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# ForteanTimes

LINDA BLAIR  
INTERVIEW

"Spirits exist,  
there's no doubt  
about that!"

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40

YEARS OF

## THE EXORCIST

THE BLOOD  
OF SATAN

THE EXORCISM OF  
MICHAEL TAYLOR

STAIRWAY  
TO HELL

THE POSSESSION OF  
LATOYA AMMONS



# How to Become a Successful Writer!



By Marian Ashcroft

If you've ever fancied being a writer but don't know where to start – here's the answer. For the past twenty-five years The Writers Bureau has been running a home-study Creative Writing course that teaches ordinary people how to write, get published and earn an extra income.

'Most people can be taught to write for publication,' claims Susan Busby, Head of Britain's largest writing college, 'as long as they want to write, are willing to learn and put in the time and effort required. Our students prove that. They come from all walks of life and have very different educational backgrounds. Yet, after studying with us many will see their name in print for the first time.'

The Creative Writing course offered by The Writers Bureau covers all genres – articles, short stories, novels, books, scripts etc. so students get a chance to explore all types of writing to find where their interests and talents lie.

Students also receive individual, personal tuition from a professional writer who gives guidance on style, technique and marketing.

'The course gives a student confidence in their work and the know-how to increase their chances of publication,' explains Susan. 'Unfortunately, the untrained writer is more likely to have their work returned to them, not because they can't write, but because they haven't followed the rules of the publishing world. And that, in a large part, is what we teach – how to make your work acceptable to those who will pay for it.'

The college also provides a whole support system to novice writers that includes their tutors, their advisors, free resources and chance to converse with other writing students on their website.

The Writers Bureau is so confident in the training and support it provides that it gives an amazing money back guarantee – if a student doesn't earn their fees back through published writing by the end of their course the college will refund them in full. Plus, the course comes on 15-day trial so you can see for yourself the quality of the training on offer.

To find out more about how The Writers Bureau can help you become a successful, published writer contact them for a free prospectus:

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**Tim Skelton** "Besides seeing my first book in print, I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated yet more guide-books for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA. I am writing flat-out, and getting paid what I can now describe with pride as a decent salary. And it is thanks to The Writers Bureau that I got this chance. It provided me with the opportunity to realise an ambition

which I didn't know how to nurture. I do now."

**Published**



**Hannah Evans** "I've been published in The Guardian and Good Life earning £400. And now I've got my first book published by Bloomsbury called MOB Rule: Lessons Learned by a Mother of Boys. The Writers Bureau course provided me with structure, stopped my procrastination but most importantly it provided the impetus to try

something different."

**Published**



**Chris Green** "I've had 30 pieces of work accepted by various publications since I started my Writers Bureau course – a mere 18 months ago. I contemplate that fact and I am amazed to have come so far in such a short time. Thanks to the careful and patient tutoring provided by The Writers Bureau and the boundless confidence this has given me, I can continue to explore my potential

and see where it takes me."

**Published**



**Jane Isaac** "When I started the Writers Bureau course, I wanted to explore avenues for my writing and develop and strengthen my personal style. I had no idea that it would lead to me being a published writer of novels and short stories. I still pinch myself when I receive emails and messages from readers who've enjoyed my work or

when I give talks to book clubs and visit bookstores to do signings. These are magical moments that have changed my life – my dream has come true."

**Published**

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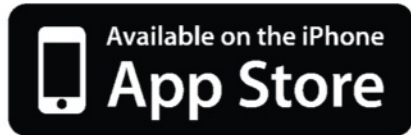


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# CONTENTS

the world of strange phenomena



GETTY IMAGES

**30 WHAT POSSESSED US?**  
It's 40 years since *The Exorcist* arrived in Britain – is it still the scariest film ever?



ETIENNE GUILFILLAN

**12 JOURNEYS OUT OF THE BODY**  
Dislocating your own consciousness



AFP / GETTY IMAGES

**40 RITE OR WRONG?**  
Exorcism today



GETTY IMAGES

**74 IT HAPPENED TO...**  
Exorcist star Linda Blair



DAVID SUTTON

**16 WET WEATHER GHOSTS**  
Do floods equal phantoms?

## strange days

The mystery of Flight MH370; bad weather ghosts; GCHQ and the UFOs; boys with tails and the dude with two dicks; Sir Francis Drake in Canada; death clocks; footprints from the flood; aquatic ape theory – and much more.

- 15 KONSPIRACY KORNER
- 16 GHOSTWATCH
- 18 CLASSICAL CORNER
- 22 ARCHÆOLOGY
- 23 MYTHCONCEPTIONS
- 24 NECROLOG
- 25 STRANGE DEATHS
- 26 THE UFO FILES

## features

### COVER STORY

### 30 WHAT POSSESSED US?

Forty years after its UK release, is *The Exorcist* still the scariest movie of all time? Did its first audiences really faint in the aisles and vomit on the carpets? **DR LEO RUICKBIE** investigates our four-decade obsession with possession.

### 36 THE BLOOD OF SATAN

**DR LEO RUICKBIE** looks back at the bloodiest real-life episode associated with the release of *The Exorcist* in 1974 – the disastrous exorcism of Michael Taylor.

### 40 RITE OR WRONG?

Are contemporary exorcisms a dangerous hangover from the superstitious past or a pan-cultural tool for spiritual and psychological healing? **TED HARRISON** explores the history of a controversial practice.

### 46 A VERY MODERN HAUNTING

It's ages since we had a spooky yarn of possessed children, levitations and exorcism, then along comes this controversial report of a 'portal to Hell' from urban Indiana. **BOB RICKARD** heads down into the haunted cellar – where he finds there's a whole lot more to the story than what appeared in the tabloids...

## reports

### 28 BLASTS FROM THE PAST

No. 50. The Tennessee aeronaut flap of 1907

### 76 STORIES FROM THE ILLUSTRATED POLICE NEWS

No. 29. The life and death of the Birmingham Midget

## forum

**55 The Ark that never was** by Richard Seary

**56 Down from the mountain** by Jerry Glover

## regulars

- 02 EDITORIAL
- 59 REVIEWS
- 71 LETTERS
- 74 IT HAPPENED TO ME
- 78 READER INFO
- 80 PHENOMENOMIX

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FORTEAN TIMES is produced for Dennis Publishing by Wild Talents Ltd. Postal address: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD.

You can manage your existing subscription through <http://www.subsinfo.co.uk/> - this should be your first port of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

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UK subscriptions: 0844 844 0049

USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 888-428-6676

Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email [cs@imsnews.com](mailto:cs@imsnews.com)

Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)1795 592 909

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



© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

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

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PRINTED BY BENHAM GOODHEAD PRINT LTD

**DISTRIBUTION**

Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide

by Seymour Distribution Ltd.

2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT

Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001

Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to

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**Speciality store distribution** by Worldwide Magazine

Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 7881272

**STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

12 issues: UK £39.98; EU £47.50

**Fortean Times** (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis

Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom.

The US annual subscription price is \$89.99.

Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business,

C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica,

New York, 11434.

Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.

US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times,

3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

REST OF THE WORLD £55; US \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues)

**DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED**

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Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Circulation 17,024 (Jan-Dec 2011)

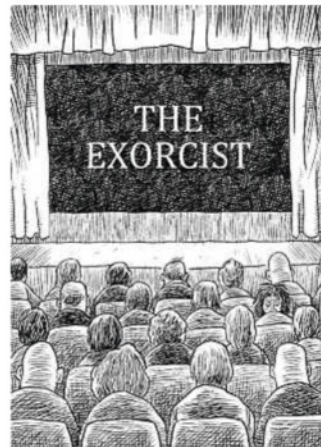
Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: MARCH 2014

# editorial

## An obsession with possession

It's now 40 years since the "scariest film ever made" touched down on our shores. William Peter Blatty and William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* arrived on a wave of hype and hysteria in March 1974 (having been screened in the US on boxing Day of 1973), triggering a media obsession with possession that has scarcely abated in the years since. We mark the occasion with this special issue, in which we assess the impact of the film, explore some of the fall-out from it and consider some contemporary and recent cases. Dr Leo Ruickbie looks at the reception of this groundbreaking movie and asks whether it retains its number one spot in the annals of screen terror (p30), before exploring what must be the most shocking Exorcist-related case in British history, that of the exorcism of Michael Taylor (p36). Our in-house religious affairs expert Ted Harrison examines the history of exorcism within the Christian church and beyond, and asks whether it has any place in the therapeutic landscape of contemporary secular society (p40). Bob Rickard brings the story up to date with an account of a series of bizarre events that took place in Indiana in 2012, and asks whether this very modern case of possession and portals to Hell, which sucked in social workers, police and medical professionals, was a species of collective folly arising from a specific social context (p46). Finally, we managed to grab a chat with the legendary Linda Blair, whose own life was transformed by her role as the possessed Regan in *The Exorcist* (p74).



suggestion that Hergé's 1968 Tintin story *Flight 714* - in which an aircraft is hijacked and landed on a remote volcanic island - had somehow provided inspiration for the fate of Flight 370. Drawing back from such crazy theorising, CNN anchor Don Lemon probably thought he was introducing a note of scientific rigour when he asked a live TV panel whether it would really be so "preposterous" to consider a black hole as a possibility. Mary Schiavo, a former Inspector General for the US Department of Transportation, quickly poured cold water on Lemon's theory, pointing out that: "a small black hole would suck in our entire Universe, so we know it's not that." Perhaps the last word should go to FT correspondent Hugh Henry, who emailed Fortean Towers: "Simple: find DB Cooper and you'll find the plane."

hole would suck in our entire Universe, so we know it's not that." Perhaps the last word should go to FT correspondent Hugh Henry, who emailed Fortean Towers: "Simple: find DB Cooper and you'll find the plane."

**STEVE MOORE 1949-2014**

We're very sad to announce that, as we were going to press, we learned of the death of Steve Moore, who passed away at home over the weekend of 15-16 March.

Steve was among the earliest members of the Gang of Fort, being in at the launch

of *Fortean Times* in 1973 and remaining a regular contributor of articles and reviews right up to this issue. He edited FT's scholarly journal *Fortean Studies*, produced the *General Index* to issues 1-66 of FT (a Herculean labour) and compiled a number of popular FT books, such as the *Inept Crime* and *Weird Sex* volumes. His novel *Somnium* was published in 2011.

Steve's knowledge encompassed more than forteana, taking in Eastern mysticism, the I Ching, science fiction and comics, of which he wrote many classic examples. Always a selfless source of esoteric information and sage advice, Steve will be irreplaceable and missed by all. A full tribute will follow next issue.

*David R Sutton*  
 DAVID R SUTTON

*Bob Rickard*  
 BOB RICKARD

*Paul Sieveking*  
 PAUL SIEVEKING

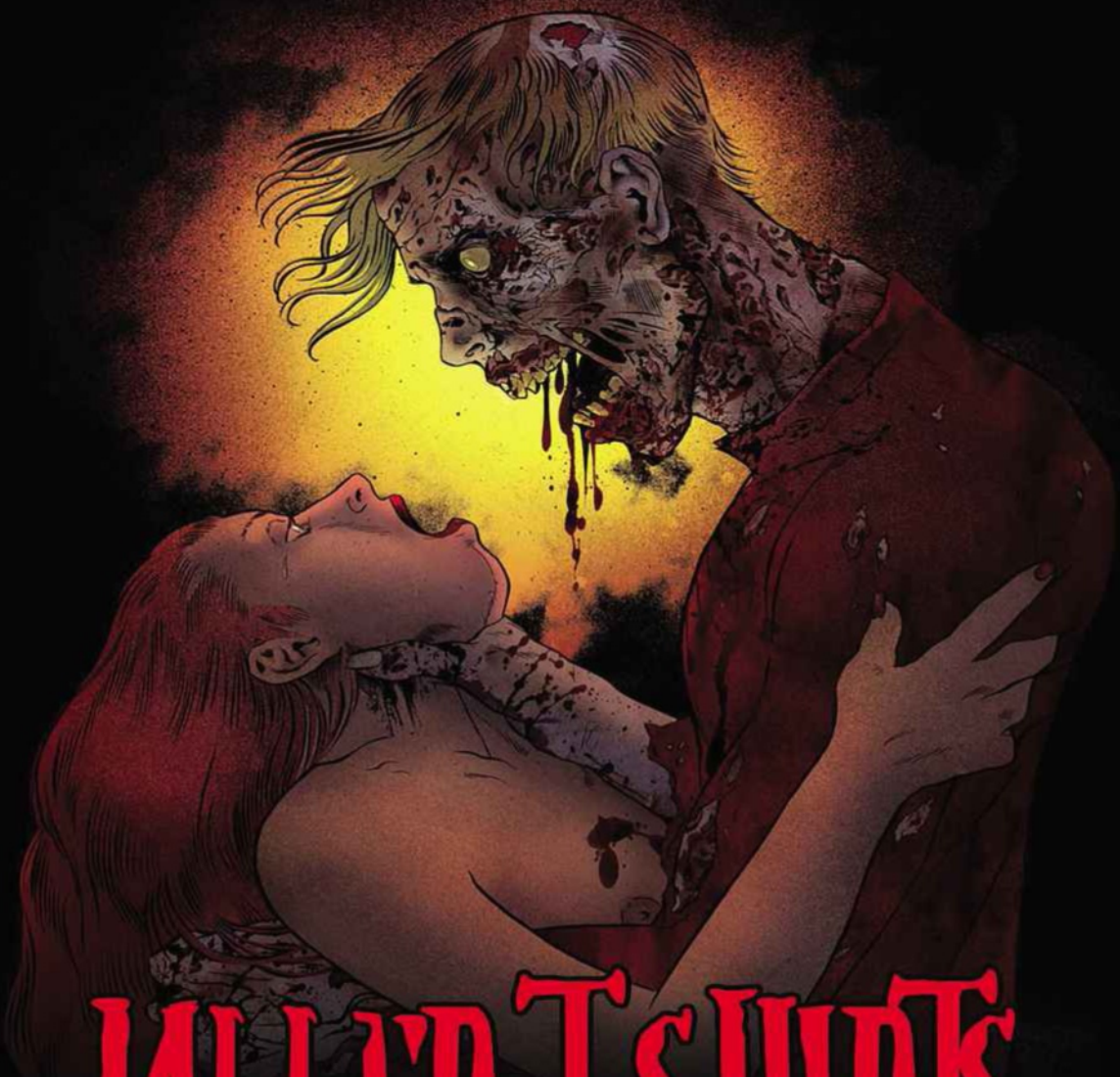
**THE MYSTERY OF FLIGHT MH370**

As the search for missing Malaysian Airways flight MH370 continues to draw a blank (see pp4-5), various less than compelling theories have been mooted on the Internet and social media to fill the informational vacuum. One Malaysian politician tweeted his personal theory - "New Bermuda Triangle detected in Vietnam waters, well-equipped sophisticated devices are of no use!" - before being shamed into apologising. Meanwhile, fake tweets and Facebook postings announced that MH370 had indeed been "found near Bermuda Triangle", going viral before being exposed as the work of Internet scammers.

Due to the passenger manifest including 20 employees from Texas-based technology firm Freescale Semiconductor, others suggested that the plane was being used to test "cloaking technology", which explained its apparent disappearance from radar, or that the employees were the target of Chinese kidnappers. North Korea was fingered, too, as were aliens and the Illuminati. There was even the amusing

**Why fortean?**  
 Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!  
**SEE PAGE 78**

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# strangedays

## The mystery of Flight MH370

The disappearance of a Malaysian Airlines passenger plane is the latest aviation enigma

Flight MH370 took off from Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia at 12.40am on Saturday, 8 March. The Boeing 777 was carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew, including two pilots, Captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah, 53, and First Officer Fariq Abdul Hamid, 27. At around 1.30am, Hamid bade farewell to Malaysian air traffic control, saying: "All right, good night". Then civilian radar lost all contact with the aircraft. Someone on the plane deliberately switched off all three communications systems within 12 minutes of each other. Military radar tracked the plane changing direction back to the Malaysian mainland. It flew far above its 'ceiling', reaching 45,000ft (13,700m) before later flying very low, possibly to evade radar. Satellite tracking suggested that 200 miles (320km) north-west of Penang, the plane went in one of two directions: across the Andaman Sea towards central Asia; or over Indonesia towards the southern Indian Ocean. The plane was last tracked by satellite at 8.11am – although the location was unclear. It could have reached as far as Kazakhstan about 3,000 miles (4,800km) away. On 18 March it emerged that residents on Dhaalu Atoll in the Maldives in the Indian Ocean had spotted a low-flying jumbo jet that bore the red stripe and white background of Malaysian Airlines heading south hours after MH370 disappeared. On 20 March, Australia's Maritime Safety Authority announced that analysis of four-day-old satellite images had revealed what might be debris related to the missing aircraft.



ABOVE: The search for the missing aircraft was being conducted over a vast area and involved at least 25 countries.

### Courtney Love announced she had "found" the plane

There is no further hard data at the time of going to press. Either all will be explained by the time you read this, or MH370 will be on the way to becoming a classic conundrum covered in fortune anthologies for years to come.

After more than 70 years, we still don't know what happened to Amelia Earhart,

while the 1945 disappearance in Vincent Gaddis's notional 'Bermuda Triangle' of Flight 19 with its 14 airmen is only partially explained. On 22 March 1957 a US Air Force Boeing Stratofreighter from California, with 57 passengers and 120 crew, vanished 200 miles (320km) southeast of Tokyo and was never found. In March 1962, Flying Tiger Line Flight 739, a US military plane carrying 90 soldiers, disappeared during a flight from Guam to the Philippines and left no trace of wreckage or a mayday call. On 25 May 2003, a Boeing 727, which was no longer painted with an airline logo, took off from Quatro de Fevereiro International Airport in Luanda,

Angola, without clearance or a flight plan. More than a decade later, we still don't know what happened to it.

On 12 March, Ibrahim Mat Zin, a Malaysian shaman or *Bomoh*, accompanied by several assistants, visited Kuala Lumpur International Airport wielding coconuts and bamboo binoculars to "weaken the bad spirits so the rescuers can find the plane". Two days earlier, he had used a fish-hook for the same purpose. The news triggered a mixture of outrage and embarrassment from Malaysia's social media users.

On 18 March, on her Facebook page, singer Courtney Love announced she had "found" the plane, offering an annotated screen grab showing what she



**GCHQ AND THE UFOs**  
Magicians and misinformation in British intelligence  
**PAGE 6**



**BY BREATH ALONE...**  
Michelle Pfeiffer and her surprise breatharian confession  
**PAGE 14**



**STOP ALL THE CLOCKS**  
Timepieces that conk out at the same time as their owners  
**PAGE 20**

believed to be evidence of an oil slick (pictured right). "I'm no expert," she said. Meanwhile, Uri Geller claimed he'd been asked by a "substantial figure" in Malaysia to employ his 'remote viewing' skills to help find the missing aircraft.

Could the captain of MH370 have committed suicide-by-plane? This happened in 1997 when Silk-Air Flight 185 crashed in Sumatra, killing 97 passengers and seven crew; and in 1999 when EgyptAir flight 990 crashed into the Atlantic, killing all 217 on board. Maybe the plane landed in the Andaman Islands. There are more than 570 islands, only 36 of which are inhabited. A beach landing would be difficult but not impossible, but it is unlikely that it would be able to take off again. Maybe it landed in a remote desert area in, say, Xinjiang, Kyrgyzstan, or Kazakhstan – but it would be difficult to evade radar in India, Pakistan and



Afghanistan, which are kept on high alert, unless it flew in the radar shadow of Singapore Airlines flight 68 en route to Spain (another hypothesis). Maybe it headed south and landed in northern Australia – or crashed in the Indian Ocean.

As 153 of the passengers were Chinese citizens, maybe the plane was commandeered by China's Uighur Muslim

separatists and taken to the Taklimakan Desert, but again this would require amazing luck or skill in evading radar systems. Maybe there was a fire on board, the pilot headed for the closest safe airport, but crashed into the sea. However, if the course was changed during an emergency, one might expect it to be done using manual control, but the left turn was done by computer

keystrokes. This would also rule out a loss of cabin pressure or the release of toxic fumes leading to the death of all on board. Did the erratic fluctuations in altitude indicate a struggle? Maybe the plane has been landed and hidden to be refuelled and fitted with a new transponder before being used in some spectacular terrorist outrage... time will tell. Or perhaps the plane was shot down by some trigger-happy air force that now wishes to conceal its mistake. Maybe the plane was sucked into a singularity, or teleported to another time, or abducted by space commandoes from Zeta Reticuli – all of these possibilities have been suggested by Internet conspiracy theorists. Or perhaps this was a dress rehearsal for the Rapture.

At the time of writing, the search area covered 2.24 million nautical miles<sup>2</sup> (7.68 million km<sup>2</sup>). *Yahoo News*, 12 Mar; *[ABC News]* 13 Mar; *D.Mirror*, 14 Mar; *Sunday Telegraph*, 16 Mar; *D.Telegraph, Independent*, 19 Mar; *Guardian*, 18+20 Mar 2014.

## EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Abbott puts 'suppository' in the wrong place**

*<i>13 Aug 2013.*

**Anne's head got sliced off as I landed in Gatwick**

*Irish Times, 27 Aug 2013.*

**'Evil' seagulls held us hostage**

*Hull Daily Mail, 9 Aug 2013.*

**Limerick's 'triumph over evil' welcomed**

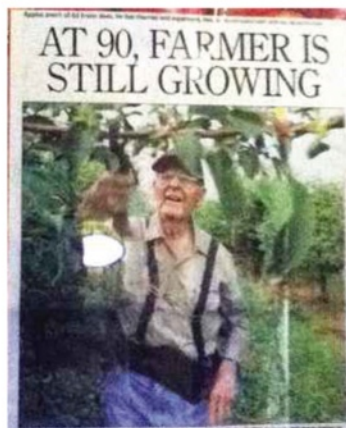
*Irish Times, 19 Aug 2013.*

**World's oldest cat is living in Orpington - and is same age as Dizzee Rascal**

*This Is Local London, 28 Aug 2013.*

**Mice implanted with false memories**

*Guardian, 26 July 2013.*



*Detroit Free Press, 8 July 2013*

**Abandoned terrapins stalk Lake District**

*Guardian, 10 Aug 2013.*

**Non-existent people trapped by China's one-child policy**

*Guardian, 17 Aug 2013.*

**Replica camel on loose**

*Adelaide Advertiser, 16 Aug 2013.*

**Man survives for two years without heart**

*Sunday Times, 28 July 2013.*



## SPECIAL REPORT

UFOS FINALLY MAKE AN APPEARANCE IN LEAKED GCHQ DOCUMENTS, BUT BEWARE, SAYS **MARK PILKINGTON**, THE SAUCERS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM...

# TRICKSTERS, SAUCERS AND CYBER MAGICIANS



ABOVE: Two of the UFO images that appear in the leaked GCHQ Powerpoint presentation – Dean Morgan's 1950 photo and fuzzy blobs shot in 2005 by Arturo Robles.

Since the late 1970s, when the activist group Citizens Against UFO Secrecy used America's Freedom of Information Act to force the CIA and the then barely-known NSA (National Security Agency) to release a few of their UFO files, the UFO community has been waiting patiently, and sometimes impatiently, for further official documentation to confirm their beliefs about an extraterrestrial cover-up.

The UK MOD files (see FT238:28-29 and passim), while historically fascinating, didn't contain any mindbombs, and Wikileaker Julian Assange proved rather hostile to the UFO community, calling them weirdos<sup>1</sup> in 2010 (see FT271:4-6). So when Edward Snowden began leaking NSA and GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) documents to the press in June 2013, it was hoped that new UFO secrets might be among them.

The Iranian news agency FARS's 12 January announcement that Snowden had uncovered a conspiracy involving both ETs and Nazis (see FT312:24) failed to impress – after all, it's just another day's History Channel programming here in the West – but then, on 24 February, journalist Glenn Greenwald's online news zine *The Intercept*<sup>2</sup> ran a piece entitled 'How Covert Agents Infiltrate the Internet to Manipulate, Deceive, and Destroy Reputations'.

Accompanying Greenwald's article was a leaked GCHQ Powerpoint presentation, *The Art of Deception: Training for Online Covert Operations*,<sup>3</sup> and there at last, on pages 35-37, were the UFOs.

The document itself probably dates to Spring 2012: it refers to a planned roll-out of 150 trained-up operatives in "early 2013", while a companion document refers to events in Syria of February 2012. It appears to be introducing a three-week training programme for 'Online Covert Action Accreditation', offered by GCHQ's Human Science Operations Cell (HSOC), part of the Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group (JTRIG) revealed by Snowden. It's classified Secret, with sub designations of SI (Signals Intelligence), Rel to USA / FVEY (meaning that the information can be shared with equivalent departments in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA).

JTRIG's role is to "destroy, deny, degrade [and] disrupt" the online operations of perceived enemies, who could be anyone from the Taliban to British Islamic extremists or hacktivist groups like Anonymous. To do this it uses three sets of tactics:

1) online HUMINT (Human Intelligence) – monitoring and engaging with users of social media sites, online forums, chat rooms, message boards etc.

2) Strategic Influence – using a variety of psychological techniques to gain influence over individuals and, through them, manipulate online communities.

3) Disruption and Computer Network Attack (CNA). This is the final stage, whereby JTRIG gains control of, or critically disrupts, the target community. For example, in 2008 the FBI infiltrated and took over the running of credit card scamming site DarkMarket and, earlier this year, the anonymous email client Tormail used by hackers.

Among the modules to be completed during the three-week HSOC training programme are: Scams and Deceptions (the longest session, lasting a whole two weeks), Psychology and Cyber Psychology (one day), Disruption (only 1 hour), Strategic Influence (one day), Digital Tells (determining the success of your operation; half a day) and Social Engineering (homework).

So far this is fairly standard Le Carré spookwork brought up to date for the Social Media age. But it gets rather interesting, and a whole lot more fortean, with Slide 8, a photograph of playing cards being trick-shuffled, captioned "We want to build Cyber Magicians".

While the text that accompanied the presentation is missing, a number of data heavy slides and illustrations provide enough clues to piece together a

plausible narrative.

Sides 10,11 and 12 are flow charts demonstrating how Magic Techniques and Experiment can be applied to GCHQ HUMINT, Influence and Disruption operations. The charts incorporate all the building blocks you will need for your campaign, including Conspiracy Stories, Persuasion, Conformity/Obedience, Alias Management, Legend Building (a Legend is a false backstory), Scams, Confirmation Bias, Propaganda, Branding, Marketing and Psychopathy. There are also references to the cultural mapping and comparison tools of sociologist Geert Hofstede (Hofstede Dimensions) and the techniques of marketing psychology guru Robert Cialdini, author of *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (1984).

Slide 16 includes photographs of magicians who have previously worked alongside intelligence groups (see FT185:46-50). In 1856, the great Frenchman Jean Robert-Houdin used stage tricks to persuade the Algerian Marabout tribe that the magic of the French was more powerful than their own. During WWII, Jasper Maskelyne deployed a variety of stage techniques on the battlefield, creating decoy tanks, mechanical monsters and, it is alleged, making Alexandria vanish and reappear further along the Egyptian coastline, so eluding aerial bombardment.<sup>4</sup>



In 1950s America, the CIA hired celebrity illusionist John Mulholland to train operatives in deception techniques, from simple sleight-of-hand tricks to the construction of complex mechanical devices. Mulholland also attended séances and occult gatherings and visited parapsychology labs, compiling his research into two field manuals for CIA operatives, who he refers to as ‘tricksters’.<sup>5</sup>

Slide 17, “Dissimulation – Hide the Real”, “Simulation – Show the False”, demonstrates some useful deception techniques used in nature, and in warfare; while slides 20 and 21 demonstrate another key element of the illusionist’s art, Attention Management: “We look where we expect something interesting to happen; we are biased to see/hear/feel/smell/taste what we strongly expect to see/hear/feel/smell/taste”.

It’s a step-by-step guide to the art of deception, with HSOC’s ultimate goal being to transform its geek army into tuxedo-wearing information conjurers.<sup>6</sup> As Slide 18 spells out, managing your subject’s attention, and their perception and interpretation of events, allows you to control both their emotional and behavioural responses to the situation. And that’s magic – with a bit of mind control thrown in for good measure.

Even if these are all tried and tested techniques, deployed for decades by contact officers and agents on the ground, it’s still fascinating to see the anatomy of contemporary spycraft laid bear in such a way, with the added sociological and marketing voodoo, borrowed from Hofstede

and Cialdini and weaponised by the intelligence services. What is different about this presentation, however, are its targets – the online communities and social media systems that GCHQ’s operatives are being trained to infiltrate, control and, in some cases, destroy.

So where do UFOs fit into all this?

Strand 2 of the presentation refers to “Influence and Information Operations”, and here the marketing elements of the previous section come into play. Why do people adopt the beliefs, brands and products that they do? How can one successfully seed a brand, or an idea?

“People,” we are told, “make decisions as part of groups for emotional reasons, not rational ones.” One pair of slides seems to refer to the urban legend, popular in Muslim communities, that the Coca Cola logo reflected in a mirror spells “No Muhammad, No Mecca” in Arabic.<sup>7</sup> Did this myth emerge by accident, or was it deliberately seeded? It doesn’t matter – from a branding and marketing perspective, all that matters is that it’s an idea that has stuck.

We can ask the same questions about the UFO mythology, and perhaps this is what the presentation is doing over the three slides featuring UFOs. The first is a classic flying saucer, allegedly photographed by Dean Morgan in Redbud Illinois on 23 April 1950.<sup>8</sup> The second shows four video stills of fuzzy lights, shot in November 2005 by controversial Mexican UFO photographer Arturo Robles, while the third looks like a classic

case of a fast-flying bird mistaken for a saucer.

Following the images is a slide of an SLR camera alongside an iPhone, and a wooden wagon wheel next to a shiny, modern car wheel. These might demonstrate the changing nature of photographic technology – and the attendant shifts in the cultures of perception – or the changing nature of technology itself. Belief in UFOs hasn’t changed over the past 60 years, even if the technology for capturing them has. As a powerful brand and an iconic cultural export, like Coca Cola, the UFO can’t be beat.

The GCHQ/HSOC Powerpoint has notable parallels with a declassified RAND Corporation document from 1950. *The Exploitation of Superstitions for Purposes of Psychological Warfare*<sup>9</sup> discusses a similar *modus operandi* for the ‘strategic influence and disruption’ of targets by exploiting religious beliefs and superstitions, and also references illusionists Maskelyne and Mulholland. Amongst the questions asked are “What evidence is there that some types of superstitions lose their credibility after enjoying a brief vogue?” “What types of superstitious appeals will be best adapted to the various audiences to be propagandised?” and “What may be the boomerang effects of attempts to exploit popular folklore?”<sup>10</sup> The same questions could have been asked by the GCHQ document.

While we don’t know why there are UFOs in the ASOC/JTRIG presentation, and we don’t want to leap into the trap of confirmation bias (see Slide

11), the fact that the saucer photographs appear within the context of influencing and manipulation online communities is, if nothing else, highly suggestive. There’s no doubt that intelligence organisations worldwide have exploited UFOs, and other folkloric subjects, in their operations, nor that they have deliberately influenced the beliefs of the UFO community.<sup>11</sup> In this light we might view the 2005 “leak” of the Serpo papers, documenting the exchange of USAF personnel and extraterrestrials in 1968, as an influence exercise (see FT209:42-43) that, intentionally or not, rejuvenated a moribund UFO industry.

Questions might also be asked about the growth and development of many online conspiracy groups including the 9/11 Truthers, false flaggers, gangstalking and technological mind control victims, some of whom, with no sense of irony, have hijacked the comments section below Glenn Greenwald’s original article.

In his own piece, Greenwald focuses on the use of disinformation and misinformation to discredit and manipulate the reputations of individuals (like Snowden and, presumably, Greenwald himself) and organisations that oppose the status quo. This is unquestionably an important issue, but the message implicit in the presentation is that, by managing the ways that millions of Internet users receive and perceive information, GCHQ’s Cyber Magicians hold the tools to shape, influence and control reality itself.

## NOTES

1 [theguardian.com/media/2010/dec/03/julian-assange-live-online-answers](http://theguardian.com/media/2010/dec/03/julian-assange-live-online-answers).

2 [firstlook.org](http://firstlook.org).

3 <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/document/2014/02/24/art-deception-training-new-generation-online-covert-operations/>

4 Appropriately enough,

several of Maskelyne’s wartime claims, detailed in his 1949 book, *Magic at War*, including the Alexandria vanishing act, may themselves have been illusions. See [maskelynemagic.com](http://maskelynemagic.com).

5 These were compiled and republished in 2010 as *The Official CIA Manual of Trickery and Deception*.

6 A line borrowed from magician Ray Teller, seen in the final slide.

7 I’m aware that I’m playing Powerpoint Karaoke here – they may also simply be making a point about the strength of Coca Cola’s global brand!

8 It made the cover of Ray Palmer’s *Flying Saucer* magazine in October 1959,

but is generally considered to be a fake.

9 [www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_memoranda/2008/RM365.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_memoranda/2008/RM365.pdf). See [miragemen.wordpress.com/2010/11/03/rand-superstition-and-psychological-warfare](http://miragemen.wordpress.com/2010/11/03/rand-superstition-and-psychological-warfare).

10 It’s interesting that, at the height of the flying saucer panic in America, the RAND document, produced for the

US Air Force, discusses all manner of superstitions and folklores as being useful to psychological warfare, but contains no mention of UFOs!

11 The best known example being the case of Paul Bennewitz recounted in my book *Mirage Men* (2010), and *Project Beta* by Greg Bishop (2005).

## SIDELINES...

### IT'S A CLAMITY

Research at Bangor University in Wales has shown that the world's oldest living creature, accidentally killed in 2006, was a century older than previously thought. The ocean quahog (a deep-sea clam, *Arctica islandica*) – named 'Ming the Mollusc' after the dynasty ruling China when it was born – was dredged alive from the North Atlantic seabed near Iceland in 2006. The rings on its shell show it was born in 1499, making it 507 when it was killed by being put in a freezer. *Sunday Times*, 28 Oct 2007; *D.Mail*, 29 Oct 2007; *D.Telegraph*, 14 Nov 2013.

### NEOLITHIC REVIVAL

Wiltshire farmer Tim Daw, 52, has begun work on a long barrow in one of his fields at All Cannings, near Devizes, where cremated ashes from up to 2,400 people can be stored. The 50m (164ft) barrow beside the Kennet and Avon Canal, costing £50,000, is based on the famous West Kennet long barrow nearby and will be aligned with the sunrise at the Winter Solstice. "We've already had five people sign up," said Mr Daw. *D.Telegraph*, 26 Aug 2013; *Metro*, 14 Jan 2014.

### FRUIT RAID

A man in Newington, Connecticut, ram-raided a petrol station, stole a single banana, and ate it before driving off. Police were ap-peeling (geddit?) for witnesses. *Sun*, 10 Feb 2014.



MARTIN ROSS

## MEDICAL BAG

BOYS WITH TAILS, BABY WITH TEETH AND 'DOUBLE DICK DUDE'



SHARIQ ALLAQAQAND / COVER ASIA PRESS

ABOVE: Arshid Ali Khan shows off his "gift from God". BELOW: Chandre Oraon attracts worshippers from near and far.

### MAN AND HANUMAN

Arshid Ali Khan, a 12-year-old Indian boy living with his grandparents near Chandigarh, has a 'tail' growing from his back. Devotees call him Balaji and see him as an incarnation of the monkey god Hanuman. They flock to see him, often leaving cash or gifts in return for a blessing. In fact, Arshid has meningocele, a form of spina bifida where the spinal cord develops abnormally. "I love my tail," he said. "It's a gift from God. It's unusual but people respect me and bow before me because of it. I feel special." However, doctors say if the growth is not removed, Balaji's twisted limbs could become worse. Spina bifida affects about one child in every 2,500. *Sun*, 23 July 2013.

- Also seen as an incarnation of Hanuman is Chandre Oraon, 35, who has a 14.5in (37cm) hairy tail. Like Arshid, he says it is a "gift from God". He was born with a patch of hair on his lower

### "Me getting sick was a sign that my tail was divine"



ARKAPRAVA GHOSH / BARCROFT INDIA

back and refused to have it cut. Worshippers travel hundreds of miles to queue up outside his house in Alipurduar, West Bengal, to seek healing and blessings by touching his tail.

Doctors have offered to have the long tail removed, but he refused, saying: "Once my mother chopped off my tail when I was young. Soon after, I got a high fever and I was very sick. My mother told me that I almost died. After that, everyone said I must keep the tail. My family said they felt me getting sick was a sign that my tail was divine."

Monika Lakda, who had travelled overnight to see Mr Oraon at his small makeshift shrine, said: "My brother's son was once very unwell and had fever. We gave him medicine but it did not work. So we came to Chandre to seek his blessings. The baby recovered soon after that. We believe that Chandre is an incarnation of Hanuman. They say he was born on the Holy Hanuman day. So we have faith in him."

It is highly likely that Mr



Oraon was born with a form of spina bifida called spina bifida occulta. It is quite common for children with spina bifida to have a hairy patch on their back. When Chandre was a boy, other children used to make fun of him and pull his tail. He later had trouble finding a girlfriend: over 20 women rejected his romantic advances before he met his wife, Maino, 38, in 2007. They now have a five-year-old daughter, Radhika. Chandre hopes to build his own temple so he can offer mass blessings, but he is a poor man, so it won't happen without financial help. *dailyemail.co.uk*, 7 Feb 2014.

## BORN WITH TEETH

Stacey Lewis, 24, gave birth to her daughter Imogen in Newport, South Wales, in May 2013. The baby was born with two front teeth in her lower jaw. Equally endowed was Eva Griffiths, born in Middlesbrough on 8 September. Her mother Vicki, 26, said: "I had planned to breastfeed, but Eva's teeth have put me off." For eight earlier examples, see FT113:12. In 1990, Sean Kenny was born in Basingstoke with 12 teeth, believed to be a record. Some celebrated men are said to have been born dentally equipped, including the third century Roman emperor Valerian, Richard III of England and Louis XIV of France. *D.Telegraph*, 30 May; *Sun*, 20 Sept 2013.

## THE HUMAN GARDEN

Ron Sveden from Massachusetts had been battling emphysema for months when his condition deteriorated and he was rushed to hospital with a collapsed lung. He was steeling himself for a cancer diagnosis when X-rays revealed a pea plant about half an inch (1.25cm) long, growing in his lung. Doctors believe it had "gone down the wrong way" and sprouted. "One of the first meals I had in the hospital after the surgery had peas," said Mr Sveden. "I laughed to myself and ate them. Whether this would have gone full-term and I'd be working for the Jolly Green



Giant, I don't know." *BBC News*, 25 July 2013.

- Doctors in Beijing found a dandelion nearly 2cm long growing inside a young baby's ear canal. The 16-month-old girl's worried parents said she had been suffering from an ear infection for more than four months and they finally decided to see a specialist when she began scratching it regularly. Her mother saw 'something' inside her daughter's ear, but was unable to get it out. It was later surgically removed. "Even the slightest bit of pressure put her at risk of internal bleeding so it had to come out," explained physician Gu Qinglong. *Metro*, 30 Nov 2013.

- Rochelle Harris, 27, dislodged a fly from her ear while holidaying in Peru, but thought nothing more of it until she started getting blinding headaches and pains down one side of her face, heard scratching noises inside her head and woke up back home in England one morning with liquid on her pillow. She sought treatment at the Royal Derby Hospital, where a brain scan showed that maggots had chewed a half-inch (12mm) hole in her ear canal. Olive oil failed to drown them, so doctors resorted to surgery and found a "writhing mass of maggots" within her ear, raising concern they could eat into her brain. A family of eight maggots was removed. Analysis found that a New World army screwworm fly – a blowfly called *Cochliomyia* – had laid eggs inside Harris's ear. [R] 17 July 2013.

- After suffering from severe earache for 24 hours, a 48-year-old Taiwanese woman went to hospital in Taipei. Doctors removed her hearing aid to find a bloodstained discharge in her left ear canal, caused by a fat fruit fly larva, which had feasted on skin close to the eardrum. Dr Cheng-Ping Shih said that the woman's ear was less sensitive than normal because of many years of wearing

a hearing aid. Her ear healed after she was treated with antibiotics. *MX News (Sydney)*, Sun, 14 Feb 2014.

## MEDICAL MISCELLANEA

An actor being examined by a medical student as part of a test was found to be suffering from the condition he was pretending to have. Jim Malloy was pretending to have an abdominal aortic aneurism as part of a standardised patient programme at the University of Virginia's medical school. When student Ryan Jones examined him, he was surprised to find signs the actor was suffering from the very same condition. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph*, 7 Jan 2014.



- A man who claims to have two penises became an Internet hit after posting photos of his genitals on entertainment website Reddit. The anonymous man (going by the online moniker of 'Double Dick Dude'), believed to be an American, said that each member was fully functional and operated independently from the other. His snaps drew 12,000 comments within hours. We are informed that one in six million boys is born with two penises, but most have one removed at an early age. For a rapist with two penises, caught in Malaga, Spain, in 1992, see FT67:15. *Sun*, 3 Jan 2014.

- An unnamed woman who had had breast implants complained that the procedure had made her forgetful. Her memory loss was so bad the condition was officially listed as a possible side effect. The complaint is one of 202 noted in 2012 by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency regarding implants. *Sun*, 4 Nov 2013.

- A woman in India has given birth to 10 stillborn babies. Anju Kushwaha, 28, from the Satna district of Madhya Pradesh, went into labour at just 12 weeks on 15 December, and during the 78 miles (125km) journey to hospital gave birth to nine, with the 10th delivered when she arrived there. *MX News (Sydney)*, 17 Dec 2013.

## SIDELINES...

### DOGS AND CATS OF WAR

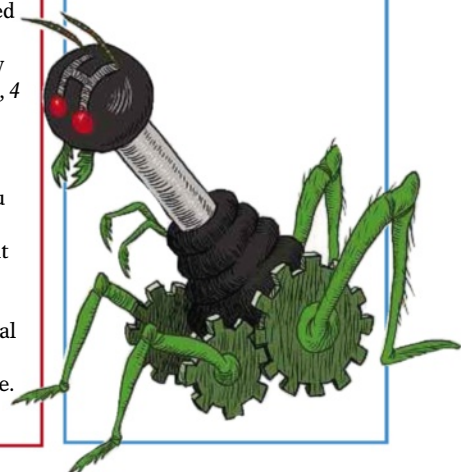
Britons slaughtered 750,000 family pets in one week when war broke out in September 1939. This resulted from the false assumption that putting down pets was a patriotic thing to do after pet owners were told animals would not be allowed in bomb shelters. It was thought to be a humane alternative to pets roaming bombed streets in terror. The government also sanctioned prosecution of cat owners for giving their pets milk. *Bonzo's War: Animals Under Fire 1939-1945* (2013), by Clare Campbell.

### WAL MART OUTFOXED

Wal-Mart is considering legal action after DNA testing showed traces of fox meat in the donkey meat it sold to China. Donkey meat is considered a delicacy in parts of China. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph*, 4 Jan 2014.

### NATURAL GEARS

A gear system has been found in insects, showing that nature developed cogs before humans. Juveniles of the plant-hopping insect *Issus coleoptratus* – found in gardens across Europe – have hind leg joints with curved cog-like strips of opposing 'teeth' that intermesh, rotating like mechanical gears to synchronise the creatures' legs when they jump. These gears, the first to be seen functioning on any animal, were discovered using high-speed video. *livescience.com*, 12 Sept 2013.





## SIDELINES...

### FAST FOOD FAUX PAS

McDonald's shut down its staff-only website, McResource Line, after it was revealed that the chain had been advising employees not to eat takeaway food, which was "high in calories, fat, sugar, and salt". (Sydney) *D.Telegraph*, 27 Dec 2013.

### NOT SHIP SHAPE

Breast implants fitted at a Harley Street surgery in London by Mohammad Aslam were "too big and heavy", a breast enlargement expert told a tribunal. The expert's name? James Bristol. *Times*, 27 Nov 2013.

### GAME OLD BIRD

Retired racing pigeon Colin, 31, is thought to be the world's oldest – 23 years older than the average pigeon – and is still going strong. William Hoare, 64, of Long Sutton, Somerset, took Colin under his wing in 1982. His impressive longevity is attributed to a strict diet of the finest seeds, millet and rice. *D.Express*, 24 Dec 2013.

### PHANTOM GOLFER

Residents in Richmond Road, Beddington, near Croydon in south London, are being bombarded with brand new golf balls, even though the nearest golf course, Mitcham Golf Club, is three miles (4.8km) away. The balls started landing in December. "They just keep appearing overnight," said Graham Todd. On 24 January a second resident found one in her garden and a third found some in his flowerpots. *Times*, 31 Jan 2014.



MARTIN ROSS

# The Bristol crocodile

## Multiple sightings of something lurking in the River Avon



TOM ADITYA / SWNS.COM

MICHAEL LLOYD / SWNS.COM

On 3 February, police were called to investigate Jolyon Rea's report of a 6ft (1.8m) crocodile. The bus driver (above) had spotted it by Coronation Bridge over the River Avon in the Bedminster area of Bristol at around 9am. "I could see about 2ft [60cm] of its back sticking out of the water and I knew straight away what I was looking at," he said. "When I was in my 20s I went to Florida and I saw alligators, so I know exactly what they look like." The police carried out a search of the area but found no trace of the reptile.

Producers of the black comedy film *The Hatching* denied responsibility for the scare. The film – shot in West Pinnard, an hour's drive from Bristol, last November and December – depicts schoolboys who break into a zoo and steal eggs that hatch into killer crocodiles, which then terrorise the Somerset Levels.

A day after the bus driver's sighting, there was another reported sighting in the Eastville Park area, about three miles (5km) from the Coronation Bridge – but this turned out to

**“He was six feet long and I could see his eyes and snout”**

be a prank. Then Kelly Gray, 41, from Bishopsworth saw what she thought was a crocodile in the river while driving past the entrance to St Mary Redcliffe School in Clarence Road, about 400 yards from Coronation Bridge, shortly after 11am on 5 February. "He was swimming along the river and he just put his head above the water," he said. "He was about six ft [1.8m] long and I could see his eyes and his snout. I could see him quite clearly."

Five days later, Bristol town councillor Tom Aditya, 39, announced that he had probably filmed the croc in the river last year. The video footage (inset above) shows an object floating against the current below some birds, before it bobs and turns

around; he insisted it was not a log. "I remember I could see its eyes," he said. Aditya also believes he spotted the creature while walking near Pill on the banks of the Avon near Bristol in October 2013. A third croc sighting on 16 February, made from the towpath at Rownham Hill, claimed the beast had a swan in its mouth.

Clifton Zoo, Noah's Ark Zoo and Bristol Aquarium all stressed that any crocodile or alligator on the loose was nothing to do with them. Reptile keeper Andy Carbin said: "I think it is pretty unlikely that there is a crocodile. If there were, it would be getting pretty cold by now. At this time of year, crocodiles are pretty dormant and hibernating, rather than swimming around – unless it had just been dumped there." Dr Adam Britton, a zoologist, suggested an alternative: "It could have been a monitor lizard or possibly even an iguana, which to the untrained eye could look a bit crocodile-like." *BBC News*, 4 Feb; *Metro*, *Guardian*, *Times*, *Sun*, 5 Feb; *Bristol Post*, 6+9+13 Feb; *D.Mail*, 12 Feb; *swns.com*, 20 Feb; *pers. comm.*

## TOMB FOR THE CELTIC TIGER



Over the weekend of 26/27 November 2011, Joe McNamara and friends erected a faux megalithic structure near Keel on Achill Island off the west coast of Ireland. 'Achill-henge', as it was soon named, consists of 30 concrete columns in a circle, each nearly 4.5m (15ft) high, topped by a lintel. Situated on a scenic hilltop overlooking the village of Pollagh, it is a little over 100m (330ft) in circumference (**FT289:22**). In July 2012, the High Court ordered that it be demolished, but it's still there. In September 2013, each column was covered with a 12ft (3.6m) drawing of a young man. Emily O'Callaghan, one of 12 volunteers on the artwork, said a steady stream of tourists and curious locals had been coming to see it. The work is part of a project entitled 'Our Nation's Sons'. Roscommon artist Joe Caslin said: "As a nation we have pushed a significant number of our young men to the very edges of society and created within them feelings of neglect and apathy. It is now time to empower these young lads and give them a sense of belonging." *Irish Times*, 5 Sept 2013.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF JOE CASLIN

## SIDELINES...

### BRIGHT SPARK

Adam Kirby from Mitcham, south London, was reading at nine months and potty-trained himself at 23 months after reading a book on the subject. Aged two he scored 141 in an IQ test – higher than many US presidents. He joined Mensa aged two years and four months – the youngest member after Alice Amos (who was a month younger). *D.Telegraph*, 15 June 2013.

### ROAST DOVE AND NOODLES

Five couples released 100 doves to mark their joint wedding in Hefei, Anhui province, central China. The birds were meant to provide a stunning backdrop to the wedding photographs, but photographers instead recorded their swift demise. Guests and a few locals caught the birds with nets and their hands, bashed them over the head and took them home to cook. *MX News (Sydney)*, 20 Nov 2013.

### FALSE RESURRECTION

A woman visiting a relative's grave in a São Paulo cemetery saw the earth moving on a nearby grave and heard faint groaning. She called police. Video footage shows Brazilian paramedics scraping dirt from a man, still buried up to his chest, before hauling him out of the grave. He was hospitalised with minor injuries. Police believe the former city hall worker had been beaten in a fight and dumped unconscious in an empty grave. *Sun*, 9 Nov; *Sky News*, 11 Nov 2013.

### GRAB A GANNET

The world's first pickled guga (baby gannet) eating championship was held on the Hebridean island of Lewis on 28 December. Twenty contestants raced to eat half a gannet chick – said to taste like something between duck and salted mackerel – with a side dish of potatoes in the shortest time. Islanders have enjoyed gugas for centuries. *D.Star*, 23 Dec; *Independent*, 27 Dec 2013.



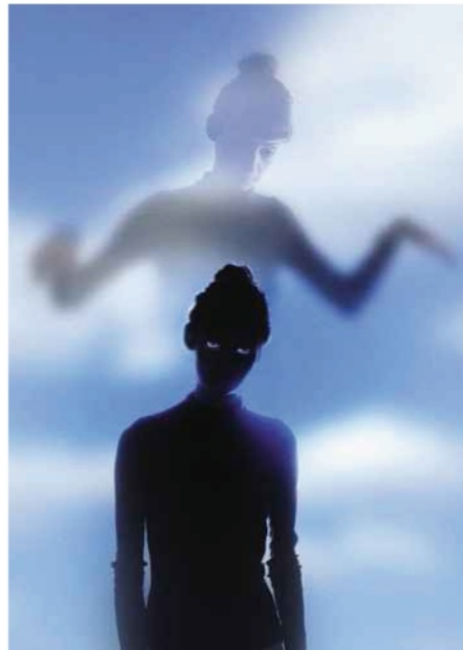
# Out-of-body on demand

## Woman offers researchers a rare opportunity for study

Journeys out of the body – as imagined by New Age religions, lucid-dreamers, hippies, accident victims and those reporting near-death experiences (such as coronaries or becoming conscious during surgery) – have long been one of the exciting prospects of alternative views of consciousness. However, the equally anticipated medical corroboration of what proponents believe might be a universal talent for out-of-body experiences (OOBEs) has been in very short supply. The magic conjunction of a properly funded medical research team and a willing participant who could ‘externalise’ on demand has simply not been available... until now. In February, the ‘open science platform’ *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* published research into a woman who claimed to be able to dislocate her consciousness from her body at will under controlled conditions and while her brain was being MRI scanned for just over an hour.

The subject (here called a participant) is a 24-year-old psychology graduate student at the University of Ottawa. After an undergraduate course on ‘body representation’ hallucinations in patients – which included discussion about OOBEs – she came forward to disclose that she not only had similar experiences, but had them from childhood and could induce them at will, usually when she was bored at school or prior to sleep. She told the researchers that she was “surprised that not everyone could experience this”.

She said she could watch herself from a viewpoint that rotated above her body – “rolling along with the horizontal plane” – while remaining “aware of her unmoving ‘real’ body” and seemingly without feeling any strong emotions. Her curiosity, likewise, seemed rather detached as she explained: “I feel myself moving, or, more accurately, can make myself feel as if I am moving. I know perfectly well that I am not actually moving. There



### She could dislocate her consciousness from her body

is no duality of body and mind when this happens, not really.” She has the sensation of still being in a body, albeit weightless and invisible, while thus ‘exteriorised’. “I am the one moving – me – my body. For example, if I ‘spin’ for long enough, I get dizzy. I do not see myself above my body. Rather, my whole body has moved up. I feel it as being above where I know it actually is.”

The researchers – Andra M Smith and Claude Messier from the University of Ottawa’s School of Psychology – thought her case interesting enough for a more detailed study. First they administered four diagnostic questionnaires to her to identify whether she had any brain anomalies, sleep or perceptual disorders, and to estimate

her ability to process “visual and kinesthetic imagery”, the results of which proved to be comparable to those of ‘athletes’ and ‘health adults’.

Then, after an initial base scan in a functional MRI scanner (fMRI), she underwent three scan sessions of attempting ECE (‘extra-corporeal experience’ as the researchers called it) comprising four ECE exercises of different lengths with a 60-second rest between them. Between each of those sessions, her

brain was scanned for ‘guided motor imagery’ in which she visualised someone else ECEing and at rest, moving a finger and at rest, then imagining herself doing a ‘jumping jack’ exercise and someone else doing it.

During the ECE sessions, she was asked (through headphones) to go ‘in’ and ‘come out’ of her ECEs, indicating with a finger tap (in sight of the researchers) when she felt the experience was starting and ending. In different sessions, she was asked to induce a rocking movement of her invisible, separated ‘body’, a rolling motion, and a bobbing motion. She reported that the ‘spinning’ was unpleasant and hard to stop and switched to ‘bobbing on the ocean’.

The resulting images from the three ECE sessions, after careful analysis, were combined into one because there was “no significant difference” between them. They showed that the “most significant and consistently activated” region “during ECE compared to non-ECE” were in the “left lateral” region “in the supplementary motor area”. The “bilateral posterior visual region”

had significantly less activation during ECE than in non-ECE exercises.

In discussing the results, Smith and Messier note that while the woman’s experiences fit the description of an OOBE (as used in professional literature), they were, according to her own testimony, “without the feeling of being only outside her body and without any of the emotional content typically reported”, hence their coining of the term ‘extra-corporeal’ to differentiate between them. Also, because the ECE itself was ‘private’, they relied upon ‘the participant’s descriptions’ without determining whether any part of it was hallucinatory. With these caveats in mind, they say, the brain functions during “reported ECE” were “different than those observed in motor imagery”. The results suggest “an unusual kinesthetic imagery” that shares features of both classic OOBE and typical motor imagery.

There was a difference between her own ECE (i.e. first-person view) and imaging that of someone else (i.e. third-person view). These ECE events “activated the left side of several areas associated with kinesthetic imagery and were associated with a strong deactivation of the visual cortex”. “This suggests,” they conclude, “that her experience really was a novel one.” They end calling for replication of their study.

There is a suggestion here that if this ability is found to be more widespread – “unreported because people do not think this is exceptional” – it “might be present in infancy but is lost without regular practice”.

#### SOURCES

Andra M Smith and Claude Messier: “Voluntary out-of-body experience: an fMRI study” (*Frontiers of Human Neuroscience*, 10 Feb 2014) <http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00070/full#sthash.ly5qUd1.dpuf>

Douglas Main: “The Woman Who Can Will Herself Out Of Her Body” (*Popular Science*, 6 Mar 2014).

Jennifer Welsh: “Scientists Scanned A Woman’s Brain During An Out-Of-Body Experience - And What They Found Was Amazing” (*Business Insider*, 7 Mar 2014).

Sarah Griffiths: “The woman who ‘can leave her body at will’” (*D.Mail*, 7 Mar 2014).

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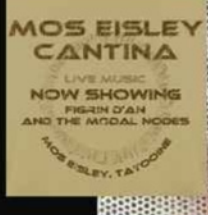
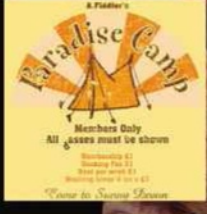
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## FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

Odd diets (fresh air or human flesh), another Shroud theory, a twirling statue and a wrong head

### LIVING ON LIGHT [FT120:14, 129:9]



Michelle Pfeiffer, 55, has revealed that when she arrived in Hollywood in the 1980s she became involved with the breatharian cult, which asserts that food and water are unnecessary and if one connects to the Earth's 'pranic' energies one can survive – indeed thrive – on nothing but air and light. The actress fell under the spell of a “controlling” couple, who tried to put her “on a diet that nobody can adhere to” and “thoroughly brainwashed” her, she said. Convinced that their regime of hardcore fasting and mysticism would keep her slim and expand her spiritual horizons, she visited them three times a week, while they gradually emptied her bank account with their incessant demands for fees. They persuaded her to become a fruitarian as a first step towards the breatharian ideal. Pfeiffer, then aged about 20, was saved by her future husband, actor Peter Horton, who had been making a film about the Moonies. “I was helping him to do research on this cult and I realised I was in one.” Horton persuaded her to cut her links with the group.

In the 1980s, breatharianism was promoted by Wiley Brooks, a former New York sound engineer who worked with Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin. “Food is more addictive than heroin,” he would tell his followers. He claimed to



ABOVE: A press conference during the Dresden murder case of a man who wanted to be eaten and was allegedly killed by a cannibal.

have fasted for 19 years, but in 1983 he was caught sneaking into a hotel and ordering a chicken pie [FT40:23]. Brooks, now 77, lives in New Mexico, where journalist Tom Leonard met him in a desert motel. “He confided that our every move – including our conversation – was being monitored by the Illuminati... He also said he had passed into a ‘new world’, a higher dimension where he breathes a mixture of nitrogen, sulphur and lithium, and his blood is full of precious metals – attributes we will all need when the planet becomes unbearably hot. He admits that he still eats and drinks a little, but only Diet Cokes and McDonald’s quarter pounder with cheese, which, would you believe it, perfectly balance out the toxins in the air.”

Today there are at least a dozen breatharian gurus around the world, connecting with followers and each

other through expensive workshops and retreats, books, videos, and of course the Internet. The most famous is Jasmuheen (Ellen Greve, a former financial consultant from Australia), who claims to have 5,000 followers; she maintains that a person can thrive on pranic energy and 300 calories a day. At least four readers of her book, *Living On Light*, have starved themselves to death, including Verity Linn, 49, who died in a remote part of the Scottish Highlands in 1999.

Other breatharians are more secretive. There is the Maha Devi Ascension Movement, a small American cult run by a German woman who has been photographed dressed as an Ancient Egyptian priestess and allegedly claims to be an immortal from Atlantis. In London there is Jericho Sunfire (aka Richard Blackman), a former professional rugby player who describes himself in on-line videos as a “breatharian personal fitness guru” and says it has taken him 17 years to complete his transition to full breatharianism. A world without food would be ecological heaven, he says. The fatalities haven’t stopped others trying a total fast. In June 2013, Naveena Shine, a 65-year-old British woman living in Seattle, gave up her attempt to live on sunlight after 47 days without food. *MX News (Sydney)*, 19 June; *Sunday*

*Independent (Ireland)*, 3 Nov; *D.Mail*, 4+16 Nov 2013.

### VOLUNTEERS FOR SLAUGHTER [FT169:12]



Back in 2001, Armin Meiwes, 41, a software specialist dubbed “the cannibal of Rottenburg”, killed, cooked, and ate

parts of Bernd-Jürgen Brandes, 42, a computer chip developer at Siemens corporation in Berlin. Brandes had answered an online ad: “Wanted: young, well-built 18 to 30-year-old for slaughter”. Meiwes wrapped up the flesh of his 16-stone (102kg) victim into neat parcels, which he froze and ate over a 10-month period. When caught, he had less than a quarter of his grisly hoard left. He was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Twelve years later, a 59-year-old Pole called Wojciech Stempniewicz, the director of a trucking firm in Hanover, used the same Internet forum as Meiwes and Brandes – ‘Zambian Meat’ – to offer himself up for sacrifice. Police said it was “the number one website for exotic meat” and has 3,000 registered users.

Stempniewicz’s message, using the name ‘LongpigHeszla’, was “Kill me and eat me up”. According to Dresden police chief Dieter Kroll,







Stempniewicz had “since his youth fantasised about being murdered and eaten by another person.” He took a coach to Dresden on 4 November 2013, where he was met by ‘Caligula’ (Detlev Guenzel, 55, a handwriting expert with Saxony’s Office of Criminal Investigation), who then drove him to his boarding house in the remote Gimmlitztal valley in the Erzgebirge Mountains, advertised as “the perfect getaway place”. Guenzel took Stempniewicz to the cellar, where he slit his throat and spent five hours chopping up his body and burying pieces in the garden. Police believed he had eaten choice cuts, earning him the nickname “the cannibal detective”. The recovered body parts should reveal whether Guenzel is actually guilty of cannibalism, which he has so far denied. *Guardian*, 30 Nov; *Sun*, 30 Nov, 1 Dec; *Independent*, 2 Dec; *Scotsman*, 6 Dec 2013.

### SHROUDED IN MYSTERY [FT51:4-7, etc]



Back in 1988, carbon dating of fibres from the Turin Shroud gave a date of AD 1260 to 1390, but several subsequent scholarly articles have

contended that the dating samples may not have been representative of the whole relic [FT301:6]. The latest twist is a suggestion by a team of Italian scientists, related in the journal *Meccanica*, that an 8.2R earthquake at the time of Christ’s death in AD 33 released neutron particles from crushed rock (good old earthlights, in other words) which then imprinted the ghostly, X-ray-like image on the 14ft (4.2m) cloth through “thermal neutron capture”. This reminds the Gang of Fort of the scenic images allegedly etched on skin by lightning strikes.

According to Professor Alberto Carpenteri, who led the aforementioned team, these neutron particles would also have increased the carbon levels in the cloth, helping to skew those awkward carbon-14 results. Of course, Prof Carpenteri’s theory of ‘piezo-nuclear’ reactions accompanying earthquakes has its sceptics, while its application to the endlessly debated Shroud is very much left-field. Maybe the good professor is following that

precept attributed to Tertullian, *Credo quia absurdum* (“I believe because it is absurd”). *D.Mail*, 13 Feb 2014.

### THE SPINNING STATUE [FT304:5]



The 4,000-year-old statue of Neb-Senu in Manchester Museum, observed rotating in its glass display case, is not necessarily possessed or cursed,

it seems. The 10in (25cm) Ancient Egyptian statue rotates as a result of vibrations from passing footfall and traffic. Sensors placed under the cabinet recorded the vibrations over 24 hours and demonstrated their correlation with Neb-Senu’s twirling: both ceased overnight.

One objection to this theory had been that the other figures in the same display case remained motionless. When asked about this, vibration expert Steve Gosling said: “This statue has a convex base. There’s a lump at the bottom that makes it more susceptible to vibrations than the others, which have a flat base. This is conclusive.” *D.Telegraph*, 20 Nov 2013.

### KING’S HEAD IN DOUBT [FT275:23]



The long-lost head of King Henri IV of France, who was assassinated in 1610, was allegedly bought at auction in Paris in 1919.

Four years ago, it was investigated by Philippe Charlier, France’s pre-eminent forensic examiner. Charlier and his team declared they were “99 per cent certain” it was the head of Henri IV, after comparing a facial reconstruction with contemporary portraits. They also identified a small mole in the right nostril and a healed facial stab wound – features in common with the monarch. Last October, however, Dr Jean-Jacques Cassiman reported in the *European Journal of Human Genetics* that he had found a genetic mismatch between the head and three living male relatives of the king. There are now calls for a retraction of the original report in the *British Medical Journal* (15 Dec 2010). *Los Angeles Times*, *Independent*, 31 Oct 2013.

**Y**ou probably remember the scene in *Dr Strangelove*: the loony American base commander, Jack D Ripper (Sterling Hayden), lecturing Group Captain Lionel Mandrake (Peter Sellers) on the dangers of fluoridation, “the most monstrously conceived and dangerous communist plot we have ever had to face.”

Director Stanley Kubrick and writer Terry Southern were mocking the American far-right group, the John Birch Society – the Tea Party of its day – which believed this. <sup>1</sup> Disastrously contaminated by its association with this conspiracy theory, the anti-fluoride case disappeared beneath the consensus view that fluoridation of water, which apparently reduced tooth decay, was a good thing.

Thirty years after *Dr Strangelove*, the first tiny crack in that consensus appeared, and in an unlikely place. In 1992, the left-wing, spy-watching *Covert Action Quarterly*, published an article by Joel Griffiths entitled “Fluoride: Commie Plot or Capitalist Ploy?” Griffiths showed the origins of the fluoride-in-reservoirs idea as being the solution to the disposal problem presented by the mountains of fluoride created as a by-product of the construction of the first American nuclear bombs. Twelve years later, Christopher Bryson expanded Griffiths’s thesis and pulled together medical research that challenged the consensus view that fluoride was harmless to health and good for teeth in his *The Fluoride Deception* (London, Seven Stories, 2004).

But neither Griffiths nor Bryson had much impact. Ask your dentist next time you go. He or she will never have heard of the doubts about fluoride. The US federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention currently lists the fluoridation of water in Ten Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century. <sup>2</sup>

Now a large study by the Harvard School of Public Health has “found strong indications that fluoride may adversely affect cognitive development in children.” Crudely: fluoride reduces IQ, as well as having other deleterious effects, and may not even have any effect in preventing tooth decay. <sup>3</sup> Perhaps this time the ‘Harvard’ name will be sufficient to dent the pro-fluoride consensus.

Elsewhere, this headline caught my eye: “Snowden Documents Proving ‘US-Alien-Hitler’ Link Stuns Russia”. Apparently, in a report on the leaks of NSA material by the Russian FSB (the new name for the KGB) is the claim that among the documents leaked by Edward Snowden was “incontrovertible proof” that an “alien/extraterrestrial intelligence agenda” is driving US domestic and international policy. <sup>4</sup> Curious that no one else had mentioned this, isn’t it? Of course there is no such Federal Security Services (FSB) report and the source of this story, Sorcha Faal, is some kind of spoof or disinformation exercise (though if the latter, its purpose remains unknown).

This appears to be a Snowden-NSA ‘spin’ to a 2012 story in the *Daily Mail* in which Timothy Good, he of *Above Top Secret* and other best-selling ufology books, claimed that President Eisenhower had three meetings with aliens. <sup>5</sup> Good has been running the Majestic 12 (MJ12) material, which purported to show alien contact with the US government in the early 1950s, since the late 1980s; and, looking at his own website ([www.timothygood.co.uk/](http://www.timothygood.co.uk/)), his faith in the story has not been dented by the subsequent revelations that the whole thing had been fabricated by US Air Force Intelligence.

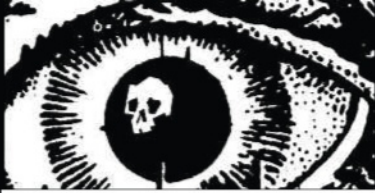
<sup>1</sup> The Birchers now deny ever believing this. See [www.jbs.org/about-jbs/myths-vs-facts](http://www.jbs.org/about-jbs/myths-vs-facts). But they did. See <http://crooksandliars.com/heather/rachel-maddow-exposes-john-birch-society-c>.

<sup>2</sup> [www.cdc.gov/about/history/tengpha.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/about/history/tengpha.htm)

<sup>3</sup> [www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/fluoride-childrens-health-grandjean-choi/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/fluoride-childrens-health-grandjean-choi/). This report and other anti-fluoride studies are discussed at [www.washingtonblog.com/2013/02/government-and-top-university-studies-fluoride-lowers-iq-and-causes-other-health-problems.html](http://www.washingtonblog.com/2013/02/government-and-top-university-studies-fluoride-lowers-iq-and-causes-other-health-problems.html).

<sup>4</sup> [www.whatdoesitmean.com/index1730.htm](http://www.whatdoesitmean.com/index1730.htm).

<sup>5</sup> [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2100947/Eisenhower-secret-meetings-aliens-pentagon-consultant-claims.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2100947/Eisenhower-secret-meetings-aliens-pentagon-consultant-claims.html).



# GHOSTWATCH

**ALAN MURDIE** keeps a weather eye on spookiness in the first of two monthly forecasts



DAVID SUTTON / ETIENNE GILLIAN

## WEATHER-RELATED HAUNTINGS

For those interested in supernatural beliefs and primitive religious ideas of the kind explored in such classic works as Sir James Fraser's multi-volume *The Golden Bough*, the news in recent months has supplied some interesting examples of the survival of archaic modes of thought regarding that most English of topics, the weather.

Early in January, amid unprecedented flooding in many parts of Great Britain, a media furore arose when David Silvester, an Oxford councillor for the United Kingdom Independence Party, attributed the floods, high tides and storms battering the country to divine retribution inflicted because of Parliament's decision to enact legislation permitting gay marriages. UKIP duly expelled Cllr Silvester for his public endorsement of divine punishment and revival of Shakespeare's doctrine of nature, but mediæval religious sentiments soon surfaced again in the most unlikely quarters. At the end of January the *Sun* was ahead of the *Catholic Herald* in backing prayers to St Medard (died c.560 A.D.), the French 'Patron Saint of Weather' and by 8 February Prime Minister David Cameron was describing the flooding in Somerset as "biblical". (*Sun + Catholic Herald (on-line)*, 31 Jan 2014). For those of my vintage and blessed with long memories, such stories recalled the alarm in the aftermath of a powerful lightning strike upon York Minster in July 1984, just three days after the installation of David Jenkins as Bishop of Durham, who had made comments widely interpreted as his expressing a doubt in the literal physical

## THE SHIPWRIGHT'S ARMS WAS VISITED BY THE GHOST OF A SHIPWRECKED SAILOR ON THE NIGHT OF THE HURRICANE

resurrection of Christ (see 'God's mysterious way?' by John Michell, **FT33:54-57**).

Against a backdrop of the survival of such beliefs in modern times, what relationships might be claimed between the realm of ghosts and spirits with the weather?

Storms and exceptionally bad weather certainly provide a dramatic setting for innumerable ghost stories, both in fact and fiction, often playing a pivotal role in the initial plot by forcing the hapless witnesses to seek shelter in what turn out to be haunted premises.

Traditionally there are also a large number of "weather dependant" ghosts occurring mostly in wet and cold conditions (in this regard manifestations at Borley Rectory were something of an exception, being mostly in summer). An extensive list of 'weather-dependant' ghosts has even been compiled on the Internet, though regrettably few are referenced. Perhaps that makes little difference since most are clearly folkloric (see The Paranormal Database [www. www. www.](http://www.paranormalweather.com/database.html)

[www. www. www.](http://www.paranormalweather.com/database.html) )

Not surprisingly, most of these weather-related manifestations are traditionally encountered outdoors in the countryside, where the weather will be all too apparent. Old Norse traditions had the Wild Hunt racing across the skies in the Dark Ages at the front of storms (see 'Pilgrims from Hell' by Maria J Pérez Cuervo, **FT312:26-31**) and a theory amongst folklorists is that this motif was later transmogrified into tales of phantom coaches.

For example, the ghost of William, the fifth Lord Byron known as "Devil Byron", is said to appear with his sister in a phantom coach around Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire, when "wiful is the weather", just one of a number of phantom vehicles in the country linked with rain or bad weather. (*The Haunted Homes and Family Traditions of Great Britain*, 1888, John Ingram.)

A spectral horseman is said to gallop up to Wycoller Hall, Lancashire, on a moonless night when "the wind howls and the moors are lashed by storms." On stormy nights at Troughend, Northumberland, the angry shade of landowner Percy Reed who was murdered and dismembered appears to crack a whip and release his rage. The cracking of the whip adds to the gale to such an extent that trees are threatened with destruction. (*Penguin Book of Ghosts*, 2008, by Jacqueline Simpson and Jennifer Westwood; *Ghosts of the North*, 1977, by Jack Hallam.)

The ghost of a girl who drowned in a stream during World War I is "sometimes seen during floods and bad weather" at Alice Bright Lane in Crowborough, Sussex (*Phantom Ladies*,

# COMING NEXT MONTH

1976, by Andrew Green) whilst on wet nights in the late 1960s and early 1970s a phantom man dressed appropriately in a raincoat made a nuisance of himself stepping in front of traffic along the A38 road near Wellington, Somerset (*Ghosts of Old England*, 1987, by Terence Whittaker).

Other weather-related apparitions appear on foot in urban areas, including Jonas Harper, inventor of the umbrella, whom Thurston Hopkins claims haunts Red Lion Square London on rainy nights (*The World's Strangest Ghost Stories*, 1958) whilst a ghostly old woman in a mob cap "hobbling at speed" appears in West Street at Farnham, Surrey's most haunted town, particularly on wet nights in winter months, according to Peter Underwood's *The Ghost Hunter's Guide* (1984).

Eastern counties provide a variety of weather-related hauntings. At Sheringham on the north Norfolk coast the ghosts of drowned sailors known as "yow-yows" were said to call out their names before storms, whilst during storms a ghostly coastguard walks the beach between Mundesley and Bacton, shouting and singing exultantly and "laughing as wildly as the wind" (*The Folklore of East Anglia*, 1974, by Joan Forman; *Haunted Britain*, 1973, by Anthony Hipplesley Cox).

Further down the east coast, near the site of the sunken city of Dunwich, the bells of churches lost to the sea could be heard chiming during storms; similar traditions are told along the Welsh coast (*The Ghost Book*, 1955, Alasdair Alpin MacGregor). Ghostly Roman soldiers are reputed to patrol the causeway at Mersea Island in Essex, particularly favouring periods of bad weather, according to Harry Ludlam's *The Restless Ghosts of Ladye Place and Other True Hauntings* (1967). The last recorded sighting of a figure interpreted as a Roman soldier appears to have been in February 1970; have any been encountered in the wake of storms and flooding since December 2013? Inland, a phantom light resembling a

lantern reputedly manifested on 'rokey nights' (i.e. rainy or misty) at Irstead, Norfolk, but not after enclosures and drainage of the marshes in 1810. The ghost was said to be that of a man called Heard but was possibly a meteorological phenomenon or marsh gas (*Norfolk Archaeology* vol 2, 1847).

In Suffolk at Peasenhall, each anniversary of the unsolved Peasenhall murder on 31 May 1902, the sky is said to cloud over and become dark, (*Hidden Suffolk*, 2000, by Gill Elliot), whilst in 1940 at Woolpit, the folklorist Christina Hole in *Haunted England* (1940) recorded that the howl of a wolf might be heard when the snow lies thick upon the ground. An attraction to cold is similarly shown by phantom monks at Amwellbury House, Ware, Hertfordshire, who appear before a snowfall (*Ghosts and Hauntings*, 1965, by Dennis Bardens).

Disturbing the tombs and barrows of the ancient dead could traditionally trigger thunderstorms, as at the Iron Age Burley Camp in Devon and particularly the Beedon Barrow in Berkshire (where an attempt to open the tumulus in around 1850 was followed by storms). On the Isle of Arran when a prehistoric tomb was opened, the home of the reckless excavator was hit by a tornado (see *The Folklore of Prehistoric Sites*, 1976, by LV Grinsell and *A Guide to Mysterious Arran*, 2008, by Geoff Holder). Earth mysteries enthusiasts have wondered if digging releases energies from leys.

It is claimed that the haunted Shipwright's Arms near Faversham in Kent had a rare visitation from the ghost of a shipwrecked sailor on the night of the UK's famous October 1987 hurricane. Accounts in ghost books often stress the isolation of the Shipwright's Arms, but in normal conditions it can be reached by car or by a footpath over the marshland. More recently in December 2013, the pub has been hit by a tidal surge and a fire but it has since re-opened. (*The Good Ghost Guide*, 1994, by John Brooks; see [kentonline.co.uk/kent\\_business/news/shipwrights-arms-reopens-11852](http://kentonline.co.uk/kent_business/news/shipwrights-arms-reopens-11852)).



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**THE SOVIET SNOWMAN**  
HUNTING THE GRAND OLD MAN  
OF RUSSIAN YETI RESEARCH



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# FORTEAN TIMES 314

ON SALE 1 MAY 2014

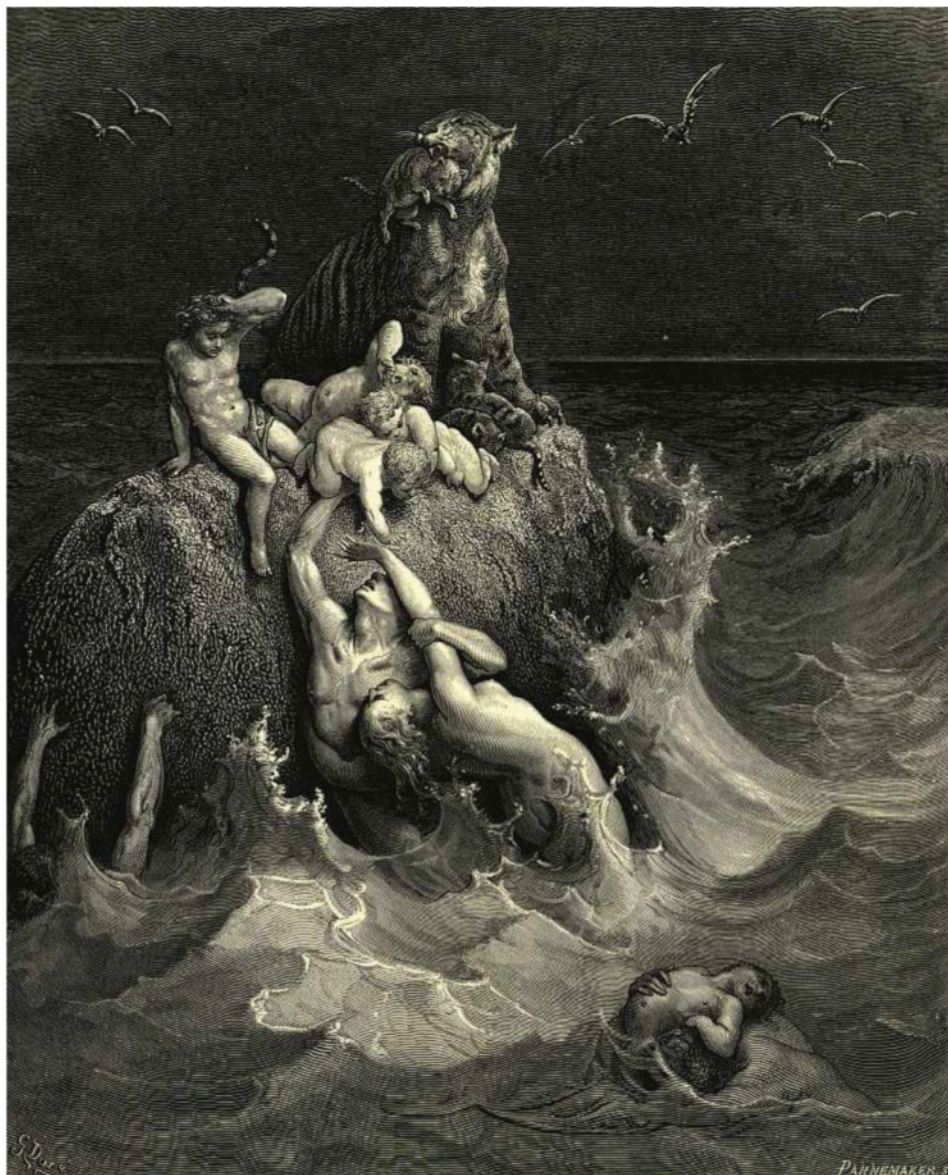


# CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 174: WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE



“ Monistically, I have to accept that no line of demarcation can be drawn between emotions of minds and motions of rivers” – Fort, *Books*, p749

Apart from hoping Mat Coward stays dry in Somerset, I have another, more dismal reason for this diluvial diversion, having lost house and possessions in a tsunami-like inundation here in

Calgary. Naturally, it came quite unpredicted by the local uranoscopes – May they sleep with the (Michael) Fishes!

From what I see on BBC World Service and read in the public prints, David Cameron and Chris Smith seem poised to hand out copies of *Ark Building For Dummies* to the victims.

Cameron in neo-theologian mode has dubbed this

catastrophe ‘biblical’. Well, Noah is certainly the brand name for these aquatic disasters. Not, of course, a monopoly of the Old Testament. A number of Sumerian tablets describe Mesopotamian catastrophes. One (shades of Before and After Ford in *Brave New World*) distinguishes the royal dynasties as pre- and post-flood – will Cameron or Miliband thus go

down in history?

The Greeks had their own version, the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, told by many writers, most notably Plato in his *Timæus*. The common thread is the local god – Ea/Jehovah/ Zeus drowning the world as punishment for human sinfulness, thus prefiguring those American televangelists who blamed Hurricane Katrina on divine wrath against homosexuality.

These flood tales used to be dismissed as mere myth – a myth is of course as good as a mile. Nowadays, though, various scientists have proposed theories to justify belief in their historicity, ranging from sudden drastic rises in sea-levels post-Ice Ages to meteors or comets crashing into oceans with consequent tsunamis.

All these and more may be seen on myriad websites. Inevitably, the spectre of ‘Climate Change’ raises its head. I am no denier of this. But, if Al Gore and his minions knew any weather history, they’d have to admit that it is not all down to human folly. Our planet has seen countless drastic mutations and calamities æons before the Industrial Revolution, carbon emissions, and whatnot – just read on to the end of this column.

The Pyrrha-Deucalion version may be linked to the colossal eruption and consequent tsunami that c.1500 BC (the date is much debated) devastated the island of Santorini-Thera and other centres of Minoan civilisation, affecting many further parts of the world, possibly creating a Year Zero. Vulcanologists regard this as one of the greatest explosions of all time, comparable to Krakatoa.

Its worst effect on history was, of course, to inspire Plato to his myth of Atlantis and all the modern nonsense about precise location and sightings, plus some dreadful films and TV series [FT163:19].

We don’t have to accept that these earliest floods engulfed the entire planet. The point is, accounts of them were referring to ancient communities’ own small worlds, not our larger one.

Though poetically repeated by the likes of Ovid (*Metamorphoses*), and the new Christian emphasis on divine retributions for Sin, the connection between floods and gods mutated somewhat. The Olympians (Greek deities, not London or Sochi ones) were more mundanely associated with the weather, Zeus/Hera being (from Homer on) ‘The Cloud-Gatherer’ who discharged

thunderbolts, Neptune/Poseidon ('The Earth-Shaker') in charge of earthquakes, and so on – I'd like to have heard an ancient shipping forecast.

Not that the religious connection was lost. Dramatic weather and natural catastrophes of all kinds were routinely interpreted at the highest priestly levels as omens. Julius Obsequens (4th-century AD) culled multiple cases from Livy in his own *Book of Prodigies*. At least British victims (as far as I know) haven't had to cope with showers of blood, chalk, earth, milk, or stones – cf. Fort, *passim*, for such phenomena and deluges in general.

Not to mention what Rome and Italy had to contend with at and after 15 March 44 BC when Cæsar went down in that fatal game of Ides and Seek. As reported by Dio Cassius (bk45 ch17), Horace (*Odes*, bk3 no29 vv29-49), and Virgil (*Georgics*, bk1 vv466-85), there were earthquakes, lightning strikes, thunderbolts, volcanic eruptions, plus infestations of snakes, wolves in the streets of Rome and, to top things off, a crop of talking animals – another of Fort's topics.

Blood both falling from the skies and welling up from the earth inevitably evokes the prophet Enoch Powell's "Like The Roman I See The Tiber Foaming With Much Blood," quoting Virgil (*Aeneid*, bk6 v87) – he never actually said 'Rivers of Blood', Enoch being a good classicist; his *Lexicon to Herodotus* (1938) remains indispensable.

Herodotus, by the way, talking (bk2 ch5) of its benign inundations, coined the epigram 'Egypt is the Gift of the Nile', which in turn recalls the parallel tales of Moses in his bullrushes crib and Romulus and Remus on the Tiber, both of which have been modernly linked with periods of flood.

Amidst all these tabloid tales (Athenæus, bk8 para333) adds falling frogs in Central Europe, an event unimprovably dubbed 'Frogeity' by Fort, p82; cf. FT:138:14), come nuggets of mundane detail, e.g. the Fucine Lake overflowing over a five-mile radius and (108 BC) thousands drowned when the river Po burst its banks.

The Tiber (Rome's Thames), if not always sanguinary in colour, did frequently burst its banks; cf. Gregory Aldrete, *Floods of the Tiber in Ancient Rome* (2007), plus the multi-

authored article 'Climate Change during and after the Roman Empire: Reconstructing the Past from Scientific and Historical Evidence,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 43, 2012, 169-220 (abstract online) – something Al Gore and co should read. Here, I can't do better than quote from Peter Jones's (along with Mary Beard, one of Britain's two top classicists) latest Ancient & Modern column, *Spectator*, 22 Feb 2014:

"Julius Cæsar would have diverted the Tiber away from Rome, behind the Vatican. After a nasty inundation in AD 15, emperor Tiberius established a quango to consider the matter. It suggested diverting lakes and rivers upstream (same is going on here in post-flood Calgary, all talk and no action – BB). The towns affected by this – Florence and others – argued this would result in them being flooded – the proposal was dropped."

Sounds all too familiar. Jones further itemises measures actually taken, e.g. Claudius dredging Rome's Port of Ostia and Hadrian raising the height of the flood-prone Campus Martius – compare wretched British failures over the last few years. He mordantly adds that continued upstream Tiber floods only affected the poor in their rickety high-rise estates – "Toffs had their houses on the hills" to avoid malaria – so "What a chance for urban renewal!"

Doing a bionic leap forward to 1704, that year saw the publication of novelist-politician Daniel Defoe's *The Storm*, prefiguring modern 'Instant Journalism'. It describes the week-long November climatic cataclysm that devastated London (2,000 chimney-stacks blown down, Queen Anne cowering in a St James's cellar, hundreds of Thames boats and ships wrecked) and other regions, above all Bristol, Portsmouth ("looked as if the enemy had sacked it, most miserably torn to pieces") and – where else? – the hapless Somerset Levels where hundreds of people and thousands of animals were drowned.

So, as usual, nothing new under the Sun – or in these cases, clouds.

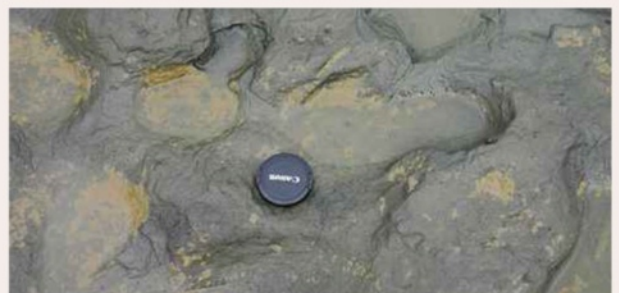
"These sudden, astonishing leaks from the heavens are not understood. Meteorologists study them meteorologically. This seems logical, and is therefore under suspicion" – Fort, p750.

## FOOTPRINTS IN THE MUD OF TIME



Footprints left by ancient humans 800,000 years ago – made by at least one male and several smaller people believed to be females and children – were found last May in ancient estuary mud (now soft sedimentary rock) at Happisburgh in Norfolk, making them the earliest footprints found in Europe. "They are clearly a family group rather than a hunting party," said Nick Ashton of the British Museum, leader of the research team. The only older footprints found so far are at Laetoli in Tanzania, at about 3.5 million years old, and at Ileret and Koobi Fora in Kenya at about 1.5 million years – although one found in sedimentary rock at Egypt's Siwa oasis in 2007 was said to be two million years old or possibly older (FT239:20). The previous oldest footprints in Britain were a mere 7,500 years old. The Happisburgh discovery came at an archaeological site that has yielded stone tools and fossil bones, including mammoth remains. At the time, Britain was still connected to continental Europe by land and the site would have been on the banks of an estuary several miles inland. The 49 prints were found at low tide when waves washed away much of the beach sand to expose the silt below. The surface needed to be recorded as quickly as possible with 3-D scans and images before the sea eroded it away – which happened within a fortnight.

The researchers estimated that the height of the ancient humans who left the prints varied from about 2ft 11in to 5ft 7in (90cm–1.7m), not far off the height of modern humans. They were dated at 800,000 years old partly on the basis of the site's geological position beneath ancient glacial deposits, but also because associated fossils come from extinct types of mammoth and horse and early forms of vole that were alive at that time. They may have been related to people of a similar period found in Atapuerca in Spain, assigned to the species *Homo antecessor*, or Pioneer Man, said Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum in London. "These people were of a similar height to ourselves and were fully bipedal," he said. *Homo antecessor* apparently became extinct in Europe 600,000 years ago and was perhaps replaced by the species *Homo heidelbergensis*, followed by the Neanderthals from about 400,000 years ago, and eventually modern humans some 40,000 years ago. However, the story of early human development is highly speculative and constantly modified. [AFP] *D.Telegraph*, 8 Feb 2014.



## STOP ALL THE CLOCKS

Tales of timepieces that stop working at the moment their owners give up the ghost...

A church clock maintained for almost 30 years by a doctor and local landowner stopped at the exact time of his death. Dr John Farrer climbed the narrow stone spiralled stairs of the St James's Church clock tower in Clapham, North Yorkshire, every week. He died at home aged 92 on New Year's Day. His son, also called Dr John Farrer, glanced at his watch as his father slipped away – and later realised the church clock also stopped at exactly the same time. Dr Farrer said: "The clock stopped literally to the minute of dad's death. As a family doctor I'm used to looking at my watch because sometimes it can be critical for the death certificate. It was just habit that I did it as we knew he was going to die. He was having palliative treatment, but I realised he had stopped breathing and I read the time on my watch as 8.15am. It was only later when I spoke to two different people in the village that we realised the clock had stopped at the same time."

Dr Farrer Sr was born in Sydney, Australia, in 1921 and took over the 10,000-acre Ingleborough family estate in November 1953, following the death of his uncle Roland. Although St James's Church is not part of the estate, it was rebuilt around 150 years ago using Farrer family money. "My father had maintained [the clock] for 30 years but it eventually became too much for him and he reluctantly had to hand over the responsibility," said Dr Farrer Jr. "It's the focus of the village and because the village is small enough to hear the clock chime it's a real time-keeper. It was very close to my dad's heart." The clock was restarted following Dr Farrer's funeral. *dailymail.co.uk, 9 Feb 2014*

- Clocks and watches were the first complex machines to feature in the domestic environment and, as Lyall Watson says in *The Nature of Things* (1970), they "have had the time and the opportunity to insinuate themselves very deeply into our lives." The old



ABOVE LEFT: The church clock of St James's Church, Clapham, North Yorkshire. ABOVE RIGHT: Henry VIII's 'Clock of Death' at Hampton Court.



tune by Henry Clay Work about a grandfather clock that ran for 90 years "days without numbering" and "stopped short, never to go again, when the old man died" expresses a common motif in folklore.

- One of the earliest examples is the "The Clock of Death", now housed at Hampton Court Palace. Made in 1540 for Henry VIII, it allegedly stopped when he died in 1547 and six years later on the death of his son Edward VI. In 1619 it stopped in mid-strike at the instant when Anne of Denmark, queen consort of James I, passed away.

- Pope Paul VI had a treasured alarm clock that had been with him since 1923, when he was a Vatican diplomat in Poland. He was in the habit of setting it to wake him at 6am each morning. At the moment of his death in 1978, the alarm sounded.

- Iris Bentley recalled the morning in 1953 when her brother Derek was executed in Wandsworth Prison. She sat with her parents in their front room, listening to the clock on the mantelpiece. "My mum had been sedated," she said. "Dad was cuddling my little brother Denis and me. We knew there was nothing else we could do. The

### "The clock stopped literally to the minute of my dad's death"

clock stopped ticking at 9am. It has never started up since." Derek Bentley was hanged at 9am that morning.

- Walter Sawchuck ran a fish and chip shop and a grocers in Haddington, Lothian, in Scotland. In 1970 he bought two small electric wall clocks from a stallholder for £1.50 and jokingly asked for a guarantee. The stallholder told him: "I promise these clocks will never break down as long as you are in business." Five years later, he sold the chip shop, and the day he handed it over the clock in the shop burned itself out. Five years after that, he sold the other shop and the second clock broke down. *Sunday Telegraph, 31 Oct 1999.*

- CN Satterthwaite from Solihull, West Midlands, wrote to *FT* in 1997 to describe some anomalous clock activity. His mother had died suddenly from a heart attack one

afternoon in 1985. Ten days later, he went to his parents' house for the wake and noticed that the carriage clock on the mantelpiece had stopped at 3.30, the time of the funeral and the exact time of his mother's death. It had been on the mantelpiece for 40 years and had never broken down.

The clock remained stuck at 3.30 for five years until one afternoon, sitting with his father, he noticed it had moved to 10.30. His father said he had cleaned it that morning and must have freed the jammed mechanism; however, it moved no more. The next morning, our correspondent's father went shopping, fell down and died from a heart attack at 10.30am. The clock never went again. **(FT103:51).**

- Tony Percuoco, chef of a restaurant on the Gold Coast in Queensland, was given a watch by his father Mario, which he kept in a drawer and wound up just once a year. Mario Percuoco died on the Gold Coast at 5pm on 7 June 2004, aged 80. Twelve hours earlier, in Naples, his brother Giuseppe, 90, passed away. Remembering the gift from his father a day or two later, Tony fetched the watch. The hands had stopped at 5 o'clock. *(Gold Coast) Weekend Bulletin, 19-20 June 2004.*

See also "Grandma's clock" on p71.

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# ARCHAEOLOGY

Our archaeological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL SIEVEKING**, whose attention has been grabbed by an early portrayal of a roo-like creature, the earliest Buddhist shrine, curious grave goods and Drake's Canadian adventure



ABOVE: A 'roo (or another creature with long feet) in a 400-year-old manuscript

## 16TH CENTURY 'KANGAROO' MANUSCRIPT

A tiny drawing of an apparent kangaroo in a Portuguese manuscript dated between 1580 and 1620 could rewrite Australian history. The pocket-sized manuscript, known as a processional, acquired from a rare book dealer in Portugal by Les Enluminures Gallery in New York, shows a sketch of an apparent kangaroo ("canguru" in Portuguese) nestled inside a capital letter D. It has led researchers to believe images of the marsupial were already being circulated by the time the Dutch ship *Duyfken* – thought to have been the first European vessel to visit Australia – landed in 1606. Historian Peter Trickett, author of *Beyond Capricorn*, has long argued that a Portuguese maritime expedition first mapped the coast of Australia in 1521–22.

"A kangaroo or a wallaby in a manuscript dated this early is proof that the artist of this manuscript had either been in Australia, or even more interestingly, that travellers' reports and drawings of the interesting animals found in this new world were already available in Portugal," said Les Enluminures researcher Laura Light. "Portugal was extremely secretive about her trade routes during this period, explaining why their presence there wasn't widely known." (A further obstacle to research is that many Portuguese state records were destroyed in the

Lisbon earthquake of 1755.)

Dr Martin Woods, curator of maps at the National Library of Australia, was more cautious. "The likeness of the animal to a kangaroo or wallaby is clear enough," he said, "but then it could be another animal in south-east Asia, like any number of deer species, some of which stand on their hind legs to feed off high branches. For now, unfortunately the appearance of a long-eared big-footed animal in a manuscript doesn't really add much."

Also entwined in letters of the text are two male figures adorned in tribal dress, baring naked torsos and crowns of leaves, which Ms Light said could be Aborigines. John Gascoigne, Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, pointed out that the latest date for the manuscript, 1620, "would

accommodate the arrival of Willen Janszoon in the *Duyfken* in northern Australia in 1606." He also speculated the images could come from a 1526 trip to Papua. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 Jan 2014.

## BUDDHA'S BIRTHPLACE

Excavations in the Maya Devi Temple at Lumbini, Nepal, long identified as the birthplace of the Buddha, have uncovered the "earliest ever Buddhist shrine" – the remains of a previously unknown sixth-century BC timber structure under a series of brick temples, dated by using a combination of radiocarbon and optically stimulated luminescence techniques. The structure contains an open space in the centre that chimes with the nativity story of Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha. Until now, the earliest archaeological evidence of Buddhist structures at Lumbini dated no earlier than the third century BC, the time of the patronage of the Emperor Asoka, who promoted the spread of Buddhism from present-day Afghanistan to Bangladesh. Lost and overgrown by jungle in the mediæval period, ancient Lumbini was rediscovered in 1896 and identified by an inscription on a third-century BC sandstone pillar documenting a visit by Asoka to the site of the Buddha's birth as well as the site's name – Lumbini. It is once again a living shrine: the

archaeologists worked alongside meditating monks, nuns and pilgrims.

Buddhist tradition records that Queen Maya Devi, the mother of the Buddha, gave birth to him while holding on to the branch of a tree within the Lumbini Garden. Geoarchaeological research has revealed the presence of ancient tree roots within the earliest temple's central void, while subsequent brick temples were arranged around this space, which was unroofed. The latest discoveries suggest that the Buddha was born in the sixth century BC rather than the fourth century BC, a dating recently favoured by some scholars. Buddhists in Nepal and Sri Lanka, however, have always believed that the sage was born around 623 BC. Of course it is possible that the ancient tree shrine was built by pre-Buddhist believers, but Prof Robin Coningham of Durham University, co-director of the excavation, said that if the Buddhists had appropriated the tree shrine from non-Buddhists, the site would not have survived relatively unscathed. "Also, the inscriptions at Bodhi Gaya reveal a thriving culture of tree worship, which suggests continuity," he added.

Lumbini is one of the key sites associated with the life of the Buddha – the others being Bodhi Gaya, where he became enlightened; Sarnath, where he first preached; and Kusinagara, where he departed this life. At his



ABOVE: Inside the Maya Devi Temple in Lumbini, Nepal, one of the four most sacred places in Buddhism



## 173. YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU



### The myth

It's the poster that killed a generation of young men. In 1914, the image of Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, pointing directly at the viewer and demanding of him a patriotic sacrifice, helped to fool thousands of naïve British youths into volunteering to fight in World War I.

### The "truth"

Current revisionist campaigns notwithstanding, no serious person would deny that the Great War was an exercise in profit accumulation and inter-empire rivalry, built on the systematic murder and maiming of millions. But the Kitchener poster played no part in promoting the slaughter, for the simple reason that it didn't appear as a poster until after the war. Although Kitchener's face did appear on recruitment posters, art historian James Taylor says there is no evidence of the pointing portrait ever being employed in this way. The image was originally used on the cover of *London Opinion* magazine (5 Sept 1914). The poster does not exist in the official archives, nor in thousands of contemporary photographs studied by Taylor. The myth apparently began when the original magazine artwork was acquired by the Imperial War Museum in 1917, and mis-catalogued as a poster.

### Sources

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<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/419446/Lord-Kitchener-Your-country-needs-you-poster-never-used-to-recruit-troops-academic-says>

### Disclaimer

Can this possibly be right? It would be the most extraordinary example of national false memory on record, surely, if we've all been so fundamentally wrong about the (very recent) history of what is arguably the most famous poster of all time. Entrenched positions are forbidden at FT, so I look forward to reading your debunks, rebunks, doubts and endorsements on the letters pages.

### Mythchaser

A reader wants to know if it's true (or if in theory it could be true) that human bodies are decomposing more slowly than they used to, because the modern diet contains so many artificial preservatives. I do find myself wondering about our readers' private lives, sometimes...



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passing at the age of 80, the Buddha is recorded as having recommended that all Buddhists visit Lumbini. The shrine was still popular in the middle of the first millennium AD and was recorded by Chinese pilgrims as having a shrine beside a tree. *sciencedaily.com*, 25 Nov; *BBC News*, 26 Nov; *Antiquity*, Dec 2013; [AFP] 5 Jan 2014.

• Last December, a gold urn said to contain relics of the Buddha was stolen from a mountain shrine in Cambodia, 25 miles (40km) outside Phnom Penh. It was recovered from a house in the southern province of Takeo on 6 February. Several Asian countries possess relics believed to come from the body of the Buddha, and the stolen urn holds great religious and cultural significance for Cambodia. The relics were given to the late King Norodom Sihanouk in 1957 by Sri Lanka to commemorate the 2,500 anniversary of the Buddha's birth – so the donors obviously believed he was born in 543 BC, which fits the latest discoveries in Nepal. *Guardian*, 8 Feb 2014.

### GRAVE DISCOVERIES

Fifteen early Bronze Age graves in Geitzendorf, north-east of Vienna, include one that contains the bones of a woman aged between 45 and 60, along with an anvil, hammers, flint chisels and some small pieces of dress jewellery, including studs and rings. Ernst Laueremann, director of the prehistory department at Austria's Museum of Ancient History, says that the find shows the woman was a metal worker, which contradicts the archaeological consensus about the division of labour in prehistoric times. "It was normal in those days for a person to be buried with the items that were part of their working lives," said Dr Laueremann. British archaeologist Mike Pitts was sceptical: "Sometimes

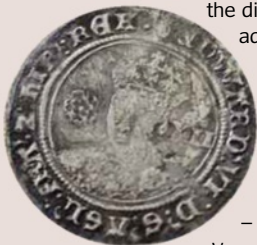
the objects could relate to the individual's profession but they could equally be there because they looked good or were put into the grave by relatives and didn't belong to the individual." *D.Mail*, 4 Oct 2014.

• Humans have been decorating graves with flowers for almost 14,000 years. At a burial spot in Israel known as Raqefet Cave, Professor Dani Nadel, an archaeologist at Haifa University, and his team have used radio-carbon dating on the lining of tombs containing 29 skeletons, with four containing plant impressions identified as the stems of sage, mint and figwort. *D.Telegraph*, 2 July 2013.

### DRAKE IN CANADA?

Last December, metal-detector hobbyist Bruce Campbell discovered an English silver shilling, minted between 1551 and 1553 during the reign of Edward VI, buried in clay on a Vancouver Island shoreline. This has rekindled interest in a controversial theory that Sir Francis Drake made a secret voyage to Canada's Pacific Coast in 1579 – two centuries before Spanish sailors and Capt. James Cook made their famous "first" European visits to the future British Columbia in the 1770s.

Former British Columbia cabinet minister Samuel Bawlf, author of *The Secret Voyage of Sir Francis Drake* (2003), says the discovery of the coin adds to the substantial documentary evidence that Drake – well known to have reached California during his 1579 expedition – actually sailed to Vancouver Island and well beyond, but was ordered by Elizabeth I to hide the true extent of his northward travels to protect England's strategic interests in the New World. Royal British Columbia Museum curator Grant Keddie noted that this is the third 16th century coin found along the B.C. coast. (*Toronto National Post*, 12 Jan 2014.





## NECROLOG

This month, we remember the award-winning writer who adopted the aquatic ape hypothesis, wrote an accidental best-seller and influenced contemporary feminist narratives

### ELAINE MORGAN

From a poverty-stricken upbringing in the Welsh valleys, Elaine Morgan became a prolific, prize-winning television writer. Her script for a *Horizon* documentary about Joey Deacon, the disabled fundraiser, won her the Prix Italia in 1975; and in 1979 her serialisation of Vera Brittain's World War I memoir, *Testament of Youth*, won her the Royal Television Society's writer of the year award. Her other television credits included an adaptation of *How Green Was My Valley* (1975), *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George* (1981) and episodes of *Dr Finlay's Casebook*. In 2005 she published *Pinker's List*, a spirited demolition of the theories of the academic Steven Pinker.

Morgan's interest for fortoans, however, is her championing of the aquatic ape hypothesis of human evolution. An avid reader of popular science books, she grew increasingly irritated by theories, propounded by writers such as Robert Ardrey (*Territorial Imperative*, 1966) and Desmond Morris (*The Naked Ape*, 1967), which proposed that human evolution was driven by the needs of males chasing game on the savannah. Bipedalism increased field of vision and freed up hands to use tools. "The theme... was that people are different from apes because apes' ancestors stayed in the trees and our own ancestors went out onto the plain and became hunters," she recalled. "They stood up on two legs to run faster, they became naked because the running overheated them. Females were regarded chiefly as one of the scarce resources for the males to fight over. If they differed from the males in any way, that was to make themselves more sexually attractive."

Why, Morgan wondered, did human females alone have to evolve special features to coax the males to desire them, when "in every other species... the males take what they are offered in the way of pulchritude, and they like it"? And if males lost their body hair to allow them to cool down, why did the females become even more hairless when they would



have needed to keep warm looking after the children during the chilly tropical nights? Another point she might have made is that deer and antelope kept their fur and their quadrupedal ways on the savannah.

Morgan decided to take on the scientific consensus after reading a 1960 article by Sir Alister Hardy, Professor of Marine Biology at Oxford, propounding an "aquatic ape hypothesis" for human evolution. Hardy speculated that perhaps our pre-human ancestors learned to walk upright and gained the capacity for speech in the relative safety of the water's edge rather than in the harsh heat of the African savannah. He argued that our ancestors' physiology changed dramatically when a population of woodland apes became isolated on a large island around what is now Ethiopia and were forced to adapt to a marine environment: they lost the bulk of their body hair, the remaining strands helping to streamline their bodies as they swam; they developed a more upright posture, supported by the water; their fingertips grew more sensitive as they felt around for food; they grew a layer of subcutaneous fat – found only in other aquatic mammals

– to keep themselves insulated. The ratio of subcutaneous fat to bodyweight in humans is 10 times that of other primates. From an evolutionary point of view, human blubber would give us little advantage if we were land hunters, but would be eminently useful if we lived beside and in the sea.

Hardy's hypothesis had been largely forgotten by the time Morgan wrote *The Descent of Woman* (1972). She added a few touches of her own, including the claim that women had grown larger breasts than their ape sisters to give their offspring something to cling on to. She reserved her most closely argued

strictures for Freud, whom she saw as a major barrier to women's emancipation. Coming hot on the heels of Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, *The Descent of Woman* chimed perfectly with the feminist narrative of the time. Human ancestors were referred to as "she" and the book dwelt in detail on such conundrums as the female orgasm and why a man's penis is bigger than a gorilla's.

It was partly luck that made *The Descent of Woman* an international bestseller. Just as Morgan was setting out for America to promote the book, the US Book of the Month Club selectors found themselves in a quandary. They had opted for Clifford Irving's biography of Howard Hughes, but at the last minute it emerged that Irving had invented the whole thing. At short notice the selectors instead decided to fall back on a book by a "52-year-old Welsh housewife". As a result the few interviews expanded into a 10-day coast-to-coast tour, and she became something of a celebrity.

*The Descent of Woman* was translated into 25 languages. Morgan was not surprised when it was rubbished by scientists, admitting that "the impulse to write

was purely politically motivated"; but the positive response from feminists persuaded her to attempt to give the theory a more scientific gloss, and she went on to publish several more books on evolutionary theory, including *The Aquatic Ape* (1982), *The Scars of Evolution* (1990), *The Descent of the Child* (1994), *The Aquatic Ape Hypothesis* (1997), and *The Naked Darwinist* (2008). The title page of the last of these featured a quotation from the philosopher Daniel Dennett: "During the last few years, when I have found myself in the company of distinguished biologists, evolutionary theorists, palaeoanthropologists and other experts, I have often asked them just to tell me, please, exactly why Elaine Morgan must be wrong about the aquatic theory. I haven't yet had a reply worth mentioning."

In 1995, Professor Phillip Tobias, one of the most eminent proponents of savannah-driven evolution, announced in a lecture that he had been mistaken. Despite some sceptics launching a parody campaign online to argue humans evolved from "space monkeys", the aquatic ape hypothesis has acquired some scientific currency in recent years following the discovery of fossils indicating that humans became bipedal before the savannah developed. Having devoted only two pages to Hardy's ideas in *The Naked Ape*, Desmond Morris subsequently said that he believed an aquatic phase of human development was "highly likely". Articles favouring Hardy and Morgan have appeared in *New Scientist*, the *Observer* and *BBC Wildlife Magazine*. The aquatic hypothesis also had an influence on Margaret Drabble's novel *The Sea Lady* (2006). However, most scientists remain sceptical, pointing out that despite the fact that aquatic margins provide almost perfect conditions for fossil formation, there is no fossil evidence to support the theory. Prof Hardy had an answer for this, suggesting the aquatic apes' remains were swept out to sea.

In May 2013, scientists gathered



at a London hotel to discuss the aquatic ape hypothesis – rebranded by some the “waterside theory” to make it more acceptable. Sir David Attenborough, who attended, said: “It is an extremely interesting idea and it helps explain many puzzling features of the human anatomy.” For example: tail loss, vertical spine, dorsal shoulder blades, wide thorax and pelvis – and a diet sourced from the sea rather than the land, which would have provided the Omega-3 oils from fish that our brains needed to out-grow those of other mammals, giving us a crucial edge over our primate cousins. “Omega-3 boosts brain growth in mammals,” said Prof Michael Crawford, director of the Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition at Imperial College London. “That is why a dolphin has a much bigger brain than a zebra, though they have roughly the same body sizes.”

The retention of head hair is explained as a protection from temperature extremes for the scalp, which would have often protruded above the water. If you were to drop a baby orang-utan in water, it would sink to the bottom. A human baby, on the other hand, will close its larynx and automatically paddle its arms and legs. “It is the typical response for a baby dolphin in the sea,” said Prof Crawford.

Our protruding noses also distinguish us from other primates, and possibly developed by natural selection for foraging in shallow waters. Outward-facing nostrils would be a hindrance to submersion in water for long periods. By having nostrils face the ground, we can bob underwater without water entering the airways – air trapped in the nose prevents water entering. Our noses also seem shaped for swimming forwards at speed, pushing the water away and keeping it out of our nostrils. What’s more, our large sinuses are beneficial to aquatic living. The spaces in the skull between our noses, cheeks and foreheads can act as buoyancy aids that help to keep our heads above water. By contrast, skulls of other primates lack such large air pockets. Still, without direct evidence of some kind, the aquatic ape hypothesis remains a Just So story.

*Elaine Floyd, afterwards Morgan, screenwriter and feminist, born Hopkinstown, near Pontypridd, Wales 7 Nov 1920; died 12 July 2013, aged 92.*

## STRANGE DEATHS

### UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



**A python strangled security guard Ambar Arianto Mulyo, 59, in front of terrified onlookers outside the luxury Hyatt hotel on the Indonesian resort island of Bali around 3am on Christmas Day. “It happened so fast,” said Agung Bawa, an assistant security manager at the hotel, in the Sanur area, which was temporarily closed for renovations. “We could not do anything to help him.” Mulyo, who worked at a nearby restaurant, had offered to help capture the 15ft (4.5m)-long snake, which had been spotted several times near the hotel. He managed to secure the snake’s head and tail and put it on his shoulders, but it wrapped itself around his body and strangled him to death before escaping into nearby bushes. Police and wildlife experts were unable to find it. *D.Mail, D.Mirror, 28 Dec 2013.***

An eight-year-old Russian girl was orphaned last September after her entire family was wiped out by deadly gas from rotting potatoes. Maria Chelysheva lost her parents, brother and grandmother who were killed one by one after entering their cellar in Siberia where the potatoes were stored for the winter. Her father Mikhail Chelysahev, 42, a respected law professor, was first to enter the cellar and succumb, followed by his wife Anastasia, 38. Three months later, the same fate befell Olga Izmailova, 34, and three of her friends, who were asked by a farmer in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, to search for good potatoes in heaps of duff ones in his barn. Half an hour later, the farmer found all four dead. (*Sydney*) *D.Telegraph, 5 Sept 2013; Sun, 21 Jan 2014.*

**Two-ton Tanya, an elephant said to have been “angry and upset” after a show in Lizy-sur-Ourcq near Paris on 8 September 2013, used a tarpaulin to cover an electric fence before smashing through two barriers. She fled to the village green, where she knocked down an 84-year-old man playing petanque (a variety of boules) with her trunk and trampled on him. He died later in hospital, while Tanya was recaptured. *D.Mail, Metro, 10 Sept 2013.***

Colin Manvell, 67, a retired geography teacher, former tennis champion and keen wildlife photographer from Havant, Hampshire, travelled to India for a three-week trek. On 19 September, while walking alone in Masinagudi National Park, a tiger reserve in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu, he was trampled to death by an elephant near a

watering hole. He was deaf in one ear and probably didn’t hear the animal approaching him from behind. Attacks by wild elephants have increased in India as their traditional habitats have been steadily encroached upon. *D.Telegraph, D.Mirror, 21 Sept 2013.*

**Frances “Frankie” Warren, 26, an office worker from Thornbury, Gloucestershire, was so upset that her blonde hair looked ginger after a visit to the hairdresser on 29 May 2013 that she drove 80 miles (130km) to Sedgley, West Midlands, walked into woodland and hanged herself from a tree. Police found her body two days later. *Sun, 2 June 2013; D.Telegraph, Sun, Metro, 28 Jan 2014.***

Natasha Scott-Falber, 14, from Caerwent, Monmouthshire, died on Valentine’s Day 2013 of toxic shock syndrome after using tampons for the first time. This led to high fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, dizziness and a rash. The infection is caused when *Staphylococcus aureus* or *Streptococcus* bacteria, which normally live harmlessly on the skin, invade the bloodstream and release toxins. *Mail on Sunday, Sunday Mirror, 17 Nov 2013.*

**Marcus Sweet, 46, collapsed and died in Bristol after eating part of his wife’s homemade curry. He had a spoonful of coconut milk and developed breathing problems. He later suffered a fatal heart attack as part of an allergic reaction. *Sun, 29 Oct 2013.***

John Jackson, 40, died of an enormous caffeine overdose after eating a pack of 12 Hero Instant Energy Mints, unaware that each contains 80mg of caffeine (equivalent to a can of Red Bull). He never drank tea or coffee. His estranged partner found him dead in his flat in Darlaston, West Midlands, in May 2013. Mr Jackson had been a heavy drinker, damaging his liver, which was unable to absorb the stimulant properly. *D.Mirror, D.Mail, 12 Oct 2013.*

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there has been independent confirmation. As sceptic Bob Sheaffer points out: "Hoover obviously has a great knowledge of biology, and the presence of organic molecules in meteorites is uncontroversial... but it would be nice to get feedback from other biologists to [his] claims". Flying Saucery feels this is another example of confirmation bias, or the tendency of people to select information that confirms their beliefs or hypotheses. Displaying our own bias, we will be happy to change our minds as and when NASA announces it has found conclusive evidence of life on Mars, or elsewhere.  
[www.openminds.tv/scientist-believes-evidence-alien-life-mars-destroyed/26012](http://www.openminds.tv/scientist-believes-evidence-alien-life-mars-destroyed/26012)

Convoluted, certainly, and evidence if any were needed that UFO belief can be used to justify any ends, political, religious or social.  
[www.huffingtonpost.com/alejandro-rojas/farrakhan-asks-president\\_b\\_4850196.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alejandro-rojas/farrakhan-asks-president_b_4850196.html)

### WHO IS GULLING WHO

Last month we asked why not one major UFO secret had turned up in the millions of top secret documents leaked by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden (FT312:24). Now an interesting document has turned up on the website of investigative journalist Glenn Greenwald, who is one of the key players in the ongoing Snowden story. It takes the form of a PowerPoint presentation used to train spooks at GCHQ, the British eavesdropping agency, based in Cheltenham. Called 'The Art of Deception: Training For A New Generation Of Online Covert Operations', the slides include three UFO images 'lifted' from the Internet that depict 'daylight discs' over Mexico, USA and Cornwall. GCHQ won't comment on stolen documents but Mark Pilkington, author of *Mirage Men*, believes the truth is much more mundane but no less sinister – for his full report see pp6-7 this issue. He thinks the photographs are, far from being a secret government stash of genuine UFO photographs, part of a presentation designed to train novice spooks in the art of deploying "psychology, deception, illusion, dissimulation, magic, religion and belief" in their intelligence and counter-intelligence operations. This is not a new idea but it is one that Flying Saucery has some time for. As ufologist Nigel Watson points out, one of the three photographs in the GCHQ presentation, a snap taken of a 'UFO' by a tourist on a coastal path near St Austell, Cornwall, in 2011, is almost certainly a seagull (see FT233:30 for a similar photograph, also from the Cornish coast). Watson explains all three shots as being, respectively: "... a hub cap thrown in the air, a deflated Mylar balloon and an out-of-focus seagull taking a poo." Which raises the question of who precisely is gulling whom? What the presentation appears to reveal is that the spooks know that many people *want to believe* in UFOs and their beliefs and perceptions can be manipulated "with just a few contextual nudges".  
Western Daily Press, D. Mail, 10 Feb 2014; <http://miragemen.wordpress.com/2014/02/25/mirage-men-revealed/>

### BARRACK OBAMA IN AREA 51 SAUCER DRAMA

There is still a large and vocal community who believe that world governments are covering up their knowledge of the UFO mystery. Most are just ordinary members of the public who hold this belief because of their interpretation of personal experience or, as we have seen above, scientists convinced that evidence will soon be discovered. It's unusual, then, to find someone like Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan lobbying US President Barack Obama to spill the beans on Area 51. But toward the end of his year-long series of sermons he claimed Obama's 'shadow government', which he believes is controlled by a global elite, has been hiding the existence of UFOs from the public for decades. Even more bizarrely, Farrakhan and his cronies believe in the existence of 'The Mother Wheel', a massive spaceship that he claims remains in orbit around Earth and will eventually rescue Nation of Islam adherents from the planet. Shades of the Christian Rapture there, but Farrakhan believes that only when Obama reveals the truth about Area 51 can the destruction of America by the 'shadow government' be averted. Bonkers? Perhaps.

BELOW: Louis Farrakhan wants Obama to spill the ufological beans.



### LIFE ON MARS?

Maverick scientists occasionally come out of the woodwork in support of the extraterrestrial hypothesis, or variants of the widely held belief that aliens exist. Their claims are often taken very seriously simply because many people would like to believe we are not alone. For instance, astrobiologist Richard Hoover worked at NASA for almost five decades and made a name for himself by publishing scientific papers claiming evidence of extraterrestrial life has been found in meteorites. After leaving NASA he continued research into this possibility but during a recent interview with Lee Spiegel of the *Huffington Post* he announced: "I am absolutely convinced that life is not restricted to the planet Earth because I have found the remains of lifeforms that are absolutely, conclusively extraterrestrial". A bold statement, which he expanded on by talking about an object photographed on Mars by NASA in 2004 (above). This image, believes Hoover, represents a starfish like animal called a crinoid. So far so strange; but then he added conspiratorially that only hours after the image was broadcast the rock was destroyed by the Opportunity Rover. The implication was that NASA is determined to conceal any evidence of life on Mars uncovered by its unmanned expeditions to the red planet. Quite why Hoover should choose to buy into this particular conspiracy theory tells us more about humans than it does about Martians. The fact that Hoover chose to present his findings via a lecture at the 2014 International UFO Congress in Arizona may provide a clue. Just because a qualified professional makes a case for something anomalous that does not mean we should accept it until

NASA

GETTY IMAGES

## MY DOG SAW A UFO

On 16 February 2014, a man in the small Missouri town of Rolla reported that his dog had just seen a UFO. They were out walking that evening when the man noticed that the animal was gazing upward rather than sniffing the ground in more usual doggy fashion. Following its gaze, the witness reports seeing a long object with 'windows' on the edge that crossed the sky, made a sharp left turn and disappeared. During the sighting the 'craft' was apparently emitting a humming/buzzing sound.

So what happened in this interesting new case? Did the dog's superior hearing ability (canines can detect sounds outside the normal human range) pick up the 'UFO noise' before the witness? Or did the dog simply 'see' the UFO first? Or, might there be another factor that makes an animal more likely to be aware of the presence of something strange in the sky before its human companion, such as detection of electrical fields or chemicals in the atmosphere?

Of course, weird, flying things would presumably seem peculiar or frightening to any creatures that can perceive them. But, given that Fido will not typically read *Fortean Times*, dogs seem free of the cultural context within which humans are bound to perceive strange lights in the sky: it is unlikely that dogs would see a UFO in 'alien' terms. Therefore, we might reasonably conclude that if a dog sees something in the sky then that something was real, as opposed to hallucinatory.

Unfortunately, that is not quite correct, because we know that dogs dream (you only need to live with one to see that happening). They can also suffer neurological problems and even epileptic seizures that are believed to include images of things not really there. So a dog is potentially prone to 'seeing things', just like us. Though if a dog and a human both appear to see things at once then we can at least anticipate there is some common cause.

Dogs have also been widely cited as being able to detect ghosts around the house, with the resultant fear – running hiding in the corner or staring at one spot for ages – regularly claimed in cases as the basis for belief that a haunting may be taking place. This animal behaviour, in my view, often leads the humans in the house to then look out for something they might not otherwise have noticed (a door opening on its own, for instance) and presuming it to be further proof of the unseen spectre in their midst. However, once you accept that these animals may just be dreaming, or hallucinating, or simply hearing a mouse (inaudible to you), then the reported events remain noteworthy – but a need for caution also becomes evident.

I do not rule out the option that animals can 'see' ghosts. Brian Vike of the Canadian group HBCC UFO Research reports his own experience when he and his mother were with their dog at the reputedly haunted Oak Bay Golf Course in Victoria, BC, late one night. The dog was asleep in the back of their car when it woke up with a start and stared at the course, growling at something over the links. The two



## Dogs have been widely cited as being able to detect ghosts

humans could now see a white mist – not like any normal fog they had seen before. It was forming and thickening in the same spot – and they understandably made a rapid exit.

A chance passer-by might have interpreted this phenomenon as a ghost or a UFO, depending upon circumstance; but all we can really say is that it was an unusual effect of unknown origin. What matters is that animal and human seemingly became aware of this 'event' in their own way more or less at the same time – suggesting that it was in some respect physically real.

Another example of the ambiguity of interpretation comes from plant scientist Dr Michele Clare in Yorkshire who reported to me a case from Rotherham that occurred to a witness as a youth in 1937. He was with his dog at dusk, in an area near some old mines, when a figure emerged from the gloom, running full pelt down a slope and straight through a fence as if it were not there. Passing close by the boy and heading for a railway line, the 'thing' was no more than 5ft (1.5m) tall with claw-like hands and a pointed head. The witness had no difficulty concluding that, in his view, it was the Devil! His dog, on the other hand, had only one thought – to run away as fast as possible. This fear and flight mechanism is common in such cases.

We cannot know what the dog thought it just saw (the doggy devil, perhaps?), but we do know that if the encounter had taken place

decades later it is more than probable that this figure would have been interpreted as alien in origin, given a changed cultural background. However, it once again seems that human and animal perceived something not quite right about this 'apparition' and reacted to it instinctively.

In a UFO context, this case can be compared with the events of 24 February 1975, when postman Thomas Meyer was walking with his dog on Sizewell Beach in Suffolk at 6.55 pm. They saw a strange greenish/yellow "pumpkin" glowing "like a TV screen" as it headed in off the North Sea to hover just feet above the beach. It gave off a pungent odour likened to acid drops (maybe some chemical associated with electrolysis of sea water?). Poor Thomas was badly affected by proximity to this thing, feeling a glowing heat radiating from it that left him so ill that he had to take a lot of time off work. There was also reported TV interference in the nearby town of Leiston during these events – again implying some powerful energy emission from the UFO. The physics and chemistry of this encounter pose some intriguing questions.

As for the dog, it saw the object and reacted with immediate panic, fleeing as fast as possible towards home, being found – still in distress – nearly a mile away.

If you look back at my column in FT299 you will find some interesting cases and new research by physicists into how humans can 'sense' the approach of storms from factors such as pressure changes and ionisation of the atmosphere, and how this ionisation creates glows in the air that could be perceived as UFOs. The sense of apprehension felt in these cases appears to occur when electrochemical changes occur in susceptible people (often ones prone to migraine attacks).

So here we have a UFO that appears to be a physically real phenomenon that glows strangely, affects the atmosphere, creates strange smells and induces physiological radiation effects on humans and dogs – as well as triggering extreme states of distress. This matches modern scientific knowledge and is something we could and should be able to analyse. Here, the reaction of dogs to such phenomena offers a useful added insight.

On 20 February 2014 a study was published in *Current Biology* ("Voice Sensitive regions in the dog and human brain") by a team of scientists led by Dr Attila Andics of the MTA ELTE research organisation in Budapest. They applied magnetic resonance scans to both human and dogs to study how their brains reacted when subjected to various auditory stimuli.

The results argue that humans and canines create similar 'social environments' and react to emissions of this sort in a comparable manner – although dogs do have enhanced capabilities in this regard. Whilst reactions to other possible ways in which UFOs might trigger a response in a witness (or dog) have yet to be studied, this latest research suggests that the reactions of both humans and dogs to the presence of UFOs like those mentioned above makes scientific sense.

# BLASTS FROM THE PAST

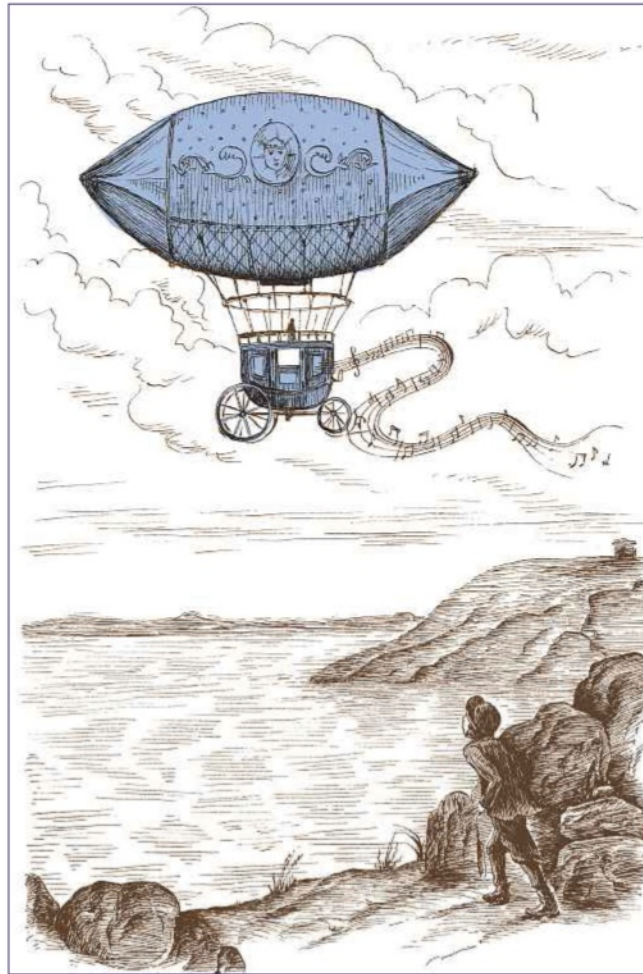
FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

## 50 THE TENNESSEE AERONAUT FLAP OF 1907

THEO PAIJMANS on the German-speaking, deeply religious balloonists who invaded the American South

The day was 20 April 1907. Walter Stephenson was out training his pair of bloodhounds near the Dikeman Spring in the vicinity of Dickson, Tennessee. Stephenson had just finished a long chase with his dogs and sat down on a log to rest, when things got weird:

*He espied upon the eastern horizon a speck, which he took to be a large kite. He paid little attention to the object, and shifted his gaze temporarily to other scenes. Soon his attention was attracted to a whirring noise, and looking upward, he saw that the speck which he had a few moments before discovered in the eastern sky had approached almost directly over him, and that the object was in reality a huge balloon, but of a pattern and appearance he had never in his life before seen. He discovered that the floating mass was rapidly approaching the earth. Of a sudden, the observer says, strains of music calculated to charm the spheres burst from the balloon, which circled round and round and finally landed at Dikeman Springs. A number of strange people emerged from the car, which was closely curtained with a substance that fairly glistened in the sunshine that temporarily burst through the obscuring clouds, and all going to the big, flowing spring, knelt by it in a supplicating attitude and so remained for a minute or more. Mr Stephenson says that while this was going on he sat quietly within speaking distance, and when the strange visitors arose to their feet and he supposed their devotional exercises were over, he asked if he might be permitted to inquire who they were, and what their mission? He said that instantly a visard was lifted by one of the company and the benign face of a lady showed from underneath and said in German: 'Haben sie Beten?' (did you pray?) and instantly all were aboard, the airship rose, circled about for a minute or more, and was gone in a westerly direction.*



“A number of strange people emerged from the car, and all going to the spring knelt by it in a supplicating attitude and so remained for a minute or more”

*Mr Stephenson says that the incident left an impression upon him that he can never forget, and while he knows that it was some human invention, it looked and the music sounded more like that of angels than of mortals.<sup>1</sup>*

The strange account was widely republished in a number of American newspapers.<sup>2</sup>

I found the above story quite a few years ago. Since then, editions of the *Nashville*

*American*, where the story appeared first, have been digitised and are available online. Interested in any follow-up, I decided to check up on the story, and to my surprise I found that Stephenson had not been the only person claiming to have had a close encounter with the mysterious airship occupants. His was only the first of a string of similar stories.

A day after Stephenson's encounter, a Mr WA Smith,

described as a respected farmer living four miles from the town of Bold Springs, told how he left for town that Saturday morning at around 3.30am. He was just on his way when he heard strains of music. Shrugging it off, thinking that perhaps a wedding must be taking place, he then noticed that the music came from above. He looked up and “was amazed to see a large balloon of unusual size and strange pattern. Suspended from the balloon was a large closed car from within which the music appeared to come. The car was strung with electric lights, and a brilliant searchlight was carried at the front. No machinery or mechanism appeared in view, and the motive power could not even be surmised.”

The balloon directed its searchlight to a large spring, heading directly toward it. Finally the balloon descended slowly to the ground, about 30ft (9m) from the edge of the spring. Smith left his horse tied to a tree and went for a closer look. “As he came close he noted a peculiar party of queer-looking persons in strange garb kneeling beside the spring, apparently engaged in silent prayer.” Smith decided not to make contact, but as the group returned to their aerial craft, one of them pointed to him uttering some words that Smith could not understand. In closing, the *Nashville American* remarked: “In justice to Mr Smith it should be stated that his story was told here Saturday afternoon, nearly 16 hours before the *Sunday American* reached town. In *Sunday's American* appeared a story from Dickson, Tenn., in the adjoining county, chronicling the appearance of a similar air craft, and crediting the strange visitors with speaking German.”<sup>3</sup>

A day later, the *Nashville American* published the account of Herman Schubert, who with his family lived at the edge of the town of Pleasant Spring. He claimed that the mystery aeronauts visited thereabouts

as well. Schubert, who was German, regarded the aeronauts as “merely visitors from what he calls ‘the old country.’” The Schuberts occupied a large farm with a spring, a natural basin 20ft (6m) wide, at the edge of a 40-acre (16ha) wood lot. “The spring is the headwater of a small stream, which, from its rise on the Schubert farm, is known as Schubert Creek.”

Schubert and his 16-year-old son Carl were at the spring-house that Sunday evening. Finishing his work, it was now near dark, Carl sat at the edge of the basin. The old man heard his son calling in a half-frightened tone, so he rushed outside. “At an elevation of several hundred feet the two saw a large airship or balloon; from their account it is impossible to decide which. Suspended from the body of the air machine was a large closed car, very similar to the body of a stage coach, except that it was probably 35ft [10m] long, and had an entrance on either side instead of at the end.”

The airship landed at the edge of the spring and the Schuberts retreated inside the spring-house to witness the scene from there. Twelve to 14 people were seen walking to the spring, “their attitude one of reverence, as though standing on sacred ground, or in a sacred presence.” At the spring the group arranged itself along the edge and knelt, “apparently in silent prayer, being thus engaged for several minutes.” When the strange aeronauts returned to the carriage, the elder Schubert, addressing no one in particular, asked what they were doing and who they were. “The party, with one exception, continued unheeding on the way to the car. Only one of the party took note of Mr Schubert’s request. Turning toward the two this one of the travellers said, without raising the head covering: ‘Sie haben nicht gebeten; Rede uns nicht an,’ which Mr Schubert

says is the German equivalent for ‘Thou hast not prayed; address us not.’ Mr Schubert spoke to them in German, and the spokesman replied, evidently surprised at hearing the tongue; ‘Unsere Wohlfahrt ist noch nicht valledent; in guten Zeit wird die welt alles wissen.’ This, Mr. Schubert says, is German for: ‘Our pilgrimage is not yet completed; the world will know all in time.’ The spokesman then turned and followed his companions into the car, which rose rapidly and took a southerly direction.”<sup>4</sup>

Then mail carrier Asa Hickerson came forward with his own unbelievable encounter, which was published in the *Nashville American* on 28 April. Two days earlier, Hickerson had been delivering the mail. He was descending a steep hill with a little log building named Peabody School at the bottom, when his attention was drawn to “sounds resembling the chanting of some weird, funeral dirge, proceeding seemingly from the tops of the forest trees through which his route winded.” His horse became restless and all his attention was needed to calm the frightened animal. Pausing briefly, Hickerson left his buggy to adjust the harness, when once more the strange sounds were heard, but now much louder; “simultaneously there swooped into plain view a gigantic air craft that gradually and with the ease of a huge bird, settled softly to the ground, some 50 yards [46m] from where Mr Hickerson struggled with his now almost unmanageable roan mare.” A group of “several men” exited “the long car attached to the craft, and forming in single file, resumed their long chant, and proceeded slowly to the mouth of an abandoned oil well at the side of the road.” There the group conducted a strange ritual. Forming a circle around the well, one of them carrying a long staff plunged it three times

in the well after having made “sundry passes in the air” with it. The group then withdrew to the opposite side of the road where the staff, dripping with the oil, was stuck in the moist earth and set alight. “The band then joined hands and again lifting their voices in song, slowly circled round and round the flaming rod, while a small spiral column of black smoke whirled slowly upwards.”

The ceremony finished, the group returned to the airship. Hickerson too wanted to know what was going on. So he asked: “What are you doing here?” The one who had carried the staff replied in sonorous tones “betreue deine sunde und bete!”<sup>5</sup> extending his right hand the meanwhile as if invoking a benediction. The huge vessel then with the poise and grace of an eagle rose slowly until well above the forest and headed in a northeasterly direction and was soon lost to view.”<sup>6</sup>

Printed directly below the account someone named A Mollycoddle from Nashville pointed out how the accounts “caused great interest, and the progress they make will be noted with avidity. A feature of the reports, which has struck me is the seeming partiality they manifest towards liquids, but contrary to precedent they seem to find only water. The brewers should advertise.”<sup>7</sup> The *Nashville American* published nothing more after that date.

It’s difficult to believe that a group of masked German-speaking aeronauts actually flew around Tennessee in a state of religious fervour. The technical capabilities of the airship were beyond what powered flight of that time could achieve, for one thing. There was a German from “the old world” who was test-flying airships at that time, but that was Count Zeppelin, and he did so in Germany. The 1907 newspapers printed

accounts of his attempts as well as those of many others. Were the reports of the close encounters in Tennessee meant as a commentary on the attempts by Zeppelin and the other aeronauts, a social satire on certain local religious affairs or on alcohol abuse by certain persons? Just another tall tale, sly ad campaign for an experiment in proto-science fiction by an unknown hack in the manner of HG Wells’s *War In The Air*, written in 1907 and published a year later?<sup>8</sup> If so, the contexts and cultural markers easily identifiable to readers of the time are now not so easy to place.<sup>9</sup>

The German-speaking religious aeronauts left Tennessee, but five months later, on 16 September 1907, residents in Wenatchee, Washington, were amazed by the sudden appearance of “a balloon” at a height of 900-1,000ft (274-305m). “The sky craft was of the dirigible class, equipped with a long cigar-shaped gas bag, beneath which hung suspended what seemed to be a cabin with propelling mechanism. The flight of the airship was so swift that only a fleeting glimpse of it was afforded the astonished spectators. Some of the more excited in the crowd claim that they distinctly heard strains of music issuing from the cabin of the sky craft.”

A hunter, viewing the object with his field glasses, claimed that three persons were visible “upon the deck of the cabin, two men and a woman of rare beauty.” A fisherman claimed to have seen “a paper tossed from the fleetly flying craft, but that it unfortunately fell in the river and was carried away.” From the town of Omak reports came that “a strange looking airship” had passed over town on 17 September at 7am. “It was headed northwest; thought to be a Japanese war balloon.”<sup>10</sup>

1 ‘Weird Tale From Dickson. Queer Brand Of Liquor Must Be Used In That Country’, *Nashville American*, Tennessee, 21 Apr 1907.

2 Also published in the following newspapers: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Ohio, 25 Apr; *Suburbanite Economist*, Chicago, Illinois, 28 June; *Evening News*, Ada, Oklahoma, 1 July; *Reading Times*, Reading, Pennsylvania,

1 July; *Logan Republican*, Logan, Utah, 7 July; *Wasatch Wave*, Heber City, Utah, 12 July; *Mt. Sterling Advocate*, 17 July; *Elkhart Truth*, Elkhart, Indiana, 31 July 1907.

3 ‘Kneel In Prayer Beside Spring. Humphrey’s County Man Locates New Brand Of Dope And Sees Things’, *Nashville American*, Tennessee, 22 Apr 1907.

4 ‘Aeronauts At

Pleasant Spring. Mysterious German Air Travellers Encountered By Farmer And His Son’, *Nashville American*, Tennessee, 23 Apr 1907.

5 The newspaper does not give a translation from German: “Repent your sin and pray!”

6 ‘Blazing Staff Lights Up Scene. Dutch Aeronauts In Dickson County Frighten Horse Of Rural Mail Carrier’, *Nashville American*,

Tennessee, 28 Apr 1907.

7 ‘What They Are Looking For’, *Nashville American*, Tennessee, 28 Apr 1907.

8 In Wells’s *War In The Air* the evil German empire plans a surprise attack on America with airships and other flying machines.

9 The searchlights and the female passenger remind one of the 1896-1897 airship

accounts. The German language cropped up half a century later with the claims of early contactee Reinhold Schmidt, who was coincidentally born in 1897 of German-American parents. Schmidt claimed to have been briefly aboard a cigar-shaped object resting in a field in the neighbourhood of Kearney, Nebraska, on 5 November 1957. The UFO was occupied

by human-looking male and female ufonauts speaking high German. Schmidt’s dubious account has decidedly religious overtones as well.

10 ‘Balloon Sails Over The City. Strange Aerial Craft Startles the populace-Airship Had Music and Beautiful Woman’, *Wenatchee Daily World*, Wenatchee, Washington, 17 Sep 1907.

# WHAT POSSESSED US?

Forty years after its UK release, is *The Exorcist* still the scariest movie of all time? Did its first audiences really faint in the aisles and vomit on the carpets? **DR LEO RUICKBIE** investigates our four-decade obsession with possession.



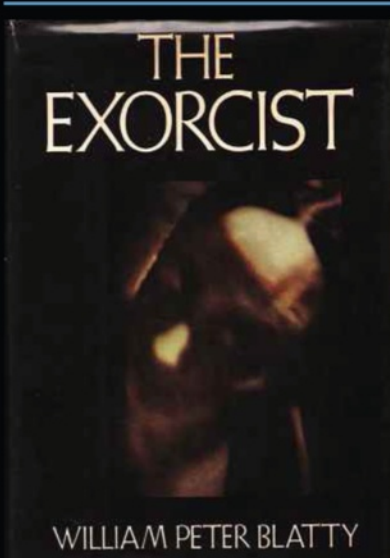
They found the body lying underneath an open second-floor window at Devonport Naval Barracks. A young man, no more than a boy, lying in the careless disarray of the dead. He was quickly

identified as Christopher Gengam, a 16-year-old naval rating who had once sailed with Prince Charles on the frigate *HMS Jupiter*.<sup>1</sup>

At the inquest, Able Seaman Clive Smith, then 19, described how they had gone to see the film *The Exorcist* together two days earlier. The next morning, a shaken Gengam had told Smith that he had had “a bit of a nightmare”. DCI Edward Newman said that it would have been “impossible” for anyone to fall accidentally out of the window. Pathologist Dr Charles Hunt found a blood alcohol level at the legal limit for driving. Gengam, he suggested, had “just let himself fall rather than jumped”.

Gengam’s death was not an isolated case. Rainer Hertrampf, 19, blew his brains out after watching *The Exorcist* when it was released in West Germany in September 1974. When, after undergoing a failed exorcism in October that year, Michael Taylor tore his wife’s face to pieces with his bare hands, killing her in the process, *The Exorcist* resurfaced to take the blame (see p36). After he killed

## AUDIENCES QUEUED FOR UP TO FOUR HOURS IN THE RAIN



Sandra Simpson, also in October, 17-year-old Nicholas Bell claimed that he had become possessed after seeing the film.

Had *The Exorcist* claimed these lives? Was it that terrifying?

### “WIPING UP THE VOMIT”

“Contains very strong language, strong threat and supernatural horror” warns the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) on the 2010 DVD release of *The Exorcist*. Viewers today already know what they are in for, but it was not so 40 years ago when, on 16 March 1974, the film first opened in British cinemas. Following on the heels of controversial films such as Ken Russell’s *The Devils* (1971) and Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), which had been withdrawn by the director in 1973, allegedly following death threats and concerns over copycat violence, the film first had to run the gauntlet of the BBFC. Without a BBFC classification there would be no UK release.<sup>2</sup>

Anyone who’d seen the US headlines gleaned a confusing and largely negative image of *The Exorcist*: “the scariest film” (*New Republic*), “occultist claptrap” (*New York Times*), “religious porn” (*Rolling Stone*) and “garbage” (*Palm Beach Post*). Despite the pooh-poohing of critics, audiences in New York queued for up to four hours in the sleet and rain on Boxing







ABOVE: Scenes from the US opening of *The Exorcist* – crews round the block and fainting in the aisles. BELOW: *Mad* magazine had its own take on *Exorcist* hysteria.

Day 1973. The *New York Times* reported that touts were selling \$3 tickets for \$50 a pair, whilst others were offering \$100 to get to the front of the queue. Elvis Presley paid \$350 for his seat. The Zodiac Killer wrote to the *San Francisco Chronicle* praising the film as “the best saterical [sic] comidy [sic] that I have ever seen”.

By the time the UK press picked up on it, the film had become a “crude slice of Grand Guignol” (*The Times*), even “thoroughly evil” (*Catholic Herald*). A “harassed American cinema manager” was quoted by Derek Malcolm in the *Guardian* as saying: “My janitors are going bananas wiping up the vomit”.

Writer William Peter Blatty and director William Friedkin played upon people’s fears, not just in the film itself, but in discussing the filming. “It was as if,” said Blatty just before the US release, “some evil force was haunting the film.” Friedkin told journalists that: “There are strange images and visions that showed up on the film that were never planned”. The deaths of Jack MacGowran, who played the drunken director Burke Dennings, the brother of Max von Sydow (exorcist Father Lankester Merrin), and the grandfather of Linda Blair (possessed girl Regan MacNeil) were all seen as the movie’s evil handiwork. In fact, as many as nine deaths have been attributed to the film.<sup>3</sup>

It was also widely publicised that a priest blessed each shoot. It failed to prevent the set of the MacNeil house, where the exorcism takes place, from burning down – and on a Sunday, too. Blatty told *People* magazine in 1974 that when they played the sound tapes back they heard “loud rapping sounds” that had not been audible during filming. “Billy Graham was on to something,” Blatty told *Guardian* journalist Xan Brooks in 2000, “when he said that there was evil in that film. He meant evil down deep in the very celluloid.”

When they finally got to see it, the media was full of stories about people fainting, vomiting and fleeing cinemas in terror – not necessarily in that order. New York cinema manager David Pelletier told Jim Willse of the Associated Press that, “Three, four, or five people faint at every performance. Some



throw up.”

“My carpets are ruined,” he added.

Willse also reported that a Milwaukee cinema had 20 faintings in the first 17 days. Three fainters – one of whom cracked his head on the ground as he fell – and five walk-outs were reported at another cinema in Ontario, Canada.

There were even unsubstantiated accounts of heart attacks, a miscarriage, a frenzied attack on the projection screen by a man trying to kill the demon, other acts of unspecified violence at showings and between two and four institutionalisations.<sup>4</sup> Father Richard Woods, a Dominican from Loyola University, Chicago, was quoted in the *Catholic Herald* as saying: “I can attribute overall at least 30 cases of presumed possession directly or indirectly to the book and the film.” With stories of paper bags being provided for patrons with weak



ABOVE: The ABC cinema in Shaftesbury Avenue advertising the opening of *The Exorcist* on 14 March 1974.

stomachs, *Mad* magazine had its own 'The Exorcist Barf Bag' gracing the cover of the October 1974 issue.

The horror also came draped in Hollywood razzmatazz. Before *The Exorcist* reached British shores the press was already reporting on its chances at the Oscars. In total, it was nominated for 10 Academy Awards, becoming the first horror film to be nominated for Best Picture. Friedkin was nominated for Best Director and Blatty for Best Writing (Screenplay based on material from another medium). Linda Blair (Regan McNeil) was nominated for Best Actress in Supporting Role and Ellen Burstyn (Christine MacNeil) for Best Actress. Ten nominations put it in the same running as *The Godfather* (1972) and *Star Wars* (1977).

### "THE MOST TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE"

Just days before the film opened, *The Times* ran a story on Dr Richard Mackarness. A psychiatrist at the Park Prewett Mental Hospital, Basingstoke, Mackarness said that he had seen over half a dozen cases of demonic possession at the hospital over the past nine years. When standard treatments for depression or schizophrenia failed to work, he claimed he always found a history of dabbling in the occult. Described as "a practising Christian", Mackarness said that interest in the occult was rising and so, too, was possession.

With the countdown to the UK release running, Rhodes Boyson, the Conservative MP for Brent North – he of the trademark mutton-chop whiskers – demanded that Home Secretary Roy Jenkins should ban the film. Mary Whitehouse wanted it banned. The Christian pressure group the Festival of Light wanted it banned and considered legal action to prevent the film being shown after contacting the BBFC.

"It is a powerful horror movie," said the BBFC's then secretary Stephen Murphy. "Some people may dislike it, but that is not a sufficient reason for refusing certification." The BBFC passed the film uncut with an 'X' rating.

The nation was primed to over-react. St John Ambulance crews joined the picketers outside the cinemas. The Festival of Light handed out leaflets warning those entering the cinema against the "dangers of opening themselves up to the forces of darkness". A 16-phone 'hotline' manned by clergy and laymen (with, according to the *Catholic Herald*, "experience in dealing with demonology") was set up; in the first three weeks it took 600 calls in London alone. Numerous local councils exercised their right to ban the film outright, leading entrepreneurial individuals to run buses to cinemas lying beyond the reach of such proscriptions. A Church of Scotland official was quoted as saying he would "rather take a bath in pig manure than see the film."<sup>5</sup>

But what was the British audience reaction like? For *Catholic Herald* writer Peter Jennings, watching the film at the ABC in London's Shaftesbury Avenue was "the most terrifying experience I have ever encountered at the cinema." He described



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## "I'D RATHER TAKE A BATH IN PIG MANURE THAN SEE THE FILM"



HULTON ARCHIVE / ETTY IMAGES

people in the audience "trembling with fear". One girl was "shaking and crying" in her boyfriend's arms. "I could feel a real sense of evil," he said. Fifty minutes in, and a man in his 30s got up to leave. He collapsed in the aisle. Jennings counted nearly 30 early leavers. At the end, those left in their seats were "numbed with shock".

Afterwards, Jennings spoke to Kenneth Jones, a St John Ambulance veteran of 15 years. "Never have I seen such reactions to anything as I have to this film," he said. "We treated over 20 people at the last showing for fainting and sickness, five of whom were physically sick." Jennings's story was published under the banner headline "Terrifying Reality of *The Exorcist*".

ABOVE: The Warner Cinema, Leicester Square, offers *The Exorcist* and *Enter the Dragon*.

LEFT: Rhodes Boyson was in favour of a ban.

### "THE REAL THING"

Part of the success of *The Exorcist* was due to its claim to have been based on a true story. In a way, it was. In 1949, a 14-year-old boy from Cottage City, Maryland, USA, was exorcised by Father William S Bowdern and others on the approval of Archbishop Joseph E Ritter. Journalist Bill Brinkely broke the story in the *Washington Post* on 20 August 1949. (See Mark Opasnick, "The Haunted Boy", FT123:34-39). *Exorcist* author Blatty, then a student at the Catholic Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., heard of the case during a Theology lecture. Almost 20 years later he wrote to Bowdern. The Archbishop had sworn Bowdern to secrecy, but he left Blatty with something to think about, Blatty revealed during a 2011 interview with the *Huffington Post*. "I can tell you this," Bowdern said. "The case I was involved in was the real thing. I had no doubt about it then and I have no doubt about it now."

Friedkin went to enormous and often cruel lengths to make the film look like 'the real thing'. He fired guns before letting the cameras roll to capture the reaction in his actors' faces. He refrigerated the set to achieve authentic billows of breath from his actors during the exorcism scenes. He blasted loud, unnerving music before takes. The rigs used to propel Blair and Burstyn caused lasting back problems. When the demon is exorcised from Regan, the scream we hear is the distilled fear of pigs being driven to slaughter. He struck Father William O'Malley (who played Father Joseph Dyer) across the face, so that when we see him deliver the last rites to Father Karras, lying broken at the foot of those infamous steps, his hand shakes with real emotion. Was the result worth it?<sup>6</sup>

Cinemagoers in St Louis must have thrown a few curious glances at the two Jesuits

## THE EXORCIST SERIES

### *The Exorcist*

(1973, dir William Friedkin)

### *Exorcist II: The Heretic*

(1977, dir John Boorman)

### *The Exorcist III*

(1990, dir William Peter Blatty)

### *Exorcist: The Beginning*

(2004, dir Renny Harlin)

### *Dominion:*

### *Prequel to the Exorcist*

(2000, dir Paul Schrader)

## AN EXORCIST CHRONOLOGY

### 1972

14 August, filming starts

### 1973

19 June, premiere in New York

### 1973

26 December, US release

### 1974

16 March, UK release

### 1979

Theatrical re-release reviewed by the BBFC under the Protection of Children Act 1978

### 1980

First shown on US television

### 1981

Released in the UK on video

### 1988

Copies withdrawn under the Video Recording Act 1984

### 1998

The BBFC classifies the new *The Exorcist: 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Edition* DVD release as 18, ending the 10-year ban

### 2000

Theatrical rerelease *The Exorcist: The Version You've Never Seen Before*

### 2001

First shown on UK television

### 2006

*The Exorcist: The Complete Anthology* DVD box-set

### 2010

*The Exorcist (Extended Director's Cut and Original Theatrical Edition)* on Blu-Ray

### 2012

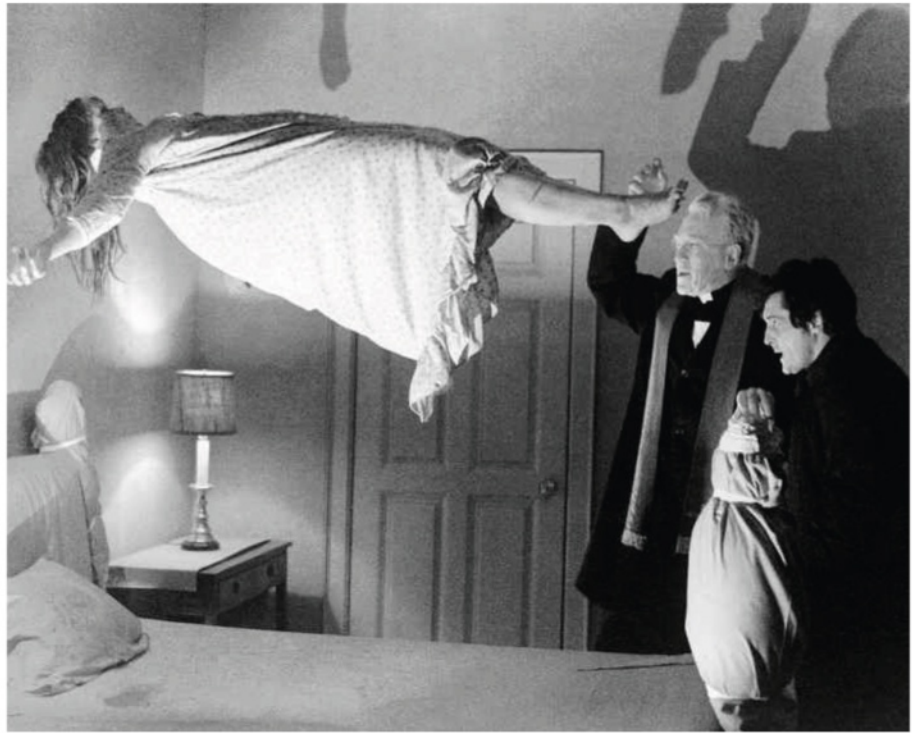
*The Exorcist* stage adaptation by John Pielmeier opens in Los Angeles

### 2013

*The Exorcist: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*

### 2014

First UK radio dramatisation on BBC Radio 4



GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Regan (Linda Blair) puts the fear of Satan into Max von Sydow (Fr Merrin) and Jason Miller (Fr Karras).

standing in line to watch the film. Little did they know that these were the original exorcists, or at least two of them. Fathers Halloran and Bowdern went to see the movie as soon as it came out. In an interview with Catholic writer Michael H Brown, Halloran said: "I thought it was a typical Hollywood, glitzy thing, real bizarre." When asked about the head spinning, Halloran thought it was "ridiculous". The crucifix masturbation was "gross". The green vomit was "nonsense". Halloran was "disappointed". Bowdern had not liked it either. But Halloran was directly comparing it with the 1949 case, which had only ever been Blatty's inspiration, not his Bible.<sup>7</sup>

Father Gabriele Amorth, the Vatican's chief exorcist and honorary life president of the International Association of Exorcists, loves *The Exorcist*. It is his favourite film. "People need to know what we do," he told Gyles Brandreth in a 2000 interview for the *Sunday Telegraph*, although he did find the special effects a little over the top. But is what we see in *The Exorcist* really what exorcists do?

In his 30-plus years as the Church of Ireland's exorcist, the Rev. William H Lendrum has dealt with a Ouija board possession case not unlike Regan's encounter with Captain Howdy, fought a Satanic cult and tried to banish an unholy and seemingly intelligent bad smell, but, as he told the *Guardian* in 2005, he has never encountered green vomit volcanoes, spinning heads or demonic metamorphoses. Amorth, however, will tell all who listen about the nails, slivers of glass and bits of radio that he has seen the possessed vomit up.

For the former exorcist of the archdiocese of New York, the late Father James LeBar, *The Exorcist* was on the money. "It pretty much shows what it can be like," he told the

*Observer* in 2000, adding, "it's a compilation of things that happen in different exorcisms; the levitation, the exorcisation, the screaming. All of those things take place in every exorcism." He later told the *Spirit Daily* website that "*The Exorcist* is about the most accurate portrayal of what can happen at an exorcism that I have ever seen."<sup>8</sup>

After ridiculing *The Exorcist* with a 'Ken Russell Award for Good Taste' in his article on the film disasters of 1973, *New York Times* film critic-in-chief Vincent Canby must have kicked himself. The film went on to win two of its 10 Oscar nominations and picked up a further four Golden Globes out of five nominations.

## "WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? PEA SOUP?"

Apart from being a massive blockbuster, *The Exorcist* routinely ranks among the top films of its genre. For horror, both the *Independent* (2011) and *Time Out* (2012) gave it the number one slot, although the *Guardian* (2010) tried to be different by dropping it to sixth place. The *Independent* also ranked it as the third "most controversial film" (2010) and the sixth "most shocking" (2012). The 180-degree head scene made sixth place in the *Telegraph's* (2012) "Ten of the scariest moments in cinema" list. And, of course, it heads the *Telegraph's* (2011) list of "Top 10 exorcist films". In 2010, it was chosen as one of the 25 most culturally significant films for preservation in the American National Film Registry. When Play.com, part of Japanese Internet giant Rakuten, asked 10,000 of its customers to vote on what they thought was the scariest film in 2013, *The Shining* put *The Exorcist* in second place with *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) coming third. They then wired a selection of them up to heart monitors and let the films roll. All three sent

hearts racing into the range expected of light exercise.<sup>9</sup>

“Here’s Johnny!” Jack Nicholson’s maniacal face peering through the axe-vent door sent hearts pounding by an average increase of 28.2 per cent. In contrast, Freddy Krueger stepping out of Nancy Thompson’s dream elicited a 27.2 per cent rise, and the scariest scene in *The Exorcist*, not the head-spinning nor the final exorcism scene, but the one where Christine McNeil is drawn up to the attic by strange noises, scored a 24.8 per cent rise. Ultimately, *The Exorcist* is only the third scariest film. However, what the Japanese boffins did not consider is that there is more to horror than heart rate. Neither *The Shining* nor *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is among the total of 625 films included in the American National Film Registry as of 2013. Neither were they nominated for any Oscars.

*The Exorcist* is seen as having created the modern horror genre; certainly it sounded the death knell for British genre stalwart Hammer Films, according to producer Roy Skeggs. “We were not prepared to be that revolting,” he told *The Scotsman* in 2001. But it was more than that. In 1974, Hammer was responsible for releasing *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*, *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires*, and *Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter*. Such cinematic Penny Dreadfuls, however delightful in their way, could never compete with the gritty, contemporary, domestic and thoroughly disturbing horror of *The Exorcist* with its iconic cinematography and layered meanings.

The impact of *The Exorcist* went beyond horror. The month before the film was due to open in the UK it already commanded 15 per cent of the key market income in the US. When he saw the numbers, Warner Bros vice-president of worldwide advertising and publicity Richard Lederer reportedly told Barry Beckerman, the man who had supervised the acquisition and development of the film, “Kid, the fun is over. There are guys in New York looking at these figures, saying ‘This is the kind of money you can make in the movie business?’”<sup>10</sup> *The Exorcist* has taken between \$413 million and \$441 million worldwide. *The Director’s Cut* (2000) took another \$112 million worldwide. In total, *The Exorcist* series of films has taken over \$660 million worldwide.<sup>11</sup>



ABOVE: Reverend Trevor Dearing (or is that Dave Allen?) performs an exorcism at St Paul’s Church in Hainault, Essex, in 1975.

With the ‘guys in New York’ star-struck by dollar signs, they were missing the underlying fact: millions of people saw the film – and will see the film. It was and continues to be a cultural phenomenon. Almost every time the press covers an exorcism story there is a picture of Regan levitating from her bed, or a similar scene from the film. When Anthony Hopkins’s grizzled exorcist character in *The Rite* (2011) turns to the Doubting Thomas played by Colin O’Donoghue, he says, “Well, what did you expect? Spinning heads? Pea soup?” Well, yes, that is exactly what we expected.

Before *The Exorcist*, 60 per cent of Americans believed in the Devil. According to the latest research by Gallup (2007) the figure now stands at 70 per cent. Of course, we cannot credit *The Exorcist* with that – not alone, at any rate. With its largely realistic portrayal of exorcism, according to some exorcists, based, however loosely, on a true story, and written by a Catholic, the film presents us with entertainment as evidence for the existence of Satan – the sort of ‘evidence’ that can give us all ‘a bit of a

nightmare’.

We will never know what went through Rainer Hertrampf’s head, except a bullet. Michael Taylor was driven mad by an exorcism, not by *The Exorcist*. Nicholas Bell later confessed that he had made up the story as a way to escape the consequences of his actions. It seemed to him to be a plausible defence.

When asked if seeing *The Exorcist* had led to the death of naval rating Gengam, DCI Newman replied that it was “a very likely solution”. The coroner was less convinced and recorded an open verdict, but felt compelled to make a statement warning film-goers “likely to be upset” by films of a “horrifying or violent nature” to avoid seeing them. The implication was that he sided with the inspector.

When *People* magazine’s Nellie Blagden asked Blatty in 1974 if he was bothered by the reports of adverse reactions to seeing the film, Blatty responded that “the film is designed to have a powerful emotional impact... it’s doing its job when people react with the shakes.” But it was always more than that for Blatty. He also pointed out that: “some priests have remarked on renewed attendance at Mass and that the film has created some communicants among the young, who were terrified by the evil depicted in the film.”

The enduring power of *The Exorcist* is surely that its believable domestic setting leads us by the nose to the shocking confrontation with evil, just as if we were there. We stand with Karras and Merrin in Regan’s bedroom practically shouting “The power of Christ compels you!” along with them, because by then we, too, want to put the demon back in its box.

If only, as the constant re-releases confirm, to take it out again. FT

#### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



DR LEO RUICKBIE holds a PhD from King’s College, London, for his research on contemporary witchcraft and magic. He is the author of several books, most recently *A Brief Guide to Ghost Hunting* (Robinson, 2013) and runs [www.witchology.com](http://www.witchology.com)

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# BLOOD THE EXORCISM OF

DR LEO RUICKBIE LOOKS BACK AT THE BLOODIEST REAL-LIFE EPISODE ASSOCIATED WITH THE RELEASE OF *THE EXORCIST* IN 1974

**B**estiality, blasphemy, heresy, lewdness, masochism – one by one the exorcists drove the demons from him. In the little vestry of St Thomas's Church, Gawber, Barnsley, they had to hold him down. They had taken the wooden cross from around his neck and burnt it. They had splashed him with water – the court reporter did not say if it was holy. They had forced a crucifix into his mouth. For six hours they drove the demons out. By the end, their list ran to more than 40.

As a grey autumn dawn nervously illuminated the cold church, the exorcists, exhausted, decided that they must rest. The last three demons – anger, violence, murder – had defeated them. He was, they believed, still possessed.<sup>1</sup>

"We've had a report of a man running through the streets of Ossett naked and covered in red paint." It was 10am on Sunday, 6 October 1974, and Police Officer Ian Walker had just come on duty at Wakefield Police Station. "Turn out and have a look, but we think it might be a hoax". He put the telephone down and called to his partner John. Both might have groaned at the thought of a wasted trip to Ossett. They would later wish that it had been a hoax.

Walker gunned the car down the empty roads and made Ossett in five minutes. They found the man outside a pub, lying curled in the foetal position. He looked like a casualty leftover from Saturday night. An ambulance crew were already on the scene and had thrown a blanket over him. Ian noted red hair and black socks sticking out from underneath.

"It's not paint," said John, "it's blood and he's covered in it."

"It is the blood of Satan," said the man. "It is the blood of Satan." Over and over again.



## 'Exorcism turned loving husband into killer'

A night of exorcism to rid Michael Taylor of evil spirits instead put the Devil in his heart and turned him into a homicidal maniac, it was claimed at Leeds Crown Court yesterday.

Within hours of the bizarre church ceremony Taylor killed his "darling" wife Christine, aged 29, with unspeakable brutality.

Mr Geoffrey Baker, prosecuting, said Taylor tore her eyes out with his bare hands.

"He tore her tongue out. He tore her face almost off, and she died very quickly from inhalation of blood."

He also wrung the neck of a poodle which was in the house. Then—"clearly demented"—he walked naked and blood-covered through the streets of Ossett, Yorks.

"They primed me for it."



Michael Taylor



Christine Taylor

having, and "some kind of exorcism" was practised on him.

On October 5, Taylor attacked the vicar in the vicarage and threw a vase out of the window.

Mr Baker said the vicar's wife had told of an enormous force of evil emanating from Taylor. "In her view it was a difficult case of demon possession. Her husband agreed and

some notoriety, and those who care for us and govern us may well be concerned."

The Anglican Church's leading exorcist, Canon John Pearce-Higgins, former vice-Provost of Southwark Cathedral, last night attacked what he called "blasted meddlers who dabble about in demonism."

He added: "The damage they can do is immense."

## "IT WAS LIKE PICTURES OF LIONS READY TO KILL THEIR PREY"

In September 1974, Michael Taylor was 31, married to Christine (Chris), with five boys, aged from six to 12 years old. He was described as happily married, a loving husband, and a decent, hard-working man. A neighbour, Barbara Wardman, said their home was one of "happiness and laughter". At the time, he was suffering from a bad back and was out of work, and with all those mouths to feed must have been feeling the pressure. Perhaps that was why he was also described as

depressed. Perhaps that was why Wardman introduced him to Marie Robinson, the 22-year-old lay preacher leading a Christian fellowship group in Barnsley.

Wardman said that the Taylors were afraid of church services, of not knowing what to do, so she and Robinson served them bread and Ribena in their home in Havercroft, Ossett. She thought that it would be "nice to introduce them to a simple act of faith such as breaking bread."

The next evening, Michael Taylor started speaking in tongues. The group was again meeting at his house. Another member, Mavis Smith, burst into tears.

"I started shaking," said Robinson, "which in me usually mean[s] that the Holy Spirit is very active, and his power was ready to be used." She laid her hands on Smith's head and started speaking in tongues. Smith was not impressed by the attempted exorcism. "She told me she hated me," said Robinson. "I can see,

# OF SATAN

## MICHAEL TAYLOR

looking back, that I was very full of spiritual pride," she said.

In the following days, Robinson became a regular visitor at the Taylors' home. On one occasion, Taylor and Robinson stayed up all night to make the sign of the cross over each other as protection against the power of the full Moon. There was talk of witchcraft and a Satanist in the group. But there was something more than just Christian fellowship developing between Taylor and Robinson. Once, when his wife left the room for a moment, Taylor kissed Robinson.

"She seduced me with her eyes," he said. "I can still see those eyes. I saw her standing naked before me, and I was naked."

"The whole of my being just reacted completely against that," Robinson later said. "We just snapped apart. It was like a clash of wills, a clash of spirits."

"Mike," she told him, "You know all this is wrong. You know you love Chris."

Taylor's wife came back into the room. He turned to her. "We have won a great victory for the Lord," he said. "We have both overcome our passions."

Robinson glanced at him. "His whole features seemed to have changed. He looked almost bestial."

Taylor was looking at her, too. "I felt the evil within me. But I fought it – oh, how I fought it, but it overcame me."

A scream of fear burst from Robinson's lips, turning into a wild screaming in tongues.

Taylor, too, started speaking in tongues, slapping Robinson's face with his hand. He was now crouching over her. "It was like pictures of lions ready to kill their prey," said Robinson. She tasted fear in her mouth.

"Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" Robinson repeated over and over. Chris joined in, both women calling on the name of Jesus to save them. Something saved them that day. Taylor's fury abated.



But something had changed. Something had happened to Taylor. A neighbour, Betty Easter, heard him shouting in the street. "Drink milk," he was shouting, "the milk of human kindness." He had spat in the road and was now telling Easter that it was milk. Not inclined to accept Taylor's offer, Easter then had Taylor's finger waved in her faced as he exclaimed, "The wrath of God is upon you."

One of Taylor's friends decided that he needed help and took him to see Rev. Peter Vincent of St Thomas's Church in Gawber, near Barnsley. Christine went with them after leaving the boys with their grandmother. Sitting in the vicarage, no doubt over a cup of tea, Taylor attacked Vincent and threw his cat out of the window. The vicar's wife, Sally, talked of "an enormous force of evil emanating from Taylor." She believed he was possessed. Her husband agreed.

They telephoned the experts, self-described "practitioners in exorcism", Rev. Raymond Smith, a Methodist minister from Barnsley and his wife Margaret. They were joined by Donald James, a Methodist lay preacher, and John Eggins, a member of Robinson's Christian fellowship group. Smith was the only one who did not want to go ahead with an exorcism. He was over-ruled. When later questioned about the right to perform an exorcism, Vincent said: "I have the authority of the New Testament and the Lord Jesus Christ." He believed that the others had "the same authority as members of the one church of God." At midnight they took Taylor into the vestry of St Thomas's and made a makeshift bed of prayer cushions for him to lie down on.



PC Walker took an address and made his way over to where the man was believed to live.

He met the inspector and his sergeant on the doorstep. As he approached, the inspector turned and asked him, "Are you married?"

"Yes," said Walker.

"Have you any children?"

"Yes," said Walker.

"You're not coming in."

Walker had seen the lot on his beat: "Plenty of blood and not a little death," as he put it. He blanched when he thought of what must be behind that front door.



They might have thought that they had cast out over 40 demons, but the exorcists were far from triumphant. They were scared. They were scared of Taylor. At around 7am, Margaret Smith announced that the Lord had told her that "the spirit of murder was going to break out".

They wanted to call Taylor's GP, but Christine was against it, thinking it would only further provoke Taylor. The Smiths tried their own doctor, but got a number unobtainable signal. Julia Gilby, a teacher from Wakefield, called the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) for West Yorkshire on their behalf. The MOH told them that without a referral from Taylor's GP he was unable to assist. At 7.45am Gilby telephoned the West Yorkshire Police. Detective Chief Superintendent Ronald Sills later said that all they had been given was some vague information about someone called "Mike".



ABOVE: A view of Ossett town centre in 1980, showing Market Place and Bank Street.



ABOVE: St Thomas's Church, Gawber. The exorcism of Michael Taylor took place in the vestry in 1974.

"We did not get the impression that there was a maniac about," said the police and told Gilby that they should telephone the Taylors' family doctor. At 8am they sent the Taylors home.

At the inquest, coroner Philip Gill asked Vincent, "Did you have any misgivings?"

"There was," said Vincent, "in Michael's eyes, towards the end of the ministry in the vestry, a look I can only describe as that of murder."



They sent Walker to set up a communications vehicle, then search the surrounding gardens. He was told to look for an axe or a large knife. His search drew a blank.

His wife asked questions when he got home. "How was your day at work?" might sound innocent enough, but for Walker "there are some things you do not take home, and this was one of them." However, over the next 24 to 48 hours every newspaper and TV news bulletin across the country answered those questions.



At around 10am, Taylor attacked Christine with his bare hands. He tore out her eyes, her tongue and removed most of her face. She choked to death on her own blood. Taylor also kicked and punched his mother-in-law's dog before throttling it to death. Taylor later told police, "I was compelled by the forces within me to destroy everything in our house." He said both that he believed that he was possessed by an evil spirit and that he had believed that he was ridding his wife of such a spirit.

According to the psychiatrists, the exorcism had driven him mad. But only temporarily. After being treated at Broadmoor Hospital, Taylor was pronounced legally and clinically

sane. He was fit to stand trial. At Leeds Crown Court in March 1975, Taylor pleaded not guilty to the charge of murdering his wife. In depositions to the court, expert witnesses declared that Taylor had been insane at the time the crime was committed. Geoffrey Baker QC, for the prosecution, described Taylor as having been "suddenly exposed to intense spiritual influences and became either bewitched or demented, so that he felt obliged to murder his wife to destroy some evil spirit which was within her."

On 25 March, the jury found him not guilty of murder by reason of insanity. He was ordered to be detained for psychiatric treatment and returned to Broadmoor. At the end of the second inquest into Christine Taylor's death on 23 April 1975, Philip Gill found no evidence of criminal action or negligence and recorded a verdict of misadventure.

Dr Eric Treacy, MBE, the Bishop of Wakefield, denied that the exorcism had of itself led to the death of Christine, claiming that Taylor was already in a disturbed state. He expressed confidence in Vincent and told newspapers that he would not be seeking his resignation. At the same time, he banned all further services of exorcism in the diocese and established a commission to investigate the practice.

According to Dr Hugo Milne, then consultant psychiatrist to hospitals in the Bradford area, hyperventilation during the exorcism had altered Taylor's consciousness, causing him to "behave in an aggressive and uncontrolled way". The exorcism had been, he said, "the ultimate trigger-mechanism which led to Mrs Taylor's death." Writing shortly after the case, WH Trethowan, Professor of Psychiatry at Birmingham University, considered that Taylor was suffering from an "hysterical pseudopsychosis, which had been temporarily induced in him by his exorcisers".<sup>2</sup>

Others sought to blame events on wider cultural causes. Writing in *The Times*, Dr William Sargant, Honorary Consulting Psychiatrist at St Thomas's Hospital, London, and author of *The Mind Possessed* (1973), blamed the tragedy on "recent film publicity and hullabaloo about *The Exorcist*" and "increasing unhealthy interest in recent years in esoteric religious phenomena". Trethowan also wrote to the newspaper, blaming "silly superstition" and "medieval mumbo-jumbo".

Debate over the role of exorcism continued throughout 1975. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Donald Coggan, was quick to defend exorcism within the Church of England when challenged. However, in May, the Bishop of London, Dr Gerald Ellison, followed Treacy by forbidding exorcism without express permission. Exorcism was also debated in the House of Lords with Lady Summerskill (Labour Party) querying the government whether it intended to regulate the use of exorcism in mental health cases. An open letter signed by 65 academics, including the then Bishop of St Albans, the Right Revd Robert Runcie (later Archbishop of Canterbury), was sent to the leaders of the Church of England demanding that no official status should be given to exorcism. It was a call for a *de facto* ban. At the Church of England's General Synod in June, exorcism was not outlawed, but new guidelines were announced, putting the rite under the authority of the diocesan bishops and stipulating the involvement of the medical profession. It was the end of the DIY Anglican exorcists.

Taylor spent two years at Broadmoor before being moved to a secure ward in Bradford Royal Infirmary, West Yorkshire. After he was discharged, two years later, he returned to live in Ossett. He was arrested again in 2005 for the sexual assault of a teenage girl. He pleaded guilty and received a three-year community rehabilitation order including psychiatric treatment. The judge noted that since his arrest he had made four attempts to commit suicide.<sup>3</sup>

"I am quite convinced," Vincent had told the inquest, "that God will bring good out of this in his own way, however tragic it was at the time."

Before 6 October, Walker had been an agnostic. But what he called "the stupidity and futility of it all" removed any lingering doubt he may have had that there was a God.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Events have been reconstructed from trial and inquest reports, letters to the editor and other items appearing in *The Times* from 22 March 1975 to 1 July 1975, together with articles from the *Glasgow Herald* (26 March 1975) and the Associated Press (26 March 1975). Ian Walker's account was published as 'The Dangers of Exorcism – Guest Post', Socraticmama.com, <http://socraticmama.com/2012/01/12/the-dangers-of-exorcism-guest-post/secular-parenting>, accessed 7 February 2014. All cited speech is given as originally quoted.

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# RITE OR WRONG?

Are contemporary exorcisms a dangerous hangover from the superstitious past or a pan-cultural tool for spiritual and psychological healing? **TED HARRISON** explores the history of a controversial practice.

**E**xorcism is a centuries-old practice found in many cultures. The most famous exorcist in history was probably Jesus of Nazareth who lived at a time, 2,000 years ago, when a wide range of psychiatric and neurological disorders were little understood and attributed to demonic possession. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century it might have been assumed that exorcism as a treatment was on the wane, but the UK release of *The Exorcist* in 1974 (see p30), as well as the horrific Ossett exorcism and murder case (see p36) in October the same year, saw an explosion of public interest in the subject.

More recently, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen a spate of films designed to entertain cinemagoers with Hollywood's version of demonic possession. This time, their chief selling point is that they are allegedly based on, or pretending to be, real-life cases. *The Rite* (2011) is based on the experience of a Roman Catholic priest who volunteers to train as an exorcist. *Anneliese: The Exorcist Tapes* (2011) is a fictionalised account of a case from the 1970s (the same one that inspired the 2005 film *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*). *The Devil Inside* (2012) is shot in faux-documentary style and based on an Ossett-style killing by a woman undergoing exorcism. The story involves her daughter travelling to Rome to meet her mother, who is held in a secure psychiatric hospital, and becoming involved with two priests conducting unauthorised rites. It revels in every cliché of the genre. At one point, the body of the possessed mother contorts into inhuman shapes – with the help of a remarkable, hyper-jointed body-double.

As in the 1970s, the release of the latest round of films parallels an upsurge

in interest in the subject both amongst the general population and within the Christian churches. Writing in *Psychology Today*, Dr Stephen Diamond described a “widespread explosion of interest in exorcism”.<sup>1</sup> The Church of England currently has an exorcist, more discreetly referred to as a deliverance ministry adviser, in every diocese. This is not because of any obsessive interest in the subject by clergy, claimed a recent feature in the *Church Times*, but rather as a response “to demand from the public. The Church has had to find a safe and sound way of dealing with the demand.”<sup>2</sup>

The Rt Revd Dominic Walker, Bishop of Monmouth, who has more than 35 years experience of the deliverance ministry, described how people turn up on the vicarage doorstep “just like at a GP's surgery. They might feel possessed or cursed... might have experienced some paranormal activity... been involved in the occult. The Church's job is to interpret that psychologically, spiritually and theologically.”<sup>3</sup> Most diocesan advisers are today in turn advised by multidisciplinary teams, including psychologists. Exorcism is the last resort, says Bishop Walker, after considerable preparation and consultation.

Despite this caution, hundreds of exorcisms are nevertheless conducted both by self-trained practitioners with no Church oversight and by maverick exorcists within the main denominations. Some exorcisms involve a priest offering little more than simple prayers of reassurance. They are rituals designed to be calming and healing. In a few cases, however, exorcisms approach the Hollywood model and can be distressing to watch, especially if they centre on people







**ABOVE:** Modern-day exorcists, real and 'based on real events'. Father Gabriele Amorth (left) has been fighting demonic influences for decades, while Anthony Hopkins's Father Lucas Trevant is a character in the 2011 film *The Rite*, adapted from the book by Matt Baglio and based, according to the author, on a true story.

who are seriously mentally or spiritually disturbed. In extreme cases, there are real dangers stemming from these rites, risks to both the exorcist and the subject. In February 2007, Daniel Petru Corogeanu, a Romanian priest, was jailed following the death of a young nun during an exorcism which involved 23-year-old Irina Cornici being chained to a cross and denied food and water for days. Irina, who had been treated for schizophrenia, believed she was hearing the voice of the Devil (FT200:4-5, 223:21; for more fatal exorcisms, see FT123:40).

### “THIS IS WARFARE”

In November 2010, a two-day conference on exorcism was held in Baltimore and attended by more than 100 Roman Catholic priests and bishops. It was held behind closed doors, so as not to encourage sensational media interest, and convened by Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois. Its purpose was to discuss the circumstances under which the church might responsibly authorise an exorcism.

“Not everyone who thinks they need an exorcism actually does need one,” Paprocki said. “It’s only used in those cases where the Devil is involved in an extraordinary sort of way in terms of actually being in possession of the person. But it’s rare, it’s extraordinary, so the use of exorcism is also rare and extraordinary. But we have to be prepared.”<sup>4</sup>

In March 2011, 60 clergy, along with members of the medical and psychiatric professions, attended a conference on the subject held in Rome. The event was described as a course on exorcism and Satanism and was held at the Legionaries of Christ’s Regina Apostolorum University. It was co-sponsored by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments and the Congregation for Clergy. Demonic possession, it was said, was becoming an increasingly worrying problem as, thanks to the Internet, it was growing

## “THE USE OF EXORCISM IS RARE, BUT WE HAVE TO BE PREPARED”

easier for people to become involved in Satanism.

Delegates heard of a need for the Church to train more specialists in its fight with the Devil and his minions. “This is warfare. We’ve gotten way behind. We’ve lost the concept of spiritual warfare,” said Msgr Marvin Mottet, the official exorcist of the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa.

The Catholic News Service reported the 80-year-old retired priest saying that about once a month he saw a serious case of possession and “tons” of cases of demonic influence in which people are being “bothered or attacked by evil spirits”. Those kinds of cases, he said, are “a daily thing”. The same report noted that during the breaks and question-and-answer periods, priests eagerly shared theories and ‘war stories’ of strange or difficult cases of possession, all of which “could have made fine fodder for a Hollywood screenwriter’s brainstorming session”.

“Msgr Mottet and other exorcists said just as there are different levels of the Devil’s influence on a person, so there are different methods to counter it, with exorcism being reserved to priests who have their bishop’s permission and are certain the person is experiencing real demonic possession.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1999 the Vatican issued new guidelines on exorcism, the first since 1614 (see

FT123:13). Only priests with experience in such matters and with their bishop’s permission should undertake the ritual, the Vatican said. Clergy were advised to resort to exorcism only in exceptional circumstances and cautioned not to mistake psychiatric problems for diabolic possession. The exorcisms should employ the prescribed rite and the media should not be allowed to be involved. “The existence of the Devil isn’t an opinion, something to take or leave as you wish,” said Cardinal Jorge Medina Estevez, adding that belief in Satan is a tenet of Catholic faith.<sup>6</sup>

The most active of contemporary Catholic exorcists is probably Father Gabriele Amorth. Now in his eighties, he claims to have helped over 70,000 people. He considers the current Vatican line as far too restrictive and fears demonic influences are at work in numerous areas of modern life. He has, amongst other concerns, warned against yoga and Harry Potter. He attributes recent sexual scandals involving priests to Satan and his cohorts infiltrating the Church.

### AFRICA’S EXORCIST

The Vatican was forced to take action against one archbishop who, it was claimed, was an excessively zealous exorcist. In the 1970s and 80s the fame of Emmanuel Milingo, then Archbishop of Lusaka, spread throughout central Africa (see FT75:15, 102:25, 123:13 and 310:46). Long before the Vatican issued instructions to exclude the media, he invited me in my capacity as a BBC reporter to witness him at work. I recall a large room with 50 or 60 people sitting around the edge. It was hot and a small group of musicians beat out an incessant rhythm as the archbishop prayed over those present. Many had walked miles to be there and had queued for hours outside the building. They were there as they believed their various problems and symptoms were caused by demon infestation. As time passed more and

more of those present began to moan, scream and writhe on the floor. The archbishop held his hands over them and prayed intensely. Another priest and assistants helped catch those who were falling and comfort those in distress. When I spoke to the archbishop afterwards, he was in no doubt that he had been engaged in spiritual warfare. It was traditional in his culture, he explained, for people to believe in demons. They went to local exorcists for help. He was providing the same help, but in the name of Jesus. The approach Milingo was taking was similar to that taken by the Church in many other contexts when orthodox theology had to adapt to, or synchronise with, indigenous practice.

However, shortly after I witnessed the exorcisms in Zambia, the archbishop was called to Rome to explain himself. His ministry was attracting too much attention. It was, he was told, both unauthorised and unorthodox, from the Vatican's point of view.

He remained in Rome and was given a desk job at the Vatican, although permitted to continue his work as a charismatic preacher and exorcist. He attracted a considerable following in the city, but as the years passed his behaviour became increasingly bizarre. When, in 2001, he decided to marry a woman chosen for him by the Moonies, he was laicised – stripped of his authority as a bishop and priest. Father Amorth described himself as “absolutely stupefied and astounded” when he heard the news of the archbishop's marriage. “I have known him for several years. He was a legitimate healer and, above all, an excellent preacher who freed people from demons”. No longer needing to be obedient to

his Episcopal superiors, Milingo returned to Africa and continued to exercise his ministry. After conducting an ordination, and despite the ‘patient vigilance’ shown by Pope Benedict XVI, he was excommunicated. “Both Archbishop Milingo and the four ordained men are under a ‘latæ sententiæ’ excommunication, according to Canon 1382 of the Code of Canon Law,” the authorities declared.<sup>7</sup>

### UNCLEAN SPIRITS

Exorcism is a pancultural practice. The Greek philosopher and physician Hippocrates, said to be the founder of modern medicine, was an exorcist. The Christian Gospels contain numerous accounts of Jesus casting out demons and in one, recorded by three Evangelists, he transfers demons from a possessed man into a herd of pigs – who then kill themselves by running over a cliff.<sup>8</sup>

Christian theology suggests that the demons capable of taking control of a human body and mind are disembodied fallen angels who have sinned and been cast out of Heaven. Their leader is Satan, the fallen archangel, and their purpose is to subvert the purposes of God. In Christian practice, exorcists command demons to leave those who are possessed in the name of Jesus, a higher authority than Satan. However, to accomplish this the demon should, if possible, be identified and named, and even then might resist the order and struggle to keep control.

While Hollywood exorcisms most frequently show Roman Catholic priests, the practice is found in many Protestant traditions as well; but the sight of priests, the Church's ‘men in black’, engaged in

spiritual battle with the forces of evil is more cinematically interesting than that of ordinary-looking members of, say, a Pentecostal congregation.

The Catholic rite too employs the most dramatic language, which rises in intensity as the exorcism progresses, and the priest is instructed to make the sign of the cross (+) at frequent intervals.

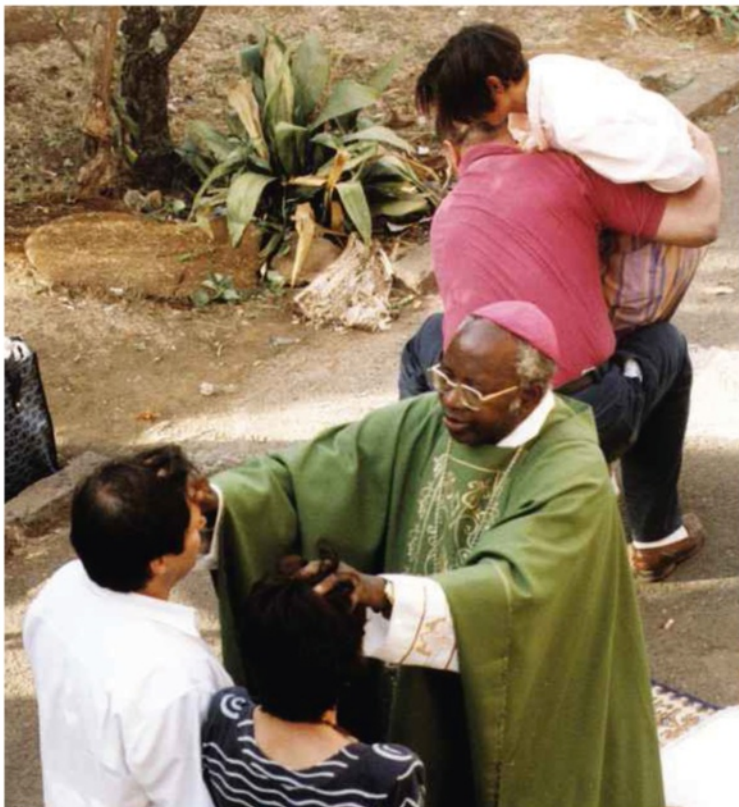
“I cast you out, unclean spirit, along with every Satanic power of the enemy, every spectre from Hell, and all your fell companions; in the name of our Lord Jesus (+) Christ. Begone and stay far from this creature of God (+).”

Later, the words used become even more urgent: “I adjure you, ancient serpent, by the judge of the living and the dead, by your Creator, by the Creator of the whole Universe, by Him who has the power to consign you to Hell, to depart forthwith in fear, along with your savage minions, from this servant of God.

“Tremble before that mighty arm that broke asunder the dark prison walls and led souls forth to light. May the trembling that afflicts this human frame, (+ on the breast) the fear that afflicts this image (+ on the brow) of God, descend on you. Make no resistance nor delay in departing.

“Depart, then, (+) impious one, depart, (+) accursed one, depart with all your deceits, for God has willed that man should be His temple. Why do you still linger here?”

The instructions are that the prayers be repeated until the possessed person is freed. In extreme cases the possessed person shouts and screams abuse, often using several voices. Language can be foul and violent and the possessed may be restrained to prevent



ABOVE LEFT: Archbishop Milingo conducts an exorcism at his villa near Rome. ABOVE RIGHT: Romanian Orthodox priest Daniel Petru Corogeanu, who was sentenced to seven years in prison for causing the death of Irina Cornici in an attempted exorcism in 2005.

GETTY IMAGES

AFP / GETTY IMAGES



ABOVE: A 1956 photo showing a man being restrained while a priest performs an exorcism.

them injuring themselves or the exorcist.

As the procedure is only to be carried out by experienced practitioners, advises the Vatican, training courses for modern-day exorcists are held in Rome. Author Matt Baglio in his book *The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist*, basis for the later film, told the story of the previously sceptical American priest Father Gary Thomas attending such a course.

“Maria suddenly screamed. She began thrashing violently on the couch. Then, much to Father Gary’s amazement, her facial muscles tensed in such a way that her appearance completely changed and she took on the visage of an adder. Even her mannerisms seemed to become snakelike... He wasn’t hallucinating. He threw some holy water on to Maria and she lunged at him, but was grabbed at the last moment by her parents... Deep hatred poured out at him through her black eyes.”<sup>9</sup>

Success is judged to be attained when the possessed person yields and becomes calm and normal.

Evidence of genuine possession is said to be displays, by those possessed, of superhuman strength and physical ability. They also display an apparent knowledge of facts and events that the subject could not be expected to know except by demonic intuition.

Writing in the *Catholic Herald* 13 years ago, Father Jeremy Davies, an exorcist and medical doctor, suggested two essential conditions had to be met before it was right to perform an exorcism. Firstly, there “has to be a serious restriction, caused by the demonic, of the person’s free will to do the will of God.” Secondly, “that the free will that does survive must be willing to obey the will of God.”

“It is important not to expect that an exorcism will give more than a little help, when the person’s greatest need is for a deeper conversion... a deeper repentance

and faith. It is also important to distinguish natural causes of afflictions from demonic causes. In traditional animist cultures there is a tendency to attribute too much to spirits. In our modern scientific culture, the opposite error is, of course, far more common, due to the lack of faith.”<sup>10</sup>

The Protestant form of exorcism is often performed in public during an act of worship. In many Pentecostal traditions it is the practice for preachers to invite members of the congregation forward to be prayed over. In June 2009, a video posted on YouTube generated protests from Gay Rights groups as it apparently showed a minister and some of his helpers casting out “the demons of homosexuality” from a 16-year-old boy. The teenager at the Manifested Glory Ministries Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut, is seen writhing on the ground, moaning and vomiting. “I

command you to leave,” shouts one of the church elders. “Right now in the name of Jesus, I call the homosexuality, right now in the name of Jesus”.

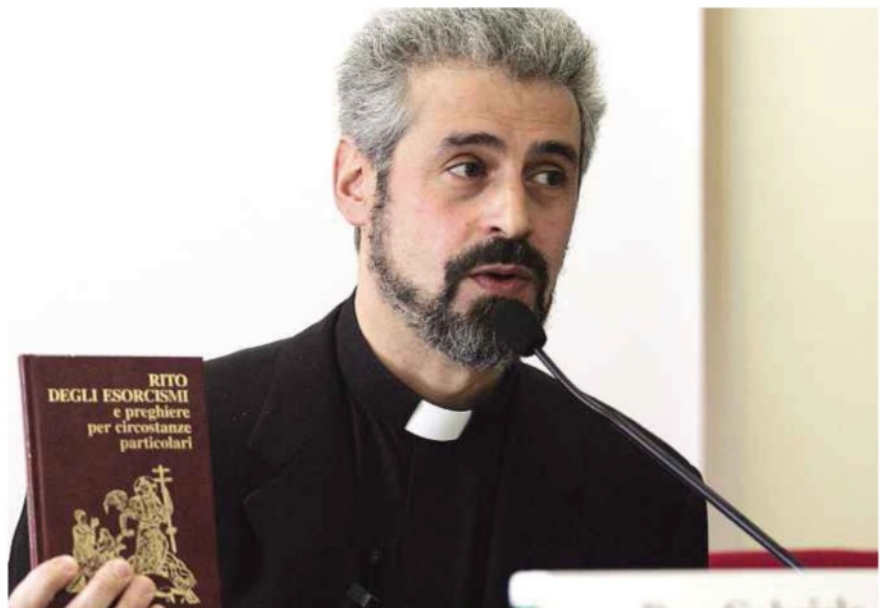
Another YouTube hit shows a Kenyan preacher, also described as an exorcist and witch-hunter, praying over a woman who had come forward during a service at a church in Alaska. The clip’s notoriety stems not from the woman’s behaviour but from her identity. Two years later, Sarah Palin was to achieve international recognition as a US vice presidential candidate.

## WITCH CHILDREN

Exorcism is a widely practised therapy in many parts of Africa, as Archbishop Milingo acknowledged. In many countries it is the main form of ‘psychiatric’ treatment available. In some cultures, driving out demons becomes a horrifying business involving beatings and incarceration. A number of alarming cases of abuse have emerged involving families who have believed a child to be possessed.

A ‘witch-child’ may be subjected to psychological and physical violence, according to a UNICEF report. “First by family members and their circle of friends, then by church pastors or traditional healers. Once accused of witchcraft, children are stigmatised and discriminated against for life. Increasingly vulnerable and caught in a cycle of accusation, they risk yet further accusations of witchcraft. Children accused of witchcraft may be killed, although more often they are abandoned by their parents and live on the street”.<sup>11</sup> Often a physical abnormality, or even being a twin, is sufficient evidence for some traditional societies to accuse a child of demonic involvement.

These ideas may spread outside the countries of origin through population migration. The Nigerian Pentecostal preacher Helen Ukpabio has a strong following in the USA despite being accused



ABOVE: Father Gabriele Nanni, an official exorcist of the Roman Catholic Church, holds the book of exorcism.

of fostering ideas that have contributed to the torture or abandonment of thousands of Nigerian children, including infants and toddlers suspected of being witches and warlocks. Her culpability was a central contention of the television documentary *Saving Africa's Witch Children*, which followed the work of a charity 'Stepping Stones Nigeria' that rescues children abused during horrific "exorcisms" – splashed with acid, buried alive, dipped in fire, or cast out of their villages because some itinerant preacher said they were possessed. In her book *Unveiling the Mysteries of Witchcraft*, Ukpabio writes that "if a child under the age of two screams in the night, cries and is always feverish with deteriorating health, he or she is a servant of Satan."<sup>12</sup>

In the USA, exorcism and literal belief in satanic possession is found in many Protestant churches embracing charismatic practice. The fictional Landover Baptist Church, featured on the satirical website, [landoverbaptist.org](http://landoverbaptist.org), satirises such ideas.

*'The first thing we do,' Landover Pastor Deacon Fred explains, 'is put a Bible on the ground. If the baby crawls away from the Bible, it immediately becomes a candidate for sterilisation. The possessed child is then placed in a crib with a full grown adult swine to see if the demon will hitch a ride. We then take the demon-possessed pig to Landover Lake to see if it drowns itself in accordance with Scripture. If the pig drowns, the child will stay with its mommy and daddy.'*

In a tragically true case in Texas, though, a 13-month-old girl called Amora was killed with a hammer in what investigators said was the most gruesome scene involving a child they had ever seen. The child also had 15-20 bite marks on her body. Officials believed Amora may have been tortured before her death.

According to the arrest report, the mother admitted that she was present when an exorcism of the demons possessing the body of their child was performed. She went on to say that after her husband killed the baby, they drove to a pawnshop in Henderson to pawn items to pay for an exorcism service; police officers were able to confirm those transactions.<sup>13</sup>

## EXORCISM TODAY

Although much of Europe is today described as secular, some parts have seen dramatic increases in cases of exorcism over the last 30 years. Italy has gone through "an exorcism boom," says Matt Baglio. "Not only are the numbers of officially appointed exorcists on the rise (reported to be somewhere between 350-400), but they have also created their own guild-like association, the International Association of Exorcists, in 1992."<sup>14</sup>

In many cultures and church denominations today, belief in demonic possession is as vivid and literal as it was in earlier periods of history. For many years, the modern psychiatric profession had no time for such ideas. Those believing



ABOVE: Lady Apostle Helen Ukpabio, whose 'exorcisms' of 'witch children' were exposed in a documentary.

themselves to be possessed were dismissed as delusional. The belief was part and parcel of the illness, not the cause. More recently, the profession has taken a more open-minded approach. Many doctors are working with priests within diocesan deliverance teams. One theory is that exorcisms are therapeutic because they encourage those with a history of psychiatric problems to act out their troubles.

While it tends to be those espousing more conservative ideas who believe in the existence of a real Devil as the personification of evil, it is the growth in liberal theology that has enabled psychiatrists and spiritual advisers to find common ground. Sharing a desire to help patients, doctors and liberal theologians are taking a new look at the subject. The language of possession is being viewed as a helpful set of images with which to describe symptoms and suggest solutions.

"The subjective experience of possession, feeling influenced by some foreign, alien force beyond the ego's control is to some extent, an experiential aspect of most mental disorders," wrote Dr Stephen Diamond in *Psychology Today*. "Patients frequently speak of symptoms, unacceptable impulses, thoughts or emotions as ego-alien, and uncharacteristic moods or destructive behaviors as 'not being myself', commonly exclaiming 'I don't know what got into me,' or wondering 'What possessed me to do that?'" Presently, such disturbing symptoms are hypothesised by psychiatry to be due primarily to some underlying neurological or biochemical aberration. Biochemistry, in the form of the tiny neurotransmitter, has become our postmodern *demon du jour* for which all manner of evils are blamed.

"Most psychotherapy does not adequately treat the possession syndrome. For some bedeviled individuals, the traditional ritual of exorcism or myth of 'demonic possession' serve to make more

sense of their suffering than the scientific, secular, biochemical explanations and cognitive-behavioural theories proffered these days by mainstream psychiatry and psychology.

"The truth is, most psychotherapy patients need *far* more than what pharmaceutical intervention and/or cognitive restructuring – the two most popular 'evidence-based' modalities today – can provide. They need and deserve support and accompaniment through their painful, frightening, disorienting, perilous spiritual or existential crises, their 'dark night of the soul'. They need a psychologically meaningful method to confront their metaphorical devils and demons, their repressed anger or rage, and the reality of evil."<sup>15</sup>

How long before exorcisms are available on the NHS? **FT**

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



TED HARRISON is a former BBC religious affairs correspondent, regular *FT* contributor and author of a number of books. His latest, *Apocalypse When?*, is out now from Darton, Longman and Todd.

## NOTES

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# A VERY MODE

It's ages since we had a spooky yarn of possessed children, levitations and exorcism, then along comes this controversial report of a 'portal to Hell' from urban Indiana.

**BOB RICKARD** heads down into the haunted cellar - where he finds there's a whole lot more to the story than what appeared in the tabloids...

**T**owards the end of January this year, the *Indianapolis Star* broke the story of a family in Gary, Indiana, just south of Chicago, claiming to be tormented by demons and reporting a wide range of paranormal phenomena including strange sounds, poltergeist-type phenomena, multiple possessions, one child levitating and another "walking backwards up a wall".<sup>1</sup>

Such complex accounts are relatively rare these days, but what lifts this one above the usual credulous journalism on the subject is that, after many months' research, the paper's reporter, Marisa Kwiatkowski, had accessed "nearly 800 pages" of official case documents obtained by the *Star* and interviews with the police departments of Gary and nearby Hammond, family care workers from the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS), psychologists, family members and a Catholic priest.<sup>2</sup> The mother at the centre of the story - 31-year-old Latoya Ammons - agreed to be interviewed on condition her children not be interviewed or named and was "unusually open". In addition, she "swears by her story," states Kwiatkowski, "and signed releases letting the *Star* review medical, psychological and official records that are not open to the public, and not always flattering."

Sharon Hill, the sceptical owner of the *Doubtful News* website, in commenting upon the *Indianapolis Star* story, pointed out that despite its impressive detail and references, and Kwiatkowski's gentle hint to her readers to "look beyond the claims", it was hardly a sceptical report.<sup>3</sup> This is important, says Hill, because according to a "nonscientific poll" on the *Star*'s site, "there is about a 50/50 split regarding belief in demons; 27 people said they did not believe in demons but did after reading this story. This is a

## IT BEGAN WITH A CLASSIC HORROR MOVIE OPENER - A SWARM OF BIG BLACK FLIES



problem".<sup>4</sup> Yes, it's certainly a problem for US 'skeptics', who would doubtless say every reporter has a duty to be sceptical - by which they too often mean a duty to rubbish every story to which 'skeptics' object.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, and as if to prove Hill's point, much of the subsequent 'journalism' about the 'Portal to Hell', as the house was called, was

derivative, error-filled sensationalism. Worse, the spectacle of public service officials, to whom Ammons turned for help at many points, rushing to declare their own belief in demonic possession, is not an edifying one.

However, having warned her readers, Kwiatkowski, in our opinion, steers relatively calmly through tricky issues and, significantly, manages to get across the story from the point of view of her protagonists (who were definitely *not* sceptical). This is, indeed, *very* important, for it gives us an understanding of what they believed happened and why - something a thoroughly 'skeptical' account in all likelihood would not do. So, using Kwiatkowski's references, with some additions from other reports and interviews, I will try to reconstruct the main dramatic events.

### IT BEGAN WITH FLIES

The ultimate origin of the Ammons family saga of fear is not clear. By all accounts, the family involved - Latoya (or LaToya) Ammons, her mother Rosa Campbell, and Latoya's three children (two boys aged seven and nine and a girl aged 12, in April 2012) - had been troubled long before this 'outbreak'. Three years earlier, in 2009, the Indiana DCS had warned Latoya about the children's consistent truancy.<sup>6</sup> She later admitted to Valerie Washington, a Family Case Manager (FCM) of the Indiana DCS, that "the children fight one another and are abusive to one another and then they pass out." She could not send the children to school because "the spirits would make them sick, or they would be up all night without sleep."<sup>7</sup>

The modern phase seems to have begun in November 2011, when the family moved into a dilapidated rented house on Carolina Street - "a quiet lane lined with small one-story homes"



# ERN HAUNTING



LEFT: Latoya Ammons. ABOVE: The house on Carolina Street, in a Hammond Police Department photo. The 'spooky' shape in the window caused much comment online.

– in Gary. It was here that the strange disturbances began and escalated until 19 April 2012, when, in desperation, they sought help from their family physician, Dr Geoffrey Onyeukwu. Ammons said she told him everything in the hope he might understand. In his notes about the visit, seen by Kwiatkowski, Onyeukwu wrote “delusions of ghost in home” and “hallucinations,” but would not expound any further until there was an official waiver of the patient’s privileged confidentiality.

It began with a classic horror-movie opener, writes Kwiatkowski, “with flies”. Big black flies that swarmed around their screened porch, even during the December chill. Campbell remembers thinking that this was “not normal. We killed them and killed them and killed them, but they kept coming back.”

Gradually, the new house seemed less and less like a home as other strangeness happened. Both Campbell and Ammons mention noises that started after midnight – the sound of someone clumping up the cellar steps and the creak of the cellar door opening. They would check repeatedly, but no one was there; even after they locked that door the disturbance continued. Campbell says she woke one night to see the shadowy figure of a man pacing about the living room. When she went to investigate, she found “large, wet boot prints”.

By the next year, according to grandmother Campbell, “the family’s unease had turned to fear”. They all remember a significant incident that occurred in March 2012, when their friends and relatives had gathered at the house to mourn the death of a mutual acquaintance.

At two in the morning, Latoya was napping in Campbell’s bedroom with her daughter and a friend, when she startled the mourners by screaming. Campbell says she ran to the room and saw the 12-year-old levitating above the bed, unconscious. The mourners were terrified; as some surrounded the girl, praying fervently, Campbell said she saw her granddaughter descend onto the bed. When the girl woke, she had no recollection of what had happened. Understandably, many of the visitors refused to return to the house after that night.

Campbell says she told Latoya: “We need help. We need to talk to someone who knows how to deal with it.” Kwiatkowski comments that “they didn’t know exactly what ‘it’ was, but they believed it was something supernatural.” The pair called



ABOVE: Latoya Ammons's mother, Rosa Campbell, taking the Gary Police Department on a tour of the haunted cellar. BELOW: The stairs down to the cellar.

several local churches and were rebuffed by all except one, which told them their house “had spirits in it.” Their recommendation was that they “clean the home with bleach and ammonia” and anoint every door and window with crosses. In addition, said Ammons, she poured olive oil on the hands and feet of all three children and drew crosses on their foreheads.

Campbell and Ammons told the *Star* that they also consulted two clairvoyants, who hardly consoled them with the news that the family’s home “was besieged by more than 200 demons.” Because this came from ‘experts’ in the subject, and because “it meshed with their Christian beliefs”, Latoya and her mother accepted this fully as an explanation of what was

happening to them. The clairvoyants advised them to move, but, financially, this was out of the question. Instead, again following ‘expert’ advice, they cobbled together an altar in the cellar from a table and a white sheet, placed a candle and a statue of Mary, Joseph and Jesus on it, beside a Bible opened at Psalm 91. Then, with one of the clairvoyants, they conducted their own exorcism, dressed in white and wandering through the house “burning sage and sulfur” while reading Psalm 91.

### A COLLECTIVE DELUSION?

For the next three days, according to Ammons, “nothing odd happened”. On the fourth, bedlam again erupted, as “demons” possessed Ammons herself and her three children. According to mother and grandmother, “the kids’ eyes bulged, evil smiles crossed their faces, and their voices deepened”. This is probably something most parents have observed in their temperamental offspring; but here, in the context of a demonic haunting, their worst fears seemed to become real, or at least a state similar to what fortune tellers call a ‘night-siege’ mentality... a collective *folie* in which imagination and anxiety go into hyperdrive.

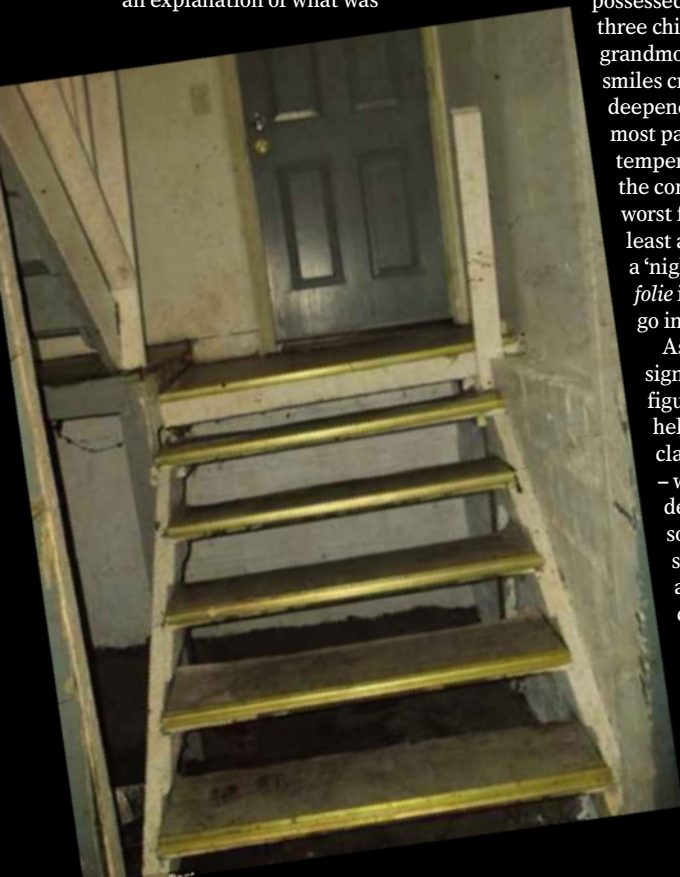
As the story progresses, it is significant that nearly every authority figure to whom the family turned for help – medical staff, care officials, clairvoyants, a priest and the police – were either already believers in demonic possession or at least had some investment in a belief in spirits and the supernatural. Take away the religious element and this case might well have been reported as a particularly nasty poltergeist haunting. As it is, we see a culture in which a significant level of credulity actually insulates the

family from any external references that might serve as a reality check.

Ammons herself was becoming affected. She said there were moments when she too felt she was being “possessed”. She told the *Star* of “feeling weak, lightheaded and warm”; her body shook and she felt “out-of-control... You can tell it’s different, something supernatural.” Campbell was relatively untouched by the demonic goings on around her. She said she was “born with protection from evil”; that she, and others like her, “have a guardian” that protects them.

Among the violent phenomena reported, the daughter’s head was slammed into a headboard causing a wound that needed stitches. During a later interview, the girl told a mental health officer that she sometimes felt as if she were being “choked, or held down so she couldn’t speak or move”. She also heard a voice say that she would “die within 20 minutes and never see her family again”. The youngest boy was overheard, as he sat in a closet, apparently talking to a boy that no one else could see; the invisible boy “was describing what it felt like to be killed”. On another occasion, he was observed to fly out of the bathroom “as if he’d been thrown”. “Some nights were so bad the family slept at a hotel,” wrote Kwiatkowski. It was a sign of their desperation and fear; no mean thing considering their poverty. It was at this point – 19 April 2012 – that they went to Dr Onyeukwu.

Ammons and her mother, Campbell, were forthcoming about the pandemonium that then erupted in Onyeukwu’s community centre clinic in Gary. The boys began cursing the doctor, “raging at him in demonic voices” and suddenly the youngest boy was “lifted and thrown into the wall with nobody touching him”. Then, both boys “passed out” and, as Ammons and Campbell



cradled one each, someone at the clinic called 911. “Seven or eight police officers and multiple ambulances showed up,” Onyeukwu told the *Star*. “It was “bizarre. I’ve never heard anything like that in my life,” he said and admitted, “I was scared myself when I walked into the room.”

Both boys were referred to a Methodist hospital in Merrillville – to which Dr Onyeukwu is affiliated – for an assessment of their behaviour. It was at this point that the Indiana DCS were called in, and by the end of that month the DCS was granted temporary wardship of all three children by the Lake Juvenile Court. [8]

## THE WALL-WALKER

Regarding the much-cited incident of the older boy “walking backwards up a wall”, the following is a précis of statements in the *Star* investigation, the Indiana DCS documents, and police reports.

When the boys woke up in the hospital, the older boy acted rationally, but the youngest screamed and thrashed. Campbell said it took five men to hold him down. Someone called DCS and asked the agency to investigate Ammons for possible child abuse or neglect. The male caller – identified only as ‘RS’ in the DCS reports<sup>9</sup> – speculated that Ammons might have a mental illness and believed that the children “were performing for their mother” and that she was “encouraging their behaviour”. RS stated that he believed that “a month ago everything was relatively normal [and] within the last month it started with one child acting out and fighting, then it was with all the children being very violent with each other in public but especially with the mother present.” RS also added that Latoya “may have mental health concerns”; later the hospital psychiatrist who evaluated her determined that she was of “sound mind”.

The DCS family case manager, Valerie Washington, filed the following account after interviewing the family in hospital. Firstly, mother and children were healthy and free of marks or bruises. As she spoke with Ammons, the youngest boy started growling with his teeth showing. His eyes rolled back in his head. The boy locked his hands around his older brother’s throat and refused to let go until adults pried his hands open. The physical outbursts of hitting and kicking continued until Latoya “placed the child in a gentle therapeutic hold. The child became limp and was placed on the bed, but was difficult to arouse [and] did not recall what happened.”

Later that evening, Washington – accompanied by registered nurse Willie Lee Walker and grandmother Campbell – interviewed the two boys in a small room. As they discussed the placement of the younger boy, he began staring into his brother’s eyes and growling again. The older brother “stated that ghosts were attacking him and his brother,” and began head-butting his grandmother’s stomach. Campbell grabbed her grandson’s hands and started praying as he was saying, “in a different deep voice... ‘It’s time to die. I will kill you.’”

What happened next took the



## “THE KIDS’ EYES BULGED AND EVIL SMILES CROSSED THEIR FACES”

professionals by surprise. Washington’s account, written within a couple of days of the incident, states: “[The older boy] had a weird grin on his face and began to walk backwards while the grandmother was holding his hand and he walked up the wall backwards while holding the grandmother’s hand and he never let go. He flipped over and landed on his feet in front of the grandmother and sat down in the chair. A few minutes later he looked up as if he was back to himself.”

Walker told the *Star* later: “He walked up the wall, flipped over her and stood there. There’s no way he could’ve done that.” When police asked Washington, later, whether the boy had taken a run at the wall, as though performing an acrobatic trick, she told them: “No. The boy glided backward on the floor, wall and ceiling”.

Washington’s report continues: “FCM Washington and psychologists left the room immediately and went to the attending doctor, Dr Richardson, and told him what was just witnessed in the Ammons family room.” When Kwiatkowski sought clarification from Washington, she “did not respond”. However, Washington did tell police that

she “was scared when it happened and ran out of the room [and] Walker ran out of the room with me.” “We didn’t know what was going on,” Walker told the *Star*.

Dr Richardson did not believe them, “so he asked if the child can perform this act again.” Walker – referred to as “the psychologist” in the DCS report – said he told the doctor that he seriously doubted it, and that “the kid was not himself when he did that.” They all went back to the room to ask the boy to repeat the feat. “When he tried to walk up the wall again he could not get his balance nor place his feet properly,” Washington noted.

Walker, who said he previously believed in demons and spirits, thought the boy’s behaviour had “some demonic spirit to it”, but also that it might be the result of a mental illness. The police report quoted Washington saying she believed there could be an “evil influence” affecting the family.<sup>10</sup>

Ammons spent that night at the hospital with her younger son, while Campbell took Ammons’s daughter and elder son to a relative’s home in Gary. The next day was the youngest’s eighth birthday. Ammons said DCS officials asked Campbell to bring the older children back to the hospital, presumably to talk more about what happened. After celebrating the boy’s birthday, Washington broke it to them that the children wouldn’t be going home. Ammons told the *Star* she and her children were crying because they didn’t want to be separated. “We’d already been through so much and fought so hard for our lives,” she said. “We were beating it, whatever we were fighting. We made it through together as a team, and they separated us.”

The children “were removed from the mother’s care to ensure their safety.” All of them “were experiencing spiritual and emotional distress,” Washington said. The older two were placed with the St Joseph’s Carmelite Sisters in East Chicago; the youngest for psychiatric evaluation at a Christian Haven in Wheatfield, after several facilities refused his admission. Latoya would not be reunited with her children until six months later.



TOP: The makeshift altar. ABOVE: DCS Worker Samantha Ilic claimed that after touching a mysterious oily substance her finger turned white.



ABOVE: Father Michael Maginot, the priest at St Stephen Martyr Church in Merrillville, concluded that “the family was being tormented by demons”.

## ENTER THE EXORCIST

On the morning of 20 April 2012, Father Michael Maginot, the priest at St Stephen Martyr Church in Merrillville, received a call from David Neville, chaplain at the Methodist Hospital, asking him to come and exorcise a nine-year-old boy. Now why would a hospital chaplain do that... unless he, too, believed in demonic possession? Maginot agreed to interview the family and, two days later, met Latoya Ammons and her mother, Rosa Campbell, at their Carolina Street home.

As Campbell detailed their bizarre story for him, Maginot noticed that the bathroom light was flickering. Each time the priest went to investigate, the flickering stopped. Maginot made an *ad hoc* deductive leap; it *must* be a sign of demonic interference. “It was scared of me,” he later told the *Indianapolis Star*. Ditto with the Venetian blinds that were swinging with “no air current”. Then, he spotted “wet footprints” in the living room. Amazingly, it took the whole four-hour interview to conclude that “the family was being tormented by demons [and] there were ghosts in the house.” When Ammons complained that she had a headache – as anyone would, enduring all this – Maginot placed a crucifix against her head. “She convulsed”, he said. Before he left, he went through the house, blessing each room with holy water. His parting words: “Leave because it isn’t safe.” Ammons and Campbell promptly moved in with a relative.

## HE WANTED TO SEARCH THE DIRT UNDER THE STAIRS FOR A PENTAGRAM

A few days later, the two women were back at the house, this time to let Valerie Washington check the condition of the home. She was accompanied by a police officer from Lake County and two others from the Gary and Hammond police departments. Ammons refused to go inside, but Campbell agreed to go with the group. Ammons’s makeshift altar was still in place, and the rings of salt around the base of the walls that she hoped would “dissuade the demons [that] seemed to emanate from beneath the stairs”.

Captain Charles Austin, a 36-year veteran of the Gary Police Department, was one of those officers; he had been asked by the DCS to inspect the Ammons home for any carbon dioxide leaks or health risks. He duly reported that “the home has multiple religious shrines, bibles throughout the home, plenty of food, the home was clean.” Initially, he

suspected that the family had “concocted an elaborate tale as a way to make money”, but, after visiting them and speaking to witnesses, he said: “I am a believer.” This public conversion was inevitably turned into headlines implying that the chief endorsed the reality of Ammons’s claims.

During the interview with Campbell, one officer’s audio recorder malfunctioned. According to the Lake County police record, another officer recorded audio and, when he played it back later, heard a sound like an unknown voice whispering “Hey”. That officer also took photos of the house. In one photo of the basement stairs, there was what appeared to be a cloudy white image in the upper right-hand corner, said to resemble, when enlarged, a face. Other photos were likewise said to show “strange silhouettes”. Chief Austin also claimed to find odd shapes on photos taken with his iPhone, and he began reporting on all sorts of relatively minor malfunctions in his home and car.

While Austin declared himself “a believer”, the mental health professionals assessing Ammons and her children remained unconvinced. Clinical psychologist Stacy Wright, who examined Ammons’s youngest boy, said he tended to act possessed when he was challenged, redirected or asked questions he didn’t want to answer. In her evaluation, she wrote that he seemed coherent and logical except when he talked about demons, when his stories became “bizarre, fragmented and



ABOVE: Father Maginot holds out the crucifix he used in performing three Church-authorized exorcisms on Latoya Ammons in June 2012.

illogical,” and changed each time he told them. He would also change the subject, seemingly at random. Wright concluded that the boy “did not suffer from a true psychotic disorder.” Instead, she continues, “This appears to be an unfortunate and sad case of a child who has been induced [sic] into a delusional system perpetuated by his mother and potentially reinforced” by other relatives. Clinical psychologist Joel Schwartz, who evaluated the other siblings, came to a similar conclusion. Regarding Ammons’s daughter, he said there is a need “to assess the extent to which [she] may have been unduly influenced by her mother’s concerns that the family was exposed to paranormal experiences.”

Latoya Ammons herself was examined several times by psychologists, who found her “guarded,” but not overtly “experiencing symptoms of psychosis or thought disorder.” One psychologist recommended that she be re-assessed by a specialist “to determine whether her religiosity may be masking underlying delusional ideations or perceptual disturbances.” Despite the probing, Ammons and all three children consistently maintained that they were possessed by demons.

After the assessments and placements, the DCS set goals for the family with the aim of reunification. All were admonished to participate in therapy to address past behaviour and “take responsibility for their actions”. The children were “not to

discuss demons and being possessed”.

Ammons was urged to get a job and seek new accommodation; above all, she must learn to use “alternate forms of discipline not directly related to religion and demon possession,” and “not use possession as an excuse for the children’s behaviours”.<sup>11</sup>

### A PORTAL TO HELL

While Ammons worked on meeting those objectives, police and DCS officials continued to investigate alleged “strange happenings” in the house – only the investigating group kept getting larger.

On the afternoon of 10 May, Campbell, Ammons and Austin went back to the Carolina Street house. The two other police officers from the initial visit joined them after work hours. Also present were Father Maginot, two Lake County officers with a police dog, and DCS family case manager Samantha Ilic (who was there because Washington refused to enter the house again).

The atmosphere was largely determined by Maginot, very much enjoying his role as an authority. According to the Lake County police report, he wanted to search the dirt under the stairs for a pentagram “or objects that might have been cursed”; anything might indicate “a demonic presence and possible portal to hell” or perhaps even someone buried there. A hole was dug, which yielded nothing but minor domestic trash. An officer filled it in and Maginot scattered some blessed salt over it

“as a barrier to evil”.

This time, it was Ilic’s turn to be thoroughly, and understandably, spooked. While in the basement, she had touched some “strange dripping liquid” which felt “slippery yet sticky”. Back upstairs in the living room with the others she said the fingers on her left hand were starting to tingle and whiten; they felt “broken”. Within 10 minutes, she said she couldn’t breathe, feeling like she was “having a panic attack”; so she went outside to wait for the group. As though on cue, Ammons complained of a headache and muscle pain, and went outside to join Ilic. Austin said he left the house at nightfall. He said he had “been shot at and investigated murders, rapes and armed robberies during more than three decades on the force” but he was not “staying in the house past dark”.

The remaining officers stayed inside, now investigating an oil-like substance dripping from venetian blinds. They couldn’t figure out where it was coming from. To make sure Campbell or Ammons hadn’t poured oil on the blinds, the officers used paper towels to clean it off, then sealed the room for 25 minutes. When they went back in, according to police records, the oil had reappeared. Maginot sprang forth to relieve their confusion: “The liquid was a manifestation of a paranormal or demonic presence”. He included this in his report to Bishop Dale Melczek, when he sought permission to perform an exorcism on Ammons.<sup>12</sup>



ABOVE LEFT: Gary Police Captain Charles Austin "figured a movie would come of this". ABOVE: TV host Zak Bagans bought the Gary 'demon house' for \$35,000.

## THE EXORCISMS AND AFTER

Maginot said Bishop Melczek had not authorised an exorcism in 21 years as a bishop of the Diocese of Gary, something a spokesperson for the diocese would not confirm for confidentiality reasons. Melczek initially denied Maginot's request to do a church-sanctioned exorcism, Maginot said, and told him to contact other priests who have performed "minor exorcisms" which "do not require church approval". In the end, Maginot had to look it up on the Internet.

That same day, he did an "intense blessing" on the home "to expel bad spirits" and performed the minor exorcism on Ammons. In attendance were two police officers and Ilic. Ilic said later that she "got chills" during the rite, which took nearly two hours. "We felt like someone was in the room with us; someone breathing down your neck." Like the police chief, she began to notice a string of accidents and medical problems and felt "something was going on" but did not immediately describe it as "demonic".

After the minor ritual, Maginot told Ammons to "look up the names of demons that were tormenting her" and identify demons that represented the family's problems. He intended to use those names to fight the demons in further exorcisms. Ammons said she and a friend looked up demons' names online until they "found names that fit". Plainly, this is not rocket science. When their computer kept shutting down, she said, she "felt sick, lightheaded". We've all been there!

In the end, Bishop Melczek gave Maginot permission to use an authorised exorcism. So, in June 2012, Maginot conducted three major exorcisms on Ammons at his church in Merrillville. He said he could tell how strong the demon was "by how much Ammons convulsed". Two police officers who had kept

in touch with Maginot over this case were on hand "in case she needed to be restrained".

In an interview with MailOnline.com, Maginot explained his own theory of Ammons's distress. He was convinced that a former lover was a trigger. Every time he asked her about this man – who is not the father of any of the children – Latoya displayed more "symptoms of possession: fever, cold, headaches, nausea and convulsions".<sup>13</sup>

Ammons said she prayed with Maginot until it became too painful; that it felt as if something inside her was trying to hold on and inflict pain at the same time; pain "as intense as giving birth. I was hurting all over from the inside out." At this time, she and her mother had moved to Indianapolis, about 135 miles (217km) to the south of Gary, but they drove back for the exorcisms and court hearings, and to visit the children still in foster care. After a final ritual – in which demon names were written on paper and burned – and a blessing of their new home, Ammons said, her nightmares ended. She now "lives without fear".

The last DCS family case manager in charge, Christina Olejnik, described how well the children were responding and congratulated Latoya Ammons in complying with all the "court ordered services", getting a job, furnishing a new home, and even helping her kids with their homework. In her application for the ending of the state wardship, Olejnik said that they "have not experienced any issues with demonic presences or spirits" in their new home and that "The family is no longer fixated solely on religion to explain or cope with the children's behaviour issues."<sup>14</sup>

Ammons regained trial custody of her children in November 2012. The DCS continued to check on the children, to make

sure they were going to school, until the case was finally closed in February 2013. Ammons called the day she picked them up from the DCS office in Gary, the happiest of her life. "I hadn't been that happy in God knows how long." The children – now aged 13, 10 and eight – said they felt safe after they left the house on Carolina Street. The demonic voices and violent behaviour were also left behind after their separation and care placements; an entry in one DCS report even notes that their attitudes to authority had improved.

However, in a parting statement, Ammons declared that it was God, and not the psychologists, who resolved her problems. "When you hear something like this," she said, "don't assume it's not real, because I've lived it. I know it's real."

## THE WRAP

On 29 January 2014, two days after the story broke in the *Indianapolis Star*, the Ammons home in Gary was bought for \$35,000 by Zak Bagans, host and executive producer of *Ghost Adventures* on the Travel Channel. Or rather, news of the purchase was leaked to the press suspiciously close to the date Marisa Kwiatkowski's article first appeared in the *Indianapolis Star*, while the story was still hot. If Bagans was not behind that brilliant piece of PR timing, he certainly had the savvy to make use of it. Describing the opportunity this 'haunted house' presented as momentous as that of a UFO landing in open view, he said he plans to use the house for "research" into the purported paranormal activity. Charles Reed, who sold the property to Bagans, said media interest in the house has been unbelievable, "so much so that a [interim] tenant called Gary police to complain when reporters and photographers showed up".<sup>15</sup>

- Within three days of the *Star* breaking

the story, media outlets in more than a dozen countries clamoured for interviews with Latoya Ammons, her family and others mentioned in *The Star's* report. She said people showed up at her current home in Indianapolis, "bombarded my Facebook page and falsely claimed they were my friends". She did, however, on 30 January 2014, agree to talk to *Inside Edition* (an interview much linked on the Internet).<sup>16</sup>

- In early February 2014, Father Michael Maginot, the Catholic priest in Merrillville who exorcised Ammons and blessed her home – and who was quite open in talking about demons and possession – announced that he was to appear on *The O'Reilly Factor*, a talk show on FoxNews, and had signed a film contract with the Evergreen Media Group, currently producing *The Conjuring 2: The Enfield Poltergeist*. Evergreen chairman Tony DeRosa-Grund called it a "standard deal". Maginot said he signed the contract because he felt Evergreen "wouldn't sensationalise what happened". I wouldn't bet on that, Mike. But there's no stopping him now; he went on to signed a contract with Zak Bagans (see above) to make a documentary about the case with an on-camera interview, and participation inside the home on "an investigation" for Bagans. Hope it's not a 'summoning'.

Another person who has been relishing

the media interest is Captain Charles Austin of the Gary Police. He told the *Star* he had been contacted by media from 20 countries. He "expected notoriety and figured a movie would come of this", but "wouldn't go back to the house unless required to do so for an investigation".<sup>17</sup>

- A week after the ordeal of Latoya Ammons was all over the world's media, her stepmother was telling the *Chicago Post-Tribune* that this side of her family "believe none of it went on". The unnamed woman (who still lives in Gary) told columnist Jerry Davich: "My children – Latoya's brothers and sisters – are outraged. They know the true story and they're upset about the family name being dragged through the mud. [We] hoped this would all blow over [but] it has not. There are lots of twists and turns that have not been revealed." Davich said the stepmother went on to say "unflattering things" about her stepdaughter "whom she hasn't seen in several years", but he was careful to gloss over them.<sup>18</sup>

- Finally, Sharon Hill, within a day of the *Star* story, managed to find a story about Latoya Ammons published by Fox59<sup>19</sup> – a Fox-affiliated TV news station for the Indianapolis area. In August 2013, barely six months after reclaiming her children and moving away from Gary to a rented

apartment in Indianapolis, Ammons was publicly complaining about the living standards at her La Esmeralda Apartment block. Apparently, the deteriorating conditions had already led to more than 3,200 calls to police since 2008, causing City Prosecutor Samantha Dewester to file public nuisance lawsuits against the owners. Presumably unaware of Ammons's sensational flight from Gary's Gateway to Hell, she was interviewed as a typical resident.<sup>20</sup>

Ammons told Fox59 that she had complained about "mold, electrical outlets that give off a smoke odor" and the violence outside her door. "It's just not safe for children," she said. Not a demon in sight, except, perhaps for those incarnated as landlords and their agents. "I don't know what they're talking about," the on-site manager said. "It's just like you're scared, so you just want to move on to something better," said Ammons.

Well, it worked for her before. **FT**

#### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**BOB RICKARD** started *Fortean Times* in 1973 and was its co-editor for 30 years. He is the author of numerous books on *forteana* and a founder of the Charles Fort Institute. He is currently researching the roots of British *forteana* thought in his 'First Fortean's' series in FT.

#### SOURCES & NOTES

1 Marisa Kwiatkowski, 'The Dispossession of Latoya Ammons', *Indianapolis Star*, 25 Jan 2014: <http://archive.indystar.com/article/20140125/NEWS/301250013/The-dispossession-Latoya-Ammons-and-Strange-events-lead-Ind.-family-to-resort-to-exorcism/>, USA Today, 27 Jan 2014: [www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/01/27/family-possessed-seeks-exorcism/4939953/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/01/27/family-possessed-seeks-exorcism/4939953/)

It is reasonable to ask why a story of a family in 'supernatural' torment – a story that began around two years previously and had a happy ending in mid-2013 – did not appear until 25 January 2014 when Kwiatkowski's article was published in the *Star*. She told a fellow journalist, Jerry Davich, that "much of that time was waiting on requested public records," (see note 11) and getting clearance to use them. What took the journalists by surprise was the intense media storm and circus that the story triggered.

2 Redacted copies of selected official documents were placed online by Marisa Kwiatkowski. These are my main sources for reconstructing the story and are referenced below. Other sources were consulted, but their accounts were mostly derivative.

Kwiatkowski later provided a selection of headlines from

news outlets around the world that repeated her scoop, which she said "included some that looked vaguely familiar" (which I infer as a polite reference to wholesale copying); and "some of which may be a tad more sensational than accurate", (which I infer as a polite reference to utter credulity): [www.indystar.com/story/news/investigations/2014/01/28/internet-reaction-to-the-exorcisms-of-Latoya-ammons/4960351/](http://www.indystar.com/story/news/investigations/2014/01/28/internet-reaction-to-the-exorcisms-of-Latoya-ammons/4960351/)

3 Sharon Hill, 'Demonic tale sounds like Hollywood, has little else to hold it up', *Doubtful News*, 26 Jan 2014: <http://doubtfulnews.com/2014/01/demonic-tale-sounds-like-hollywood-has-little-else-to-hold-it-up/>. The answer to Hill's criticism that Kwiatkowski's report was not sceptical, came from Kwiatkowski herself in her response to a colleague on the *Chicago Post-Tribune*, Jerry Davich, who "asked her flat out" whether she believe Ammons's story or not (see note 18). "She tactfully replied 'I'm not paid to have an opinion'." Davich continues: "What she means is that she's paid to write stories without inserting her opinion. Surely she has an opinion about this story and other ones, too. She just can't print it or publicly say it."

4 Sharon Hill also, rightly, said that much of the phenomena supposed to have taken place

would not have been out of place in a Hollywood horror movie; in fact, in recounting the events the narrators might well have been subconsciously drawing on or influenced by Hollywood imagery to communicate their experiences. This does not necessarily mean, of itself, that their experiences were not authentic perceptions and reactions. (I shall leave these aspects to a sociologist or folklorist in need of a topic for a thesis).

5 For example, the 'skeptical' Metabunk site offered only two interpretations: the Ammons family were "mentally ill and/or faking it". Precisely where the experiences of the other witnesses, including care workers, police and priest fit into this unhelpful 'explanation' is not at all clear. [www.metabunk.org/threads/latoya-ammons-a-real-life-demonic-possession.3012/](http://www.metabunk.org/threads/latoya-ammons-a-real-life-demonic-possession.3012/).

6 The first 'intake' report (19 April 2012), taken by Family Case Manager Michelle Baloski, 'Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect': [www.documentcloud.org/documents/1004829-dcs-preliminary-report.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1004829-dcs-preliminary-report.html).

7 The second 'intake' report (23 April 2012), taken by Family Case Manager Valerie Washington, 'Report of Preliminary Inquiry and Investigation': [www.documentcloud.org/documents/1004899-intake-officers-report.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1004899-intake-officers-report.html).

officers-report.html.

8 Child Custody form signed by FCM Valerie Washington (undated): [www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005396-taking-custody-without-a-court-order.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005396-taking-custody-without-a-court-order.html).

9 'RS' denotes 'Report Source' and referred to as male. From the tone, wording and other internal evidence in the report, my guess is that the informant was their family physician Dr Geoffrey Onyeukwu. See notes 6 and 7 above.

10 Details from the police reports are from the following: the Hammond Police report: [www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005398-excerpt-from-hammond-police-report.html#document/p1/a140410](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005398-excerpt-from-hammond-police-report.html#document/p1/a140410) and the Lake County Police report: [www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005559-excerpt-from-lake-county-police-report.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005559-excerpt-from-lake-county-police-report.html).

11 DCS case plan: [www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005561-dcs-case-plan.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005561-dcs-case-plan.html)

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# forum

## The Ark that never was...

**RICHARD SEARY** argues that Noah's Ark will never be found – because in the original Hebrew text it was never a ship in the first place...



**RICHARD SEARY** lives in Australia and has a long association with *FT*. When not studying and teaching archaic 'biblical' Hebrew, he keeps up an abiding interest in the weird.

Christian fundamentalists love searching for Noah's 'Ark', and there are many claims to its having been found. Therein lies the problem, for Noah's 'Ark' (in Hebrew *tay'bah*, which is actually a loan-word from Babylonian and refers to a 'sacred enclosure')<sup>1</sup> The only other use of the term is for the basket/container in which baby Moses was placed (Exodus 2:3, 5). The story is a mystical text that was never meant to be taken literally, and linguistic analysis of the text provides more than enough evidence to substantiate this.

All non-Hebrew texts of Genesis 6:14-9:28 – the complete Noah account – contain significant errors and mistranslations. The first major mistranslation concerns from what the Ark was created or constructed.

"Gopher-wood", I hear the evangelicals yell...

The major problem is that there is no such thing as 'gopher wood'. The Hebrew term *gof'er* actually means lava, as in what comes out of volcanos, and the word is used in a variety of ways, all relating back to volcanic activity such as falling ash, fire from heaven and burning out of the earth. For example, see the following passages: Genesis 6:14 (the substance of the Ark) and 19:24 (what fell on Sodom and Gomorrah); Job 18:15 (part of a prophecy of destruction); Psalms 11:6 (hot ash); Isaiah 30:33 (a pyro-plastic flow) and 34:9 (hardened lava flow); Ezekiel 38:22 (a hot ash cloud).

So the story has it that the Ark was made of some igneous material. The old King James Version (1611) translates *gof'erith* (the feminine, active rendering of *gof'er*) as 'brimstone' – except in the Noah story where the word is left untranslated. Modern versions render

it as 'sulphur' generally, again except in the Noah account, and the New International Version (1973, 1985) completely distorts the Hebrew and substitutes 'cypress'.

The second major mistranslation is what the 'flood' and the 'waters' actually were. The Noah story uses a rare and unique term for the 'flood' – *mab'boul* – which is only used in the Noah account and Psalm 29:10 (the usual term for 'flood' is *na'har* and literally means an overflowing river or stream) and has the very specific meaning of the flow of stars across the heavens, e.g. the Milky Way. In Jewish non-biblical mystical texts such as the Zohar and Kabbalistic writings, *mab'boul* is used in the context of 'sparks' – souls that are little bits of the Divine/Universe.

So according to an accurate reading of the text, Noah (his name means 'rest',

'quiet', 'resting place') built a sacred enclosure of some kind of igneous material following a form of sacred geometry (a Babylonian speciality); filled it with life-forms then floated across the starry skies while the Earth was 'drowned' by falling stars.

There are numerous other false translations in the Noah story: the so-called 'window' (*tzahar* – literally 'to glisten', 'light emitting'; Genesis 6:16) was, according to various Jewish mystics and commentators (Chizkuni, 13<sup>th</sup> century, Rashi, 11<sup>th</sup> century, et al) actually a jewel or a precious stone that refracted light.

So there you have it, the fundamentalists have downgraded an interesting mystical text to a gross story about a boat crammed full of animals and this then allows them to use the flood story to explain ancient fossils and other inconvenient facts that would spoil their schema. By relying on a false text, they can relax in the safety of their own delusions. I suspect that an accurate reading of the text will, in turn, generate yet more nonsense with the idea that the 'Ark' was actually a spaceship that floated across the galaxy and landed on Earth to discharge its cargo of life forms. **FT**

<sup>1</sup> See Richard-Rafael Joachim, *Complete Biblical Hebrew: English Root and Significant Word Dictionary*, Amazon, 2012.



NOAH'S ARK ON MOUNT ARRAT, SIMON DE MYLE. C. 1570

# Down from the mountain

Noah's Ark expeditions have undergone a revival in recent years. **JERRY GLOVER** catches up and asks if the 'arkeologists' claims could amount to anything?



**JERRY GLOVER** is an independent researcher of historical enigmas, and a regular contributor to *FT*. He has written and produced for stage, radio and the small screen.

The imminent release of the film *Noah*, directed by Darren Aronofsky, made me wonder what resulted from the sensational announcement in April 2010 that Noah's Ark had been 'discovered' (yet again!) on Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey (see **FT263:4-5**), as things had gone curiously quiet on that front since then. To recap: team NAMI (Noah's Ark Ministries International) garnered worldwide headlines by announcing the finding at above 4,000ft (1220m) of a "huge wooden structure frozen in the ice", consisting of seven spaces described as shelters for animals, rooms, and stairs, all of which was "made from ancient hardwood". Team NAMI proclaimed "99.9 per cent" certainty that this was Noah's Ark.

There have been similarly sensational claims before this (see **FT120:34-39, 139:66**): the SEARCH Foundation expedition of 1969,<sup>1</sup> the hull-shaped geological feature championed by Ron Wyatt from the 1970s and the "petrified wood" from an "aircraft carrier-sized" object found by Bob Cornuke's team in 2006.<sup>2</sup> These had attempted to use hard science to nullify a potential confirmation bias strongly influenced by biblical literalism. The Evangelical Christian nature of the NAMI team would suggest such literalism at work – but who else would explore a treacherous volcano to find the most improbable craft ever built? Clearly, they had found *something* that could, to the uninformed imagination, resemble a wooden structure sturdy enough to survive a deluge. Photos showed team members inside a wooden construction, something never seen before. The carbon-dating evidence of a timber sample from 2370 BC underscored the newsworthiness of the event, as did the academic presence of Dr Ahmet Özbek, a geologist at the Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University in Turkey, and Professor Otkay Belli, an institute director at the University of Istanbul. With all this

## Photos showed team members inside a wooden construction

evidence and academic support, where was the subsequent TV special with Dan Snow yomping up the glacier to confirm the importance of this discovery? Where was the expected aftermath of the discovery?

Soon after the NAMI press conference, unexpected developments temporarily engulfed team NAMI. By September 2010, Dr Randall Price and Dr Don Patton, the team's original archaeologist and geologist, were giving vociferous opposition to the finding. Patton stated that NAMI were "probably deceived" by their Kurdish guide, Ahmet Ertugrul ('Parasut') who employed "carpenters from the Black Sea" to build a "movie set" in which thin wood was charred to make it look ancient... and presumably tarred, as God told Noah to do. Turns out, NAMI claimed another piece of "fossilised" ark wood, which was actually volcanic tufa, from an expedition in 2006 when Dr Saih Bayraktutan, head of Seismology at Ataturk University, was asked to participate in dating the wood but declined after a cursory glance at the sample.<sup>3</sup> Stating the whole thing was "a stupid fraud", Patton predicted that NAMI's next earth-shattering discovery would be to find Noah's house on the other side of the mountain. So far this has not happened.<sup>4</sup>

Patton also revealed the wider context of an impressive photo that flashed worldwide, revealing it to have been about the size of a small chicken coop rather than a large room. NAMI responded to Patton and Price's critical report, accusing them in several statements of "seriously defaming and damaging the reputation" of the group members and the Turkish government, and of a hidden agenda on Price's part

to undermine them to further his own Ark research.<sup>5</sup> The point about rivalry was possibly relevant, since Price had already been touting his own discovery of two "anomalies" on Mount Ararat detected by "unique technology, not commercially available" that can perform subsurface scanning "in real time" from a satellite. Curious then, that Price's trump card to demonstrate his discovery was just a hand-drawn contour map showing two solid rectangular features split apart, *Titanic*-style, near the mountain summit. Price had taken great trouble to construct a bespoke shelter for his excavation site in 2009, lugging generators up the glacier and making an 18ft (5m) test hole, which, he intriguingly announced later, exposed running water that "shouldn't be there" because "something is there that's causing the ice not to melt" (what could *that* be?).<sup>6</sup> Accusations and counter-accusations occupied the rest of 2010; NAMI's responses moving from a hurt and disappointed tone to a fully-referenced exposure of Randall's "lies" and "fraud" – which in the context of the biblical-literalist beliefs impelling these expeditions is a way of implying that the attacks on them were inspired by Satan. The dormant volcano was living up to its Turkish name of Agri Dag: 'the heavy mountain'.

The Turkish academics who might have avoided all this rancour with impartial scholarly standards seemed to have deserted the ship by this point.<sup>7</sup> Randall Price noted that Professor Belli had never been to the NAMI site, but NAMI pressed on with their mission regardless, releasing a DVD entitled *Days of Noah 2: Apocalypse*, going on a social media splurge, and recruiting Dr Joel Klenck, president of the Paleontological Research Corporation, to raise their scientific credibility. In language falling just short of endorsing the Noah's Ark claim, Klenck nevertheless confirmed the "monumental wooden structure" contained joinery that showed "a remarkable degree of complexity" (mortise-and-tenon assembly) dating to the Late Epipaleolithic period (13,200-9,600 BC). Ceramic vessels at the site conformed to a local style in use a couple of centuries either side of 6000 BC. Klenck's analysis was published only as generalised press releases in which he took the opportunity to congratulate team NAMI and chide other scholars for discrediting its claims "either because the data threatens their theories, they object to the scientific discipline, they acquire significant

### NOTES

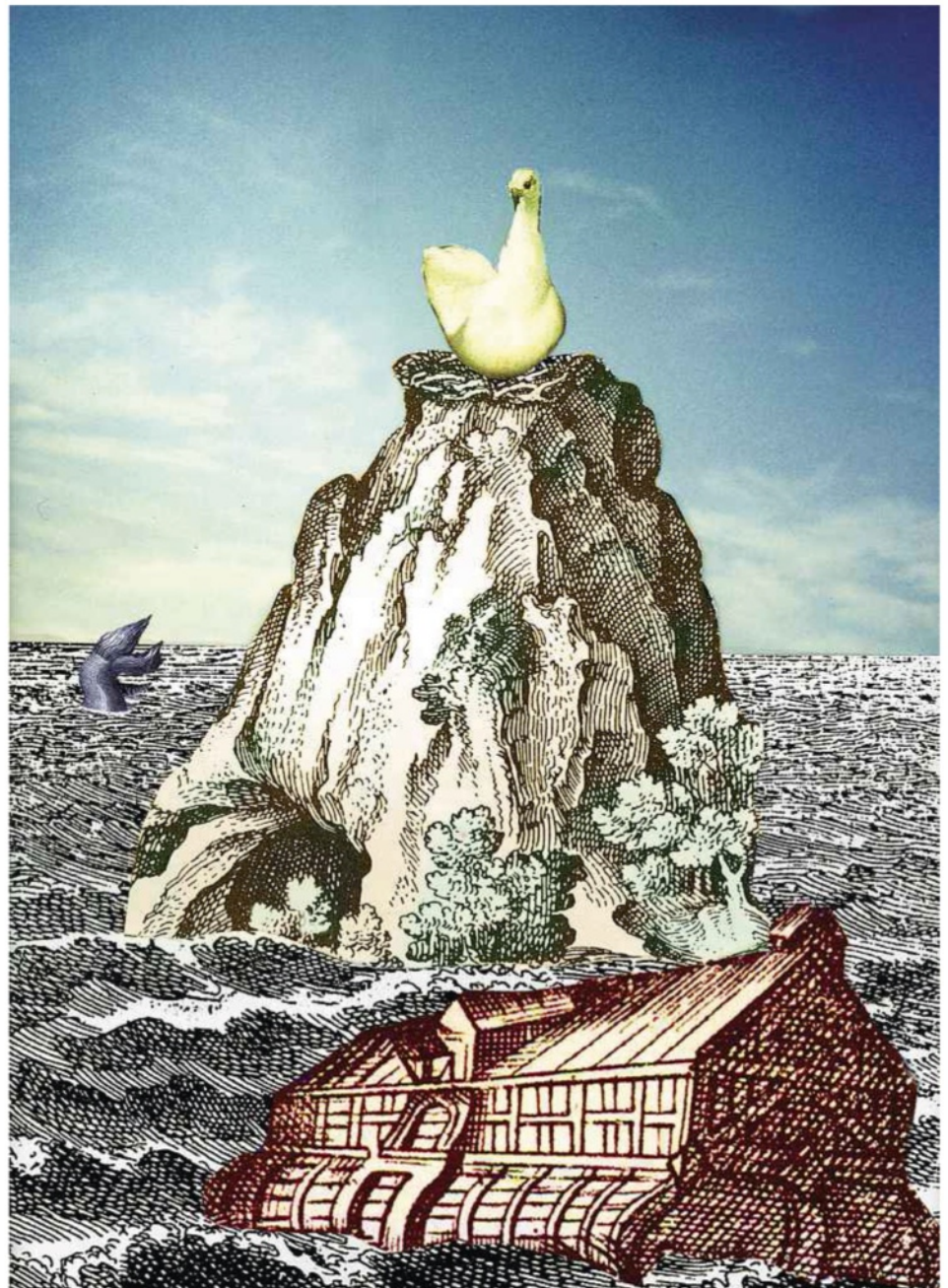
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- 5 noahsarksearch.net/eng/statement.php.
- 6 Youtube.com: "Searching for Noah's Ark, Randall Price - Clip".
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- 8 tinyurl.com/lj8of4h; tinyurl.com/qgkzawz.
- 9 prurgent.com/2012-05-27/pressrelease244030.htm.
- 10 A 2011 Gallup survey reports 30% of Americans interpret the Bible as the literal word of God. Creationist and intelligent design beliefs of the origin of life total 39% of the UK population in YouGov Prospect Survey Results 2010.
- 11 Youtube.com: "Noah's Ark? Arch Bonnema".
- 12 Also because a tablet held by the British Museum shows the king climbing a mountain. Irving Finkel, *The Ark Before Noah*, Hodder & Stoughton (2014), pp291-301.

monies from alleged Ark expeditions, or a combination thereof.”<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, by May 2012, NAMI members and Ahmet Ertugrul (‘Parasut’), the mountaineer who initially found the site, were advertising for 1,000 people to join a hiking expedition in which a day was to be spent on the mountain itself – not at the actual site, but at a nearby place where they could “witness the scientists at work via video call”. Also on offer was the opportunity to examine “raw and unpolished” items retrieved from the site, and to see photographs.<sup>9</sup> If there had been any mention of the chance of appearing in the next NAMI blockbuster I might have gone myself; with NAMI’s cameras rolling it would have been my big chance to appear in a Hong Kong archaeology-action flick.

Also bringing earth-shaking arkeological news is Arch Bonnema, participant in one of Bob Cornuke’s BASE expeditions of the early 2000s. With the flair for publicity that is the core skill of all Arkeologists, Bonnema attained some national TV sofa time on *Good Morning USA* in 2013 with his folksy tale of smuggling out of the country little lumps of “petrified wood” taken from a “Spanish galleon” of a vessel on Ararat. With five different labs analysing the pieces, the “Head of one of the Smithsonian Labs” or “Dr So-and-So” from Cambridge University (identities protected), are excited – despite “not believing the Bible”<sup>10</sup> – that among the “only petrified wood cut by human hands” was a piece of petrified faeces from the Ark containing cat hairs from three different big cats that don’t exist together, bird feathers from South America, butterfly wings from Africa, and plant matter from the South Pacific islands.<sup>11</sup> The anticipated scientific reports should make for enthralling reading... or will they?

Only the presentation of these arkæological capers is new. The Ark has somehow always been a locus of pilgrimage and commercialisation. Previously it was at the summit of Cudi Dagh some 200 miles (320km) to the south, where Islamic and possibly Mesopotamian tradition places it according to Irving Finkel, the British Museum’s cuneiform crusader. He notes that: “There has obviously been a vigorous local trade in Ark mementoes with talismanic powers since time immemorial,” proposing that King Sennacherib, after besieging Jerusalem, could have been looking for the Ark when he climbed Mount Nipur around 700 BC; the Babylonian Talmud says he worshipped a plank of Noah’s Ark in the



JERRY GLOVER

Temple.<sup>12</sup>

Even in antiquity – perhaps more than a millennium before the account in Genesis – the dramatic yet comforting myth of the Ark exerted the mythological force that has made it one of the most universal myths, with over 300 similar stories from around the world. For the biblical literalists and Christian scientists, it is a way to widen and deepen their evangelical message, which from Team NAMI is apocalyptic and dire and was ultimately timed to cash in on the 2012 ‘end of the world’ hullabaloo. The apocalypse was merely a convenient proxy PR

campaign for them, as for many others riding the eschatological wave at that time.

If we were forced to nominate one precious glacier to be allowed to melt, the Ararat glacier would be one I’d vote for, if not to shut up the arkeologists then to compel them to embark on more feasible quests, unlikely as that may be. Never mind the marine fossils and the images possibly staged to conform with our expectations. Bring us something properly fortaean, and don’t come down off that mountain proclaiming your discoveries and your DVDs until you have it. **FT**

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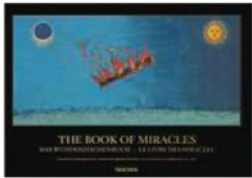
This month's books, films and games

# reviews



## Apocalypse Then (in colour)

Portents reinforced belief in the coming end of everything, which in turn enabled the identification of the unusual as portentous, resulting in this glorious artistic record



### The Book of Miracles

Till-Holger Borchert & Joshua P Waterman

Taschen 2013

Boxed hb, 192 art pages + pb 175pp, £99.99, transcription, sources, bib, ind, ISBN 9783836542852

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £75.00

*The Book of Miracles* is a glorious display of Renaissance forteana. Produced in Augsburg in or just after 1552, it's a bound collection of paintings, with brief descriptions, of signs and portents seen in the sky, from comets to haloes around the sun to rains of blood, along with miraculous animals, plagues of locusts, Siamese twins and much more.

Originally there were 200 paintings, though some have gone missing over the years; this facsimile of the recently

rediscovered original includes the blank missing pages, repairs, tape marks and stains on the pages. And it's stunning: cloth-bound, 13 by 8¾ by 1½ inches (33 by 22 by 4cm), with an accompanying paperback the same size, all in a clamshell box. It's one of several books of wonders of the time, perhaps the best known being Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses* (1560), published in English as *Certain Secrete Wonders of Nature, Containing a Description of Sundry Strange Things* (1569).

*The Book of Miracles* illustrates weird and wonderful occurrences from Old Testament times (paintings 1–15) through Antiquity (16–30), the Middle Ages and Late Middle Ages (32–90) right up to the present day of the book (91–171) and ending with the End Time visions of John of Patmos in the Book of Revelation (172–192). As one of the essays says, "Signs and apocalypticism seemed to exist in a state of mutual perpetuation": observed portents increased belief in the imminent End of

### "Signs and apocalypticism seemed to exist in a state of mutual perpetuation"

the World, which "intensified the tendency to identify the unusual as portentous".

Many of the biblical scenes are based on illustrations by Hans Holbein the Younger and other artists in Martin Luther's 1545 German Bible, and the biblical text comes from that translation. The book starts with the Flood, then the Rainbow, God's covenant with mankind. Next is a gorgeous painting of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, reminiscent of John Martin 300 years later – a brooding red landscape, the cities in flames, and in the centre of the painting, abandoned by all, a lone pillar of salt. It continues with, amongst others, the parting of the Red Sea, Elijah caught up in a whirlwind into Heaven and Ezekiel's vision of the wheel and the creature with four faces.

The images from Antiquity include an account of "a terrible occurrence" in 73 BC when tamed animals – donkeys, oxen, horses, sheep – all returned to the wild "and completely forgot their previous nature". The text doesn't say, but could this be an image of the slave revolt of that year led by Spartacus?

In the main body of

the book most of the paintings are of unusual celestial phenomena such as phantom suns, mock moons, solar eclipses portending disaster, unusual stars appearing (supernovæ?) and plenty of comets – 26 of them. Strange cloud formations and thunderstorms led to wonderful illustrations of battles in the heavens, interpreted as signs of an imminent war. "In the year 1545, on the 29th day of March, on Palm Sunday, a terrible, ghastly vision was seen in the kingdom of Poland... three red crosses were seen in the east, in the middle of which was a man in armour with a fiery sword. A great band of warriors came towards him on horseback and on foot and fought with him... Then a dragon appeared and devoured the man."

There are natural disasters: hailstorms, floods, earthquakes, the winter of 1126 so cold that birds froze to death in mid-air – all brilliantly illustrated.

One of the artists has used exactly the same ruined city to show the devastation following earthquakes in Italy in 1119 and 1228, and a slightly different version for 1506, all with the stylised image of spires leaning at 45 degrees above their towers. Only one volcano is shown: the eruption of Vesuvius: "Also a poet, called Pliny the Elder, wanted to see the fire but the fire consumed him too" – illustrated in the foreground.

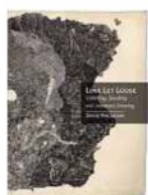
There are two spectacular paintings of explosions destroying much of a city after lightning struck a gunpowder store, in Heidelberg in 1537 and in Mechelin, Netherlands, in 1546; the colours, as throughout the



Continued on p60

# Walking lines

The humble yet often significant doodle has some surprisingly fortean aspects



## Line Let Loose

**Scribbling, Doodling and Automatic Drawing**

David Maclagan

Reaktion 2013

Hb, 168pp, illus, refs, ind, £22.00, ISBN 9781780230825

**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £19.00**

Paul Klee famously wrote “A line goes out for a walk, so to speak, aimlessly, for the sake of the walk.” In *Let Line Loose*, David Maclagan traces where the aimless line might be off to, revealing subconscious impulses of scribbles and depths behind doodles. The mark-making spectrum, from utterly raw to intricately embellished, is used to explore an artist’s inner processes (or lack thereof). Mark-making is also applied to document art’s relationship to itself. One of Maclagan’s objectives is to note the paradoxical learned spontaneity which artists employed after experiencing unencumbered forms of visual expression made by “primitive” cultures or the insane. Works of outsider art became inspiration, then technique, then formula.

Distinctions are made over types of inscribing. Scribbles are the most basic, a sort of nothing that may lead to representation or decoration, but doesn’t always. Scribbles are found in child and primate art. Astutely, Maclagan warns that deeming the graphic markings of children or primates ‘art’ risks projecting cultural ideas of what art is on to works whose authors have not imagined it as such. Maclagan, whose background in art psychotherapy is apparent in these pages, notes the psychological charge carried

by some scribbles. Again, this charge is sought by trained artists and “the deliberate regression of an experienced artist” shapes new creative potentials. More structured that scribbles, doodles are “a sublimated fidgeting” that adults create in moments of boredom or daydream.

Deeper into the psyche, we find automatic drawing, completed in a state of “absence of conscious awareness.” It is used to link practices that can arguably be considered part of a Western shamanic tradition. From Spiritualist mediums to Surrealist explorers, automatic drawing was a transmission from elsewhere, be it a spirit realm or the subconscious. The drips of Pollock form a surprising yet logical conclusion to this path. However, Maclagan distinguishes between Surrealist creators, who brought back images from the unconscious, and Pollock, whose work can be viewed as an image of the unconscious itself.

A final category of line is meta-doodle, a doodle freed from time constraints and accepting of the mediumistic qualities of automatism. Instead of wilfully bypassing the conscious mind, meta-doodles involve intense, even obsessive attention to detail. This compulsive focus informs the technique of many outsider artists whose works belong in this category. Interestingly though, it may be that purposefully unconscious and fanatically focused approaches to artmaking lead to a similar state of absorption. Like the humble doodle, this slim volume belies the profundity to be found within. Richly illustrated, this work can be enjoyed as much for its visual enchantments as for its insights on the creative self.

Mike Pursley

### Fortean Times Verdict

THE LINE CONNECTS OUTSIDER ART AND INNER JOURNEYS

9

Continued from p59

book, are amazing.

Animals feature from time to time: plagues of flies and locusts, a four-legged chicken, a fish with a human head, a mare giving birth to a hare, a pig with extra front legs coming out of its back. There’s a stillborn baby with two heads, four arms and six legs. Many of their descriptions end: “and it looks just as it is painted here”. Charles Fort would have had a field day.

The accompanying book contains a short essay on the sources of the images and their texts, and a longer essay on the “genesis, style and meaning” of the work, each in English, German and French. It also includes an invaluable “transcription” section showing thumbnails of three of the paintings per page, each with its original text and modern translations.

Considering the great care clearly taken with the paintings, it’s unfortunate that there are several textual errors betraying careless proof-reading, for example correctly dating the eruption of Vesuvius to AD 79 alongside the thumbnail of the painting but saying 79 BC in the essay.

Two more criticisms, one minor, one rather more important. First, the solid box housing the books is quite difficult to open; a simple pull-tag on the opening edge would have solved this. Second, the price. Yes, it’s a stunningly gorgeous artefact, exquisitely presented, and no doubt was expensive to produce. But £99.99 is a horrendous price – and the fact that an online retailer is able to offer it for £40 less suggests that the price is somewhat inflated. Taschen have brought out some excellent low-price art books in the past; I hope they’ll consider producing a cheaper edition of this, perhaps in paperback, on lighter stock, maybe in a slightly smaller size.

It wouldn’t be the same, of course, but it would make these beautiful Renaissance paintings available to a far wider audience. David V Barrett

### Fortean Times Verdict

STUNNING REPRODUCTION OF RENAISSANCE FORTEANA

9

## Airborne

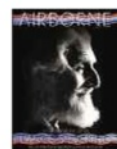
**Scenes from the Life of Lance Sieveking, Pilot, Writer & Broadcasting Pioneer**

Edited & annotated: Paul Sieveking

Strange Attractor Press 2013

Hb, 375pp, notes, bib, ind, £25 (inc. p+p)

**AVAILABLE FROM STRANGE ATTRACTOR PRESS**



Lance Sieveking might not be a household name these days, but for 30 years from the late-1920s he garnered

considerable column inches in the national newspapers and was (if the *Sunday Express* of 25 Feb 1934 is to be believed) stalked by autograph hunters outside Broadcasting House; hardly the kind of thing a producer of radio plays would expect nowadays.

Lance, though, was a pioneer – an intrepid explorer through the trackless, uncharted territory of radio broadcasting, then in its very infancy. Like many explorers, he could cut an eccentric figure: six foot six, with a gleam in his eye and a head full of the kind of ideas that make managers and administrators shuffle nervously in their seats.

He had joined the tiny British Broadcasting Company – then just four years old – in 1926; typically, he’d somehow wandered into the post of assistant to the Director of Education without any experience or qualifications and, in his own words, “almost totally without ‘education’ in the formal sense”. This must have been a great help; Lance simply used his fund of common sense and boundless curiosity to make it up as he went along, pioneering techniques that would become commonplace enough in later years but were astonishing innovations at the time: live sports commentary, sound effects, the mixing of music and speech for expressive or impressionistic effect, and so on.

Born in 1896, Lance was, in some senses, an emblematic figure of the 20th century, with a knack for being in at the birth of things. Long before his BBC career he’d fallen in love with aviation after a visit to Hendon (described most memorably) and joined the Royal Naval Air Service, getting into numerous scrapes (such as landing his



aircraft in a Muswell Hill garden) and flying Handley Page bombers until he was shot down and imprisoned by the Germans in November 1917.

This affinity for nascent, world-changing technologies wasn't lost on him; his careers in the air and on the airwaves were both marked by a talent for imagination and improvisation: he recalled that, in 1928, just before the start of the live broadcast of his radio feature *Kaleidoscope*, "I felt exactly as I felt on that cold morning when I had been told to take the aeroplane into the air alone for the first time. *Exactly.*"

*Kaleidoscope* was in many ways the climax of all his experiments up to that point. Translating some of the techniques of (particularly Soviet) film-makers to the medium of radio, *Kaleidoscope* was described as "A Rhythm, representing the Life of a Man from Cradle to Grave". It combined poetry and prose with original dialogue and live music, using seven or eight studios filled over 100 musicians, singers and actors, all controlled by Lance, seated at a fantastic device called the Dramatic Control Panel, which allowed him to 'play' the multiple live sound sources in the manner of an organist. The result must have been bewildering for early listeners – the radio equivalent of a Vorticist painting or an Ives symphony; it was certainly a landmark in broadcasting, and its influence is still audible today.

*Kaleidoscope* was broadcast live on 4 September 1928; the previous year, while on the Riviera, Lance had met Aleister Crowley, who had predicted the 32-year-old's death at the age of 45 (wrong) and that "something of the most stupendous nature" would happen to Lance on 4 September 1928 (correct).

Other oddities pop up throughout the book: an encounter with an apparition of his dead brother Val – shot down over Zeebrugge in 1918 – on the London Underground a decade later; a family who had troubles with elementals and a poltergeist; examples of clairvoyance provided by Lance's mother, his first wife,

and Paul Nash's wife Margaret; and what must surely be some of the earliest recorded instances of 'street light interference', or SLiding – a power Lance manifested on two separate occasions.

Lance's memoirs have been assembled and edited – and intercut, aptly enough with excerpts from letters and diaries – by his son, our own founding co-editor Paul Sieveking. The end result is surely something that Lance would have approved of: not a straightforward biography or career survey – far too blandly linear – but something kaleidoscopic, evocative of the wayward nature of a life from cradle to grave. In fact, there's enough experience here for numerous lives: Lance, sometimes drifting into acting or journalism, sometimes working with a sort of monomania on a radio project or a novel (he wrote many, often on quite fortaean themes), seemingly knew or at least met everyone. GK Chesterton (his godfather) and Montague Summers, HG Wells and GB Shaw, Churchill and Ramsay MacDonald flit through these pages in a series of amusing anecdotes, each observed with Lance's customary slightly detached and wondering gaze.

*Airborne* is a supremely amiable, life-affirming sort of book in its embrace of the haphazard and unexpected, a cheering reminder that lives are not always mapped out, things not as predictable as we're encouraged to believe. Lance once dedicated an early book of his nonsense poetry to "Man's freedom to have what thoughts he jolly well pleases" – a sentiment I'd like to think applies just as well to *FT* and its readers.

David Sutton

### Fortean Times Verdict

MEMOIRS OF AN INNOVATOR AND A SLIGHTLY FORTEAN FATHER

8

# Monolithic...

## If the answer's drugs and shamans (which it ain't), what's the question?

### Sacred Mushroom/ Holy Grail

The Long-Lost Origin of Our Most Intriguing Legend

Terry Atkinson

Jorvik Press 2013

Pb, 163pp, bib. \$15.95/£10.95. ISBN 9780988412248

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £10.95

As long ago as 1974, in *The Nature of Greek Myths*, GS Kirk identified several 'monolithic theories' of myth interpretation, by which he meant that according to their proponents, all myths could be explained as deriving either from ritual, or aetiology, or natural phenomena, and so on.

While those theories might offer insights into particular facets of different myths, a much more flexible approach is needed overall. There is one monolithic theory still going strong, which is that all myth and early religious practice can be explained by the use of psychoactive drugs. One might be forgiven, on occasion, for thinking that the interest is less in 'solving mysteries' than in validating authors' and writers' fascination with drugs by claiming centuries-old tradition. The main growth in this area is in what might be described as 'fringe scholarship'.

Atkinson's book is fairly typical of the type: it's his belief that the Holy Grail is to be identified with the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom, and that the Grail Quest is about the training of a new shaman ("it's all shamanism" being another monolithic theory whose day seems to be passing). Often working from secondary sources, Atkinson discusses previous theories of Grail interpretation, and then runs through other cases

where drugs have been suggested as explanations of Vedic Soma, the Eleusinian Mysteries and so on.

While these theories are often suggestive, they're ultimately incapable of proof, and the same critique applies here. Atkinson's identification of the salmon as a symbol for *Amanita* is little more than a guess, and isn't really followed through; the shape of the fully opened mushroom may resemble a dish or chalice, but so do many other things. And his speculations about *Amanita* and the tarot, alchemy, etc, are so vague as to be hardly worthy of inclusion.

This thin book shows signs of padding. One could wish for a little more selectivity about source material (it's to be hoped that eventually people will realise that 'idiosyncratic' is a polite way of describing the work of Robert Graves), and better referencing and an index would certainly have helped the presentation.

Atkinson delivers some interesting and suggestive ideas, but personally I'm far from convinced by a number of them. Perhaps the book's main interest lies less in its attempt to 'solve the mystery', which always strikes me as an appallingly reductionist approach, even when the 'answer' is drugs and shamanism, than in its being yet another example of the application of the 'monolithic drugs theory'.

If drugs are your interest, you may like it; I suspect mainstream Arthurian scholarship will probably pass it by.  
Steve Moore

### Fortean Times Verdict

INTERESTING IDEAS IN WHAT IS OVERALL AN UNCONVINCING THESIS

4

To order any of these titles – or any other book in print – contact the

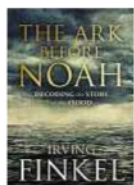
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# Real Noah-where man

Irving Finkel's comparative study of Mesopotamian flood legends tackles the mythology/history nexus with great flair



## Before Noah's Ark Decoding the Story of the Flood

Irving Finkel

Hodder & Stoughton YEAR????

Hb, 352pp, £25.00, ISBN 9781444757057

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £20.00

This study of the original Mesopotamian flood legends appears when the worst winter storms for decades are submerging tracts of Wales and England. Of all the flood myths known throughout the world, the account of Noah's Ark resonates most strongly in the West; a reverse Creation narrative of the heroic efforts of one man to rescue his family and as much earthly life as possible in the face of a Creator at his most wrathful. In our precarious era of financial depressions and high-technology anxieties, the story gains even more mythological power, not only as a tale of survival but survivalism, the efforts of individuals to prepare against, as they see it, impending social collapse.

In this work of comparative mythology-meets-historical investigation and speculation, the British Museum's curator of cuneiform inscriptions assembles the pre-biblical origins of the Mesopotamian Flood Story, starting with the discovery in 1872 of a Flood account on a tablet retrieved from Ninevah by British Museum assistant George Smith, and his own discovery in 1985 of another tablet, privately owned, detailing instructions for building an Ark, as in the Book of Genesis. Finkel explains how he came to learn cuneiform, its background as a writing system, and the idiosyncrasies to be overcome

by those brave enough to try to read it. He perpetuates the outmoded but resilient attitude that an essential component of 'real' civilisation is logossyllabic, phonetic writing. This enables him to write off the dynamic and religiously-protean Ubaid network from which Sumerian civilisation emerged only as nameless wandering nomads, an obfuscation that does no credit to a national museum curator given what is now known about this and other societies that reached heights of artistry and commerce without conventional written records. In explaining how and why cuneiform developed, and the ways it was used, the pre-Genesis Arks of the title are delayed for another 70 pages, though the world of cuneiform is entertainingly sketched as Finkel knows it well and is keen to recruit more readers for the thousands of unread tablets in the British Museum.

After a masterly comparison of texts of the earliest versions of the Mesopotamian Flood Story from tablets spanning the Old Babylonian period (1900–1600 BC) to the Late Babylonian period (900–600 BC), plus the Koran account, Finkel changes tack to a theory as idiosyncratic as cuneiform itself. On the tablet from the Old Babylonian period that Finkel discovered in private hands, the god Enki instructs Atrahasis to draw out the boat "on a circular plan", and drawing on waterborne traditions that still existed in Iraq until the 20th century Finkel latches onto the tablet description to conceive the Ark (taken as an actual vessel) as a 20ft (6m) high, two-decked coracle with a diameter as wide as a football pitch. The photograph of a coracle holding 20 men is still tiny compared to Finkel's coracle Ark, whose real-world feasibility is, perhaps wisely, not investigated. Later accounts change the Ark's shape to a cube

(Utnapishti's) and an oblong (Noah's), with their dimensions staying about the same. What happened to the Ark in different traditions and the ensuing commercialisation brings the investigation to rest on firmer ground.

The maths-heavy conjecture of the coracle Ark might be bizarrely brilliant, but the many questions raised by embracing a literal approach to this part of the story are not addressed, not even recent scientific advances in the picture of ancient cataclysms. Finkel perceives that the Mesopotamian Flood Story predates its textual appearance by centuries, and notwithstanding the coracle concept, the main achievement is in showing how mythology is history made performance piece; imbued with truth if not in the sense of being 'archaeologically-safe'.

An English intellectual eccentricity permeates this book, tenacious enquiry combined with orthodox and refreshingly unorthodox thinking and a warm, wry spirit ("To our minds, noise abatement as justification for the total annihilation of life looks a bit over the top") that goes far to circumnavigate difficulties raised by the author stepping outside his specialist field. There should be more like Irving Finkel: specialists willing to launch brave ideas on less substance than they are trained to admit, especially historians who tend to avoid mythology and the potential for bold speculation based on sound, albeit scant, information due to the division between 'history' and 'mythology', texts and oral folklore; a prejudice preventing us knowing far more about unrecorded history. Finkel is not one of these, thank Enki.

Jerry Glover

### Fortean Times Verdict

ERUDITE INVESTIGATION OF THE CREATION OF A MYTH

7

## Unseen Cosmos

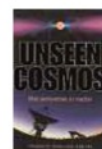
The Universe in Radio

Francis Graham-Smith

Oxford University Press 2013

Hb, 256pp, illus, notes, ind, £20.00, ISBN 9780199660582

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.95



Before the 20th century, everything that was known about the Universe came from visual observations.

Telescopes provided a magnified view of things, but they still used the same range of wavelengths as the human eye. It never seems to have occurred to astronomers that they might be missing anything of importance. When the first amateur enthusiasts started mapping the Galaxy at radio wavelengths in the 1930s, the professionals were sneeringly dismissive. It was another two decades before they finally latched on to the importance of "radio astronomy", as it became known. Over the next 30 years, radio observations led to a revolutionary new understanding of galactic structure and cosmology, and the discovery of hitherto unsuspected phenomena such as pulsars, quasars and active galactic nuclei.

Francis Graham-Smith is a former Astronomer Royal who played a central role in the development of British radio astronomy and some of its most important discoveries. Therein lies both the strength and the weakness of this book. On the one hand, the historical narrative is authoritative and comprehensive – probably no one could have done a better job. On the other hand, Graham-Smith is too close to the technicalities of the subject to be able to explain them clearly to a lay reader. His treatment of astrophysical processes, for example, will confuse anyone who doesn't already have a fair grasp of the principles involved. But for those who do (or for those happy to skip over the book's more technical paragraphs), this is a first-rate overview of the history of radio astronomy.

Andrew May

### Fortean Times Verdict

EXCELLENT, BUT NOT A BOOK FOR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

8



# ALSO RECEIVED

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

### Scared to Death

David Clarke

ACM Retro 2013

Pb, 110pp, illus, bib, £12.95,  
ISBN 9781908431226

David Clarke – historian, folklorist and regular at Fortean Towers – makes a welcome entry among the local small press history titles. Alan Murdie, in his introduction, refers to a “prejudice” among folklorists that “industrial centres were bereft of folklore”. This anthology of hauntings, yarns, rumours and lore from Sheffield and its environs proves otherwise. Clarke’s expertise in trawling newspaper archives, tracing legends to the earliest sources, allows him to retell them more authentically, illustrated with period engravings and newspaper clippings. Apart from the ghosts (some seeming solidly real and others so horrific they scared their witnesses to death, allegedly), readers will find of particular interest the accounts of local ‘Devil’s footprints’ and Spring-heeled Jack. Our favourite was the yelping sounds from the sky said to indicate the passage of the ‘Gabriel Hounds’.

The graphic design, good writing and documentation set a high bar for other small history presses.

### World Wide Mind

Michael Chorost

Free Press 2011

Hb, 242pp, notes, bib, ind, \$26.00,  
ISBN 9781439119143

We are late in listing this but Chorost, always an engaging writer, tackles a topic of great interest to us: “The coming integration of humanity, machines and the internet”. It is a theme familiar in modern literature and film: from cyborg (part machine) individuals and characters who upload their personalities into computers, up to artificial entities that are single (think C3PO and Hal) or collective (think Borg), and so on. We are on the way, argues

Chorost; the communal sharing of information had led from the invention of writing to the Internet. Where next for beings who like to share experiences?

In 1851, Nathaniel Hawthorne wondered whether electricity would make “the world of matter [...] a great nerve, vibrating thousands of miles”. Was the Earth “a vast head, a brain, instinct with intelligence?” Chorost looks forward with excitement and suggests that the coming evolutionary leap into a genetically modified and machine-enhanced humanity will unite us in ways we can’t imagine (although writers like Peter Hamilton, William Gibson, David Brin and Neal Stephenson, for example, do a great job trying).

What lifts Chorost’s thesis out of the mundane is that he explores that philosophical, psychological and spiritual issues of the journey towards “a self-aware world mind”.

### Alien Mysteries, Conspiracies & Cover-Ups

Kevin D Randle

Visible Ink Press 2013

Pb, 400pp, illus, bib, ind, \$19.95,  
ISBN 9781578594814

Randle will be known to fortians and ufologists as a reliable authority on Roswell and ‘UFO crashes’ generally. He had an active interest in psychology and anthropology during his mainly military career, so what he has to say on these subjects will be of great interest.

The early chapters are quite fortean, being his take on putative cultural and archaeological evidence of extraterrestrial visitation. From the great airship sightings of 1897 to the beginning of the modern era of mystery rockets and the first UFO sightings, Randle launches into more detailed discussions about ‘alien bodies’, the MJ12 conspiracy, major crashed UFO cases, cases involving missing planes and pilots, and his own role in deconstructing the

Condon Committee’s Project Blue Book. He concludes by analysing the conspiracy theories that infest UFO research. They exist, he says, but in different ways and at different levels of the military and government, and usually for unknown reasons; there is nothing you can do about them and they have not stopped enterprising investigators from uncovering cases and huge amounts of data. That is the fun part, he argues.

### SECRET MARS

MJ Craig

Secret Mars 2013

Pb, 295pp, £12.95, ISBN 9780992605315

As one online reviewer of this book notes, there is now so much information relevant to the topic of evidence of intelligent life on Mars that it is difficult to know where to start. Craig’s fascinating survey of images from the Red Planet is intended to be a necessary briefing for that layperson. It is well written and

full of thoughtful analyses of over 100 fascinating photos of what appear to be regular structures ranging from gears and cubes up to city-sized ruins. The big omission here is any elimination of the possibility the objects may be imaging and processing artefacts. But, he asks, “If these objects are artificial, how did they get there?” If they aren’t the remains of a native civilisation, are they evidence of extra-solar alien visitors? Reasonable questions with no answer. The view might be different, Craig argues, if NASA lifted its sight from microbes in the dust to the larger objects littering the landscape. It wouldn’t be a Mars book without conspiracy theories and Craig asks some interesting questions about perceived lies, secrecy and cover-ups. Even if you don’t agree with him, the enigmatic images remain fascinating. We are on the verge of several manned missions to Mars; can we hope that these issues will be definitively answered?

## FORTEAN FICTION

### It Came!

Dan Boulwood

Titan Comics 2014

Hb, 88pp, £14.99, ISBN 9781782760054



“Directed by” artist/writer Dan Boulwood, *It Came!* is an affectionate comic book pastiche of 1950s British B-movies. Rendered in glowing monochrome, the “main feature” is a distinctively homegrown take on the ‘Monster from Outer Space’ genre in which a giant, monosyllabic alien robot rampages through a bucolic English countryside populated by bicycling vicars, ruminant rustics and village fetes. The behemoth’s dastardly plan to sap our very Britishness is opposed by an ineffectual army straight out of *Carry On Sergeant* and our two leads – pipe-smoking, misogynistic scientist Dr ‘Boy’ Brett and his female assistant Doris Night. Poking gentle fun at the genre conventions of both period movies and comics, not to mention the gender politics of the era, this delightful book includes faux 1950s adverts (“Johnny Foreigner Engine Oil – made with real foreigners”, “trailers” for coming attractions (“The Lost Valley of the Lost”), movie posters and IMDB entries for lead actors Dick Claymore and Fanny Flaunders, all showcasing Boulwood’s dynamic compositions and eye for period detail. If the ‘script’ isn’t ultimately as memorable as the images of a dodgy-looking flying saucer chasing a Morris Minor or the robot menace entangled in bunting, this is a lovely book.

David Sutton

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



### Captain America: The Winter Soldier

Dir Anthony Russo and Joe Russo, US 2014  
On UK release from 28 March

After nearly 70 years in the deep freeze, Captain America was always going to have a tough time adjusting to modern life; while 2012's *Avengers* saw him thrown into a battle with alien invaders in which it was pretty clear who the bad guys were, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* – his second solo outing – finds Steve Rogers having to adjust his old-fashioned moral compass to a world in which realpolitik and relativism are the order of the day. It's not, as you'd expect, too easy for him, especially when something appears to be extremely rotten at the heart of intelligence agency S.H.I.E.L.D and a figure from his own WWII past reappears in the form of a brainwashed super-assassin.

The plot is a particularly timely one, following on from the Snowden revelations of the NSA and GCHQ snooping on both foreign governments and their own citizens: the Armin Zola algorithm makes their snooping efforts look like amateur hour, mining personal data not just to check up on peoples' past and present actions, communications and political preferences but extrapolating this information into the future so that

potential troublemakers can be rooted out before they even think about upsetting the political apple cart. The trouble is, from Cap's point of view, that the good guys seem to have become indistinguishable from the bad guys, offering punishment before the crime and fear rather than freedom.

This is a grittier film than Cap's earlier WWII-set outing, and ultimately a better one. Mashing up the superhero movie with the political thriller was an inspired idea, and the Washington DC setting and the presence of none other than Robert Redford in a key role underline the debt to Seventies classics like *Three Days of the Condor* and *All the President's Men*.

This is still a Marvel film though, so despite the twists and turns of the 'Trust No One' plot, much of its pleasure comes from watching comic book characters brought to convincing life and beating the crap out of each other. Chris Evans simply *nails* Captain America, but the increased screen time for supporting characters is welcome too: Samuel L Jackson's iconic Nick Fury gets some action of his own in an extended and adrenaline-fuelled car chase that harks back to set pieces in films like *The French Connection*, while Scarlett Johansson's Black Widow – in her third and meatiest appearance – gets to kick ass in inimitable style while

acting as a nicely ambiguous foil to the upright Steve Rogers. The introduction of Sam Wilson (aka The Falcon), here an ex-para with some 'borrowed' Stark Industries high-tech wings, offers some much-needed help to the increasingly beleaguered Cap, and Anthony Mackie is another bit of perfect casting.

What's perhaps most surprising is that the Russo brothers – with a background in TV comedies like *Arrested Development* and *Community* – have turned in the best action movie I've ever seen. And it's not down to the CGI spectacle – impressive though that is – but to the fight sequences: these are astonishing well choreographed and possessed of a thumping, visceral heft that simply drags you into the fray and leaves you reeling.

*Winter Soldier* has all the elements of a good Bond film – *Goldfinger* rather than *Octopussy*: classy action sequences; perfect pacing; a sense of style; delightful character interplay, and a high-stakes narrative arc. There's even a fight in an elevator that's like the Connery/Shaw sleeper car dust-up in *From Russia With Love* on steroids.

I don't know if press screenings are a good way of gauging how films will play with 'real' audiences, parting with real money, but if the reaction of the large and enthusiastic crowd packing

the Odeon Leicester Square was anything to go by, no one – comic fan or casual viewer – is going to feel short-changed by this latest supremely confident effort from Marvel Studios. For my money, it's an instant classic of the genre – and the most fun I've had sitting down in months.

Oh, and stick around until the end – the very end – of the deliciously retro end titles sequence for two of those by-now traditional 'easter eggs'.

David Sutton

### Fortean Times Verdict

A PURE BLAST OF NON-STOP, KICK-ASS COMIC BOOK JOY

9

### Game of Thrones Season Three

Dir Daniel Minahan et al, US 2013

Warner Home Entertainment. £39.99 (DVD) £49.99 (Blu-ray)

One of the great achievements of *Game of Thrones* is just how much talking there is in it. For a genre from which you expect incident and action, the majority of the drama actually comes from talking heads. Even the inordinately protracted scenes of the torture and dehumanisation of Theron (a season misstep for me) while it contains some outright graphic nastiness also contains a lot of jawing. Most good books are good because of memorable characters; there are plenty of them in *Game of Thrones*, and a score of new ones turn up in Season Three with some serious acting wellie (much of it British) to portray them.

Martin and the writers of the series don't make the mistake of turning this into 'The Tyrion Show' (*Big Bang Theory* and Sheldon take note), even though the character features prominently throughout. Martin has spent many years studying the tropes and the clichés of the genre before wading in and challenging them. The seemingly redemptive arc of a loathsome, irredeemable bloodless reptile like Jaime Lannister, for example. There be dragons, too, in Season Three. For while the War of the Kings across Westeros continues on its treacherously intersecting paths, Daenerys Stormborn continues her partially-clad perambulations across the exotic landscapes of Essos and its slave cities, all the while working her way through

'Dragon Fire Training 101' and turning those who challenge her progress into Mr Crispies.

One of the many clever cards Martin plays is the slowburn magic. It has taken us three seasons to get to fully fledged fire-breathing dragons, while the White Walkers beyond the Wall have been so sparse up to this point they could just as well have been the odd zombie extra mistakenly wandering in off the set of *The Walking Dead*. What the TV series loses in this vast cast of characters and multiple plot lines is the enviable mastery of third person limited point of view that Martin employs in the books. But the way in which different narratives take centre stage in the TV version is just as effective in its way.

There is something for everyone here: barbed conversations between female protagonists (I'm thinking Lady Olenna, played by Dame Diana Rigg) that step straight out of a 19th century novel; or the picaresque adventures of Jon Snow North of The Wall with Ygritte, a young woman who simply will not take no for an answer. This being the way of the Game, it must surely end in betrayal of one sort or another. Then we get the po-faced nobility of the Starks contrasted with the this-is-way-too-much-fun machinations of the Lannisters, when Lena Headey's Cersei gives Margaery Tyrell a lesson in girl power at the same time that Lord Varys and Littlefinger try to outdo each other in the backstabbing stakes in the Lannisters' court.

Season Three revolves around the Lannisters, now more than ever in the ascendancy – although there's nothing they won't descend to to stay that way. Tyrion (the character approaching closest to hero status and with the most depth and complexity) has had his arse kicked and spends much of Season 3 just trying to stay alive and keep his beloved mistress Shae in one piece. This allows for more development of other characters and is one reason why, along with fantastic production values and visuals, *Game of Thrones* continues to be the most involving and lavish spectacle on TV these days.

There is also, of course, the requisite unending parade of nudity, sex and violence. Which brings us to the notorious 'Red Wedding' episode, one that sums up much of

## 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](http://www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com); @revpeterlaws)

### PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE

Dir Brian De Palma, US 1974  
Arrow Video, £24.99 (Blu-ray)

### THE STUFF

Dir Larry Cohen, US 1985  
Arrow Video, £24.99 (Blu-ray)

This month we have two servings of satirical horror from Arrow Video. First up is Brian De Palma's psychedelic swipe at a heartless music industry with *Phantom of the Paradise*. Legendary and God-like music producer Swan is immediately smitten when he hears a new rock Cantata based on the story of Faust. But the bug-eyed singer-songwriter behind it, Winslow Leach, doesn't quite fit Swan's plans for this 'new sound.' Instead, he steals the music and has Leach imprisoned, gradually turning the talented songsmith into a vengeful, disfigured nutcase. De Palma's *Rocky Horror* – and more interesting than that film in my opinion – is a delirious bolt of creative energy, like Stanley Kubrick on acid. There's some wonderful set design, clever photography (I never tire of De Palma's split screen technique) and knowing nods to classic and contemporary Gothic horror (*Faust*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *The Picture of Dorian*

*Gray*, *Psycho*). Yet the captivating spine of the movie is to be found, perhaps unexpectedly, in Swan himself. He's played by Paul Williams, the real-life music legend who penned hits for the Carpenters, the Muppets and, more recently, Daft Punk. He gives an impeccably sly and menacing performance here. In Swan, De Palma characterises the heart of the music business as a Satanic capitalist hippy. The film has lost none of its satirical edge; in fact one might argue it's even more prescient in our current *X-Factor*- and *American Idol*-fuelled music industry (it's hard not to see Swan as a grim prophecy of Simon Cowell). Arrow's Blu-Ray is rich, vibrant and packed with great extras.

Skip forward a decade and cult movie king Larry Cohen sends up the cigarette and fast food industry in the almost indescribable oddity, *The Stuff*. The world is obsessed with a delicious zero-calorie yoghurt called 'The Stuff', so a struggling ice cream industry hires industrial saboteur Mo Rutherford to find out what's in it. Turns out, *The Stuff* is not just a dessert. It's a parasitic, sentient organism bent on human destruction. Little wonder that the film studio bosses who commissioned this were left baffled when they first



saw it. They expected a standard horror B-Movie and tried hard to market it as such (just check out the blatantly skewed trailer in the extras). Instead, Cohen serves up an absurd curio unlike anything else. It's wildly uneven, with inspired gross-out prosthetics alongside some dodgy opticals, and subversive sociological comment mixed with ridiculous but fun plot developments. Plus lead actor Michael Moriarty may well have been a Cohen favourite, but his nerdy quirkiness really is an acquired taste. Yet despite the chaos *The Stuff* can't help put a smile on the face as well as provoke thought. And any film that can turn yoghurt into a ravenous monster gets a sticky thumbs up from me.

### Fortean Times Verdict

TWO SURPRISING SATIRICAL HORRORS RESURFACE IN HD

8



what Martin is about as a writer of fantasy (and horror), with his insistence that “no one is safe”.

Martin is a consummate writer who knows there is nothing new under the Sun but has the talent to make everything shine again (in a way that other writers in the genre do not). Quite where all this will lead in the end is anyone's guess. There could well be outrage if *Game of Thrones* (and the still unfinished series *A Song of Ice and Fire*) ends with anything other than a massive artistic ‘No’: an awful gut-hollowing denial of the expectation that ‘everything will come right in the end’, the conclusion of so much TV, film and literature. If Martin were to write a ‘Yes’ at the end of *A Song of Ice and Fire* and pull it off, that would make him a greater writer, for me, because it seems he has gone too far to turn back from the ‘No’ path now.

When I reviewed Season Two I said it would be a tough act to follow. Season Three has surpassed it. Now Season Four, soon to be aired, has an even tougher act to follow.

Nick Cirkovic

### Fortean Times Verdict

GRUBS, PIGLETS, FLOWERS AND THE MEANING OF LIFE?

9

## Thor: The Dark World

Dir Alan Taylor, US 2013

Walt Disney Studios, £15.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

The second instalment in what now looks set to be a trilogy of films starring Marvel's mighty god of thunder picks up the story after the events of 2012's *Avengers* movie, with Thor (Chris Hemsworth) sorting out the Nine Realms and mooning over astrophysicist love interest Jane Foster (Natalie Portman). She, meanwhile, is working in London and wondering if her golden-locked god will ever return, and Thor's naughty brother Loki (Tom Hiddleston) is languishing in an Asgardian slammer for his meddling in Midgard.

In some ways, *The Dark World* is a neat inversion of its predecessor; instead of a god stripped of his powers and banished – to often comic effect – to Earth, here we have Portman whisked off to Asgard to meet the (in Odin's case, disappearing) parents. Unwittingly, she

brings disaster with her, as Dark Elf Malekith (Christopher Ecclestone, grim as ever) breaks up Jane's off-world idyll in pursuit of a McGuffin known as the Æther. The threat is so great that Thor must enlist Loki's help – but can he be trusted?

Production design and effects are genuinely impressive – the greater exploration of Asgard is particularly welcome for those of a certain age who remember poring over Jack Kirby's classic two-page rendering of the home of the gods; and, more than in the first film, we get a genuinely Kirbysque aesthetic in which science and magic are one and the same – Norse stylings jostle with some seriously futuristic artillery and aircraft.

Director Alan Taylor (*Mad Men*, *Game of Thrones*) perhaps doesn't get as much from his actors as did Kenneth Branagh in the previous outing, but they deliver the goods. Once again, Tom Hiddlestone's suavely malevolent Loki steals every scene he's in, but it's really the irresistible chemistry between him and Hemsworth's nice-but-dim Thor that really lifts the film out of its occasional doldrums. While Taylor's film is often more cinematic than Branagh's – whose idea of visual interest seemed to consist of the odd skewed camera placement – the big battles can drag a bit, and it's only with the final portal-hopping showdown between Thor and Malekith that all this fighting really catches fire (and Thor boarding the Underground raises a smile). It's not Marvel Studios' finest hour, but it is, for the most part, an awful lot of old-fashioned fun.

Nestled amongst the usual extras, you'll also find the latest ‘Marvel One-Shot’ short film; these have been getting progressively more ambitious, and *Hail to the King* is the best so far, an hilarious showcase for Ben Kingsley's Trevor Slattery character, the ketamine-added, third rate British thespian last seen in *Iron Man 3* (“His Lear was the talk of Croydon”). Written and directed by Drew Pearce, this 15-minute gem is alone worth the price of admission (and gets this release an extra point).

David Sutton

### Fortean Times Verdict

A MOSTLY ROLLICKING ROMP ACROSS THE NINE REALMS

8

## SHORTS

### THE MACHINE

On UK release and View on Demand from 21 March



Winner of Best UK Film at the Raindance Film Festival 2013, Caradog James's SF noir *The Machine* is set in a near-future world of smog-submerged skyscrapers in which a recession-hit West is engaged in an economic cold war with China. It shows impressive visual flair on a modest budget that fits right in with cash-strapped times. Scientist Vincent McCarthy (Toby Stevens) is

developing brain implants for the MoD to repair soldiers with profound head and body injuries and enhance their warrior capabilities, but also to provide a cure for his brain-damaged young daughter. He recruits brilliant young American scientist Ava (Caity Lotz) to help him after her AI nearly aces the Turing Test. When Ava shows ethical concerns she falls prey to ruthlessly unethical boss Thomson (Denis Lawson). McCarthy transforms what is left of Ava into his masterpiece and the machine he creates very soon displays a mind and feelings of its own, heading ultimately to a showdown with Thomson and his forces in which the AI-enhanced soldiers on the base turn against their creators and masters. Comparisons have been made to *Blade Runner* (the pulsing synthesiser beat and tsunami swathes of Tom Raybould's score are pure Vangelis) and there is a neat nod to 2001's Hal at one point. *The Machine* is perhaps more stylistically diverting than it is profound, but among many reasons to see it is Lotz's dual turn as a smart, nosey young scientist and the balletic, bone crunching cybernetic Ava at the film's violent climax. **NC 7/10**

### THE QUIET ONES

On UK release from 10 April

After 2012's hit *Woman in Black*, Hammer returns with *The Quiet Ones*, starring Jared Harris (fresh from his success with *Sherlock Holmes*), Sam Claflin and promising new actress Olivia Cooke as a sexy young girl with serious possession issues. The film was inspired by the ‘Philip Experiment’, where a group of Canadian parapsychologists attempted to create a ghost, therefore ‘proving’ that spirits were merely constructs of the human mind. The film isn't an account of this experiment, but uses this conceit to create a new story in which a typically overbearing British professor arouses his students' curiosity with the possibility of conjuring a spirit from a troubled girl's soul. The rather conventional and stagey first half is set in the university, introducing the characters. The second half, in which the team relocates to a rundown old house to further their investigations, is a noticeable improvement, both visually and narratively. Some good old fashioned shocks, relying more on suspense than CGI, and a few intriguing revelations add to the fun – though the ending isn't half as smart as it thinks it is. **Etienne Gilfillan 6/10**

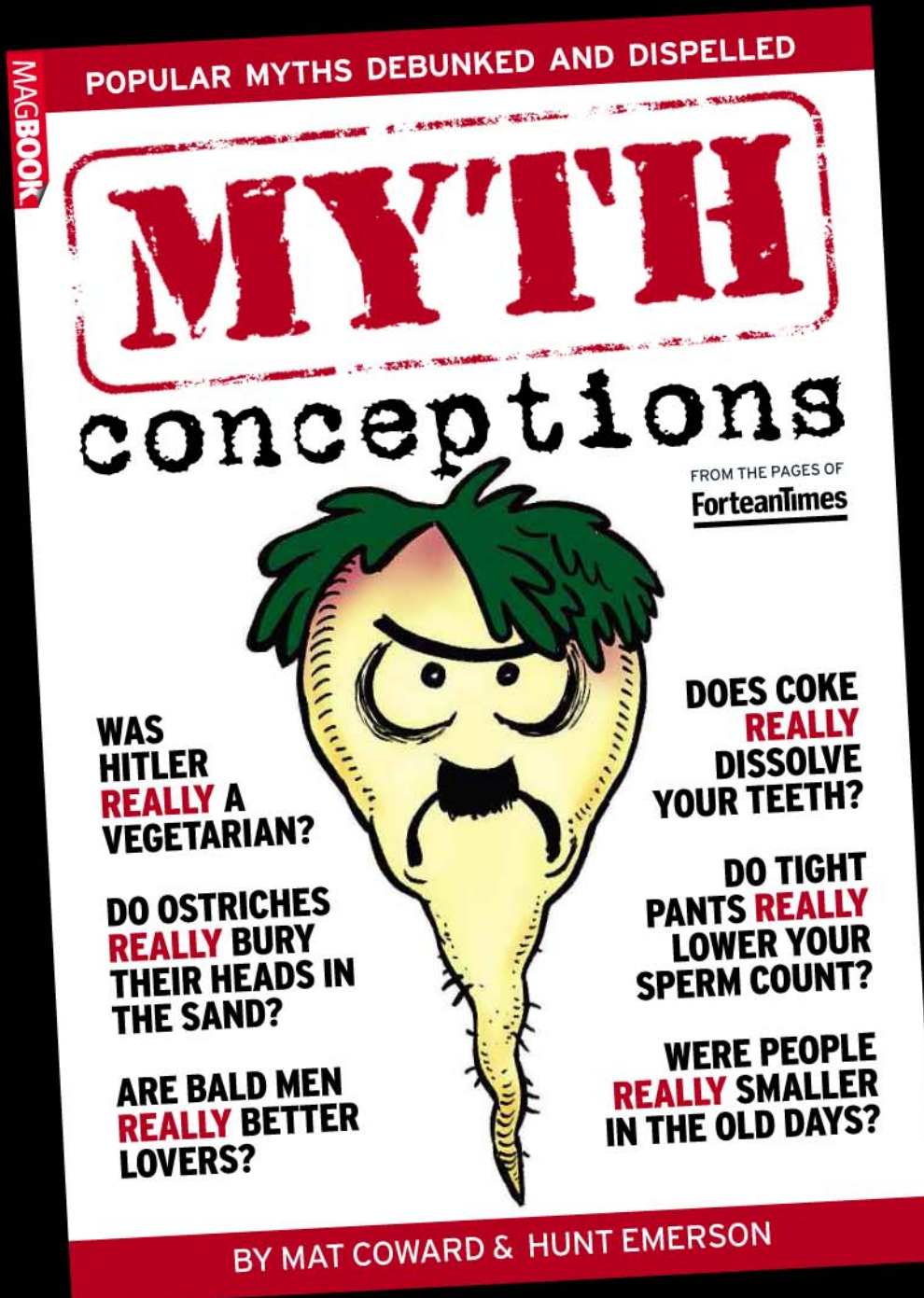
### THE BORDERLANDS

Metrodome, £12.99 (DVD)



Yes, this is another found-footage movie, but don't be put off: this one transcends its self-imposed limitations and ends up being both immensely likeable and rather well realised. An unlikely team of Vatican investigators are sent to check out weird goings-on in a West Country church and have to decide whether they've encountered genuine paranormal activity or merely a cynical priest. Amusing and slow-burning (unlike the sheep who goes up in a blaze of paraffin), this only falls down in never being as scary as billed, feeling at times a bit like *Father Ted* meets *Stigmata*. **Tim Weinberg 7/10**

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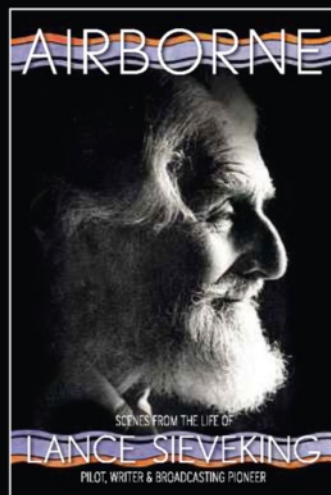
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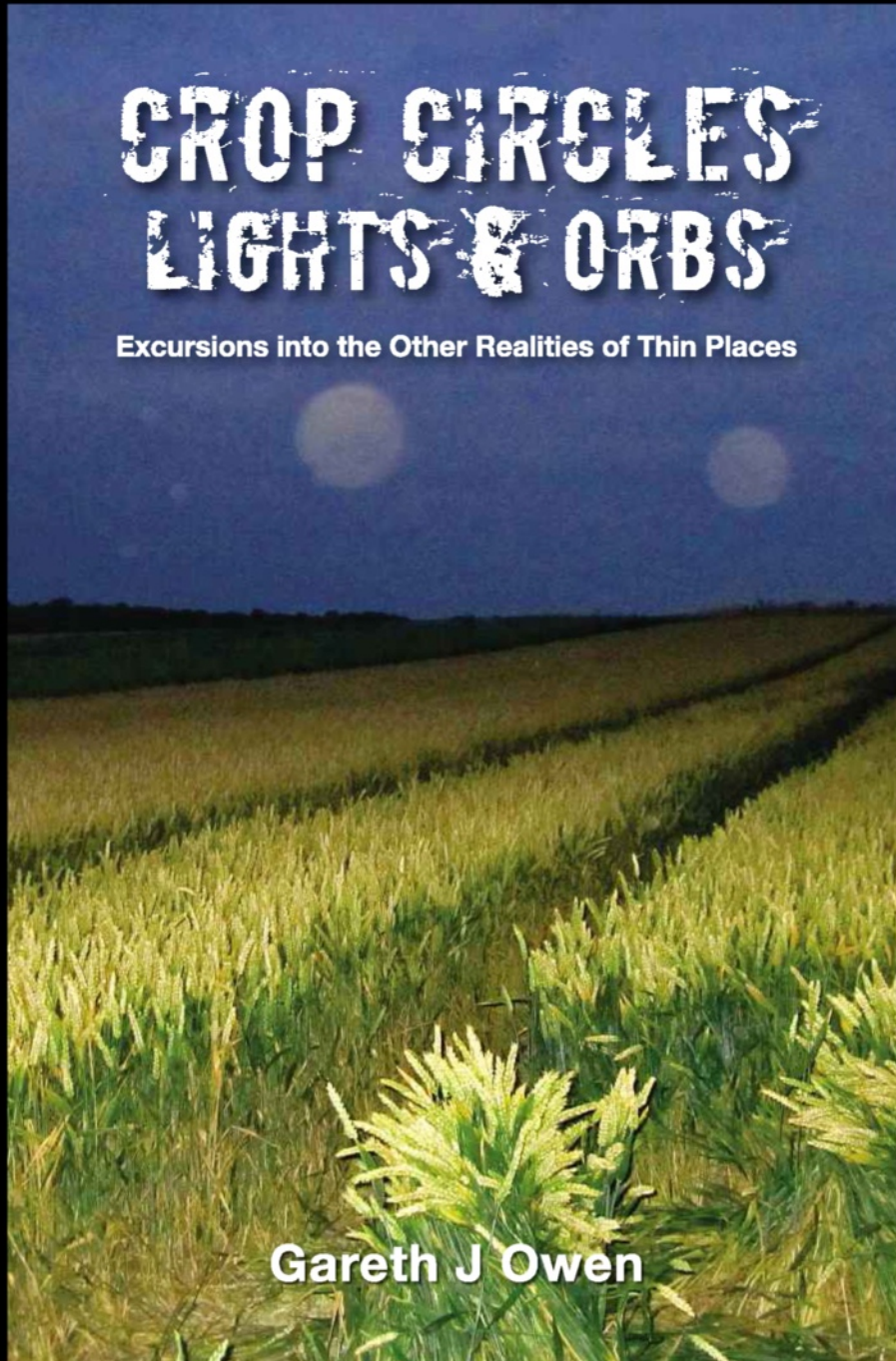
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Dear FT...

# letters



## Chain of causation

Craig Flowers's letter [FT311:74] was neatly encapsulated by the Moody Blues: "I think, I think I am, therefore I am, I think" (*On The Threshold Of A Dream*). If our Universe really (sic) exists, rather than being a figment of our collective but non-existent imaginations, then its primary attribute is causation – things happen as a result of previous events, in a chain going back to its inception. If there is/was nothing outside our Universe, then for everything to spring from nothing for no reason (à la Big Bang) violates this essential attribute, suggesting that there must be some external entity or power that brought our Universe into existence and endowed it with the natural laws that let it operate in a predictable manner. Presumably this creating entity would not be bound by the laws and principles built into the Universe.

A Judaeo-Christian style God would fit the bill nicely; the God of Moses's ancestors gives Moses no name except the statement "I am" – so hinting at not needing or having had a pre-existing cause; and later on Jesus says that "God is spirit", so outside of anything investigable by our senses. As creator of the Universe, God would be able to interfere in it in ways that ignore its normal physical laws. Some of the topics that FT covers are difficult to fit into the natural laws of "nature". They could also be explicable by positing a "spiritual" existence outside our Universe, but with the ability to interfere inside it.

Other than deity, the next most popular idea seems to be that our Universe is a Martin Rees style "computer simulation by aliens". Not sure how one distinguishes the two ideas...

**Alan Donnelly**  
*Thetford, Norfolk*

## Criticising Keel

Having Jerome Clark, a man with an obvious personal grudge against his former mentor, review the re-release of John Keel's *Operation Trojan Horse* seems rather unfair. I feel readers deserve a more balanced review from someone without an axe to grind. I also think it's rather amusing Clark



criticised Keel as "credulous, paranoid, and a crank" considering his own participation in the whole Linda Napolitano affair with Budd Hopkins. If the events of *The Mothman Prophecies* did truly happen, one can't really blame Keel for being paranoid.

**Anton Stuhlmann**  
*Fort Myers, Florida*

## Rowley rag

The letter from Andy Arnold [FT310:72] regarding the white object and the church fire I found interesting for two reasons, one being that I can easily see the area in question from my house here in the West Midlands. The other is that it reminded me of the celebrated UFO/entity encounter event from the same area, the Rowley Regis case of 4 January 1979 [FT50:40-44]. This involved an orange glowing sphere, bizarre entities (who were seen to help themselves to a glass of water and some mince pies), and ground traces. The witness, housewife Jean Hingley, subsequently suffered increased sensitivity to all things electrical and also changes to her physiological state. The incident was well documented and investigated [see, for example, *UFOs: Psychic Close Encounters* by Albert Budden, 1995].

The area lies within a high outcrop of magnetic rock visible for miles around. The rock is loadstone, or magnetite, with

ironstone; in addition, there is a significant stratum of basalt, or dolerite, which becomes magnetic if, say, it is struck by lightning – it is known as 'Rowley Rag'. Adding on two fault zones, a large quarry and two large RF transmitting antennæ results in a more than ideal scenario for EM effects with associated 'earth-light' phenomena. Natural and technologically born EM fields can more easily interact with electrically sensitive individuals at such places through the unconscious; and very probably such was the case with the two incidents noted, especially as this area is a hotspot for the release of such activity. The quarry would be a major factor as it was then a working quarry, ground disturbance being a contributor to such piezoelectrical effects. (Here I recall an earlier UFO/encounter in Cornwall, the New Mill incident of September 1977, along a driveway to a property that was undergoing major structural alterations. There is also a quarry very close by, but it was not in operation at the time.) Also of importance is the faulting element, with many light phenomena being observed in such regions.

If certain individuals at particular times can, in an altered state of consciousness created by exposure to such EM fields, perceive apparent physicality as well, this is not so far removed from the stories of poltergeists being able

## Tree trunk door

Here's another tiny door in a tree trunk that I spotted near our home [see **FT302:70, 305:73, 308:69**].

According to my youngest son it is where his imaginary friend – Blood Nose – used to live. Recently Blood Nose moved out but other members of the extended Nose family have taken up residence instead.

**Paul Gilham**  
*Wokingham, Berkshire*

to rearrange objects, for instance. Such people also experience the element of interaction and intelligence when brain, mind and body are all influenced.

While the causes of these experiences are not fully understood, when so many physical attributes of the Rowley Regis area are seen together there it is hard to deny such connections.

**Raymond Cox**  
*Halesowen, West Midlands*

## An Adventure

In *Phenomenomix* [FT311:80] Emerson and Jackson mention WB Yates's fondness for the 1911 book *An Adventure*, illustrating this with a frame showing the two Oxford dons who, on a trip to Versailles, suddenly found themselves back in the time of Louis XVI. I can see that Hunt was going for a humorous impression rather than anything like a portrait, but even so he has rather taken liberties when imagining the appearance of Charlotte Anne Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain, the two academics in question. Whatever their eccentricities, neither of the ladies was ever famed for sporting a bowler or a moustache. Experiencing a time-shift must have been quite sufficiently unsettling without having an unexpected gender reassignment thrown in a century later.

**Gail-Nina Anderson**  
*By email*

# letters

## Imagining Thunderbird



Interesting to read “Occulture Vultures” [FT310:56-57], about the occult becoming hip again. The occult has always had its allure for poets, artists and a wide variety of writers and thinkers. Art is an obvious conduit for exploring the various currents and catacombs of occultism. The Symbolists and Surrealists embraced many of its facets too numerous to list. Some of whom include Rops, Moreau, Brauner, Ernst, Selligman, Palen and the evocative art of the women Surrealists Toyen, Carrington and Varo. Even Duchamp was alleged to dabble in alchemy; tell that to the YBAs!

It would be interesting to see whether any art-

ists of today have fortune themes in their work. I have explored esoteric and occult ideas in my own artwork for years, from hermeticism and alchemy to shamanism and tantra. I find the openness to embrace the weird and wonderful in a neo-surreal shape-shifting manner, leavened with a good dollop of humour, is a great way to produce art. My recent “Enigmatic Landscape” series include the works “Captured Thunderbird” (above) and “Welcome Stranger” (below) that place this weirdness in settings that are all too recognisable – the landscape of this very isle.

**David Grimbly**, *By email*



## Orthodox drones

I was very interested in general by the article “Droning On” [FT311:38], but also because of one omission, and historically quite an important one, in the range of drones in music, i.e. church music. It is true that Jimmy Billingham does make reference to Gregorian chant, choral music and the chants of oriental religions; but the truest use of the drone is in Greek and Russian Orthodox Church music. Musical instruments of all kinds (including the organ) are banned in their music because they believe that the human voice is the purest instrument. They also ban singing in harmony or polyphonically; but they do use the drone, as defined by Mr Gillingham, “the long sustain off a note”. So this usually comprises members of a choir sustaining a fairly low note throughout the piece, with a cantor singing over the drone.

The late Sir John Tavener composed several pieces for orthodox use, with a drone, which I have heard during services, but in the Church of England. The effect on me was quite profound, exactly in the way Mr Billingham describes. I was grateful that he put my experience within a wider context.

**Revd Dr Barry Norris**

*Crediton, Devon*

## Colin Wilson

It was good to read Gary Lachman’s fine double-page appreciation of Colin Wilson’s life and works [FT310:24-25]. Lachman’s was the only obituary piece I read in any UK publication to do that extraordinary writer something like literary justice. A working class autodidact who enjoyed enormous early success on a scale most writers might envy, Colin became (though in a rather different sense from the title of his famous first book) a sort of Outsider of 20<sup>th</sup> century British letters. In fact, the horribly predictable media and critical backlash – petty, spiteful, cliché-ridden and generally inaccurate, as Lachman so justly pointed out – directed against such a precocious, wide-ranging talent persisted throughout Colin Wilson’s long and hugely prolific lifetime.

While you couldn’t easily pigeon-hole Colin (another reason for him to be spurned by our narrow literary and academic establishments!), he

never seemed bitter, remaining affable, good-humoured and indeed irrepressible. From the 1960s on we shared the same innovative paperback publishers, Panther Books, and in the mid-1970s when I first met him we were both serving on the South West Arts Literature Panel. Ted Hughes, Patricia Beer, Peter Redgrove, Ken Smith and other West Country authors were members then, and meetings were enhanced, to say the least, by Colin, who always generously brought with him a briefcase containing a few good wines to tide us all through some rather long hours and supplement the dull regional arts fodder.

Another convivial occasion when the wine flowed was in the Cheshire Cheese pub in Fleet Street, at the launch of the Panther edition of *Mysteries*, Colin's mammoth sequel to *The Occult*. The two lovely women friends accompanying me that evening were separately chatted up by the notorious Satanist Anton LaVey, who spun the selfsame line with each – promising High Priestess status, orgiastic initiation into the Secret Truths, etc etc. (He got nowhere and everyone had a good laugh: fun times indeed, rather than End Times!)

Whenever I could arrange it (during a writing Residency centred on a college, library, or arts centre) I'd invariably invite Colin to come and talk to students and audiences on any subject of his choice, for I knew what a fascinating speaker and very approachable communicator he was. There was a most enjoyable weekend at Plymouth Arts Centre, for instance, based around *Dreams and Dreaming*, when David Gascoyne and RD Laing joined Colin and myself on the platform: it proved a truly illuminating, humorous and stimulating occasion.

In the 1980s, Ken Smith and I became the first Writers in Residence in UK jails, and I duly invited Colin to visit my base, HMP Channings Wood, to talk to inmates about crime, punishment and the purpose of life. This he not only did – charming, stimulating and cheerful as ever – but contributed an insightful article entitled 'Prisoners and Outsiders' to my prison writing anthology *Out of the*

*Wood* (1989). Colin ended his piece thus: "Once a man has learned to express his feelings and dreams, he rises above that element of criminality which exists in every man. In other words, if we could find a method of teaching prisoners the art of self-expression, in any form, we would also have discovered an infallible method of keeping our prisons half-empty. And that in itself would be one of the greatest social revolutions of all time." A quarter-century later – with prison education departments and budgets cynically cut, privatisation creeping in, and all our prisons overflowing – Colin's reflections on crime and psychology, among so much else, seem extremely relevant if not prophetic. They remain well worth reading, for Colin certainly had (in the title of just one of his many books) *The Strength To Dream*.

Our society and literature need dreamers – open-minded creative individuals who manage to be energetic and enthusiastic, yet persist against the odds as generous and rational spirits. Colin's hero Bernard Shaw complained about Samuel Butler's provocative autobiographical novel *The Way Of All Flesh* "making so little impression", adding: "Really the English do not deserve to have great men." Looking back at Colin Wilson's vastly impressive and various oeuvre, one is inclined to agree.

**Alexis Lykiard**  
*Exeter, Devon*

## Chop chop

What do alien abductions, cattle mutilations and the nefarious underground activities near Dulce, New Mexico, have in common? Genetic experiments. About 15 years ago I watched a documentary on The History Channel about the guillotine. At the end of this documentary the announcer said, "Have we seen the last of the guillotine?" Jesus made a most profound – and prophetic – statement in Luke 17:26: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man". Christian evangelicals believe Satan has created another hybrid race of half-human, half-demonic entities as he did in the days of Noah for two reasons: first, he is

creating a 'superhuman force' of soldiers to fight in the Battle of Armageddon because he still thinks he has a chance of defeating Christ. Satan will need hearts, livers, lungs and kidneys for these soldiers. Where is he going to get them? From those that are guillotined during the Tribulation! John wrote in Revelation 20:4: "[...] and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast [Antichrist] neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands" [my emphasis]. If we are to believe certain websites about 'EndTime Guillotines', the United States had allegedly received a shipment of between 30,000 and 60,000 of these beheading machines from China to be used when 'martial law' is declared within the United States. I believe 'martial law' is referring to the Tribulation. This could be just a rumour – if it is, it's a good one because it fits right in with biblical prophecy.

The second reason for the hybrid race was to create the Antichrist. The Bible says the Antichrist is a beast. A half-human, half-demonic entity could be called a 'beast'. Christian evangelicals believe the Antichrist – who will be a political leader – is alive in the world today. Alien abductions began in the 1950s after we entered the Flying Saucer era in 1947. Christian evangelicals believe Satan launched his 'Big Lie' or 'Great Deception' that year to convince the people of Earth to believe in extraterrestrials. The New Age Movement – one of the false doctrines Jesus warned about in the Last Days – teaches of the 'Intergalactic Belief': extraterrestrials with superior intelligence that belong to an 'Intergalactic Federation' that will save humankind from the Apocalypse – but first a portion of Earth's population will be removed because their 'vibes' are not in tune with the New Age. This belief is similar to the ones promulgated in the early Sixties by UFO cults that be-

lieved they would be removed from this planet by mother ships. That portion of Earth's population to be removed are believers in Christ who will vanish from the Earth before the Tribulation and the war to end all wars – Armageddon.

**Greg May**  
*Orlando, Florida*

## Sky vampires

There might be an explanation for the cattle mutilations you highlighted in a recent issue, namely, 'Sky Vampires'. That is, the ionosphere of the Earth's atmosphere where the Sun's ultraviolet rays ionize oxygen into ozone, evolved plasma-based life forms with big supernatural or fringe science abilities. These 'Sky Vampires' are super-predators that fly down to Earth to prey on cattle and horses, drain their blood and eat selective parts of their bodies, using thermal laser-like extensions of their plasma bodies to cut off the pieces. The 'Sky Vampires' look like UFOs, or the bright lights of a 'Black Ops' helicopter. These life forms apparently have a quantum teleportation link to the Earth's ionosphere, like a 1,000-mile extension cord, so that they are always empowered by the ionosphere. And, a theory here, if these 'Sky Vampires' could 'possess' or jump inside a human body, that might explain the legend of classical vampires, which burn up in sunlight, because in the ionosphere they metabolise ultraviolet rays into electrical energy, which would burn up any bodies they possess when exposed to sunlight. The Feds' 'Black Ops' helicopter teams would trail the cattle mutilations, because it's a real supernatural occurrence that seems to break the laws of physics, and someday, by analysing traces of it, we might gain valuable scientific data. That covers it.

**Robert G Schreib Jr**  
*Toms River, New Jersey*



PAUL TAYLOR



# it happened to... Linda Blair

In 1974, Linda Blair became a household name for her portrayal of possessed child Regan in *The Exorcist*. It was a controversial role that she would never escape, but these days it gives her an opportunity to promote the work of her animal welfare foundation. She talked to *FT* about her most famous role, her odder experiences and her spiritual beliefs.

There have been a lot of stories about things happening on the set of *The Exorcist* and people dying and so on. I was a child at the time, and a child's perception is different from an adult's. An adult has some preconceived ideas they've already formulated. They may be looking for something, and a child is not. I was told when I was young that children can sense things, but I never did. I never felt anything was weird on the film shoot; it was always a job and it was very difficult. And the fact that you work on something for a year and a half – well, somebody's relative is going to pass away; a carpenter might have a carpentry accident... The electrical fire that happened on the film – well, was it because of something that was plugged into the electricity that should not have been? I never felt anything out of the ordinary. It is true that they had priests come in and bless the set, but I wasn't there.

## Ghosts and spirits

When I was nine or 10, I was playing with my sister and her friend near our house in Connecticut. In those days, we still had so-called haunted houses – you know, houses that were way back in the woods. You don't really find them any more because so much time has gone by and every plot of land has been developed. But back then, there were still places where you could find one of these houses...

This one in particular was very old, with vines growing everywhere, and we went investigating. We slowly went up the old staircase – the floors were so rotten there were holes in them. We were on the second floor and looking through things and just as we opened the bedroom door, we heard footsteps down below. They were *absolutely* footsteps... you just sort of knew that they probably weren't made by a human. We ran down the stairs as fast as we could – only I was smallest, so I was last. As we got to the big, heavy front door, my sister and her friend flew out and the door closed in front of me. Oh my God! That scared me! And then I turned around and I saw these figures – but then the door opened and I was gone! That's the only thing that ever happened to me. Nobody was threatening me, but that was the only thing happened to me that was like a ghost story situation.

We did have a strange experience within the family, though. Timmy would have been my cousin – he was my aunt's son – and on his 16th birthday, a year or two before I was born, my grandfather gave him the car to go to the store and enjoy his birthday; Timmy was 16,

so he could now drive legally. But then the car stalled on the train tracks – the old cliché that you can't believe. I mean, what is the chance of that happening just as the train is coming? Why not a different moment, half an hour before or three hours later? So, Timmy died in this terrible, violent crash – but that wasn't the end.

My sister was the one who actually used to see him the most. I talked to my family about it, and they said: "Yeah, we see Timmy all the time." They said he appeared outside, coming towards the window in what I suppose you would call a ghostly form. I never saw him myself.

I do know that spirits exist; for me, there's no doubt about that. I mean mostly those who have died violently, who were not allowed to pass on into the next life. You have good ones that are here, too, that you pray to and say: "If you can help in any way, please do so"; but I don't believe they can really do much

would never do that. People have even brought Ouija boards to me to sign at appearances, and I'm like, "Oh no, I won't touch that!" If I don't like a certain object, I definitely won't sign it.

I try to look at these experiences scientifically as well as spiritually. Spiritually, can that person be there touching you? Why not? On the other hand, scientifically, did something just manifest in the experimenter's mind? The human mind is so fragile; it can manifest a voice, or something you think you actually saw... and there is no scientific proof behind any of it, because it is always just a fleeting moment. Some people choose to be believers, and some say: "No. Because I can't prove it scientifically, it's not possible!" That's a little too hard-core for me.

## Angels, animals and *The Exorcist*

One of things that might surprise people, coming from me, is that I feel there are angels on

Earth. Everybody always wants to talk about ghosts and spirits... everyone wants to talk about negative things, but there are many of us who choose to see the beauty, find the good and recognise when there is angelic work around us. I have felt that throughout my life yet nobody ever asks me about it!

The whole *Exorcist* thing has been very strange. First of all, for me to be the one who was picked to do the film seemed very odd. I think about the fact that I made the film and it became so controversial, and I had to go through that whole experience and constantly fight for who I was. I had to live life to prove who I was. I had always wanted to be a veterinarian. Now I'm

able to affect thousands upon thousands of animals, hopefully because I have a good platform, and that came from the movie. So I respect *The Exorcist* for giving me a platform to talk about issues that I'm passionate about – environmental issues and animal welfare.

The animals teach me so much about life, compassion, death, sadness, happiness, contentment... they teach me constantly to smell the flowers, to see the beauty of the world. It's about living your life every day, no matter how difficult it is, and treating others the way you would like to be treated. I have always felt that angels are around me. If you ask me what I believe, then I believe that animals are angels hidden in animal suits. I believe that cats and dogs are angels in animal suits, and come Judgement Day you will be judged by them for how you treated them. I think many people will be quite surprised!

You can support Linda Blair's WorldHeart Foundation at: [www.lindablairworldheart.org](http://www.lindablairworldheart.org)



People have even brought Ouija boards to me to sign at appearances, and I'm like, "Oh no, I won't touch that!"

to help. They're just sort of there. The idea of trying to make contact with someone deceased is not a good one. Ouija Boards and so on... Nope! I won't touch them! We know what those particular situations are supposed to conjure up, so why – unless out of curiosity – would you be willing to enter that arena? My feeling is that you're going to attract other, negative things. I

## The dark tower

I grew up in a town called Cumbernauld, about 12 miles (19km) outside Glasgow. There is a public park there, once part of the estate of a large mansion currently called Cumbernauld House, which had been converted into council offices. In the grounds of this estate, down a wooded glen, there stands an old dovecote in the form of a tall, circular stone tower.

When I was a youth, the tower was reputed to be the haunt of 'devil-worshippers', and exciting youthful myths had sprung up regarding black masses and cat sacrifice happening there, although no one had actually witnessed any of this first-hand. At around the age of 14, three of my friends and I decided to visit the tower after dark to see what all the fuss was about and to indulge in a scary adventure. None of us had actually seen the tower before, having only heard of it by repute. We made our way along the path at the bottom of the glen, which had electric lamps to light the way. The tower itself was off to one side of the path, about half way up the side of the glen, amongst some sparse trees, with thicker trees and shrubbery behind it, barely visible in the gloom.

It seemed to give off an aura of menace and our bravado quickly evaporated once we had caught sight of it. Of our group only one other boy, Paul, and I were willing to leave the relative safety of the lit path and approach the tower. We climbed the slope towards it, berating our friends for being cowards, but I know I was very scared and Paul later admitted he also was terrified. We approached to within touching distance. There was an arched doorway facing us with stout wooden double doors with ornate metal hinges. We dared each other to touch the doors, but by this time the aura of menace had increased to the point where I was sure that as soon as I touched them they would fly open and something malevolent would be waiting on the other side to claim us. Paul was similarly reluctant to touch the doors so we settled for touching the stones of the archway instead.

At this point our friends from the path shouted a warning and we saw an almost solid wall of dense fog coming down the slope of the glen through the trees towards us. We fled in terror and after we had run



from the glen Paul and I spoke about the sense of foreboding we had experienced when approaching the wooden doors and how glad we were that this unnatural-seeming wall of fog had never caught up with us. The whole experience had been frightening and exhilarating for all of us.

Several days later it was my task to walk the family dog and as it was around noon I thought I would return to the glen to see what the tower was like in daylight. This is where the whole thing became genuinely spooky and puzzling. The tower was there, but the doorway was sealed completely by stone. The stones were irregular in size and shape, unlikely to be easily mistaken in the gloom for the regular stout planks and hinges we had seen the other night, and they were flush with the outer wall surface. Subsequent investigation revealed that the doorway had been sealed like this for years.

The doors Paul and I saw that night were set back several inches in the archway and we had both been within touching distance of them. Despite the gloom, our eyes had grown accustomed to it by the time we reached the tower and both of

us were in no doubt about what we had seen. None of us had any idea that there weren't meant to be doors there. We had not seen the doors themselves as unusual in any way, only the sensation of something sinister lurking behind them.

Despite Paul and I seeing the doors up close, neither of us could bring ourselves to touch them. I have often wondered what would have happened if we had. What did we see that night? A time slip? A portal to hell perhaps? I doubt it, but I'll never know, and in a way I'm glad I didn't find out the hard way.

I must sign off now as I'm an archaeologist and I have a Bronze Age burial site to excavate tomorrow.

**Scott Wilson**  
*Hyndland, Glasgow*

## Grandma's clock

As a child I used to stay at my grandmother's house every Friday night. In the hallway was her precious grandfather clock, which made a funny sound every time I walked past it, disturbing the enormous, heavy weights inside. I remember sitting in her front room watching

TV and listening to the clock strike on the quarter hour. I used to join in and sing along with it, which made my grandmother smile. "I love your clock Nan," I would say after the last chime of every sequence. "I know you do," she would reply fondly, "so do I".

I was a regular visitor at my grandmother's house over the years as I adored her and she lived only a few streets away. My husband would join me too and often remarked on the clock's beautiful face. "One day I want you to have that clock," she said to my husband. "You like it so much I know you will appreciate it". I was thrilled to think that it would remain in my family and we assured her that we would always treasure it.

The clock was given to us when she moved into a residential home. She used to enjoy seeing it in our house when she visited and she could see how well we were looking after it. When she passed away it felt almost too much to bear for both of us and the clock instantly became even more precious. The day of the funeral arrived. When we got home we sat down with a cup of tea and our eyes came to rest on the clock in our front room. For some reason it was telling the wrong time. It had stopped at the same time as the funeral. We tried in vain to get it going again, and have asked clockmakers to mend it, but without success. The presence of the clock keeps her memory alive in our hearts – but did its mechanism 'die' when she was laid to rest?

**Michelle Lloyd King**  
*Hertfordshire*

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



# POLICE NEWS

THE ILLUSTRATED  
LAW COURTS AND WEEKLY RECORD

JAN BONDESON presents more sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.

## 29 THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE BIRMINGHAM MIDGET

Dysfunctional families who neglect and mistreat their children are a daily feature in the newspapers. A dismal tale from the *Illustrated Police News* would suggest that this is far from a modern phenomenon.

In early July 1884, Mrs Emma Evans, the wife of a Birmingham mechanic, gave birth to a most extraordinary child, less than 9in (23cm) long and weighing less than 10oz (280g), but still perfectly formed. Since all

the neighbours thronged to see little Lilly Evans, the Birmingham Midget, it did not take long for her parents to realise that they were on to a good thing. After the Midget had been rented to a showman for 30 shillings (£1.50) a week, Mr Evans downed his tools and descended into an alcoholic daze. When Emma Evans accompanied the Midget on tour, she brought a knapsack of gin bottles with her wherever she went. On 17 August, the Midget fell ill with convulsions. She was taken out for a ride, in the vain hope that such an experience would cause the tiny creature to rally, but the Birmingham Midget expired the next day.

Emma Evans now tried to make a deal with the showman, or perhaps a doctor keen on collecting curiosities, to sell the tiny corpse. An auction was started, with several interested bidders, but these macabre proceedings were halted by Mr Weekes, the deputy Coroner for Birmingham, who held an inquest on the Midget on 21 August. When questioned by the stern Mr Weekes, Emma Evans denied ever being drunk, although she admitted keeping the Midget awake

for exhibition purposes. A woman who had made an elaborate dress for the Midget testified that poor Lilly had been exhibited throughout the day, with the exception of dinner and teatime. She had suckled the mother when the latter was sober, and had been fed "scalded biscuits" when that was not the case.

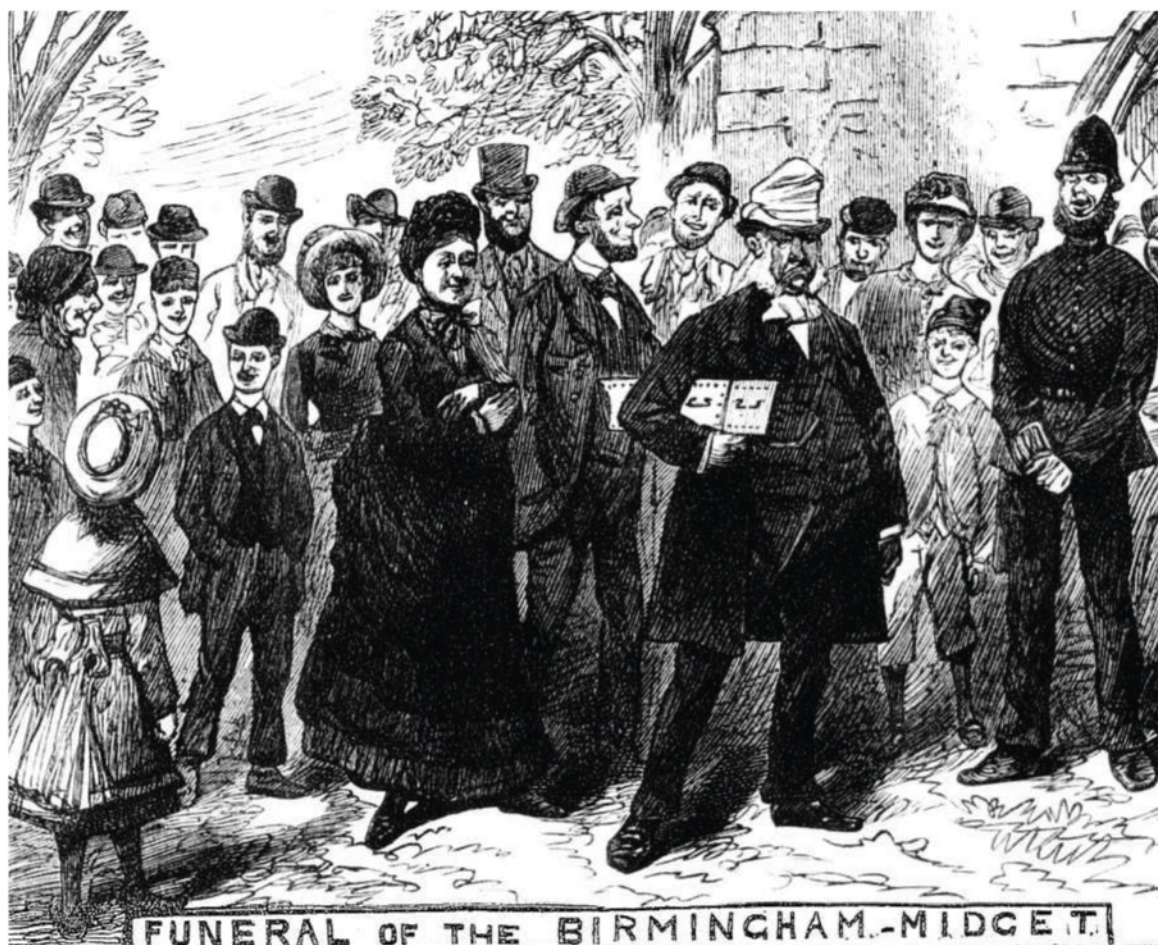
"But was she not nearly always drunk?"

"Yes." [sensation in court]

The verdict of the Deputy Coroner was that Lilly Evans had died due to the neglect of the mother and the rigours of being exhibited for money. He treated Emma Evans to a severe tongue-lashing, adding that she had narrowly escaped prosecution for manslaughter.

But the 'dysfunctional' Emma Evans was not done yet. Since she freely exhibited the corpse to any person giving her a tip, the house where she lodged, in Francis Street, was thronged by the curious. On 24 August, the undertakers put the Birmingham Midget in her tiny coffin, and the procession to Warstone Lane Cemetery could begin. Such was the crowd attending this singular funeral

that Francis Street was unpassable for 15 minutes. Not trusting the mother's promise that the remains of the Midget would not be sold to the showman, the police halted the procession midway and opened the coffin, to reveal the tiny corpse within. The detestable Emma Evans was hissed and yelled at by the mob, and would have been lynched had the police not protected her. When the undertaker grasped the tiny coffin and put it underneath his coat, as depicted by the *IPN* artist, there was a loud yell of laughter from the mob, a dismal farewell to the unfortunate Birmingham Midget.



ABOVE: The funeral of the Birmingham Midget, from *Illustrated Police News*, 6 September 1884.

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# Why Fortean?



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FT toes no party line.

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# PHENOMENOMIX

WB YEATS  
Part 5 - The Last!

HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON

THE SECOND HALF OF W.B. YEATS' LIFE WAS EVEN MORE EVENTFUL THAN THE FIRST! HE MARRIED A MUCH YOUNGER WOMAN WHO PROVED TO BE A BRILLIANT MEDIUM!

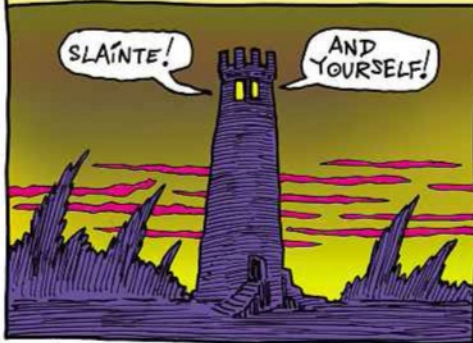


Domestic Bliss in the Yeats' household

HE HAD AN OPERATION TO RESTORE HIS SEXUAL POTENCY...



HE MOVED INTO AN ANCIENT TOWER, WHERE HE COMMUNED WITH IRISH SPIRITS FROM THE 18TH CENTURY...



HE RETURNED TO HIS EARLY INTEREST IN INDIAN MYSTICISM...



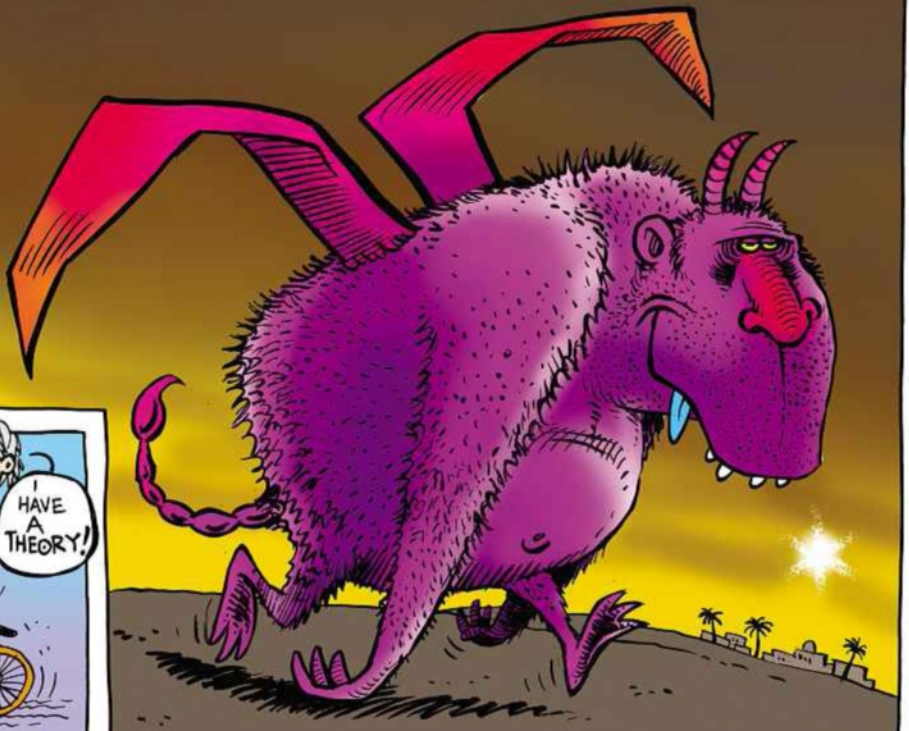
IN DREAMS AND VISIONS HE TIME-TRAVELLED BACK TO ANCIENT BYZANTIUM...



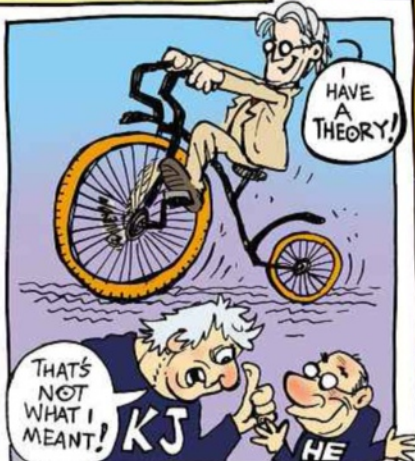
IN POEMS, HE SAW HIMSELF AS A METALLIC TOY BIRD — A PLAY-THING FOR "LORDS AND LADIES OF BYZANTIUM"...



MUCH OF YEATS' LATER POETRY WAS BASED ON THEORIES OUTLINED IN "A VISION"! POSSIBLY HIS GREATEST POEM FROM THIS TIME WAS A TERRIFYING VISION OF THE GREAT BEAST THAT WOULD DOMINATE A NEW AGE OF SAVAGERY! IT'S CALLED "THE SECOND COMING"...



USING HIS WIFE'S SPIRIT MESSAGES, HE WROTE A HUGE AND STRANGE BOOK CALLED "A VISION", WHICH EXPLAINS HIS THEORIES OF HISTORICAL CYCLES...



"AND WHAT ROUGH BEAST, ITS HOUR COME ROUND AT LAST SLOUCHES TOWARDS BETHLEHEM TO BE BORN?"

# 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](http://www.PranaTalisman.com)

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The deluxe  
crystalised  
PRANA

The original  
PRANA

## The PRANA Talisman

Turn your Dreams into Reality  
with the Power of Magic & your Mind

PRANA is a real and very powerful, authentic magical talisman of ancient origin, to help you achieve all your goals.

Supplied in its own individual pouch & complete with a simple 12 page booklet of instructions and background information.

PRANA Original - £9.99 each  
PRANA Deluxe Crystallised Edition - £14.99 each

(Shipping per order: £2.50 UK Mainland; £3.50 Europe; £5.00 R.O.W.) For full details and secure online ordering visit our website.

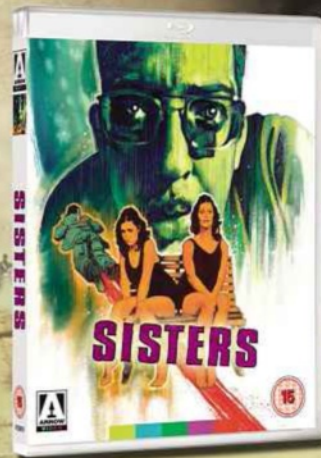
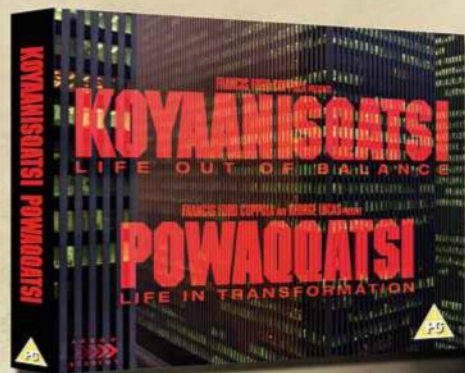
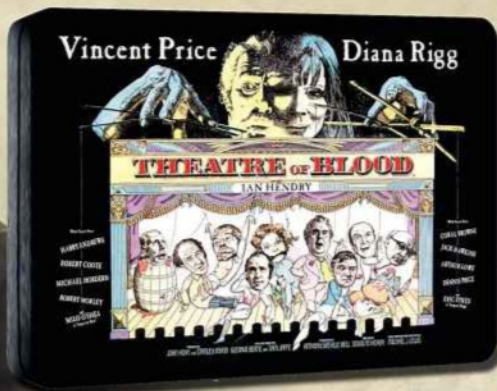
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PRANA - the Talisman of the Elements, the Breath of Life and the Four Archangels.





# AN ACTION-PACKED APRIL



Margot Kidder is seeing double in *Sisters*, the latest addition to our every-growing Brian De Palma collection, whilst it's curtains for the critics of horror legend Vincent Price in the blood-drenched *Theatre of Blood* – available in both Blu-ray and glorious Limited Edition SteelBook editions! Meanwhile, Chuck Norris and Lee Marvin are back in action and ready to take down a group of political terrorists in *The Delta Force*. Fancy something more cerebral? No problem – this month's Arrow Academy release of the experimental documentaries *Koyaanisqatsi/Powaqqatsi* has it covered.

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