,

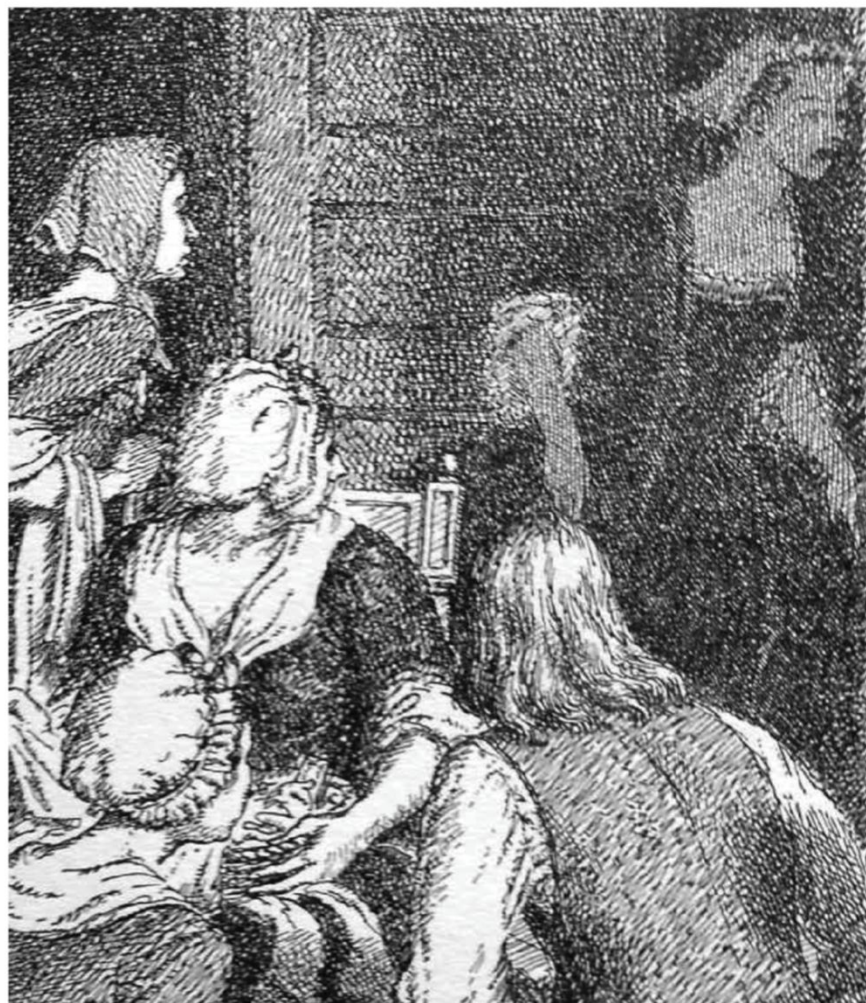
“WHEN I RETURNED TO THE MANSION I WAS ASSAILED BY A NOISE I NEVER HEARD BEFORE”

he assumes it is indeed a servant. By the time he’s seen again, by the nursemaid, going into the Yellow Room one summer evening, it’s just a man dressed in brown. And certainly no male servant would go into a room that was customarily the bedroom of the lady of the house, which the Yellow Room was. Unless of course it was a male servant who had somehow risen beyond his station.

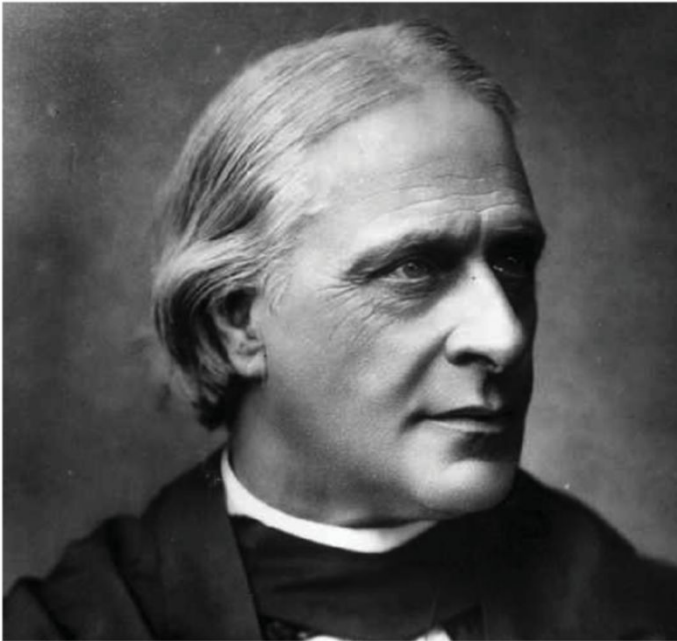
Lord Bute, who edited the Ricketts documentation for the *Journal for the Society for Psychological Research* in April 1893, certainly thought so. “He [Mackrell] is spoken of as dishonest,” notes Lord Bute, echoing Mary Ricketts’s view. It seems, weaving all the threads together, that Mackrell may have had an affair with a woman above stairs, and consequently took many liberties in his behaviour.

In *The Turn of the Screw*, a governess called Miss Giddens is sent to a large country house in the southern counties of England. She is hired by a bachelor at his house in London; James writes how her employer impresses her as “such a figure who had never risen, save in a dream or an old novel, before a fluttered anxious girl out of a Hampshire vicarage”. She is to teach his young nephew and niece, Miles and Flora, whose guardian he now is after the death of their father. She is to go down to the country and teach them.

Soon she sees the leering, devilish Quint. Quint is dead, but there he is, with his white



ABOVE: The female apparition, as illustrated in Harry Price’s 1941 book *Poltergeist Over England*.



ABOVE: Was it RE Benson (left), then the Archbishop of Canterbury, from whom Henry James (right) heard the story of Mary Ricketts and the Hinton Ampner haunting?

face and curls of red hair, peering through the Dining Room window, like a fox scanning a henhouse for chickens. The housekeeper, Mrs Grose, identifies him from the description. He's at the window of Bly, just like the description of Isaac Mackrell at the window of Hinton.

Henry James seems to have built this master-servant identity confusion into the fabric of *The Turn of the Screw*. Servant wore master's clothes in an inversion of social custom. Quint "never wore his hat but he did wear – well, there were waistcoats missed," says Mrs Grose to Miss Giddens. Mackrell, you will recall, stole his master's gold buckles.

THE TURN OF THE SCREW

The Turn of the Screw was published in 1898. Since the apparitional aspect of the Ricketts haunting was secondary (and only the servants actually saw anything clearly), and it was assumed that the male ghost was Lord Stawell (or his descendent Lord Dartmouth as Mary Ricketts writes, in error) rather than his steward, nobody had made the connection between the Ricketts haunting and James's novella. Since its 1898 publication, the source has always been a great mystery, despite Henry James clearly describing the evening with the Archbishop, and Benson's narration of the story, both in his contemporaneous diaries and the preface to the first edition.

Archbishop Benson died before the novella was published, and his wife and son – the writer EF Benson – claimed they never heard their father tell a ghost story that resembled it in any way. Benson possibly thought it unsuitable. The general scholarly view till recently is that *The Turn of the Screw* is not based on any known story. But since senior members of the Church of England knew about Hinton at the time, and gave

THE GHOST OF A MONSTROUS SERVANT STANDS AT THE WINDOW

Mary Ricketts shelter from a supernatural storm, it doesn't seem all that surprising that this is a story the Archbishop of Canterbury might know.

Maybe we can reconstruct the story that Benson told. It would have described the ghost of a man and the ghost of a woman in the undertow of a sex scandal, and another woman who leaves a handwritten account of their predation, which has the dust of a Hampshire parsonage on its pages. Mary Ricketts, after all, wrote her account in the Hinton parsonage, in Hampshire. Perhaps Archbishop Benson had seen or knew of this handwritten version – of which there were two in existence. Alone but for servants, without the man of the house to help, she desperately tries to shield her children from the incipiently violent spectral incursions. The ghost of a monstrous servant stands at the window. A ghost of a woman treads on a lake of silk.

At the beginning of *The Turn of the Screw*, a man takes a manuscript out of a drawer. The 1871 *Gentleman's Magazine* publication of the story was based on Mary Ricketts's manuscript, which is now stored in the British Library. To handle it is an electrifying experience. The handwriting hints at speed, emphasis and agitation. It is pointedly addressed to her children. Her motives for

writing it down are not completely clear, but it seems most important to her that if her children are going to hear stories as they grow up, they need to know that their mother conducted herself in an entirely rational and upstanding way. She especially gives thanks to God and "the peculiar mercy of Providence" that preserved them from the "affright and terror" that was surrounding them.

What would a modern analysis of the hauntings show these days? Both Sacheverell Sitwell and Harry Price regarded it chiefly as a poltergeist story. The children, all under 10, were too young to be considered standard poltergeist foci, and since the servants were replaced, no single young servant would qualify either. Indeed, to have a poltergeist case in which the children were unaware of what is going on is pretty much unheard of – though this may suggest, of course, that the focus was Mary Ricketts herself.

It rankled with Admiral Jervis that the 'mystery' of Hinton was never solved. It's a curious thought as to what extent the experience of Hinton influenced his personality, and whether his later almost incandescent hatred of disorder and mutiny had anything to do with the unsolved mystery preying on his mind. It is said, in later years, that he "flew into a rage" whenever the ghosts of Hinton were mentioned. **F**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



ROGER CLARKE grew up in haunted houses and is the author of *A Natural History of Ghosts* (Penguin, 2012). He is a columnist on the *Independent* and has written for numerous publications.

“THE CEREMONY OF INNOCENCE IS DROWNED”

DAVID SUTTON marks the Britten centenary with a look at the composer's 1954 opera *The Turn of the Screw*.

Henry James's 1898 ghost story, considered ever since its appearance a classic of the genre, has been adapted on numerous occasions for stage and screen, perhaps most famously in Jack Clayton's highly atmospheric 1961 film version *The Innocents*. Seven years earlier, though, composer Benjamin Britten and librettist Myfanwy Piper had transformed the story into an operatic masterpiece that has, in turn, established itself as a modern classic.

At first sight, opera might not seem the most obvious medium into which to translate James's spooky, ambiguous tale. Not that opera hadn't seen its fair share of phantoms, from the all-purpose gothic spooks of French grand opera to more individualised vengeful spirits: the Commendatore dragging his murderer to Hell in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the dead Banquo in Verdi's *Macbeth* or the spectral Countess in Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades*. All of these served powerful dramatic and psychological functions in the works in question, but James's story is the product of another age, a peculiarly modern spin on the ghost story in which the status of the phantoms – real ghosts or the hysterical products of a repressed sexuality – is ultimately indeterminate.

Britten first came across the tale on the wireless: a June 1932 diary entry talks of “a wonderful, impressive but terribly eerie & scary play ‘The Turning [sic] of the Screw’ by Henry James.” By January 1933 he was reading “James's glorious & eerie” story, proclaiming it an “incredible masterpiece”.¹ There's no indication of why the 19-year-old was so taken with the tale, although Michael Kennedy writes of the Britten family's “remarkable curiosity about the occult”² and one of the composer's relatives speaking in Tony Palmer's film *A Time There Was...* mentions Britten's interest in such matters, as well as his experience of premonitions. On the other hand, the hints of homosexuality and pederasty attached to the relationship between the ghosts and the children – particularly that between Quint and Miles – must have exercised a continued fascination for Britten as he came to terms with his own sexuality, and perhaps – as has been suggested – some sort of sexual abuse suffered at school. Piper believed that “he was interested in the effect of adult, or bad, ideas on the innocence of children,” and it's certainly true that one of the central themes of *The Turn of the Screw* – the conflict between innocence and corruption – is central to Britten's operatic output from *Peter Grimes* in 1945 right through to *Death in Venice* in 1973. Whatever the reasons, over 20 years



BOTH PHOTOS: HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: Peter Quint (Peter Pears) appears to Miles (David Hemmings) in the English Opera Group's 1954 production of *The Turn of the Screw*. ABOVE RIGHT: Benjamin Britten in a 1949 portrait.

after his first encounter with the work, Britten settled on it as the basis of a new chamber opera – just six singers and 13 instrumentalists – commissioned for the 1954 Venice Biennale.

One of the problems with recasting the story as an opera was the fact that James's ghosts are seen, but not heard, which adds to their ambiguous status but doesn't offer many musical possibilities. Mary Ricketts clearly believed the Hinton Ampner ghosts were all too real, and was determined to keep her children as far away from them as possible, as is the Governess in James's novella; Britten, on the other hand, made the decision to bring them face to face. He decided early on that his ghosts would be undeniably present; a producer can still inject considerable ambiguity into any staging, but there's no getting away from the fact that these – whether ‘real’ or ‘imaginary’ – are *singing* ghosts.

It's the revenant Peter Quint – the manservant who “was free with little Master Miles!” – who gets the most unforgettable music, written for the highly distinctive tenor of Britten's partner Peter Pears. But it's not what you might expect: unearthly, yes, with its gorgeous melismas (an idea inspired by Pears's singing of a Pérotin motet in Aldeburgh church, thus adding a blasphemous *frisson*) and shimmering celesta accompaniment, but certainly not ‘spooky’ in any traditional sense. In fact this, the first adult male voice we hear in the opera – when Quint approaches Miles at the climax of Act I – offers the young boy, thus far wholly in thrall to the controlling female figures of the Governess and Mrs Grose, a seductive glimpse of another, womanless world:

*I'm all things strange and bold
The riderless horse, snorting,*

*stamping, stamping on the hard sea sand
The hero highwayman, plundering,
plundering, plundering the land*

This is a ghost possessed of more than a little glamour (in both senses), whose appeal to Miles is undeniable, if frightening. But is Miles (the precursor of the spooky-nursery-rhyme-singing child in every subsequent horror movie) a victim, or “bad, aren't I?” as he asks the Governess at the end of Act I? Is he an innocent, or a knowing tease? Can Quint be seen as truly evil, or simply enamoured of his young ‘victim’? After all, Britten became infatuated with his first Miles, the young David Hemmings, who always insisted that ‘Ben’ was just as nice as could be and that nothing untoward ever took place. Britten and Piper thus pile their own ambiguities onto James's, as exemplified in the harmonic instabilities and ambiguities, the clashes of tonality and dissonance that underlie the brilliantly worked out construction of Britten's astonishing score.

James had boasted that having not one, but two, children added another “turn of the screw” to his story: Britten's dark, seductive masterpiece gives it another crank, and attains a whole new level of creeping unease in the process.

¹ John Evans, ed., *Journeying Boy: The Diaries of the Young Benjamin Britten 1928-1938*, Faber, 2009, p107 & 127-128.

² Michael Kennedy, *Britten*, JM Dent, 1981, p67.

See also Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (Faber, 1992) and John Bridcut, *Britten's Children*, Faber, 2006.

Numerous versions of Britten's opera are available on Blu-ray and DVD; the most recent Glyndebourne production (Fra Musica, 2013) is highly recommended, as is Katie Mitchell's BBC film (Opus Arte, 2005).

HARK! WHO KNOCKS THERE, CHILDREN?

ANGELINE B ADAMS & REMCO VAN STRATEN trace the journey of St Nicholas from third century Myra to the modern Netherlands - and to the centre of a contemporary Christmas controversy.

"See, yonder comes the steamboat from Spain. He brings us Saint Nicholas. I can see him already. His servant is laughing and beckons us: "Sweets for the sweet, the bad get caned"

All Dutch children know these lines. They come from a song heralding the arrival of Sinterklaas. His birthday on 5 December is one of the highlights of the children's year, but he arrives from Spain some weeks earlier, an event that is celebrated in cities and villages all over the country. He is a majestic figure with his long white beard, red bishop's robes and mitre. His retinue of aides in black face-paint and colourful costumes tumble and cavort, doling out handfuls of tiny biscuits called *pepernoten*. They process through the town, the smallest children following them in awe and even the older ones obviously delighted.

Each night after his arrival, children put a shoe by the fireplace and sing songs like the one above. They may leave a drawing or letter to Sinterklaas, often in rhyme, and a carrot for his horse. Next morning, they'll find *pepernoten*, chocolate initials or sugar mice in their shoes, and sometimes a small toy. On the fifth, the children will welcome Sinterklaas in school, sing to him and receive a present. At home that evening - *Sinterklaasavond* - there'll be a rapping at the window. The smallest child will find a hamper at the front door with presents for all the family. The next morning, when they wake up, Sinterklaas will be gone for another year.

THE MAN FROM MYRA

Considering the mark he has left on global culture, as the inspiration for Sinterklaas and Santa Claus, precious little is known of the historical fourth-century Nicholas of Myra (for a detailed account see 'Ho Ho Ho! A Seasonal Portrait', by Paul Sieveking, FT56:42-45). He was a Greek, born around AD280 of wealthy Christian parents. Apparently, they died in an epidemic, after which their young but already devout son was raised by his uncle, also Nicholas, then bishop of Patara in modern-day Turkey. The young Nicholas gave his inheritance to the poor, devoted his life to the Orthodox Church

THE FEW FACTS ARE COLOURED BY A WEALTH OF LEGEND



ABOVE: Saint Nicholas of Myra shown on a 10th-century Byzantine ceramic tile.

and eventually became Archbishop of Myra. He was reportedly present in Nicæa when the nature of Christ's divinity was hashed out in 325 and is believed to have died on 6 December in (probably) 343.

What few facts we possess concerning Nicholas are coloured by a wealth of legend and stories of other clergymen of the same name. They combined to form a sort of Super-Nicholas, an all-purpose miracle worker. He saved virgins, children and sailors from doom; repentant thieves, the falsely accused and pawnbrokers could call on him; and such was his success as an exorcist that he led the Devil around on a chain. By the sixth century, a cult had grown around him, extending across the world, wherever the tides took the sailors of whom he was the patron saint.

The tale of the poor man with the three daughters is famous. He could not provide them with a dowry, and they faced a life of prostitution. Nicholas got wind of this and, under cover of darkness, threw three purses

of gold through an open window; or, in some versions, down the chimney. Fundamental to present-day celebrations is the legend of his visit to a famine-struck region to minister to the hungry. There, a butcher had murdered and pickled three boys, to sell them as ham. Nicholas saw through this, and through prayer resurrected them.

A CULT IS BORN

Nicholas himself had no such luck in death. His tomb was a popular attraction for pilgrims until the region was invaded by the Turks in the late 11th century. The Italian cities of Venice and Bari appeared keen to 'rescue' the saint's relics and visiting pilgrims from the heathens, although the true prize was the status and commercial value the remains would bring. Before any battle for the bones could get underway, sailors from Bari managed to bag half of them. Whether they were pirates and thieves or believers inspired by a vision of Nicholas himself depends on whose side of the story you read. Venice didn't completely lose out though, as Venetian soldiers got hold of the remaining relics during the First Crusade.

In the late 1950s, the archdiocese of Bari reluctantly allowed a select group of scientists to measure and photograph the bones. In 2004, Dr Caroline Wilkinson of Manchester University used these as the basis for a forensic facial reconstruction. Icons generally show Saint Nicholas as tall and ascetic, with piercing eyes under a well-developed but balding cranium, but now an altogether different picture emerged: at a mere five feet (1.5m) he was small even for his time, and any attempt at solemnity would have been undermined by a badly broken nose. In no report is mention made of the saint's personal fragrance, a vial of which is extracted yearly from the tomb and sold in a nearby shop.

The 1222 Council of Oxford ruled the official veneration of St Nicholas on 6 December one of the most important feasts of the year. Wherever the cult of the saint took hold in the early Middle Ages, public festivities sprang up alongside it, with processions, markets and, particularly, celebrations for children. An 11th or 12th





ABOVE LEFT: In 1852, Sint administers a beating while mum and dad look on approvingly. Sint did not yet rely on his aide to strike the fear of God into unruly children. ABOVE RIGHT: In 1945, Sinterklaas is now accompanied by Pete. The boy in the photo is Remco van Straten's father, trying on his new toy pistols and holster.



century manuscript collates various legends into a school play about the saint, and the 1576 ledgers for the Klaaskerk in Utrecht mention the costs of celebration of “*S. Nycolaes dach*” for schoolchildren.

The St Nicholas processions were a jolly affair. A statue of the saint was carried around, accompanied by the city trumpeters. As an 11th century hymn has it: “Let us cheer in happiness and harmony, on the yearly feast of the blissful Nicholas”. You could purchase food, sweets and toys at the popular St Nicholas markets, though many just came for the booze, which prompted attempts to stop the markets altogether. In Amsterdam, the authorities settled for policing theft and public drunkenness after the city’s youth vehemently protested the ban.

WEATHERING PROTESTANT DISAPPROVAL

The Reformation of 1580 was to change all that: idolatry of saints was forbidden, and as the patron saint of children, marriageable girls, sailors, merchants and thieves, St Nicholas was a very visible target. So, no more processions, no more singing and definitely no celebrations at school. Preachers invoked hell and damnation over this ‘papist superstition’, the government issued edicts against the baking of bishop cakes and the sale of dolls around 6 December.

Elsewhere in Europe, the gift-giving tradition died out or mixed with other festivities like Christmas Eve, but the stubborn Dutch mentality guaranteed that within people’s homes the celebration lived on. In 1658, Protestant Reverend Jacobus Sceperus

PREACHERS INVOKED HELL AND DAMNATION OVER THE ‘PAPIST SUPERSTITION’

sounded off about the false piety and sheer greed of children, who “having learnt from the old, shout, scream and pray to Nikolaus”. He cited a popular children’s song: “Will you give something in my shoe, and God will reward you. Give me a purse with bells, and I won’t bother you any more. As long as it pleases God, I will love *Sinte Niclae jen*”.

Indulgent parents gave these “imbecile sheep” apples, nuts, biscuits, figs, raisins, sugar, money, gold, silver, toys and puppets. Sceperus even knew of one man who went to the length of climbing his roof with a horse-shoe to produce the track of the saint’s horse in the snow. Hardly dignified, but the image of a holy man clambering across the rooftops to drop gifts down the chimney has endured into present times. Deeper religious meaning of the celebration had been traded for children’s enjoyment, but for them it lost none of its magical appeal.

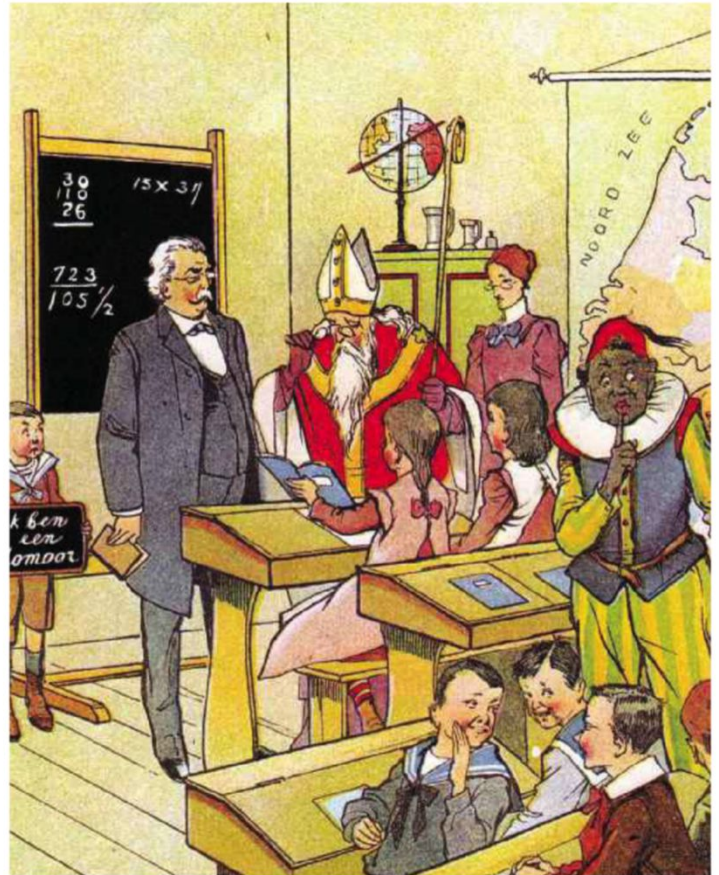
St Nicholas’s night-time visits to bestow

gifts, grown from the legend of those three poor maidens, also gave him a reputation as matchmaker. A young man could initiate courtship by sending a doll to a girl he fancied, who could accept it or send it back with its head broken off. The doll was made of *speculaas*, a spiced biscuit, which conveniently rhymes with Sinterklaas. While a biscuit doll won’t get you far nowadays, students still advertise their intentions with gifts and suggestive rhymes.

With the end of the 18th century came a new attack on Sinterklaas, as proponents of Enlightenment railed against children being led to believe in lies and superstition. Reams of edifying and moralising poetry were written to fill their minds instead, but to no avail: all the forces of the Age of Reason could not make the magic disappear. In the mid-19th century, intellectuals caught up with folk wisdom and Romanticism proclaimed the worth of an emotional and spiritual approach to life. A diet of rationality alone would impoverish children’s souls. They should have their fantasy and their fairytales; adulthood would come soon enough.

SINT IN PRINT

Reforms in education around this time had brought literacy to the lower classes, while improved printing processes made mass production of children’s books possible. Moral stories with an ironic twist were popular at the time, and children delighted in punishment of the wicked – often horrific and out of all proportion to their crimes. There was cosy do-gooding too, and Sinterklaas proved himself not above jemmying windows to award gold-



ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: Two colourful illustrations from a 1907 edition of Schenkman's seminal Sinterklaas book. Sint and Pete arrive in Amsterdam and visit a school.

filled purses to poor but deserving folk.

No book has been more important to the modern Sinterklaas feast than the 1850 work by Amsterdam schoolmaster Jan Schenkman, *Sint Nikolaas en zijn knecht* (*Saint Nicholas and his servant*). It was a modern book for modern children, told in light verse without moralising, with Sinterklaas arriving in Amsterdam by steamboat and departing by hot air balloon. We see him buying pastry, books and toys and dispensing them in homes and schools. He wags his finger at some bad apples, but they may yet avoid being carried off in his burlap sack.

The first edition had crude illustrations, but the book was popular enough to remain in print for decades. The first page was set to music in the early 20th century, to form a song that is still a staple: *Zie, ginds komt de stoomboot uit Spanje weer aan; hij brengt ons Sint Niklaas, Ik zie hem reeds staan*. That steamboat from Spain brought not just Sinterklaas but also his servant. The text describes him only as “black of colour”, and illustrations show him in the clothes of a black pageboy.

In all likelihood, the first illustrators of Schenkman's book based the looks of the servant on paintings and prints they had seen. In the previous century it was fashionable for the rich to be portrayed with young black attendants. They're often referred to as servants, but the example of the two boys Cupido and Cedron, who were presented to Dutch Stadholder William V as a gift, leaves no question about their real status. These pages executed light manual tasks in the house and wore expensive silk livery in their

owners's heraldic colours. All this would have been a handy visual shortcut to enhance Saint Nicholas's own status.

In Schenkman's book this as yet anonymous figure is passive but benign, but his reputation worsened and he was given the archetypal Dutch name of “Piet”. There may have been an influence from his demonic German counterparts like Krampus and Ruprecht (see FT118:34-37, 128:11, 218:11), as an old Dutch name for the devil is “Pietje Pek” (Pete Tar). Where once Sinterklaas punished children personally, this task was soon delegated to Black Pete, who became a crude stereotype: the childish and spiteful black figure of white fears.

Much as Clement Clarke Moore's *A Visit From St Nicolas* codified Santa Claus, Schenkman's book formed a template for how Sinterklaas would be celebrated. Any Sinterklaas visiting a school would have a long white beard, a mitre and red robes modelled on the illustrations in the book, even if they were made from cotton wool, cardboard and old curtains. And that is exactly how any child would recognise him to this day.

COMING TO A TOWN NEAR YOU

Until then, Sinterklaas's visits to people's homes, let alone his arrival in the country, had not been re-enacted. In Protestant Holland, going around dressed as a bishop wouldn't have gone down too well. But now children had seen Sinterklaas's arrival in Schenkman's book, and it was inevitable they'd want to experience it for themselves.

Sinterklaas made his official public debut in 1888, in the southern Dutch town of

Venray, accompanied by an honour guard on horseback, plus “angels and servants whom the grey man had brought from far regions for the occasion”. A brass band played, candy was dispensed to the children, and according to a local newspaper “nothing lacked to awaken the greatest admiration and bafflement of the littlest ones”. The event was organised by the local Chamber of Commerce, thus sealing that enduring covenant between the venerable altruist and the shopkeeper.

The children of Amsterdam saw the saint arrive for the first time in 1934 – a direct response to the number of panhandlers dressed as Sinterklaas taking to the streets because of the economic crisis. The idea of having one official Sinterklaas was the idea of Amsterdam journalist David Kouwenaar, and was embraced by local businessmen.

The saint received all the honours of visiting nobility and was officially welcomed by a reluctant, because devoutly Protestant, mayor. He then made his way to the Vondelpark on horseback, where 6,000 children each received a present. Six black sailors had been press-ganged into the role of Black Pete. “Holy Lord, the cold is killing me,” one reportedly complained to his employer of the day. The “joyous entrance” was to be held in perpetuity on the Saturday before the Saint's birthday, but by the next year this had been moved by some weeks at the urgings of the sponsors.

Since 1952 the Dutch public television network has broadcast the arrival of the *Goedheiligman*, each year from a different location. These broadcasts have become increasingly elaborate and nowadays come with daily bulletins updating the nation's

THE PROBLEM WITH PETE

DUTCH TRADITION BECAME EMBROILED IN RACISM IN THE WEEK THE DUTCH WENT MAD

Quinsy Gario recently found himself the most hated man in the Netherlands. On 7 October, the Amsterdam artist and activist appeared on the *Pauw & Witteman* TV talk show and explained why he wanted Sinterklaas to come without Black Pete this year, “or at least with an understanding of what he stands for.”

For Gario, Sinterklaas's helper is a symbol of racism and of the country's slave trading past: “He's a colonial belch, a relic from... before the abolition of slavery. Each year we parade this figure around, as if we want to return to that time. There are so many people being hurt, and yet the voice of black people is not being heard.”

Comments on Facebook, Twitter and news websites were plentiful and unanimous: Gario was a troublemaker who should keep his “hands off our tradition”. He's no stranger to trouble, though: in 2011, he was arrested for wearing a T-shirt with the slogan *Zwarte Piet is Racisme* to the televised Sinterklaas parade in Dordrecht, which was attended by 60,000 and viewed on TV by 1.8 million.¹ According to the mayor of Dordrecht: “In the case of the Sint Nicholas parade, things are simply different.” End of.

Many of those Dutch people who came from the former colonies of Suriname and the Antilles from the 1970s onwards feel that Black Pete is a reminder of discrimination and racism. Back in 1987, actress Gerda Havertong explained it to Big Bird on *Sesame Street*: “I'm fed up with it! Every year the same – Sint enters the country, and black adults and children are called ‘Black Pete’.” 25 years later, children still come home from school crying because they are taunted about their supposed resemblance to the traditional figure.

Despite Gario's talks with various Sinterklaas organisations, and promises that “something was to be done”, nothing happened. Prime Minister Mark Rutte said: “Black Pete, as the name says, is black. That's a fact.” While Gario and 20 others lodged an official objection to the 2013 Sinterklaas parade in Amsterdam, Barry Biekman of *Platform Slavery Past* went to the United Nations.

Following weeks of growing debate about Black Pete, on 19 October the *NRC Handelsblad* newspaper leaked a letter on UN headed paper addressed to the Dutch government suggesting that Pete fed the stereotype of Africans as second-class citizens. In the letter, Verene Shepherd urged that until this matter was settled, the Sinterklaas celebration could not be allowed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The current affairs programme *EenVandaag* got Shepherd on the phone. “What is wrong with the one Santa Claus, why do you have to have two Santa Clauses?” she asked, adding: “The working group cannot understand why it is that people in the Netherlands cannot see that this is a



throwback to slavery, and that in the 21st century this practice should stop.”

UNESCO pointed out that Shepherd spoke on her own behalf and was a consultant on the Human Rights Council and not actually part of the UN staff,² but the Dutch people and media understood just one thing. “UN researcher pleads for scrapping Sinterklaas” ran the headline on popular news site *Nu.nl*. 5,000 readers reacted, many ignoring moderator prompts to do so without hatred or racism.

Kevin van Boeckholtz and Bas Vreugde were also angered by the news: “It sucks, what's happening. How can you wring the neck of such a lovely tradition, such a beautiful cultural celebration?” They started a Facebook page waggishly called *Pietitie*, and

within days two million people had signed, making it by far the fastest growing and most popular Dutch Facebook page ever.³

A day later, on 23 October, 16-year-old Mandy Roos announced her own initiative, again through Facebook. Her slogan “Black Pete isn't racism, and has to stay!” was belied by the overall tone of the page, with many racist comments (many targeted at Gario) not removed. She called for a gathering on the following Saturday in The Hague, where attendees would arrive dressed as Black Pete.

The affiliated *Pete Protest* Facebook group evaluated the event the next day: “What a wonderful party we had. We're so very proud of you and how the day went.” However, among the turnout of 500 demonstrators, the group Anti-Fascist Action counted 30 known neo-Nazis. Geert Wilders's far right Dutch Party For Freedom (PVV), was also represented by parliament member Joram van Klaveren. Mandy Roos presented him with the total ‘likes’ of all pro-Pete Facebook pages. The *Pietitie* boys found out the next day: “Presenting the *Pietitie* happened without our permission and we want to make very clear that we do NOT want to be linked to any political party.” More people

suddenly felt unhappy being associated with the PVV and voiced their disquiet. However, another incident is what the day will really be remembered for.

Tilly Kasiepo had no problem with Pete, but felt the UN had better things to do. She came with the Papua flag, seeking attention for Indonesia-annexed West Papua. Photojournalist Gerrit de Heus described in detail what happened on his blog: “When a small group of Black Pete sympathisers sees the woman with the flag, the mood changes. A small group closes in on her. A blonde woman with black face paint starts



TOP: Quinsy Gario protests, sporting a ‘Zwarte Piet is Racisme’ shirt. CENTRE: Black Pete as the bogeyman who carries naughty children off in his sack. ABOVE: Actor Erik van Muiswinkel – proud to be Pete.

screaming: 'So you're against Black Pete? Go back to your own country!' Someone tries to grab her flag, she tries to escape but a small mob pursues her. One man is just stopped from hitting her, and eventually the police take her away for her own safety. The mob thinks she's being arrested and congratulate themselves."⁴

This attack on an innocent protester marked the absolute low point in a week in which extreme views were vented by otherwise ordinary people in a social media frenzy. When pop singer Anouk took an anti-Black Pete stance, the crudest (unprintable) slurs were directed at her and her mixed-race children. In the Dutch town of Hoogezand-Sappemeer, the charity *Minimaclub*, organising its annual Sinterklaas parade and celebration for disadvantaged children, planned to feature not only black but also orange and green Petes as a reaction to the debate. When this was reported in the national media, the organisers received abuse and death threats by email and phone. The plan was dropped.

The idea that "Black Pete is racism" simply does not fit with the much-touted Dutch love of tolerance or what they believe about themselves. For them, Pete carries all the innocence of childhood, and anything that complicates this innocence sullies it. There also is an increasing longing for simpler times, when men were men, women were women, each child had a father and a mother, and there were no people with different cultural roots demanding equal rights and fair treatment.

The harassment of Tilly Kasiepo was the landmark incident that made many realise that the Black Pete protests had got completely out of control. *Pietitie* and other Facebook groups quickly distanced themselves from the scandal and scrubbed their pages of hateful comments. In a detailed open letter, Amsterdam's mayor announced that the Sinterklaas parade would take place, but that changes would be made. Quinsy Gario and the organising committee have resumed talks behind closed doors.

With the direct focus of their protest lost, *Pietitie* had to find a new aim for their page. They refocused their efforts on doing something for children from poor families: "Because exactly in this month they are confronted with their 'being different'. Together we should want to contribute to a Sinterklaas celebration for everyone!"

If only they meant those words not just for poor children but for everyone in the Netherlands.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSwHoFCq58Y
- 2 <http://blogs.un.org/blog/2013/10/24/what-is-the-role-of-human-rights-independent-experts/#sthash.cQOEn9Ey.dpbs>
- 3 www.facebook.com/pietitie
- 4 <http://geritdeheus.wordpress.com/2013/10/27/zwarte-piet-malieveld-den Haag/>

children on the activities of Sinterklaas, his white horse Amerigo and his growing army of Black Petes. With the influx of immigrants from the former colonies, however, Holland has become increasingly multicultural, and Pete has had to adapt.

ZWARTE PIET IS RACISME

Black people in particular are troubled by what they see as a throwback to the way they were portrayed in the past and a reminder of Holland's slave trade. But the rest of Dutch society struggles to come to grips with that past, and many parents are horrified by the suggestion that Black Pete, usually played by whites in blackface, has racist overtones. "Nonsense!" they say, "It's an old tradition." All too often, as celebrated Dutch tolerance wears thin, this is followed with: "And if they don't like it, they can go back to their own country!"

A commonly heard justification for Black Pete's colour is that it's soot from the chimney, but this of course doesn't explain the colourful page's outfit, curly hair, even brown skin tone and red lips. Others argue that Sinterklaas is descended from the Norse god Wodan, and his aides are the noble incarnations of his ravens. At first glance, the similarities between Sinterklaas and Wodan are striking: Sinterklaas has his crozier, red mantle and mitre, and rides over the roofs on his white horse; Wodan charges through the night sky on Sleipnir, wears a hat and cloak, and carries a spear; and in his quest for wisdom he discovered the runes, which are echoed in the book in which Sinterklaas keeps the details of good and bad children.

Not insignificantly, Sinterklaas and his retainers are a source of joy for children, whereas seeing Wodan on the Wild Hunt with his undead army was an omen of disaster (for more on Odin and the Wild Hunt, see FT53:59-69). While elements of pagan traditions have certainly been absorbed into Christian religion, there is a lack of fit between Wodan and Sinterklaas. There are vast differences in purpose and detail, and the similarities merely suggest shared archetypes. A case can be made for Black Pete as successor to the Devil that the mediæval Saint Nicholas led on a chain, but this hardly defuses the charge of racism.

Actor Erik van Muiswinkel has played Pete on Dutch television for a decade and a half, and says he is proud to have done so. In an essay on the subject, he argues that the character has become detached from its stereotype. He is now just called Pete, has no exaggerated red lips and no longer speaks broken Dutch. He sees Sinterklaas and his helpers as fairy tale figures that can be enjoyed by Dutch children of all races. That is, if people stop making jokey comparisons between minority children and that humble black servant of yore: "No one can abolish racism, insensitivity and boorishness. But we should at least show our willingness to try."

With such high public visibility, Sinterklaas couldn't just stop at visiting deserving children. In books and on television he found himself involved in increasingly contrived adventures, and so began a slow erosion of his dignity. From

all this silliness emerged in the 1980s, amid cosy sweaters and Laura Ashley curtains, an elderly and milder Sinterklaas. Pete was still funny, but no longer played as a figure of fun. He had become capable and clever, a role model and identification figure for children.

Though Van Muiswinkel says Pete has become "less black and less of a servant," the blackface remains. And it has a function: to dress up and paint their faces is a liberating experience for performers, and in small communities a necessary disguise. In a ritual not unlike guising or mumming they become not a "black person", but the character of Black Pete. If a switch to multi-coloured Petes is to be successful, both children and performers must still see the performance as authentic and believe in Pete.

While the debate round Pete goes on, there is a bigger threat to Sinterklaas, and it comes not from within multicultural Holland, but from the forces of commerce and globalisation. Dutch children find Santa Claus in their Christmas holiday movies and with their soft drinks and hamburgers. But the jolly impostor is not welcome until Sinterklaas is well on his way back to Spain.

Children's author Marcel van Driel is not surprised: "Sinterklaas is the last magical being the Dutch know. By the time they are four, children have learnt that the characters from their favourite cartoons and books are made up, and no longer believe in elves and gnomes. But Sinterklaas – he is real." And though the Dutch are a sober and matter-of-fact people, they will try to keep this last remnant of magic alive for their children for as long as they can. **FT**

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THE FACE OF FU MANCHU

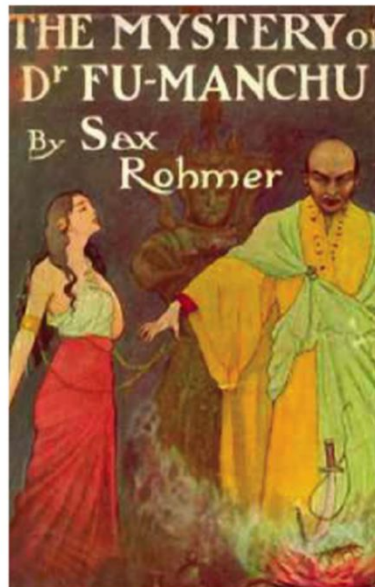
One hundred years ago, Sax Rohmer's fictional embodiment of the yellow peril stalked the streets of Limehouse in his first book appearance. But was Fu Manchu simply a stereotypical figure of Chinese cunning and cruelty, or a more complex creation? **PHIL BAKER** celebrates the centenary of a misunderstood criminal mastermind.

"Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan." Just add superhuman genius, a shaven skull and "long, magnetic eyes of the true cat-green" and you have Dr Fu Manchu: "the yellow peril incarnate in one man." It was a century ago that the fiendish Doctor was launched upon the world, hell-bent on nothing less than the downfall of Western civilisation and taking on an archetypal existence alongside such immortal creations as Dracula, Dr Jekyll, and Sherlock Holmes.

Fu Manchu was the brainchild of Sax Rohmer, the king of pulp erotica. Rohmer was the pen name of Arthur Sarsfield Ward (1883-1959), a hack writer from the south London suburbs with a mendacious line in autobiography. Around 1910, Ward supposedly asked a ouija board how he could earn his living, whereupon it obligingly spelt out the word "C-H-I-N-A-M-A-N". This was prophetic, because a year or so later he was delving fearlessly into the Chinese drug racket, apparently for the popular paper *Tit-Bits*, when his researches led him to Three Colt Street, Limehouse, in London's East End. It was here that he was inspired by a glimpse of a tall, dignified Chinese criminal mastermind, wearing a fur-collared coat and followed by a beautiful Arab girl – and the rest, as they say, is history, with 13 novels and endless spin-offs, from Christopher Lee films to Fu Mun Chews (a sticky sweet of the 1970s).

Fu Manchu was soon locked in battle with his stalwart if not very bright British opponents, the tweedy double act of pipe-smoking colonial troubleshooter Denis Nayland Smith, latterly working in Burma

"IMAGINE A
PERSON WITH
A BROW LIKE
SHAKESPEARE
AND A FACE
LIKE SATAN"



ABOVE: A first edition of the first Fu Manchu novel, published in 1913.

("He also saved the British Empire, by the way"), and his sidekick Dr Petrie. The name of Nayland Smith seems to be inspired by Wayland the Smith, a mythic hero of the Anglo-Saxons, while Petrie is surely named after Flinders Petrie, the Egyptologist (Egypt was Rohmer's real obsession, with China an afterthought). Their Holmes-and-Watson quality contributes to the lingeringly Edwardian feel of the books, despite the fact that they run from 1913 to 1959 and have contemporary plots – so much so that a late short story, 'The Mind of Fu Manchu', was originally entitled 'Secret of the Flying Saucers', and revealed that Fu Manchu had been experimenting with anti-gravity craft. Advanced technology was always one of his specialities, along with his fiendish army of Burmese dacoits, trained baboons and killer centipedes.

Fu Manchu inspired numerous imitations in the yellow peril genre, festering away between the wars in American pulp magazines, such as *The Mysterious Wu Fang* and *Dr Yen Sin* (the latter the work of Donald Keyhoe, later to be a UFO writer). He is also the clear inspiration for Ming the Merciless in *Flash Gordon*, and Fleming's Dr No in the James Bond novel, with more nuanced and playful appearances in Michael Moorcock's *The Warlord of the Air*, Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula*, and Alan Moore's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (where Moriarty blitzes the East End, until Limehouse strikes back with an extraordinary kite, balloon and rocket assault on Moriarty's aerial warship). The way that anti-Western mastermind Osama Bin Laden caught the imagination of the press also had something distinctly Fu Manchu about it.



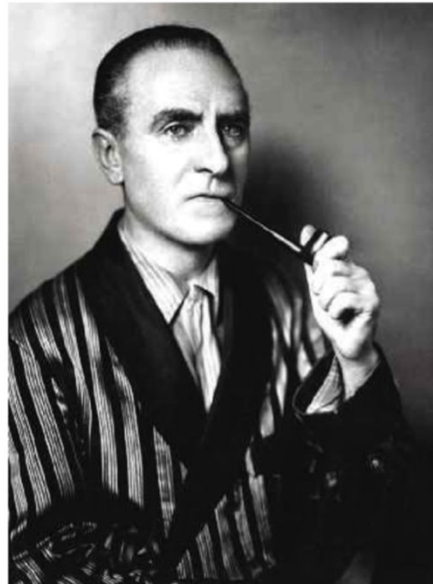
THE TORTURE GARDEN

The all too obvious background to the Fu Manchu books was the so-called Yellow Peril, as in MP Shiel's 1898 novel *The Yellow Danger*. Western anxieties about Asia were inflamed by the Boxer Rebellion in China, Japan's trouncing of a European nation in the Russo-Japanese War, and widespread Chinese immigration, particularly to America. A far smaller number of Chinese settled in London's Limehouse, where their notably peaceful and law-abiding community was fictionally associated with all manner of cut-throat terror and depravity, including the almost entirely non-existent phenomenon of the opium den: a myth which got off the ground with Dickens's *Mystery of Edwin Drood* and continued into Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* and the Sherlock Holmes story 'The Man with The Twisted Lip'. Limehouse, inevitably, is where Fu Manchu has his diabolical HQ in the early books.

China was associated in the Western mind with arrogance, fanaticism and torture, with some basis in reality: Western civilians had been put to death by slow amputation during the Opium Wars, and photographs showed the Death of a Thousand Cuts being used in official executions as late as 1905. Freud's patient The Rat Man acquired his name because he heard about a Chinese torture involving rats: it was so horrible he couldn't stop thinking about it, until he ended up on the couch. It is significant, though, that it seems to come not direct from China but from Octave Mirbeau's strange, semi-satirical French novel of 1899, set in China, *The Torture Garden*.

The idea of China, and by extension Chinatown, as a sadist's playground clearly fascinated Rohmer, who gives Fu Manchu such fiendish devices as the Wire Jacket and the Six Gates – the latter a rat torture which he threatens to use on Nayland Smith. In *Dope*, another Chinese-themed Rohmer novel outside the Fu Manchu series, the foolish Mollie Gretna says "there is something so magnificently wicked-looking about a pigtail – and the very name of Limehouse thrills me to the soul!" – "I have read that Chinamen tie their wives to beams in the roof and lash them with leather thongs until they swoon." – "I am simply quivering with delicious terror!"

China is demonised in the Fu Manchu books, but this somehow lacks conviction: endless lip service is paid to Fu Manchu's evilness, but there are far more convincing encomia to his sense of honour, his genius, and the genius of his ancient culture. In fact, China is less demonised than idealised. Rohmer's sense of exotic Chinese genius borrows from the popular Edwardian figure of the Chinese stage magician: there were a number of these, dressed as pigtailed mandarins, most famously Chung Ling Soo (William Ellsworth Robinson, killed on stage in 1918 when his bullet-catching trick went wrong). Rohmer knew the variety acts of his day – he had a background of writing for music



ROHMER GIVES FU MANCHU SUCH FIENDISH DEVICES AS THE 'WIRE JACKET'



LEFT: Sax Rohmer. BELOW: One of the many beautiful illustrations by JC Coll for the *Collier's Magazine* appearances of the Fu Manchu stories from 1913 onwards.

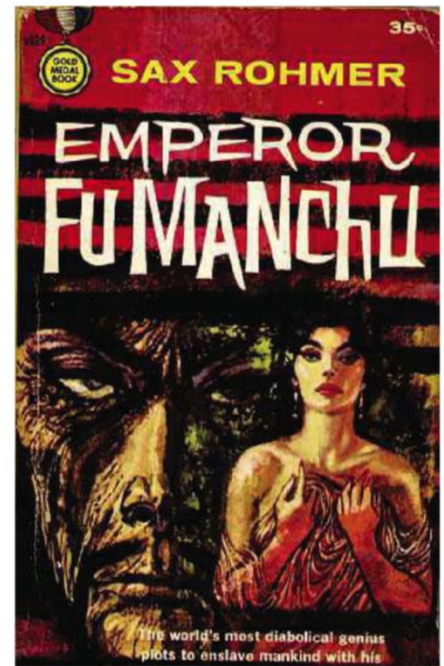
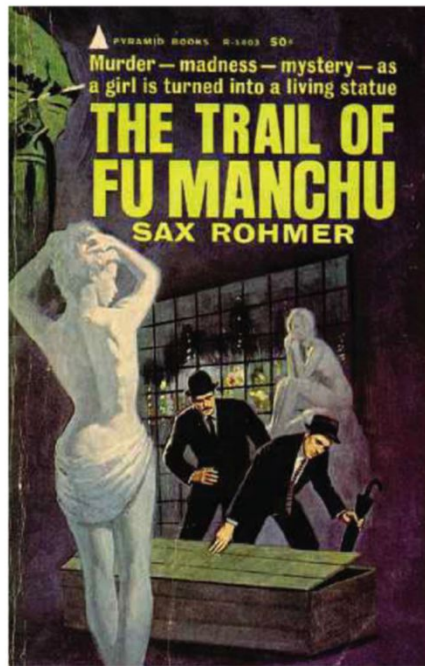
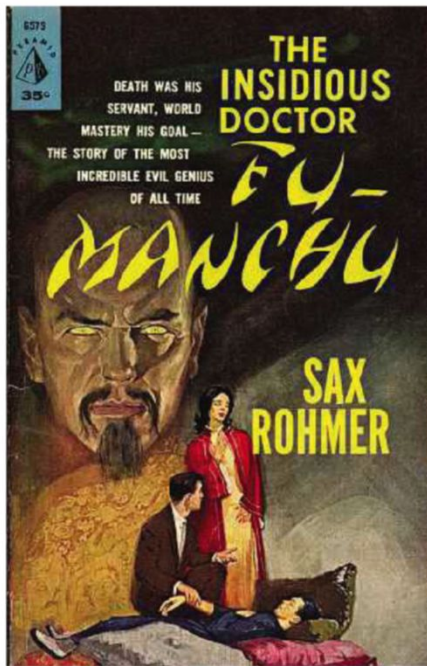
hall, and ghosted the autobiography of the comedian Little Tich – and later became a friend of Houdini, apparently after Houdini sent him a fan letter about his survey of the occult, *The Romance of Sorcery*. Fu Manchu's miraculous escape from the Great Pyramid in *The Mask of Fu Manchu* recalls 'Under the Pyramids', the *Weird Tales* story written by HP Lovecraft in collaboration with Houdini, and there are references to stage magic and escapology throughout the books. When Fu Manchu is arrested, he miraculously swaps places with his lawyer and walks free: "He wasn't relying on the loopholes of the law! He was relying on his genius as an illusionist!"

In the words of the 20th-century cliché: "Very clever, these Chinese!" But Fu Manchu's character ultimately transcends anything specific to China. Rohmer's love of Egypt leads him to compare the Doctor to Pharaoh Seti I, while the Doctor's aristocratic charm and prolonged life – thanks to his immortality serum – recall Dracula, as does the loyalty of his Western acolytes: "The Prince is free!" says one, after he escapes, "The work goes on!" Satan is a running comparison in the books, no doubt owing something to Rohmer's Catholic background – and as Blake famously said of Milton, you can't help feeling Rohmer is "of the Devil's party without knowing it."

Fu Manchu has green eyes, not a Chinese trait (except for a very small group believed to be descended from Roman legionnaires) with a third eyelid, a nictitating membrane. This is not a Chinese feature – it is not a human feature, although *Star Trek's* Vulcan Mr Spock possesses it. Which leads us to another, deeper stereotype into which Fu Manchu plugs: that of the ultra-cerebral alien, like Dan Dare's opponent The Mekon – a green-skinned, huge-headed mastermind dedicated to the destruction of Earthlings, whose name chimes not only with mechanical but Mekong. With his great forehead and slanted eyes, Fu Manchu also recalls the drawing by Crowley known as Lam, sometimes taken to be his 'Guardian Angel' Aiwass, but in fact originally titled 'The Lama', and described by Crowley as "my guru". There is something Asian-and-yet-not going on here – in which connection we could also consider Crowley's mandarin picture of the sage Kwaw (used on the cover of the first edition of *The Great Beast*). There is a lurking archetype behind all these causally unrelated figures, and – like Crowley's notion that Lam was his guru, and that Kwaw, or Kwaw Li Ya, was a self-portrait – it has something idealised about it.

FIENDISH MACHINATIONS

The true glory of Fu Manchu, and Rohmer's respect for his greatest creation, is clearest when following the books as a series. In the first of them,



ABOVE: Rohmer went on to write 13 Fu Manchu books, which went on to enjoy a long life in splendidly lurid paperback editions such as these.

The Mystery of Fu Manchu (1913), Nayland Smith returns from Burma bringing exotic adventure into Petrie's "humdrum suburban life". Fu Manchu has already attempted to kill Smith in Burma, and he tries again in Petrie's house, using the "Zayat Kiss": a dacoit climbs in the window and leaves a piece of paper, impregnated with a rare essential oil, near the intended victim. The oil then draws a giant poisonous centipede, which leaves a kiss-like mark on the corpse – except in this case Smith whacks it with his trusty golf club, and later a dead Dacoit, guilty of bungling his mission, is found floating in the Thames.

These elaborate deaths are Fu Manchu's stock in trade – subsequent books feature "the snapping fingers" (a type of leech), "the coughing horror" (a trained ape), "the red spots", "the flower of silence", "the Green Death" and more. Hashish preparations are another speciality, along with a perfect anaesthetic extracted from mimosa, and at the end of the first book we see "the fungi cellars", where laughing victims leap about like maniacs under the influence of psychotropic toadstools. After falling victim to a needle jab prepared from the fungi, police inspector Weymouth loses his mind and lives wild by the Thames; but Fu Manchu feels "some kind of admiration or respect for him" and restores his sanity. Finally, our Chinese fiend seems to perish in a fire, but Petrie can't help hoping he survives, "against all the promptings of logic and Western bias".

And he does, of course, with more fiendish machinations in *The Devil Doctor* (1916). There is a memorable moment when Petrie wanders into an antique shop in Museum Street, near the British Museum, where he insists on trying to pick up a Buddha despite the shopkeeper telling him that it is not for sale. Inevitably he grabs it, only to find it is the secret handle of a door – and there, "facing me, stood Dr Fu Manchu!" Later, having escaped from captivity, Petrie sees Fu Manchu outside in Museum Street,

wearing an oddly grotesque outfit of fur coat and large tweed motoring cap (modern readers might think of the work of Edward Gorey). Fu Manchu regularly erupts into these familiar, ordinary London settings – at another moment he is glimpsed looking out of a dark window in Burlington Arcade – and almost invariably with an exclamation mark. His presence makes London seem like a place of exotic possibilities – in Rohmer's terms, of "romance" versus "the humdrum" – as much a promise as a threat.

Fu Manchu is not initially a free agent – he is part of the Si-Fan, a secret society based in Tibet. The Si-Fan is "a mystery concealed behind the veil of Lamaism" paving the way for the world to be ruled by a "yellow princess": "the Grand Lama is merely her high priest." The Si-Fan evolves and changes with the books. At one point we are told a quarter of the non-white races belong to it, but in the later books its ruling Council of Seven is multi-ethnic. "Three of the Seven are as well known to the world as Bernard Shaw," says Smith: "Even to me their names came as a surprise" (another of them, baronet Sir Mostyn Bierce, bears a distinct resemblance to Sir Oswald Mosley).

YELLOW PERIL VERSUS RED MENACE

After *The Si-Fan Mysteries* (1917), which included a trip to the "House of Hashish" in Soho, there was a long gap before the series continued with *Daughter of Fu Manchu* (1931). This opens in Egypt, where the great Orientalist Sir Lionel Barton appears to be dead but is merely suffering Fu Manchu's "living death", a form of catalepsy, by which the Doctor removes famous scientists from the world and turns them into faithful zombies after granting them the drug-induced "Celestial Vision".

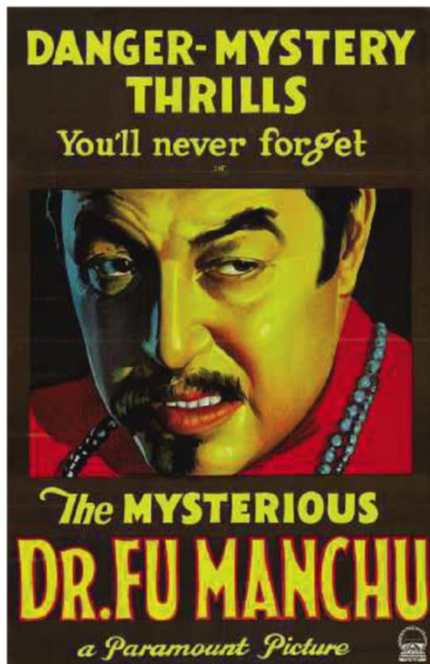
Sheer exoticism is the main driving force in the Fu Manchu books, incarnated in the shape of the lovely Arab girl Karamaneh (who goes from being Fu Manchu's slave to Petrie's

wife), but there is a less lovely embodiment of it in the hideous dwarf that features in *Daughter of Fu Manchu*. Hunch-backed, "epicene", and wearing a fez, this dwarf is a hashish-smoking assassin or "hashishin" (originally the private assassination troupe of Hassan I Sabbah, the Old Man of the Mountains, who seems to have given us the word 'assassin' from 'hashish'). One of these dwarfs is killed, but when another is safely locked up in Vine Street police station, Nayland Smith gravely explains it is "the only hashishin, I believe, ever captured by European police."

Mask of Fu Manchu involves a plot to stir up Moslem fanatics in the Middle East using relics of El Mokanna, the Veiled Prophet, and includes an amnesia drug made from "kaapi" – possibly *bannisteria caapi* or *yage*, also known as ayahuasca. It is in this book that Fu Manchu perfects his immortality elixir, made from a rare jungle orchid, and for the rest of the series he will be dependent on it (far more so than on the opium he regularly smokes).

The "dread Chinaman" keeps busy throughout the Thirties: in *Bride of Fu Manchu* he creates hybrid insect monsters and crosses plague with sleeping sickness, working from an underground complex with its own jungle flora. His scientific genius is put to remarkable use in *Trail of Fu Manchu*, manufacturing gold in a tunnel under Limehouse by an alchemical process that involves burning human bodies. This is such a success that he even opens negotiations with the Governor of the Bank of England, and it is also in this book, as part of the growing respect between enemies, that Petrie saves Fu Manchu's life by helping him with the immortality serum.

As the Thirties go on, Fu Manchu is increasingly preoccupied with politics and world peace. In *President Fu Manchu* he is buying up America with his gold and trying to install a puppet leader in the White House, helped by various fiendish tricks: an orator is



ABOVE: Rohmer's most famous creation also made many screen appearances, being played by Warner Oland, Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee and Peter Sellers.

made to look foolish with triggered memory loss while he's speaking, and another politician is murdered by a Manchurian Candidate-style killer, hypnotically conditioned to react to the trigger-word "Asia".

Fu Manchu goes over Niagara Falls at the end of the book but – like Holmes and Moriarty going over the Reichenbach Falls – this is not the end. In *The Drums of Fu Manchu* (1939) he is assassinating dictators, arms manufacturers and other warmongers in the cause of world peace (including Hitler-figure "Rudolf Adlon"). The last thing they hear is Arab drumming, before they fall victim to "the Green Death". Sadly, as we know from history, Fu Manchu failed to prevent the Second World War. In *The Island of Fu Manchu* (1941) he is in Haiti, disgusted by the world situation and busying himself with voodoo and collecting scientists (he "collects specialised brains as some men collect postage stamps"). It is also in this book that the good guys hit Fu Manchu below the belt by taking hostage his pet marmoset Peko, the only creature he has ever loved.

AN HONOURABLE MAN?

After the war Fu Manchu is re-occupied again with world peace, and with battling "the leprosy of communism". *Shadow of Fu Manchu* sees him in New York, struggling to gain control of a terrifying invention, greater than the atomic bomb. Britain and Russia also want to acquire it, but the twist is that Fu Manchu only wants to stop it falling into the wrong hands – he has had it himself since at least 1913, made by a Buddhist monk, and he was just going to inspect it when he first encountered Nayland Smith in Burma.

Shadow of Fu Manchu also has a marvellous cameo of one Professor Hoffmeyer, an Austrian psychoanalyst. From

FU MANCHU'S PET MARMOSET WAS THE ONLY CREATURE HE EVER LOVED

the fact that he is tall and smokes opium, however, you can guess who he really is. "As Professor Hoffmeyer, I have been observing the life of Manhattan," says the Doctor: "I have seen that Manhattan is Babylon reborn – that Manhattan, failing a spiritual revolution, must fall as Babylon did."

The final books in the series are not the best, involving a complicated plot with doubles in Cairo and some anti-Communist action in China. In effect, the saga peters out unfinished, cut short by Rohmer's death – ironically, for a yellow peril merchant – after catching Asian flu. But taking the series as a whole, it is increasingly clear that Fu Manchu is the hero. Right from the early books, he always keeps his word: he is not just honourable, but the most honourable man the narrator has ever known. His English, too, is not just pretty good for a foreigner, but "the purest English of any man I have ever heard." Further evidence that he is really a sterling fellow comes from the fact that he knows his Shakespeare, was personally acquainted with Lord Kitchener ("whom I knew and esteemed") and – despite wanting to bring down Western civilisation – he even has a mysterious soft spot for the British Empire: "Your long reign,

Sir Denis, is ending. A blacker tragedy than any I had dreamt of will end your empire," he says, adding "I thank my Gods that the consummation will not be seen by me."

So – as they say – what's not to like? "My methods, Sir Denis, were bad," he admits in 1931, adding: "My motive was good." By 1948, even Sir Denis is coming round to this, especially with regard to anti-Communism and world peace. "I appreciate your aims," he says: "I don't like your methods." Fu Manchu is nothing if not ruthless. He is not a democrat, far less a liberal. But if we compare this to Rohmer's own politics, we can see it's not necessarily going to dent his admiration for his greatest creation: like a lot of pulp writers, Rohmer was distinctly right-of-centre, and believed in "government by the whip and the axe."

So these magnificently absurd books, irradiated by a crazed exoticism, are in fact far less polar, less black-and-white, less white-and-yellow, than they seem. By the logic of the series, Fu Manchu is still alive, still taking his immortality serum, still scheming and biding his time. He has outlived his creator, who told listeners to a 1930s wireless broadcast: "I hope you understand Dr Fu Manchu as I have tried to understand him. Perhaps one day he may conquer the world. It would be a queer world, but I am not sure that it would be any worse or any better than the one we live in." **FT**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



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No 53: MYSTERIOUS APPEARANCES

Nearly all of forteana could be said to consist of mysterious appearances of something or the other: monsters in lakes and oceans, UFOs in the sky or crashed in the desert, aliens at the foot of the bed, red rains, falls of fish, kangaroos in Chicago, enigmatic patterns in wheat fields, ghosts in photographs or in draughty castles, not to mention airports, teleports, and so on. Among such reports is the one in *Nigeria News* (11 September 2012) headed **WORSHIPPERS AMAZED AS WOMAN DELIVERS A COLT AT CHURCH**, complete with picture.

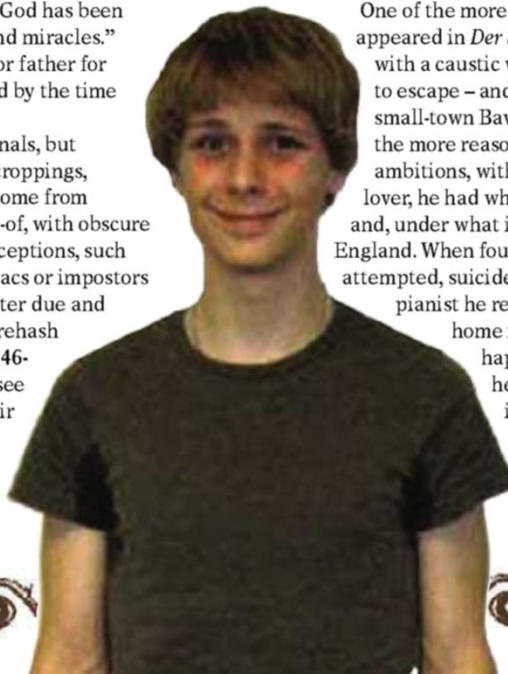
During a “prophecy programme” held by the World Liberation Ministry, on the old Sapele-Benin express road, a female worshipper “started screaming during the prayer session and began to bleed from the womanliness before the horse came out.” The church’s General Overseer commented, without apparent irony: “We have seen people that vomited several things during our service[s] but not this type of thing. God has been blessing our ministry with prophecies and miracles.” The newborn, whose ostensive mother (or father for that matter) was not identified, was dead by the time journalists arrived on the scene.¹

Not quite as rare as that in fortean annals, but rare enough, are mysterious human outcroppings, by which we mean people who seem to come from nowhere, or somewhere mainly unheard-of, with obscure or non-existent identities. With a few exceptions, such characters have turned out to be amnesiacs or impostors and have been successfully identified after due and diligent enquiry. Those fearing another rehash of Kaspar Hauser (see **FT169:38-42, 191:46-50**) and the Green Children of Woolpit (see **FT57:39+41**) may read on unsullied. Their stories are both too well known and too enigmatic to serve any purpose beyond gratuitous puzzlement.

A piano in pink

Among the more recent cases was the Piano Man, 20-year-old Andreas Grassl, who popped up on the beach at Sheerness, Kent, on 7 April 2005, wearing a sodden suit and tie (see **FT1994-5, 202:19**). All the labels had been cut from his clothing, and he had no passport or other ID. Taken by police (whose questions he didn’t answer) to hospital, staff gave him a pen and paper, hoping he would write his name. Instead he drew a grand piano. Offered a piano, he spent four hours at the instrument playing everything from Tchaikovsky to the Beatles. Doctors treated him for post-traumatic stress, and considered he might be an autistic savant with a singular talent for music but severely compromised social and linguistic skills. For nearly five months he said not a word. Sometime before 20 August, when he flew to Germany to rejoin his parents, Grassl, as he put it, “just suddenly woke up and realised who I was.”

One of the more detailed reports on his background appeared in *Der Spiegel*: he was a talented young man with a caustic wit and a gift for languages who wanted to escape – and briefly succeeded – the confines of small-town Bavaria. He was also, it seems, gay (all the more reason to leave). Various thwarted in his ambitions, without a job, and having broken up with his lover, he had what’s loosely called a nervous breakdown and, under what impulse no one knows, made his way to England. When found he was possibly contemplating, or had attempted, suicide. No one seems to be sure just how good a pianist he really was. And ironically, he ended up back home in stifling Protsdorf (pop. 71). It was not a happy story, although Grassl was last (2007) heard of living quietly, “fully recovered” in Switzerland, where he was studying



LEFT: Robin van Helsum, alias ‘Forest Boy’, who appeared in Berlin in 2012.

French at the University of Basel.

Fortean may draw more sustenance from the responses to appeals in the media to identify the 'piano man'. His parents said they never saw his picture in the media. Otherwise, he was variously identified as a French busker, Steven Villa Masson, an (unnamed) Italian concert pianist, a Czech musician named Tomáš Strnad, an Irish student, and perhaps most intriguingly, the husband of Danish councillor Susanne Steffensen of Karlebo, near Copenhagen. Speaking on Danish TV, she maintained that Piano Man was her Algerian-born husband, whom she had believed to be in Algeria visiting his sick mother. She claimed that his family severely disapproved of his having married a western woman. "I think he has fled for his life. He has previously received death threats," she said, adding: "He has lost 20 kilos and bleached his hair, but I can see in his eyes that it is him. I will never be wrong when I see those eyes." But wrong she was. Steffensen travelled to England to meet her claimed husband, but (she said) the hospital did not allow her to meet him. It would be interesting to know if Mr Steffensen returned to Denmark, and what he thought of all that.²

The case of Robin van Helsum, *alias* Forest Boy, was simpler (see FT281:4-5, 289:20, 292:11, this issue p23). He turned up, without any ID, at the Berlin city hall on 5 September 2011 with a tale that his mother had died in a car crash in 2004, and of having lived rough with his father since 2005 in the dark Teutonic forests. He called himself 'Ray'. His father had died in August 2011; the boy had buried his corpse beneath the trees "under some stones". He told bureaucrats: "I'm all alone in the world, I don't know who I am. Please help me." In fact, he had spent fully five days camping in the forest, with a friend, from his home in the Netherlands. The Berlin authorities gave him food and shelter and pocket money, and he managed to learn some German. In June 2012 the Berlin police released a photograph of him to the press, whereupon he was identified by a former girlfriend. Van Helsum then vanished, shortly to be found working in a Berlin burger joint. The authorities were tempted to try him for fraud, but dropped the charge in exchange for 150 hours' community service. As for cause or motive - Van Helsum had had a somewhat troubled childhood, but others with more disturbed histories have not gone in for narcissistic tricks like his.³

And now for someone completely different

It's possible to see Grassl and Van Helsum as instances of people trying to lose themselves in order to find themselves— involuntarily, in Grassl's case. But some 'mysteriously appearing' people arrive from nowhere only in the sense that the actual somewhere of their origins is camouflaged by the panoply of a whole life, usually in some sense an exotic one. Contemporary examples include Bill English and his fabrications of being a Green Beret who had extra-special insight into the US Government's contact with aliens (FT75:21-27, 76:30-35) and the grotesque duo of 'Binjamin Wilkormirski' and 'Laura Grabowski', mutually reinforcing but indubitably fake Auschwitz survivors. 'Grabowski' also boasts a previous alternative history/career as a victim of ritual satanic abuse (FT251:52-3).

One of the more celebrated historic instances of people with



ABOVE: Mary Willcocks, otherwise known as Princess Caraboo.

an invented identity is Princess Caraboo of Javasuu. Her fame is somewhat disproportionate to the length of her reign, which lasted for the spring of 1817 in Gloucestershire. She turned up in Almondsbury on 3 April that year, seeking lodging from a cottager by signs, and speaking an unrecognisable language. The parish overseer of the poor took her to Knole Park (not to be confused with the Sackville shack in Kent), the seat of the local magistrate, Samuel Worrall. Mrs Worrall arranged for her to stay at a local inn, where she first showed high-born airs:⁴

Upon some preparation being made for her supper, she expressed a wish that she preferred tea; and before she partook of it, she covered her eyes with her hand, and appeared to repeat a prayer, bowing her head at the conclusion. Upon a second cup of tea being poured out, she refused taking it, until the cup was thoroughly washed; and when she drank it, she repeated the same form of prayer with much seeming devotion.

And in keeping with her exotic nature, she purported not to recognise a bed. She would speak only in her incomprehensible tongue, but did give signs of recognising various Chinese artefacts, and did establish that her name was 'Caraboo'. Various persons of foreign extraction or

familiar with Oriental languages attempted to converse with her, to no avail. Staying for a few days at St Peter's Hospital, Bristol ("the receptacle," in Gutch's words, "for vagrants and the poor"), she refused all food or drink. Later, taken into Mrs Worrall's household, she persistently refused to eat flesh, fowl, or eggs unless she cooked the meat herself on an open fire. "In the choice of her food she was also... consistent and uniform, and affected much peculiarity and nicety," writes Gutch. A Portuguese named Manuel Eynesso visited her at St Peter's, and claimed to understand her strange tongue. "[Her] tale," says Gutch, "was, briefly, that she was a person of consequence in her own country, had been decoyed from an island in the East Indies, and brought to England against her consent, and deserted. That the language she spoke was not a pure dialect, but a mixture of languages used on the coast of Sumatra, and other islands in the East." This was enough to persuade Mrs Worrall to take Caraboo back to Knole.

There, she was, of course, visited by many of the county's good and great, eager to see and hear the foreign enigma. Writes Gutch shrewdly:

There was no one who took a greater interest in her fate and adventures, than one gentleman who had made several voyages to the East-Indies, who was conversant with every creek and harbour in those seas, and well acquainted with the customs of China. This gentleman committed to writing the following particulars, either extracted from the girl at various times by signs and gestures; or as it now appears, in the warmth of his anxiety to discover her history, he most probably assisted her in the creation and composition of them. [p7]

Pirates! Cannibals! Kidnappers!

The epic spun was as good as than anything cooked up by RM Ballantyne or Captain Marryat, plus a dash of the Gothic. This is just the start:

THAT her name was CARABOO; that she was the daughter of a person of rank, of Chinese origin, by a Maudin, alias, a Malay woman,

who was killed in a war between the Boogoos (Cannibals) and the Maudins (Malays.) That whilst walking in her garden at Javasu, attended by three sammens (women) she was seized by the people of a pirate prow, commanded by a man of the name of Chee-min, and bound hand and foot, her mouth also covered, and that thus she was carried off. That her father swam after her; and in pursuit shot an arrow, which killed one of her women, who were taken on board with her. That she wounded herself two of Chee-min's men, with her crease, when she was seized; one of whom died, but the other was recovered by the Justee (a Surgeon.) After 11 days she was sold to the captain of a brig called Tappa Boo; the brig sailing during the transaction; she being conveyed from one ship to the other in a boat. That after four weeks the brig anchored at a port, remained there two days, and having taken on board four female passengers sailed again, and in five weeks more anchored at another port, where the four females were landed; that they staid three days, and then sailed for Europe, which she reached in 11 weeks; being near some part of the coast of England, in consequence of the ill usage she experienced, she formed and carried into execution the resolution to jump overboard, and she swam to shore. [pp7-9]

One of the more cunningly 'convincing' motifs that Caraboo inserted into her tale was: "That the Boogoos (Cannibals) were black. That when they took white prisoners, they cut off their heads and arms, and roasted them by a fire, round which they danced, and then eat them." [p11] She also concocted an alphabet and numerical characters, possibly inspired by her interlocutor's leading, or perhaps based on a dim memory of Chinese pictograms. The performance was extraordinarily consistent. Gutch reports [p12] that "during the 10 weeks which she resided at Knole and in Bristol, she was never heard to pronounce a word or syllable which resembled her native tongue [i.e., English]. Mrs W's housekeeper, who slept with her, never heard at any interval any other language or tone of voice than that which she first assumed." Rather remarkably, given her actual background, she also proved herself a tolerably expert fencer, archer, and oarsman.

On 6 June, Caraboo absconded from Knole, and pitched up in Bath, where an anxious Mrs Worrall found "the Princess at the very pinnacle of her glory and ambition, in the drawing-room of a lady of *haut ton*... The drawing room was crowded with fashionable visitants, all eager to be introduced to the interesting Princess. There was one fair female kneeling before her, another taking her by the hand, another begging a kiss!" [p18] The newspaper publicity this appearance generated led directly to Caraboo's exposure: her one-time landlady in Bristol, a Mrs Neale, recognised her, as did the son of a Westbury wheelwright, who had met her shortly before she adopted her regal persona at Knole. Both convinced Mrs Worrall of the girl's true identity and, confronted by her patroness, Caraboo broke down and confessed all.

Or did she? She was certainly born Mary Willcocks in 1791, at Witheridge, Devon, and at some point (probably in 1814) she said she met a 'gentleman' whose name is variously given as Baker, Bakerstendht or Beckerstein. They married after two months, and lived in London and Sussex; he then sent her back to London, telling her he was going to France and would bring her to France in due course. That was the last she saw of him. The child, born in February 1816, was christened John Wilcox, but Mary always referred to him as John Edward Francis Baker. Already one senses

that Mary's relation to reality (whatever story she was telling) was never less than creative.² But she told the London Foundling Hospital that the baby was the son of John Baker, a bricklayer, with whom she had lived for nine months in Exeter; when they moved to London, he deserted her. Either tale might be true.

Restless creativity

Less plausible, but not absolutely impossible, is her story that at one point in her wanderings – she rarely kept a job for more than three months – she had been offered a place in a gang of highwaymen encountered on Salisbury Plain (she was disguised as a man at the time), provided she could fire a pistol. Terrified, she "fired off the pistol more dead than alive, and screamed out that she was murdered.—They threatened to destroy her, having ascertained thereby her sex, if she did not tell, whether she did not come there as a spy: then she fell on her knees, told them every thing, and begged pardon..." They gave her "a guinea and five shillings" and let her go. In 1816, after the death of her son, she worked in Islington for a Mrs Starling, who said Mary:

was the best servant she ever had in her house, but so odd and eccentric, that she frequently thought she must be out of her mind. She was very fond of her children, but told them such strange stories about gypsies and herself, that she frightened them out of their wits. She once came into the parlour, and had dressed herself up so like a gypsey, that the children did not know her. She told them she had been in the East-Indies and America; that she was in Philadelphia; was brought to bed by the side of a river; that a lady and gentleman going by in a carriage took her up, and had her taken care of. [pp51-2]

Mary Willcocks-Baker's admittedly narcissistic fantasies seem on the whole harmless; the worst she did in her persona as Caraboo was to be exposed, and so expose the credulity of a broad section of West Country gentry – who by the end of June 1817 had packed her off to Philadelphia to be rid of the embarrassment. She had a prodigious memory and, one surmises from her 'eccentricities' and restlessness, an (uneducated) intelligence that, until she 'landed' the role of Caraboo, never found a proper focus. She was also a brilliant actress, living her part absolutely. Pretending to know no English, she was able to develop the part simply by listening and memorising what the erudite around her were saying and speculating. Gutch moralised that she was "an instance of consummate art and duplicity exceeding any occurrence in the annals of modern imposture," but that sounds like an attack in defence of his class (earlier he refers to her – manifestly inaccurately – as "constantly surrounded by persons of superior talent"). In a society whose hierarchies were less rigid she might have found a longer and more fruitful career: her creativity, discipline and her self-absorption would certainly have fitted effortlessly into Hollywood.

Meanwhile students of tales of bizarre experiences might reflect on certain lessons of the Caraboo incident. Her audience's will to believe, and their *naïveté*, coupled with the imagination, intelligence and determination of the star claimant, produced a classic instance of collusive hoax. The nearest modern parallel is perhaps the collective collusions and delusions of the alien abductee/abductologist fraternity. The difference is that Princess Mary Baker Caraboo had the wit not to believe her own story. Whether or not she believed some of her other tales is a moot point. **F**

NOTES

1 *Nigeria News*, 11 September 2012: <http://news2.onlinenigeria.com/latest-addition/194084-worshippers-amazed-as-woman-delivers-a-colt-at-church.html>. Readers may be reminded of the case of Mary Toft, who 'gave birth' to a litter of rabbits in the 18th century, albeit for less ostensive reasons (see **FT:57-26**).

2 See www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/the-lost-son-the-life-and-travails-of-the-piano-man-a-372244-2.html; www.scotsman.com/news/world/piano-man-finds-peace-after-gay-heartbreak-that-wrecked-his-life-1-745336; www.pinknews.co.uk/2007/05/01/piano-man-was-a-victim-of-gay-heartbreak/

3 See Wikipedia, "Robin

van Helsum" (which is all anyone needs).

4 All quotations on Princess Caraboo are from her earliest biographer, John Matthew Gutch, *Caraboo: A Narrative of a Singular Imposition*, Gutch, Bristol, 1817: annotated html edition at: <http://www.resologist.net/carabooa.htm>. Numbers in square brackets refer to pages of the original printed edition. Caraboo's insistence on

seeing her cup freshly washed before each filling may remind factoid buffs of the late Queen Mother's reported refusal to partake of her favourite libation, gin and Dubonnet, unless she saw the fresh bottle of Gordon's opened in her presence.

5 Even when confronted by Mrs Worrall, the 'princess' couldn't resist an elaboration: "Mrs Neale being dismissed, the girl

immediately commenced a narrative to Mr Mortimer, in which, to account for her knowledge of Eastern customs, she attempted to shew, that she had resided four months at Bombay, and also at the Isle of France, as nurse in an European family. But Mr Mortimer having visited Bombay, soon detected her, and she refused at that time to communicate any further particulars." [Gutch, p29]

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THE FIRST FORTEANS

2. THE YOUNG ROCKETEERS

Who were the First Forteans? British fortean lineage began in the early 1930s, when Charles Fort was still alive and his books quite rare in these isles. **BOB RICKARD** continues his rummage for our fortean roots.

Two things connected many of the early science fiction fans and the British Interplanetary Society (BIS). The first was their fascination with the new developments in rocketry and the prospect of space exploration; it was a new frontier and held the promise of flight to other worlds. The other connection was an almost unspoken, yet, common, awareness of Charles Fort's writings. As Leslie Johnson, an SF fan who became founder-secretary to the BIS, later recalled: "It is a strange thing that people who were interested in interplanetary travel were not necessarily interested in Science Fiction; more credibly, those who were interested in Science Fiction were interested in interplanetary travel."

A good example of this crossover is the Manchester Interplanetary Society (MIS) formed by teenage SF fans Eric Burgess (1920-2005) and the artist Harry Turner (1920-2009) in 1936, to build and launch rockets. A 19-year-old Arthur C Clarke even came up from London to attend some of their meetings. A year later, one of their rockets blew up, attracting the attention of national newspapers and the law.

This accident occurred on 27 March 1937 on windswept moorland at Clayton Vale, outside Manchester.¹ The event had been well publicised and the Manchester lads promised to launch 13 experimental rockets that they had designed and built themselves. Harry Turner's son Philip told me: "None of them got too high and most of them exploded or crashed."² It was the only model to have a metal casing; when it exploded, three people were injured, including a schoolboy and the photographer.

In Arthur C Clarke's autobiographical *By Space Possessed* (1993), he said, referring to this incident, "The actual building of rockets was frowned upon, for it would only result in police proceedings



ABOVE: The young Manchester rocketeers (average age 17) assemble their own missiles at the Clayton home of Eric Burgess.
BELOW: Fritz Lang's *Frau im Mond* (The Woman in the Moon), believed to be the first realistic depiction of space flight in film.

THE MIS ROCKETEERS WERE SUMMONED TO CITY POLICE COURT ON 14 MAY 1937, CHARGED WITH UNLAWFULLY MANUFACTURING "A FIREWORK" AND PROHIBITED EXPLOSIVES

under the 1875 Explosives Act, as a group of experimenters in the north country has already proved." One newspaper carried the headline: "Rocket that was meant for a Planet explodes in Manchester and Police say 'Stop it!'"

The MIS rocketeers were summoned to City Police Court on 14 May, charged with unlawfully manufacturing "a firework" and prohibited explosives, but the case was eventually dismissed. Harry Turner later recalled: "Philip Cleator [see below] took an interest in MIS activities after the trial – obviously felt that as a bunch of 16- and 17-year-olds we needed a little guidance." Cleator welcomed the young enthusiasts and after the war the

MIS was absorbed into the BIS.

The British Interplanetary Society came into being in 1933, in a rather low-key way, when Philip Ellaby Cleator (1908-1994) – a Wallasey academic and polymath whose interests ranged from rocketry and robots to lost languages and underwater archaeology – wrote a long letter to his local paper bemoaning the fact that Britain had no equivalent of the American Interplanetary Society (founded in 1930). He remembered watching, in his mid-teens, a movie about radium as a rocket fuel; its closing shot – of a rocket heading into space leaving a glowing trail – inspired his lifelong passion.³

Published on 8 September 1933, Cleator's letter to the *Liverpool Echo* resulted in an inaugural meeting at his house a few weeks later. Among the first who responded was Leslie Johnson who, in turn encouraged other SF fans to join. He was followed by Walter Gillings, Ted Carnell, Ken Chapman, William Temple – all SF fans whom we



shall look at more fully later in this series. Among them too was MIS founder Eric Burgess (who served as BIS President 1944-1945, and who is credited with convincing Carl Sagan that the Pioneer probes should carry a message for extraterrestrial intelligences); and Arthur C Clarke (who served as BIS treasurer in 1937, and twice as their president (1946-1947 and 1951-1953).

There is a widespread misconception that Eric Frank Russell (EFR) was one of the founders of the BIS⁴ – not helped by his faulty recollection later in life that he had been. As John Ingham, his biographer, discovered, “Years before his first science fiction story was published, [EFR] had a mature interest in rocketry, spaceflight and astronomy.” But he did not write to Johnson expressing his interest until four months later. When he finally joined the BIS – around October 1935 – secretary Johnson recognised his talent and immediately took him on as an assistant.⁵

In 1934, barely a year after its formation, BIS founder Cleator travelled to Germany for a friendly visit to the country’s Society for Space Travel – *Verein für Raumschiffahrt (VfR)*⁶ – where, along with the famous rocket pioneers Wernher von Braun and Hermann Oberth, he met Willy Ley (1906-1967), with whom he shared many interests outside astronomy and physics. They got on well together, and later both were to write SF and articles of fortaean interest. Given the role of the V-series ‘flying bombs’ in the strategic raids on London between 1944-1945, Cleator’s trip must rank as one of history’s ironic footnotes.

Incidentally, the VfR had been founded in 1927 by Ley and the others not to progress spaceflight but to advise Fritz Lang on rocketry for his film *Frau im Mond* (“The Woman in the Moon”, 1929), believed to be the first realistic depiction of spaceflight in movies. Director Lang later praised Ley’s work: “The orbits... around the Earth, and to the Moon and back... were so accurate that... the Gestapo confiscated not only all models of the spaceship but also all foreign prints of the picture.”⁷

Ley gave Cleator a list of space travel enthusiasts from all over the world, which included the name of Professor Archibald M Low, a well-known British physicist, inventor, editor of *Armchair Scientist* and



ABOVE: Despite the warning to stand well back, their audience crowded around to watch Bill Heeley launch No.6, the one that exploded. “The two sinister gentlemen on the right of the picture are plain-clothes cops”, notes Harry’s son, Philip Turner.

BELOW: Philip Ellaby Cleator; the inaugural meeting of the British Interplanetary Society was held at his house in Wallasey in 1933.



broadcaster who had contacted the VfR earlier. On his return, Cleator passed Low’s details to Johnson, who, with EFR, went to see Low on one of their recruiting forays. Low became the BIS’s second president, serving between 1937 and 1939. Evidently Cleator and Ley kept in touch about rocketry. *The Astronaut* – the journal of the MIS, edited by Harry Turner – for August 1938 carries articles from both of them.

In 1935, Ley, who, was growing ever more horrified by National Socialism, forged authorisation for a visit to London and fled there. Moving to the USA, he was soon writing science articles for *Astounding*, *FATE*, and *Galaxy Magazine* (becoming the latter’s science editor in 1952). His 1959 book *Exotic Zoology* was my main introduction to sea serpents, yetis,

and ‘historical’ dragon sightings. Ley was also a measured sceptic – he particularly associated the Nazis with ‘pseudo-science’, on which topic he wrote a memorable article for Campbell’s *Astounding*.⁸ Ley has a crater named after him on the Moon, and, to general dismay, died only a month before the first Moon landing in 1969. **FT**

Next issue: ‘Poltergeist Chibbett’ and his fortaean newsletters.

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1. In May 2012, a plaque to commemorate these launches was erected at this Clayton Vale site – more details: <http://astrotalkuk.org/2012/05/09/a-public-event-to-commemorate-manchesters-first-rocket-pioneers/>
2. Harry’s son Philip Turner, who maintains the Harry Turner online archive, told me: “My late father was a great fan of the works of Charles Fort, having been introduced to them by Eric Frank Russell.”
3. BIS site <http://www.bis-space.com>. Curiously, much of the role of SF fans in founding the BIS is absent from the BIS website’s history page.
4. EFR is wrongly stated on the Liverpool University Archive Hub to be a BIS founder: <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/features/0501efr.html>
5. John Ingham, *Into Your Tent* (Plantech UK, 2010, pp78-79).
6. Tom Crouch, ‘Willy Ley: Chronicler of the Early Space Age’, in Virginia P Dawson and Mark D Bowles, eds., *Realizing the Dream of Flight: Biographical Essays in Honor of the Centennial of Flight, 1903-2003*. (NASA, 2005, p.158).

7. Fritz Lang, ‘Sci-Fi Film-maker’s Debt to Rocket Man Willy Ley’, *Los Angeles Times*, 27 July 1969, p24; cited on the wiki page for ‘Willy Ley’.

8. Willy Ley, ‘Pseudoscience in Naziland’, in *Astounding Science Fiction* 39/3 (1947, pp90–98).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – I could not have made this record without the generous help of the SF fan historians and archivists who went out of their way to preserve the correspondence, images, fanzines and reports of the day. Chief among those are:

Rob Hansen’s *THEN: A History of UK Science Fiction Fandom (1930-1980)*: www.ansible.co.uk/Then/

Rob Hansen’s FIAWOL archive: www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/index.htm

Dave Langford for his Ansible archive: <http://news.ansible.co.uk/>

Greg Pickersgill for his Gostak archive: www.gostak.demon.co.uk/

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Bill Burns’ amazing *efanzines* project site: <http://efanzines.com/>

Jill Godfrey for permission to use Harold Gottliffe’s photos from several of these sites.

I obviously owe a huge debt to John L Ingham’s biography of Eric Frank Russell, *Into Your Tent* (Plantech UK, 2010), the result of several decades’ worth of patient detective work.

NB: For ease of reading, I omit many references here – but a fully referenced and linked version will follow on my CFI blogsite: <http://blogs.fortean.org/bob>

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The Quantum Zeno Effect

You should never underestimate quantum weirdness, says **ANDREW MAY**, because in the subatomic domain, the laws of common sense don't apply.



ANDREW MAY is a regular contributor to *FT* and a contributing author to *30-Second Quantum Theory*, to be published by Icon Books in summer 2014.

If you look at a flying arrow for just a single instant of time, the arrow will appear to be stationary in the air. If you continue staring at it, then at the next instant of time the arrow – since we've just established that it's stationary – cannot have moved. In other words, you can stop an arrow in mid-flight just by looking at it. This is the essence of Zeno's arrow paradox.

Zeno of Elea lived in Italy in the 5th century BC, and he belonged to a school of philosophy that believed all change was an illusion. He was also responsible for the paradox of "Achilles and the Tortoise", whereby a slow runner, given a head start, can never be overtaken by a faster runner. First Achilles has to run to the point from which the tortoise set off, by which time the tortoise will have moved to another point further on. But when Achilles gets to that point, the tortoise will be further on still... and so on, forever.

In mathematical terms, Zeno's paradoxes can be viewed as early attempts at infinitesimal calculus – a subject that was not perfected for another two millennia. When it was, it proved what common sense had been saying all along: that Zeno was talking bollocks.

Despite this, Zeno's paradoxes have never quite lost their fascination. Eric Frank Russell, that great pioneer of fortean fiction, used Achilles and the Tortoise as an example of "Diabologic" in his short story of that name. Another of Zeno's paradoxes cropped up in Philip K Dick's "The Indefatigable Frog" – an early short story that also manages to namedrop Charles Fort. And Fort himself referred to Zeno in *Lo!*¹. All these writers believed, as Zeno did, that there was something fundamentally screwed-up in the way

we perceive reality.

At the risk of annoying readers like Tim Greening-Jackson (**FT304:73**), I'm going to invoke quantum theory at this point. If nothing else, the quantum world is famously counter-intuitive. Many people will be familiar with the idea that a quantum system can simultaneously be in a superposition of two different states, until an observation forces it to "collapse" into one state or the other. An unobserved radioactive atom, such as the one that controls the fate of Schrödinger's cat, will be in a superposition of undecayed and decayed states. The longer it sits there without being observed, the higher the probability that when eventually observed it will be in the decayed rather than the undecayed state.

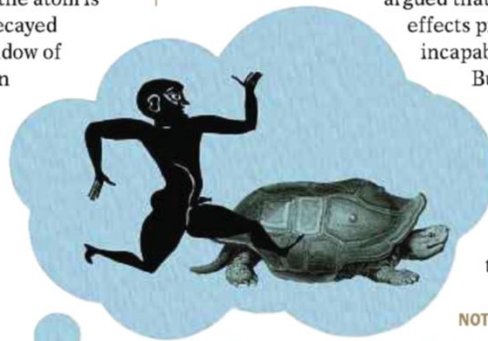
This is standard quantum weirdness... but there's an obscure little twist that makes it even weirder. If the atom is observed to be in an undecayed state, then for a brief window of time after the observation is made the atom's probability of decay will be zero. So if it's observed again within this window, it must still be in the undecayed state... and so on for as long as observations continue. It's exactly like Zeno's arrow paradox – observing an object closely enough prevents any kind of change from happening. The unlikely connection between classical philosophy and modern physics was first pointed out in a 1977 paper entitled "The Zeno's paradox in quantum theory"².

The authors of that paper labelled it a paradox because... well, it's just too weird to be true, isn't it? But you should never underestimate quantum weirdness. The reality of the quantum Zeno effect (QZE), as

it is now known, has been well and truly established by laboratory experiments. In the macroscopic world of everyday experience, a watched kettle will eventually boil regardless of what the old proverb says. But in the subatomic domain of quantum physics the laws of common sense don't apply. There's no escaping it – a quantum state that is subject to continuous observation is incapable of changing. Zeno was right after all.

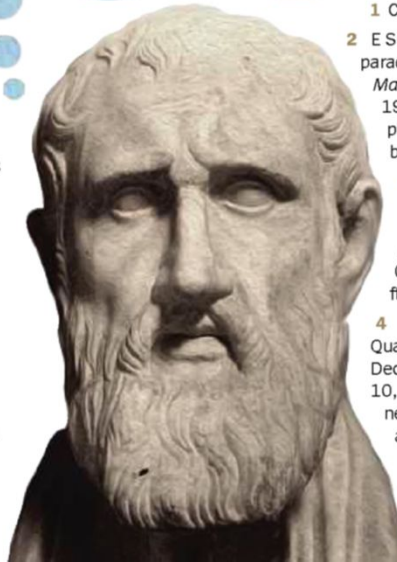
When quantum physicists talk about "observation" they don't necessarily mean conscious observation by a human witness. Any kind of continuous state-checking will do. Some researchers have speculated that biological systems may have evolved an ability to exploit the QZE unconsciously, for example in the magnetoreception of migratory birds³. It's even possible that a biologically exploited QZE could come to the aid of those who, like Jenny Randles, have suggested that quantum effects "might illuminate many seemingly puzzling phenomena of the mind such as telepathy and precognition" (**FT201:27**). The link between the QZE and "paranormal Psi effects" was highlighted in a recent paper by Danko Georgiev⁴. The author, being a sceptic, argued that the non-existence of Psi effects proves the human brain is incapable of exploiting the QZE.

But what if the opposite is true? Would the existence of Psi effects prove that the human brain *does* exploit the QZE? I'm sure there are readers of this magazine who would like to think so! **FT**



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The real spirit of Christmas?

The realisation that Santa Claus isn't real is a traditional marker of the end of childhood; but, finds **SD TUCKER**, there might be hope yet for all those adults who stubbornly refuse to grow up and put away childish things...

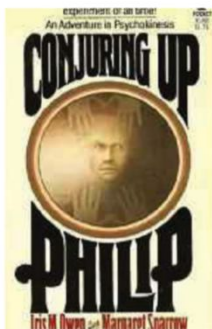


SD TUCKER writes regularly for *FT*. His latest books are *Terror of the Tokoloshe* and *Paranormal Merseyside* and his next, due next year, will be *The Hidden Folk*.

Everyone knows the old joke about the dyslexic Devil-worshipper accidentally selling his soul to Santa – but how many people know that it is actually possible to contact Father Christmas through occult methods in real-life?

At a Christmas party held at the home of the husband-and-wife parapsychology team of ARG Owen and Iris M Owen in 1974, a very strange séance was staged. As most ghost-buffs know, the Owens were responsible for one of the most famous parapsychological experiments of all time when, in Toronto in the early 1970s, they decided to create their own fictional ghost, called 'Philip'.

Adherents of the 'RSPK' (Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis) hypothesis regarding poltergeists, the Owens felt that most polts were probably just unconscious emanations from the minds of their victims, which then accrued some vague sense of 'personality' after interacting with the people they haunted. In short, the idea went, if you treat a poltergeist as an invisible dead person, then that is what it will eventually start to behave as. With this in mind, the Owens invented a fake biography for an entirely fictional person, a deceased English aristocrat who had 'lived' during the 1600s – the famous 'Philip'. By deliberately treating an apparent poltergeist (or collective emanation from the sitters' minds, if you prefer) that popped up during séances they held with fellow enthusiasts as if he really *were* 'Philip', the Owens eventually managed to get him to act accordingly. The answers he gave to questions put to him, for instance, were entirely consistent with the false life-story that had been created for him. The implications of this seminal experiment were clear; you could make a 'ghost' be whatever you wanted it to be, simply through the power of suggestion.



And this is where the Owens's 1974 Christmas gathering comes into the story...

It was held, like the Philip séances, at their home, and many of the guests had been 'sitters' at these experiments. As a joke, one of the partygoers put their hands upon the table that had been used for the séances and uttered the classic line: "Is there anybody there?" Apparently, there was; a loud single rap – the agreed signal for 'yes' amongst the experimenters – rang out around the room.

"Are you Father Christmas?" asked another, no-doubt tipsy, visitor.

"Yes", came back another single rap.

A long conversation with an invisible 'Santa' then followed, in which all of the answers to the predictable slew of questions about elves, reindeer, chimneys and the precise temperature at the North Pole were answered by the spook, completely in character. As Iris M Owen later put it in her classic book about the 'Philip' experiments, this was all a "beautiful illustration" of how "in these situations you get what you expect".¹

This is an idea which should be familiar to all regular readers of this magazine; it's the lesson taught us by the way that, for example, strange lights in the sky are interpreted in one culture

ABOVE: Guests at ARG and Iris M Owen's house try to conjure up Philip.

as being fairies, in another as witches, and in our own as UFOs. We tend to project, in short, our own cultural assumptions onto things – and if it's possible for a Sussex housewife to 'see' something that actually turned out to be the Moon as an 'alien spacecraft', complete with rows of lights and solidly structured metallic sides, as once famously occurred,² then perhaps it could also be possible for a small child at Christmas-time, in a state of high expectation and excitement, to 'see' the lights on a passing aircraft

as being Santa in his sleigh. To choose another example, it's a commonplace observation that people who wake in the middle of the night suffering from sleep-paralysis often witness hallucinations which appear in a guise appropriate to their own cultural expectations; 'aliens' armed with anal probes in modern-day America, but 'demon-rapists' in mediæval Europe. Given the law of statistics, some child, somewhere, at some point, *must* have woken up one Christmas Eve suffering from sleep paralysis; is it really so implausible that they might have then had a corresponding hypnopompic hallucination of Father Christmas standing over their bed?

In fact, there are cases on record of persons claiming to have had hallucinations of fictional characters; for example, a 1992 letter to *FT* gave a detailed account of a small boy seeing Mickey Mouse – "a very real, very solid figure filling the doorway" – in his grandparents' house one day (*FT*65:63). Having a vision of someone like Mickey or Santa Claus need not necessarily mean that a youngster should be putting a visit to a child psychologist at the top of their Christmas list, however; it is well-known that the boundaries between fantasy and reality are rather more blurred for the average child than they are for most adults, and a quick flick through a book dealing with the topic of childhood hallucinations and imaginary friends, such as Michael



HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

J Hollowell's interesting *Invizikids*, shows that infants really can see weird figures – like talking yoghurt cartons with arms and legs and imaginary Elvis impersonators – and even interact with them.³ After an article on the topic by Hollowell appeared in this very magazine (FT250:30-35), correspondence from readers revealed that some children have indeed had highly-developed fantasies and full-blown sightings of festive characters like Father Christmas and living snowmen (FT252:72-73). Such figures might not be visible to adults, but it seems as if they really are present to their children.

Surprisingly, one person to take a slight interest in childhood Christmas visions was the great Swiss psychologist CG Jung. In 1954/55, the editor of a Swiss magazine, the *Schweizerische Beobachter*, invited his readers to send in accounts of their personal experiences with the unknown. He received around 1,200 letters, which he passed to Jung, who read them and then passed them on in turn to one of his acolytes, Aniela Jaffé. She then subjected these missives to a Jungian analysis (naturally!) and reported her findings in the 1963 book *Apparitions and Precognition*.

Interestingly, many of the sightings of apparitions were reported to have occurred to the *Beobachter's* readers when they were children – and some took place at Christmas.

One such letter concerned the plight of a nine-year-old girl who, one Christmas Eve, was lying in bed longing to be visited not by Father Christmas, but by her beloved father, who had died some years beforehand. Lo and behold, “soft knockings” and “a strange sound of footsteps” were heard in her bedroom, followed by her father making an appearance, “shining and lovely as gold, and transparent as mist”. He came over to his daughter's bed, smiled and then promptly disappeared, leaving the girl with a feeling of “great peace”.⁴ As Jaffé says in her discussion of this experience, the fact that it took place on Christmas Eve is surely significant; traditionally, this particular night was not only the time that Santa came to visit, it was also a time when wandering spirits came back to Earth, as in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. Jaffé's implication seemed to be that this particular date in the calendar is numinous and somehow magical – to

a child, at least – and that this very fact could potentially lead to kids being in a state of mind conducive of such visions. Evidently, this particular little girl was hoping to see her dead dad rather than Kris Kringle, but for most tots at this time of year the situation would probably be rather different ...

Amazingly, Jaffé's book also contains a description of one young boy's ghostly encounter with what might almost be termed a real-life ‘Bad Santa’. One childhood evening, claimed the letter-writer, he saw a “white figure” which “rose from the dusk” of his staircase. It was, he wrote, a little old man with a “spreading white beard” and carrying a sack over his shoulder. Bizarrely, he described this phantom as looking as if “a drawing heavily outlined in chalk had stepped out of a blackboard”. It disappeared towards the top of the staircase, but was seen again by the boy in his attic, a few months later. The apparition, upon spotting him, “started violently” as though surprised, and then a big white flame appeared upon its breast, emitting a palpable sense of anger, before the figure once more vanished.⁵ Even though these particular encounters did not specifically occur at Christmas-time, Jaffé interpreted the bearded entity carrying a sack as being a version of Father Christmas, a figure she linked back to fairy-lore (our modern image of Santa is based partially upon a breed of Scandinavian dwarf known as a tomté) and subjected to an elaborate bout of symbolic analysis. Essentially, she viewed Santa-like spooks as being some kind of archetypal apparitions, like White Ladies or Black Monks, which would naturally emerge from the collective human psyche and be seen again and again as the years went by.⁶ Jaffé actually thought that Santa symbolised death, who must visit all our houses stealthily at night some time; Merry Christmas, kids!

Whatever our opinions may be of Ms Jaffé's ideas, though, I suspect that such childhood ‘Encounters with Claus’ might be more common than we think; such things are no doubt forgotten over time by most, the memories of toddlers not generally persisting for too long. Parents may remember them, but interpret them as being merely cute little anecdotes about their offspring and the time they ‘pretended’ to have seen Santa when they were two years old. But what if they *weren't* pretending? I'm not entirely sure whether I find myself being strangely comforted or deeply disturbed by such a thought. **FT**

NOTES

1 Iris M Owen (with Margaret Sparrow), *Conjuring Up Philip: An Adventure in Psychokinesis*, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1976, p214.

2 Patrick Harpur, *Daimonic Reality: A Field Guide to the Otherworld*, Pine Winds Press, 2003, p87.

3 Michael J Hollowell, *Invizikids: The Curious Enigma of ‘Imaginary’ Childhood Friends*, Heart of Albion Press, 2007.

4 Aniela Jaffé, *Apparitions and Precognition: A Study from the Point of View of CG Jung's Analytical Psychology*, University Books, 1963, p57.

5 Jaffé, op cit, p106.

6 Jaffé, op cit, p113-114.

HAVE A READ... IF YOU DARE!

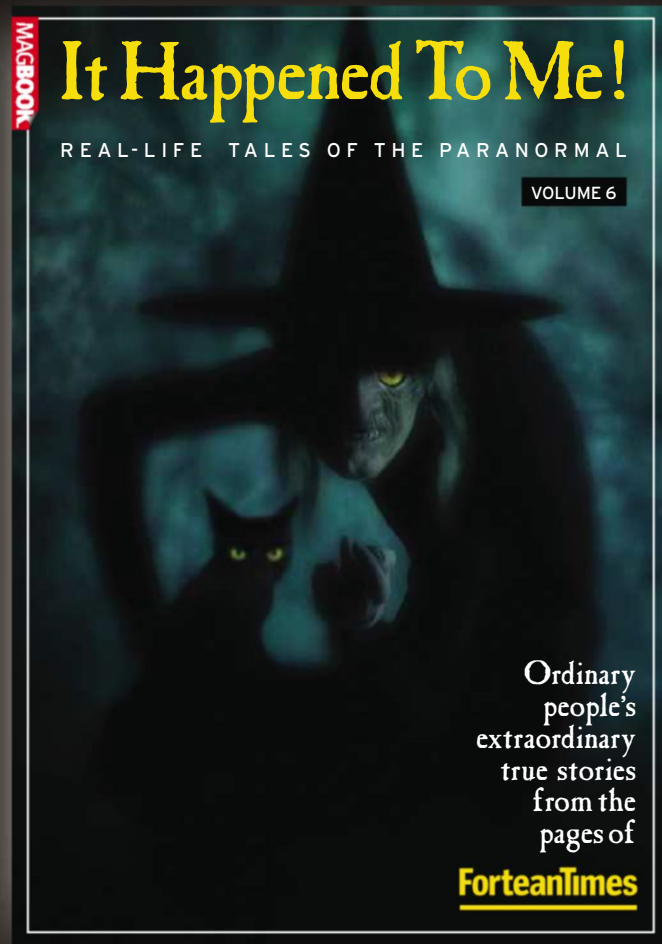
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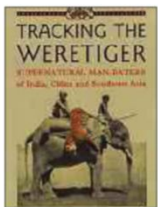
This month's books, films and games

reviews



Tiger, tiger, burning bright

The poor, benighted peasants who shared the tiger's habitat were equally at the mercy of the 'supernatural' felids and the priests who terrorised them for profit



Tracking the Weretiger

Patrick Newman

McFarland 2012

Pb, 216pp, refs, notes, illus, ind, \$21.95/£34.50
ISBN 9780786472815

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £34.50

Any account of the great 19th century colonial fad for hunting tigers in India, Indonesia, Malaysia and China – especially the much-feared man-eaters – would be a great read; this one is above the rest, reading like a *Boy's Own* thriller but with a thorough scholarly apparatus underpinning every narrative opportunity. Newman, a former journalist in the Far East, does not stop there, for it is written, as one reader put it, “from the viewpoint of the people being eaten as opposed to the people shooting them”; by which he means the terrified locals and neighbours of the ‘disappeared’ for whom these predators assume the stature of demons. This is a book of curious lore and anthropology more than it is of social and natural history, and skilfully manages sensationalism while setting a cracking pace. To give an idea of the scale of the problem, Newman tells of a single male leopard that dominated 500 square miles of Himalayan foothills, from 1918 to 1926, terrorising 50,000 residents and tens of thousands of pilgrims who had to traverse the region.

Newman first sets his sights upon the general attitude of

“civilised superiority” that pervaded colonial society, which dismissed native fear about the tiger’s ‘supernatural’ qualities as the hysterical reaction of simple-minded savages. “It is easy to scoff at native superstition from the back of an elephant with a powerful rifle in your hand,” he writes, “when you are not the one compelled by poverty to enter the forest” – every bit as dreaded as the ancient Wildwood of Europe – “every day, barefoot and barely unarmed, to find firewood or food”. Then, as the notorious big-game hunters fall into the background, he stalks those who had more direct experience of the archetypal nature of the beast-hunt.

Newman is even-handed, pointing out that these same gullible and frightened peasants were equally at the mercy of any unscrupulous priest, shaman or sadhu who would shamelessly manipulate their fears for gain and status. In that respect they were worse than the man-eaters driven by hunger or madness, or the white rajahs by their crass ignorance. To clarify, Newman refers to stories of mendicants who threatened to transform if they were refused alms (a ploy that worked unfailingly if there was a man-eater on the loose). “If ever there was a check on antisocial behaviour,” he continues, “it was warning that the gods punish wrongdoers by sending man-eaters to kill them,” and of course, the priest would advise placating those gods with more and more offerings.

These scares offered another time-worn tool of social revenge, suggesting your enemy was a shapeshifter, or guiding a trail right to their door. The despised

“Possession by tiger spirits is still practised by Malay and Chinese mediums”

local imagination had already, in a way, shot itself. Newman points out that the sadhus who revered Shiva in his Pashupati avatar, as Lord of Beasts, emulated his ferocious look and slept on tiger skins. Hindu mythology predisposed its adherents to accept as real shapeshifting gods – such as the avatars of Vishnu, who fought demon brothers over two lifetimes, incarnated as a boar in one and a man-lion in the other.

The belief in weretigers among the rural Malays during the early colonial era was described by Sir Hugh Clifford, who lived among them for 20 years after he was appointed as ‘British agent’ in 1887; he was later installed as high commissioner of the Malay States. Fluent in formal and dialect Malay, he particularly loved the land and people of Pahang state. In his memoir of 1897 he wrote of their complete acceptance that the *dukuns* (shamans of pre-Islamic animism), who provided them with carved tiger amulets (for healing), were possessed by tiger spirits. But they also believed that there were rogue *dukuns*, black magicians, murderers and madmen (especially lunatics occasionally glimpsed living naked in the jungle) who assumed tiger form to kill or worse, suck their victims’ blood, a combined vampire-tiger demon. Possession

by tiger spirits is still practised by Malay and Chinese mediums at festivals, albeit in a more socially-acceptable form – to bring health, luck and prosperity – and propitiatory shrines and symbols are seen everywhere.

Newman goes into all of this – like Clifford, he has great affection for Malaya – delighting in stories from memoirs, official reports and newspapers about hunters, villagers and survivors (not many of those), including witnesses of “bizarre transformations”. In particular, the intelligence and cunning of the tiger is both admired and feared as, beyond human, ‘superhuman’. Its ferocity and strength were also sought after; e.g. their power and prowling grace are deliberately emulated by practitioners of *silat* – a Malay and Indonesian martial art. While many *silat* masters “invite the tiger-form spirits of their dead teachers to possess them”, in Aceh, it is said, some actually turn into tigers in the heat of a fight. Similarly, China’s Wudang and Shaolin kung fu have their ‘tiger’ forms and stances.

In Burma, villagers, on their return from a successful tiger hunt, we are told, would “dress and act as women” to confuse any tiger spirit that might have followed them. But in the Western Ghats of southern India, anyone (man or woman) who killed a tiger was honoured with a Narimangala (a ‘tiger wedding’) and married to the tiger’s soul – presumably, says Newman, to avert any impending revenge. He includes an engraving of the one of the last such weddings, which featured in the *Illustrated London News* of 6

Continued on page 62

The borderline

A fine study of mediæval thought asks when belief slips into the unacceptable



Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies

The Boundaries of Superstition in Late Medieval Europe

Michael D Bailey

Cornell University Press 2013

Hb, 295pp, notes, bib, ind, \$55.00/£35.50, ISBN 9780801451447

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE 35.50

This is no pop history of spells and hexes. Michael D Bailey's approach to late mediæval superstition highlights the challenges of determining what constitutes acceptable spiritual practice. He emphasises that an exact definition of superstition may not exist: superstition itself is slippery and protean. The key word is boundaries: when did behaviour cross the line from proper to improper religious devotion? Bailey drives his inquiry with a larger concern about "how people understand metaphysical forces", which applies not just to superstition, but to religion overall.

This is a careful, academic inspection of how the physical and spiritual realms were thought to interact. Conclusions are drawn from writings by 14th to 16th century academic and theological elites, for whom Augustine and Aquinas formed the basis of what superstition was understood to be. Augustine warned against the worship of idols and involvement with demons. Aquinas broadened the definition to include incorrect performance of religious observance. Like art or porn, superstition became an "I know it when I see it" phenomenon, determined by ever-changing cultural subjectivities.

Mediæval intellectuals

explorations of demonology, necromancy, sorcery, alchemy, and natural magic led to difficult questions. How, for example, can one distinguish divine rapture from demonic possession? Religion, science, and magic were not as neatly compartmentalised as we like to think they are now. However, Bailey dispels notions that the mediæval mind was somehow backward. On their own terms, mediæval writings on superstition reveal innovative, analytical and discerning thought in action. The thorniest subject involved the night sky. Theoretical debate raged over the elusive divide between astronomical observation and astrological prediction. Witchcraft, too, was perplexing. Bailey's take on "the worst of superstitions" investigates the unofficial charms and remedies used as countermeasures against witches.

Important dichotomies emerge in the course of this examination. Superstition influenced elite and common spheres of mediæval society. It addressed the nebulous intersection of internal and external manifestations of faith. Bailey concludes with a flourish, as superstition is applied to sociologist Max Weber's concept of disenchantment (roughly, the idea that intellectual history involves a linear reduction of metaphysical belief). Bailey, though, argues that the story is never so straightforward. Cycles of dis- and re-enchantment come into play, and, furthermore, modern historical understanding involves a periodisation process that threatens to oversimplify the past. Superstition did not die out during the Scientific Revolution. It is still here. Bailey enriches his subject while expanding its relevance.

Mike Pursley

Fortean Times Verdict

SKILLED HISTORIAN GIVES NEW IMPORTANCE TO AGE-OLD DEBATE **8**

The End of the World

Reverend Billy

OR Books 2012

Pb, 118pp, illus, refs, £7.00, ISBN 9781935928935

AVAILABLE FROM [HTTP://WWW.ORBOKS.COM/](http://www.orbooks.com/)



Refreshingly different from all that misanthropic Armageddon porn, *The End of The World* suggests we may

already be at the "global going-crazy tipping point" of an already unfolding consumerism-fuelled climate change enviro-apocalypse, the 'Shopocalypse'. While most prophets of doom relish the prospect of unbelievers engulfed by extreme weather events or whatever, the Rev's take on the End of the World is strangely uplifting, with an obvious love of people and of life, even if all life on Earth is about to disappear.

Its surreal gallows humour would melt the heart of the most curmudgeonly lizard-bothering End Times freak, with The End heralded by an imagined "white-hot two-day blowout sale at Best Buy" and by the appearance of new eco-disaster cash-in products like "drowning Elmo toys." A vivid opening scene relates non-stop breaking news pay-per-view reality disaster movies playing on the iPhones clutched in the cold, dead hands in the piled-up corpses. But there's a serious side; US Geographical Survey data on "the widespread mortality of their forests" also gets a look in.

Rev. Billy urges the reader to take personal responsibility for the coming Shopocalypse, and to take steps to avert a climate change Armageddon through political activism, or as his Church of Stop Shopping Choir so succinctly put it, "Changealujah!" The Rev. Billy's the alter ego of New York actor and street performer Bill Talen, and the Church of Stop Shopping's 'Forest Faith' enviro-creed owes more to Occupy Wall Street than to any of "the disastrous religions".

Nor is it a haranguing "I'm better than you" critique from the sidelines – the Rev. Billy and his associates have done some of the things *The End of the World* describes – one chapter recounts an impromptu assembly held

by Occupy mass-arrestees in underground cell under a New York police station, another a guerrilla Thanksgiving dinner in the lobby of the Bank of America.

The End of the World will fit neatly in your pocket, and its "impossible" poetry is up there with the best bits of the Beat Poets, but with much better gags. Matt Salusbury

Fortean Times Verdict

QUITE EXTRAORDINARY. PRAISEALUJAH!

9

Signatures of Life

Science Searches the Universe

Edward Ashpole

Prometheus Books 2013

Hb, 227pp, notes, bib, \$25.00/£19.99, ISBN 9781616146689

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.99



In November 2013, Erik Petigura studied data collected by the Kepler spacecraft and concluded that our galaxy hosts something like 40 billion Earthlike planets, likely housing (in Petigura's words) "life that somehow resembles life on Earth". The news attracted sufficient attention to end up on the front page of the *New York Times*. Neither Petigura nor the *Times* mentioned what this does for ufology's extraterrestrial hypothesis: namely, further validate its key prediction.

Since the discovery of the first extrasolar planet in the mid-1990s, the detection of worlds previously only suspected has proceeded at a dizzying pace (though some bitter-enders insist on Earth-life's uniqueness). A sizeable number of those planets will be a few billion years older than the Earth, allowing time for intelligent civilisations, many of which will almost certainly have developed ultra-advanced technology, some of it devoted to space exploration, to evolve. They won't try to communicate with us via antiquated radio telescopes, either, as decades of failed SETI efforts ought to have made clear.

In *Signatures of Life*, science journalist Edward Ashpole underscores these points, which will have occurred to any astronomically informed observer who is open-minded about UFOs. Though sometimes critical of their short-sightedness, Ashpole

credits SETI scientists with providing a framework – however unintentionally – within which it is possible to talk rationally about evidence of an alien presence in the Solar System and even in the Earth’s atmosphere. (A few SETI scientists, for example the late Michael Papagiannis, have pointed to UFO reports as potentially relevant to the search.) As Ashpole observes, “the science that supports astronomical SETI, a respectable scientific discipline, equally well supports the hypothesis that some UFOs are alien artifacts.”

He also qualifies his remarks with some criticisms of ufology, both warranted and excessive (since ufology has been pushed to the fringes, it is only to be expected that it will attract its share of fringe personalities). While Ashpole has caught the essential UFO evidence, one wishes he were more deeply read in ufology’s small but irreducible body of serious literature. There are, for example, no *Journal of UFO Studies* citations (thus none to environmental scientist Michael D Swords’s 1989 paper ‘Science and the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis in Ufology’), and he apparently is unfamiliar with – immodesty alert – my *UFO Encyclopedia* volumes, which would have given him a broader perspective on ufology, its history, and its various approaches.

This, however, is not a fatal shortcoming. *Signatures* bursts with thought-provoking information, ideas and insights about all aspects of what Ashpole calls the ‘Grand Hypothesis’, which he defines as being that “life and intelligence are universal phenomena”. His eloquent look at every aspect of that question informs, intrigues, and never bores. If Ashpole is ahead of his SETI colleagues in his willingness to consider evidence of ETI (probably robot probes) in our immediate neighbourhood, one suspects it’s not by much. In the meantime, here’s the cutting edge.

Jerome Clark

Fortean Times Verdict

A FASCINATING MUST-READ FOR FANS OF THE GRAND HYPOTHESIS

9

Weird War II vs history

A deadpan artefact about the Nazis and the occult from a serious history publisher hovers between history and fantasy



The Nazi Occult

Kenneth Hite

Osprey Adventures Books 2013

Pb, 80pp, illus, bib, ind, £10.99, ISBN 9781780965987

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.89

If you’re interested in military history, there’s a good chance that one of your bookshelves contains a row of Osprey books, slim volumes with titles like *Imperial Japanese Navy Destroyers 1919–1945* or *Macedonian Armies After Alexander 323–168 BC*. Brief, informative and lavishly illustrated, they cover a bewildering variety of topics, often in exacting detail.

In recent years, Osprey seem to have been expanding their line to include a series of books focusing on more narrative history – volumes with titles like *Kill Hitler*. Additionally, they’ve branched out into wargames. And lastly, they’ve begun to publish works which are a little more... esoteric.

Take, for instance, Kenneth Hite’s *The Nazi Occult*. This volume is the first of something called ‘Osprey Dark’. Other titles announced for the line include *The Knights Templar: A Secret History* and *We Will Destroy Your Planet: An Alien’s Guide to Conquering the Earth*. It promises to tell “the true story of the most secret battles of World War II”. In fact, the book itself is rather odd.

This isn’t a history book about the connections between Nazism and occult beliefs, though it draws on many historical sources to illustrate its tale. It isn’t a work of fiction – at least, not one of narrative fiction – though it describes many fictional events. In some ways, it resembles a sourcebook for a wargame or role-playing game, although it lacks

any kind of game system.

In fact, the best way to think about *The Nazi Occult* is that it’s a fake Osprey – the kind of book Osprey Publishing would sell in a world where the Third Reich’s secret occult wing made deals with yetis, Werewolf partisan groups contained actual werewolves and Nazi flying saucers ruled the skies.

Hite creates this unusual artefact amazingly well. Beginning with a brief introduction, he moves across the facets of Nazism’s involvement with the occult, sorting his material by subject – runes, astrology, “hidden energies,” Nazi occult organisations – but also working his way up from the plausible to the outlandish. The journey begins with volkisch mystical groups in interwar Germany and ends with Nazi flying saucers battling the Allies in Antarctica.

The writing style blends the actual history of esoteric elements of pan-Germanism with full-tilt Weird War II fantasy without ever letting the hint of a smirk cross its face. Hite deploys a classic Lovecraftism here, continually referencing both genuine history and total fiction in an offhand way that assumes that the reader knows both. For instance, an equivalent Allied paranormal research programme is mentioned in passing but never described, just as Allied strategy wouldn’t be described in a “real” Osprey book about the Germans. *The Nazi Occult* even achieves that ghoulish hint of creepy enthusiasm about the bad guys so

common in military history books about World War II.

Visually, *The Nazi Occult* lives up to Osprey’s high standards. It’s illustrated with a mixture of painted “battle” scenes, images of German personnel with notes on uniform and equipment, reproductions of contemporary photographs and publications, and fake photos showing German flying saucer technology. The only disappointment is the rather garish cover; it’s tempting to imagine how well the “alternative-universe Osprey” bit would have worked if the book had been in Osprey trade dress with a title like *Occult Forces of the Third Reich (1): Nazi Occult Experiments 1923–1939* or something. Still, one can hardly expect Osprey to mess so firmly with its own brand identity, no matter how hilarious the result would have been.

If there’s one unanswered question about *The Nazi Occult*, it’s who this book is really for. It isn’t exactly a history of Nazi occultism, a bug-eyed conspiracy fantasy or a slam-bang Weird War II action story, although it has elements of all three styles, and as a result it might disappoint readers looking for one of these. Readers who enjoy a well-executed oddity will appreciate a work of non-narrative fiction that blurs the line between history and the fantastic with assurance and verve.

James Holloway

Fortean Times Verdict

AN INTRIGUING ODDITY FOR FANS OF FANTASY AND MAYBE HISTORY

9

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Daya people become zombie-tigers if their corpses are washed with lime water

Continued from page 59

December 1873. Apparently you can catch this feline equivalent of lycanthropy by swimming in a stream a tiger has drunk from, or by drinking water from a tiger's pawprint. Among the many villages of hereditary shape-changers in Indonesia and Malaya that Newman catalogues, the Daya people are said to be able to transform in daylight should they taste or smell limes, or become



A Kodava warrior weds the soul of a tiger

zombie-tigers if, inadvertently, their corpses are washed, in Islamic tradition, with lime water.

Ascetics and priests across the Far East tell almost identical stories of sending, during sleep or trance, their spirit into the jungle to inhabit a tiger, variously flesh or ethereal; here too we find the familiar tales of wounded beasts tracked to reveal a similarly wounded man; and of men found in tiger traps, who are – naturally – assumed to be shape-changers rather than hapless travellers. Conversely, animals, especially those come upon unexpectedly in places they shouldn't be, face death at the hands of a mob pursuing a suspected shape-changer. Still today, as we have seen in the 'monkey-man', 'grease yakas' and 'oily man' scares from India to Java, there is a general fear of a supernatural thief or molester who has performed black magic to obtain the abilities to change form and be uncatchable.

Figures from the WWF show that tigers disappeared from Bali in the 1930s–1940s, from Central Asia in the 1970s, from greater Java in the 1980s and from southern China in the 1990s; in real terms, there were an estimated 100,000 tigers in the Far East in 1900, plummeting to

around 3,000 in 2010; a decline blamed chiefly on poaching and loss of habitat. That destruction, we now know, also affects the psyche of the tribes who uneasily shared their lives with the tigers. Some anthropologists have described how this has been rationalised: the Negrito hunter-gathers of Malaysia believe ancestral spirits will destroy the world when they are finally forced to leave their forest; the Mlabri hunters of northern Thailand

believe their spirits will send tigers to kill them if they ever quit their nomadic life; and, in Java, a village reputed to be the home of hereditary weretigers explains its dwindling

population as due to childless marriages, the result of a loss of patronage from the spirits.

According to American anthropologist Robert Wessing, the Javanese, to whom the tiger is a powerfully totemic symbol, simply refuse to accept the official declaration of its extinction, preferring to believe that they still prowl the island forests. But then, they may know something we don't. A recent AFP report (23 March 2010) told of a man in Indonesia's Jambi province, dragged from his hut in the night and killed by a (DNA-verified) Sumatran tiger. He and his now terrified comrades had camped on a tiger trail and the suspicion was that they might have been hunting; tiger parts are highly prized as amulets or ingredients in 'traditional' medicine.

I found the book as fascinating as a tiger's stare; well written and packed with all the detail – sometimes gory but told with the panache of a seasoned narrator – that you could possibly want on such a curious and delightfully obscure topic. The bonus is that so much of it appeals to a fortean sense of aesthetics and balance.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

A BIG, BOLD 10 OUT OF 10 – UNMISSABLE! JUST BUY IT!

10

A Cabinet of Greek Curiosities

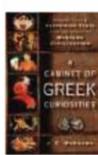
Strange Tales and Surprising Facts from the Cradle of Western Civilization

J C McKeown

Oxford University Press 2013

Hb, xv + 286, illus, £12.99, ISBN 978199982103

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69



"The thrice-accursed Greeks said it long ago" – Fort, *Books*, p55
As delightful as its Roman predecessor (FT268:88), with

24 chapters on diverse topics.

Primary sources quoted

extensively in English, with Greek and Latin sometimes appended. Illustrations, also handy glossaries of names and terms. McKeown's scholia are tersely informative, enlivened by pertinent modern analogies (e.g., 'immigrant' as term of abuse) and dry wit.

Humour ancient and modern indeed prevails, albeit darker moments intrude – if squeamish, avoid p102! Every reader will extract their favourite plums, some doubtless heading immediately for the Sex chapter – the concluding one Soros ('Heap') is actually the most fortean. I, while sharing McKeown's scepticism, am naturally drawn to the claim that drunks can be sobered up by discussing ancient history. Other lapel-grabbers include the Olympic Games-winning werewolf – does this explain Usain Bolt? – and the Indian viagra plant that facilitates 70 ejaculations per night.

McKeown does not merely (to use Karl Marx's term) bookworm, vindicating via his own she-mule Pliny's assertion that kissing this creature alleviates hiccups – not many academics would venture such courageous research.

Addenda/Corrigenda/Supplenda. Winckelmann (murdered at 51) did not disdain a Greek odyssey – he got to Italy. Women were not quite so oppressed as here alleged. Alexandria mounted a strong challenge to 'Athenocentricity'. There have actually been recent claims of discovering the tombs of Antony and Cleopatra. The French OULIPO movement perpetuates lipogrammatic fooleries. Above

all, more needed on the low-sounding claim (p151) that Thucydides's *History* comprises 151,260 words: McKeown's count? a computer's?

Several late items suggest a third, Byzantine collection – to your muttons, Jim!

Barry Baldwin

Fortean Times Verdict

MCKEOWN RIVALS MY FT COLUMNS. WHAT MORE CAN I SAY? 9

Reductionism

A Beginner's Guide

Alastair I M Rae

OneWorld Publications 2013

Pb, 214pp, illus, bib, ind, £9.99, ISBN 9781780742540

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.49



Reductionism is the belief that a complete understanding of a complex system can be achieved by analysing it into its

component parts. Nowadays, it is particularly associated with the scientific method, and it's had some striking successes – not just in fundamental science, but in practical areas like engineering and medicine. At the same time, many non-scientists (and, I suspect, most forteans) are profoundly sceptical about the ability of reductionism to provide a "theory of everything".

Although reductionism is a highly divisive subject, there is little meaningful discussion of its history and methods, and its pros and cons, outside specialist philosophical works.

A beginner's guide to these issues is sorely needed, but that's not what this book is. Rather than discussing the process of reductionism per se, the author chooses instead to present a lengthy exposition of the current scientific paradigm that has resulted from the reductionist approach.

Although this is one of the great achievements of reductionism, it's not one that is likely to have much appeal for the general reader... and it's certainly not going to make any new converts to reductionism.

Andrew May

Fortean Times Verdict

UNFORTUNATELY, FAILS TO LIVE UP TO THE TITLE'S PROMISE

5

Sci-fi and fantasy round-up

David V Barrett on an understated ghost story, super-cute little vampires, a literary pastiche, a curious bookshop, a bit of subverted history and, of course, fashion

The Year of the Ladybird

Graham Joyce

Gollancz 2013

Hb, £12.99, 265pp, ISBN 9780575115316

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £11.69

Möüsch the Crooked

Robin Bennett

Monster Books 2013

Hb, £9.99, 280pp, ISBN 9780956868466

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £9.49

Terra

Mitch Benn

Gollancz 2013

Hb, £12.99, 255pp, ISBN 9780575132085

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £11.69

Shades of Milk and Honey

Mary Robinette Kowal

Corsair 2013

Pb, £7.99, 262pp, ISBN 9781472102492

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £7.99

Mr Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore

Robin Sloan

Atlantic Books 2013

Pb, £12.99, 288pp, ISBN 9781782391197

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £11.69

Reflections

Roz Kaveney

Plus One Press, 2013

Pb, 311pp, £12.50, ISBN 9780986008573

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £12.50

Fashion Beast

Alan Moore & Malcolm McLaren

Avatar/Titan Books 2013

Pb, 256pp, £18.99, ISBN 9781592912117

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £17.09

 Graham Joyce's *Some Kind of Fairy Tale* (FT299) won this year's British Fantasy Award – so let's look at his latest. The blurb of *The Year of the Ladybird* says "A Ghost Story", but don't expect haunted castles and floating figures in pale shrouds. The ghost element in this novel is subtle, quietly understated for most of the book

– though it's there just enough to catch unsettlingly from the corner of your eye. David is working as a Greencoat at a holiday camp at Skegness. It's 1974, the summer of drought and the plague of ladybirds of the title; as well as looking after holidaymakers and getting entangled in sexual affairs, David is approached by National Front activists, the party being at its height. This is an unusual novel, which carries you along largely because of the ordinariness of the events and the believability of the characters... but who are the man and the child David keeps seeing on the beach?



In *Möüsch the Crooked* a group of vampires are sent to find the Grail – but forget all the vampire films and TV you've seen. These are human-shaped, but with gossamer wings and about the size of a dragonfly – but because the story is told by Möüsch, we're not told any of this; we just pick it up as we go along. The quest goes from the Continent to England to China in a rattling yarn with perils at sea, vicious swordfights, deep friendships, love and loss, heroism and betrayal. Physically this book is a delight, from the cover painting of an old book cover to the simple but stunning illustrations at the start of each chapter, to the fount, which uses decorative ligatures connecting letters. Robin Bennett clearly loves books as beautiful objects in their own right, and set up his own publishing company to create them.



Mitch Benn is probably best-known as the writer of topical songs on Radio 4's *The Now Show*. His first novel, *Terra*, shows that he has an alternative career ahead of him. A visitor to Earth accidentally scares a couple away from their car, and the baby in the back seat. Lbbp takes the baby

back to his planet, Fnrr, and raises her as his daughter, naming her Terra. Most of the novel is about the teenage human's first months at the equivalent of secondary school, the only alien amongst her Fnrrn friends. It's light, it's fun – but it also addresses some very real questions about which are more important, differences or similarities.



Mary Robinette Kowal's *Shades of Milk and Honey* is Jane Austen with a twist. We have the hypochondriac mother, the indulgent father, the silly younger daughter and the clever older one who is, of course, the viewpoint character. The twist? The use of glamour to create images – trees and a stream in the drawing room, a gentle breeze and the scent of flowers as one plays the pianoforte. Jane Ellsworth is an accomplished glamourist, but with her long nose and flat hair she's definitely on the shelf at 28, and spends much of her time protecting her sister from unsuitable suitors. But then she meets a professional glamourist... This is a delightful pastiche, extraordinarily well-written with few lapses of voice – all the more remarkable considering the author is American.



The narrator of *Mr Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore* gets a job in a bookstore that has few customers – and most of them don't buy books, but turn up in the middle of the night to return one and borrow another from the dizzyingly high stacks in the shadowy back of the shop. Building a computer model of the shop and the borrowings he makes a startling discovery, which leads him to a centuries-old secret society. Tie this in with an artist flatmate who makes models that fill the flat, a girlfriend who works at Google's legendary HQ

and a wonderfully archetypal elderly bookseller, and add in a significant typeface as a major plot point, and you have an unusual and cracking good novel.



Reflections, the second volume in Roz Kaveney's *Rhapsody of Blood* series, has the Huntress Mara dealing with a bad-tempered Isaac Newton, rescuing a young Voltaire and falling foul of Robespierre. As an immortal, human was mean little to her, but she takes an interest when people (and gods) gain power from the blood they shed; she protects people from bullies. And she tells Aleister Crowley all of this in a café in Greece. Meanwhile in the (almost) present day, newly-immortal Emma becomes caught up in a (literally) hellish power-play involving a hungry minor god who becomes a weapon of mass destruction – with dreadful consequences as she loses her ghost lover Caroline. Amongst her delicious subverting of history Kaveney has a skill for creating completely believable characters; the best of the new ones in this volume (including Mary Wollstonecraft and Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire) is Polly Wild, Cockney queen of the intelligencer underworld from the early 18th century to today.



Nearly 30 years ago Alan Moore and Malcolm McLaren had an idea for a film and Moore wrote the screenplay. It was never made, but at last it sees the light of day as a graphic novel – and it works. *Fashion Beast* is a beauty-and-the-beast story, with sexually ambiguous characters caught up in a fashion house in an almost cyberpunk dystopia. Moore's script was adapted by Antony Johnston and gorgeously illustrated by Facundo Percio.

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.



Flu

Dir Kim Sung-Su, South Korea, 2013
On UK release from 22 Nov

Flu (Gamgi) may turn out to be the only disaster movie directed by Kim Sung-Su, a Korean film-maker who admits he prefers making action movies. This is a shame, because he's put together a proper medical disaster film that grips and entertains, with just the right amount of tension, harrowing scenes and a generally likeable cast. It's more of a *Towering Inferno* than a *Contagion* – the large dollop of melodrama, some very contrived coincidences and more than a soupçon of sentimentality see to that – but that isn't necessarily a bad thing.

The drama begins in Bundang, a district near Seoul, which is the destination of a container-load of Southeast Asian illegal immigrants carrying a mutated form of avian flu, H5N1. The virus, of course, soon gets loose and starts to spread in an area home to nearly half a million people. Mayhem ensues.

The action is largely seen through the eyes of a group of three characters: Jigu, a kind-hearted response team worker; In-Hye, a ballsy doctor/single mother; and Mirre, her precocious daughter. They're a watchable trio, the little girl especially, and it's their separations and reunions that chauffeur in the implausible coincidences and out-and-out slushiness. Despite this, the relationships between Mirre, her mother and Jigu are

touching and at times funny.

The minor characters include Jigu's goofy side-kick, a comic-book bad guy army officer, and a mix of weak and heartless politicians alongside those trying to make the right decisions (the President, strangely, appears to be a bit of both). "The eyes of the world are on Korea right now" is the best cheesy line, given by an American politician with way too much power over Korean affairs, and in an inexplicable English accent.

Flu is a blockbuster that portrays a large-scale human disaster with the aid of realistic CGI and large crowds of extras; huge camps are set up along the river to house the infected and there's a harrowing stadium scene; large crowds of extras rampage through supermarkets and storm the barricaded exits to escape the Bundang district that's now been shut down. Sung-Su manages to switch effectively between the small human moments in claustrophobic medical tents to these rampaging crowds, and in doing so gives the film a heart. The science is a bit dubious: bird flu is diagnosed within about a minute and the length of time it takes to develop enough vaccine for such a large number of people is ignored, but that doesn't really matter. *Flu* is a very satisfying watch.

Julie McNamee

Fortean Times Verdict

OLD-SCHOOL DISASTER MOVIE FROM SOUTH KOREA

7

Empty Rooms

Dir Adam Lamas, US 2012
Three Wolves, £9.99 (DVD)

Single mother Maddie moves into big scary house with mute, autistic son Jonah, (who only communicates through pictures) and much badness transpires. When stuff starts flying around and smashing, is it Jonah's doing or...? I'm heading into spoiler territory. Yes, there are nods to *The Shining* and many other haunted house pictures, but *Empty Rooms* is very much its own film and makes effective use of its limited resources, especially the hardworking (and as confused as me) cast. The problem is the clichéd writing and characterisation of the supporting cast: screaming, bug-eyed hobo; annoying new age friends; cynical psychiatrist; friendly, sympathetic cop. There are also the inevitable scenes of Maddie showering and walking around in just her vest and pants. Sheesh, don't these people know they're all being exploited?

It's redeemed somewhat through the inventive cinematography and editing – all, remarkably, the work of director Adam Lamas. While he clearly knows his horror onions, and his way around the camera and editing room, he doesn't appear to possess the originality that makes a great horror director.

Tim Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict

ALL THE RIGHT ELEMENTS, BUT NONE OF THEM ORIGINAL

6

Curse of Chucky

Dir Don Mancini, US 2013
Universal, £10.99 (Blu-ray), £8.99 (DVD)

There has been a long and honourable tradition of 'demonic doll' movies, from *Dead of Night* (1945) to *Magic* (1978) and beyond. Whether it's ventriloquist dummies, animated toys, or deadly dolls, the threat of a lifeless yet still life-like mannequin is potent. The effect of dolls or dummies, whether china, porcelain, puppets or toys, on some people is well known (pediophobia is the proper term). From their humanoid shapes and life-like faces to the fact they they appear 'dead' until moved or animated, dolls have an uncanny power to spook. The 'uncanny valley' effect – the more human a non-human doll or image looks, the more disturbing it becomes – is well known. There's been something of a revival in the deadly doll stakes in recent cinema, including the Annabelle doll in *The Conjuring* (2013), Billy in the *Saw* (2003-) franchise, and the dummies in *Dead Silence* (2007). One of the most terrifying is still the Zuni fetish doll in *Trilogy of Terror* (1975). Uncontested king of the killer dolls, however, is Chucky, from the *Child's Play* series which celebrates its 25th anniversary with *Curse of Chucky*.

The new film (released straight to DVD) manages to function as a triple threat: it is a sequel, a prequel, and a fresh start for this venerable franchise. In what at first appears to be a clean-slate beginning, the Chucky doll mysteriously arrives at the home of wheelchair-bound Nica (Fiona Dourif, daughter of voice-of-Chucky actor Brad Dourif). The usual mayhem breaks out as the doll comes to evil life and begins taking out family members and friends, including the local priest, a nanny, and Nica's sister, all in an old dark house where (guess what?) there's no phone reception. This is all effective stuff, and writer-director Don Mancini (who has written all the Chucky movies; this is the sixth) gets the basics right, including a dash of horrific gore. This is traditional, fairly restrained slasher movie-making, except here the slasher is an animated doll.

However, Mancini can't resist linking back to the previous movies, so it is revealed that this

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)

DEAD OF NIGHT

BBC, UK 1973
BFI, £14.99 (DVD)

SCHALCKEN THE PAINTER

Dir Leslie Megahey, UK 1979
BFI, £15.99 (Blu-ray + DVD)

CLASSIC GHOST STORIES

BBC, UK 1986
BFI, £14.99 (DVD)

SUPERNATURAL

BBC, UK 1977
BFI, £16.99 (DVD)

Maybe you're fully prepared for Christmas presents – eggnog, ironic retro woolly jumper – but have you sorted out your ghost stories yet? If not, then the British Film Institute have done a wonderful job of providing that essential metaphysical component for the festive period with a sackfull of TV dramas from the 1970s.

First up is *Dead of Night* (1972), a horror anthology of which only three episodes survive. 'Return Flight' is a slow-moving tale of a commercial pilot seeing visions of World War II. It's the weakest of the bunch, but has a suitably chilling ending. 'A Woman Sobbing' is much more interesting, exploring sex, loneliness and the plight of the domestic housewife. It's an oppressive, unforgiving story

with Anna Massey (from *Peeping Tom*) turning in a brilliant performance as a headstrong woman tormented by sobbing in her attic. Perhaps the standout of the set is the first episode, 'The Exorcism', in which two posh couples sip wine and discuss politics in their new second home in the country. But when the wine starts to taste like blood and the darkness turns to pitch outside, they know something is very wrong. The story itself is claustrophobic and unsettling, but it's the performance of Sylvia Kay that really makes the flesh creep. Her substantial, tear-filled monologue is a tour-de-force of acting, and the ending is as clever as it is bleak. It's a heady mix of politics, socialism and the paranormal that will leave you moved and disturbed.

Schalcken the Painter (1979) is the only disc that comes on Blu Ray as well as DVD. The source elements aren't exactly pristine but it's still a nice bonus for a film so beautifully shot and composed. It's a fictional tale based on Le Fanu's story about real-life Dutch artist Godfried Schalcken, a painter of works featuring candlelit figures that already had a natural air of mystery about them; here they are the backdrop for a darkly gothic art film. It takes its time, there's very little dialogue

and the main character is far from likeable, but patient viewers will find the atmosphere cranking up when a mysterious (and scary-looking) aristocrat turns up wanting to purchase Schalcken's girlfriend. Things turn increasingly grim, but it's the nightmarish vision of the ending that hammers home the devastating underlying message: that women through the ages have so often been treated as figurines: posed, used and discarded.

A particular fireside treat can be found on the disc of *Classic Ghost Stories* (1986). Here, Robert Powell sits in his cosy Victorian study sharing the tales of MR James. This really is a testament to the power of simple storytelling, with the majority of its running time devoted to Powell talking direct to camera as he shifts on his creaking chair. There are also little dramatic scenes that really do add to the spookiness. Stories like 'The Mezzotint' (a mysterious painting appears to change, showing a dark creature creeping toward a house) have particular power in this one-on-one format.

There are other gothic BFI releases out at the moment, but rounding out the batch I saw is a two-disc release of a little-known 1977 series called *Supernatural*. It's a period anthology series based around the idea of a Club of the Damned, where prospective members must each tell a frightening story and hope that those present are duly terrified. If not, they won't only be denied membership, they'll also be killed. Tough crowd.

What's remarkable about this series is just how strange it is. The *Classic Ghost Stories* disc is full-on classic gothic, and even under the political surface *Dead of Night* shares that traditional story-telling vibe. But some of the episodes of



Supernatural border on the surreal – and are all the more disturbing for it. A werewolf-themed two-parter starring Billie Whitelaw is often singled out for attention, but there's one story that really stood out for me: 'Mr Nightingale', starring Jeremy Brett. He plays an English businessman staying in the family home of a prospective Dutch client, but when he starts to see black seagulls he finds he is able to let his true desires out. I don't want to spoil it, but what follows is so freaky and bizarre that the tale kept creeping up on me long after I'd turned the thing off.

To watch these BBC dramas is to revisit a television language that is barely even recognisable today. The very slow pace, the largely static camera, the clear sense that this is a set and these are actors spouting literary, clearly written dialogue. Yet the lack of the fake-documentary realism so favoured today actually pulls you into nothing less than pure drama. Settling down to these DVDs is like a night at the theatre, and the themes, sets and performances have a habit of burrowing into your psyche in a way that much modern TV simply cannot.

If you want a creepy, profound, political and philosophical Christmas, look no further.

Fortean Times Verdict

JUST THE THING FOR THE PERFECT GOTHIC CHRISTMAS

8



family has a direct connection to serial killer Charles Lee Ray (whose soul lives on in Chucky). Then, gilding the lily, several scenes during the end credits not only hark back to the previous two movies (*Bride of Chucky*, *Seed of Chucky*), but also make a direct link to the very first *Child's Play*. Fans will love that touch; others may be left scratching their heads... However, *Curse* proves this doll's still a formidable character, having survived not only each of the films but 1990s media hysteria in both the US and UK.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

MANCINI'S NO DUMMY – CHUCKY LIVES!

7

Pi

Dir Darren Aronofsky, US 1998
Lionsgate, £15 (Blu-ray)

This 1998 lo-fi black and white conspiracy thriller was a big hit on the festival circuit, winning prizes at Sundance and at the Gotham Awards, and broke through to the mainstream, launching the career of writer-director Darren Aronofsky. Amazingly, the mix of mathematics, Jewish mysticism, and paranoia still works, 15 years on. As grainy as ever on Blu-ray, *Pi*'s uniquely down-and-dirty 'this is reality' aesthetic has been maintained, making the film's flights of fancy all the more potent.

Sean Gullette stars as Max Cohen, a reclusive maths genius searching for patterns in the stock market (and elsewhere). He's hassled by a corporation who want to tap his skills, and by his mentor who wants him to steer clear of troubling deeper mathematics. Into an already volatile mix comes a group of Hasidic Jews, adding kabbalah to the stew. They're all after a 216-digit number that may (or may not) be used to predict the stock market, or might (or might not) be the true name of God. Max is already close to the edge, plagued by migraines and outlandish hallucinations, isolated in a tiny apartment that looks like he's actually inside a giant computer (is this the arthouse *Tron*?). References abound to number theory, the golden section, the maths inherent in the game of Go, chaos theory, and human beings' unerring ability to

see patterns where there are none.

This is all conjured up through voice-over, hand-held monochrome cinematography, and a riveting central performance from Gullette, who is never off camera. The movie's depiction of blinding migraines is one of the best seen on film (ask any sufferer!). As the pressure piles up on Max, things become seriously weird. Just when you think the movie is heading for a baffling Kubrick-like conclusion, Aronofsky pulls back from the brink (something he wisely refuses to do in his later follow-up, *The Fountain*). Backed by an excellent Clint Mansell score, *Pi* may be an acquired taste but it's worth the head trip.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

CONSPIRACY + MYSTICISM, BUT NOT BY THE NUMBERS

9

Spiders (3D)

Dir Tibor Takacs, US 2013
Lionsgate UK, £12.99 (DVD), £15.99 (Blu-ray)

Tibor Takacs's glory days are some 15 years behind him, when he directed the *Sabrina*, *the Teenage Witch* films. Since then, he's pursued a wholly original career, producing such gems as *Ice Spiders* and *Mega Snake* (both 2007 and both TV movies.) Recently, he's directed episodes of *My Babysitter's a Vampire* (no, me neither). Working with fairly limited resources, Takacs knows his CGI can't compete with the big boys, so goes for a clunky, style reminiscent of Ray Harryhausen. The acting's pretty solid, diligently working a clichéd script full of lines like "This doesn't make sense" and "It doesn't add up."

The wreckage of a spaceship infested with alien spiders falls to Earth, through the New York City subway. The cast of stereotypes then turn up, all trying to deal with this demented nursery rhyme situation, where the spiders eat rats, then hobos, then whatever the hell they want. *Alien* is a pretty solid touchstone, *Mimic* perhaps less so, and when the spiders break cover, people run around empty streets a lot and the soldiers turn up, you can add *Starship Troopers* to the mix.

Tim Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict

KNOWING, TONGUE-IN-CHEEK MONSTER MAYHEM

8

SHORTS

SQUIRM

Arrow Video, £14.99 (Blu-ray)



Spielberg had it easy. The mere thought of a shark circling you as you swim is enough to make most peoples' hearts stop. Earthworms, on the other hand, don't exactly have people clutching their chests in terror. So *Squirm* is testament to the skill of director Jeff Lieberman, who somehow makes these innocuous creatures actually quite threatening. The close-ups of barbed little worms screaming (the sound is a slaughtered pig effect lifted from *Carrie*) and the heaving mass of their bodies tumbling out of open doors and quaking across living room floors really does make the viewer do exactly what the title demands. There's an enjoyable city-versus-backwoods vibe here too, and a real sense of country dirt and grime. In the crowded 'nature attacks' genre of the 1970s, this is one of the better efforts. **Rev PL 6/10**

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Arrow Video, £14.99 (Blu-ray)



A bleached-blond Vincent Price broods over the crumbling wreck of his family home as he contemplates the seeds of madness in his family line. But when a young man comes to rescue Price's sister, the House of Usher (both literal and figurative) starts to fall apart. Roger Corman ups his usual production values for a lavish, classical movie which began a line of Poe adaptations. Richard Matheson offers a notable script and the art direction is fantastic (especially the disturbing paintings of the family – shame you can't buy those on eBay). The rest of the cast is so-so, but Price puts in one of his most tortured, affecting performances. **Rev PL 8/10**

THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS

Arrow Video, £14.99 (Blu-ray)



Wes Craven (who gives a fascinating interview in the extras included on this release) has always been one of the most interesting film-makers working in horror, from the hugely controversial *Virgin Spring* remake *Last House on the Left* to *Nightmare on Elm Street*, which helped kickstart the horror franchises of the 1980s. *The People Under the Stairs* was his attempt to take the old dark house template and turn its tropes to social comment; the owners of this particular crumbling pile are a pair of messed up, incestuous, whitebread Republican slum landlords watching the neighbourhood turn poor and black in Bush Mark I's America. It's a bizarre, dated and immensely likeable fairytale rather than a horror movie, and glad as I was to see it again after all these years, it still isn't quite as good a film as it ought to be. A welcome release, in any case.

David Sutton 7/10

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2

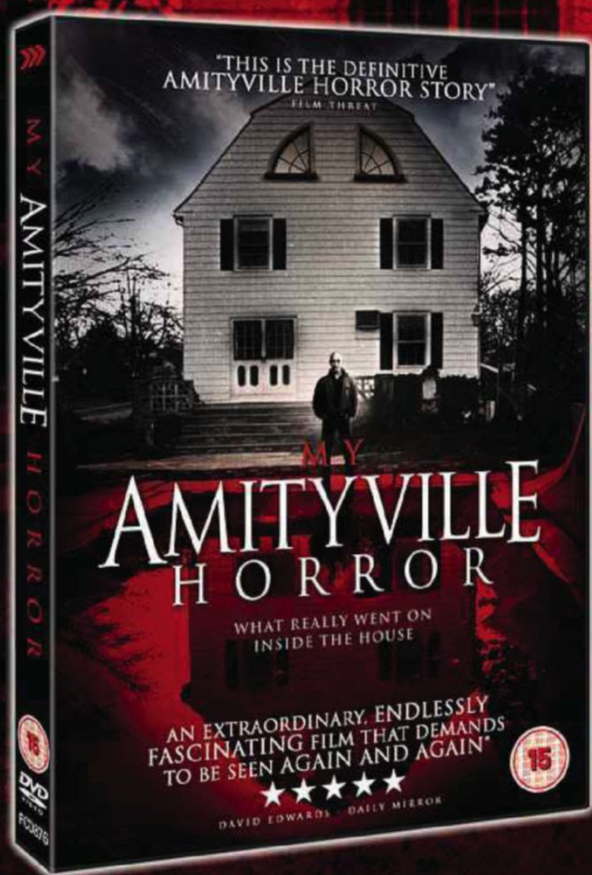
Arrow Video, £24.99 (Blu-ray)



Tobe Hooper's darkest hour, this appalling 1986 sequel to his classic 1974 horror movie encapsulates nearly everything that went wrong with the genre during the Eighties: it's dumb, desperate for laughs and utterly trite. A second disc of Hooper's early work is mind-numbingly tedious, but in terms of extras this is a desirable set for completists. **DS 4/10**

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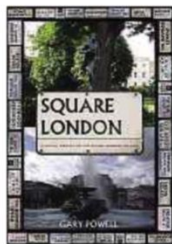
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Nick BROWN

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Lecture by Benjamin Creme

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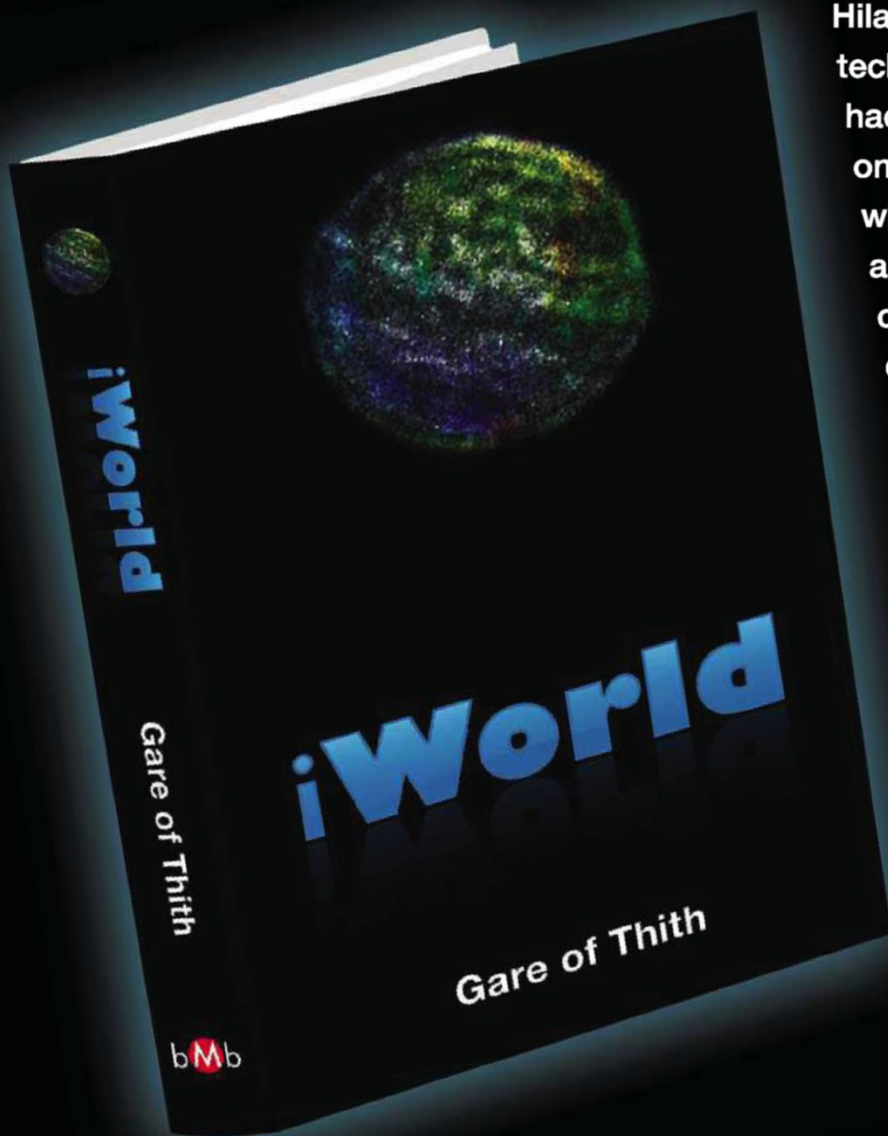
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Dear FT...

letters



The wicker man

In his review of *The Wicker Man* [FT307:60], David Barrett asks how a film made by a major British company could disappear, “unless it’s deliberate”. As a possible answer, *Wicker Man* actress Ingrid Pitt, in her autobiography *Life’s A Scream*, describes how her hated second husband George Pinches, a film booker for the Rank chain of cinemas, refused to show the film because she was in it and promised to bury all her subsequent movies. Deliberate enough? She married Pinches out of convenience and the union was never consummated.

Michael Slatter

By email

Elongated skulls

The report on “Coneheads” [FT305:20] only mentions deformation as the cause of the skulls’ shape. Around Paracas in Peru there is evidence that those people had naturally elongated skulls. The skulls are thicker than ours, of greater volume, and skeletons have been uncovered of mothers and young babies showing the feature. The Paracas people died out about 2,000 years ago.

Andrew Munro

Conna, Co. Cork

The weight of time

A friend of mine told me the following story a few years back. As he was picking his wife and daughter up from Stansted airport on a Saturday morning, he arranged to stay at his parents’ house in Essex the night before. After dinner and catching up with his folks, he went off to sleep in his old bedroom. It had been about 10 years since he’d last stayed over; having got married and had a daughter in the meantime there hadn’t been the space or the necessity to crash in his old room. He said it was weird being alone in his old single bed. Looking up at the shelves, he saw some of his old school textbooks, a reminder of his previous life as a sixth form student cramming

Simulacra corner



Justin Robinson noticed the remarkable similarity between a KitKat face and the face of Jesus on the Shroud of Turin.

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 with your postal address)

for A Levels before leaving for University.

That night, he dreamt that he was 17 or so again. He woke to hear the bustle of his parents in the morning. The aroma of coffee, and his father preparing bacon and eggs, confused him momentarily, and in that instant he felt as though he was a teenager living at home once more. He then told me that almost straight away he remembered where he was and why he was there... and with that he physically felt a weight being dropped onto his chest. He described it as not unpleasant, a bit like when someone throws you a heavy blanket, but a weight of sorts nonetheless. And that is what we carry around with us every day. A father, a husband, a hard working employee, just going about his day, carrying the burden of life. He said by the time he’d got

out of bed and gone downstairs he felt absolutely normal again...

Carl Saville

By email

Invisible sign

Looking at the two photographs of the signpost [FT307:69], I noticed one obvious difference between them: the lower one, with the missing sign, shows evidence of having been shot with flash (there is a brighter line down the centre of the signpost which is not present on the first photo, for example). Most signs these days are not just reflective, they are retroreflective – i.e. they direct light straight back at the light source. So all that’s happened is that the sign has reflected most of the flash that illuminated it straight back at the camera and – as the exposure is set for the relatively much darker

centre of the image, i.e. the boy and the signpost – it’s become very overexposed. The sky is also overexposed and as such the two are blending in.

Angus Rae

Edinburgh

The uncanny valley

More may be learned about the “uncanny valley” syndrome [FT303:36] by studying the behaviour of young children. People between the ages of one and three years are frightened by the sight of older children wearing Guy Fawkes masks, some distance off. I saw a two-year-old girl at a comics convention, too terrified to enter a room full of people including some in smiley body masks representing Asterix the Gaul and Obelix.

Donald Room

London

Tenuous evidence

David Pawlowski claims (citing no evidence) that the photograph he sent *FT* [FT306:66] is of a “senior guard wearing no identification” and that his “itchy trigger finger” is intimidation to keep interested people away from the obvious (not!) Lockheed Electra hidden under a tarp in the background. I don’t know what he’s seeing, but this is probably the most tenuous piece of so-called “evidence” I’ve ever encountered. The broad smile, manner of holding the Thompson, and stance are those of the typical serviceman posing with a weapon so he can send a photo home to family and friends.

He also identifies the two dim figures in the background as “shore patrol guards” based on what appear to be Sam Browne belts over their shoulders. Does he not see the figure has arms akimbo, grinning as his mate (who is very likely an aircraft maintenance tech who never gets to handle weapons) has a snap taken while holding a machine gun? The alleged Sam Browne belt is in all likelihood the sling from the soldier’s own Thompson, as the angle is all wrong for a Sam Browne rig.

The “lack” of ID is easily explained as well: US servicemen of the era wore patches on the shoulders, which are not visible in the photo. My father served in Burma in 1944-45 and sent home almost exactly the same photo, albeit taken in jungle, as well as snaps of his mates holding weapons in a variety of poses. Mr Pawlowski’s imagination is running away with him. Sorry, case not proven.

Richard Joltes

Amesbury, Massachusetts

Camels and eggs

Regarding Mythconception 139 (The camel’s hump): if you google “Bear Grylls camel” you will find numerous links to an episode of *Man v Wild* dating back to 2010. In this episode, Grylls employed the corpse of a camel in his bid to survive a desert environment. At one point he cut open the hump and, aside from the large fatty deposit discussed in Mythcon, there was also a quantity of water, which he was able to simply scoop out and drink.

• I’d also like to thank you for showing that my life, which I’d previously thought devoid of damned data, in fact has contained several noteworthy events, including The Old Hag and not one but two compost eggs – one in amongst the roots of a tomato plant I was tipping into the compost bin and the second actually *in* the compost bin – not the same egg, I’d disposed of that. The second was more mystifying because my compost bins are the plastic, a-fox-can’t-dig-in-it variety. I did try to take a photo for your edification; why is it that potentially fortaen photos never come out?

Gena Newman

By email

UFO evidence

The rather bad-tempered exchange between Mike Prentis and David Clarke [FT306:65] tangentially raised what I consider to be one of the key issues in modern ufology. Mr Prentis listed several important cases from the past, both British and American. In his response, Dr Clarke made a specific reference to only one of the British cases, which is perfectly understandable as his primary focus is British ufology. Dr Clarke, Jenny Randles and others have, in recent years, steadily worked their way through a large number of British cases and shown that many of them may well have non-exotic explanations. Andy Roberts’s work on the Berwyn Mountain incident is a prime exam-

ple of this [FT252:30-35].

However, at the same time, there is a steady stream of material from the USA – a recent example being the book, *Inside the real Area 51: the secret history of Wright-Patterson* by Thomas J Carey and Donald R Schmitt – some of which contains interesting and compelling evidence for the extraterrestrial hypothesis. Among the more convincing claims are statements made by senior military officers, such as the late General Arthur Exon, to the effect that extraterrestrial vehicles and alien bodies have been recovered by the US government. It may of course be regarded as “disinformation”, but this argument is much less compelling now that the Cold War has ended and one wonders why it should still be of use to anyone.

The former astronaut Dr Edgar Mitchell (the sixth man to walk on the Moon) has made similar claims based on his large network of contacts in the military. Furthermore, the increasing number of “dying declarations” by those involved in the Roswell incident adds to the large body of evidence that something other than a super-charged weather balloon landed in New Mexico in July 1947. Those close to death are not usually in the mood for making jokes – some may of course be senile but not all surely, and their stories are remarkably similar. So, in the light of this material, which is so clearly at odds with the picture that Dr Clarke and Jenny Randles present in their columns, I don’t think that either Mr Prentis or myself can be blamed for wanting a slightly better explanation for the global UFO phenomenon than Chinese lanterns, Earth lights, the planet Venus, marsh gas, faulty radar and unreliable witnesses.

Geoff Clifton

Solihull, West Midlands

Jenny Randles replies:

I base my opinions on the evidence that I can directly investigate. Claims of captured alien bodies and alien technology reported from the USA are fascinating but primarily anecdotal. And I do wonder why no country less likely to hide away such

things has ever accessed similar evidence.

I fully agree that it would be foolish to dismiss these claims entirely – and I do not believe that I ever have. Indeed, several of my books show that I have considered such matters with what others might regard as too much open-mindedness (or too little objectivity). I am thinking, for example, of Star Children (1994), UFO Retrievals (1995) and UFO Crash Landing? (1998) – hardly hostile to the concept that some UFOs might originate from an alien source.

However, it is undeniable that my views have hardened somewhat in more recent times for reasons that I set out in my FT column ‘Alien End Game?’ [FT297:31]. Although, I try to have an open mind as I trust my series ‘Life with the aliens’ [FT265:28, 266:29, 267:31, 268:29, 269:28-29] reveals. This considered in detail the questions that arise from studying the alien contact evidence and the possible ways that we might choose to interpret this data.

A theme that recurs in such research is that proof of alien contact is largely absent in the concrete sense of physical traces, unearthly DNA, even photographic data on what are clearly structured craft on the ground – let alone their occupants. A hundred eyewitnesses telling you that this proof exists in some secret base somewhere is, of course, intriguing. But in ufology you learn that what witnesses say does not necessarily equate with what is actually true.

Deliberate deception is not the only alternative to straight acceptance here. For it has to be fair that we demand higher levels of proof before accepting the reality of more extraordinary claims about alien visitation. I am very willing to be persuaded by such levels of proof. Indeed, I would be thrilled to accept the existence of aliens if the data were strong enough, because I took astrophysics classes at college with Zdenek Kopal, one of the pioneers in the search for alien life.

However, in FT I can only promise to write about what I know to be true or what I sincerely believe I can conclude. That said, I will take on board Mr Clifton’s cautions and in an upcoming column promise to look at some UFO cases that directly challenge my own thinking on this subject. I accept that we can per-



“I slept with Rip Van Winkle. Talk about a long night!”



Maggot King

Last weekend [3/4 August 2013], my mother's neighbour discovered a horde of tiny creatures in the birdbath in her garden. She scooped some into a jar, which my mother brought to show me. Those in the jar died overnight, and in the morning, when she brought them to my flat, their tails were all tangled together in a rosette-like mass with their heads pointing outwards – a formation strikingly similar to the images of Rat Kings that have appeared in the pages of *Fortean Times* over the years [e.g. **FT40:10**].

From what I could determine, the creatures were rat-tailed maggots – the larvæ of a drone fly (*Eristalis*). To begin with, they were swimming freely in the birdbath and in the jar without any tangling of their tails (actually breathing-tubes). It seems one of nature's strange coincidences that the larvæ, named after their 'rat tails', should adopt this unusual behaviour displayed by rats.

Ross Smith, Edinburgh

haps too easily become immune to wonder and may convince ourselves that we have found the answers already. So I will try to suspend such judgement and hopefully will learn something in the process.

Demonic UFOs

From a Christian standpoint, the heralding of the UFO age is one of the prophesied signs of the End Times. 'Signs in the sky' – according to the Bible – have been recorded since earliest times, but only within the past 60 years have flying saucers become a part of American pop culture. Jesus warned that one of the signs of the End Times would be just like the times of Noah. Was He referring to the wickedness of the world or the correlation between non-human entities (fallen angels) breeding with humans and creating the hybrid race of giants with victims of

alien abductions being subjected to scientific experiments that involved breeding with the aliens? Another sign of the End Times is a turning away from God. Demons masquerading as 'extraterrestrials' have convinced contactees that they are the ones who created us through genetic manipulation. Charles Bowen, editor of England's *Flying Saucer Review*, and paranormal author John Keel were among the first to realise that contactees were actually having real experiences whilst ufologists poo-pooed them as 'hoaxers' or victims of 'psychiatric disorders'.

Don Lloyd, the assistant editor of *Flying Saucer Review*, joins certain evangelicals naming Satan as the moving force behind the UFO phenomenon, wanting people to believe that UFOs are of extraterrestrial origin because that is a "materialistic concept to distort man's relation to the spiritual world by spreading the delusion that physical machines

are coming to Earth with physical beings from outer space." Yet another proponent of UFO demonology was retired British diplomat Gordon Creighton, who warned in 1990 that demonic forces would soon create a third world war. The Book of Revelation calls this Armageddon.

Greg May
Orlando, Florida

Lovecraft and Fort

As Dean Ballenger is interested in HP Lovecraft's views on Charles Fort [**FT306:67**], I refer him and other readers to *Mysteries of Time and Spirit: The Letters of H.P. Lovecraft and Donald Wandrei*, edited by ST Joshi and David E Schultz (San Francisco: Night Shade Books, 2002).

On 29 January 1927, Lovecraft asked Wandrei: "By the way – have you read any of the exotic ravings of Charles Fort, who thinks that all sorts of wonderful things exist in the air & outside visible space, & asserts that men of science are leagued in a conspiracy to keep us in ignorance of the true nature of the universe? I have heard of him for years, but never read his stuff – 'The Book of the Damned' & 'New Lands' – & now [Frank Belknap] Long, who has just encountered this material, tells me that it is marvellously weird & imaginatively captivating. Fort appears to be a man of some culture & ability, far above the usual run of 'flat-earthers' & kindred eccentrics" (pp.21-22).

In his reply, dated 7 February 1927, Wandrei wrote: "Fort's two books I read a couple of years ago. They are extremely interesting and miserably written. They consist largely of authentic records of phenomena inexplicable to science, for which Mr. Fort offers suggestions based on his revolutionary concept of the universe." (p.26) At the undaunted Lovecraft's request, Wandrei put *The Book of the Damned* in the post to Lovecraft 21 March 1927, saying: "I hope its language doesn't infuriate you as much as it did me. It is at least interesting and unique, if not a literary masterpiece." (pp.56-57)

Lovecraft replied quickly, telling Wandrei on 27 March 1927:

"As to Fort – he is a fine author to skim, but an impossible one to read! What a fascinating jumble of rumours & travellers' tales he has assembled, & what a delicious set of conclusions he has drawn from them! He is distinctly above the average of such bizarre eccentrics, & seems well versed in philosophy though weak in science, psychology, & archaeology. I can understand why Long raved so violently about him, for there is truly a breathless sense of the unknown, the forbidden, & the mystic in his dreams of morbid, viscous worlds in the air, secret visits from other worlds & abysses of space, archaic cults on earth in touch with Beings from Beyond, & such like. It is a source-book full of imaginative provocation; & although the style is utterly hopeless, I think I shall muster up the patience to give 'New Lands' the same sort of skimming I have given this." (pp.61-62)

In a letter written 17 April 1927, Lovecraft dismissed Fort's "glib hypotheses" but added: "Which reminds me that [Farnsworth] Wright says Fort is a close personal friend of the *Weird Tales* author Edmond Hamilton, to whom he has suggested several of the story plots appearing in the magazine." (p.91)

Much later, on 25 April 1931, Lovecraft asked Wandrei: "By the way – have you noticed how much more attention the fantastic and picturesque Charles Fort is receiving of late, since the publication of his 'Lo'? I must get a look at that book, though I scarcely imagine it differs radically from the two earlier ones." (p.280)

Others have pointed out – as Joshi does in *The Annotated H.P. Lovecraft* (New York: Dell, 1997) – that Lovecraft's "The Colour Out Of Space" includes a mysterious meteorite that attracts lightning, much like Fort's "thunderstones". As that story was written in March 1927, even as Lovecraft was first reading (or at least skimming) Fort, the pioneer anomalist's influence on at least one paragraph of Lovecraft is pretty clear. But "archaic cults on earth in touch with Beings from Beyond" are central to Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror", written the next year. A "source-book full of imaginative provocation", indeed!

Andy Duncan
Frostburg, Maryland

Pygmy elephants

I am not surprised Matt Salusbury didn't find any Pygmy Elephants in "Kerali kallana capers" [FT301:72-74], as Sali and his guide brother Mallan didn't seem to know the difference between a gaur (Indian bison) and water buffalo. In the article, Mallan disappeared into the jungle and flushed out what he claimed was gaur; but the accompanying picture shows adult and juvenile water buffalo. The most obvious difference is that gaur have long white socks on all four legs, even the juveniles. I'm afraid this must also throw the authenticity of the original alleged pygmy elephant sighting into doubt; if Sali and Mallan can't differentiate between these species, can we believe they can tell the difference between a juvenile Indian elephant and a pygmy elephant?

A Marriott

Hyde, Greater Manchester

Matt Salusbury replies:

Point taken, and there was time for me to add a note to that effect before the pygmy elephants book went to press. However, it is also worth pointing out that I didn't really have a language in common with Sali and Mallan – Sali speaks Malayalam and only a few words of English, Mallan speaks Malayalam and the Kani dialect and a few more words of English, mostly nouns to describe plants. While they were able to show me



ABOVE: Gaur, adult & juvenile.

round, they weren't able to discuss the wildlife in detail with me. (I was an English language teacher for 15 years, so we were able to do a surprising amount with gestures, sketches and improvisation.)

It's quite possible Mallan could identify a water buffalo but didn't know the English for 'water buffalo' and told me they were 'gaur' because that was the nearest – approximate – expression for it he could find in a language I could understand. It's also possible that Mallan thought he'd heard gaur, and only when he got up close to them saw they were water buffalo, and in the excitement of the stampede that followed didn't bother to mention this afterwards.

Sali's website has a page of photos of 'insects' even though it includes tree crabs, which makes me think that Malayalam might not have a word for 'arthropods', so 'insects' was the nearest equivalent that Sali's Malay-

alam and (not very good) English-speaking associate who does his website could find. For all I know, Malayalam might not even have separate words to describe water buffalo and Indian bison. English has, for example, a 'woodlouse' that isn't really a louse, a 'slow worm' that's not really a worm, and the North American bison is also popularly known in English as 'buffalo', so there's confusion over wild bovine species in our own language. People who need to describe animal species with precision would go into English (or even Latin), so there's less need for Malayalam to be as exact as English.

I invite any of the 30 million-odd Malayalani (Malayalam-speakers) out there to enlighten us. I didn't get permission to take an interpreter into the Wildlife Sanctuary with me. Warden Sharma only gave me permission to go in on condition I went in with Sali (well known to him) and Mallan, for one day only.

The Julia set

Benjamin Radford's evaluation of the Julia Set crop formation at Stonehenge in July 1996 [FT306:24-29] highlights this as a classic example of the failure to investigate this event in a proper manner at the time – which was my own feeling about it then. It seems that we don't even know whether or not the return flight had the same pilot, for example, a fundamental matter that could easily have been determined the following day. This shortcoming also applies to many other such crop circle events. Believers in a paranormal origin for crop circles did not need to make extensive rational investigations about the discovery of such appearances, though a pseudo-science, often sincere, was developed from a study of the downed crops and the exotic geometries often revealed in the formations. Perhaps the wonder of these formations precluded some more rational and logical thoughts at the time.

It is not the case that no crop

circles have been witnessed forming, although this is rare. Those that were seen happened in seconds as the crop fell over in a kind of whirlwind. Those witnessed were the original simple circles, before the appearance of more elaborate forms as the 1990s progressed. This led to the concept of a possible unusual meteorological cause for some circles and maybe some of the early ones with rings also. Meteorologist Terence Meaden's 'plasma vortex' theory had a life of its own alongside, but separated from, the polarities of paranormal origin and landscape art; but Meaden with his theory was out on a limb, frowned upon by believers and scientists alike.

Raymond Cox

Halesowen, West Midlands

Benjamin Radford has fallen into the trap of making assumptions and then presenting them in a way that allows his conclusions to seem as if an answer has been found. He was right to be sceptical about 'M', Lucy Pringle's eyewitness, but he

should have been equally so regarding Rod Dickinson's testimony. Did Radford try to interview farmer Sandell or son, or the pilot/s? What groundwork did he do? If aliens are using crop circles as a means of contact, either they or we should know by now that it's not working. Radford's conclusion is especially irritating: William of Ockham, his place of birth (not as often put Occam) and his 'Razor' have often been misrepresented. William's 'Plurality should not be assumed without necessity' means many things and has been interpreted in different ways. The simplest conclusion in this case is that the originator of the Julia Set crop glyph is unknown.

Philip Hemmisse

by email

Editor's note: For a general overview of crop circles, see "Crop Circle Symposium" [FT53:32-69, Jan 1990], "The Fortean Times Guide to Comography" [four-page insert in FT63, June 1992] and numerous annual 'cereological' updates.

Denver Airport

The great airport conspiracy is even greater than Fortean Traveller Nick Parkins imagines [FT307:74-76]. The runways at Denver International when seen from the air may almost form a swastika. But the runways at Heathrow, when seen from above, almost form a Star of David – or at least they did back in the 1950s, before redevelopment.

John Rimmer

London



Pixies or St Anthony?

I first noticed my wallet was missing on a Tuesday and couldn't clearly place its whereabouts since the preceding Saturday. So started the seemingly endless round of phone calls to pubs, police, and friends. No one had seen it, and so started the second round to banks, post-offices, utility companies and so on. I'd had the wallet over 20 years and with its long, heavy metal chain, which attached to any belt, it had seemed impervious to loss or theft. By the end of the week I'd pretty much given up hope, while my kittens looked on sagely and I wondered whether they could have stashed it somewhere with the rest of the treasures and trinkets that had mysteriously vanished since they came to stay.

My new *FT* plopped through the letterbox and I was reminded of the story about directly petitioning some saint or other for the return of lost items. Picking a historical dictionary off the shelf, I quickly located Saint Anthony and, with a mixture of embarrassment and nervousness, loudly announced to my front room: "Please Saint Anthony, can I have my wallet back, it's really important." I then walked to the kitchen to put the kettle on.

When I returned to the front room, the wallet was sitting on the floor in plain view, between two piles of books I stare at every day. The chain trailed on the ground and I must have practically been standing on it when looking at the book of saints. For added incredulity, it was inches from where my flatmate sits every night and was in front of a mirror, so also giving its reflection. Could it have been sitting there for nearly a week in plain view?

The cats were sleeping in different rooms and while they could have stolen it, its return would have required a nigh-on impossible mix of stealth and timing. Is it any more ludicrous to entertain the possibility of spiritual intervention than super-intelligent (and possibly belligerent) cats? Well, perhaps; but it had happened exactly as other *FT* readers had testified it would, and among the few Catholic friends I have it seems common knowledge that this will work.

Saint Anthony has been described as the Billy Graham of his day; but his strident zeal was apparently tempered with mercy. I hope it was

that sense of mercy that remedied my situation.

Tim Weinberg
Canterbury, Kent

Whilst leafing through a copy of *Fortean Times* in bed with my wife, I read her the letters about people asking the pixies for help to find lost items [FT246:75], which she immediately dismissed as too weird. She then pointed out that she still hadn't found her silver bracelet lost the previous week, despite conducting a huge search and looking "everywhere". "Ask the pixies", I said. Reluctantly, and feeling rather stupid, she asked them to help find the bracelet. Two hours later, my daughter was out in the snow-covered garden and kicked a random lump of snow in the middle of the lawn – and out flew the bracelet. Cue huge goose bumps and hysterical laughter from my wife.

David Williams
Abergavenny, Wales

I lost my favourite bottle of perfume around October 2008, despite it being on my dressing table. I looked everywhere in my bedroom for it, with no luck. Three months later, I was getting ready for school when my mother and I heard something rolling around on my floor, after closing a drawer. We were astonished to find it was my perfume. My mother (an *FT* reader) told me that a few days before, when the house was empty, she had asked the house pixie for it back. The same thing happened with my father's lost wallet: alone in the house, my mother asked for it back, and it turned up in a pocket where my father had previously looked. The return of things after being asked for has only happened after I started reading *FT*! I am very grateful to our house pixie, and would like to say a big Thank You.

Alice Ferns
Liverpool

A few weeks ago, my boyfriend and some work colleagues were discussing the pixillators. He mentioned that I had tried asking Them to find my keys last year. The question came up: "What's in it for Them?" I may have an answer! I had turned the house upside down looking for my keys, even looking in odd places like the fridge. After two days, in desperation, I remembered *FT* and thought I had nothing to lose. Nothing hap-

pened. Much scoffing and mentally kicking myself for even trying such a stupid thing. Another two days and still no keys. I tried again and said: "Please help me find my keys. If I get them back you can help yourselves to biscuits". Later that day I found the keys down the side of the chair. I had looked there about 12 times. Foolishly, I didn't count the choc chip biscuits beforehand, but maybe it's just the thought that counts.

Karen Jones
Kempston, Bedfordshire

I have occasionally experienced the disappearance of an item and its subsequent reappearance in, or near, the same place. There has usually been some doubt about the whereabouts of the object during its period of alleged disappearance, but a recent event is indubitable. In 2007 my youngest granddaughter brought me back a pack of five Disney ballpoint pens from Florida. One of them was very scratchy and had to be binned. I kept the rest in a drawer and recently started using one, leaving it on my computer desk. One day it wasn't there.

I knew I had been using it the previous day when my wife called me into the living room, so I wondered if I had put it down in there. A search of the usual places, including the papers on my desk, revealed nothing. So I got another of the Disney pens and put that on my desk. This was on a Wednesday.

I used the second pen on Thursday and Friday, leaving it on the desk each time. On Saturday morning we did the shopping run. After our return I was walking past the computer desk and saw *two* Disney pens on it, side by side!

I asked my wife where she'd found the missing pen. She professed ignorance and came to look at the two pens. "Spooky!" was her comment.

Curiously enough, the cat's toy mouse went missing a couple of days later. Despite searching under every item of furniture on the ground floor, and even moving some items into different places around the living room, it remained missing. The next day it reappeared next to the television. I admit that the cat could have found the mouse somewhere and dropped it by the TV, but, usually, if it's not in plain sight she forgets about it.

John Blackburn
By email

Coin apports

About three years ago my wife and I were going through a very stressful period in our lives with work issues (stressful jobs, threat of redundancy) and family issues (illness, bereavement). One day my wife noticed a five-pence coin on the floor of our bedroom – nothing unusual in that. However, over the course of the next two to three months she found a further two dozen five-pence coins in a variety of odd places. For example, she sat on the top stair to put her socks on and when she got up there was a coin – which she swears wasn't there before; or she'd open the airing cupboard door and there would be a five-pence; or she'd put her slippers on and there would be a coin in one of them. The coins were always found by my wife and always in the house, apart from one I found when I looked down at my grandmother's funeral. The coins only turned up when my wife wasn't looking and stopped coming once our lives became less stressful. We still have them as they gave us a lot of comfort at a difficult time. Maybe the pixies are watching over us.

Bob Hester
Horsham, West Sussex

One day while I was having a shower, alone in my house, I heard an odd sound, like something in a sci-fi movie. Then I heard a 'ping' behind me and I saw a penny bouncing off the shower floor. It was dated 1989. The house is not haunted, as far as I know. What can this signify?

Peter Weigle
Minneapolis

**FOR MORE REAL LIFE TALES OF THE
PARANORMAL PICK UP
'IT HAPPENED TO ME' VOLUME 6**



FORTEAN TRAVELLER



roar was followed by a smacking sound, and then the squeals of a piglet exiting the premises at high speed. The Chief himself then emerged, having exchanged

his usual tracksuit-top-and-sarong-combo for the traditional pandanus-leaf penis sheath. He had something under his arm.

I'll admit it: on the succession of aeroplanes, I'd entertained myself with visions of what I'd find out on the Pacific isle of Tanna. Dark-fringed tabu houses and smoking altars. Wooden replicas of Buckingham Palace, wickerwork effigies of the Duke of Edinburgh, Union Jacks flying from every mandarin tree and coconut palm. The mildewed contents of an old cream-cracker box couldn't quite compare.

Then again, there was still something miraculous about this old man, in a mountain village on a remote Pacific island, proudly displaying a collection of newspaper clippings about the Royal Family. There were bits about Charles and his organic farm. Outrage over Prince Harry and his drunken antics in a Nazi uniform. And, of course, Chief Jack's god, Prince Philip: offending entire nations, presiding over unspeakably dull committees, allegedly bumping off his daughter-in-law...

"How do you get all this stuff?"

"Friends around the world send it.

And Ken Dodd."

"Sorry?"

"Ken Dodd."

I tugged at my ear. Perhaps I'd misheard. He might have said Ken Todd. Or Kent Odd. He simply can't have meant Ken Dodd, the Mersey mirth-maker, buck-toothed King of the Diddymen. That was too weird, even for Tanna.

"I have his book inside," the Chief went on. "I will show you."

He didn't, though, because at that instant a great joyous, sweaty work party filed through the village, the women loaded up with sugar canes and the men swinging their machetes about like flags.

Among them was Kal, Naiva's Number Two son, fierce as ever, fixing me with a policeman's stare. He murmured something in his father's ear, glaring at me all the while. In the meantime the villagers settled around us in an expectant, sooty huddle. The Tannese had a pretty relaxed schedule: feed the pigs, a bit of hoeing in the yam gardens, mending the odd fence. Then there was plenty of day left for chewing the fat, supping their favourite narcotic and dreaming up new religions.

"Kal wants to know if you are happy to be on Tanna again," Chief Jack said.

It was, coming from the perpetually scowling Kal, quite a pleasant overture, and I regretted being unable to return it with the full vigour it deserved. "This

90. The Philip Worshippers of Tanna

MATTHEW BAYLIS travelled 10,000 miles to visit the volcanic South Sea island of Tanna, home to a cult that worships the Duke of Edinburgh

On my travels round the world, I'd seen sacred objects stored and displayed in every way: from room-sized tabernacles to tiny spirit houses, mediæval test tubes to golden pagodas. This was the first time I'd come across a sacred biscuit tin.

Jack Naiva, Chief of Yaohnanen village, led me down a bush path, enclosed by thick green vegetation and throbbing with birds and insects. We crossed the theatrical-looking *nakamal*, the circular meeting space ringed by gnarled and ancient banyan trees, and went into the tiny village beyond.

He had me sit on a simple log-bench outside his quarters, which weren't any grander than any of the other squat reed huts I could see. He disappeared inside, and shortly afterwards a



TOP: Chief Jack, with portrait of Prince Philip. ABOVE: Chief Jack and his son Kal enjoy their clay pipes.

is my first time," I said.

"No, it isn't," Chief Jack replied amiably. "How did you know how to make the *tamafa* last night when you drank the kava?"

"The what?"

The Chief explained that, when the sun went down, the *nakamal* filled with the spirits of the dead. To make requests of them – bigger yams, healthy children, victory over rivals – Tanna men spat a little of their treasured narcotic brew onto the ground as they drank. I'd done this like a pro last night, apparently.

But they were mistaken. The whole process had revolted me. I'd watched the little boys chewing the green kava roots into a pulp, then spitting it out onto leaves, before they strained water through it from a rusty petrol can. I hadn't been making an offering to the ancestor spirits as I drank down the cold, murky slop. I'd been gagging.

"It was just a mistake."

The Chief suggested they make more *kava*, right away, so they could see whether it was true.

"No, really – it was a mistake," I said hastily. "Anyway," I reasoned, looking straight at Kal. "If I'd been here before, I wouldn't have been so frightened when the volcano made the whole place shake this morning, would I?"

Kal and his father conducted a muttered conference. "But you brought us clay pipes. And as you drank your kava, we watched you look across at..." – he glanced theatrically at the jagged, cloud-swaddled mountain peeping through the trees behind us – "at that hill."

"Tukosmwera?"

As one, the village gave a gasp. Chief Jack's eyes narrowed.

He spoke in a quiet, trembling voice. "How do you know the name of that hill?"

"Just like the pipes, I read it in a book. I mean – not a book. Some letters from Prince Philip. I have them here."

"Show them to me," commanded the Chief. Despite the quavering voice and the way his hairdo rose like mist from a mountainside, he was very good at giving orders.

"Not exactly from Prince Philip," I clarified, rummaging through my bag. "From his office. His Secretary. The man who writes his letters."

"In Buckingham Palace?"

"Yes."

"Give them."

I handed over the sheaf of pages from the Duke of Edinburgh's Personal Secretary. After repeated pestering from me, this kind-hearted functionary had sent some of the early correspondence between Port Vila-based civil servants and Buckingham Palace in the late Seventies. It included a brief summary of the cult, written by an anthropologist, and an outline of its major myths. That was how I knew about clay pipes, and the importance of Mt Tukosmwera.

I watched as my little archive was



MATTHEW BAYLIS

"Some letters from Prince Philip. I have them here"

divvied up and pored over by the villagers, huddling in packs over sheets of paper they couldn't comprehend. Chief Jack thrust one back at me.

"Read it."

It was a myth – the central myth of the movement, in fact. I started to read. "A boat sailed past – three chimneys, red, black and white," I began cautiously.

"Inside sat the King. Sometimes he wore a captain's uniform, a suit of gold and silver, sometimes he was a cowboy. He was sailing to Aneityum, past the south-western side of Tanna.

"As the boat sailed past the rock called Nuaru, a man from nearby was sitting by the sea. This man knew that the kava speaks to us only when we are quiet. So he sat alone, close to the rock, drinking kava.

"The kava made the man see. And he watched as the King came to stand on the deck of his boat, gazing out at Tanna. He was strong and tall – a man who rode a white horse, a man who fought in World War II – but his face was sad."

I glanced at the Chief, his face cracked with concentration as he rocked back and forth on his heels.

"The King's wife came to stand by him. The man on the beach heard her, because he was drinking kava.

"My dear," asked the King's wife, 'tell me what is wrong'.

"I have to tell you a secret," the King said. He pointed to the rock, Nuaru. 'The name of that rock is Nuaru. In my language, it means, 'I am coming.'

"What language?"

"The language of that place,' the

ABOVE:

Women dressed up for the *swappem*, in which great quantities of yams, pigs and kava are exchanged between villages.

King replied, 'and of all the villages that lie behind the rock, of the mountain you can see above them. That is my home. Its name is Tukosmwera. My father is there. I am not a white man. I am from Tanna, and one day I will leave you and return. I am coming back to that rock, and when I put my foot on it, mature kava roots will spring from the ground, the old men will become young again, and there will be no more sickness or death.'

"When she heard this, his wife knew that it was true, and she began to cry. And the man on the shore heard and saw it all."

As I finished, the crowd slapped their shins in applause. The Chief waved a finger at them to be quiet.

"This came to you from Prince Philip?"

"No. Yes. It came from here.

Somebody told this story to a white man who worked here, and he told Prince Philip."

"When?"

"At the time you were angry, because the government man had made you unhappy, and you asked for something from the British government to make you glad again."

"Ah yes. We gave Mr Wilkie a pig. But he didn't give anything back."

He was referring to the Resident Commissioner, Mr Alexander Mair Wilkie, whose inadvertent breach of protocol had alerted the world to Tanna's unusual beliefs.

"In 1966. I know," I said. "And 11 years later the British government realised you were angry. So they wanted to know about you, and the things you believed, to see how they could help."

"Bob Paul was the gate," Chief Jack mused, quietly, almost to himself. Nako, his Number One son, and my appointed guide and guardian arrived and sat down, but the Chief didn't even glance up.

I wasn't sure what a 'gate' was, but I knew that in the Seventies an Australian businessman named Bob



Paul, with interests on Tanna, had developed an affectionate relationship with the men of the Yaohnanen area. In discussions with them he'd been told their local mountain was occupied by a spirit called Kalbaben. This spirit, the locals said, had many famous sons, including Jesus and the Duke of Edinburgh. And some token of the latter, they said, would compensate for the insult they'd been dealt over the pig.

On his next trip to the capital, Port Vila, Bob Paul told the British Residency, who were preparing to leave for good as the archipelago to which Tanna belonged, the New Hebrides, became independent. They, in turn, consulted anthropologist Kirk Huffman, whose report into the matter was sent straight to the Palace.

As a result, on 21 September 1978, the same day Pope John Paul I was found dead in his chambers after a reign of only 44 days, a new religion joined the ranks. A signed photograph of Prince Philip was presented by a delegation from the British Residency. There was kava and dancing and a speech, in which the last Resident, Andrew Champion, told the Tannese that Britain would never forget them.

The French, who'd ruled the area jointly with us since 1906, were not impressed. Officials sent a scathing telegram to Paris, accusing the British of cooking up this cult to keep the Tannese loyal.

That wasn't the end of it. Tuk Noao, a Yaohnanen seer, whose tribal title 'Voice of the Canoe' made him roughly equivalent to a Minister of Information, set a test to make sure that the signed photograph of Prince Philip had really come from him. He carved a ceremonial pig-killing club and sent it to London with a further request.

After careful consultation, Prince Philip sent back another photograph, in which he stood in the grounds of Buckingham Palace and brandished the club – called a *nalnal* – in impeccable Tannese fashion. Their doubts allayed, the leading lights of Philippism offered

the Duke three virgins as wives, if only he'd return to his village. Kwin Lisbet, his current wife, could come too, they added.

Nervous officials now advised the Royal Family to stay away from Tanna, advice followed ever since. But another photograph was sent, and more letters passed between Buckingham Palace and that distant mountain village. All of which, as Prince Philip and his advisers knew full well, acted to encourage a group of people in a belief that was untrue.

I still wanted to know why. And why the belief had come about in the first place. What could it do for these people, clinging to the muddy slopes of their windy, chilly island, and to this belief that only made the rest of the world laugh at them?

"Could I see the photographs you've been sent?"

The Chief smiled serenely. "We will show both of them to you soon."

"I thought there were three photographs."

"Three?"

"Yes, two of Prince Philip sitting, and one of him holding the *nalnal*."

"The *nalnal*?" repeated the Chief warily.

"Yes, the club for killing pigs, the *nalnal* that Tuk Noao made and..."

Eyes narrowed again. "Wait a minute... How do you know about *him*?"

At this point one of the villagers, who had been absent-mindedly chipping at a charred log with his machete, succeed in dislodging a small section of it, only to realise, as it flew through the air, that it was red-hot.

He gave a shout, but this failed to prevent the ember from landing on the rear end of a sleeping dog, which then went mad and bit a nearby child, turning the whole scene into an opera of crying, barking, chasing, waving and spitting. In the midst of this the Chief declared that he'd had quite enough and was going to bed. This he did, accompanied by the piglet, and the crowds departed so that, some five

ABOVE LEFT: Chief Jack, last of the founding fathers of the Philip cult, who died in 2009.

ABOVE RIGHT: Sikor Nathuan, grandson of Jack and the current chief, with two official portraits of the Duke of Edinburgh (in one, the Duke holds the *nalnal*, or pig-killing club).

minutes after, there remained only myself and the still form of Nako.

We grinned at one another and I felt, at this moment, a rare spark of warmth between us, so offered him some gum. He took it and stuck it in his hair, before informing me that I'd made a dreadful, unforgivable mistake.

"What did I do?"

"You cannot talk about Tuk Noao," he slurred emphatically. He'd obviously been at the kava early. He was also sporting one of his loudest floral shirts, along with high-waisted black slacks and a pair of sunglasses lodged in the woolly mesh of his hair. The thing he most resembled was a dance teacher, and the effect of this look, deep in the bush lands of the South Pacific, was unsettling.

"But I thought Tuk was a friend of your father."

"You can talk of Tuk," Nako decreed, patting his piece of gum. I rather wished I hadn't given it to him. "But you cannot speak that his hands made the *nalnal*."

"Why not?"

Nako gazed at me coolly. "Because my father is the one. Not Tuk Noao."

I scratched my head. "But Tuk *did* make the *nalnal*, didn't he?"

Nako winced. "You cannot *speak* that," he repeated, walking away.

It was a fitting end to an interview characterised throughout by utter confusion. I hadn't seen the photographs. I hadn't got to the bottom of what their worship looked like, if it looked like anything at all. I had somehow scandalised local sensitivities by implying that a certain man had carved a pig-killing club, which was both true and wrong. And what the hell did Ken Dodd have to do with it? **FT**



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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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POLICE THE ILLUSTRATED LAW COURTS AND WEED

JAN BONDESON presents more sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.

27. AN EXCITING EPISODE FROM THE LIFE OF MR KENNETH GRAHAME

On 24 November 1903, a well-dressed man came into the lobby of the Bank of England, presented a card with the name 'Mr GF Robinson' and demanded to see the Governor, Sir Augustus Prevoſt. He was politely told that Sir Augustus was busy, but that the Secretary of the Bank of England, Mr Kenneth Grahame, was available. Robinson agreed to see him instead. A short man with a slight moustache, Robinson was elegantly dressed and looked the perfect city gentleman; nobody could guess that not only was he a Socialist Anarchist, but a stark raving lunatic as well.

When ushered into Mr Grahame's office, Robinson promptly and wordlessly handed him a roll of paper, tied up at one end with black tape, and at the other with white tape.

Robinson knew that if Grahame took the white end, he was one of the Good Bankers, a loyal servant of his country; if he took the black end, he was one of the Bad Bankers, who hoarded the money of the poor in his bottomless vaults. 'Mr GF Robinson' was that kind of lunatic.

Grahame took the black end and unfolded three pages of foolscap, each bearing only the words 'All are concerned!' Understanding that his silent and sinister visitor was clearly not quite sane, Grahame told him he did not have the time to read his documents. Robinson's response was to draw a heavy Colt revolver and fire at him from nearly point-blank range.

Amazed that he was still alive, Kenneth Grahame shouted for Tolmie, the head



ABOVE: The lunatic Robinson on the rampage, from *Illustrated Police News*, 5 Dec 1903. OPPOSITE PAGE: Robinson is subdued, from *IPN*, 5 Dec 1903.

STRATED
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NEWS

waiter. Screaming "I did it for the good of everybody!" Robinson kept firing his revolver more and less at random: splinters flew from the office furniture as the heavy-calibre bullets struck home, and plaster showered from the perforated ceiling. When Tolmie showed his face in the door, the lunatic fired several shots at him, and pursued him out into the corridor. The shaken Mr Grahame and his fellow bankers took to their heels, leaving Robinson in possession of one wing of the Bank of England. The brave Tolmie, who crept after the lunatic, could see him stalking through the empty offices, holding his smoking revolver high, and exclaiming "Where are you, cowards!"

A frightened bank messenger came rushing out of the Bank of England and called Detective Inspector Bacon and his colleague Detective Constable Digby of the City Police. In the public lobby, the two policemen were met by Mr Grahame, who told them there was an armed man at large in the Bank. Behind him, some bank messengers were holding a door shut, to prevent the lunatic's egress. When the two detectives opened this door a little, they could see Robinson standing a few yards down the corridor; he aimed his heavy revolver at them and shouted "Come on, you cowards!"

The two policemen swiftly slammed the door shut and directed the messengers to keep holding it. They themselves tried another entrance to the corridor, in the hope of surprising the lunatic, but they found he had retreated into the Bank Library and bolted the door from the inside. They tried to reason with him, asking why on earth he had gone on a rampage inside the Bank, and eventually he drew the bolts, as if to invite them to come in. When the policemen bravely entered the room, Robinson sat down in an armchair, aimed his revolver at them, and exclaimed "If you come a step further I fire!"

The two unarmed officers had to withdraw, leaving the lunatic in possession of the Bank Library. Inspector Bacon had got an idea, however. Lord Revelstoke, the Director of the Bank of England, had come to the scene, and the Inspector asked for permission to make use of the Bank's powerful fire hose to pacify the lunatic. After his Lordship had given his consent, the Bank's firemen got the contraption ready for use. The library door was burst open, and Robinson caught the first jet of water straight in the chest. As he was swept off his feet, both police and porters attacked him. Jumping to his feet, the lunatic



threw his revolver at them, but he missed and the weapon went through the glass front of a bookcase. Undeterred, Robinson swung a heavy chair at Inspector Bacon, but the agile officer dodged underneath it and the chair smashed to pieces against a table.

Constable Digby, who had retrieved Robinson's heavy revolver, struck him on the head with the butt of this weapon, but the crushing impact against the lunatic's rock-hard skull did little to pacify him. Screaming, "All money is wrongly distributed!" he desperately struggled against the police and porters, as the hose played over them, until Inspector Bacon dealt him another heavy blow with a chair, knocking him out cold. Robinson was promptly tied to a stretcher and removed to Bow Infirmary, where his bruised and lacerated head was dressed. The only policeman to be injured was Constable Digby, whose hand had been bitten by the lunatic during the melée. The library was very badly damaged and completely flooded with water.

It turned out that George Frederick Robinson, to give the lunatic his full name, had run away from home when just 16 years old, vainly hoping to get rich in the Klondyke gold rush. After being bitten by an infuriated sled dog, he nearly lost his arm after walking 80 miles to get the wound treated, and contracting septicæmia. He later joined the

army and served in the Canadian Yeomanry during the Boer War, not without distinction. While in Africa, he caught malaria, and this was believed to have affected his brain, because when he returned to his respectable family in England he behaved very oddly, saying it was the fault of the banks that so many people were poor. The Bank of England ought to open its vaults and hand out their contents to the needy, he exclaimed to his astonished father. On trial, Robinson seemed quite mad, asking the judge whether he could have his revolver back when it was shown in court. He was certified insane and committed to Broadmoor. Perhaps he is today haunting the old asylum, frightening the other inmates by groaning and waving his heavy revolver about, exclaiming "I was right about those damned bankers all along! I told you they could not be trusted!"

Mr Kenneth Grahame, who had had such a narrow escape, became a changed man as a result. Fed up with the modern world and its unpredictable, trigger-happy Socialist Anarchists, he lost interest in banking and began writing stories for children, quaint and bucolic tales featuring talking animals living quietly in the countryside. Five years after the shooting incident, he retired from the Bank of England at the age of just 49, four months before the publication of *The Wind in the Willows*.

PHENOMENOMIX

W.B. YEATS - 1

HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON

W.B. YEATS! GREATEST IRISH POET EVAH!



NOBEL PRIZE WINNER!



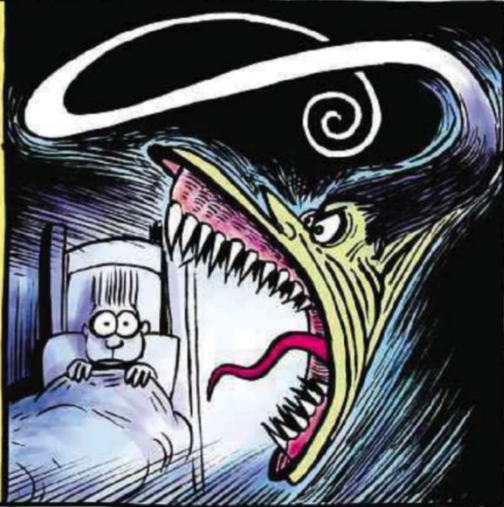
SENATOR AND NATIONAL HERO!



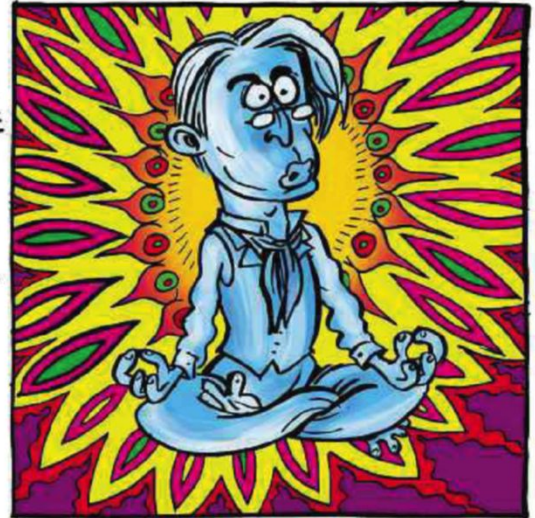
BUT ALSO PASSIONATE OCCULTIST!



BORN IN 1865, YEATS SPENT HIS CHILDHOOD WITH TALES OF THE SUPERNATURAL! HIS FAMILY AND NEIGHBOURS TOLD HIM OF GHOSTS... FAIRIES... AND THE BANSHEE!



AS A TEENAGER HE BECAME OBSESSED WITH THE MYSTICAL CULT OF THEOSOPHY AND THE WISDOM OF THE EAST...



IN JANUARY 1888, HE ATTENDED A SÉANCE!

THE SPIRIT HE SUMMONED HURLED HIM AGAINST THE WALL!



AND EVERYONE WENT INTO CONVULSIONS!



IT WAS YEARS BEFORE HE DARED TO ATTEND ANOTHER SÉANCE!

HE MOVED TO LONDON AND PUBLISHED A BOOK ABOUT IRISH FOLKLORE. HE SOON BECAME KNOWN AS THE MAN WHO SPOKE WITH FAIRIES...

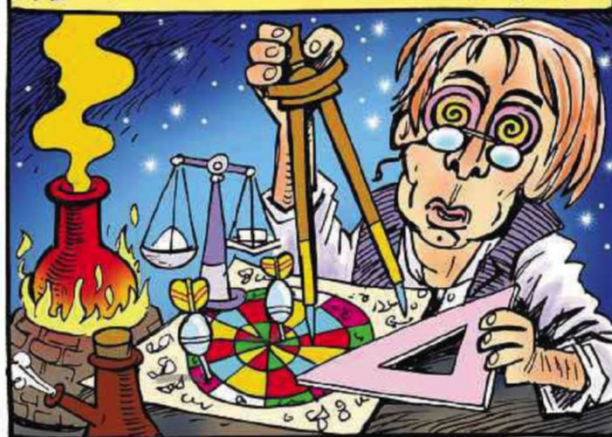


AFTER MAX BEER BOHM

HE BEGAN TO POSE AS A MAGUS... HIS NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOUR WAS CONVINCED HE WAS CASTING SPELLS ON HER HUSBAND, AND WENT WHITE WITH TERROR WHEN SHE SAW HIM!



HE DABBLED IN STRANGE ARTS... ALCHEMY... ASTROLOGY... MESMERISM...



BUT HIS CAREER AS A MAGICIAN REALLY TOOK OFF WHEN HE JOINED THE ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DAWN ... AND MET...



The PRANA Talisman

ADVERTISEMENT

How does PRANA work? The way traditional magic has always worked!...

With very little time and effort, the Prana Talisman can provide its owner with the inner power to achieve any positive goals that they wish, however ambitious! Centuries of wisdom, knowledge and practice have percolated down from the scholars and mystics of the ancient world, and now their legacy can be revealed and offered to you, in the form of the Prana.

Here is the most important aspect; the Prana will remain nothing more than an interesting metal pendant displaying some curious and mysterious-looking symbols before it is first activated, or consecrated. However, once properly and personally consecrated, it will be transformed into a real and powerful talisman dedicated to helping you to achieve the success you desire. Just as with a brand new car, which would first need fueling

and then purposefully driving in the right direction before it could actually deliver anyone to their destination, the Prana disc will need charging with both your own positive mental energy as well as the earth's natural forces, and then focusing on your personal goals before it can succeed in achieving them. Consecrating your Prana takes only a few, but

priceless minutes. Anything can be achieved with enough self belief and determination, providing it is humanly possible. Prana is the truly magic catalyst that will assist you in achieving your most ambitious goals and desires. Once your Prana has been effectively consecrated, or 'tuned', in just the way a TV antenna collects and converts invisible

signals and then broadcasts them as a clear picture, it will collect and magnify all the available natural, positive forces along with your own psychic energies, and then channel them straight towards your personal goals.

You will feel physically and mentally stronger and energised. Confidence will brim within you and you will feel a potent force rise inside, discovering new personal powers and becoming sharp and decisive. You will intuitively recognise opportunities as they appear when previously they went-by undetected; you will feel 'lucky'!

Instead of stuff just happening around you, you will be able to make things happen!

Each PRANA talisman comes with its own 12 page booklet of easy instructions and is supplied in a purple satin pouch.



... I think that Prana talisman is working as I have been creating and drawing nonstop and with new confidence. . .

unbelievable. . .

Ms DN, London

Hey... I just wanted to let you know that the talisman is amazing! Thank you! Since I had it, work has been coming in, I feel great and everything seems to be getting better!

Ms NJ, Leicester

For further information visit-

www.PranaTalisman.com

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crystalised
PRANA

The original
PRANA

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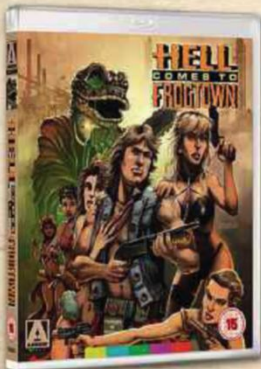




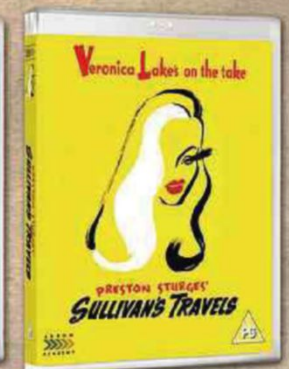
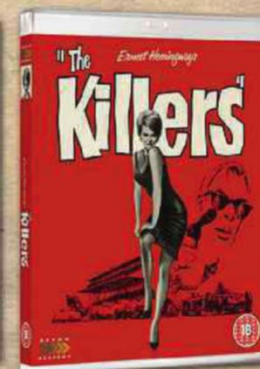
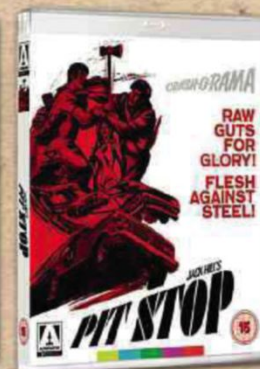
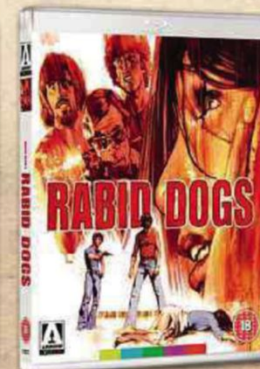
2014 PREVIEW



COMING TO DVD & BLU-RAY IN 2014



We had great fun bringing you great classic films on DVD and Blu-ray in 2013 and hope you have enjoyed them! In 2014 we continue our love for classic B-movie horror and continue to expand on the collections of some of our most celebrated auteurs including two from Tinto Brass, more from Brian De Palma and Mario Bava and our third Jack Hill-approved release for his most criminally underseen work, which also makes its UK debut. Two more making their debut are *Blind Woman's Curse*, a glorious Japansloitation mash-up of horror, yakuza and ghost story and *White of the Eye* from the celebrated Donald Cammell (*Performance*). Our Academy line adds two classic Hollywood films with a crime film from Don Siegel and comedy from Preston Sturges, both on Blu-ray for the first time in the world.



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