



**MUSIC OF THE NIGHT**

THE PHANTOM ORGANIST  
OF TORQUAY RETURNS

**INTERSTELLAR ACCIDENTS** WHY ARE UFOs ALWAYS CRASHING?

**THE UNDRESSED UNDEAD** NAKED AS SUPERNATURE INTENDED

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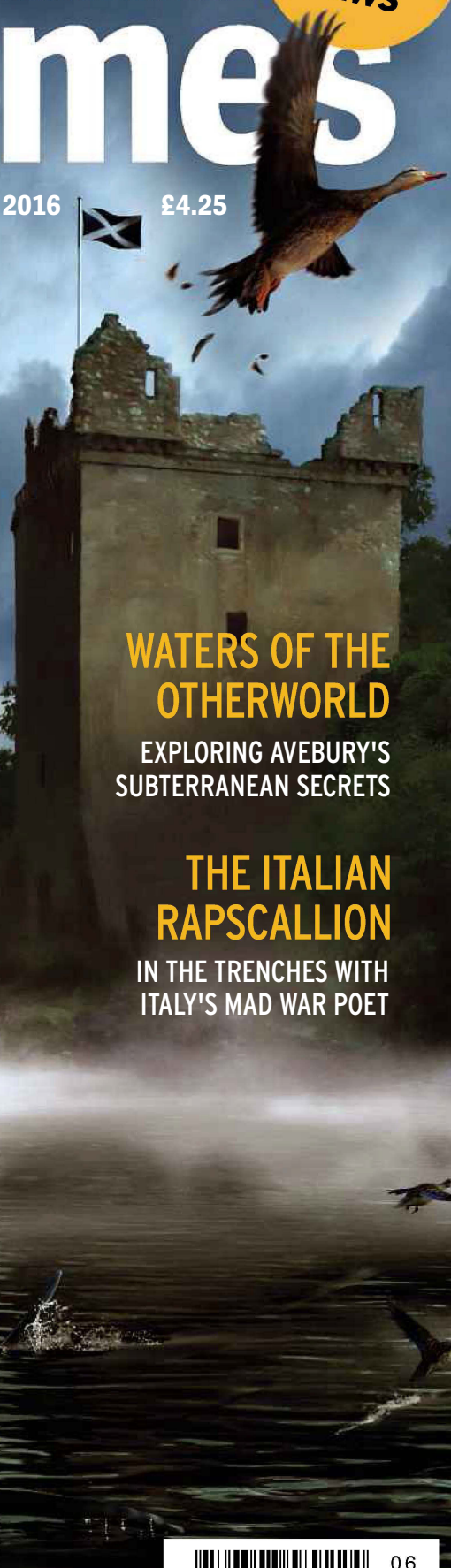
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**OUT OF THE  
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NEW LOCH NESS  
DISCOVERIES  
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THE THAMES  
AUSSIE LAKE  
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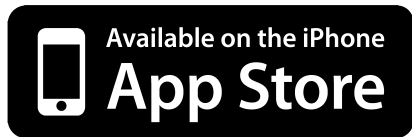
**WATERS OF THE  
OTHERWORLD**

EXPLORING AVEBURY'S  
SUBTERRANEAN SECRETS

**THE ITALIAN  
RAPSCALLION**

IN THE TRENCHES WITH  
ITALY'S MAD WAR POET





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**EDITOR**  
 DAVID SUTTON  
 (drsutton@forteanimes.com)

**FOUNDING EDITORS**  
 BOB RICKARD (bobrickard@mail.com)  
 PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteanimes.com)

**ART DIRECTOR**  
 ETIENNE GILFILLAN  
 (etienne@forteanimes.com)

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

**RESIDENT CARTOONIST**  
 HUNT EMERSON

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

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**LICENSING & SYNDICATION**  
 FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT: Syndication Senior Manager  
 ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6132  
 Anj\_Dosaj-Halai@dennis.co.uk  
 Licensing Manager  
 CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6550  
 Carlotta\_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk  
 Licensing & Syndication Assistant  
 NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6134  
 Nicole\_Adams@dennis.co.uk

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 IAN WESTWOOD  
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**CIRCULATION MANAGER**  
 JAMES MANGAN  
 james.mangan@seymour.co.uk

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

**PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE**  
 LAWRENCE BROOKES  
 020 7907 6062  
 lawrence\_brookes@dennis.co.uk

**ADVERTISING DIRECTOR**  
 STEVE NICOLAOU  
 020 7907 6633  
 steve\_nicolaou@dennis.co.uk

**SALES EXECUTIVE**  
 BRADLEY BEAVER  
 020 7907 6701  
 bradley\_beaver@dennis.co.uk

**SALES EXECUTIVE**  
 IMOGEN WILLIAMS  
 020 7907 6247  
 imogen\_williams@dennis.co.uk

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# editorial

## Of mice and monsters

### NESSIE ON FILM

Nessie has always been – ignoring St Columba and the odd bit of retconned folklore – a very modern monster. Making her debut in 1933, when Aldie Mackay’s monster sighting and Hugh Grey’s photo both made the newspapers, Nessie has always kept up a rewarding relationship with new technologies, reflecting developments in still photography, film, sonar and submarines, to name a few. All of these have been used over the past 80-odd years to search for signs of life on and beneath the waters of Loch Ness, throwing up tantalising tidbits of data, revealing, and as often creating, deliberate hoaxes and keeping the debate about what, if anything, is out there, bubbling away nicely.

Recently, the near-universal spread of camera phones means that even the most unprepared monster eyewitness can now capture some intriguing video footage, as when ‘Nessie’ (or perhaps a Sassenach cousin)

apparently surfaced twice earlier this year in, of all places, the River Thames (see p20). Back in the 1930s, the original Golden Age of Nessie photos, there may have been fewer opportunities to capture the famous monster on film, but the results are still argued over to this day. In this issue (pp28-33), Roland Watson takes a close look at one particular photograph that has been discussed, debunked and dismissed by many a researcher over the years. It remains an ambiguous image, with a number of attendant mysteries trailing in its wake. We don’t even know for certain who took the photo, or precisely where from, let alone what it shows. Roland’s detective work sheds some new light on this puzzling photograph.

Of course, Nessie’s relationship with technology has expressed itself in another way over the decades: as well as acting as a magnet for scientific investigation, the putative loch dweller has also inspired many a representation in the cinema (there’s a related argument that Nessie is herself a reflection of the prehistoric creatures people saw in local picture houses when *King Kong* opened in 1933, but that’s a different story – see FT323:54-55). Of all the films featuring Nessie, one in particular has itself become part of the loch’s extensive lore. During the making of Billy Wilder’s *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* in 1969, the model of Nessie being used in location shooting on Loch Ness (see pp6-7) sank beneath the murky waters, never to be seen again. Or not until earlier this year, when a state-of-the-art underwater robot named Munin conducted a two-week survey of the loch – while Munin failed to find any trace of Nessie, it did pick up sonar images (above) of a

large, monster-shaped object lying some 700ft below on the floor of the loch (for the full story, turn to Karl Shuker’s *Alien Zoo* column on p21). One amusing irony of this unexpected discovery is that in Wilder’s film the ‘monster’ is no such thing – it’s really a Scooby Doo-like ploy to scare away any would-be spies from a secret Naval test... of a state-of-the-art Victorian submarine.

### MOUSE MONEY

After last issue’s feature on Randy Quaid’s Hollywood ‘Star Whackers’, we’re pleased to be able to report on another cinema-related conspiracy theory that’s been making itself felt in chat rooms and forums across the Internet. According to disgruntled fans of DC Comics, the reason that recent big screen superhero punch-up *Batman v Superman* was so mercilessly trounced by critics (it’s currently sitting at a somewhat forlorn 27 per cent on Rotten Tomatoes) is that said journo are all in the pay of a certain Mr Mouse and his evil

corporate minions. The film got terrible notices, the theory goes, not because it was terrible but because Disney threw money at hacks and bloggers to say it was terrible. The entertainment giant has since, the conspiracy theorists allege, chucked even more cash at reviewers to ensure that Marvel’s *Captain America: Civil War*

(reviewed belatedly but very positively on p64) received only raves. We’re still waiting for our cheque from Uncle Walt...

### ERRATUM (ERRATUM)

**FT340:2:** In an erratum for FT339:10 (concerning the correct age of a Mr Chris Massey) we stated that regular FT correspondent Tom Ruffles had written “from London”. Tom hails, in fact, from Impington in Cambridgeshire, so here we have a rare example – possibly an FT first – of an error within an erratum, leading in turn to a subsequent erratum... which we hope contains no further mistakes.

*David Sutton*  
 DAVID R SUTTON

*Bob Rickard*  
 BOB RICKARD

*Paul Sieveking*  
 PAUL SIEVEKING



**Why Fortean?**

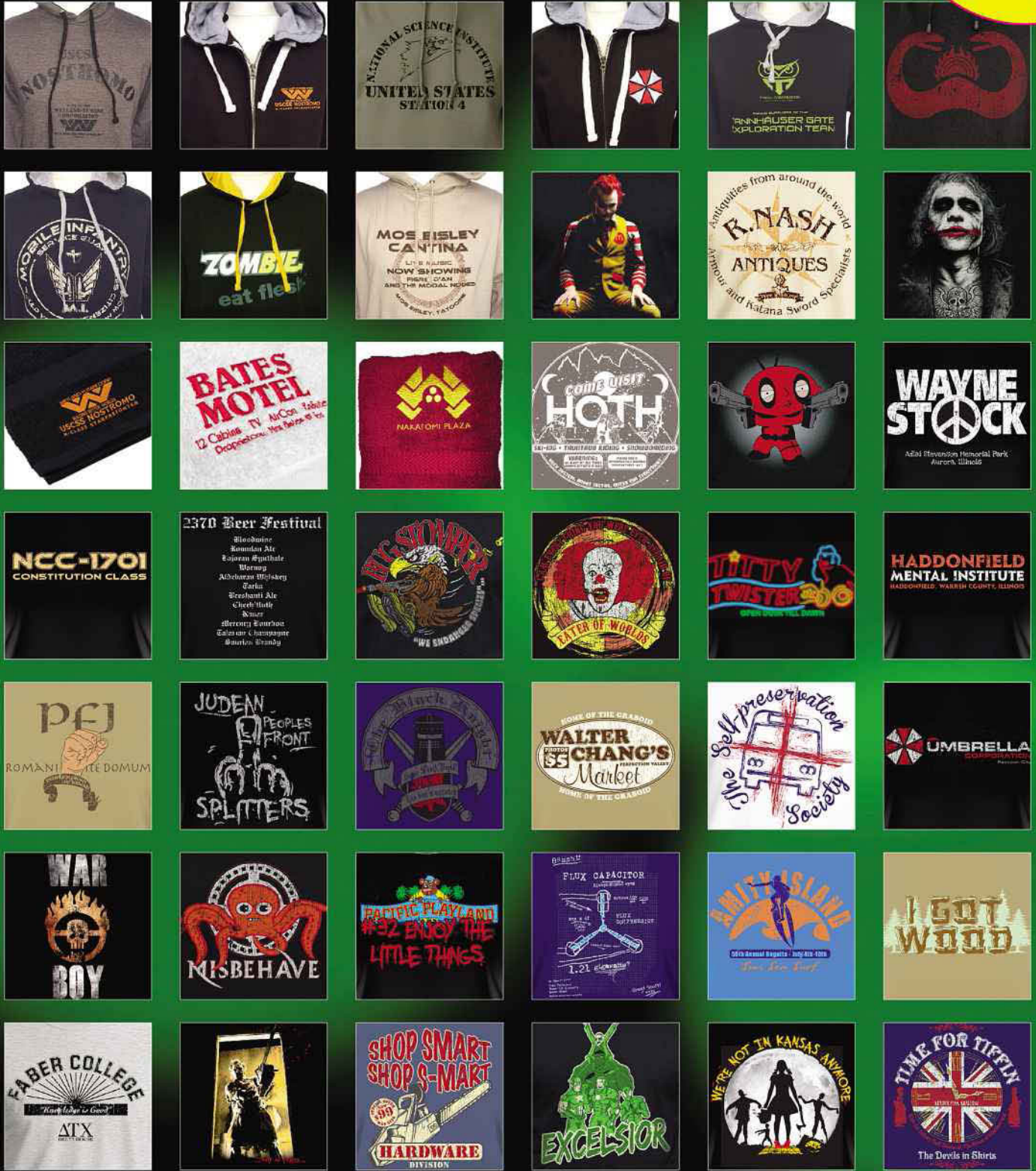
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

**SEE PAGE 78**

# Do you REALLY know your movies?

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A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

# strangedays

## The Croydon cat ripper

If you live in south London, it might be wise to keep Tiddles indoors...

Over the past two years, more than 60 cats have disappeared in south London – the majority from around Croydon – only for some to turn up dead and mutilated. The pets appear to have been lured from their home turf before being set about with a knife or machete. Heads, paws and tails, in different combinations, have been cut off, or undersides slit from throat to groin, and the blood drained. Some cats may have been intentionally run down by a vehicle or battered with an implement before being hacked to pieces. In many cases, the killer has then delivered the animals' remains back to their owners' neighbourhoods, depositing them where they can be discovered easily – in the gardens of neighbouring houses or nearby open spaces. One carcass was laid on the front step of a house a few doors from its home, the belly ripped open.

"In the past week [1-7 March 2016], we've had about seven cases," says Tony Jenkins, 51, of the charity South Norwood Animal Rescue and Liberty (SNARL), which has led the investigation into the deaths. "At the moment, I have four bodies in my car on their way to post-mortem examinations. In these cases, the cats have been cleanly cut up. The way that it has been done has led a vet working for our charity to think it is the same person responsible." Boudicca Rising (yes, really), 44, co-founder of SNARL, said: "I think we should be worried. Serial killers almost always start with animals. Potentially, you have someone who may scale up to human victims." Serial killers with a predilection for animal torture include Albert DeSalvo, the 'Boston Strangler', who killed

13 women between 1962 and 1964. In his youth, he trapped cats and dogs in boxes and shot them with arrows. British killers exhibiting similar traits include Mary Bell, Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, Fred West, Dennis Nilsen and Ian Brady. There again, the Croydon cat ripper might be seeking revenge for the devastating avian massacres perpetrated by our feline friends.

There are signs the killer is casting his net more widely – or attracting imitators. On 5-6 March, the mutilated remains of two cats were found, one in Streatham, south of the Thames, and another 20 miles (32km) away in Tottenham Hale, north London. Then a third dead

cat with its head and a front paw missing was discovered in Richmond, southwest London, on 7 March. In February, a decapitated kitten was found in East Dulwich. Now pets that used to be put out at night are being kept indoors for fear they may not return in the morning. Police in Croydon initially treated reports of the deaths as a curiosity, most likely a series of unrelated events involving attacks by natural predators or other mishaps. Little was done in the way of investigation until the end of 2015. Boudicca Rising has compiled anecdotal evidence suggesting that ritual cat killings in Croydon stretch back to 2008 – some 'luckier' pets managed to escape home with slash marks and other wounds. By February, SNARL had 42 confirmed cases linked to the killer, another 12 that were being investigated and a dozen other cases that could be linked, bringing the potential death toll to 66.

In April, SNARL said the Croydon Ripper had also struck

further afield, with a kill count exceeding 150. Boudicca Rising had received "hundreds and hundreds" of calls reporting similar attacks. "We've had attacks from Luton all the way down to Frimley in Surrey and across to Farnborough in Hampshire." Decapitated cats were found in Archway, north London, on 10 April; in Guildford, Surrey, on 18 April; in Orpington, Kent, on 21 April; and a fourth in Thornton Heath, south London, on 24 April.

Meanwhile in Caernarfon, North Wales, as many as 39 cats disappeared or were found dead since last summer, all within an area of around 10 streets on the Maesincla estate. Several were discovered shot or poisoned. Karen Bohana, 35, lost two cats in seven months. Her tabby Nellie disappeared in August 2015, while her kitten Motto vanished in late February. On the night Motto disappeared, she heard gunshots on the Maesincla estate where she lives, while neighbours reported seeing a gang of three men with air rifles walking the streets late at night.

Waves of cat killings are nothing new. In 2014, for example, about 100 cats vanished from Ipswich and the surrounding Suffolk countryside, a few limping home with injuries.

A widespread rumour had it that the pets ended up as kebabs. "A lot of cats have gone missing in areas with lots of takeaways," said one unnamed cat owner. "It is too big a coincidence." There were reports of a couple driving round Ipswich, tempting cats with treats. *D.Telegraph*, 11 Oct 2014; *Metro*, 29 Oct 2015; *Times*, 25 Feb; *D.Mail*, 10+17 Mar, 25 April 2016.

**"You have someone who may scale up to human victims"**



ABOVE: Police investigate another apparent victim of the south London cat killer in April 2016.



## BROKEN SCIENCE

Have scientists been defeated by a deluge of dodgy data?

PAGE 14



## PHANTOM ORGANIST

Ghostly music spooks the congregation of a Devon church...

PAGE 18



## MONSTROUS DISCOVERY

Has Nessie finally surfaced on the waters of Loch Ness? Sort of...

PAGE 21

# The Conspirasphere

Have the gates of Hell been opened in London's Trafalgar Square? Was this just the first of thousands such portals around the world? NOEL ROONEY gets ready for the Apocalypse

Depending on which face of the conspiracy coin you tend to land on, Trafalgar Square played host (between 19 and 21 April) to an event that has been interpreted in two very different ways. One could see the installation of a



copy of an ancient Syrian monument in the middle of London as making a defiant statement about the cultural hooliganism perpetrated by radical Muslims in Palmyra, and simultaneously displaying a replica of a fascinating part of our ancient history; all this, and showcasing the power of the Internet of Things too, before the relic roadshow heads for New York and Dubai. To others, though, it was opening a portal to the yawning gates of Hell, from which all manner of evil devil spawn will come gibbering and drooling, intent on carving a genocidal path for the looming Antichrist; and all this with the connivance of the satanic masters of the age, the variously Communist/plutocratic/pagan/reptilian puppeteers of the Illuminati.

The slightly undermining fact that the replica on display was not actually Palmyra's Gate of Baal at all, but rather an infinitely less ominous monumental arch nearby, is neither here nor there for the panic-mongers of the Apocalypse. It's the thought that counts: and here, the thinking is that the forces of truth are under fire from the merchants of evil, who are finally (after years of uncharacteristic dithering, to judge from the longevity of the 'imminent arrival' meme online and elsewhere) coming out – if that's not an unsuitably liberal phrase – to play on the worst fears of the righteous.

When the project was first announced last year, commentators seized on it and inflated it to epic and comically unrealistic proportions. It was claimed that a thousand such portals were to be erected worldwide (in the case of one video commentator, the term 'erected' turned into a repetitive

verbal tic that made the whole shebang sound like a phallic cornucopia of tumid – and horribly fascinating – construction); it was claimed that the Antichrist (a Romanian gentleman with UN-connections, in the 'traditional' version) was

waiting to make a grand entrance through the – erm – grand entrance; it was claimed that the rollcall of visitors to Bohemian Grove would be turning up to oversee the rituals. Here's a typical 'expert' explanation of the ritual: "Ritualistic Baal worship, in sum, looked a little like this: adults would gather around the altar of Baal. Infants would then be burned alive as a sacrificial offering to the deity. Amid horrific screams and the stench of charred human flesh, congregants – men and women alike – would engage in bisexual orgies."

This from Matt Barber on World Net Daily, clearly an authority, and not at all a scaremonger peddling the kind of sexualised nonsense that titillates the Forces of Good.

It occurred to me that, given the traction conspiracy theory material has in the world of radical Islam, the righteous soldiers of IS might have actually been trying to pre-empt the emptying of Hell, by demolishing the original before the copies got the chance to foist themselves on the unsuspecting world. The delicious ironies inherent in this possibility are too many to list, but it might be fun trying.

Of course, if the next few weeks see cometary impacts, world-shredding supervolcanoes and the arrival of Nick and his salivating cohorts, you can be assured my last words will be "point taken".

[http://allnewspipeline.com/FBI\\_Warning\\_Cyber\\_Threat\\_Electric\\_Grid.php](http://allnewspipeline.com/FBI_Warning_Cyber_Threat_Electric_Grid.php)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rr62AQ4F50](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rr62AQ4F50)  
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## EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### Hunter and family find angels at hospice

Toronto Star, 21 April 2015.

### NAKED MAN HAS SEX WITH A TREE

Sun, 17 April 2015.

### Intact Ottoman 'war camel' found in Austrian cellar

BBC News, 2 April 2015.

### Galaxy wraps up expansion, explores for new business

Wichita (Kansas) Eagle, 17 April 2015.

### Scientists blame 'blob' for weird winter weather

Toronto Star, 12 April 2015.

### Chairs quit after minister's letter

Irish Times, 14 Oct 2014.

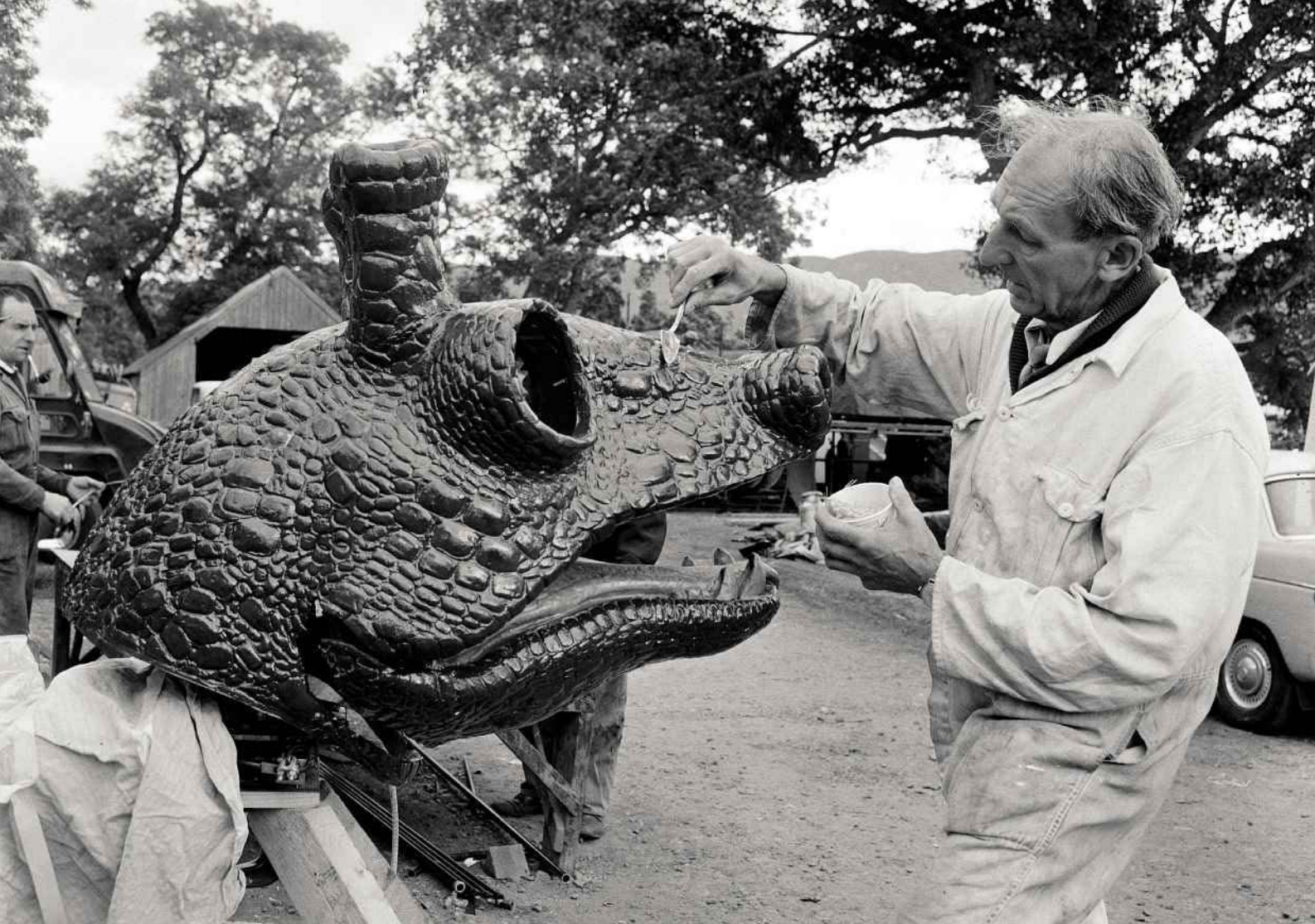
### Protesters with holy water halt hearings

Irish Times, 24 Mar 2015.

### CHECHEN LEADER DEMANDS HORSE APOLOGY

BBC News, 21 Oct 2014.





## MAKING THE LOCH NESS MONSTER

These fascinating archive photographs from July 1969 show various stages in the construction of the Nessie model designed by Wally Veevers for Billy Wilder's 1970 film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. In one picture, the framework of the original humped model is seen being unloaded at Loch Ness. In the others, Tom Davies is pictured creating the fibreglass head of the monster, working out of doors beside the

loch. The final product is seen below in a scene from the film – minus the humps that Wilder had insisted on removing, thus precipitating the model's sinking to the bottom of the loch. The model has recently been found, 50 years later, by the state-of-the-art Munin robot using state-of-the-art sonar. For the full story, turn to this month's Alien Zoo on p21.

**PHOTOS: IAN TYAS/KEystone FEATURES/GETTY IMAGES**





**SIDELINES...**

**SACRED TEARS**

After pictures of a Virgin Mary statue in Argentina apparently 'crying' were posted online, hundreds of pilgrims flocked to the church in Villa Krause, San Juan province. Clerics said the statue is kept in a glass box and can't have been tampered with; sceptics suspect condensation. *Metro*, 19 April 2016.

**VANDAL DIRECTIVE**









A man claiming to be with a fire suppression company called a Jack In The Box restaurant in Tucson, Arizona, after midnight. He said the gas pressure from inside the business was rising and told the employees to pull the emergency fire lever, get outside and bust out the windows to keep the building from exploding – which surreal directive they duly followed. Police said several other Jack In The Box restaurants received similar calls from a blocked number. Meanwhile, employees at a Burger King in Morro Bay, California, took similar action. *News4 Tucson (AZ)*, 3 Feb 2016.

**GUARD CROCS**

A gang of suspected drug-dealers in Amsterdam left their cash in the care of two fully grown crocodiles. When police arrested 11 men and woman, they also seized €300,000 (£236,000), most of it locked in a cage with the fearsome reptiles. They also seized large amounts of synthetic drugs, firearms and half a million euros' worth of crystal meth. *[R] D.Telegraph*, 27 Feb 2016.

# The Da Pinchi Code

## 'Criminal' symbols turn out to have innocent meanings

SUPPOSED MEANING	SYMBOL	ACTUAL MEANING	SUPPOSED MEANING	SYMBOL	ACTUAL MEANING
ALARMED HOUSE		DROP KERB	BURGLER ALREADY		AMOUNT OF CABLES AND EQUIPMENT FOR CABLE EQUIPMENT
GOOD TARGET		WATER	NOTHING WORTH STEALING		POSITION OF PROPOSED NEW LAMPPOST
TOO RISKY		MANHOLE COVER REQUIRES LOCKING	WEALTHY		NUMBER OF CABLES INSIDE CABLE DUCT
OCCUPANTS NERVOUS AND AFRAID		POTENTIAL MOVEMENT OF MANHOLE	VULNERABLE FEMALE		UNKNOWN

ETIENNE GILLILLAN

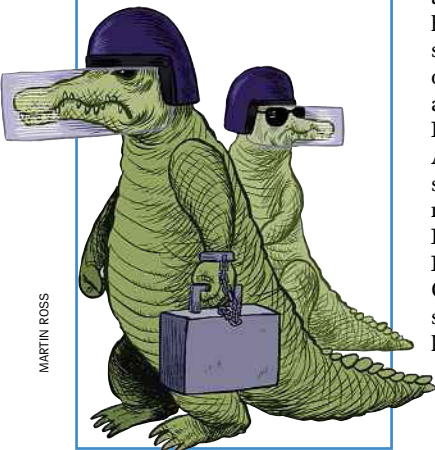
ABOVE: The 'criminal' symbols... and their rather more prosaic meanings.

For nearly a year, a series of chalk and paint symbols on roads, kerbs and walls in East Kilbride, South Lanarkshire, were said to be secret messages for potential thieves identifying easy targets. Police in Devon had previously suggested this was the case in 2013 and said that understanding the code might be a valuable tool for homeowners. This message was echoed in Warwickshire in 2015 after glow-in-the-dark symbols appeared in Bedworth. The markings were thought to give potential housebreakers details about the building, such as whether it had an alarm or had previously been targeted successfully. The shape of an open book supposedly meant a vulnerable female resident. Lanarkshire police tweeted last April: "These signs have been seen in East Kilbride, please retweet & report all sightings." In February 2015, Detective Inspector Wayne Southon of Camden CID in north London said: "These symbols are well known to police and are used by burglars to code and highlight potential targets. They are most often chalked on pavements."

Last autumn, a resident of Nailsea near Bristol found a yellow cross scrawled in crayon on her front door in Greenfield Crescent. She told the police, who issued a leaflet stating: "Dog thieves are believed to be leaving messages on gates, doors and pavements and police have now urged owners to be vigilant after a number of animals were stolen from properties daubed with unusual markings. Such a yellow cross has been seen in Greenfield Crescent recently." According to the *Bristol Post*: "Yellow crosses are used to signal that a medium-sized dog lives in the premises while a red mark is used for big dogs and pink for smaller breeds... It is estimated that 65 dogs a day are stolen across the UK. The thefts have been linked to dog fighting..." The Nailsea resident commented: "I have now upped my security and am making sure that my dog does not even go into the back garden on her own." However, the police said that no dog thefts had been reported in the Nailsea area. At the beginning of this year, West Mercia Police deflated the paranoia. They said that the signs

were merely utility firms marking what work they were planning to do. The markings are commonly used by gas, electricity, water, telecommunication and cable companies. The various meanings include indicating power lines, flammable material, water, drains or possible excavations routes. The five circles do not mean a family is wealthy, but instead show how many cables are inside a cable duct. The two rectangles illustrate that there is potential movement of a manhole, rather than the occupants being "nervous and afraid". An 'X' in a box stands for 'water' and does not mean that a house with that marking is a good target, while an 'X' in a circle shows the position of a proposed new lamppost instead of a property that's not worth stealing from.

But wait a minute. There may still have been some truth in the criminal code for a family in Devon. In January 2015, an elderly couple were mystified when a series of dodgy tradesmen kept calling at their home. The visits took place over five years, but the homeowners couldn't work out why they were being singled out. Following an investigation it emerged that a rogue builder who paved their drive had left a code in a pattern of blocks to tip off other cowboy traders that the owners were a vulnerable target. The builder, who overcharged the couple by £4,000, left the job unfinished in August 2009, but he had created a squared pattern of different coloured blocks at the centre of the driveway. The residents had not asked for the pattern but thought nothing of it until other tradesman began calling at their home in Plymstock offering to carry out work that was not required. *Camden New Journal (north London)*, 12 Feb; *Bristol Post*, 2 Sept 2015; *BBC News*, 18 Jan; *dailymail.co.uk*, 19 Jan 2016.



MARTIN ROSS

# Bosnian ball mystery

## Has 'Bosnian Indiana Jones' found sign of lost civilisation?

This stone sphere was discovered in a forest beside Podubravljje village near the Bosnian town of Zavidovici in April. Resembling a giant cannon ball protruding from an embankment, it has a radius of between 4ft and 5ft (1.2-1.5m), and an "extremely high" iron content. Bosnian archaeologist Dr Semir (Sam) Osmanagic (pictured below) believes it proves the existence of an advanced lost civilisation dating back more than 1,500 years, and could be the largest and maybe the oldest stone sphere made by human hands. He had examined the 300+ gabbro (volcanic rock) balls in southern Costa Rica, made between AD 600 and 1000, possibly by the extinct Diquis culture [FT262:22], as well as stone spheres in western Mexico and Easter Island. He reckons the Zavidovici sphere weighs around 30 tons – twice as heavy as the largest one in Costa Rica. He said the region round Zavidovici used to have as many as 80 spheres well into the 20th century, but many were destroyed in the 1970s by people believing a folktale that there was gold hidden in them. Stone spheres are also found in Tunisia, the Canary Islands and Isla del Cano in the Pacific.

Osmanagic, known as "the Bosnian Indiana Jones", claims the spheres attract positive energy and possess the power to heal. He hit headlines in 2005 when he claimed that the curiously shaped Viocica Hill overlooking the Bosnian town of Visoko was in fact an extremely ancient pyramid [FT212:20], one of many in the vicinity. While most archaeologists mocked his claim, the Bosnian government



ABOVE: The stone sphere is uncovered – but is it a man-made or natural object?

## He claims the stone spheres possess the power to heal

gave financial backing enabling excavation to be carried out. Anthony Harding, President of the European Association of Archaeologists, described the Visoko excavation as "a total absurdity", saying: "There is some genuine archaeology on the hill and I'm told it's mediæval, possibly Bronze Age or Roman. But the speculation that there could be a 12,000-year-old structure beneath is a complete fantasy." Critics are once again lining up to poke holes in Osmanagic's rather grand claims.

Discussing the Zavidovici sphere, Mandy Edwards of the University of Manchester's School of Earth, Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences said the

rock might not be man-made at all, and could have been formed by the "precipitation of natural mineral cement within the spaces between sediment grains" – a process known as concretion. The result is often spherical in shape, with the process forming the famed Koutu and Moeraki boulders in New Zealand [see FT248-64-65]. Experts at the Geological Society said the round shape of the rock could come from spheroidal weathering affecting jointed bedrock. The result is formation of concentric or spherical layers of highly decayed rock. One example of this is the Klerksdorp spheres, found in mined deposits of pyrophyllite at Ottosdal in South Africa, and initially claimed as evidence for an ancient *pre-human* civilisation. When cut in half they showed the tell-tale rings associated with concretion, as layer upon layer built up over the stones. *telegraph.co.uk*, 11 April; *timeslive.co.za*, 12 April; *phys.org*, 17 April 2016.

(For more on the 300-odd Costa Rica spheres, said to be the inspiration for a scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, see *Arthur C Clarke's Mysterious World*, 1980, pp.81-86.)



DADO RUVIC / REUTERS

## SIDELINES...

### APOCALYPSE COW

A two-headed calf was born in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, in March. Unlike most such cases, its heads were separated at the neck, and it had four eyes, four ears, two mouths and four nostrils. Such a prodigy is thought to have a probability of one in 400 million. The calf couldn't stand due to the weight of its heads, and died shortly afterwards. *Sun*, 17 Mar 2016.

### CHRIS WHO?

Ned Lunn, curate at Acomb Parish Church in York, ordered four banners hailing the resurrection from a friend who ran a local sign-printing business. A mistake was only noticed when a customer visiting the shop asked who Chris was. The banners read: "CHRIS IS RISEN". *D.Mail*, 29 Mar 2016.

### SINISTER IMPLANT

Many people suffer from delusions that they have implanted microchips, but one sex worker who turned up at ER somewhere in the US was found to have an embedded chip. Her pimp had implanted an RFID chip of the sort used to identify lost pets. Such a chip can identify a possession, but it can't locate it; there's no such thing as an implanted tracking radio, so the chip is probably a technological badge of slavery. *boingboing.net*, 3 Mar 2016.

### INANIMATE CORRESPONDENT

A Saudi man was caught by his wife of 17 years having sex with a vacuum cleaner. She reported him to the authorities, and he faced two years in jail and 1,000 lashes for adultery. A legal expert said this was lenient because the accused "performed sex with a home appliance and not with an animal or a human being". Under Islamic law, adultery is usually punished by stoning to death. The accused strongly maintained his innocence before the court. *worldnewsdailyreport.com*, 19 Jan 2016.

## SIDELINES...

### CATFISH DELIVERY

Maddison Fertic discovered a foot-long catfish in her mailbox in St Cloud, Florida, on 1 February. According to a Facebook page for Osceola County residents, two other people reported similar incidents: one resident found a catfish in her mailbox and another had a fish thrown into the yard of her St Cloud home. *Clickorlando.com*, 2 Feb 2016.

### HAT TRICK FOR KATIE

Three of Katie Arnett's four children were born on the same day. Alexander arrived on 16 November 2015, the same date as Iris (eight) and Eada (two). None of the three was due on that date, so Mrs Arnett, 32, of Deal in Kent, was not expecting the rare triple. Her fourth child, Alisa (four), was born on 22 March. *D.Express*, 27 Nov 2015.

### FLAT EARTHERS

Geography teachers are the top target of Boko Haram, the crazed Islamists in Nigeria, because their lessons contradict their dogma that the Earth is flat rather than spherical, and that rainfall is caused by God's divine will rather than by evaporation. Since 2009, 600 school staff have been murdered by Boko Haram, and 19,000 have left their jobs following threats and attacks. *D.Telegraph*, 12 April 2016.



IDAHO POLICE

## DOG TREK

SHEPDOG MAKES AN ASTONISHING 240-MILE JOURNEY FROM HIS CUMBRIAN WORKPLACE TO HIS HOME IN WEST WALES



WALES NEWS SERVICE



ABOVE: Sheepdog Pero and the likely route of his amazing journey. OPPOSITE: An epic animal trek was the subject of a 1963 film.

### PERO'S JOURNEY

The phenomenal journeys of cats and dogs were cited by Charles Fort as examples of the magic that surrounds everyday life. He witnessed one such journey while he lived in Marchmont Street, London, in the 1920s. The dog that lived in the house "had frenzies. Once he tore down the landlord's curtains. He bit holes into a book of mine, and chewed the landlord's slippers." The landlord dumped him out of London about 10 miles (16km), but he found his way back. "I cannot accept that the magician [as Fort called the dog] smelled his way home, or picked up a trail, taking about two weeks on his way. The smelling played a part, and was useful in a final recognition: but smelling indiscriminately, he could have nosed his way, for years, through the streets of London, before coming to the right scent." (*Wild Talents*, chapter 27).

Fort gives two other instances of canine journeys: a large mongrel, taken 340 miles (550km) in a baggage car, found his way home (*NY Sun*, 24 April 1931); and a Canadian dog found his way home over 400 miles (650km)

away (*NY Herald Tribune*, 4 July 1931).

Our latest prodigious canine journey was made by Pero, a four-year-old working sheepdog, one of 16 on Alan and Shan James's farm near Aberystwyth, West Wales. A farmer in Cockermouth, Cumbria, was looking for a dog that could round up sheep and follow a quad bike. "We thought Pero would be ideal for the job," said Mrs James, who lives with their five children on the sheep farm in Penrhyncoch. "We told the farmer to take him away and see if he'd be willing to work for him on his farm up north. And so Pero left us at the beginning of March." But the dog wouldn't settle in his new home, and while out working on the farm on 8 April, he bolted across the fields. Twelve days later he turned up back at the farm in Penrhyncoch, his birthplace, 240 miles (390km) away, limping and a little thinner than before, but otherwise in good condition. He would have had to average about 20 miles (32km) a day. He probably traversed the Lake District, the moorland of the Forest of Bowland and the old industrial

towns of Lancashire, before passing Merseyside, Chester and the mountains of Snowdonia. He might well have had to navigate motorways including the M6 and M62.

"We'd been told that Pero had disappeared, and was nowhere to be seen," said Mrs James, 47. "But then, last Wednesday evening, April 20, my husband Alan went out to check on the animals after supper and there was Pero on our doorstep. It was a bit of a shock, and the dog was going crazy after seeing Alan. No one called us to say that they'd dropped the dog off, and even though he has a microchip no one's been in touch either to say that they've found him. It's a total mystery how Pero has managed to find his way back to us." Her husband added: "He must have a sat-nav in his brain." "When he came back, he wasn't hungry or weak, so he must have managed to find food somewhere. He must have stopped in places along the way," she said. "I don't think it would be fair for us to send him away again. He obviously enjoys his home." *BBC News*, 25 April; *D.Mail*, *Metro*, 26 April 2016.



## ANIMAL TREK ARCHIVES

- Julie Brown operated an animal shelter at her home in Whiting, Maine, where she looked after a white German shepherd called Maxie for about a year and a half. In 2000, a couple from Palermo, 150 miles (240km) away, adopted Maxie – but three years later she returned to Ms Brown, who recognised the dog by a scar over her eye and decided to give her a permanent home. *Ananova, 15 Oct; NY Post, 16 Oct 2003.*

- Pub landlady Jen Taylor, 34, and her three children moved from Newcastle to Blackpool. One day, Kira, their 11-month-old German shepherd, was run down by a car and one of her front legs was put in a brace. A month or two later she disappeared, and four months after that she turned up in Hexham, Northumberland, 125 miles (200km) from Blackpool and 20 miles (32km) from her old home in Newcastle, her leg still in a brace. “It’s astounding,” said vet Kate MacWhirter. “She walked all the way.” *D.Mirror, 26 April 2004.*

- Moon, a Siberian husky, ran off during a road-trip rest stop near Railroad Valley, Nevada, on 6 April 2008. She turned up at her owner Doug Dashiell’s house in Ely, Nevada, on 14 April. She had evidently made her way nearly 80 miles (130km) across Nevada’s high desert and two mountain ranges. Moon, nearly two years old, seemed none the worse for wear, although a skunk had sprayed her and she stank. *[AP] Dallas (TX) Morning News, 20 April 2008.*

- Mike Taitt, 60, lost sight of his gun dog Archie at Inverurie station near Aberdeen in eastern Scotland. He feared the eight-year-old black Labrador was gone for good, but then got a phone call saying the dog was waiting for him at Insh station, just three miles from his home. CCTV showed that Archie had caught the 20.38 First ScotRail Aberdeen-to-Inverness train before getting off at the right

station about 12 minutes later. *[AFP] Bangkok Post, 29 Aug 2005.*

- On 27 October 2005, Lee Evans, 38, took Remi and Rio, his Jack Russell terriers, for a walk near Lyn Brenig reservoir, on Hiraethog Moors, North Wales. He parked his van near a wind farm and Remi immediately shot off into the nearby forest, evidently spooked by the turbines. Mr Evans spent hours looking for her and over the following days he and his family drove more than 500 miles in their search. Then on Hallowe’en, Mr Evans returned to his welding workshop in Marli near Abergele, Conwy, to find two-year-old Remi in his yard, after she appeared from underneath a trailer. There was no doubt it was Remi, since she wore a collar with a nametag. As a woman had seen her the day before in Llanfair Talhaiarn, it was estimated she had walked a good 30 miles (48km) across bleak moorland over four days. *D.Post, 2 Nov 2005.*

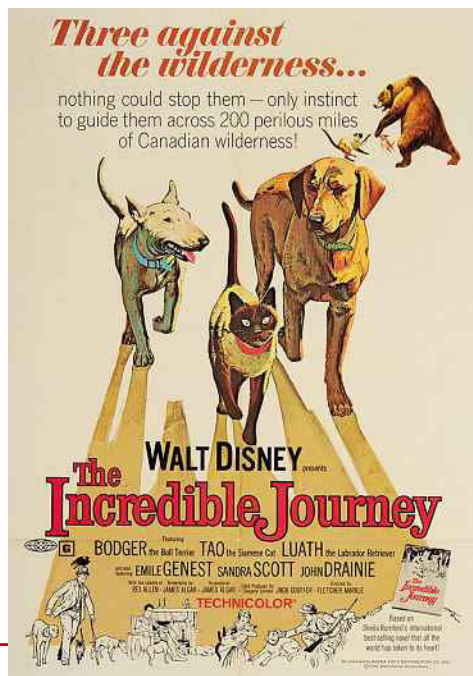
- While treks by dogs – and cats **[FT61:45-49]** – of up to 3,000 miles (4,800km) to old homes show great fortitude and unexplained navigational abilities, journeys to new homes to rejoin old human associates who have moved are even more extraordinary, as something beyond memory must be involved. In FT’s first league

table of canine trekking (“Rovers return: **FT70:38-41**), we gave four examples of this mind-boggling feat: Alsatian called Barry (1,200 miles, from Bari, Italy, to Solingen, West Germany); German shepherd Vesta (1,100 miles, Kuybyshev in the Urals to Mozyr in Byelorussia); sheepdog Fido (1,000 miles, Mons, Belgium, to Gijon, northern Spain); and terrier-poodle cross Sam (840 miles, Montrose, Colorado, to Santee, California).

- In January 1996, a four-year-old dog called Deni was reunited with his master, a young Croatian Serb called Goran Radanovic, in Ruma refugee camp, 50 miles (80km) north of Bgrade. Radanovic had earlier fled from Petrinja, 30 miles (50km) southeast of Zagrab. Deni had braved the bitter Balkan winter, walking more than 300 miles (480km) in four and a half months to find his master, in a place the dog had never seen. In March that year, a dog called Teddy found its refugee Serb owners after a seven-month, 380-mile (610km) odyssey. Teddy was separated from Matija and Milorad Mamuzic when they fled from Vrginmost in Krajina during the Croatian blitzkrieg offensive to recapture the rebel province in August 1995. *[AFP] 7 Jan; Hong Kong Standard, 10 Mar 1996.*

- A sheepdog trekked four miles (6.4km) to find his owner’s grave, even though he had never been there before. Two-year-old border collie Spot fled his new home, crossed busy main roads and was found whimpering on the tomb of farmer Denis Goodier. “It was incredible,” said Goodier’s widow Margaret, of Macclesfield, Cheshire. “The bond between them was always terrific, but this was something else.” At the time of the report (*D.Mirror*, 8 Jan 2000), Spot was back at his new home with sheepdog trainer Brian Belfield, who had originally sold him to Denis as a pup.

For more epic canine treks, see **FT91:13, 265:10-11.**



## SIDELINES...

### EMERGENCY!

Recent calls to the police include “Will I get arrested if I move my housemate’s banana?”, “Fancy a chat?”, “My shutters aren’t working properly”, “There’s a spider in my bin”, “My takeaway kebab is cold”, “My false nail has fallen off” and “There’s a racing pigeon in my garden”. Holidaymakers late for a flight asked for a police escort to the airport. At 4am a man asked: “Where is the best place to get a bacon sandwich right now?” *Mail on Sunday, 22 Nov; D.Mail, 24 Dec 2015.*

### FLAMING IDIOT

A man was so overwhelmed by bedbugs in his Detroit apartment that he sprayed himself and his sofa with alcohol in an attempt to destroy them. He then sat on the sofa, lit a cigarette and also tried to set one of the bedbugs on fire. He suffered severe burns, his apartment and three others were gutted, while two dozen more units at the St Antoine Gardens apartment complex suffered water damage. *USA Today, 9 Jan 2016.*

### EROTIC DIVERSION

A helicopter and two lifeboats were deployed, and flares used to help light up the sea, after a fisherman reported what he thought was a person floating face down in the sea off Newquay in Cornwall. The search was called off after 90 minutes when a soggy inflatable sex doll was pulled from the water. *Western Daily Press, Sun, 27 Jan 2016.*

### SUPER-ANT INVASION

Pest control experts have warned that Britain faces an invasion by two species of South American super-ants. ‘Crazy’ ants are addicted to electricity and can chew through power cables, causing blackouts and fires, while ‘Argentine’ ants can destroy crops, attack livestock, bite humans, and spread salmonella. The increase in apartment blocks help the insects form large colonies between cracks in walls and timbers. *D.Telegraph, 19 Aug 2015.*



## FLYING RABBIT

Following Storm Gertrude on 29 January, a pet rabbit called Bumper was blown onto the roof of a residential care home in Omagh, County Tyrone, and rescued by the fire service with a ladder and a carrot. Bumper's hutch had been blown over. *BBC News, 29 Jan 2016.*

## SS LIBRARY FOUND

Heinrich Himmler's occult library has been discovered in a depot of the Czech National Library near Prague that had been untouched since the 1950s. The bulk of the collection was called the Witches' Library and was intended to be stored at Wewelsburg Castle in western Germany, where the Nazi agronomist gathered a court of SS 'knights'. *D.Mail, 19 Mar 2016.*

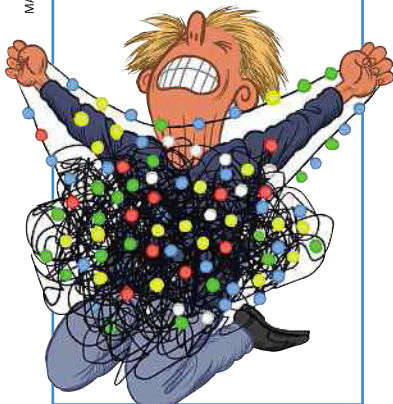
## CHESS FORBIDDEN

Saudi Arabia's grand mufti has ruled that chess is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. Sheikh Abdullah al-Sheikh said the game was "included under gambling" and was "a waste of time and money and a cause of hatred and enmity between players." After the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, chess was banned in public, but the ban was dropped in 1988. *Irish Times, 22 Jan 2016.*

## NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Last November, supermarket chain Tesco advertised for a full-time "Christmas light detangler". The successful applicant would have to unreele an untangle thousands of yards of horribly twisted fairy lights. (*Sydney*) *D.Telegraph, 7 Nov 2015.*

MARTIN ROSS



# TOP CAT

Munna, a 14-year-old Bengal tiger, is probably the most photographed big cat in India thanks to his facial markings that spell the word 'CAT'. Thousands of tourists flock to see him at Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh. The huge reserve is home to more than 130 Bengal tigers and is in an area that inspired Kipling's *Jungle Book*. *D.Mail, 7 April 2016.*



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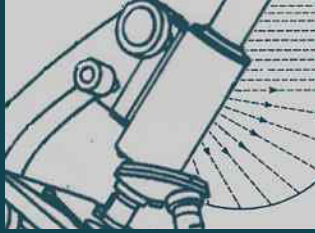
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**Ghost Town (Redcar)**

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# SCIENCE

## BROKEN SCIENCE?

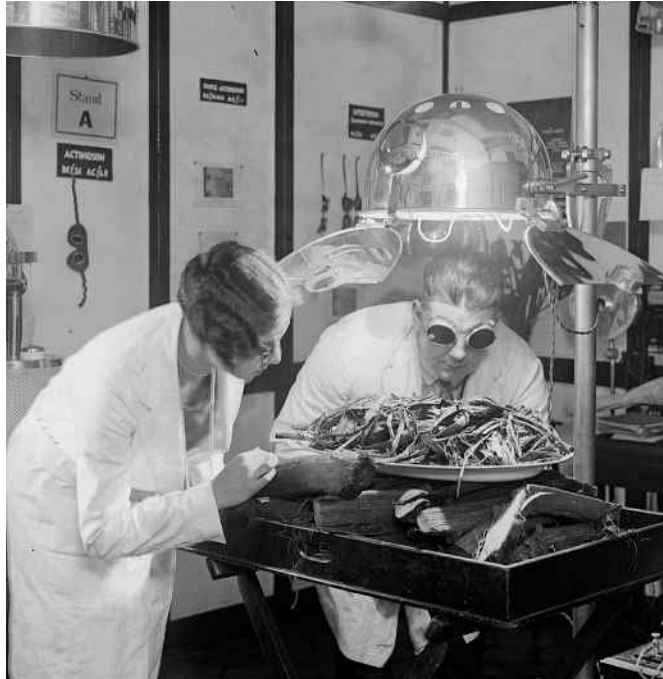
Have science's self-correcting mechanisms ceased to function, leading to dodgy data? **DAVID HAMBLING** says it's probably too soon to declare the scientific method bust.

"Science is broken" is a meme propagating around the Internet, describing how most published results turn out to be inaccurate, and how the scientific method's self-correction has ceased to function. It is an idea that many fortune tellers will seize on eagerly. Fortune tellers, by definition, is composed of science's rejects, and seeing science humbled produces a warm glow of Schadenfreude.

However, behind the simplified façade of the headlines there is a more complex reality. The triggering factor for "science is broken" was a paper in the journal *Science* in 2015, "Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science". This looked at 100 experiments reported in three highly ranked psychology journals in 2008, and found that only a third to a half of the reported results could be reproduced.

Two problems in particular gave rise to all these doubtful results. One is the burying of inconvenient evidence: if a study fails to support a cherished theory, it is simply not published. This ensures that all the available evidence indicates that the theory is valid, and nobody in the field ever hears about negative results.

The other is a statistical fiddle known as "data dredging" or "p-hacking", which gets its name from the way the p-value or probability of a set of results can be misused. To make the point, a 2011 paper called "Undisclosed Flexibility in Data Collection and Analysis Allows Presenting Anything as Significant" showed p-hacking in action. A team from the University of Pennsylvania investigated a ridiculous hypothesis – that listening to the Beatles song "When I'm Sixty-Four" made you younger – by measuring the average age of different test groups. When the data showed no statistical significance between those who had listened to the song and those who had not, they added a few more volunteers to the test and ran the statistics again. They kept doing this until they stumbled on a statistically significant outcome. Because the p-level for



### YOU CAN GET A STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT RESULT FROM ANY SET OF DATA

judging results to be "significant" is usually set at .05 or 5%, if you can have 20 different variations you usually get a statistically significant result for any set of random data.

The problem is that researchers do not necessarily decide how many test subjects they will use at the outset. If they are not getting good results they may be tempted to add a few more in – and continue doing so until it works. This is a natural human tendency, but it is the enemy of good science. If everyone does it, the system is overwhelmed with unreliable evidence.

The problems extend beyond psychology into other social sciences and also into medicine. There are vast amounts of money at stake every time a new drug is developed, and a drug that does not work is worth nothing, so there is always a huge pressure on researchers to come up with

positive results. That may well mean finding some flaws in a failed test so the results are not published, or massaging the data in an equivocal test with a little p-hacking to achieve statistical significance.

The remedies for these particular failings are already well established. The burying of evidence can be prevented by demanding that researchers pre-register their studies before a paper can be published. As well as letting everyone know that, for example, Drug X is being tested for its cancer-fighting properties, this can also bind researchers to a particular methodology. This ensures that the negative results as well as the positive ones are a matter of record, and that statistics are not manipulated after the data have been gathered. When pre-registration was introduced to the journal *Psychological Science* in 2014, the number of paper submissions initially halved, but it slowly recovered. And the content should be far more reliable as a result.

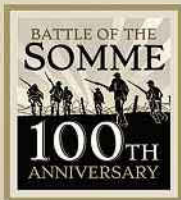
Some critics want to extend the scope of the problem and claim that it affects the hard sciences as well. This is much harder to prove. William Wilson, in a piece called "Scientific Regress" ([www.](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/05/scientific-regress)

[www.firstthings.com/article/2016/05/scientific-regress](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/05/scientific-regress)) points to the claims of faster-than-light neutrinos and evidence for cosmic inflation, both claims that were later withdrawn, as examples of how physics is deteriorating under the weight of false findings. This seems perverse. That those claims were swiftly disproved looks more like evidence that the self-correcting mechanism is in good order.

In an age where the evidence for the Higgs Boson has been weighed by many independent scientists and found adequate, and when gravitational waves have finally shown themselves incontrovertibly against all challenges (after a few false starts), it is hard to argue that physics is going backwards.

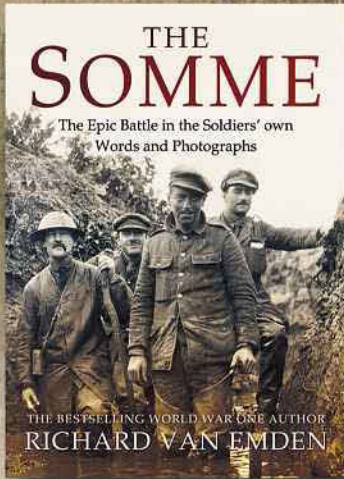
For a fortune teller, the real problem is not that the scientific establishment is too accepting, but that it is not accepting enough. This column's two favourite weird science projects, cold fusion and the propellantless EmDrive, never make it as far as the respectable journals. It is not that the papers describe experiments that are not rigorous enough, it is that their conclusions are unacceptable. Peter Hagestein of MIT received a rejection from one journal which stated flatly that they would not publish because his research supported cold fusion which "has largely been disproved among the scientific community". This made it unacceptable and cold fusion research remains outside of science. In spite of the resistance, we should eventually get good, peer-reviewed studies showing exactly what is behind the anomalies observed with both cold fusion and the EmDrive. The drip-drip of evidence builds up, and even the damned cannot be dammed beyond a certain volume. What is frustrating is that it will take a generation longer than it should to find out if cold fusion is a real phenomenon or some curious measuring anomaly.

Science looks far from broken. There is good cause to question the claims of psychologists or the drug developers, but this is hardly news. From recovered memories of abuse to the miraculous powers of Prozac, many claims have not stood up to close scrutiny, and have crumbled over time. And if you still want to reject science in its entirety, first consider what the alternatives look like.



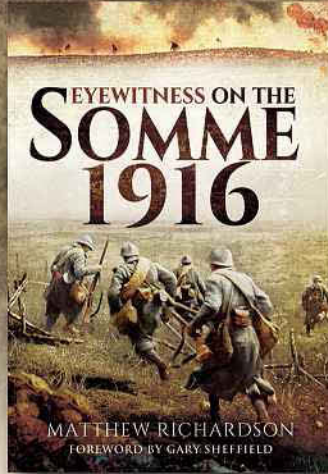
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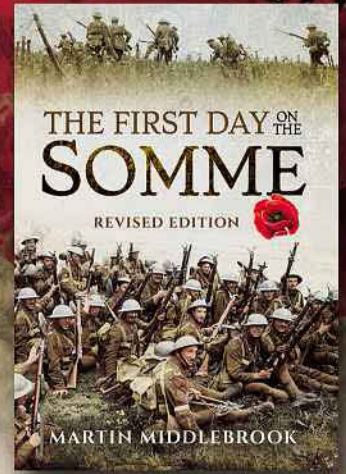
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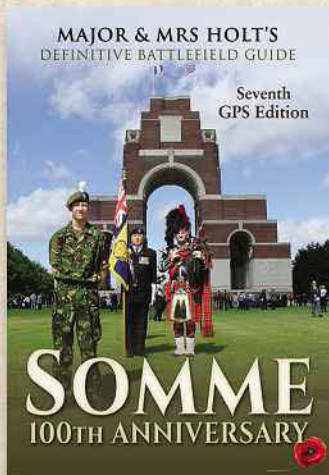
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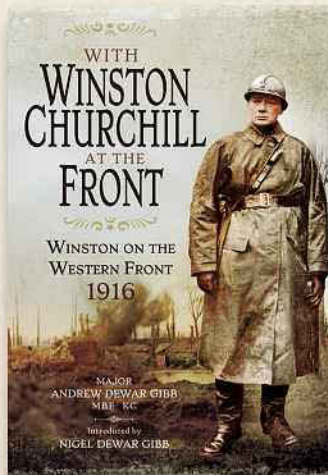
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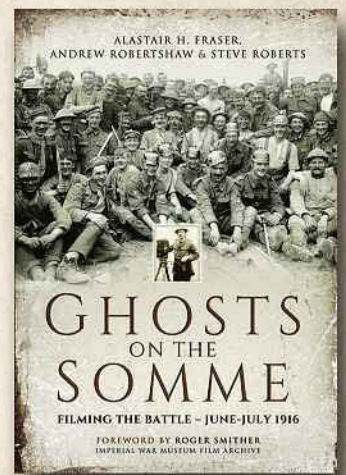
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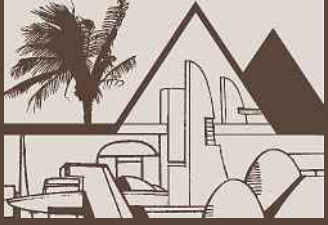
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# ARCHAEOLOGY

Our archaeological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, Managing Editor of *Time & Mind* – *The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* ([www.tandfonline.com/rtam](http://www.tandfonline.com/rtam))

## HAPPY BONES

The traditional horror image of the grinning skull was given a happier twist in a 2,400-year-old Greek mosaic discovered in Hatay province (ancient Antioch) on the Turkish-Syrian border. The mosaic, once part of a lavish Roman villa, shows a somewhat laid-back skeleton with a wine pitcher and loaf of bread accompanied by a caption in Ancient Greek saying: “Be cheerful, enjoy your life”. It may be wise advice, but perhaps rather taunting in the circumstances of its geographical location. *Mail Online*, 22 April; *Independent*, 24 April 2016.



## A MYSTERY PEOPLE

They drift into historical view around the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC in central Italy, and were what we call ‘Etruscans’ – derived from the Roman name for them, ‘Tusci’ (hence Tuscany). They had a unique language and customs, but by passing some of the arts of civilisation onto the Romans, like the invention of alphabetic writing, the Etruscans “essentially helped plant the seeds of Western culture,” observes Yaroslav Gorbachov, linguistics professor at the University of Chicago. Yet we still have no real idea who they were. Their culture was eventually assimilated into that of the Romans, and thus effectively disappeared. There are hilltop towns

in central Italy that are thought to have Etruscan foundations, and archaeologists still occasionally uncover Etruscan artefacts, like sarcophagi and grave goods, and we get some secondhand glimpses of the Etruscans through the beliefs, ideas and practices the Romans acquired from them, but the origin of their culture remains damnably enigmatic, and has been the stuff of many claims and speculations from Ancient Greek times to the present day.

Over the past decade there have been various genetic investigations to find out more, but these have failed to concretely show any lineages common to European or Near Eastern populations. In 2007, though,

a study of paternally inherited DNA from people living in three formerly Etruscan communities indicated a “residual genetic link” to Turkey. There are also some linguistic similarities with Turkey, but nothing truly conclusive over and above possible cultural borrowing. Moreover, another study in 2013, conducted with the same groups using maternally inherited DNA (mtDNA) instead, showed no genetic link to Turkey. So the precision of science has only added to the bafflement.

A major impediment to solving the Etruscan riddle is the lack of original Etruscan texts other than tomb inscriptions. But now, in the foundations of an Etruscan temple at a site north of Florence, archaeologists from the University of Texas have uncovered a slab of stone carved with an appreciable amount of the ancient language. “Inscriptions of that length are very rare, and it’s very rare to find something like that in a sanctuary setting,” said Professor Michael Thomas, co-director of the dig. It is to be hoped that this significant find will shed important new light on the mysterious Etruscans. *Daily Texas Online*, 13 April 2016.



ABOVE: The stele uncovered by archaeologists in the foundations of an Etruscan temple near Florence.

## A TALE OF TWO ‘POMPEIIS’

A group of Bronze Age dwellings uncovered near Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, is said to be the best preserved site of its kind ever found in Britain, and has been dubbed, variously, the ‘Fenland Pompeii’ or the ‘Peterborough Pompeii’. The circular wooden houses, built on stilts, form part

# CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 199: ANCIENT 'FORTEAN FUNNIES'

of a settlement dating to about 1000-800 BC. A fire destroyed the posts, causing the houses to collapse into a river where silt helped preserve the contents. Pots with meals still inside have been found at the site. Small cups, bowls and jars, 'exotic' glass beads have also been unearthed, along with textiles made from plant fibres and tree bark, and even a spool of thread. The site provides an unsurpassed "frozen moment in time" from the Bronze Age, say the archæologists. Even footprints of the inhabitants of the dwellings were preserved. And as archæological work on the site progresses, yet further remarkable finds are being made: in mid-February, a perfectly preserved Bronze Age wheel was unearthed. It's made of oak, about a metre in diameter, 3.5cm thick and complete with hub. It is Britain's oldest intact wheel and probably came from a two-wheeled, ox-drawn cart. (The world's oldest wheel, about 5,150 years old, was found in a marsh near Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2002.) *BBC News*, *D.Telegraph*, 12 Jan; *Int. NY Times*, 29 Jan; *Guardian*, 16 Feb; *D.Mail*, <i>, 19 Feb 2016.

Over the Pond, in Arizona, what might be called the 'Tucson Pompeii' was uncovered in November 2015. At a site north of Tucson 2,500-years-old bare footprints of some ancient farmers, their children and dogs have been found perfectly preserved. The dozens of prints are thought to be the oldest human tracks yet found in the US Southwest. They are distinct enough that the passage of specific individuals can be followed across an equally well-preserved 160ft<sup>2</sup> (15m<sup>2</sup>) field. The tracks were frozen in time by a flood from a nearby creek soon after they were made, the resulting cover of mica-rich sandy sediment effectively hardening the prints into mineralised casts. The preserved ancient fields they occupy are extensive. *Western Digs*, 21 January 2016.



ABOVE: Stilts and collapsed roof timbers at the Must Farm site in Cambridgeshire.

DAVE WEBB / CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

Robert L Ripley's first collection of 'Believe It Or Not' cartoons was apparently inspired by the publication of Fort's *Book of the Damned*. 'Cartoon' (thus *OED*) entered English in 1671, but attaining its modern sense only in 1863, two years before Champfleury's *Histoire de la caricature antique* – any connection?

Spartan painters Batrachos and Sauras, being refused an honorific inscription for their triumphal temple, left signatory pictures of frog and lizard (representing their names) at the columns' bases (Pliny, *Natural History*, bk36 ch42). Mæcenas wore a frog signet ring in apparent parody of Augustus's sphinx seal (Pliny, bk37 ch10). The picture of a large snake was erected to stop the birds from disturbing triumvir Lepidus's sleep (Pliny, bk35 ch117) – Roman Worzel Gummidige. Rome's Forum (second-century BC) contained the picture of a Gaul sticking out his tongue. Surely a caricature, though some think the extruded tongue is religious – perhaps the Gaul was in range of the apotropaic farting revealed in RW Daniel's 'Laughing Stones', *ZPE* 61 (1985), 127-30.

Appian (*Civil Wars* bk2 ch101) says people laughed at Cæsar's propaganda pictures of fleeing and slain enemies, doubtless done in comic style – his 20 more formal depictions were disapproved. Spurius Tadius (Pliny, bk35 ch117) won a reputation for such "innovatory" vignettes of men staggering under the weight of shoulder-perched women and "other witty pictures of that sort".

Famulus (Pliny, bk 35 ch120) wore a toga (shades of Balzac's literary dressing gown) while painting. His Minerva faced the spectator from all angles. This Roman Mona Lisa was parodied in paintings only visible from the back when auctioned at banquets (Suetonius, *Augustus*, ch75). Excessive realism was guyed (Seneca, *Controversies*, ch10 para5) in Parrhasius's torturing a prisoner to provide a good model for his painting of Prometheus – ancient Francis Bacon? Quintilian (*Institutes of Oratory*, bk6 ch72) describes Manius Curius facing a courtroom accuser with paintings showing him naked, in prison, being ransomed: victim of his excessive gambling. Adds point to Juvenal (*Satires* 1, vv90-3) on gambling mania that saw men lose not only their own shirts but those from their slaves' backs.

More correlations between art and literature. As Hipponax, Curius answered pictures with words: *ergo ego nunquam vici?* (Didn't I ever win?). Juvenal (10, vv157-8) alludes to a caricature of the one-eyed Hannibal (a genuine detail) on a huge elephant. Apart from rhetorical exercises, the Carthaginian was ancient history, but Roman

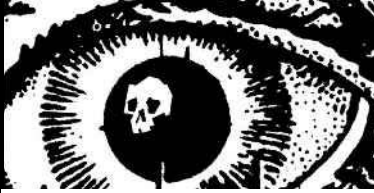
mothers still used him as a bogeyman (as ours did Hitler) to frighten the kiddies up the stairs to Bedfordshire with the threat *Hannibal ad portas* (Hannibal's at the door).

More poignant were the pictures of shipwreck victims shown to strangers to elicit pity and alms. Given the frequency of maritime disasters, these must have been a common sight and good income for artists. I've always enjoyed and never understood Victorian editor Mayor's note on Juvenal (14, vv301-2): "We often see the same thing in England".

An ideological turning point manifests in a cartoon twice (*Apology*, ch16 paras12-3; *To the Peoples*, ch1 para14) described by Tertullian as showing a donkey-man mocking Christ's Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem. Its exhibitor was a wild beast fighter and renegade Jew. The well-contrived rider comported asinine ears, hooped foot, toga, and book. Lest anyone miss the point, it was captioned *Deus Christianorum Onokoites* (The Christians' Donkey Manger-Squatting God) – the last word insultingly coined for the occasion. Later came reverse iconography. Pagan historian Eunapius (fr. 68) got het up ("This stupid drunken painters' nonsense") over city prefect Perses erecting a picture showing God's Hand protruding from the clouds, captioned "God's Hand Driving Off the Barbarians"; cf. Baldwin, *Byzantium* 46 (1976), 5-8. Seven captioned colour cartoons aimed at St Ignatius caused his biographer Nicetas (Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, vol105 paras450-5) to splutter with rage against their creator, Bishop Asbestos – good name for fiery artist, "A painter as well as his other vices".

Final disparate miscellany. A quinquplex portrait ridiculed emperor Tacitus for wearing five sets of incongruous clothes – must have been in a Canadian winter. Emperor Andronicus I was depicted in a mock designer farm-labourer's costume. Vandal Latin poet Luxorius describes a debauchee's coffin lid painted with scenes from his scandalous life. A statue of the hunchback Firmilianus in Constantinople was "carved to cause laughter" – expect its victim got the hump. Holy men's physical characteristics as catalogued in Byzantine art student manuals (cf. Baldwin, *Aevum* 58, 1984, 144-8) lent themselves to caricature, especially Paul's long nose and receding hairline – *Ap-paul-ing*.

The so-called Amasis Painter (cf. D von Bothmer's 1985 study) included pæderastic touches in his Hercules v. Cynus portrait, loosely comparable to the scene of what editor David Wilson (1985) dubs "The naked lady and the phallic gentleman" on a border of the Bayeux Tapestry.



# GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE pulls out all the stops to deliver a toccata of terror from Torquay...

## THE PHANTOM OF THE ORGAN IS HERE

The idea of a mysterious phantom blasting out notes and chords upon a massive pipe organ possesses an appeal that spans the generations. Back in December 1986 *New Statesman* magazine told readers not to bother rushing to see Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *The Phantom of the Opera*, reasoning that it 'will still be showing when your children are in college'. And so it has proved, the famous musical being just the most successful of all the numerous dramatisations, film versions (including the classic Lon Chaney interpretation, pictured right) and interpretations of the tale of the maniacal and disfigured musician haunting the Paris Opera House, originally penned by Gaston Leroux as a popular serial back in 1909-1910.

In reality, actual organ-playing phantoms prove something of a rarity, although it must be said finding a decent organ-playing ghost would easily eclipse dozens of cases of mysterious footsteps, crackling EVP recordings or anonymous nocturnal moans and groans, in terms of challenge, mystique and fascination. Undoubtedly the most famous British example is what may be called the 'Phantom of the Torquay Organ', which haunted the Church of St John the Apostle, built at Torquay in 1867 (pictured on facing page). As recently retrieved by the *We Are South Devon* community website, during the mid-1950s the case received international attention, thanks to the public statements of the then vicar, the Revd. Anthony Rouse. However, the case cannot be attributed simply to a single news-conscious cleric, for the Revd. Rouse was just one of a line of successive witnesses to a ghost that had by then been returning periodically to the Devon church and its nearby vicarage for some 72 years. But what is even more curious is that the 'Phantom of the Torquay Organ' was ultimately considered to be not just one ghost but two. Neither of these phantoms was recalled as mysterious Lon Chaney look-alikes, but otherwise ordinary and dedicated church organists, dying 60 years apart.

The first musician concerned was one Henry Ditton-Newman who died on 19 November 1883. Described in some accounts as the 'young organist' of St John's, he was in fact 39 years old at the time of his demise, but this is a relative term when it comes to ecclesiastical musicians (I was recently told of a Sussex church organist who until promoted to glory at an advanced age in February 2016 had been playing the organ of his village church since the reign of George VI – over 65 years). According to some accounts, Henry Ditton-Newman was still completing his training, but other sources suggest he was already a distinguished musician, previously organist at Anfield in Liverpool



BETTMANN / GETTY IMAGES

## HE REPORTED SEEING A GHOSTLY HAND ON THE ORGAN KEYBOARD

and who posthumously published a book of compositions and tunes. But whatever the case, the significant thing is Henry's toils at the Torquay organ did not cease when his earthly life was abruptly ended by a bout of pneumonia and pleurisy. Almost immediately afterwards, the peals of ghostly music were heard at St John's while his body rested in its coffin in the church on 20 November 1883, the witness being the vicar, the Revd. Hitchcock. Another witness was a lady who was still alive in the 1950s, traced by Devon folklorist Theo Brown. It seemed Henry Ditton-Newman had returned to play at his own funeral!

Despite the manifestations, Henry was duly laid to rest and the incident might have been forgotten but for the then Prebendary (an honorary canon attached to a cathedral or collegiate church) Basil Airy, who heard the music again and also reported seeing a ghostly hand on the organ keyboard (which by some quirk had reversed colours – the white keys were black and vice versa). Phantom hands are a phenomenon reported for centuries, both in ghostlore and in the séance room, appearing around mediums such as DD Home, Eusapia Palladino, and Eva C and the Schneider brothers – and in certain poltergeist cases. Indeed, so many cases of phantom hands could be cited that as

the psi researcher the late Manfred Cassirer declared: "It would be tedious to create a catalogue". This incident might have been treated as an hallucination but for the church verger at St John's seeing the hand too.

Subsequently, the full apparition of Henry Ditton-Neman was seen and heard by priests living at Montpellier House next door to the church. Witnesses included the Revd. Sir Patrick Ferguson Davie and a curate and his wife, Mr and Mrs Sproule, who addressed the ghost directly as "Henry". The haunting continued on into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In *The History of St John's, Torquay* (1930) the Revd. Boggis recorded that after Ditton-Newman's death "strange things happened, and there are well-authenticated accounts of apparitions... recorded down to the present time."

Interest peaked two decades later when the latest incumbent, Revd Anthony Rouse, reported hearing "sweet but sort of heavy" music and even seeing a transparent ghost seated playing the aged keys. He also stated: "Quite a few members of the choir have been conscious of someone standing by the organ when they were singing unaccompanied, as if the organist had got off his stool and was at their side". Others reported a sense of depression around the organ and domestics employed at the vicarage continued to report odd incidents.

In these cynical times some might suspect the Revd. Rouse of a publicity stunt to raise funds for replacing the aging organ; but this was the 1950s when religious observance and practice was a matter of much stricter adherence and formality, and such antics would have been sure to cause deep offence and draw a stern response from both clergy

and congregation. However, the 1950s were also a period when the Anglican Church was treating psychical phenomena with a growing intellectual seriousness, and the Churches' Fellowship for Spiritual and Psychical Studies (founded in 1953) convened a special meeting at a local hotel to examine events in October 1956. The Revd. Rouse recounted his experiences and described how a local woman, Miss Kent, had also heard the organ apparently playing by itself (she recognised the music as Edouard Silas's Mass in C). A visiting organist also declined to play at church after twice encountering a presence sitting near him, and the local *Torquay Times* succeeded in locating several other witnesses: a parish clerk Mr Downey, a Mrs Palmer and a Mrs Beer who all vouched for strange incidents. A ghost hunt was organised at Montpellier House by journalist Peter Large from the *Western Mail*. Large and his friend John Whatmore saw nothing but heard strange noises, perhaps exaggerated by the house, whilst a later visitor, Commander P Osborn, reported awakening at 3.10am to hear unexplained noises and confronting a strange cold spot.

In February 1957 the old organ was removed ("it was totally worn out" stated the Rev. Rouse) and a new model installed. Edmond P Gibson in *Fate* magazine wondered if the ghost would return from Montpellier House to try the new model. But Gibson also questioned whether Henry Ditton-Newman could be responsible for the manifestations, asking: "Can this be a case of multiple haunting in which the ghost of the former organist plays only one of the parts?" These words proved very pertinent, or perhaps Gibson had some inside information. For by the following year the Revd. Rouse was questioning the notion of a recurrent haunting generated by Ditton-Newman since 1884, and began speculating that a second phantom might be at work.

In the autumn of 1958, whilst the Revd. Rouse was away, members of a choral society rehearsing in the church reported manifestations around the organ, including an apparition, strange noises, and a sense of an oppressive presence. The curate, Sir Harold Papworth, was summoned and he sprinkled holy water over the organ stool and said prayers. Nonetheless, the sense of malaise about the new organ continued, with church organist Frederick Fea sensing an invisible someone sitting next to him, particularly on Fridays and Sundays. Mr Fea duly complained to the Bishop of Exeter. Considering the haunting was entering a new phase, at Christmas 1958 the Revd. Rouse consulted a medium, Mrs Leith-Walker at the College of Psychic Studies in London. She gave him a reading that an organist at the church had gassed himself and required the sprinkling of holy water on his grave.

Making local enquiries, the Revd Rouse discovered that shortly before his arrival at St John's, a 50-year-old music teacher named Francis Crute who played for the church had been found dead. This was on 11 September 1953, with an inquest recording the death as suicide. The Revd Rouse learned that although a funeral had been held for Francis Crute, during the service his body had remained outside St John's church throughout. Well into the 1960s and later, the Church of England could deny full funeral rights to suicides, killing oneself still being classed as a form of homicide and illegal until 1961 (though the notion that unsuccessful suicides went to the gallows is a candidate for 'Mythconceptions', the crime being punished as a misdemeanour, not a capital felony).

So in order to lay what was presumed to be a wandering soul, on New Year's Day 1959 the Revd. Rouse and Dr Malcolm Russell, a counter tenor from Exeter Cathedral, went to the grave of Francis Crute, prayed, recited a Psalm and sprinkled holy water. Thereafter, the haunting of the organ is considered to have ceased, but there is apparently no shortage of other ghosts in Torquay, the town now being the latest to earn the dubious and unverifiable accolade of the most haunted place in Britain in 2015 – the verdict of an estate agent's organisation. (See 'Revealed: The towns where things really go bump in the night' *Daily Mail*, 15 May 2015).

Meanwhile, *We Are South Devon* website even suggests there may have been a third phantom at St John's, the Revd. Hitchcock who first heard the music in 1884, but this may be a confusion in the subsequent re-tellings of the story. There are no details if it is so.

In 1970 a later rector, the Revd. BG Burr, sought to play down the haunting, saying: "There was a blind parish clerk who used to play the organ for his own amusement without bothering to put on the lights". However, this individual has not been identified and even given the longevity of some church musicians, as Graham McEwan pointed out in *Haunted Churches of England* (1989), this fails to account for all the reports over 75 years.

See: *We are South Devon* website 'The three musical ghosts of a Torquay church' 15 March 2016; 'The Ghost of the Torquay Organ' by Edmond P. Gibson in *Fate* 1957 pp 85-90; *Spirit Hands: Fact or Fraud* (1978) Manfred Cassirer in *SPR Journal* vol.49 pp.875-80).

Other examples of ghostly organ-playing include the claim of Elliot O'Donnell in his enjoyable, if overly imaginative *Haunted Churches* (1939) that weird organ music was heard issuing late one night "some years ago" from the church of St Crux in York. The witness, a policeman on the beat, was naturally startled to hear the funeral march being played in the church at night and went to investigate. As he approached, the door of the church opened by itself and he had a sensation of crinolined figures passing by him, though he could see nothing. Since the church was demolished in 1885, the story was then over 50 years old and second-hand, so the tale can easily be shelved along with those emanating from that most tantalising and productive informant, 'anonymous'.

Other alleged examples of spectral organ players include at the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Albans, St Mary's Church, Bowers Gifford, Essex, St Peter and St Paul Church at Caistor, Lincolnshire, and Borley Church, Essex. Unfortunately, local enquiries in 2000 by parapsychologist, conductor and musician Dr Melvyn Willin failed to yield any hard evidence but a variety of alternative explanations, ranging from pranksters to the claim "air remaining in pipes can be expelled by the movement of mice, of which we have many". A church organist at Caistor confessed to playing music late at night. "You can imagine, therefore, how the rumours started, especially with a boarding school close by!" One unexplained case is the organ-playing reported at Borley Church, although John May's story from 1947, of being in the churchyard and hearing 'soft notes and chords from the organ' I think may be discounted. (I think John May was another alias of eccentric fantasist Louis Mayerling who wrote the spurious '*We faked the ghosts of Borley Rectory*', 2000).

More cogent as evidence is the report of organ music heard by the Revd. Alfred Henning during the 1940s and 1950s, and also by the writer Norah Walrond. The Revd. Henning told ghost hunter Philip Paul (1923-2010) that the music heard coming from the church was slow and solemn; a question that remains unresolved is whether it was produced by a physical movement of the organ mechanism or was psychical in nature, being perceived only upon a mental level.

Sources: 'Paranormal Manifestations of Music' by Melvyn Willin in *SPR Journal* (2000) vol.64 pp.93-108; *The Ghosts of Borley* (1973) by Paul Tabori and Peter Underwood; pers comm, Philip Paul April 2008.





## NESSIE NEWS

Man watches loch for quarter century while monster heads south to London and Australia

### NESSIE IN THE THAMES?

A long dark shape that appeared to have three humps, reminiscent of descriptions of Nessie, was filmed on 5 April in the Thames in front of the O<sup>2</sup> arena. A YouTube poster known as Penn Plate took the footage while on the Emirates Air Line cable car near Greenwich, commenting: "Something huge was moving under the water and then briefly surfaced. Are there whales in the Thames? Or is it some weird submarine?" Gary Campbell, president of the Official Loch Ness Monster Fan Club, said: "I've no idea what it is. Given the size of it, I'm surprised no one else saw it." Seals, porpoises, dolphins and even whales have been seen in the Thames, and maybe a mammal could account for the sighting – or could it be a digital hoax?

The so-called 'Dock Ness Monster' was allegedly filmed again about six days later. Lea K posted an 18-second video showing a large dark shape drifting downstream in the Thames. What looks like a head bobs up and down, leaving small waves in its wake. Lea commented: "Everyone was looking at a freaking rainbow and no one paid attention to this thing."

About three days later, a similar shape was reportedly filmed in the waters of the Solent near the Isle of Wight. Trevor and Jo Wilde, from Newport on the island, were headed to Cornwall when they spotted when they spotted something from the deck of Wightlink's Fishbourne-to-



ABOVE: Steve Feltham's caravan beside Loch Ness. BELOW LEFT: Penn Plate's footage, shot near the O2 arena. BELOW RIGHT: Lea K's mysterious dark shape.

Portsmouth ferry. "She was right in the middle of the Solent," said Mr Wilde. Whatever it was seemed to be moving alongside of the boat. It seems to have a very shiny texture to it. It could have been an extremely big fish." *D.Mail, Sun, 7 April; D.Star, 12+15 April 2016.*

### VETERAN NESSIE WATCHER

Steve Feltham, 52, gave up his job, girlfriend and home in Dorset in 1991 to spend the next 25 years in a caravan beside Loch Ness scanning the misty waters. He holds a Guinness World Record for the longest continuous Nessie vigil. In the early years of his vigil, he said, there would be up to a dozen good sightings a year, but now there might only be only one. "Whatever Nessie turns out to be, it is dwindling," he said. "There was a viable breeding population

but I think the numbers have declined to the extent that there are now just one or two left."

In July 2015 he announced that he now believes the monster is a wels catfish, which can live for at least 30 years – maybe even 80 years – and grow enormous. In 1856, KT

Kessler wrote about specimens from the Dnieper River that were over 5m (16ft) long and weighed up to 400kg (880lb). The scaleless fish have a smooth back like upturned boat. "I'm not saying it's the final explanation," said Feltham. "It ticks most of the boxes with sightings – but it doesn't tick them all." However, he is not prepared to give up looking. "We still have this world-class mystery and for the next several decades I hope to carry on trying to find the answer," he said. Catfish are native to central and eastern Europe and were introduced to Britain by the Duke of Bedford at Woburn in 1880. Feltham believes the Victorians might have introduced them to Loch Ness so they could catch them for sport – although there is no record of this. *[AFP] Times, Huffington Post, 16 July; D.Mail, 17 July 2015.*

### NESSIE FEVER DOWN UNDER

The iconic photograph of the Loch Ness monster, allegedly taken by the surgeon Robert Wilson in April 1934 (and in 1994 possibly exposed as a hoax based on a toy submarine – see FT76:15) caused a media frenzy round the world. Four months later, there was a series of sea monster sighting reports in North Queensland. Was this merely a reaction to the Nessie excitement or something more mysterious?

The first sighting was on 12 August 1934 just after dawn, by a group of five Innisfail fishermen about three miles (5km) from Mourilyan Harbour. The creature appeared out of the water near their launch and was estimated to be 50ft (15m) in length, with a turtle-like head, small eyes and protruding teeth. It swam around in circles making half-gasping, half-whistling sounds before eventually vanishing.

Another sighting occurred a few days later, off the coast of Townsville, witnessed by Oscar Swanson, his son, and another man. Swanson gave a detailed account and a sketch, which was published in *The*

*Victorian Naturalist* the following year. He said the creature's head was turtle-like and rose 10ft (3m) above the water level, followed by three curved humps about 23ft (7m) apart.

The humps were covered in barnacles, with scales the size of saucers. "We were wishing we were in a speedboat," Swanson said of their retreat to the safety of the Fairway Beacon.

Another sighting followed on 23 August near the Gloucester Passage in the Whitsundays. Fishermen saw a dark creature floating near the top of the water about 650ft (200m) away. As they approached, it lifted its turtle-like head out of the water. Then, on 30 August, a motor vessel bound for Montreal wired back to Townsville to report the sighting of a "sea monster" near Penrith Island. *(Queensland) Courier Mail, 8/9 Aug 2015.*



# A<sup>Z</sup> ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden

This month's column is devoted to a remarkable rediscovery and an equally intriguing non-discovery made recently in Loch Ness by a small orange-coloured underwater robot using extremely high-resolution sonar imaging to investigate its murky depths – and their even murkier secrets – in what has been described as “the most in-depth survey of Loch Ness ever”, and part of veteran Loch Ness researcher Adrian Shine's ongoing survey Operation Groundtruth. Now read on...

## FINDING NESSIE, SORT OF

During April 2016, a state-of-the-art, torpedo-shaped, underwater robot named Munin, operated by a team from Norwegian company Konigsberg Maritime (and led by Craig Wallace) in co-operation with Adrian Shine of The Loch Ness & Morar Project, and VisitScotland, conducted a very extensive two-week survey of Loch Ness. Munin found no trace of Nessie herself, but, very unexpectedly, it did indeed find a monster of sorts, resting placidly and undisturbed on the loch floor where it had been for nearly 50 years, hidden from sight but never forgotten. At a depth of over 700ft (213m), thereby confirming its technical expertise in underwater exploration, Munin had obtained sonar scans of a very large object whose size, shape, and location are all entirely consistent with the huge, long-lost Loch Ness monster model specially constructed for the 1970 British movie *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, starring Robert Stephens as the great detective plus Christopher Lee as his brother Mycroft, and directed by American film-maker Billy Wilder.

Unfortunately, however, the movie's spectacular plesiosaur-like Nessie model, about 30ft (9m) long and complete with a tall vertical neck and head, had abruptly sunk to the bottom of the loch when towed out onto the water ready for filming in 1969. Wilder had ill-advisedly requested that its two



ABOVE: Engineer John Haig with the Munin robot, undertaking “the most in-depth survey of Loch Ness ever”.

humps be removed – disrupting its balance, causing it to overturn and sink. This amazing prop (see pp6-7) had been designed and built by special-effects wizard Wally Veevers, who would later garner much-deserved praise and awards for his celebrated work on such classic films as *2001 A Space Odyssey*, *Superman*, and *Local Hero*. He was so upset when his Nessie model sank that he had to be personally comforted by Wilder. A new Loch Ness monster model was constructed afterwards as a replacement, but this time only a head and neck were built, and filming took place not on the loch but in a large studio-based water tank, just to be on the safe side. After all, as Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell might have observed had she been there: “To lose one Nessie may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness”.

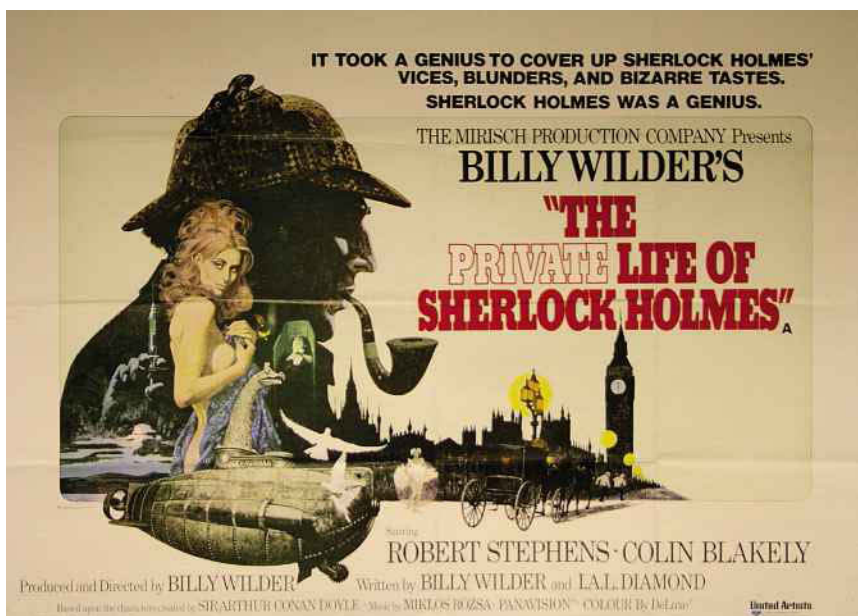
[www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-36024638](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-36024638) 13 April 2016.

## ...BUT NO SIGN OF NESSIE'S DEN

Previously in Alien Zoo, I revealed that in January 2016 a 43-year-old Loch Ness tour-boat operator called Keith Stewart had publicly announced that using 3-D sonar equipment he had obtained readings at one particular spot in the loch seemingly revealing that it was 889ft (271m) deep there [FT338:15]. If accurate, this exceeds a previous reading of 813ft (248m) obtained at a different spot, called Edwards' Deep. The site of Stewart's ostensibly record-breaking readings was apparently a previously undocumented loch-bottom trench, located about halfway between the Clansman Hotel and Drumnadrochit. Inevitably, the media soon hyped this up into being a potential hideaway for Nessie, where she and others of her reputedly plesiosaurian persuasion might have hidden during previous sonar sweeps, thus explaining why these sweeps hadn't revealed any monsters. Not surprisingly, therefore, during its two-week exploration of Loch Ness, Munin searched the area specified by Stewart for evidence of this trench's existence, and also made several sweeps of the loch bottom. But whereas it did locate the wreck of an unidentified sunken boat, it found no trace of the trench. So how can Stewart's findings be explained? Might his readings and/or his pinpointing of the alleged trench's location have been faulty, perhaps? Who can say? But for now at least, Nessie's den is as elusive as its supposed denizen. [www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/loch-ness-monster-lair-not-7743201](http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/loch-ness-monster-lair-not-7743201) 13 April 2016.

## MEMORIES OF MUNIN

A short compilation of images and videos showing Munin being deployed at Loch Ness during April 2016 as part of the ongoing Operation Groundtruth can be accessed at the Loch Ness & Morar Project's official website. [www.lochnessproject.org/explore\\_loch\\_ness/MUNIN%20SURVEY/Loch%20Ness%20Project%20Munin.html](http://www.lochnessproject.org/explore_loch_ness/MUNIN%20SURVEY/Loch%20Ness%20Project%20Munin.html) accessed by me on 26 April 2016.



JEFF J. MITCHELL / GETTY IMAGES

## FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

Human brewery, mystery hums, egg attacks, and the return of the Bogus Social Worker...

### AUTO-BREWERY SYNDROME [FT317:22]



A woman escaped a drink-driving charge after proving that her body is a natural 'brewery'.

The unnamed woman, said to be a 35-year-old schoolteacher, was arrested in New York State in 2014 after being pulled over for erratic driving and found to have a blood-alcohol level more than four times the legal limit. However, despite reportedly having slurred speech and bloodshot eyes, she insisted that she had had no more than three drinks in the six hours before she was arrested. She was referred for medical tests, which revealed that even after a day drinking no alcohol at all she had a blood-alcohol content of 0.36 per cent. The New York 'drunkenness' threshold is 0.08 per cent, equivalent to the limit in England and Wales of 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood. She was subsequently diagnosed with a rare condition called auto-brewery syndrome, in which yeast in the intestines ferments carbohydrate into alcohol, according to her lawyer, Joseph Marusak. The drink-driving charges were dismissed after Marusak presented medical research to the court, in the Buffalo suburb of Hamburg. The woman is now free to drive without restrictions, despite her condition.

Auto-brewery syndrome, also known as gut fermentation syndrome, was first documented in the 1970s in Japan, where researchers described a mysterious condition in patients with chronic yeast infections. It is being cited increasingly often in US drink-driving cases. The condition was first documented in the US by Barbara Cordell of Panola College in Texas, who published a case study in 2013 of a 61-year-old man who had been experiencing episodes of debilitating drunkenness without



ABOVE: Zug Island, in the Detroit River, might be the source of the mystery hum plaguing residents of Windsor, Ontario.

drinking alcohol. *D.Telegraph, Irish Independent, 1 Jan 2016.*

### WHAT'S THAT SOUND? [FT340:8]



A droning, industrial hum that has perplexed and disturbed locals in Windsor, Ontario, near the US-Canada border,

since March 2011, re-emerged in recent months – louder than ever. The monotonous, reverberating sound is known as "the Windsor hum". Local resident Mike Provost, who has kept records of the hums heard in his neighbourhood, noted a particular blast on 27 February that "shook everything... like a pounding on the wall. Some people complain about dishes rattling, windows rattling. It can get real disturbing." He said the jolting noises have been worse around 8pm.

One night back in 2012, more than 22,000 Windsor residents

phoned government officials about the hum during a call-in event. A 2013 report in *On Earth* magazine described how the incessant sound disturbed thousands of residents in that time, "vibrating their beds, wrecking their concentration, making their toddlers cranky. Some even blamed it for killing their goldfish." That year, an SF television show floated the idea that the hum was connected to HAARP, the US communications programme that conspiracy theorists believe controls minds or the weather, depending on whom you ask [see 'Not so secret weapon' by David Hambling, FT174:14].

After myriad complaints, a 2014 report by the Canadian government linked the hum to US Steel, based on Zug Island – a mass of land in the Detroit River just over the US-Canadian border. Experts think the hum could be the travelling sound of distant blasts from industrial furnaces releasing pressure on

the American island, but jurisdictional complications have hamstrung Canadian investigations. For its part, US Steel cast doubt on the notion that it causes the hum. For previous reports on the Windsor Hum, and others around the world, see FT291:14. *USA Today, 7 Mar 2016.*

More than 150 residents living close to Paignton Zoo in Devon have reported that a low-frequency sound coming from the giraffe house is causing unpleasant symptoms – including headaches, tremors, a feeling of irritation, sickness and disturbed sleep. The noise has been described as anything from "a persistent low-level hum", "fluctuation", "droning", and "drumming", to "a constant rumbling" and "like the thrum of a distant washing machine". The natural frequency of the human body, 7.5Hz, is akin to a low-frequency drone. When this frequency is transmitted through the body for an extended time,

it can cause nausea, headaches – and even blackouts. Resident Peter Thorne speculates the noise may be coming from the zoo's heating system. The zoo declined to comment, while a spokesman for Torbay Council said: "Our officers have been unable to hear or detect any low-frequency noise that would be an issue." *D.Mail*, 23+29 Feb 2016.

### ANY EGGSPLANATION? [FT326:8]



Police in Cleveland, Ohio, have finally discovered who bombarded the house of Albert Clemens Sr. in Euclid (a suburb of Cleveland) more than 100 times between May 2014 and June 2015: Jason Kozan, 30, a former neighbour. The lengthy investigation included undercover stakeouts, neighbourhood canvassing and testing of eggshells at a crime lab. A surveillance camera was also installed on Clemens's home. In March 2015 Clemens, 85, said that whoever was responsible demonstrated "phenomenal" accuracy, launching five or six eggs at a time and often hitting the front door of the green, two-story home that he and his late wife bought nearly 60 years ago. The after-dark attacks sometimes sounded like gunshots as eggs splattered on the aluminium siding, creating a residue that stripped the paint. Detectives failed to identify a motive for the eggings, which "largely stopped" once Kozan moved away. Does this mean that someone continued the ovoid pelting, but with less fervour? Kozan's bail was set at \$2,000. A Cuyahoga County grand jury will review his case for a possible indictment. [AP] 18 Mar 2016.

### BOGUS SOCIAL WORKERS [FT335:23]



Further details on the BSW (bogus social worker) case briefly reported last September

– the first time a BSW has been caught, as far as we are aware. FT recorded a wave of BSW sightings in 2000-2003, then a lull before resuming in 2010. Two teenage girls have admitted using a Facebook ruse as part of a plot to kidnap three babies. The unnamed pair, aged 17 and 18, used the social network to find new mothers and offer them free baby clothes in a ploy to get their contact details, before turning up at their homes posing as social workers. Police believe they dreamt up the scheme after one of the girls lied to her Jamaican boyfriend that she was eight months pregnant to prevent him leaving her.

On 21 September 2015, the girls turned up outside the home of Shantel Ullah, 20, in Normanton, Derbyshire, in a taxi. The younger girl got out, knocked on the door and claimed to be a social worker from Derby City Council called Clare. She asked to see Ms Ullah's two-week-old mixed-race son Dontae, claiming that she needed to take him for a health check. The BSW was dressed "very professionally in black trousers, high heels and a black patterned blouse, and was carrying a designer handbag", said Ms Ullah. "She said I'd signed a form when I was pregnant to say she could take Dontae away for half an hour" for a health check. However, Ms Ullah knew she had signed no such form and refused to let her son be taken. The BSW became nervous and said, "Oh, we'll have to arrange another date then," and walked out.

Ms Ullah called social services, who advised her to alert the police. Officers tracked down the teenagers – from Evesham and Wolverhampton – and discovered that they had tried to abduct a baby in Huddersfield and had plotted to kidnap another in Wolverhampton. The pair admitted conspiracy to kidnap and were due to be sentenced on 20 May. "We have never come across a case like it," said the Derbyshire police. They should read FT. *BBC News*, 24 Mar; *Derby Telegraph*, 25+29 Mar; *Sun*, 28 Mar; *Times*, 29 Mar 2016.

# Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

## 101: PUBLIC ENEMY NO 1



ILLUSTRATIONS: HUNT EMERSON

### The myth

Al Capone, Bin Laden, the Unabomber – they have all, at one time or another, had the honour of being named the USA's Public Enemy Number One by the FBI.

### The "truth"

There has never been a Public Enemy Number One, because no federal agency in the USA has ever ranked its "most wanted". The term "Public Enemy" was first used in press releases by the Chicago Crime Commission in the 1930s, and taken up by the press, but it has not been in official use since WWII – and even when it was employed, there was no *Top of the Pops* chart-style listing. The FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives Program began in 1950, as a way of attracting media and public attention to those wanted persons who are considered "a particularly dangerous menace". To make the list, a fugitive must first be proposed by an FBI Field Office, and ultimately approved by the Director. The programme is still running, and at the time of writing, has included 506 individuals, nine of them female. The Bureau says that over the years, 156 of the Most Wanted have been apprehended "as a direct result of citizen cooperation," while 24 have turned themselves in. But none of them has ever been Number One – all are equal.

### Sources

[www.fbi.gov/wanted/topten/ten-most-wanted-fugitives-faq/ten-most-wanted-fugitives-faq](http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/topten/ten-most-wanted-fugitives-faq/ten-most-wanted-fugitives-faq)

### Disclaimer

If you happen to be Public Enemy No 1, and you feel we have demeaned you, the letters page looks forward to hearing from your attorneys.

### Mythchaser

A reader asks: "Is urine still sterile? It used to be, but I've been told it isn't any more." I have a feeling in my water that he means the scientific consensus on the matter may have altered, rather than that there has been some mysterious change in the substance itself – but can anyone confirm whether or not pee really is the world's cheapest disinfectant?



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## NECROLOG

This month, we wave off one unconventional ufologist who received the first recorded visit from the Men in Black and another who proposed that UFOs were living creatures



### ALBERT K BENDER

Albert K Bender created the UFO community around the world and brought us the iconic Men in Black. He was a young factory worker in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1952 when his interest in the occult, science fiction and 'flying saucers' collided. Launching one of the first UFO investigation groups, Bender had a much broader plan in mind. He named his team the IFSB – International Flying Saucer Bureau – and was overwhelmed as branches were created around the world triggering the global quest to understand this enigma. His magazine – *Space Review* – was also a pioneer of its kind.

Bender used an eclectic range of investigative tools like out-of-body journeys into deep space to seek clues. On 15 March 1953 he also launched 'World Contact Day' in which he asked all IFSB members around the planet to beam a telepathic message to the space people asking to be friends. Within months Bender believed this was working. He planned to reveal the truth from



his 'contacts' in *Space Review*. But then, in early September 1953, he was visited by three men dressed in dark suits who said they had seen his planned exposé and his answer was correct but must never go public. Bender called the men 'silencers' – known today as MIB (Men in Black) from their clothing. Terrified, he published a warning to his readership to "be very cautious" – then shut the IFSB and quit the field.

This odd story was published

by IFSB member Gray Barker (1925-84) in *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers* (1956), the first book to describe the MIB. He related his friend's love for ghost stories in his large rambling office amidst rows of ominously chiming clocks. But the real 'answer' Bender had found went unrevealed until he broke his own silence in 1962. In *Flying Saucers And The Three Men* – published by Barker – there were hackneyed tales of monstrous aliens seeking the Earth's water and flying the investigator to the Antarctic. Most researchers considered it demonic fiction.

In 1965 Bender moved to California where he turned his attention to the music of Max Steiner, an Oscar-winning composer famed for movie scores such as *King Kong* and *Gone with the Wind*. His efforts helped gain a dedication for Steiner on the Hollywood walk of Fame.

Although Bender's role in the UFO story was brief, he left a big legacy. MIBs are now a staple of the subject and feature in countless TV shows and movies. His World Contact Day is still held on the same date each year and has been made famous by a Klaatu song that was turned into a hit record by The Carpenters. They sing the IFSB 'telepathic message' from Bender – including the catchphrase "Calling occupants of interplanetary craft".

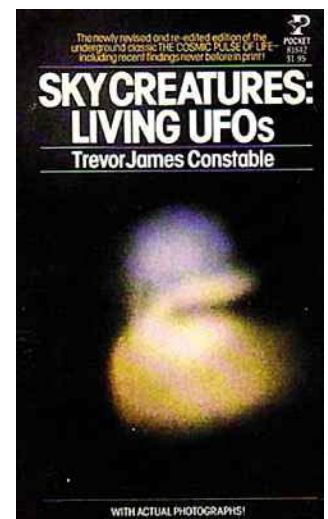
The British Flying Saucer Bureau, created weeks after the IFSB launch by a young Dennis Plunkett following an appeal by Bender in the *Daily Mail*, has outlived its parent group by over 60 years. It has hosted the British UFO Research Association (BUFORA) conference in Bristol where a range of scientific speakers presented papers vastly removed from the shadowy origins of the IFSB.

*Albert K Bender, UFO research pioneer, occultist, music historian – born Duryea, Pennsylvania 16 Jun 1921; died Los Angeles, California 29 Mar 2016, aged 94.*  
**Jenny Randles**

### TREVOR J CONSTABLE

Trevor James Constable defined a unique theory to explain the UFO mystery and spent a lifetime attempting to prove it. This led him to develop practical technology to alleviate global water shortages. A New Zealander who settled in the USA, he served 31 years at sea, 26 of them as a radio and communications officer in the US Merchant Marine. From this he developed multiple interests including military aviation – about which he wrote 11 non-fiction books, including *Horrido! Fighter Aces of the Luftwaffe* and *The Blond Knight of Germany: A Biography of Erich Hartmann*.

However, during the 1950s he became intrigued by Ruth Drown's radionics and the theories of Wilhelm Reich – who believed that there was a mysterious force – orgone energy – that pervaded the Universe. He was also influenced by Fort's writings and Conan Doyle's story *The Horror of the Heights*. He would visit the Mojave Desert with special equipment seeking evidence on high-speed infrared film and filters. Here he discovered blobs of discoloration on some of the processed images that he considered real objects, though others found them hard to reproduce. Having by now developed an interest in UFOs, Constable developed a theory radically different from the ones then current. Far from viewing these blobs as alien craft,



Constable proposed they were 'bioforms' – living creatures – that existed inside the atmosphere almost like super bacteria (for more on 'sky critters', see **FT291:30-35**).

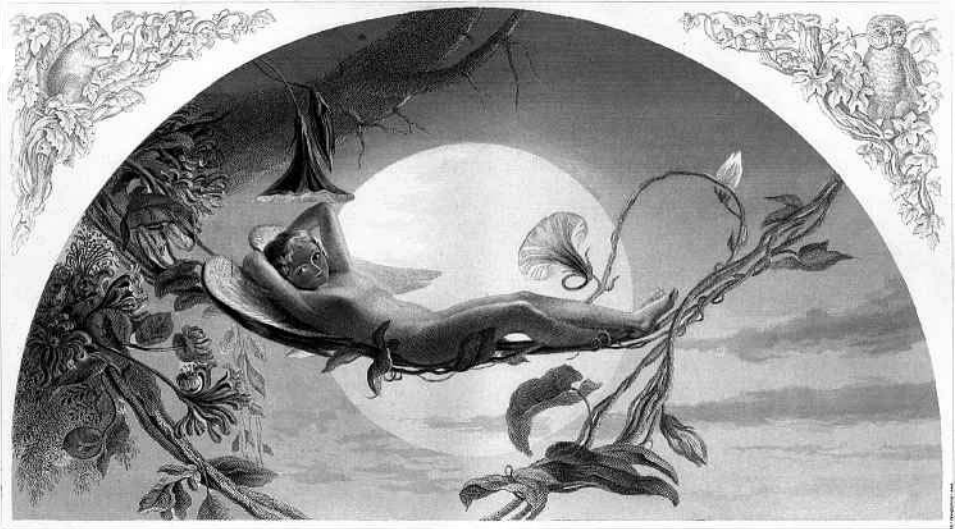
This concept was not entirely new, as Fort had dabbled with it in *Lo!* (1931); but Constable made a consistent theory from it and believed that these entities were a new species usually invisible to our senses, but under rare conditions observed as UFOs. They could also be picked up on radar – hence the number of UFO cases involving 'angels' where a target was on the screen but nothing seen by someone looking at the sky. Later he would speculate these 'sky critters', possibly angered by radar, might be responsible for cattle mutilations – swooping down unseen and devouring the herd like a voracious predator. Larry Arnold, fortean author of *Ablaze!* (1995), dubbed Constable's critters *Amæbæ constablea*, and suggested they might be a contributory factor in Spontaneous Human Combustion.

Constable published three books outlining his ideas, including *They Live in the Sky!* (1958, under the name Trevor James) and *The Cosmic Pulse of Life* (1975). In later years, he tried to use his research to create rain-making technology, following in the track of Reich once more. This included a contract with the Malaysian government to fill up a new dam with water without polluting the atmosphere via radiation or electromagnetism. He also claimed similar methods had been used to seed a dam and reservoir in California.

In a fittingly fortean coincidence, Constable wrote to UFO publisher Gray Barker discussing Albert Bender's then new book about meeting scary entities and Men in Black. His comments supporting Bender were published by Barker in *The Bender Mystery Confirmed* (1963). Now, over 50 years later and long after both left the field, Bender and Constable have died within 48 hours of each other and just a few miles apart.

*Trevor James Constable, aviation historian, UFO and photographic researcher and rain-maker – born Wellington, New Zealand 17 Sep 1925; died San Pedro, California, 31 Mar 2016, age 90.*

**Jenny Randles**



## FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

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

### NAKED GHOSTS

Today, familiarity with nudity is a given even in the most puritanical parts of the English-speaking world. Children grow up seeing bare bodies, or parts of bare bodies, in their own communities (particularly those of their own sex); and, as adolescents know all too well, naked flesh is now just a click away on the Internet. In the 18<sup>th</sup>, and perhaps particularly the 19<sup>th</sup>, century, this was not the case in British or American society; and this, as *FT* contributor Jacob Middleton points out in a recent book, *Spirits of an Industrial Age*, may have led to paranormal events – or, rather, belief in paranormal events (see also his 'Spurious Spirits', **FT297:32-37**).

Imagine now that you are, today, walking home one night after a party at a friend's house. You set off, and a naked man suddenly sprints across the road in front of you in the dark. The experience will certainly be disorienting; and while you may raise your eyebrows and walk on, you may equally get out your phone and call the police. But what happens in a society where nudity is not so familiar, and where there is no street lighting to speak of, when, late at night, a naked body shoots across your field of vision? The obvious explanation, particularly among the supernaturally inclined, seems to have been to assume that there was a ghost about. A

naked body has a luminous, blinding quality in the dark, particularly when combined with the shock at seeing dangling parts that were forbidden outside the marriage chamber (and that were worried about even there).

And there are, in fact, many pre-WWI accounts from Britain in which nudity was confused with the supernatural. In 1834, for example, at Winsford in Cheshire, a naked night-walker was long believed by the populace to be a ghost; a local landlord eventually seized the miscreant who got three months on the treadmill. In 1858, in Chorley in Lancashire, a boy threw a stone at a urinating man because the child thought that the man was a 'boggart'. In Accrington in 1874, a naked 'ghost' made nocturnal visits to

women's houses. In 1897 in Stoke Newington, an officer of the law saw a ghost, only for it to be revealed to be a disoriented and naked local woman. In Saddleworth in 1911, a driver reported seeing a ghost on the road; the police later found a dead woman with no clothes on.

These examples could be multiplied many times over up until WWI. So if you ever read a 100- or 200-year-old witness account of a bizarre event and there is a chance reference to 'glowing skin', think twice. You might just be dealing with a Georgian or Victorian stalker...

**Simon Young writes on folklore and history and runs [www.fairyist.com](http://www.fairyist.com)**

A BOY THREW  
A STONE AT A  
URINATING MAN  
BECAUSE THE CHILD  
THOUGHT THAT  
THE MAN WAS A  
BOGGART



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## UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANGLES RECALLS AN OUTBREAK OF PERSONAL SYNCHRONICITIES IN THE 1980S

### SCOUSE SYNCHRONICITIES

I have always been fascinated by the concept of synchronicity – the coincidence of events without any apparent causal link. They were recognised as important by the psychologist Carl Jung, who spent decades collecting examples and trying to understand them (see **FT171:42-47**). Quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli later recognised a relevance to the way in which the physics of the very small appears to operate. Indeed, our reality in some respects seems to emerge through perception and probability – an idea that so shook Einstein that he insisted that God would not “play dice” and struggled to accept that reality might depend upon a crapshoot.

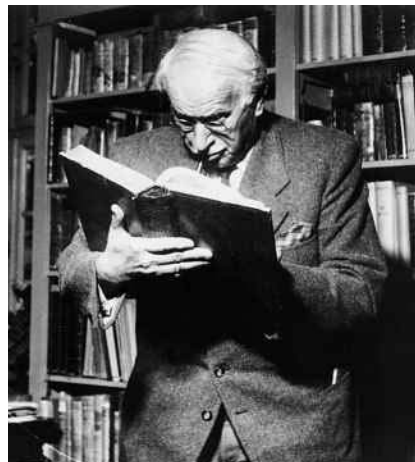
Yet today the evidence from experimental and observational science is overwhelming that this happens, and it is no longer absurd to consider Jung's further suspicion that some aspects of the paranormal might also be related to such phenomena. Indeed, I think they could be the froth on the surface of the quantum ocean, revealing these synchronistic principles at work as waves within our macroscopic world.

With this in mind, I have long recorded examples, and in the mid-1980s – when I

worked for a year or two for Radio City, the commercial station based in Liverpool – this went into overdrive.

Every week I talked about a different fortean topic as part of DJ Brian Ford's music and chat programme. These shows could be highly productive in terms of listener feedback, and I discovered and followed up many interesting cases in this way.

When I discussed UFOs, Brian asked me



to take a call from one Merseyside man who was listening intently to the programme. We did not usually do this live, but this man was part of the station team and wanted to report a sighting of a shiny object drifting overhead as he drove his car near Clatterbridge on the Wirral. The caller was, it turned out, the famous musician Gerry Marsden, leader of the 1960s group Gerry and the Pacemakers. At the time of his sighting, Gerry was driving near a hospital. Weeks later I would find myself a patient at the very same hospital, going to meet a doctor who would warn that I might need a pacemaker fitted in future for problems I was having with sudden drops in blood pressure. Happily, that possibility has yet to ‘actualise’ and later the real cause of my problem was found – but at the time the possibility was frighteningly real and the multiple synchronicity striking.

On another occasion, I heard whispers around the Radio City office that Brian Ford might be leaving for a new job elsewhere. So I discretely asked our mutual producer, Wally Scott, about it. He was polite and quite properly non-committal, though assuring me he had heard no such news.

That day I left the studio on Stanley Street, near the famous Cavern Club where the Beatles had played. It had just become home to a statue depicting Eleanor Rigby, from the Beatles song of the same name. Today, it's a tourist attraction; but at that point, it had only just been sculpted by famous musician and actor Tommy Steele. In fact, I had told an extraordinary story on air concerning his remarkable survival as a child.

Momentarily distracted by Tommy's artwork, I walked right into a placard for the local newspaper carrying the headline “*Ford's boss denies rumours*”. Just as Wally Scott, my boss, had actually done to me moments before, I thought to myself – although this story was not, of course, about me but concerned the Ford car plant on Merseyside.

Synchronicity made me grin broadly in the street – and it proved prophetic, in the sense that Brian Ford did move on and still has a successful career with the BBC. My time on the radio reached its natural end, but not without one further really huge synchronicity that to this day I still struggle to believe actually happened. But it did.

I usually talked over future programmes with both Brian and Wally to ensure they were in agreement with my ideas, and when I announced on air that I intended to talk about



TOP: CG Jung. ABOVE: The Eleanor Rigby statue in Liverpool's Stanley Street where Radio City was then based.

JAMES SIMPSON / BWP MEDIA / GETTY IMAGES

CENTRAL PRESS / GETTY IMAGES



ABOVE: Gerry Marsden, of Gerry and the Pacemakers fame, takes a ferry across the Mersey. BELOW: The Police's 1983 album *Synchronicity*.

CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/GETTY IMAGES

'synchronicity' next week I got some puzzled looks. I had to record a 'trail' that would be played on the station over the seven days leading up to this feature and I was politely advised not to stress the term "synchronicity" as listeners would never understand it. As I was reminded, the audience for the show was the "young record-buying public". So, of course, I rewrote my trail.

That next week proved to be tragically eventful. I ended up being interviewed for the first time in my life after a disrespectful thief chose to dump his getaway car right outside our front door. Sadly for him, we lived directly opposite a Merseyside CID officer who became suspicious. Luckily, he also gave me a heads-up to remove from our window what my other half had told me was just a tomato plant (apparently it wasn't!) before his colleagues arrived on the street.

The next morning, I got a call routed to me via Jodrell Bank science centre. This was not unusual, as UFO sightings were called through to them every week by witnesses who assumed astronomers were UFO 'experts', and they in turn passed them on to me for investigation. This call described a star-like light seen falling over a district of Merseyside in the early hours of that same morning. Jodrell Bank and I agreed that it sounded like a bright meteor, but I was happy to take details from the witness, expecting this to be the end of the matter and just another solved case of an Identified Flying Object.

Sadly, it was much more than that, as news reports revealed that two young men had died tragically after abandoning their motorcycles and walking into the path of a mail train. Nobody knew why. But I recognised immediately that it was at about the same time as the UFO sighting and had occurred in the same part of Merseyside.

### THE POLICE SYNCHRONICITY



My suspicion was that perhaps the youths had been distracted by the same UFO and gone to investigate and whilst doing so had failed to see the oncoming train. I knew that the UFO was most probably a meteor, and that any mention of a UFO 'causing' this tragedy would be a gift to the tabloids; it might even come over as a terrible attempt to promote my radio show. Plus, of course, it would mean involving the innocent UFO witness in this whole mess.

So I took the 'ferry across the Mersey' from my home in Wallasey and called into Radio City to collect mail from listeners, something I did often, but really just to read the detailed news file and learn what police knew about the tragedy. They remained completely baffled, and so my dilemma grew as to whether I should 'help the police with their enquiries' again?

Now fate, or synchronicity, was about to play its hand. As I sat in the studio talking to Brian Ford in a gap between his records and asking his advice, two uniformed officers marched into the studios and took away a member of staff (it was later revealed that they wanted to discuss an unpaid fine). I had just told Brian that talking

about coincidences caused them to occur!

This made up my mind to call the police and tell them what I knew, although I asked them not to go public with the information. Later, the police detective who lived opposite offered me a lift into work, and told my 'distraction by UFO' theory was as good as any others the police had to go on, but that the likelihood was that nobody would ever find out what really brought about the sad end of these two young lives.

Relieved that I had done the right thing, I went in and did my show on 'meaningful coincidence' and felt unburdened for the first time in days. Afterwards, I set off to get the bus home and on the way was given a free newspaper promoting upcoming music releases expected to be popular with Radio City's "young record-buying public".

I glanced through it casually on the ride through the Mersey tunnel – and then my jaw very nearly hit the floor when I discovered one anticipated big seller due out the following month. It was an album with a rather interesting title and a main song with some quite extraordinary words written by a group led by Gordon Sumner. Sumner is better known, of course, as Sting, and his group was The Police. That forthcoming album was titled *Synchronicity*. A few weeks later it became a huge hit and the title track was being sung out loud by the very audience that I had been asked not to confront with such a "baffling" word that no one would understand. Sting sings about meaningful coincidence, including the seemingly trivial line:

*A star fall  
A phone call  
It joins all  
Synchronicity*

And indeed it had.

# SOME FIN OF INTEREST?

## THE FC ADAMS NESSIE PHOTO

Did someone capture the image of an unusual creature in Loch Ness in 1934? Who was the photographer, and what does the picture reveal? **ROLAND WATSON** attempts to solve a photographic conundrum that has lurked beneath the troubled waters of Loch Ness research for decades.



**ABOVE:** The 1934 photo – an “ambiguous image”. **OPPOSITE:** Looking out over Loch Ness in the early 1930s.

It is a photograph that has been on the periphery of the Loch Ness literature for decades, and has therefore remained an ambiguous image for Loch Ness Monster researchers. Dr Roy Mackal declared it as “positive evidence” of the creature in his 1976 book *The Monsters of Loch Ness*. Likewise, Peter Costello found in its favour in his work *In Search of Lake Monsters*. But others barely give it a mention, neither declaring it monster, misidentification or hoax. Of such, we find that Ted Holiday, Tim Dinsdale and Constance Whyte act as if the photograph never existed.

Nicholas Witchell perhaps best summed it up in his book *The Loch Ness Story*. He reproduces the picture, but adds the simple subtitle: “An unidentified object in Loch Ness”. One suspects the

problem lies in the fact that the object on view did not fit into the normal plesiosaur mould. But then again, it doesn't have to.

Sceptical authors take a different opinion on the object's identity. Maurice Burton, keen to promote his vegetable mat theory in his 1961 book *The Elusive Monster*, tells us that the picture depicts a gaseous patch of foam thrusting a branch to the surface. Tony Harmsworth, in his recent work *Loch Ness Understood*, plumps for the dorsal fin of a species such as the dolphin.

So much for the variety of opinions, but what more can we learn about this ambiguous image? The picture itself came to light in the form of two press articles. The first appeared in the *Daily Mail* on 25 August 1934.

The short text under the picture reads:



HUTTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

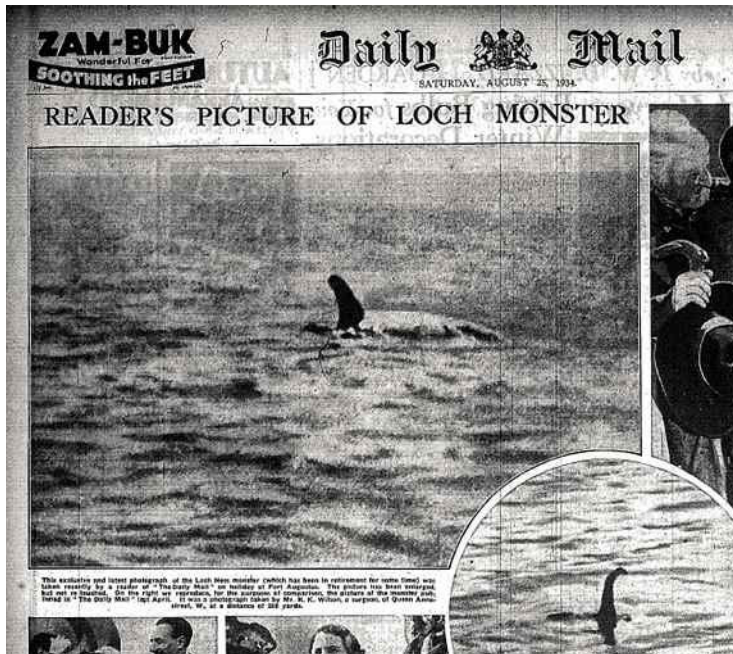


This exclusive and latest photograph of the Loch Ness Monster (which has been in retirement for some time) was taken recently by a reader of 'The Daily Mail' on holiday at Fort Augustus. The picture has been enlarged, but not retouched. On the right we reproduce, for the purposes of comparison, the picture of the monster published in 'The Daily Mail' last April. It was a photograph taken by RK Wilson, a surgeon, of Queen Anne Street W., at a distance of 200 yards.

The picture was again printed in the 1 September issue of the *Illustrated London News*. Its briefer text read:

The latest photograph of the Loch Ness 'Monster', after an interval during which it had not been seen for some considerable time: an enlargement of a picture taken recently by a visitor on holiday at Fort Augustus.

I should point out that the monster had not been in retirement or unseen for a considerable time. July and August of 1934 proved, in fact, to be the most intensive period in the history of the phenomenon. After this, though, the picture sank without trace until Peter Costello included it in his aforementioned work 40 years later.



## THE PICTURE MAY HAVE BEEN TAKEN AT FORT AUGUSTUS



TOP: The photo and story in the *Daily Mail* of 25 August 1934. ABOVE: A recent photo by the author showing the vista from Urquhart Castle, from where the Adams photograph was supposedly taken.

### THE MYSTERIOUS MR ADAMS

Thanks to Peter Costello's book, the authorship of the picture seems to have landed by default at the feet of a Mr FC Adams. If we look back at the press clippings of the time, we indeed find an FC Adams who claimed to have seen and photographed the creature. His story appeared in the 3 August 1934 edition of the *Inverness Courier*, three weeks before our picture appeared in the *Daily Mail*.

Mr Adams was in the tower of Urquhart Castle when he took his picture. A recent photo of my own from that vantage point (below) shows the vista that formed the backdrop of his picture. I would imagine that the creature he photographed would have occupied the top

centre area of the waters.

Now the object is stated to be in the middle of the loch and in a line with the village of Whitefield, which is on the opposite side of the loch from the castle. Consulting a map and drawing some lines, this would suggest the object was at a distance of over a mile away from Mr Adams. This leads me to question whether the photograph under consideration was indeed taken by him. I say this because the clarity of the object is not consistent with a photograph of an object over a mile away. Mr Adams himself was quoted as being sceptical about anything coming out on film at that distance and I do not doubt his opinion on that matter.

Moreover, the two newspaper articles suggest that the incident may have actually happened closer to Fort Augustus, over 10 miles (16km) away to the south. Given all this, I can't agree with Peter Costello's assessment that Adams was the photographer. I suspect he took this line because the Adams story was the account closest in time to the *Daily Mail* article that mentions a photograph being taken. That is a logical deduction, but the internal evidence suggests we need to look elsewhere.

So, the first clue is that the picture may have been taken at Fort Augustus. The second was a comment in Witchell's *The Loch Ness Story* in which he attributes the picture not to FC Adams but to a Dr James Lee.

What could be found out about this doctor? A search of the newspaper archives turned up only one Dr James Lee from the period. He was the senior surgeon at the Buchanan Hospital at Hastings, East Sussex. One story I found in the *Hastings and St Leonards Observer* for 13 June 1936 features him in a court case regarding an unpaid client bill.

However, further searches of the various archives proved unfruitful in connecting him in any way with the photograph. By a fortuitous sequence of searches, I managed

to find the grandson of James Lee, who still resides in that general area of England. Unfortunately, he had no knowledge of the photograph or whether his grandfather had ever visited Loch Ness. A search of his old family photo albums turned up nothing.

But how did the name of James Lee come to be mentioned in the Loch Ness literature? Nicholas Witchell was known to have consulted older researcher Constance Whyte for his book. Constance's interest in the Loch Ness Monster phenomenon would have gone back to its beginnings in the 1930s and it is possible she acquired this information at the time the story broke. However, verifying this has proven to be a more difficult matter.

The main thrust of an investigation of this kind is to uncover specific information. In this particular case, the most important item of information is the original, uncropped photograph. What we have seen reproduced in books and newspapers is often the bane of serious research: a blown up photograph that excludes all other detail which might aid the researcher in assessing the picture.

The problem applies to this picture, as it cannot be deduced from the blow-up whether the picture was even taken at Loch Ness. There is only the merest hint of a distant horizon or shore on the picture, but certainly not enough to identify the spot. This is a boon to sceptical researchers, who can merely turn around and say: "there is no evidence this was taken at Loch Ness" and leave it at that. However, we await a final verdict on that matter and the search for the uncropped picture continues.

#### OTHER WITNESSES

But the investigation into this photo may yet produce a twist in the tale. According to the newspapers, the taker of the photograph was on holiday at Fort Augustus. However, a search of newspaper reports prior to the publication of the picture in the *Daily Mail* turns up nothing seen in that area. That scenario changed when I looked beyond the publication of the picture in the *Daily Mail*. The clipping reproduced at the top of this page – from one week later in the *Scotsman* of 1 September 1934 – proved illuminating.

So here we have a nobleman with family and guests spending a holiday at Fort Augustus who apparently saw something resembling a fin careering up Loch Ness. Could this be the very same fin that appeared in our photograph, taken by someone "on holiday at Fort Augustus"? The story does not date the incident, instead using the vague term, "the other evening", and so it could feasibly have occurred a week or so before.

Further corroboration lies in the report, which states that the object created a wash comparable to that of a speedboat. I would suggest that we can also see some noticeable water disturbance in our photograph, especially to the immediate right of

## LOCH NESS MYSTERY

### "Object's" Terrific Speed

#### SCOTS BARONET'S STORY

A WELL-KNOWN Scottish Baronet, his wife, and two girls, who are at present spending a holiday at Fort Augustus, have seen the Loch Ness Monster.

It appears that the other evening the party who were about to dine, observed a curious wash disturbing the smooth waters out from Cherr Island.

A few seconds later the creature, which showed one hump, which might have been a huge fin rushed, the Baronet said, like a shot from a gun towards the Glendoe side of the loch.

The Baronet said that, although the object's movements could quite easily be followed with the aid of a glass, he nevertheless had time to go for a stalking telescope, but, apart from some thing resembling a fin, no other part of the body was visible.

At intervals the creature eased its mad career then it would dash off. When it neared the Glendoe side, it turned east, and continued its head long rush for fully three-quarters of a mile. I covered at least a mile and three-quarters before it disappeared.

The Baronet's wife and their guests said that the speed of the object was terrific, and that it created might be compared to that of a powerful speed-boat.

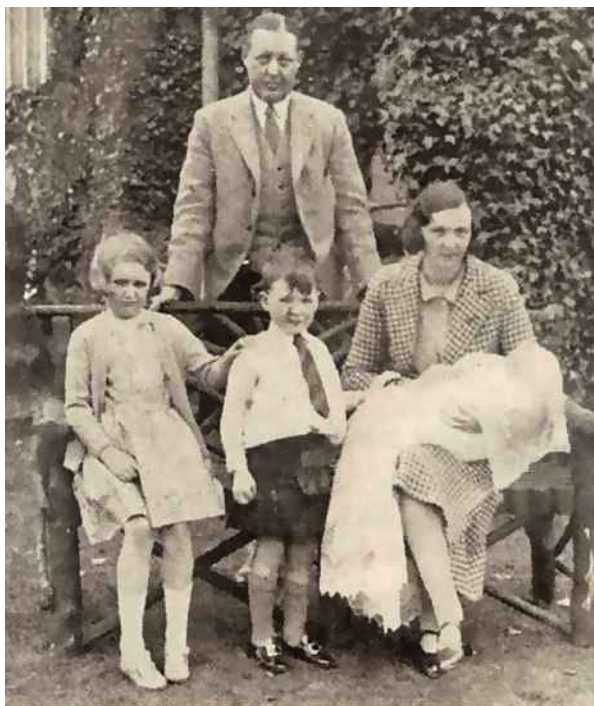
The Baronet said he could not throw any light on the monster's identity. He did not know of any creature, which behaved like it.

## A RIBBON FISH

### Findhorn "Visitor" Identified

#### FROM TROPICAL SEAS

Its 13-foot-long silver grey fish caught in a



the base of the fin. A map (overleaf) traces out a possible path for the object, with the circle being one possible location for the witnesses.

But who could this "well-known Scottish Baronet" have been? My own investigations have led me to conclude it was Sir Alistair Gordon-Cumming, Fifth Baronet of the Altyre Estate near Forres, Morayshire. Forres is only 61 miles (98km) by road to Fort Augustus.

In another photograph (below) from the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* of 28 March 1933 he is pictured with his family. As you can see, he was married and the father of two daughters and a son, which is consistent with the description of our Scots Baronet, said to have been with his wife and two girls.

Moreover, Sir Alistair was a keen naturalist; and I suspect he was also a follower of the stories coming out of Loch Ness. By way of example, another story concerning him was found three months before in the *Scotsman* of 22 May 1934. Here we read how he drove twice from his estate to Findhorn Bay to investigate a "sea serpent"-like creature that turned out to be a ribbon fish. So, it would seem on the evidence of this story that accounts of sea serpent-like creatures in Loch Ness would have also encouraged visits there.

But can James Lee and Sir Alistair Gordon-Cumming be linked? Was James Lee perhaps a guest of Sir Alistair's on that day, and, being a surgeon, did he take this alternative "Surgeon's Photograph" while Sir Alistair examined the object through a spyglass? Or is James Lee merely a red herring and Sir Alistair the real photographer? I made enquiries of the current Baronet of the Altyre Estate, but he was not aware that his grandfather might have been a witness to the Loch Ness Monster. Admittedly, I have no idea as to precisely what my own grandfather was doing in the 1930s.

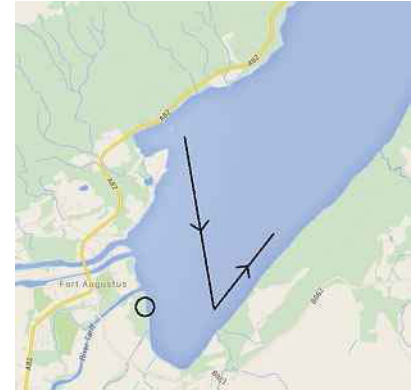
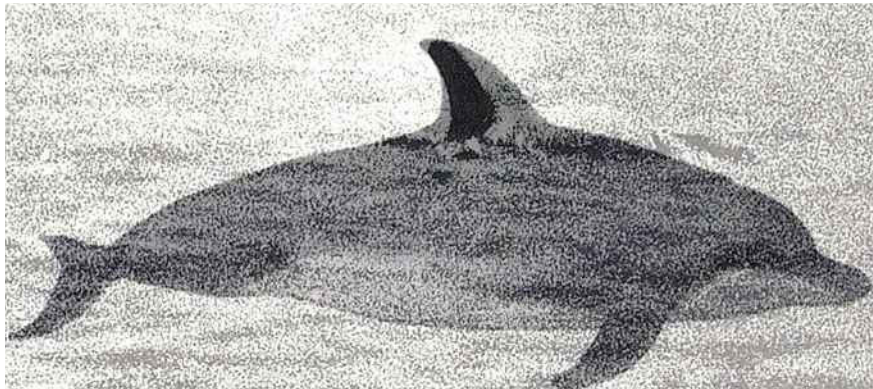
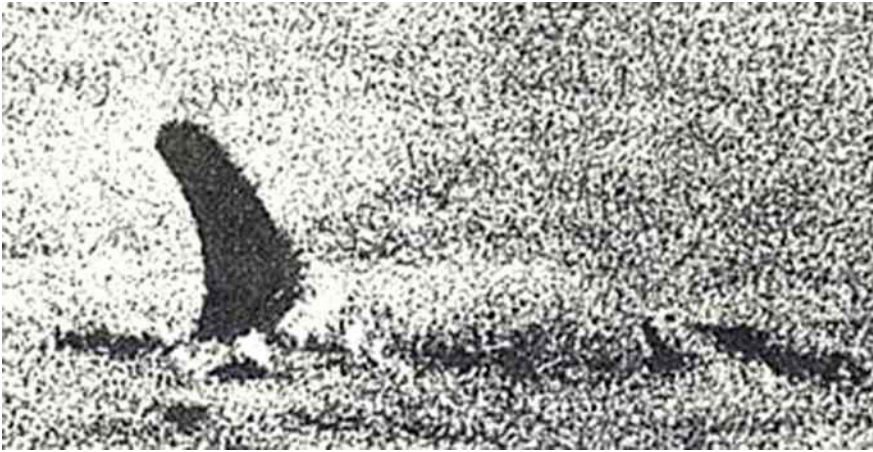
However, when I asked Dr Lee's grandson about a Cumming connection, he did say that although he was not aware of any connection to his grandfather, there was one tantalising snippet of information. When he looked up the Cumming baronetcy, he found that a member of the extended Cumming family had lived in the house where he had spent 12 years of his childhood. Is this a coincidence or a hint that the two families knew each other? I can't be sure, but there may yet be more to uncover regarding this side of the story.

#### THE PHOTOGRAPH

Whether or not he was actually connected in some way with our photograph, I am sure Sir Alistair would have taken an interest in it.

TOP: This account of a sighting by a "well-known Scottish Baronet" appeared in the *Scotsman* of 1 September 1934. LEFT: Sir Alistair Gordon-Cumming, Fifth Baronet of the Altyre Estate near Forres, Morayshire. ABOVE LEFT: A story from the *Scotsman* of May 1934 suggests that Sir Alistair was a keen monster-hunter; could he also have been the real taker of the 'Adams' photograph?





But what can we glean from the picture as we have it?

First, the idea that it was a branch being forced to the surface by gases should be discounted. I have a hard time conceiving of that dark, smooth object as being part of a tree.

When I first began to delve further, I considered the hypothesis that the photo showed the head and neck of the creature. However, even allowing for possible retraction and extension of this part of the anatomy, I concluded that the way the object extended into the water was not indicative of such a feature. So, could it be another appendage such as a fin or flipper? Again, a flipper did not look likely, which leaves us with a fin.

This led me to the prevalent sceptical position that this is no more than the dorsal fin of a species of dolphin or whale. Let us compare this object to the dorsal fin of a generic bottlenose dolphin, the most common dolphin around the Scottish coast.

The problem here is not whether it is a fin, but what kind of fin it might be. Note that the Loch Ness fin when overlaid upon our dolphin is more blunted at the top and narrower as it extends downwards. This is a pattern I have discerned with various other fins I have compared it with.

Now, I have been told that the dorsal fins of dolphins are a bit like human noses and come in all manner of shapes and sizes. Indeed, it is quite easy to pick pictures of fins which best suit our particular prejudices. To avoid the charge of selection bias, I point readers to a photographic catalogue of dolphin dorsal fins compiled by the universities of Aberdeen and St Andrews between 1990 and 2012.<sup>1</sup>

All in, there are 187 separate images of dolphins. As far as I can see, none of them is a good match for the object in the Lee photograph. They are either more pointed or broader than our object. One could try and present a dolphin at an angle in an attempt to flatten its fin, but that does not work either. In fact, the object in the picture was evidently photographed side on.

So, it is not likely to be a bottlenose dolphin. However, I did find one image that was a reasonable fit and that was Rossi's dolphin. I found this image and overlaid it.

However, I would point out that even the majority of dorsal fins from this species were not a good fit. Now, in terms of selection bias, one has to be careful here. The fact that I found a reasonable fit is not the whole story. The general rule one should follow in

ABOVE: A sequence of pictures showing a detail from the 1934 photograph, a bottlenose dolphin with the 1934 photo overlaid, a Rossi's dolphin and a Rossi's dolphin with the 1934 photo overlaid.

TOP RIGHT: A map tracing the possible path for the object seen in the Loch in 1934 by the "well-known Scottish Baronet" and his party, with the circle being one possible location for the witnesses.

## PORPOISES IN LOCHNESS.

### A STRANGE SIGHT.

A correspondent writes:—I witnessed one of the oddest sights of my life this week. On Thursday I was on Lochness-side and was looking admiringly on the beautiful scene when suddenly far out a flash of sunlight twinkled on the water and disappeared. Another and another followed, as if someone was flashing a mirror from the centre of the loch. What on earth could it be? Surely not submarines helio-signalling! I opened a field glass and then found to my amazement that the flashing was caused by a school of porpoises which somehow or other had got into Loch Ness. The sunlight was reflected from their wet dark bodies as they "tumbled" along. There might have been eight or nine of them, and there was no mistaking what they were. Their motion was lazier than is usual in salt water, as if their vitality had diminished. How they got in is to me a mystery. Will they ever get out? Or away from their loved salt sea and natural feeding haunts, must they die of starvation in an inland loch? It would be interesting to know whether porpoises were ever seen in Loch Ness before, and, if so, what became of them.



ABOVE LEFT: A report of porpoises seen in Loch Ness in 1914; or were they the monster's humps? ABOVE RIGHT: Humps or fins? The Lachlan Stuart photograph of 1951.

using a tool like Google images is that *the harder the 'best fit' image is to find, the less likely it is to provide an explanation.*

If you find a 'best fit' image that is one in a thousand rather than one in 10, this indicates that perhaps the conditions under which the object was photographed are unusual ones. One might be tempted to replace one unlikely explanation (a monster) with another that, though likelier, is also unlikely (an unusual dolphin fin).

If the alternative explanation is also unlikely, it should likewise be discarded. This may leave us in the unsatisfactory position of an "inconclusive" conclusion, but the issue depends on one matter being resolved.

### FINS AND HUMPS

Suppose we did find that elusive, uncropped photograph and it was confirmed that the picture was taken at Loch Ness. I would suggest that dolphin candidates should be discounted. I say this despite an alleged sighting of porpoises in Loch Ness in 1914, 19 years before Nessie arrived on the national scene – see the clipping from the *Northern Chronicle* of 16 September 1914 (above). But it is doubtful that such a large number of cetaceans – or indeed even one – could get into Loch Ness in the first place. There appear to be no other recorded sightings of such on record.<sup>2</sup> It could be argued, depending on your point of view, that standing waves or the Loch Ness Monster itself – perhaps in its multi-humped aspect – are more likely candidates than a school of porpoises for this unique 1914 sighting. Indeed, if a dolphin or porpoise had been in Loch Ness when our photograph was taken in 1934, it would undoubtedly have surfaced more than enough times to be identified conclusively.

In that case, a dorsal fin in Loch Ness is not likely to be a known local animal. However, the problem is that most Loch Ness Monster

researchers do not believe the Loch Ness Monster even possesses such a dorsal fin. It seems we have a story that is a square peg to the round holes of Nessie research. Bearing in mind some of the putative identities put forward for the monster, we are told that plesiosaurs do not have such fins, nor giant eels, sturgeons, long necked seals or super sized invertebrates.

This is no wonder, since Loch Ness witnesses describing fins can probably be counted on all your fingers with some left over. So, one might be tempted to dismiss the photograph as recording an event beyond the confines of Loch Ness – if it wasn't for a similar event only a few weeks earlier.

This occurred on 14 July 1934 and was reported two days later in the *Scotsman* newspaper. A story entitled "Motoring Party's View of a Huge Fin" tells how a group of people were witnesses to an object described as "a huge fin time and again emerging out of the water and proceeding rapidly down the loch".

It would be a big stretch to have two unknown species in Loch Ness, one with a dorsal fin and one without. It is hard enough convincing people that *one* unknown species exists in the loch. However, speculation is the bedrock of Loch Ness Monster discussion, so one might wonder about another class of sighting in this regard.

I am referring to a group of sightings normally described as being of a "triangular hump". The famous Lachlan Stuart photograph perhaps best symbolises the genre (whatever one's opinion may be of the picture itself). Could some of the reports of this type actually be more fin-like than hump-like? To resolve this, eyewitness reports would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Evidently, we have the near equilateral triangles types, but there may be others more like the Cumming-Lee fin.

### CONCLUSIONS

You can come to two conclusions about this picture. It was a joke perpetrated by Alistair Gordon Cumming, with the picture sent to the *Daily Mail* by him or James Lee with a follow-up story communicated to the *Scotsman* later in the week. However, the motive for such a scenario is unclear. In the case of the more famous Surgeon's Photograph, the motive is clearer. Big game hunter Marmaduke Wetherell wanted revenge on the *Daily Mail* for dumping him after his fake hippo tracks were found out (see FT308:42-46). But what Cumming and/or Lee stood to gain from a similar hoax is not at all apparent.

Or you have the alternative explanation that one of these gentlemen really *did* take a photograph of a strange, fin-like object speeding across Loch Ness. The question will only be resolved when the uncropped picture is found. If the recognisable background of Loch Ness is seen, then we have a mystery in the true tradition of its resident monster. If the background is not recognisable, we can consign it to the bin along with all the other Loch Ness Monster hoaxes. **[1]**

### NOTES

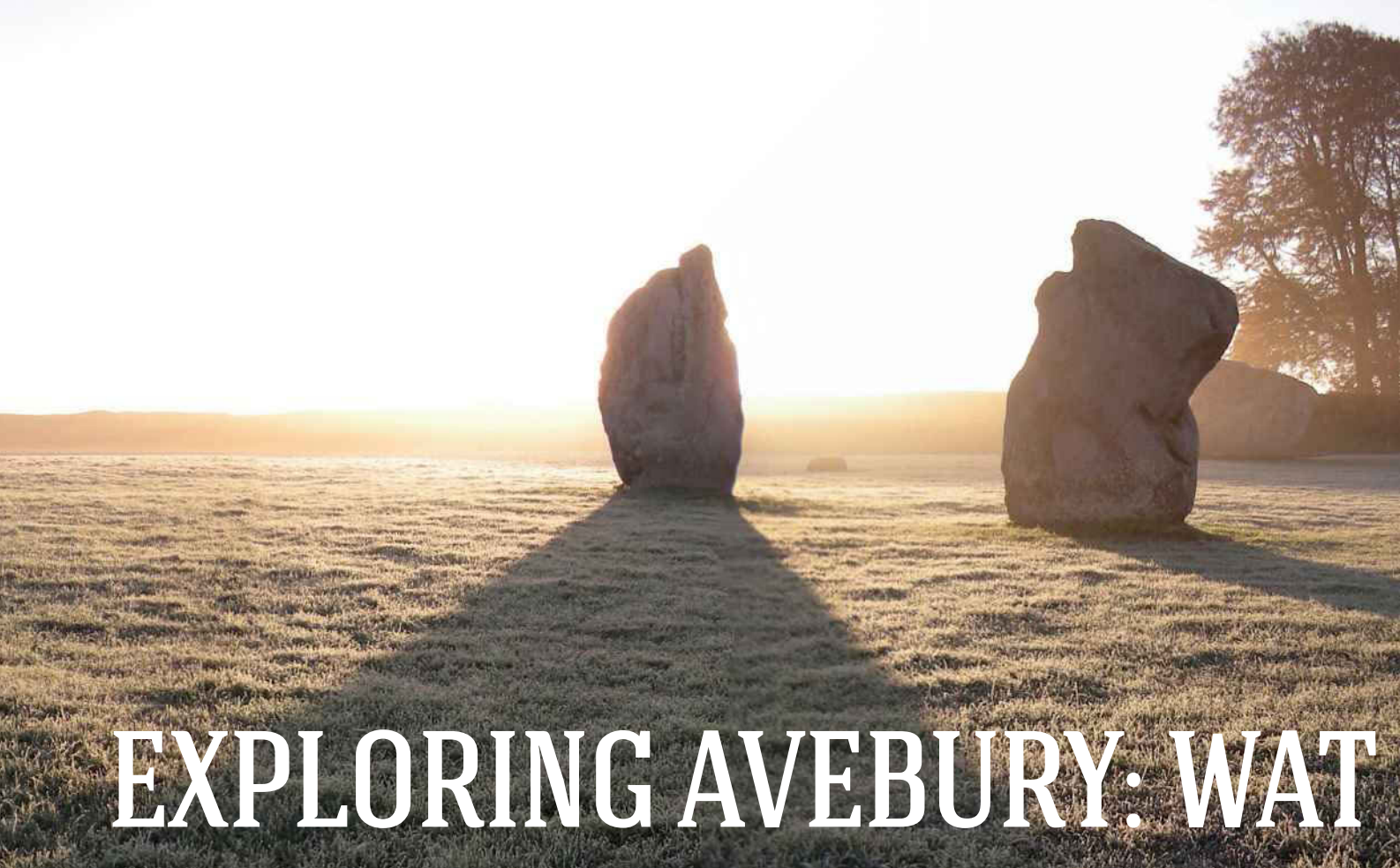
**1** [www.abdn.ac.uk/lighthouse/gallery/album2/?page=viewall](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/lighthouse/gallery/album2/?page=viewall)

**2** For more on the 1914 porpoise sighting, see my blog: <http://lochnessmystery.blogspot.co.uk/2013/05/dolphins-or-porpoises-in-loch-ness.html>

### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



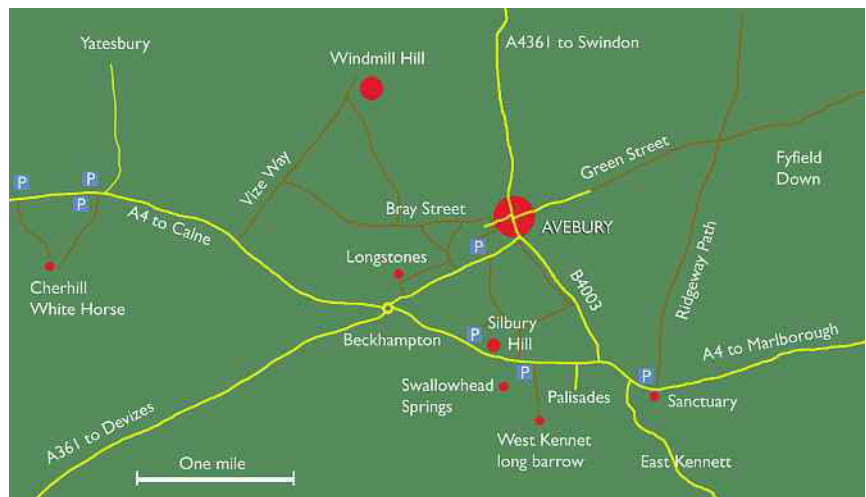
ROLAND WATSON is a software engineer from Edinburgh. He runs his own Loch Ness Monster blog at [www.lochnessmystery.blogspot.com](http://www.lochnessmystery.blogspot.com) and is the author of *The Water Horses of Loch Ness* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2011).



# EXPLORING AVEBURY: WAT

The Avebury complex forms a giant ritual landscape made up of a wealth of prehistoric monuments, but was its long construction based on the presence of subterranean waters and sacred springs? **STEVE MARSHALL** goes in search of Avebury's Otherworld. All photos by the author.

**A**vebury lies about 90 miles (145km) west of London, in the county of Wiltshire. Less than 20 miles (32km) to the south is Stonehenge. Avebury is best known as the world's largest stone circle: a quarter of a mile across, it partly encompasses a village. However, the stone circle is just one element of the Avebury Complex. Scattered across this 'ritual landscape' is a wealth of prehistoric monuments, spanning thousands of years in their construction. Surrounding the Avebury stones is a henge – a circular ditch, once 30ft (9m) deep, ringed by a huge bank built from the excavated chalk. From the henge runs the West Kennet Avenue, a double row of standing stones that ranges across the landscape. Half a mile long, it may once have been four times that length. There are traces of another avenue of similar proportions, now destroyed. Windmill Hill, West Kennet long barrow, Silbury Hill – these are all immense, iconic monuments in their own right, all sited within a few miles of Avebury.



## WATERS OF LIFE

Why Avebury? What attracted prehistoric people to this particular part of north Wiltshire? We know they were visiting Windmill Hill from at least 3670 BC, because that is when they began digging three massive concentric circular ditches on the hilltop. The largest of these, at 1,180ft (360m) across, was around the same size as the Avebury Henge. Neolithic people were meeting, perhaps annually, to slaughter cattle and feast there, but their beef was always cooked by boiling and Windmill Hill has no obvious water supply. How did they manage? A couple of miles away and more than 1,000 years later, the man-made Silbury Hill grew to immense proportions as material was dug from its surrounding ditch and piled up, layer upon layer, to become the world's largest prehistoric chalk mound. Why? And

why choose that spot to build a mound?

One reason is that the area around Avebury, and particularly near Silbury, was regarded as special because it is teeming with underground springs. It is even likely that Silbury was built directly *on top* of a spring. Avebury's springs and rivers are seasonal, usually flowing only in the wet winter months. The chalk beneath Avebury is porous, absorbing rainwater to form aquifers; when these have filled up to ground level the water flows out again as springs.

There is evidence that springs were revered in Britain from earliest times. From an area of springs at Blick Mead, just south of Avebury and close to Stonehenge, 12,000 pieces of worked flint and burnt flint have been retrieved, along with more than 500 pieces of bone dating from over 8,000 years ago. The people were feasting on *aurochs*, a



# ERS OF THE OTHERWORLD

now extinct species of giant cattle. Recent carbon dating has shown that Blick Mead was occupied between 7550-4700 BC, so incredibly, the site was in continuous use for almost 3,000 years. Votive offerings were being deposited in Blick Mead's springs, a practice that continued throughout Britain for millennia. Numerous valuable offerings have been found in the River Thames, which was apparently regarded as a sacred river in the Iron Age (800 BC-AD100) and may always have been sacred. Springwater rising in the Avebury area flows east into the Thames and may have been regarded as its true source in prehistory.

The Avebury people had an obvious practical need for water, which is vital to life. But to them, water seems also to have had ritual or religious importance, as their monuments were so often sited near rivers and springs. Comparing Avebury to other henge monuments in Britain reveals that a strikingly common factor is their proximity to moving water, and particularly to a confluence of two rivers, where one river flowing south joins with another flowing east. This may be coincidence; it may also be that southwest Britain's natural eastward tilt produces a general movement of water in that direction. Yet there are many prehistoric sites in other parts of Britain that also indicate a preference for east and south.

The reason for this may be in the sky. Both Sun and Moon rise in the east, climbing to their highest positions in the southern sky before setting in the west. This phenomenon has been explained in folklore as the Sun, Moon or both, 'dying' in the west, passing through an 'underworld' to the north and

## TO THE AVEBURY PEOPLE, WATER SEEMS TO HAVE HAD RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE



being 'reborn' in the east. North is associated in many cultures with darkness and death. Long barrows, earliest of Neolithic burial monuments, are usually aligned with an entrance that faces east to the sunrise, suggesting a belief in reincarnation.

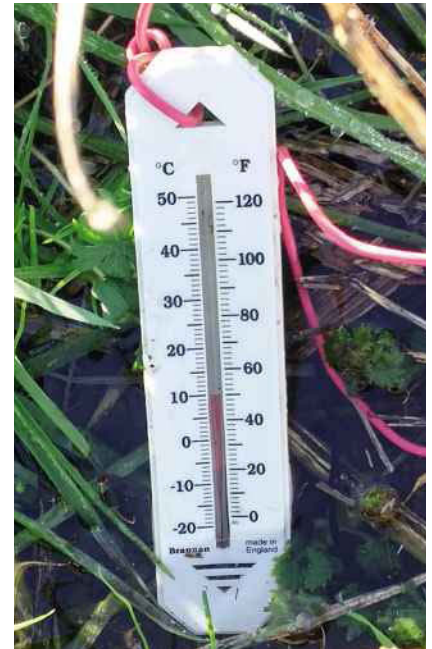
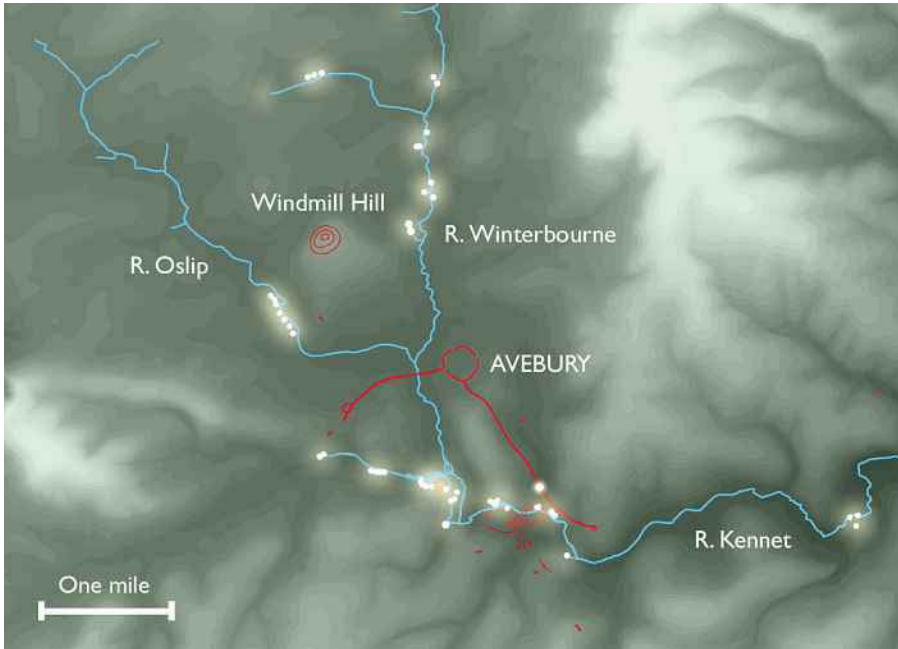
The southern portion of the Avebury circle at sunrise. **BELOW:** Warmed by the Pan Springs, grass continues to grow throughout the winter.

### SPRINGING ETERNAL

It is plain to see why springs might have been regarded as special by prehistoric people. Heated by its subterranean journey, springwater usually emerges from the ground at a constant 10°C (50°F); if it flows across a field, it warms the soil. This can stimulate the grass to grow throughout winter when it should be dormant, producing bright green, fresh growth that would not normally be seen until March or April.

Where springs flow there can be perpetual springtime, even in the depths of winter, as springs are considerably warmer than the frosty ground they emerge from. Spring-fed rivers such as the Kennet often steam in cold weather. Is it just coincidence that our word for underground water is also used for the season of growth and procreation?

Living close to Avebury, I have spent several winters out in the cold and damp, searching for springs. This may be done with an ordinary thermometer: on a frosty morning, the springwater, at 10°C, is easily distinguished from standing rainwater or flooding at 1 or 2°C. Using this method, I have discovered several significant areas of springs, including those that feed Avebury's rivers. Avebury is sited next to a confluence of two rivers, the Winterbourne and the Oslip. Both are *winterbournes* ('winter rivers') that usually dry up in summer. Although they drain rainwater from a wide area of farmland, the rivers are also fed by springs.



ABOVE LEFT: Rivers and springs around the Avebury complex. ABOVE RIGHT: Springs emerge from the ground at a constant 10°C (50°F).

Occupying a huge area of about eight acres, the Oslip springs may have been the main supply of water for Neolithic people feasting on Windmill Hill, just half a mile away. The springs could even be what first attracted people to the area: it is quite possible that such extensive springs were regarded as a special place in the Mesolithic, like those at Blick Mead.

Just west of the Avebury Henge, the Oslip makes its confluence with the River Winterbourne, which runs south to Avebury from springs a mile or so away. The conjoined stream becomes the River Kennet as it continues south past Silbury Hill. Boosted by more springs, it then flows east for a further 45 miles to become the River Thames.

Avebury's monuments are clearly associated with underground water: where there are springs there are likely to be monuments. There is a cluster of monuments

and springs between Beckhampton and East Kennett (there are two spellings of Kennet: one T for the river and archaeological sites, two for the villages of East and West Kennett). East of there is a significant gap. In fact, between East Kennett and Marlborough there is only one spring, at Clatford, and near it one monument, the Devil's Den. Springs reappear a few miles further east, where we also find the Neolithic Marlborough Mound.

### SILBURY HILL

Almost a mile south of the Avebury Henge is Silbury Hill, an immense artificial mound of chalk rubble, built between 2450 and 2350 BC and now covered with turf. Surrounding the mound is the Silbury Ditch. Cut deeply into the chalk bedrock, the ditch is quite circular on its eastern and northern sides, but to the west it extends to become almost rectangular. When the water table is high, usually in the

winter, the ditch fills with water. Although the Kennet flows south past Silbury it currently plays no part in filling the ditch, which is supplied instead by springs to the west.

The River Kennet's present course past Silbury is artificial. Probably to make more land available for agriculture, the river has at some time been moved uphill into a narrow, man-made channel at the base of Waden Hill, about 330ft (100m) northeast of where it would naturally flow. This 'canalised' river cannot always be contained: when water levels are high it overflows and the original River Kennet returns temporarily as a wide, braided river – the Old Kennet – flowing south alongside its modern counterpart. At such times we see how the Avebury landscape might have appeared 4,500 years ago, when water levels are believed to have been at least 7ft (2m) higher than today.

Avebury is sited close to a confluence of



ABOVE: Flooded willows at Avebury. To some traditional cultures the Otherworld is a mirror image of the material one, and water a conduit between them. Hence, when we see reflections in water we are glimpsing the Otherworld. Was this how the Avebury people regarded water? ABOVE RIGHT: Confluence of the rivers Oslip and Winterbourne.



**TOP:** Silbury Hill, with partially frozen ditch. **BELOW:** As their warm water melts through the snow, Avebury's springs appear as a green strip encircling the ditch. **ABOVE:** Silbury's springs mapped. The modern, canalised River Kennet is shown dark blue; in light blue is the 'Old Kennet' as it appears in times of flood. Yellow arrows show the direction of water-flow.

## MARLBOROUGH MOUND



Also known as 'Merlin's Mount', the Marlborough Mound is now within the grounds of Marlborough College. Rising above the school buildings that closely surround it, the mound is more than 60ft (18m) high, with a diameter of 272ft (83m) at the base. Its dimensions are approximately

half those of Silbury Hill, which it closely resembles. Only five miles apart, both monuments are known to date from the Late Neolithic, around 2500 BC. Over many centuries the Marlborough Mound has been appropriated by a succession of owners, each exploiting it in different ways. As

a 'motte' it was once part of the mediæval Marlborough Castle; in the early 1600s it was turned into a garden feature by the Seymour family and a spiral path was cut to its summit. Antiquarian William Stukeley visited in the 1720s, noting that the mound was surrounded by a ditch in which

springs could be seen to rise; another spring rose at Barton Farm, just north of the mound. Both are long gone and have been built over, but even today there are springs flowing into the River Kennet near Treacle Bolly, just a short distance east of the mound.

east and south-flowing rivers, but Silbury is sited exactly *on* such a confluence. Flowing east to Silbury from an area of springs is the Beckhampton Stream, which only partly feeds the Silbury Ditch; its course across the Silbury meadow has actually been engineered to divert water *away* from Silbury and into the River Kennet. Only a fraction of its flow escapes into the ditch. The Beckhampton Stream also forms braids as it crosses the meadow, expanding at times to become a lake. Northeast of Silbury its strands reunite, then are channelled into a man-made drain running off into the modern Kennet. The braided Old Kennet, when flowing strongly, ignores this drain and simply crosses it at right angles. I have found springs flowing all along the southern and western banks of the Silbury Ditch; it is largely these that keep the ditch filled with fresh water throughout the winter. Southeast of Silbury are more springs, including the well-known Swallowhead. Further east there are even more springs, forming a line up to East Kennet.

Silbury's construction required enormous communal effort, yet we can only guess at its original purpose. It was long assumed to be military, or later, the burial mound of some

## NOTHING HAS BEEN FOUND THAT GIVES ANY INDICATION OF ITS PURPOSE

great king; but despite many excavations, no trace of a burial has been found inside. In fact, nothing at all has been found that gives any indication of Silbury's purpose, though it is generally thought to have had some religious meaning or function.

Perhaps Silbury represents the *axis mundi* – the centre, or navel, of the world. It may be the embodiment of a creation myth, maybe like the 'earth-diver myth' of native North Americans, in which all the world is water until some animal dives to the bottom of the sea and returns with a mouthful of mud to create the first land. Most of the world's

**FACING PAGE:** Swallowhead Springs has become a New Age shrine associated with goddess worship.

creation myths begin with the forming of waters from chaos; this is often followed by a sexual union of the gods of earth and sky, from which all life descends. The building of a huge mound, watered by springs and rivers, could be seen as a material expression of this concept – a creation myth monumentalised in chalk; a meeting of earth and sky, surrounded by the swirling and bubbling primordial waters of creation.

### WEST KENNET PALISADES

A mile or so east from Silbury there was once a vast complex of timber structures, ranging across an area almost half a mile (800m) square – nearly twice the size of the Avebury Henge. Broadly contemporary with Silbury, they probably date from between 2500 and 2400 BC. Today the enclosures exist only as a ghost, appearing occasionally as faint cropmarks on aerial photographs. A map of the cropmarks has been compiled from pictures taken over many years but it may still be incomplete.

At the north of the site, by the river,





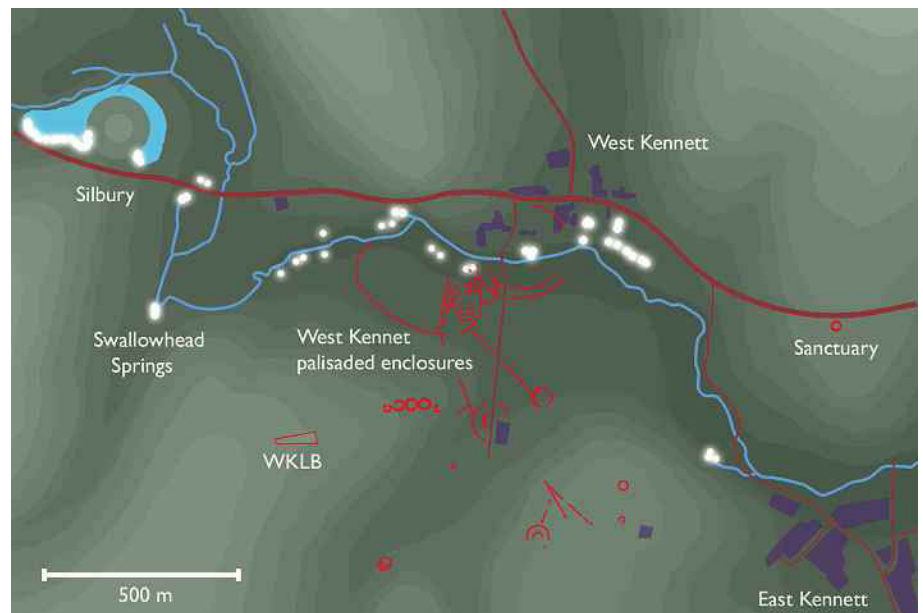


ABOVE: The West Kennet palisaded enclosures shown in red. 2,000 mature oak tree trunks formed an almost continuous wall of timber. At 6 to 8m high, it was about the height of the electricity poles in the picture. BELOW: A map of the West Kennet Palisades area.

two enormous, conjoined enclosures were constructed from oak trunk posts set into the ground. The posts were closely set, forming a continuous wall of almost solid timber. To the southeast were several smaller circles and concentric rings, some connected by radial lines. The top of the palisade walls may have been between 20–26ft (6m–8m) above the ground – around the same height as the electricity poles that cross the site today. An estimated 2,000 such posts were used in the construction, representing what amounts to an entire forest of mature oak trees.

West Kennet's palisades are intimately connected to water: the area is densely populated with springs and in prehistory there may have been more. *Enclosure 1* encircled a major spring: was it built purposely to contain the spring's power? To the west was *Enclosure 2*, a single oval-shaped ring sited just south of the river. On the cropmark plan the entire northern side of this enclosure is absent. It may have been erased by flooding, but it is likely that there was no palisade there and that the river served to mark this section of the enclosure. (This would not be so unusual, since the gigantic henge at nearby Marden is now known to have had a missing section of earthwork and instead utilised the River Avon for one of its sides.) Whether enclosures 1 and 2 existed simultaneously is unknown.

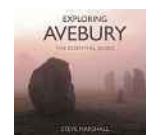
The West Kennet palisaded enclosures are not entirely unique: there are other British sites dating from around 2500 BC with great similarities. All are found on flood plains – low, often waterlogged ground, near rivers and springs. Nearby may be a flat-topped, earthen mound, surrounded by water, of which Silbury is by far the largest example. Does this represent some major change in religious belief or practice, where water assumed a high importance? Building monuments such as the palisaded enclosures required a degree of sustained communal effort that today is unimaginable. The construction of Silbury involved digging enough material out of the ground to fill 1.3 million wheelie-bins, and piling it up into a mound 102ft (31m) high and



490ft (150m) across. Whatever motivated the builders to do it?

It is curious that this period of building vast, water-themed monuments should coincide with the Beaker People's arrival in Britain from Europe. It has been suggested that the Beaker People triggered some kind of religious revival that manifested as monument building on a massive scale. This is perhaps understandable, since they brought metalworking – the magical transmutation of rocks into shiny objects of desire – and other marvels.

The Beaker People are named after the ceramic beakers that accompanied their burials; from analysis of residues in the beakers, it is known that at least some were used for drinking hallucinogenic beer, laced with henbane and other psychoactive plants. Perhaps the builders of Silbury were driven on by the promise of spending eternity in some watery paradise? Their labour may have been a sacred act – preparation for an afterlife to be spent in an otherworld that could become tangible with the aid of Beaker beer. **FT**



This article was extracted from *Exploring Avebury: The Essential Guide* by Steve Marshall, published by The History Press.

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The Exploring Avebury website also has a great deal of information about Avebury and other sites: [www.exploringavebury.com](http://www.exploringavebury.com)

#### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**STEVE MARSHALL** was for many years a professional musician and composer. He now spends his time researching and photographing the Avebury landscape and monuments

close to his home in Wiltshire. He is a regular contributor to FT.



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# ATOMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

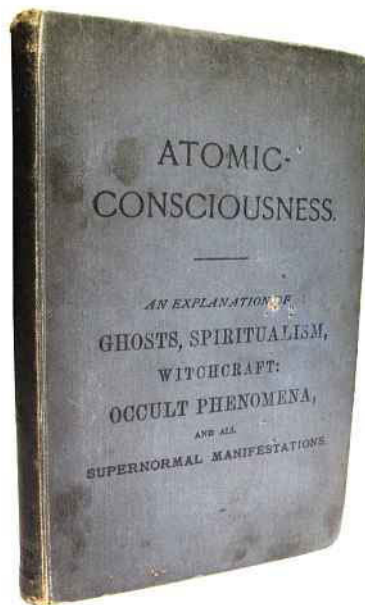
**DANIEL WILSON** rediscovers the curious career of cantankerous visionary 'James Bathurst', author of one of the late 19th century's oddest books. In fact, 'Bathurst' was an autodidact called John Palfrey, whose bizarre magnum opus attempted to uncover the hidden relations between mind and Universe

**D**ecades before Carl Jung developed his concept of synchronicity<sup>1</sup> to account for meaningful coincidences (see FT171:42-47; FT264:40-45 and pp26-27 this issue), there was James Bathurst's *Atomic-Consciousness*.<sup>2</sup> Whereas Jung's synchronicity was based on the principle of acausality (that is, a non-causal explanation for real-world occurrences coinciding with inner emotional states), Bathurst's theory was firmly causal – and most of the time *he* was the cause, responsible for such things as bringing about an unusually red sunset or causing a friend's tooth to fall out. Styling himself a modern Swedenborg, the eccentric 'Bathurst' attributed all this to his "highly developed cerebral structure", which enabled him to intuit and manipulate a wider ethereal *atomic-consciousness*<sup>3</sup> possessing "unimaginable sensibility and extreme prescient powers", retentive not only of all human thought but also of "every movement and motion".

*Atomic-Consciousness – An Explanation of Ghosts, Spiritualism, Witchcraft: Occult Phenomena, and all Supernormal Manifestations* is an extraordinary semi-autobiographical work pseudonymously published in the village of Whimble, Devon, in 1892. It is completely forgotten today. What makes the book so remarkable is that its author was unschooled and self-taught, having had little opportunity to read other works: an apology stating as much prefaces it.

## BATHURST UNMASKED

'James Bathurst' hid all traces of his identity, but the story behind *Atomic-Consciousness* can now be revealed for the first time. James Bathurst was in fact a pseudonym for one John Palfrey (1846-1921), born in Whimble. He was the eldest of six children – two sons and four daughters.

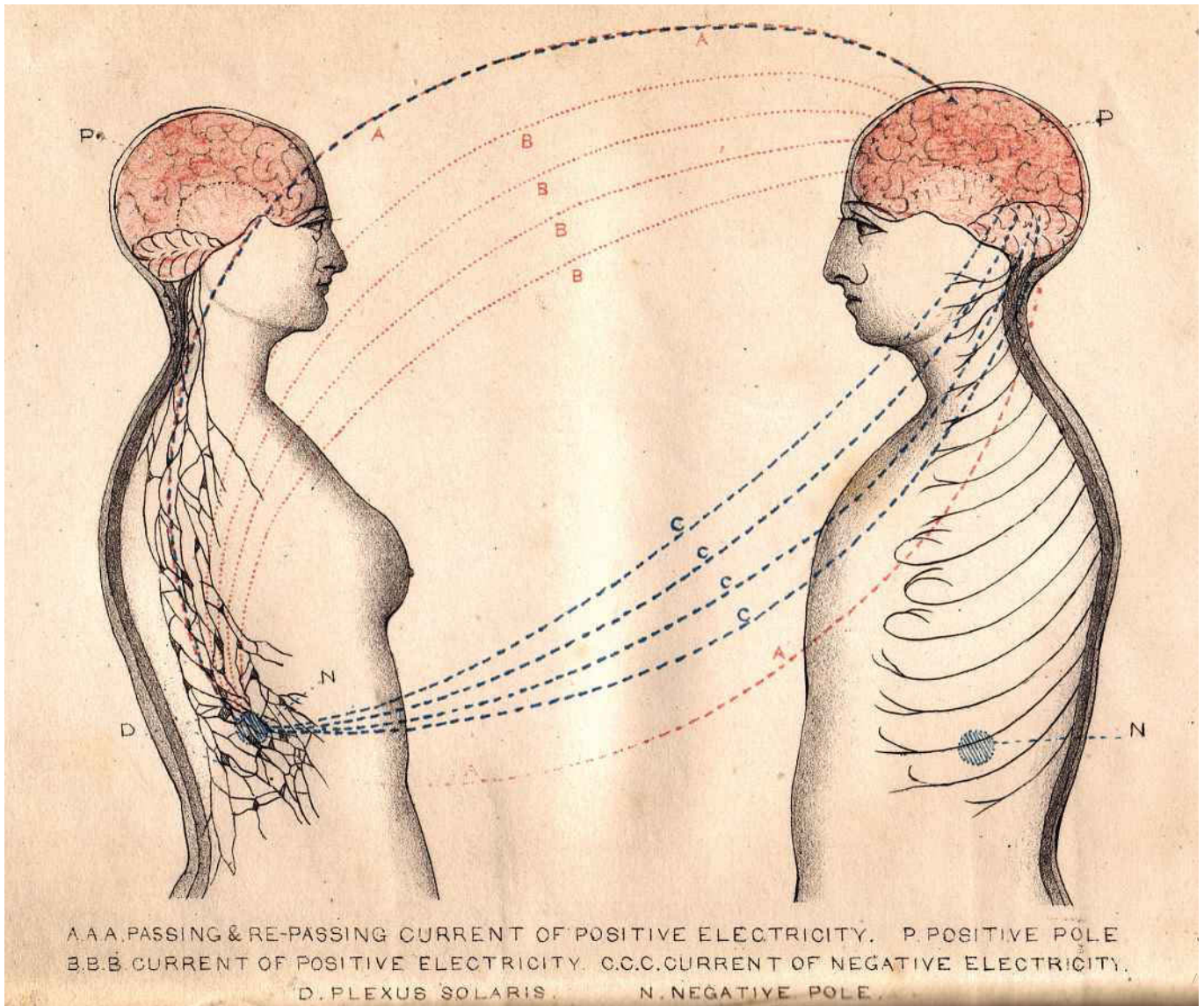


At his baptism, he supposedly struck the minister in the face with his foot, which he came to believe was "an atomic-consciously-formed omen" of the fact that in later life he would become deeply anti-religious, believing religion to be based on hypocrisy. He remarked that religious teaching in his youth had been mentally and physically ruinous. His mother, Mary Ann Palfrey (née Hitchcock), was a needlewoman prone to superstitious beliefs, and his father, John Palfrey senior, was variously a stonemason and railway plate-layer, and is described in *Atomic-Consciousness* as a drunkard.

The thoughtful Palfrey had from a young age experienced premonitory dreams, and later found that simply contemplating something during waking hours could bring about its fulfilment, or at least a notable repetition. He grew up in a cottage on The Green in Whimble, working alongside his father as a stonemason by



TOP: The first 1892 edition of *Atomic-Consciousness*. ABOVE: The Green, Whimble, Devon, where Palfrey spent his childhood.



ABOVE: Zerffi's theories resembled Palfrey's insofar as a dominant "magnetizer" may employ radiant bodily electricity to influence people. Zerffi believed that the solar plexus was the seat of subconsciousness, hence the targeted lines of force.

the age of 14. At this time, his next-door neighbour William Stokes – 22 years older than Palfrey – married and left his work as a timber dealer to become a policeman in Bath. This probably influenced Palfrey to likewise join the police force a few years later, leaving Whimble for a post in Plymouth. This job was short-lived, and within a few years Palfrey became a railway porter, relocating to Yorkshire. Employers often chided him that he was “paid to work, not to think”. The ceaseless tedium of working life stood in the way of Palfrey’s desire to set down his ideas in manuscript form, and he yearned for a less strenuous post, but reassignment was only for injured workers. An accident in 1882 saw Palfrey almost crushed between two trains, but he wasn’t sufficiently maimed to be reassigned. Following some mental exertions, a fulfilment was at last manifested: an examining doctor pronounced him insane – a diagnosis irksome to Palfrey, but one that led to the desired relief from toil, giving him time to write.

By the 1890s, Palfrey was feeling quite

## PALFREY'S BOOK RESEMBLES A MODERN SELF-HELP GUIDE GONE WRONG

downtrodden and scorned politics, religion and society, concluding that civilisation was doomed. His pessimistic worldview was possibly shaped by the fact that by 1891, as census data reveals, his parents had been reduced to paupers. Palfrey himself was also feeling the strain, stating that: “life to those who can meditate and think, is absolutely unendurable”.

*Atomic-Consciousness* resembles a modern self-help guide gone wrong. Immersed in Dickensian squalor, Palfrey had little to offer in the way of good cheer: his principal rallying cry was that Nature’s objective is to “generate from any sensitive organism the greatest amount of suffering possible”, and

that “life is a river of perpetual sorrow”. As early as page 10, his various suicide attempts are described – all thwarted by his extreme aversion to pain.

For such an introverted man to have been able to publish anything at all seems an incredible feat, especially in view of his limited means, but he had support from relatives and friends who took an interest in him. He had moved to Bath in 1884, where his sister Esther lived with her husband William Hurrell Popplestone and another sister, Harriett, worked as a servant in the outskirts of the city. William Popplestone – a gardener, grocer, and later a tailor – was especially supportive of his brother-in-law, and had a large extended family in the cloth trade: diary-like entries in Palfrey’s book cover his time lodging with Popplestone’s stepbrother Sydney at 17 St James’s Parade. Later, Palfrey reunited with his old friend William Stokes, and after Stokes’s wife died in 1890 he lodged with him at his small terraced property at 11 Clarence Place, the cul-de-sac where Esther and William Popplestone also ran a corner-shop. At this

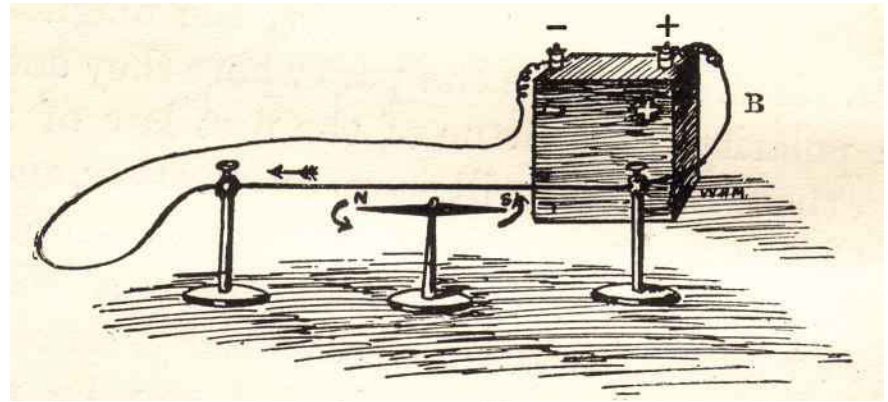
time, Palfrey's job was delivering goods around the area in a cart. Any coincidences or dream-fulfillments occurring to him during the day were jotted down "by roadside and under hedges". In his free time, he scoured newspapers for reports of freak occurrences to cite in his book. With his special gift, he could will any desired information to appear in newspapers or in scraps of paper found during his travels. He frequented local libraries and took an active interest in the burgeoning University Extension movement.

### UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

The University Extension movement gained momentum in the latter half of the 19th century as a scheme where lecturers from Oxford and Cambridge travelled across the UK to give academic courses for working men and women who could not otherwise attend university. The movement was mostly driven by Christian Socialist ideals of moral advancement: the Bath MP Edmond Wodehouse saw it as a means to "impart as widely as we can the judgement and the taste which eschew the bad or worthless products of literature, and care only for what is good and high".<sup>4</sup> An ulterior motive was to bridge the class divide, thereby stymying the growth of revolutionary socialism that the Establishment feared.<sup>5</sup> Sophistry along these lines did not go unnoticed by lecture-goers; when the Extension lectures came to Bath in 1886 (which Palfrey claimed to have willed to happen), one correspondent to the *Bath Herald* criticised a perceived political bias and misrepresentation of facts in a lecture by Conservative historian FS Pulling.<sup>6</sup> University Extension gave people the confidence to articulate their own ideas, as illustrated by a lady who, when her work was criticised by a lecturer, reportedly challenged "my facts you may criticise as you please, but my opinions – for them I am prepared to die".<sup>7</sup> Headstrong bravura is likewise found in Palfrey's work, zested as it is with anarchist sentiments.

### INTRICATE THEORIES

Despite its peculiarity, *Atomic-Consciousness* does reflect a trend in 19th century



ABOVE: Palfrey's atomic-consciousness concept owed much to Oersted's electromagnetic discoveries in 1820. Palfrey believed that a person must have a "positive" or "repellant" state of mind to actuate and fulfil his desires. One's "mental charge" should flow outwards into the wider etheric atomic-consciousness. "Negative" or "passive" states are to be avoided, as they only draw in adverse influences.

thought. Following in the footsteps of other rationalistic explanations of mesmerism, Palfrey advanced a monistic view that mind is an "electromagnetic apparatus" and that "ideas necessarily produce results"; any mental state of attention or interest produces a "cerebral force" that, if not discharged as physical action is instead released into the wider world, thus actualising the original thought that held the attention. Being a quiet, withdrawn fellow, Palfrey's cerebral force was always dissipating into the environment in this way. Atomic-consciousness is presented as an all-pervading agency through which diffused thoughts are elaborated, reshaped and actualised in the world.

Palfrey argued that nature abhors a singular incident; *duality* is the law. A thought supposedly constitutes one pole of a mental circuit, and atomic-consciousness acts to complete the circuit by arranging a repetition of the original impression: "When it is repeated, a circuit is formed, by which the force generated by one impression is discharged in the form of memory". Palfrey explained: "Say an accident occurs in one part of the country, and it is outside the limits of probability to expect a *second* anywhere near, another may occur many miles distant, or perhaps in another country,

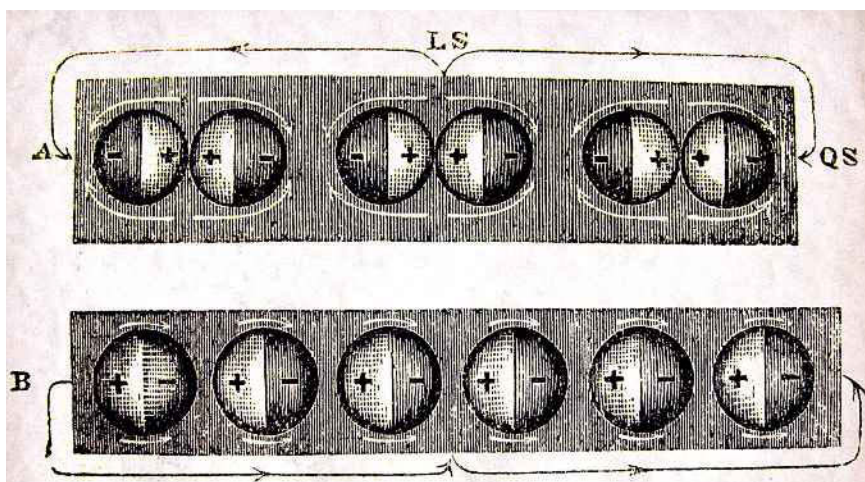
the *knowledge* of this repetition completes the mental circuit." This theory is largely developed around Palfrey himself: (a) he notices or contemplates something; (b) atomic-consciousness, having retentive properties, acts in the physical world to recreate the original impression; and (c) usually less than 12 days later Palfrey experiences the repetition, either directly or indirectly (i.e. through newspaper reports), thus triggering the memory of the original impression, closing the circuit.

As for the auditory and visual phenomena of hauntings, these, he claims, are ascribable to "previous mental charges", most experiences being subjective. In certain rare cases, however, he concedes that atomic-consciousness may become sufficiently refined to produce physical effects.<sup>8</sup> Atomic-consciousness stores thoughts as potential until circumstances permit their fulfilment ("discharge"), so these thoughts can therefore remain stored long after the deaths of their originators. Palfrey also admits that mind may sometimes act directly on mind, bypassing the atomic-consciousness media.

### BRAIN WAVES

Similar energetic theories abounded, not necessarily expounded by scientific types. In 1869 the architect and journalist James Thomas Knowles outlined his Brain Waves theory in a letter to *The Spectator*.<sup>9</sup> As with Palfrey, Knowles sought an overarching law to account for the phenomena of mesmerism, spiritualism and clairvoyance. Knowles posited that any action in the brain is accompanied by an "atomic movement" likely resulting in an "electrical manifestation" that can create undulations in the imponderable ether – thereby communicating to any sympathetic brain.

Another argument on similar lines was developed in Gustav Zerffi's 1871 publication *Spiritualism and Animal Magnetism*.<sup>10</sup> This notably invoked Kant's "Ding an sich", or the "thing in itself" (i.e. the true nature of a thing, distinct from the way it appears to us), to ascribe visions, premonitions, and so on to modes of "sight and action unaffected by space and time" and divorced from "known



ABOVE: Polarised 'electromotive molecules' within nerve fibre showing different states when at rest, or when under the presence of muscular/nervous current, illustrative of the electrophysiological theories of the time, as hypothesised by Emil du Bois-Reymond (From *On Animal Electricity*, 1852).

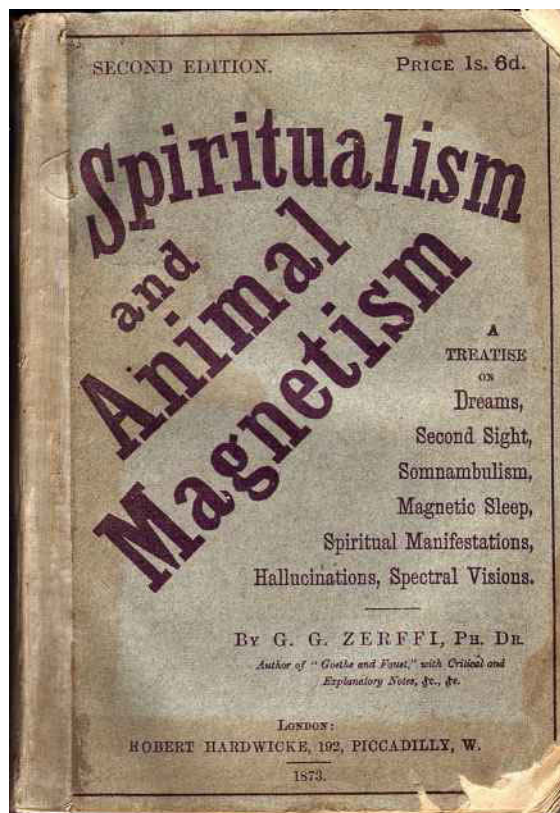
laws of physical causality” (Kant would also be an influence on Jung and his acausal theory). But Zerffi could not fully escape the Victorian mainstay of cause and effect, concluding that everything must ultimately boil down to some form of causality. Palfrey adhered to cause and effect too, but remarked that he sometimes experienced the effects before the cause.

*Atomic-Consciousness* is presented as an original thesis, uninfluenced by other theorists. However, Palfrey does profess admiration for Kant, Laplace and Darwin in an off-hand footnote concerning his belief that names and places having ‘a’ as their second letter are lucky to him (hence his pseudonym ‘Bathurst’). Traces of these thinkers permeate the text; Kant’s “thing in itself” allows Palfrey to assume hidden mechanics behind phenomena, “Laplace’s Demon” anticipates a hypothetical intellect capable of mapping all atoms in the Universe for deterministic ends, and the bleakness of Darwin’s ideas on the subjection of the weak by the strong runs through *Atomic-Consciousness*.

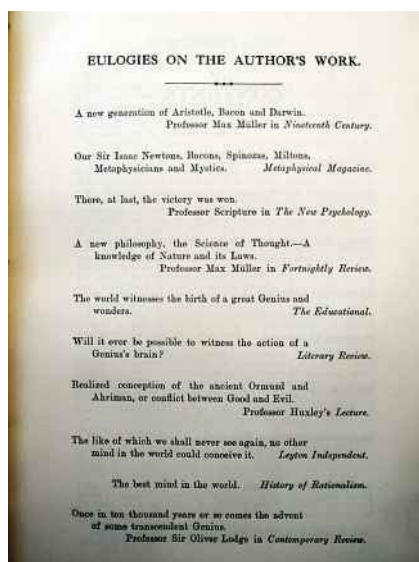
### THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ‘REPELLANT’

One of the few influences the book mentions is Helena Blavatsky (see FT302:32-37), founder of the Theosophical Society, whom Palfrey sought to meet. Using his willpower, he managed to secure the money needed to visit her, but this seeming good fortune was scuppered by the news of Blavatsky’s death. Such thwarted wishes are characteristic of *Atomic-Consciousness*: Palfrey called it *differentiation*, and it forms the tragicomic core of his work, providing a dramatic thrust that underpins all life’s little ironies (to borrow Thomas Hardy’s expression). Whenever Palfrey tried to will important things to happen, his keenness would have an adverse effect on atomic-consciousness and differentiation would kick in.

According to Palfrey, because all matter – including the human mind – is composed of atoms, a polar differentiating principle underpins all activity between mind and atomic-consciousness. To achieve one’s desires, one must be “positive”, or as Palfrey also termed it (with electrical theory in mind), “repellent” – that is, having a “dominant bearing towards atomic consciousness” characterised by unwavering carelessness bolstered by a sense of necessity. No fuss must be made. He attributed the fast pace of progress in the 19th century to this state of mind among scientists (exemplified by the ubiquity of *multiple discovery*, where inventors working independently make identical discoveries).<sup>11</sup> Conversely, “a negative state, or when a person feels wishful or anxious, is favourable to this differentiating force” and one’s desires are frustrated. To test this, whilst walking on a public street one day, Palfrey tried to mentally engage random women:



HAUNTINGS, HE CLAIMED, ARE ASCRIBABLE TO “PREVIOUS MENTAL CHARGES”



TOP: Zerffi’s *Spiritualism and Animal Magnetism* attempted to find a scientific law to account for disparate mysterious phenomena. ABOVE: Palfrey’s page of fake eulogies prefaces the two later editions of 1903 and 1909.

“Firstly, I conceived a tender affection for those who had a tolerably good appearance, and who were in a superior social position. Now it so happened that while in this particular, although forced, cerebral state, everyone whom I conceived an attraction for... responded contemptuously. I then returned, but in a mental condition, directly the reverse. I *repelled* all. The consequences were, everyone towards whom I felt indifferent and careless, endeavoured to gain my notice, or recognition... The negative mental state caused *differentiation*, while the positive brought conditions directly the converse.”

Palfrey also cited examples where millionaires had won lotteries because they possessed a careless attitude. Differentiation only occurs when anxiousness is present, and so this law operates “most intensely on those who can suffer the greatest”, such as the impoverished and emotionally sensitive. He lamented that “atomic-conscious differentiation is ever on the aggressive, to thwart and disappoint” and there is constantly “a rush of adverse and malevolent forces operating from all directions”. Drawing on the concept of direction of electric current in batteries, Palfrey sought to maintain a repellent

*positive* mind, allowing charge to flow out from him, rather than a *negative* passive mind where atomic-consciousness influences could flow into him.<sup>12</sup>

The emotional Palfrey was often deeply enraptured by natural landscapes. He was aware, however, that such feelings of adoration constituted negative states conducive to the dreaded differentiation, where adverse forces might operate upon him. Whenever he saw a beautiful country scene, he would quickly try to “divert [his] thoughts, or substitute a dominant mentality”. On one occasion, he noticed a peaceful glade earmarked for development: “When contemplating its destruction for artificial dwellings I burst into tears... I therefore climbed over the hedge... pressed my lips against several of the leaves, at the same time personifying the scene, by *addressing* the beautiful foliage.” He narrowly escaped police confinement after nearby residents spotted him, and, assuming he was a lunatic, raised the alarm.

Palfrey disliked people generally, and hated other people’s presences in parks where his enjoyment of the scenery would be sullied by “the thoughtless words and meaningless expressions from others”. One favourite park was often so full of ignoramuses that he resolved to avoid it, and planned to remove a tree branch as a memento to enjoy in private. Means were devised to cut it off, but overnight the tree was struck by lightning, and the branch he was so fond of was “detached and rendered useless, thus frustrating [his] ardently-cherished hopes. It was evidently the effect of atomic-conscious differentiation.”

Differentiation, to Palfrey, was “Nature’s antagonistic law”, to be found at work in

every context. In marriage, he observed, the partner feeling the most fervent affection might find the other had become disinterested, leading to “disappointed love”. Elsewhere, he remarked that rabies was generated in dogs to impede humanity’s relationship with that most beloved species. Ultimately, if world peace and happiness were to be achieved, atomic-consciousness would again differentiate against the human mind, thus “when the sword has been turned into a ploughshare, an enemy more powerful still will be at the door in the form of *cold*, and following its trail, *exhaustion of the soil*.”

### MILITANT VERBOSITY

When Palfrey published his book as a grand solution to all life’s mysteries it met with indifference in the few short press reviews it received. After publication, he began compiling material for an improved second edition: an elaborate exposition of “all things appertaining to [the] psycho-physiological, including hypnotic, spiritualistic, divination, witchcraft and the distinctive supernatural”. By 1902, the task was almost complete, but Palfrey had a bizarre change of heart. All around him, it seemed, his ideas were reappearing “in newspaper, book and other print, or from platform and parliament” – not just his concepts, but his very words, were being stolen from him. He placed great importance on originality, endeavouring to craft new phrases, but “the choicest verbal selections formerly imparting at sight or mention, thrilling emotion, are drawn into the miry clay, and the greater the stress or importance placed on any particular word or sentence, the more in desecration does it become familiarised”. He claimed to have destroyed his manuscript in disgust, instead publishing a small 33-page abridgement where he fumed about how “these suckling creatures in various aspect from gutter to summit being themselves incapable of conceptive creation, utilize and plagiarise my mind as crystal font from whence ideas flow.” The booklet was a shorter reiteration of his 1892 masterwork, although he bewailed his unpardonable sin of even publishing it in the first place, having made “a world of fools the wiser”.<sup>13</sup>

An expanded abridgement was also published in 1909,<sup>14</sup> with the publisher’s address given as Rowton House, Hammersmith, where lodgings were provided for poor and indigent men. Both these smaller editions are truly odd, differing in tone from the original, and it is perhaps significant that both were published as subscribers’ editions funded by friends and admirers of the first book. Palfrey’s almost incomprehensible prose is suggestive of a writer trying to impress. Indeed, outright lies are touted (such as the establishment of a ‘Bathurst Community’ in America) and a preliminary page of praise for the author’s work consists of quotes ripped from their original context.

An alternative explanation for his impenetrably overblown new literary style might lie with his belief that words were being stolen from his mind. His unusual word combinations seem like attempts



ABOVE AND LEFT: The 1909 edition of *Atomic-Consciousness* bears one of the strangest publisher’s addresses ever to feature on an occult-philosophical treatise’s titlepage: “221 Hammersmith Road, London”: an 800-room Rowton lodging house. Did Palfrey lodge in one of the small cubicles such as the one shown here?

to outmanoeuvre a “telepathic impactive impingement”, prompting one of the earliest allusions to the *tin foil hat* (see FT334:5) in a typically garbled passage: “An insulative electrical contrivance encircling the head during thought, and in sleep, does not prevent dissipation of the forces in either condition: but if specially charged with magnetic polarity, the waves of direction are affected: and cessional relapses in convolitional tension arising through valvular intermittent pulsation, cause corresponding rivulet abruptions in the wavish ethereal extension. But nothing ensures my retention of thoughts and ideas, excepting the deeper abstraction. Being filched by parasite millions in effective anticipation, and appear as their own.” Continuing in this vein, Palfrey gives the impression of a man pauperised by the burden of his intellect.

### A PAUPER’S SECRET HOARD

The publisher of the two abridged editions was ‘William Manning’ (“his old comrade”)<sup>15</sup>, a pseudonym for Palfrey’s brother-in-law William Popplestone, who had moved to Bristol with Palfrey’s sister Esther in the mid-1890s. Palfrey himself is absent from both

the 1901 and 1911 censuses, and he signs his location as Rome in the 1903 edition. The Popplestones emigrated with their children to start a new life in Australia in May 1915, leaving Palfrey seemingly to fend for himself when he returned to Bristol.

Palfrey’s activities are unclear until reports of his death appear in 1921. There was no fanfare for his literary achievements: “Miser’s Secret Hoard” ran the *Sunday Express* notice.<sup>16</sup> Described as an ordinary pauper living in a common lodging house in a slum district of Bristol (“his clothing was in rags and tatters and his general condition was one of utter neglect”),<sup>17</sup> he was taken ill and removed to Southmead Union Infirmary where, to great surprise, the discovery of a “stocking-shaped bag made of sacking” around his neck revealed “a bank book showing a balance of £80, securities relating to war stock valued at nearly £420, a sovereign, a quantity of silver and coppers, and a watch”.<sup>18</sup> This hidden wealth would be roughly £20,000 today. It was said that: “his speech betrayed him as a man of education, but apparently he had only enough means for bare sustenance”. Another report remarked that “he had been markedly eccentric in his ways and dealing with people, seldom making himself agreeable or entering into conversation, and maintaining a fixed taciturn manner,” and that he had “lived a lonely life for many years.”<sup>19</sup> In 1920, he had penned a will with a curious request indicating a mindfulness of premonitory experiences: “If anything happens to me I pray that no postmortem may be held, it being unnecessary and I am a hypersensitive.” He left everything to William Popplestone’s nephew, a dairyman named Frank Keeping.

## INVISIBLE LEGACY

On the titlepage of his 1909 abridgement, Palfrey describes himself underneath his pseudonym: “Philosopher, Seer and Metaphysician, Founder of The New Psychology, The New Age, and The New Knowledge; Of The New Naturalism, The New Idealism, and The New Pantheism; Of The New Mysticism, and Modernism”. In retrospect, this isn’t all hot air. *Atomic-Consciousness* caught the flavour of an emerging zeitgeist. Palfrey’s conceptions of the brain as an “electro-chemical apparatus” and thought as “modes of motion” were hotly discussed topics throughout the 19th century, achieving affirmative scientific consensus in the 20th. Similarly, his electro-biological occult beliefs paralleled those of Theosophy and prefigured certain New Thought ideas, and one can well imagine his angst as both movements boomed from the 1890s onwards, whilst his book languished in obscurity. This period also marked the start of study into noumenal aspects of coincidences, as seen in Alice Johnson’s landmark 1899 paper for the Society for Psychical Research.<sup>20</sup> Theories based around our perception/misperception of time appeared (in German) by Austrian biologist Paul Kammerer in 1919<sup>21</sup>, along with JW Dunne’s famous *Experiment with Time* (1927).<sup>22</sup> And of course, by the 1950s, Jung had encapsulated the varied phenomena within his term *synchronicity*. The popularity of Dunne’s and Jung’s theories could arguably be due to their ability to incorporate the ideal of an afterlife. Nevertheless, the essence of Palfrey’s ideas haunted diverse strands of 20th century culture, from Crowley’s “do what thou wilt” to the Positive Mental Attitude of the ‘get rich quick’ strategies popularised by Napoleon Hill and his ilk in the late 1930s. Even the fringe energetics theories that persist today in radionics and psychotronics evoke Palfrey’s atomic-consciousness. One has only to read Bärbel Mohr’s *Cosmic Ordering Service*<sup>23</sup> to realise that Palfrey had tapped into archetypal thinking modalities. Cosmic Ordering is a positive thinking



ABOVE: Southgate Street, Bath, at the turn of the century, close to St James’s Parade where Palfrey lodged. “Often amid choking sobs and suppressed tears, am I ordered to ‘move on,’ or rudely jostled from the footway by a heartless crowd when watching and mentally contemplating the woes of humanity”.

strategy espoused by Mohr in the 2000s and popularised in the UK by TV personality Noel Edmonds.<sup>24</sup> Adherents of Cosmic Ordering might well claim that Palfrey was the architect of his own misery by allowing himself to fixate on negative thoughts.

Judging from the mass of premonitions and coincidences accumulating in *FT’s It Happened To Me*, Palfrey’s book should be reappraised as a piece in the jigsaw of our greater understanding. Whatever the underlying nature of consciousness in its relation to the Universe, we seem no closer to any unanimity of opinion; and just as Palfrey did, today’s folksy metaphysicians still borrow the latest scientific concepts – from wave-particle duality to quantum entanglement – in street-level attempts to account for curious anomalies or to fit them into occult philosophies. Damned as woolly by more hardheaded types, these contemplations born of natural curiosity offer exciting and enlightening perspectives on human

perception. Who knows? Researchers of the future may one day unravel the life story of another reclusive introvert like John Palfrey whose life was lived in the eye of a hurricane – raised aloft but also spun deliriously within an unconventional belief system. Such researchers might discover an illuminating (and cautionary) story in the process. **FT**

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



DANIEL WILSON is Sound and Music’s Embedded composer-in-residence at London’s Resonance 104.4FM. His Radionics Radio experimental music project will be released in early 2016. He is a member of electroacoustic music quartet Oscillatorial Binnage and records solo as Meadow House. His 2015 album *Attempts & Results* is on Beautiful Music CDs.

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12 Palfrey adhered to the simplistic convention that electric charge flows from positive to negative in a battery circuit.

13 “James Bathurst”, *Atomic Consciousness Reviewed*, W & R Manning, Bristol, 1903. The publisher’s address on the title page is 2 Nottingham Road, Bristol.

Research reveals this was home to one Albert Winter (1842-1919), a dairyman who later moved to Wales and became an astrologer, as did his son, Augustus.

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## PRO PATRIA MORON?

**SD TUCKER** huddles down in the trenches with Italy's mad war poet and asks a question that still resonates today: how could such an overtly cartoonish figure could ever end up rising to international political prominence?

**I**n my opinion, the greatest political theorist ever to ply his trade in these islands is not Edmund Burke, Thomas Hobbes, nor even Richard Littlejohn; instead, it was the caustic humorist Auberon Waugh. I find his following assessment to be essentially beyond improvement: "Until [the electorate] accepts that the urge to power is a personality disorder in its own right, like... the taste for rubber underwear, there will always be a danger of circumstances arising which persuade ordinary people to start... taking [politicians] seriously... Politics, as I never tire of saying, is for social and emotional misfits, handicapped folk, those with a grudge... Political motivation is psychotic in origin... It is only when one realises that the great administrators and leaders of men have all been at any rate slightly mad that one has a true understanding of history."<sup>1</sup> Certainly, it is the only way to even begin to understand the truly extraordinary political career of the Italian poet, statesman, soldier and aviator Gabriele d'Annunzio.

D'Annunzio is a kind of capsule illustration of the fleeting nature of fame. Once one of the most well-known and celebrated (or reviled) men in the world, his name is now almost



forgotten, despite his amazing life-story. If any readers know of his legacy today, then it will almost certainly be because of Lucy Hughes-Hallett's brilliant prize-winning 2013 biography of him, *The Pike*.<sup>2</sup> In 1907, a French newspaper reported gossip that d'Annunzio, a

frequent visitor to clairvoyants, had attended a séance in Florence. When the spirits began to talk, d'Annunzio, who liked every conversation to be about himself, asked the ghosts their opinion of his literary output – the poems, novels and plays which had lent him immense celebrity. After a strange rumbling was heard, the poet was told that his writings were mere "smoke" which would vanish from the Earth with his death.<sup>3</sup> For the non-Italian world, I suppose the spook was right.

An absurd, flamboyant roué who helped steer Italy into the First World War largely because it gave him intense aesthetic pleasure to think of the newly unified nation's soil being christened in blood, d'Annunzio is an object lesson in Waugh's warning about the dangers of taking demagogues seriously. Considering his exploits from a modern perspective, it is impossible not to laugh. But at the time, people *didn't* laugh; far from it. Instead, they took him and his ideas with a deadly seriousness it now seems difficult to credit. This was a man who made public speeches about the peace-making Italian PM Francesco Nitti in which he repeatedly referred to him as 'Shitty Nitti', told his audience that Nitti was waving a white flag of surrender fashioned from his own brown-stained underpants, and invited them to spit on him the next time they saw him.

His mad rhetoric, though, was highly effective. In May 1915, he jumped on-stage at Rome's Teatro Costanzi opera-house, interrupting the performance and demanding the audience lend him their ears. Exclaiming that Italy's leading pacifist politician, Giovanni Giolitti, was nothing but "the horrible sac of an octopus", he demanded they go out and kill him so war could finally begin. Later that night, an enraged mob stole a fire-engine and drove it to Giolitti's house, climbing up its extendable ladders intending to jump through his window and murder him.<sup>4</sup> A man whose political career had begun when, in 1897, he had been elected to parliament as 'The Candidate for Beauty' ended ultimately not in this promised pulchritude, but in bloodshed – but then, to d'Annunzio, bloodshed *was* beautiful.

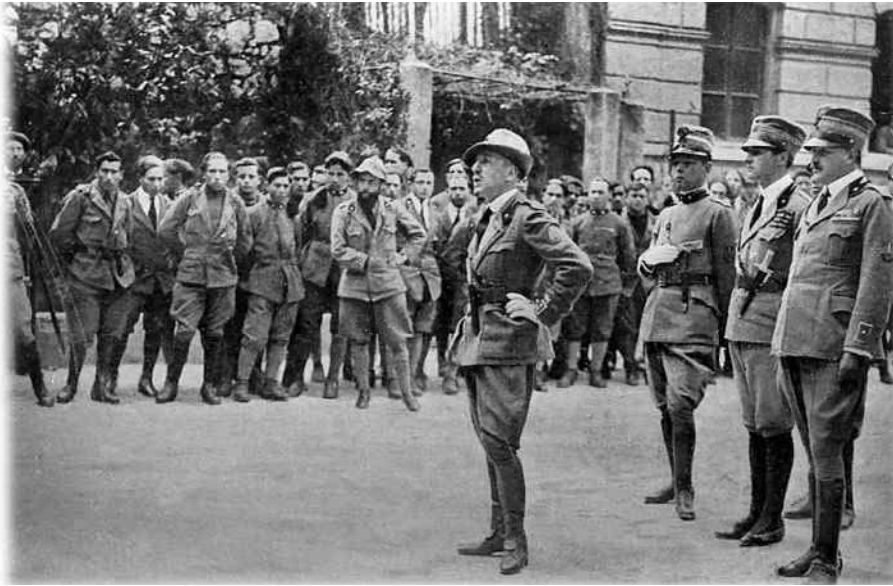
Insanely romanticising an incident in which his dogs had dragged him across the ground leaving him with mud in his mouth, once Italy had finally joined WWI in 1915,



TOP AND ABOVE: Gabriele d'Annunzio – soldier, statesman, demagogue, poet, aviator and nude sunbather.

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LEFT: D'Annunzio addresses his men after occupying Fiume. BELOW: Guido Keller, d'Annunzio's nudist deputy and fellow loon, on a chamber pot.

he began constructing a poetic ideal of the muddy trenches being the gaping maws of some chthonic earth-god hungry for human sacrifice. From the blood-drenched soil, he thought, would bloom a race of new Italian Supermen.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly brave, d'Annunzio joined the air-force, performing many acts of derring-do, and travelling the trenches giving pep-talks to the troops. Constantly, he embellished his propaganda with images implying Italy had supernatural forces on its side, referring to experiences, whether real or imagined, in which he saw legions of slaughtered Italian troops floating through the sky, encountered the shades of dead airmen or was led aside from a falling Austrian shell by the spirit of his mother.<sup>6</sup>

Given his idealisation of Italy's war, when peace finally came in 1918 d'Annunzio was intensely disappointed. He had wanted Italy to reclaim various territories from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but peace was not leading this way. In particular, he coveted the coastal port of Fiume, in what is now Croatia, which had a large ethnic Italian population. Publicly condemning politicians for not just annexing it, many nationalists urged d'Annunzio to gather his acolytes and occupy Fiume himself. Unsure what to do, he resorted to consulting the occult. One sorceress had predicted he would one day become a king (hadn't he read *Macbeth*?), and when an American psychic gave him an auspicious tarot reading at a party, his destiny appeared clear.<sup>7</sup> Soon, d'Annunzio was driving into Fiume in a red Fiat filled with flowers, straight past the Italian soldiers who had been given strict orders to shoot him if he tried to pass. Not only did they refuse to do so, many actually deserted their positions and followed him into the city. Here, he was acclaimed by the Italian population as their liberator, and installed as dictator. The poet had once moaned how he longed to "create not with words, but with human lives."<sup>8</sup> Now, he would get his chance.

## HE FLEW A SORTIE TO ROME TO DROP A POTTY FILLED WITH CARROTS ON THE PARLIAMENT



### NEW MODEL ARMY

Fiume, unsurprisingly, soon became a mecca for misfits and madmen. Whilst many Italian soldiers were motivated by a genuine sense of patriotism, platoons of poets, philosophers, radicals, outlaws and avant-garde artists were more attracted by the atmosphere of free-love, drug-taking and danger which prevailed there. D'Annunzio's interest in the logistics of weekly bin-collections being predictably negligible, his immediate political circle consisted not of dull John Major-types,

but his fellow warrior-poets. For instance, d'Annunzio's deputy (or 'Action Secretary') in Fiume was Guido Keller, an artist, aviator and nudist with several prior convictions for indecent exposure. He enjoyed sleeping naked in trees and kept a pet eagle, which he had apparently trained to comb his hair. Having won several medals for his wartime exploits, Keller now preferred to use his plane not to drop bombs but to play absurdist pranks. One time, he landed in the grounds of a Serbian monastery and kidnapped the monks' donkey by tying it to the side of his aircraft. On another occasion, he flew a sortie to Rome purely to drop a potty filled with carrots onto the parliament building.<sup>9</sup> Keller also set up his own quasi-political cult in Fiume, called YOGA: The Union of Free Spirits Tending Towards Perfection, which would meet under a fig-tree and debate the necessity of abolishing money and prisons and promoting public nudity. Innocently adopting a swastika as their logo, they set up a newspaper where they implored the bourgeois masses to do things like: DANCE in the abyss of the sea. DANCE in the African forest. DANCE beyond good and evil.<sup>10</sup>

Such proto-Situationist bollocks found favour (or at least tolerance) from d'Annunzio who, once he had power, was content to use it largely to stage parades and ceremonies whose impressive techniques were later copied by Mussolini and Hitler. Indeed, d'Annunzio would probably have approved of Keller's impractical notions of transforming the world via the medium of dance, seeing as he was himself busily writing plans for the ideal army which would arise from Fiume's New Jerusalem. A perfect soldier, d'Annunzio said, would not operate in regimented ranks, but instead be a super-talented lone-wolf. They would not only be trained killers and athletes, but would also cause terror amongst the enemy with their formidable *Opportunity Knocks*-like ability to sing, dance, whistle, put on voices and do animal impressions in the heat of battle. This sense of institutionalised individualism allowed some of Fiume's warriors to create their own personal uniforms; on a visit in 1920, the English writer Osbert Sitwell saw men dressed in cloaks, fezzes and feathers and sporting abnormal hairstyles. Others showed love for their leader by imitating him – but d'Annunzio's appearance was in itself notably odd, leading to large numbers of armed men wandering the streets with bald heads and pointed beards, monocles and white gloves, reeking of perfume and speaking their every word in florid improvised prose-poetry whilst trying to seduce passing women.

Even Fiume's darker side was a spectacle; d'Annunzio's men would force opponents to



ABOVE: D'Annunzio's estate, the Vittoriale degli Italiani, boasted a Roman amphitheatre, a huge mausoleum and half of the cruiser *Puglia* built into a mountainside.

drink lashings of laxative castor-oil until they helplessly shat themselves senseless in front of others.<sup>11</sup>

Fiume had become a literal 'theatre of war'. When the composer Arturo Toscanini paid a visit, d'Annunzio staged a giant gladiatorial contest in his honour, during which 4,000 men happily tossed live grenades at one another, injuring Toscanini's orchestra.<sup>12</sup> Central to d'Annunzio's new war-cult was an ersatz holy relic, 'The Banner of Randaccio'. Giovanni Randaccio was an Italian Major who had fallen in d'Annunzio's arms on the battlefield, and whose head d'Annunzio had placed on a patriotic flag as he lay dying. D'Annunzio liked to unfurl this 'holy relic of war' during his many speeches, describing it as being almost like the Turin Shroud. In an address of 4 May 1919, for instance, he spoke of it thus: "The sublime image of the soldier who leaned his head upon it has remained impressed in it. And it is the image of all the dead; for all who have died for the Patria [Fatherland] and

in the Patria resemble each other." This scene may sound macabre, but in it we actually have one of the tributary streams towards the later British/French idea of the Unknown Soldier.<sup>13</sup> D'Annunzio was good at putting on such circuses. It was providing bread that was the problem. His solution was to tell Keller and his men to become pirates, stealing food and supplies from the surrounding area and hijacking passing ships. This situation could not last forever though and, under siege from Italian destroyers, Fiume was finally forced to surrender in December 1920.

Amazingly, d'Annunzio remained a free man. Punishing him would have caused nationalist riots, so he was allowed to retire to a remote villa, where he devoted the rest of his life to being strange, but more quietly. The *Vittoriale degli Italiani* ('Shrine to Italian Victories') became a weird monument to d'Annunzio's idea of holy war. His actual house had a series of themed spaces, like the 'Room of the Leper', where lay a coffin

of 'sacred earth' from Fiume's cemetery. When Mussolini gained power in 1922, he happily lavished cash on d'Annunzio's project on the proviso that he retire from public life, with the result that numerous expensive follies, including an amphitheatre and half a battleship (once supplied with a crew) embedded in a mountainside, now litter the estate. D'Annunzio also designed a mausoleum, where the corpses of Fiume's holiest warriors now rest in stone sarcophagi. So dear was this project to d'Annunzio that, after his death in 1938, his spirit supposedly continued giving instructions about its precise layout to his chosen architect, Giancarlo Maroni. Maroni passed these messages on to Mussolini, who complied with the ghost's wishes and continued to donate whatever money was necessary.<sup>14</sup>

Even in death, Gabriele d'Annunzio still had everyone dancing to the beat of his drum; the Devil, after all, has always had the best tunes.<sup>15</sup> **FT**

## NOTES

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- 2 Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *The Pike: Gabriele d'Annunzio, Poet, Seducer and Preacher of War*, 4<sup>th</sup> Estate, 2013.
- 3 Giovanni Gullace, *Gabriele d'Annunzio in France: A Study in Cultural Relations*, Syracuse University Press, 1966, p52.
- 4 Hughes-Hallett, pp506-

- 507, 61-62. D'Annunzio actually called Nitti 'Cagoia', a self-coined form of 'shitty'.
- 5 Hughes-Hallett, pp362, 366. D'Annunzio claimed an earthquake in January 1915 was a sign from the earth-god that it wanted young lives to eat, and that this was an expression of its "voracious love" for Italian blood.
- 6 Hughes-Hallett, pp464-465, 402-403, 422.
- 7 Gullace, pp155-156 & Hughes-Hallett, pp.90, 470.
- 8 Hughes-Hallett, p369.
- 9 Hughes-Hallett, pp.529-531, 536, 555. There is a

photo of Keller pretending to poo in a potty – perhaps the same one he dropped over Rome? – on his Italian Wikipedia page; [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guido\\_Keller](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guido_Keller).

- 10 Laura Wittman, *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier: Modern Mourning and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body*, University of Toronto Press, 2011, p.210; [www.reakt.org/fiume/yoga.html](http://www.reakt.org/fiume/yoga.html) This reference to dancing 'beyond good and evil' is a dead giveaway that many of d'Annunzio's followers (and the man himself) subscribed

to an idea of themselves as being a band of inherently superior Nietzschean *übermensch*.

- 11 Hughes-Hallett, pp554, 40, 532, 524. It was undoubtedly in Fiume that the so-called 'theatre of fascism' – Hitler-type salutes, torchlight parades, addresses from balconies, etc – began, but d'Annunzio himself was not really a fascist *per se*, in spite of Mussolini's later appropriation of his image for his own benefit.
- 12 Hughes-Hallett, p41.
- 13 Wittman, p215.

- 14 Hughes-Hallett, pp613-614, 643-644; *Il Vittoriale* is still preserved as a shrine/museum, and can be visited by tourists; see [www.independent.co.uk/travel/europe/il-vittoriale-a-lakeside-fantasy-fit-for-a-libertine-8930831.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/europe/il-vittoriale-a-lakeside-fantasy-fit-for-a-libertine-8930831.html).

- 15 Perhaps literally so; d'Annunzio actually tried to write Fiume's constitution based upon musical principles. See [www.reakt.org/fiume/charter\\_of\\_carnaro.html](http://www.reakt.org/fiume/charter_of_carnaro.html) for this fascinating document reproduced in full.

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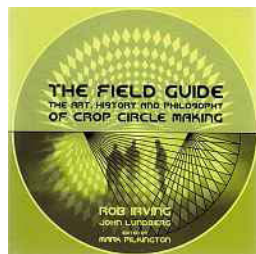
THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE PRESENTS

# BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

## 10. AMONG THE FIELDS OF GOLD

One of the more intriguing aspects of 'the paranormal' is the intensity and possessiveness with which believers in any particular phenomenon will defend the reality of its oddity, even in the face of all evidence to the contrary. True, some of those apparently devoted believers may do so for social or even commercial reasons. The lecture circuit and the frequent TV appearance can be remunerative. But in their wake are the legions of the convinced. Quite *why* they persist in insisting that, for instance, contactees such as Billy Meier and George Adamski have communed with aliens from the Pleiades and Venus is another story. What's of interest on this shelf of our library is what they do when offered something in the nature of a confessional – in this instance, the wholly serious yet frequently hilarious *The Field Guide: The art, history and philosophy of crop circle making*, penned by lead author Rob Irving (now PhD) with John Lundberg, and edited by Mark Pilkington. As veteran circlemakers, they should know what they're talking about.

The art, history and philosophy of crop-circle making is exactly what we get (if not quite in that order), and quite a lot more besides. It's still *de rigueur* in some quarters to refer to 'the crop circle mystery', and that remains a fair description: we may know now that patterns in the crops are made by people, but *their* motives are a puzzle for some, and so are the meanings of the circles. And so the authors kick-start the book with a side-aching tour of various interpretations put upon the patterns in their earlier years – a tradition still going strong: just view the comments on the Crop Circle Connector website each year, and you will witness wonders. Here, we have the amazing translations of pictograms by Eric Beckjord, who perceived "a curious blend of Korean characters and an ancient African Berber script called Tifinag", which was supposedly adapted by Nordic travellers. Beckjord then transliterated these into Roman characters, which miraculously produced vowel-free English sentences. The Hierophant's Apprentice has long maintained that 'aliens' are as thick as two short planks, and would now enquire why they couldn't use plain English to start with? And the messages were as trite as anything we've come to expect from our busy visitors: THIS IS A DANGEROUS PLACE TO CAMP, for instance, or, more enigmatically, THE TRIAL BY THE LAW SAY THE SECRET WRITINGS. A pizza recipe would have been more helpful. Suitably frustrated, Beckjord hacked out a plain message in the corn: TALK TO US.



The answer came back a week later, cut into the wheat on Milk Hill, Wiltshire. But it was incomprehensible, looking like a weird mix of crude Greek and Hebrew characters. Beckjord was stumped, but one Michael Green, presuming these were archaic Hebrew characters *as used in Atlantis*, went through some hoops to produce the phrase THE CREATOR, WISE AND LOVING. Then Prof. Gerald Hawkins, decoder of Stonehenge, entered the fray, along with 12 scholarly helpers. After searching 18,000 phrases in 42 languages, they concluded that this was a Latin sentence meaning I OPPOSE ACTS OF CRAFT AND CUNNING. Next in line came Robert Boerman, who had the brilliant idea of holding the script up to a mirror and translating it using Green's method (*as used in Atlantis*). This revealed the phrase A NEW BREED OF PEOPLE, which to Boerman's satisfaction anyway confirmed Green's translation. This plethora of 'meanings' reminds one of John Michell's hilarious account in *Megalithomania* of similarly incompatible results of attempts to decipher inscriptions (actual, ancient, or otherwise) on sundry rocks around the world. Not to mention Satanic propaganda uncovered by playing raucous rock albums backwards, which very few of us are inclined to do, as it makes no difference to the appeal of the music.

The authors decided to have a go themselves at decoding the script. They hypothesised that the characters were only half-formed, representing the bottom half of a string of squared-off letters in English.

After some experiment, we presume, they found a close match with this sentence: MEADEN TALKS SHIT. (For those unfamiliar with the history: meteorologist Dr Terence Meaden had theorised that crop circles were produced by atmospheric vortices, and as the formations become more complex – to demonstrate the error of his ways – he came up with ever more elaborate explanations for the patterns. Eventually he admitted defeat, and retired from the field, as it were.) It is impossible to know if the inscribers of this opinion—which at least had some relevance to its context – intended to complete it, or if part of the joke was to leave it cryptically unfinished for predatory crows to descend upon and gnaw at; although it is certainly ironic that a band of so-called 'hoaxers' arrived at its most plausible interpretation. Neither is it clear whether the answer to Beckjord's plea was to be taken as coming from the 'aliens' (or whomever), or from naughty cynical Earthlings. But ambiguity is at the heart of circle-making.

Ambiguity is also central to art, and one has to bear in mind that the authors regard themselves as artists in the landscape. Since writing this book, they have also been open about the relations between tricksterism, ostension, and their work. The ambiguity, for better or worse, extends on occasion to their treatment of their subject. One would have liked, in particular, a rather more detailed account and analysis of the part played by Rita Goold in the crop circle scene of the early 1990s. Perhaps they were more mindful of draconian English libel law than they need have been. At any rate we learn that Goold made a name for herself as the nation's leading 'physical' psychic, materialising all manner of deceased folk à la Florence Cook *et al.*, but rather precipitately abandoned the pursuit when Prof. Archie Roy expressed interest in recording one of her séances using infrared cameras. This information is suggestive, to put it no more strongly. A few years later Goold cosied up (our word, not the authors') to Colin Andrews, then regarded as the leading 'researcher' in the crop circle world. Then, according to oral tradition, she was involved in, or the instigator of, all sorts



LEFT: Pat Delgado (left) and Colin Andrews examine a crop circle in a field near Salisbury in July 1990.

of odd events, some of which may have led Andrews astray. It would not be unkind to suspect that Gould was a bit of a wooden-spoon specialist – a stirrer – or trickster. We are told none of this, although the account of Gould's unique witnessing of "a plasma vortex in all its glory", dutifully and trustingly recorded by Dr Meaden, provides a clue. Perhaps the reluctance to do more than hint and insinuate is no more than a disinclination to rock a fellow trickster's boat any further than necessary, and if that's the case one can respect it.

Our authors are less delicate with Colin Andrews, noting the singular way he promoted himself, from a local authority technical services support officer to its 'chief electrical engineer', and not contradicting those who called him 'professor'. One of the book's more farcical episodes describes how founding circle-maker Doug Bower observed one of Andrews's field-watches, noted the position and direction of the cameras, and crept behind them to do his dirty work. Collapse of stout parties all round, then, when the Sun rose on his handiwork. Apparently with no diminution of ego, Andrews contents himself these days with promoting all kinds of signs, wonders, and news items as portents of an imminent, huge, 'shift of consciousness' among humanity at large. Andrews's hardly less eccentric co-author Pat Delgado gets a generally more silent treatment, but what comment is possible on this short exposition of the differently logical, from *Circular Evidence*?—

"The greatest of all physicists, Albert Einstein, proved that photons exist, but they do not exist in time. In other words, they do not recognise time. He also stated that everything in existence is based upon the photon. The photon has an infinite lifetime, and can take any form it wishes as mass and anti-mass. With the anti-proton, or photon, which has no mass and no charge, an infinite lifetime is established as the vital bridge between the state of

"PICKING FIVE FAVORITE BOOKS IS LIKE PICKING THE FIVE BODY PARTS YOU'D MOST LIKE NOT TO LOSE."

*Neil Gaiman*

being (now) and the state of 'not being' in the physical world." That should have the average physicist starting to lose the will to live, but here's the clincher: "This would seem to support the theory that the circles are created by an unknown force field manipulated by an unknown intelligence."

Delgado's entire chapter is a cataract of weird shit (sorry, but it is) like this, and we recommend you buy a copy of the book (price: a penny plus postage, on Amazon) against the day that you, weak and weary upon some midnight dreary, need cheering up. This stuff, by the way, apparently impressed William Levengood enough to start poking about into crop circles, and we know exactly how far into the bizarre that has led.

We cannot leave our highly selective mentions of *The Field Guide's* many gems without mentioning its do-it-yourself section. Among other useful advice – such as how to simplify your stomping so that a pattern of wondrous complexity can be completed quickly by a handful of people – the authors list equipment vital to the circle-making enterprise, and do not fail to include dowsing rods:

"Naturally, you will have organised your design to incorporate earth energies or 'ley' lines. This can require expertise as the lines snake and resonate as they synchronise with the pulse of the Universe. Dowse the potential site to establish the strongest current, noting its direction. If a pattern is located on a powerful energy line this will satisfy initial tests for genuineness, and aid in curative effects, orgone accumulation, angelic visions, benign abduction experiences and general feelings of well-being." Going *against* the flow will result in opposite and unpleasant effects, plus "sore or bleeding anus, navel, genitals etc... and feelings of disillusionment. The authors have noted with neutrality that this may be of interest to Satanists."

As ever, one can but scratch the surface of such a book. Virtually every page contains a gem, and we're given the circles' prehistory to 1976, the detailed merriments thereafter of Doug Bower and Dave Chorley – how many of us knew that they pole-vaulted about the fields in order to leave no footprints? – and the roots of 'the phenomenon' in ufology, a thorough run-down of the (pseudo) scientific approach, a long chapter on the underlying philosophy of the circlemakers' art, the DIY guide, and interviews with Doug Bower and members of circlemakers.org. Pretty damn comprehensive for its time.

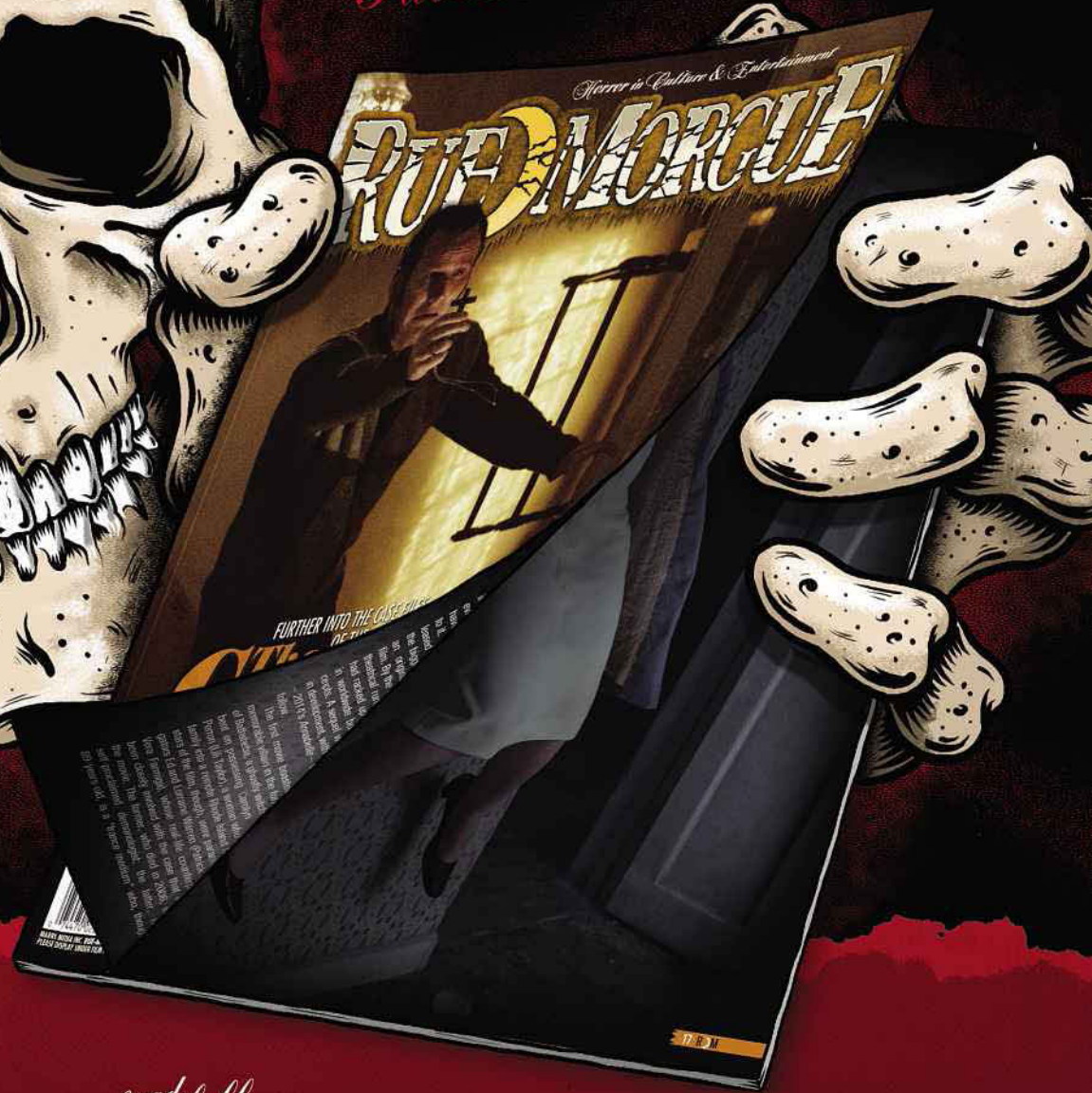
It's now a decade on from its publication, and *The Field Guide* would perhaps benefit from being enlarged and updated. A number of things have evolved in the slightly esoteric (although not inaccessible) world of circle-making, after all. Diehard channellers of Zeta Reticulans, Pleiadeans, etc., aside, few now maintain that patterns in the fields are traces of alien visitors. These days it's subtler: all the inspiration and meticulous planning that goes into complex formations is the work of otherworldly entities working on the unconscious minds of the humans involved. Unfalsifiability, we note, is alive and well and living in Wiltshire, where a degree of commercialism has also entered, to no one's great advantage. With the exception of circlemakers.org, many circle-makers themselves seem to have – and not for the better – shifted away from the classic approach epitomised by Rob Irving (FT306:52) as "a tacit code of ethics: 'Make circle, leave field, shut the fuck up!'" and begun claiming various works as their own – which wrecks the mythopeic point of the exercise. Nevertheless, we have an uncanny feeling that crop circles and their makers will be with us a while yet. **F**

*The Field Guide: The art, history and philosophy of crop circle making*, Rob Irving and John Lundberg, Strange Attractor Press 2006.

*Horror in Culture & Entertainment*

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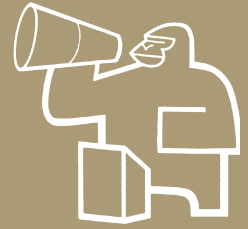
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## Accidents on the cosmic highway

Why do extraterrestrial craft have a habit of crashing on Earth? **ROGER MUSSON** believes he has the answer...



**ROGER MUSSON** is a writer, seismologist and broadcaster, and a subscriber to FT since 1982. His book *The Million Death Quake* is published by MacMillan.

**B**ack in the 1960s, the comic strip Dan Dare was a good representation of ideas from popular science fiction of the time. Characters zipped around between the planets of the Solar System in spaceships that were not much more than upgraded WWII jets. Nowadays, however, we know that none of the other planets in our Solar System is capable of supporting life. So whereas it was once possible to suppose that UFOs, assuming them to be extraterrestrial craft, originated from Mars or Venus, now we have to consider that any extraterrestrial origin must lie outside the Solar System; which means that UFOs, if craft they be, must be capable of practical interstellar travel, using technology that we can barely imagine the workings of.

With this in mind, there is a phrase that frequently crops up in the pages of *FT* that worries me, and that is “UFO crash”, or “saucer crash” if you prefer. The most famous case is, of course, the Roswell incident of 1947, but there are many more (admittedly, many obviously bogus) and longtime *FT* contributor Jenny Randles has even compiled a book of them.<sup>1</sup> Randles concludes her book with a series of questions – “What do we know about the craft itself?” “What are the aliens said to be like?” and a few others – but no one seems to be asking what to me is the critical question: why do the ruddy things crash at all?

Well, you might say: of course they crash. We are used to things crashing. Cars crash; trains crash; planes crash – so why shouldn’t UFOs crash? But this is going back to the Dan Dare mind-set. It would not be surprising for a spaceship of Dan Dare’s vintage to crash, but UFOs that have zipped across from Betelgeuse or wherever are vastly more advanced technologically – they have to be. Can



CHRISTOPHER FURLONG / GETTY IMAGES

it be that aliens have perfected the technology for interstellar travel and yet not invented the altimeter? How can it be that aliens can cover distances measurable in hundreds of light years, only to fly smack into a Welsh hillside?

It doesn’t stack up. So let’s consider the options. I can think of three reasons to consider, whereby a UFO might plausibly crash. First, enemy action – things crash when they are shot down. There is a far-fetched story<sup>2</sup> that South African jet fighters downed a UFO in 1989, but frankly, I doubt if any terrestrial military is going to open fire on a non-aggressive UFO, and I would expect the UFO to be well able to defend itself in any case. And I think we can probably rule out the idea of UFOs arriving here carrying bombs secretly planted by alien terrorists (although I suppose it’s remotely possible).

Reason number two is technical malfunction. This is a common enough explanation of things crashing here on Earth, but we are talking about an alien race with vastly superior technology. So not only should we assume that they do know about altimeters, but also that they are clever enough to keep them in good repair. So reason number two doesn’t stack up.

That leaves reason number three, which is pilot error. Here again, the question is difficult: why send

### NOTES

**1** Jenny Randles, *UFO Retrievals*, Blandford, 1995.

**2** *Ibid.*

UFOs all the way to Earth, probably at considerable expense in dilithium crystals or whatever the things use for fuel, only to have some rookie pilot crash the darn thing?

And here perhaps we have a clue to the whole UFO mystery. The saucers we see have rookie pilots because the aliens are using our skies as a driving school! Living as I do in a quiet street, I’m used to seeing learner drivers practising; why should saucer pilots not need somewhere to learn the controls as well? It all makes a lot of sense. Aliens certainly don’t want learner drivers crashing their craft on *their* planet, so why not send them here where they can crash all they like, and who cares about the locals? It also explains why we don’t see UFOs landing in the White House rose garden – that’s not part of the driving test.

So whenever you read accounts of UFOs performing amazing right-angle turns and zipping away at incredible velocity, you have to think that inside that UFO there is an alien wearing a flat cap and carrying a clipboard saying to the nervous pilot: “Now using the forward and reverse gears, I want you to reverse the direction of the craft”.

Of course, the other possibility is that none of the various crash stories are genuine, and UFOs don’t really crash at all – but that would be no fun at all, would it? **FT**



# Marcia through the K-hole

MIKE PURSLEY tells the story of how Marcia Moore's 'bright world' journey ended in a very dark place indeed...

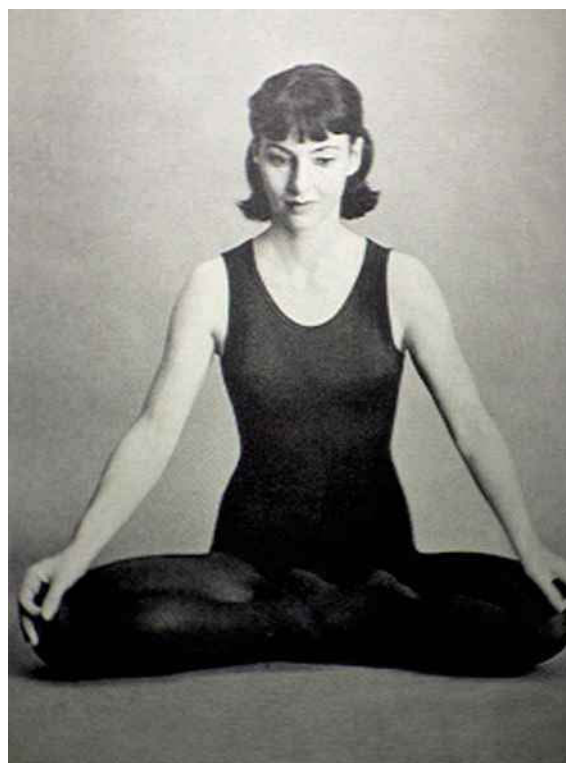


**MIKE PURSLEY** resides in Baltimore, MD where he writes, researches, and makes music. He has reviewed numerous books for FT and has previously written on the musician Felix Kubin.

In April 1976, hotel heiress and astrologer Marcia Moore was introduced to ketamine, beginning a love affair that would last almost three years. Marcia was in Big Sur, having spent the afternoon at Esalen Institute. Her lecture tour on hypersentience, a past life reincarnation therapy, was underway and she was to spend the night with a friend, "Jane", who had been experimenting with an exotic chemical exponentially stronger, yet much gentler, than LSD. Jane claimed to have taken the drug, an anaesthetic called ketamine, over 200 times without incident. Marcia was intrigued. That evening, she received an injection of 'K' from Jane's spiritual brother, a slender longhair calling himself Rama, who made ketamine runs down to Mexico. This was Big Sur in the mid-1970s, after all.

Her trip started almost at once, beginning with auditory hallucinations of crickets that gave way to the whirring of invisible motors. Next were visual distortions, as dark beams against a white ceiling melted into patterns. Then the mystical breakthrough: an indescribable state of egoless consciousness... the sensation of personality being reduced to molecular, then atomic levels. After existing within a field of absolute awareness, Marcia returned to herself in stages, remembering her name, where she was, what she was doing there. A reader of mystical writings for years, she was finally having a sacred experience of her own. The trip "felt like going home". She believed she had simultaneously died and become reborn. In less than an hour she had been forever changed.

Marcia was 48 years old at the time of her first ketamine trip. Although she had dutifully tried pot and acid in the 1960s, drugs weren't her thing. Though a drug novice, she was a New Age lifer. Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1928, Marcia was the daughter of Robert Lowell Moore, affluent founder of Sheraton Hotels. Her mid-20s were spent travelling through India with



## "The Goddess Ketamine set her seal upon our union"

her husband and young children. Her return to the United States began a dramatic string of marriages, divorces, and spiritual quests. She ploughed through yoga, astrology, and past life regression therapy with abandon. Famously, she graced the pages of Jess Stern's 1965 hippy favourite *Yoga, Youth, and Reincarnation*.

A year after her introduction to ketamine Marcia met the man who would become her ketamine research partner and fourth husband. Howard "Sunny"

Alltounian, an anaesthesiologist at a Seattle hospital, had his chart read at Marcia's astrology workshop. The pair later met at a party and laughed about how both put people to sleep, Marcia via past life regression hypnosis, Howard in a more conventional medical setting. The conversation turned to drugs, specifically to ketamine, with which Howard was familiar. A rapid courtship followed: calls, letters, gifts of jewellery, and a hypersentience regression that took Howard back to the time of Robin Hood, where the burgeoning couple had evidently known each other. Howard was 10 years Marcia's junior, and divorced for less than a year. This did not stop him from inviting Marcia to house sit with him for 10 days at a place outside Seattle he was now calling Sherwood Forest. It was a tranquil setting, and there would be ketamine. Ten days and a handful of chemical adventures later the couple were engaged. They had known each other less than four months.

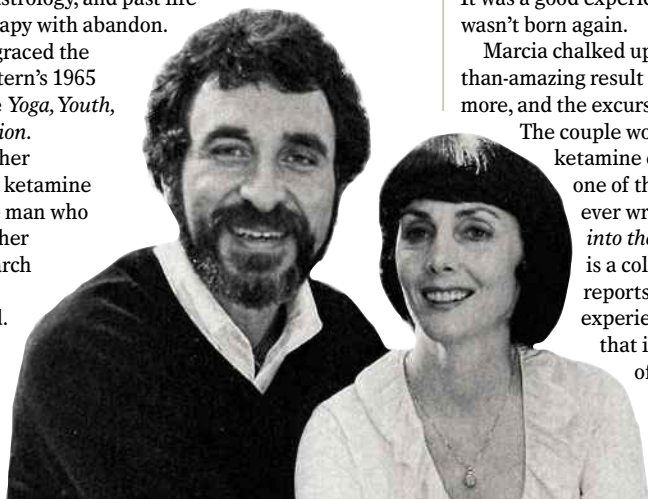
During their first joint ketamine experience Marcia found her soul mate, saw God, and discovered the fountain of youth. "Home again, I'm home again," she repeated, experiencing a sensation of oneness with a cosmic matrix. As she came down a bit, Marcia imagined Howard's face blending with the face of God. In rapture, she felt her cells ooze and melt, and while in their waxy state, each cell was stamped with Howard's initials. "The Goddess ketamine set her seal of approval on our union," Marcia would write. Then it was Howard's turn. Foreshadowing what would become a difference in opinion about ketamine, Howard's experience was less articulate, less ecstatic. He laid back and muttered "Wow" while in a stupor. It was a good experience yes, but he wasn't born again.

Marcia chalked up Howard's less-than-amazing result to his weighing more, and the excursions continued.

The couple would compile their ketamine experiments into one of the strangest books ever written. *Journeys into the Bright World* is a collection of trip reports and tape-recorded experience transcripts that is part Vaults of Erwid, part

ABOVE: Marcia Moore in the 1965 book *Yoga, Youth and Reincarnation*.

BELOW: Marcia and fellow ketamine adventurer Howard Alltounian.



mystical text, part metempsychotic love story. The book cover bears the eye-catching blurb: "Pioneering a new path to higher consciousness – a personal account by the extraordinary couple who risked everything to learn its secrets." *Journeys* relays 15 ketamine sessions in detail, including that initial foray into K-space back at Big Sur. Over these sessions a relationship with the substance grows and evolves. Early experiences involve Marcia and Howard taking the drug together, being united by it, and sharing common visions of ancient Egypt.

In late 1977, Marcia and Howard began using the drug to outline a spiritual system; a hierarchy of being stemming from a place Marcia had named the 'bright world'. Trips during this time involved reconciling the bright world with the everyday. In these moments, Marcia faced the classic mystic's dilemma: How can one relate non-ordinary reality back to baseline consciousness? This concern led to still more ketamine, and Marcia's relationship with the substance took on an intense, evangelical zeal. Now calling it "Samadhi therapy", she invited friends and past life regression clients to share the medicine. Marcia had become convinced she possessed "humanity's last resort". Yet, even as the ketamine was shared with others, Marcia and Howard continued their introspective journeys. They used it as an aid to clairvoyance via K-injections-while-candle-gazing exercises. By February 1978, Marcia had made extraterrestrial contact thanks to the drug, having met the "space brothers" while exploring inner-space. The book's final sessions speak obliquely of a new alchemical understanding of reality gleaned from the repeated trips.

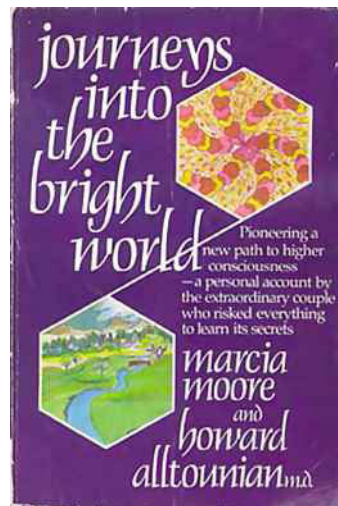
The strangeness of *Journeys* permits multiple readings and interpretations. Most obviously, it serves as a tragic case study in the mechanics of chemical dependency. Ketamine is now understood to be the rare psychedelic that is psychologically addictive and, for whatever reason, Marcia happened to be particularly prone to its charms. Her early trips produced a feeling of homecoming and perfection that turned into what can only be called an obsession.

Although *Journeys* only relates 15 specific ketamine trips in detail, reading between the lines it is obvious she must have been on it constantly. For instance, she speaks of "mini-trips" taken while Howard is out running errands. There is an undeniable escalation to her use. Every trip is

glorious. Each experience is better than the last. And yet, the inability to merge the experiences with ordinary reality became a misery, returning her to the K-hole again and again. She was not so deluded as to think addiction was impossible. There may be a hint of doubt when she writes: "As far as I can tell the substance is both physically and psychologically nonaddictive," and later concedes that "the substance is about as addictive as meditation". But is this admission reassuring, or deeply troubling? What is genuinely frightening, though, is part of a transcript from a trip in December 1977, when she simply says: "I don't want to come back."

Another take on *Journeys* is that it's a worthy addition to the annals of mystical literature. Driven by an impulse of almost desperate spiritual seeking, the writings do contain moments of spiritual truth. Marcia found her ketamine-fed visions of a "cosmatrix", celestial cities, and circles spinning through space-time so beautiful that she concluded that beauty was an inherent quality of a sentient universe. If these revelatory writings are to be dismissed, then so should those of Blake and Swedenborg. Seeded with years of various New Age practices, the ketamine gave Marcia access to a realm she'd often read about but had not previously visited. Eventually, she was able to outline an ontological system of emanation, beginning with a cosmic vortex that filtered through a grid of archetypes and finally hardened into matter. In terms of self-understanding, she reported that the bright world journeys lessened her ego while augmenting her sense of self. The poetic, visionary, and often heartfelt descriptions of hallucinatory consciousness culminate in an enhanced capacity to love the Universe. As much as Marcia cursed her inability to accurately convey the experience, few other writers have been able to relate both the psychological and spiritual qualities of psychedelic experience with as much grace and insight.

Howard, certainly, was not as eloquent in his experience reports, and another, less upbeat, reading of *Journeys* is that of the



ABOVE: *Journeys into the Bright World* relates the details of 15 ketamine sessions undertaken by Marcia and Howard.

couple's increasingly strained relationship. Though Marcia and Howard are co-authors, it is very much Marcia's book and Marcia's quest. In his early trips, Howard complained that the substance made his body feel like wax. It was unnatural and unnerving for him. This fact speaks to how individual subjectivities inform the psychedelic experience. Marcia's years of New Age study led her in one direction; Howard's medical background led him in another. As the experiments continued, Howard's reservations turned from how the drug made him feel, to his wariness of Marcia's growing fascination with it. He

became the reluctant scientist, a role that would develop into the nickname "Dr. Neptune". As Marcia's ketamine tolerance grew, Howard's tolerance for the whole enterprise lessened. On one trip the couple taped in December 1977 Howard is recorded saying: "This is getting to be a drag. I do anaesthesia all day and then I come home and do it at night." Howard's wariness was seconded by none other than scientist and psychonaut John Lily, whom Marcia visited in early 1978. Expecting to meet a fellow ketamine proselytiser, she instead learned that Lily believed the substance to be dangerous, had stopped taking it, and encouraged her to do so as well.

The ketamine use continued. If John Lily couldn't change her mind, what chance did Howard have? But the experiments would soon stop forever. On 14 January 1979, Marcia vanished and would remain a missing person until parts of her skeleton were found over two years later. Although her disappearance is still mysterious, most likely she hiked out into the woods surrounding her home, injected some ketamine, and died of exposure. Reading *Journeys* in the light of how it all ended is deeply saddening. Whatever mystical truths were uncovered come a distant second to the final act, which in hindsight feels almost inevitable. Marcia's bright world journey affirms that spiritual questing is often a blend of folly and wisdom. Had she lived, it's interesting to imagine her role in today's emerging psychedelic renaissance. Would she be wearing a VR headset, hooked to a dissociative IV drip, still charting the bright world landscape? Or would her obsessions have long since turned elsewhere? Perhaps it's best to think of her as an explorer. **FT**

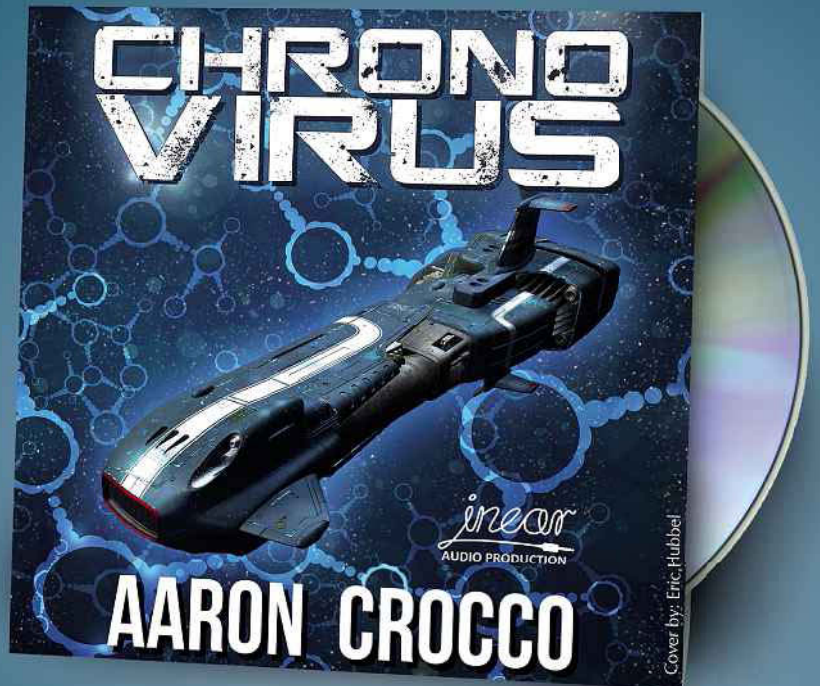
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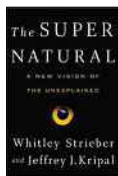
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# reviews



## Experiencing anomalies

The contributors to a conversation about the meaning of unexplained occurrences moves past rejectionist and literalist name-calling and pleads for open-mindedness



### The Super Natural A New Vision of the Unexplained

Whitley Strieber & Jeffrey J Kripal

Jeremy P Tarcher/Penguin 2016

Hb, 365pp, refs, ind, \$28.00/£24.00, ISBN 9781101982327

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £21.00

*The Super Natural* is an intellectually adventurous, consistently challenging effort to come to grips with extraordinary experiences. Long ago, the debate stalemated into what might be called the rejectionist and the literalist camps – i.e., skeptics/debunkers vs proponents/believers – and has remained largely frozen in place ever since, with not many of us much the wiser.

One consequence is a vast literature of contesting claims, the ideological fervour of hard-core rejectionists matched on the opposite extreme by the quasi- (or openly) religious embrace of fantastic entities presumed to be precisely what they appear to be. Over the course of decades as a fortean, I've read a frightening amount of this writing and even contributed to some of it myself.

To anyone who isn't committed to making a point or winning an argument at any cost – a minority, perhaps a small one, of students of such phenomena – a brain-wrenching conclusion eventually stares one in the face: Yes, strange phenomena are vividly experienceable and do indeed elude the fulminations of debunkers. At the same

time, however, they provide no conclusive material evidence of their presence, surviving mostly (though, confoundingly, not quite entirely) in memory and testimony. I have called these things “experience anomalies” (FT243:42-47) as opposed to (potentially verifiable) event anomalies.

Whitley Strieber is author of the best-selling and inevitably controversial *Communion* (1987) and other books chronicling his otherworldly encounters. Jeffrey J Kripal of Rice University is a well-regarded religious historian whose *Authors of the Impossible* (2010) turns a sympathetic scholar's eye on the works of Fort, Vallee, and other anomalist intellectuals.

Here, Strieber and Kripal contribute alternating chapters in what amounts to a conversation about the meaning of unexplained occurrences, from ESP and visions of the dead to fortean and UFO phenomena.

The authors call for a “more generous vision of experience,” presumably in opposition to those who argue for the narrowest one possible in service to what the scientist David Hufford wittily calls the “tradition of disbelief.” Thus, there is room in human acceptance for UFOs, humanoids, monsters, and more (including, I presume, the ghostly canine my wife and I spotted in our front lawn some years ago). It doesn't follow, however, that such things can be incorporated into the world as we understand it, which is to say consensus reality, just as they can't be dismissed, even if in some sense imagined, as purely imaginary.

Kripal in particular is adept at documenting how the weirdness

### “We can employ a ‘radical empiricism’ open to evidence and testimony defined by high strangeness”

we experience now is hardly new. It's always been there for the envisioning, even if in guises appropriate to the cultural atmosphere. He writes that as a historian his job is to “compare things”. In the particular case of anomalies, at their core the experiences are broadly recognisable over time and space, thus rendering nonsensical the dismissive phrase “anecdotal testimony,” a rhetorical strategy intended to remove unwelcome reporting – falsely – from any larger historical or experiential context. I find particularly provocative the parallels between Indian Tantric traditions and American abduction narratives.

He cautions that in our current thinking about anomalies we have no reason to judge ourselves wiser than those who came before us; we're just seeing them – both figuratively and literally – through our own uniquely narrow perspective, likely as naïve as our ancestors'. “There is no good reason,” he remarks, “to assume that we just happen to be living in the historical moment that has the privileged view of things.”

The problem, in the authors' view, may be that our “cognitive hardware and cultural software” aren't up to the task of explaining certain categories of experience. Maybe by their nature they are inexplicable, possibly designed

more to be “read” (Kripal's verb) – to subvert our complacent sense of ourselves and the world we occupy – than accounted for. Anomalies erase boundaries between material and immaterial, objective and subjective, true and false, real and imagined, by acting as if all at once. *Super Natural* cites the quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli: “In the science of the future reality will neither be ‘psychic’ nor ‘physical’ but somehow both and somehow neither.”

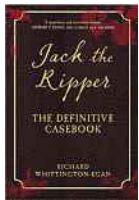
Strieber and Kripal plead agnosticism on the ultimate question: the source or cause of extraordinary experiences, whether it is a separate otherworld that interacts with us (and perhaps us with it) in curious, bewildering ways or a function of humanity's shared, evolving consciousness. In effect they concede that in our present state of understanding, there's no way to know because, without re-imagining the possible (what we put on the table, in Kripal's homey phrase) and knowing more than we let ourselves admit, we can't. And then there's our clumsy, limited brains which reduce our reception of signals coming our way from a larger human or cosmic order we are able to glimpse only occasionally and imperfectly. All we can do in the meantime is to employ, as Kripal calls it, a “radical empiricism” open to evidence and testimony defined by high strangeness, ambiguity, and paradox.

The riches of this book are such that even after reading it twice and taking extensive notes, I felt as if I had not fully come to grips with it. A review of this length can

*Continued on page 60*

# More Ripping stories

An updated archive of Ripper material and a round-up of murdered women and children, but no hint who the Ripper was



## Jack the Ripper

The Definitive Casebook

Richard Whittington-Egan

Amberley Press 2013

Hb, 349pp, illus, notes, bib, ind., £25.00, ISBN 9781445617888

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99



## Rivals of the Ripper

Jan Bondeson

The History Press 2016

Hb, illus, £20.00, ISBN 9780750964258

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99

Last July, BBC 1's *Ripper Street* aired an episode in which a murder map of 1888 Whitechapel was shown. DI Edmund Reid (Matthew McFadden) had annotated a map with pictures of Ripper victims and, as the camera panned over the words Catherine Edowes, viewers caught a glimpse of a dead woman's mutilated face. The misspelling of Eddowes's name was careless enough, but this was actually a photograph of Elizabeth Short, aka The Black Dahlia, murdered 59 years later and 5,437 miles away, in 1947 Los Angeles. The researchers could have done with *Jack The Ripper: The Definitive Casebook*, a tranche of diligently collated material concerning every non-fictional account since 1888 that represents Richard Whittington-Egan's lifelong study (now reissued) of this most elusive of quarries.

In this updated version of his 1975 publication, the author argues that it is the mythical landscape of Jack – gaslight on cobbles, a fleeing figure in a cape, shades of Sherlock Holmes and Jekyll and Hyde – that has enabled fictional evocations, like those of *Ripper Street*, to “re-fashion the charnel-house horrors

of Whitechapel into a sort of Ingoldsby legends sequence”.

Unlike most other authors recorded within, he has no prime suspect. His intention is rather to lay down the facts then turn a forensic eye over the theories that have been offered in the past 128 years, and the research that supports them, before analysing defects in the evidence. It is always obsessive attempts to create maps that lead back in time that blind the authors of each new theory to the inconvenient truths that stand in the way of revelation – suggesting that Whittington-Egan has retained his sanity by refusing to take a view.

Seventy years ago, he spoke to residents of Whitechapel who could still recall the crimes and unsurprisingly, the most mesmerising passages come from 1888. Following the publication of the ‘From Hell’ letters, journalist George R Sims ventured into the October night on a Ripper hunt, noting that: “The border line between the horrible and the grotesque has grown very fine in Whitechapel... the inhabitants have relieved their overstrained nerves by laughing.” Amid the “labyrinthine network of courts and alleys” he comes face to face with Johnny The Tipper, a bookie laughing in the shadow of Jack.

Many Ripperologists have been harsh about the abilities of the real Edmund Reid, his Scotland Yard counterpart Frederick Abberline and Met Commissioner Sir Charles Warren. Whittington-Egan goes to great lengths to defend decisions made then. Jan Bondeson, in his *Rivals of the Ripper*, cannot help but disclose failings of the force in his compendium of unsolved murders of women in London between 1861–1897. Here are 14 cases, some of which happened in daylight and with witnesses, where the defendant was either found not guilty or never found at all. Many interlink geographically;

some resonate with contemporary fears – refugees were accused of the murder of Martha Halliday in 1861; while the spectre of the moneylender hovers over Sarah Millson, battered on her own doorstep in 1866. Bondeson's collection is augmented with plates from the *Illustrated Police News* and his contemporary shots of the locations.

All are disquieting, but none so disturbing as the nine-year spate of child murders and abductions in West Ham. On 31 January 1890, 15-year-old Amelia Jeffs went on an errand and never came back. A fortnight later, her violated body was found in a cupboard in an empty house. Two other girls had vanished from the same streets in the 1880s, while three others suffered horrendous near-drownings. Then, on 19 February 1899, six-year-old Bertha Russ didn't come home from school. Her body was found on 5 March... inside a cupboard in an empty house. Bondeson notes that the West Ham Disappearances have attracted: “much idle nonsense from imaginative students of the occult”. He, on the other hand, has two strong flesh-and-blood suspects who appear to have evaded justice because of police ineptitude.

Both authors end with recent claims on the identity of Jack that hinge on DNA analysis from what is purported to be Catherine Eddowes' shawl [see FT320:18–19]. Neither is convinced the latest technology stacks up a solution. Edmund Reid's thoughts provide a neat summation: “I challenge anyone to produce a tittle of evidence of any kind against anyone. The earth has been raked over and the seas have been swept, to find this criminal Jack the Ripper, always without success...”

Cathi Unsworth

### Fortean Times Verdict

RIPPER TEXTS YOU CAN RELY ON – TV RESEARCHERS TAKE NOTE!

9

Continued from previous page

only hint at the depth of insight and speculation that await. I can only urge you to read it yourself. You'll be engaging with what may be the most original treatment of the subject since Jacques Vallee's *Passport to Magonia* nearly half a century ago.

Jerome Clark

### Fortean Times Verdict

EVEN-TEMPERED CONVERSATION BETWEEN OPPOSITES

9

## Death and the Afterlife

A Chronological Journey from Cremation to Quantum Resurrection

Clifford A Pickover

Sterling Publishing Co Ltd 2015

Hb, 211pp, illus, notes, refs, ind., £16.99, ISBN 9781454914341

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.99



This lavishly tooled coffee table book of death, life after death and related matters is a whistle-stop tour with an emphasis on the macabre and creepy. Each of its 100 entries is paired with a full-page colour illustration, the subject-matter being organised chronologically, starting with Cremation (c.20,000BC) and Natufian Funeral Flower (c.11,000BC), taking in The Witch of Endor (c.1007BC), the Black Death (1347), the Golem (1580), the Guillotine (1792), through to the Death of the Universe and Quantum Resurrection (both pegged at >100 trillion years ahead of us).

Whilst the book's format dictates that each entry can only provide a snapshot, Pickover's coverage is a broad one, taking in archaeology (burial mounds and Viking ship burials), anthropology (abortion, cemeteries and suicide), beliefs and superstitions (banshees and sin-eaters), man-made horrors (the guillotine and genocide) and science (cardiopulmonary resuscitation, cryonics and quantum immortality).

Fiction also gets a look-in, with entries for Poe's *The Raven*, Lovecraft's *Herbert West: Reanimator*; as does fine art (Millais' *Ophelia*, Schwabe's *The*

Death of the Gravedigger).

It would be a suitable birthday or seasonal gift for that special Goth person in your life.

Christopher Josiffe

### Fortean Times Verdict

OH DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING-A-LING-A-LING?

7

## Origins

The Scientific Story of Creation

Jim Baggott

Oxford University Press 2015

Hb, 403pp, illus, notes, ind, £25.00, ISBN 9780198707646

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £21.00



I must admit to a certain sympathy for serious-minded advocates of intelligent design (ID). I can see where they're coming from. The Universe – even the biodiversity in Darwin's "tangled bank" – is remarkable, transcendental and thought-provoking.

And answers to the profound questions raised by even a brief contemplation of the Universe's wonders aren't always to hand. Some 13.8 billion years after the moment of creation, we still have no real idea what set the Big Bang off, why matter coalesced to, eventually, form stars, or even where most of the matter in the Universe is hiding.

And that's not starting on how life began or what it is, the nature of consciousness or the staggering diversity of evolution's products from truffles, to duck-billed platypuses to stink bugs.

Human nature abhors an intellectual vacuum. So, myths and religions offered 'working hypotheses' explaining Life, the Universe and Everything. Science will, probably, eventually overturn creation mythologies – although in the meantime, scientists' zeal to fill the vacuum can be counterproductive. As *Origins* notes, some scientists publish popular books promoting ideas that are often not accepted, Baggott claims, "outside of a relatively small community of theorists". The media regularly hypes yet "another dramatic breakthrough" that is "retracted months later when it emerges that the analysis was faulty and

the announcement premature".

*Origins* offers an eloquent, insightful, intellectually robust counter-narrative to both ID and theories that Baggott describes as 'fairy-tale physics'. Baggott makes difficult and sometimes esoteric scientific theory (such as wave-particle duality, perhaps the archetypal quantum mechanical phenomenon, or Einstein's relativity) comprehensible, even if your formal scientific education never progressed further than knowing that H<sub>2</sub>O is water.

In particular, Baggott aims to differentiate "unquestioned fact from majority explanation from debatable interpretation from pure speculation". His admirable success treading this fine line is one of the book's great strengths. And it's why *Origins* should be on everyone's bookshelves, whether or not you're a devotee of popular science. When the next 'breakthrough' hits the headlines you'll better appreciate its significance, relevance and reliability.

Baggott isn't afraid to highlight areas of uncertainty. He notes for example "none of our scientific theories are up to the task" of describing the moment of creation and the very early development of the Universe. Baggott describes scientists' inability to find four-fifths of the matter in the Universe (dark-matter) as "quite frankly, an embarrassment". And he remarks that "every attempt" to define life "has proved broadly futile".

*Origins* is so clearly written, so engaging, so thought-provoking that it wouldn't surprise me if it inspires a new generation to take up science to answer such fundamental questions. As Baggott remarks: "The scientific story of creation takes us well beyond the boundaries of our unaided perception and simple reckoning. It opens our eyes to greater truths."

I know 25 quid is a lot. But *Origins* is worth every penny – it'll repay several readings and be an invaluable reference book. I can't recommend it highly enough.

Mark Greener

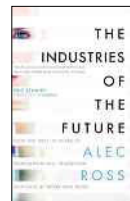
### Fortean Times Verdict

EYE-OPENING AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING – JUST GET IT

9

# Future shock

## An exciting future of intelligent robots and Big Data-driven policy? That depends



## The Industries of the Future

How the Next 10 Years of Innovation Will Transform Our Lives at Work and Home

Alec Ross

Simon & Schuster 2016

Hb, 304pp, notes, ind, £20.00, ISBN 9781471156038

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.00

Japan's burgeoning geriatric population and rigid immigration control has resulted in a dearth of "eldercare" nurses. Toyota's stereotypically girly robotic nursing aide, based partially on *The Jetsons's* robot nanny Rosie, and Honda's ASIMO (which bows politely and answers questions) aim to step into this gap. MIT's Sherry Turkle wonders about the longer-term effects of bypassing any emotional connection; however, Alex Ross, former Senior Advisor for Innovation for Clinton when she was Secretary of State, suggests that Japan's animist Shinto heritage may make it easier for geriatrics to accept robots as having spirits. Nor does Asia have the European literary tradition of technology-as-threat – think Prometheus, Icarus and Frankenstein – that makes the prospect of cloud robotics so worrying to the West. At the other end of the industrial

development scale, the African Robotics Network glories in "frugal innovation" to create \$10 robotic arms, for instance. People, though, "aren't as easy to upgrade as software" – mapping the first genome cost \$2.7 bn, though personalised genomic sequencing will soon, according to its evangelists, be affordable for all. Well, not quite *all*; as William Gibson said, "The future is already here – it's just not very evenly distributed".

Ross moves from life sciences to the 'code-ification' of money and force, and then on to what to me was the most interesting section of a totally gripping book: Big Data's dance with geopolitics and the geography of innovation in this Brave New World. Left and Right will cease to be meaningful; rather, the new divide will be between closed and more open economies. Just as demographer Emmanuel Todd foretold the end of the American empire by analysing data on educational standards, Ross suggests that those societies that fail to encourage *all* sections of their populations (women, in particular) to thrive will be flattened by the next technological wave. "The twenty-first century," says Ross, "is a terrible time to be a control freak."

Ross has produced a book that is as well written as it is stimulating.

William Darragh

### Fortean Times Verdict

EXCITING GLIMPSE INTO A POSSIBLE FUTURE – IF WE'RE OPEN

9

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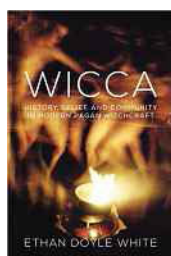
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## Wicca pedia

A scholarly overview of pagan witchcraft demolishes a few foundation myths



### Wicca

History, Belief and Community in Modern Pagan Witchcraft

Ethan Doyle White

Sussex Academic Press 2016

Hb/Pb, notes, bib, ind, 275pp, £65/£25, ISBN 9781845197544/7551

AVAILABLE FROM AMAZON

Ethan Doyle White has been researching and speaking on the history of Wicca for some years; he knows his stuff. He's currently studying for a PhD in Archaeology at University College London.

*Wicca* isn't based on his original research; it's more a book-length literature review of works by other academics and practitioners.

That doesn't reduce its value; there's a mass of material out there, scattered throughout books, academic papers and articles, and the author has done a sterling job in pulling it together into a coherent narrative.

He covers the origins and development of Wicca, dealing sympathetically but firmly with what most Wiccans today accept as the foundation myth of their religion (at least in Britain; some American Wiccans still cling to it): that it is the continuation of a pre-Christian religion in Britain and Europe. Margaret Murray, Charles Leland and others have a lot to answer for.

The book is in three sections: history, belief and praxis, and Wiccan life.

What is perhaps most fascinating is just how many varieties of Wicca there are,

with different conceptions of the deity/ies, and with very different ways of organising themselves and practising their beliefs.

And, as in any religion, there's often friction between the different groups – though Doyle White avoids the term “bitchcraft”.

Wicca is young enough as a new religion that there are still a few people around who knew its founder Gerald Gardner; it's now old enough that there's a reasonable body of academic work on it, by anthropologists, sociologists, historians, folklorists and other scholars of religion. Doyle White points out that the first academics to treat the religion seriously were mocked by their colleagues; even as recently as 1999 Prof Ronald Hutton of Bristol University, one of the foremost scholars in the field, received “some derision from other academics” and came across “widespread scorn and ridicule of Wicca and contemporary Paganism across many sectors of British society, including academia”.

Fortunately, that situation seems to be changing, partly perhaps as a result of the number of Wiccans and other Pagans who are now academics themselves.

The demographics of the Wiccan community are fascinating: it has “more women than men, a high percentage of bisexual and homosexual practitioners, and is dominated by voracious readers. As a group, Wiccans typically have higher levels of education than the wider population, yet average or lower levels of income...”

For anyone looking for a scholarly overview of one of the major Pagan religions, this is where to start.

David V Barrett

### Fortean Times Verdict

WORTHWHILE AND VERY READABLE STUDY OF WICCA

8

### Medieval Robots

Mechanism, Magic, Nature and Art

ER Truitt

University of Pennsylvania Press 2015

Hb, 255pp, illus, bib, ind, \$55.00, ISBN 9780812246971

AVAILABLE FROM THE PUBLISHER/AMAZON



Artificial animals, self-playing instruments, humanoid figures and even clocks: they all fall within the scope

of ER Truitt's study of mediæval automata. But *Medieval Robots* isn't a study of the engineering behind such marvels – indeed, many of the “wonders” discussed in this book are completely fictitious. Instead, Truitt examines the ways in which mediæval European literary sources discuss marvellous machines. These devices include not only real automata manufactured in the Muslim world or the Byzantine Empire during the Middle Ages, but also the animated metal knights and fabulous clockwork palaces of mediæval romance, the brazen head of Roger Bacon and even the preserved corpses of legendary heroes.

*Medieval Robots* isn't a history of automata so much as it is a history of what automata tell us about mediæval thought. Mediæval Europeans expressed their views of the cosmos, the human body and both natural and supernatural powers through stories of miraculous devices and the craftsmen – or sorcerers – who created them. As the Middle Ages progressed, these views changed until eventually automata were seen as expressions of the technical skills of their creators and as a way for the elite to demonstrate their wealth, sophistication and modernity.

Each chapter of *Medieval Robots* deals with a different aspect of automata in the mediæval world. The first talks about depictions of automata in foreign lands, whether in tales of chivalry or travellers' stories intended to be read as fact; as Truitt points out, the distinction is rather murky in mediæval literature. Next comes a consideration of the analogy between automata and natural creation, including the image of *Natura artifex*. Nature as a craftsman. The next chapter

deals with the talking and prophesying heads associated with mediæval philosophers and occultists like Roger Bacon or Gerbert of Aurillac. Subsequent chapters deal with automata as memorials and the ways in which they resemble preserved corpses in the literary sources as well as the role of automata in pageantry and performance. Finally, Truitt concludes with a discussion of mechanical clocks and mediæval perception of time.

Truitt's examples mainly come from French sources, including travellers' tales, romances and administrative documents. These are clearly explained for readers who may not know much about the context or traditions of mediæval literature. Probably the most entertaining are the descriptions of automata in later mediæval courts, especially a lengthy description (which Truitt calls “bizarre”) of engines at the Burgundian palace of Hesdin in which it becomes clear that one of the richest and most powerful men in 15th-century Europe was spending colossal sums of money on a set of technically sophisticated but puerile practical jokes intended to soak guests with water or cover them in flour. The image of the ruler who captured Joan of Arc chortling at his guests “being beaten by large figures like idiots” is healthily jarring.

*Medieval Robots* is a fascinating look at the philosophical and intellectual aspects of a topic usually written about as part of the history of technology. In particular, the book takes an engagingly fortean approach in refusing to separate histories of actual automata from fanciful mediæval writing about them; mediæval people didn't (or probably didn't) distinguish between them so clearly, and if our goal is to learn about mediæval thought we shouldn't either. Wide-ranging, informative and filled with fascinating connections, *Medieval Robots* is a worthy addition to the library of any student of the weird Middle Ages.

James Holloway

### Fortean Times Verdict

MECHANICAL MEDIÆVAL MARVELS MAKE FOR FASCINATING READING

8

# ALSO RECEIVED

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

## A Magician Among The Spirits

Harry Houdini

Cambridge University Press 2011

Pb, 294pp, ind, £25.99, ISBN 9781108027489

This is a welcome reprint of Houdini's 1924 account of his dealings with some of the most famous and notorious Spiritualist mediums of his day. He was sceptical of their claims of materialisations, levitations, apports, rapping and other communications, and of their channelling of deceased people. Though he attended hundreds of séances for this investigation, he did not encounter a single genuine event. Much of the book is given over to how he exposed what he saw as trickery, deceit and even fraud. Over time, his opinion hardened, which caused a split with his friend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. While this document is presented as an account of "superstition and credulity", we have to wonder about the extent to which his strongly-held negative opinions precipitated the 'correct' result. Nevertheless, it is a valuable record of period investigation.

## Hidden Stonehenge

Gordon R Freeman

Watkins Publishing 2014

Pb, 355pp, bib, illus, ind, £14.99, ISBN 9781780280950

Freeman – a chemist and radiation physicist at the University of Alberta – discovered a 5,200-year-old 'Sun temple' at Majorville, in southern Alberta in 1980 and this is his account of his study of it over three decades. It is detailed and lavishly illustrated. He compares his megalith's features, astronomical alignments and metrology with other solar megalith complexes across Europe, revealing surprising correspondences with Stonehenge. His discoveries at the 'medicine wheel' at Majorville have been used to resolve some of the unknown calendrical alignments at Stonehenge. It seems to demonstrate that "5,000 years ago Britons and Plains Indians made precise astro-

nomical observations at these sites, halfway around the world from one another, at nearly the same latitude". The book itself is a monument to Freeman's persistence and attention to detail. John Michell would have relished it!

## Padfoot

Patricia & Lionel Fanthorpe

The King's England Press 2015

Pb, 172pp, bib, £9.95, ISBN 9781909548510

Part mystery animal, part witches' familiar, part demon and part ghost, apparitions of a huge black dog with fiery eyes have prowled the British landscape since Celtic times. The Fanthorpes attempt a natural history of this 'monster' in its many forms. From the accounts they have gathered here (including its appearances in other countries and cultures), we note its consistently terrifying air of menace and its interpretation as a dire portent. The Fanthorpes have produced a welcome, clear and accessible overview.

## The Omniverse

Alfred Lambremont Webre

Bear & Co 2015

Pb, 213pp, notes, bib, ind, £16.00, ISBN 9781591432159

Wabre massages trans-dimensional intelligence, time travel, the Afterlife and a secret colony on Mars into a grand theory of "dimensional exo-politics". His 'players' are "intelligent civilisations created by souls in the Afterlife" who, with the help of the Source (the sum total of everything) and their invisible agents ('the Archons'), are developing galaxies and planets where souls can incarnate. The Mars colony is one such place "whose permanent security personnel is age-reversed and shot back through time to their specific space-time origin points". If this is secret, how has the author escaped the attention of his telepathic time-travelling superbeings? "Using advanced quantum access technology the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and

the CIA time-travelled the 2005 edition [of his original thesis *Exopolitics: A Decade of Contact*] back to 1971 when an unwitting Alfred was examined by around 50 CIA and DARPA officials who knew he would be a leading future extraterrestrial and time-travel whistle blower" etc. We fear the rapidly rotating head of this author has vanished up what passes for an extra-dimensional orifice.

## Ark of God

David Hatcher Childress

Adventures Unlimited Press 2015

Pb, 302pp, colour plates, bib, \$22.00, ISBN 9781939149497

The ever-energetic Childress, who runs the Adventures Unlimited enterprise, has tirelessly republished long out-of-print classics of 'anomalous archæology', often enhanced by the addition of other papers on the same subject, including his own writings. The story of the Old Testament's most mysterious artefact is presented from the earliest descriptions to modern scholarship. It appears to be a kind of portable temple containing a fearsome object or machine that, if handled unwisely, killed those nearby with a massive electrical discharge. Childress follows several lines of inquiry including the use of electricity by the Ancients; the associated quest of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and the possibility the Ark was taken to Ethiopia; the legend of Prester John; and the accounts of modern travellers who claim to have visited places in Africa that to this day have a (replica?) Ark which is venerated by locals. This cannot fail to spark the interest of your inner Indiana Jones.

## Who Shot JFK?

Robin Ramsay

Pocket Essentials 2007

Hb, 158pp, notes, ind, £9.99, ISBN 9781842432327

"Why bother with this old stuff?" asks Robin Ramsay, who wrote on conspiracy topics for *FT*. "It's the greatest whodunit of the post-WW2 era." He bypasses (for the

moment) the long list of supposed villains to offer "the most obvious candidate": Lyndon B Johnson. As well as deconstructing theories about the CIA, Mafia, anti-Castro Cubans, Israeli secret service, British royal family and so on, he focuses on research by those who avoided the 'obvious'. Ramsay is a talented writer and explains clearly.

## Hauntings, Horrors and Dancing With the Dead

Bloody Mary

Weiser/Red Wheel 2016

Pb, 246pp, bib, \$19.95, ISBN 9781578635665

Pretty much everything you need to know about the ghosts and associated mysteries of New Orleans is here, including Marie Laveau and other Voodoo Queens, the Chicken Man, the Devil Baby, and Zombies. 'Bloody Mary'? It's the handle of someone who has dedicated herself to rescuing the folklore of the city and environs, made urgent by such disasters as 2005's Hurricane Katrina. She runs ghost tours and calls herself a psychopomp for lost souls and "an advocate for spirits' rights". Jauntily written, even if you don't believe in ghosts.

## Viral Mythology

Marie D Jones & Larry Flaxman

New Page Books 2014

Pb, 256pp, bib, ind, \$15.99, ISBN 9781601632951

The authors – apparently respected as communicators of paranormal subjects to US TV stations – declare that "behind every myth, fairy tale and legend [...] is an encoded layer of wisdom, science and truth, passed down throughout history". They set off on an excited romp through history, searching a variety of cultures for correspondences between symbols, art, stories and myths, substituting the 'collective unconscious' for 'alien intervention'. That similar 'archetypes' thrive today is, they say breathlessly, due to an "information highway to the past" they have "uncovered". There is nothing here that was not said earlier and better by others and... wait! That was New Age tosh too.



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



### Captain America: Civil War

Dir Anthony and Joe Russo, USA 2016  
On UK release from 6 May

A few weeks late, this, due to an unfortunate lack of synchrony between our last press date and the film's media screening, but spoiler-free for anyone late to the party.

We last saw Captain America (Chris Evans), Iron Man (Robert Downey jnr) and the rest of the Avengers last year after they'd defeated a worldwide threat of their own making in Joss Whedon's *Age of Ultron*. Now, after a covert mission to recover biological warfare materials from Lagos (a very Bon-like opening) ends with the accidental death of some innocent civilians, the US government steps in, demanding that the superpowered team accept official oversight: the Avengers will now report to the UN and won't be able to act without its say-so. A hundred nations have signed up to the 'Sokovia Accords' (named for the Eastern European state that was collateral damage in the fight against Ultron) and even Tony Stark thinks the team should sign up and respect the will of the people – surely a concept that Captain America can get behind? Cap may believe in the people, but his recent experiences (in *Winter Soldier*) have left him less sure about their elected representatives. Won't making

the Avengers a tool of government leave them ripe for military and political manipulation and misuse?

In a nutshell, that's the argument that leads to the titular dust-up. It's interesting to note that a gradual reversal of positions has occurred that sees a guilt-ridden Stark – the egomaniacal autocrat who once "privatised world peace" – coming down on the side of the government while eternal soldier and upholder of American values Rogers chooses to go rogue. It's a dual journey that probably only really pays off if you've caught previous entries in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but offers rich subtextual pickings even if you haven't: is the film (set largely in Germany) a parable about the EU, with Cap as an heroic Brexiteer worried about sovereignty and democratic freedom? Or a reflection on the West's military adventures in the Middle East, which have a tendency to come back and bite them on the backside? Whatever, the stakes are high, and only increased by the re-emergence of Steve's wartime besty and subsequent Cold War assassin Bucky Barnes, who appears to have reverted to his old Manchurian Candidate ways to take out a head of state.

Big themes, then; but, crucially, big fun too. Although *Civil War* has a potentially bum-numbing two-and-a-half-hour running time, the Russo brothers keep it surprisingly

fleet, somehow managing to juggle a huge supporting cast, provide telling character moments for various Avengers, weave the resolution of plot threads from previous movies into the main narrative, and introduce two new key players – Chadwick Boseman's regal and righteous Black Panther and Tom Holland's joyous teenage Spider-Man. It's also, for the genre, an intimate epic, tellingly more concerned with the destruction of relationships than real estate: even the six-on-six battle at the film's heart – in which comic book splash pages come to glorious, grin-inducing life – plays out as a series of variations on this theme rather than just another wearying CGI punch-up. It's all highly enjoyable, and peppered with humour to occasionally defuse the tension, as when one seasoned Avenger says to an over-excited young Spidey: "Have you ever been in a fight before? There's not usually this much talking."

There are flaws – I'm sure a couple of plot wheels came off somewhere – but even Marvel's oft-cited problem with creating effective villains becomes sort of the point with Daniel Bruhl's Zemo: there's no 'big bad' in this film, just messy conflict and compromise.

David Sutton

### Fortean Times Verdict

SMART SUPERHEROICS IN MARVEL'S LATEST

9

### Tale of Tales

Dir Matteo Garrone, Italy/France/UK 2015  
On UK release from 17 June

Everyone likes anthology movies, don't they? The format has been used well in cinema, particularly in fantasy genres. British horror anthologies from the 1960s and 1970s such as *From beyond the Grave* and *Tales from the Crypt* are fondly remembered, as are US efforts like *The Twilight Zone* and *Creepshow*. A robust format, it was also extremely popular on the continent, particularly in the 1960s, with some of the big beasts of European arthouse cinema – including Fellini, Godard, Pasolini, Visconti and De Sica – contributing to portmanteau films like *Boccaccio '70* and *RoGoPaG*.

At least part of the appeal of anthologies is that there's almost always something for everyone, in bite-size pieces; if one segment doesn't work, there will be another along soon. Everything moves at a good pace, there's very little padding and usually each story contains a juicy little twist.

In *Tale of Tales* we get a trio of dark fairy stories adapted from the work of 16th century Italian writer Giambattista Basile, which concern obsessive love, family ties and, of course, the terrible consequences of transgression. All three concern monarchs. A queen (Salma Hayek), desperate for a child, turns

to a magician for help but pays a heavy price for it. Two inseparable elderly sisters (Shirley Henderson and Hayley Carmichael) find their relationship strained to breaking point when one regains her youth and marries a sex-mad king (Vincent Cassel). A bookish ruler (Toby Jones) tries to be too clever and is obliged to give his daughter away to a hideous ogre.

Director Matteo Garrone – who made the justly celebrated modern gangster film *Gomorra* and is here making his debut English language feature – chooses to intercut his three tales rather than present them separately. He more or less dispenses with the bookend or wraparound story too, and so is breaking with two of the form's standard conventions, with the result that the film doesn't work quite as it should. One might say the same of the entire film: it has all the right elements in place, but they just don't come together.

There are some fine actors, but the cast overall is underwhelming and sometimes presents a jarring clash of acting styles and languages. There are some stunning locations, costumes and sets, but the period feel isn't there. There are sea monsters, giant insects, ogres and witches, but the effects and make-up are variable, with some of the CGI being particularly poor. Simply put, the stories don't come to life – which if you're making a film about three fairy tales is to fall at the first hurdle.

Part of the problem is that none of the tales feels sufficiently magical or fantastic. They aren't about wizards and dragons, but nevertheless fantasy plays a crucial role in all of them: this is how the queen becomes pregnant, how an old lady becomes young again, and how a king creates a giant flea. But because of the details that Garrone focuses on, and in particular some of the unpleasant details, the film is too grounded in the everyday.

Similarly, fairy tales and anthology movies work by presenting simple stories in a short space of time, stripped of all excess. In the aforementioned *Tales from the Crypt*, Freddie Francis delivered five tales plus bookends in 92 minutes. Garrone's film takes over two hours to tell three stories. The pace is too leisurely, and at least half an hour could have been

## THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

This month, FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and rounds up a slew of recommended books on horror cinema.

Watching horror movies can turn you into a gibbering, sweaty psycho, but *reading* about them will merely transform you into a cultured, erudite monster. Here's a batch of recommended titles to add to your reading list.

First up is *English Gothic: Classic Horror Cinema 1897-2015* (Signum Books, 2015), a superbly detailed overview of over 100 years of British terror. To call it exhaustive might suggest that it's a bit of a plod, but it's far from that: Rigby's flair for an apt phrase and his giddy love of the genre make this more of a delightful skip through the macabre side of British cinema. All the key titles you'd expect are present, but where the book really shines is in unearthing lost or forgotten films. This loving hymn to the history of British horror is required reading, and the inclusion of snippets of reviews from the time is a nice, context-adding touch.

Where Rigby delights in the written word, Tomas Hodges's *VHS Video Cover Art* (Schiffer Publishing, 2015) is a glossy celebration of the video sleeve in all its retro charm. An artist himself, Hodges curates over 240 examples of VHS and Beta art with an almost evangelical fervour. In our current world of lazy, photo-shopped movie posters, the book does more than just push the nostalgia button: these weird, intricate and often downright whacky examples of horror movie publicity materials are an important celebration of a forgotten art and a reminder of what it can achieve.

Another hefty hardback comes from wedding photographer Tony Urban. In *Travelogue of Horror* (Schiffer Publishing, 2014), the day-job takes a back seat to his obsession with the dark side of culture. He and his mother (!) trek across America snapping

shots of horror movie locations, true-life crime scenes and other locales of fortean interest. It's a jolly jaunt, taking in everything from the spot where the toddler got hit by a truck in *Pet Sematary* to Jeffrey Dahmer's childhood cabin. Sadly, an inspired premise gets lost in the design. The photographs are gorgeous, but way too small for a book of this size, with too much space given over to large titles and text. It's also a frustrating tease to hear Urban describe (for example) taking "sensory overload" shots of Camp Crystal Lake, only to find that hardly any are actually included in the book. There's the germ of a really good book here, and Urban feels like a horror kindred spirit – you just need a magnifying glass to really appreciate the sights he saw.

A lot easier to carry is a nifty little full-colour paperback by Jim O'Rear called *Hollywood Paranormal Films: Fact or Fiction* (Schiffer Publishing, 2011). The graphic design might be a little homespun but the content is a fascinating look at the supposedly 'true cases' behind some well-known horror movies. O'Rear is sceptical of famous hauntings, such as Amityville or the supposed *Haunting in Connecticut*, but he rattles off the details with an infectious enthusiasm for all things spooky.

You'll need to flex your muscles again for *Nightmare USA: The Untold Story of the Exploitation Independents* (FAB Press, 2008) from Stephen Thrower. This massive and lavishly illustrated book is a down-and-dirty delight. Thrower has a knack for drawing out the grottier and sleazier side of cinema, yet he couples this with a sensitive appreciation for the art, poetry and power of pulp art. Like Rigby, Thrower's sometimes obscure movie recommendations will



keep you stocked with goggle fodder for months, perhaps even years.

Of particular fortean interest is *The Beast of Boggy Creek* by Lyle Blackburn (Anomalist Books, 2013). It's a riveting account of the so-called Fouke Monster, a red eyed Sasquatch wandering the creeks of Arkansas. I've included it in this list because of its generous and detailed discussions of the movies that the monster inspired. Charles B Pierce's smash-hit Bigfoot horror/documentary *The Legend of Boggy Creek* casts a hairy shadow across this book and is a vital thread in the history of the creature. Other flicks are covered too, like *The Creature from Black Lake* and the forgotten 1990s documentary, *The Hunt for Bigfoot*. It's a well-researched example of how fortean phenomena slip so easily from life to art and back again.

Another little gem is Tony Earnshaw's *Salem's Lot: Studies in Horror Film* (Centipde Press, 2014). I'm a huge fan of the original 1970s TV movie, so lapped this up like one of the ravenous vampires in the story. Featuring both contemporary and recent interviews with most of the key players it's a detailed, tastefully illustrated exploration of a bona fide gothic classic.

trimmed with no problem at all; less is often more. Structurally, too, the film falls down: intercutting the three stories robs each of its impact – just as one story has built up tension, we cut to another and have to wait while the director laboriously builds it back up again.

*Tale of Tales* doesn't work, not because the stories are uninteresting or because there are flaws in its production but because a number of directorial decisions don't come off. None of them in isolation is a major issue, but combined they bring the film down. It's a shame, because it could have been wonderful, and in most departments nearly is, but Garone fails in the basic task of getting the stories off the page.

Daniel King

### Fortean Times Verdict

SADLY, SOMETHING OF A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

6

## The Dark Side of the Sun

Dir David Askey, UK 1983  
Eureka Entertainment Ltd, £29.99 (DVD)

The six-part series *The Dark Side of the Sun* is the last of Michael J Bird's four Mediterranean dramas for BBC TV – and by far the scariest. Bird (*The Aphrodite Inheritance*, *Maelstrom*) was particularly good at psychological dramas where the tension builds up through the series and you're not sure whether the weird things going on are supernatural or not.

Anne Tierney (Emily Richard) goes to the Greek island of Rhodes after the sudden death there of her photographer husband Don (Patrick Mower), intending to take over the photo book he'd started work on. She doesn't know – but the viewer has seen – that Don had photographed top financiers arriving clandestinely on Rhodes; that he's intrigued by an old castle and its residents; that having been refused permission, he goes there at night to take photos; and that a sinister figure, Raoul Lavallière (Peter Egan), has somehow caused him to run in terror from the castle, drive down the mountain and crash his car.

Anne meets young historian David Bascombe (Christopher Scoular), who is doing research on the island and offers to show her around. She also meets the immaculately dressed Lavallière, who is suave and charm-

ing to her, and invites her to the castle.

Everywhere she goes, Anne catches glimpses of Don, and comes to believe that he's trying to contact her from beyond the grave. Bascombe introduces her to a psychic friend, Ismini Christoyannis (Betty Arvaniti), who links to Anne, but is blocked from reaching Don by Lavallière. And then one night Anne wakes to find Don in her bed...

As Anne's psychiatrist says at one point: "If we know anything for certain about the human mind it's that it's capable of some very strange things. Given the need and the will... it can do just about anything. Including conjuring up the dead. The mind creates its own reality... But that's only one possible explanation of the so-called supernatural."

Raoul Lavallière is grand master of a neo-Templar order of leading European politicians and financiers. He claims to be the descendant of (and is physically identical to) a Templar knight, Thibaut de Montfort – and on his desk is a portrait of Thibaut's dead wife, who is identical to Anne. And he has hypnotic and mind-projecting powers, possibly through a demonic figure.

The Templar story is based on the myths rather than any reality, and in any case it was the Hospitallers who were on Rhodes; and the modern-day order is basically the Bilderberg group. Anne and David are too reactive and far too nice; the psychic, Ismini, is stronger and more interesting than either of them. Considering he's dead for most of the story, Don makes quite a few appearances, but doesn't do a great deal except disturb Anne. The undoubted star is Peter Egan, who is outstanding as the manipulative and evil Lavallière; one can almost forgive him for his role in the dire comedy *Ever Decreasing Circles*, which began the following year.

The ending seems rushed, and it leaves the way open for a sequel that never happened. But despite its faults, *The Dark Side of the Sun* is a powerful psychological/supernatural gothic drama that sticks in the memory – not least because of the stunning filming on the island of Rhodes.

David V Barrett

### Fortean Times Verdict

DISTURBING GOTHIC DRAMA IN A BEAUTIFUL SETTING

8

## SHORTS

### BUDO – THE ART OF KILLING

Screenbound Pictures, £7.99 (DVD)



It's a shame Karate nut Elvis Presley died in 1977. If he'd hung on for just two more years, he'd have found his absolute favourite documentary. *Budo – The Art of Killing*, is a slow-mo meditation on Japanese martial arts. Meaning it's made up of lots of shots of topless blokes standing still in the snow before slamming their hands against tree trunks. And boy do they hit hard. I winced so much in this that I gave myself stomach cramps. At times it's beautiful, at others it's camp, but mostly it's a fascinating portrait of the Japanese, who manage to make even beating the living crap out of each other an aesthetic experience. **Rev Peter Laws 6/10**

### BEAT GIRL

BFI, £19.99 (Dual format)



A bizarre slice of X-rated British exploitation from 1959, *Beat Girl* is another intoxicatingly odd release from the BFI's splendid 'Flipside' label. A cautionary tale of the generation gap – soon to become a yawning chasm – the film pits sulky teen sex bomb Jennifer (starlet Gillian Hills, who is smoulderingly brilliant) and her rocking beatnik buddy Dave (Adam Faith, who isn't) against an assortment of squares played by more conventional British thespians: David Farrar, Christopher Lee, Nigel Green and a young Oliver Reed in what I think must be his first credited film role. Farrar is the emotionally retarded architect father who is more concerned with designing a city without people than his daughter's escalating emotional turmoil; Lee is the icy, brilliant sleazeball who runs a strip joint called Les Girls. When Jennifer realises that these two worlds – conventional Kensington and happening Soho – are actually linked by a sexual hypocrisy that the adult world refuses to acknowledge, she goes into all-out hormone-fuelled rebellion mode. Mixing fascinating location footage with studio recreations of coffee bars and strip joints, and boasting John Barry's first film score, *Beat Girl* is a mixture of technical excellence and dramatic ineptitude – but it's quite fascinating from start to finish and looks fabulous in this remaster. Nice extras include a 1955 supernatural short starring a pre-Hammer Lee. **David Sutton 7/10**

### DARK SIGNAL

Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment, £9.99 (DVD)



The producer credit for Neil Marshall (*Dog Soldiers*, *The Descent*) probably fuels unrealistic hopes for this somewhat ambitious but often muddled and sometimes unpleasant bit of low budget Brit horror from Edward Evers-Swindell (and many of his family, according to the credits). It's interesting to see how the film eventually brings its two parallel strands – a local radio station beset with EVP interference and a robbery gone wrong at a local farmhouse – together, but the pay-off – as conventional slasher strays into *Shining* territory – is a bit confusing (to me, anyway). Two bits of advice: the film's PRs, whom one assumes are English, should note that the Welsh Valleys are not in Snowdonia; and the director should perhaps have tried to ensure that the film's inexplicably Scottish sheep farmer didn't suddenly forget that he was supposed to have a Scottish accent halfway through the film. **DS 5/10**

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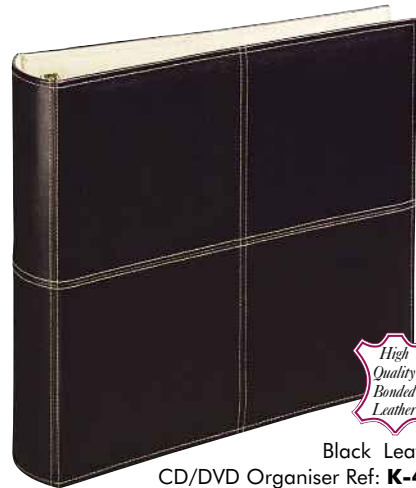
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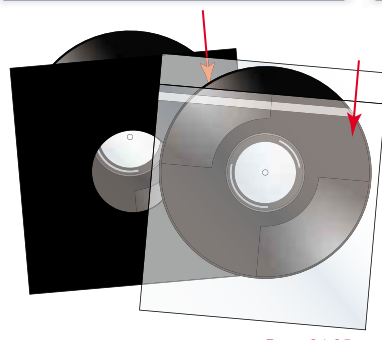
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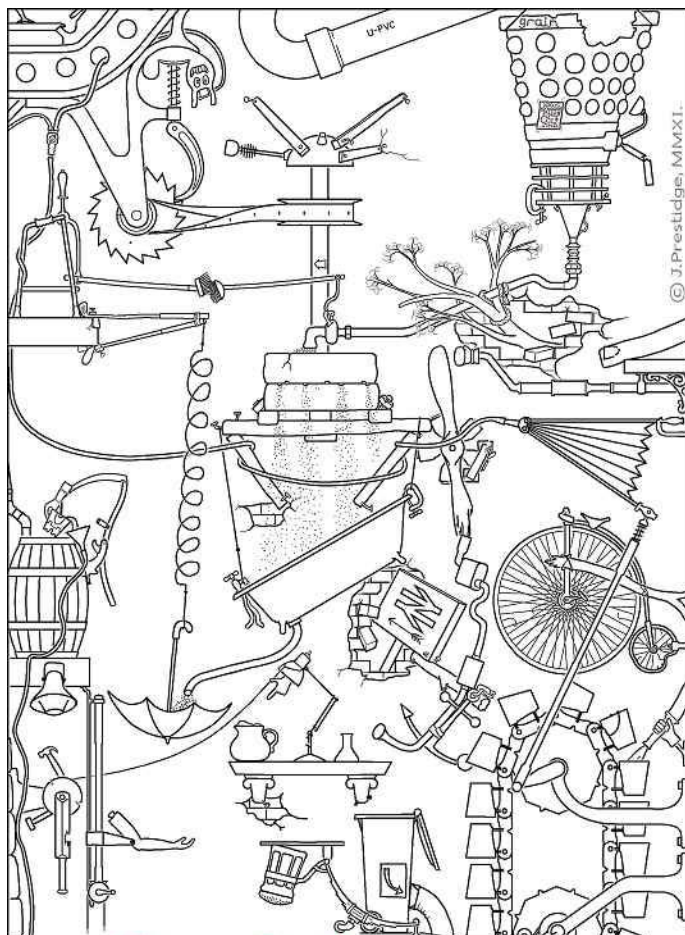
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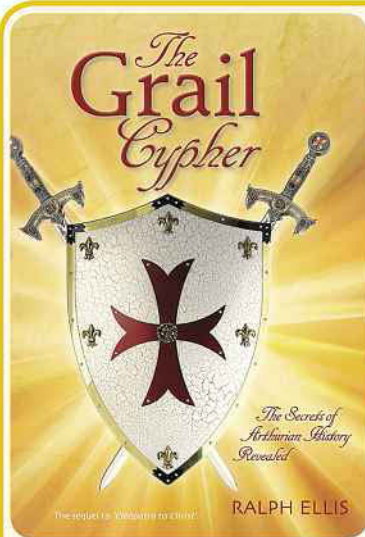
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Dear FT...

# letters



## Mysterious Max

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (Max), who died of leukaemia on 14 March 2016 aged 81, was one of the foremost composers of his generation. He also had some passing reasons to be remembered in the pages of *Fortean Times*. The most obvious is his opera "The Lighthouse", which is based on the mystery of the disappearing lighthouse keepers on the Flannan Isles. In the epilogue, the cast note that the lighthouse is no longer manned. I was at the premiere in Edinburgh on 2 September 1980, and recall the work ended with a spotlight raking the audience while the cast chorused: "The light-house has gone automatic! The light-house has gone automatic!" That very evening, the automatic light on the Flannan Isles failed.

Notable also was an interesting heretical idea speculated on by Max back in the 1960s and 1970s, that while Jesus Christ died on the cross and was buried in the tomb, it was the Antichrist who was resurrected on the third day. Some of his works from around this period were based on this notion. A friend of mine who knew him then once said to me she seemed to sense unseen spirits trailing after him as he walked into a room, but I never heard anyone else report such a thing, nor did I ever notice it myself, so make of it what you will.

**Roger Musson**  
*Edinburgh, Scotland*

## Feline death rite?

Our 14-year-old cat Rémi was put to sleep on 29 February, because of liver tumours. She had been sharing our home with an older cat – Prunelle, her 'aunt', now 18 years old – but they had always cordially ignored each other, apart from the occasional... er... catfight, around food. That's why I was very surprised to see Prunelle spending two days and nights beside her dying niece (on top of the boiler, where our late cat always slept), as if to comfort her, like a death doula. Is this a recognised phenomenon? It might just be a

## Simulacra corner



David Sowerby noticed this wooden Bugs Bunny beside the River Tees in Darlington in March 2016. *We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to [sieveking@forteantimes.com](mailto:sieveking@forteantimes.com) – and please tell us your postal address.*

coincidence, but as they barely looked at each other in 14 years, I can't help wondering about my old cat's sixth sense.

**Catherine Dupont**  
*Habergry, Belgium*

## Molly dancing

Paul Giamatti (really? The one from *Sideways* etc? Yes – Editor) [FT339:73] with his memory of cross-dressing dancers in black-face seems to be referring to a Fenland traditional plough boys' dance wherein said boys would black up with soot as a disguise, dress up in whatever bizarre and outlandish clothes they could find, then dance around the village begging for money, food and drink. If none was forthcoming,

penalty pranks would be played; the sweeping and buzzing Mr Giamatti refers to would appear to be one such, but there are reports of people's lawns or gardens being ploughed by a single furrow. This seems to be a variant of Hallowe'en trick or treating.

Only one of the group dressed in women's clothes – the "Molly". Molly was 18th century slang for a prostitute. I only know this because, as I was reading Mr Giamatti's letter, the same month's edition of *The Oldie* (my only other magazine subscription) lay open on the table at a double page photograph of black-faced modern revivalists of Molly dancing! Synchronicity at work yet again.

**Tony Purcell**  
*Sheffield, South Yorkshire*

The ritual described by Mr Giamatti was known as 'mumming', according to Prof Ronald Hutton: "A definition of mumming as carried on around Newcastle in the 1720s was provided by Henry Bourne, who characterized it as an exchange of clothing between young people of opposite sexes, who thus costumed went from house to house asking for hospitality... If a house which they entered needed cleaning, then they would sweep hearth and kitchen, 'humming all the time "mum-m-m"'" (*Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, OUP 2001). Hutton mentions that the tradition carried on into the 19th century.

**John Wyburn**  
*By email*

## Lull's 'computer'

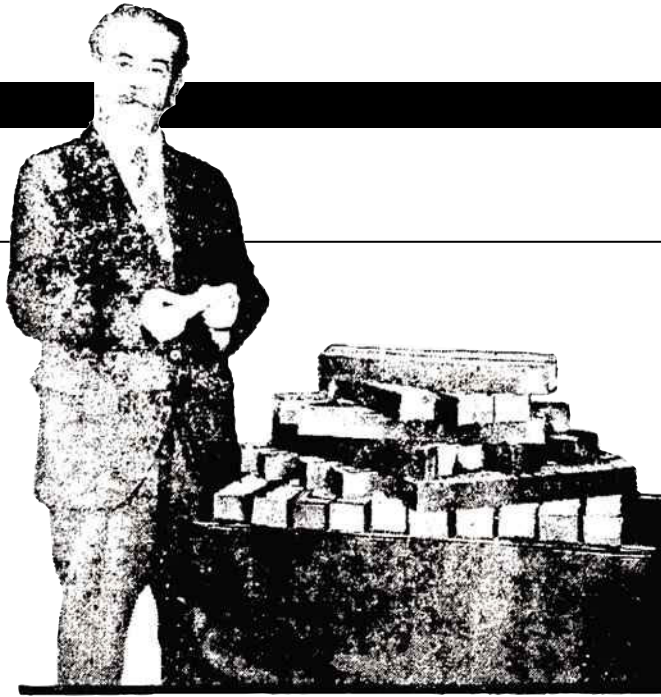
David Hambling's article on Ramon Llull [FT339:14] describes Llull's idea for an *ars combinatoria*, a 'portable encyclopædia' that would allow access to all knowledge by means of the permutation of a field's underlying principles. He mentions Jonathan Swift's satirical description in *Gulliver's Travels* of a similar device used on Laputa (not Laputia) that produces random combinations of words, though sadly little sense. Another, more successful, dystopian content generator that could have been included is the kaleidoscope in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It employs much the same technique to manufacture prolefeed, mindless entertainment churned out by rearranging existing approved materials without the need for any imagination or originality on the part of the operator. Alas, Llull's concept for creating knowledge has become the method by which programmers construct Saturday night television entertainment.

**Tom Ruffles**  
*Impington, Cambridgeshire*

## Highway etiquette

Regarding the AA patrolmen saluting to warn of a speed trap, I worked at the AA for 24 years, and





the truth of the matter, I believe, is that in the early days of the AA, patrolmen were instructed to salute any member, *unless* there was a speed trap ahead, so it could be argued that it wasn't an active warning. However, regardless of the details, I don't agree that it was "criminally irresponsible behaviour", as stated [Mythchaser, FT339:23]. Although I feel that motorists who speed excessively should be caught, the prevailing view is that it is better to give prior warning to make them slow down and drive more safely. The Highways Agency itself puts up fairly visible warning signs regarding speed cameras, and GPS systems like Tom-Tom are allowed to show where the cameras are. Also, police officers carrying out roving speed traps are always visible – they don't hide in the bushes. It is also common for motorists to warn oncoming traffic of traps.

**Dave Miles**  
Oakley, Hampshire

## Fort's boxes

Descriptions of Charles Fort nearly always mention the 'shoeboxes' in which he stored his data; but Bob Rickard's piece on Fort's notes [FT324:54] is the first time I've seen a picture of them – an "exceedingly rare image", in fact. But what kind of shoeboxes are these? They look like they could hold one of Goofy's shoes, or a clown's. A pair of normal shoes could be packed in them heel to toe, maybe. But they look nothing like shoeboxes as we know and

love them today. Fort probably didn't get them made to measure, so there must have been some commercial product in them, common enough for Fort to get hold of lots of empties. But what?

**Nils Erik Grande**  
Oslo, Norway

### Bob Rickard responds:

*It was obvious to me long ago that they weren't actual shoeboxes, and that the term was being used generically for storing (anything) in handy, smallish, cardboard cartons or boxes, most probably with a removable lid like actual shoeboxes. What their original function was I have no idea. Any suggestions?*

## Bowie's Library

In 2013 the Victoria & Albert Museum in London held the exhibition 'David Bowie Is', a retrospective of Bowie's whole career featuring materials from his personal archives, which is still on tour in museums and galleries throughout the northern hemisphere. As part of the launch, the curators released a list of Bowie's 100 favourite books. Alongside a penchant for modernist fiction and histories of 20th century cultural movements, his reading includes several titles that reinforce my article's thesis that Bowie had a serious interest in esotericism and other subjects of fortune interest ["The mage who

sold the world', FT338:28-33].

Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* (1956), and *Strange People* (1961) by Frank Edwards – studies of people who were outside the social norms due to their distinctive ontological perspectives and/or physical talents – are unsurprising choices given Bowie's fascination with personæ and cultural change (*The Outsider* in particular offering a variation on the Nietzschean idea of the 'superman' that flavoured Bowie's work in the 1970s). An interest in alternative modes of consciousness is evident in the selection of *On Having No Head: Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious* (1961) by Douglas Harding, and Julian Jaynes's *The Origin Of Consciousness In The Breakdown Of The Bicameral Mind* (1976). Jaynes's book is also a central reference point for Colin Wilson's influential writings on the paranormal from *Mysteries* (1978) onwards. These themes – unusual people and alternative modes of consciousness – also inform Lawrence Weschler's 1995 book *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder*, a study of the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles, a modern-day *wunderkabinett* filled with both authentic and fabricated exhibits celebrating human eccentricity [FT100:22-24].

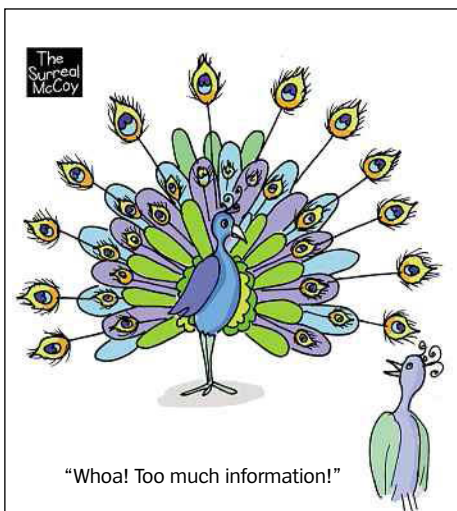
Elaine Pagels's *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979) discusses the nature of Gnostic Christianity and its relationship with the orthodox Christianity that remains dominant to this day, based on the author's scholarship of the Gnostic scrolls found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. The inclusion of this tome affirms that Bowie had a genuine interest in Gnosticism, as was evident in some of his late career interviews when the subject of his

spiritual leanings was raised.

A more direct engagement with esotericism and occultism is indicated by two books in particular. The first is the novel *Zanoni* (1842) by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. As is well known, Bulwer-Lytton's main claim to occult fame is his 1871 novel *The Coming Race*. This novel's invention of the Vril-ya, an advanced subterranean civilisation that threatens to supersede mankind, was appropriated by the likes of theosophists, hollow Earth theorists and Nazi occultists (see Theo Pajimans's article on the Vril Society FT303:42-46). *Zanoni* is a Gothic romance centred on a Rosicrucian adept who rescinds his immortality to fall in love, only to then perish in the French Revolution.

Although Bulwer-Lytton denied being an active Rosicrucian, the novel appears to have been adopted by some esotericists as an allegory of Rosicrucian beliefs. As with *The Coming Race*, *Zanoni* contains concepts that were appropriated for use in genuine esotericism. For example, the novel contains a section entitled 'The Dweller on the Threshold', in which an entity calling itself by that name appears to the protagonist as an embodiment of the material/base aspects of the self that must be overcome in order for the initiate to advance on the path of enlightenment. Esotericists such as Madame Blavatsky and Rudolf Steiner adapted this conceit for their own use, implying that it was a genuine aspect of occult development that Bulwer-Lytton had rendered in fictional form.

While *Zanoni* shows Bowie engaging with esotericism in fictional form, the other overtly 'occult' book on the list, *Transcendental Magic, Its Doctrine and Ritual* (1856; first English translation 1896) by French occultist Eliphas Lévi, signals a more practical interest in the magical arts, as evident in Bowie's mid-1970s 'coke and occult' period. Although Lévi has been much criticised by scholars of occultism for superficiality and inaccuracy, this grand overview of magical history, principles, and techniques was hugely influential among modern Western magi such as MacGregor Mathers and Aleister



"Whoa! Too much information!"

Crowley, particularly for innovations such as expounding the correspondences between the Tarot and Kabbalah. (While Crowley does not appear on Bowie's list, he is perhaps implicitly represented through the fact that Crowley identified Levi as one of his prior incarnations).

In an occult aside, Bulwer-Lytton crops up in *Transcendental Magic* in relation to one of Levi's most famous anecdotes. Exiling himself to London in 1854 to further his occult researches, Levi became a subject of interest amongst esoterically inclined society figures. Levi describes receiving a cryptic summons from an elderly society lady who had heard of his reputation as a thaumaturge from people within Bulwer-Lytton's circle. He is commissioned to summon up a shade in the expectation that it will be able to provide clairvoyant intelligence in relation to personal questions put to it: he chooses the spirit of the ancient mage Apollonius of Tyana.

While the evocation is successful, the outcome is rather unpleasant – the spirit's main reply to the queries put to it is 'death', and the arm in which Levi brandishes his sword of conjuration is rendered benumbed for several days. A lapsed Catholic, Levi presents the whole affair as a cautionary tale regarding the dangers of dabbling with the spirits of the dead. As there appears to be no evidence of Bowie engaging in necromancy, he presumably took Levi's advice in this matter, and stuck to the study of the Kabbalah instead (ghouls in the swimming pool excepted).

Outside of the books mentioned here, the overall list is an interesting read that affirms Bowie as one of the most erudite stars in the rock/pop canon: hard to imagine the likes of Miley Cyrus reading Dante or John Dos Passos (Nabokov's *Lolita*, possibly). My source for the list was the davidbowie.com website (<http://www.davidbowie.com/news/bowie-s-top-100-books-complete-list-52061>).

**Dean Ballinger**  
Hamilton, New Zealand

Further to the article on Bowie, in particular his persona in the Lazarus video – with bandages over his eyes, which are represented as

buttons – perhaps I could throw something into the ring of possibilities. Round about the same time Bowie died, and the final two videos were everywhere in the media, I was struck by a passage in Jonathan Bate's new biography of Ted Hughes (*An Unauthorised Life*, p243) about when Hughes met Ezra Pound at a conference in 1965, when Pound was 80. In a letter to Charles Tomlinson (in *Letters*, p247, published 2008), Hughes described Pound as looking like "a resurrected Lazarus", with "dead button eyes". So might this suggest that David Bowie read Hughes's collected letters and that therefore Hughes influenced Bowie's final and apparently autobiographical video work? And what might it say about Bowie and the oeuvre of Ezra Pound, given Pound's ambivalent and fluctuating dalliances with metaphysics and the occult? That's for someone else to play with.

**John Billingsley**  
Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire

## Tile mystery

Richard Porter might be interested in the documentary *Resurrect Dead: The Mystery of the Toynbee Tiles* by Jon Foy. In the film, Foy follows Justin Duerr and the rest of his group as they seek to solve the mystery of the hundreds of cryptically tiled messages that have appeared not just on Manhattan city streets, as Mr Porter makes mention of in his

letter [FT337:72], but around the world.

**Trevor Ouellette**  
Ontario, Canada

## Interstellar Travel

I will be interested to learn what FT's regular UFO columnists make of the latest revelations from Professor Hawking that it could soon be possible to reach extra-solar planets in around 30 years, albeit using gram-scale nano-craft. It has even been suggested that some of us who are alive today will live to see beamed back images of the surfaces of currently unknown planets. One of the sceptics' main arguments against the extraterrestrial hypothesis has been the vast distances involved in reaching us and the time it would take to travel here; and yet we have been in the Space Age just a few decades and already the distance issue seems to be less and less daunting. UFO sceptics often seem stuck in the here and now, lacking the vision to surmise what could be possible in the near future. I would argue that, given what mankind has achieved in the last century and the fact that many of today's whacky notions can become tomorrow's hard science, nothing should ever be ruled out. I can't help feeling that Charles Fort might have some sympathy for that view.

**Geoff Clifton**  
Solihull, West Midlands

## EVIL EYE

I have had a few incidents of reading something and realising that music in the background has a lyric that is startlingly pertinent. While reading John Billingsley's excellent article on the evil eye and Albanian teddies [FT339:28-

35], I noticed that Radio 6 was playing a track I'd not heard for many years: 'Jeux Sans Frontières' by Peter Gabriel. "If looks could kill they

probably will," opined the ex-Genesis singer.

**Graeme Kenna**  
Wallasey, Merseyside



I enjoyed John Billingsley's entertaining survey of protective measures against the evil eye around the world. One he didn't mention was the Nazar Battu, which can be seen on many houses in the Indian Punjab, as well as ours in Huddersfield (left).

**Mark Graham**  
By email

## Incident at Aztec

Reviewing our book *The Aztec UFO Incident* [FT339:63], Nigel Watson states (paragraph 6): "This has since tainted the Aztec story, though here it is quickly pointed out that Newton was not fined or imprisoned, although he did have to pay a massive \$18,000 in court costs". However, thanks to the great investigative work by William Ogden in 1960 we know that Silas Newton and Frank Scully sued Herman Flader (and others) for a massive \$25 million. The case was settled out of court for an undisclosed amount. Mr Watson also states (paragraph 9): "What [the authors] don't mention is that the *Aztec Independent Review* newspaper printed in 1948 a prank story about little green men from Venus crashing in a saucer." I can assure you that in 1948 no article appeared in said paper about little green men or any kind of alien. The only article in any local paper that could be mistaken for a flying saucer story concerns a meteor that overflowed the Four Corners area. However, a (literally) incredible story did appear in March 1950 concerning the huge "Flying Saucer Armada" that appeared in the Four Corners area as well as other parts of northern New Mexico.

**Scott Ramsey**  
By email

## Nigel Watson responds:

*I'm happy to be corrected over these two points. We are still left with a story that is surrounded by a group of shady characters and has few facts to support it. Even if Dr Gee (or scientists under this umbrella name) really were involved in this case, why was the information leaked to Silas Newton and Frank Scully and not to other journalists and scientists? As with most saucer landing or crash cases, there is little or no evidence to support the alleged events except friend-of-a-friend stories or ancient recollections by alleged witnesses. Whatever your viewpoint, this book is worth getting, as the authors' painstaking research shows the many complexities and grey areas involved in trying to get solid evidence to prove that the Aztec landing actually happened.*

# it happened to me...

First-hand accounts from *Fortean Times* readers and posters at [forum.forteantimes.com](http://forum.forteantimes.com)

## Just one degree of separation

I am from Merseyside currently working away in Halifax, West Yorkshire. About three weeks after my eldest son went to work on the Costa Del Sol, I met a professional client for the first time, covering a meeting for a colleague. She explained a sequence of events leading to a document being filed late. She had been away in Spain that weekend, staying with a hen party in Nerja.

"Been to Benalmedina at all?"

"Only one place, Andrew's Bar."

"Barman say anything to you?"

"Yes, he'd lost his voice singing AC/DC on the karaoke."

"That'll be my son then."

On the one hand, frequent destination for hen parties from the North of England, in a job where one meets lots of people – on the other, meeting me from a conurbation 60 miles away, and my son 60 miles from where she was staying in the only pub she entered, meeting father and son 1,000 miles away in the space of four days...

**Graeme Kenna**

*By email*

## Invoking Boo Boo

As a self employed musician and actor, one of the ways I supplement my sometimes vicarious income is by writing and presenting a pub quiz every Monday night at a hostelry in a leafy district of Bristol in which I could never afford to live. I have developed a fairly unusual style of both presentation and authorship and a fortean would usually find at least one question in their area of interest every week. I make some effort to ensure the questions are my own and neither too fiendishly impossible or easy. This involves considerable work, so occasionally I will pluck the odd question from a pub-quiz-type book.

Now, the last time I moved house around two years ago, I had recently picked up just such a book called *Quirky Quiz Questions* for this purpose from a charity shop, and it was packed amongst many other books in open-top boxes which I was involved in placing on my bookshelf at the new flat. This is a repetitive process and I was rather bored doing it, and for some reason at some point I said out loud to myself 'Boo Boo' in the voice of cartoon character Yogi Bear. I have no idea why this familiar childhood phrase popped into my mouth and it's certainly not an expression I can recall using in the last 20 or so years, but just a second or two after saying it the book I happened to be placing on the shelves fell to the floor and opened at a page in front of me. It was the quirky quiz book, and the first question on the page was: "What is the name of cartoon



## Tunnel wraith

My son, a teacher, recently took a class to the Stockport Air Raid Shelter, an enjoyable and educational venue. He was going into one of the many tunnels and decided to take a photograph down one particular arm, at the end of which was a very bright light, hoping for an unusual 'artistic' shot. To the eye, the light was so bright that it washed out everything else. The camera, however, seemed to capture a walking figure at the far end. When he reached the end there was, of course, no one there and nowhere for anyone to have gone.

He said that I was welcome to send it to *Fortean Times* on his behalf but that he didn't "really believe in that sort of thing". I, on the other hand, really do.

**Anthony Wilkins**, Ripponden, West Yorkshire

character Yogi Bear's sidekick?"

I had a little chuckle and nodded to the great cosmic joker (or library angel, maybe). I hadn't even looked at this book before except when I bought it some weeks earlier, and had answered out loud a question I didn't even know it was going to ask me! I'm inclined to evoke Heath Robinson's "long arm of coincidence" as explanation, but it still makes for an odd tale.

**Jules Landau**

*By email*

## Little man, waving

Reading about the various encounters with "little people" – such as the case of the driving gnomes in Wollaton Park, Nottingham, in 1979 [FT31:42] – I recall an interesting encounter my grandfather had with a little man in St Leonards, Dorset. It was probably in the mid to late 1980s, and it happened when my grandfather was sitting in a large old circus trailer parked on my family's field, which backed onto a section of the New Forest. One day he was sitting in his chair looking out of the trailer window when he saw, a short distance away in the field, a small man dressed all in green with a little gnome's hat. He said that the little man simply stood there look-

ing at him and waved in a friendly manner, so he waved back, whereupon the little man vanished into thin air.

My grandfather passed away on 11 August 1999, the day of the total solar eclipse, and he always stuck by every word of this story for as long as he lived. I would be interested to hear if anyone else has had any odd experiences in this particular area of Dorset.

**John Hope**

*Southbourne, Dorset*

## Real-life succubus?

About 18 years ago, I was 18 and lived with my mother in the area of Wirral, Merseyside. One night I came back from the pub – not drunk, just merry. I always go to sleep with pants and T-shirt on and always have the lights off. I remember having a very pleasant dream and felt myself being aroused. I woke up with pressure on my chest, but didn't think much of it, and tried to drift back to sleep. Then I realised there was something on top of me and felt wet hair on my face and hands around my throat. I knew I wasn't asleep; I was terrified and in complete darkness. I reached over and turned on the bedside light. A very thin girl with long black hair was

squatting on me and having sex with me.

As I screamed she looked up and screamed and I hit her with the back of my hand. She flew off the bed and stood up. She was soaking wet from head to toe, which I guessed was sweat. She begged me for more. I got up and found that both of us were naked. I grabbed her arm and slung her into the front garden. She ran off across a field and into the nearby woods. I didn't ring the police; I didn't know who she was and never saw her again.

I was a little disturbed of course; particularly about how she got into the house, how she took my clothes off without me waking up, and why she didn't have any clothes herself. At first I thought I was being raped by a ghost, but it was really a very odd, flesh-and-blood girl. Strangely, there was no evidence that she had broken in at all!

**Lee Piercy**  
*By email*

## Harbinger ghost

Regarding Nils Erik Grande's article on harbinger ghosts – the *vardøger* [FT327:30-33]: I live in a normal 1930s house with no ghosts, but I've had the exact experience described in the article quite a few times. It was quite odd to see it described so well. My *vardøger* is always to do with my husband coming in from work. He comes in at different times, so I'm never quite sure when to expect him. I'll hear the crunching of feet on the front gravel, key in the door, door opening, the rustle of him taking his rucksack off in the hall and then nothing. He will always be in soon after. It doesn't happen that often, but it is a bit odd. The first time I really thought I'd heard him come up the stairs and was a bit shaken, but now it's just one of those things. Interestingly – as the article mentions, it may occur less in modern, Internet connected times – it only ever happens when I'm upstairs reading to my daughter at bedtime, with all computers, TVs and radios off.

**Emma Barton**  
*Thames Ditton, Surrey*

## Raspy breathing

In early 1984 when I was 16, we were living in Derby and my mum had just been diagnosed with brain cancer. As a family, death held no wonder for us and I wasn't scared by ghostly/unexplained goings-on, being somewhat sceptical of these things.

I'd recently begun working at a local garage after leaving school. One morning I woke up shortly after dawn and distinctly heard breathing coming from under the bed. I lay there for what seemed ages listening to it, but it must have been no more than 20 to 30 seconds. I then leaned over the side of the bed to peer underneath, wondering if it was a rodent with bronchitis, as it was soft, but raspy, almost on

## One morning I woke up shortly after dawn and distinctly heard breathing coming from under the bed...

the verge of coughing. There was nothing there.

I got up and went to work, and that was that. I broached the subject of deaths in the house with mum; a great uncle in the 1960s and a great aunt just the year before (1983) apparently. The house was bought in 1920 by my great aunt and her husband, and when she died in 1983 it was left to mum, and thence to me. My bed was about 80 years old and had been used by both relatives who had died there. It was a single bed, with a high headboard, low footboard and cast iron frame with chain-linked base and a stuffed mattress. My mum died in November 1984, in the same bed.

The strange breathing never happened again, or if it did, I was either asleep or somewhere else, and no one else has ever mentioned hearing anything. It ignited a lifelong interest in things paranormal and still puzzles me to this day.

**Jennifer Hobson**  
*Lapford, Devon*

## Bunny picture

On 22 January 2004 my sister passed away. My family and I never expected her to die so fast, so I prepared for my daughter's birthday that was due the same week. My sister was the kind of girl that if she knew your birthday she was the first one to buy a gift for you. She loved to make people happy. She couldn't buy a gift for my daughter because she was so ill, but she asked my mother to go and buy the gift. With the worry and the pain knowing that my sister was passing away, my poor mother forgot to buy anything.

Two days after my sister passed away I was sleeping in my room and opened my eyes in the dark, but I saw something in the ceiling. I was not dreaming. This was so rare. It was a couple of bunnies dressed in gowns cooking in a kitchen. It was like the old-time 32mm movies I used to see when I was a child. I felt I couldn't move and after that I felt something on my left arm. The room began to illuminate and I saw my sister sitting by my side. I asked her what she was doing, and she told me that she felt so happy because now she could dance. I asked her about some people who had recently passed away, but she said that she hadn't seen them yet. Then I blinked and she disappeared.

It was 3:00am. I called my parents to tell them what had happened.

The next morning, I don't know why, I woke up with a desire to find the St Mary medal I found at school when I was eight years old. I looked for it in my house without success, so I decided to go to the bank to look in my safe deposit box. When I arrived I found that I had lost my key so I asked the teller how much a new one cost and she told me \$100. I felt terrible, almost crying, and went back to my car.

In the meantime I received a call from a friend and told her everything that had happened to me, including the key issue. "Let's pray," she said. "You'll see that the keys will appear." I couldn't think what else I could do, so I began praying with her. After I called off I looked for the key once more in the same pocket I had searched and I found it. I went to the box and found the St Mary's medal.

I was so happy. I said to myself, you don't have to spend \$100 on a key, so let's go to Marshalls (a department store that I never visit) to see if I can find a photo album for my daughter's birthday. Imagine my surprise when in the middle of all the photo albums was one with a picture on the cover of the same bunnies I had seen on my ceiling. I immediately realised that this photo album was the gift my sister wanted to give to my daughter, so I bought and treasure it.

**Yamel Garcia**  
*Guaynabo, Puerto Rico*

## Spectral assistance

When I was a student in Coventry in the early 1990s, lodging in King Richard Street, my housemates and I witnessed something very peculiar. Four or five of us were watching TV in the sitting room, while a newly arrived friend was shifting stuff out of her allocated bedroom down into the cellar. We could see her to-ing and fro-ing through the upper half of the door that had a security glass window in it – the type with wire running through, making little squares that you can't see through very well. As we joked about how one of us should really go and help, we realised we didn't need to as someone was already helping her. We could see the pair of them passing back and forth across the window for a few minutes as they cleared the room. When my friend had finally finished, she came into the living room and complained how none of us had offered to help. We justified our laziness by telling her she already had help and to stop moaning. My friend was very confused, adamant that she'd moved everything on her own. We knew we had watched her going past the window followed by her 'helper' over and over again. But there was no one else in the house. More strangeness occurred in that house throughout the year we lived there.

**Elaine Bratt**  
*By email*

# POLICE

THE ILLUSTRATED  
LAW COURTS AND WEEK

JAN BONDESON presents more sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.

## 47. SOUTH LONDON HERMITS

### THE PECKHAM MISER

In the 1860s and 1870s, a middle-aged man named Henry Davies lived in a large semi-detached house at 47 Peckham Grove. His family had moved there sometime in the early 1850s, and after his elderly parents had both expired, Henry Davies decided to withdraw from the world and become a hermit. He made a habit of never leaving the house during daytime hours, although he sometimes emerged after dark to purchase victuals. Since the Peckham Miser, as he was called, took no interest in gardening pursuits, or in maintaining his house, 47 Peckham Grove soon became the eyesore of the neighbourhood: its garden became a jungle, and the house very

dilapidated.

In 1881, the long-suffering neighbours complained to the Metropolitan Board of Works that the Peckham Grove hermitage was a disgrace to the neighbourhood: it did not have a single whole pane of glass in the front windows. The Peckham Miser received a summons to have his windows repaired: the workmen who arrived were appalled at the state of the house and the garden. The hermit employed no house-keeper or servant, and he had a strong disdain for cleaning and tidying and an equally strong reluctance to throw anything away; all the rooms were cluttered with junk, and covered in layers of dust. The Miser took an interest in legal actions, and was regularly visited by his solicitor, whom he told that his father had been a wealthy man, and that he got a quarterly allowance of a large amount of money. In 1883, the Miser fell ill with what was diagnosed as kidney disease, which meant that Dr Hentsch, of Southampton Street, Camberwell, also came to call at the hermitage. The house was in a dreadful state, and the Miser quite ill and frail. He told the doctor that he was about 60 years old, although he looked much older. He also volunteered that since his parents had been wealthy people, he had never done a day's work in his life.

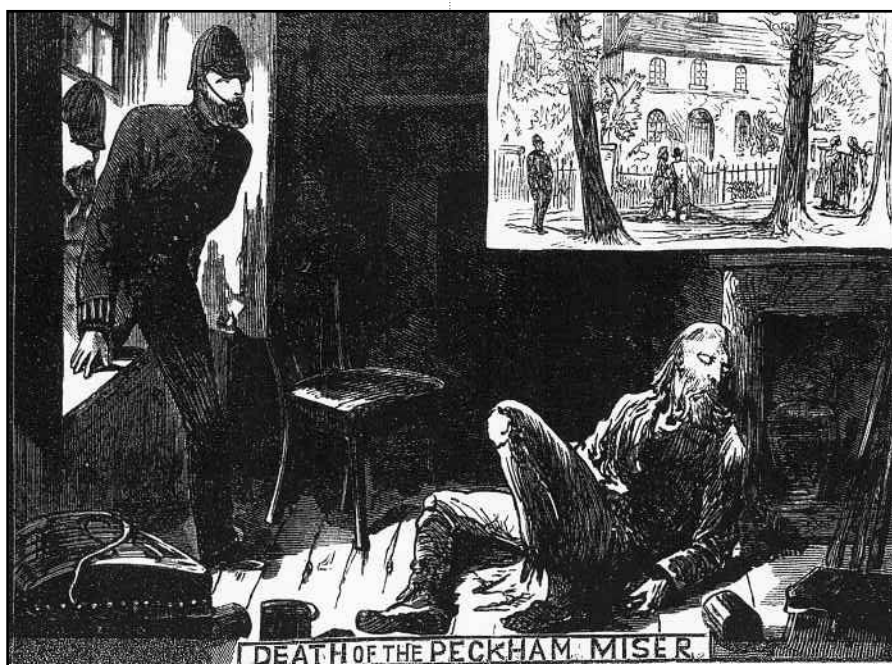
Dr Hentsch returned to see Davies a few days later; he suggested that another medical man should be consulted, but the patient said that would be too expensive. When the doctor asked him if he had made a will, he said that he was going to. When the doctor next came to the hermitage, nobody opened the door. Fearing the worst, he went to the police station, and Sergeant Timbs went with him to the house. After they had made their way through the overgrown garden, the policeman raised a ladder and obtained admission through a back window. He found the Miser lying dead against a dresser, covered with rags. Every room in the house was full of rubbish, and it had not been cleaned for decades. There were piles of documents relating to the Miser's legal actions, one of them a bill for legal costs amounting to £600. The coroner's inquest on Henry Davies returned a verdict of death from natural causes.

A friend of the family wrote a letter to the police superintendent suggesting that Davies's remains should be buried in the grave of his parents at Nunhead Cemetery, and this idea was acted upon. It turned out that the Miser actually had a living brother, but this individual had wanted nothing to do with him, and did not even attend the funeral. In fact, the only mourner was the clerk to the solicitor Davies had employed to supervise his legal actions. He was the sole occupant of the mourning coach following the hearse through the Peckham streets, taking the remains of the Miser to their final resting-place.

### THE NORWOOD HERMIT

Allan Neville had worked as a hosier as a young man, but after receiving a small legacy he decided to withdraw from the world and become a hermit. His house, or rather hermitage, was part of the remains of a crumbling old mansion called Meadow Bank, situated on the Durham Road, midway between West Norwood and Streatham Common. This was a very secluded spot, and thus suitable for a hermit who wanted nothing to do with the remainder of humanity. In particular, Neville very much disliked children and took cover whenever he heard the sound of juvenile voices near his hermitage.

On the afternoon of 30 June 1898, a number of small children had congregated to play in a field adjacent to the hermitage. Nothing happened until a quarter past nine in the evening, when gunfire was heard from the direction of Neville's house. The children scattered, and some of them ran home to alert their parents. The railway signalman William Dearing was one of these parents, and he



ABOVE: Death of the Peckham Miser, and a view of the hermitage, which no longer stands, *IPN*, 8 Sept 1883.  
OPPOSITE PAGE: The hermit tries to gun down the Norwood children, *IPN*, July 9 1898.

# ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY RECORD: NEWS

picked up his little daughter, who was just three-and-a-half years old, and went in search of the gunman. In the field, he saw an odd-looking man holding a small fowling-piece. When Dearing charged the gunman, Neville fired his weapon, wounding both Dearing and his young daughter. Dearing seized the hermit and held him until some other parents and a police detective had come to his assistance.

Neville was frogmarched to the local police station, where he was charged with maliciously firing a gun loaded with shot at children, with intent to do them bodily harm. It was fortunate that the hermit only owned a small-calibre weapon, loaded with old duckshot cartridges; if he had possessed a more powerful gun, much mischief might have been caused. Neither William Dearing nor his daughter were seriously hurt, but a little boy had been shot in the forehead, with one bullet penetrating the skin and causing bloodshed.

When Allan Neville was brought up before the South Western Police Court, William Dearing described how the hermit had fired at him and how he had also seen him fire at the children. After being apprehended and disarmed, Neville had insisted it was a pure accident. Albert Henry Dickson testified that his five-year-old son had been wounded in the forehead and face. George Feaner, a young Norwood lad, described how he had been playing cricket in the field when he saw Neville leaving his house, holding a gun, which he levelled and fired at the children. He denied that he had been annoying Neville by throwing stones at his ramshackle hermitage. The prisoner was remanded, and the magistrates offered to accept two sureties of £100 for his appearance. The case attracted a good deal of newspaper attention: "Extraordinary Outrage at Norwood!" said the headline of *Reynolds's Newspaper*; "Two Norwood Children shot by a Hermit!" cried *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* and "Extraordinary Outrage by a Norwood Recluse!" exclaimed the *Illustrated Police News*.

On 14 July, Neville was again brought up before the London County Sessions. He was defended by Mr Wheeler, QC, and by Mr De Michele, and pleaded not guilty to unlawfully wounding the children. The prosecution argued that Neville, an eccentric man under normal circumstances, had long been annoyed by the children playing in the field at the back of his house. He had written to the police, threatening that unless he received protection from his juvenile tormentors, he would "introduce a load of shot" into them; the police had thought they were dealing with the idle threats of a madman, and ignored him.



EXTRAORDINARY OUTRAGE BY A NORWOOD RECLUSE.  
SEVERAL CHILDREN SHOT AT AND WOUNDED.

The signalman Dearing had been a witness to Neville firing his gun at the children, and hitting one of them in the face. The defence argued that Neville had only fired his gun to frighten the children off, and that the gun had not been pointed at them, although a ricochet from the trunk of a tree had led to the little boy being hit. The jury found the prisoner guilty, however, and the Chairman said that

although this was a serious case, none of the children had been seriously harmed. He did not want to degrade the prisoner with a term of imprisonment, as he expressed it, but Neville was fined £50 to put an end to his trigger-happy tendencies. This fine appears to have had the desired effect: the hermit retired into his hermitage, and never did anything newsworthy again.

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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."

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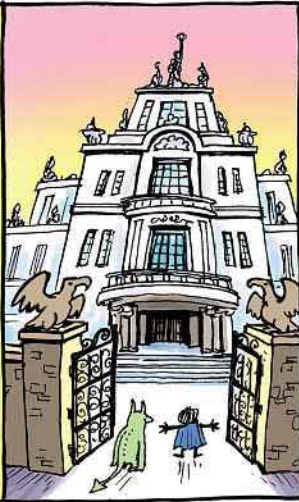
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# PHENOMENOMIX

FAUST part 3

HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON

AS SOON AS THE PACT WAS SIGNED, FAUST BEGAN TO LIVE THE HIGH LIFE! HE MOVED INTO A LARGE HOUSE ...



HE HAD MEPHOSTOPHOLES STEAL LOTS OF FANCY CLOTHES FOR HIM...



HE MAGICALLY SUMMONED FINE FOODS AND WINE...



THE ONLY HITCH CAME WHEN FAUST CONSIDERED MARRIAGE - A CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION! THE DEVIL WAS FURIOUS, AND HE TERRIFIED FAUST BY CURSING HIS HOUSE!



OLD NICK EVEN SHOWED UP IN PERSON...



FAUST GAVE UP HIS WEDDING PLANS! INSTEAD, MEPHO SUPPLIED HIM WITH WOMEN EVERY NIGHT...



AS THE YEARS WENT BY, FAUST'S DEMANDS BECAME MORE AND MORE AMBITIOUS! HE HAD MEPHOSTOPHOLES TAKE HIM TO OUTER SPACE!



NEXT, HE HAD MEPHO TAKE HIM TO THE POPE'S COURT IN ROME, WHERE, WHILE INVISIBLE, HE PLAYED ALL KINDS OF HILARIOUS TRICKS!



...AND LOOTED THE POPE'S PERSONAL WINE CELLARS...



IN CONSTANTINOPLE HE CAUSED THE TURKISH EMPEROR TO HALLUCINATE THAT FAUST WAS A MANIFESTATION OF THE PROPHET!



AND HE MADE LOVE TO ALL THE WOMEN IN THE EMPEROR'S HAREM - WITH SOME SUCCESS, APPARENTLY...



AND FINALLY, AT THE REQUEST OF HIS STUDENTS, HE CALLED UP THE IMAGE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN HISTORY - HELEN OF TROY!



NEXT TIME: Decapitations! Musical Snakes!! and Faust's Hideous Downfall!!!

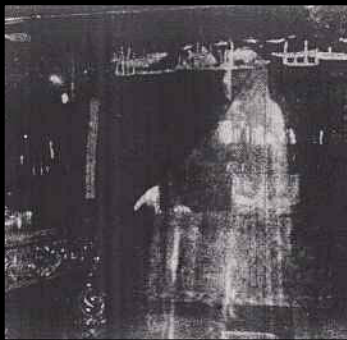


# COMING NEXT MONTH



## DAGG'S DEMON

POLTERGEIST GIRLS AND THE  
WITCH OF PLUM HOLLOW



## WHINES AND SPIRITS

THE HAUNTING OF THE  
FERRYBOAT INN



CHIMNEY GHOSTS,  
SPARE'S TAROT,  
NORTHERN WEIRDNESS,  
AND MUCH MORE...

# FORTEAN TIMES 342

ON SALE 23 JUNE 2016

# STRANGE DEATHS

THERE'S A WHOLE LOT OF CHOPPING GOING ON 2



Yuan Wang, 26, appeared at a police station in China's central Hunan province with a human head on his passenger seat and claimed that the head had "flown into the car" in a paranormal incident. Only later did he remember that he had decapitated a motorcyclist while speeding during a drug and alcohol-induced psychotic episode. He was driving home after a party in Shenshan when he hit a pensioner on an electric motorbike. The force of the impact snapped the 76-year-old man's neck and sent his head flying through the windscreen. The rest of the man's body had dropped off beside the road. *Metro*, 2 Dec 2015.

A motorist was decapitated by a horse's head – when it smashed through his car windscreen. The 42-year-old man had collided with the animal as it grazed on the central reservation of a motorway near Nuremberg, Germany, severing its head. His daughter, behind him, was badly hurt and his wife and son were treated for shock. *Sun*, 2 Aug 2010.

A girl aged four was decapitated with a cleaver in an apparent random killing outside a metro station in Taipei, Taiwan, on 28 March. She was grabbed from behind by a stranger. She was with her mother who was unable to prevent the attack. Police arrested a 33-year-old man, identified only as Wang, who had previously been treated in a psychiatric unit. *Metro*, 29 Mar 2016.

A 72-year-old man strangled and dismembered his 71-year-old wife and encased her head in a concrete block, which he then used to help drown himself in an Austrian lake. The unnamed couple were from near Frankfurt in Germany. Police divers recovered the dead man, with the concrete block in a bag attached to his hand, from the waters of Traunsee on 4 January, a day after two suitcases containing the woman's remains were found floating close to the lake's shore near the town of Gmunden. Post-mortems suggest that the woman was strangled between Christmas Day and New Year's Day and that the man drowned later. There was no indication of third party involvement. [AP] (*Sydney*) *D.Telegraph*, 7 Jan 2016.

A man beheaded his wife and their pet dog after suffering a paranoid delusion that dancers on *The X-Factor* were speaking to him and would bring him "eternal damnation". Timothy Allen, 40, killed his wife, bio-scientist Samantha Ho, 39, at their home in St Neots, Cambridgeshire, as they watched an episode of the television singing competition on 29 August 2015. Allen, who had long-standing psychiatric problems triggered by a motorcycle accident in 2004, told police that he believed the dancers were "puppets" being controlled by a puppet master who was coming to get him. Ms Ho made a "harrowing" call to the police after her husband tried to cut his own throat. When officers arrived, they found Allen bare-chested, covered in blood and repeatedly stabbing the couple's border collie. His wife's head was nearby. He

was detained indefinitely. *D.Telegraph*, *Metro*, Sun, 27 Feb + 18 Mar 2016.

A nanny decapitated a child in her care on 28 February before brandishing its bloodied head outside Oktyabrskoye Pole metro station in Moscow, screaming "Allahu Akbar!" (God is great) and "The end of the world is coming in a second. I'm your death. I hate democracy. I am your suicide bomber!" Several policemen tackled the black hijab-clad woman to the ground and the severed head rolled away. No explosive devices were found. Earlier in the day, the child's torso was found at the scene of a fire in a nearby apartment block. The nanny was Gyluchekhra Bobokulova, 38, a citizen of Uzbekistan, who killed four-year-old Nastya (Anastasia) Meshcheryakova in retaliation for Russian bombing in Syria, where she hoped to relocate. She told a court hearing that "Allah commanded" her to kill the toddler, whose parents hired her as a nanny 18 months earlier. Bobokulova's father said she had never previously shown any interest in religion. She had allegedly been "driven mad" after learning that her husband in Uzbekistan had cheated on her and started a new family. *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mail*, 1+4 Mar; *Metro*, 1+2+3+4 Mar; *Sun*, 1 Mar 2016.

Dempsey Nibbs, 69, decapitated Judith Nibbs, 60, his partner of 30 years, with a kitchen knife, broke her head with a mallet and metal bar, and flushed the pieces down the lavatory at their flat in Hoxton, east London, on 10 April 2014. The retired crane driver had complained to his son that the meals-on-wheels worker, mother of his two children, "was not the housewife she used to be, that she had become more liberal in her outlook." She had taunted him, saying she had had sex eight times with other men. When the police arrived, Nibbs repeatedly stabbed himself and was hospitalised for a year. He claimed he had killed his wife because he thought he was fighting off a snake, but since the murder he had shown no signs of mental illness. *D.Telegraph*, *Sun*, 30 Mar 2016.

Derek Ward, 35, decapitated his mother, 66-year-old Patricia Ward, a professor at Farmingdale State College, New York. He dragged her body into the street in front of their home in Long Island, then committed suicide by walking in front of a commuter train on 28 October 2014. The professor's torso was found by a kerb and her head several paces away. The son had mental health problems going back 10 years. *NY Daily News*, *irishexaminer.com*, 30 Oct 2014.

Kenneth Dale Wakefield, 43, decapitated his 49-year-old wife, Trina Heisch, and her two dogs in their Phoenix, Arizona, apartment on 25 July 2015. He then severed his left arm at the elbow and gouged out one of his eyes before being discovered. He told police he was trying "to get the evil out" of his wife, having smoked the designer drug Spice about an hour beforehand. Several bloody knives were recovered. Both husband and wife had a history of mental illness. [R] 4 Aug 2015.

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