



WATCH THE SKIES!

**IS THE PENTAGON
SEARCHING FOR UFOs?**

SKINWALKER RANCH INTERDIMENSIONAL ENTITIES IN UTAH

STONE-THROWING SPOOK ROMANIAN POLTERGEIST MYSTERY

PUSSIES PRESERVED WEST SUFFOLK MUMMIFIED CAT SAFARI

CHIMPANZEE JUKEBOX • WORLD'S UGLIEST PIG • THAI WILLY WHITENING • BLIND SIGHT

**THE
WORLD'S
WEIRDEST
NEWS**

THE WORLD OF

STRANGE PHENOMENA

WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

ForteanTimes

FT363 FEBRUARY 2018

£4.50

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

PHONE CALLS FROM
THE DEAD AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS FROM
THE SPIRIT WORLD



FIRST CONTACT

WHAT DO WE DO WHEN
THE ALIENS ARRIVE?

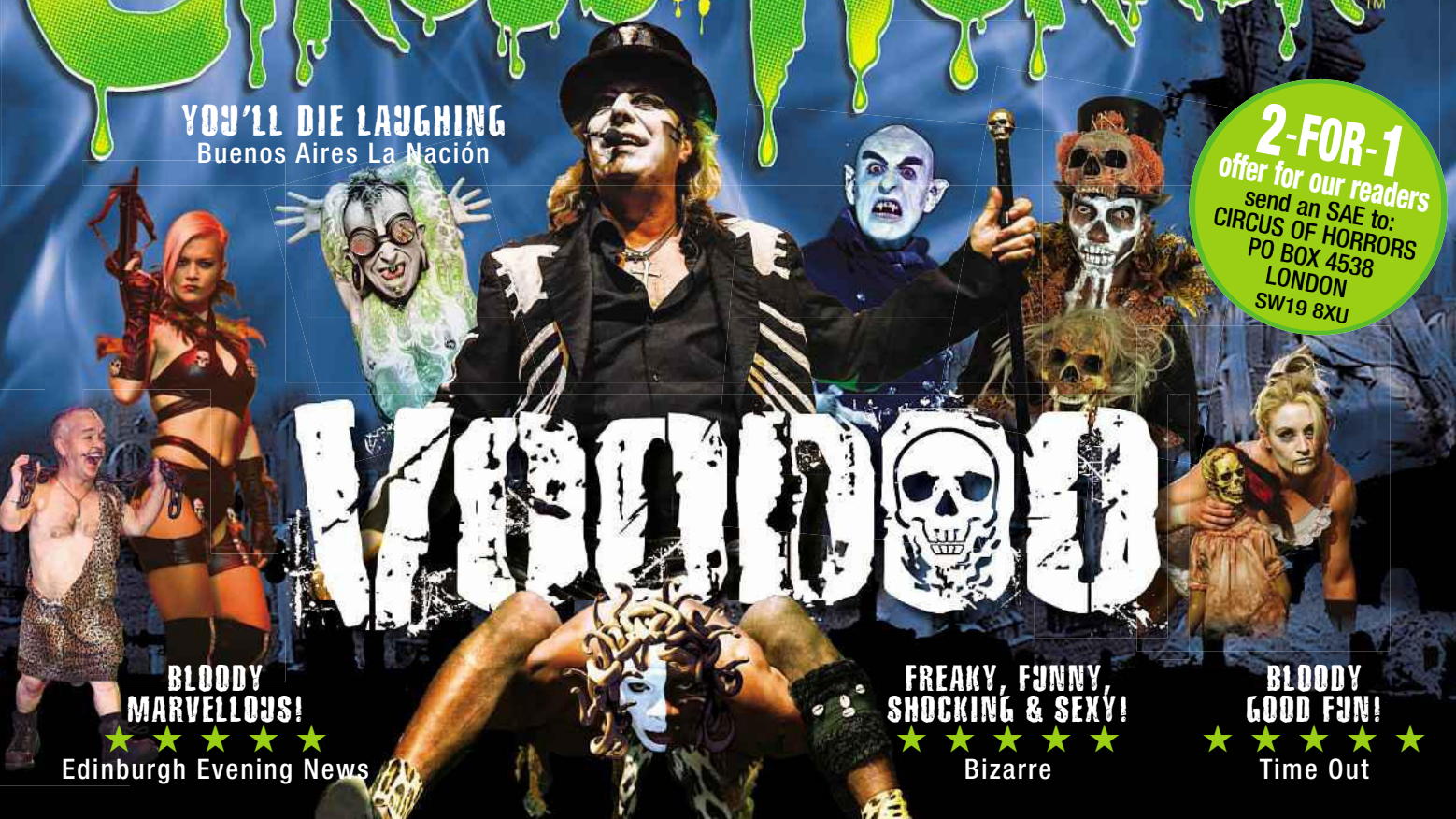
IT STORMED INTO THE FINALS OF BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT... NOW A WEST END & WORLDWIDE SMASH WITH ITS BRAND NEW SHOW!

'YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS. ONE DAY SOMETHING WILL GO WRONG AND YOU'LL WANT TO SAY YOU WERE THERE WHEN IT DID' Graham Norton

THE CIRCUS OF HORRORS

YOU'LL DIE LAUGHING
Buenos Aires La Nación

2-FOR-1
offer for our readers
send an SAE to:
CIRCUS OF HORRORS
PO BOX 4538
LONDON
SW19 8XU



WAKED UP

BLOODY MARVELOUS!

FREAKY, FUNNY, SHOCKING & SEXY!

BLOODY GOOD FUN!

Edinburgh Evening News

Bizarre

Time Out

CRAWLEY , Hawth Theatre 10 Jan parkwoodtheatres.co.uk/The-Hawth	01293 553636 3 Feb	EASTBOURNE Royal Hippodrome royalhippodrome.com	01323 80 20 20 25 Feb	MOTHERWELL Concert Hall https://culturenl.co.uk/	01698 403120 22 Mar	PRESTON Guild Hall prestonguildhall.co.uk	01772 80 44 44 22 Mar
WOKING , New Victoria Theatre 11 Jan http://bit.ly/2j9KntJ	0844 871 7645 5 Feb	LINCOLN New Theatre Royal newtheatreroyalincoln.co.uk	01522 519 999 26 Feb	BILLINGHAM Forum forumtheatrebillingham.co.uk	01642 552 663 23 Mar	TELFORD Oakengates Theatre theacetelford.com	01952 382 382 23 Mar
POOLE Lighthouse 12 Jan lighthousepoole.co.uk	01202 280000 6 Feb	YORK Grand Opera House http://bit.ly/2B0EBKS	0844 871 3024 28 Feb	MANCHESTER Palace Theatre http://bit.ly/2BHYWCz	0844 871 3019 24 Mar	FROME Memorial Theatre fmt.website	01373 462 795 24 Mar
EXETER Corn Exchange 13 Jan exetercornexchange.co.uk	01392 665938 7 Feb	COLNE Muni themuni.co.uk	01282 661 234 1 Mar	SHEFFIELD City Hall sheffieldcityhall.co.uk	0114 2 789 789 3 Mar	BIRMINGHAM Alexandra bit.ly/2BoPGsD	0844 871 3011 25 Mar
TORQUAY Princess Theatre 14 Jan http://bit.ly/2A2PIWB	0844 871 3023 8 Feb	LIVERPOOL Empire atgtickets.com/venues/liverpool-empire	0844 871 3017 2 Mar	HALIFAX Victoria Theatre calderdale.gov.uk/victoria	01422 351158 26 Mar	BREGON Theatr Brycheiniog brycheiniog.co.uk	01874 611 622 26 Mar
WEYMOUTH Pavilion 15 Jan weymouthpavilion.com	01305 783225 9 Feb	NEWCASTLE Tyne Theatre & Opera House tynetheatreandoperahouse.co.uk	0844 2491 000 3 Mar	SUNDERLAND Empire http://bit.ly/2K9rCTA	0844 871 3022 4 Mar	BOURNEMOUTH Pavilion bournemouthpavilion.co.uk	0844 576 3000 27 Mar
BRIGHTON Theatre Royal 16 Jan http://bit.ly/2AlcLcL	0844 871 7650 10 Feb	BARROW-IN-FURNESS The Forum theforumbarrow.co.uk	01229 820 000 4 Mar	WHITBY Pavilion whitbypavilion.co.uk	01947 458 899 5 Mar	PETERBOROUGH Key Theatre vivacity-peterborough.com	01733 207 239 28 Mar
SWANSEA Grand Theatre 17 Jan swansea.gov.uk/swansea-grand-theatre	01792 475715 11 Feb	STRANRAER The Ryan Centre dumgal.gov.uk/ryancentre	01776 703 535 13 Mar	SCARBOROUGH Spa scarboroughspa.co.uk	01723 821 888 29 Mar	BOSTON Blackfriars Theatre blackfriarsartscentre.co.uk	01205 363 108 29 Mar
YEovil Octagon Theatre 19 Jan octagon-theatre.co.uk	01935 422884 13 Feb	DERRY/LONDONDERRY Millennium Forum millenniumforum.co.uk	028 7126 4455 14 Feb	BARNSELY Metrodome bpl.org.uk/metrodome	01226 730 060 6 Mar	SKEGNESS Embassy Theatre embassytheatre.co.uk	01507 613 100 30 Mar
CHELTENHAM Town Hall 20 Jan cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk	0844 576 2210 14 Feb	BELFAST Waterfront waterfront.co.uk	028 9033 4455 7 Mar	FELIXSTOWE Spa Pavilion http://spapavilion.uk	01394 284 962 7 Mar	OXFORD New Theatre http://bit.ly/2AH8PIX	0844 871 3020 31 Mar
HEREFORD Courtyard 22 Jan courtyard.org.uk	01432 340555 16 Feb	ABERDEEN Beach Ballroom aberdeenperformingarts.com	01224 641 122 8 & 9 Mar	GT YARMOUTH Hippodrome hippodromecircus.co.uk	01493 844 172 10 Mar	NOTTINGHAM Forest Park IN THE BIG TOP bit.ly/2i3HUw0	08444 993 666 1 Apr
NEWPORT Riverfront 23 Jan tickets.newportlive.co.uk	01633 656757 17 Feb	FALKIRK Town Hall falkirkcommunitytrust.org	01324 590 900 17 Mar	COLCHESTER Charter Hall colchester-events.co.uk/whats-on	01206 282 020 10 Mar	KINGS LYNN Corn Exchange kingslynncornexchange.co.uk	01553 764864 17 Apr
WELLINGBOROUGH Castle Theatre 25 Jan castletheatre.co.uk	01933 270 007 18 Feb	KILMARNOCK Palace Theatre eastayshireleisure.co.uk	01563 554 900 13 & 14 Mar	MAIDSTONE Hazlett Theatre http://bit.ly/2BW5KWS	01622 758 611 13 & 14 Mar	GLASGOW Kings Theatre atgtickets.com/venues/kings-theatre	0844 871 7648 18 Apr
STOKE Victoria Hall 26 Jan atgtickets.com/venues/victoria-hall	0844 871 7627 19 Feb	KIRKCALDY Adam Smith Theatre onfife.com/venues/adam-smith-theatre	01592 583 302 19 Feb	STEVENAGE Gordon Craig Theatre gordon-craig.co.uk	01438 363 200 15 Mar	ELGIN Town Hall skiddle.com	01343 543778 19 Apr
READING Hexagon 27 Jan readingarts.com/hexagon	0118 960 6060 20 Feb	GLENROTHES Rothes Hall onfife.com/venues/rothes-halls	01592 611 101 20 Feb	HARLOW Playhouse harlowplayhouse.co.uk	01279 431 945 16 Mar	WREXHAM , Glyndwr University glyndwr.ac.uk/en/Events	0844 888 9991 20 Apr
SWINDON Wyvern theatre 28 Jan swindontheatres.co.uk	01793 524 481 21 Feb	INVERNESS Eden Court eden-court.co.uk	01463 234 234 17 Mar	KETTERING Lighthouse lighthouse theatre.co.uk	01536 414 141 17 Mar	NORWICH Royal Norfolk Show Ground IN THE BIG TOP ticketmaster.co.uk/artis/26960	08444 993 666 21 Apr
CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange 29 Jan cambridgelivetrust.co.uk	01223 357 851 23 Feb	PITLOCHRY Festival Theatre pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com	01796 484 626 23 Feb	CARDIFF St Davids Hall stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk	029 2087 8444 20 Mar	MILTON KEYNES Theatre bit.ly/2iqXqGj	0844 871 7652 22 Apr
SOUTHAMPTON O2 Guildhall 2 Feb livenation.co.uk/southampton	023 8063 2601 24 Feb	DUNDEE Whitehall Theatre http://www.whitehalltheatre.com/	01382 434 940 24 Feb	WARRINGTON Parr Hall pyramidparrhall.com	01925 442 345 21 Mar	DERBY Bass Recreation Ground IN THE BIG TOP derbylive.co.uk	01332 255 800 26 Apr

circusofhorrors.co.uk

🎫 = tickets also available from
ticketmaster.co.uk
08444 993 666

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

CONTENTS



TERENCE SPENCER / THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION / GETTY IMAGES

16 Ghost sonatas: channelling new works by dead composers



PHILIP TOSCANO - WPA POOL / GETTY IMAGES

26 Hilary Mantel's aura



VASILE ARCANU

24 Priest versus poltergeist



MANUNATH KIRAN / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

6 Primate playmates: the boy who made friends with monkeys



FORTEAN TIMES 363

Why fortean ?

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

SEE PAGE
78

STRANGE DAYS

A digest of the worldwide weird, including: Amazing survivals, World's oldest animals, Virgin Mary visions, and much more...

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 05 THE CONSPIRASPHERE | 16 GHOSTWATCH |
| 13 SCIENCE | 23 ALIEN ZOO |
| 14 ARCHÆOLOGY | 28 THE UFO FILES |

FEATURES

30 COVER STORY

A LITTLE HISTORY OF SPIRIT TECHNOLOGY

Is it possible to bring scientific innovations to bear on the intangible world of the spirit, or even to talk to the dead through emerging technologies? **CHRIS JOSIFFE** traces the history of Spiritualist kit designed to communicate with the Other Side.

38 FROM LOS ALAMOS TO SKINWALKER RANCH

Retired US Army colonel **JOHN B ALEXANDER** has seen more than his fair share of anomalies. Here, he recalls his time with the National Institute for Discovery Science and looks back at one of its most baffling cases – the outbreak of high strangeness on a Utah ranch...

42 CRIMINALLY BAD

JAN BONDESON looks back at the short history of the *Illustrated Police Budget*, a British weekly paper whose sleazy and salacious approach to news reporting made the notorious *Illustrated Police News* look like a model of good journalistic practice.

REPORTS

52 BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

The UFO Experience **THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE**

74 FORTEAN TRAVELLER

The Suffolk Mummified Cat Safari **MATT SALUSBURY**

FORUM

49 Disgrace on Dartmoor **PAUL TAYLOR**

50 Bligh Bond: God's Archæologist? **TIM FLIGHT**

REGULARS

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 02 EDITORIAL | 69 LETTERS | 79 PHENOMENOMIX |
| 55 REVIEWS | 78 READER INFO | 80 STRANGE DEATHS |

EDITOR
DAVID SUTTON
 (drsutton@forteantimes.com)
FOUNDING EDITORS
BOB RICKARD (bobrickard@mail.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteantimes.com)
ART DIRECTOR
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
 (etienne@forteantimes.com)
BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
VAL STEVENSON
 (val@forteantimes.com)
RESIDENT CARTOONIST
HUNT EMERSON
SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES
 www.managemymags.co.uk
 customercare@subscribe.forteantimes.com

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 www.managemymags.co.uk – this should be your first port of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

Change your address, renew your subscription or report problems: UK subscriptions: 0330 333 3492 / customercare@subscribe.forteantimes.com
 USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 800-428-3003 (toll free)
 Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com
 Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)330 333 3492

LICENSING & SYNDICATION
 FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT: Syndication Manager
RYAN CHAMBERS TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 4027
 ryan_chambers@dennis.co.uk
 Senior Licensing Manager
CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 3840
 carlotta_serantoni@dennis.co.uk
 Licensing & Syndication Executive
NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 3998
 nicole_adams@dennis.co.uk

YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET
 www.forteantimes.com



© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

PUBLISHED BY DENNIS PUBLISHING,
 31-32 ALFRED PLACE, LONDON, WC1E 7DP

PUBLISHER
DHARMESH MISTRY
 dharmesh_mistry@dennis.co.uk

CIRCULATION MANAGER
JAMES MANGAN
 james.mangan@seymour.co.uk

EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER
GERALDINE GROBLER
 geraldine.grobler@seymour.co.uk

SENIOR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE
MICHAEL HILLS
 michael_hills@dennis.co.uk

GROUP ADVERTISING DIRECTOR LIFESTYLE
ANDREA MASON
 020 3890 3814
 andrea_mason@dennis.co.uk

SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE
BRADLEY BEAVER
 020 3890 3722
 bradley_beaver@dennis.co.uk

SALES EXECUTIVE
IMOGEN WILLIAMS
 020 3890 3739
 imogen_williams@dennis.co.uk

PRINTED BY WILLIAM GIBBONS & SONS LTD

DISTRIBUTION
 Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide

by Seymour Distribution Ltd.
 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
 Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
 Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk

Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 788 1272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, 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 500, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

12 issues: UK £48; Europe £58; Rest of world £68
 US \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED
GROUP CFO/COO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
COMPANY FOUNDER

BRETT REYNOLDS
KERIN O'CONNOR
JAMES TYE
FELIX DENNIS

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
 ABC 13,904 (Jan-Dec 2016)

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
 © Fortean Times: JAN 2018

EDITORIAL



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

TALKING TO THE SPIRITS

Welcome to our February issue, in which (among many other things) we explore some lesser known areas of spirit communication. The idea that human beings can receive messages from the other side or communicate with the dead is found in virtually every culture and is probably as old as humankind. But what happened when scientific and technological innovation met the then-current Western iteration of such beliefs in the form of Spiritualism makes for a fascinating story. As Chris Josiffe explains in his 'Little History of Spirit Technology', rather than new technologies displacing long-standing beliefs in the afterlife, they in fact attracted the attention of both Spiritualists and scientists (often in the same person) who saw in the telegraph or the phonograph new opportunities to put spirit communication on a sounder scientific basis. Even an avowedly sceptical inventor such as Thomas Alva Edison (pictured above) seems to have believed that new wireless technologies offered a way of testing Spiritualism's claims, and announced in 1910 that he had "been at work for some time, building an apparatus to see if it is possible for personalities which have left this Earth to communicate with us..." And on a more artistic note, Alan Murdie examines the strange career of Rosemary Brown, the British housewife who claimed to be channelling new works from such esteemed, but long deceased, composers as Beethoven and Liszt.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THINGS TO COME

Readers may remember Jemima Packington, 61, the world's only 'asparamancer', who claims she can see into the future by tossing asparagus into the air and interpreting how the spears fall (FT251:20). While her predictions for 2017 were not all accurate (the US under Trump is indeed now seen by many as a "pariah state", but no other countries have withdrawn from the EU and it's debateable whether the British economy is booming), Jemima has shared her prognostications for the coming year, which include: a record number of Royal births, a string of political scandals (you don't say!), the bursting of the Bitcoin bubble, the resurgence of the printed book and the US bringing the world to the

brink of serious conflict. Watch this space. *Metro*, 4 Jan 2018.

BEASTLY BEHAVIOUR

Amid the current flood of revelations concerning sexual predators in Hollywood and beyond, we were surprised to come upon a story about abuse of the cryptozoological kind. According to reports, Darrel Whitaker, a 57-year-old hunter from Glenwood Spring, Colorado, claimed a sasquatch attacked and attempted to rape him while he was walking in the woods. The big hairy creature, described as being 8ft tall, emerged from behind a tree and punched Mr Whitaker in the face, knocking him out. "When I regained consciousness, he had already torn my pants and was tearing through my underwear. I stabbed him in the shoulder with my hunting knife, and that made him run away."

Sadly, the whole thing was revealed by Snopes.com as originally dating from May 2017 and being yet another example of that current bugbear, fake news. www.snopes.com/colorado-hunter-sasquatch/

ERRATA

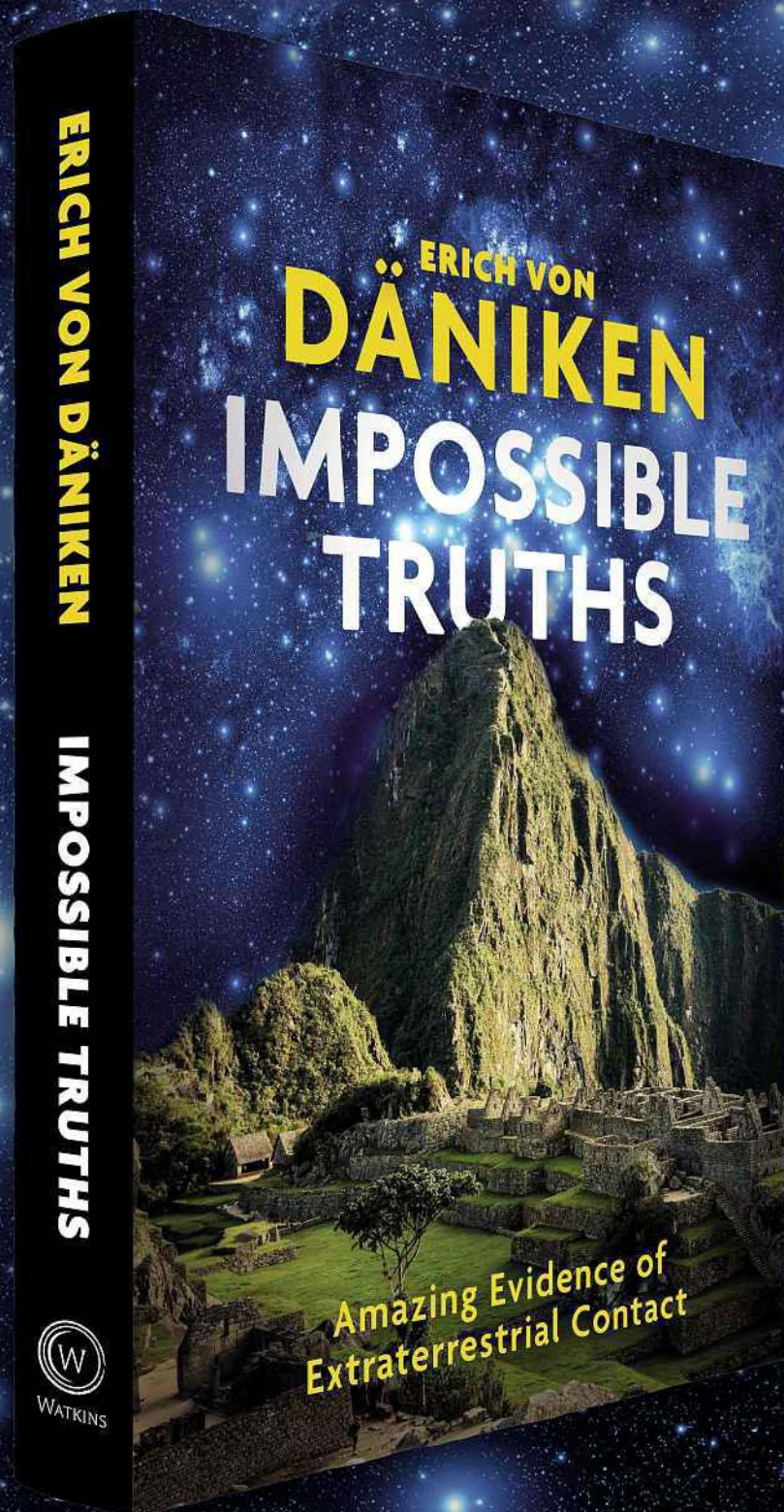
FT362:8: Rob Gandy wasted no time in spotting the first boo-boo of 2018. In the sideline 'Wolves Return' an unfortunate typo shone a whole new light on the legendary founding of Rome: "Rome's symbol is a she-wolf sucking the infant brothers Romulus and Remus..." Yes, that should have been "suckling"...

David R Sutton
 DAVID R SUTTON

Bob Rickard
 BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
 PAUL SIEVEKING

From the acclaimed author of the international bestseller *Chariots of the Gods*



Erich von Däniken presents his latest research on astounding theories about alien contact with the Earth from earliest times with a stunning visual evidence and unpublished testimony from expert informants.

Impossible Truths
by Erich von Däniken,
RRP: £14.99.

Available online and in
all good bookshops.



WATKINS

www.watkinspublishing.com



A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

STRANGE DAYS

SONIC WARFARE OR MASS HYSTERIA?

Chirping crickets are another possibility, while mass faintings in Cambodia are blamed on spirits

CUBAN CRISIS

Since the election of Donald Trump in November 2016, US embassy staff (and some Canadians) in Havana have heard ringing, chirping and grinding noises and around 24 have suffered symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, tinnitus, severe headaches, balance problems, brain injury, and hearing and memory loss [FT359:22, 360:14]. Was all this caused by a deliberate attack by sonic weapons, or a surveillance operation gone horribly wrong, leading to harmful microwave pulses? No infernal machine was identified and the Cubans seemed as puzzled as the US authorities, and offered a joint investigation.

The attacks appeared to end around last August. By December, a panel of Cuban scientists concluded that a cacophony of chirping crickets was to blame; meanwhile, US medical testing had revealed that many embassy workers had developed changes to the white matter tracts that let different parts of the brain communicate, but US officials refused to say whether the changes were found in all 24 patients. Acoustic waves have never been shown to alter the brain's white matter tracts, reinforcing scepticism that some kind of sonic weapon was involved. Could the sounds have been the by-product of something else that caused damage?

Or was it all a case of mass psychogenic illness due to stress? "From an objective point of view, it's more like mass hysteria than anything else," said Mark Hallett, president of the International Federation



ABOVE: The US Embassy in Havana, Cuba.

of Clinical Neurophysiology. "American intelligence agencies are the most sophisticated in the world, and they reportedly don't have a clue as to what's causing the symptoms," said Robert Bartholomew, a medical sociologist, author of a series of books on outbreaks of mass hysteria (and sometime FT contributor). "I will bet my house that there are agents in the intelligence community who have also concluded that this is a psychogenic event – but their analysis is either being repressed or ignored by the Trump administration because it doesn't fit their narrative. Mass psychogenic illness is by far the most plausible explanation."

On 9 January, however, State Department Medical Director Dr Charles Rosenfarb told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he ruled out mass hysteria. This explanation is indeed problematic, as most such outbreaks of a "functional disorder" are among people gathered in one place, and symptoms usually subside when victims are disbursed.

In this case, several victims were targeted individually by "directional acoustic phenomena" in hotel rooms and private houses, and symptoms persisted months after those affected had left Cuba. And could changes in the brain's white matter tract possibly be psychosomatic? Maybe... As the report in *Psychology Today* concluded: "Science has a long history of people seeing what they expect or want to see in order to support their initial suspicions. This is just the latest example." *Guardian*, 13 Oct, 7 Dec; *Times*, 7 Dec 2017; *Psychology Today*, 10 Jan 2018.

ALL FALL DOWN

On 2 November 2016, Cambodia's National Social Security Fund (NSSF) took to Facebook to claim that a mass fainting at a Kampong Speu shoe factory in the Bati district of Takéo province was caused by a worker being possessed by a spirit, before later revising the cause to "poor health and imagination". It initially reported 47 people fainted at

the Wing Star Shoes factory, which supplies Asics, but later updated that figure to 139. Norn Sophea, a union rep who was present on the factory floor, said that the workers fainted when a 25-year-old worker named Heng, who was about to leave work with a fever, started screaming for help and her hands began to shake. "Workers saw this and they were frightened and so they fainted one after the other," said Sophea. "They have been working hard and some have heart problems, so it is easy to get a shock." Khou Huot, health operational district chief, said 30 workers were treated for exhaustion and headaches with intravenous fluids. The following day, the factory conducted a water blessing to ward off any lingering evil spirits. *Phnom Penh Post*, 3 Nov 2016.

A year later, more than 100 garment workers from the JD and Toyoshima Company in Takéo's Bati district fainted a day after the Cambodian Labour Minister warned factory owners they would face legal action if large groups of their staff fainted. On 6 December 2017, 221 workers at the factory had fainted after smelling something similar to ripe guava; the source of the odour could not be identified. Two days later, another 137 workers passed out at the same facility. An NSSF working group investigated the second round of fainting and found ventilation had not been sufficiently improved since the first incident. However, improved ventilation is unlikely to prevent similar outbreaks. For other recent cases of 'mass hysteria', see FT360:11. *Khmer Times*, 11 Dec 2017.



SIMIAN SIMULACRA

Why monkeys
succumb to
pareidolia

PAGE 8



MANTEL'S MIGRAINES

How visual
disturbances
can inspire

PAGE 26



SAUCER STORIES

Bob Bigelow and
the Pentagon
UFO files

PAGE 28

THE CONSPIRASPHERE

NOEL ROONEY looks on as Flat-Earthers are dissed by proponents of the Hollow World and the Internet is taken in by a fictional temporal anomaly in a London foot tunnel...

UNDERGROUND THINGS

Flat Earth Theory has enjoyed its fair share of the attention economy of late, what with gaining celebrity endorsements, mainstream coverage, and even a merchandising fillip (see last month's column, **FT362:4**). So perhaps it is only to be expected that competing theories about the true nature of the planet should make their own bid for a share of the market. Some of this activity has been a touch resentful, even openly contemptuous, of the Flat Earth meme. At first glance, the criticism is identical to that of the rational and sceptical responses to the idea that we live on a disc; but the apparently matter-of-fact naysaying is followed up by the offer of an equally eldritch theory.

The main competitor (indeed the only one with any profile that I could find; if any FT readers have come across others, I would be very happy to hear about them) is the venerable – and historically tainted – idea that the Earth is in fact hollow. Some proponents of this theory have come out of the woodwork in recent weeks to pour scorn on the Flat-Earthers, and some of the media that have picked up on them seem to be working under the misapprehension that Hollow Earth theory is novel. I suppose this is yet another symptom of the 'more bigger snacks now' attitude of even allegedly respectable media outlets; an ill-informed approach by ill-informed journalists trying to fill page space with engaging and superficial clickbait.

One prominent spokesperson for the Hollow Earth theory, Rodney Cluff (who has published at least one book on the subject) was interviewed by the *Sun*. His response to Flat-Earthers was amusingly reminiscent of the 'as everybody knows' gambit that often passes for theological, or political, debate in our dimly, grimly, benighted times: "I don't know how the Flat-Earthers can be so confused," he

opined. "They are obviously wrong. The world is not flat – it's hollow. They reject all the evidence." So there you have it. Personally I would be somewhat wary of venturing down a hole that might be inhabited by the lost tribes of Israel, the Vikings, and a late infusion of escaped Nazis, but each to their own.

I was intrigued to see a piece of purported psychogeography make a splash on social media recently. The Woolwich Foot Tunnel Anomaly excited an avalanche of responses online, and eventually found its way into the pages of the *Guardian*. I was emailed on the topic by quite a number of friends and fortean correspondents, so I followed the story to its source, a charmingly creepy little blog site called *Portals of London*, which claims that London has a number of locations where time acts in decidedly odd ways. Workers on the Woolwich Foot Tunnel, it was suggested, had experienced time distortions, such as appearing at one end of the tunnel mere moments after descending the other.

The blog is clearly a piece of gently Borgesian fiction, with just enough of a plausible tone to give the innocent reader a moment of pause: could this be true? But it is not exactly a hoax: the language and atmosphere of the stories reveal themselves as fiction on anything more than a cursory reading. Amusing, then, that such a large proportion of the online population took it at face value; I wonder if, in 30 years or so, it will have morphed into the kind of legendary citation that fuels so many fictive fortean fields. In an increasingly gullible world, it's a decent bet.

www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jan/08/woolwich-foot-tunnel-portals-of-london; <https://portalsoflondon.com/>; www.ibtimes.sg/earth-hollow-nazis-vikings-live-beneath-its-surface-says-new-theory-22303; www.ourhollowearth.com/ourhollo/p1.html

EXTRA! EXTRA!



FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES
FROM THE IRISH PRESS

GARDA TARGETING CRIMINALS

Letterkenny (Donegal) Post, 26 Oct 2017

'Haunted bread' complaints rejected

Irish Times, 4 Aug 2017.

BREASTFEELING PLAN WELCOMED

Derry Journal, 16 Jan 2017.

Councillor fears dangerous erection

Leinster Leader, 17 Jan 2017.

CENSUS SAYS WE HAVE TWO SPARE WOMEN!

Carlow People, 11 April 2017.

Baltic elves confront Russian trolls in information war

Irish Times, 10 July 2017.





INDIAN MONKEY BOY

Samarth Bangari, a two-year-old boy in Allapur, a south Indian village 250 miles (400km) from Bangalore, was spotted playing with nearly two dozen grey langur monkeys. His uncle Barama Reddy said it was “strange” for the monkeys to behave like that, and villagers feared the boy would be attacked while his parents worked in a nearby field; but it soon became clear they were more than comfortable in his presence, with the little boy happy to share some of his food with the visiting troupe. “Since that day, the monkeys haven’t missed a day,” said Reddy. “They come to the house around the same time. Even if he is sleeping, they first wake him up, and then sit with him for an hour or two.”

The unusual relationship piqued local interest, and soon people began visiting the house to catch a glimpse of young Samarth tottering around the farm with 20 langurs in tow. Thinking the monkeys must enjoy the company of children, they plonked another youngster next to Samarth, but the langur pack became aggressive. Reddy said Samarth was now a local legend due to his “special bond” with the monkeys, whose sounds he mimics even though he cannot speak yet. “Everyone thinks that he is special and they are communicating with each other, and can understand what is being said.” [AFP] 21 Dec 2017. Photos: MANJUNATH KIRAN/AFP/Getty Images.

For children raised by monkeys (and other animals), see Paul Sieveking, ‘Wild Things’, FT161:34-41.



SIDELINES...

GRUESOME GENRE

The “most exquisitely macabre exhibit” at an exhibition called ‘Flesh’ at the York Art Gallery in 2016 was “a sequence of watercolours documenting ‘The Death of a Noble Lady and the Decay of her Body’ in the tradition of Kusozu, a genre of Japanese illustration specialising [sic] in step-by-step depictions of decomposing women.” *Spectator*, 24 Sept 2016.

HEAVIEST RAIN

Hurricane Harvey in late August was the wettest tropical cyclone in US history. About 1,640mm (64.6in) fell in one location in Texas and an estimated 127 billion tonnes of rain fell in total on the state – so much that it compressed the Earth’s crust by roughly 2cm (0.78in). *Times*, 27 Dec 2017.

GYM JAM

A man whose penis became stuck in a hole of a 2.5kg (5.5lb) gym weight plate in the German city of Worms on 16 September needed the help of the fire brigade and their power tools to remove it. (*Adelaide*) *Sunday Mail*, 17 Sept 2017.

ESCAPED FROM TOP HAT?

A white rabbit spotted travelling solo on the London Overground to Hackney and a 254 bus to Holloway baffled social media last October, and prompted reports of further bunny sightings. One user responded: “I have seen that bloody rabbit in Hackney, was sure I was hallucinating”. (*Sydney*) *D.Telegraph*, 3 Oct 2017.



MONKEY BUSINESS | From petrol pilfering to pareidolia and pop music

- A monkey was caught red-handed drinking petrol from parked motorbikes at the market in Panipat, in the northern Indian state of Haryana. Locals investigated after finding their fuel tanks empty. “The monkey was clearly addicted to the petrol,” said Gaurav Leekha. “It would refuse to eat even bananas and nuts if anyone offered it.” It was pulling out fuel lines and using them like straws. *Metro*, 10 Nov 2017.



LEFT: The petrol-guzzling monkey of Panipat. BELOW: Rhesus monkeys indulging in a spot of pareidolia.

- Scientists at the University of York created a “chimpanzee jukebox” allowed the animals – 18 at Edinburgh Zoo and others at the National Centre for Chimpanzee Care in Texas – to listen to works by Mozart, Beethoven, Adele and Justin Bieber. While previous studies suggested that chimps found music relaxing, this 14-week investigation found it had no effect on their behaviour, aggression or grooming habits. Indeed, it showed that they perceive all music as mere noise – although they cleared off quicker when fast pop music was played. “Music is not something relevant to them,” said Dr Emma Wallace, lead author of the report in the journal *PLoS One*. “Music appreciation is possibly a uniquely human trait.” *D.Mail*, *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mirror*, 30 Mar 2017.

- Monkeys, however, do seem to appreciate simulacra. To investigate whether pareidolia (perceiving a familiar pattern, typically a face, where none exists) was a uniquely human experience, Jessica Taubert at the US National Institute of Mental Health in Maryland and her colleagues trained five rhesus macaques to stare at pairs of photos. Each photo showed either an inanimate object that prompts pareidolia in humans, an equivalent object that doesn’t, or the face of a

monkey. It was known that that both people and monkeys will look longer at images of faces than other things, so the team presented each of the photos in every possible pairing – 1,980 in all – and measured the time the monkeys spent looking at each. The monkeys did indeed seem to succumb to pareidolia – they spent more time looking at illusory faces than the non-illusory photos they were paired with. They also spent more time looking at the illusory faces

than the monkey faces, perhaps because they spent longer studying these more unusual “faces”, or because they tend to dislike holding the gaze of another monkey. Examining eye gaze patterns, the team found that the monkeys frequently fixated on the “eye” and “mouth” regions of the false faces, which is also how people behave when viewing real faces. The human brain is primed to see faces from an early age. Babies can recognise a face while still in the womb – scans show that when dots of light are shone through the skin, fetuses preferentially turn to look at patterns that resemble faces, but ignore random shapes. Being able to quickly spot and interpret a face can give vital information about whether a social group is friendly or hostile. But sometimes we are too good at spotting faces, seeing the Virgin Mary in a damp stain. The fact that monkeys also easily per-





ceive false faces underscores the biological advantage for social animals to preferentially detect faces in the environment. *New Scientist*, 24 Aug 2017.

● A chimp has been filmed using tools apparently to clean the corpse of her adopted offspring, suggesting animals other than humans may have mortuary practices. The female, Noel, was seen at the Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage Trust in Zambia using a stem of grass to remove debris from the teeth of a male, Thomas, whom she had looked after since the death of his mother four years earlier. She was one of a number of chimps that surrounded the body for around 20 minutes, gently touching and sniffing Thomas despite offers of food to lure them away. Noel stayed on her own to clean his teeth, even when the others had left.

Dr Edwin van Leeuwen of St Andrews University, lead author of the study published in *Scientific Reports*, said: “Noel approached Thomas’s body, sat down close to his head, turned her upper body sideways to select a hard piece of grass, put the grass in her mouth, and opened Thomas’s mouth with both of her hands. Then she wrapped her fingers around Thomas’s chin and jaw, and used her thumbs to explore his teeth. After three seconds, she took the grass out of her mouth with her right hand, while maintaining focused grip on Thomas’s mouth with her left hand, and started to meticulously poke the grass in the same dental area where her thumbs had been. This behaviour has never been reported in a chimpanzee or any other non-human species. Chimpanzees may form long-lasting social bonds and like humans, may handle corpses in a socially meaningful way.”

Nina, Noel’s adolescent daughter, stayed at her mother’s side and observed the cleaning efforts. The researchers say Noel might have been trying to understand how Thomas had died. She was seen tasting the debris she picked from his teeth. A post mortem exam found Thomas had most likely died from a combination of a viral and bacterial lung infection. *D.Telegraph*, 17 Mar 2017.



LEFT: A female Japanese snow monkey getting jiggy with a surprised sika deer.

Female monkeys would gaze at the deer and emit vocalisations

● Beaten with rocks and sticks, stamped on, then eaten – a chimp known as Foudouko was murdered by his own community in south-east Senegal. It is one of only nine known cases of males killing one of their own, as opposed to killing a member of a neighbouring tribe. It provides an insight into male coalition building, said Michael Wilson, associate professor at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. “Why do these coalitions sometimes succeed, but not very often? It’s at the heart of this tension between conflict and co-operation, which is central to the lives of chimpanzees and even to our own,” he said.

Chimp groups usually have a majority of adult females, but in Foudouko’s case the ratio was two males to every female – making the competition intense. (In Senegal, female chimpanzees are poached to provide infants for the pet trade.) Another reason for Foudouko’s death may have been that 13 years ago he was “somewhat of a tyrant” as alpha male of the clan, part of the Fongoli Savanna Chimpanzee Project. After being ousted, he lived alone for some years before trying to regain leadership as younger males were jostling

for power. Professor Jill Pruett of Iowa State University said: “He was trying to come back in at a higher rank, which was ultimately foolish.” *New Scientist*, 30 Jan; *Metro*, 2 Feb 2017.

● Young Japanese female macaques – or snow monkeys – in Minoo, Japan, have been seen ‘practising’ copulation by mounting sika deer and rubbing themselves on their backs. Dr Noëlle Gunst and her team at the University of Lethbridge in Canada recorded five adolescents mounting deer a total of 258 times over two months. When deer walked away, the female monkeys sometimes displayed what Dr Gunst calls “sexually motivated tantrums”, consisting of body spasms and screaming. “It is well known that a period of maturation and practice is necessary for the development of adult-like sexual behaviours and sexual partner preferences in non-human primates,” she added. She claimed the encounters allow the females to experience sexual reward through genital stimulation.

The behaviour is only seen during the mating season. Female monkeys would also gaze at the deer and emit high-pitched vocalisations, like their typical calls when on heat. Previously, a male Japanese macaque had been filmed mounting a female sika at Yakushima Island in southern Japan, which is now seen as sexual behaviour in light of the Minoo data. *Guardian*, 16 Dec; *Metro*, 21 Dec 2017.

SIDELINES...

PETRICHOR

Scientists claim to have bottled petrichor, the fresh earthy scent after a summer rain. They collected air samples after storms in Essex and New York City before vaporising them to pinpoint the compounds responsible for the familiar fragrance. *Mail on Sunday*, 17 Sept 2017.

WORM TO THE RESCUE

The global plastic crisis could be solved by moth larvae capable of disintegrating the material at “uniquely high speeds”, a talent discovered accidentally by a beekeeper. Commonly found living in beehives or harvested as fishing bait, the waxworm appears to have enzymes in its saliva or gut that attack plastic’s chemical bonds. The project is to isolate and mass-produce the enzyme responsible – and keep it away from gas mains and electrical wiring! *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mail*, 25 April 2017.

DAESH-THEMED HOLIDAY

On 3 June 2017 Julia Monaco, 26, a tourist from Melbourne, was put in lockdown on the Underground during the terror attack on London Bridge. On 6 June she was in Notre Dame in Paris when a policeman was stabbed outside. And on 17 August she took cover when a van drove into pedestrians in Las Ramblas in Barcelona. *Eve. Standard*, 18 Aug 2017.

KNICKERS FLUSHED

Leslie Turnbull, 75, and his wife Clare, 37, flushed their underpants down the lavatory for 18 months, blocking sewers and causing manholes to overflow in Pontyberem, Carmarthenshire. Engineers found a “mass of undergarments”. The couple, who gave no reason for their odd habit, were fined £1,220. *Sun*, 15 Sept 2017.

FLOCKING NIGHTMARE

Five fire crews were sent from Fife and Tayside in Scotland to Nigg Bay, a three-hour drive, to save a sheep that had fallen down a cliff – only to find that the coastguard had shot the animal dead after a vet decided a rescue would be too risky. (*Sydney*) *D.Telegraph*, 19 Sept 2017.

SIDELINES...

ADIEU CHANTAK

One of the first apes to learn sign language has died in Atlanta, Georgia, aged 39. Chantek the orangutan lived with anthropologist Lyn Miles in Tennessee for about nine years and learned to sign more than 150 words, clean his room, make and use tools and memorise the route to a fast-food restaurant. He spent his later years in Zoo Atlanta where he was treated for heart disease. *BBC News*, 8 Aug; *D.Mirror*, 10 Aug 2017.

EWE ATTACKS SHEEPDOG

A sheepdog had to be rescued from the sea after being butted off a 60ft (18m) cliff by an angry ewe to protect her lamb. Farmer Dan Jones was tending his flock when two-year-old Tian plummeted off the headland in Llandudno, North Wales. *D.Mirror*, 14 July 2017.

HOLES-IN-ONE

Jayne Mattley, 57, and Clair Shine, 77, defied astronomical odds – said to be 17 million to one – by hitting consecutive holes-in-one at East Berkshire Golf Club in Crowthorne. They were in a group of four teeing off on the 13th – a 203-yard par-three over a deep ditch – when they were directed to a temporary tee that bypassed the obstacle. *D.Mirror*, 27 Oct 2017.

MISTAKEN IDENTIKITTY

Sammy the cat turned up on his tearful owner's doorstep hours after she thought she had buried him. Karen Turner, 50, found the black cat with white chest fur dead in the road outside her home in Bishop's Itchington, Warwickshire. She traced the owner of the mystery cat via Facebook, and returned the corpse to her. *Sun*, 20 Sept 2017.

BIG CAT BEER

In recent years, walkers have made a number of sightings of a sandy-coloured cat, larger than a dog, on Bevendean Down in East Sussex, along with the savaged remains of animals such as rabbits. The Bevy, a cooperative pub in Bevendean, a Brighton suburb, has now launched its own beer, "The Beast of Bevendean", in partnership with Holler Boys Brewery. *Brighton and Hove Independent*, 6 Oct 2017.

ANIMAL OLDIES

More record-breaking geriatrics from the animal kingdom...



WESTWOOD VETERINARY GROUP

ABOVE: The late, lamented Nutmeg celebrated his 31st birthday in March 2016.

MOGGY METHUSELAHS

Nutmeg, one of the world's oldest domestic cats, was put to sleep following heart failure last September, aged 32. Liz and Ian Finlay from Blaydon, Tyne & Wear, found the stray cat in their garden in 1990 [FT345:26]. "We celebrate his birthday in March every year so we know it was around March 1990 when we got him," Mr Finlay told the *Newcastle Chronicle*. "I sorted out [an] abscess on his neck and then we took him to the Cats Protection League to check him over. The vet there said he was an adult, around five years."

So Nutmeg was probably born in 1985, trumping Corduroy, born in Oregon on 1 August 1989 and at 27 'officially' the oldest cat in the world according to Guinness World Records. However, Guinness will not recognise Nutmeg's longevity claim, as his birth was not documented. Nutmeg also outlived Scooter, of Mansfield, Texas, who was born on 26 March 1986 and turned 30 in 2016, but died before Guinness recognised him as the world's oldest cat on 8 April that year.

Last July, a cat in Northern Ireland turned 31 – probably,

Guinness will not recognise Nutmeg's longevity claim

Sasha was rescued in 1991 by Beth O'Neill in Newtownabbey, County Antrim. The emaciated animal looked like a kitten, but vets told Ms O'Neill that she was five years old. Since then, Sasha survived an attempt to poison her, broken ribs and kidney disease. Britain's oldest recorded cat was Ma from Devon, who died in 1957 aged 34; then there was Wiskey, who turned 33 in March 2004

[FT184:13], and whose date of death is unknown. The oldest cat ever, according to Guinness, was Creme Puff (born 3 Aug 1967, died 6 Aug 2005) owned by Jake Perry of Austin, Texas, who died aged 38 years and three days. *D.Mirror online*, 14 May; *D.Telegraph online*, 9 Oct; *D.Mirror*, 24 Dec 2016; *D.Mirror*, 24 July; *Sun*, 15 Sept 2017.

HISTORIC HORSE

A horse thought to be the oldest in the world died in October 2015, aged 50. Orchid, an Arab-thoroughbred cross, was emaciated when rescued in 2013, but she made an amazing recovery at Remus horse sanctuary in Brentwood, Essex. Founder Sue Burton said: "She's almost blind but full of energy. Her retirement lifestyle is the secret to her old age. She has no carrots, but eats five cabbages a week." Britain's oldest donkey died on 10 February 2017, aged 51. Owner Wendy Hoyland of Llandysul, West Wales, said he was "mischievous". *D.Mirror*, 3 Jan, 10 Oct 2015; 13 Feb 2017.

OLD CROC

Henry, a Nile crocodile who terrorised a tribe in Botswana before being captured and held in captivity, became the oldest known example of his species when he turned 116 in December 2016, spending the day in his pen with his six 'wives'. Henry was (or is – he may still be alive) 5m (16ft) long and weighed half a tonne. A tribe in the Okavango Delta



ABOVE: Despite eating several people, 85-year-old Henry enjoyed a quiet old age.

CROCWORLD



SIMON JACOBS / CATERS NEWS



ABOVE: Orchid, seen here in 2015, lived to the age of 50, and was thought to be the world's oldest horse

hired an elephant hunter known only as "Sir Henry" to capture the croc after he ate several men, woman and children. He was moved to Crocworld Conservation Centre on the east coast of South Africa in 1985 when he was 85. *Times*, 5 Dec 2016.

ANCIENT SHARK

A Greenland shark found in the North Atlantic has been declared the oldest living vertebrate. Proteins in the 18ft (5.5m) long shark's eye were carbon-dated in 2016 to estimate that the venerable female fish was born between 272 and 512 years ago – so sometime between in 1504 and 1744 [FT345:26]. The former vertebrate record holder was a bowhead whale estimated to be 211 years old [FT230:12]. In a separate study, researchers from the Arctic University of Norway are mapping the Greenland shark's genome in an attempt to crack the mystery of its longevity, which could conceivably help to extend our own life expectancy. *D.Mail*, Sun, 14 Dec 2017.

SENIOR SIMIAN

The world's first gorilla born in human care died on 17 January 2017, less than a month after her 60th birthday, making her the oldest gorilla on record. Colo died in her sleep at

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in Ohio, surpassing the usual life expectancy of captive gorillas by two decades. Born at the zoo on 22 December 1956, she eventually became a mother of three, grandmother of 16, great-grandmother of 12 and great-great-grandmother of three. A malignant tumour was removed from under her arm just weeks before her 60th birthday. Zoo president Tom Stalf said: "It has been our honour to care for this charismatic and history-making gorilla, who has connected with millions of people and helped inspire them to protect her species." [AP] *KSL.com*, 17 Jan; *D.Mirror*, 19 Jan 2017.

OLDIE NEWS FROM ZOOS

Other age-defying animals in US zoos reported in December 2016 included: **Coldilocks**, a 36-year-old polar bear at the Philadelphia Zoo, is considered the oldest polar bear in the US. The bears' typical lifespan in captivity is 23 years. The zoo says treating her early for kidney disease appears to have helped prolong her life. **Elly**, an eastern black rhino at the San Francisco Zoo estimated to be 46 years old, is the oldest of her species in North America. She has had 14 calves, and her offspring have produced 15 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren and one great great grandchild.

Packy, an Asian elephant at the Oregon Zoo, at 54 was the oldest male of his species in North America. Born in 1962, Packy became the first elephant to be born in the Western hemisphere in 44 years. **Nikko**, a 33-year-old snow monkey at the Minnesota Zoo, is the oldest male snow monkey in North America. **Little Mama**, a chimpanzee living at Lion Country Safari in Loxahatchee, Florida, was thought to be in her late 70s. She took allergy medicine, iron supplements and omega 3 multivitamins, and was trained to accept a nebulizer treatment for coughing. **Emerson**, a Galapagos tortoise at the Toledo Zoo in Ohio, was estimated to be about 100. [AP] 22 Dec 2016.

- **Basi**, said to be the world's oldest captive giant panda, died last September at a centre in Fuzhou, southeast China, aged 37. She lived in the facility since the age of four, apart from a brief exchange trip to San Diego Zoo in 1987, and survived almost two decades longer than the average panda. But wait... another panda, called **Jia Jia**, allegedly celebrated her 38th birthday on 10 August 2016 [FT345:27], and no news of her death has reached Fortean Towers. (*London*) *Eve. Standard*, 14 Sept 2017.

SIDELINES...

SAVING SNEEZE

Shaun Smith, 54, of Sheerness in Kent, accused of sexually assaulting a woman by licking her toes, was cleared after telling police his DNA was left on her foot by his sneezing while kneeling to kiss her bare feet. *Sun*, 1 Sept 2017.

FRUITLOOPERY

A man was found to have 25 times the acceptable level of cyanide in his blood after abnormally low blood oxygen levels were noted during routine surgery in 2015, according to a report in the *British Medical Journal*. The 67-year-old told doctors in Melbourne he had taken two teaspoonfuls of homemade apricot kernel extract and three Novodalin (herbal fruit kernel supplement tablets) every day for five years, supposedly to prevent cancer. *New Scientist*, 30 Sept 2017.

FAKE ROOTS

Wildlife investigators have discovered that dried penises of endangered Bengal monitor lizards and yellow monitor lizards are being passed off as a plant root used in religious rituals. The rare root, believed to bring good luck, has all but vanished from the Indian countryside, and traffickers are fraudulently selling the penises online. *D.Telegraph*, 21 June 2017.

WINDOW LICKER

Police in Swindon were hunting a man resembling Noel Gallagher seen at 5.30pm on 23 October swigging from a bottle of White Lightning and licking windows. Curiously, Gallagher's old band Oasis were named after the Oasis leisure centre in Swindon. *Western Daily Press*, 24 Oct 2017.



MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES...

DRAMATIC REDUCTION

A 59kg (130lb) non-cancerous tumour was removed from a Mississippi man at Bakersfield Memorial Hospital, California, on 31 January 2017. Roger Logan, 57, had previously been told that he was simply overweight. [AP] 8 Jan 2017.

FELINE FOSTERING

Eight baby hedgehogs, orphaned after their mother died in a lawn-mowing accident, refused milk from a syringe, a bottle, and a saucer for two days at Sadgorod Zoo, Vladivostok, before being adopted by a cat called Muska, which had recently raised a litter of foster kittens. Muska fed the spiky brood for more than a week and comforted them at night. BBC News, 25 July 2017.

BLAND OF BROTHERS

Dull, a village in Perth and Kinross, twinned with Boring, Oregon, in 2012 [FT290:6], has been joined by Bland, New South Wales. Dennis Melloy, Perth and Kinross Provost, now hopes to join forces with the US towns of Ordinary and Dreary. Sun, 29 July 2018.

RANCH FOR SALE

John Edmonds, owner of the Stardust Ranch in Rainbow Valley, near Phoenix, Arizona, put his ranch up for sale last October, fed up with extraterrestrial encounters. “[Aliens] actually levitated [my wife] out of the bed in the master chamber and carried her into the parking lot and tried to draw her up into the craft,” he said. He claimed to have killed more than a dozen extraterrestrials over the past 20 years. New York Post, 27 Oct 2017.



MARTIN ROSS

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

The latest updates on fortean news items



THE ADVENTURISTS

ABOVE: Tom Morgan takes to the air. BELOW: Gonzalo Montoya Jiménez: still with us.

UP, UP AND AWAY [FT155:16-17]



A British adventurer flew 25km (15.5 miles) across South Africa, suspended from 100 helium balloons. Taking off on 23 October 2017 just north of Johannesburg, Tom Morgan, 38, reached heights of 8,000ft (2,438m) while strapped to a camping chair. He spent two days inflating balloons ahead of the flight, which he described as “magical”. He admitted feeling “somewhere between terrified and elated” as he rose in the air. As the balloons drifted towards the inversion layer of the atmosphere – where the temperature rises – he said the flight started to accelerate very quickly. “I had to keep my cool and start gradually cutting the balloons.” Morgan, who has lived in Bristol for 15 years and runs an adventure company, wants eventually to set up a competitive helium balloon race in Africa. “We will have to avoid areas with lots of spiky bushes though,” he said.

Morgan’s probable inspiration was the notorious Larry ‘Lawn Chair’ Walters, who ‘flew’ from San Pedro to Long Beach in California in July 1982, reaching an altitude of 16,500ft (5,029m). The details of his foolhardy feat were inexplicably mangled by both Stephen Pile in *The Return of Heroic Failures* (1988) and the

Darwin Awards in 1997. BBC News, 24 Oct 2017.

CONSUMED BY FIRE [FT362:4]



A man died after he burst into flames on a street in Hull on 27 December, two weeks after London police issued a fresh appeal for witnesses to a similar incident back in September. Daniel Lingwood, 32, a resident of Thanet Road in Hull, looked out of his window to see flames across the road. He immediately rushed outside to help the victim, who has not been named. “There were some women going round to get buckets of water to chuck over him, but I have done first aid before and I knew that would be bad for his skin, so me and another bloke tried to roll him on the ground to put the fire out,” he told the *Hull Daily Mail*. Emergency services were called just after 8pm. Unfortunately, the man was unable to be saved and died at the scene. The cause of the fire was unknown, but the police were not looking for anyone in connection with the incident.

On 17 September 2017, John Nolan, 70, was engulfed in flames in Tottenham, north London, before being airlifted to hospital, where he died the next day from severe burns. There were no accelerants found on his body. On 15 December, the

police said Nolan’s death and the reason why he caught fire was still unexplained. Could either incident have been a case of Spontaneous Human Combustion? *Newsweek*, 28 Dec 2017.

DEADLY ERRORS [FT334:10-11, 357:23]



A prisoner in northern Spain woke up in a hospital mortuary after being certified dead by three experienced prison doctors – one on the overnight shift, a second on duty in the morning, and a forensic specialist. Gonzalo Montoya Jiménez, 29, an inmate at a jail in the Asturias region, was found unconscious in his cell at 8am on Sunday, 7 January, and regained consciousness four hours later, shortly before an autopsy was due to be performed. His body had been marked in preparation for the post-mortem examination, and the fact that he was alive was only discovered when he began snoring on the autopsy table. At the time of the report, he was under observation in intensive care at an Oviedo hospital and his family were demanding that he be released from jail. He has seven months left to serve of his sentence, for stealing scrap metal.

As Jiménez was an epileptic, his apparent demise was initially suspected to be a case of catalepsy, when a person’s vital signs slow down to the point of being almost imperceptible; however, it then emerged that he had attempted suicide by taking an overdose of barbiturates. This, along with severe hypothermia, served to mask his vital signs. BBC News, 8 Jan 2018. *livescience.com*, *D.Mail*, 9 Jan; *D.Telegraph*, 10 Jan 2018.





Rendezvous with 'Oumuamua

What will happen when we detect an alien signal? DAVID HAMBLING suggests checking Twitter...

'Oumuamua is the Hawaiian word for scout or messenger, which is why it was the name given to the first known object to enter the Solar System from outside. To many, 'Oumuamua's size and unusual shape – over 200m (660ft) long¹ and 30m (100ft) wide – suggest a spacecraft rather than anything natural. Scientists have trained radio telescopes on the mysterious intruder to detect any signals it might be emitting. What happens if they find something?

'Oumuamua was initially tagged as a comet because of its trajectory. Comets typically swoop in from enormous distances, briefly loop around the Sun and then head back into the void for an extended period. However, the lack of a coma – a trail of ice and comet dust – indicated that 'Oumuamua was something more solid than a comet-type 'dirty snowball'. Close study indicated that 'Oumuamua appears to be a dense, metal-rich object, like an asteroid – or a spaceship. Some astronomers even suggested calling it Rama after the giant alien craft that appears from interstellar space in Arthur C Clarke's 1973 *Rendezvous with Rama*.

The Allen Telescope Array, a radio telescope operated by the SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) Institute, failed to detect any activity from the object. Since then more powerful instruments, the Breakthrough Listen and Green Bank radio telescopes, have been trained on it. While the mass of data they gathered has not yet been fully analysed, there was no obvious "WOW!" signal, no cosmic Morse tapping out of "WE COME IN PEACE". If they do detect something though, things could get interesting.

The International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) has a set of 'Protocols for an ETI Signal Detection'. These require that anyone picking up what appears to be a signal from an intelligent alien source verify that this is the most plausible explanation. False alarms have been produced by natural phenomena such as pulsars (pulsing radio stars), classified aircraft or even overspill from microwave ovens (see **FT346:16**). Before making any public announcement, they should inform affiliated observers and research organisations who will check independently and confirm the original observation. After that, the discoverer is then required to inform their national authorities, the Secretary-General of the UN and the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams of the International Astronomical Union – a body based at Harvard responsible for communicating astronomical findings



Social media has democratised information and NASA knows this well

to the world. Then "A confirmed detection of extraterrestrial intelligence should be disseminated promptly, openly, and widely through scientific channels and public media, observing the procedures in this declaration. The discoverer should have the privilege of making the first public announcement."

According to the protocols, no response should be made to the aliens until "appropriate international consultations" have taken place. The IAA does not even speculate what the response might be. Clearly, it's going to take some heavyweight, high-level political negotiation. Achieving consensus on whether we want to be part of a galactic community will make Brexit look like child's play.

In these days of rampant social media, the protocols are likely to be short-circuited. In the initial phase of sharing data with other organisations, leaks are almost inevitable. This would be the most exciting potential discovery in any researcher's career, and some of them will be worried that their government might try and keep it quiet. Interestingly, the IAA protocols mention a need to "seek international agreement to protect the appropriate frequencies" – the risk being that someone might simply decide to broadcast radio noise and jam the alien transmissions, as the Soviet Union used to jam unwelcome radio broadcasts to its people from the US.

In practice, any tweets mentioning alien contact will be picked up and amplified, even if the mainstream news media obey strict instructions to drop the story. The news is no longer controlled by a handful of

publishers; social media has democratised information. NASA knows this well, and has started hinting at announcements in advance. In December they called a press conference to discuss a new breakthrough by their planet-hunting telescope. The actual discovery, detecting multiple planets around a star using AI, would only have had a fraction of the attention without the online buzz that preceded it, all speculating about alien life.

News of first contact will hit your Twitter feed well before the Secretary-General of the UN hears about it. Les Tennen, a member of the IAA's SETI Committee, worries that this will impact their protocols. "There is not going to be time to have the kind of discussions and deliberations that the original protocols were envisioning," he told *Motherboard*.

Organisations like SETI generally envisage alien contact as being a matter of picking up signals from many light-years away. Communications would be extremely slow at best, and it would take decades to get a reply. An object like 'Oumuamua within the Solar System presents much more immediate possibilities; a spacecraft would be able to orbit if not land on our world and communicate directly. We will not have years to hammer out an agreed response. We might not even have days. And social media will be boiling over in the meantime.

On the positive side, there is no military plan. The Pentagon had proposals in the 1950s, known as "Seven Phases to Contact," but this assumed US space probes finding life on other worlds rather than the other way around. There has apparently been nothing since.

The religious sector may be best prepared. The Vatican has stated it would welcome extraterrestrials; Islamic scholars have pointed out passages in the Koran that imply the existence of life on other worlds. Theology professor Ted Peters carried out a survey in 2011 and found that most people thought the discovery might severely affect other faiths, but not their own.

So, while the slightest sign of a radio signal from 'Oumuamua may send stock markets crashing, throw politicians into a panic and have the military running in circles, religions of all denominations will thrive and perhaps grow. Whether the aliens still wish to make contact when they see what we are like is another matter...

¹ Not 400m (1,312ft) long, as stated in FT's initial report, **FT362:24**.

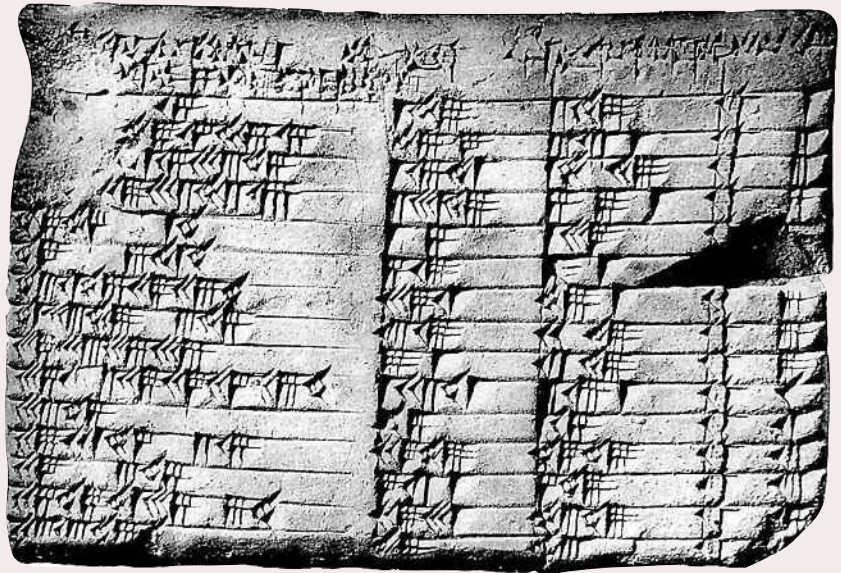
PAUL SIEVEKING digs up evidence of Babylonian trigonometry and the world's earliest zero

FIRST TABLET COMPUTER

Hipparchus, a Greek astronomer who died around 120 BC, has long been regarded as the father of trigonometry, with his "table of chords" on a circle considered the oldest trigonometric table. Such tables allow a user to determine two unknown ratios of a right-angled triangle using just one known ratio.

However, a 3,700-year-old clay tablet has recently proved that the Babylonians developed trigonometry more than 1,500 years before the Greeks and were using a sophisticated method of mathematics that could change the way we calculate today. The tablet, known as Plimpton 332, was discovered early last century in the ancient Sumerian city of Larsa in southern Iraq by Edgar J Banks, an American archaeologist and diplomat, said to be the inspiration for the *Indiana Jones* films. Dated by its cuneiform style to between 1822 BC and 1762 BC, the tablet was bought from Banks by the New York publisher George Arthur Plimpton who bequeathed it with the rest of his collection to Columbia University, New York, in the 1930s.

The partly broken tablet measures 13 by 9cm (5x3.5in), and is 2cm (0.78in) thick. Scholars at the University of New South Wales in Sydney have now shown that the four columns and 15 rows of cuneiform script constitute the world's oldest and most accurate trigonometric table, which was probably used by ancient architects to construct temples, pyramids, palaces and



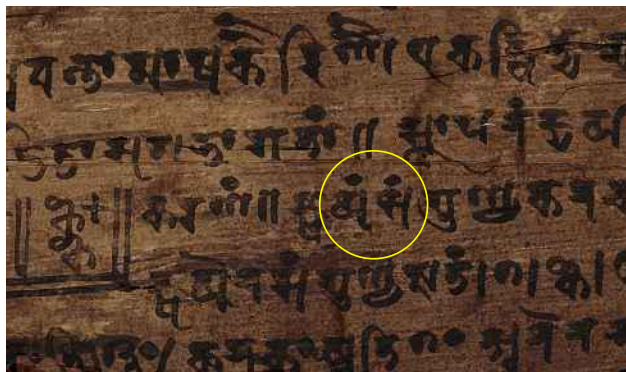
canals. The base 60 employed in calculations by the Babylonians permitted many more accurate fractions than our base 10.

"Our research reveals that Plimpton 322 describes the shapes of right-angled triangles using a novel kind of trigonometry based on ratios, not angles and circles," said Daniel Mansfield of the School of Mathematics and Statistics at the UNSW Faculty of Science. "It is a fascinating mathematical work that demonstrates undoubted genius. The tablet not only contains the world's

oldest trigonometric table; it is also the only completely accurate trigonometric table, because of the very different Babylonian approach to arithmetic and geometry. This means it has great relevance for our modern world. Babylonian mathematics may have been out of fashion for more than 3,000 years, but it has possible practical applications in surveying, computer graphics and education. This is a rare example of the ancient world teaching us something new." *D.Telegraph, Guardian, 25 Aug 2017.*

NOTHING GETS OLDER

Carbon dating has revealed zeros that date back 500 years earlier than had previously been seen. The numbers appear in the Bakhshali manuscript, an ancient Indian text consisting of 70 leaves of birch bark filled with mathematics and text in Sanskrit, held in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Until now, it was thought that the first zero had been carved on a wall in Gwalior, India, in AD 876. However, the Bakhshali manuscript, named after the village where it was found in 1881 buried in a field in what is now Peshawar, north-west Pakistan, has been carbon dated to between AD 224 and 383. The document, seemingly a training manual for merchants, was acquired by AFR Hoernle, an Indianologist, who presented it to the Bodleian in 1902.



For decades, judging by the style of the calligraphy, it was thought to have been written between the eighth and 12th centuries. In the text, zero is denoted by a dot, which later evolved into the round symbol that we know today. It was used as a placeholder, as with the Mayans and Babylonians, but only the Indian dot would go on to gain true number status, first described in AD 628 by the Indian astronomer Brahmagupta. The concept of zero allowed for the development of calculus, and underpins the digital age. The Greeks and Romans had no symbol for zero, but India had "a culture that is quite happy to conceive of the void, to conceive of the infinite" said Marcus Du Sautoy, professor of mathematics at Oxford. *D.Telegraph, 15 Sept; New Scientist, 23 Sept 2017.*



CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

221: PLINY THE POO-BAH

...As opposed to Winnie The Poo-Bear.

I've very rarely penned a Classical Corner without at least one reference to Pliny's *Natural History*. High time, then, to bring the old boy on to centre stage.

Apart from what he himself lets slip, our knowledge of his life and works comes from two Letters (3.5, 6.16) written to enquiring friends, and a scrappy notice by Suetonius.

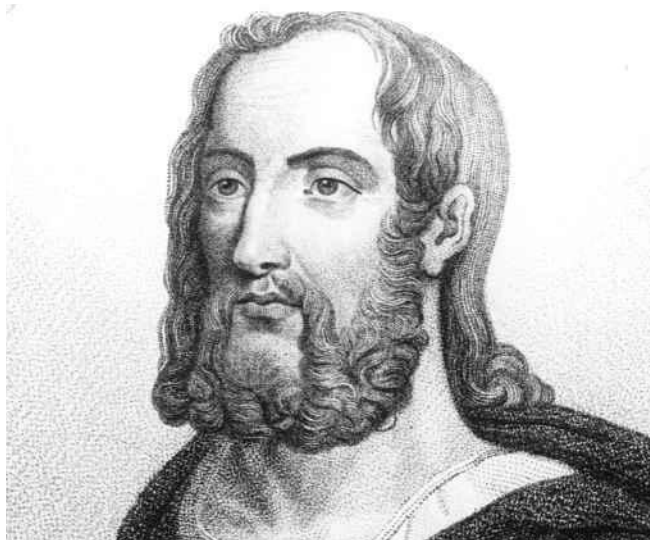
The first English translation by Philemon Holland (1601) is available on-line. Modernly convenient, despite some inaccuracies, is H Rackham's Loeb (1938-62).

Best general book is Mary Beagon's *Roman Nature: The Thought of the Elder Pliny* (1992), plus her annotated *Commentary* (2005) on Book Seven, particularly rich in forteana.

Did Fort read the Elder Pliny? He drew the line for information at AD 1800, observing (e.g.) "There is no desirability in going back to antiquity for data," and "Ancient wisdom drips in a patter of slimy opinions," along with deprecating "the thrice-accursed Greeks" and questioning the point of teaching Greek and Latin (*Books*, pp55, 396, 668, 965) – on this reckoning, I must be Fort's worst nightmare.

As I argued in **FT164:16**, Fort's description (pp777-9) – a sustained piece of bravura prose – of the 1872 Vesuvius eruption is so similar in general effect and particular terms to the younger Pliny's epistolary account that one wonders if he had read the Roman's autoptic account of the AD 79 blow-up. They share the same narrative gifts and eye for the telling small things – e.g. Pliny mentions stranded sea life, Fort a fallen sparrow.

Reverting to uncle, Colin Bennett, *Politics of the Imagination: The Life, Work and Ideas of Charles Fort* (2009, p32), suggests: "The writings of the Greek philosophers such as Pliny the Elder contain what could be called Forteana" – we'll ignore his absurd mis-classification of our Roman, whilst Wence Horak, *Sky Gods and Angels* (2012, Google E-Book, unpaginated) compares Pliny's repertoire of strange rainfalls and comets to Fort's.



We are not here concerned with details of Pliny's (AD 23-79) public career, which comprised a number of civilian and military commands. In cause here are his complete bibliography and literary habits. Before the *Natural History*, he composed a pamphlet on how to discharge javelins from horseback (written as junior cavalry officer – how would he have been at polo?), a biography of the poet and tragedian Pomponius Secundus – it would be piquant if the Pomponianus he rescued at Pompeii was the latter's son, 20 volumes on the Roman-German Wars, lengthy treatises on oratory (foreshadowing Quintilian) and grammatical niceties (perhaps in emulation of Julius Caesar's similar work).

Pliny's *German Wars* was inspired by a dream in which Nero Drusus (brother of Tiberius), who had campaigned and died there, stood over him pleading that his memory be kept green.

His nephew (Ep. 5.5) records a cognate, more sensational oneiric episode. The biographer Fannius embarked on a litany of all those executed or exiled by Nero – no shortage of material there. His first three volumes were a hit with the public. But then the ghost of Nero appeared, sat on his bed's end, read the published parts and vanished. Fannius took this to mean his writing would stop where Nero's reading had – and promptly died.

Pliny spent little time in bed. Asked how his uncle achieved so much in so busy a life (cf. the same question in Adam Begley's biography, 2014, of John

Updike), nephew explains that he worked Thatcher-like almost round the clock, had books read aloud to him at meals and bath-times, when he would also dictate notes, doing the same while travelling and in intervals from official duties.

The one Plinian survivor is, of course, the *Natural History*, billed by his devout nephew as "a learned and comprehensive work, as varied as nature itself," a verdict endorsed by Samuel Johnson as "a treasure-trove of ancient common wisdom".

It encompasses 37 books, one of the largest extant ancient compilations, requiring 10 Loeb volumes,

nearly 3,000 pages in Philemon Holland's two-folio translation. The title misleads, in that we get (e.g.) loads of information about emperors and empresses not in Suetonius's biographies.

In his *Preface*, Pliny claims to have given 20,000 facts drawn from 100 authors. Actually, the tallies given at the end of each book's contents are far higher. Although crediting the (to us) obscure Valerius Soranus's *Lady Initiates* for these procedures, Pliny set the standard for modern scholarly bibliography.

Based on 160 closely written notebooks of his researches, Pliny (as Fort) combined industry with open-mindedness, often sceptical, interested in ideas as well as registering people and events.

Almost every page has at least one fortean titbit. As said, *FT* readers would especially enjoy the prodigy-stuffed Book Seven, pretty well one marvel per page. Everyone will come away with a favourite item. My own (it's a tough choice) remains the claim (bk28 ch22 para76) that wrapping a woman's brassiere around your head cures headaches – beats paracetamol...

Though I fear the old man would not have been amused, the best is yet to come. On 28 March 1957, his *Histories* were rediscovered – as a Goon Show script (online, and it's in Box 6 of the CD Box Compendium.) I would love to hear from any *FT* veterans who remember hearing it.



Unfinished symphonies

ALAN MURDIE takes his seat for a concert of music from the spirit realm

“Music is in the air”, said Sir Edward Elgar, “music all around us, the world is full of it and—you—simply—simply—take as much as you require”. He put out his hand in a gesture of capture.” (*Sir Edward Elgar* (1904) by RJ Buckley).

At the time Elgar spoke thus there did not exist the constant flow of broadcast, streamed and piped music that envelops us today, nor the vast quantities of recorded music accessible from various formats, playable or downloadable at the press of a key or the click of a mouse. From his words, Elgar appeared to imply music existed outside the self, waiting to be tapped by sensitive individuals. One person whose life seemed to illustrate exactly such a conceit was the medium Rosemary Brown (1916-2001), the subject of a play *The Lambeth Waltz* by David Thurman, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 26 October 2017. Billed as a comedy featuring “the psychic dinner lady from Balham to whom some of history’s greatest composers dictated music from beyond the grave”, it was a dramatised account of her remarkable story.

From 1964 Rosemary Brown claimed to be channelling original musical compositions from the post-mortem personalities of Liszt, Beethoven, Bach, Brahms, Schumann, Schubert and Brahms to Debussy, Rachmaninov, Stravinsky, Gershwin, and (after 1980) John Lennon. She made numerous recordings and wrote three books on her experiences. During the 1970s and early 1980s she became internationally famous, with performances of these works in London, New York and around Europe. The music she created seemed well beyond her limited musical knowledge and talents and exactly how it was produced has never been explained.

Thurman’s play was based on the idea that after her second book she was being pressured by her publisher into writing a further more sensational volume, with a cynical professional ghost writer (an obvious pun) to produce the text for her. The hired writer is sceptical of her psychic gifts but sees a commercial opportunity if the book is unashamedly populist, recommending she should claim to be channelling the recently murdered Beatle John Lennon rather than long-dead classical composers. The writer is left baffled and perplexed by her serious response that this could prove difficult and that approval is needed from her principal guide, the discarnate Franz Liszt (1811-1886). The play then switches



ABOVE: Rosemary Brown and some of the composers whose work she claimed to channel.

to imagined and sparky dialogue between her and the waspish spirit of Liszt, who does not respond well to the prospect of channelling new work from the spirit of Lennon. Though lighthearted in approach, the play did not seek to ridicule Mrs Brown, presenting the communications as she claimed on occasion to hear them.

The play also prompted an item on BBC Radio 4’s *Woman’s Hour* the same day about Brown, including an interview with her son Tom. The view that Brown’s mediumship was to be taken seriously was expressed by many in the past who encountered her in person, witnessed her peculiar talents and studied her music. Many critics were genuinely puzzled, even if they rejected the idea of her being directly inspired by dead composers. However, from her tone

of suppressed incredulity, it seemed the presenter of *Woman’s Hour* found this just all too astonishing for 10.30am broadcasts, though an archive clip revealed a far more sympathetic interview had actually been conducted with Brown on the programme long ago.

As I have previously remarked, modern Radio 4 programmes are generally rather disdainful of ghosts and mediumship, usually eschewing any serious treatment. The fact that women report more psychic experiences than men is a phenomenon that typically goes unremarked on *Woman’s Hour*, which is altogether far more comfortable dissecting current political, gender and feminist issues than exploring any notion of female communication with the dead. Whilst in the last four decades

certain feminist scholars have done much original and significant research into the history of girls and women involved with spiritualism, enigmas such as Brown and her the 30-year-long musical mediumship appear to constitute an embarrassment.

Born Rosemary Dickeson in Balham in 1916, Rosemary Brown spent her early life there, the daughter of working class parents. According to her autobiography, from childhood she yearned to pursue music and ballet, but like many individuals born in that era she was held back by lack of funding and circumstances. The only unusual thing in her life was a series of odd psychic experiences, including seeing ghosts. Aged seven she saw an old man with white hair and wearing a black cloak appear before her. He did not give his name but stated that when in mortal form he had been a composer and pianist. "When you grow up I will come back and give you music", he declared before vanishing. Sometime later she saw a photograph of the composer Liszt as an old man and recognised him as her spectral visitant.

The family had a piano at home, and as she grew up her mother struggled to pay for a few lessons from a man who served as the pianist for local ballroom dancing classes. Whilst a schoolgirl, she worked running errands to pay for a few more lessons with a music teacher at Tooting Bec and with a licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music. She learned about musical theory, scales and key signatures, but this was interrupted by World War II. After this she took a few more piano lessons while employed as an office worker, but these ended on marriage in 1952. Unfortunately, her husband's health was poor, and from then on, particularly following his death nine years later in August 1961, her life was a struggle to hold together their home and bring up the children, a boy of eight and a girl of four. Their family had always been poor and things were looking grim. However, as she was coming out of her grief she sensed that the composer Liszt was coming to her, though she was unable to see him.

In 1964 she suffered two cracked ribs and during the course of convalescence occupied her time knitting and reading. One day she decided to amuse herself on



LEFT: Rosemary Brown shown going into a trance state. BELOW: The long-dead Franz Liszt, who first appeared to Rosemary when she was just seven.

her mother's old piano. Suddenly, she became intensely aware that Liszt was standing in front of her and guiding her fingers across the keys. She began playing wonderful music without effort, music that she could not recall ever having heard before. This experience was repeated over several dreamlike afternoons and she began writing down the spontaneous compositions. Then Liszt began to talk to her, providing the name of each composition, putting the individual notes into her head or guiding her hand on the keyboard. She would then laboriously take them down, note by note. From this began her extraordinary career as a scribe for some of history's greatest composers, which continued through into the mid-1990s.

Encouraged by the spirits to make her role known, she attracted a number of influential supporters and was prepared to be filmed and undergo testing. Receiving funding from a special trust established by Sir George Trevelyan, she took the opportunity to throw herself wholeheartedly into writing down the music dictated to her. Hundreds

"When you grow up I will come back and give you music," Liszt declared before vanishing



of musical scores were produced in over a dozen different composing styles as the number of claimed deceased communicators expanded. The most striking of this growing flow of material was put into wider circulation, leading to public concerts and professional recordings. Throughout her career she insisted the music came not from herself but from the discarnate composers using her as their amanuensis.

There were sceptics aplenty and newspaper music critics wagged their heads. For example, Dennis Matthews in *The Listener* (26 June 1969) described her as "delightfully frank and humble", but raised a number of technical reasons, such as mistakes in the niceties of her musical grammar, suggesting that the music came from her own subconscious self. The general view was that the music was notably inferior to the best produced by the various composers when they were on Earth. But a 1969 item called *Grübelei* (meditation), partly created under the watchful gaze of BBC reporter Peter Dorling and a television studio crew, impressed at least one critic, being described as "a most spectacular and unusual piece. It



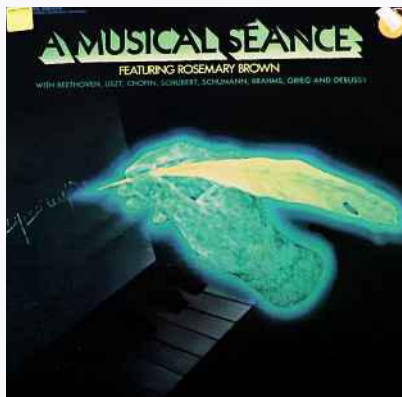
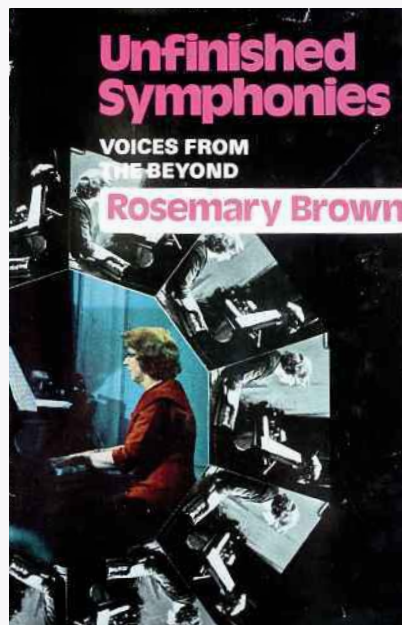
GHOSTWATCH

has strong harmonies, cross-rhythms and occasional instructions in French – a point conferring authenticity, but difficult to fake.” The composer and Liszt specialist Humphrey Searle said: “We must be grateful to Mrs Brown for making it available to us. It could well be something that he would have written had he lived another two years.” To have written the *Grübelei* implied not only a knowledge of Liszt, but also the ability to see the direction his music was moving at the time of his death.

A concert at the Wigmore Hall by her of some of the compositions in 1971 generated sardonic comments by music critics from broadsheet newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Times*. But there were others who were fascinated by her. Pianist Cristina Ortiz found one Chopin piece “absolutely incredible”, while the composer Richard Rodney Bennett said, “You couldn’t fake this music.”

What impressed all who met her was her straightforward sincerity and modesty, even shyness about her gifts, along with what was actually observed when the process of dictation was happening. Altogether, the general consensus was that while the music was not up to the standard of that written by the composers concerned when alive, it was of a far higher quality than could be expected even from somebody with considerably more musical training than she had ever received. Professor Ian Parrott of the University of Wales wrote, “I am quite happy to accept the utter genuineness of the phenomenon of Rosemary Brown”, and he later produced a book, *The Music of Rosemary Brown* (1978), which declared his support. Brown herself published three books, *Unfinished Symphonies* (1971), *Immortals at my Elbow* (1974) and *Look Beyond Today* (1986). When she died in 2001 aged 85, she belatedly received several positive obituaries in the national press.

On one level Rosemary Brown might seem a modern example of how, as feminist scholars have argued, mediumship may provide a means of empowerment for socially oppressed women. From a gender and feminist perspective, in 19th and early 20th centuries Spiritualism elevated women to positions of relative importance and authority. At a time when women were treated socially as second-class citizens and in England still referred to as the chattels of their husbands, Spiritualism provided a means of reversing such power imbalances. Successful female mediums were revered, exercising power and influence, freed from overt male control. Speaking on behalf of the dead was a way of asserting power personally and



collectively in a patriarchal society; any inappropriate behaviour could be blamed upon the spirits. (For example, in the case of ‘George Yeats’, wife to poet WB Yeats, it has been postulated she faked thousands of pages of trance scripts to keep her older husband interested in her (See *George’s Ghosts: A New Life of W.B. Yeats*, 2000, by Brenda Maddox).

This perspective is a most interesting one and has stimulated recovery of much valuable information on the lives of female mediums from historical obscurity. However, the closer one gets to these subjects and their utterances, the greater the problems that arise for this perspective, whenever the question of the reality of their experiences is considered. Claims of being literally possessed by socially conscious spirits, or spirits of any sort at all, are ones which many social scientists (and media commentators deriving their opinions from them) cannot stomach. By applying materialist paradigms, spirits must be rejected a priori and interpreted as evidence of something else. Marxism, structuralism, mainstream psychology,

LEFT: Rosemary Brown’s 1971 book *Unfinished Symphonies*, and her 1970 LP *Musical Séance*, on which she and pianist Peter Katin played some of the works she claimed to have channelled with the help of dead composers such as Beethoven.

Freudian orthodoxy and post-modernism – all influential in social science discourse – have no place for the reality of spirits and psi-phenomena. Admitting to their possible objective existence would be to erode the intellectual foundations upon which these perspectives are based.

Such a position can also make the claims of mediumship unpalatable to feminist scholars, many of whom admirably champion women’s rights and seek to redress historical injustices. For if the claims of spiritualistic phenomena are false – which materialist ideologies dictate they must be – then logically it means women mediums were telling lies, just as many men at the time accused them of doing, and that for generations female mediums have been perpetrating monstrous and cruel frauds, exploiting the bereaved and the vulnerable. Alternatively, such women were utterly deluded and hysterical and simply not to be believed, (again, exactly as male prejudices, past and present contend).

Understandably, many feminist scholars are reluctant to lay such charges against female mediums, as it would appear to endorse gender prejudice and oppression, historic and contemporary. One way of avoiding this conundrum is to project other motives on to women who became channels, viewing them as proto-feminists, highlighting instances where spirits seemed to encourage unfeminine and deviant behaviour, breaking social taboos. Spiritualism for women, it is argued, was a way of legitimising marginal political ideas that many feminist scholars espouse and applaud. In the past, mediumship was harnessed to many righteous and progressive movements, as diverse as women’s emancipation, the abolition of slavery, righting working-class grievances, caring for prostitutes and animal rights.

The majority of female mediumistic pronouncements did not express extravagant, radical, politicised or unconventional views. With the great majority of Spiritualist manifestations it is hard to detect any political motives or intentions (they also appear to be largely absent from Ouija séances with groups). In some cases, it might clarify the ‘why’ but not the ‘how?’, failing to explain how numerous mediums like Rosemary Brown produced puzzling material that they always insisted came from beyond themselves.

MEGALITHIC EXPLORATIONS 2018-2019

ANCIENT EGYPT & BAALBEK, LEBANON TOUR
MARCH 5TH - 18TH 2018
BRIEN FOERSTER, ANDREW COLLINS, HUGH NEWMAN & THE AWYANS

MYSTERIES OF ENGLAND TOUR
INCLUDING PRIVATE ACCESS TO STONEHENGE
15TH - 21ST JULY 2018
JJ AINSWORTH & HUGH NEWMAN

SARDINIA: MEGALITHS & GIANTS TOUR
SEPTEMBER 2018
MARIA WHEATLEY, JJ AINSWORTH & HUGH NEWMAN

GÖBEKLI TEPE & MEGALITHIC TURKEY TOUR
12TH - 22ND OCTOBER 2018
ANDREW COLLINS, HUGH NEWMAN & JJ AINSWORTH

MEGALITHIC PERU & BOLIVIA TOUR
NOVEMBER 2018
HUGH NEWMAN, JJ AINSWORTH & SPECIAL GUEST HOST

SIBERIA: LAND OF THE DENISOVANS
JULY 2019
ANDREW COLLINS & HUGH NEWMAN

PRIVATE STONEHENGE & AVEBURY TOURS
SMALL GROUP TOURS ALL THROUGH 2018 & 2019
WITH B&B ACCOMMODATION NEAR STONEHENGE & AIRPORT PICK-UP



www.megalithomania.co.uk
info@megalithomania.co.uk

PRIVATE TOURS:
GLASTONBURY,
DARTMOOR & THE
SOUTH WEST

MEGALITHOMANIA



GLASTONBURY TOWN HALL
MAY 12TH - 13TH 2018

ANDREW COLLINS
Göbekli Tepe and The Denisovans

PRIVATE ACCESS
TO STONEHENGE
ON MONDAY 14TH

ROBIN HEATH

Stonehenge in Wales and The John Michell Memorial Lecture

PROF. TERENCE MEADEN

Advances in Megalithic Solar Archaeoastronomy

RICHARD CASSARO (From Spain)

Triptych Temples and the GodSelf Icon in Ancient Cultures

THOMAS SHERIDAN (From Ireland)

Sigils in Stone: Sorcery and Magic Among Sacred Sites

GARY BILTCLIFFE & CAROLINE HOARE

The Cosmology of British Cities and the Power of Centre

SIMON BANTON

The Astronomy of Stonehenge

JJ AINSWORTH (From the US)

Ancient Symbolism at Megalithic Sites

HUGH NEWMAN

Scottish Carved Stone Spheres and the Tiwanaku Connection

info@megalithomania.co.uk

01458 746101



TOURS ON THE FRIDAY, MONDAY, TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY

www.megalithomania.co.uk

WHAT WERE THE ANCIENTS UP TO ?

The Eleven

There is a war

You will see nothing on your TV
You will read none of it in your newspaper

It has raged unseen since the beginning of history
And it will end only when history ends

Heroes will rise to the side of good
Some will embrace and relish that duty
Others may not know the purpose
for which they were born

Some will fight with the sword
Others will employ subtler weapons

This is a story of that war

This is a story of heroes

Establishment

Part One of

The Eleven

Begin the journey on Kindle now

The Eleven

E. Lenz

Paul Carter Block

Some are born to be heroes
others are bred

Part 1:

Establishment

STRANGE CONTINENT

Unfazed by Brexit, **ULRICH MAGIN** and **THEO PAIJMANS** round up the weirdest news from across Europe...

ALIEN BIG CATS

In August 2017, many witnesses near several towns in the Sierra Norte de Guadalajara, Castille, Spain, reported a panther. The Department for the Protection of Nature (SEPRONA) of the Civil Guard and the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment of Castilla-La Mancha tried to catch the animal, but failed. Already in February, a jaguar had been seen near Valladolid. In the new case, all zoos denied they were missing an animal, and a video on YouTube shows the blurred and distant figure of a feline. Locals fear several large cats are on the prowl, as sightings have been made at virtually the same time in villages kilometres from each other. The region, which borders Segovia and Soria, is unpopulated and mountainous. One sighting was made in the Cañamares Valley, another, on 4 August, near La Bodera. "I held my dog to avoid problems, but the panther was very calm, as if he had travelled this area for a long time," said the witness. No farm animals had been harmed at the time. (*El País*, 23 Aug 2017)

On 12 September 2017, a man walking his dog in the late afternoon in the countryside at Monticello near Cormons, Fiaul, Italy, noticed the animal becoming agitated, and, looking to where his dog indicated, observed a 20lb (9kg) feline "half-way between a puma and a cat". "It was a few metres behind me and noticed my dog which chased it for a few yards. It all took a couple of seconds, not more. I did not even have time to get scared. When my dog started barking, the animal was scared and ran into the woods off the path. I was able to see it had long hair and was half a metre [20in] long: the colour was shiny black. I have never seen such a thing in 20 years of hiking here at the Isonzo river. It was huge. I even



ABOVE: The wolf snapped by Karin van der Sluis in the wooded Veluwe.

had the impression that it was following me. If I had not seen my dog pointing at it I probably would not even have noticed it. I do not know exactly what kind of animal it was: it was a large feline, like a panther, a lynx or a puma, but black." There had been previous sightings a few years back. (*Il Oiccolo*, Trieste, 14 Sept 2017)

On 28 September 2017, a motorist reported a "dead wildcat" on the Federal Road 9 at Metternich, near Koblenz, Germany. Police investigated and found... a wool blanket with leopard spots! (*TAG24.de*, 29 Sept 2017)

October 2017 brought a series of animal kills at Johanngeorgenstadt, Saxony, Germany, when a cat and a badger were found killed with a bite to the throat. Another cat had been missing for four weeks, and its owner Elke Storl believed it had been killed by a lynx, which is known to be in the region. Police installed a wildlife camera, but only got shots of cats and a fox. However, one videotape shows a cat-like animal, but more slender and taller than a normal pet. (*Freie Presse*, Chemnitz, 6 Oct 2017)

WOLF ENCOUNTERS

Talking a walk with their dog in the Veluwe, a large wooded area in Overijssel, the Netherlands, 52-year-old Karin van der Sluis and her husband could not at first identify the animal they saw

strolling in a leisurely fashion at some distance. A huge dog or a jackal, perhaps; but it was the behaviour of their German Shepherd Duke that put an end to their speculations. The dog froze – submissive behaviour it would not have exhibited had the creature been a dog. "Then immediately the thought occurred that it was a wolf," Van der Sluis said. She grabbed her camera and managed to get a picture. The animal turned around and observed the stunned couple for a while before going on its way, still in a very leisurely manner. The encounter had lasted some three seconds. The couple sent the image to Dutch organisation *Wolven in Nederland*, where experts confirmed they had seen a wolf. Van der Sluis: "The first wolf that has appeared in the Veluwe." (*De Gelderlander*, 20 Oct 2017)

25-year old Stefan Bake was driving down the highway in the vicinity of Kloosterhaar, Overijssel, at 8.30am on Monday, 13 November. He had just dropped off his sister at work and was returning when he spotted the remains of a 'large animal'. His curiosity aroused, Bake stopped to investigate and got the fright of his life. The remains were those of a wolf about 1.2 metres (4ft) tall. "I have never seen anything like it before. It was so big – and those teeth! At first I kept my distance, making sure the animal was no

longer breathing," Bake said. According to wolf expert Leo Linnartz of *Wolven in Nederland* this was already the fourth time in a brief period that the wolf was seen in the Netherlands. "That sharp increase is nothing special. They all come from Germany where the wolf populations are growing." The dead wolf could have been the same that was spotted in the Veluwe a few weeks previously by the Van der Sluises. "Wolves can cross a distance of about 50km (30 miles) in a day, so it is possible," Linnartz said. (*De Gelderlander*, 13 November 2017). About a week later, on Sunday, 19 November, two weekend hunters, Andrea Schneider and Michael Plöger, discovered a wolf in a field in the vicinity of the church of Zwillbrock, Germany. They managed to observe the creature for about 15 minutes and take pictures with a mobile phone. (*Ruhr Nachrichten; Tubantia*, 20 Nov 2017)

THE VIRGIN ON TOUR

Since March 2017, hundreds of people have been gathering at the Laurentius Chapel in Unterflossing, Upper Bavaria, to witness a seer experiencing visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The village has only 112 inhabitants, and the chapel is owned by Otto Masszi, an astronomer who works in environmental protection and bought it six years ago. Last year, a Sicilian visionary called Salvatore Caputa, saw apparitions in a privately owned chapel in Walpertskirchen, also in Bavaria, and Masszi invited him to come to Unterflossing. Ever since, Caputa has announced regular visits from the BVM and the pious have continued to assemble.

Masszi is completely convinced of the authenticity of his visions, and has videos



on his mobile phone to show journalists. The air is said to smell of roses after an apparition. The Catholic Church has not yet pronounced the visions genuine, and has sent an emissary to observe the proceedings, but the seer has been warmly welcomed by local people. On 9 September, more than 1,000 spectators came to witness a vision, travelling from as far away as northern Germany and Austria. Caputa, 73, claims he has been in close contact with the BVM for the last 30 years. In 2010, after he experienced visions in Klagenfurt, Austria, the local Bishop asked Catholics not to attend Caputa's assemblies. The next apparition has been announced for March 2018. (*ZEIT online* 1 July; *ovb online*, 6 Sept; *Merkur*, 7 Sept; *Welt.de*, 11 Sept 2017)

POPE'S BLOOD STOLEN

Reliquaries with the blood of St John Paul II and bone fragments of the Blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko, a Polish priest who was killed in 1984 by the Communist regime, have been stolen from the Sanctuary of Montecastello in Tignale near Lake Garda, Italy. The relics had been in a "Holy House" behind the altar of the church. "This is a very serious act by reckless people who have deprived the Sanctuary and the hermitage of Montecastello of

the most beautiful things," said Don Giuseppe Mattanza, the sanctuary's priest for 11 years. He appealed to the criminals to return the reliquaries, anonymously, if necessary. (*Brescia Oggi*, 25 Oct 2017)

HITLER ART DONATION

A woman who wishes to remain anonymous has donated a watercolour painted by Adolf Hitler to the NIOD, the Dutch Institute for War Documentation. The painting depicts a street scene around the Neutor in Vienna and is signed 'A. Hitler'. According to the woman, her father bought the watercolour for 75 cents at a stamp and coin collectors market. At home, he discovered the signature, and overcome by fear, hid the picture for many years. The woman didn't want to keep it, but two auction houses refused to sell it, she claimed. With many Hitler forgeries in circulation, the NIOD investigated whether this was an authentic Hitler painting, which it turned out to be. Gertjan Dikken of NIOD said: "I was overcome by a historic sensation when I laid my hands on the painting."

The watercolour, painted in Vienna between 1908 and 1913, is the first Hitler painting to be found in an official collection in the Netherlands. (*Volkskrant*, 25 Nov; *RTL Nieuws*, 25 Nov 2017)

AERIAL PHENOMENA

The bright light seen by many in the sky over the Netherlands around 9pm on 21 September 2017 was probably a meteor, according to Felix Bettonvil of the Leiden observatory. Sighting reports came in from the provinces of Noord-Holland, Groningen, Noord-Brabant and Flevoland. Many reports of a 'falling star' were also shared on social media. Said Bettonvil: "We have received dozens of sightings reports and it is evident that something enormous has happened in the Netherlands. It is clear that it was a fireball, something that entered the atmosphere from space." (*Algemeen Dagblad*, 21 Sept; *NOS Nieuws*; *RTL Nieuws*, 22 Sept 2017.)

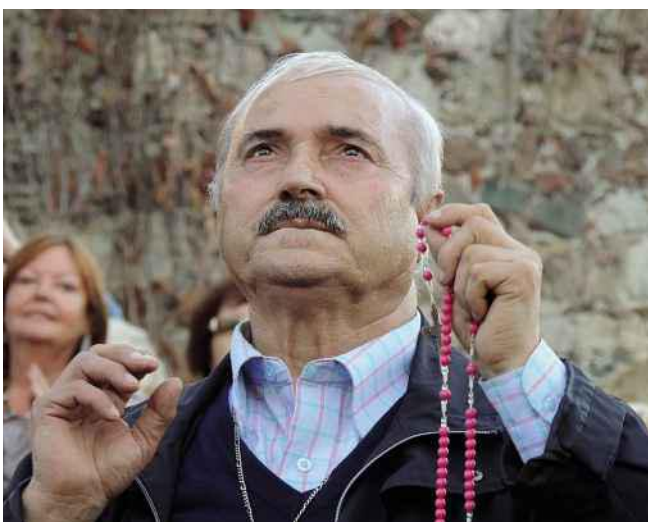
On the evening of 23 September, around 7.50pm, eyewitnesses saw a white U-shaped light high above the village of Ekkersrijt in the Dutch province of Noord-Brabant. One witness managed to take a picture of the light, by then "diminishing in size until it disappeared." It was visible for about five minutes. The incident was reported to UFO Meldpunt, a webpage for Dutch UFO sightings. (*Son en Breugel Nieuws*, 24 Sept 2017)

A bright meteor flashed over the skies of northern Finland at approximately 18:40 hours on 16 November. Residents

of the city of Inari in Finnish Lapland also reported hearing a loud banging noise.

According to ufologist Björn B Borg, the Finnish Astronomical Society URSA identified the object as a meteoroid. Its shockwave had caused windows and houses to vibrate and was responsible for the loud noise. URSA clocked its initial speed at 13km (8 miles)/second. It started to glow at an altitude of 91km (56 miles), when it was southwest of Ivalo. The flight over North Lapland lasted 9.5 seconds and turned the landscape as bright as day as the meteoroid travelled at many tens of times the speed of sound. Its diameter was originally about half a metre (20 in) and its weight before entering the atmosphere between 100 and 300kg (220-660lb), URSA established. It crashed in the wilderness of Vätsäri, northeast of Lake Inari, near the Norwegian border.

"Experts have calculated that parts of the Finnish Inari meteorite have spread east of Lake Inari over an area of about 10 to 15 km (6 to 9 miles). Many Northern Lights cameras caught it on film and with the help of these pictures experts will try to find parts of the meteorite," said Borg. (*Italehti*, 16+17 Nov; *Ilta-Sanomat*, 16 Nov 2017; pers comm, BB Borg).



ABOVE LEFT: Sicilian seer Salvatore Caputa has his eyes on the BVM. ABOVE: The meteorite filmed over Finland by Johannes Karhula in November 2017.



SURVIVORS' STORIES

Two remarkable tales of high seas drifters, plus the woman lost for a month in the Alabama wilderness

ALL AT SEA

At 9am on Christmas Day, a Polish sailor was rescued by the French coast guard near the island of Réunion, east of Madagascar, after he was spotted by a yacht crew. Zbigniew Reket, 54, claimed he had been drifting in a rudderless lifeboat across the shark- and pirate-infested waters of the Indian Ocean for seven months. He was thin, sickly and confused, but otherwise in good health. He said that he and Samira, his cat, had survived on half a packet of Chinese soup per day, along with any fish he managed to catch.

His marine adventures started in 2014 when he travelled to India from the United States, where he had lived for a decade. He bought the modified lifeboat, originally from a cruise ship, with the intention of sailing it back to Poland. He spent time modifying it, but it broke down soon after leaving port because of a problem with its mast. He drifted for days in the Indian Ocean before washing up on the Comoros Islands off the coast of Mozambique, where he stayed for about two years and adopted Samira.

He had left the Comoros Islands in May 2017, bound for Durban in South Africa 2,000km (1,200 miles) to the south. This would have involved him sailing through the Mozambique Channel, a busy shipping route with strong currents. The instruments on his boat had been smashed because of big waves and he had no means of communication. He had provisions for only one month.

"We drifted towards the Somali coast, then towards the Maldives, and then Indonesia again," he said. "Several times I could see land, but I could never steer towards it. I spotted several ships but the battery on my radio was dead." The authorities are checking out his story, which local media say appears to be plausible. He said he would consider staying on Réunion, which as an EU citizen he is entitled to do. "I want to have a



LEFT: Zbigniew Reket and his cat Samira happy to be alive after their seven-month adventure.

"Several times I could see land, but I could never steer towards it"

normal life, find a job, and why not stay here?" he said. [AFP] *D.Mail, Times, D.Telegraph, 28 Dec 2017.*

- A young fisherman flew home to the Philippines on 29 March 2017 after being given up for dead at sea, battling hunger, thirst and despair for nearly two months on a tiny boat that drifted all the way to Papua New Guinea. Rolando Omongos, 21, recounted an astonishing tale of survival, three weeks after his rescue by a Japanese fishing vessel. "I cried non-stop when I was finally rescued. I was too weak to stand up and they had to carry me," he told reporters. He said he survived on rainwater and moss growing at the hull of his 2.5m (8ft) long boat, finding respite from the heat of the tropical sun by diving into the water frequently. His 31-year-old uncle Reniel Omongos, who was on a second small boat, died from hunger and exposure after

a month. The nephew lashed the body on to his boat for a few days but later let it sink into the water when it began to smell.

The men had set off on 21 December 2016 with other fishermen from General Santos, a southern Philippine port facing the Celebes Sea. The port lies more than 3,200km (nearly 2,000 miles) northwest of the PNG island of New Britain, where rescuers later dropped off the survivor. A storm separated Omongos and his uncle from their mother boat on 10 January, and they ran out of fuel five days later. They later tossed their small boat engines overboard so they would float higher and avoid being swamped by huge waves. "No fewer than four vessels would pass us by each day," said Rolando. "I would wave at them but they would not stop for us." He said the ships and fishing boats apparently failed to see their tiny vessels bobbing about 3km-5km away. "I never lost hope. I was always praying," he added. "I told myself, at least one of us had to get back home."

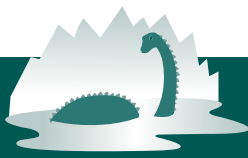
When the Japanese fishing vessel *Wakaba Maru* found him, Omongos said he was very weak and emaciated, having been reduced to eating moss once every few days. He was down to just over 20kg (44lb),

from his original weight of 61kg (134lb). The fisherman, who quit school after sixth grade, said he planned to rest after flying home to General Santos, but vowed never to set foot on a boat again. "Maybe I will go back to school instead," he added. [AFP] *theguardian.com, 31 Mar 2017.*

- For the saga of José Salvador Alvarenga, the first person in recorded history to survive in a small boat lost at sea for more than a year, see **FT312:20, 340:22**. For other high seas drifters and tales of survival, see **FT48:16, 53:18, 156:17, 166:10, 198:9, 323:25, 328:26**.

LOST IN THE WOODS

- A woman who went missing in the wilderness was found alive on 12 August after nearly a month living off berries and wild mushrooms with no shelter. Lisa Theris, 25, had reportedly lost 50lb (23kg) and was covered in scratches and bug bites after she got lost amid acres of dense forest in Midland, Alabama, without any shoes, phone or bag. She was finally reunited with her family after being spotted by a motorist on Highway 82, who turned around after seeing "something moving in the bushes". Before she disappeared, Ms Theris, a radiology student from Louisville, had been with two men who later robbed a hunting lodge in Bullock County, Alabama. She fled from the men because she did not want to be part of the robbery. Sheriff Raymond Rodgers said: "She's not familiar with this area and apparently on the night she ran, she went into the woods at night and got lost... She said she was drinking water out of a brook and eating berries and mushrooms. The bugs had really been on her and she had a lot of scratch marks." More than half of Alabama is covered by forest. *independent.co.uk, 15 Aug; Times, 16 Aug 2017.*



KARL SHUKER debunks a desiccated dinosaur and is thrilled by a rare porcine photo op



LEFT: One of the photos of the 'dinosaur-like' mystery creature that circulated in December 2017. ABOVE RIGHT: The skeleton of a mongoose. BELOW: The Javan warty pig caught on hidden camera.

NOT A DECOMPOSED DINOSAUR

During mid-December 2017, the world-wide media contained many reports concerning the decomposed carcass of a fairly small creature that had been found at a long-abandoned sub-station in Uttarakhand, northern India. The reason why such an ostensibly insignificant find was attracting such attention, however, was the remarkable claim that this might be the desiccated corpse of a dinosaur! According to various original Indian news reports that were subsequently circulated and disseminated extensively in Western media accounts, it was a dinosaur-like fossil but with flesh still on its bones that had been found in mid-November by an electrician while cleaning out the sub-station, previously untouched for 35 years, in the small city of Jaspur. However, accompanying photos and a short video showed a creature that was clearly no fossil and certainly no dinosaur either, but rather a mummified present-day cadaver of something that was unquestionably mammalian, as unambiguously demonstrated by its diagnostically mammalian dentition.

Notwithstanding this immediately obvious fact, the reports stated that the carcass was to be sent to Dr Bahadur Kotlia, a palaeontologist at Kumaun University, for historical and scientific analyses, including carbon-14 tests, in order to determine its age and identity. Moreover, Dr Parag Madhukar Dhakate, a Conservator with the Indian Forest Service, was quoted as having said: "It looks like a dinosaur, but we can't say anything until all the tests are done". In reality, the photos and video showed unequivocally that it looked nothing like a dinosaur but everything like a modestly-sized mammalian carnivore, either a mustelid (weasel, marten) or a herpestid (mongoose). Yellow-throated martens *Martes flavigula* do exist in the area where this specimen

was found, but are not common there, and do not normally associate with human dwellings anyway, not even abandoned ones. Conversely, mongooses are much more common there, and are far more likely to be found in or near human habitation. In addition, the broad base of the deceased creature's tail, and its relatively straight claws and longer limbs, indicate a mongoose identity more than a marten or some other mustelid. So, not a dinosaur at all, simply a misidentification, albeit one of truly monstrous proportions.

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/dinosaur-like-animal-remains-discovered-uttarakhand-jaspur/1/1093004.html>, 19 Nov 2017; www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/mysterious-dinosaur-like-creature-discovered-11701321, 15 Dec 2017; www.express.co.uk/news/science/893340/dinosaur-india-scientists-science-corpse-uttarakhand, 17 Dec 2017.

PORCINE PIMPERNEL

Photographing a pig whose greatest fan would be hard-pressed to describe it in terms more flattering than 'homely' or 'memorable' might not be everyone's definition of excitement, but to conservationists working in Indonesia one such recent event was very exciting indeed. This is because the pig in question was none other than a Javan warty pig *Sus verrucosus*, one of the world's rarest species of wild pig, which was stealthily snapped lately by a hidden camera in a forest on the island of Java where conservationists conducting a survey

hoped that this elusive mammal might still exist, although some feared that the deadly combination of hunting and habitat loss had already driven it into extinction.

Happily, however, the slightly blurry but still readily recognisable close-up image of one such specimen taken by the camera and released to the media just before Christmas 2017 verified that this was not the case after all. The survey was led by Dr Johanna Rode-Margono from Chester Zoo, England, who confirmed that she and her team were thrilled to have re-discovered this porcine pimperl, and that their priority was now to ensure that its habitat was protected. An additional danger potentially facing this particular species is that it may be interbreeding with the European wild boar, yielding hybrid individuals that would compete with pure-bred specimens for food and habitat, which would mean that the Javan warty pig's continuing existence could be threatened by what must surely be the ultimate paradox for any endangered species – breeding itself into extinction.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/science-environment-42465534/hidden-camera-captures-rare-pig-thought-extinct, 23 Dec 2017; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-42433938>, 23 Dec 2017.



JOHN CUMMINGS / CREATIVE COMMONS

DR JOHANNA RODE-MARGONO

ANDREI AND THE ROMANIAN ROCK-TOSSER



LEFT: The Dobre house in Naipu. ABOVE: Eleven-year-old Andrei Dobre, the apparent focus of the Naipu poltergeist. BELOW: Some of the rocks thrown at the Dobre house.

ALL PHOTOS: VASILE ARCANU

PAUL CROPPER investigates a stone-throwing poltergeist in southern Romania.

While some poltergeist episodes last for months or years, in most instances the mind-boggling chaos peters out after only a few days or weeks. A recent Romanian case lasted for just four days, but left a lasting impression on the terrified villagers of Naipu, 50km (30 miles) south-west of Bucharest.

The strange events began in the house of Daniel and Ramona Dobre on Sunday 20 August 2017, when stones began pelting the roof, the falls sometimes continuing until almost midnight. Weirder still, lights switched on by themselves, chairs tipped over, and other household objects flew about. The phenomena seemed to focus on the Dobres' 11-year-old son Andrei.

When paranormal activity erupts in your isolated Romanian village, who do you call? The local priest and the police, of course – in that order. But as the priest began to recite his prayers, chairs flipped over



again and more objects were thrown around. His prayer candle also started burning – from the bottom! Six police officers arrived and observed chairs and pots moving about. Although some were struck by the flying stones, a search of the property proved fruitless. On leaving, the creeped-out constables told reporters they were ordered not to speak further about their experiences.

The villagers were quick to zero in on a likely source for the haunting: in June, a female

neighbour of the Dobres had died, and local tradition holds that if a person's soul does not go to Heaven or Hell within 60 days, it may haunt or even possess the living. Obviously, then, Andrei was being tormented by the deceased neighbour's Earthbound spirit. To support their case, wise old locals pointed out that the flying stones seemed to come from the direction of the dead woman's house.

News of the weird events soon spread, and within a couple of days four national television

stations – Antena 1, Antena 3, Realitatea TV and RTV – had all reported live from the Dobres' house. One of the first journalists on the scene was local Giurgiu photographer Vasile Arcanu, who arrived on 23 August with Giurgiu mayor Constantin Carapanceanu and deputy mayor Mugurel Vatafu.

Vasile's initial scepticism was shaken when, in a span of only 30 minutes, he observed three chairs flip over, and various objects – a bottle filled with holy water, a box of photos and clothes on hangers – thrown about. When I spoke to him in early October he was most insistent that no one – not young Andrei or anyone else – could have faked the events: he had been alone in the house when some of the seemingly paranormal events occurred.

He documented the events quite well with still photographs, but, like many a polt investigator before him, was thwarted whenever he tried to videotape the proceedings. First, a recently charged battery went completely, inexplicably, flat and had to



LEFT: Andrei was taken to the Letca Noua monastery in western Giurgiu, where a priest said special prayers over the boy.

BELOW: Chairs being overturned and bottles of holy water being sent flying are common occurrences in the Dobre house.

be replaced. Then, after he'd finally got the camera running, the invisible imp, true to the poltergeist playbook, showed perfect timing: when the camera was switched on nothing happened; when it was switched off objects moved.

A seasoned journalist who has covered many gruesome automobile accidents, Vasile confessed to feeling "a little fear" while in the house, and had an overwhelming sensation of being watched. During his visit, young Andrei exhibited some distressing symptoms: he pulled his hair compulsively and the muscles of his face, hands and feet contracted, creating a rather grotesque effect.

One of the many odd things about the episode was that the recently deceased lady, whose spirit was now believed to be tormenting him, had not disliked the lad. Far from it; she'd been particularly fond of him. But Andrei would cry out the woman's name and plead "leave me alone!" – and objects would fly.

With the strange events continuing and Andrei's condition worsening, the rattled residents considered resorting to a quaint old Romanian folk remedy to end the curse: digging up the neighbour's corpse and staking



Doctors were unable to find any sign of mental illness

her through the heart. Their dark mood wasn't eased by the suicide by hanging of a 19-year-old local man, although police were quick to state the death was linked to relationship problems rather than events at the Dobre house.

With the villagers sharpening stakes and media attention escalating, local Child Protection officers stepped in. Andrei was taken to

a local hospital and then to the Alexandru Obregia Psychiatric Hospital in Bucharest where doctors were unable to find any signs of mental illness.

After only four hours the boy's parents had him discharged, and then, feeling religion offered a better chance for a cure, took him on a pilgrimage to six Romanian churches, including Saint Spiridon in Bucharest and a monastery in Cernica.

The intrepid journalist Vasile Arcanu accompanied the family on the final excursion, to the Letca Noua monastery in western Giurgiu, which is well-known as the site of an Orthodox miracle: in 2002, "ointment" reportedly began streaming from an icon of the

Virgin Mary held in the church.

As Andrei entered the churchyard, he turned to his companions and announced: "I am free. There is no one with me." Just to be sure though, the priest went ahead and read special prayers over the boy. Later, Andrei told Vasile that a voice had warned him: "Be careful. Things may not stay like this". Immediately thereafter, Andrei's odd spasms ceased to afflict him and the seemingly supernatural events at his family home slowed and eventually stopped.

While the refreshingly happy resolution of the Naipu episode is rather unusual, its central events followed the same patterns I have seen in many other poltergeist cases. While the responses to, and the explanations for, polt activity may differ from region to region and culture to culture, the core phenomena, and the way events unfold, are remarkably similar across the world – and indeed, across the centuries.

In Romania, where there is general acceptance of the supernatural, and of various explanations for paranormal activity, people don't seem reluctant to report poltergeist episodes. The same usually doesn't apply in most Western countries, where witnesses are often ridiculed into silence or become fodder for news media looking for the next cheap thrill. So, the best place to investigate polt cases these days seems to be in developing countries, an idea I pursued in Zimbabwe in September of 2017.

But that's another story, for another issue...

Sources: *Romanian news media 21-27 Aug 2017, particularly Libertatea (Bucharest), Antena3 (Bucharest) and Giurgiuveanul (Giurgiu). Interview with Vasile Arcanu, 4 October 2017.*



MEDICAL BAG

Thai men's quest for paler peckers, Hilary Mantel's inspiring migraines and the cortically blind boy who can see (though he's a bit near-sighted)



LELUX HOSPITAL



SEAN GALLUP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: Many Thai men, according to reports, are choosing to submit themselves to the "Pikachu laser" in an attempt to deal with their "dark penis problem".
ABOVE RIGHT: "Gaming Disorder" is now an officially recognised mental health condition. BELOW: Author Hilary Mantel's migraines leave her feeling "haunted by myself".

A WHITER SHADE OF WANG

Skin whitening is nothing new in many Asian countries. The practice is largely attributed to the lingering traditional perception that having fair skin means not being part of the working class, and not having to work in the fields. Thai men can now get a new laser treatment to lighten their penises – offered at £480 for five sessions. Lelux, a cosmetic hospital outside Bangkok, has become the talk of Thai social media after its employee posted about the treatment dubbed "Pikachu laser" on Facebook (the most famous pokemon is used as Thai slang for "penis"). The treatment promises to magically decrease the melanin in a penis and make it lighter and "pinkish". Lelux Hospital advertised the laser on Facebook as: "The most talked-about treatment right now. [To achieve] pink, white Pikachu. End your dark penis problem. It doesn't hurt or require recovery. Ready to score right after it."

The video of a 30-year-old Thai man allegedly having the treatment received nearly four million views in 24 hours. The unnamed patient said the difference is noticeable after the first treatment. "It was much lighter. I've had three treatments and now feel better. I'm much more confident to wear

swimsuits now when I travel." We don't know what type of swimsuits would look better with a whiter wang. Last year, Lelux Hospital made headlines for offering the "3D Vagina" treatment, which supposedly made a camel toe more visible. They also offered vagina whitening. The clinic currently gets an average of 20-30 patients a month coming for vagina and penis whitening with some coming from as far afield as Myanmar, Cambodia and Hong Kong. However, public health officials have warned people that the procedure could lead to scarring, inflammation and "nasty looking spots". *Coconuts Bangkok, 4 Jan; BBC News, 5 Jan; D.Telegraph, 6 Jan 2018.*

WONDERS OF THE AURA

Dame Hilary Mantel says her migraines provide her with a 'gift' of creative inspiration. The author of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up The Bodies* has suffered from the debilitating condition since her teens. Although she rarely suffers from headaches now, the aura symptoms (visual or auditory disturbances) remain. "Sometimes I get savagely impatient with prolonged aura," she said, "but sometimes it leaves me a gift – a breakthrough, a sudden insight – something I can use. If

I can manage to write, I get an excellent payoff. But it's a rough way to work."

The condition can conjure "musical ear worms, or a banal phrase repeating in my head until it becomes charged with meaning, like a spell. A prolonged and dislocating sense of déjà vu. Sensory memories welling up from a deep place. I feel haunted by myself – it's as if there are two realities, slightly overlapping, and around them a nebulous, saintly illuminated area like spun fog, so I don't feel securely based in my body."

About 8.5 million people in the UK suffer migraine attacks every year; of those, around one in five experience aura. Other writers with the condition include Lewis Carroll. "Alice

in Wonderland syndrome" is the name given to feelings of micropsia and macropsia, when objects appear smaller or larger than they really are; it has been suggested that the scenes in which Alice grows and shrinks were based on Carroll's visual disturbances. *D.Telegraph, 12 Dec 2017.*

GAMING MEDICALISED

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has, for the first time, included "gaming disorder" in a list of mental health conditions in a draft of its 11th International Classification of Diseases guidelines, which is published in 2018. The WHO characterised a gaming disorder as a "pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behaviour" either on or offline. Notable traits include patients prioritising gaming over "life interests and daily activities or continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences." (*Fortean Times* has recorded several deaths following marathon gaming sessions.) Patients must have shown symptoms for at least a year before diagnosis, although the guidance states that this is subject to change depending on the severity of the case.

The decision comes four



PHILIP TOSCANO / WPA POOL / GETTY IMAGES

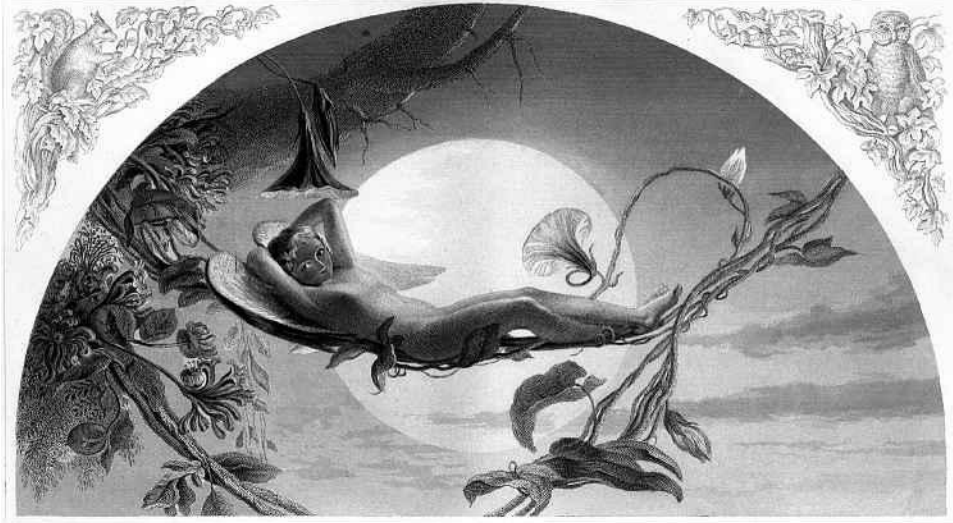


years after “Internet Gaming Disorder” was listed as a condition for further study in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which is published by the American Psychiatric Association. There are several private organisations that offer gaming addiction therapy, including UK Addiction Treatment Centre (UKAT), which also provides treatment for alcohol, gambling and substance abuse. “What we have seen at UKAT is a 300 per cent rise in the amount of admissions where gaming addiction is part of their reason for treatment since 2014,” said a UKAT spokesman. The organisation has treated 36 inpatients for gaming addiction since 2014. *D.Telegraph*, 29 Dec 2017.

BLIND SIGHT

A boy without the visual processing centre of his brain has baffled doctors by still having near-normal sight. The seven-year-old Australian, known as BI, lost his primary visual cortex shortly after he was born due to a rare metabolic disorder called medium-chain acyl-Co-A dehydrogenase (MCAD) deficiency. Normally, the primary visual cortex is crucial for sight because it processes electrical signals relayed from the eyes. People with damage to this area are said to have “cortical blindness”.

Dr Iñaki-Carril Mundiñano at Monash University in Melbourne said the cortex was lost when his brain was malleable. “You wouldn’t think he is blind,” he says. “He navigates his way around without any problems and plays soccer and video games.” This is not the only case of a person with a damaged visual cortex being able to ‘see’ on some level; but it is reportedly the first known case of a person with *no* visual cortex having a conscious experience of vision that is very near normal. The only problem the researchers found with BI’s vision was that he’s a bit near-sighted. *New Scientist*, 6 Dec; *Newsweek*, 7 Dec; *Metro*, 14 Dec 2017.



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

I’ve referred previously in this column to the possibility that driving can induce a trance-like state. Could ‘highway hypnotism’ also be responsible for one of the hoariest of urban legends, the phantom hitchhiker?

The hitchhiker comes in several versions, but in its simplest form a driver lets a hitchhiker into the car and, then, a few minutes later, they turn around to see that the hitchhiker has disappeared.

In 2012 Akhiro Watanabe and Hirokazu Furuya, two Japanese neurologists, tried to explain away the hitchhiker in their fascinating article “Pathogenic Mechanisms of Sleep Hallucinations and their Relationship to Ghost Tales”.

They were interested in a series of hitchhiker accounts from the 1960s about taxi drivers picking up vanishing passengers from Hirakata bypass between Osaka and Kyoto Prefectures. A local newspaper was, in 1968, able to find one taxi driver (no name given) who said that it had happened to him: we are not just relying, then, on tales from distant friends of friends here. Watanabe and Furuya explain this event as follows. The taxi driver, they suggest, was driving, became drowsy and then entered an REM state. In this state, he imagined stopping for a person on the roadside. However, he ultimately snapped out of the REM state: perhaps a bump on the road woke him. Crucially, he was not aware that he had been

in a trance and so was shocked to find that his passenger was absent. In the words of a 1968 news report: “After driving [for] several minutes, he felt an abnormal sensation and turned back to the rear seat to find no one there.” This is interesting, but can it really explain other lived cases of the vanishing

hitchhiker? Surely, the key element here is that this was a taxi driver. It was quite natural for a taxi driver in a trance to imagine picking someone up because that is what taxi drivers do. Most drivers do not make a habit of picking up total strangers and so any driving-induced vision along these lines would be rather out of the ordinary. There is also the awkward fact – how often this mars psychological or neurological explanations for forteana! – that sometimes there is more than one person

in the car. In 1981 in Montpellier, France, four travellers picked up a mature lady. She squeezed between two women in the back seat. At a certain point, she screamed “Mind the bend! You are risking your life!” The car slowed down on a dangerous turn and then the passengers realised that their passenger had vanished. This case is particularly interesting because it was documented by the Montpellier police. What would Dr Furuya and Watanabe make of this, I wonder?

Simon Young’s new book *Magical Folk: British and Irish Fairies: 500 AD to the Present* is out now from Gibson Square Books

THE TAXI DRIVER,
THEY SUGGEST,
WAS DRIVING,
BECAME DROWSY
AND THEN
ENTERED AN
REM STATE.

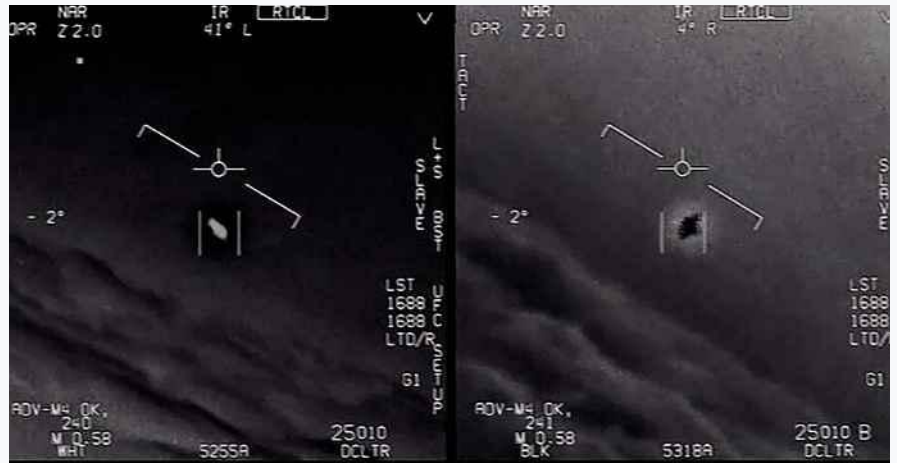


Now you see it, now you don't

The *New York Times* has suggested the truth is out there, but **PETER BROOKESMITH** is not so sure.

The previous Flying Sorcery column (**FT361:28**) introduced you to Tom DeLonge's To The Stars Academy (TTSA) and all the many wonderful things it proposes to do. Now it's done something, and all the world has heard about it. Or some of it. The story broke online in the *New York Times* (and in print in the following Sunday edition): "Glowing Auras and 'Black Money': The Pentagon's Mysterious UFO Program" sang the headline (see **FT362:2**). The thrust of the article was twofold: that the US Government had admitted investigating UFOs despite denying doing any such thing for nearly 50 years, and spent \$22 million between 2007 and 2012 on an unclassified but well-hidden Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) project called the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program (AATIP), in charge of which was one Luis Elizondo. This gent and his 'program' were mentioned in the previous Flying Sorcery column as now being with the TTSA, and he had a couple of surprises for the staid readers of the online Gray Lady: two brief videos, shot from Forward-Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) cameras on board US Navy fast-movers. One, titled FLIR-1, was identified as being taped from an F/A-18F Super Hornet attached to the *USS Nimitz*, during an exercise 100 miles (160km) off San Diego in 2004. The military had apparently declined to say when, where, or by whom the other, titled GIMBAL, had been shot. Both showed something blurry as seen in the heads-up display (HUD) of the Navy jets. More on them shortly.

Second, and possibly of greater interest to the average *NYT* reader, was how AATIP came to be funded. Now, \$4.4 million a year out of an annual US defence budget of \$600-odd billion doesn't need your calculator to tell you 'tis but a tiny fraction, even if for a while it would keep you or me from worrying about the cost of claret, Sobranies, and having the Bentley serviced. Besides, every little counts. It seems most of this cash didn't go to fund the DIA worthies of AATIP, toiling away under Mr Elizondo, "on the fifth floor of the Pentagon's C Ring, deep within the building's maze." The project was proposed to the DIA by Senator Harry Reid. He had been approached by Las Vegas billionaire and fervent believer in ET visitation Robert Bigelow of NIDS fame (see pp38-41), who in turn, it seems, had been put up to the idea by none other than Luis Elizondo. Once the cash was forthcoming, the DIA contracted most of the work to a company called Bigelow Aerospace Advanced Space



ABOVE: Frames from the GIMBAL video showing something in the HUD of Navy jets. LEFT: AATIP head honcho Luis Elizondo (top) and political supporter Senator Harry Reid.

Studies (BAASS). Some of that money was funnelled to MUFON to carry out field investigations. Mr Reid's sponsorship of the project was joined by Senators Ted Stevens and Daniel K Inouye. The former died in 2010, the latter in 2012. As far as I know no conspiracist has yet suggested that these two were assisted in their demise because They Knew Too Much, but be patient... Meanwhile, Mr Reid has long been pursued by rumours of corruption, so this cosy arrangement inevitably smells of the pork barrel, if not a veritable barrel of herrings.

Alongside the *NYT*'s main article was a sidebar featuring the account of Cdr David Fravor of encountering a UFO during that November 2004 exercise. Fravor and (presumably his wingman) Lt Cdr Jim Slaughter were diverted from their training mission by an alert from the cruiser *USS Princeton*. Over the previous two weeks the cruiser's radar had been picking up 'objects' that

"appeared suddenly at 80,000ft [24,400m], and then hurtled toward the sea, eventually stopping at 20,000ft [6,100m] and hovering. Then they either dropped out of radar range or shot straight back up." Now one of these had turned up in the vicinity. When the two (unarmed) fighters arrived at the given co-ordinates, they had nothing on their radar and no UFO was visible. But then they noticed that the sea below them was churning, and above that was hovering "an aircraft of some kind - whitish... around 40ft [12m] long and oval in shape... jumping around erratically" over the "boiling" waves. Fravor descended toward it, whereupon the object rose to meet him, then abruptly peeled off, accelerating "like nothing I've ever seen". The target thus lost, the two jets were told to fly to a designated CAP (combat air patrol) point. They were still 40 miles (64km) from that when the *Princeton* told them that their mystery target had already arrived there. When they arrived at the CAP point themselves, the thing had disappeared, and the two Super Hornets headed back to the *Nimitz*. Two things strike this one-time (aged eight) would-be Fleet Air Arm flyboy. One: note that Cdr Fravor's plane was not equipped with a FLIR pod, and so the FLIR-1 video that's been casually associated with his account was allegedly taped on a later mission, sent out *four hours* afterward from the *Nimitz*, and may show something absolutely unrelated. Two: why did the *Princeton* radar operators assume that whatever appeared at Fravor's CAP point was the same thing they had

DREW ANGERER / GETTY IMAGES

tracked earlier (but that had meanwhile vanished from their screens, it seems)? There may be a good answer to this, but we haven't had it yet.

So that leaves a couple or three more things to chew on. These are: TTSA's treatment of the videos, and associated matters; what the videos actually show; and what AATIP and BAASS were up to. The last is probably easiest to deal with first. From Luis Elizondo, you get the impression that AATIP was busy investigating UFOs in the 'ufological' sense of the term. The DoD was a bit more specific, not to say deflationary: "The AATIP's mandate, when it existed, was to assess far-term foreign advanced aerospace threats to the United States", "a wide range of 'anomalous aerospace threats' ranging from advanced aircraft fielded by traditional US adversaries to commercial drones to possible alien encounters" – in other words, UFOs as understood in classic aviation jargon. The project – at one point allegedly involving 46 scientists – produced "reams" of paperwork, in the form of some 38 lengthy reports according to Elizondo, including one 490-pager on "alleged UFO sightings in the United States and numerous foreign countries over multiple decades". Feel like re-inventing the wheel, anyone?

Bigelow spent some of his Pentagon pocket money on refurbishing some of his many buildings in Las Vegas to store "metal alloys and other materials that Mr Elizondo and program contractors said had been recovered from unidentified aerial phenomena". That rather strongly suggests those 'materials' were gathered by ufologists (MUFON?) rather than rehoused from Hangar 18 or Area 51. And where are they now? And then AATIP's researchers "also studied people who said they had experienced physical effects from encounters with the objects and examined them for any physiological changes", which no doubt resulted in yet more reams of paper. In the end, the DIA decided that AATIP had produced nothing substantive and canned it. Elizondo presents this now as a lever for TTSA and 'disclosure': "We need to ensure we engage... our leaders, and say 'Hey, look this is worth investing [in]'... The bigger story here is: 'Folks we've been looking at this stuff for a while and it's real', and as a nation we need to decide if this is a national security imperative." The DIA, like the US Air Force, following the Condon Report 42 years earlier, seems to have concluded otherwise.

TTSA's evidence for "it's real" consists at the time of writing of those two aforementioned FLIR videos and a 2017 statement purportedly from one or some of the aircrew involved in the 2004 *Nimitz* incident. TTSA say the videos were released to them with complete 'chain-of-custody' documentation, but so far have failed to publish it, so to all intents and purposes they exist in limbo. TTSA say the GIMBAL video was released to them with the location, date, and other identifying data redacted. The DIA say they've released



ABOVE: Former US Navy pilot David Fravor claims that he had a 2004 mid-air encounter with a mystery aircraft "like nothing I've ever seen"; but is that the same encounter shown in the FLIR-1 video?

"The bigger story here is 'Folks, we've been looking at this stuff for a while and it's real'"

nothing from AATIP. Oh. The FLIR-1 video in one form or another has been kicking around the web since 2007, while Cdr Fravor's story has been out there (on the FighterSweep blog) since 2015. TTSA say they have three videos, but the third is yet to appear. So we don't have TTSA to thank for much. The witness statement confirming Cdr Fravor's account is likewise questionable. It's clearly not an original document, since it sports none of the security classifications, rubber stamps, initialled approvals, standard Department of Defense page numbering or other tell-tales that it's an official release, not even a letterhead or cover page. It does contain official-looking blacked-out (and sometimes rather pointless) redactions, but they're clearly the work of a computer, not the standard felt-tip beloved of FOIA censors. It seems that Elizondo acquired the videos from the DIA – or somewhere – to use in 'pilot training', and not to promote Tom DeLonge's crowd-funded fantasy factory. Oh again. And Oh dear.

Now to the videos. GIMBAL comes with a voice track, at best guess an exchange between the crew of the chase aircraft; FLIR-1 is from 2004 (we're told), has no voice track, and ends with the target whizzing off to the left at seemingly enormous speed. Both videos have been intensively scrutinised and analysed by Mick West and other knowledgeable souls of Metabunk.org, even down to the camera arrangements and image paths within the Raytheon FLIR pods (which, *nota bene*, are gimbal-mounted) hung on the Super Hornets at the time. Tim Printy has also speculated that the videos we see are copies of copies of copies, possibly then recorded on a phone from a TV set, so grim is the quality compared to current IR weapons-grade imagery, which

is as sharp as a monochrome hi-def TV. What we get in both cases is an amorphous blobby shape with a flare around it. The IR camera allows the viewer to toggle between displaying the 'hot spot' as black or white. In the 'hot black' mode there's a distinct white flare around the central hot spot. Mick West concluded that this was a camera artefact, not a mysterious 'aura' as promoted by TTSA, and the apparent rotation of the target image in the GIMBAL video is actually a function of the angle at which the gimbal-mounted camera is operating (as the gimbal rotates, so does the image). Metabunk conclude that the target is nothing more extraordinary than a distant aircraft, its shape blotted out by the over-saturating heat signature. This video's title leads one to wonder if it's not a recording of a test of the gimbal mechanism itself. The audio track, noticeably lacking in inter-aircraft military formality, mentions "a fleet" of drones (presumably visible on radar), which adds weight to this speculation.

The supposedly amazing bit of the FLIR-1 video comes right at the end, when the target shoots off to one side at apparently enormous speed. 'Apparently' is correct, as the camera goes to a 2x zoom at this point and loses its lock on the target. That's all: there's nothing unusual about it if one knows what one's looking at. It's noteworthy too that in both videos the airspeed of the pursuing aircraft is consistently around 250 knots, and the targets appear to remain at a constant distance. This doesn't match Cdr Fravor's account of 'his' UFO whizzing off at supersonic speed – and the Super Hornet can hit Mach 1.8 (1,190 mph at 40,000ft) if it needs to. In cold sober fact, there's no reason yet to suppose that this video has any connection to Cdr Fravor's sighting – which remains unexplained – or even the 2004 *Nimitz* carrier group exercise at all.

Altogether this amounts to rather less than the TTSA hype (not to mention the *New York Times*) would have us believe, and even less than such luminaries as Richard Dolan and Stanton Friedman seem to think it all means (see sundry interviews on YouTube). So now we wait to see if it means anything at all. Don't hold your breath, as they say...

A Little History of Spirit Technology

Is it possible to bring scientific innovations to bear on the intangible world of the spirit, or even to talk to the dead through emerging technologies? **CHRIS JOSIFFE** traces the history of Spiritualist kit explicitly designed to communicate with the Other Side.

The so-called God Helmet, developed by inventor Stanley Koren and neuroscientist Michael Persinger in 1990, was claimed to have the ability of inducing mystical and religious experiences by stimulation of the temporal lobes with low-intensity magnetic fields (see FT42:5054, 201:39, 205:4-5, 270:40-43).

Another recent attempt to bring technology to bear upon the world of the spirit is the Spiricom, which supposedly allows for two-way communication between its users and spirits of the dead. It was constructed in 1980 by William O'Neil, apparently on the instructions given to him by the spirit of a dead scientist. O'Neil made its specifications available free of charge, but no one appears to have replicated his results, suggesting that any spirit communication may have occurred as the result of O'Neil's own mediumistic ability rather than the technology itself.

More recently still, we have the Ghost Box, or Frank's Box, built in 2002 by Frank Sumption, again, following instructions from the spirit world. It generates sound by using white noise and random sounds captured across AM radio bands; it has been subject to the same criticism aimed at similar electronic voice phenomena (EVP) findings – that any data is merely the result of pareidolia, and thus non-replicable.

But these contemporary pieces of kit may be seen as continuing a long tradition, arguably stretching back to the 19th-century séance room, with its Ouija boards, planchettes, and spirit trumpets. The first two decades of the 20th century saw the appearance of somewhat more sophisticated devices, usually in the service of Spiritualism. There was the Psychomotor, the New Wave Detector, and FR Melton's 'psychic telephone'. But prior to this we have Captain Quentin Craufurd's 'ether box' (essentially a modified radio).

CAPTAIN CRAUFURD: WIRELESS MAN

Captain Quentin Charles Alexander Craufurd (1875-1957) was a decorated officer of the Royal Navy whose innovations



The inspiration for his wireless telegraph came to him in a dream

in wireless technology – notably, his invention of the ship-to-ship radio system – constituted a significant advance in military (and later civilian) communications. His distinguished career was acknowledged by the award of an MBE in 1953. He was also the founder of the Fairy Investigation Society in 1927 (see 'The Fairy Investigation Society' by Simon Young, FT321:30-37), and, as a companion to various birds and animals, experimented with human-animal communication.

Craufurd claimed that the inspiration for his wireless telephone came to him in a dream in 1907 (much like August Kekulé's discovery of the atomic structure of benzene, or Dmitri Mendeleev and the Periodic Table). He later explained that this experience had led him to become involved with psychical research. In this field, he applied his scientific mind to

ABOVE: A spirit trumpet, used in séances to allow spirit voices to communicate with sitters.

the development of devices that might facilitate communication between human and non-human minds. He claimed to be able to receive messages from the dead via an 'ether box', and soon became known in Spiritualist circles as 'the wireless man'.¹

He might sound like a crank, but was in fact an inventor of some talent. This is attested by the existence of several patents in his name having been lodged at the Patents Office; for example: UK Patent 154347 (1920): *Method and apparatus for detecting distant ships whereon dynamo electric machinery or the like is running* and UK Patent 391491-A (1933): *Improvements in or Relating to Wireless Signalling Systems*.

Combining his two research areas, Craufurd experimented with technology as a means with which to establish communication with other realms. In 1927, whilst playing around with a device of his own invention, he claimed to have "tuned in" to the music and voices of fairies: "In my case I began with an electrical apparatus of my own design and a nearly worn-out torch battery, and one day I heard fairy music, the sound of harps and bells. 'Something' knew I was incredulous and yet delighted. It

answered to my voice.”

Craufurd then proceeded to ask questions, and entered into a dialogue with these fairies (for so he believed them to be), in much the same way as Spiritualists would typically do when conversing with spirits of the departed:

One of my early questions was: “Are there, then, such creatures as fairies?”

The reply came: “They are all around you.”

“Then why cannot we see them?”

“Your minds are not tuned!”

“How do you mean ‘tuned’?”

“Your ether machine is tuned and you are not.”

“Ether machine”? Do you mean that box over there?” I pointed to the wireless.

“Of course,” came the prompt reply.

So that was that! We had to tune in to what was about us or remain ignorant.²

TWO LADIES AND JOCK

Some 14 years later, Craufurd was experimenting with another psychical device, a ‘condenser’ – “the result of trial and error over a long period”. He describes a séance at which he believed the spirit of celebrated Boston medium Mina Crandon (aka ‘Margery’; see ‘Dr Dingwall’s Casebook, Part Two’ by Christopher Josiffe, FT300:50-54) had manifested. The sitters consisted of two ladies, “D.D., a positive medium, N.C., a negative medium,” and Craufurd himself.

“The two ladies receive the communications by placing their hands on a Planchette, sitting facing each other, while I place my finger-tips on the box I have constructed, which I call a condenser, at a third side of the same table.” Craufurd’s deceased nephew Jock (a sailor, lost in action when the aircraft carrier *HMS Courageous* was sunk by a U-boat at the very start of WWII) also came through. Jock was apparently working on a similar condenser on the Other Side, “which is to work in unison with mine, and it has been proved that with the aid of these instruments I (who have, to my knowledge, no psychic gifts) am able to contribute psychic force to the circle”.

13 December 1941 was a stormy evening. The séance met as usual. Craufurd noticed “a strong reaction in the condenser by tingling in my finger-tips. D.D. murmured, “They seem to be far away.’ I, too, had a sensation of distance hard to describe. Suddenly Planchette began.

“America calling, calling. America holds the key.”... Then a large, strong writing began, performed with immense vigour. ‘WALTER’.”

Walter had been Margery’s own spirit control when she was alive, supposedly the spirit of her dead brother Walter Stinson. “Then the soft round hand began again. ‘Margery. Yes, friends, now we can be an American voice for you’.”³

Although some details of Craufurd’s condenser are given, its exact mechanism is not entirely clear; the construction and operation of his earlier ether box were



ABOVE: Thomas Edison was sceptical of the claims of Spiritualism, yet announced that he was “building an apparatus to see if it is possible for personalities which have left this Earth to communicate with us”.

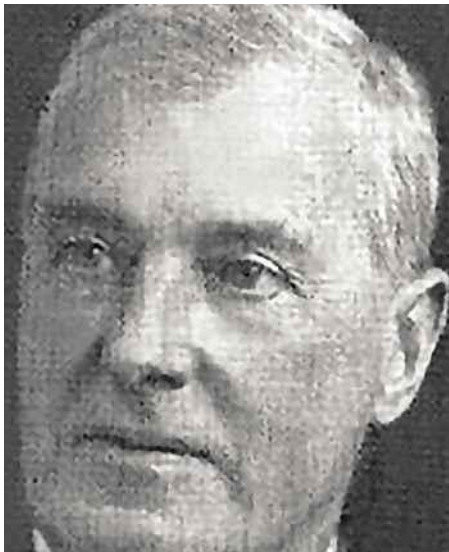
equally opaque. For another sitting, on 28 February 1942, Craufurd had “prepared a new condenser, with various changes in design. It was not quite finished, but I was anxious to test it and to see if my collaborators on the Other Side approved of it”.

‘Walter’ made an appearance, being very interested in the condenser. He cautioned that the radio waves utilised by both Allied and Axis forces were interfering with effective communication between his world and ours: “The rays of the devices you are using for war purposes are making a network all about your surrounding etheric envelope. Guess it makes things a jam, and psychic communication is being hindered everywhere.”

He therefore proceeded to offer advice on how the device might be improved, telling Craufurd that it needed handles. “You have made a good beginning with your red light and box-condenser, but you have not gone far enough for real results.” The condenser is described as producing “gusts of force” which need to be “regulated and reduced to manageable proportions.”

“Right, Walter,” answered Craufurd, “I can easily fit handles, of course, but I want to know how to connect them. I fancy one might be to the inner coating, and the other to the outer...”

‘Walter’ then began to draw a rough diagram or plan. “Condense your scanty force,” he counselled, “and supply your medium.”



ABOVE LEFT: Captain Quentin Craufurd, a decorated Naval officer and wireless technology pioneer who was also a founder of the Fairy Investigation Society and an experimenter with spirit communication. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Boston medium Mina Crandon (aka 'Margery') producing "a mass of finger-like teleplasm".

"As he wrote the last words," reported Craufurd, "I had the impression of the condenser becoming radio-active on the inside and filling the atmosphere within with a sort of incense, as if it contained an incense-burner. I had not looked at it in that way before, but the idea of creating a smoke atmosphere of, possibly, radio-active particles issuing from the inside of the condenser, is very reasonable, and might render visible, by the behaviour of the smoke from incense, my theory of polarisation and an ectoplasmic cloud issuing from the orifice. Walter's 'condense your scanty force' seemed appropriate to this thought."

The reference to incense suggests a religious ceremony. Elsewhere, there is an indication that josticks were being used during the sittings: "The smoke from the stick you are burning is a good conductor of force". Craufurd conceived of his box condenser as an "Ark", evidently thinking of the Ark of the Covenant described in the Book of Exodus. Indeed, later, he explicitly described it as such. 'Walter' instructs him to fit handles to the outside of the "ark condenser," Craufurd speculating that Moses may have used the Biblical Ark for communicating with spirits: "A reference to the Bible record had shown that such handles were permanently attached to the Ark for carrying it... I came to the conclusion that the golden staves fitted to the Ark might have been the means of providing a chain or circle of hands for those assisting Moses by taking part in a séance."

He reflected on the Boston séances during Margery's lifetime; the sitters had placed their hands on the table following the traditional 'table-turning' method, but had later come to find joining hands to be more effective. "The reason," Craufurd writes, "would appear to be that direct contact by means of joining hands was better than contact only over the surface of the table. An improvement to the wooden table-top was, as experiments have shown, to coat

The psychic telephone was not that different from the spirit trumpet

the surface with metal. Now if the circle of priests (mediums) grasped the staves of the Ark, they could form a circle round it in metallic contact, so that electricity was freely conducted, and at the same time the main surface of the Ark itself would not be interfered with. Thus as large a part as possible of the Ark's surface would be free to radiate. This appeared to me to be the use of the handles proposed by Walter; they prevented a large part of the model Ark from being screened by hands covering the surface."⁴

This combination of spirit communication with (pseudo?)-scientific language – in this case, the religious practices of the ancient Israelites being linked with 20th-century technological modernity – is typical not only of Craufurd but of others in this field.

One of Craufurd's stated aims was to prove "that those of us with very weak psychic powers may hope to enhance them by the use of suitable instruments".⁵ He was not embarrassed to admit that he himself was lacking in natural psychical ability, and so was more than willing to boost his own chances of making contact with discarnate spirits and non-human entities by means of technology.

Quentin Craufurd was a fascinating character who warrants an article all of his own. But for now, I should like to argue that, far from being a lone maverick or eccentric, he was actually in step with many of his scientific peers.

MELTON'S PSYCHIC TELEPHONE

Detailed plans for the construction of FR Melton's psychic telephone were published in his pamphlet *A Psychic Telephone: its Construction, the Laws and Conditions that Govern its Use* (Nottingham: E Brown & Co., 1921). The device consisted of a box with an inflatable rubber bag inside it; this was connected to a pair of earphones. The theory behind it was that the medium would inflate the bag with their breath. When sealed, spirits' voices would be heard through the earphones without a need for the medium to be present, her or his breath being sufficient for spirit manifestation. In fact, the psychic telephone – with its earphones or 'receivers' to amplify spirit voices – was not all that different from the classic spirit trumpet.

However, a replica of the 'psychic telephone' was built by veteran psychical researcher Hereward Carrington, who failed to reproduce the results claimed for it by Melton. It was also subjected to a rigorous series of tests by Harry Price, who also concluded that it did not work.⁶

Having said that, researchers Raymond Bayless and D Scott Rogo, in their *Phone Calls from The Dead* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979), took a more balanced view regarding Melton's supposed spirit messages, noting that the content of several of these seemed to match those of more recent communications, giving the 'psychic telephone' some degree of credibility.

This problem of non-replicable results is a perennial one throughout the history of spirit-contact devices. Aside from the sceptics' view that fraud is at work, it leads one to wonder whether any meaningful data were arrived at by means of the inventor's or user's own psychic ability to contact the spirit world; or at least to generate *what appear to be* messages from the spirits.

ZWAAN'S SUPER-RAYS

Ever since Melton's invention, various devices have been proposed as technological

aids to psychical research. In 1948, a Dutchman, Mr N Zwaan (or Zwann) caused a flurry of excitement at the International Spiritualist Conference in London when he demonstrated his apparatus, which, he claimed, produced 'Super-rays'. These were evidently a variant of the now-discredited 'N-ray' theory proposed by physicist Prosper-René Blondlot in 1903. 'N-rays' were supposedly a form of emanation or radiation emitted by most substances, which served to increase their luminosity. The theory was seized upon by several psychical researchers as providing a scientific basis for certain allegedly paranormal phenomena.

Zwaan's Super-rays, it was claimed, were able to induce trance states and also to cure disease. In effect, his device did away with the need for the presence of a physical medium. In collaboration with one Mr Ernest Thompson, Zwaan founded the Spirit Electronic Communication Society, based in Manchester, to promote interest in and investigation of his device. Much debate and controversy followed, culminating in the pages of the British Spiritualist newspaper *The Two Worlds* in 1952, when JB McIndoe, a fellow Spiritualist, but one with professional knowledge of electronics, queried the Zwaan apparatus's scientific credentials, arguing that since no electrical current passed through it, any effects must be the result of suggestion or the placebo effect.

DR KILNER'S AURA

Discoveries in theoretical physics in the 19th and 20th centuries had brought an understanding that we are constantly surrounded and penetrated by invisible forces: electromagnetic radiation in the form of light waves, radio waves, X-rays. Modern medical breakthroughs in epidemiology and genetics had (in the Western world at least) also consigned to history the notion that sickness and disease were the result of witchcraft.

Nevertheless, belief in the paranormal was regarded as not entirely incompatible with modern physics, and scientific terminology was quite often employed in esoteric literature. For example, Dr Walter J Kilner, a medical electrotherapist and author of *The Human Atmosphere, or, The Aura Made Visible by Chemical Screens* (New York: Rebman, 1911), sought to prove that the human body was surrounded by an aura composed of electromagnetic waves, and that these waves were detectable and measurable with the correct equipment. This aura could then be used for medical diagnosis. Whilst not a Spiritualist himself, Kilner's theories were enthusiastically taken up by those who were. This can be seen in *Spiritualistic Experiences of a Lawyer* (London: Psychic Book Club, 1937), whose anonymous author claims that "the existence of this 'aura' has caused many scientific men to take up research work on the subject. The exhalation of electrical vibrations from the body raises a presumption that the human body is an electrical battery".

Further, the unknown lawyer cites an

article published in the *Times* the previous year (14 April 1936) which described the research of Professor Edwin I Cohn of Harvard Medical School, who had apparently confirmed 17th-century theories that the human body was both galvanic and electric. Accordingly, and as also suggested by Craufurd, the Spiritualist medium has the ability to temporarily withdraw their personality and spirit from their body, and to allow a spirit to enter it and to take control. When this withdrawal is complete, the medium falls into a trance. In a not-entirely-clear analogy, Craufurd offers the wireless receiver as an example of such a withdrawal: "it can be put out of tune with certain vibrations, and it can be tuned in again."

THE REFLECTOGRAPH

Another type of spirit communication gadget was the 'reflectograph', described in the *Spiritualistic Experiences of a Lawyer* as a form of typewriter. Its method of operation was as follows: a 'spirit hand' would make contact with the device's keys, and the ensuing letters were spelled out on a recording board, appearing in coloured light. Craufurd claimed to have shaken hands with a spirit in the course of one such 'reflectograph' session. He had also admired an antique ring worn on one of its fingers, and had been allowed to kiss the spirit hand

itself. He described it as being much the same as a human hand in terms of its texture, pliability and temperature, but that when he and the supposed spirit said their goodbyes, the hand melted in his, much as snow would do.

RAPPERS' DELIGHT

It is, of course, not a new suggestion that during the 19th and early 20th centuries the discourses of modern science and technology had some degree of affinity with those of psychical research and Spiritualism. The raps and knocks that manifested in the Fox household at Hydesville, NY, in 1848 – allegedly the work of spirits attempting to communicate with the living – are widely seen as the beginnings of the Spiritualist movement (despite Maggie and Kate, the two younger sisters, eventually admitting they had faked the phenomena, some 40 years later). A form of code had been developed by visitors to the Fox house, and by Maggie and Kate, whereby combinations of raps could indicate 'yes' or 'no,' or could spell individual letters of the alphabet.

The previous decade had seen the invention of the electrical telegraph. Morse code was developed as a language, a means with which to interpret the telegraph's dot-dash clicks and electrical pulses. The ability of the wireless telegraph to communicate

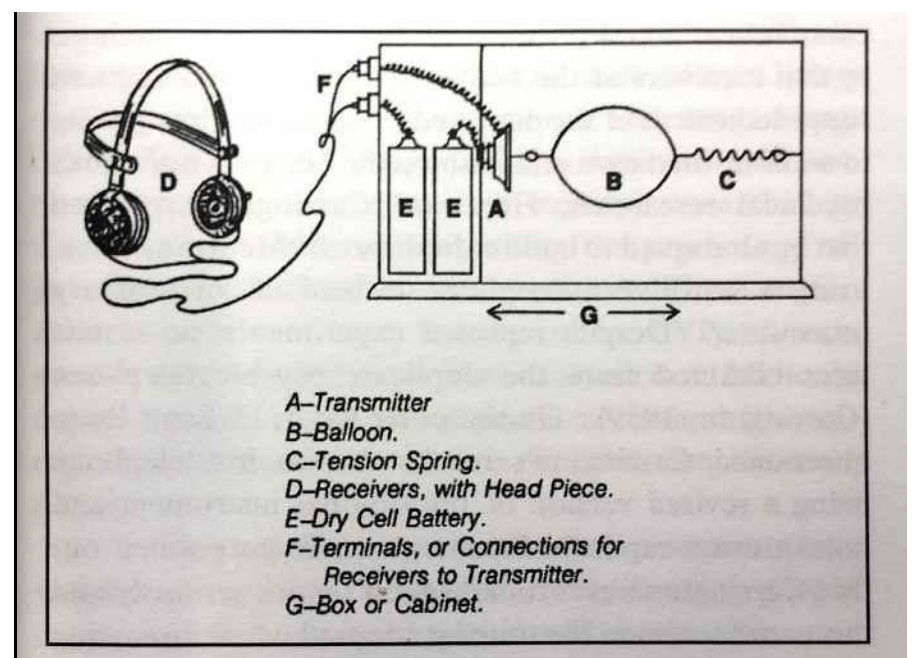
Spirits CAN Communicate. The Psychomotor proves it.

This sensitive instrument enables anyone to establish communication between the two worlds. We guarantee every Psychomotor :—

To move without physical contact. To spell out messages from the world of Spirit. To answer mental questions. To respond to mind forces.

Write now for descriptive circular, or send 3/6 for Test Model.
Super Sensitive Model De-Luxe £1 0 0. Post free U-K. and colonies.

Oaspy, Mystic, 56, Smithford Street, Coventry.



TOP: An advertisement for the 'Psychomotor' from the Spiritualist journal *Light*, 3 November 1933.

ABOVE: No examples of Melton's psychic telephone exist, but we do have a plan from his 1921 booklet.

instantaneously from a distance, without physical co-proximity of sender and receiver, was regarded as a mysterious and near-magical technology. Early experiments in 'tele' (distant) communication were swathed in an aura of the religious or supernatural. "WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT"

(Numbers 23:23) was the message relayed by Morse in 1844, one of the very earliest transmissions, which openly referenced the sense of numinous awe with which the new technology was regarded.

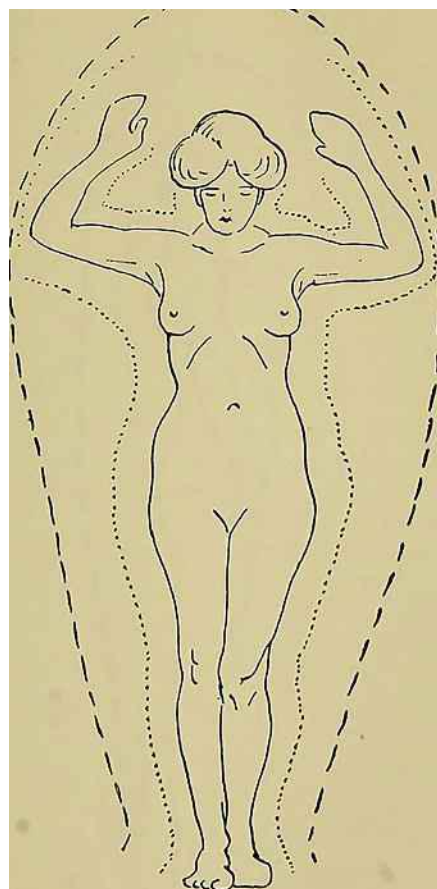
In consequence, it may not be such a surprise to learn that, around the start of World War I, a solicitor and amateur wireless telegraph operator called David Wilson had developed a modified telegraph device for the explicit purpose of receiving and recording anomalous messages. His findings were published in an article in the 13 March 1915 issue of *Light: A Journal of Spiritualism, Psychical, Occult and Mystical Research*, titled 'The Ethereal Transmission of Thought: A New Field of Experimentation'.

Wilson explains that, between July and September of the previous year, he had "collected... from various automatic writers the 'Message of Amen Rá-Mes,' in which certain passages occurred which seemed to me to contain what might prove to be very valuable hints... it seemed clear to me that the association of telepathy with ethereal vibration was unmistakably inferred. In other words, that the ether is the medium for the transmission of thought".

Accordingly, Wilson "could hardly think of these matters without calling to mind the ether waves used in wireless telegraphy". He explained to his readers that just as Hertzian and other light waves utilised the same medium, the ether through which they travelled, so too might other waves, those that provided the "motion-mechanism" of thought transference. (A wave theory of light implied that, like sound waves, light waves must, of necessity, have a medium of transmission – regarded as being the ether). Wilson began to experiment with his wireless telegraphy equipment. He noticed that the galvanometer needle appeared to be registering Morse signals. A second observer was present to bear witness to the fact of the needle's independent action.

Curiously, it seemed to work even when disconnected from its receiving aerial wire. A preliminary message, received on 10 January 1915, read: "Great difficulty, await message, five days, six evening." On the appointed date, 15 January at 6pm, the following message was transmitted. Wilson read it as 'RYELIMINA-E-BRA-IONS---ARTK' whilst his witness read 'TRZELIOININA MEVIVRATIMNS.'

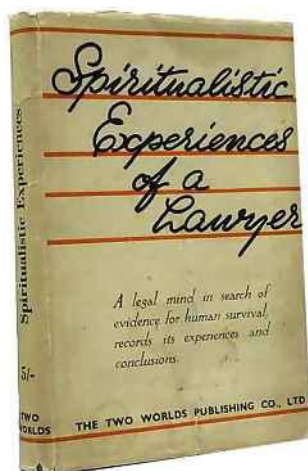
According to Wilson, "wherever the message



came from, it could only mean one thing, namely: "Try eliminate vibrations. ARTK." Who 'ARTK' might be wasn't clear; perhaps the wise Amen Rá-Mes, although Wilson later writes of "those personalities who have elected to designate themselves Tehuti and Kha-em-Uast."⁷

At any rate, it seemed that until the equipment was adjusted, it would prove unreliable. Wilson's modified device, the New Wave Detector, was more efficacious, capable of receiving coherent, if gnomic, messages like: "All personalities are differentiated in consciousness, but are united in subconsciousness into one absolute, complete and indivisible unity", or "Now from him... coming into Amenti is not sought a count of worldly triumphs and successes, but rather of those lessons which life has brought him, for verily this is the first great law: Life is for introspection."

Whilst the second observer seemed to rule out fraud, and no conventional source for the Morse signals was found, it is surprising that merely by fine-tuning the New Wave Detector, the clarity of the communications had improved from 'RYELIMINA-E-BRA-IONS---ARTK' to sentences and paragraphs written in perfect English.



"HERE THE BIRDS BURN"

Perhaps these early New Age homilies are rather too coherent to be credible, more closely resembling the speech patterns and register of an early 20th-century British Spiritualist gent than an ancient Egyptian of Giza.

The brief, disjointed, elliptic *non-sequiturs* recorded by the most famous EVP researcher, Latvian psychologist Konstanin Raudive, are very different in both content and tone. Raudive used tape recorders, microphones, diodes and radio receivers to receive hundreds of unsettling, opaque messages which were delivered in a variety of languages – English, German, Swedish, Latvian, Spanish.

Raudive's 'spirits' made curious, enigmatic and brief declarations: "The girl grew up outside," "For mother, the Moon is important," and "Where are the bangles?" More disturbingly, the voices seemed to speak of their current state: "I have been condemned"; "Ah! there are penalties here"; "Here the birds burn"; and simply, "We suffer".⁸

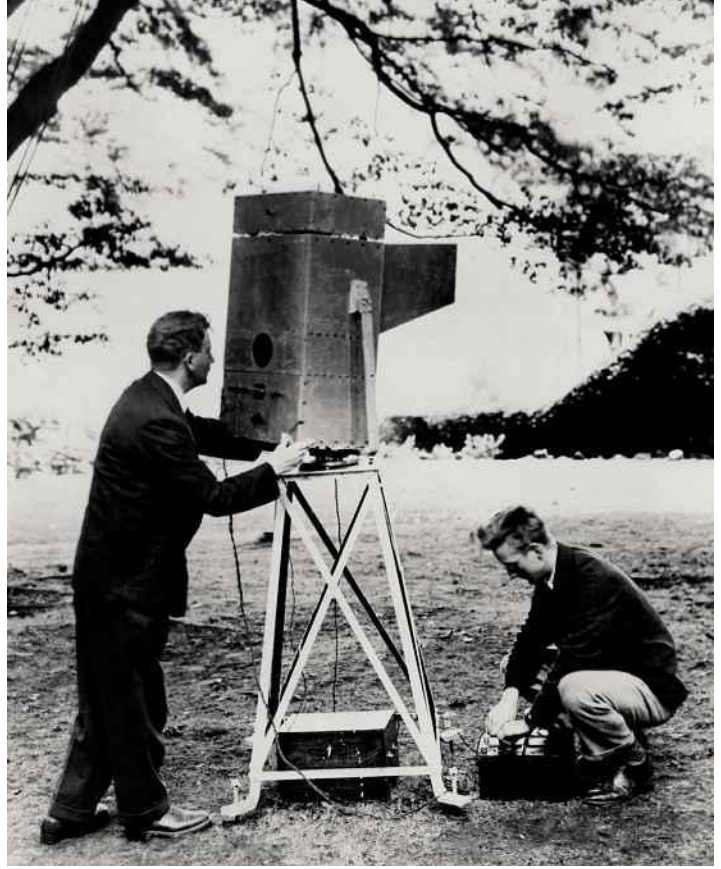
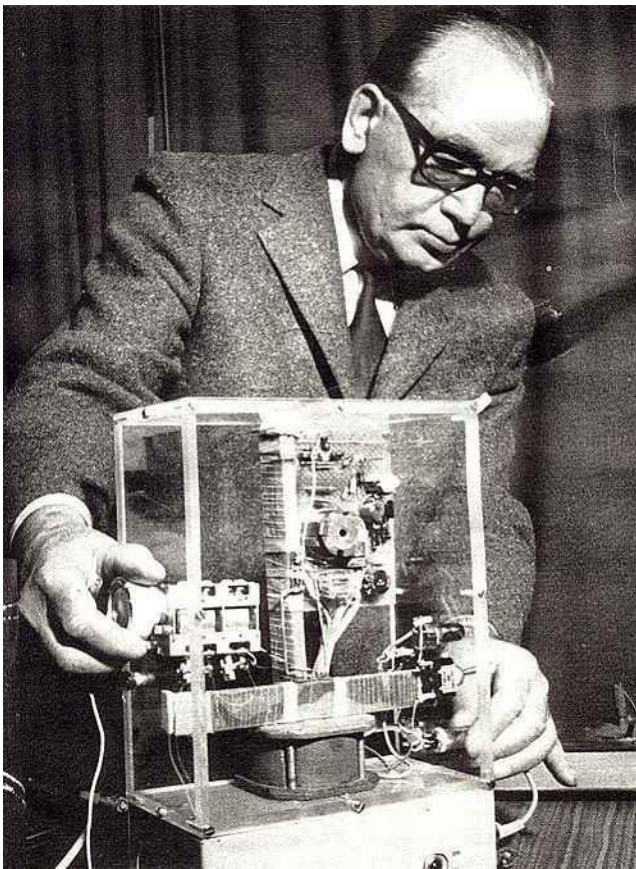
At times, the voices would comment and advise on technical matters, telling Raudive to tune in or to stay on a certain frequency, and explaining that they preferred the radio to the microphone method.

EVP is most often associated with Raudive, whose *Breakthrough* had first been published in 1968, and first translated into English in 1971; but earlier research had taken place in the 1950s, when Swedish filmmaker Friedrich Jürgenson (with whom Raudive had collaborated) claimed that the voices appearing on bird song recordings he'd made were those of his deceased parents and wife. Also in the 1950s, researchers Raymond Bayless and Attila von Szalay built a device consisting of an insulated cabinet connected to a speaker. This, they claimed, permitted the voices of disembodied spirits to manifest.

A similar device to this had been built a decade before, when J Gilbert Wright, a researcher at General Electric, collaborated with Harry Gardner in the construction of an insulated box, 24in by 7in (61x18cm) with a small microphone connected to a speaker. They had been assisted, they claimed, by the spirit of Thomas Alva Edison, who had, during his lifetime, hinted that he was himself working on a device that would allow communication between this world and the next.

LOGIE BAIRD: BLACK MAGIC MAN

John Logie Baird, one of the pioneers of television, was another scientist who claimed to have communicated with the spirit of Edison. Claims of assistance by fellow researchers from beyond the Veil were not uncommon (as we have seen, Craufurd believed that his own work in developing the box condenser was being assisted from the Other Side by his dead cousin Jock). After his death, Edison was said to have made contact



HULTON/DEUTSCH / HULTON/DEUTSCH COLLECTION / CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: EVP researcher Konstantin Raudive. **ABOVE RIGHT:** John Logie Baird demonstrates his noctovisor. **FACING PAGE:** An illustration from Kilner's *The Human Atmosphere, or, The Aura Made Visible by the Aid of Chemical Screens*, an influence on the anonymous author of *Spiritualistic Experiences of a Lawyer*.

at séances on several occasions; his supposed spirit claiming to be continuing the work he had begun whilst on Earth.

Baird was an habitu  of Spiritualist meetings, of which he wrote: "I have witnessed some very startling phenomena under circumstances which make trickery out of the question – and also unfortunately publication. I am convinced that discoveries of far-reaching importance remain waiting along these shadowy and discredited paths."

Here he describes a visit to a s ance in west Wimbledon:

We waited and waited, the darkness and silence had a most eerie effect; then the old lady next to me squeezed my hand and whispered in an awestruck whisper, "Look, it's coming." Sure enough, in front of the booth, faint and almost invisible, a wavering purple-coloured cloud was forming. It grew denser, and then the silence was broken by the irregular tapping of a Morse key; the spirit was signalling... The message was directed to me and it came from no less a personage than Thomas Alva Edison. Edison had, it appeared, been experimenting with Noctovision in his home in the astral plane, and he was convinced that it would in time prove of great use in assisting communication between the living and those who had passed over...⁹

Noctovision, one of Baird's inventions, enabled an image to be transmitted from one

"Edison had been experimenting from his home in the astral plane"

room to another, even when the first room was in complete darkness. Oddly enough, the first witnesses of this 'Noctovising' (as he called it) were Sir William Crookes, in 1926, and Sir Oliver Lodge the following year, both physicists being well-known advocates of Spiritualism.

There have been suggestions that Baird thought of his Noctovision as the first step in the development of teleportation. It is certainly the case that the British military took a great interest in Baird's work during the 1920s and 1930s, especially in its application to aircraft and ship detection, guidance and navigation, and coded signals transmission. It is still not entirely clear what other technology he might have been working on. When a journalist put enquiries to the Ministry of Defence in 1984, he was met with the response: "No comment. Much of his work is still classified."

Incidentally, when living in Trinidad just after the Great War, Baird's mysterious experiments in a wooden house belonging to a local plantation owner had earned him the nicknames 'Obeah' and 'Black Magic Man'. These were given him by suspicious locals on account of the strange flashing lights they had seen coming from the house at night.¹⁰

EDISON'S 'SPIRIT PHONE'

Edison himself was sceptical about Spiritualism's claims for the existence of the spirit world. In 1910, he was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying: "All there has been, all there ever will be, can or will, soon or late, be explained along material lines."¹¹

Ten years later, he told a *Scientific American* journalist: "I cannot conceive such a thing as a spirit. I cannot be party to the belief that spirits exist and can be seen under certain circumstances and can be made to tilt tables and rap and do other things of a similar unimportant nature. The whole thing is so absurd."¹²

Nevertheless, in the same month, Edison made a startling announcement: "I have been at work for some time, building an apparatus to see if it is possible for personalities which have left this Earth to communicate with us..."

He added that this apparatus, if he succeeded in its development, would not function by "any occult, mystifying,

EDISON'S Own SECRET

Edison, though materialist-minded, was yet willing to accept spiritual beliefs if they could be proven by scientific tests. Here is described one of his amazing secret experiments whereby he sought to lure spirits from beyond the grave and trap them with super-sensitive instruments.

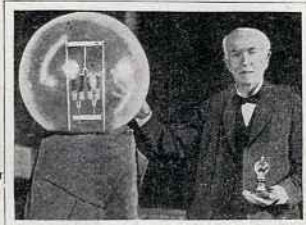
ONE black, howling wintry night in 1920—just such a night when superstitious people would bar their doors and windows against marauding ghosts—Thomas Edison, the famous inventive wizard, gathered a small group of scientists in his laboratory to witness his secret attempts to lure spirits from beyond the grave and trap them with instruments of incredible sensitivity.

Until recently only the few favored speculators ever knew the outcome of this sensational experiment. Only the few Edison intimates, assembled like members of a mystic clan, ever knew what unearthly forms materialized in the scientist's labora-

tory that night to give proof or disproof of existence beyond the grave.

For thirteen years results of Edison's astounding attempt to penetrate that wall that lies beyond mortality have been withheld from the world, but now the amazing story can be told.

In a darkened room in his great labora-



Thomas Edison, inventor of the electric light, holding in his hand one of his first creations, the carbon light. Left—A modern 150,000 c.p. light.



Though of an avowed materialistic cast of mind, Edison nevertheless bestowed great benefits on mankind. At the left he is seen in his laboratory conducting experiments to find a method of making rubber nit of gold-rod. Drawing above illustrates the operation of the photo-electric cell in detecting smoke crossing its "line of vision." Similar set-up was used in detecting presence of spirits.

tory, surrounded with beakers, generators, and other experimental equipment, Edison set up a photo-electric cell. A tiny pencil of light, coming from a powerful lamp, bored through the darkness and struck the active surface of this cell, where it was

Modern Mechanix and

SPIRIT EXPERIMENTS

transformed instantly into a feeble electric current. Any object, no matter how thin, transparent or small, would cause a registration on the cell if it cut through the beam.

When the experiment was ready to begin the spiritualists in the group of witnesses were called upon to summon from eternity the ethereal form of one or two of its inhabitants, and command the spirit to walk across the beam. Then while the spiritualists went through their rites the scientists watched intently the meter of the electric eye, which would flicker the instant any ghostly form interrupted the light-beam.

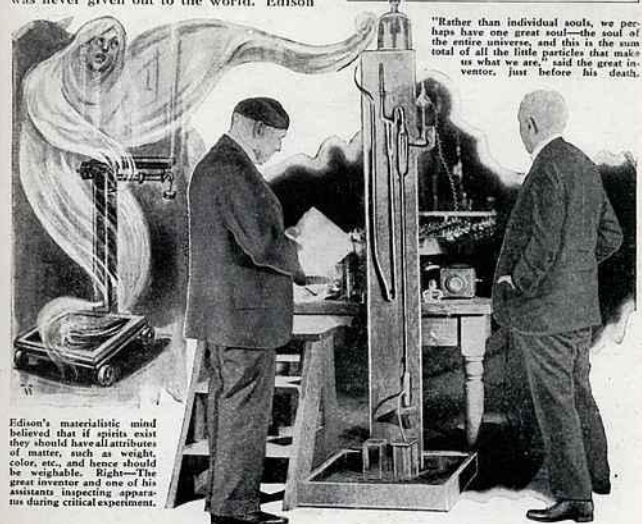
Spirits Remain in Eternity

Tense hours were spent watching the delicate instruments for the slightest indication of a spirit form, but none came. The wind howled around the corners of the laboratory building, the spiritualists exorcised, but the ghosts, if any, remained in their abode in eternity. Narrowed scientific eyes saw the meter's needle remain steady as a rock.

It was because of these negative results that the news of the amazing experiments was never given out to the world. Edison



"Rather than individual souls, we perhaps have one great soul—the soul of the entire universe, and this is the sum-total of all the little particles that make us what we are," said the great inventor, just before his death.



Edison's materialistic mind believed that if spirits exist they should have all attributes of matter, such as weight, color, etc., and hence should be weighable. Right—The great inventor and one of his assistants inspecting apparatus during critical experiment.

Inventions for October

ABOVE: This article in *Modern Mechanix* magazine from October 1933 described hard-headed sceptic Thomas Edison's scientific approach to spirit communication through "amazing secret experiments whereby he sought to lure spirits from beyond the grave and trap them with super-sensitive equipment".

mysterious, or weird means, employed by so-called 'mediums,' but by scientific methods. I am engaged in the construction of one such apparatus now, and I hope to be able to finish it before very many months pass".¹³

But no such apparatus ever appeared during Edison's lifetime, and no prototypes, plans or other documentation concerning its development have been found among his papers; it has been suggested that he was simply playing a joke upon the *American Magazine* journalist. But given that his diaries contain numerous pages of essays on Spiritualism, the afterlife, and related topics, it seems evident that these subjects were, to him, ones of genuine and sincere interest.

Edison was in good company. When Marconi first began experimenting with radio signals at the end of the 19th century, he interpreted those he was receiving as being messages from the dead, and spent much of his later years trying to develop a device that would facilitate communication between our world and that of the spirits. In 1921, he also claimed that certain signals he'd picked up at the low end of the long wave spectrum were messages from alien civilisations.

"Edison had been experimenting from his home in the astral plane"

Similarly, Alexander Graham Bell's assistant Thomas Watson theorised that the strange noises on their telephone circuit (most probably static, or VLF signals emanating from lightning storms or from the Earth's magnetic field) were of extra-terrestrial origin: "I used to spend hours at night in the laboratory listening to the many strange noises in the telephone and speculating as to their cause. One of the most common sounds was a snap, followed by a grating sound that lasted two or three seconds before it faded into silence, and another was like the chirping of a bird. My theory at this time [1876] was that the currents causing these sounds came

from explosions on the Sun or that they were signals from another planet. They were mystic enough to suggest the latter explanation..."¹⁴

Nikola Tesla had also made similar claims of having eavesdropped on interplanetary communication. Interpreting the apparently rhythmic transmissions picked up via his Colorado radio tower in 1899, he stated that he was "the first to hear the greeting of one planet to another".¹⁵

DESIRE AND DREAD

It's evident that many scientists of the 19th and early 20th centuries saw no contradiction between their involvement in psychical research on the one hand and in what we might now regard as orthodox scientific research on the other. Specifically, with the example of communication at a distance between two minds, the concept of telepathy was at the time closely linked to the latest developments in communications technology such as the wireless telegraph or the telephone. Indeed, the term 'telepathy' began to be used only after the popularisation of these inventions.¹⁶

When wireless communication first began

to be used, it was often regarded as having supernatural qualities. Analogous in effect to telepathy, the new technology seemed to provide a scientific, materialist basis for paranormal phenomena. It was but a short step further, then, to believe it only a matter of time before human scientific endeavour and ingenuity would develop a device enabling communication between this world and the next.

The development of wireless telegraphy had a couple of unexpected side-effects.¹⁷ Not only did it stimulate interest and belief in certain psychic phenomena, it also generated new theories through which such phenomena might be understood – disembodied communication at a distance being analogous to, and maybe even providing an explanation for, telepathy, for example. Wireless telephony took matters one stage further, in that the disembodied voices of the radio and telephone were comparable to the disembodied spirit voices manifesting in the séance room. Telephony strengthened arguments for the existence of discarnate human intelligences, for the separation of mind from body, even for the existence of the soul. In seeking explanations, some commentators proposed that thoughts transmitted from one mind to another via telepathy journeyed through the same ether of space in which wireless waves travelled.

Rather than putting an end to speculations about the paranormal, innovations in the telecommunications industry have, ever since the advent of the wireless telegraph,



LEFT: The first known photograph of a moving image produced by John Logie Baird's "televisor", as reported in the *Times*, 28 Jan 1926. The subject is Baird's business partner Oliver Hutchinson.

fostered and encouraged a belief that contact with the world of spirit may one day be a scientific reality: "Each new communications technology seems to evoke as well as the nervous ambivalence of wireless, a simultaneous desire and dread of actually making such extraordinary forms of contact."¹⁸

Do we still believe that the latest developments in communications technology,

made available to all by a mass consumer market, bring us one step closer to spirit communication? Surely not – at least not on a conscious level. Yet information technology and mobile communications are sometimes associated with the world of spirits; this may be observed in accounts of contemporary paranormal cases that feature 21st century technology. Mobile phones behave oddly, sending and receiving text (SMS) messages from the dead,¹⁹ while computer screens display anomalous messages from entities sometimes claiming to be from the past, sometimes from the future.²⁰

There seems no reason to suppose that future telecommunication developments will put an end to speculations about the paranormal. And we may expect the twin sensations of attraction and unease induced by technology to persist, and to continue generating further 'ghosts in the machine.' One dreads to think what a 'possessed' networked 3D printer might produce at night, when no one is looking...

◆ CHRISTOPHER JOSIFFE is a regular contributor to FT and the author of *Gef! The Strange Tale of an Extra-Special Talking Mongoose*, which is now available from Strange Attractor Press: <https://strangeattractor.greedbag.com/buy/gef/>

NOTES

1 Anon., *Spiritualistic Experiences of a Lawyer*, London, Psychic Book Club, 1937, p173.

2 Quentin Craufurd, Foreword to Marjorie Johnson, *Seeing Fairies*, San Antonio, Anomalist Books, 2014, pp6-7.

3 Quentin Craufurd, 'The Return of Margery', *Psychic Science: The Journal of the International Institute for Psychological Research*, Vol 21, no 3 (Oct 1942), pp93-99.

4 Quentin Craufurd, 'The Return of Margery II', *Psychic Science: The Journal of the International Institute for Psychological Research*, Vol 21, no 4 (Jan 1943), pp119-125.

5 Ibid., p125.

6 See FR Melton to Harry Price (1932), HPC/4B/314; Harry Price to FR Melton (1932), HPC/4A/150, both Harry Price archive, Senate House Library, University of London.

7 Tehuti = Thoth, and Kha-em-Uast is likely a variant spelling of Khaemwaset, a popular name of the New Kingdom, the best known Khaemwaset being Ramesses II's son, known as the 'first Egyptologist' for his extensive restoration of ancient monuments.

8 Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2000, p88, and Konstantin Raudive, *Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead*, (Ed. Joyce Morton, trans. Nadia Fowler), Gerrards Cross, Colin Smythe, 1971. See also Jurgen Heinzerling, 'All About EVP', **FT104:26-30**; Judith Chisholm, 'Distant Voices', **FT194:26-30**.

9 John Logie Baird, *Sermons, Soap and Television*, London, Royal Television Society, 1988, pp68-69.

10 Tom McArthur and Peter Waddell, 'The Secret Life of John Logie Baird', *Teletronic: The Original Television History Site* (www.teletronic.co.uk/john_baird_9.htm)

11 *New York Times*, 2 Oct 1910, p29.

12 Austin C Lescarboua, 'Edison's Views on Life and Death', *Scientific American*, Vol 123, no 18 (30 Oct 1920) p446.

13 BC Forbes, 'Edison Working on How to Communicate with the Next World', *American Magazine*, vol 90 (Oct 1920), p10.

14 Thomas Augustus Watson, *Exploring Life: The Autobiography*

of Thomas A Watson, New York, D Appleton & Co., 1926.

15 Nikola Tesla, 'Talking With Planets', *Collier's Weekly*, 9 Feb 1901.

16 See Anthony Enns, 'Psychic Radio: Sound Technologies, Ether Bodies and Spiritual Vibrations,' *The Senses and Society*, 3:2, 2008, pp137-152. The Oxford English Dictionary gives the first attestation of the word 'telepathy' in 1882, deployed by FWH Myers in volume one of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* (1882, 1.ii.147).

17 See Richard Noakes, 'Thoughts and spirits by wireless: imagining and building psychic telegraphs in America and Britain, circa 1900-1930', *History and Technology*, 32:2, pp.137-158.

18 Sconce, op. cit., p83.

19 See Chapter 9 of Callum E Cooper's *Telephone Calls from the Dead: A Revised Look at the Phenomenon Thirty Years On*, Portsmouth, Tricorn Books, 2012.

20 See Ken Webster's extraordinary *The Vertical Plane*, London: Grafton, 1989. The events took place in Webster's old Cheshire cottage between 1984 and 1987. Messages in antiquated English, apparently written by one Tomas Harden from

the time of Henry VIII, begin to appear on Webster's BBC micro-computer. In addition to Tomas's messages were those from a group of entities apparently from the future, collectively named '2109'. See also **FT108:40-44**.

FURTHER READING

Thomas Alva Edison, *The Diary and Sundry Observations of TA Edison*, Ed. Dagobert David Runes, New York, Philosophical Library, 1948.

Geoffrey K Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013.

D Scott Rogo and Raymond Bayless, *Phone Calls from the Dead*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1979.

Avital Ronell, Avital. *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

Buckner Speed, 'Voices of the Universe', *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 138 (April 1919), pp613-15

Natalie Zarrelli, 'Dial-a-Ghost on Thomas Edison's Least Successful Invention: The Spirit Phone', *Atlas Obscura*, 18 Oct 2016 (www.atlasobscura.com/articles/dial-a-ghost-on-thomas-edisons-least-successful-invention-the-spirit-phone).

From Los Alamos to Skinwalker Ranch

Retired US Army colonel **JOHN B ALEXANDER** has seen more than his fair share of anomalies. Here, he recalls his time with the National Institute for Discovery Science and looks back at one of its most baffling cases – the outbreak of high strangeness on a Utah ranch...

The phone rang unexpectedly on a Sunday morning. A group of scientists was standing in the kitchen of our home in Santa Fe. Most of the weekend we had been discussing Zero Point Energy research and how best to proceed. At that moment, the issue was getting people back to Albuquerque to catch their flights. There was no way I could have known that the seemingly innocuous call would lead to some of my most amazing encounters with inexplicable phenomena. The events that followed would be real, but far outside current scientific understanding.

THE BORDERLANDS OF SCIENCE

The caller announced that he was Bob Bigelow. He had heard about me and asked if there were any projects that needed funding. Coincidence? Possibly, but how did it happen that a complete stranger would call asking about funding projects just as some of the leading scientists in the world had completed a discussion of the topic. Actually, I had encountered Bob once before. He had attended the MIT conference on abductions that was hosted by John Mack of Harvard and Dave Pritchard, an extraordinary optical physicist at MIT. I had given the presentation immediately following John Mack's. That was a tough act to follow. The topic of my talk was on the possible relationship between UFO abductions and Near Death Experiences.

Having recently retired from Los Alamos National Laboratory, I was looking for new options and suggested to Bob that we get together. A short time later he flew over to Santa Fe, and as a result of that meeting he did fund a project of a friend of mine, Pharis Williams. "Willie," as he was known, had been working on his Dynamic Theory for a long time and wanted to complete it. Bob also expressed interest in establishing an organisation to explore UFOs and the continuation of consciousness beyond death. I mentioned the Santa Fe Institute and their innovative approach to research. They were focused on chaos theory and attracted some of the best minds in the world.



There were reports of strange creatures being seen at the ranch

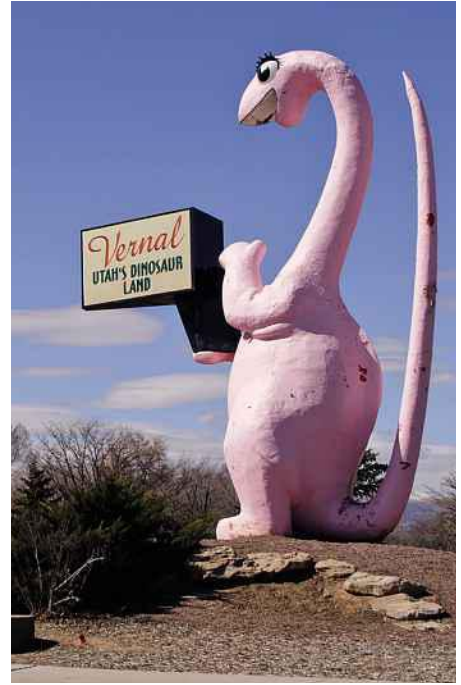
Intrigued, Bob indicated he might like to buy the Institute. While their research was superb, and processes for the cross-fertilisation of ideas captivating, their leading light and co-founder was Murray Gell-Mann, a theoretical physicist and 1969 Nobel Laureate for his work on elementary particles. His book *The Quark and the Jaguar: Adventures in the Simple and the Complex* had been published recently and had garnered a lot of public attention. Gell-Mann, however, was notoriously independent and a professor emeritus at the California Institute of Technology. Given Bob's proclivities for tight

LEFT: Col John B Alexander, seen here during his time in the US Army.

control, that was not going to be a good fit.

A month later I agreed to join in the development of a new organisation that he chartered as the National Institute for Discovery Science (NIDS). It was located in Bob's hometown, Las Vegas, and close to his other offices. NIDS was not his first foray into supporting psi research. For a time, Angela Thompson had done work at the Bigelow Foundation, and Dean Radin was funded at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, for several years. But NIDS was the first free-standing, full-time organisation and would primarily focus on his two specific interests.

Having twice formally retired, I was hired part-time, and before long an experienced biochemist named Colm Kelleher was brought in as the deputy administrator to run the operation day-to-day. One of my early tasks was to help create a world-class Science Advisory Board (SAB). Bob knew a few of the obvious choices, like Jacques Vallee, Hal Puthoff, and lunar astronaut Edgar Mitchell. But because I came from the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), I had other contacts in the scientific community, ones who were not widely known to be interested in these phenomena. What emerged was truly an amazing group, one that could stand up to any scrutiny. It included Gian-Carlo Rota of MIT, who is considered the father of combinatorial mathematics, and O'Dean Judd, a physicist who had been the technical director of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, aka Star Wars) and later became the National Intelligence Officer for Research and Development at the National Intelligence Council. Also on the board was Johndale Solem, a brilliant theoretical physicist from LANL who held the Enrico Fermi chair and had published hundreds of peer-reviewed papers in different fields. It was Johndale who first proposed the use of nuclear weapons for planetary defence against asteroid impact. For that he was vociferously attacked in the *New York*



ABOVE: One-time NIDS founder Robert T Bigelow shows off the Bigelow Expandable Activity Module (BEAM), intended for use at the International Space Station, to NASA Deputy Administrator Lori Garver in 2012. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Vernal, Utah, home not just to Skinwalker Ranch but to large pink dinosaurs.

Times as just wanting to defend the nuclear weapons budget. Also an initial member of the NIDS SAB was another lunar astronaut, albeit a more sceptical one, Senator Harrison “Jack” Schmitt. Joining us later was Al Harrison, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis, who studied how contact with extraterrestrials would impact society. There were several other scientists, most of whom had been openly involved in the scientific study of anomalous phenomena. While many fields of science were represented, the common factor was that they were all open-minded and willing to examine data that didn’t fit preconceived parameters.

The first chairman of the NIDS SAB was Christopher (Kit) Green, MD, PhD, a former CIA senior scientist and then a senior executive with General Motors. Later, Kit would head the fMRI research at Wayne State Medical Center, but he was already known for his interest in psi phenomena. With his multidisciplinary background and questioning mind, he was the perfect choice to head this group.

WOLVES, ORBS AND MUTILATIONS

For the six years I was associated with NIDS, I had an opportunity to engage in some fascinating studies. Of course, one stands out beyond all others: the events at what became known as Skinwalker Ranch (see Ian Simmons, ‘Strangeness at Skinwalker Ranch’, FT169:44-47). Bob and I flew to Vernal, Utah, the day he closed the deal with Terry Sherman to buy the ranch. That was the first night I spent alone on the mesa overlooking the grazing land below. But other than an attack of voracious mosquitoes, there was

nothing remarkable to report. Later, that was not the case – there were several incidents that would challenge any model of modern science. (For more complete information about this investigation, I recommend the book *Hunt for the Skinwalker* by Colm Kelleher and George Knapp.)

The term Skinwalker Ranch was coined by people not associated with the project. Skinwalker comes from the Navajo tradition and refers to an entity that can change form from a man into any animal, such as a wolf, coyote, fox, or even a bird. They are associated with witches and evil, as opposed to the medicine men who engage in blessings and healings. The term skinwalker was appropriate, as there were credible reports of strange creatures being seen at the ranch. It was reported to us that the local Indians were well aware of unusual happenings in the area, events that occurred long before it became a working ranch. By tradition, it was an area to be avoided, especially at night.

Based on these tales, it seemed like the acquisition of the ranch made sense as it offered a nearly unique opportunity to serve as a laboratory where phenomena occurred frequently. It would exceed our wildest expectations, but it must be emphasised that these spectacular events took place over a period of years. It was not as if something unusual happened every night.

The SAB listened to the remarkable, often fantastic stories that Terry Sherman told us. For the record, we found him to be very credible and a solid citizen who was perplexed by the events that happened to him and his family. The history of the ranch seemed to support his claims. When Terry and his family moved in, they found heavy

metal rings embedded in the walls near the front and rear door of the tiny house. The prior owner indicated that he kept vicious dogs chained near the doors to prevent anyone or anything from approaching the house. Later we learned that he had also experienced a number of incidents that caused him to use that primitive but effective security measure.

One of the inexplicable stories that lends credence to the Skinwalker Ranch phenomena happened shortly after the family first moved in. While on a break from working close to the house, Terry noticed a dog approaching from the west. As the animal walked right up him, Terry realised it was a wolf and not a dog, as he’d first thought. The wolf was very large, its head coming to the middle of Terry’s chest. He thought it strange that a wolf had been domesticated and was friendly to humans. After petting the animal, Terry returned to work.

Within a few minutes, he heard a commotion in his cattle pen, which was located nearby. There, he found the wolf had reached under the bottom railing, grabbed a 600lb (272kg) calf by the snout, and was attempting to pull it out. Picking up a heavy wooden post, Terry smacked the wolf in the ribs as hard as he could. That had no effect. From his truck, Terry quickly retrieved his 44-Magnum. At point-blank range, he fired six rounds into the wolf’s chest. That should have killed any natural animal, yet barely fazed this one.

At that juncture, the wolf let go of the calf and began wandering off, but not in any hurry. Next Terry picked up a loaded rifle he used for elk hunting. He fired at the retreating animal and saw chunks of flesh

fly off the animal's body. Eventually the wolf disappeared from sight. Terry then went over to the location where he had seen the flesh fall to the ground. Lying there were remnants of the animal. Most surprising, Terry noted, was that although they had just been blasted from the moving body, what he picked up smelled as if putrefied. In most cases putrefaction does not occur until several days after death. Whatever Terry shot did not behave like any known animal. Whether it was a skinwalker or not is impossible to say. It is safe to say that six rounds from a 44-magnum at close range, even if the path of the bullets missed vital organs, should have brought the intruder down. It didn't.

It was another event that caused Terry to sell the ranch to Bob. On several occasions, Terry and the rest of the family reported seeing balls of light, sometimes called orbs, dancing a few feet above the ground. Like most ranchers, the Shermans kept dogs that were both pets and work animals. One night Terry saw his dogs jumping up and snapping at the orbs. There appeared to be some interactions, almost teasing, between the dogs and the orbs as they moved off the eastern edge of his property.

Unlike all previous nights, the dogs failed to return to the house. The following day Terry went looking for them. Beyond the fence, he came upon what he believed was the remains of the dogs. On the ground, he found three greasy spots. That was all that remained of the pets. That scared him, as he was concerned that his teenage sons might also attempt to engage the orbs. They decided to vacate the ranch before any harm could come to the family.

From a scientific perspective, one of the most interesting events that took place was the mutilation of a calf. The incident was important, as it provided a lot of physical evidence that cannot be explained. It was calving season at the ranch. One bright sunny

midmorning, Terry went out to examine the herd and found a newborn standing next to its mother. As is the custom, the calf was weighed and given a tag to identify it with the mother. Crossing the flat, open field, he found a second newborn and proceeded to tag and weigh that one as well. The procedure took about 45 minutes.

As he drove back to where he had found the first calf, a distance of only about 300 metres (980ft), he was shocked to find the mother going berserk. There, on the ground was the dead body of the calf he had tagged and weighed just a few minutes earlier. The calf showed signs of extensive mutilation. The ear that had been tagged was sliced off with surgical precision and was missing. The calf was both eviscerated and exsanguinated. The bones were intact, save for a femur that had been removed and was lying a short distance from the rest of the body. What remained of the calf now weighed 20lb (9kg) less than before.

The body was immediately covered, and NIDS's own veterinarian, George Onet, flown to the scene within a few hours. Extensive testing was conducted. The cut for the missing ear was indicative of a very sharp instrument. The same was true of the strange marks found on the femur. SAB members were consulted on this case, but they could provide no rational explanation for what had happened. The missing blood was problematic. Did it seep into the ground? That possibility was eliminated, as there was a test conducted in which blood was obtained from a local slaughterhouse and intentionally poured onto the ground at a nearby location. Even weeks later, the spot where the blood was intentionally deposited

was clearly identifiable.

Predation was considered. There are a few mountain lions in the area to the north, but this was not how they kill. Bears, wolves, and other large animals were categorically excluded, as was the possibility of human intervention. This was an open field and within Terry's line of sight at all times.

The possibility that someone would risk such an attack, including extensive surgery, in broad daylight is so remote as to be eliminated.

As unlikely as it seems, the conclusion of the investigation, with concurrence

of the SAB, was that the evisceration and exsanguination had occurred at another location and the body returned to where it was found. That defies all known scientific theories. It points to something that has the capability of interdimensional transport and interaction with our physical world. It may be considered bizarre, but when all of the facts are considered, it becomes the most parsimonious explanation.



INTERDIMENSIONAL INTERACTIONS

There were many hours of observations made by our highly qualified staff members. Most nights, nothing of note happened. But on several occasions events that are totally inexplicable did occur. Another example that points to an interdimensional interaction took place in August 1997. Two of our trained researchers were located at an observation point on the escarpment that runs along the north side of the ranch. That area provides an overlook from which you can see most of the ranch and is near where I spent my first night. At about 2.30am, just as they prepared to call it a night, they spotted a dim light near the vicinity of the dirt road below them. Shortly, its intensity increased, revealing an expanding circle of yellow light. It seemed to hover about 3ft (90cm) above the ground. When it reached an estimated 4ft (120cm) in diameter and appeared tunnel-like, a dark object appeared. Using the third-generation night vision equipment that NIDS had procured, they saw a humanoid-looking creature emerge from the illuminated tunnel. They estimated that the entity was about 6ft (1.8m) in height and probably weighed around 400lb (180kg). It pulled itself out of the tunnel of light and landed on the road, or so they thought. In a short period of time, the creature headed eastward down the road into the darkness. The tunnel of light then receded into itself and disappeared.

Given the size of the entity they had seen, the researchers prudently waited before descending to the road. As with reports of many Bigfoot or Sasquatch sightings, they noticed a distinct pungent odour in the area, but no other trace of the creature. A daylight search was even more perplexing.



ABOVE: One of the few circulating photographs of Skinwalker Ranch. TOP: Photograph of a mutilated calf apparently taken on 10 March 1997.

The dirt road is dusty and anything moving on it leaves prints. Obviously, any animal the size that they reported should have left footprints behind. None were ever found. This interaction too is prototypical of a Skinwalker, albeit one of unknown/extradimensional origin.

While that report relies on eyewitness testimony, other incidents provided substantial physical evidence and were equally disconcerting. For the next several years the ranch was instrumented and time-lapse video recordings of the area were made 24/7. In select areas cameras were mounted, taking a photo every one and one-third seconds, or about 45 frames per minute. The cameras were elevated about 20ft (6m) off the ground on substantial poles. They faced west with most of the ranch property in view. The video cameras were situated in such a way that two of them were observing two other cameras. There were wires running down the poles, under the ground, and into a trailer home that contained the recording equipment. The wires were firmly affixed to the poles with a lot of duct tape. As the wires neared the ground, they were protected by PVC tubing that was secured to the poles by plastic U-clamps. Inside the trailer the recordings were made with the date-time stamp always imprinted. This system functioned smoothly for many months without a single interruption.

One day, the wires were found pulled loose at the top of pole mounted camera #2. Significant damage had been done. All of the duct tape, about half a roll, had been pulled loose and was gone. Anyone who has worked with duct tape knows how hard it is to remove. In addition, a 3ft (90cm) length of wires was also gone. The protective PVC had been pulled loose from the pole and the U-clamps were missing.

It was fairly easy to determine the exact time of the incident. When reviewing the video feed from camera #2, the pictures stopped abruptly. The next step was to examine the video recording of camera #1, which had a view of camera #2. What it didn't show was startling. Though it had recorded continuously, it did not show any of the disturbance at camera #2. Stranger still, at the time that camera #2 stopped sending pictures, the cattle were grazing peacefully around the pole. That is very significant, as whenever anyone approached this herd, the cattle tended to scatter and move away. Dogs and predators would elicit the same reaction. We also eliminated the possibility that a person had approached from behind the pole in a manner that camera #1 would not have spotted them. First, the cattle would have scattered. Second, there was no video of a person climbing the pole, and doing all of the other damage that occurred. It would have been impossible to have caused that amount of damage in the one and a third seconds between frames. When the cut ends of the wires were sent for analysis, it was concluded that the instrument used was probably rusty, but not specifically identified.



ABOVE: Today, the dirt road leading to the ranch is blocked by numerous obstacles; evidence of an ongoing cover-up or an effort to deter UFO buffs from wandering onto private property?

Again, the SAB was presented with the evidence. Given the totality of the circumstances, there is no credible scientific explanation that can accommodate the data. Worth noting is that one of our staff seemed to be more sensitive to these events. An astrophysicist, Eric Davis, reported that at times he had mental contact with an unknown source. During one incident, he sensed something moving through the tree branches near where the old ranch house had been located. The description was reminiscent of the invisible alien in the movie *Predator*. As readers may recall, all you could see was a disturbance in the visual pattern, but no distinct object. Eric, who has published some notable articles in antiproton annihilation propulsion, told us that the entity had told him: "We are watching you." It is not clear why he experienced interactions when others did not. That is part of the conundrum we found at Skinwalker Ranch.

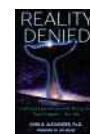
There were several attempts made to capture data on these phenomena. All of them were evaded, as if some intelligence were determining what would be presented. I had previously given a name to these phenomena: I call it Precognitive Sentient Phenomena (PSP). PSP is not limited to Skinwalker Ranch, but it certainly played out there. The wording is precise. *Precognitive* means that the controlling factor knows before the event takes place exactly how the observers will respond. If there will be research done on solid evidence, it can predict what will be done and interject aspects that defy logic. *Sentient* means that whatever is controlling the interaction is intelligent. Also, that intelligence is firmly in charge of both how the event is observed, and what the response will be. *Phenomena* means that the event generally will be inexplicable.

The subject of the Trickster is well established in paranormal research. Whatever is generating these incidents

does so in a manner that does not remain consistent over time. From a scientific perspective, that makes studying any aspect of it almost impossible. In vain we make attempts to isolate characteristics of the phenomena in order to research them effectively. But what happens is that these phenomena constantly morph over time.

Among other attempts at obtaining useful information on the phenomena, biosensors were established, namely dogs. There were many stories about interactions between dogs and the phenomena, and not all had ended as gruesomely as what happened to Terry's pets. Still it is known that dogs can sense things that are well beyond human capability. In order to have control of the situation, pens were constructed in an area in which activity had been reported. Towers were put in above the pens and various toys placed there. On occasion, the items would be moved about, but true to form, nothing was caught on camera....

For an interview with John B Alexander, see Jim Schnabel, 'Paranormal Soldier', FT263:42-44.



Extracted from *Reality Denied: Firsthand Experiences of Things That Can't Happen - But Did*, by John B Alexander, Anomalist Books, 2017.

➡ JOHN B ALEXANDER is a retired senior Army officer with decades of experience with a wide range of strange phenomena. He also worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory, is a founding board member of the International Remote Viewing Association, a past president of the International Association for Near Death Studies, and served on studies with the National Research Council, the Army Science Board, the Council on Foreign Relations, and NATO. His website is johnbalexander.com.

Criminally Bad: The Illustrated Police Budget

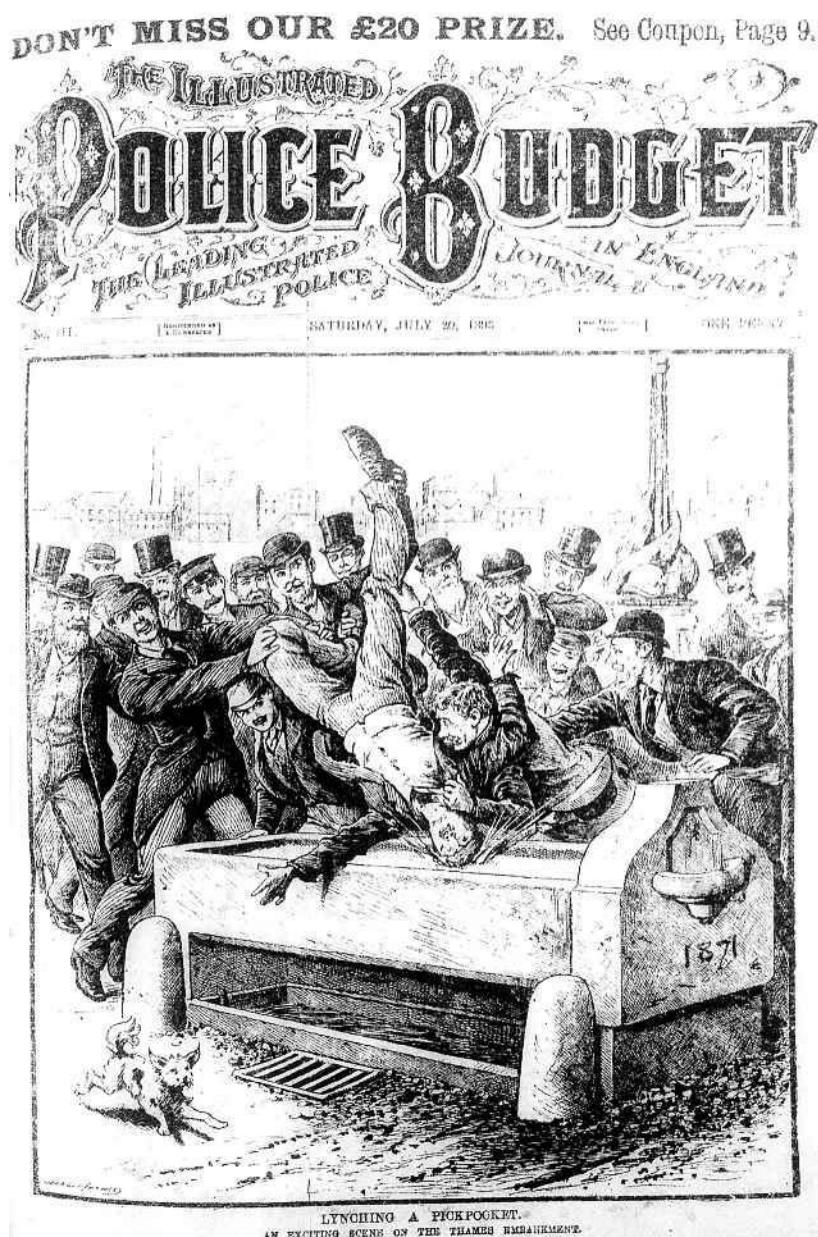
JAN BONDESON looks back at the short history of the *Illustrated Police Budget*, a British weekly paper whose sleazy and salacious approach to news reporting made the notorious *Illustrated Police News* look like a model of good journalistic practice.

Whereas there has been a good deal written about the *Illustrated Police News*, here in *Fortean Times* and elsewhere, the down-market rival of this curious old newspaper remains comparatively little-known. But the *Illustrated Police Budget* competed with its larger and more prosperous rival for decades, and in its early Edwardian heyday it spawned another curious magazine, *Famous Crimes Past & Present*, devoted solely to criminal history.

The *Illustrated Police Budget* was founded in June 1893. From its inauguration, it was edited by the penny-a-line journalist Harold Furniss. He cheekily described it as “The Leading Illustrated Police Journal in Britain”, but initial sales were far from brilliant. In 1894, when a naughty illustration in the *Budget* caught the attention of a police inspector, Harold had to give evidence in court, claiming that the illustration was not indecent. Sir John Bridge, the Bow Street magistrate, sternly pointed at the offending image, showing a ‘lady’ with her dress up around her knees, and a ‘gentleman’ singing ‘I long to linger, linger long with you!’ and asked “Is this not indecent?”

“I think it is a charming scene, and worth illustrating,” Harold replied, as cool as a cucumber. Mr Charles Schurey, the proprietor of the *Illustrated Police Budget*, testified that he was most careful about what appeared in his paper, and that he regularly turned down advertisements for ‘rubber goods’ and other dubious merchandise. Nevertheless, he was fined £2 and two shillings costs, and sternly admonished by the fierce Bow Street magistrate. Sir John Bridge added that the proper object of the press was to improve, instruct, and elevate the people; indecent publications like the *Budget* instead had the tendency to lower, to degrade and to demoralise.

But in spite of this angry tirade from the forthright magistrate, the circulation of the *Illustrated Police Budget* steadily increased. It gradually managed to establish itself as Britain’s second ‘Illustrated Police’ newspaper. Its sleazy journalism and alternately gory and semi-pornographic illustrations appealed to a large, predominantly male and working-class, readership. The lads who read such magazines



LEFT: A pickpocket is lynched in London, a lighthearted image from the *Illustrated Police Budget* of 20 July 1895. FACING PAGE: The baby farmers Mrs Sachs and Annie Walters are hanged, from the *IPB*, 7 Feb 1903.

COLNEY HATCH CATASTROPHE! [52 WOMEN INCARCERATED! [THRILLING DOUBLE-PAGE PICTURE!]

THE ILLUSTRATED
POLICE BUDGET
THE LEADING ILLUSTRATED POLICE JOURNAL IN ENGLAND.
ONE PENNY.

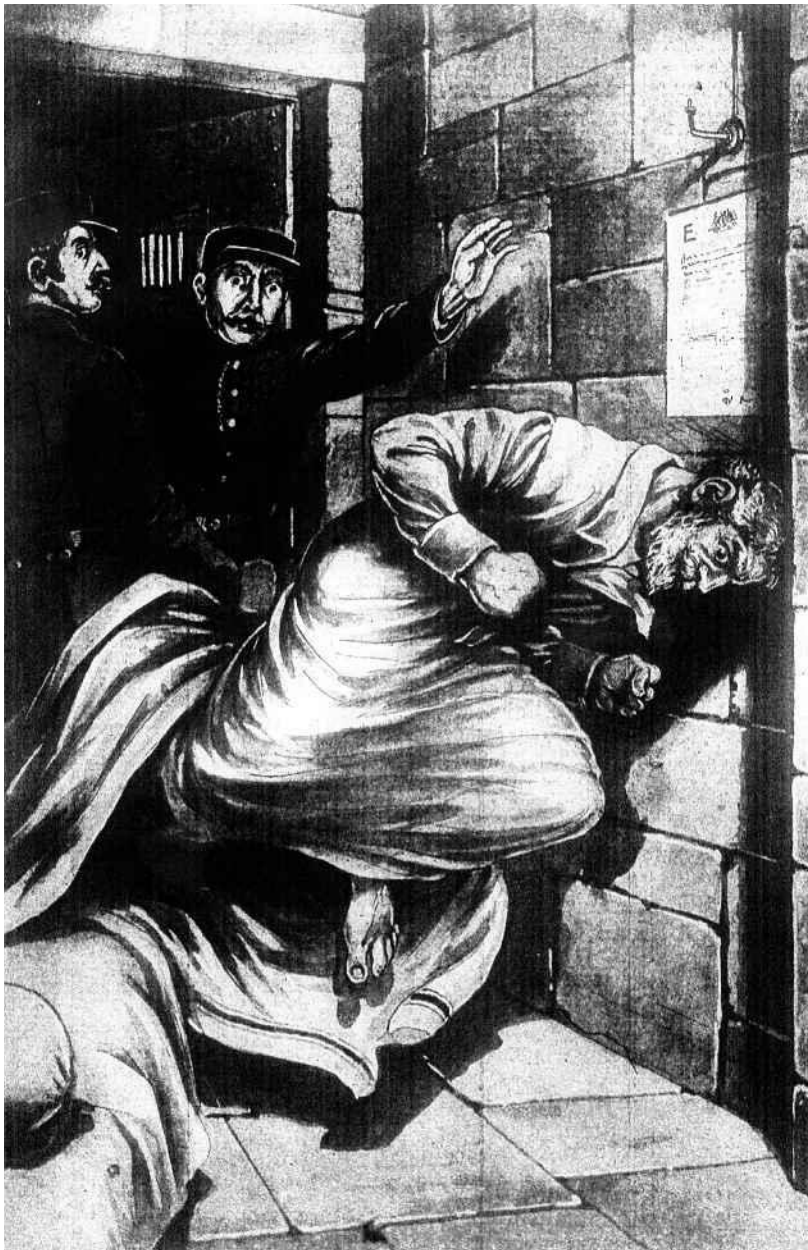
No. 505.

EDITED BY HAROLD FURNISS.

FEBRUARY 7, 1908.



BABY FARMERS HANGED AT HOLLOWAY.
MRS. SACHS AND MRS. WALTERS ON THE GALLOWE LAST TUESDAY MORNING.



LEFT AND BELOW: In March 1913, a man named Henson tried to blow up his house at 14 Flora Road, Ramsgate, Kent, with a powerful bomb. His son, a footballer, tried to run away with the infernal machine, but was himself blown to pieces. Old Henson later tried to commit suicide by dashing his brains out, but without success. The *IPB* took a vigorous interest in this case, and Harold Furniss again ended up in court for his lurid and graphic images of the disaster.

did not care much for aesthetes such as Oscar Wilde, whose work they could not understand, and with blameworthy cowardice the *Budget* published a series of ribald and homophobic cartoons depicting the great artist's downfall. Its vigorous anti-Wilde campaign of 1895 would remain the paper's sole contribution to the contemporary cultural debate.

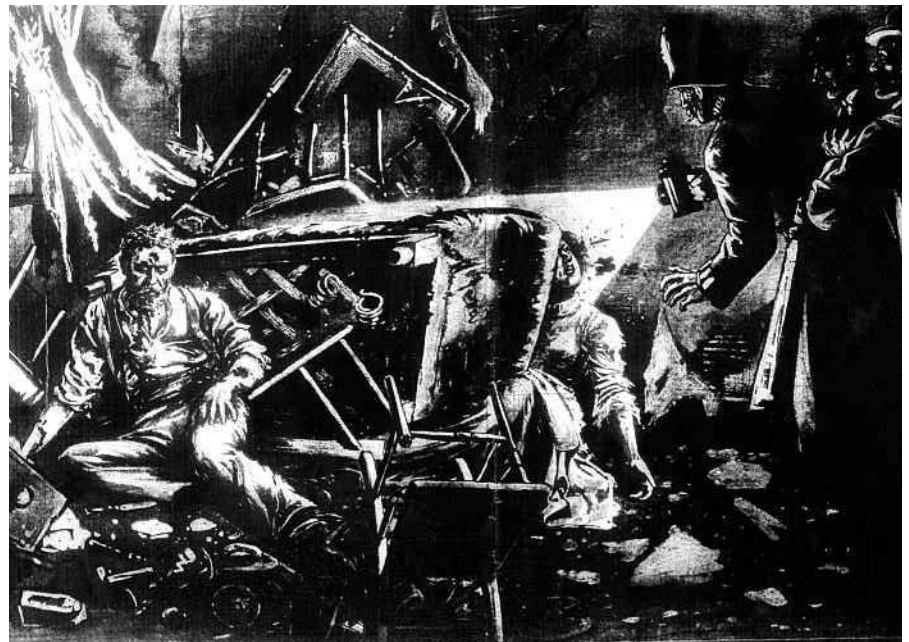
The advertisements in the *Illustrated Police Budget* are quite hilarious in their own right. The presumed intellectual level of its readership attracted quacks from near and far, offering various interesting patent medicines for sale. Not only were there 'Dr Boyd's Obesity Pills' and 'Hare's Invaluable Pills for Gout & Rheumatism', but also cures for blushing, red noses, and female complaints. Ladies who wanted 'A Lovely Figure' and 'A Full Natural Bust' were not referred to the plastic surgeon in those days; there were instead some remarkable medicines supposed to make the female body develop, as well as corsets for those who had no benefit from the quack's nostrums. Finally, short-statured gentlemen should purchase the 'A.D. Invisible Elevators' for their shoes, to increase their height by up to four inches.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

As its very name suggests, the *Budget* did everything on the cheap. Whereas the *Illustrated Police News* prided itself on the quality and accuracy of its illustrations, the images of famous crimes and criminals executed by the *Budget's* draughtsmen were often based on imagination alone. The paper was strong on boxing, and also on stage and music-hall news. Drawings of lantern-jawed bruisers and scantily clad, buxom female performers abounded in its pages. Images of women fighting or getting drunk appear



THE HEROIC DEATH OF YOUNG HENSON.
NEW PICTURE TAKEN AT THE SCENE OF THE TRAGEDY. THE BOMB WAS FOUND IN THE HOUSE AT 14 FLORA ROAD, RAMSGATE, KENT.





ABOVE: Three decidedly naughty images from the *IPB*: a jealous French ballet dancer bites off her rival's nose; a lady shoplifter is about to be birched by the shop manageress; and some girls prance about in gymnastic attire. BELOW LEFT: On 4 April 1896 the *IPB* published this completely imaginary drawing of Charles Wooldrige murdering his wife. BELOW LEFT: The *Illustrated Police News* provided an accurate depiction of the events on 11 April.

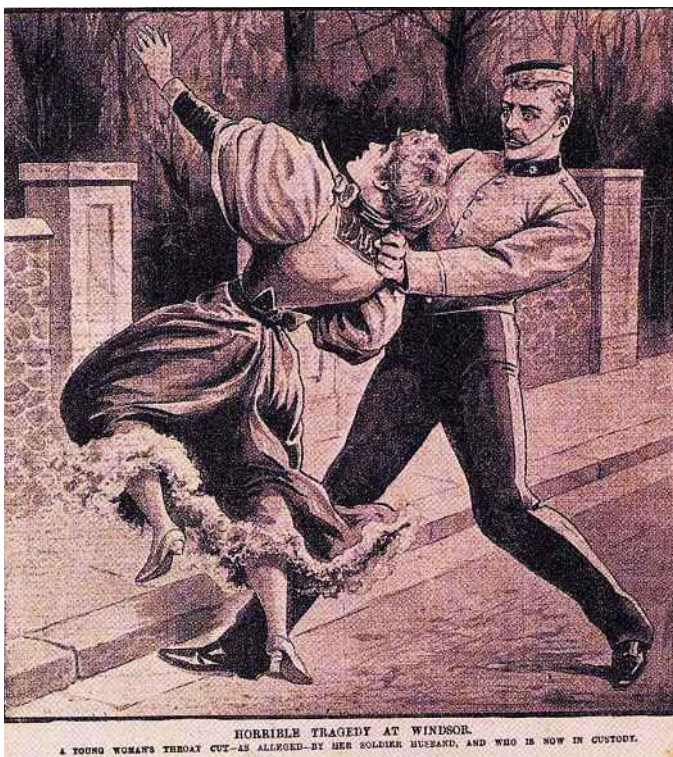
with a frequency indicating a pathological fixation. The *Illustrated Police News* was well known for its lurid drawings of females in various stages of undress, but the *Budget's* bawdy-minded draughtsmen did their best to outdo their rival newspaper. Images of flagellation were another recurrent theme: a well-dressed female shoplifter is birched by the shop manageress, and naughty schoolgirls wearing gymnastic attire receive chastisement from a sturdy schoolmistress. Thus, the *Budget* had all the faults of the *Illustrated Police News*, but none of its merits: its crime reporting was plagiarised and

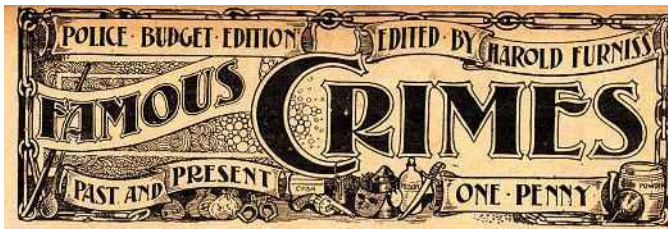
A well-dressed female shoplifter is birched by the manageress

low-quality, its illustrations shoddy and inaccurate, and its lurid sensationalism

unbridled. It was printed on very brittle, low-quality paper, meaning that few intact copies have survived in private hands.

Nevertheless, the *Illustrated Police Budget* continued to flourish: it achieved its greatest circulation in early Edwardian times. In 1901, Harold Furniss added to his publishing empire by founding *Famous Fights Past and Present*, an illustrated weekly for the boxing fraternity. In early 1903, he introduced yet another 16-page weekly magazine, *Famous Crimes Past and Present*, for aficionados of criminal history. He recruited a team of journalists to write for it, a certain Guy





Vol. III.—No. 35. THE MURDER OF MR. HAYES.



Vol. III.—No. 36. THE BURNING OF CATHERINE HAYES.

ABOVE LEFT: *Famous Crimes*, issue 35: Catherine Hayes and her two associates brutally murder Mr Hayes. ABOVE RIGHT: *Famous Crimes*, issue 36: Catherine Hayes is burnt alive at Tyburn in 1726. BELOW: Horrors! It's Jack the Clipper! From the *IPB* 11 April 1903.

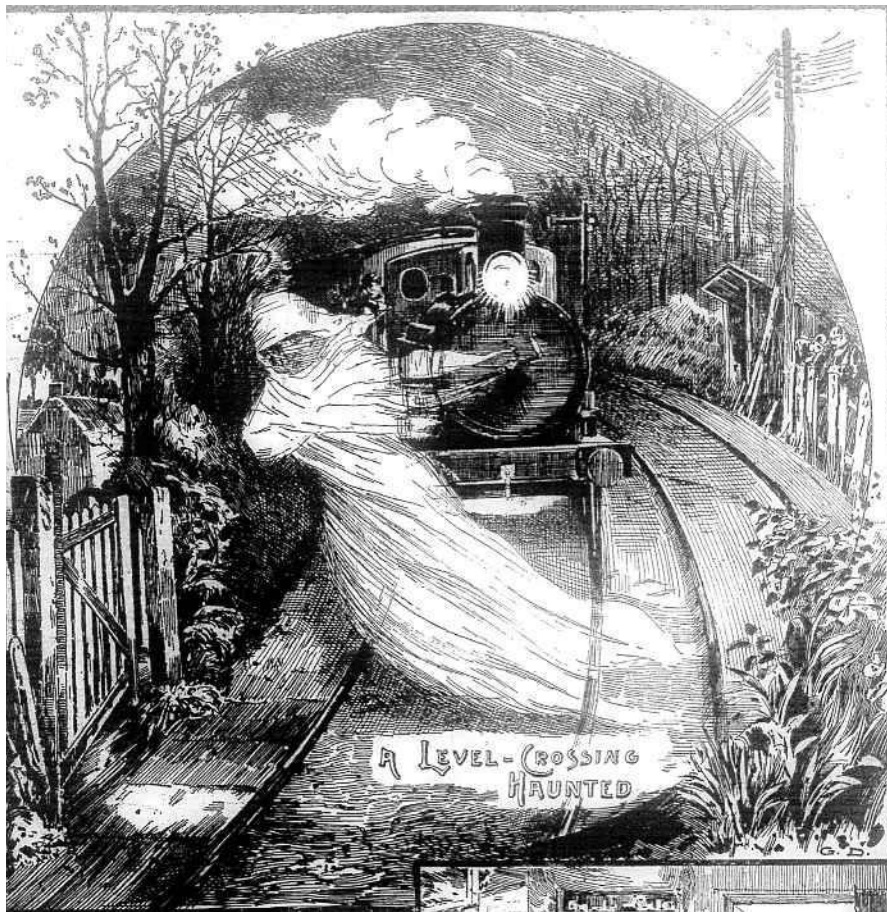
Logan (see FT310:36-39) prominent among them. Logan took a vigorous interest in criminal history, and delighted in visiting houses where famous murders had taken place. He worked for various London newspapers, writing features about crime and criminals, a serialised novel about the South African war, and overblown poetry in the manner of George R Sims. With his near-encyclopedic knowledge of Britain's criminal history, Guy was a very valuable recruit to *Famous Crimes*, particularly since there is nothing to suggest that Harold Furniss himself possessed any specialist knowledge in this area.

Famous Crimes Past and Present is a surprisingly high-quality production, given the resources available to Furniss and his team, and this is largely due to the influence of Logan. He wrote many full-length features on famous crimes, like the unsolved Cannon Street and Hoxton murders, and the railway murder of Elizabeth Camp. Some of these features, like those on the Denham massacre of 1870 and the Gleeson Wilson murders of



1849, have tell-tale resemblances to Guy's later published writings. Although the articles were all unsigned, Guy's elegant, rather prolix style of writing stands out compared to the laboured offerings of his fellow penny-a-liners. Each issue of *Famous Crimes* contained a longer illustrated feature about some famous case like Mrs Maybrick, the Ratcliffe Highway murders or Charles Peace the burglar. Sometime, these lengthy features stretched over three, or even four, issues. Each issue also had a number of illustrated shorter articles and features, nearly all about (mainly British) historical crimes. The frontispiece of each number, sometimes drawn by Harold Furniss himself, often had a graphic, penny-dreadful character: the uxoricidal Catherine Hayes being burnt alive at Tyburn, James Blomfield Rush shooting Mr Jermy at Stanfield Hall, and the brutal-looking Richmond murderess Kate Webster advancing on her terrified victim Mrs Thomas, chopper in hand.

Each 16-page issue of *Famous Crimes* cost just a penny, which was cheap even by the



FAR LEFT: The only good image of a ghost that I was able to find in the *Budget*: a haunted level-crossing in Surrey, from the *IPB* 11 Nov 1893.
LEFT: 'United in the Tomb! A Narrow Escape from Premature Burial!' from the *IPB* 3 February 1894.

standards of the time, but then it was printed on the same kind of low-quality paper as the *Budget* itself. Considering the number of illustrations in each issue, and the cost of printing, it must have been a struggle for Furniss to make any profit at all. *Famous Crimes* struggled on throughout 1903 and 1904, but it lasted for only 125 issues. A note in the *Budget* of 1 July 1905 declared that *Famous Crimes* was 'Now Incorporated with This Paper'. This rump of *Famous Crimes* would continue, with full-page spreads in most issues of the *Budget*, many of them written by Guy Logan, until 23 May 1908, when it disappeared for good, being replaced by Major Arthur Griffiths' 'All About Our Police'. The *Budget* itself would not last much longer: it changed its name to the *Illustrated Sporting Budget and Boxing Record* in April 1910, and ceased to exist altogether in early August 1912, after not less than 1,001 weekly penny issues had been published.

COCK AND BULL

As readers of FT over the last few years will know (see FT274–351), the *Illustrated Police News* is a valuable repository of vintage *fortean*. Is the *Budget* another treasure-trove of Victorian and Edwardian weirdness? The answer must be – unfortunately not! Firstly, the magazine cared more for boxers and music-hall performers than for weird happenings from around the world, and it shared neither the *IPN*'s fondness for ghosts



and ghost stories, nor its commendable diligence in seeking out interesting news from around the globe. Secondly, its bawdy draughtsmen lacked the skill of their *IPN* colleagues, and the poor-quality paper the magazine was printed on made the images yellow and spotted. Thirdly, the *Budget*'s illustrations, often drawn from imagination alone, are often too inaccurate to be of much use. Take the example reproduced

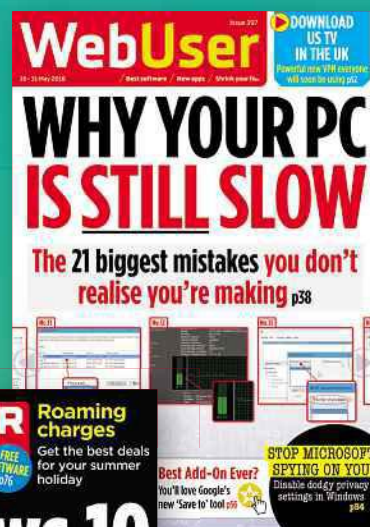
on p45: the uniformed soldier Charles Wooldridge murders his wife in front of No 20 Alma Terrace, Eton, a large house with an impressive-looking garden. This was the crime that inspired the aforementioned Oscar Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Gaol*, since Wilde shared his prison with the young soldier awaiting execution. But in real life, the house in Alma Terrace was a humble terraced dwelling, with a minuscule front garden, and Charles Wooldridge was wearing civilian attire at the time of the murder. The *IPN* got all of these things right, as you can see from the adjoining image.

But the *Illustrated Police Budget* is not entirely devoid of *fortean*. The 1904 volume has a cock-and-bull story of an old man in Colchester vomiting a lizard which had lived and thrived within his intestinal tract for many months. Jack the Clipper, the London hair despoiler, makes an appearance, as does his perverted colleague Jack the Inkman, who made use of his trusty fountain pen to squirt ink over the backsides of ladies' dresses. Tales of premature burials, and last-minute rescues from this dire fate, occur at regular intervals. The best of them is the story of a young Italian Countess who is presumed to have expired from 'catalepsy'. But just before she is to be interred in the family vault, her lover demands to see her corpse one more time. This favour is granted him, but as soon as the coffin lid is unscrewed, the lady leaps out with alacrity. 'United in the Tomb! A Narrow Escape from Premature Burial!' exclaimed the *Budget*'s headline. 'Gorblimey!' its 1894 readers must have exclaimed in return, on reading this improbable (and almost certainly invented) story.

NOTE: The British Library has complete runs of both *Illustrated Police Budget* and *Famous Crimes*. There are healthy runs of these two weekly magazines in several transatlantic repositories: the Hasburgh Library of Notre Dame University has a complete run of the *Illustrated Police Budget*, whereas the New York Public Library and the Yale University Library have complete runs of *Famous Crimes*. The Albert Borowitz collection at Kent State University Library has 130 issues of the *Budget*, as well as two bound volumes and various loose issues of *Famous Crimes*.

◆ **JAN BONDESON** is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, a regular contributor to FT and the author of numerous books, including *Murder Houses of London* (2014) and *Strange Victoriana* (2016). His latest book, *Victorian Murders*, is currently available from Amberley Publishing.

From Apple to Zeiss, and everything in between



For exclusive subscription offers and trials, visit:
magazinedeals.co.uk/tech

Whether you're an IT professional or a first time buyer, Dennis technology has a magazine for you, all of which are written and produced by expert editorial teams. We cover the whole spectrum of technology news, reviews and features.



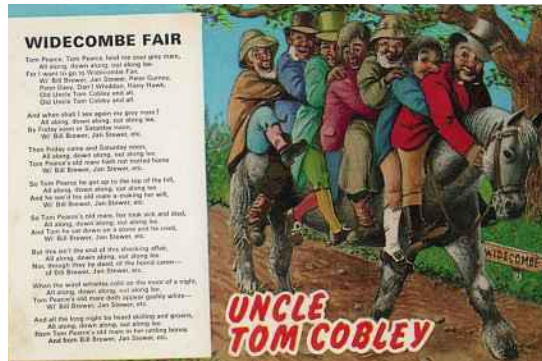
Disgrace on Dartmoor

PAUL TAYLOR asks what dark doings lurk beneath the surface of the folk song *Widecombe Fair*...

“**A**nd all the night long be heard skirling and groans,” is the opening line of the final verse of “Widecombe Fair”, one of the most famous folk songs of England. Substitute ‘shrieking’ for ‘skirling’ and you get the idea: something unpleasant is going down. Where is this chilling and unsettling sound coming from? From the ghosts of an old grey mare and seven shameful men out on the Devonshire moor. But why?

If only we knew. The song tells us that an old mare took sick and died whilst in the care of these characters. Apparently, it was a “shocking affair”, and the seven men had a “horrid career”. We do have the names, however, of the Devon Seven; we also know who owned the horse: “Tom Pearce, Tom Pearce, lend me your grey mare.” A reluctant Pearce was persuaded to lend his horse to this motley crew, as they wanted to go to Widecombe Fair. Yes, you’ve got it: “All along, down along, out along lea”. Clearly a lengthy old trek. So here are the names of our hopeful travellers: Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davey, Dan’l Whiddon, Harry Hawke – and, of course, Old Uncle Tom Cogley and all.

Great names for a good tune? But it is almost certain they were real people. This legendary folk song unflinchingly points the finger of judgement, naming and shaming as it does so. And, thanks to research done by the Widecombe and District Local History Group, most of the characters in the curious cast have names which can be traced to families working or living in the Sticklepath and Spreyton



The men are perhaps sitting rather too snugly together...

area of mid-Devon in the early part of the 19th century.

The History Group also found a sign at the Tom Cogley Tavern in Spreyton indicating that the men set off from outside the public house to travel to Widecombe in 1802. The pub is a 16th century building. It was probably known simply as The Tavern at the time.

There were more than a few Thomas Cogleys in the Spreyton area back in the day. The most likely for our purposes is the one who died in 1844, aged 82. He was a Buttsford man and is buried in Spreyton churchyard. But herein lies a problem: he would have been only 40 years of age at the time of the trip to Widecombe Fair. Would he really have been called ‘Old’ Uncle Tom Cogley? Perhaps a more likely candidate would have been his great uncle Thomas, who died in 1794 in Spreyton; just to add to the mystery, nobody knows where his grave is. This would mean, of course, that the sign found at The Tavern dating the trip to 1802 is bogus. That would make sense. It’s too accurate, too precise, too convenient for a legend such as this.

The intrepid historians also

found headstones across mid-Devon allotted to various Davys, Gurneys, Pearses and Stewers. Brewer is a common enough name in

the area, and so is Whiddon or Whitton; and there’s no shortage of Hawkes.

So, it’s fair to assume that a gang of associates, probably livestock farmers or dealers, were up for the 12-mile trip from Spreyton to Widecombe across the moors. And Tom (or Tam) Pearce (or Pearse) was put on the spot. Were these guys his friends, neighbours or a bit of both? It’s possible that, whatever the relationship between them, the owner of the old grey mare was made an offer he couldn’t refuse. And in handing her over, he sealed the poor horse’s awful fate.

But what can we suppose brought about her death? Obviously, she could have been exhausted, underfed and overworked by a bunch of bladdered chumps. But such a death would surely not have created the dark controversy which underpins the ballad. It would seem that far more sinister deeds were afoot. At the very least, the ballad hints at gross maltreatment; or could we be looking at a form of ancient ritual? Whichever way we read the song, Tom Pearce’s petrified mare was sacrificed out on the moors.

The wassailing folk custom called ‘Mari Lwyd’, Welsh in origin and practised in the West Country for hundreds of years, entails the use of a hobby-horse made from a horse’s skull mounted on a pole. A ghostly white sheet covers the stick and

anyone holding it. The wassailers knock on people’s doors and demand entry, therein to receive food and drink.

Is the Mari Lwyd a credible scenario here? Frankly, it’s doubtful that the rag-tag bunch of holiday hooligans would have been able to get their acts together; and there weren’t many welcoming abodes out on the moors.

There is an illustration commonly associated with this whole affair, one that has served as inspiration for countless postcards. Ostensibly comic in intent, it shows all the named men mounted on Pearce’s horse at the same time. The implication is that these idle dunderheads all clambered on the mare’s back and to save themselves a long and tiring walk. And the burden, not surprisingly, was too much for the horse to bear.

But these were bawdy times, and bawdy jokes were common. Look again at the drawing and you will see the men are perhaps sitting rather too snugly together. Is our artist hinting at something that a farmer’s wife would blush at the thought of? And what are we supposed to say to a suggestion that all these men rode the horse? *Double-entendre?*

Something unseemly undid Pearce’s mare, and one of the gang, or more than one, snatched to someone back at base. There could have been no song written without someone spilling the beans. And it was down to a songwriter to seek redress for the poor mare by telling it how it was... without telling it how it really was.

The great thing about folk music is that it makes you think. In this case, it might be best just to enjoy the song.

♦♦ **PAUL TAYLOR** is a freelance writer and cartoonist. He also paints, and has a keen interest in traditional folk music. He lives and works in rural Leicestershire.

Bligh Bond: God's archaeologist?

Why did Fredrick Bligh Bond scupper his promising archaeological career with claims of psychic phenomena, asks **TIM FLIGHT**

At the beginning of 1918, Fredrick Bligh Bond (pictured below), known to his friends as Bligh, was a respected antiquary, archaeologist, and architect. His excavation of Glastonbury Abbey had been extremely successful, elucidating the layout of this long-neglected site and uncovering numerous historical artefacts, a fact made all the more remarkable when we remember that this was his first excavation. Yet, in February 1918, he published *The Gate of Remembrance*, in which he claimed that his remarkable discoveries had been made at the direction of mediæval monks, whose memories of the Abbey were communicated to him through the psychic phenomenon of automatic writing. This book led to much of his work being discredited and Bligh's eventual removal from his post as head excavator in 1922. Nearly a century later, no satisfactory reason for his actions has been uncovered.

As a sceptic, I do not believe that Bligh received direction from long-dead monks. Adherents of automatic writing claim to be able to produce written communications without consciously writing, usually through the agency of spirits. Specifically, Bligh believed that he had tapped into an eternal font of knowledge, which he called "the great memoria", a repository available to all mankind. This knowledge was passed on through the personalities of those from whose experiences the memories derived: deceased monks of Glastonbury, who called

themselves The Watchers. This knowledge, Bligh claimed, was communicated to him through the hand of his friend Captain John Bartlett, a practitioner of automatic writing.

Few today would believe in either the phenomenon itself, or that Bligh used this method to direct his excavations. Bligh was a recognised authority on ecclesiastical architecture, an experienced antiquarian, and readily admitted to conducting exhaustive research to uncover how the Abbey once looked. When we consider that Bartlett himself was a folklorist and antiquarian who had already conducted the excavation of nearby Woodspring Priory, we can safely conclude that the pair constituted a formidable team whose success is entirely attributable to their own talents and experience. Equally, the language of the automatic writing scripts does not bear close scrutiny: a mixture of bad Latin (which Bligh called "monk-Latin") and garbled, inaccurate Middle English. It is not too much of a stretch to suggest that the scripts are poor examples of antiquarian *bricolage*, especially since Bligh's only defence against contemporary criticism of the language was to attempt to divert attention to the supposedly miraculous nature of the communications themselves.

Neither do we have definitive evidence that the scripts published in *The Gate of Remembrance* pre-dated the excavations at Glastonbury Abbey, which began in 1908. It is convenient that Bligh only published the scripts after having made his remarkable discoveries at the site. Although there are a few cryptic references to parapsychological methods dating from the early period of his excavations, no detail of what

these specifically entailed is provided. For example, in 1908 Bligh nebulously stated that "the subconscious or intuitive powers were stimulated to work in alliance with reason": one suspects that reason was ultimately triumphant over "intuitive powers". We should also note that Bligh had been fascinated by the paranormal since childhood, and even conducted his own investigations into ghosts. As such, the references to psychic activities that some give as evidence for the veracity of Bligh's later claims could refer to any number of paranormal investigations.

Though he demonstrated automatic writing to Basil Blackwell and Dorothy L Sayers in July 1918, this was no more than a parlour game (quite apart from taking place after the scripts were published). Bartlett simply scribbled down the results of Bligh's trip to the Bodleian Library the day before to read up on Richard Whiting, whose memories they claimed to have received. Defenders of the automatic writing hypothesis also fail to address the plausibility of Bligh's later work, *The Hill of Vision: A Forecast of the Great War*, a set of prophetic scripts supposedly received long before the outbreak of World War I and, of course, not published until the war had finished in 1919.

If the scripts were both produced after the excavations, and fraudulently so, we have to ask why Bligh would commit such a falsehood, and at such great risk to his good reputation.

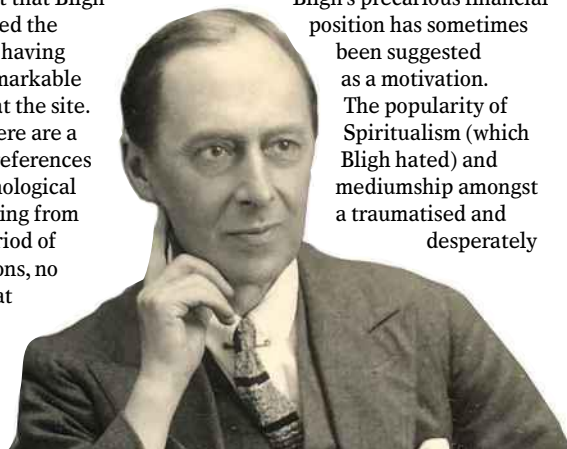
Bligh's precarious financial position has sometimes been suggested as a motivation.

The popularity of Spiritualism (which Bligh hated) and mediumship amongst a traumatised and desperately

credulous post-war public meant that a fortune could be made from their exploitation. Claiming to have been in communication with The Watchers could, potentially, have brought great wealth to Bligh and Bartlett, and indeed Bligh went on to have a successful career lecturing and writing on psychic phenomena. However, although Bligh was declared bankrupt in 1914, by 1918 his fortunes had recovered; he somehow always managed to employ a personal secretary, even at his lowest financial ebb. Far from representing the final throw of the dice by a desperate man, there must be another reason for Bligh's artifice.

The answer, I believe, lies in Bligh's personal beliefs and reformist aspirations. His architectural designs evidence the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement, which had the radical aim of economic and social reform based upon mediæval models. The movement idealistically saw the communities of skilled craftsmen who worked on the great cathedrals as an egalitarian system, superior to the industrial model wherein a clear hierarchy existed between the factory owners and their poorly skilled wage slaves whose humanity was obliterated by the scale and method of production. They hoped to achieve reform by re-educating the populace in mediæval methods of construction and architecture. Under this influence, Bligh was instrumental in two schools influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement – the Glastonbury Guild of Sacred Art and the Notting Hill Workers' Guild – both of which aimed to educate the poor in both architectural and spiritual matters.

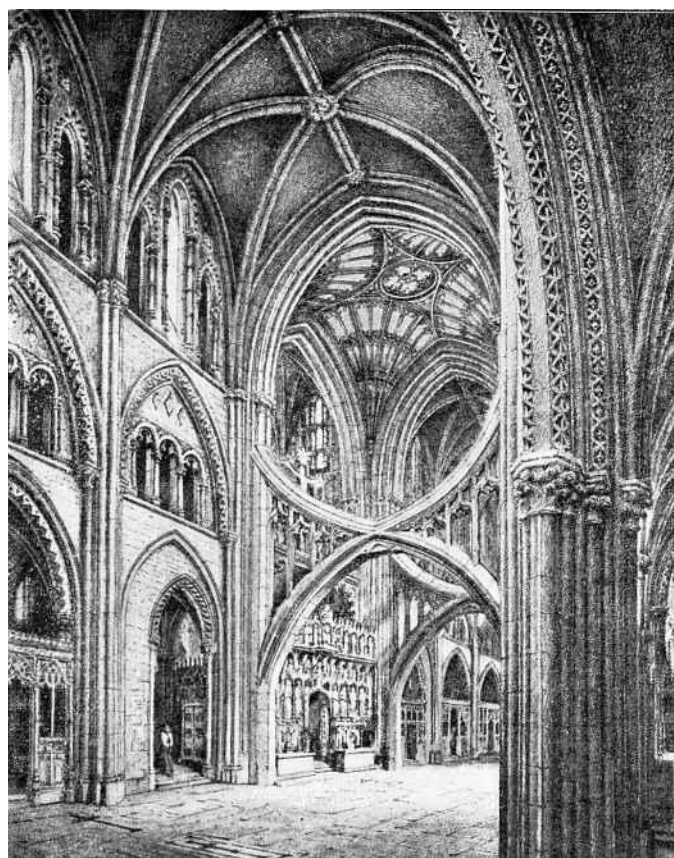
Bligh's political outlook was Christian socialism, advocating a return to the simple life he saw in his idealised vision of the Middle Ages. Part of this vision was the centrality of spirituality





to everyday life, which had been on the decline in Bligh's lifetime since the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. Bligh's father, Frederick Hookey Bond, was an Anglican clergyman, and Bligh's deeply religious upbringing was buttressed, no doubt, by the tragic rate of infant mortality amongst his siblings. By claiming to have received the communications of the long-dead under scientific conditions, Bligh was attempting to bring salvation to an increasingly secular society. Attributing his achievements at Glastonbury Abbey to voices from beyond provided apparently concrete proof of the existence of another world, which he hoped would appeal to the rational side of the public consciousness. Throughout the automatic writing scripts, the message of *The Watchers* is the need for spiritual reinvigoration: "Religion is the chief rule of life and all denial of this truth is futile" (*The Secret of Immortality*). The Watchers even blame Germany's defeat in World War I on the nation's preoccupation with material, rather than spiritual, matters. We can trace Bligh's spiritual manifesto in a description of *The Watchers* from an essay of 1921: "They try to depict for us the promise of a new and better ordering of society in which Man will at last definitely set his foot on the ascending path towards a goal of transcendent promise and beauty."

There is clear evidence that Bligh saw himself as God's chosen tool for the spiritual reinvigoration of mankind. In a script, supposedly produced before he was granted permission to excavate Glastonbury, Bligh is told that "the time is ripe for the stones to be studied... Go ye soone" (*The Gate of Remembrance*). Glastonbury Abbey provided Bligh with the fulcrum around which to base his mission to save the nation's souls. Even when not talking of psychic matters, Bligh clearly romanticised Glastonbury: "It stands alone as a connecting link with the British Church... without breach of continuity, the Saxon priest officiated at the same altar as the British priest,



It is acceptable to lie if it is for spiritual good

and the Norman followed him" (*An Architectural Handbook of Glastonbury Abbey*). Folklore has long held that Glastonbury Abbey was founded by Joseph of Arimathea, who supposedly left the Crucifixion with a chalice containing Jesus Christ's blood – the Holy Grail itself – that he brought to the West Country. Were this true, Glastonbury would predate Rome and Jerusalem as the oldest Christian foundation in the world, with far more convenient access for the British people, and a more recent history of divine miracles in the form of the automatic writing. Sure enough, Bligh received messages from *The Watchers* that Joseph had indeed founded Glastonbury, and that Bligh himself was to find the Holy Grail buried at the Abbey. Bligh was also told that King Arthur and

Queen Guinevere were buried at Glastonbury Abbey, just as the Abbey's mediæval archives claimed. Arthurian legend holds that Arthur is not dead, but only sleeping, and will awaken when he is most needed by Britain: for Bligh, that time had arrived in the early 20th century, and his 'awakening' would be the rediscovery of the remains. Thus, through archaeology, Bligh set himself the difficult task of saving the souls of mankind.

This mandate would supersede any concerns Bligh may have had about lying. Patristic Theology – in which Bligh was well-read – holds that it is acceptable to lie if it is for spiritual good, as Augustine of Hippo illustrates: "If occasion of doing good require, we may sometimes tell a lie" (*On Lying*, 5). In trying to bring the message of God to the people, and so save their immortal souls, Bligh would have seen himself as entirely justified. Bligh's research into the paranormal and strong faith in God, meant, at the very least, that he believed that the phenomena behind his false claims did exist.

LEFT: A reconstruction of the interior of the Abbey drawn by Bligh in 1908.

The importance of such a mission explains why Bligh was willing to risk his professional reputation and invite the ridicule of the public.

Despite his best intentions, Bligh's reputation never recovered, and he died in Wales in 1945. We should not remember him as a liar or madman, but recognise his great scholarly achievements and acknowledge his psychic claims as the actions of a man who believed that he was acting for the greater good of humanity. Perhaps *The Gate of Remembrance* needs reclassifying for the secular 21st-century mind, and to be seen alongside works such as *The Land of Mist* by Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle (an acquaintance of Bligh), a story in which the thithertorational Professor Challenger finally accepts the tenets of Spiritualism, and concludes that: "The obtuse incredulity and stubborn unreason of the prelates who refused to look through the telescope of Galileo and to observe the moons of Jupiter, has been far transcended in our own days by those noisy controversialists, who rashly express extreme opinions upon those psychic matters which they have never had either the time, or the inclination to examine".

Like Conan-Doyle, Bligh provided a fictionalised version of his own beliefs, in the hope that it could lead to the betterment and salvation of others. This is a noble sentiment, whatever our personal beliefs and, for me at least, one for which we should forgive this inspired, eccentric man.

For more on Bligh's excavations at Glastonbury, see Jack Romano "The Glastonbury Enigma", **FT143:40-44**; for his interest in maths and gematria, see Tim Hopkinson-Ball, "A Love Affair with Numbers", **FT249:50-54**.

◆ **TIM FLIGHT** completed his PhD at Magdalen College, Oxford, and is now a freelance writer. He is a board member of the Mystical Theology Network, and a former visiting lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London.

THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE PRESENTS

BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

29. 'A GOOD BOOK ABOUT UFOS' (OR TWO)

In the good old days, anyone who wanted an informed opinion about UFOs went to J Allen Hynek. True, he could behave like an absent-minded, over-thoughtful professor at times (most of the time, according to his wife), but this was a public virtue. He *was* a professor – of astronomy, deemed an appropriate expertise for ufology, and chair of his department to boot. And crucially he'd worked for the USAF's Project Blue Book as an 'official' investigator. He became overwhelmed by Blue Book's ways of working, and was even less impressed by the Condon Report's, and the conclusions drawn by its titular head. But over the years he had come to believe there was *something* about *some* UFO reports that justified thorough, objective, scientific investigation. So when Blue Book closed down in 1969, following the Condon Report, Hynek found the funding to set up the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) and maintain it for several years. He had no hesitation in admitting that he did not know what the phenomenon *truly* represented. At the same time, he tended to take witness accounts of strange events at face value; honest and straightforward himself, he seemed unable to digest the idea that others might be less scrupulous or more mischievous or simply misled by misperceptions. His two books, discussed here, explain all this and what he thought should be done about it.

Hynek opens *The UFO Experience* with the remark that he'd often been asked to recommend "a good book about UFOs" and found himself unable to provide a title, even though by the early 1970s there were hundreds of volumes on UFOs in print. Like many another who's muttered "If you want to get anything done around here, you've got to do it yourself", he – by then free of any obligation of discretion toward the US Air Force – sat down to write one himself. His definition of such a book: it "should, I think, be honest, without prejudgment; it should be factual and as well documented as possible. It should not be, however, a book that retails – or retells – UFO stories for the sake of their story value; rather it should attempt to portray the kinds of things that people – real everyday human beings with jobs and families – say they have actually experienced." Being far from daft, Hynek of course featured plenty of good, boggling stories among his illustrative examples.

Hynek was invited to join the USAF's UFO-investigation team because he worked near Wright-Paterson Air Force Base, and was suitably qualified and senior. At the time, he says, "I felt, as did virtually all my colleagues, that the subject was nonsensical, and I had little inclination to give it serious study" and, he continues, "It was thus almost in a sense of sport that I accepted the invitation to have a look at the flying saucer reports... they were called

'flying saucers' then. I also had a feeling that I might be doing a service by helping to clear away 'nonsense'. After all, wasn't this a golden opportunity to demonstrate to the public how the scientific method works, how the application of the impersonal and unbiased logic of the scientific method (I conveniently forgot my own bias for the moment) could be used to show that flying saucers were figments of the imagination?" In this he was to be disappointed. And there was a bit more to it: "The scientific world has surely not been 'eager to find out' about the UFO phenomenon and has expressed no inclination to astonishment. The almost universal attitude of scientists has been militantly negative. Indeed, it would seem that the reaction has been grossly out of proportion to the stimulus. The emotionally loaded, highly exaggerated reaction that has generally been exhibited by scientists to any mention of UFOs might be of considerable interest to psychologists... It has seemed to me that such exhibitions by mature scientists are more than expressions of pity for the uninformed. Perhaps they are expressions of deepseated uncertainty or fear... The phenomenon of this modern witchhunt, the

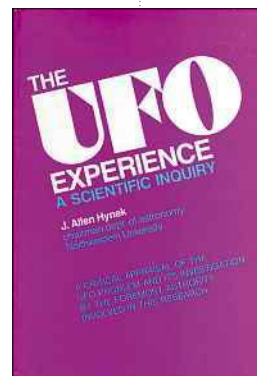
antithesis of what the scientific attitude stands for, is itself a phenomenon worthy of study." *Plus ça change* – even if 'witchhunt' seems overstated, since no scientist's career ever actually suffered from an interest in UFOs, least of all Hynek's. 'Jaded indifference' is probably nearer the mark these post-X-Files days.

But what is a 'UFO' anyway? Hynek initially says it's "simply... the reported perception of an object or light seen in the sky or upon the land the appearance, trajectory, and general dynamic and luminescent behaviour of which do not suggest a logical, conventional explanation and which is not only mystifying to the original percipients but remains unidentified *after close scrutiny of all available evidence by persons who are technically capable of making a common-sense identification, if one is possible.*" This last bit (our italics) is crucial. In broad terms, Hynek thought that the USAF failed to call in expertise (including his own) where they could and should have, while Condon's team, having decided on

an eclectic sample of reports to investigate, applied no common-sense filters to them at all. "The UFO was defined by Condon as merely something that puzzled a given observer. The 'Condon UFO' was not required to undergo a screening process before being admitted for study as a UFO: a report that remained unexplained after severe screening by technically aware persons. The committee thus really addressed itself to the

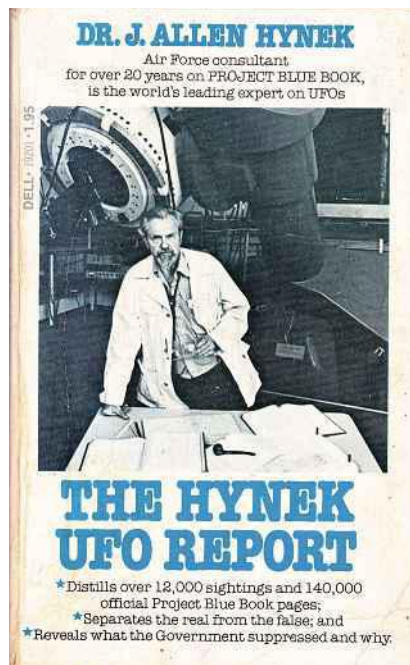
problem of finding a natural explanation to fit the report. It is my contention that this should have been done in the original screening process. The fact that more than 25 per cent of the cases studied were not assignable to natural causes simply means that only 25 per cent of the cases studied were eligible for study as UFOs."

Having opened the door wide to all manner of reports, Condon & Co then severely limited their own scope by framing their problem in terms of popular conception: "The committee chose to



consider only the problem of whether UFO reports (and far many more non-UFO reports) supported the hypothesis that the Earth was being visited by extraterrestrial intelligences [ETI]. UFO = ETI was the defining equation. It did not try to establish whether UFOs really constituted a problem for the scientist, whether physical or social." Throughout, Hynek himself fails to address the social aspect of UFOs – still less ufology – in any depth, and one wonders what, were he alive today, he would make of the now large literature expounding and exploring the several facets of the psychosocial hypothesis (PSH). As an instance of his neglect, consider this: "A critic of the UFO scene once remarked, '... unexplained sightings do not constitute evidence in favour of flying saucers any more than they constitute evidence in favour of flying pink elephants'. What he failed to realise was that the strangeness spectrum of UFO reports is so narrow that not only have flying pink elephants never been reported but a definite pattern of strange 'craft' has. If UFOs are figments of the imagination, it is strange that the imaginations of those who report UFOs from over the world should be so restricted." This is an odd blind spot, given the plethora of (remarkably consistent) imagery infesting movies, TV, comic books, newspapers – *the media* – before as well as after Kenneth Arnold's seminal 1947 sighting. On the other hand, one can guess that Hynek would have despaired at the tropical growth and bizarre ramifications of the ET/ETH approach, given his eagerness to explain, to anyone who asked, why he thought it a non-starter.

In *The UFO Experience* Hynek set out his classification system for UFOs, now generally accepted as a standard: Nocturnal Lights, Daylight Disks, Radar-Visuals, and Close Encounters of the First, Second and Third Kinds. The last of these did not impress him but, as he wrote, "we cannot subdivide the UFO phenomenon, accepting some parts and rejecting others. We must study the entire phenomenon or none of it. Encounters of the Third Kind must in all fairness be included in this book", even though "To be frank, I would gladly omit this part if I could without offence to scientific integrity: [cases] in which the presence of animated creatures [who interact with witnesses] is reported." He considered CE-IIIs only as 'contactee' events, which he fairly if sourly described as "characterised by a 'favoured' human intermediary, an almost always solitary 'contact man' who somehow has the special attribute of being able to see UFOs and to communicate with their crew almost at will (often by mental telepathy). Such persons not only frequently turn out to be pseudoreligious fanatics but also invariably have a low credibility value, bringing us regular messages from the 'space men' with singularly little content. The messages are usually addressed to all of humanity to 'be good, stop fighting, live



“EVERYTHING
IN THE WORLD
EXISTS IN
ORDER TO END
UP AS A BOOK.”

Stéphane Mallarmé

in love and brotherhood, ban the bomb, stop polluting the atmosphere' and other worthy platitudes." This (mis)led him into calling Betty Hill a contactee. She's now, of course, counted as an early *abductee*, and abductions are classed as Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind.

CE-IIIs, however, did intrigue him. In these, he comments, UFO occupants "almost never make an attempt to communicate; in contrast, they invariably are reported to scamper away or back into their craft and fly out of sight. They do not seem to have any 'messages' for mankind – except 'Don't bother me'"; and he recounts the 1955 Kelly-Hopkinsville, 1959 Papua New Guinea ('Father Gill'), and 1964 Zamora/Socorro events in some detail. The first of these, he notes, "had only one witness as far as the UFO itself was concerned, even though 11 people witnessed the occupants." Hynek seriously misses a trick here. Some time elapsed between the UFO sighting and the appearance of the flying-goblin-like 'occupants', which didn't 'scamper away' at all, and consequently were set upon with a hail of gunfire, to no apparent effect. It's subsequently been suggested, not altogether plausibly, that the 'aliens' were actually a flock of owls (it is difficult to

believe that a family of rural Kentuckians were such terrible shots that not one corpse resulted from their barrage). But whatever really happened that night the point, surely, is that other than the proximity in time, there's really nothing to connect the UFO sighting and the later siege by the weird avians. To call them 'UFO occupants' is a stretch in logic that Hynek should have seen and avoided.

Be warned, too, that Hynek devotes many pages to his ideal UFO investigatory project. Worthy (even sensible) as this is, it isn't the world's most exciting read. There is a certain ironic contemporary echo here though, if one calls to mind the recent attempt by Robert Bigelow and MUFON to do something faintly similar. That seems to have ended in tears, and one suspects that the bureaucratic barnacles Hynek's ideal would have attracted would eventually have suffocated it.

Hynek couldn't avoid mentioning the possibility of a cover-up in the conduct of Blue Book. All he can say is that "At no time... did I encounter any evidence that could be presented as valid proof that Blue Book was indeed a cover-up operation." On the other hand, "one time when I inquired into the specifics of a certain case, I was told by the Pentagon's chief scientist that he had been advised by those at a much higher level to tell me 'not to pursue the matter further'." But that, note, was in one case only. Understaffing, lack of assiduity, and mild incompetence seem to have been Blue Book's overriding sins.

None of this dimmed Hynek's optimism. If, he said, "there is indeed 'paydirt' in the ore of UFO data, it might well represent a scientific breakthrough of major magnitude. It might call for reassignment and rearrangement of many of our established concepts of the physical world, far greater even than the rearrangements that were necessary when relativity and quantum mechanics demanded entrance into our formerly cosy picture of the world." Many entertain the same hope to this day.

Hynek's follow-up, *The Hynek UFO Report*, covers much the same ground, but with fresh case histories and more detail on Blue Book and Condon. And it contains Hynek's essential first question à propos a UFO report: *Unidentified to whom?* A poacher or cab driver may not recognise Sirius rising, low on the horizon, dancing about because of atmospheric and autokinetic effects, but an astronomer will. Read both books, then, but it might be an idea to put a summer of trout-fishing in Kashmir between the two.

J Allen Hynek, *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Enquiry*, Henry Regnery Company (USA); Abelard-Schuman 1972, Sphere Books 1974 (UK)

J Allen Hynek, *The Hynek UFO Report*, Dell Publishing Co 1977 (USA); Sphere Books 1978 (UK)

FREE

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
ForteanTimes
EXCLUSIVE MUG

when you subscribe

Open your mind with Fortean Times. Get your monthly fix of strange phenomena, curiosities, prodigies and portents delivered direct to your door.

Your Phenomenal Offer

- Get your first **3 issues for £1**
- Exclusive **FREE Fortean Times mug**
- **SAVE up to 11%** on the shop price if you continue your subscription
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops



YOURS FREE!

SUBSCRIBE TO ForteanTimes TODAY!

Call +44(0)330 333 9492

Or visit dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes

QUOTING OFFER CODE **P1705P**



Apocalypse now (and centuries ago)

Revelation's Death on a pale horse, avenging angels and the Beast have been a vivid, familiar and mystifying part of Western Christianity for centuries, as this handsome and erudite volume shows

Picturing the Apocalypse

The Book of Revelation in the Arts over Two Millennia

Natasha O'Hear and Anthony O'Hear

Oxford University Press 2017

Pb, 368pp, illus, bib, ind, £13.52, ISBN 9780198779278

The Book of Revelation has long haunted Western civilisation. The New Testament's decidedly eschatological final book, its title derives from the Koine Greek *apokalypsis*, meaning 'revelation' or 'unveiling'. Allegedly composed by the Apostle John, the same disputed author as the equally Greek-tinged eponymous Gospel, modern scholarship points toward a different authorial source, namely John of Patmos, a Christian prophet who lived in Rome in AD 64 under the reign of Nero (the Beast with Seven Heads and the number 666 seem to allude to that despotic ruler). Revelation is a strange, symbolic text; much of its intense imagery derives from earlier sources, primarily the Jewish prophetic books of the Old Testament Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Psalms. Comprising an epistolary introduction followed by a letter to seven Asiatic churches in the Roman provinces, current interpretation of Revelation views John's letter as an admonition to those Christians seeking to withdraw from the Christian community and seek accommodation with the Roman Empire.

As early as the fourth century AD, the Book of Revelation was considered canon by the Christian Church. Its poetic and evocative imagery – the Rapture, the Lamb of God, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Death riding a pale horse, a

black Sun and a Moon red as blood, the poisoning Wormwood star, the Seven Seals, the Woman Clothed with the Sun, the legions of avenging angels, the Great Dragon, the Whore of Babylon, the Beast and its mark of 666, the Antichrist, the Bottomless Pit, the Great Judgment, and the New Jerusalem – is woven into the fabric of Western religion, culture and eschatology, and is as familiar as the best-known lines of Shakespeare. Certainly, Revelation has proven an imagistic, thematic, metaphorical and moral inspiration for countless artists, musicians, poets, and painters.

In *Picturing the Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation in the Arts over Two Millennia*, the father-daughter scholarly team of Anthony and Natasha O'Hear provide an illuminating guide to pictorial depictions of the Apocalypse in Western art. Their concise introduction presents a helpful textual history and a summary of major themes and imagery in Revelation from which these various artists and traditions draw inspiration. Because the sheer volume of Revelation-inspired artwork is so vast, the O'Hears wisely focus on 10 primary visual works, each of which is covered in a single chapter, though others are discussed. Among the 120 examples included are the Trier Apocalypse (France, early ninth century), the Anglo-Norman Trinity and Lambeth Apocalypses (c.1250 and 1260–75, respectively), the Angers Apocalypse Tapestry (c.1377–82), the 15th century altarpieces by Van Eyck and Memling, and Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach the Elder's 16th-century woodcuts, with later chapters touching on apocalyptic imagery

“Dürer's woodcuts use imagery from Revelation to reflect political and social realities”

in literature, music, and film.

Picturing the Apocalypse is a welcomingly accessible study, providing historical and social contexts, along with extremely well-articulated aesthetic considerations. For example, in discussing Dürer's *The Apocalypse* (1498), composed of 15 engravings, the O'Hears note that, as with many artists to draw from Revelation's eschatological well, Dürer's woodcuts use imagery from Revelation in order to reflect the political and social realities of his times. In Dürer's 15th century Germany, tensions between Protestant and Roman Catholics were heated and, given the near-ubiquitous penetration of religious belief and practice in everyday life, endemic. The established order of Church and State was being challenged by this ideological split; many viewed the march of progress as having the sound of apocalyptic hoof beats. Similarly, Otto Dix would turn the Four Horsemen in his series of prints *Der Krieg* (1924) into a meditation on the apocalyptic relations of the destructive (and often meaningless) effects of the Great War, a modern day Armageddon that, in Dix's view, might be seen as just the latest iteration of a war that plagues humanity. In Dix's work, the horseman of Death becomes another victim of

trench warfare.

As the O'Hears illustrate, the interpretations of Revelation have changed over time, and its symbolic, allusive, and perplexing imagery has adapted to specific social, cultural, and political contexts. William Blake, another of the O'Hears' select examples, could therefore use imagery derived from Revelation to illustrate his personal – and radically individualised and eccentric – philosophic interpretation of Christianity. Indeed, since the 19th century, apocalyptic imagery has often been used to underline the existential crisis of social alienation unleashed by modern industrial and post-industrial society. In Edvard Munch's expressionist *The Scream*, for example, the O'Hears argue that apocalyptic imagery is perfectly adequate for portraying personal as well as social transformation.

The authors include a useful glossary of technical terms, and while the small black and white reproductions of the various artworks under discussion are, apart from the woodcuts, inadequate and in dire need of colour

reproduction, their inclusion here is at least helpful in introducing modern readers to some of the perhaps lesser-known works they discuss. Well-organised, cogently argued, expertly composed, erudite yet approachable, and masterfully researched, *Picturing the Apocalypse* is a worthwhile tour among all things apocalyptic. The authors chart a clear path through a thicket of theological and aesthetic considerations without losing their way.

Eric Hoffman

★★★★★



Scientific spiritualism

The interwar attempt to put psychical researchers on an objective, semi-professional footing left the scientific community unmoved

Science of the Seance

Transnational Networks and the Gendered Bodies in the Study of Psychic Phenomena, 1918–40

Beth A Robertson

UBC Press 2016

Pb, 242pp, ind, bib, notes, £29.99, ISBN 9780774833509

While there has been a considerable academic interest in Victorian Spiritualism and séance room phenomena, the 1918–1939 period has been less well served. Beth Robertson's *Science of the Seance* helps to redress that imbalance. It is a shortened version of her history PhD, and the prose occasionally shows its academic origins.

Robertson argues that changes took place in the séance room during the inter-war period that echoed those in the wider society. It was not a sealed space subject only to its own laws, but affirmed and transgressed norms, and thus presents a means to illuminate broader societal currents. There was a move from local to transnational networks of researchers, particularly linking Britain, Canada and the United States, reflecting increased movement of people and ideas. International links had always existed within Spiritualism, but became stronger thanks to improved communications, greater opportunities for travel and a proliferation of organisations publishing information. This was part of a transnational trend in culture and politics more generally.

Though she promises to cover British mediumship, Robertson's focus is firmly on North American sources. Harry Price is mentioned only in passing, though he had strong international contacts and was 'Foreign Research Officer' for the American Society

for Psychical Research. The Society for Psychical Research in London is mentioned only a handful of times.

Instead, Robertson focuses primarily on the 'Margery' mediumship of Canadian-born Mina Crandon in Boston, Mass., and the work done by Thomas Glendenning Hamilton's group in Winnipeg, Manitoba. There were links between the two; Walter, who in life had been Mina's brother, appeared at both locations and at the Spiritualist retreat in Lily Dale, New York.

In analysing the 'gendered bodies' of mediums, Robertson notes that psychical research emulated mainstream science. Female mediums – often working class – were subjected to the middle- and upper-class male gaze and treated as little more than pieces of equipment.

This approach signalled investigators' attempts to remove the taint of subjectivity, considered a feminine attribute, in their endeavours to present themselves as sole experts despite not necessarily being as detached as they pretended.

The idea of the objective quasi-professional psychical researcher attempting to put the séance on a firm scientific footing as a means of establishing its legitimacy was not new, as technology had been applied to document mediumship for decades. What was new in the 1920s was the awareness of scientific developments which called previous certainties into question and expanded the language available to describe the supposed relationship between spirit and matter.

However, despite efforts to project psychical investigations as scientifically legitimate and producing strong evidence, the scientific establishment

was in general left unmoved. Further, Robertson highlights a tendency for investigators to sometimes lose control of the process to assertive mediums and even spirits (Walter was keen on directing a programme of research from the other side...). The result, Robertson suggests, was a blurring of the line between the expert and the object of study.

As is often the case with academic writers on Spiritualism and psychical research, Robertson writes not as an insider, but as "a historian of gender, science, medicine, and technology". A rough guide to an author's familiarity with the history of psychical research is whether FWH Myers's first name is spelled Frederic (correct) or Frederick (incorrect). Robertson fails the Myers test, implying lack of close familiarity with a key figure whose influence, as she notes, was still strong in the inter-war period. As a result of this limitation there is a failure to broaden the discussion sufficiently beyond the specific examples on which she concentrates.

On the evidence Robertson presents, there were fewer differences between the séance in the 1920s and '30s and its earlier incarnations than there were similarities. She fails to convince that there was a 'radical shift' after the Great War from traditional séance room to 'psychical laboratory'. Even so, she provides a useful introduction to some of the work exploring the boundary between this world and the next in the period. Her book indicates the need for further exploration of the international networks of psychical research (especially in non-Anglophone countries) in this academically under-examined period.

Tom Ruffles

★★★★★

UFOs, Chemtrails and Aliens

What Science Says

Donald R Prothero & Timothy D Callahan

Indiana University Press 2017

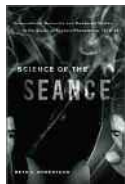
Hb, 459pp, notes, bib, ind, \$28.00, ISBN 9780253026927

It's often said that being a forteran is like being a spectator at a tennis match between manic sceptics and rabid believers. This book is not designed for *Fortean Times* readers: it's a fairly random grab-bag of stuff that has caught the authors' attention, loosely hung around a UFO theme for dyed-in-the-wool sceptics in the US to use as ammunition against true believers. The bibliography contains plenty of sceptical writing and a moderate amount of belief-oriented material, but virtually nothing from the middle ground. There is Philip Klass and James Hatcher Childress, Carl Sagan and Zecharia Sitchin, but no Jenny Randles, Andy Roberts or David Clarke, and no sign of Mark Pilkington's *Mirage Men* either.

Having said that, it avoids the worst excesses of sceptic literature. There is limited scoffing, although for the foreword they wheel out Michael Shermer, who can't help talking about UFOs, UAPs and CRAPs ("Completely Ridiculous Alien Piffle"). Prothero and Callahan have done original analysis on the cases they look into, and many of their conclusions are valid and fairly reasonable. It is more the tone in which they are presented that is unhelpful.

Many of the faults of scepticism remain. Prothero goes out of his way to speak against the stereotype of wacky lab-coated scientists, then goes on to confirm the stereotype of science as a monolithic body of privileged knowledge, both in the cringe-worthy subtitle and in his slightly finger-wagging way of writing. There's the customary expounding of Carl Sagan's misleading and unscientific axiom 'Extraordinary Claims require extraordinary evidence' and the usual wilful misuse of Occam's Razor.

We are also lectured on how what they describe as 'pseudoscience' tries to give claims unwarranted credibility. These include false appeals to authority, credentials and





expertise, special pleading, and *ad hoc* hypotheses. Prothero is a geologist, yet talks about extraterrestrials, spacecraft and psychology. He is also happy to assert that the symptoms Betty Cash suffered in the Cash-Landrum close encounter were probably the result of an infection that came on just as she saw a saucer, and can blithely suggest – without a shred of evidence – that a 1989 triangular UFO seen by many people over Belgium must have been a secret experimental stealth plane, 10 years before the US unveiled the first one. The US may well test experimental aircraft over Area 51, but doing so over Brussels is unlikely. I could continue.

This book does feel somewhat out-of-touch, although not as badly as many sceptic tomes. A chapter about unusual clouds and UFOs treats them as if it's new rather than part of the repertoire of the more analytical ufologists for over 50 years. This has less to do with current knowledge, I suspect, than that Prothero started teaching a meteorology course just before writing the book. The time spent demonstrating that crop circles are man-made is unnecessary (only a minuscule rump of New Agers now claim otherwise), as is the space devoted to the Roswell autopsy story, which has been so convincingly dead for over 10 years that even the most obsessive UFO enthusiasts steer clear of it. There is an entertaining chapter on UFOs and religion, but SD Tucker's *Space Oddities* covers the same ground far more engagingly, and I doubt there is anyone alive who doesn't know the rustless iron pillar in Delhi is actually rusting.

Sceptics are increasingly irrelevant to current science communication. Their head-on, authority-based onslaught is seen as dated and ineffective, more about confirming in-group identity than combatting unreason or converting the undecided. These days far more sophisticated and effective techniques are available for encouraging people to use scientific tools to understand their experiences.

lan Simmons
★★★★★

Death

A Graveside Companion

Ed: Joanna Ebenstein

Thames & Hudson 2017

Hb, 368pp, illus, ind, bib, illus, £210.36, ISBN 9780500519714

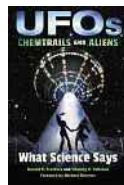
This hefty hardback is a journey through the history of humanity's relationship with death. It covers everything from gravestones and memorial photographs to medical manuals, theatrical posters, mourning jewelry, religious relics, tourist displays of corpses, Hallowe'en costumes, skeleton-themed advertisements and more. In addition to its huge collection of morbid art, this volume also contains 19 short essays on different aspects of the role of death in subject.

Death's seven sections each cover a different thematic area. Beginning with "the art of dying", the book proceeds through scientific and medical examinations, memorials, the personified character of death, death as a symbol, death as entertainment, and perceptions of the afterlife. Each section begins with two to three essays, each two to five pages long. Topics covered are as diverse as the use of hair in mourning jewelry, the careers of particular spiritualists, death in Mexican art and the *Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death*. They are fascinating introductions, and the subjects so varied that there's likely to be something in them for any reader.

These essays are one of the few areas where the book's otherwise gorgeous design falls a little short. The text pages are printed in gold text on a brown background, which is easier to read than it sounds but not as easy to read as it might be.

The essays, together with Ebenstein's introduction and the brief foreword by Will Self, make interesting reading, but the real strength of this book is the size and breadth of its image collection. Death casts its net wide, giving a compelling picture of the many ways in which human societies have engaged with death over the centuries. It's not an in-depth study, but a lavishly illustrated guide, something like a museum exhibition in book form. It's a fantastic visual resource and a lot of fun to dip into.

James Holloway
★★★★★



Encounter in the Desert

The Case for Alien Contact at Socorro

Kevin D Randle

New Page Books 2017

Pb, 284pp, illus, ind, bib, \$16.74, ISBN 9781632651136

With revelations of a secret US government UFO programme recently exposed in surprisingly even-handed treatments by traditionally unfriendly outlets such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, maybe it's time to re-examine the Socorro, New Mexico, landing of 24 April 1964. Even Project Blue Book, ordinarily adept at drawing explanations out of the thinnest of air, listed it as among its rare unexplaineds. It continues to defy conventional explanation more than half a century later.

In the mid-1990s, in the desert near Socorro, I met the principal witness, Lonnie Zamora, and fellow Socorro police officers (all retired by then) who had played secondary roles in the incident. Zamora, who has since died, turned out to be personable, warm-hearted, and good-humoured – a decent man and far from the devious hoaxer portrayed (unconvincingly on just about any grounds) by particularly resolute debunkers. Other officers related aspects of the case (mostly involving persons who provided corroborating testimony) that had not appeared in the standard recountings. Veteran ufologist and prolific UFO-book author Kevin D Randle passes on that information, along with much else, in his comprehensive *Encounter in the Desert*.

The new book is, to my fairly certain knowledge, the second on the subject. The first was Ray Stanford's *Socorro 'Saucer' in a Pentagon Pantry* (1976), based on the author's investigation in the immediate aftermath of Zamora's reported late-afternoon sighting of an egg-shaped craft with two briefly visible small humanlike figures nearby.

The object, which sported a symbol (an upright arrow with a straight line at the bottom and an arc over the top) on its side, left traces in the sand and (controversially) on the rocks

beneath it. Parts of Stanford's book generated fierce disputation, most of it focused on Stanford's reported recovery and handling of tiny metal flakes seemingly from the vehicle. It doesn't help that, as the title hints, the book strays into dead-end crashed-saucer country.

Randle's book re-examines the case and its larger context within the framework of UFO experiences overall, including CE2s (physical traces) and CE3s (occupants). He also surveys, and persuasively discounts, the alternative explanations (e.g., hoax and lunar-landing vehicle), while trying to clear up such lingering matters as the precise shape of the symbol Zamora reported.

As always Randle is a calm, matter-of-fact chronicler, constitutionally immune to such occupational disorders as paranoia, excitability, credulity, and conclusion-leaping. If he is not a natural prose stylist, any

open-minded reader will likely forgive him for what Randle offers in responsible analysis. In fact, at times he bends over backwards to embrace a prosaic solution when equally sober researchers might conclude otherwise, as in his dismissal of the Flatwoods, West Virginia, 1952 monster report as hysteria-generated. Still, caution in handling complicated data, and any UFO data worth thinking about are bound to be complicated, is always preferable to its opposite.

Unless earthshaking new developments rattle our understanding, surely unlikely at this stage, *Encounter in the Desert* will remain the definitive treatment of one of ufology's foundational cases. It will also serve as a good example of how to treat a single case at book length. It's not enough to lay out a detailed exposition of the incident. That incident also needs to be viewed through the prism of instructive comparable reports in other times and places.

Randle, who understands as much, handles Socorro and related issues in characteristically able fashion.

Jerome Clark
★★★★★



No dogs nor cats on Mars

A stunning look at extraterrestrials' influence on our imagination from Kepler's shade-loving Moon-dwellers to recent pulp science fiction

Aliens

Past, Present, Future

Ron Miller; forewords David Brin & Dr John Elliot

Watkins Publishing 2017

Hb, 224pp, illus, gloss, further reading, ind, £25.00, ISBN 9781780289687

This hefty, gloriously produced, large format hardback covers the topic of aliens, as its title suggests, in three parts: past, present and future.

The 'past' section, 'Worlds Other Than Our Own', surveys how over the past 400 years our perception of the world has expanded from beyond our tiny planet to the vast reaches of the Universe.

The biggest game changer came when Galileo Galilei (1554-1642) aimed a primitive telescope at the heavens and discovered that the planets were irregular bodies much like Earth rather than special types of stars. When it became accepted that we live on a planet that circles the Sun, along with other planets, asteroids and comets in the Solar System, it inevitably led to speculation that life might exist 'out there'.

Many of the imagined aliens were complete fantasy or used for satirical effect, although some writers did make an effort to consider the impact of different environments on biological outcomes.

For instance, as early as 1634, German astronomer Johannes Kepler speculated, in what is perhaps the first science fiction novel *Somnium*, that the inhabitants of the Moon would need to find shade or grow protective shells to survive the intense heat during a lunar day. Alternatively, Gabriel Daniel in *A Voyage to the World of Cartesius*, 60 years later, imagined bodiless, spiritual

entities living on the Moon.

By the end of the 19th century, humanoid aliens were used as a vehicle to expound philosophical and religious ideas and their authors were not too bothered about keeping to scientific facts. Miller says that the creepy Martians in HG Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898) were the first genuinely non-human aliens to appear in fiction. Other Victorian aliens ranged from winged (Mothman-types!) and amphibious monsters on Mars to saintly humanoids.

In part two, 'The Science of Extraterrestrial Life', Miller details how life originated on Earth and how our increasing scientific knowledge about the Solar System and beyond has refined how we imagine life evolving elsewhere in the Universe. Swedish philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg, for example, stated in 1758: "That there are many earths, and men upon them."

Mars, being very similar to Earth, became the prime focus for speculation that it harboured intelligent life. Networks of canals were seen on its surface, inspiring Percival Lowell to popularise the idea that these were built by Martians to collect water from the polar caps of Mars. Others, including HG Wells, were more sceptical. "We shall find no flies

nor sparrows nor dogs nor cats on Mars". From here, Miller looks at the recent discovery of exoplanets and the hunt for those that may show signs of life.

Part three, 'Aliens Among Us' takes up half of the book. Miller looks at how the coming of the flying saucers in 1947 made people believe that aliens were visiting us from outer space. He reviews the similar US 1896-97 'airship' sighting craze to warn us that what people observe in the sky "...is something a little more amorphous and vague than most observers might believe. How many ordinary but unfamiliar natural phenomena were given wheels, wings, propellers or disc-shapes by the expectations of the observer, who believed these were the features it must have?"

Miller also takes into account how folklore and early science fiction aliens have shaped what UFO witnesses and abductees report seeing and 'experiencing' today. He is particularly good at showing the importance of pulp science fiction and cinema in shaping these perceptions until they have created accepted norms (like spindly, big-headed, grey aliens or philosophical humanoids).

Using his background as an art illustrator and science fiction novelist, Miller provides us with a colourful trip through the alien universe employing a wide range of high-quality illustrations that include centuries-old engravings, book, comic and magazine art, movie posters and UFO photographs.

Whether or not we will ever openly come into contact with intelligent alien beings is something only the future will tell. In the meantime, Miller gives us plenty of food for thought.

Nigel Watson

★★★★★



Haunted by the Abyss

The Otherworldly Experiences of Paranormal Sarah

Sarah Soderlund

Llewellyn Worldwide 2015

Pb, 227pp, US \$15.99, ISBN SORT OUT ISBN!!!!

This engaging memoir by Sarah Soderlund ('Paranormal Sarah') opens with childhood supernatural encounters in her Kansas City home, haunted by a wizened old woman. Muppet-like monsters march towards Sarah's bedroom. Pterodactyls land in the back yard. Recurring dreams have the quality of an alien abduction. A sinister local forest is the site of strange lights, UFO sightings and Mothman-type entities. Further experiences with Ouija boards, haunted Civil War battlegrounds, demonic entities and shadow creatures develop Sarah's psychic abilities, landing her a weekly Internet radio show and regular appearances at US psychic fairs and paranormal conferences.

Chris Josiffe

★★★★★

Monsters in the Machine

Science Fiction Film and the Militarization of America after World War II

Steffen Hantke

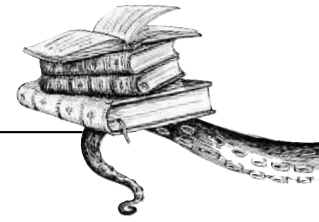
University Press of Mississippi 2016

Hb, 240pp, illus, bib, ind, \$60.00, ISBN 9781496805652

Steffen Hantke's books include *Conspiracy and Paranoia in Contemporary American Fiction* and *Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear*. The science fiction films of the 1950s and 1960s have long been accepted as allegories for Cold War paranoia about nuclear war and Soviet aggression in Europe. In this excellent text, the author makes a strong case that they were as much reflections of America's memories of WWII, the emerging military-industrial complex and American entanglement in Korea and other post-colonial conflicts. The purpose, according to Hantke, was to portray the US military as an inescapable presence in American life in an age of perpetual mobilisation ... America was never going back to life before the war.

Richard Thomas

★★★★★



ALSO RECEIVED

WE LEAF THROUGH A SMALL SELECTION OF THE DOZENS OF BOOKS THAT HAVE ARRIVED AT FORTÉAN TOWERS IN RECENT MONTHS...

Occult Paris

The Lost Magic of the Belle Époque

Tobias Churton

Inner Traditions 2016

Hb, 493pp, \$29.95, illus, colour plates, notes, bib, ind, ISBN 9781620555453

Tobias Churton, a scholar of the Western Occult tradition, paints a vivid and detailed portrait of Paris during the Belle Époque (1871–1914), when it was the fertile medium for many cultural, artistic and esoteric movements that had considerable influence upon the greater world.

Here is all the background you could wish for about the prime characters – from Blavatsky and Levi, Érik Satie and the Peladians, to Papus and d’Aveydre; priests and painters; musicians and magicians; alchemists and artists; Gnostics, Theosophists and Masons; Surrealists and Decadents – their lives, works, interactions and scandals.

It is dense in detail, but the writing conveys the excitement of an author who savours every aspect of his topic. Reading this almost makes you want to re-read Pauwels and Bergier’s *Morning of the Magicians*, this time with greater understanding.

Flesh Falls & Blood Rains

John Hairr

Coachwhip Publications 2016

Pb, 159pp, illus, bib, ind, \$13.95, ISBN 9781616464028

John Hairr, a Carolina historian, presents a tightly focused study of falls of flesh-like and blood-like materials. He begins with essays on the subject as it is recorded in ancient and more modern documents. The next four cases studied occurred in America, from the most famous of all in Tennessee, 1841, to the celebrated Kentucky ‘meat shower’ of 1876. From the late 19th century, he accumulates considerable local news reportage and notes that, despite the increasing intrusion of ‘scientific explanations’ from ‘experts’ up to the most recent incident chronicled here (in Spain in 2014), the mystery remains.

Hairr’s level of local and contemporary detail is impressive; the only element missing (as far as we can see) are the theories of Prof Chandra Wickramasinghe on primitive extraterrestrial life. Four appendices present facsimiles, including a historical record from 1679; an attempted chronology from 1577 BC to 1849; another from AD 472 to 1847, and Hairr’s own chronological summary of news accounts from 1806 to 2005. An essential reference for the fortean meteorologist.

Legend Tripping

The Ultimate Family Experience

Robert C Robinson

Adventures Unlimited Press 2016

Pb, 309pp, illus, \$14.95, ISBN 9781939149640

What Robinson calls ‘legend tripping’ is a challenge to his readers to get out there and investigate or follow the trails of other investigators. Twenty chapters cover pretty much the whole American gazetteer, from Bigfoot, sites associated with UFOs or hauntings, ‘Ghost lights’, buried treasure and lake monsters (with Nessie thrown in). The author is not entirely credulous, providing advice sections on preparing and kitting out for such expeditions, and the importance of critical thinking. His enthusiasm, though, might well inspire a new generation to set off into the wilderness with their smartphone’s GPS (instead of a compass).

Trackbed Tales

It’s Winter on a Preserved Railway...

NM Scott

Book Guild Publishing 2015

Pb, 64pp, £9.99, ISBN 9781910508862

This slender volume hosts 10 narrated stories of some strange and extraordinary incidents or discoveries made in the supposedly serene world of preserved or restored English railways. Human remains, dangerous creatures, Satanic societies, haunted rolling stock, and the like. Scott is a published writer of Sherlock Holmes pastiches, so his little stories go at a cracking pace;

but don’t expect these to be true as no sources are given. A good loo book.

Sea Creatures

Ponsonby’s Curious Compendium

Dr David Ponsonby & Professor Georges Dussart

Ivy Press 2015

Hb, 286pp, illus, ind, £12.99, ISBN 9781782402459

The (removable) sticker on this book proclaims that the publishers are ‘Makers of beautiful books’. This one certainly is, as is the companion volume on insects and spiders. The line engravings, some up to 200 years old, obviously cause some issues, as the authors acknowledge: they have corrected names, where necessary, and explain that the taxonomy might have changed since the illustration was published. They usefully explain Linnæan classification for those non-biologists among us. The text is edited to the bone to cram in the maximum of information, but the book does not aim to be a field guide. It is, though, very handsome and (more relevantly for this review) picks up on some decent strange facts about the creatures pictured. Some crabs, for instance, snip poisonous sea anemones off the rocks and attach them to their shells to repel predators; others clutch them in their claws as a brightly coloured deterrent. The hermaphroditic barnacle fertilises its neighbours “by means of a disproportionately long penis” when not “kicking food into its mouth”. Lobsters sometimes shake their claws off on hearing a sudden noise, according to a Victorian naturalist. A wonderful engraving shows a cuttlefish clinging to a Mr Beale (“a sensation of horror pervaded his whole frame”) after throwing itself at him. The starfish’s powers of regeneration mean that a single arm can regenerate an entire body. And sea cucumbers (a south-east Asian delicacy) entangle predators in a slime; if that doesn’t work, they expel their internal organs.

A useful hint: don’t swim where you see black lugworm

casts, which can often indicate sewage discharge.

The Suppressed History of American Banking

How Big Banks Fought Jackson, Killed Lincoln, and Caused the Civil War

Xaviant Haze

Bear & Co 2016

PB, \$16.99, pp.231, illus, notes, bib, index, ISBN 9781591432333

Xaviant Haze investigates the historical origins of the first banks in the newly constituted USA and explains how they “fought Andrew Jackson, killed Abraham Lincoln and caused the Civil War”. Jackson was the only president who paid off the national debt. You might assume this was wacky conspiracy theory-mongering, but this story is very interesting; it is also well told and very well researched.

WTF?!

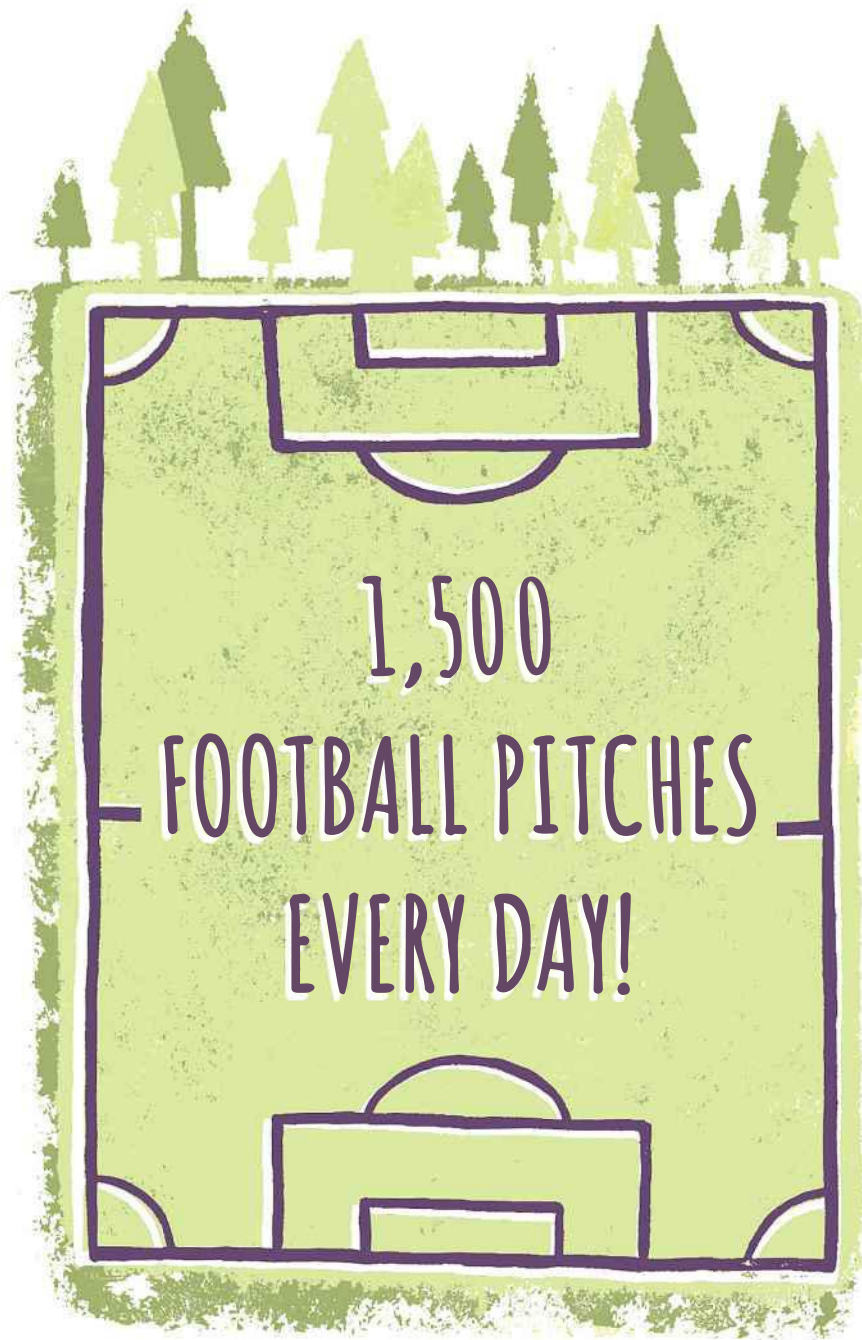
An Economic Tour of the Weird

Peter T Leeson

Stanford Economics and Finance 2017

264pp, illus, notes, ind, \$27.95, IDBN 9781503600911

This book is what happens when a professor of economics and law with a love of the curious examines what looks like irrational behaviour. (Spoiler alert: it isn’t.) Take, for instance, the apparently misogynistic public auctions of pre-owned wives in 19th century England. The women had a veto, and the evidence suggests they traded up financially. One welcomed the transaction as “the happiest moment of her life”, and her husband escaped the legal requirement to provide bed and board. A snappy discussion on indirect Coasean bargaining ensues, expanded in the Notes for Nerds appendix. The sales ended only when they stopped being useful – basically, when married women gained property and child custody rights. Like the other examples, this is an ingenious, incentive-driven solution to a contemporary problem. And so on to Gypsy superstition, cursing monks, judicial combat and the rest... Excellent.



Did you know that European forests, which provide wood for making paper and many other products, have been growing by over 1,500 football pitches every day!

Love magazines? You'll love them even more knowing they're made from natural, renewable and recyclable wood.

UNFAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005-2015

Two Sides is a global initiative promoting the responsible use of print and paper which, when sourced from certified or sustainably managed forests, is a uniquely powerful and natural communications medium.

There are some great reasons to [#LovePaper](#)
Discover them now,
twosides.info





The beauty of the beast

Guillermo del Toro delivers an ode to outsiders in his beautifully crafted adult fairytale, which asks what would happen if the Creature from the Black Lagoon found a willing romantic partner...



The Shape of Water Dir Guillermo del Toro, US 2017 On UK release from 14 February

Guillermo del Toro has always had a unique style as a filmmaker, and his love of monsters has continued to give cinemagoers colourful and nuanced portrayals of the creatures and stories he holds dear, ensuring that his films stand out from the more one-dimensional and disposable paranormal offerings in the contemporary cinematic landscape. While del Toro is no stranger to passion projects, as evidenced by a significant number of his previous works, it is clear from the onset that *The Shape of Water* – the tale of a lonely, mute cleaner in a government lab who stumbles upon a captive ‘amphibian man’ and determines to free him – is the very definition of a labour of love.

Del Toro has had a dedicated following for years, and while he has become increasingly well-known outside dark fantasy

The cast is pitch-perfect for the story del Toro wants to tell

and horror circles, the Mexican auteur has been considered too much of a genre-specific filmmaker to create something that could appeal to a broader audience without compromising his artistic integrity.

On paper, *The Shape of Water* has an undeniably del Toro-esque appeal, and the story can essentially be described as: what would happen if the Creature from the Black Lagoon did not have to kidnap his love interest, but instead found his feelings reciprocated? However, while del Toro has dismissed any speculation as to possible connections between his latest effort and his *Hellboy* films, what truly makes the *The Shape of Water* work, beyond the appeal of the fantastical elements, is

that the story at its core is deeply human and relatable. The film brims with a sincere sweetness and maintains an exquisite tonal balance that serves to perfectly suspend the viewer’s disbelief; most audiences will be hard-pressed not to fall in love with the story and the characters that inhabit it.

Having insisted on casting Sally Hawkins and Michael Shannon for the roles of leading lady and callous villain, it is abundantly clear that their parts were written specifically for them. Hawkins brings her radiance and warmth to the character of Elisa, making it another noteworthy addition to her already impressive résumé of thoroughly engaging performances. Shannon takes another turn as a menacing antagonist, but the intensity he brings to the character means that it never feels as if he is merely reprising past turns as other baddies and is an integral part of what makes him such a unique talent.

The supporting characters

portrayed by Octavia Spencer, Richard Jenkins and Michael Stuhlbarg add additional depth to the story and help further build the world of the film. Having once again written the part specifically for the actor, del Toro enables Spencer to deliver her trademark, love-fuelled sass in the role of Elisa’s colleague Zelda with great potency. Richard Jenkins is a likable, yet insecure and slightly bumbling gay bachelor with whom Elisa shares an apartment, while Michael Stuhlbarg impresses as a secretive scientist with a highly compelling character arc. This could all be considered typecasting, but by giving the actors such well-written characters to portray, del Toro has ensured that the cast, both individually and as a whole, is absolutely pitch-perfect for the story he wants to tell.

Needless to say, the visual aspect of the film is as stunning as one has come to expect from this director. The score further emphasises the sweet, heartfelt tone of the film’s style and narrative; however, do not be fooled – this is still very much a del Toro piece. Thus, the filmmaker has playfully sprinkled elements of unsettling body horror throughout the film. These elements are genuinely unpleasant, but they never feel out of place and therefore do not detract from the overall sense of the film being an enthralling fairytale for adults.

What del Toro has always done well is world-building. His fascination with dark fantasy and his ability to bring the figments of his imagination to life with such vibrancy attests to the scale of his talent. However, what really makes his films stand out is the sheer heart that he pours into his stories and characters. Easily

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)

Hammer House of Horror: The Complete Series

Dir various, UK 1980
Network, £29.99 (Blu-ray)

Did your parents let you watch ITV when you were growing up? An odd question perhaps, but I've met at least three people whose BBC-loving parents banned their kids from watching 'the other side'. Supposedly, the independent channel was crass, commercial and 'low grade'.

Programmes like this 1980 ITV production of *Hammer House of Horror* wouldn't have helped ease their fears. The British horror factory brought its trademark excess to the small screen with a full-on mix of underwear-clad stabbings, bouncing breasts, baby eating and screaming children being showered with blood at a house party. This latter scene, from the segment 'The House That Dripped Blood', left millions of kids scarred for life. It's the perfect example of the series's no-nonsense approach to the macabre.

Yet there are plenty of left-field moments too, like the totally bizarre 'Growing Pains'. Here, a woman and her scientist husband (who's trying to solve world hunger), adopt a creepy, well-spoken kid with a pudding-basin haircut. They want to replace the son who died after eating some pills from dad's save-the-world lab. Soon, rabbits, and then people, start dying. It's so strange and unpredictable that I found myself gripped. Another crazy entry is 'Rude Awakening', a horror precursor to *Groundhog Day*. Denholm Elliot plays the wife-hating estate agent caught up in



Screaming children are showered with blood at a party

a crazy nightmare loop in which buildings collapse on him and he cops off with his naked secretary in a telephone box. One of my favourite episodes is 'Children of the Full Moon', where Diana Dors plays grinning housemaid to a bunch of creepy kids who "only play at night". A young couple with car trouble find the house and are given a place to stay, only to find there's a rapey wolf on the prowl outside...

Even more predictable episodes – like 'The Carpathian Eagle', whose twist you'll see coming the day before you watch it – are thoroughly enjoyable. Here, men's hearts are being cut out by what appears to be a 300-year-old Carpathian countess. Lol. Watch out for a young Pierce Brosnan, who chats up the killer in a Buckinghamshire park. (If you live in Bucks, this show is a fascinating time-capsule of locations, by the way.) 'Witching Time' has a 17th century witch terrorising

a farmhouse. In 'Charlie Boy', a man gets hooked on an African fetish doll which seems to have the power to cause actual deaths. Again, it's by the numbers stuff, but the period setting and commitment to mayhem is hard to resist.

The show also tried to comment on 'issues' too, as in 'The Thirteenth Reunion', where a Fleet Street journalist delves into the 1980s diet industry (which seems a bit harsher than today's Weight Watchers). Basically a grumpy bloke in a tracksuit shouts at women in leotards for being "fat", "repulsive" and "turning men away in disgust". 'The Silent Scream' riffs on prisons and confinement as a pet shop owner traps an ex-con in an elaborate cage. This episode even features Peter Cushing as the mad captor, and a young Brian Cox as his prey. One of the weakest entries is 'Visitor from the Grave', which uses that old horror chestnut of a dead fella cropping up repeatedly and moaning 'I will be revenged'. Despite having an hysterical Katherine Leigh Scott in it (Maggie from *Dark Shadows*), this is the least exciting of the bunch.

Some episodes are actually pretty scary. 'The Two Faces of Evil' feels like a nightmare you'd have as a kid, and 'The Mark of Satan' is one of the darkest of the series, following a mortician who starts to believe in a satanic conspiracy revolving around the number nine.

Hammer House of Horror will delight both those who were terrified by it the first time around and others only catching up with it now after a ban by parents who thought ITV depraved. Judging by this, ITV was a bit depraved – all the more reason to high-five the channel's horror chops. Oh, and on Blu-ray, the picture quality is outstanding. Buy it direct from Network and you'll get a hardcopy facsimile of an original episode script thrown in too!

his strongest film since *Pan's Labyrinth*, *The Shape of Water* has more in common with that film than just stunning visuals and excellent special effects, as he once again uses the tensions of the film's historical setting to realise the story's full emotional depth: in *Pan's Labyrinth* it was post-Civil War Spain, here it is Cold War America. This adds an additional sense of gravitas to the characters' motivations and feelings, one that brings home the fact that sometimes the strange and unusual is, in fact, deeply human, while humans are often the real monsters.

Leyla Mikkelsen



Native

Dir Daniel Fitzsimmons, UK 2016
On UK release from 23 February

Native is principally the story of scientists Cane and Eva. Selected to steer a ship across the stars in the hope of locating the planet from which a mysterious signal appears to emanate, the pair are human in appearance but clearly follow a different set of rules to *Homo sapiens*, eschewing emotion for logic (like everyone's favourite Vulcan) and demonstrating well-developed telepathic abilities. The latter skill enables them to maintain communications with their loved ones back on their home planet, Cane with his wife Awan and Eva with partner Seth.

Mid, ahem, star trek, Awan dies in childbirth (when Cane tells Eva that his wife is pregnant with four children, Eva replies laconically "why so few"?). The event triggers a lengthy and complicated breakdown in which Cane questions his own identity, his ingrained avoidance of emotions and the constricting hive structure of his own people. He becomes obsessed with a piece of classical music, and his obsessive deconstructing of its sonic textures becomes a metaphor for his own self-discovery. And all the while his travelling partner Eva – mentally linked with cool, rational Seth – struggles to maintain her professionalism and indeed keep the colonial mission on track in the face of her companion's meltdown.

Daniel Fitzsimmons's debut feature was well received on the



2016 festival circuit, receiving Best New Filmmaker award at the Boston Science Fiction Festival and a number of other nominations. After that, the film seemed to go into hiding but the good news is that a UK theatrical release is imminent.

Arguably, *Native* is a short film stretched to feature length, but despite the low budget and the limitations of the story it's a fascinating watch. TV regulars Rupert Graves as Cane and Ellie Kendrick as Eva are extremely well cast; their small screen training equips them well for the close-up nature of much of the film's photography, essential in conveying the complex facial movements that reflect their conflict of conscience.

It's Fitzsimmons's choice of pace that's the really interesting thing about this film. In a lesser director's hands *Native* could have been a soporific experience – and indeed the first 15 minutes or so don't bode well – but the slow accretion of details attracts rather than repels the viewer. Stylistically, *Native* takes its tone from Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) and thematically from Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976); these are bold movies to draw on in your first feature, but in the end it's the performances and the cool, detached but involving script that won me over. This is a slow, carefully played film, which in the end raises some big questions about our existence. Recommended.

Daniel King



Stalker

Dir Andrei Tarkovsky, Russia 1979
Criterion, £17.99 (Blu-ray)

Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* is justly renowned as one of the greatest science-fiction films of all time and, in this humble reviewer's opinion, is one of the greatest films of all time in any genre. To describe it merely as sci-fi seems to me to be missing the point somewhat. Its SF credentials are certainly impeccable, based as it is on Boris and Arkady Strugatsky's 1972 novel *Roadside Picnic* – itself a seminal work in the genre – but Tarkovsky is even less interested in aliens than the

Strugatskys are. He jettisons most of the plot points from the novel and instead uses the basic premise as a framework for an exploration of metaphysical themes.

The stalker of the title is a hired guide, one who leads those brave or foolhardy enough on trips through the Zone – a part of the country turned into a lethal wasteland as a result of an alien visitation. The reason travellers wish to enter the Zone is because there is reputed to be at its heart a room where one's most innermost desire can be granted. Two such travellers, a writer and a professor (Tarkovsky regulars Anatoly Solonitsyn and Nikolai Grinko, respectively), have hired a stalker (Alexander Kaidanovsky) to take them there. And that's pretty much it as far as plot is concerned: the film is a literal and metaphorical journey.

Its greatness lies in its uniqueness. More than any other director, with the possible exception of Ingmar Bergman, Andrei Tarkovsky used film as a means to consider philosophical questions; his films have a depth and profundity unsurpassed in cinema history. In *Stalker* he examines concepts such as religion, conscious and unconscious desire, and 20th century anxiety with the ultimate purpose of laying bare the human condition.

I'm aware that all this makes the film sound very dry, but the remarkable thing is that Tarkovsky succeeds in his goal while delivering it in the form of a tense and gripping cinematic experience. On top of that, Tarkovsky was – within Soviet budgetary restrictions – an absolute master of technique and composition, so the film has an epic feel to it, which, in a different context, would rival someone like David Lean. To have *Stalker* available on Blu-ray in the UK is cause for celebration, and even more so because it has been issued as part of the Criterion Collection's UK collection. The film has never looked better (seen here in a new 2K digital restoration) and comes complete with some extremely interesting and illuminating supplements, as you'd expect from Criterion.

Daniel King



TELEVISION

TWIN PEAKS: THE LIMITED EVENT SERIES

Universal Pictures, £34.99 (Bluray), (£24.99 DVD)

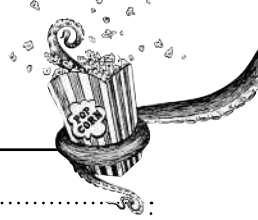
When the second season of *Twin Peaks* ended in 1991 with a disturbing cliff-hanger and the words "How's Annie?" viewers, myself included, could not have suspected that we'd wait 25 years to see a follow-up to David Lynch and Mark Frost's game-changing TV series. Declining ratings had done for the show; it was obvious that a third season was never going to materialise and fans had to content themselves with Lynch's pitch-black prequel *Fire Walk with Me* and then... nothing. To everyone's surprise, *Twin Peaks* returned in 2017 on the US Showtime network. I hadn't taken the dead Laura Palmer's "I'll see you again in 25 years" as anything more than another Lynchian tease: but, give or take a year of network wrangling, she wasn't wrong.

Twin Peaks: The Return (or the 'Limited Event Series' as it's billed for this release) may or may not have been what people were expecting – confounding expectations was *Twin Peaks*'s MO – but, like the original (while being quite unlike the original), the new *Peaks* is a captivating, funny and disturbing experience. It brings back most of the characters from the original series, and allows us to piece together (to a certain extent) what's happened to them in the intervening quarter of a century, but it does so in ways that some viewers may find frustrating; it introduces so many new characters (sometimes for single scenes) that it's hard to keep up; it picks up long-abandoned plot threads and interweaves them with dizzying new ones; it leans heavily at times on Angelo Badalamenti's brilliant score, but opts for an unsettlingly music-free approach for long stretches; it continues, and indeed doubles down on, the disturbing, dreamlike doublings and oneiric patternings to be found in all Lynch's work; it seems at times to be in dialogue with his earlier films – from *Eraserhead* to *Inland Empire* – acting as a kind of 18-hour summation of his entire career. Unlike the more collaborative original, this is Lynch uncut, full of temporal dislocations, surreal non sequiturs and brutal violence alongside the warmth and humour.

One thing the new series doesn't do is nostalgia; there are no cosy reunions (although there is clearly considerable warmth between director and cast), and no attempts to pick up where we left off; the passage of time is crucial, impossible to ignore and central to the story Lynch and Frost want to tell. Geographically too, the show opens out to a surprising, disorienting extent; we are no longer happily/uneasily trapped in the familiar locations and spooky woods of one small town in the Pacific Northwest, but transported back and forth from New York City to New Mexico, from Las Vegas to South Dakota, as the ramifications of some primal cosmic evil seem to spread across the vastness of America; empty landscapes, endless roads and cheap motels familiar from other films (not just Lynch's) become waypoints on a nightmare road trip or nodes of power on an occult map we can't quite decipher.

I realise I've said nothing about what actually happens over this sprawling movie in 18 parts, and that's because – oddly perhaps in a piece that eschews narrative convention to such a startling degree – spoilers really would ruin the experience. Television and films, even at their best, rely on readily available tropes and familiar structures of feeling, and *Twin Peaks* simply doesn't. Best to discover it for yourself. But be warned: for a while, at least, everything else you watch will seem oddly shallow, predictable and lacking both 'the glow' and the deep, deep darkness to be found in this bizarrely compelling masterpiece.

Extras include a five-and-a-half-hour marathon following Lynch at work. This, although narrated by a gnomish Werner Herzog soundalike (an extended joke? I'm not sure) is actually riveting. Watching the director at work, it's clear how heavily invested he is in *Twin Peaks*, and it's an eye-opener to see what a hands-on, passionate and practical man Lynch is: of course, while he is very clear about *how* things should be done, he's pretty reticent about *why*. **David Sutton** ★★★★★



SOUNDS PECULIAR BRIAN J ROBB PRESENTS THE FORTEAN TIMES PODCAST COLUMN

As a medium, podcasts have been enjoying something of a boom over the past few years. The democratisation of quality media production through high-specification computer equipment has allowed a plethora of previously marginalised voices their own access to what were once quaintly called ‘the airwaves’.

In the past, broadcasting (reaching a wide audience from a single source) was heavily regulated and controlled, mainly through frequency scarcity: only those authorised or licensed to have access to the airwaves were allowed to broadcast. In UK terms that, initially, meant the BBC, with commercial stations coming along in the 1960s.

In terms of radio, there have been amateurs since the invention of the medium, reaching a crescendo with the offshore ‘pirate’ pop stations of the 1960s that ultimately led to the BBC launching Radio 1. For the longest time, Radio 4 (or NPR in the US) has been the default home of quality ‘spoken word’ content, whether that was drama, current affairs, or documentary radio.

Now, anyone with a microphone and an iPad, laptop, or computer and the right software can produce a decent podcast and launch their work onto a waiting world. Not all of them are good, while many are far better than you might expect, sometimes surpassing the productions of ‘legitimate’ broadcasters like the BBC or NPR. When it comes to fortean topics, there are a host of podcasts out there, ranging from the polished and compelling to the amateurish and downright weird. SOUNDS PECULIAR is your insider guide to the best of the current podcasts dealing with fortean topics: all you have to do is sit back and listen...



Podcast: *Strange*
Web: www.strangepod.com
Host: Chris Batchelor
Episodes Count: 17
Format: Single voice reading
Established: 2016
Frequency: Monthly
Topics: Weird stories

In his introduction to each episode of his podcast *Strange*, host Chris Batchelor promises “strange stories of the paranormal, bizarre coincidences, and unexplained phenomena”. Batchelor has only been running his one-man show since 2016, but he has so far clocked up 17 episodes covering a wide range of fortean topics. According to Batchelor, his scope covers “the unusual, the unknown, and just about everything that can be described as strange...” He takes in historical mysteries, paranormal happenings, and other unknown phenomena. In fact, if it’s fodder for *Fortean Times*, it’s certainly fodder for *Strange*.

The first two episodes stretch from folklore, covering a famously weird event in South Devon in 1855 (‘The Devil’s Footprints’), to the odd sounds heard by Apollo astronauts orbiting the Moon (‘Moon Music’). Batchelor takes the claims of the strange noises heard by the Apollo 10 astronauts (there’s a perfectly terrestrial explanation) as a hook to explore a selection of other unexplained anomalous sounds from around the world, including those coming from underwater and within the Earth itself. While some likely have ordinary explanations, not all do. This is, of course, ideal for an audio podcast, as it affords Batchelor the opportunity to actually play recordings of the weird noises (amid a wider ambient soundscape, with music by Ben Sound running behind Batchelor’s rather soothing voice). The larger world of anomalous hums is explored in some depth, giving an idea of how wide-ranging these short talks can be (he even fits in the still unexplained ‘number stations’).

Space returns in the fourth episode, which covers the notorious ‘Wow’ signal of 1977 in which SETI astronomer Jerry R Ehman marked up a print-out of an anomalous data signal with a red circle and the exclamation ‘Wow’.

For a long time, it was thought to be a potential signal from an intelligence beyond Earth. That is believed to be less likely these days, with all sorts of alternative explanations offered, from microwaves to stray television broadcasts.

Several fortean favourites pop up, from the Tunguska explosion in Russia (Episode 14), the mysterious substance known as ‘Star Jelly’ (Episode 17), and the ‘curse’ of the infamous Crying Boy painting (Episode 12). Crime mysteries also feature, including the three attempts to hang convicted killer John ‘Babbacombe’ Lee at Exeter Prison in 1885 (Episode 3: ‘The Man They Could Not Hang’).

Flying saucers and UFO lore have recurred a few times, including the 1977 events in the Dyfed Triangle in Wales (Episode 16: ‘The Broad Haven UFO’), and the 1964 photo taken by a Carlisle fireman of his daughter in which a strange figure appeared (Episode 9: ‘The Solway Firth Spaceman’), both of which have featured in *Fortean Times* several times over the years.

More oddball topics covered by *Strange* include the question of coincidence (Episode 15), whether the number 13 is unlucky or not (appropriately enough, Episode 13), the role of premonition, especially of

one’s own death (Episode 10), and British big cats, including various sightings on Dartmoor and elsewhere across the British countryside (Episode 7). There are also a couple of themed specials for Halloween and Christmas taking in relevant seasonal stories.

Each instalment of *Strange* is around 15 minutes, so easily digested during a lunch break or while carrying out a domestic task. Batchelor’s reading style and voice (easily radio quality; he does have a local UK radio background) are eminently well suited to podcasting, and he claims to present the show from “a Victorian attic in the historic city of Plymouth”. In some ways, this is a British equivalent of American podcast *Lore* [Sounds Peculiar, **FT353:68**] and recalls Richard Maclean Smith’s *Unexplained* [Sounds Peculiar, **FT355:68**], one of the other few worthwhile British fortean podcasts.

Things stalled at *Strange* HQ recently, with Batchelor occupied with the birth of his second child. No new episodes have appeared since June 2017, but Batchelor is teaming up with Spoke Media, who produce a US-based podcast also called *Strange*, to contribute British-based stories, essentially merging the two shows into an international co-production. It’s a worthwhile endeavour and certainly worth Batchelor’s continued attention. In the meantime, there’s an archive of the 17 existing episodes to keep you entertained.

Strengths: Wide diversity of topics, well presented.

Weaknesses: None really; *Strange* lives up to its billing.

Recommended Episodes: Episode 5: *Ghost Ships (the Mary Celeste and others)*; Episode 6: *Electric People (covering ‘Sliders’, who affect street lamps and other electric items)*.

Verdict: *Strange* is well scripted and narrated, making it a welcome addition to the world of fortean podcasts.

The simple way to buy a car

Buy online and we do the hard work for you

Excellent monthly finance packages available



You buy online
- selecting from
over 40,000 used
cars nationwide



We inspect the
car and supplying
dealer for price
and quality



We deliver the car
to your door with
a 14-day money-
back guarantee

buyacar.co.uk

SEE OUR REVIEWS ON  TRUSTPILOT

“Amazing! They are with you every step”



Lisa, 21 October

“Very impressed and was smooth and hassle free from start to finish”



David, 9 September

“Thank you and we would buy through you again”



Clancy, 21 August

“I’m loving my new ride. I would recommend this service to anyone”



Tatiana, 8 September

British wrestling always had a dark side. This magazine explores it. Send SAE for details.

British Wrestlers,
City House,
131 Friargate,
Preston, Lancs.
PR1 2EF.

The Socialist Party

aims at building a moneyless world community based on common ownership and democratic control with production solely for use not profit. It opposes all leadership, all war.

For 3 **FREE** issues of our monthly Socialist Standard write to:

The Socialist Party (FT)
52 Clapham High Street
London SW4 7UN
www.worldsocialism.org

INTERSTELLAR WAR IS COMING TO OUR WORLD

WILL YOU BE READY?

@SMDreactor

URGENT

ANIMAL SOS SRI LANKA
Animal SOS Sri Lanka
UK Registered Charity 1119902

Please LIKE us on

APPEAL TO SAVE LIVES

We face daily horrors in our work to save stray animals in Sri Lanka. Prince was found by some tourists. He had an horrific, foul smelling, maggot infested neck wound and was near to death when he arrived at our sanctuary. We saved his life along with 1000's of other desperate animals that we give a lifeline to. Without us, they are doomed. Prince lives at our sanctuary along with many other rescues that have suffered so greatly on the streets. Animal SOS Sri Lanka is a UK Registered Charity and we need your support NOW so we can continue saving lives.

Please save a life today by donating

PLEASE HELP US TO CONTINUE GIVING THESE ANIMALS A FUTURE BY DONATING TODAY. *There is no greater gift*

I enclose £100 £50 £25 Other £

Mr/Mrs/Ms.

First Name.....Surname.....

Address.....

.....

Email.....

Please make cheques payable to: Animal SOS Sri Lanka. Post to: 12 Cheyne Avenue, South Woodford, London E18 2DR
Or make a secure donation online www.animalsos-sl.com {E} info@animalsos-sl.com {T} 07773 746108 *thank you!*

Give more at no extra cost to you:

GIFT AID. I would like Animal SOS Sri Lanka to reclaim tax on this & all future donations until I notify you otherwise. I confirm I am a UK taxpayer & that I pay as much income or capital gains as Animal SOS Sri Lanka will reclaim in the tax year (currently 25p in every £1 donated.)

Signature..... Date.....



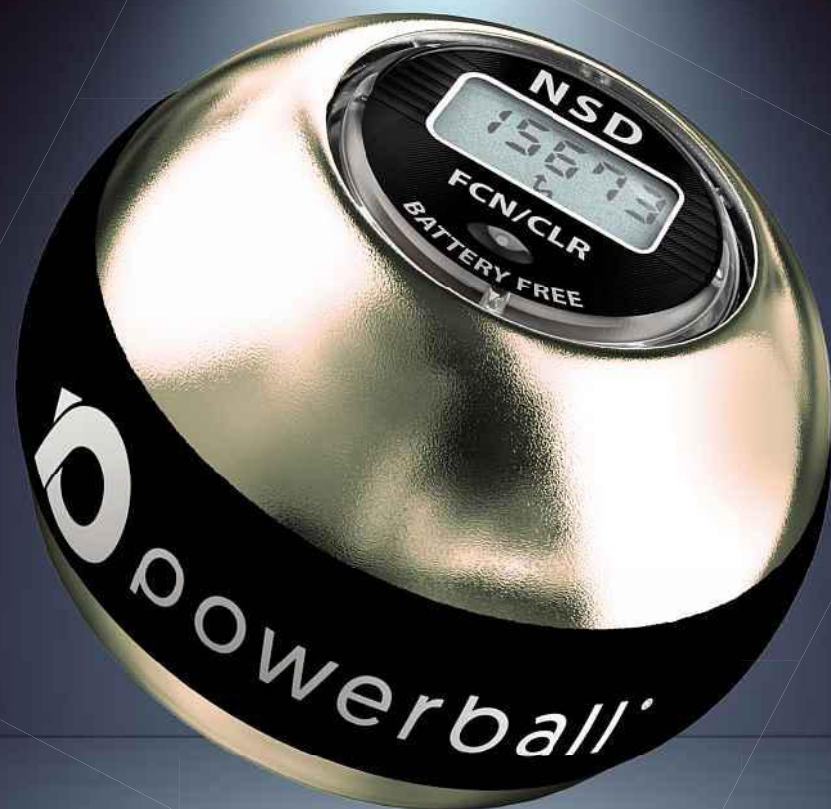
SERIOUS PASSION

Passionists are passionate about
the poor and powerless.

We recognise the Cross of Jesus
wherever we meet suffering humanity
and the suffering earth.

*For the Crucified God
in the Crucified People
on the Crucified Earth*

THE MOST AMAZING **DEVICE** YOU'LL EVER HOLD IN YOUR HAND



Powerball® gyroscopes - up to 30% off in-store this week

Helpful for golf, sprained wrist, grip strength, carpal tunnel, tennis, climbing, guitar, tennis elbow, cycling, RSI, piano, broken arm, gardening, shooting, martial arts, drumming, squash, hockey, cricket, arm wrestling, basically...everything

 powerballs.com



LETTERS



CONTACT US BY POST: BOX 2409 LONDON NW5 4NP OR E-MAIL SIEVEKING@FORTEANTIMES.COM
PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS

The Ashes

I have nothing to add to the history of the Ashes [Mythconceptions, FT362:25], but I was reminded that when I was about five or six I was convinced that the 'ashes' that were so much talked about on the radio were the ashes of the losing team, who were slaughtered and cremated so their remains could be handed to the winners. I didn't think this at all odd at the time; it was just something that happened in the grown-up world. Mercifully, perhaps, I never mentioned this theory to my parents, and gradually I realised that cricket was not nearly as exciting as I had thought, a conviction that has never left me.

Tina Rath
London

St Bernard dogs

With regard to the 'Mythconception' about St Bernard dogs [FT359:25], my 2011 book *Amazing Dogs* contains a long chapter on the cultural history of these dogs. The keg of brandy that they supposedly carried is an invention from Victorian times. There is reason to believe, however, that the dogs *did* carry a small flask with a 'reviving liquor', said by one author to have been wine, suspended from their collars. At the present time, packs of St Bernard dogs are kept at the Fondation Barry and at the Musée des Chiens de St Bernard in Martigny, mainly for breeding purposes. When I went there to see them, none of the dogs had a keg around the neck.

Jan Bondeson
Dunbar, Scotland

Black square

My manager reported a recent UFO witnessed by her and her husband. The sighting took place in Crosby, Merseyside, at approximately 6.30pm when they arrived home from work in late October 2017. The sky was clear although the Sun had almost set. The UFO was matt black and they estimated it to be about the same size and shape as an A4 sheet of paper and around 30ft (9m) above the house. It was moving silently

SIMULACRA CORNER



Have a heart

We publish these images in anticipation of St Valentine's Day. Jason Moore was picking up apples in his garden when he came across this Valentine fruit, while Daniel Barton writes: "This perfect heart shape of lollo rosso was on the back of a lettuce leaf that garnished my wife's scampi and chips at the Briardene pub in Whitley Bay one day last October."

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP or to sieveling@forteanimes.com.

at speed in a direct straight line from south to north; roughly travelling up the Sefton coastline. One intriguing feature was that it flipped onto its back and then over again. I ran through the usual suspects: a drone? – too silent; a bird? – the wrong shape, too fast and direct, silent and flipping on its back; a Chinese lantern? – too direct a trajectory and travelling too fast (ditto weather balloon); a plane/ hang-glider? – too small. So I'm really not sure. I am aware there has been at least one reported rectangular black UFO from China this year but I think that was large and hovered. Anyone ideas?

PS: I've subscribed to FT for years and devour cover to cover every word every month.

Dan Clay
Merseyside

Catapulted

Reading the February 1996 *Fortean Times* in bed this morning, I found the item 'Raining cats and cats' [FT85:10], (initially published in a Bournemouth church magazine in 1994) about the vicar that accidentally

catapulted his cat onto a neighbouring lawn, where it was appropriated by a little girl. Fast forward to FT356:52, where the Hierophant's Apprentice quotes (essentially) the same story from Jan Harold Brunvand's *Too Good to be True*, claiming it's "one previously unencountered". Doesn't the Hierophant's Apprentice read FT then?
Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

Bubonic Plague vaccine

Your report "The Plague Returns" [FT361:11] from *The Economist* states that no vaccine has been developed for Bubonic Plague. Not so. I was a lab technician at Cutter Labs in Berkeley, California, in 1968. One of my jobs was testing plague vaccine. The bacteria were killed with formaldehyde and we tested for the concentration of this chemical. We mouth pipetted samples because the lab wanted us to work as quickly as possible. If you overshoot, you got a mouthful of vaccine, and

if the level of formaldehyde was too low it meant you had live bacteria as well. Naturally, we were immunised every six months and I never overshoot because formaldehyde isn't good for you either. Plague vaccine was developed in 1890 and has been improved over the years. Governments keep a supply in case of emergencies because the disease is endemic in parts of the world. It also would make an excellent germ warfare agent if their attention faltered.
Nancy Farmer
Portal, Arizona

Thunderstones

If Charles Fort thought the scientists of his time had no explanation for "thunderstones" he was mistaken [FT362:79]. The established belief, from the early 19th century, is that the small conical ones are the fossilised rostra of belemnites, relatives of squid that lived and were catastrophically extinguished at the same time as ammonites ("snakestones").
Donald Room
London

LETTERS

Stopping horses

With reference to Shaun Cooper's letter about witches stopping horses [FT361:74-75]: when I was a child my mother told me of a wise woman/witch in Somerset in the late 1800s called Old Mother Wembridge, past whose cottage horses refused to go if she was standing in her doorway. Drivers would get down and ask her to go inside. She would do so, laughing, and only then would the horse move on. Since then I read somewhere of a plant that horses dislike, and I wonder if Mother Wembridge perhaps used it in making her remedies and horses could smell it on her person.

Elsa Beckett
London

Organ music

A very interesting article about musical hallucinations ('An Ear for Music', FT361:22). For some years, my wife has complained of experiencing a type of tinnitus that manifests as organ music. She was for many years a member of the excellent St George's Beckenham Church choir, so it made me wonder if this was a case of the brain struggling to make sense of random noise produced in tinnitus and re-interpreting it as music, in this case, very familiar to my wife from her days as a chorister. She says that there is no recognisable tune to what she

hears now, only short phrases from scales – but she definitely identifies the instrument she hears as being a church organ. I am surmising that once the brain 'decides' upon an interpretation, that interpretation gets 'locked in', producing the maddening 'earworm'. In any case, I was able to direct her towards the article, and she found it both fascinating in itself, and of some relief to know that others were having the same rather weird experience. So – thank you!

Anthony Wilkins
Ripponden, West Yorkshire

Dog-headed saint

Permit me to remedy an omission in Maria J Pérez Cuervo's excellent article on 'The Politics of Monsters' [FT361:30-37]. She gives the impression that mediæval Christianity had an overwhelmingly negative attitude towards monsters; however, there was one monster who had a very positive place in the affections of Christians in earlier centuries. This is St Christopher, who came of the race of Cynocephali and yet served as a fierce (and pretty scary-looking) defender of the faith. To quote David Gordon White's book *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago, 1991, 35): "Saint Christopher's cynocephaly is a constant theme in his Eastern iconography and hagiography, whereas he is only occasionally portrayed with a dog's head in

Western traditions. His function and situation are nevertheless identical in both traditions." For those of us who reject the recent modernisation of the Church since the 1960s (when Christopher was, I gather, removed from the official martyrologies), to look on the monstrous dog-headed saint is to be freed from the danger of a bad death that day,

hence his frequent appearance in wall paintings in mediæval church buildings.

To be fair, Cuervo's article does mention Saint Augustine of Hippo's reference to the monstrous races as worthy of salvation, but Christopher shows that monsters can even attain sanctity. [For more on the Cynocephali, see Matt Salusury's "A Short History of Dog-Headed Men", FT310:32-37]

Paul Kitchenham
Shotton, Flintshire, Wales

Titanic coincidence

Many people have heard of premonitions and coincidences relating to the *Titanic* disaster. But for myself, whose acquaintance with these may have started in *Fate* magazine some years ago, the following was new. "Synchronicity and the *Titanic*," an article in *Atlantis Rising* #124, says that 23 years after the sinking, a seaman aboard a merchant vessel named *Titanian* had been reading a novel, published in 1898, called *The Wreck of the Titan*. Ten days after the *Titanian* had left Scotland for New York, seaman George Reeves was ordered to stand lookout at 2300 hours. At 23:35, he realised that the time was just five minutes earlier than when the *Titanic* had hit an iceberg. Increasing unease soon prompted him to order the engines to be stopped, saying "iceberg ahead". The ship then struck some large fragments of ice, which caused damage, and as it came to a full stop an actual iceberg was spotted looming ahead in the darkness.

Richard Porter
Denver, Colorado

Replication & hawk moths

I read the article 'Submarines, sonars and spooks' [FT355:14] with interest. The 1975 report by Skolnik is now available at www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/b228588.pdf. It is perhaps a little unfair to suggest that researchers "do not believe in submarine-generated UFOs".

Skolnik's report suggests an acceptance of the reality of the phenomenon, and some possible mechanisms have been proposed. Fundamentally, however, if an effect is reproducible then it can be investigated with a view to elucidating its mechanism. If its mechanism is understood, then conditions can be contrived to reproduce the effect. If the mechanism is unknown and the effect is not reproducible, then what further avenues of investigation are available?

I don't think the issue is a lack of belief so much as the lack of any clear way forward for investigating it. This strikes me as being a problem common to most fortæan phenomena. There is also the issue that the lack of reproducibility in this case is probably due to it occurring as a result of the complex interaction of multiple environmental factors – which makes it almost impossible to model. It is a fact that defence spending in the Western world is fairly tightly constrained at the moment, so investigating phenomena that are very resistant to investigation is unlikely to be a priority.

• Anthony Riddell's notion of a 'hopping' T-Rex [FT359:73] is a wonderful mental image, but I suspect it falls foul of scaling laws – where volume (and thus mass), does not scale linearly – hence the fundamental differences in body design between elephants and insects. It is received wisdom that elephants cannot jump because of their size (in fact they can, but only at risk of injury). T-rex was double the mass of an elephant, so I can't imagine it did a lot of jumping.

• Finally, I wonder if 'Jim D' and Rachel McDonald's 'fairies' [FT355:76, 359:75] might have been hummingbird hawk moths. I have seen these in the South of France, and they do look rather odd and out-of-place. I don't think their presence in the UK has ever been confirmed, which would presumably make these observations of interest to entomologists.

Ian l'Anson
By email



"I'm sending you back as a mayfly.
See you tomorrow."



Brecon Ice Rings

I recently acquired this early photographic postcard showing a fine display of ice rings at Llanfaes Bridge, Brecon, on 1 January 1914.

Mark Graham, *Huddersfield, West Yorkshire*

I would like to posit a possible solution to Jim D's 'flying fairy'. The BBC news website recently printed an article, with video, of the hummingbird hawk moth, a very rare and highly unusual visitor to these shores. I was struck by the resemblance to Mr D's drawing both in form and in angle of flight. It's certainly something that I would have been unable to identify had it flown past me. www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-northern-ireland-42097984/unusual-hummingbird-hawk-moth-defies-myths

Gareth Young

Frodsham, Cheshire

Ghost moths, perhaps

In response to Matt Salisbury's very interesting article 'The Mystery Lights of Suffolk' [FT360:46-51], it seems to me the often-touted explanation for such phenomena doesn't really explain what is usually reported. Will-o-the-wisps are usually described as small points

or globes of light moving about above marshes or meadows, keeping a certain distance from the observer, not flickering flames or vague glows coming up from the ground as in the marsh gas and phosphine theories.

It seems more likely to me that insects are responsible for many of the sightings, particularly the ghost moth, though this is now much rarer than it used to be. The males of the species have pure white wings and dance just above the height of grass stalks, among which the females are hidden. The moth's fast-moving white wings when hovering can resemble a little ball of light mist, presumably sometimes enhanced by moonlight or other light sources. This explanation for will-o-the-wisps was first suggested by Kenneth Gloyne Blair (based on his own observations) at a meeting of entomologists in 1922, and seems to me the most plausible suggestion so far. Other moths and insects may be similarly implicated in the mystery light

sightings and offer a more fitting explanation than any of the purely geological or atmospheric phenomena suggested.

I also wonder whether, in electrically charged air, insects' wings might sometimes generate enough of a static charge to create a glowing St Elmo's Fire type phenomenon around them. I would be interested to know of any thoughts or experiences readers may have regarding this idea. The faint glow that Matt Salisbury saw on the ground in Dunwich Forest was very probably bioluminescence from honey fungus or similar.

Paul Harris

By email

Crypto attitudes

In response to Charles Paxton's Forum piece [FT362:56], I can only commiserate that de Montfort was not born in England rather than France, where he might have been more fairly treated. He might have overestimated the size and ship-destroying powers of giant squid,

but he was only working with the little information he had at the time. Before the gorilla was discovered, stories circulated of savage hairy wild men that would rape native girls and fight elephants. This of course is untrue, but both gorillas and giant squid exist. Pierre Denys de Montfort was correct and despite his pioneering research he still remains uncredited.

Cryptozoologists do develop new methods of research. I am hoping to employ underwater cameras and my own unique baiting system on my next expedition if it comes off. Remember, most cryptozoologists are hamstrung due to lack of funds. I can afford only two or three weeks in the field when ideally I should be spending months or years in search of target species.

As for the high priests of science, how many times have we seen some 'rent-a-sceptic' scientist mockingly pouring scorn on cryptozoology in documentaries? Most of these people have never been to the areas in question or searched for the cryptid, yet they are happy to sneer from the comfort of their lecture halls and laboratories. The Wikipedia page for cryptozoology is totally and unjustly skewed against the subject. It lists the criticisms but none of the support.

Cryptozoologists are not on a holy crusade to make everyone believe in monsters. Neither do we believe in every wild story we hear. All we ask is for people to be more open-minded. Cryptozoology should be looked on as a branch of zoology.

Heuvelmans could indeed be seen as a high priest of cryptozoology; he was certainly a pioneer. However, he was also a victim of his own dogmas. He rejected many reports of reptilian sea serpents in favour of his own theory of marine mammals and even tried to twist reports to fit his paradigm. I don't follow him blindly and we should not follow the so-called experts blindly either.

Richard Freeman

Zoological Director, Centre for Fortean Zoology, Exeter

LETTERS



Lacuna

I think there is a rip in space/time that exists between these two signs found on the south side of Julia Creek, Queensland (pop 511). The rip is 4km [2.5 miles] long and between these signs to Kynuna, Queensland (pop 95). The question whether space/time is long, or deep, or high remains unanswered because this view inevitably is from only one angle.

William Wilson, *Mount Isa, Queensland*

Night Mail

*This is the night mail crossing the Border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order.*

The recent extensive discussion of the 1970s weirdscape [FT354:30-37, 357:74-76, 359:72] has been fascinating: I wondered if your readers remember one feature of the era's nocturnal soundscape – the 'Post Plane'? We all draw comfort from the notion that while we sleep, thousands of paramedics, fire and police officers and engineering crews are working through the night keeping watch; keeping us safe. Once, we would have ascribed lighthouse keepers and coastguards to their ranks – although the fact that they've all been cut, rationalised, merged and outsourced throws a jug of cold water over this particular twinge of *Gemutlichkeit*.

As a teenager in the Seventies, in the early hours of the morning, if I woke to the faint drone of a propeller-driven plane, I would think sleepily, "There goes the

Post Plane", somehow reassured by the notion that it really was a twin-engined type; part of some sort of designated domestic flight network, resplendent in Royal Mail livery, its hold filled with letters and parcels, tracking north or south, ensuring that people from the Shetland Islands to the Lizard could open their post over breakfast. It was, I guess, like the shot of *Hygge* that hearing the Shipping Forecast gives us: we are snug and safe while gallant seafarers are battling wintry gales in the North Atlantic. Royal Mail does use a small fleet of 'planes – but they are three Boeing 737 jets flown by Titan Airways, variously out of East Midlands, Bournemouth, Exeter, Stanstead, Edinburgh and Belfast airports – not propeller driven ones. The railway Travelling Post Offices – and older readers will recall fondly that you could even post a letter if you were hurrying along the platform and found one temporarily sided there – are long gone.

But the story persists; it has

regional variations and context: in Merseyside, the Wirral and North Wales, people insist it's a regular, scheduled flight from Speke, Hawarden or Borras to London, carrying the mails and, some allege, sensitive police, legal and intelligence-related documents. Along the length of the Pennines it's regarded as 'The London Plane'; in Newcastle, I've heard people insist that they listen out for it, and the engine note helps compose them for sleep – and it is even ascribed a type: a Short SC7 Skyvan.

Even if this is simply a kind of foaftale or wish-fulfilment; merely assigning a cosy, nostalgic story to a random night charter, ferry, passenger, or freight flight, or a residual memory of hearing the pre-dawn whistle of the Night Mail train – its a rather wonderful one.

And none will hear the postman's knock

*Without a quickening of heart
For who can bear to feel himself forgotten.*

Keith Davies
Newcastle upon Tyne

Dangerous squid

I found Charles Paxton's Forum piece on giant cephalopods [FT362:56-57] very interesting. Part of the problem is that attacks by giant cephalopods on craft at sea have persisted in fiction, and hence the popular imagination, into modern times. Examples extend from Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* (1870) to the current TV ad for Captain Birdseye's fish fingers.

Nick Warren
Pinner, Middlesex

Bleeding witches

I enjoyed Dr Jacob Middleton's article 'Twilight of the Witches' [FT359:38-43], but at its conclusion the author seems oddly, er, sanguine about witch-bleeding, in light of some of the accounts given. Was the practice really "a cathartic release of social tensions"? Not, I suggest, for the victims – the people actually slashed and stabbed to let the social tensions out. Most accounts seem to describe only minor injury, but in spite of this – or perhaps because of it – they suggest a culture that accepted casual violence against women.

Sadly familiar, also, is the problem that the women making complaints weren't believed, one way or another: Mary Philips's account of being "followed and insulted by young men using bad language" barely seems to require a mental health explanation, let alone a supernatural one. Perhaps it was not wholly a delusion – or not at first?

Meanwhile, perpetrators get the benefit of the doubt: in the accounts of Ann Tennant's murder, James Heywood is characterised as "eccentric" and as otherwise having been "a quiet inoffensive man". Plus ça change! Today's mass media routinely use the same language to excuse even the worst acts of violence – and particular violence against women. In this respect, at least, witch-bleeding ain't over yet.

Tim Wilkinson Lewis
Cambridge

IT HAPPENED TO ME...

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

Moving wine glasses

I was advised by social media that a friend and colleague had passed away of natural causes. His body was discovered on 24 August 2017. A fellow airline pilot dying of "natural causes" aged only 55 aroused my suspicion. I was later informed that, in fact, he had committed suicide on 10 August. Between the 10th and 24th of that month, I was deeply aware of my friend's presence; initially, just reminders of his existence and our friendship that started in 1993. It seemed that I could not move past that period, constantly dwelling on past experiences. I was even sufficiently moved to play one of his favourite CDs, wondering what he was up to.

One afternoon during that fortnight, when my wife and I were in our kitchen, our automatically operated garbage bin opened by itself. A short time delay automatically shut the lid. We both laughed it off but I felt, strongly, that it was not a normal event. The bin lid requires a firm light sense shadow across the sensors. A fly sweep would not be sufficient. It never did that before or since.

Like so many other people, I have regular spiritual experiences at around 3.45am. Again, during the period in question, I was awoken one morning at this time with the en-suite toilet flushing by itself. A couple of days later, at the same time, I was awoken with the sound of someone washing in the hand basin. I turned and noticed my wife asleep beside me. Learning later that my friend had died on the 10th and his body found on the 24th August, it seemed to me that the events taking place were caused by him.

I have had numerous, humorous discussions with friends and colleagues that should they pass before me, to let me know of an existence after death. Nothing frightening



please, just something simple, like moving my glass of afternoon wine. Shortly after 24 August, out lunching with my wife, wine on the table, glasses poured, food at the prep stage, she went to the bathroom. Alone, but constantly aware of my friend's demise, I moved my hand and grasped the stalk of the wine glass. I felt the top of the glass move with a push and instantly let go. The glass moved on its own six inches [15cm] across the table. I watched in astonishment. My wife returned while the waiter laid out the first course. I kept quiet about the event but felt deeply content that it was my colleague, answering my previous challenge. Then my wife's glass of wine started moving a full 6in to 8in [15-20cm] away from her. "Whaat?" she exclaimed. I told her that it was my friend but wasn't ready to mention my own wine glass moving. That would really have spoiled the garlic bread!

Retired airline pilots like me are trained to analyse events very carefully. I have often attempted to simulate the event. Glasses do not move by themselves. The condensation drips will often form a condensation base from drips but the glass will not move. The table in question was completely flat. Once I became at peace with the passing of this dear friend, only fabulous memories

remain. But, one last time, a few weeks ago, I was moved to play his favourite album tracks, some of which I didn't like much. It was a final message from him to let go. I have.

Gordon MacFarlane
By email

Lifting a curse

I used to design tyres for a living. We had a number of factories around the world. We visited them from time to time, and staff from these factories came to Birmingham. We were often in daily correspondence by phone and fax (no emails back then), so we got to know our opposite numbers quite well.

One of our technical managers at the Zambian factory, well respected, well educated and, as far as I know, quite popular, was unexpectedly taken ill. This was some years ago when AIDS was still making the headlines and there was some concern that this might be the problem, although he was adamant that this could not be the case. The doctors could find no cause for his illness, but he got progressively worse. Then someone suggested that a curse had been put on him. His rejected this out of hand, insisting he had no time for such superstitions. However, as he continued to get worse he was eventually

persuaded, very much against his better judgement, to return to his village to consult the local shaman. He presumably greased a few palms and before long he began to improve and made a full recovery.

Was he suffering from some straightforward malady from which he would have recovered anyway, even though the doctors could not diagnose what it was? Or did he only think he was a sceptic when subconsciously he believed in the power of curses? Or does witchcraft really work? My money is on the second alternative, except he would have needed to know that someone had put the mockers on him, and he said he did not.

Steve Yates
Erdington, Birmingham

Maternal talent

On 30 December 2003 I attended a family party at my brother's house. My two-year-old son Arthur was having a fantastic time running around being chased by his father and aunt. I was sitting in the front room talking to my brother when in my mind's eye I saw Arthur running into the room, turning around and loudly colliding with the door. As I turned to the left, I could see the door in the exact position I had imagined and Arthur came whizzing into the room pursued by his aunt. As he did a lap of the room and headed back towards the door, I leaned across and pushed it shut, just before he ran straight past me on an exact trajectory to where the door had been.

I am certain I prevented my son's injury, and there is no way that what I had envisioned could actually have happened before as I had never been in my brother's house in that situation since Arthur was born. Has anyone else been able to prevent a future event in this way? Is it a version of *déjà vu*?

Mary Haynes
Melbourne, Derbyshire

Fortean Traveller



113. Suffolk mummified cat safari

MATT SALUSBURY sets out on an unusual bus journey around West Suffolk in search of the region's many preserved pussies and mummified moggies.

It was once common practice for cats or kittens to be walled up (sometimes alive) during the building of houses, to bring good luck and to ward off fires and evil spirits. They are still being uncovered, usually from spaces in roofs or around chimneys. (King James VI of Scotland, in his 1597 philosophical dissertation on witchcraft *Daemonologie*, discusses how malevolent spirits or “spectres” that trouble houses are most likely to enter them via the chimney.) Those entombed cats that haven’t rotted away mostly date from the 17th and 18th centuries and have been naturally mummified and preserved, giving them a scary, skeletal look, like hairless gremlins.

One such specimen turned up at The Trading Post curiosity shop in Wells, Somerset, in 2012 (*D.Mail*, 9 May 2012), brought in by a customer who found it during restoration of their 300-year-old house. There’s a mummified cat on show at The Stag pub in Hastings, while the one you can see at Christ Church



Cathedral, Dublin, was found wedged up an organ pipe.

Although mummified cats on display in the British Isles are a bit unevenly distributed, fans of the slightly gruesome artefacts can take in an easily do-able cluster of them in the western half of the county of Suffolk. They’re even handily all on the same bus route; and if you’re doing the West Suffolk mummified cat safari by car, it’s all within easy reach of the A134.

The best place to start your tour is in Bury St Edmunds – Just “Bury” to locals, and always pronounced “berry”. There are two mummified cats and two mummified kittens on display in Bury’s 12th century Moyses’s Hall, now a museum. It also has some examples of an Elizabethan regional speciality in its public collection – witch bottles. These are earthenware bottles filled with pins, needles and nails and concealed as a protection against witches (see FT359:32-37).

Moyses’s Hall’s mummified kittens are part of the Barley House Hoard, from a farm in the mid-Suffolk village of Winston. This hoard of objects deliberately dropped into a space near the chimney dates from around 1650 to 1730 and includes six felines in total, with a rat (sadly currently not on display at Moyses’s Hall), many shoes, pigs’ trotters, goose wing bones with notches cut in them and plenty else besides that presumably brought good luck. The scored goose bones could have been some form of crude almanac recording saints’ days.

The Barley House Hoard is one of four “spiritual middens” in the county of Suffolk, accumulations of stuff found in houses dropped into spaces around the chimney for good luck, sometimes spaces specially built into a dwelling.

Other such Suffolk lucky hoards include Cutchey’s Farm – a broken firkin lid, horseshoes, padlocks, stirrups, a shoe with a hole in it, through which a rat skull was found protruding, along with loads of other stuff. Archaeologist Timothy ND Easton described (in *Historical*



TOP: A display of mummified cats in Bury St Edmunds’s Moyses Hall. ABOVE: Lavenham’s splendid Guildhall.



ABOVE: The 14th century De Vere House, Lavenham, will be familiar to Harry Potter fans. BELOW: The magnificent mummified moggy in Bury's diminutive Nutshell pub; according to locals the cat has a curse attached to it.

Archaeology, 2013, 47, 1) how Cutchey's Farm's then owner, facing a run of financial bad luck after parting with the hoard in the 1980s, begged for the return of the "lucky" items. They eventually settled on the re-internment of a single child's shoe.

Suffolk hoards of lucky charms have also been pulled out of houses at Hestley Hall – broken pots, chicken's feet, fruit stones and more – and Earl Soham – over 30 shoes from the 1830s, gloves, a bottle containing a horse medicine made from hornbill glands from India, a pair of braces, a framed mirror, and a bunch of lavender. Earl Soham's 19th century hoard was less a collection of lucky items than a sort of early time capsule.

Another six mummified cats were discovered by builders doing work on a house in Fakenham Magna, not far from Bury, in 1972. (They're not on display anywhere as far as I know.) The builders reported being scared by strange tapping noises and footsteps while working on the property.

Also in Bury, a few minutes walk from Moyses' Hall, is The Nutshell pub – allegedly Britain's smallest public house – which has a fine, leathery specimen of a mummified cat hanging from the ceiling, along with all the foreign banknotes



He still has the tips of his ears and most of his whiskers

that have ended up there over the years. Should you find yourself in the pedestrianised centre of Bury, the pub is well

worth a visit.

In its bar – just 15ft by 7ft – it's almost impossible not to get pulled into one of the conversations going on there, often among Bury's tiny "alternative" community. If you can't fight banter with even better banter, it's probably not for you.

Ask nicely for permission to photograph their magnificent mummified cat, and whatever you do, do NOT touch it. Like a

lot of East Anglian mummified cats, there's said to be a curse attached to it. I heard an apocryphal tale about The Nutshell's mummified cat being stolen, as a result of a prank by "other ranks" in a locally based military unit, only for it to be returned not long after by a grim-faced off duty soldier (out of uniform but still identifiable by his haircut) who turned up at the pub at opening time and handed it back without a word.

From Bury bus station, the Chambers 753 bus takes you on an uneventful 35-minute drive to Lavenham. Most of the rural rides round here are on double deckers, so enjoy the view.

You know you've arrived in the village of Lavenham, with its 321 listed buildings, when the houses all go a bit *mental* – suddenly every building is a half-timbered, eccentric, wonky-angled extravagance with insane overhangs, often painted in bizarre colours. Look down any side street and every building in it has just the same level of mediæval madness. It used to be one of the Wool Towns, where immensely wealthy wool magnates settled. While it's a town no more, most of its 15th and 16th century Wool Town era houses still stand.

Head straight for Lavenham's white-painted Guildhall with its elaborately carved timbers. It once housed a jail, but now it's a National Trust property and local museum whose magnificent mummified cat is worth the price of admission alone.

He goes by the name of Rameses and was found hidden in a roof in one of the nearby houses. So magnificently well preserved is he that he still has the tips of his ears and most of his whiskers. None of the staff could tell me why he's called Rameses, although I suspect it's something to do with Egyptians and mummification.

If you have time to kill in Lavenham before the 753 bus (from The Swan pub) takes you onward to your next mummified cat stop in Sudbury, there's the De Vere House. This 14th century red brick and half-timbered residence was world famous even before it featured as Harry Potter's decaying birthplace and ancestral home in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 1*. Check out also the Market Square, which stood in for the market square



of Bury St Edmunds in the not particularly historically accurate witch-burning scene in the film *Witchfinder General*, starring Vincent Price.

Next stop Sudbury, birthplace of the painter Thomas Gainsborough (his most famous painting, *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, was painted in a landscape on the edge of town.) Gainsborough's statue stands in the town's market place, not far from Gainsborough's House, now a museum, at 46 Gainsborough Street.

The forteen traveller to Sudbury, however, would be more interested in a very steep hill down by the River Stour. Here there are highland cattle grazing in nearby fields by the riverbank and swans gliding down the river. Here is Walnut Tree Lane, one of the very few slopes in Suffolk so steep that if you've come here by bike you absolutely *have* to get off and walk, as I did. At the end of this lane is the Mill Hotel. Even though there

was a wedding reception about to start when I dropped in, the very welcoming receptionist had absolutely no problem with my request to crouch down by the floor in the corner and photograph their mummified cat.

It's on display in a glass-topped casket set in the floor. Its skin is a ghostly white; it's curled up with its head looking over its shoulder, a fang revealed. It's a fine specimen in a good state of preservation, apart from a few large holes chewed in it by some kind of insect. It was found in 1975 and reburied in its casket by the then Mayor of Sudbury, after Canon Peter Schneider of the Church of England reportedly



TOP LEFT: Rameses, on display in Lavenham's Guildhall. BELOW LEFT: The Mill Hotel, Sudbury. BOTTOM: The hotel is home to another mummified cat.

declined to perform a religious ceremony for a dead cat. Now it's on display under thick glass in a recess in the corner of the floor in the lobby, where it was found.

As far as I'm aware, for the next nearest mummified cat on display you'd have to go all the way to King's Lynn, over 40 miles (64km) north of Bury in north Norfolk, where there's one at The Red Cat pub and hotel. However, dedicated mummified cat spotters can take the Beestons 91 bus from Sudbury bus station all the way to Ipswich, which has good train connections and whose Ipswich Museum has a modestly-sized Egyptology gallery complete with two mummified and embalmed Egyptian cat mummies.

The bus journey from Sudbury to Ipswich on the Beeston 91 double decker bus – run by England's oldest private sector bus company – takes just over an hour and it's quite a ride. There aren't many stops on the A1071 road that takes you through south Suffolk, so the driver has his foot down on the gas pedal most of the way.

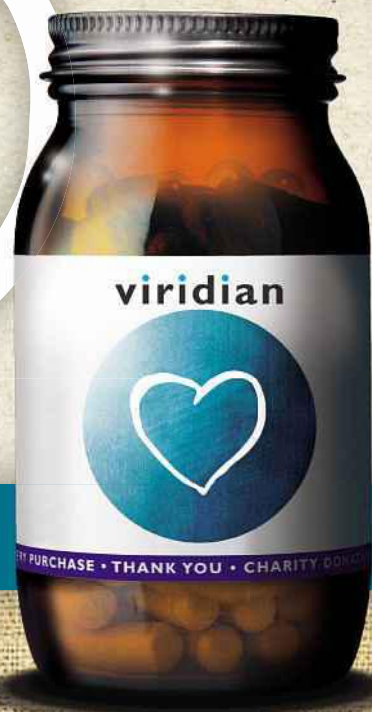
TRAVEL INFORMATION

Moyses's Hall Museum, Cornhill, Bury St Edmunds, open every day, adults £4, www.weststow.org/moyeses-hall; Lavenham Guildhall, for opening times www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lavenham-guildhall, adults £6.50; The Nutshell, The Thoroughfare, Bury St Edmunds, www.thenutshellpub.co.uk/; The Mill Hill Hotel, Walnut Tree Lane, Sudbury, www.themillhotelsudbury.co.uk/; Ipswich Museum, admission free, open Tues to Sun, www.ipswich.gov.uk/services/museums-and-galleries Chambers 753 bus service – Bury St Edmunds to Lavenham (35 minutes), Lavenham to Sudbury (30 minutes). Buy on the bus day tickets for unlimited travel on their network. www.chambersbus.co.uk. Beestons 91 or 91C bus service from Sudbury to Ipswich (buy tickets on the bus.) www.beestons.co.uk/index.php/bus-services. Neither bus service runs on Sundays. Trains from Bury St Edmunds to Ipswich, Cambridge or Peterborough; Trains from Sudbury to Marks Tey (change for London Liverpool St); Trains from Ipswich to London, Norwich, Cambridge, Peterborough. www.greateranglia.co.uk/

♦ MATT SALUSBURY is a regular FT contributor. His book *Mystery Animals of the British Isles: Suffolk* is out soon from CFZ Publishing (www.twitter.com/mysteryanimals).

ETHICAL VITAMINS WITH AN ORGANIC HEART

Visit your local health store
to discover the right programme
of food, lifestyle and supplements
for your individual needs.



viridian

www.findahealthstore.com

READER INFO

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £48; Europe £58; USA \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £68. Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

NORTH AMERICA (US & CANADA)

Subscribers should contact: IMS, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 800-428 3003 (toll free); Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

UK, EUROPE & REST OF WORLD

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times**, Rockwood House, Perymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.

Telephone payments and queries: 0330 333 9492.

E-mail payments and queries: customer@subscribe.forteanimes.com

HOW TO SUBMIT

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by FT readers and contributors in any medium or format.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Contact the art director by email (etienne@forteanimes.com) before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, PO Box 71602, London E17 0QD, UK or email drsutton@forteanimes.com. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate.

LETTERS

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteanimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

BOOKS, PERIODICALS AND REVIEW MATERIAL

Send to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP.

CAVEAT

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. FT can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.

CLIPSTERS WANTED!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: **1 FEBRUARY 2018**. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK
E-mail: sieveking@forteanimes.com
or post on the FT website at www.forteanimes.co.uk,
where there is a contributor's guide.

WHY FORTEAN?



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

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

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

intermediate and transient state between extremes.

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

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

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

FT toes no party line.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS

AUSTRALIA Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC), **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Steve Scanlon, Janet Wilson. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Kate Eccles, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Owen Whiteoak, Bobby Zodiac. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Terry W Colvin. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Greg May (FL), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

FORT SORTERS

(who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Chris Josiffe, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

CLIPPING CREDITS FOR FT363

Garrick Alder, Richard Alexander, Gerard Apps, Jon Atkinson, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Ole Braenne, Brian Chapman, Peter Christie, Terry Colvin, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Graham Cordon, Mat Coward, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Alan Gibb, Nils Erik Grande, David Hambling, Hugh Henry, Kevin Hubbard, Rosalind Johnson, Bill & Louise Kelly, Stefan Lozowski, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Greg May, John Palazzi, Jim Price, Tom Ruffles, Tony Smith, Nidge Solly, Gary Stocker, Frank Thomas, Joe Trainor, Dave Trevor, Chris Tye, Mike Wade, Keith Wamer, Nicholas Warren, Len Watson, Owen Whiteoak, Paul Whyte, John Wilding, Janet Wilson, Gary Yates, Bobby Zodiac.

PHENOMENOMIX THE STORY OF SAINT MOLING AND THE FOX HUNT EMERSON (FROM ANCIENT SOURCES)

IN OLD IRELAND, THE SAINTED BISHOP MOLING LIKED TO SURROUND HIMSELF WITH ANIMALS OF ALL SORTS...



IN GENERAL THEY WERE A REASONABLE AND WELL-MANNERED CROWD...



...BUT AMONGST THEM WAS A FOX WHO TOOK A NOTION TO STEAL AND EAT A HEN!



ST. MOLING WAS DISPLEASED, AND SCOLDED THE FOX...



I'VE UPSET HIMSELF! I MUST MAKE AMENDS...



NO NO NO! THIS WILL NOT DO AT ALL! TAKE THE POOR FEATHERED CREATURE BACK TO THE CONVENT AT ONCE...



...AND MAKE SURE YOU DESIST FROM THIEVING IN THE FUTURE!



BUT THE FOX WAS, AFTER ALL, A FOX, AND DID NOT DESIST!



ON ANOTHER OCCASION THE FOX STOLE A BOOK FROM THE MONASTERY LIBRARY...



BUT THE MONKS CAUGHT HIM STEALING AND EATING A HONEYCOMB, AND HAULED HIM BEFORE THE SAINT...



I CAN TELL IT WAS, FROM THE SLY LOOK OF YOU!



BE OFF, AND BRING IT BACK UNHARMED!



AH - GET UP, YOU WRETCH! I SHAN'T PUNISH YOU, BUT NEVER TOUCH A BOOK AGAIN!



AND THAT IS WHY, TO THIS DAY, YOU DON'T SEE FOXES READING BOOKS!

COMING NEXT MONTH



BELLA IN THE WYCH ELM
BLACK MAGIC, NAZI SPIES AND
A GRISLY WARTIME MYSTERY



THE GOAT-HEADED GOD
A BRIEF HISTORY OF
BAPHOMET



HITLER'S CAT LADY,
DOGGY DETECTIVE,
BLACK SHUCK COMICS,
AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 364

ON SALE 1 MAR 2018

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

The body of a 61-year-old man was found in the ceiling of a hospital in Stellenbosch, Cape Town, two weeks after he had an operation at the facility. The man had been admitted on 5 October and underwent abdominal surgery, but disappeared after a nurse, who had been attending to him, left to fetch clean linen. A search party was unable to find him. "Sadly, the patient's body was discovered 13 days later in an isolated area in the ceiling, which is difficult to reach," said provincial health department spokesperson Mark van der Heever. "There is currently construction work being carried out at the hospital which also contributed to the difficulty of the search. The circumstances relating to how the patient got access to the ceiling are currently being investigated." FT founder editor Bob Rickard speculates that it could have been "a horrible way to end an out-of-body experience, suddenly materialising inside the ceiling." *News24 (South Africa), 23 Oct 2017.*

The identity of a man found dead in a field near Canterbury, Kent, on 3 February 2017 will probably remain a mystery after a coroner closed the case. Police had sent DNA samples to countries across Europe but drew a blank. Dental records could not be used, as he had no teeth. Next to his shirtless body was a wine decanter, glasses, mobile phone, Oyster card, wedding catalogue (containing the name 'Mandy Martin'), black suitcase and a book on clinical theology. There were no signs of injury. Coroner Ian Gollop ruled he had died of heart disease. "This is clearly a man who didn't want to be found and was living at the edge of existence," he said. *D.Mail, Metro, D.Mirror, 14 Nov 2017.*

Toxicology tests suggest a German former nurse murdered at least 100 people at two hospitals where he worked. Detectives believe Niels Hoegel, who is already serving a life sentence for two murders, systematically administered fatal doses of heart medication to people in his care, hoping to impress colleagues by resuscitating them; but many died. Hoegel is now said to have killed 38 patients in Oldenburg and 62 in Delmenhorst, both in northern Germany, between 1999 and 2005, making him one of Germany's worst post-war serial killers. Investigators say he may have killed more, but potential victims have been cremated. Hoegel was caught

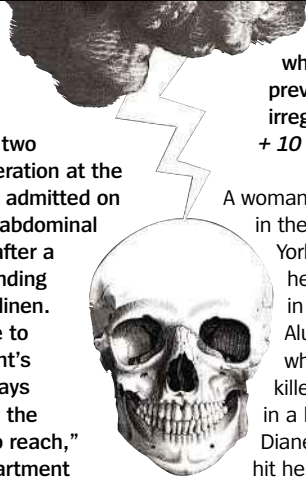
when a nurse saw that a patient previously stable had developed an irregular heartbeat. *Metro, 29 Aug + 10 Nov; BBC News, 9 Nov 2017.*

A woman killed by a hit-and-run driver in the village of Lindenhurst in New York State is the third member of her family to be killed by a car in the past two years. Pauline Aluska, 54, was found dead near where her brother John, 61, was killed in September 2015, also in a hit-and-run. Their sister-in-law Diane died in May 2017 when a car hit her moments after she pushed her daughter out of the way. *[AP] 16 Aug 2017.*

An American man was charged with murder after claiming he awoke from a dream in the early hours of 1 September to find his wife stabbed in bed beside him. Matthew Phelps, 28, phoned emergency services in Raleigh, North Carolina, appearing to blame his actions on a strong dose of cough medicine he had taken before going to bed. In a transcript of the 911 call, he tells the operator: "I had a dream and then I turned on the lights and she's dead on the floor... there's blood all over me, and there's a bloody knife on the bed... I can't believe I did this. I can't believe I did this." Lauren Ashley-Nicole Phelps, 29, was alive when police arrived, but died in hospital from her injuries. *Queensland Times, 6 Sept 2017.*

A disabled man drowned when a large wave swept him into the sea as he tried to scatter the ashes of his sister Michelle, 44, at her favourite beauty spot. Shane Galliers, 51, was on rocks at Trebarwith Strand, Cornwall, when a "surge" of water dragged him down in "treacherous conditions", the Truro inquest was told. Mr Galliers, a grandfather from Lifton, Devon, had left a large family gathering in January 2015 when the accident happened. His body was never found. *BBC News, 31 Oct; Metro, 1 Nov 2017.*

Keelan MacKnight, 15, of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, collapsed in goal when a football hit him in the chest during a kickabout in July 2017. He was airlifted to hospital, but died the next day. The teenager, who was fit and healthy, was hit in the "tiny fraction of a second" when his heart was vulnerable as part of its normal cycle. It caused a concussion of the heart, a rare medical phenomenon upsetting its rhythm. *Sun, 29 Nov 2017.*



Why Not Be A Writer?

What our students say:



"I'm currently working on my **fourth book**, have been paid for my writing by at least 15 different magazines, and now **earn half my income from writing** – all thanks to The Writers Bureau's course."

Sarah Plater



"I enrolled in The Writers Bureau's Creative Writing course in the hope of **building my confidence as a writer** and ending my cycle of publishing failures. **I currently work as a content writer** with a writing agency and have even won a writing competition."

Walter Dinjos



"I won the 2015 Flirty Fiction Prima Magazine and Mills and Boon competition. The prize was **£500**, a three page feature in the magazine and the chance to work with Mills and Boon on my book. Also I have three stories in three anthologies with other authors – **we've raised almost £2,000 for cancer charities**"

Rachel Dove



"I have been published in different papers and magazines and am now producing around **250 articles a year**. It's going a bit too well at times! Seriously, it's very satisfying, stimulating and great fun – and thanks again to the WB for launching me on a **second career**. I meet so many interesting people and count myself mightily lucky."

Martin Read



"If you listen to the tutors and take time to read the material you can be a working writer, it really is an excellent course. I've found part-time work as a freelance writer for Academic Knowledge. I've earned just under **£2000** in the past year."

Steph Thompson



"I am delighted to tell everyone that the **course is everything it says on the tin, excellent!** I have wanted to write for years, and this course took me by the hand and helped me turn my scribbles into something much more professional. I am delighted that **my writing is being published and I am actually being paid**. All thanks to the Comprehensive Creative Writing course."

George Stewart

Being a writer can offer you a second income, extra spending money or it can even be a full-time career. **It's your choice. But whatever your writing ambitions, we have a course that will help you to achieve them.**

That's because our first-class home-study creative writing course contains all you need to know to **become a successful, published writer**. You learn how to write articles, short stories, novels, TV, radio, drama and more. You are shown how to develop your writing style, present your manuscripts, contact editors, find markets and **HOW TO SELL YOUR WORK**.

What's more, you do not need any previous writing experience to succeed on the course as it's suitable for the absolute beginner.

Throughout the course you will be **tutored by a professional writer**, who will offer constructive feedback on your twenty marked assignments. In addition, you can count on the support of our dedicated Student Services team who will do all they can to ensure that you get the most out of your studies.

When you enrol, your full course is sent to you on a **fifteen day trial**. Your studies are then flexible to your requirements. Moreover, we offer you a **full refund guarantee**. If you do not earn back the equivalent of your fees by the time you finish your course we will refund them in full.

So, if you would like to **learn how to earn from writing**, try our risk-free course. For a free prospectus visit our website or call our freephone number **TODAY!**

www.writersbureau.com

FREE CALL
24 HRS

0800 856 2008

Quote:
ATX17

YES! Please send me free details on how to become a successful, freelance writer.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

Freepost RSSK-JZAC-JCJG

The Writers Bureau

Dept ATX17

Manchester, M3 1LE

www.facebook.com/thewritersbureau
www.twitter.com/writersbureau

email: 17W1@writersbureau.com Please include your name and address



Members of BILD
and ABCC

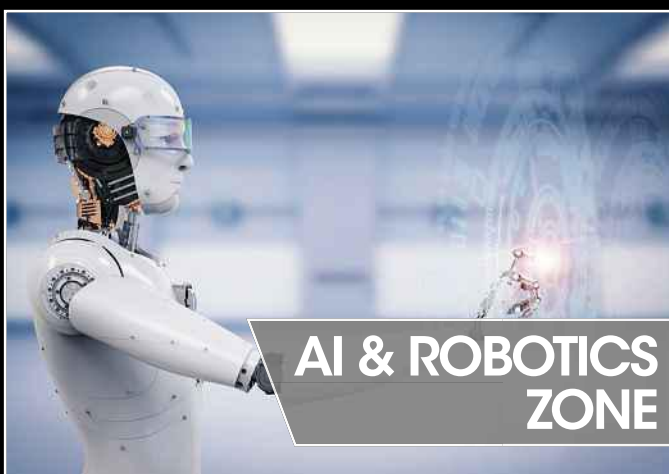
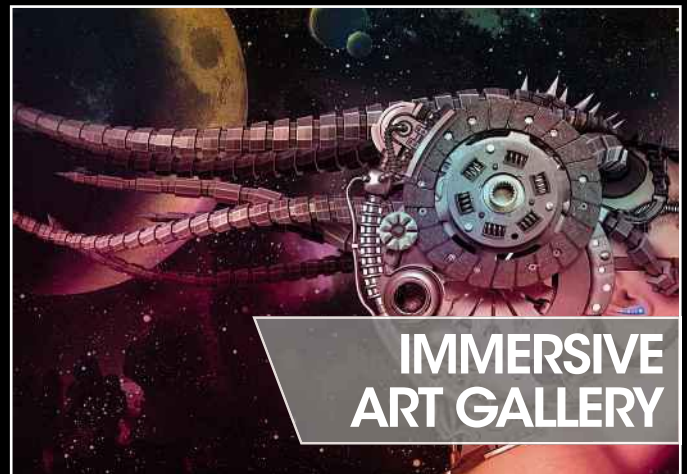
Enrol online to access your course modules TODAY at: www.writersbureau.com

FUTURE TECH NOW

**BUSINESS DESIGN
CENTRE LONDON**
APRIL 05-07 \ \ 2018

virtualrealityshow.co.uk

VR \ \ MR \ \ AR \ \ AI \ \ ROBOTICS \ \ WEARABLE TECH



We have more than 20 major features, along with conferences, workshops, meetups, exhibitors and product demonstrations.

USE DISCOUNT CODE: **FTT**
BEFORE 28 FEB FOR 10% OFF!!

virtualrealityshow.co.uk