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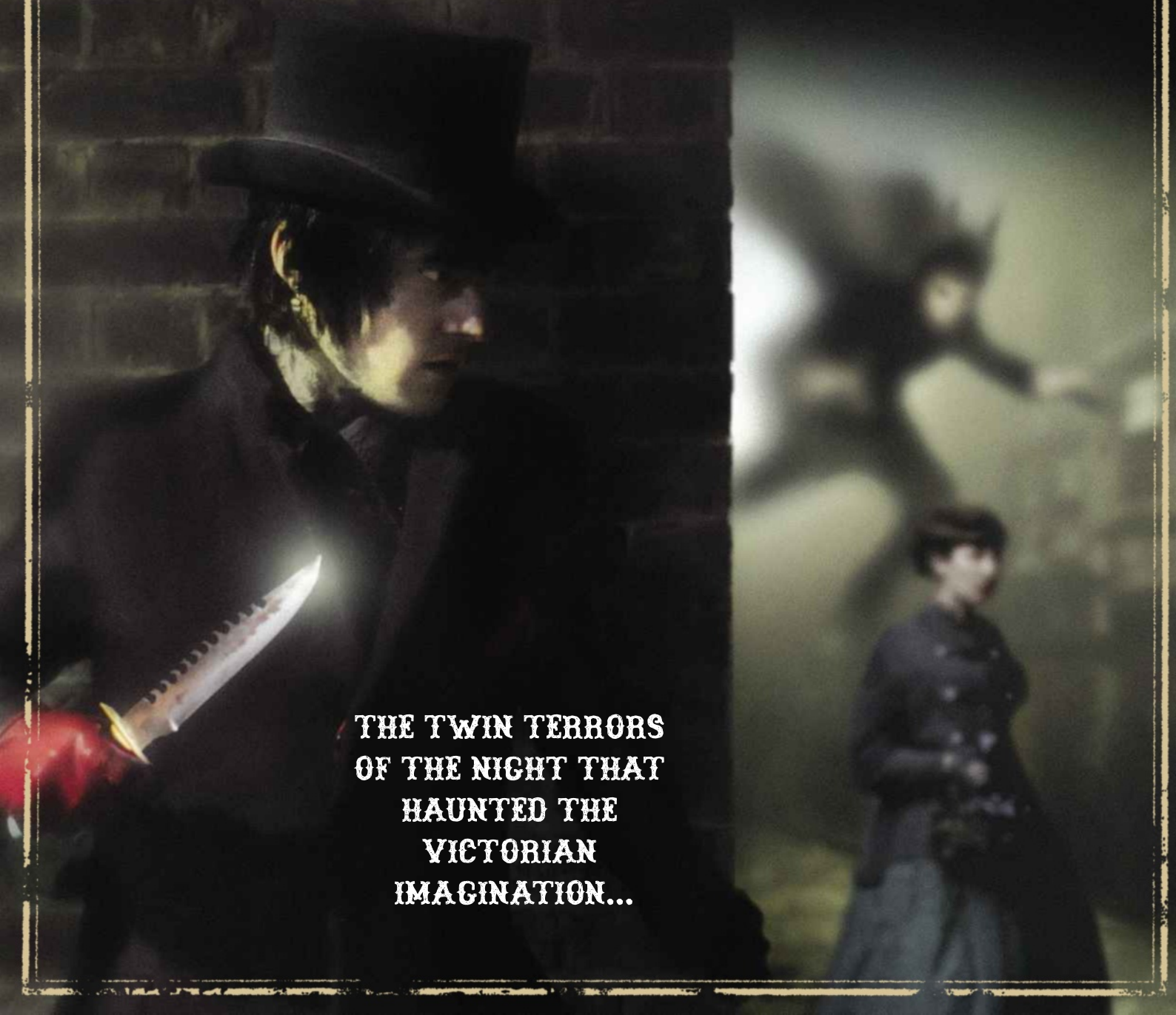
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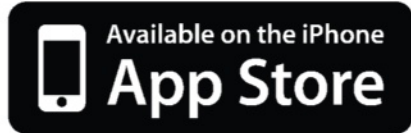


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# editorial

## Nightstalkers

At about 8.30pm on 12 December, a pregnant woman walking near her home in Hertford Street, Cambridge, was slashed across the face by a phantom attacker, seemingly at random. Hayley Baker, a 29-year-old vet, said: "I felt something brush my cheek and saw a man dressed in black running past me and ahead. That's when I felt blood trickling down my face."

The mystery assailant ran off into the night. Residents of the area expressed their shock at the attack. In the words of one: "It is terrifying to think there is some maniac out there... We can't believe something like this could happen in Hertford Street of all places." The victim was taken to hospital with serious facial injuries and will reportedly be left with a permanent scar from the attack. (*Cambridge News*, 13+14 Dec 2013).

Thankfully, such 'phantom slasher' attacks (though documented on many occasions in *FT*) are relatively rare; but it was an odd synchronicity that as the Cambridge slasher appeared out of the night we were spending our own dark winter evenings finishing work on an issue devoted in part to the two most notorious monsters to stalk the streets of Victorian London: Jack the Ripper and Spring-heeled Jack. SHJ, whose superhuman exploits were first reported in 1838, is usually believed to be a 'phantom attacker', the superhuman product of a full-blown panic who was never caught because he didn't actually exist; the Ripper, on the other hand, committed real crimes, the evidence of his reality clear in their ghastly results. But, as our mini-symposium of articles reveals, these two Jacks can also be viewed as figures in a complex landscape made up of real crime, moral panic, popular fantasy and the very fabric of the rapidly expanding Victorian metropolis. As Jacob Middleton shows (p30), 19th-century London was a city whose liminal suburban areas were seemingly crawling with 'monsters', and where women in particular felt extremely vulnerable. And as Theo Paijmans's latest 'Blast from the Past' (p28) demonstrates, it wasn't long before SHJ made his way across the Atlantic to stalk the newly-built streets of America, taking on a host of varied but strangely consistent guises: 'Jack the Slasher'; 'Jack the Hugger'; 'Jack the Acid Thrower'; 'Jack the Cutter'; even 'Jack the Tyre-Slasher'. Most of the reported victims of these phantom attackers were, of course, women. Even if the yellowing newspaper reports of such scares cannot be wholly believed, they articulate genuine fears and anxieties, perhaps driven by social change as much as actual crime.

And even in the case of Jack the Ripper, asks Scott Wood (p40), can we be sure that the black-

cloaked, top-hatted figure of penny dreadfuls and Hammer Horror films was a real individual and not a composite figure conjured from the realm of urban legend to lend a sense of coherence to a series of horrifying and baffling murders?

The Ripper's slippage from the world of fact into that of fiction is represented here by a real rarity: we reprint the first chapter of the first English-language novel about the murderer - just as it appeared in the pages of that fortan favourite, the *Illustrated Police News* (p36).

**IN DEFENCE OF THE OUTSIDER**

We were sad to hear of the passing of Colin Wilson on 5 December 2013; it was perhaps an unfortunate date to die, as he shared it with a

certain Nelson Mandela and the BBC felt, rightly or wrongly, that this trumped all other shufflings off of this mortal coil (as well as East Anglia being largely underwater) for the rest of the week.

The broadsheets did manage some grudging coverage of the departed writer, but there was no doubt that he took his 'outsider' status with him on the next stage of his journey. Our own plucky Gary Lachman made a stand, though, calling out

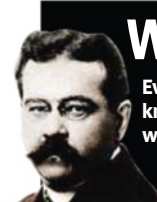
one Terence Blacker, author of a particularly snarky piece about CW in the *Independent* (9 Dec 2013): "I have reflected on how best to respond to this piece of utter garbage," wrote Gary, "and after much thought this is my conclusion: I challenge you and the editor who commissioned this appalling exercise in inanity and pointless insult to a duel. Simultaneously or in sequence, it doesn't matter. This is public and for once I hope the social networks do their thing and spread my challenge far and wide."

We don't know whether Mr Blacker has taken up Gary's challenge or weapons have been chosen, but our money is definitely on Mr Lachman, whose obituary of CW is on p24.

*David Sutton*  
 DAVID R SUTTON

*Bob Rickard*  
 BOB RICKARD

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**SEE PAGE 78**



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# strangedays

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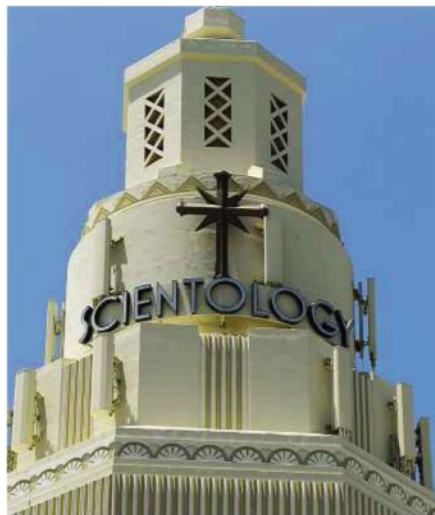
The Church of Scientology is a religion – it's official. With the ruling of the Supreme Court in December, English law caught up with the opinion of most scholars of religion.<sup>1</sup>

The decision was the result of an appeal by Louisa Hodkin and Alessandro Calcioli, who had been brought up in the Church of Scientology (CoS) and wanted a religious wedding in a Scientology chapel in London. But a peculiarity of English law denied them this.

Since the Marriage Act (1994) you can have a secular wedding almost anywhere – stately homes and hotels have found a new source of income. But under the Places of Worship Registration Act 1855 a religious marriage service must be in a place registered for religious worship. In a similar case in 1970, Lord Denning said although there were exceptions, such as Buddhist temples, generally “religious worship means reverence or veneration of God or of a Supreme Being” which he didn't find in Scientology.

On this basis, the Registrar-General refused permission for Ms Hodkin and Mr Calcioli to marry in the chapel, and a High Court judge last year said he could not overturn that ruling.

Giving the ruling of the Supreme Court on 11 December 2013, Lord Toulson said that: “to confine religion to a religion which involves belief in a ‘supreme deity’ leads into difficult theological territory... Scientologists do believe in a supreme deity of a kind, but of an abstract and impersonal nature. Ideas about the nature of God are the stuff of theological debate.”



### The Church of Scientology is a tiny religion in Britain

He went on to give a definition of religion: “I would describe religion in summary as a spiritual or non-secular belief system, held by a group of adherents, which claims to explain mankind's place in the universe and relationship with the infinite, and to teach its adherents how they are to live their lives in conformity with the spiritual understanding associated with the belief system... Such a belief system may or may not involve belief in a supreme being, but it does involve a belief that there is more to be understood about mankind's nature and relationship to the universe than can be gained from

the senses or from science.”

He said it would be “illogical, discriminatory and unjust” to prevent the couple from marrying in accordance with their beliefs.

The main implication of the Supreme Court's decision – beyond the wedding of a young couple in the place of their choice – is likely to be on taxation. Places of worship do not have to pay business rates. Local government

minister Brandon Lewis said his department would be taking legal advice. “I am very concerned about this ruling and its implications for business rates. Hard-pressed taxpayers will wonder why Scientology premises should now be given tax cuts when local firms have to pay their fair share. It will remain the case that premises which are not genuinely open to the public will not qualify for tax relief,” he said.

A spokeswoman for the Charity Commission said that it “is considering the impact of the judgement”. In 1999 they refused CoS an application for charitable status, saying: “Scientology is not a religion for the purposes of English charity law.” But this was on the basis of “promoting religious education for the public benefit”. Tim Rutherford, a lawyer specialising in charities, said that that decision was because “The manner in which Scientologists carry out their activities was considered to be

too private to demonstrate any public benefit.”<sup>2</sup>

This landmark decision is a PR coup for CoS, which the couple admitted to Sky News had funded the legal case. Both are third-generation Scientologists, coming from prominent families in the Church. Louisa Hodkin is the daughter of solicitor Peter Hodkin, who has acted for CoS in the past, and granddaughter of the former headmistress of an independent school near East Grinstead, attended by many CoS children.<sup>3</sup> Alessandro Calcioli is the grandson of former head of public relations for CoS in Britain, David Gaiman, and nephew of fantasy writer Neil Gaiman, who no longer has any connection with the Church.

But in a real sense it will make little difference. Despite its apparently high profile, the Church of Scientology is a tiny religion in Britain; in the 2011 census only 2,418 people in England and Wales identified as Scientologists, behind the Bahá'í Faith (5,021), Rastafarians (7,906), Jains (20,288) and Pagans (56,620). Despite the oft-quoted figure of 10 million members worldwide, reliable sources estimate the true membership as low as 25,000-40,000.

David V Barrett

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> e.g. “Scientology: a Secularised Religion” in Bryan R Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, OUP 1990: 267-88; David V Barrett, *The New Believers*, Cassell 2001: 447.

<sup>2</sup> [www.thirdsector.co.uk/news/1224712/supreme-court-ruling-church-scientology-affect-legal-meaning-religion-charity-commission-says/](http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/news/1224712/supreme-court-ruling-church-scientology-affect-legal-meaning-religion-charity-commission-says/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.greenfieldsschool.com/hubbard.htm](http://www.greenfieldsschool.com/hubbard.htm)

GETTY IMAGES





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# Comedy signer

## Schizophrenic imposter at Mandela service

The man who acted as a sign-language interpreter at Nelson Mandela's memorial service on 10 December was an imposter who simply made meaningless hand gestures for hours as he stood on stage next to President Obama and other world leaders. Deaf groups said he made no sense in any language, and didn't seem to know the recognised signs for South Africa, Mr Mandela's clan name Madiba, President Jacob Zuma, Thabo Mbeki, the former president – or even 'Thank you'. Ingrid Parkin, principal of the St Vincent School for the Deaf in Johannesburg, said all of South Africa's 11 official languages are covered by the same signs, none of which the imposter used.

Thamsanqa Jantjie, 34, who

wore a government clearance pass, was watched by millions around the world, standing only three feet from Obama as he eulogised Mr Mandela during the service in Soweto, Johannesburg, attended by 91 heads of state. The African National Congress party confirmed that it had used Jantjie "as a volunteer" at several events in the past, including its centenary celebrations in Bloemfontein last year. "We've never had any complaints before," said spokesman Keith Khoza – a claim contradicted by Wilma Newhoudt-Druchen, an ANC MP and the vice-chairman of the Deaf Federation of South Africa, who said the Federation had submitted a report about the man to the party in 2012 but received no



is here," he said. "And the problem, I don't know the attack of this problem, how will it come – sometimes I react violent, sometimes I will see things that chase me."

Apparently,

response.

Jantjie defended his bizarre performance, insisting he was a "champion of sign language", but said he had long suffered from schizophrenia and had spent more than a year in hospital. He claimed he lost concentration at the memorial service, began hearing voices and suffered from hallucinations. He did not know what brought on the attack, although he said the jubilation he felt that day could have played a part. "I see angels come from the sky to the stadium – I start realising that the problem

Jantjie was the subject of a fraud investigation, for allegedly claiming £88,000 for interpretation services not rendered. The company that put him up for the job at the service seemed to have "vanished". It then emerged that Jantjie, who is receiving treatment for his schizophrenia, had faced charges of rape (1994), theft (1995), housebreaking (1997), malicious damage to property (1998), murder, attempted murder and kidnapping (2003) – but had been found mentally unfit to stand trial. *D.Telegraph, Metro, 12+13 Dec; [AP,AFP] http://rt.com, 14 Dec 2013.*

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

## EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Scientists closer to growing new teeth

*D.Telegraph, 9 Mar 2013.*

Students fight for their right to cheat

*Canberra Times, 22 June 2013.*

Family: Police used too much force in killing

*(Minnesota) Star Tribune, 7 Nov 2010.*

Penguins eliminate stubborn Islanders

*(Minnesota) Star Tribune, 12 May 2013.*

Exploding rhubarb chutney lifts the ceiling at flat

*D.Telegraph, 6 July 2013.*

Angels fly to aid holiday makers

*Halifax Courier, 21 June 2013.*

Holy Family stays on fire

*(Minnesota) Star Tribune, 17 Nov 2012.*

Delta may soon hold stake in Virgin

*(Minnesota) Star Tribune, 11 Dec 2012.*

Ark saved from administration

*Wolverhampton Express & Star, 1 July 2013.*







## OARFISH PORTENTS

On 13 October, marine biologist Jasmine Santana, snorkelling at Toyon Bay, Santa Catalina Island, off the coast of California, came upon the corpse of an 18ft (5.5m) oarfish, lying on the seabed 30ft (9m) down. With the help of 15 friends, she hauled it ashore. Then on 18 October, another oarfish, this one 15ft (4.5m) long and with 6ft (1.8m) -long ovaries full of eggs, was found on a beach south of Santa Catalina Island, near the city of Oceanside. Neither carcass showed any signs of injury or disease. Oarfish (*Regalecus glesne* or 'king of herrings') live to 3,000ft (914m), are rarely seen and remain largely unstudied. They have been found to grow to at least 30ft (9m), making them the longest bony fish in the world. They weigh up to a quarter of a ton (254kg), and are believed to swim vertically. Despite their fierce appearance – knife-shaped body, huge eyes and crimson mane like a cock's comb – they are docile creatures that feed on krill. They probably account for many 'sea serpent' legends following sightings by ancient mariners. "Mostly they spend their time quite near the surface, suspended vertically with their heads up, just passively floating," said Tyson Roberts, an ichthyologist with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, who believes there are more one species of oarfish. He also believes they have the capacity to change gender.

For a stunning photo of a 23ft (7m) oarfish washed up dead on Coronado Beach, San Diego, California, in November 1996, see **FT97:16-17**. A 11ft 7in

(3.5m) infant oarfish was landed near Saltburn, Cleveland, in February 2003 [**FT171:20**], and another infant, 15ft (4.6m) long, was washed up at Perth, Australia, on 6 February 2005 [**FT196:14**].

In the year leading up to the devastating 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, between 10 and 20 oarfish washed up dead along the coast of Japan. Ancient Japanese fishermen's lore suggests the creature – known as the "messenger from the sea god's palace" – rises to the surface to warn of impending earthquakes. On 19 October, the day following the discovery of the second oarfish in California, a 6.4 magnitude quake was recorded in the Gulf of California.

Rachel Grant, a lecturer in animal biology at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, said there might be some truth to the Japanese legend, and she has begun a study to test the idea. "It's theoretically possible, because when an earthquake occurs there can be a build-up of pressure in the rocks which can lead to electrostatic charges that cause electrically charged ions to be released into the water," said Dr Grant. "This can lead to the formation of hydrogen peroxide, which is a toxic compound. The charged ions can also oxidise organic matter which could either kill the fish or force them to leave the deep ocean and rise to the surface." Another possibility is that prior to a quake there is a release of large quantities of carbon monoxide. (*Sydney D.Telegraph*, 17+21 Oct; *Independent*, 24 Oct; *NY Times*, 4 Nov 2013. **PHOTO: Catalina Island Marine Institute**





## SIDELINES...

### NEIGHBOUR FROM HELL

Ken S—, living in California's rural Tehama County, claimed in late October that Bigfoot was throwing rocks at him. He said the 15ft (4.5m) manimal arrived in woodland behind his house two weeks earlier and had been responding to hunting-style calls. He claimed to have filmed it, and said rocks were being thrown over his head and piles of wood moved, sometimes blocking his driveway. *MX News (Sydney)*, 24 Oct 2013.

### NOT A GOOD SIGN

Edward Sant, seven, was standing outside a Tesco Express store when a section of the famous sign became dislodged and fell on him. He was treated for a deep gash on his neck and taken to hospital. Edward was visiting his grandfather Robbie Robinson, who is leading local opposition against plans for a £20 million Tesco superstore in Brixham, Devon. The irony was not lost on him. *Western Daily Press*, 23 Aug 2013.

### SURREAL GUIDE

China's Communist Party tourism chiefs have told people going abroad that they must cut back on limp handshakes, public displays of nose-picking, swimming pool soiling and the discussion of pork. The stern edicts appear in a 64-page *Guidebook for Civilised Tourism*, issued on 1 October. *D.Telegraph*, 3 Oct 2013.

MARTIN ROSS



# Dead to the world...

## A round-up of recent mummifications within the family



### HOLY WOMAN

On 27 October, the body of Graziella Giraudo (above), who would now be 68, was found in a locked bedroom cupboard in a villa in Borgo San Dalmazzo, near Cuneo in northern Italy. Wrapped in bedsheets like a shroud, she was sitting upright in a chair, with her left hand resting on her knee, her right hand raised in blessing, and her face in a good state of preservation. Investigators believe she may have been embalmed. According to *La Stampa*, Graziella had been dubbed the "Holy Woman" due to her healing powers and ability to predict the future using the tarot. She had been sharing the three-storey house with Rosa, the mother of her son-in-law, who used to assist her with her tarot reading sessions by welcoming clients into the house. Graziella was separated from her husband and two children, and Rosa had told the Holy Woman's relatives that she had left on a trip four months earlier, "but would be back".

Rosa had recently died of cancer and in her final days, dozens of people visited the house to pay their respects. Little did they know that Graziella's body was hidden away upstairs. It was only after Rosa's funeral that

her son came upon the macabre tableau. "The body is very clean, as if someone had looked after it," said coroner Mario Abrate. Mayor Gian Paolo Beretta said: "It seems impossible for something like this to happen in a community where everyone knows each other. It's like a horror film." According to *La Stampa*, Graziella had apparently been ill, but continued to read tarot cards and Rosa was "always by her side, welcoming and attending to visitors". Locals who spoke of Graziella's talent as a fortune-teller – how "even nuns sought out her advice" – said they couldn't remember seeing her after 1995. "We cannot exclude the possibility that she was

## Italian 'Holy Woman' may have been embalmed



venerated" after death, said local prosecutor Massimiliano Bolla. "The lady who lived with the mummy came here to buy a lot of fat. It did seem like a strange request," said a local butcher. *Digital Journal*, 30 Oct; [AFP] 4 Nov 2013.

### BEDSIDE MUMMY

A grieving 69-year-old Belgian woman was so devastated by her husband's death that she couldn't bear to report it – and slept next to his corpse in their Brussels apartment for almost a year. Marcel H, 79, died of an asthma attack in November 2012, and his mummified remains lay undiscovered until the landlord complained to the authorities that the couple had not paid rent for several months. Neighbours, apparently, didn't notice any unusual odours. "A body can mummify in a dry, warm environment," said Philippe Boxho, pathologist at the Forensic Centre of Liège. "It takes at least a week to reach such a

state. In this case the body had rotted in the bed and his internal organs had liquefied. This liquid would have spread and the bed would have been swarming with insects as the body rotted; this would have been a real shame. Even though the smell of human decay is very specific, many people equate that smell to the smell of garbage. Once the body has become rotten the smell does decrease significantly. This is not the first time I have made a discovery of this kind. I've been faced with two or three other occasions where people have continued to sleep with the corpse of their partner." *dailymail.co.uk*, 19 Nov 2013.

LEFT: The mummified remains of Marcel H, whose grieving wife could not bear to report his death.





ABOVE: Joni Bakaradze's corpse is pickled in vodka for his small son's benefit.

## COMPLETELY -PICKLED

A woman whose son died 18 years ago pickled him in alcohol and stashed his corpse in the basement where she has cared for him ever since. She did this because her husband said that his 21-month-old grandson should be enabled to love his late father. Tsiuri Kvaratskhelia keeps Joni Bakaradze's body in a wooden coffin beneath the family home in Georgia, eastern Europe. Joni died in July 1995 aged 22, and is now mummified. For the first four years, the family used traditional methods to preserve the body, such as balsam sap. Then: "One night I had a dream when a voice told me to treat Joni by rubbing vodka so... I've been using spirit liquid poultices since then," said Mrs Kvaratskhelia. "You must not leave the body without them overnight as the skin will turn black." For the first 10 years on his birthday she gave him a change of clothes – but then decay made this impossible. "He wanted his kid to see him that way," said Mrs Kvaratskhelia. "I believe from that point on the kid started to love his father." There is a viewing window for family and friends (right). *Huffington Post*, 9 Sept; *(Melbourne) Herald-Sun*, 12 Sept 2013.

## FENDING OFF EVIL

A family of three from Ramavarma Puram – a neighbourhood of Nagercoil in Tamil Nadu, southern India – lived with a dead relative for 10

months because they thought keeping her corpse around would help fend off evil spirits. After Umadevi, 56, died on 3 December 2012 her family kept her body under a bedspread. The authorities discovered it after a neighbour complained about the smell. Umadevi's mother, Sarojini, her son Sivaraman and her brother Sellampillai were notoriously superstitious. Sellampillai told the police that his father had died after seeing a ghost in the house and so he had decided to keep his sister's body in the house in order to make sure that no more spirits would trouble them. The three were taken to hospital to be treated for a psychological disorder and a possible infection caused by the decomposing body. *dailymail.co.uk*, 31 Oct; *TNT magazine*, 5 Nov 2013.



ABOVE: Some day, son, all this will be yours – Joni Bakaradze's basement coffin.

## MORE MUMMIES

- A Russian kept her husband's body in her apartment in Yaroslavl region for three years, ordering her five young children to feed and talk to him so he would be resurrected. The children would tell her he talked and ate his broth, knowing he was dead. She herself did not go into the room, fearing it would halt the ex-Pentecostal missionary's resurrection. In July 2012, when the family decided to move, two of the girls, aged nine and 14, dumped the torso in bushes and the head and hands in rubbish bins. *MX News (Sydney)*, *Eve Standard (London)*, 20 Nov 2012.

- Three Japanese siblings – a 65-year-old man and two women aged 59 and 52 – were arrested after it was discovered that they had kept their mother's skeleton in their house in Usa, south-west Japan, for three years after her death. Police found Mrs Ishigai's body lying face up on a futon – which her children said was "for religious reasons". They denied the charge of corpse abandonment, saying their mother was in fact still alive. "Our mother has become a god," they told officers. "She is not dead but is in the process of ascending to higher dimensions." The police said they believed that the woman would be 88 years old had she been still alive. *D.Mail*, 7 Mar 2013

- A man who slept with his dead wife's body in Belgrade, Serbia, for 15 nights told police he thought she was asleep. *Sun*, 24 April 2013.

## SIDELINES...

### FELINE AGGRO

A 31-year-old woman was walking her poodle near the city of Belfort in north-eastern France on 21 July when a gang of six feral cats set upon her, knocking her to the ground, biting her on the leg and arms, and piercing an artery. She was treated for injuries at a nearby hospital and given a rabies jab, while a vet treated her poodle. *livescience.com*, 26 July 2013.

### TOUGH DEFENDER

Bosnian goalkeeper Dusko Krtalica, 51, was hit in the head by a rifle bullet fired in the air at a nearby wedding reception in Sarajevo. He thought the sharp pain came from crashing into the goal post earlier and carried on playing, but was eventually taken off feeling woozy. *Metro*, 20 June 2013.

### MINORITY REPORT

Mumbai police arrested a restaurant owner for drinking tea "in a suspicious manner". Vijav Patil was charged under a law that allows preventative detention of someone suspected of being about to commit a crime. Justice Gautam Patel of Mumbai High Court ordered police to drop the case, saying: "We know of no way to drink tea 'suspiciously'." *MX News (Sydney)*, 23 Sept 2013.





## SIDELINES...

### OH OH SEVEN!

Following a stroke in 2007, a Canadian man of 45 developed synaesthesia: he tastes colours and is disgusted by blue shades. High-pitched voices and brass instruments – specifically the theme music from James Bond films – trigger out-of-body experiences and orgasmic sensations. It is only the second known case of synaesthesia after a stroke. *MX News (Sydney), 1 Aug; D. Telegraph (Sydney), 2 Aug 2013.*

### RUN, TOM, RUN

Australian Tom Dennis, 52, has become the fastest person to circumnavigate the world on foot after an epic journey of 16,200 miles (26,070km) in 622 days, beginning and ending at the Sydney Opera House. He ran roughly a marathon a day, starting in December 2011 – and flew between the continents. *D.Telegraph, 14 Sept 2013.*

### WEE HERO

A medal awarded to a dog that extinguished an incendiary bomb by peeing on it during the Blitz has been found during a house clearance in Bristol. Juliana, a Great Dane, soaked the device after it fell through the roof of its owner's house in April 1941. Three years later, the dog alerted customers to a fire in its owner's shoe shop, thus earning a second Blue Cross Medal – which sold at auction for £1,100. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 5 Sept 2013.*



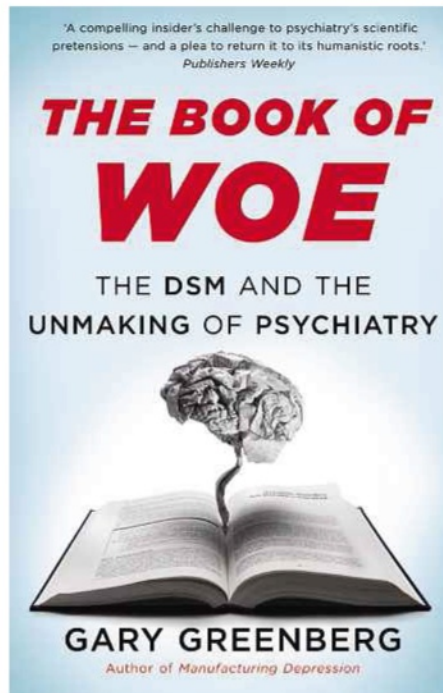
## MEDICAL BAG

MORE MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSES, FALSE CANNIBALISM CONFESSION, SEEING UPSIDE-DOWN AND SELF-HEALING

### MISERY MEDICALISED

In *The Book of Woe*, psychotherapist Gary Greenberg offers a scathing attack on the so-called “psychiatrists’ bible”, the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Medical Disorders (DSM)*, the 5th edition of which – *DSM-5* – was published last May. As a grotesque example of how suffering is “medicalised”, Greenberg recalls that, in 1850, a physician called Samuel Cartwright reported a new disease in the highly respected *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*. Cartwright named it drapetomania, from the ancient Greek *drapetes* for a runaway slave; in other words, here was a disease that “caused Negroes to run away”. It had one primary diagnostic symptom – “absconding from service” – and a few secondary ones including “sulkiness and dissatisfaction just prior to flight”. Greenberg suggests that drapetomania might well have made it into the *DSM*, had the manual existed at the time. After all, he notes, homosexuality was listed as a “sociopathic personality disorder” when the *DSM* was first published in 1952, and remained so until 1973. “Doctors were paid to treat it, scientists to search for its causes and cures,” he wrote. “Gay people themselves underwent countless therapies including electric shocks, years on the couch, behaviour modification and surrogate sex.”

In order to remove the stigma attached to the word “disorder”, *DSM-5* is replacing the term “gender identity disorder”, for children and adults who strongly believe they were born the wrong gender, with “gender dysphoria”. The term “Asperger’s disorder” doesn’t appear, and instead its symptoms come under “autism spectrum disorder”. That umbrella diagnosis includes children with severe autism, who often do not talk or interact, as well as those



### “Suddenly, everyone and his brother was bipolar”

with milder forms, right up to “idiot savants” who have high intelligence and vast knowledge on narrow subjects but lack social skills. Such a diagnosis appears too nebulous to be useful.

*The Book of Woe* details how the *DSM*’s decisions have created “false epidemics” of over-diagnosis and over-treatment. In 1994, for example, the diagnostic threshold for bipolar disorder was lowered to cover people without full-blown mania – their elevated moods or exuberance being labelled “hypomania”. As a result, bipolar diagnoses soared, as did prescriptions for mood stabilisers and antipsychotic drugs, which in the US were for the first time being advertised directly to the public. “Suddenly, everyone and his brother was bipolar,” says Greenberg. About six million

people are now diagnosed as bipolar in the US; in the UK, it’s one in 100.

Most alarmingly, diagnoses of child bipolar illness increased 40-fold over a decade. “In 2007 alone half a million children, 20,000 of them under six, were prescribed drugs that a decade before would have been prescribed only in the most dire circumstances,” says Greenberg. Side effects of some of the drug cocktails include obesity, diabetes and suicidal thoughts. In an attempt to reduce bipolar diagnoses in children, *DSM-5* has introduced a new illness, Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder (DMDD), to cover intensive temper tantrums – but it is feared that this will lead to a further treatment epidemic. Naturally, the pharmaceutical industry is delighted.

Greenberg is particularly dismissive of *DSM-5*’s changes to the criteria for Major Depressive Disorder. Until now, this diagnosis was specifically excluded in cases of recent bereavement, on the grounds that grief is normal. That exemption has been removed in *DSM-5*, leading critics to argue that grief itself has been labelled a mental disorder.

“There have been studies showing 50 per cent of the Western population would now generate a *DSM* diagnosis,” said Prof Gordon Parker of the University of New South Wales. Put another way: half the population has a mental disorder, according to the *DSM*. Greenberg believes that psychiatrists must narrow their scope – to make a “reasonable claim” for certain mental illnesses falling within their domain. “When the *DSM* was published there were 14 mental disorders and now there are 250 – it needs to scale back,” he said. (*The Book of Woe: The DSM and the Unmaking of Psychiatry* by Gary Greenberg, Ingram International Inc). *Guardian, 2 Dec 2012; (Queensland) Courier-Mail, 18-19 May; D.Telegraph, 7 Oct 2013.*





YVONNE ASELL / SVD / SCANPIX / PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES



ABOVE: Sture Bergwall, who falsely confessed to killing dozens of Scandinavians.

## FANTASY CANNIBAL

In the 1990s, under interrogation by the Swedish police, Sture Bergwall (then calling himself Thomas Quick), confessed to raping, killing, and (in some cases) eating more than 30 people in Sweden, Norway and Finland. In a series of trials between 1994 and 2001, he was convicted of murdering eight people, including three children, and was locked up indefinitely in an institution for the criminally insane. Two decades later, after an investigation by a journalist and a documentary filmmaker, it emerged that Bergwall had invented the serial-killing alter ego 'Thomas Quick' after being prompted by zealous investigators only too eager to close their cases. At the time he was pumped full of benzodiazepines, having been in a psychiatric hospital for three years. There was no forensic or witness statements to back up his 'confessions'. On 31 July 2013 the last murder conviction was overturned when Bergwall, 63, who had been in Säter psychiatric hospital for the last 22 years, was acquitted of the killing and dismemberment of 15-year-old Charles Zelmanovits in 1976. It was announced that Bergwall might be freed in two or three months – so maybe he is now back in society. He had emerged from a decade-long narcotic fog in 2002, when he was taken off his medication.

When Bergwall was first incarcerated for bank robbery in 1991, he said he was feeling lost and battling with low self-worth. "I wanted to be this interesting person," he said. "I didn't want to be this grey, bad person. I wanted to be something else." He agreed to start therapy, and as the sessions progressed he noticed the darker his tales, the more people listened. Craving attention, he started to open up with stories of childhood abuse and trauma. He began to weave ever more intricate fantasies, until he finally confessed to a killing that was dominating the Swedish media at the time: the death of 11-year-old Johan Asplund. The confessions continued to tumble out, aided by



ABOVE: Economist Bojana Danilovic catching up with the upside-down news.

the high doses of benzodiazepines he was on. Needless to say, those who actually committed the murders could well still be at large. *Guardian, Independent, 1 Aug; D.Mirror, 2 Aug 2013.*

## TOPSY-TURVY

Bojana Danilovic, 28, an economist from Uzice, Serbia, sees everything upside-down. She reads newspapers topsy-turvy, needs an inverted PC screen and keyboard, and turns her television on its head. "To me it's normal," she said. "My eyes see images the right way but my brain changes them. Doctors don't know how, just that it does, and where it happens in my brain. They've seen people write the way I see, but no one like me." US experts say she has "spatial orientation phenomenon" (giving a medical mystery a fancy name gives the comforting illusion of progress; better still, say it in Latin). *Sun, 15 Mar 2013.*

## SELF-REPAIR

A baby who desperately needed a heart transplant baffled doctors after his own heart healed itself. Five-month-old Oscar Tasker's survival chances were slim when the left side of his heart 'died' after cardiac arrest. He had been on a waiting list at the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle. "It's like something just clicked," said his father Jason Tasker, 33, of Coventry. Consultant Richard Kirk said: "Someone up above must have been smiling down." *Metro, 16 July 2013.*

## SIDELINES...

### FORCED RESURRECTION

More than 10 men in the Chinese city of Wuhan, Hubei province, claimed a soft drink seller called Han had been beaten to death by the hated 'chengguan', civil enforcement officers. The men demanded compensation while the 'victim' lay under a sheet on a gurney. However, unable to stand the 36°C (98°F) heat, he jumped up and took a drink of water. Han and two others were arrested. *Irish Times, 7 Aug 2013.*

### DUMMY MUMMY

While searching his grandmother's attic in Diepholz, northern Germany, Alexander Kettler, 10, discovered what appeared to be a bandaged mummy in a sarcophagus complete with death mask, canopic jar and other artefacts. The boy's father recalled that his father had acquired a chest in North Africa in the Fifties. Tests revealed 20th century bandages, a real human skull, and a plastic skeleton chemically treated to resemble bone. *D.Telegraph, 3 Aug, 26 Sept; [AFP] 4 Sept; Der Spiegel, 24 Sept 2013.*

### SPONGE SANDWICH

While pregnant with her two children, Kelly-Marie Pearce, 28, from Wolverhampton munched her way through scores of sandwiches made from washing-up sponges and sand. Her odd craving began when she watched her mother-in-law change the sand in her pet parrot's cage. Both children were born healthy. *Sun, 19 Aug 2013.*

### WEB WIZARD

In 2002, university dropout Luo Shun from Hunan province in China began working as a freelance feng shui consultant, charging for advice on auspicious dates and names. In October 2012, Luo, 31, opened an online store on Taobao, China's answer to Amazon, and is now making £109,000 a month selling online spells. *D.Telegraph, 10 July 2013.*





## REPTILE CAPTOR

A New Zealand kayaker, identified only as Ryan, was rescued on 31 August after being trapped by a 20ft (6m) crocodile on remote Governor Island off the coast of Western Australia's far north. He told his rescuer, Don Macleod of Kalumburu, that the croc stalked him every time he tried to paddle his 2.5m (8ft) kayak the 4km (2.5 miles) to the mainland. He had run out of food and had about a litre of water left by the time Macleod saw his light signal. (Sydney) *D.Telegraph, Scotsman, 3 Sept 2013.*

## ANGRY TIGERS

Six men searching for rare incense in Sumatra's Gunung Leuser National Park accidentally snared a tiger cub in a trap intended to catch deer for food. Five tigers chased them up a tree and killed one man who fell after a branch broke. Rescuers with dart guns finally reached the survivors after five days. *D.Telegraph, (Dublin) Metro Herald, 9 July 2013.*

## WELL WOMAN

A Chinese woman who fell down a well survived for 16 days by eating raw corn and drinking rainwater. Su Qixiu, 48, was gathering herbs when she fell 4m (13ft) down an abandoned well in Henan province. Her husband and children searched for her in vain; she lost 15kg (33lb), about a quarter of her body weight, before being found by a passer-by on 16 September. *Metro, <i></i>, 19 Sept 2013.*

## PHAN-TOMCAT

Malcolm Pennicard, 69, a banker from Great Sutton near Chester, hears three ghostly meows every time his Nissan X-Trail 4x4 passes a certain road junction. He has driven family and friends to the junction, and they have also heard the inexplicable sounds. "It is obviously trying to tell me something," said Mr Pennicard, "but I don't know cat language." *Sun, 21 Sept 2013.*



## VAMPIRE BUG

The unusual markings on the back of this leafhopper bear an uncanny likeness to Dracula. The insect was spotted in the wildlife garden of the Natural History Museum in London. The garden is meant to encourage people to interact with wildlife in the city, and will reopen in April 2014.

PHOTOS: TRUSTEES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM LONDON





# Write Your Way To A New Career!

## Writers Bureau Celebrates Twenty-five Years of Helping New Writers

by Nick Daws

When distance-learning pioneer Ernest Metcalfe founded The Writers Bureau in the late 1980s, he can hardly have dared hope that twenty-five years on it would be acknowledged as Britain's leading writing school. Yet so it proved, with thousands of Writers Bureau students seeing their work in print for the first time. And, for many of those who persevered with their writing, the dream of becoming a successful writer has turned into reality.

Students such as Tim Skelton. An engineer by profession, he had always harboured an ambition to write, and at the age of 40 signed up with The Writers Bureau. The decision changed his life: "My writing career took off exponentially. I started appearing regularly in lifestyle and in-flight magazines. The following year I was commissioned by Bradt Travel Guides to write a guidebook to Luxembourg.

*"My writing career took off exponentially."*

I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated guidebooks for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA."

Another student who benefited was Hazel McHaffie. Hazel wanted to make her academic work in Medical Ethics more accessible to people, and decided to write the themes into novels. Following her Writers Bureau course, Hazel has had five novels published, and appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. She also has her own website at [www.hazelmchaffie.com](http://www.hazelmchaffie.com).

Sometimes studying with The Writers Bureau takes students down new and unexpected paths. Patricia Holness originally enrolled on The Writers Bureau's Writing for Children course. However, she soon realised that what she was learning applied to other types of writing as well.

She is now a full-time writer, regularly selling short stories for both

children and adults. She also has a monthly column in Devon Life.

These are just a selection from the inspirational true stories from students of The Writers Bureau. There's no reason why YOU couldn't be their next success story. With a 15-day free trial and money-back guarantee, there is nothing to lose and potentially a whole new career to gain! So why not visit their website at [www.writersbureau.com](http://www.writersbureau.com) or call on Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

Hazel McHaffie



Tim Skelton



## How To Become A Successful Writer!

As a freelance writer, you can earn very good money in your spare time, writing the stories, articles, books, scripts etc that editors and publishers want. Millions of pounds are paid annually in fees and royalties. Earning your share can be fun, profitable and creatively most fulfilling.

To help you become a successful writer we offer you a first-class, home-study course from professional writers – with individual guidance from expert tutors and flexible tuition tailored to your own requirements. You are shown how to make the most of your abilities, where to find ideas, how to turn them into publishable writing and how to sell them. In short, we show you exactly how to become a published writer. **If you want writing success – this is the way to start!**

Whatever your writing ambitions, we can help you to achieve them. For we give you an effective, stimulating and most enjoyable creative writing course... appreciated by students and acclaimed by experts.

It's ideal for beginners. No previous experience or special background is required. You write and study at your own pace – you do not have to rush – as you have four years to complete your course. **Many others have been successful this way.** If they can do it – why can't you?

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# THE CURIOUS STORM GLASS

The origins of the storm glass are obscure and its efficacy in predicting the weather has been questioned. **DAVID HAMBLING** asks if this alchemical enigma might actually work.

**T**he storm glass or camphor glass is a subtle contrivance claimed to be able to forecast the weather by unknown means. Does it work by science, alchemy or wishful thinking? The answer turns out to be surprisingly complex.

The storm glass was popularised by Vice-Admiral Robert Fitzroy in his 1863 work *The Weather Book: A Manual Of Practical Meteorology*. This was a highly influential work; the *Spectator's* review was typical in asserting that: "It is probable that Admiral Fitzroy knows more about the weather than any other man in England." Fitzroy was keen on scientific forecasting, dismissing pseudoscientific notions like lunar weather forecasting and advocating scientific instruments. He went into some detail on the correct use of the barometer, and promoted the storm glass.<sup>1</sup>

The storm glass is a sealed tube containing a mixture of chemicals in which crystals periodically form, grow, rise, fall and dissolve – something like a lava lamp working in very slow motion. The simple reading of the glass looks like a sort of sympathetic magic. Clear glass meant clear weather; a cloudy glass meant cloudy weather, possibly with rain. Crystals at the bottom of the glass indicated frost, and a cloudy glass with crystal stars meant snow. Fitzroy noted that even indoors, "the chemical mixture in a so-called storm glass varies in character with the direction of the wind." North winds caused fern-like crystal growths, south winds caused a melting, sugary-like substance to form, and so on.

Fitzroy had taken a storm glass with him on his extensive travels; he was the captain of the *Beagle* on the epic voyage with Charles Darwin from 1831 to 1836. He thought the storm glass worked by electrostatic forces carried in the wind, and corresponded with the physicist Michael Faraday on the matter. Storm glasses were issued to ports to warn fishermen against going out in potentially stormy weather.

The origin of the storm glass is a mystery. Fitzroy noted that they had been made in Britain



ABOVE: Two storm glasses, the one on the right designed by Admiral Robert Fitzroy.

## Storm glasses were sold at the 'Goat and Compasses' on London Bridge

for more than a century, having been sold at a pub on London Bridge called 'the Goat and Compasses'. It was also known in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The liquid is a solution of potassium nitrate and ammonium chloride in a mixture of water, alcohol and camphor oil. It has been suggested that the storm glass was a by-product of alchemical research; certainly alchemists had long been fascinated by the growth of crystals and studied them for clues about how inanimate matter could become animate. Isaac Newton, a keen alchemist, wrote on 'Diana's Tree', silver that crystallises in tree-like forms (complete with leaves and fruit) from silver nitrate.

This tree was believed to be an intermediate form between mineral and vegetable life.

However, from the start, many have questioned whether the glass works at all. The same year as Fitzroy's book, Charles Tomlinson published "An Experimental Examination of the so-called Storm-glass".<sup>2</sup> Fitzroy was no stranger to scientific controversy, having been one of Darwin's earliest and most vocal opponents on evolution.

Tomlinson was a serious meteorologist himself, though somewhat of the debunking tendency, explaining various 'eccentricities' such as ball lightning as being mistaken observations of ordinary lightning discharges. After some years of experiment, he had concluded that the formation of crystals in the storm glass was driven purely by temperature, and it had no weather-predicting power at all, other than as a crude thermometer. This might occasionally be useful – to illiterate sailors, a simple and unambiguous sign of the temperature drop that precedes

a storm could save a vessel – but Tomlinson was generally sceptical.

Disbelief has been the general view ever since. In a 2008 study, Alan Mills of the University of Leicester found that the storm glass was affected not just by the current temperature, but also by the previous temperatures it had been exposed to. This makes it more than a straightforward thermometer, but "in general any correlation between appearance and future weather patterns would be purely coincidental."<sup>3</sup> To Mills the storm glass had no value other than as a historical curiosity.

A few amateur weather forecasters do still use a storm glass and claim it is an accurate predictor – but then some also use traditional rules like a good crop of acorns foretelling a hard winter.

Scientists are still studying how the composition affects the growth of crystals. A paper on "Cyclic growth and dissolution of camphor crystals in quinary, ternary, and binary solutions: a study on crystal behaviour in storm glass" by a team at Meiji University found that the complex mixture produced far more variation in crystal growths with temperature change than simpler systems.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the glass is quite finely tuned for its function; presumably this was the result of much trial-and-error by 18<sup>th</sup> century alchemists experimenting with different mixtures.

One paper from Russia is even positive on how this allows it to predict weather. A 2010 paper from the Crimean Astrophysical Observatory (apparently a genuine institution), analysing 15 years of observations, states that crystal formation intensified two days before any sudden drop in air pressure indicating a storm. These were correlated with changes in the Earth's magnetic field, and "consistent with views that changes in the background electromagnetic low-frequency fields are a physical agent influencing the process of crystal formation".<sup>5</sup>

It will take more than one paper to overturn current thinking. But there is the possibility that Fitzroy – not to mention the alchemists – might really have been on to something.

### NOTES

- 1 <http://tinyurl.com/ngymh7u>
- 2 <http://tinyurl.com/prbzz6b>
- 3 <http://tinyurl.com/owamn7>
- 4 <http://tinyurl.com/nfjwecy>
- 5 <http://tinyurl.com/p8ha7rm>

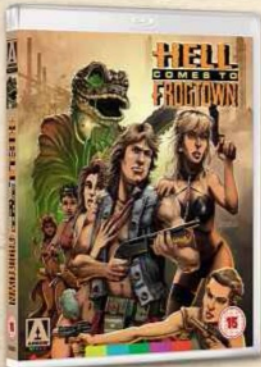




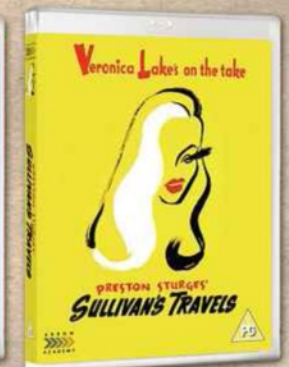
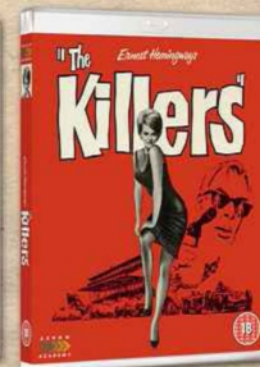
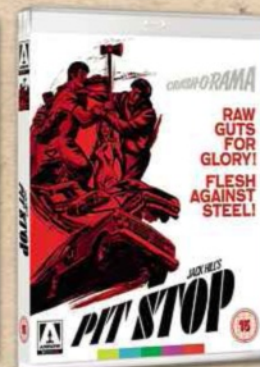
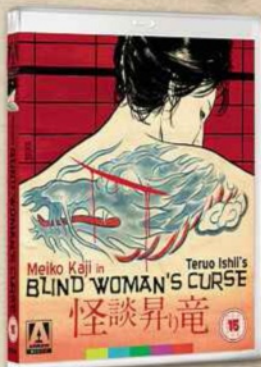
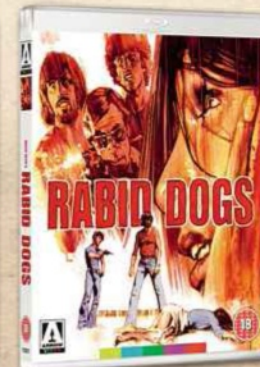
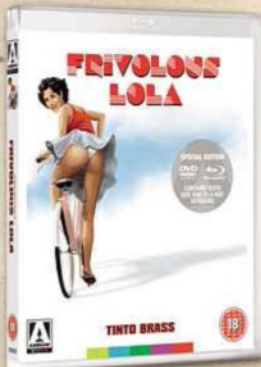
# 2014 PREVIEW



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# GHOSTWATCH

**ALAN MURDIE** examines the new US craze for ghost vigils in supposedly haunted hospitals



AFP / GETTY IMAGES

**LEFT:** A tour guide dressed as a nurse stands in the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum, West Virginia.

## ASYLUM SEEKERS

In April 1953 the late Philip Paul (1923-2010) won a BBC TV game show called *What's My Line?* where an invited panel of personalities had to guess the jobs of contestants. His chosen occupation of 'ghost-hunter' famously defeated the combined skills of the entire panel of judges, leading one irascible member named Gilbert Harding, the sort of man whom the audience 'loves to hate', to declare: "Do you really believe in ghosts? You must be barmy!"

Harding's condemnation of people who believed in ghosts as insane provoked a lively discussion in the national press, although afterwards he apologised to Paul and the pair became friends. Not long before his own death, Harding admitted to Paul changing his mind on ghosts, after being shaken by hearing the voice of his deceased sister Constance at home in his flat. (See *Some Unseen Power*, 1985, by Philip Paul).

Today in Britain, the linking of insanity with Hallowe'en games and hi-jinks provided a way of starting a media furore. The highly commercialised celebrations of October 2013 seemed to be characterised by a shift away from the use of traditional supernatural costumes such as ghosts and witches, to be replaced by themes and fancy dress costumes inspired by horror films, largely from the 'slasher' genre. This led to tasteless costumes with labels such as 'mental patient' and 'psycho ward' being put on sale by supermarkets such as Tesco and Asda, but then swiftly withdrawn following an outcry by certain tabloid newspapers. This seems to have been one of those periodic mass

## "I TOURED THE WHOLE HOSPITAL INCLUDING THE BASEMENT, WHICH WAS A TRIP!"

media furores, driven by political correctness and questions of taste and vulgarity, from newspapers which rarely hesitate to brand selected individuals and groups as 'loonies' or 'nutters' when feeling so inclined. Little was achieved beyond token apologies, although Asda did manage a one-off £25,000 donation to the mental health charity MIND. The same newspapers steered clear of examining the impact of government cuts in the funding of mental health services, and political correctness swiftly moved on to the perennial condemnation of 5 November Bonfire Night celebrations.

Meanwhile in the United States few, if any, qualms over taste impeded celebrations of Hallowe'en with a far more robust attitude being taken, as American ghost-hunters turned out in force to target former mental asylums and hospitals, hoping to encounter the ghosts of former inmates and patients. Many of these groups were keen on trying to record examples of what are considered electronic voice phenomena (EVPs) and capture the spirit voices of deceased patients. For example, researchers from the American Paranormal Research Association (APRA) have put together a video containing

samples of their best EVP data recorded at Old South Pittsburg Hospital and Linda Vista Community Hospital, which they declare are "two of the most haunted hospitals in America". Several of the EVP extracts seem distinctly curious, indeed superior to many other such recordings, including a voice seeming to say "I'm not dead". However, others are indistinct and can only be described as human-sounding moans at best.

For many, the real goal seems to be spooky entertainment. Amid huge political controversy about President Obama's health care reforms, the long-standing domination of private over public health

provision in the United States and cuts in Government funding have resulted in numerous derelict hospital buildings standing empty, to become the Hallowe'en playgrounds for would-be ghost-hunters and 'legend trippers'. Thrill-seeking seems to be the prime reason for many of these ghost-hunts, with one female visitor to Linda Vista breathlessly recounting her experiences with a paranormal team on the Internet thus:

"The blood of a thousand operations stuck in the cracks of those tiles... The vibe in that room is just NUTS! The smell of the X-ray room was nuts too! It smells like old burnt flesh. I toured the whole hospital including the basement which was a TRIP!... Some feared this hospital in the 1980s because it was in a bad part of town then, and most believed once you entered Linda Vista you did not leave... Many spirits in there, some really want to get out desperately. Some will follow you home".

However, as she admitted actually working for a haunted house attraction in Las Vegas, and she had been specially bussed to Linda Vista after winning the tour as a prize in a competition at her workplace, perhaps one would not expect a sober and objective report.

The thrill of going round a former mental hospital in the dark was certainly being exploited at the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in West Virginia, which closed in 1994 and now operates as a museum. It was charging \$100 per head at Hallowe'en for overnight ghost vigils. Claimed activity at the Trans-Allegheny includes the sound of hospital beds rolling up and down the hallways, and "full-bodied apparitions of both patients

and doctors, along with horrible screams coming from the rooms where electroshock therapy was conducted". The sounds of dead patients are also heard throughout the facility, including maniacal laughing and warnings. Plans are already being developed to invite visitors back for more terror-filled evenings in 2014. (Sources: *The Phoenix Student Newspaper of Glenville State College* 31 Oct 2013; [www.hauntingamerica.com/trans-allegheeny-lunatic-asylum/](http://www.hauntingamerica.com/trans-allegheeny-lunatic-asylum/); <http://ghosttvblogs.com/haunted-hospitals-best-paranormal-evidence-a-p-r-a.html>; [www.yelp.co.uk/biz/linda-vista-hospital-los-angeles](http://www.yelp.co.uk/biz/linda-vista-hospital-los-angeles) posted 8 Aug 2013).

Meanwhile in Texas, rooms that once comprised a psychiatric ward, a nursery and a morgue at the derelict Worley Hospital in Pampa were chosen by a radio DJ known as 'Tommy the Hacker' of 96.9 KISS FM for a ghost-hunt on 28 October, backed by a group called the Palo Duro Area Paranormal Society. Tommy the Hacker saw it "as a great way to prove or debunk the myths surrounding this landmark", the site having become notorious not only because of ghosts but as a draw for curiosity and sensation-seekers, who have committed wanton acts of vandalism and sprayed graffiti on walls inside.

There are claims of silhouettes glimpsed at windows (which sound like reflections, or perhaps trespassers) and Frank McCoy of the Duro Area Paranormal Society told journalists: "I understand that people have heard little kids' footsteps and a baby crying in the nursery". A female scream has also been reported. According to Mr McCoy, the group planned "to go all out", setting up a range of equipment including digital recorders and cameras, laser grids, night-vision cameras and an EVP device described as a 'spirit box'. This comprises a digital radio scanning through channels quickly, which believers maintain allows denizens of the spirit world to talk through the broadcast waves, their voices penetrating through the static, so-called Instrumental Trans-Communication (ITC). In addition to hoping to capture spirit voices, Mr McCoy stated that they would be taking tour participants into each room "and giving them challenges" such as blindfolding them and requiring them to "wear headphones connected to digital recorders intended to pick up paranormal sounds as the group plays out different scenarios in each of the targeted wards of the hospital."

What this might

**RIGHT:** The former Waverly Hills Sanatorium in Louisville, Kentucky.

succeed in proving, if anything, is anyone's guess, but doubtless it was designed to be thrilling fun for participants. Owner Carol Peet who acquired the property in 2002 was definitely sceptical, but was willing to tolerate the ghost-hunt, on the basis that "it will show people that the hospital isn't haunted and put the stories to rest". She added: "We are in the process of raising funds to turn it into a human resource and life training centre to help the people of Pampa – quelling negative rumours would help us turn the building around."

From her perspective, the widely publicised ghost-hunt represented a way to manage and deter curiosity seekers drawn to the site. Just what kind of problems can arise was shown by a decision taken by Ohio University in September 2012 to demolish a former mental hospital building known as the Ridges Building 26 or old Beacon School, which had become a magnet for trespassers. In the last five years police have arrested 55 people in 36 incidents at the Ridges Building, its eerie reputation boosted by the presence of a nearby cemetery. Consequently, Ohio University was proposing to knock it down entirely, funded by a \$300,000 demolition grant that heritage campaigners argued might be better spent on restoring the building instead. (Source: *'Columbus Dispatch'*, 22 Sept 2012).

Plans for transformation also featured in reports of ghost-hunting around the former Waverly Hills Sanatorium, a hospital in Louisville, Kentucky, which once cared for thousands of tuberculosis patients between the 1920s and its closure in 1961. Owner Charlie Mattingly originally wanted to turn the building into a bed and breakfast emporium but it is now a destination for ghost-hunters – though details of who was doing the haunting were rather hard to come by. The dilapidated building is full of creaky doors, decaying

rooms and an underground tunnel that was used to haul away the dead. Mr Mattingly says paranormal enthusiasts come 'from around the world' to tour or even spend the night inside the draughty building. He says many who have visited report spooky encounters – but despite the hype, there is little in the way of hard information as to what manifestations supposedly occur, beyond vague reports of the apparition of a nurse. Otherwise, the only listed ghost is a boy named Timmy who responds to a ball being rolled to him by rolling it back to you. The possibility that this might happen hardly seems a sufficient justification to cross the Atlantic; as the late Andrew Green once remarked of a haunted hotel in Norfolk where an unseen cat was said to jump on a bed at night "even the enthusiastic ghost-hunter would probably be inclined to move on to a case which offers greater potential and challenge." (*Ghost Hunting: A Practical Guide*, 1973. Source: [AP] 29 Oct 2013).

Unfortunately, much of the so-called evidence recorded at these former hospital sites is dubious in the extreme. Other than broadcasting their results on the Internet, few of the groups show any inclination to further analyse their findings in any detail. Consequently, although there are many claimed examples of haunted hospitals throughout the United States, (e.g. St Vincent Hospital, Santa Fe, built in 1977 on the site of a penitentiary graveyard; or the Mountain Home Veterans Hospital in Tennessee built to house veterans of the Civil War and haunted by a soldier in a uniform dated to the Spanish-American War of 1898) little is ultimately being learned, though I don't doubt it all provides good fun for participants who use ghost-hunting as an excuse for a lark in the dark or a means of profit and publicity.

*To be continued....*







# 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.bloomsbury.com/uk/journal/time-and-mind](http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/journal/time-and-mind))



ABOVE: The two Carlisle tridents, each over 7ft long and hewn from single oak planks using stone tools. Their purpose remains a mystery – your ideas are welcome.

## MYSTERY TRIDENTS

Tullie House Museum in Carlisle, north-west England, has put two 6,000-year-old wooden ‘tridents’ on display. The objects were in fact discovered in 2009 during local archaeological excavations, but despite much scratching of heads no one has figured out what they are or what their function might have been. Only four other, almost identical, tridents are known of in Britain, all found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – two in Cumbria (an area relatively close to Carlisle), and two from a bog in Armagh, Northern Ireland.

The Carlisle tridents are both over 2m (7ft) long, sturdy and skilfully hewn from a single oak plank – all the more remarkable considering that stone tools would have been used. Their close similarity suggests they were made for a specific purpose, but what? The museum is inviting people to put forward their ideas. Interestingly, your columnist saw vaguely similar wooden tridents from Tibet/Nepal recently, and was informed they were used as rakes. But they were slightly curved while these things are flat. Maybe old Neptune left a few of his tridents lying around? I’m sure *FT* readers can come up with better notions... *Westmorland Gazette*, 3 Dec; *Past Horizons*, 6 Dec 2013.

## BLUESTONE TONES

And now to announce some of our own news. In July 2013, the Landscape & Perception project, operating under the ægis of the Royal College of Art and led by RCA senior lecturer Jon Wozencroft and your columnist, conducted the first-ever acoustics tests of all the bluestones (the shorter rocks) at Stonehenge. It was part of a much broader audio-visual study of the source area of the Stonehenge bluestones on Preseli,

south-west Wales. This was found to be a noteworthy soundscape, with a significant percentage of the actual rocks making metallic sounds like bells, gongs, tin drums, etc., when tapped with small, handheld “hammer stones”. It also discovered evidence for the deliberate use of the rocks in the Stone Age, which makes ringing rocks into lithophones – i.e. rocks intentionally used for their sounds. Cross-culturally in the ancient world such rocks were thought to contain spirits or supernatural potency, like *ch’i*. The builders of Stonehenge may have had similar beliefs and, if so, that could answer the mystery as to why the Preseli bluestones

were considered important enough to be transported the 200-150 miles (320-240km) to the Stonehenge site.

We have alluded to this project in previous columns, but a complete illustrated report, which will be in the print edition of *Time & Mind* in March 2014, is now out online (by Routledge, who are taking over the publication of the journal). You can get direct full and free access to the paper by using this link: <http://bit.ly/tm-stonehenge> .

## A SIRIUS SUGGESTION?

Göbekli Tepe, a c.12,000-year-old structure, perhaps a temple, in southern Turkey, may



ABOVE: Paul Devereux (l) and Jon Wozencroft (r) test a bluestone at Stonehenge for acoustic properties.

# CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 171: FORT(Y) YEARS ON

have been built to venerate the “dog star” Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky and known to have been viewed as significant by numerous ancient cultures. This remarkably ancient and deeply mysterious multi-phase complex comprises at least 20 circular or oval enclosures (most not yet excavated), seemingly following a pattern in which there are two huge monumental T-shaped pillars set parallel to each other in the centre of each one, surrounded by walls and smaller but still massive pillars. Some of the pillars are decorated with abstract imagery and animal carvings [see **FT220:46-51, 289-293**].

Although the invention of agriculture has been deemed to have kick-started the cultural revolution we call Neolithic, there is no evidence of agriculture near Göbekli Tepe. This has caused some to speculate that religious imperatives may have been the primary driving force of the Neolithic revolution, the origins of civilisation. Now, Italian archaeoastronomer Giulio Magli (who pops up with his findings in all sorts of contexts, including *Time & Mind*) has found that the site may have been aligned to Sirius.

The Earth wobbles on its axis causing a millennial shift in our view of the night sky's canopy of stars (a phenomenon known as the Precession of the Equinoxes). Stars that are near the horizon will rise and set at different points, and they can even drop completely from view, only to reappear thousands of years later. Using computer programming, Magli reconstructed how the stars would have appeared from the latitude of Göbekli Tepe around the time its first phases were built. Sirius would have been below the horizon until around 9,300 BC, when it would have suddenly sprung into view. “I propose that the temple was built to follow the ‘birth’ of this star,” Magli is reported as stating. “You can imagine that the appearance of a new object in the sky could even have triggered a new religion.” He used site plans and satellite images to calculate that the two central megaliths inside each enclosure would have been aligned to frame horizon points where Sirius would have risen in 9,100 BC, 8,750 BC and 8,300 BC respectively. But archaeologists are still unsure as to whether the complex was roofed or not, and Magli admits his findings are only preliminary. *New Scientist*, 16 Aug 2013.

Simultaneous titular tribute to Our Master and Alan Bennett.

*FT* celebrated this milestone in style. Full marks to editor (in Latin = ‘one who puts on public entertainments’). But, future commemorative jamborees should take a leaf from the Roman Secular Games.

(Major sources: Censorinus, *De Die Natali*, bk17 ch10; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds & Sayings*, bk2 ch4 para5; Zosimus, *New History*, bk2 chs2-8. Subsidiary information from: Pliny, *Natural History*, bk7 ch48 para 159; Servius on Aeneid 8. 526; Suetonius, Claudius, ch21 para2 & Domitian, ch3; *Augustan History*, Antoninus Pius, ch110 paras8-9; *Epitomes of Roman History* by Aurelius Victor, ch28, Eutropius, bk9 ch3, and Orosius, bk7, ch20; Obsequens, *Prodigies*, ch131 – culled from Livy).

The Secular Games may (it is disputed) have originated in 509 BC, inaugural year of the Roman Republic. A Sabine called Valerius (or Valesius) was told by a voice from the ether to give his sick children heated water from the Tiber to drink. He did so and they were immediately cured. Waking after a restorative nap, they informed dad that a mysterious figure had appeared in their collective dream with instructions to sacrifice to the gods of the underworld. Valerius/Valesius, told where to dig, unearthed an altar designed for these deities – obviously a deity old man! – and performed the requisite rituals.

Despite this colourful début, there are few signs of repeat performances over the next 500 years. The games held in 249 and 149 may have been Secular, but some think they were emergency appeals for divine help in the First and Third Punic Wars; cf. Mary Beard/ John North/ Simon Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge Univ. Press 1998, 71-2, 111).

Augustus spectacularly revived them in 17 BC to boost his personal and political images. A handy prophecy in the Sibylline Books justified the chronological shuffle whereby a Sæculum (Century) could be defined as 100 or 110 years; the Games’ early history was duly rewritten by hack historians. The punters certainly got their theological money’s worth. A mysterious trumpet blast from the sky, a strange light illuminating the heavens, and a priest dropping dead in mid-sermon had already promised great things. Four days and nights (31 May – 3 June) of sacrifices to various gods/goddesses were postluded by a week or more of plays and chariot races. Despite their edgy relationship (the emperor once called him “my purest prick”), Augustus commissioned the poet Horace to compose a special hymn (the *Carmen Sæculare*) sung

by a procession of 27 maidens and equivalent boys whose virginities were harder to confirm.

Romans were formally invited by circumambulant heralds to “A Spectacle they had never seen before and never would again”. Hence, when Claudius, with more calendar finagling, put on his version in AD 47, this proclamation was ridiculed by those many who had seen Augustus’s, including the dancer Stephanio (now 63, and “destined to live a good few more years) who pranced at both.

Domitian’s Games, preferring Augustus’s calculation to Claudius’s, emphasised the entertainment side, organising 100 chariot races on a single day – a grand prix to end all grand prix – achieving this by cutting the laps from seven to five. Septimius Severus also followed Augustan mathematics with his Games in AD 204, notable for giving his wife Julia Domna a starring role as priestess.

Between these two, Antoninus Pius had used both Rome’s foundation date and his own 10th coming-to-power anniversary for his Games in AD 148, distinguished by the number of animal performers: 100 lions, tigers, elephants, crocodiles, hippopotamuses, and a mysterious creature called corocotta, said by Pliny (NH, bk8 ch44 para107) to be the product of hyenas mating with Ethiopian lionesses, capable of imitating human voices.

The gods may have been offended by these beasties taking the lead roles, given the number of fearful prodigies during his reign: a two-headed child born; a snake of extraordinary size eating itself from tail to middle; Arabian lions surrendering to hunters; barley sprouting from tree tops – barley credible.

Only fitting that Philip ‘The Arab’, claimed by some early church historians to be a secret Christian (there were similar tales about Nero’s faithful mistress Acte, reproduced in *Quo Vadis?*), should celebrate Rome’s Millennium in AD 248 by the most sumptuous Games of all, their zenith (nadir to modern taste) being the slaughter of 1,000 gladiators and hundreds of animals in the Colosseum.

Also the last ones. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, declined to put any on, and his successors followed suit, thereby arousing the wrath of pagan historian Zosimus who blamed the downfall of the Empire on their neglect, an argument weakened by the failure of any pagan priest to perform the rituals sanctioned by the desperate Christian authorities in Rome during Alaric’s first siege (AD 408), and massively confuted in Augustine’s *City of God* – “his learning is too often borrowed, his arguments too often his own” (Gibbon, *DFRE*, ch28 n2).



## BORN TO SURVIVE

It's easy to get lost in the wilderness, but living to tell the tale means a diet of mice and lizards – and a bit of luck

● Raúl Fernando Gómez Circunegui got lost in a snowstorm while trying to cross the mountains from Chile to Argentina on foot after his motorbike broke down. Argentinean officials from the province of San Juan, flying over the mountains in a helicopter to record snow levels, stumbled upon the resilient 58-year-old Uruguayan four months later, on 8 September. The plumber and father of three from the city of Bella Union was in a shelter 9,320ft (2,840m) above sea level, and was able to hobble over and open the shelter door, alerting the crew to his presence. He had survived the southern hemisphere's bitter winter by eating mice (or rats – reports differ) he caught in traps he found in the refuge, supplemented by some raisins he had with him, along with dried meat and sugar left by climbers. He lost 44lb (20kg) during the ordeal and was treated in hospital for dehydration and anaemia. "The truth is that this is a miracle. We still can't believe it," said San Juan governor José Luis Gioja. "I asked him: 'Are you a believer?' He told me: 'No, but now I am'." (In 1972 a plane carrying a Uruguayan rugby team to Chile crashed in the Andes. Some of the survivors sustained themselves by eating the dead.) [R] *Guardian*, *D.Mail*, 10 Sept 2013.

● Gene Penaflor, 72, from San Francisco, survived 19 days in Mendocino National Forest in California. On 24 September he failed to meet up with his hunting partner for lunch. The two had split up for several hours to hunt deer; during his hike, Penaflor fell and struck his head, waking up disoriented amid thick fog. He walked for a time but stopped when he didn't know where he was. He spent the night near a water source to tend to a cut on his chin. During the next two days, he saw a helicopter and tried to send a smoke signal but no one saw him. He sustained himself on squirrels, lizards, a snake,



TOP: Raúl Fernando Gómez Circunegui is carried to safety by his rescuers. ABOVE: Gene Penaflor recuperates. OPPOSITE: 18-year-old Matthew Allen.

berries and algae. To keep dry and warm from the rain and snow, he crawled under a large log and covered himself with leaves and grasses. He saw deer but didn't have the energy to shoot them. An initial search involving several agencies was called off when a storm was on its way. It was reactivated on 12 October, and someone heard a voice calling for help from the bottom of a canyon, three miles (4.8km) from where he disappeared. He was carried to safety on a makeshift stretcher and airlifted to hospital. His son said he was in good condition. *Irish Independent*, 15 Oct 2013.

● Matthew Allen, 18, disappeared from his home in Westleigh, near Cherrybrook on the northern edge of Sydney, Australia, on 27 November 2012. Weeks of police searches, with helicopters and rescue dogs, failed to find any trace of him; he had left his mobile phone behind, his bank account was untouched, and he had not taken any extra clothing with him. His family feared the worst.

At 8pm on 26 January, nearly nine weeks later, two hikers found him lying exhausted and disoriented in the thick scrub of Berowra Valley, only about a kilometre from his home. He had lost six stone (38kg), half his body weight, and was suffering from partial blindness and severe dehydration brought on by his ordeal. His body was covered in leeches and mosquito bites, with gangrene eating his feet and lower legs, and he probably would not have survived much longer had he not been found. He was winched out by helicopter and flown to a local hospital.

The accountancy student, who suffers from an unspecified mental illness, is thought to have set out into the dense bush on a survival mission, with \$150 in his pocket, minimal food supplies and some basic camping equipment; but he struggled to exist on almost no food and the little water he could gather from a virtually dry creek bed. To make matters worse,

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

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



there was a record-breaking heatwave, with temperatures topping 45°C (113°F). “He was not living under any shelter and was exposed to the full conditions since he was reported missing two months ago,” said police chief Glyn Baker. “Anyone who is missing for that length of time in those kinds of conditions... you wouldn’t expect to see them again... Hikers often walk along tracks in the area. [Matthew] must have kept out of the way of people. I also think that he was in such a state that he couldn’t actually get up and move. He was not that far from home, but there is no indication that food was being pilfered from the house.” Some local people wondered why Matthew was not found earlier; but Duncan Gibbs (whoever he is) said the bush “is pretty rugged and you can be just around the corner from someone and never know that they’re there.” (Sydney) *D.Telegraph*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, *D.Mail*, *D.Mirror*, *D.Telegraph*, 29 Jan 2013.

● A South African tourist, travelling to the Mentawai Island on an Indonesian cruise boat for a spot of surfing, fell overboard at night after fainting when he went on deck feeling seasick. A massive search was launched, but he was given up for dead. He was found alive by an Australian cruise ship after floating on his back in rough seas for 27 hours without a lifejacket. Brett Archibald, 50, told how jellyfish stung him and seagulls tried to peck his eyes out as he struggled to keep afloat. After his rescue, he said he would continue his holiday, adding: “I didn’t fly all this way to tread water for 27 hours.” *D.Mail*, 19 April 2013.



SWNS.COM

## THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA

On 15 August 2013, a very distinctive but highly decomposed ‘sea monster’ carcass (above right) was washed ashore on a beach at Villaricos, in Andalusia, southern Spain. Measuring approximately 13ft (4m), it was very long and sinuous, prompting early media speculation that it was an oarfish *Regalecus glesne* – the world’s longest species of bony fish and a popular identity for some alleged sea serpent sightings [see p6-7]. However, the carcass’s vertebræ seemed more shark-like in photographs, and making it even more intriguing was a separate portion that appeared to bear a pair of horns – which oarfishes certainly do not possess. Eventually, however, it was conclusively identified as a shark, by Florida State University ichthyologist Dr Dean Grubbs, who also revealed that its mystifying horns were really a pair of pectoral fin supports known as the scapuloacoracoids. *livescience.com*, 22 Aug 2013.

## RETURN OF THE COOKII MONSTER

In 1910, American scientist Alfred Gainsborough Mayor spied an unfamiliar pink jellyfish in the waters off Cookstown in Queensland, Australia. Although it wasn’t captured, Mayor was able to make a sketch of it, sufficiently detailed for zoologists to realise that the species was unknown to science. Based on the sketch and Mayor’s description, it was formally described, and named *Crambione cookii*. In more recent times, it has been dubbed the Cookii Monster, but despite its media-friendly name this elusive species was never reported again, and seemed destined to be known forever from just a single sketch – until autumn 2013, that is.

This was when aquarist Puk Scivyer captured a large pink jellyfish (top left) off Queensland’s Sunshine Coast while she was releasing a rescued sea turtle there. After taking the jellyfish to the nearby UnderWater World Aquarium where she works, it was examined by jellyfish expert Dr Lisa-Ann Gershwin in an attempt to identify its species, and even Mayor’s sketch of the fabled Cookii Monster was perused – whereupon the newly captured specimen was found to be identical to it. Here, then, was only the second specimen of *C. cookii* ever recorded, and the first to be captured.



YOUTUBE

It is now being cared for as a prized scientific specimen at the aquarium, where it will be observed further. Over 2ft (60cm) across, this species has a sting that is exceedingly potent, so much so that it can actually be felt in the water surrounding the jellyfish. *dailymail.co.uk*, 22 Nov 2013.

## A CRYPTIC CAT UNMASKED IN BRAZIL

Sometimes a new, hitherto unrecorded species can be staring you quite literally in the face without being recognised for what it is, as has now been shown with the following case. Also known variously as the tigrina, little spotted cat, and tiger cat, the oncilla *Leopardus tigrina* is closely related to the larger, more familiar ocelot, and is distributed from Costa Rica southward into several South American countries, including Brazil. Only one species has traditionally been recognised.

However, a recently published study of the oncilla has revealed that the population dwelling within southern Brazil’s Atlantic Forest does not interbreed at all with oncillas existing elsewhere in Brazil. Moreover, the study has revealed that no genetic exchange has taken place between this Atlantic Forest population and other oncillas for around 100,000 years, and that genetically the Atlantic Forest oncilla is sufficiently distinct to be upgraded to a separate species. Accordingly, this previously cryptic cat species has been given its very own scientific name – *Leopardus guttulus*. In addition, Dr Eduardo Eizirik from Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, leader of the team responsible for this taxonomic dichotomy, has suggested that other oncilla populations, in particular the one existing in Costa Rica, may also prove to be distinct species. So, watch this space! *news.mongabay.com*, 27 Nov 2013.



PROJECT WILD CATS OF BRAZIL



## When the Earth moved

What geophysical forces give with one hand they take away with the other, with dramatic results



AMEL EMIRIC / AP / PRESS ASSOCIATION

ABOVE: The villagers of Sanica, north-western Bosnia, have their own theories as to why their pond vanished, including WWII bombs or its owner taking it with him when he died. BELOW: The Bayou Corne sinkhole – 25 acres in size and still growing.

### SINKHOLES

Just outside Sanica, a remote village in north-western Bosnia, children would fish in a tranquil pond bobbing with green algæ and lined with willow trees, as cattle grazed nearby. Then, in mid-November 2013, the pond vanished. “I sat here only a day before it happened, sipping plum brandy,” said Cemal Hasan. “And then, there was panic. Fish were jumping out, and a big plum tree was pulled down like someone yanked it with a hook.” The pond was about 20m (66ft) in diameter and about 8m (26ft) deep. By late November, the ‘abyss’, as the villagers dubbed the crater, was some 50m (164ft) wide and 30m (98ft) deep – and growing.

Scientists said the pond’s disappearance could have been the result of drying underground water currents, or changes in soil drainage due to irrigation. Local villagers, however, disagreed, offering their own explanations. “It could have been a giant cave that opened its doors,” offered Milanko Skrbic, “or a volcano.” Alternatively, fish could have triggered the explosion of one of several World War II German bombs believed to have been

thrown into the pond by an old woman after the war. “She herself died when one of the bombs exploded in her arms,” said Cemal Hasan. One occult suggestion was that the owner of the pond took it with him when he died in late October. “Only days before Hasan passed away he said: ‘I’ll take everything with me when I die.’ And that’s what he did,” said Rezak Motanic. “His daughter saw him walk on the lake the night he died.” Husein Nanic said it could be a sign that the end is nigh. “All sort of miracles happen before the doomsday,” he said. [AP] *Guardian*, 26 Nov 2013.

- In June 2012, a froth of bubbles was seen issuing from the depths of Bayou Corne, an idyllic, cypress-draped stream meandering through swampy southern Louisiana; people assumed it was a leaky gas pipeline. Then two months later, on 3 August, the ground opened up – a voracious maw 325ft (100m) across and hundreds of feet deep, swallowing 100ft (30m) trees, guzzling water from adjacent swamps and belching methane. More than a year later, the Bayou Corne sinkhole

is about 25 acres (10ha) in size and still growing, biting off chunks of forest and creeping towards an earthen barrier built to contain its oily waters. To compound the worries of local residents, flammable methane is surfacing not just in the bayou, but in the swamp and in front and backyards across the area.

Much of Louisiana sits atop an ancient ocean whose salt

remains, extruded upwards by the pressure of rock, have formed at least 127 colossal underground pillars; and 700ft (213m) beneath Bayou Corne, the Napoleonville salt dome stretches three miles (4.8km) long and a mile wide, and plunges perhaps 30,000ft (9,150m) to the old ocean floor. Over the years, a number of companies have punched into the dome, hollowing out 53 enormous caverns to store propane, methane and natural gas, and to make salt water for the region’s many chemical factories. In 1982, on the dome’s western edge, the Texas Brine Company sank a well to begin work on a big cavern. Until it capped the well in 2011, it pumped in fresh water and sucked out salt water. At some point the well’s western wall collapsed, and the cavern began filling with mud and rock that dropped into the vacated space, freeing trapped natural gas. The gas floated up while the rock slipped down. The result: a yawning, bubbling sinkhole. Geologists say it will eventually stop growing, perhaps at 50 acres (20ha), but how long that will take is unknown. *Int. Herald Tribune*, 27 Sept 2013.





# KONSPIRACY KORNER

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

ON WHY ACADEMICS JUST DON'T GET IT

**S**tand by your beds, conspiracy theorists! British academics are coming. With three distinguished profs at the helm, a five-year project has begun at Cambridge University to study 'Conspiracy and Democracy: History, Political Theory and Internet Research'. In the mission statement on their website they note: "Theories and beliefs about conspiracies are an enduring feature of modern societies. This is partly a reflection of the fact that real conspiracies do exist, and have existed in the past."

So are they going to study phenomena such as the NSA and GCHQ's global surveillance project and how it might undermine democracy?

Of course not. The mission statement quickly bats that aside.

"But the pervasiveness of conspiracy theories in the 21<sup>st</sup> century suggests that many other factors are also at work." It does? Might it not suggest there are more conspiracies? This, evidently, is not a suitable subject for academic study. Instead they are going to examine the following:

"What does the prevalence of conspiracy theories tell us about trust in democratic societies, and about the differences between cultures and societies? How have conspiracies and conspiracy theorising changed over the centuries and what, if any, is the relationship between them? Have conspiracy theories appeared at particular moments in history, and why?"<sup>1</sup>

To judge by the comments of two of the profs involved, which were quoted by the BBC,<sup>2</sup> the real issue is: are conspiracy theories undermining orthodox politics? Are conspiracy theories turning the electorate into Jeremy Paxman, who famously approaches interviews with politicians by asking himself, "Why is this lying bastard lying to me?"

But the conspiracy theories and democracy project precludes even considering that maybe some of the theories are true. Heaven forbid, that might even lead us into the growth of a national security state.

Curiously, to judge by the project's website, its central subject, conspiracy theory, is being treated as if its meaning was self-evident. But is it? In a comment on a related paper, a certain Geoff Chambers notes that one definition of a conspiracy theory – "allegations that powerful people or organisations are plotting together in secret to achieve sinister ends through deception of the public" – would "cover just about any critical comment about government decisions, which are normally conducted in secret, certainly by powerful people, and might (just possibly) sometimes warrant the description 'sinister'."<sup>3</sup> Oops! We are not a million miles away from the late Carl Oglesby's claim in the 1970s that conspiracy is normal politics carried out by normal means. And what about Anthony Summer's distinction between conspiracy theories and theories about conspiracies? For example, are the detailed allegations made on the website jancom.org about judicial and political hanky-panky around the recent conviction of Asil Nadir for theft conspiracy theories or theories about conspiracies? In short: do our distinguished profs understand the quagmire into which they are wading?

In any case, some of their academic colleagues would question the validity of the project. Joseph Uscinski and Joseph Parent of the University of Miami recently claimed that "the overall level of conspiracy theorising in the United States has been going down steadily since Kennedy's assassination."<sup>4</sup>

Oh, really? What did they analyse? "A sample of letters to the editor of the *New York Times* over a period of 120 years". Of course – the perfect database: letters to America's establishment newspaper, which has never met a conspiracy theory (and few theories about conspiracies) it thought worth taking seriously.

<sup>1</sup> [www.conspiracyanddemocracy.org/about/](http://www.conspiracyanddemocracy.org/about/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24650841](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24650841)

<sup>3</sup> [www.frontiersin.org/personality\\_science\\_and\\_individual\\_differences/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00409/abstract](http://www.frontiersin.org/personality_science_and_individual_differences/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00409/abstract)

<sup>4</sup> [www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/11/11/why-so-many-americans-believe-kennedy-assassination-conspiracy-theories/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/11/11/why-so-many-americans-believe-kennedy-assassination-conspiracy-theories/)

## NEW ISLANDS

On 24 September, half an hour after a 7.8R-magnitude earthquake rocked Baluchistan province in Pakistan (bordering Iran and Afghanistan), an island rose out of the Arabian Sea, 1,800ft (550m) off the Gwadar coastline. Buildings shook in Karachi, the Baluch capital Quetta, and as far away as New Delhi and Dubai. The death toll was thought to exceed 500. Observers who visited the island by boat described a 60ft (18m) high, 250x100ft (76x30m) mass of rock, mud, seaweed and dead fish. Its surface was cracked and emitting methane. It's not rare for a big earthquake to create an island – just not this kind of quake. Islands normally form after thrust earthquakes, like the 9.1R monster that caused the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004.

"You have one piece of crust being pushed underneath another piece of crust," explained John Bellini, a geophysicist at the US Geological Survey. "They lock for awhile, and when the earthquake occurs, the lock is broken, and part of the crust thrusts upwards." The Indian Ocean quake pushed several low-lying areas above the surface of the ocean near the Andaman Islands, although none of them was big enough to warrant a name.

However, the Baluchistan quake was "very different", said Bellini. The fault there is slightly tilted, as opposed to vertical. Called an oblique strike-slip fault, it is similar to the San Andreas fault in California. While Bellini said he didn't know how such a quake could have made an island, Mohammed Danish, a geologist, was confident it was created by a build-up of frozen methane released from below the seabed by the movement of tectonic

plates, which had thrust mud and rocks to the surface. "There is an abundance of methane near the Gwadar coastline where this phenomenon has occurred," he said. "[The island] will erode away in the next monsoon season." Scientists from Pakistan's National Institute of Oceanography said the island was not the first of its kind along the Gwadar coast – for instance, similar islands formed after an 8.1-magnitude quake in 1945, and after quakes in 1999 and 2010.

New islands, overall, aren't a rare phenomenon. Erosion, glacial retreat, and volcanoes create them all the time. One of the latest to make headlines was a 2,000ft (600m)-wide island that popped up off the coast of Yemen in late December 2011 after a volcano erupted under the Red Sea. *The Week*, 25 Sept; *D.Telegraph*, 26 Sept; *Int. Herald Tribune*, 2 Oct 2013.

• Japan gained another small piece of territory on 21 November when an erupting subterranean volcano formed a new landmass off the coast of Nishinoshima, a small uninhabited island in the southern Ogasawara chain, 1,000km (620 miles) south of Tokyo. Three weeks later, the new island had grown to 558,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (51,800m<sup>2</sup>), 3.5 times its original size, and was expected to last "several years". *D.Telegraph*, 22 Nov + 12 Dec; <i>, 22 Nov 2013.



ABOVE: Visitors to the island that appeared off Gwadar. ABOVE RIGHT: Japan's new island.

JAPAN COAST GUARD

APP / GETTY IMAGES





## NECROLOG

This month, GARY LACHMAN bids a fond farewell to a perennial outsider who has finally found rest after a lifetime of doing things his own way – and sometimes paying the price



HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

### COLIN WILSON

Colin Wilson was one of the most prolific, stimulating and controversial writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In a career spanning more than 50 years and producing 181 titles – according to his bibliographer Colin Stanley – Wilson turned his insatiably curious and insightful mind to a sometimes dizzying spectrum of interests, ranging from philosophy, psychology and mysticism, to the occult, the paranormal, and criminology. He also produced a substantial body of fiction, turning his hand to science fiction, crime fiction, fantasy, espionage, literary detection, and even erotica, creating a sub-genre of what we could call the “phenomenological novel”. Wilson also wrote several biographies, of figures including Rasputin, Wilhelm Reich, Bernard Shaw, and Jung. His friend Robert Ardrey, author of *The Territorial Imperative* (1966), once told Wilson that he wrote far too much. Wilson agreed, but confessed to an inability to stop; “I write,” he once wrote, “as a dog with fleas scratches.” In an interview with me for *Fortean Times* in 2004 (FT188:40-43), Wilson remarked that “I had so much to say, I thought I wouldn’t be happy until I was 70 and had 50 books behind me.” Yet he also recognised the

dangers of being prolific, especially in our age of specialisation. “The trouble with having so much to say is that you write too much and cover too many subjects. You’re also forced to write at a tremendous pace, just in order to make a living.” An irredeemable workaholic, Wilson once smiled when I asked him if he intended to out-write HG Wells. I haven’t done the maths, but I wouldn’t be surprised if he did.

Modern readers, used to “experts” who rarely stray from their well-defined niches, may wonder about an autodidact who

pronounced on the complexities of consciousness, the evidence for prehistoric civilisations and the darkness of the criminal mind, but as his readers know, a single theme runs through all of Wilson’s work. In *The Occult* (1971), the book that brought him out of the literary wasteland that his early success had cast him into, Wilson made this clear: “A single obsessional idea runs through all my work: the paradoxical nature of freedom.” Wilson was troubled by the fact that most of us waste our lives on trivialities. Living comfortable, complacent existences, freedom for us becomes “blurred and indefinite”, an emptiness we fill with entertainments and diversions aimed at “killing time”. Yet when “I am confronted by danger or crisis, I see it as a threat to freedom, and my freedom suddenly becomes positive and self-evident – as enormous and obvious as a sunset.” Wilson devoted his long career to solving this enigma, an aim that led him through a remarkable philosophical landscape. His books themselves can produce this bubbling sense of freedom; they fill our mental horizons with inner sunsets and a

profound sense of possibility and potential.

Colin Henry Wilson was born on 26 June 1931 to a working class family in Leicester. Favoured by his mother, Wilson grew up with a strong sense of confidence and the belief that life meant well by him, a sense of “immunity” well tested in later years. At 10, a copy of *The Marvels and Mysteries of Science* instilled a hunger for knowledge as well as the realisation that most of the adults around him were strangely incurious about the world. By 14, he had begun his first book, his *Manual of General Science*. He gave it up in a few months, but it taught him how to write and revealed the curious pleasure that comes with using the mind.

Wilson’s first love was science but the discovery of poetry put an end to that. By his early teens he had formed the conviction that he would become a writer. Another development was a profound sense of nihilism, a depression that could be chalked up to teenage angst but which in Wilson took on more formidable manifestations. For months, he was plagued by the idea that human life is meaningless – worse, a kind of cosmic joke – and he was baffled that no one he knew ever questioned it. Hearing Bernard Shaw’s *Man and Superman* on the Third Programme showed him that he wasn’t the only person on the planet concerned with the meaning of human existence, yet even

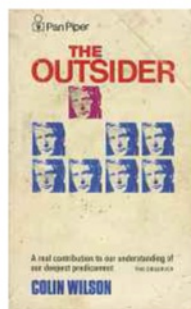
Shaw wasn’t enough to shake his depression. At 16, Wilson decided to commit suicide. A series of mindless jobs taken after leaving school only deepened his nihilism, and during a brief return to school Wilson was about to down a bottle of hydrocyanic acid in his chemistry class when something happened. Suddenly

he became two people: an idiotic teenager about to throw away his life, and a more mature, wiser individual, irritated at his foolish other self. Wilson experienced what he spent the rest of his life trying

to secure: a sense of clarity, of the objective *meaningfulness* of life, a perception lost under the stifling subjectivity of emotion. He realised he wanted *more* life, not less. He had one of the “peak experiences” the mechanisms of which he devoted his life to understanding, and it literally saved his life.

Maintaining that sense of meaning was hard work. After a stint in the RAF, which he escaped by pretending to be gay, Wilson drifted from job to job and room to room in Leicester and London, with a brief stint in Paris selling subscriptions to the *Paris Review*. He wrote incessantly and by the early 1950s hit on the idea of sleeping on Hampstead Heath and working by day in the Reading Room of the British Museum in order to save rent; it would also preclude him paying support to his first wife, with whom he had a son (they had agreed to a separation). His plan succeeded. The novelist Angus Wilson, who worked at the library, befriended the young Wilson and offered to show his publisher the novel Colin was working on; this would later be published as *Ritual in the Dark* (1960), a philosophical thriller which could be characterised as Jack the Ripper meets *The Brothers Karamazov* (and which, if they knew their stuff, Penguin would put out as a Modern Classic). Another friend, Stuart Holroyd, inspired him to work on a critical book, a work of ideas surrounding a theme that had obsessed him for some time: that of the “outsider”, the man or woman who “sees too much and too deeply” and who craves a sense of meaning and purpose more powerful than what conventional life can provide, concerns that existentialists like Sartre and Camus were grappling with. On Christmas Day 1954, in his freezing room in Brockley, Wilson sketched an outline of the book that would make him famous.

When *The Outsider* – a study in alienation and extreme mental states – appeared on 28 May 1956, published by Victor Gollanz, no one was more surprised at its instant success than Wilson. His range was vast, reaching





from Nietzsche to TE Lawrence, Van Gogh to Nijinsky; he also discussed later important figures like Hermann Hesse and Gurdjieff, well before their popularity in the 1960s and 70s. The first edition sold out in a day. Reviewers like Cyril Connolly and Philip Toynbee tripped over themselves to celebrate England's "home grown existentialist". For Edith Sitwell Wilson was a "truly great writer"; John Connell agreed and added "And he's only twenty-four". John Osborne's kitchen-sink drama *Look Back in Anger* had opened the same week and the press quickly started a publicity storm around the "Angry Young Men". Wilson had nothing in common with Osborne or the other Angries – except for being working class – but he was tarred with the same brush and after some weeks the critics tired of the Angries and turned on them. Wilson was caught in the backlash, and to this day the conventional media still trots out the inaccurate clichés that muddled his early success – witness the poor response to his passing in the press and the scandalous absence of any mention of it by the BBC. Although one critic, Herbert Read, considered it a better book than *The Outsider*, *Religion and the Rebel* (1957), Wilson's second, took a pummeling and for the next decade and a half he was *persona non grata* in the English literary world.

Wilson moved to Cornwall with his second wife Joy – they had three children together – and undeterred by his dismissal continued to write, producing the books of his "Outsider Cycle", a series of investigations into society, literature, psychology and philosophy, as well as novels embodying these ideas. *The Age of Defeat* (1959), *The Strength to Dream* (1962), *Origins of the Sexual Impulse* (1963), and *Beyond the Outsider* (1965) were aimed at overcoming the cul-de-sac he believed the work of Sartre, Camus and Heidegger had ended in. Drawing on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and the later work of Alfred North

Whitehead, Wilson strove to take existentialism in a new, more positive direction, a project he summed up in *Introduction to the New Existentialism* (1966). He once remarked that he "sat out the 1960s," and indeed his philosophy was not in tune with the ethos of the swinging decade. Yet his sitting was very productive, and during these years he honed his skills as a communicator through demanding lecture tours and teaching positions in the US. During one stint in California, he spent an afternoon with Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood and Henry Miller. Twice he had arranged to meet Jack Kerouac, but both times the original Beat got too drunk to show up.

By the end of the 1960s the "occult revival" had reached Wilson

and an American publisher asked if he would be interested in writing a book on the subject. Although he always had a mild interest in the occult, Wilson was sceptical and admitted he accepted the commission because he needed the money. It was a good decision.

Critics applauded *The Occult* – and its sequel, *Mysteries* (1978) – and for a time he was back in the literary good books. *The Occult* sold almost as well as *The Outsider*, but even more important, he had by this time formulated an answer to the Outsider's crisis of meaning. It lay in developing the mind itself and in its peculiar power to "grip" reality, a development of Husserl's notion of "intentionality". Perception, Husserl argued, was intentional, not passive; we are not mirrors reflecting reality, as the Cartesian model argued, but active minds reaching out and grabbing it. Sartre, Camus, and Heidegger had ended in a kind of stoic acceptance of meaninglessness because they failed to recognise this. Wilson did and he took it further, suggesting we possess a hidden power, a "Faculty X", which allows us, in moments, to grasp the "reality

of other times and places," a breakthrough out of the subjectivity that stifles us. Faculty X is a kind of "sixth sense" that conveys to us "the purpose of life, quite direct and un-inferred." It is also, Wilson argues, "at the heart of all so-called 'occult' experience."

Some critics complained that he had dumped existentialism and jumped on the occult bandwagon, but this is untrue. His interest in the occult stems from the same obsession that informs his Outsider Cycle: the way to meaning. *Beyond the Occult* (1988), which Wilson said was his most important book, brings together his speculations on this theme. By the 1980s his interest in criminology, begun in the early 1960s – way ahead of the "true crime" boom – had also come



together in *The Criminal History of Mankind* (1984), a work that rivals Wells's *Outline of History* in scope, insight and sheer intellectual adventure. And in shorter works like *Frankenstein's Castle* (1981) and *Access to Inner Worlds* (1983) Wilson developed his insights into split-

brain psychology, while in *The Misfits* (1987), he synthesised his decades-long study into the lives of "sexual outsiders" looking at the careers of, among others, the Marquis de Sade, Lord Byron, and the cross-dressing philosopher Charlotte Bach.

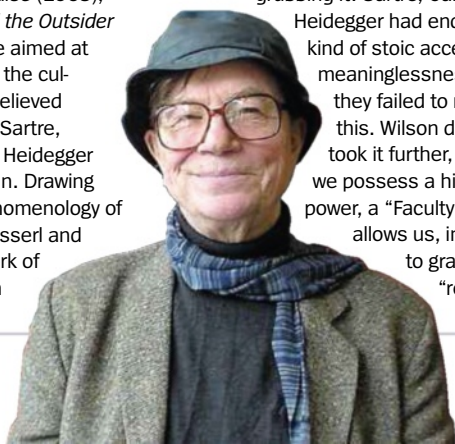
The mid-1990s saw another big seller. *From Atlantis to the Sphinx* (1996) began Wilson's investigations into the evidence for prehistoric civilisations; his interest in this had been aroused by the work of Graham Hancock and Robert Bauval. He continued this theme in later books, such as *The Atlantis Blueprint* (2000), and *Atlantis and the Kingdom of the Neanderthals* (2006), which drew on the work of Charles Hapgood, who argued for the existence of a vast maritime civilisation well before the rise of Egypt, and Wilson's friend the psychologist Stan Gooch, whose ideas about Neanderthal Man, laughed at during his lifetime, are now increasingly accepted by the

scientific mainstream – sadly, with no mention of Gooch's brilliant work.

Wilson showed little sign of slowing down in the new century, although there was a sense that he was looking back with the intention of summing up his life's work. Like all obsessives, he returned again and again to the same themes, seeing new ways into them and formulating new syntheses. *Dreaming to Some Purpose* (2004), his second autobiography – *Voyage to a Beginning* (1969), written at the hoary age of 38, was his first – is a congenial overview of his career, from the duffle-coated early days to the treadmill life of an unrepentant "writing machine". Angered at Humphrey Carpenter's superficial look at the 1950s, *The Angry Young Men* (2002), Wilson produced his own account, *The Angry Years* (2007), a no-holds-barred, warts and all look at his early contemporaries that shows Wilson at his best, recounting his encounters with Osborne, Kingsley Amis, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing and others from that time. And in *Superconsciousness* (2009) he again synthesised a lifetime's analysis of the mechanisms of consciousness, producing a "DIY manual" on how to achieve that intensity of being that he first felt at the point of suicide so many decades ago.

Figures as diverse and prestigious as the psychologist Abraham Maslow, the historian Jacques Barzun, and the novelist Philip Pullman bucked the mainstream tide and praised Wilson's work, but readers of *Fortean Times* need little argument in that department. Wilson said that human beings are like grandfather clocks, driven by watch springs; reading him, I assure you, makes our inner gears a little bit stronger. "I would like my life to be a lesson in how to stand alone and to thrive on it," he once said. It has been this, and much more, for the many who stood with him. A warm, generous, dignified man, he will be missed.

*Colin Wilson, writer, born Leicester 26 June 1931; died 5 December 2013, aged 82. He is survived by his wife Joy, his daughter Sally, and his sons Damon and Rowan.*







# the UFO files

FORTEAN TIMES presents our monthly section featuring regular sighting reports, reviews of classic cases, entries on major ufological topics and hands-on advice for UFO investigators. **The UFO Files** will benefit from your input, so don't hesitate to submit your suggestions and questions.

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## FLYINGSAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT  
THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND  
FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY



### CASH LANDRUM CRUMBLES

It was a case that sceptic Peter Brookesmith had to concede was "the most baffling and frustrating of modern times". And it was cited by Eddie Bullard as one of the "quality cases" that challenged psychosocial explanations for UFOs. But new evidence has raised doubts about the Cash-Landrum encounter that happened in Texas on 29 December 1980, just one day before the Rendlesham incident.

The case revolves around the stories of two women, Betty Cash and Vickie Landrum (above), who said they were driving home at night from a bingo game with Vickie's seven-year-old son, Colby, when they saw a strange diamond-shaped object hovering over a rural road 35 miles (56km) from Houston airport. Both women were caught in a blast of intense heat as they left their car and noticed the 'object' appeared to be shepherded by 23 huge Chinook helicopters. They suffered illness, including skin blisters and burns, in the aftermath of the encounter and Betty was treated in hospital for injuries that she believed were caused by radiation. The case quickly became a 'classic'.

The investigation was conducted by just one person, NASA aerospace engineer John Schuessler, who published a book on the case in 1998. In his account, Schuessler said the women took him to the exact spot on the road where scorch marks were visible on the road and nearby trees. But no photographs were ever produced of marks on the road or their car. Some leading UFO proponents doubted the women's symptoms could have been produced by radiation, as a dose strong enough to cause skin blisters would have killed them. In fact Betty died 18 years after the sighting in 1998, aged 71. Neither could anyone explain where the 23 helicopters came from during the Christmas holidays or how such a spectacular formation in the sky was missed by tens of

thousands of people living near a busy civilian airport. In 1986, Vicky's claim for \$23 million in damages against the US Government was thrown out, on the basis there was no evidence the helicopters or 'object' were owned by the US military. The case had more holes than Swiss cheese, but ufologists would not let it go.

Now a fresh investigation by Curt Collins has discovered that officials from the Texas Department of Health visited the road and found no evidence of radiation. They offered to investigate further but were denied access to the women's medical records. Worse still, Shuessler told them that "due to the late hour and the ladies' emotional state" they could not remember where the incident happened, directly contradicting his published claim to have found the exact spot. Collins believes that "the entire case is tainted" by the new revelations, but that is an understatement in terms of what it says about the lengths both witnesses and investigators can go to perpetuate a UFO 'mystery'. You can follow the developments on Curt's blog: [www.blueblurrylines.com](http://www.blueblurrylines.com) and Bob Sheaffer's Bad UFOs: <http://tinyurl.com/oj6gqeb>.

### MYSTERY MAP VISITS UK DREAMLAND

In November, ITV revived the old *X-Files* formula with a two-part TV show called *Mystery Map*, pairing Julia Bradbury with sidekick Ben Shephard as a pair of mystery-busters touring Britain to probe its supernatural legends. Inevitably, Rendlesham was top of the list and its chief poster-boy, Nick Pope, flew in from his new home in Arizona to tell Shepherd this was "not just a case of lights in the sky". With nothing new to add to story, the intrepid presenter sat in the darkened forest listening to Col Halt's tape noting "the fear and tension" in his voice. The sceptical view of the case was provided by Chris French, who said that a meteor and the Orfordness lighthouse were more likely explanations than alien visitors. Cue the arrival of bluff Yorkshire copper Gary Heseltine, who said he believed aliens might want to visit Suffolk because they were concerned about nuclear weapons stored on this base during the Cold War. The presenters then got to do an 'investigation': they wrote to the MoD politely asking if the nuclear claims were true. When the reply arrived, it contained just two words: "No comment". *Mystery Map* was left with what they set out to find – a mystery!

### THE INVISIBLE LIGHTHOUSE

The lighthouse at Orfordness in Suffolk (below) that plays the role of trickster in the legend of 'Britain's Roswell' has been switched off for good. The beam flashed for the last time on 27 June and has been replaced by a stronger lamp at Southwold. There has been a lighthouse at Orfordness since 1792 and some now expect it will fall victim to coastal erosion. It has become iconic not just as a geographical landmark, but as a symbol for one of the longest running controversies in ufology (see **FT204:32-39,78-79**). Inspired by the UFO story and his memories of his childhood in Suffolk, musician Thomas Dolby is touring North America with an innovative live show called 'The Invisible Lighthouse'. Although Dolby doesn't buy Ian Ridpath's theory that the lighthouse was the UFO seen by Col Halt, he admits being mesmerised by the power of its beam as child. His production includes the lines: "I found my way out to the only spot in the woods where you can see the lighthouse. But what had become of the great epic beam I remember from childhood?"

[www.ianridpath.com/ufo/rendlesham.htm](http://www.ianridpath.com/ufo/rendlesham.htm);  
[www.thomasdolby.com/](http://www.thomasdolby.com/)



SIMON JAMES / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## THE 'WES' EFFECT 2: SEEING THINGS

Last issue I related a 1901 close encounter with a flying hut and two small humanoids that emerged from it. This is one of the first recognisable CE3 – or alien contact – sightings. It straddles the boundary between the reports of fairy folk recorded for centuries across many cultures and what today would be considered something very different – aliens landing in spaceships to terrify some hapless local.

The witness, Frank, could not convince himself that what he saw was just a dream, although he tried. It remained vivid in his memory as an actual event throughout his life. Crucial to this was the fact that others in his village either heard a strange noise as the 'hut' took off or saw something anomalous in the sky; yet they regarded it as a meteorological phenomenon, such as a thunderbolt or ball lightning.

So why did Frank interpret the same event in a very different way from the others? The simplest explanation is that he chanced to be in the right place at the right moment to observe at close hand what the others only glimpsed. So Frank saw what was really there, and they did not. But there is another option – defined by what I call the 'WES' effect – that is potentially at the heart of strange experiences like this across the ages.

To illustrate this, consider another case brought to me by a fascinating lady called Roberta. She told me of her unusual life, in which multiple odd experiences had occurred, ranging from apparitions to UFOs. One was particularly interesting because it involved a kind of out-of-body state in which she seemed to witness herself standing nearby and developed a very peculiar sensation in which it was impossible to decide whether she or the other her was the *real* Roberta.

Roberta believed that she possessed an innate sensitivity to paranormal events and became an astrologer, giving life readings to others. But then, in late May 1972, she went on a coach tour of Eastern Europe and something dramatic happened. The coach party was in two separate buses, one behind the other, as they drove from Russia into Poland. It was the middle of the night and most of her fellow travellers were asleep as the coaches rumbled along a highway near to the town of Poznan. Suddenly, Roberta became aware that there were weird beings on the roof of the bus in front.

These creatures were mostly human in appearance, about the size of seven-year-old children but a little imp like. Roberta told me that these beings were "not quite solid, yet not transparent". They appeared to be happily playing on the roof of the vehicle, aware – she sensed – that no one immediately below them had a clue that they were there.

This scene, curiously reminiscent of the 1963 *Twilight Zone* episode involving gremlins on an aircraft wing, played out for several minutes as Roberta tried to persuade herself that it was all an hallucination. This is just what the 10-year-old Frank had done. Yet, as with

## There were weird beings on the roof of the bus in front



him, Roberta was unable to convince herself that this was only some sort of vision.

She chose not to alert anyone to this extraordinary sight, not wanting to distract the driver – although his view ahead should have revealed the entities to him. In the end, she concluded that she must simply be "attuned to different frequencies of perception", as suggested by her other unusual experiences: she could detect these creatures, others could not. But how can we ever prove that these beings were present in the real world, as opposed to created by her imagination – perhaps even via that *Twilight Zone* episode?

Crucially, we have a further clue. For the previous night, as the bus was on the road between Moscow and Smolensk, Roberta had already had another encounter – this time with a UFO. The object, described as a large round glow, had seemingly appeared behind her coach and then followed them for miles as they travelled across the Russian landscape.

Again, given that nobody else seemingly saw this craft, we might be tempted to say that it's impossible to determine the 'reality' of what Roberta described. Was it there – only visible to her 'highly attuned' self – or was it in her imagination?

There is a third possibility. When I investigated, given the likely time and place from Roberta's recall, it emerged that the full Moon was rising where her UFO had been. So was the Moon the source of a surprising misperception that only Roberta experienced that night? Did others actually see her 'UFO' too, but correctly recognise what it was and so not have any kind of strange experience? This is where the 'WES effect' may come in to play.

In this equation there are three components: W = a witness who is primed in some way to be susceptible, E = the local environment with any triggering factors that may be out of the norm, and S = a stimulus that is suitably ambiguous in nature. Put these three together (W+E+S) to

get the WES effect, and a close encounter can emerge.

Roberta was clearly a primed witness given her belief in an ability to attune to other realities and her track record of odd experiences. The environment that she was in – a long, tiring bus journey at night is known to induce 'highway hypnosis' as repetitive passing images from the darkened surroundings 'lull' the brain into a rhythm – seems well suited to causing an altered state of consciousness. And the Moon popping up over the horizon unexpectedly appeared larger than it should have done because when close to the horizon the perspective of the 'Moon illusion' creates just this impression. Once the object was interpreted by Roberta as 'homing in' on the bus there was – for her – a suitably ambiguous stimulus.

Take away any of the three components of the WES effect and the result will probably not be anything strange enough to be reported as a fortan event; on the rare occasions when they all combine, there's a good chance there will. Other witnesses in a position to see the stimulus (S) but who do not match the W and E elements of the WES effect will see the same thing but not perceive it as extraordinary.

So with Roberta the Moon transmogrifies into a spaceship. Later, we might speculate, tree shadows dancing on the roof of the bus become small creatures cavorting about. And in Bournville in 1901, perhaps the other villagers who saw and heard things were correct to identify them as a thunderbolt, whereas our 10-year-old boy walking in a state of reverie on a warm summer's eve saw it close up, and the WES effect kicked in to produce a very different kind of experience.

Of course, as you will rightly be saying, this is merely a theory designed to match the evidence. But I find it useful when applied to CE3 cases in particular, as an alternative to assuming that they are either hoaxes or actual alien contacts (and I would never be so bold as to entirely eliminate that possibility).

If you are understandably unconvinced there is an experiment that you can do at home that I will leave you to ponder. It may provide a demonstration of the WES effect in action.

Look at the image on this page and note your immediate reaction upon seeing it. Then read what is written in the small print at the foot of this page. Now look again at the picture and consider what you observe. Is it still the same?

Context and information can alter how we perceive an ambiguous stimulus. And if it happens via photographs, then it surely must happen in real life when all the other aspects of the WES effect come into play at the same time.

**IMAGE:** A bald-headed alien staring skywards is on the right of the image with its five fingers positioned under the chin... or so it seems. In fact, this sketch (by artist Barbara Walters) was made of the famous Ilkley Moor entity photograph from 1987 for the cover of my book *Aliens: The Real Story* (Hale, 1993). It was printed upside down by mistake as the publisher thought *this* was the alien. Turn this page upside down and you will now see what the 'real' Ilkley alien photo looks like. Now which alien is the most convincing?



# BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

## 48 NEW JERSEY'S SPRING-HEELED JACK SCARE

THEO PAIJMANS follows Spring-heeled Jack's emigration from Victorian England to the New World

Spring-heeled Jack is remembered as one of the stranger terrors of Victorian England (see pp30-35, 40-41). But was another 'Spring-heeled Jack' at the heart of the scare that befell the town of Elizabeth, New Jersey, in December 1885? From the descriptions, it would seem so.

Beginning in the second week of December, the town was besieged by a very agile and extremely tall ghost that appeared almost nightly.

The apparition was described as "a male ghost 12ft [3.6m] high, clad in white, and having large, luminous eyes. The ghost is said to be guilty of jumping fences 12ft high, perching down upon the sills of second-storey windows, flitting about among the branches of trees, and climbing lightning rods with rapidity and ease."<sup>1</sup>

It was said that the 'ghost' had frightened churchgoers in the vicinity of St Michael's Church, East Jersey Street, the place said to be its favourite haunt. One evening, about a dozen persons saw the thing climb up a lightning rod to the church roof, run along the ridge, and appear on the street at the rear of the building. On another occasion, it frightened Lizzie Steckel. The ghost pursued her with outstretched arms until she reached the door of a friend's house. There she fainted while frantically ringing the bell, while the ghost "instantly disappeared". Armed parties scoured the streets, while some thought an ingenious young German who had once been caught in the act of playing a ghostly prank was behind the turmoil. A day later, on Tuesday night, Amanda Miller and Victoria Reinhardt were returning from a party when they discovered the ghost stalking them. They screamed and ran, with the thing in pursuit. Mr Miller unleashed his watchdog. It gave chase, but returned to the house quite



terrified. The ghost leapt over a fence and was gone. Amanda Miller described it as having "fiery eyes and horns, and wrapped in a robe of white," waving its "long and bony arms". And, adding to the Spring-heeled Jack-like appearance, one newspaper remarked that the witnesses "account for his wonderful leaps and flights by vague allusions to springs and wires which they cannot explain in detail."<sup>2</sup>

The story was published nationwide in a number of American newspapers between December 1885 and early February 1886. It also appeared in an abbreviated version, in which the fences have grown to 15ft (4.6m) high, we find added emphasis on the involvement of "springs somewhere" and mention of a vigilance party who had the ghost briefly cornered and which may have grown out of the "dozen persons" who saw the ghost climbing the lightning rod to the roof of the church:

"This ghost is extremely difficult to catch. Its agility is something amazing. Fences fifteen feet high afford no obstacle to the gigantic bounds by which it is accustomed to travel... People have suggested that it must have a spring in it somewhere. It is rumoured that several young women have been kissed by the naughty ghost, and the girls are afraid to venture out of doors after dark. There is something anthropomorphous about the spook after all."<sup>3</sup> In still shorter versions of the account published outside of New Jersey, the ghost itself even reached the phenomenal height of 15ft!<sup>4</sup>

In the hope of finding more reports I contacted the New Jersey Historical Society, which has extensive collections of 19th century New Jersey newspapers. The Society searched the pages of the *Elizabeth Daily Journal* and the *Newark Evening News* for accounts closer to the actual events. It emerged that both newspapers published accounts

on 11 December 1885 that paint a different picture of what happened; not only that, but when compared to each other they also offer different perspectives on the scare. As the *Newark Evening News* reported:

*Residents of South Palmer and Division Streets and Third Avenue, Elizabeth, are excited over the alleged nightly appearance of a ghost, which they declare is 10ft [3m] high, and that it flies across the streets like a kite. Those who have seen it, among the number of Miss Lizzie Steckel [sic], say that the phantom is robed in white, has large fiery eyes, and wears ugly looking horns. On Tuesday*

*night, Miss Steckel says, while returning from a hall she and her escort were chased by the spectre several blocks. Amanda Miller and Victoria Reinhardt, residing on Third Avenue, also assert that they were pursued by the ghost.*

*Incredulous people believe the ghost is a crazy German who sometime ago was seen at an early hour in the morning placing a kite across the street, preparatory to making an aerial flight. The man says that on the death of his mother, two years ago, he was told by her that he would be a ghost the rest of his life.*

*The police are investigating the matter, and a large crowd congregated last night in the vicinity where the alleged ghost was seen.*<sup>5</sup>

The same day the *Elizabeth Daily Journal* published a different view on the matter and a more mundane explanation of the events:

*The New York World correspondent must yield the palm to-day to a scribbler in this*

## JACKS OF ALL TRADES

The enterprising Fleet Street journalist who penned the infamous 'From Hell' letter at the height of the Jack the Ripper scare, creating that iconic name, may even have started an international trend. Hundreds of mystery assailants were active in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century America, gaining such nicknames as 'Jack the Kisser', 'Jack the Hugger', even a 'Jack the Tyre Slasher'.

As an 1891 newspaper remarked: "Why Jack? An unknown lot of scoundrels are designated variously as Jack the Ripper, Jack the Ink Slinger, Jack the Haircutter, Jack the Kisser, Jack the Peeper, and so on. Jack is the familiar adaptation of the time-honoured name John, which has been worn by saints and warriors, popes and kings, statesmen and scientists. The vogue originated in Whitechapel... But there is one Jack who wears his *nom de guerre* with greater honour than the others. He inhabits St Louis, and is celebrated as Jack the Dude Kicker. He makes it his business to assault with both feet the extravagantly dressed and purposeless young men of that city. A dozen so far have complained of his violence..."<sup>1</sup>

That same year a 'Jack the Stone Thrower' was slinging huge stones through glass windows of more than a dozen homes in Fort Dodge, Iowa.<sup>2</sup>

In Hoboken, a 'Jack the Hugger' was arrested. He turned out to be 50-year-old Frank Perlitter, who lingered around factories where girls were employed and "embraced the pretty girls when an opportunity offered."<sup>3</sup>

In 1893, the women of Bridgeton, Pennsylvania, were terrorised by a 'Jack the Acid Thrower'. Described as a young, good-looking man with blonde hair and a sandy moustache, the miscreant was in the habit of throwing acid over women's dresses.<sup>4</sup>

In 1899, a 'Jack the Cutter' slashed women's dresses in Philadelphia,<sup>5</sup> followed in 1905 by a 'Jack the Shoe-slasher'.<sup>6</sup> In 1908, a phantom assailant injected cocaine with a syringe or needle in the arms of unsuspecting residents of the city. The Philadelphia police named him 'Jack The Needle Jabber' and a newspaper commented that: "girls and women... form the majority of his victims".<sup>7</sup>

In 1900, a 'Jack the Slasher' operated in Boston, "a crank, who, apparently without any motive, goes about the city slashing sealskin and other costly garments with some sharp instrument".<sup>8</sup> That same year saw the arrest of Max Krebs, 'the mysterious Jack the Cutter of Washington'. He was caught in New York in 1898 for the same offences. He was also responsible for the 1899 Philadelphia spree. "He has operated, therefore, in

at least three cities. He is a mystery to the police, who cannot account for his crimes".<sup>9</sup>

1 'A Man Who Kicks to Some Purpose', *Auburn Daily Bulletin*, Auburn, New York, 1891.

2 'This Crank Smashes Windows', *Chicago Herald*, Chicago, Illinois, 2 June 1891.

3 'Now It's Jack The Hugger', *New York Herald*, New York, New York, 15 May 1891.

4 'Throws Acid Over Women', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19 June 1893.

5 "Jack The Cutter Identified. Washington Prisoner Has Operated Here and in Philadelphia", *New York Times*, New York, 4 Jan 1900; "Jack The Slasher Caught. Cut The Dresses of Many Women in Philadelphia Last Fall", *Charlotte Daily Observer*, Charlotte, North Carolina, 12 Jan 1900.

6 'Shoe Slasher Tempts Victims With Flowers', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 22 Jan 1905.

7 'Police Seeking Jack The Jabber. Mysterious Man With Hypodermic Syringe Injects Cocaine in Stranger's Arms. Several Victims, Principally Girls, Have Been Affected - Man Dies Strangely', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 12 Apr 1908.

8 'Jack The Slasher in Boston. Unknown Person Cuts Sealskin Coats and Other Garments', *New York Times*, New York, 3 Jan 1900.

9 'Jack The Cutter Identified. Washington Prisoner Has Operated Here and in Philadelphia', *New York Times*, New York, 4 Jan 1900; 'Jack The Slasher Caught. Cut The Dresses of Many Women in Philadelphia Last Fall', *Charlotte Daily Observer*, Charlotte, North Carolina, 12 Jan 1900.

city with versatile talents, who has made a fanciful and luridly coloured ghost story do service in a half a dozen or more metropolitan journals. He says that the whole city is excited with the pranks of a wonderfully agile spectre making its nightly appearance upon the streets... The truth of this sensational story is that something over a week ago a fellow played ghostly pranks in the locality mentioned, and frightened one or two girls, all the other absurd particulars exist alone in the mind of the thrifty penny-a-liner. The fellow who frightened the young ladies has very wisely retired from

the ghost business.<sup>6</sup>

Seemingly undisturbed by this condemnation, the *Newark Evening News* reported a day later that "last night" the ghost had made another appearance:

*Elizabeth's spectre continues to frighten the residents of the Third Ward. Last evening Louis Messing says he met the spook while on East Jersey street. He says he saw it dancing on the crossroads opposite St. Michael's Church, and that on throwing a stone at it it at once vanished, and a few seconds later he saw it skirmishing across the street like a cloud, and enter the churchyard, the gate of which*

slammed to.

*Later the phantom was discovered sitting on the edge of the steep slate roof. In the early hours of the morning the fire alarm bell was heard to strike two. Among the superstitious the antics of the white-robed visitor have created much alarm, Charles Dohmeyer, a reputable citizen, asserts that there is no mistake about the ghost. Last night several armed bodies of men had a long chase after the spook through Schordien's woods. They declare that they found the spectre swinging among the trees, but at the first pop of a gun it vanished.*

Some of the residents of the playground of the ghost say that unless it soon makes itself scarce they will pack up and move.<sup>7</sup>

The *Elizabeth Daily Journal* published nothing more on the scare.<sup>8</sup>

Something was afoot in Elizabeth, New Jersey, but probably nothing more than a sensationalised account of a local prank. If so, the anonymous 'penny-a-liner' could well have lifted the descriptions that are so similar to Spring-heeled Jack from one of the penny dreadfuls about Jack, which began to appear as early as 1864.

### NOTES

1 'An Agile Ghost. He Climbs Lightning Rods, Perches on Church Roofs, and Is Said to Kiss the Girls. (From the New York Sun)', *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, St. Louis, Missouri, 14 Dec 1885.

2 Ibid.

3 'A Huge Ghost. The Terrible Apparition Which Persecutes the Citizens of Elizabeth, N.J. (Boston Herald)', *St Joseph Herald*, Saint Joseph,

Michigan, 16 Jan 1886. This shorter version of the account was also published elsewhere and nationwide as 'A New Jersey Ghost', *Daily Inter Ocean*, Chicago, Illinois, 2 Jan 1886; *News and Observer*, Raleigh, North Carolina, 10 Jan 1886; 'A Huge Ghost. The Terrible Apparition Which Persecutes the Citizens of Elizabeth, N.J. (Boston Herald)', *Jackson Sentinel*, Maquoketa, Iowa, 14 Jan 1886; *Marble Rock*

*Weekly*, Marble Rock, Iowa, 14 Jan 1886; *Daily Gazette*, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 16 Jan 1886; *Waterloo Courier*, Waterloo, Iowa, 3 Feb 1886; *Warren Ledger*, Warren, Pennsylvania, 5 Feb 1886.

4 "There is a ghost 15 feet high that kisses young women and raises Cain generally in the quiet old town of Elizabeth, N.J. There are a good many people who would like to carry on the same proceedings if they had the ghost

of a chance." *Milford Mail*, Milford, Iowa, 11 Feb 1886; also in *Kellogg Enterprise*, Kellogg, Iowa, 29 Jan 1886.

5 'Elizabeth's Big Ghost. Excitement Over an Alleged Spook. What it is Thought to Be', *Newark Evening News*, Newark, New Jersey, 11 Dec 1885, Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J.

6 'Ghost Story. The Wonderful Tale of a New York Reporter - An Agile Spectre

- Its "Outstretched Arms"- Girls Screaming - Ghosts Bounding - The Business of the Bubble', *Elizabeth Daily Journal*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, 11 Dec 1885, Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J.

7 'The Elizabeth Ghost. Men Who Declare That They Saw the Spectre Last Night', *Newark Evening News*, Newark, New Jersey, 12 Dec 1885, Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J.

8 At my request the *Elizabeth Daily Journal* was also searched for the period of 12 to 31 December 1885 by New Jersey Historical Society's Library Reference Assistant James Amemasor. No further accounts were located in reference or as a sequel to the 11 December account. The search included the vertical files with book chapters, magazines, newspaper clippings, etc. on New Jersey ghosts.



# THE HAUNTED LANDSCAPE

London in the nineteenth century was the haunt of monsters in search of helpless female victims, and Spring-heeled Jack was the most notorious of them all before Jack the Ripper arrived on the scene. But, asks **JACOB MIDDLETON**, have Jack's celebrated supernatural qualities obscured the real context in which such attackers operated?

**T**he closing days of 1837 saw London struck by extraordinarily harsh winter weather. The winds that swept in from the North Sea brought with them a series of snowstorms that left the commercial and public life of the capital at a virtual standstill. The Thames froze above Hammersmith, whilst the stretches of river running through the city were clogged with floating chunks of ice. People were driven off the streets by the cold, and London was left desolate and frozen.

It was in the midst of this winter that rumours began to spread about a strange character stalking lone travellers in the villages surrounding the city. This mysterious figure was described as appearing in the form of a white bear, or as a white bull, or else as a man dressed in a suit of bronze armour, equipped with clawed gloves.<sup>1</sup> Dramatic tales of his activities circulated freely amongst the population of the capital, and it was said that servant girls in the neighbourhoods to the west of London "told dreadful stories of a ghost, or devil, who, on one occasion, was said to have beaten a blacksmith, and torn his flesh with iron claws".<sup>2</sup> The newspapers claimed that many chose not to travel after dark, for fear of what they might meet.

The subject of these extraordinary rumours soon earned himself a name – Spring-heeled Jack – that derived from the great leaps he was said to perform when evading those who sought his capture. He appeared as an incredible character to contemporary observers, capable of near impossible feats, and able to elude all pursuers. Yet, his emergence was, in many ways,

**JACK WAS  
SAID TO  
HAVE TORN  
THE MAN'S  
FLESH WITH  
HIS CLAWS**

a product of the physical and social conditions of 1830s London. The stories told about this ghostly figure encapsulated many of the social anxieties of the period, albeit in a dramatic and exaggerated form. Spring-heeled Jack should be seen as a literal 'zeitgeist' – a spirit whose manifestations embodied the uneasy relationship between the population and their physical environment at the dawn of the Victorian era.

## **FOOLISH SERVANTS AND FEARFUL LADIES**

The early weeks of 1838 saw many dramatic tales linked to the appearances of Spring-heeled Jack. It was said by some that he had first appeared in Barnes where, in the shape of a white bull, he had attacked a number of people, principally women; in nearby Richmond it was claimed that he had scared a number of ladies to death, whilst in Sion Park and Isleworth he had reputedly inflicted injuries on his victims with his clawed gloves.<sup>3</sup> He had, meanwhile, terrified the inhabitants of Hammersmith by appearing as "an immense baboon, six feet high, with enormous eyes, and arms of an extensive length".<sup>4</sup> Unsurprisingly, many people who lived in the area around London chose to stay indoors after nightfall, rather than risk being confronted with such a fearsome character.

Despite the widespread alarm produced by the sightings of Spring-heeled Jack, the press treated his appearance in the vicinity of London as a humorous diversion, a light-hearted distraction from the misery of the unusually harsh winter. Much amusement was derived from the notion that this



**ABOVE:** Jack atop a roof in an 1850 illustration. **OPPOSITE:** Jack leaps over a stagecoach in a penny dreadful of the 1850s.



# SPRING-HEEL'D JACK:

THE TERROR OF LONDON.



JACK LEAPS OVER THE STAGE COACH.



was a ghost quite unlike those that populated contemporary literature. Not only had Jack's escapades shown him to have a physical presence, but he chose to present himself in the vicinity of the capital, which was thought to be a most unlikely place for a ghost to appear. Whilst there was a considerable residual belief in ghosts throughout British society in the late 1830s, they were connected in the popular imagination to the rural world; tales told of phantom figures placed them in country churchyards or rustic crossroads, far from civilisation. They were not expected to appear in close proximity to a large and modern city. As a result, Spring-heeled Jack was dismissed as a "suburban ghost", a term intended to convey the intrinsic contradictions which he embodied.<sup>5</sup> If ghosts did exist, they were expected to emerge in the remotest regions of Britain, not in the neighbourhood of a city like London.

These underlying notions about the nature of ghosts informed the discussion, and dismissal, of Spring-heeled Jack by the press. "Never has credulity or superstition been more strongly exemplified," claimed the *Morning Chronicle*, "than in the ghost story".<sup>6</sup> Another newspaper, the *West Kent Guardian*, took the opportunity to present the beliefs of the common people exposed to Spring-heeled Jack as intrinsically ridiculous, noting how:

*Some old women will have it that he has been seen dashing across Blackheath at 12 o'clock at night, on a milk white steed, covered with blood and dust – others have seen him at all hours in the day and night, at the corner of every lane, street and road, in Greenwich, Woolwich, and Deptford, and the surrounding neighbourhood. Little children can't go to bed by themselves, for the thought of his bouncing down the chimney or in at the window the moment they are asleep.*<sup>7</sup>

The same newspaper would later declare that Spring-heeled Jack was "a gross species of humbug", noting that: "feats far exceeding all probability have been ascribed to him!"<sup>8</sup>

The tone of the press largely derived from preconceptions about those who believed in ghosts. Moralists of the early 19th century had often complained, in the words of Joseph Taylor, about "the simplicity of a great part of mankind in being so credulous as to believe every idle tale".<sup>9</sup> Children and women were seen as particularly susceptible to superstition, and the victims of Spring-heeled Jack were typified as foolish servant girls and delicate ladies. According to the press, servants were either responsible for spreading gossip about the suburban ghost, or, alternatively, proved to be his victims.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, many accounts carried an implicit suggestion that only weak-minded females could be driven out of their wits through encounters with Spring-heeled Jack; one of the earliest reports of this suburban ghost claimed that he had "succeeded in depriving seven ladies of their senses".<sup>11</sup> This was a ghostly figure, it seems, who was a particular threat to women.

Given the general tone of reporting, it is unsurprising that London's satirical

newspapers took up the story of Spring-heeled Jack, and it is here where we see the first visual glimpse of the phantom. On 10 March 1838 the cover of the *Penny Satirist* was graced by two pictures of the character who had been plaguing London. One image portrayed Jack as a horned devil, leaping over a house; he is dressed in a cape and shown equipped with the spring-heeled boots which explained this incredible feat of agility. This is the ghostly antagonist of the most incredible and unlikely stories then circulating in the capital. A second, accompanying, image is, however, far more interesting. Here, Spring-heeled Jack is portrayed naked, save for a helmet, cloak, and pair of boots.

He is shown chasing two women, with the accompanying text suggesting that this is a form of punishment for their petty gossip. As its title might suggest, the *Penny Satirist* was a humorous newspaper, and the image was intended to amuse its readers. The gossiping old maid was, after all, a stock comedy figure of the time; the portrayal of Spring-heeled Jack, meanwhile, is as a ridiculous bogeyman, capable of scaring only the most foolish and superstitious members of the population, such as spinsters and servant girls. This image invites us to take the part of the rational bystander, who can laugh at the ridiculous reactions of these women.

And yet, this second image should make us

## JACK ALOFT.



ABOVE: A horned and devilish Spring-heeled Jack leaps over a house, from the *Penny Satirist* of 10 March 1838.

question such a proposition. This is, after all, a clawed and naked man who is attempting to attack a pair of women after nightfall. With the mask of humour removed, this Spring-heeled Jack becomes a fearsome prospect, perhaps all the more threatening if he is merely someone who has chosen to take on the guise of a ghost.

### THE MONSTERS OF LONDON

Whilst the ghostly trappings and protean form of Spring-heeled Jack fascinated the press, they also helped to disguise the context in which he operated. The early 19th century city was a public space in which women were regularly threatened by unwanted attention. This ranged from undue masculine interest and sexual harassment, through to violent assault. Whilst many women were fortunate enough to escape physical harm, the city was a risky environment, one which concealed within it numerous strange and dangerous characters. An example of this was the “fellow genteelly dressed in black” who, in the summer of 1810, was reputed to lurk in the fields beyond Marylebone, waylaying women who were unaccompanied by a male escort.<sup>12</sup> At the time, the parish of Marylebone marked the edge of London’s urban centre; those who travelled past this point would soon find themselves in the narrow lanes of the Middlesex countryside; it was an environment that could leave female travellers vulnerable to attack. One press report told of how:

*Two young Ladies out of Baker-street, and a little boy, were indecently accosted by the Monster on Wednesday morning, in the fields leading from Portland-road to Primrose-hill, and he literally tore the cloaths [sic] off one of their backs, and brutally scourged her with a switch. The other young lady was treated in a manner too indecent to be described.*<sup>13</sup>

The use of the word “monster” denotes that this character belonged to a category of criminals that had emerged in the latter years of the 18th century and had proved to be uncomfortably common in the early decades of the 19th. These were predatory urban figures who targeted women in attacks of an apparently sexual nature. While the term ‘monster’ might seem to imply that there was a supernatural component to their activities, it was a reference to their behaviour, which was shocking and perverse to a contemporary newspaper readership. Adding to the alarm was the fact that many of these monsters bore an outward appearance of normality, or even gentility: these were violent criminals who took on the guise of respectable citizens.

The most famous of these assailants was the London Monster who preyed upon the city’s women in the latter part of the 18th century. He was said to have stabbed, or cut the clothes, of upwards of 50 women and by 1790 was responsible for a widespread panic in the capital.<sup>14</sup> Less well known, however, are the various other characters that followed in his wake. In the first half of the 19th century numerous reports appeared in the metropolitan press of mysterious and threatening figures who stalked vulnerable

### SPRING-HEELED JACK.



ABOVE: A rather different looking Spring-heeled Jack – clawed and naked but for a cloak and helmet, but also from the *Penny Satirist* – putting a pair of female gossips to flight.

## THE LONDON MONSTER PREYED ON THE CITY'S WOMEN

women.<sup>15</sup> The typical monster attack, if such a thing may be said to exist, occurred on the fringes of the city and affected a woman travelling alone. An example of what might be expected of such an event can be seen in the account of an attack upon a woman named Ann Pearson in August 1827. Pearson was returning home to London from an afternoon in Kentish Town when she was met on the road by “an elderly and respectable looking man”:

*After walking by her side some distance, he put one arm round her waist, and was proceeding to further liberties, when she sprang from him, and threatened to call for assistance. Instead, however, of proceeding to further outrage, as she expected, he entreated pardon, and again resumed his station by her side, until they arrived very near the Fever Hospital, at Battle Bridge, where he suddenly turned on her, and she instantly felt herself wounded in the left arm, with some sharp instrument.*<sup>16</sup>

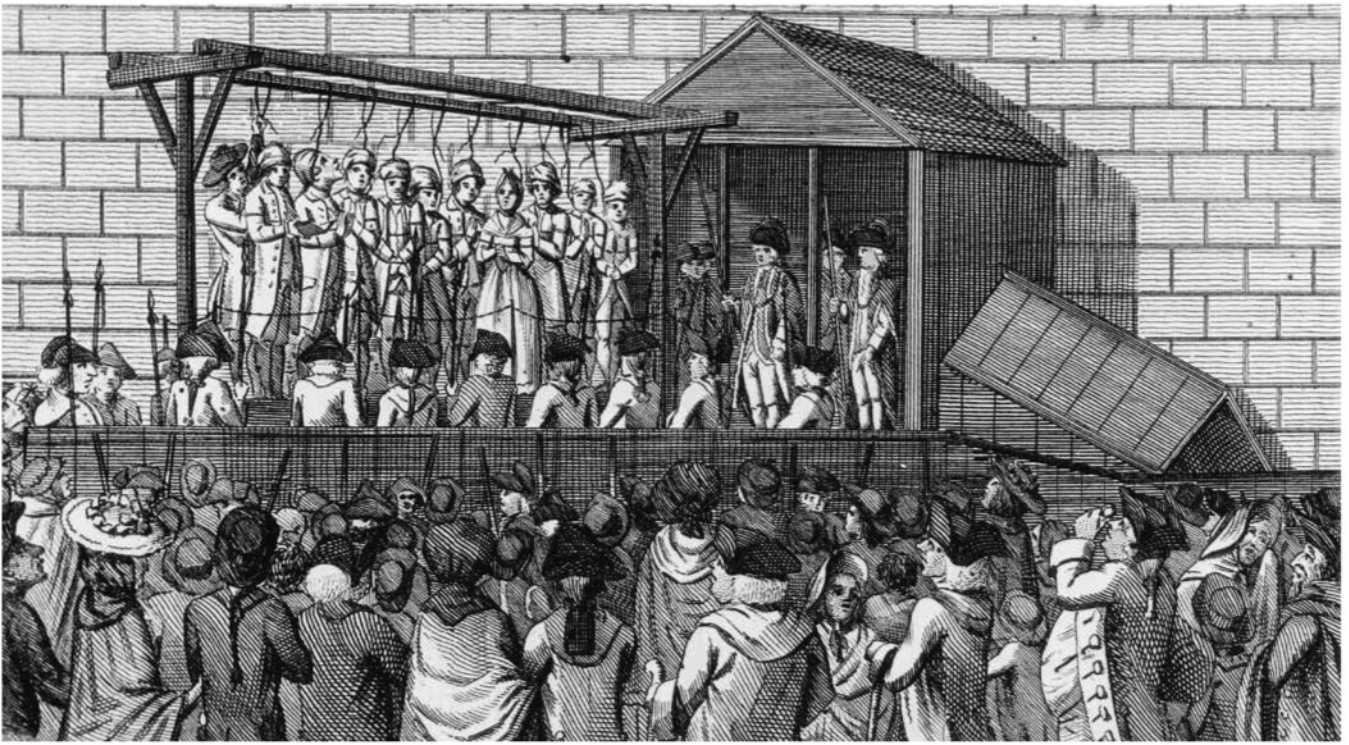
The assault occurred in the region of what is now Kings Cross, then the very edge of the capital. Many of the roads were still rural lanes lined with trees and surrounded by

fields. The attack upon Pearson was, moreover, of an implicitly sexual nature, the monster’s blow being, in the words of the report, “evidently aimed at the breast”.<sup>17</sup> The language here is typical of the newspapers of the time, and is suggestive without being explicit. Contemporary readers would have understood exactly what kind of predators these figures were.

The activities of such monsters form an important part of the background to the appearance of Spring-heeled Jack at the end of the 1830s. Their existence was common knowledge and helped to condition expectations of the threats that were ever-present on the urban peripheries of London. In many ways, the appearance of Spring-heeled Jack was a continuation of the pre-established narrative of the monster. As with his earlier counterparts, the suburban ghost was a figure who lurked on the fringes of the capital, preying upon lone women; he often targeted the vulnerable, and those of low status, such as servant girls. His attacks, too, carried with them an implicit sexual quality; the manner in which Jack was said to “tear clothes from the backs of females” is one example of this.<sup>18</sup> Yet whilst the monsters of the early 19th century are largely forgotten, Spring-heeled Jack is remembered to the present day. A significant factor here is the widespread press coverage of his ghostly antics in the early months of 1838, which far exceeded that of his rivals. Predatory figures were, it seems, not just common but mundane, and by the 1830s it took supernatural trappings and ghostly imagery to raise such a figure to broad popular attention.

The monsters were not considered by contemporary observers to be a supernatural threat, but merely predatory figures that targeted and endangered the unprotected female traveller. Yet it is worth noting that the distinction between fact and fiction in





ABOVE: The new gallows at the Old Bailey, used for mass executions, circa 1780. BELOW: Gibbet irons on display. OPPOSITE: The 'Hammersmith Ghost'.

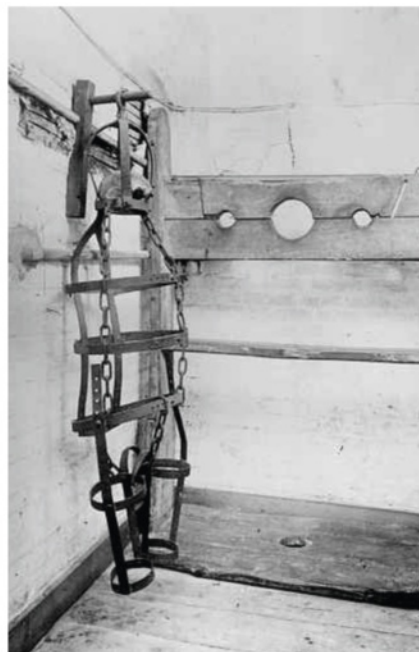
the tales told of their activities appears to have been imprecise, and their activities to have been glamorised and fictionalised by the press. In the popular imagination they were amplified into mysterious, relentless, and dangerous figures. It was a small step to personify these monsters in the form of Spring-heeled Jack, an elusive and ghostly character who appeared as a threatening and unstoppable force, haunting the London night.

### CITY OF GALLOWES

Underlying the activities of Spring-heeled Jack was the fact that in the early 19th century, Londoners had to navigate two related and overlapping urban spaces. The first of these was the physical city in which people lived their everyday lives, one in which numerous women had to fend off the unwelcome attentions of men and monsters. Yet this London existed within the framework of an imaginary city which dominated popular perceptions, and which also had a direct effect upon people's lives. This imaginary London was a space inhabited by phantom assailants, and was, in the words of one historian, a "dark, powerful, and seductive labyrinth".<sup>19</sup> The boundaries of this city were set by the imagination of its observers.

These two Londons were closely related, and the environment provided by the physical city influenced the manner in which the imaginary London was envisioned. Positive views of London were encouraged by the urban developments of the early part of the century, which had transformed the capital into a thriving metropolis, the grand heart of an international empire. This was a city protected by a professional police force, graced by neat rows of modern townhouses, and lit by over 40,000 street lamps.<sup>20</sup>

## IN THE 18TH CENTURY LONDON WAS KNOWN AS THE CITY OF GALLOWES



The latter provided both a literal and metaphorical enlightenment, and were seen as beacons of modernity and civilisation. There were, however, other images of London, many of which portrayed the city in a less flattering light. In the 18th century it had been known as the 'City of Gallows'. "Enter it at any point," reported one writer, "and you would have to pass under a line of gibbets."<sup>21</sup> The punitive penal code of the era mandated the death sentence for hundreds of offences, with the bodies of those found guilty of the most serious crimes being hung in chains, often close to the location where the offences had occurred. Even at the beginning of the 19th century it was common for travellers, particularly when close to the heavily populated region surrounding London, to find their journeys punctuated by regular encounters with the bodies of hanged criminals.<sup>22</sup>

The era of the City of Gallows came to an end in 1823, when extensive legal reform led to the end of the systematic exhibition of the bodies of criminals. Yet the era of gibbets remained in living memory throughout the early part of the Victorian period, and cast its longest shadow over the British countryside. This included the peripheries of London, which, despite a close connection to the capital, remained predominantly rural in character, made up of farms and small villages. A useful example of how this type of environment functioned is provided by Hammersmith, a neighbourhood on the western edge of London, four miles (6.4km) from the Charing Cross. Its proximity to the capital meant that its population grew steadily through the early years of the century; by the 1830s, it was a London suburb, complete with modern villas and a horse-drawn omnibus providing a connection to the city. Yet, despite this,



Hammersmith was not urban in any meaningful way. It lay outside of the governance of the capital and remained a largely rural environment, an overgrown village with farms and market gardens. It was typical of the considerable suburban hinterland that had grown up in the early part of the century, which, whilst closely linked to the economic and cultural life of the capital, lacked many of the institutions of the modern city.

These suburbs, where the city and the country intersected, were a fertile breeding ground for phantom attackers. These were neighbourhoods where the local landmarks were still the sites of murders and gallows, though their physical traces might be vanished. The uncanny atmosphere of these areas was amplified by place names; in the words of one historian, “the topography of nearly every British hamlet was freighted with supernatural importance”.<sup>23</sup> Haunted locations formed part of folk memory, a means of mapping out events in local history, such as murders and suicides. Thus, travellers were confronted by a landscape both physical and imaginative; in a world where illiteracy was common, the environment could be read both in terms of physical signs and with reference to ghost stories and criminal events.<sup>24</sup>

## SUBURBAN TERROR

It is, then, perhaps unsurprising that it was London’s suburban fringe that was afflicted by Spring-heeled Jack. Many of the early sightings can be traced back to areas such as Clapham Common, the village of Barnes, and the rural lanes that surrounded Kew, Peckham, and Greenwich.<sup>25</sup> Another location haunted by Jack was the area around Hammersmith, with some sources claiming that his first appearance was there.<sup>26</sup> This was a neighbourhood which had, for many years, been haunted intermittently by its very own ghostly terror: the Hammersmith Ghost



(see FT297:42-45).<sup>27</sup> Here, Spring-heeled Jack took on the most incredible forms, being seen as a “thing” that “had neither the appearance of a human being nor of any animal”, and as a monstrous donkey, which knocked at doors in nearby Shepherd’s Bush and fled pursuers by leaping over high walls and fences.<sup>28</sup> While these tales bear a hint of the ridiculous, the unnatural forms taken by Jack would have seemed both uncanny and threatening to those living in the area at the time.

The peripheries of London were, then, a natural landscape from which Spring-heeled Jack might emerge. They formed an area far from the lit and policed urban centre of the capital, an area where monsters and criminals could function with little fear of detection or capture. It was easy for the metropolitan newspapers of Fleet Street to dismiss the ghostly figure supposedly prowling the fringes of the capital. They looked at the working-class population who feared Spring-heeled Jack and saw superstition and credulity. Yet those people who lived and worked on the edge of London and were exposed to the suburban ghost’s activities perceived matters differently. Spring-heeled Jack was, from their point of view, a real and present threat. The stories told about him may have been the product of the blurred boundaries between the real and imagined urban space he inhabited, and often confused the physical and ghostly threats he presented; however, regardless of the dismissive tone of the press, the physical dangers *did* exist, and were particularly alarming to certain sections of the population. For the lone female traveller, particularly after nightfall, the area around London was a threatening environment. As the last rays of sunlight retreated over the horizon, this landscape was transformed into one that might conceal ghosts, monsters, or other nameless horrors. The darkness of the winter night was indeed something to fear. **FT**

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**JACOB MIDDLETON** is a researcher who combines academic work in the history of education with a love of sensationalist Victorian media. His current area is educational anxiety in Victorian Britain.

### NOTES

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- 3 “Credulity – the Ghost Story”, *Morning Chronicle*, 10 Jan 1838, p4.
- 4 “Credulity – the Ghost Story”, *Morning Chronicle*, 10 Jan 1838, p4; “Spring-heeled Jack”, *All The Year Round*, 9 Aug 1884, p346.
- 5 Note, for instance, the usage in “Outrage on a Young Lady”, *Times*, 22 Feb 1838, p6.
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- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Joseph Taylor, *Apparitions; or, the Mystery of Ghosts* (London, Lackington, Allen, & Co., 1814), p.vi.
- 10 See, for instance, “Police”, *Times*,

11 Jan 1838, p7.

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13 *Ibid.*

14 See Jan Bondeson, *The London Monster* (Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2003).

15 See, for instance, “Another Monster”, *Morning Post*, 19 Jan 1811, p4; “A Monster”, *Morning Post*, 4 Sep 1822, p3; “Another Monster”, *Morning Post*, 26 July 1827, p3.

16 “A Monster”, *Morning Post*, 31 Aug 1827, p4.

17 *Ibid.*

18 “Police”, *Times*, 9 Jan 1838, p4.

19 Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (London, Virago, 1992), p17.

20 The street-lamp statistics are for 1823, and are taken from Roger Ekirch, *At Day’s Close* (London,

Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), p331.

21 Alexander Andrews: “The Eighteenth Century: Or, Illustrations of the Manners and Customs of our Grand-Fathers”, *New Monthly Magazine*, Nov 1855, p370.

22 Andrews stated that, in the 18th century, one could not “[c]ross any of the heaths, commons, or forests near London” without being “startled by the creaking of the chains from which some gibbeted highwayman was dropping piecemeal”. See Andrews: “The Eighteenth Century”, p370.

23 Ekirch, *At Day’s Close*, p16.

24 Suicide was considered a serious crime in this period and until 1823 was at least notionally punished by the burial of the victim’s body, staked through the heart, at the nearest crossroads.

25 Clapham Common was claimed as the location where Spring-heeled Jack emerged by the writer Elizabeth

Villiers. See Elizabeth Villiers, *Stand and Deliver* (London, Stanley Paul & Co., 1928), pp241-243. Whilst Villiers’s claims do not find much support from known sources, there remains the possibility that supporting contemporary material remains to be discovered.

26 The story of Hammersmith being the first place where Spring-heeled Jack was sighted is mentioned in “Spring-heeled Jack”, *All The Year Round*, 9 Aug 1884, p346. The article goes on to state that the “most trustworthy accounts” located the emergence of Spring-heeled Jack at Barnes.

27 See Jacob Middleton, “Georgian Ghosts: An Aristocratic Spectre”, *History Today*, Feb 2011, pp44-45.

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# THE TRUE HISTORY OF GUY LOGAN

JAN BONDESON looks at the career of Guy Logan, forgotten author of the first full-length fictional account in English of Jack the Ripper's crimes – from which we reprint the opening chapter as it appeared in the *Illustrated Police News* of 1905.

**G**uy Logan was a London journalist. He was the prime mover behind the useful *Famous Crimes Past & Present* magazine, but went on to greater things. Between 1905 and 1906, his novel *The True History of Jack the Ripper* was serialised in the notorious *Illustrated Police News* (see FT274:50-54). A thrilling and fast-moving narrative, along the lines of much working man's fiction of the time, it sees the brilliant but insane Doctor Mortemer Slade kill an attendant in order to break out of the asylum to which he has been confined. It turns out that Dr Slade's faithless girlfriend has got engaged to a younger and more attractive man during his period of incarceration in the madhouse, and this pushes the disturbed medical man over the edge. A profound misogynist, and possible victim of neurosyphilis, he begins murdering and 'ripping' randomly chosen prostitutes, leaving a string of mutilated victims behind in the Whitechapel streets. A brilliant consulting detective is hot on Jack's trail, but the cunning Ripper is too clever for him: he murders Mary Kelly in Miller's Court and makes his escape with impunity. Many more adventures are to come, one of them involving a large mastiff dashing out of a doghouse and endeavouring to put an end to the Ripper's existence, before the *True History of Jack the Ripper* is finally divulged.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Guy Logan went on to write seven books of essays on true crime, all of them valuable sourcebooks, in spite of their sometimes careless author's disdain for footnotes and references. Guy had made sure never to miss any murder trial at the Old Bailey, and he

## GUY LOGAN NEVER MISSED A MURDER TRIAL AT THE OLD BAILEY



had seen and spoken to many of his criminal protagonists. A keen 'murder house' detective, who delighted in documenting London's historical topography of capital crime, he hoped to produce a monograph on this subject, provisionally entitled *Murder Houses of London*. But the elderly Guy's literary prospects received a crushing blow in 1938, when one of his books was at the centre of a disastrous libel suit.

Guy had made some ribald comments about the French courtesan Marguerite Steinheil, who had been acquitted, after a sensational trial, of murdering her husband and mother back in 1908; he clearly thought her a very lucky woman. But it would have been more prudent of him to keep quiet about this sinister

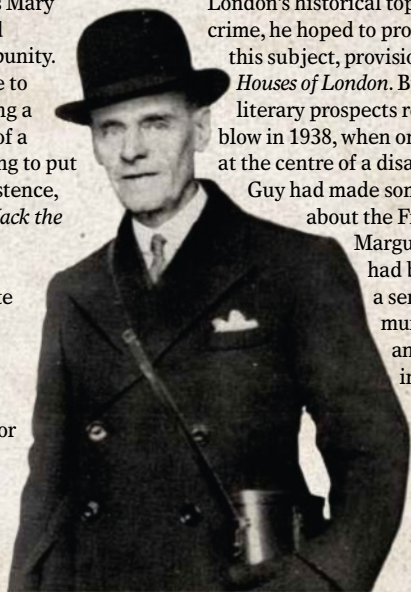
woman, since unbeknownst to him, she was still very much alive. Remarkably, she had married the obscure peer Lord Abinger, who had fallen in love with her when seeing her stand trial in Paris, and was now a Baroness who had been introduced to the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace. During the libel trial, Lady Abinger's barrister did a very good job depicting his client as the blameless victim of a foul libel from an impudent cad of an author. Although Guy may well have been inclined to fight his case in court, and expose the vicious life of this wicked woman, his craven publishers chickened out, to a chorus of considerable odium in the press. Lady Abinger spent the libel proceedings on a grand banquet for her friends in Brighton; one of the guests was her current lover, a so-called Polish Count, another her former favourite Dr Appiah, once the prime suspect in the first Brighton trunk murder of 1935.

As for Guy Logan, he published no further books after this unfortunate incident, and the author of the earliest full-length English-language fictional treatment of Jack the Ripper's crimes died in Weston-super-Mare in 1949.

Guy Logan's *The True History of Jack the Ripper* has just been published (Amberly Publishing 2013) in book form for the first time, with additional material by Jan Bondeson. A few copies of the 'Ripperologist' signed limited edition of this book are still available directly from the author for £15 (to include postage within the UK) via [BondesonJ@cf.ac.uk](mailto:BondesonJ@cf.ac.uk) (please inquire that books are available before making use of PayPal).



**JAN BONDESON** is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, a regular contributor to *Fortean Times* and the author of numerous books. His next one will be *Murder Houses of London*.





## THE TRUE HISTORY OF JACK THE RIPPER \* CHAPTER I. THE ESCAPE



Half-way between the villages of Broxbourne and Hoddesdon in Herts, and standing in its own grounds, some little distance off the main road was, in the year 1887, the private lunatic asylum of one whom, for the purposes of this history, we will call Dr Kent. Private asylums for the insane have not, since the revelations of the novels *Hard Cash* and *Valentine Vox* been in very good odour in this country; but the establishment of Dr Kent was exceptionally well favoured. To be a patient there was almost to be distinguished. None could be received at that model abode whose relatives were not prepared to pay highly for the privilege. Dr Kent's 'Home for the Mindless', as it was termed, in that gentleman's admirably drawn up prospectus, was only suitable as a resort to those with more money by a great deal than brains, and that is how Mr

Mortemer Slade became an inmate.

It was the evening of a fine October day in 1887. Ordinarily speaking, summer had long since taken its departure, and the rigours of early autumn seemed close at hand; but this was the last warm day of the year, the last expiring effort of a genial and benevolent summer to maintain its supremacy. It had been an ideal day, and the inmates of Grange House, sane and insane, normal and abnormal, had been loath to abandon the grounds in which cricket, tennis, and even the old-fashioned croquet had for the last six hours been in full swing.

The gardens of this rural Bedlam were the admired of all the countryside. The house stood on a gentle eminence looking towards the north, and green lawns and verdant plantations stretched away for a mile and a half towards the main road to Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's

Stortford. Great banks of rhododendron bushes intersected the various fields, and these were topped by oaks and chestnuts and limes that were universally pronounced to be the finest in the county. In this spot, nature was at her loveliest. In this same spot poor Humanity, staggering under a load of mental afflictions, was at her worst, for the men and women who gazed with lacklustre eyes upon the beauties of the surroundings were mad – some more, some less – but all indisputably, undeniably mad.

Two men were walking apart on the paths which skirted the boundary of the higher grounds. A high fence and then a higher hedge divided the garden at this point from the high road beyond. It was about half-past six in the evening, the sky was still clear and of a beautiful pale blue colour, while the air had all the peaceful balminess and charm of early summer. Away in the distance, beyond a belt



of trees, the madhouse stood on its prominent hill. How little it seemed to have in common with the gay surroundings and the mild and pleasing air.

The two men – of a height, both tall and spare – slowly paced the well-trimmed paths in friendly arm-in-arm. They were Dr Crosbie, one of the assistant medicoes attached to the sanatorium and Mortemer Slade, an inmate of the asylum. On the former we need bestow only a brief description; of the latter, we shall have much to say. Dr Crosbie was one of the most treasured assistants to Dr Kent, the urbane and talented principal. He was admittedly an expert, a connoisseur in all matters that directly or indirectly concerned the insane. He had learning. He had theories. He had enthusiasm. He had the divine gift of sympathy. He believed from his heart that all men are mad, but that some are more mad than others. He did not scoff, even in his own mind, at the foibles of the mentally weak. He had a hobby for collecting the corks from champagne bottles. One of his most hopeless patients insisted on collecting old bootlaces, of which useful commodity he was the proud possessor of some seven hundred pairs. “For the life of me,” said Dr Crosbie in an occasional burst of candour, “I don’t know which of us is the bigger idiot.”

Mortemer Slade had also qualified for the medical profession. Mad or sane, he was an intensely clever man. Both Dr Kent and Dr Crosbie, his ablest assistant, had often been surprised and even awed at the extent of his understanding. They revered him for his erudition, but they were equally convinced that Mortemer Slade was very mad indeed. Yet they considered him to be mad in a peculiar, unconventional way. Slade could be permitted to mix with any society with the certainty that he would not betray his want of mental equilibrium. He could be left at any time and anywhere. He might be trusted, under all circumstances, to behave like a gentleman; he would never betray himself to be the harmless, clever, pleasant, easy-going maniac his ‘keepers’ one and all pronounced him to be. They even had hopes of curing him some day; of restoring him to his wealthy relatives sane and healthy in mind and body. “Mark you, Crosbie,” Dr Kent would often proclaim oracularly, “If Slade recovers we shall give the world a great surgeon!”

Slade paused for a moment in his walk, unlinked his arm from that of the friendly doctor, and proceeded to light a cigarette. There was nothing in his aspect or demeanour to suggest the mental warp which had wrecked a promising career. Insanity and genius, we know, are closely allied. The soul of Mortemer Slade hovered over the borderland between the two.

“Even now, doctor,” he remarked in suave, even tones, “though I am, unhappily, a patient under the care of a mental specialist, I feel that I am destined to become famous – or infamous. Which, I wonder?”

Dr Crosbie smiled. “When you have undergone our treatment a little longer, Mr Slade,” he said, “neither fame nor happiness should be beyond your grasp. You will be restored to your friends and fortune, and modern surgery will have cause to rejoice thereat.”



FINDING THE BODY OF ANNIE CHAPMAN.

## A WOMAN HAD BEEN FOUND DEAD BENEATH THE ARCHWAY OF A BRIDGE

Mr Slade smiled grimly. He had not a nice smile. His lips were thin, his teeth rather sharp and discoloured, his eyes placed rather close together in his head. He had a fine, intellectual brow, and his face was pleasant in repose, but the smile was sinister, and he never laughed.

“The world shall yet hear of me,” he said calmly. “I feel sometimes a moral elevation, doctor, which seems to place me beyond and above the common wants, the likes and dislikes, of conventional humanity. Let us take Alexander of the Great, St John the Divine of the very Good, and Nero of the very Bad. I could not hope to eclipse the first two. But I, even I, might surpass the deeds of the Roman Emperor whose name posterity abhors.”

Dr Crosbie glanced at him unobserved. Slade seemed calm, dignified, intelligent as ever, but something in his tone vaguely alarmed the doctor, and he determined to report this speech to his principal. The words had been said lightly enough, but the tone was significant of much. They returned to the house together, and Crosbie marked and called a game of one hundred up between Slade and a mad squire of considerable property, who, except when he was playing

billiards, of which game he was passionately fond, imagined himself to be one of his own fox-hounds, and conducted himself in approved ‘doggy’ fashion.

After dinner, at which Dr Kent presided, and which was not taken till eight o’clock, Slade sat in the magnificent library reading the evening papers, which had just arrived. He had professed a mild sort of interest in a case of murder recently reported from the East-end. A woman had been found dead beneath the archway of a bridge with her throat cut. The assassin had not been found. He tossed the paper aside with an impatient movement. “Some day,” he said aloud, “I shall be credited with that, and it was only a bungling piece of work after all.”

The patients – ‘guests’ as Dr Kent preferred to call them – were not permitted to leave the building for any purpose after dinner; but certain privileges were granted to a very few, and Slade was one of them. He had the right, if he chose, to sit on the terrace and enjoy his evening or even to walk in the grounds, if the night was fine. At nine o’clock on this particular occasion he put on his hat and overcoat, for the night was chilly, and proceeded towards the garden. Four attendants, strong, active, muscular men, promenaded the grounds till all the inmates of the establishment were in bed; but these did not take much notice of Slade as he passed, for he was regarded as three-fourths sane and one fourth mad, and treated accordingly. Slade walked towards the great gates which separated the grounds of Grange House from the outside world. To the left of them were beautifully appointed stables. Several of the wealthier patients possessed carriages and horses, and Dr Kent, a famous whip, had his own drag, which was a familiar feature of the main London road. On either side of the great



gates ran a hedge dividing the Grange House estate from the road.

At exactly twenty minutes past nine by his watch, Slade, looking cautiously around, gave a low whistle. This he repeated two or three times. Then he lightened intently, and from the other side of the hedge came a responsive whistle, somewhat shriller than his own. He approached closely to the hedge.

"Is that you, Dagenham?" he asked.

"Yes sir," was the reply.

"No one stirring your side?"

"Not a soul, sir. It's a dark night, and just suited to your purpose. I'll hand you the ladder."

As noiselessly as possible a small ladder of the telescopic kind was placed on the top of the thick hedge, and instantly secured by Slade. He placed it against the hedge, which was high and of dense thickness, and proceeded to ascend it. On the other side a similar ladder was in readiness. In less than a minute Slade was in the road standing by the side of Dagenham, a groom employed by Dr Kent, whom he had contrived to bribe to assist his escape.

"I've got the trap and horse ready, sir," whispered that worthy. "It's a-waitin' for us down at the Black Bull. You'll be in London inside an hour and three-quarters. Leave the turn-out at the place we appointed, and I'll look after it."

Slade considered a little.

"I don't think it prudent to go to the inn," he said. "The landlord has often seen me, and my appearance there at this time would excite remark. He is one of those ignorant fools who think that every poor devil staying at Grange House is of necessity a dangerous lunatic. Go you and fetch the conveyance. I'll wait in the hollow of the hedge there. How long will you be?"

"Seven or eight minutes," replied the

groom.

"Hurry up, then," said Slade, turning up his coat collar, slouching his hat over his eyes, and slinking back into a recess in the hedge. The man departed with light and hasty tread. Slade waited. With haste and restlessness, however, that characterises the actions of the morbid-minded, he presently ventured from the obscurity of his shelter, and approached the gates. Peering through, he was able to see the lights of the great house through the intervening trees. He chuckled at the thought of Dr Crosbie's face when he heard of the abrupt and unannounced departure of the model patient! An escape from the well-ordered establishment of Dr Kent! Unthinkable! Then his mood changed, and he threatened the distant mansion with his clenched hand.

"When yonder wise-acres pronounced me mad," he muttered, "I there and then determined, in a spirit of pure mischief, for I am saner than any of them, to justify their decision. The time is ripe. The moment has come! Let the madman live up to his reputation. The whole world shall ring with the dread name I shall assume. I will flout every protection which an effete civilisation has created for its own safe-guarding. The resources of all the forces of detection shall not avail themselves against me. I will strike terror to every heart, and plunge this great ugly London of ours – the home of vice, and filth, and crime – into a miasma of death and desolation. To the end of time, humanity shall shudder at the name of –" He stopped. Stealthy footsteps were rapidly nearing. He swung round and made for the sombre aperture in the hedge. Too late! A dark figure sprang forward and confronted him.

"Don't you think, Mr Slade," said the voice of one he knew, "you had better return to the house with me?"

Slade replied with an angry snarl like that of a wild beast. The newcomer, who had arrived so inopportunistically, was a young medical man attached to the Grange House establishment. Slade had disliked him vigorously. This young man had seemed to fathom the dark passions which animated the madman's mind. Others – experts in lunacy – had thought him nearly sane. Young Welman had never thought so, and Slade knew it.

"I do not propose to return to Dr Kent's," said the latter. "The farce has been played long enough. Stand aside, sir, and permit me to pass."

"I have my duty to perform," said the other firmly, "and I shall not shrink from it. Come, sir," he added, persuasively, "You are too sensible to perform foolish little tricks like this. Let us return to the house."

He made a movement towards the gates. If he could but reach them, ring the great bell and thus give an alarm! Slade understood. He remembered the bell. Its clings would arouse the two keepers in the lodge, the stable-helpers, and the employees in the servants' hall. He strode past Welman and permitted that gentleman to get nearer to the gates. But the doctor knew too much to turn his back on the other, or to remove his eyes from his face. They continued to face each other. Suddenly the sound of wheels from behind Welman reached the ears of both. A vehicle was approaching. Involuntarily, Welman glanced behind him. With a spring like a tiger, Slade was upon him. He had contrived to secure, unseen, a heavy, jagged stone and with this implement he struck the other a tremendous blow, cracking the back part of his skull like an egg-shell. Without a groan, blood and particles of bone pouring from his fractured head, Welman fell to the earth as a horse and trap driven by Dagenham reached the spot.

"My god!" said the groom, springing from the box. "You've killed him." He stooped and examined the prostrate man. "Sir – sir –" he stammered, "You're a murderer."

"I commence well," said Slade, tossing the blood-stained stone into the hedge. "That was not bad for a beginner. Help me to hide the body in the hedge."

Dagenham hesitated. He had 100 pounds of Slade's in his breast-pocket, but he looked round as if seeking the means to fly.

"Help me, you fool," hissed the murderer, and threatened him with upraised arm.

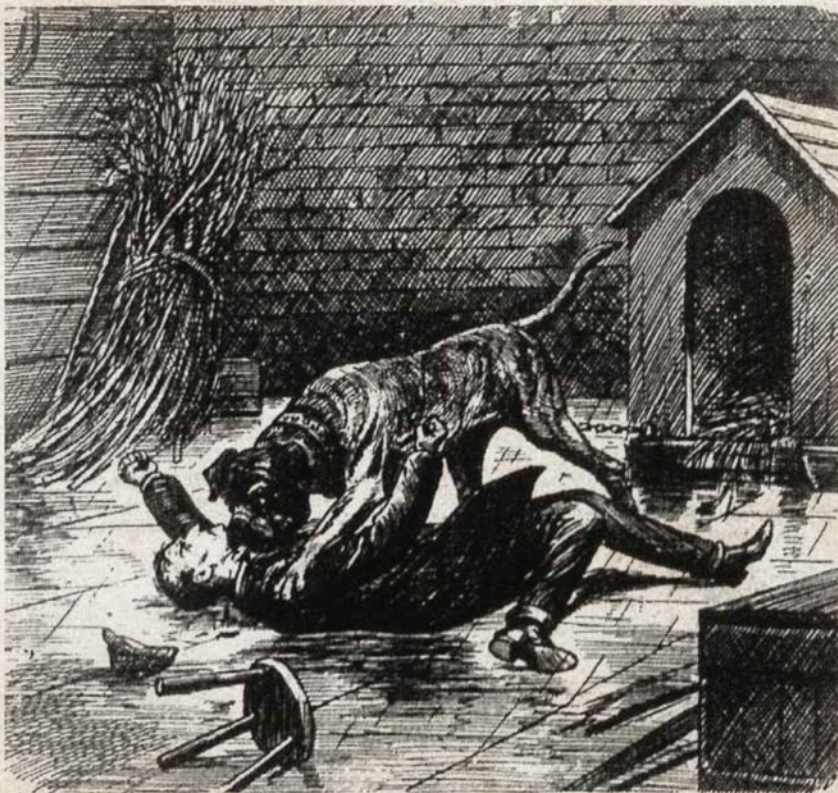
Dagenham seized the legs of the dead man, averting his eyes from the poor, battered head, and Slade lifted the body by the shoulders. They placed it in the dark recess of the hedge, and Slade covered it as best he could with dead leaves and decayed branches.

"Not a word to a living soul," he said to his unwilling accomplice, "as you value your life. When that corpse is found, let them assume what they please. Remember this, however. I will never murder another man.

He sprang into the trap, seized the reins, and turned the horse's head towards London.

"Free!" he said. "Free to pursue the course I have mapped out." He plied the whip with vigour, and was soon swallowed up in the darkness.

This was the beginning of a series of crimes without parallel in the history of the civilised world. **F**



FASTENED ITS FANGS IN THE RIPPER'S THROAT.



# BLADES IN THE NIGHT

SCOTT WOOD examines London's phantom slashers, from the Mohawks to Jack the Ripper, in the context of the capital's wealth of urban legend

The Mohawks (also known as the Mohocks or Mowhawks) were a gang who supposedly terrorised London in 1712. They were rumoured to put fish hooks in people's cheeks and drag them along with a fishing line; or to crush the noses, slit the ears and gouge out the eyes of their victims. Another cruel trick of theirs was to put their sword between a man's legs and move it around to make the poor fellow dance; another was to surround their victim and spin him around; as he turned to face one attacker, another would stab him in the backside from behind. Like a horror story version of the Bullingdon Club, they were said to be rich young men who would meet in clubs, drink to excess then head out, often into St James's Park, to cause havoc.

With all of this cruelty on the streets it may be surprising to learn there was only one Mohawk trial. The total number of arrests was seven and the names read like the guest list of a society party: Edward Richard Montague, Lord Hinchinbroke; Sir Mark Cole, baronet; Thomas Fanshawe; Thomas Sydenham, gentleman; Captain John Reading; Captain Robert Beard; Robert Squibb of Lincoln's Inn, gentleman; and Hugh Jones, servant to Sir Mark Cole.

As recorded in *Chambers Book of Days*, this aristocratic crew were put on trial for being 'mohocks':

*They had attacked the watch in Devereux Street, slit two persons' noses, cut a woman in the arm with a penknife so as to disable her for life, rolled a woman in a tub down Snow Hill, misused other women in a barbarous manner by setting them on their heads, and overset several coaches and chairs with short clubs, loaded with lead at both ends, expressly made for the purpose.*

The defendants claimed that they themselves were vigilante 'scourers' and were out looking for Mohawks, but the nightwatchman mistook the rich crime-fighters for Mohawks and arrested them. The jury found them guilty and fined them each three shillings and four pence. It is not clear whether their victims were ever found or if they were invented by the nightwatch, and it doesn't prove much other than a group of men were convicted for a night's misconduct. With a lot of rumour, and little evidence, the doubts about these stories grew. Jonathan Swift thought the Mohawks

## IS THE RIPPER MYSTERY A MORAL PANIC GROWN INTO URBAN LEGEND?



were the result of mass hysteria, and Daniel Defoe thought they had the "air of Grub Street" about them (Grub Street being the home of London's cheaper and more sensationalist publishers).

After the Mohawk panic of 1712 came the appearance of Spring-heeled Jack in 1838. Jack was a dark, iron-clawed, fire-breathing figure who would terrify people, often women, walking at night in London, before making his getaway by leaping or bouncing over a wall with the aid of his spring-heeled boots. Jack is now thought of as a ghost or demon, some elemental presence spreading fear across London. He has featured often in popular culture – from penny dreadfuls to modern comics and the fiction of Philip Pullman – as a supernatural or super-gadget bearing superhero.

The earliest description of Jack appeared

in a letter from a Peckham resident to the Lord Mayor of London, published in the *Times* of 9 January 1838, describing a dangerous bet laid by an affluent group of men:

*The wager has, however, been accepted, and the unmanly villain has succeeded in depriving seven ladies of their senses, two of whom are not likely to recover, but to become burdens to their families. At one house the man rang the bell, and on the servant coming to open the door, this worse than brute stood in no less dreadful figure than a spectre clad most perfectly. The consequence was that the poor girl immediately swooned, and has never from that moment been in her senses. The affair has now been going on for some time, and, strange to say, the papers are still silent on the subject.*

The "unmanly villain" appeared in villages around London (including Peckham) disguised as "a ghost, a bear and a devil", and had already left one woman so afraid she could not bear the sight of men. The Peckham resident thought that news or warning of this campaign had not yet appeared in the papers because those involved, being of higher ranks, had sought to keep the stories out of the press. In 1907, Jack was identified as the Marquess of Waterford, an aristocrat with a reputation for cruelty and practical jokes who would hide in dark places in costume, waiting to frighten people.

The identification with the rich may be twofold: firstly there is the idea that those in the higher echelons of society have contempt for ordinary people and gain sport from tormenting and terrorising them. There is also the fact that no Mohawk or Spring-heeled villain was ever captured and shown to the public. This may be because they did not really exist, but those convinced of their reality had other ideas: the rich and privileged escape arrest and publicity through their power.

The reality may be stranger. Guising was popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, and dressing up as a ghost and walking the night, looking to frighten people, was an almost common adult pastime. As well as Jack there was the Peckham ghost, Plumstead ghost and others (see 'Spurious Spirits' FT297:32-37). Mike Dash, in his authoritative "Spring-heeled Jack: To Victorian Bugaboo from Suburban Ghost" (*Fortean Studies*, 3:7-125), investigated



news stories of one of the most famous Spring-heeled Jack cases. As reported in the *Times* on 22 February 1838, Jane Alsop of Bearbinder Lane, Old Ford, answered a late-night ring at the door. The man at the door said, "For God's sake, bring me a light, for we have caught Spring-heeled Jack in the lane." Jane gave the candle to the man, whom she thought was a policeman, but instead of running off with it he threw off his heavy cloak, put the candle to his chest and "vomited forth a quantity of blue and white flames from his mouth". Jane saw that the man wore a large helmet and that his clothes fitted him very tightly, like a white oilskin. Spring-heeled Jack, as the man was thought to be, darted toward her, catching her by the dress and back of her neck and placed her head under his arm. He began to tear at her dress with his claws and Jane screamed loudly for help. One of her sisters arrived and rescued her.

This account is the heart of the Spring-heeled Jack myth, and the description of the helmet and tight-fitting suit led researchers in the 1970s to suggest that Jack was an alien running amok in early Victorian London. Dash's research suggested that the newly formed Metropolitan Police had concluded that: "In her fright the young lady had much mistaken the appearance of her assailant."

One version of the myth has it that Spring-heeled Jack may have been an insane aristocrat. In a talk at the London Ghosts conference of October 2012, Mike Dash suggested that while the main suspect, the Marquess of Waterford, was known to have dressed in a devil costume at a party, this does not mean that countless other aristocrats were doing the same. It does seem sensible, though, to suggest that there was not just one Spring-heeled Jack; this ghost or devil was either a viral idea taken up by many individuals, or something they did – guising in the city – to which the idea of Spring-heeled Jack became attached.

If Spring-heeled Jack and the Mohawks were essentially panics, is it possible that another series of actual violent acts have a fictional bogeyman attached to them? Is the Jack the Ripper mystery not a mystery at all but a moral panic grown into urban legend and conspiracy theory? I think parallels between the rumours of Mohawks and Spring-heeled Jack and the theories about Jack the Ripper are worth drawing.

That the murders themselves took place is not in doubt; that there was one killer – the enigmatic Jack, with his cape, top hat and leather surgeon's bag – is an unproven idea that has developed into a cultural icon. Historian Jan Bondeson wondered in an article in *History Today* whether the panic over the 1888 prostitute murders created the myth of a single killer; ripperologists disagree on the number of Jack's victims, and believe that two might have been murdered by partners or ex-partners. The violent death of Polly Nichols, the Ripper's first victim, caused a moral outrage, as had the activities of Spring-heeled Jack and the Mohawks, and a number of other deaths – Emma Smith, Martha Turner and Rose Mylett – were, at first, also attributed to Jack the Ripper. These have not made it into the 'canonical five' murders for which



most ripperologists think the Ripper was responsible: Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes and Mary Jane Kelly. Annie Millwood, Ada Wilson and Annie Farmer were all suggested Jack the Ripper victims or survivors, but have since been discounted in Ripper orthodoxy. Another victim, the aptly named 'Fairy Fey', was allegedly found on 26 December 1887, "after a stake had been thrust through her abdomen", but there are no records of a murder in Whitechapel over that Christmas period.

The authorities were unsure whether Rose Myatt had been murdered at all or whether she had choked to death while drunk. Writing about the death, Robert Anderson, the officer in charge of the investigation, thought if there had not been a Ripper scare, no one would have viewed it as a murder.

With the mythology of the Ripper has grown the idea that the killer has never been brought to light because of a conspiracy amongst the rich and powerful. Prince Albert Victor, the grandson of Queen Victoria, was named as a possible Ripper suspect in the 1960s, the idea being that he was driven mad as a result of catching syphilis from a prostitute. This rumour evolved into the idea popularised in Alan Moore's graphic novel *From Hell* and the film it inspired, that the Ripper was Sir William Gull, Freemason and surgeon to Queen Victoria. The current conspiracy theory is that Albert Victor had an affair with a woman, which the Ripper victims found out about; they were murdered by an insane Gull to cover up the truth.

Other suspects include the Duke of Clarence, Sir John Williams, obstetrician to Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Beatrice, Lewis Carroll and painter Walter Sickert. Each suspect tends to be the focus of a new book, and with the continued growth in popularity of Ripper lore and the deepening of the myth, new and even more unlikely suspects are investigated all the time. After comparing Jack the Ripper crime scene photographs and the paintings of Vincent van Gogh, writer Dale Lerner has concluded that van Gogh was, indeed, Jack the Ripper. John Morris takes

the idea of Sir John Williams being the Ripper, driven to insanity after not being able to have children, and transfers the crimes to his wife, Lizzie Williams, in his book *Jack the Ripper: The Hand of a Woman*. Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula*, has never really been in the frame for being Jack the Ripper, but the book *The Dracula Secrets: Jack the Ripper and the Darkest Sources of Bram Stoker*, suggests that the Ripper was, sort of, and in a roundabout way, Dracula. It argues that through a "secret code" found in "previously unpublished letters", Stoker wove details of Ripper suspect Francis Tumblety into his novel. This 'Ripper Code' was inspired by Stoker's relationship with Sir Thomas Hall Caine, to whom he dedicated *Dracula*. Caine also had a relationship with Tumblety, and Tumblety was fingered as a Ripper suspect in the book *Jack the Ripper: First American Serial Killer*. Tumblety was arrested in 1888 for gross indecency, and was possibly gay. Did this drive him to murder and mutilate women?

In 1986, Peter Turnbull published his book *The Killer Who Never Was*, putting forward the no-Ripper hypothesis. Ripperologist and tour guide John G Bennett published *Jack the Ripper: The Making of the Myth* in 2011, which, while not denying the single-killer hypothesis, did much to disembowel the countless theories about the original murders. Retired murder-squad detective Trevor Marriott brought his experience to investigating the Ripper killings and concluded that there was no Jack. If the evocative name of Jack the Ripper had not been attached to the Whitechapel killings, he argues, the theory would have been forgotten a long time ago. He concludes that at least two of the women "were killed by the same hand" and the other murders, if they were related at all, were copycat killings. "The urban myth was created by an overzealous newspaper reporter sending a mysterious letter signed Jack the Ripper. The police certainly never believed in a killer known as Jack the Ripper".

What these theories share with the Mohawks' dangerous rakes and the fantastical attacks of Spring-heeled Jack is the idea of rich and debauched individuals committing murder and mutilation and escaping justice because of their privilege. The actual, certain evidence for the Whitechapel killings is provided by the bodies of the victims. The theories and the name of Jack the Ripper came with the subsequent hysteria. **FT**



Adapted and extracted from *London Urban Legends: The Corpse on the Tube and Other Stories* by Scott Wood, published by The History Press, £9.99.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



SCOTT WOOD is the co-founder and host of the London Fortean Society, a contributor to the Londonist website and previously convened the South East London Folklore society.



# DOWN BUT NOT OUT IN WOOLFARDISWORTHY

**ORRIN HARE** attended what many feared would be the last ever Weird Weekend – but then a ray of hope broke through the dark clouds. Illustration by **HUNT EMERSON**.

It always rains at the Weird Weekend (it's held in Devon, after all!) but different and darker clouds had been hovering over this year's iteration from the beginning.

Rumours suggested that the organisation of the Centre for Fortean Zoology's (CFZ) 14<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the zoological, the cryptozoological and the illogical, had been anything but smooth, while the slowly deteriorating health of CFZ Director Jon Downes was making such sustained effort and stress increasingly unwise. In fact, as our Land Rover made a nuisance of itself down the M5 and then up the road to Woolfardisworthy, it seemed all

but inevitable that it would be the last one.

Even without the

## THERE WAS ALSO A TUNNEL OF GOATS, WHICH I'M SURE PLAYED ITS PART

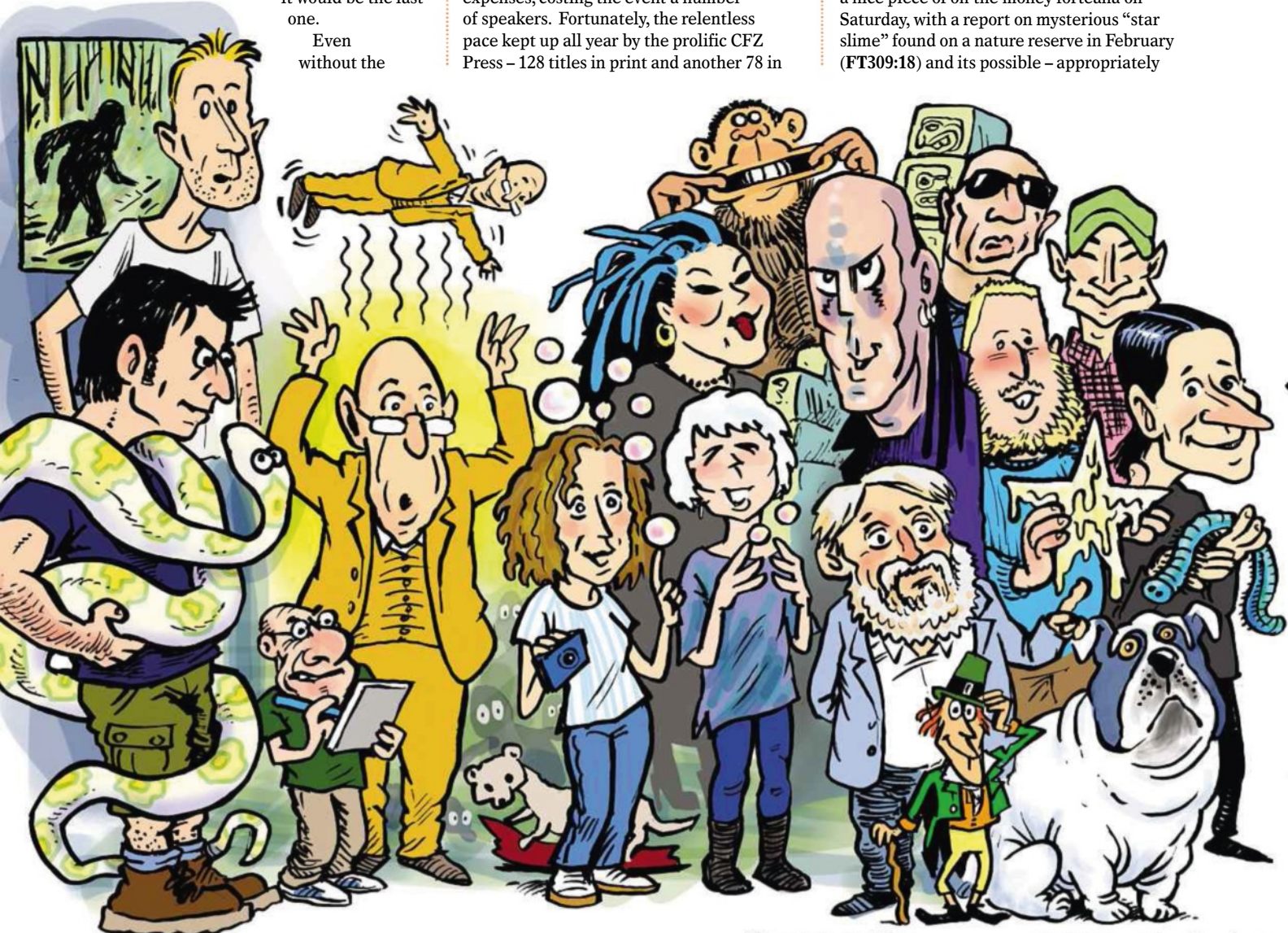
looming thread of extinction, it was a more bedraggled affair than in recent years, as spiralling costs for venue hire and services devoured money set aside for lecturer expenses, costing the event a number of speakers. Fortunately, the relentless pace kept up all year by the prolific CFZ Press – 128 titles in print and another 78 in

preparation – ensured that those speakers with new books to hawk had a reason to turn out, while regulars and staff all worked extra hard to keep things interesting.

There was also a Tunnel of Goats, which I'm sure played its part.

Richard Ingram and Ronan Coghlan got us going on Friday evening, before Danish cryptozoologist Lars Thomas dove with us into the history and culture of Scandinavian trolls, first showing the similarities between troll lore and the giant hairy bipeds of cryptozoological narratives, then reversing the process by presenting evidence for trolls by those standards.

Tony Whitehead of the RSPB gave us a nice piece of on-the-money forteana on Saturday, with a report on mysterious "star slime" found on a nature reserve in February (FT309:18) and its possible – appropriately



James Newton Judge Smith large ape Mark Raines Karl Shuker Sharon Bennett's crack kitchen team present The Loch Ness Banana Jackie Tonks  
 Nick Wadham & snake Lisa Mallam Histed-Todd; Whitehead Max Blake Barry Tadcaster & Ken Jeavons the orang pendek (Richard Freeman)  
 Hunt the cartoonist Sarah Boait & Mya Gleny Beech Marten Shaun Ronan Coghlan & leprechaun Prudence  
 Dr. Dan Holdsworth Glen Vaudrey & Boggart Richard Ingram  
 with horns, a typical WW attendee



bird-related – solution, while the excellent Glen Vaudrey’s look at Staffordshire mysteries began with spectral black dogs then somehow took a turn for the even stranger with the introduction of werewolves, a headless boggart and the dreadful Jenny Greenteeth.

The field cryptozoologists concluded the day, beginning with Andrew Sanderson’s report of his expedition to central Russia earlier this year in search of the Almasty. Meanwhile, if a definition of insanity is to repeat the same action but expect a different result, then it was lucky that CFZ Zoological Director Richard Freeman was accompanied on his return from a *fifth* expedition in search of Sumatra’s Orang Pendek by another modest haul of circumstantial evidence, including what might be the first photograph of the creature’s handprint.

Sunday began with James Newton’s useful primer on the history of Bigfoot culture, while Lars Thomas took to the stage again in the afternoon for a fascinating look at the hitherto neglected cryptozoology of

Greenland.

So, was this actually the last ever Weird Weekend? Well, it was supposed to have been – the CFZ had even prepared a video farewell to sob us out with – but for the unexpected death just two weeks earlier of one of Downes’s heroes, Mick Farren of the psych band The Deviants, who dropped dead on stage in the middle of a gig at the age of 69. Since you have to go sometime, Downes reasoned, you might as well go out swinging. And singing. The show must go on!

Still, as an ending had already been prepared, why waste it? We fade out on the CFZ directors bellowing the words to the Sid Vicious version of “My Way” through glove puppets...



Lee Walker  
Silas Hawkins  
reads a  
bedtime story  
Dr. Darren Naish  
& feathered dinosaur

Backstage  
crew  
David  
Brand-Phillips  
Jess Heard  
Olivia, Jo-Jo & Shosh  
Graham Inglis  
Andrew Sanderson

Lars Thomas & troll

and Corinna  
& Jon Downes



# SPEAKING IN TONGUES

**TED HARRISON** examines the rise of the charismatic movement and asks whether the mainstream Anglican Church has been revitalised by evangelical modernisers or hijacked by fringe Christian activities like speaking in tongues...

*"Keil ama tondo ramala indiksia. Iia tondi lamatra silia contira sa ma."*

It sounds like gibberish and bears no relation to any known language, but when uttered out loud during prayer, charismatic Christians call sounds like these "speaking in tongues".

They might be in church, surrounded by a congregation, or praying at home alone when suddenly, they say, strange words come into their heads and they start uttering weird sentences. It is a sign, they believe, that they have been filled with the Holy Spirit. It is, they claim, what happened to the early Christians on the first Whitsun Day.<sup>1</sup> That was the occasion when, according to the Bible, the room in which Jesus's disciples were gathered was filled with the sound of a rushing wind, flames of fire appeared above them and the first Christians discovered a supernatural ability to speak in foreign languages.

The Alpha Course, currently the most popular introduction to Christianity running, culminates in a weekend away in which participants discover how to be filled with the spirit so they too may speak in tongues. To be a Christian, says the course leader Nicky Gumbel, is to have the spirit of Christ living inside. "It is like being a boiler with the pilot light burning – but to be filled with the spirit is when the boiler goes 'whoosh!'"

"To our logical minds it is weird! But it's also amazing, and it's perfectly biblical," says the Alpha script.

The course organisers say that 1.5 million people in the UK have tried Alpha since it began 35 years ago, with 10 times that number worldwide. Not everyone ends up speaking in tongues, but thousands do. Some participants also shake and quake in spirit-filled ecstasy. They might even laugh uncontrollably, dance, jerk or writhe on the ground.

"WORDS ARE COMING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH, AND YOU CAN'T CONTROL IT"



## CELEBRITY CHARISMATICS

In Britain today there are hundreds of thousands of men and women who believe that their minds and bodies have been overshadowed by a divine spiritual power beyond themselves with amazing, or to outward appearances bizarre, consequences. They have been caught up

in the charismatic, or renewal, movement. Those involved come from across the social spectrum and from many nations. Worldwide charismatic behaviour is especially strong in Africa and in Britain it is found in congregations with African roots. Its stronghold within the Church of England however is Nicky Gumbel's church, London's Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB), where the congregation includes a high proportion of wealthy white professionals, including bankers and city high-flyers.

There are celebrity charismatics too. Ex-Spice Girl Geri Halliwell and professional adventurer Bear Grylls have both endorsed the Alpha Course. The American actress and model Megan Fox (left) has talked openly about being overcome by feelings of religious fervour; not in her case via Alpha, but at the Tennessee Pentecostal church she attends. Describing the experience of speaking in tongues she says: "It feels like a lot of energy coming through the top of your head – I'm going to sound like such a lunatic – and then your whole body is filled with this electric current. And you just start speaking, but you're not thinking because you have no idea what you're saying. Words are coming out of your mouth, and you can't control it. The idea is that it's a language that only God understands. It's the language that's spoken in Heaven."<sup>2</sup>

These strange occurrences were once confined to what members of traditional churches usually perceived as whacky Pentecostalist chapels and way-out congregations, but now they have infiltrated the historic churches in a major way.

"It is no longer just for wild-eyed, tambourine-waving Pentecostals who gather in storefront churches in poor neighbourhoods," according to high-profile charismatic J Lee Grady, former editor of *Charisma Magazine*. "This unusual form of







Christian prayer, which sounds like mindless babbling, is upwardly mobile.”<sup>3</sup>

With the appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury of Justin Welby, alumnus of London’s HTB and a man well in with the charismatic movement, activities that were once on the edge of respectable Christianity are centre stage. Archbishop Welby has talked openly about speaking in tongues himself. “It’s just a routine part of spiritual discipline – you choose to speak and you speak a language that you don’t know. It just comes.”<sup>4</sup>

It has been hinted too that the new Pope, Francis, may be a closet charismatic – certainly sympathetic. When, on his appointment, he appeared before the cheering crowd in St Peter’s Square, he bowed down asking the people to pray for him. “Most of the public at large was charmed, but puzzled,” noted the *Catholic World Report*. “Pope Benedict too had asked the people to pray for him, but without the bowed head. To some spectators, however – including the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and their counterparts in the Protestant and Orthodox worlds – the gesture came as something surprisingly familiar. In the ‘charismatic’ galaxy, prayer is offered and asked for in this way by people of all levels – specifically, prayer for a renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

A photograph, taken before he became Pope, shows the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires on his knees with head bowed as a group of evangelical pastors and Catholic priests and laymen pray over him. It is a scene typical of a charismatic gathering. As Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, he would also celebrate Mass for the Charismatic Renewal of Buenos Aires.

“Pope Francis’s frequent mentions of the Holy Spirit, as well as his unprecedentedly frequent references to the Devil (rather than to a generic ‘evil’), indicate his affinity for the Charismatic Renewal,” says the *Catholic World Report*.

It was in a Roman Catholic setting that I first saw the most spectacular charismatic phenomenon, someone being slain in the spirit. It was in the late 1970s in Lusaka at the home of the exorcist Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo. As those over whom he prayed started to be filled with ‘the spirit’, they fell



## CHARISMATIC PRACTICES WERE ONLY TO BE FOUND ON THE OUTER FRINGES

backwards into the arms of an assistant priest and were laid on the floor, often writhing and shouting. All that it had taken to knock them over was a light tap on the head from the Archbishop. Milingo’s charismatic ministry did not at that time meet with Vatican approval and he was summoned to Rome.

### THE ROOTS OF RENEWAL

The word charismatic derives from the Greek word ‘charisma’, meaning a gift of the spirit. In the Bible, St Paul gives a list of spiritual and supernatural gifts which includes working miracles, prophecy, diagnosing cases of demonic possession and speaking in tongues.<sup>6</sup> Those who speak in tongues today tend also to believe in St Paul’s complete charismatic package, involving miracles and supernatural powers being at work in the world, including

possession. Charismatic churches often conduct exorcisms and share stories of direct divine intervention in the lives of members. “The energy is so intense in the room that you feel like anything can happen,” says Megan Fox of charismatic services. “I have seen magical, crazy things happen. I’ve seen people be healed.”<sup>7</sup>

Barely 100 years ago, charismatic practices were only to be found on the outer fringes of Christianity. Today, such activities as speaking in tongues and being slain in the spirit are mainstream in the historic churches. As the Church of England continues to experience a decline in active members, the Anglican charismatic churches buck the trend, and many are experiencing a period of growth.

The Charismatic, or Renewal Movement, with its claims that believers can be filled with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, gained its first foothold within the Anglican Church back in the 1960s. It started in California where, in controversial circumstances, The Rev Dennis Bennett emerged as the most high-profile Episcopalian (Anglican) charismatic.

“Unknown to most parishioners, Bennett and 70 other members had been ‘speaking in tongues’ – making utterances that most mainline churches equated with overheated Pentecostalism and Holy Roller tent revivals,” wrote John Dart, former *Los Angeles Times* religious affairs reporter. After the main Passion Sunday service in 1960, “an assistant priest pulled off his vestments, put them on the altar and stalked out, saying, ‘I can no longer work with this man!’ Tumult reigned. One man stood on a chair, shouting, ‘Throw out the damn tongue speakers!’”

Bennett resigned, but what came to be described as “renewal within the historic churches” had begun. Since then, Anglicans worldwide have been caught up in an international movement that is now a dominant force within Protestantism and a growing movement within Catholicism.

The spread of the current charismatic movement “was one of the great surprises of twentieth century Christianity,” writes Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, in his *A History of Christianity*. Its origins lie in several strands of debate, both in Europe



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GETTY IMAGES

TOP: Rev Dennis Bennett helped start the Renewal Movement. ABOVE LEFT: The Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope Francis both have charismatic leanings.



and America. “A holiness movement sprang out of the teaching of the early Methodists, proclaiming that the Holy Spirit could bring an intense experience of holiness or sanctification into the everyday life of any believing Christian. There existed a widespread instinct that Protestant emphasis on sermons and the intellectual understanding of the word of God did not give enough room for human emotion.”

Yet the movement, in particular speaking in tongues, says Prof MacCulloch “has very little precedent in Christian practice between the first and 19th centuries.”

When a handful of 17th and 18th century sects began to exhibit charismatic characteristics, their behaviour was so odd it earned them ridicule and nicknames – the origins of the Quakers and Shakers (see FT271:38-42).

In the first century, there is evidence from St Paul that the early Church in Corinth became gripped by a charismatic fervour, and the strange practices St Paul found there led to a severe reprimand:

*“If I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.”<sup>8</sup>*

In other words, what’s the use of uttering a load of spiritual gibberish, if no one understands you? What is happening today within the contemporary charismatic churches appears to resemble what was happening in ancient Corinth.

## THE GIFT OF GLOSSOLALIA

So what is speaking in tongues, and why has it re-emerged within Christian practice after lying mostly dormant for 1,800 years?

The supernatural explanation is that God the Holy Spirit is at work, blowing a wind of change through a moribund institution. The words may not bear a resemblance to any known human language, but, say some believers, it is a language understood by God.

This explanation does not, however, allow for the fact that glossolalia is not an exclusively Christian practice. It is found in several other cultures and faith-traditions. It is known in Shamanic practice and in several Hindu traditions. A mantra, if the words have no known meaning, might also be categorised as a form of glossolalia.

There is also evidence that glossolalia is learned behaviour. It does not strike congregations out of the blue, a direct gift from heaven or the Gods. It spreads from congregation to congregation. People copy others and learn the technique; it’s like a religious fashion that appears to spread



ABOVE: Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo conducts an exorcism at his villa in Zagarolo near Rome.

GETTY IMAGES

through direct human contact.

As Professor MacCulloch suggests, perhaps it appeals to certain types of congregations as a reaction against cerebral preaching and over-emphasis on intellectual theology. It is a method of praying, one might suggest, that bypasses the need to formulate words or sentences. As with a word such as ‘Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah!’ it is a verbal ejaculation of emotion, with no linguistic meaning.

When, in the Bible story, the Apostles spoke in tongues, the listening crowd heard them as speaking in foreign languages. An extensive study of glossolalia from a linguistic perspective by Professor William J Samarin of the University of Toronto’s Department of Linguistics rejected the view that modern glossolalia resembles any foreign language that could be understood by another person who knew that language. Samarin called it a ‘pseudo-language’: “unintelligible babbling speech that exhibits superficial phonological similarity to language, without having consistent syntagmatic structure and that is not systematically derived from or related to known language.”<sup>9</sup>

In the early 1970s, anthropologist and linguist Felicitas D Goodman studied recordings of glossolalia from Christian congregations and from non-Christian rituals from Africa, Borneo, Indonesia and Japan. When all features of glossolalia were taken into consideration – that is, “the segmental structure (such as sounds, syllables, phrases) and its supra-segmental elements (namely, rhythm, accent, and especially overall intonation)” – she concluded that there is no distinction in glossolalia between Christians and the followers of non-Christian religions. She concluded that glossolalia “is, actually, a learned behaviour, learned either unawaresly or, sometimes consciously.”<sup>10</sup>

In some churches, members have been taught how to speak in tongues, noted a prominent Christian Charismatic, J Lee Grady. “I will never apologise for the gift of tongues, and I believe it is a wonderful gift every Christian can have. But someone got the idea they could ‘prime the pump’ by asking people to repeat certain phrases in order to uncork a prayer language. Asking someone to say, ‘I tie my bow tie, I tie my bow tie,’ is not going to prompt a miracle. Quit manipulating the Holy Spirit.”<sup>11</sup>

Grady himself discovered speaking in tongues in 1976 as an 18-year-old, after reading Dennis Bennett’s bestseller *The Holy Spirit and You*. Although he had heard some preachers warn him it was all demonic, Grady decided to ask God to fill him with the Holy Spirit’s power and give him the ability to pray in an unknown language. “One hot summer evening in Atlanta, I sat on a concrete bench near a volleyball court and asked Jesus to perform this minor miracle. No fireworks went off, but I began to hear some simple phrases in my head.” He said them out loud, with no clue what he was saying.

“It sounded stupid. Knowing that intelligent people don’t sit around muttering to themselves in a strange language, I struggled with doubts. It felt foolish on one hand, yet at the same time there was a sense of inexplicable peace as the phrases poured out of me without any effort. It was almost like stepping out of a boat and walking on water.

“That was the beginning. Since then, I’ve spoken in tongues many times: in the shower, in the car, sitting at my desk. Usually I have my eyes closed, but sometimes they’re open. Wherever I am, when I’m speaking in tongues it feels like it’s coming from the deepest part of my being. I am not out of control, and afterward I sometimes I feel a deep sense of satisfaction.”<sup>12</sup>

In the New Testament, speaking in tongues was a spontaneous gift. At Whitsun, the early Christians had no idea what to expect. “Today, most times the person who speaks in modern tongues have been coached or taught the





phenomena. The congregation is told that they need to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and if they do they will speak in tongues.”<sup>13</sup>

And one experiment showed that there is no need to be a believer to speak in tongues. A study carried out with a group of 60 non-believing undergraduates showed that 20 per cent could learn glossolalia after listening to only a 60 second sample and about 70 per cent could succeed with some moderate training.<sup>14</sup>

### SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT

One of the strangest things I have ever witnessed in a British Christian context was when the Toronto Blessing crossed the Atlantic from the Airport Church in Toronto, Canada, where it started as an extreme manifestation of ‘the gifts of the spirit’. (See FT77:24-28).

I saw lines of people falling over; people standing for hours, shaking, laughing, screaming, barking like dogs. At one gathering I attended, the congregation included several police officers who were slain in the spirit and ended up writhing on the floor.

The Toronto Blessing peaked and faded; yet, as the writer Dave Tomlinson, vicar of St Luke’s, Holloway, has noted, there remains a tendency for the charismatic movement to lurch from fad to fad.

“At its best, Charismatic spirituality is open to this continual and unpredictable renewal. At its worst, it is vulnerable to faddishness, to an overemphasis on novel phenomena and the comparatively trivial,” says Bishop Graham Cray, the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Missioner.

Nevertheless, he puts in a good word for the Toronto legacy. “I have no doubt that the ‘Toronto Blessing’ was a time of authentic renewal and of some trivialisation. My own experience was of a deep encounter

with God, which, I believe, prepared me for a future ministry of which I had no imagination at that time.”

The spread of the Alpha Course dates from that time, he notes, “So the fruit of the Toronto Blessing in the UK may well include the large numbers who have come to faith through Alpha.”

Could there be another Toronto Blessing? “Of course, the Spirit continually renews the Church.”

The sequence that leads from the events in Dennis Bennett’s church to the widespread experience of speaking in tongues in the Church of England lends strength to theories that it is learned behaviour. In 1963, Dennis Bennett came to St Mark’s, Gillingham, where John Collins was vicar, to speak to an invited meeting. “I was inwardly amused that some of my guests seemed apprehensive, as if a speaker on the Holy Spirit might well have fire coming out of his mouth and ears ‘to consume us’”, Collins recalled.

A clergyman from Canterbury came in cassock and cape and addressed the evangelical vicar as ‘Father Collins’. He stayed behind after the meeting and Dennis Bennett prayed with him.

On his way home down the M2 to Canterbury this unlikely-seeming recruit began speaking in tongues. “Was that the real thing?” he later asked Collins, who assured him that it was.

John Collins himself dates his own first experience of speaking in tongues to one cold February night in 1963. He had been persuaded by a retired missionary with an interest in charismatic renewal to hold a night of prayer for worldwide renewal in his parish, starting at 10pm.

“At about 2.40am, something happened. The Holy Spirit fell!

“I found myself fully awake... full of energy and very happy! And what

was happening to me was clearly being experienced by everybody else. Some were singing... Was there an emotional atmosphere? Yes plenty of it... how can you praise without emotion?”

Renewal spread steadily through the 1970s, but received a major transatlantic boost early in the next decade when John Wimber of the Californian Vineyard Church brought the seeds of church planting to Britain. Church planting was a highly effective method of spreading the charismatic message and involved overflow members of a charismatic congregation moving en bloc into a traditional, and declining, church and taking over.

Wimber made a major impression, particularly at St Andrews, Chorleywood, and St Michael-le-Belfrey, York, where the incumbents, Bishop David Pyches and David Watson, received his team with great excitement. David Watson had been curate at St Mark’s Gillingham, Kent, where John Collins was rector. Watson, with his newfound enthusiasm for charismatic renewal, grew a tiny congregation into one that had to move to a larger church. In the early 1970s, I recall attending an evening service there that attracted so many people they decamped to the Minster.

According to Justin Welby’s biographer Andrew Atherstone, the Welby family travelled to America and found solace and help following the death of their baby daughter at Wimber’s Vineyard Christian Fellowship. Their introduction had been via Holy Trinity, Brompton, which Wimber first visited in 1982.

Wimber, however, was not without his critics. He had conservative views on the role of women within the church, and his talk of supernatural forces and spiritual warfare was viewed as alarmingly over-simplistic. Some even accused him of creating a mindset within the Vineyard church with cultic overtones. “I am not referring to specific doctrines,” one critic wrote anonymously, “but in the way rank-and-file members relate to the leadership and accept their teachings with little, if any, serious critical evaluation.”

John Wimber was aware of the dangers of Charismatic excess. He found himself embroiled in arguments over alleged Charismatic heresy, and in 1986 he dissociated himself from the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church where the Toronto Blessing had its beginnings.

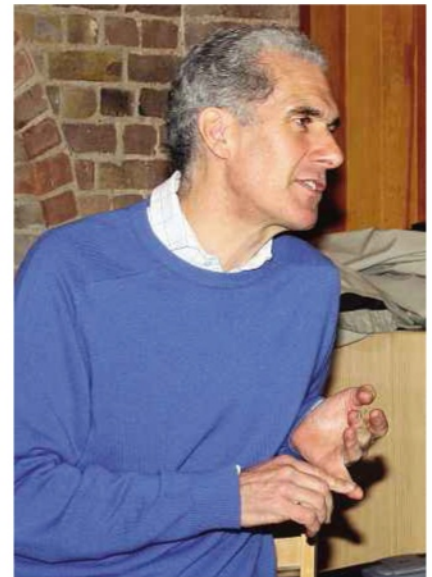
### ALPHA MALES

From its first tentative steps at the evangelical end of the Church of England, renewal spread through all the Anglican traditional strands. During the 1970s, the movement made significant inroads among Anglo-Catholics. In 1973, the first Anglican Catholic Charismatic Convention was held in Walsingham, and by 1979 had outgrown the shrine and was transferred to the larger conference centre at High Leigh. Canon John Gunstone of Manchester estimated in 1984 that about 10 per cent of Anglican



ABOVE: Slain in the spirit: falling over, writhing, laughing and screaming are all part of the worship experience.





ABOVE LEFT: Holy Trinity Brompton, where the Alpha Course was developed. ABOVE RIGHT: Nicky Gumbel, who has overseen the growth and success of the course.

communicants had been baptised in the Spirit, and perhaps a slightly higher proportion of the parochial clergy.

A 2001 *Church Times* survey suggested little change. It reported 9 per cent of clergy describing themselves as either charismatic or very charismatic, with a similar figure for the laity. The survey probably underestimated the true figures as it included clergy ordained before the 1960s. A very different picture has emerged from more recent studies. By some estimates half of all new Church of England clergy are now charismatics.

Six years ago, a survey by Dr Andrew Village of Warwick University questioning 1,000 students studying for ordination discovered 42 per cent said they had spoken in tongues, 39 per cent gave words of prophecy and 71 per cent believed they had been directed by God through visions or dreams.

Work by Professor Leslie Francis and his department<sup>15</sup> has established, too, that while charismatic practice was found amongst Anglo-Catholics, it was more frequently found within the evangelical tradition. It was also noted to be an urban rather than rural phenomenon.

Renewal has not impacted on the Church of England in an even or consistent way. It is undoubtedly the driving force behind many growing congregations; it has reached the highest echelons of the established Church; and yet, there remain many parts of the Church of England utterly untouched by contemporary Charismatic practice.

In some quarters, serious theological doubts about the movement remain: might the national Church have been hijacked by a strange peripheral Christian practice? Consequently, might it become increasingly alienated from the general population it has the duty to serve? Has the Church, the unique society that 'exists for the benefit of those who are not its members', become a members' only club?

Many new Christians, having completed the Alpha Course, join a close-knit charismatic

congregation and some find themselves entering a world where they have to "switch off some of their critical questioning faculties", suggests Dave Tomlinson. "This suits some people on their journey, but others run out of steam. The social environment they find does not lend itself to people asking further awkward questions".

Tomlinson also says there should be research into the mechanism of speaking in tongues. Is it the Holy Spirit at work, or a technique for allowing someone to temporarily close off the rational mind?

And what role does music play in inducing charismatic behaviour? Glossolalia, as found in a congregational setting across religions, is normally accompanied by repetitive rhythmical music. In a shamanic tradition this might be drumming. In a Christian setting, this will be the worship band playing simple choruses over and over again. And how many people speaking in tongues are simply copying their neighbours, concerned they might appear the odd one out? "I've often been invited by charismatic friends to their services," one clergyman noted, "but if I found myself speaking in tongues, I would know I was faking it."<sup>16</sup>

For many new Anglicans, speaking in tongues, spiritual healing, the deliverance ministry, prophecy and visions are as familiar as Hymns Ancient and Modern, pews, cassocks and surplices were to their grandparents' generation. A corollary of this is that the informal nature of much charismatic worship has given new members little awareness of traditional and historic church liturgy. "Hence the radically impoverished liturgical life of many charismatic fellowships," observes Bishop Tom Wright, theologian and former Bishop of Durham. Speaking in tongues and cathedral evensong would appear to be two incompatible approaches to worship.

If glossolalia has any supernatural element, it has to be the most widespread supernatural manifestation of all, with millions of practitioners worldwide. It would confirm the

belief held by many that God remains at work in the world today, constantly intervening in human affairs. However, even if it is a form of behaviour that spreads through being copied, with the words being nothing but gibberish, it can still be regarded as a religious phenomenon. For it has a role in worship and religious practice that avoids the cerebral emphasis on dogma, creeds and scriptures and instead provides an outlet for raw emotion, which in our rational age, is frequently suppressed – even by the traditional churches. **FT**

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# THE FIRST FORTEANS

## 3. ROUND-ROBINS OF THE DAMNED

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

In that dark era before the Internet, communication between like-minded people had to be inventive. For the early interplanetary enthusiasts, science fiction fans and first forteans their equivalent of the email group or online forum was the ‘newsletter’, a simple form of fanzine run off on a stencil duplicator. During World War II, when the meeting groups were suspended and many fans were dispersed among the armed forces or relocated elsewhere, these provided intellectual nourishment and a means of keeping in touch.

Central to our fortean history is Harold ‘Hal’ Chibbett, who joined one of London’s first SF groups in the mid-1930s. It was there that he first met Arthur C Clarke; and later, in 1942, on an RAF radio course at London Polytechnic, he met Eric Frank Russell (EFR) with whom he had corresponded since the early 1930s. The three shared a keen interest in Charles Fort’s ‘phenomena’ and remained lifelong friends. When I met Hal in 1975, he said he was still exchanging letters with Clarke, William Temple and EFR.

Harold Stanley Walter Chibbett was born on 19 February 1900 in Islington and lived in north London all his life. For most of that time he worked for Inland Revenue, retiring in 1965. He was secretary of the original Science Fiction Association and had written for several fantasy pulp magazines.<sup>1</sup>

Several years before WWII began, Chibbett formed the ‘Probe’ group to investigate paranormal and anomalous phenomena, and he edited and published their newsletter. It was his firm opinion that these phenomena were “not super natural, therefore, and should be diligently studied by Science”.<sup>2</sup>

During WWII, with all of its restrictions on materials and services, Chibbett had the idea of converting his postal distribution into an experimental chain-letter form, as each mailing was passed



LEFT: Hal Chibbett at the *Newsletter* duplicator, the messy but vital accessory of any fanzine editor in those days. The photo has not been dated, but my guess it was taken shortly after WWII, when Hal would have been in his late 30s or early 40s.

and Kuda Bux, the celebrated exponent of fire-walking and live burial. At this remove, we have no record of the other members of Probe, but at some point EFR joined Hal on his paranormal investigations. Later, EFR used to refer to him as ‘Poltergeist Chibbett’.<sup>3</sup>

Towards the end of the war, the *Newsletter* was also sent to the many SF fans who could not attend the weekly meetings at the White Horse, in London’s Fetter Lane. At first, Chibbett writes, the recipients were “mainly parapsychologists, such as myself, and science-fiction enthusiasts”, including “Arthur Clarke, John Wyndham, Prof. Archibald Low, Eric Russell and William Temple.”<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after the war, the demands of returning to a ‘normal’ daily life made active investigation and publishing difficult. *The Newsletter* – and perhaps also Probe – lay dormant for the next two decades. When Hal resumed activities in 1969, the expanded Probe *Newsletter* now included “all off-beat subjects such as UFOs, occultism, etc”. Each *NL* was a packet containing correspondence, news-clippings, magazines and critical commentaries, to which each recipient was invited to contribute before passing it on. Lists were usually limited to three people at a time, then returned to Chibbett. *NLs* could be chosen from a topic list, or members could create new topics. No fees were ever charged. Sometimes a topic became popular and was declared a ‘research group’.

By 1974, Chibbett had issued packets on 550 individual topics to around 40 members – ‘*NL*-ites’ he called them. Alongside the usual SF and fantasy writers

“THE GROUP TO WHICH I BELONG MAKES A PRACTICE OF COLLECTING AND COLLATING DATA OF UNUSUAL HAPPENINGS, MUCH IN THE MANNER OF THE LATE CHARLES FORT”

on after reading to the next on the list. For much of the rest of his life, Hal maintained a system of postal chain-letters circulating news and correspondence and even news-clippings, called collectively *The Newsletter* (*NL*) and described as “an occasional postal contact”.

Quite early on – in mid-1939 – he published a very fortean mission statement: “The Group to which I belong makes a practice of collecting and collating data of unusual happenings throughout the world – much in the manner of

the late Charles Fort – and... it believes that... close study of apparent irregularities in Nature will eventually show that they fall into line with generally accepted knowledge”.<sup>2</sup>

Hal had been keenly interested in psychical and occult phenomena since his teens. Over five decades – aside from working in the Civil Service and writing fantasy fiction – he conducted many investigations, during which he met most of the now-famous names, including Aleister Crowley, psychical investigator Harry Price,



and parapsychologists, they included “scientists, clergymen, atheists, agnostics, astrologers, ufologists, mediums and people who have experienced psychical phenomena such as astral projection or poltergeists” ... and, of course, fortune-tellers.<sup>4</sup>

Starting in 1971, he had also organised social meetings for NL-ites at the annual Esoteric Conference, in London, held by Marion Green’s *Quest Magazine*. By the NL’s 31<sup>st</sup> year (1975), postal losses of “irreplaceable material” and “carelessness” added to his admin worries, and his health had waned sufficiently to require he pass administration of the *Newsletter* to his old SF comrade Sid Birchby in Manchester. Thanks to Sid, summaries of at least two *Newsletters* – on ‘Winged Cats’ and the ‘Hummadruz’ (a ubiquitous but mysterious aerial sound) – made their way into the pages of *Fortean Times*.<sup>5</sup>

*FT* was in its second year when I first became aware of Hal and his pioneering efforts in circulating fortune-telling. In October 1975, Mike Howard – who put out his own occult fanzine, *Spectrum*, and who was then working for the Isle of Man company that published the UK edition of *Fate Magazine* – urged me to send copies to Chibbett who, he said, was also a fortune-teller. Hal wrote back promptly with full details of his *Newsletter* network, offering to put a copy of *FT* in the packet marked ‘fortune-telling’, hoping that it would do two of his sceptical readers, Prof. John Taylor and Dr Chris Evans, “much good”.

Within a few exchanges, Hal invited me to visit him for a more leisurely “natter” at his modest end-of-terrace maisonette in Bounds Green, north London; and so I did, on 6 November 1975. I was surprised to find him looking rather frail; he was 75 and a veteran of investigating and publishing our kind of material, and I was 40 years his junior and only just beginning my journey. Nevertheless, he and his wife Lilly were excellent hosts as we chatted through the gamut of fortune-telling subjects fuelled by tea and homemade cake.

I must have passed muster because he had a surprise for me. He brought out a couple of boxes containing “my fortune-telling oddities”



ABOVE: Hal Chibbett’s newsclipping collection, pasted onto record cards, spanned 30 years (1937-1967). BELOW: Early in his career, Hal also wrote fantasy fiction. He had two stories in Ted Carnell’s anthology *Jinn & Jitters* (1946) and 18 years later, was in great company in Robert W Lowndes’s *Magazine of Horror and Strange Stories* (Feb 1964).

BOB RICKARD

– hundreds of file-cards onto which were pasted fading newsclippings from the mid-1930s to the 1950s. He said: “these will almost certainly be destroyed when I go,” and asked if I could suggest what to do with them. How could I refuse such a charming invitation? They are currently in the process of being scanned and will eventually be part of the ‘Chibbett Collection’ in the Charles Fort Institute database.

Hal could only spare me two hours that evening. An SF fan, Laurie Parker, arrived to drive him to the One Tun pub in the narrow lane called Saffron Hill, close to St Bart’s Hospital. It had been the regular Thursday night meeting place for London’s SF literati; the latest in a succession of venues dating back to the famous White Horse in the 1940s. I declined their kind offer to join them and staggered home with my treasure.

Hal Chibbett’s health continued to decline as a result of haemorrhages following radiation treatment, and

he died after a heart attack on 23 February 1978 – as Sid Birchby pointed out, just five days before the death of his old friend EFR. Sid managed to keep the NLs going for a while after Chibbett’s death, until his own death in 2001.<sup>6</sup> I have tried to find out what happened to the NL archive since then, but have not been able to locate any copies of *The Probe*, and the fate of Chibbett’s archive is unknown. It is increasingly likely that his prediction came true. I should have asked Sid before he died; or else Sid’s brother John, who died in 2010, but I didn’t know of John’s existence until I began researching this series. Recently, when Rob Hansen told me that, at his last encounter with John (at the ‘Tun’), John told him that Sid’s things “had all been binned before anyone could get to them”.<sup>7</sup> It felt like my last link to the fortune-telling past was severed. However, I was in no doubt that Hal’s publications, range of interests and clipping gathering

were forerunners of what we have tried to do with *Fortean Times*. It is a pity, then, that we had only a few sporadic moments of contact, but the torch was passed on.

Next instalment: *Eric Frank Russell, the Contrarian*.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 For fullest account of Chibbett’s life (and precious little is recorded) see note 6 (below) and Terence E. Hanley’s blog ‘Tellers of weird tales’ for 28 April 2012 – <http://tellersofweirdtales.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/hsw-chibbett-1900-1978.html> – which also has a list of the Chibbett’s known writings.
- 2 From one of the few extant articles by Chibbett ‘The Supernormal’ in Doug Mayer’s *Tomorrow* #6 (Summer 1938, p9) [www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN%20Archive/Tom06p8.htm](http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN%20Archive/Tom06p8.htm)
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- 4 From the historical information that came to new *Newsletter* members. Personal collection.
- 5 Hummadruz: **FT29:54**; Winged cats: **FT35:47** (cites *Newsletter* #548, 1975).
- 6 See Birchby’s obituary for EFR and Chibbett in **FT25:32, 43**
- 7 Pers comm from Rob Hansen.

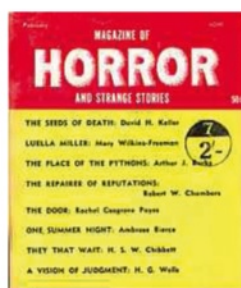
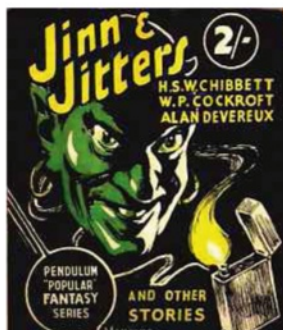
#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For their generous help, my thanks go to the SF fan historians and archivists who went out of their way to preserve the correspondence, images, fanzines and reports of the day. Chief among those are ...

Rob Hansen’s **FIAWOL** archive: [www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/](http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/)  
 Dave Langford for his **Ansible** archive: <http://news.ansible.co.uk/>  
 Greg Pickersgill for his **Gostak** archive: [www.gostak.demon.co.uk/](http://www.gostak.demon.co.uk/)  
 Terence E Hanley for permission to use an image from Randal A Everts’s collection.

For critical help with this instalment, thanks go to Peter Weston, Terence E Hanley and Rob Hansen.

NB: A fully referenced and linked version will follow later on my CFI blogsite: <http://blogs.fortean.org/bob>





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# forum

## Time, Space and Blavatsky

**STEVE MOORE** casts a sceptical eye over esotericism's odder claims, but wonders if one of its leading lights might actually have foreseen recent cosmological speculations.



**STEVE MOORE** is a longtime FT contributor, edited *Fortean Studies*, and has written lots of stuff in various fields. His novel, *Somnium*, was published in 2011.

One thing I've always found interesting (and often hilarious) about the Western esoteric tradition is its apparent desire to explain and validate itself with reference to contemporary science. Soon after the discovery of the various parts of the electromagnetic spectrum in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we began to hear occultists describing things like the 'astral plane' in terms of 'vibrations' and having a 'different frequency' to the mundane world, and this sort of terminology still lingers today. Aleister Crowley's journal *The Equinox* was subtitled (perhaps mischievously) 'The Review of Scientific Illuminism', while in the 1980s the Chaos Magic movement attempted to find the rationale for its more practical approach to magic in Chaos Theory, most notably with Edward Lorenz's famous formulation of the 'butterfly effect', where a small change in one place, such as the flapping of a butterfly's wing, can result in a large change in another, such as a hurricane. Mathematical aspects of Chaos were also mined, resulting in Peter Carroll's peculiarly absurd 'equations of magic', which attempted to equate a number of mathematically unquantifiable factors such as 'gnosis' and 'subconscious resistance' to come up with an equally unquantifiable 'magic factor'.<sup>1</sup> These days, of course, quantum physics is the usual recourse, particularly referring to its (usually poorly understood) 'uncertainty principle' and 'quantum entanglement', where effects occurring on the microcosmic plane are thought to provide possible explanations for events at the macrocosmic level.

Perhaps my favourite example of this sort of thing is Veolita Parke Boyle's 1928



ABOVE: Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

mash-up of the *I Ching* and Western numerology (and quite a lot else), *The Fundamental Principles of Yi-king, Tao, the Cabbalas of Egypt and the Hebrews*,<sup>2</sup> with its splendid sub-title: 'Personal Name Radio, the Switchboard of the Universe'. Better still, when we turn to the frontispiece, we find a 'Chart-o-Scope of Magnetic Vibratory Action', which apparently explains the aforesaid 'Switchboard', though frankly I'm not sure how.

OK, we shouldn't laugh (well, not too much, anyway), as some of these views have been held in earnest good faith by perfectly nice people. But they're category errors, where "things of one kind are presented as if they belonged to another".<sup>3</sup> The astral plane is a mental state, not something you tune in to like a TV channel. 'Magic' is not quantifiable mathematically or scientifically. Adding

up the numerical values of the letters of your name has nothing to do with radio.

This isn't to suggest that there's absolutely no interface between esotericism and science; merely that the sort of links claimed above are misguided. But thinking about this sort of thing reminded me of HP Blavatsky's notion of the 'Astral Light', which she explains as analogous to the Sanskrit *akâsa* or 'ether'. According to Madame B's esoteric compendium *Isis Unveiled* (its two volumes notably subheaded 'Science' and 'Theology'), the Astral Light "keeps an unmutilated record of all that was, that is, or ever will be. The minutest acts of our lives are imprinted on it, and even our thoughts rest photographed on its eternal tablets." Note the reference to the relatively recent technology of photography here. Furthermore: "It is on the indestructible tablets of the astral light that is stamped the impression of every thought we think, and every act we perform; and ... future events - effects of long forgotten causes - are already delineated ..."<sup>4</sup> Blavatsky may have been talking figuratively about 'tablets' and 'records' here, but later followers, such as CW Leadbeater, developed the notion into the oft-derided 'Akashic Records' where the conception seems to be much more in terms of written records and cosmic libraries... and, indeed, a great deal of innocent hilarity can be had by googling the term and simply letting the New Age nonsense wash over one... particularly from those who want to tell you how *you*, too, can consult the records. Or worse, what they've found there already.

Let's strip off some of the esoteric bric-a-brac here. Obviously the idea of a written record (which implies someone or something to write it, implying in turn that there'd have to be a record of that someone writing it, and so on *ad infinitum*, unless our scribe was outside of time and space itself) is unworkable, but suppose the Astral Light/Akashic Record was more like a hologram. If this contained minute details of everything that ever happened or will happen in time and space, this would, effectively, be continuous with the complete cosmos; and ultimately there'd be very little to distinguish it from the Universe itself. This sounds almost as ludicrous as everything being recorded by armies of cosmic penmen, but we may actually be able to find a parallel in current

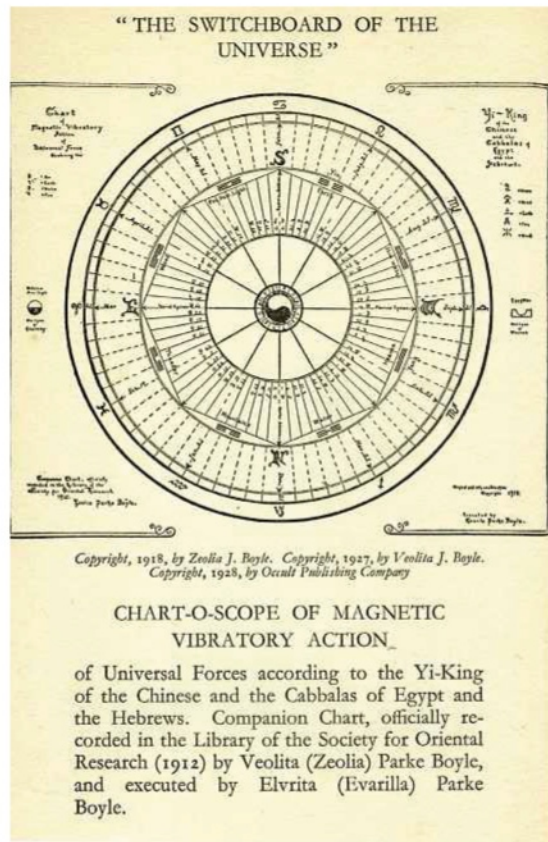


scientific thought.

Leaving aside such things as potential multiple universes, there is an ongoing scientific debate, often ferocious, about the nature of time, at least as it functions in our 'normal', single Einsteinian universe, between viewpoints known as 'Presentism' and 'Eternalism'. And before you write in, please remember that I'm not espousing one side or the other here; I just want to look at the implications of one of these viewpoints.

Presentism is the common sense, conventional view that divides time into 'past', 'present' and 'future', where the past is seen as immutably fixed, the future as undefined and uncertain, because it does not yet exist, and the present as the current 'moment' that moves along the time-stream. Thus the future becomes the present as the passing moment arrives at it, while what is currently the present in turn inevitably becomes the past. Essentially, only the present moment is real; the past is already gone, while the future has not yet occurred. Presentism is the way time is usually perceived as we live our mundane, everyday lives. We might call it the 'default setting' for the way people, especially laymen, see time, and regardless of what the true nature of time may be, we have little or no alternative but to live our lives as if the present is all that's real and the future unknown. Unfortunately, this view is difficult to reconcile with various scientific notions such as the theory of relativity. In particular, there are problems in that observers at different points of reference can have differing perceptions of whether events happen simultaneously or not.

While there are other theories about time, Eternalism is the hypothesis that's most often offered in opposition to Presentism, and it's this view that concerns us here. Eternalism, which has its origins in Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity, takes the view that all points in time are equally real, and regards time as ontologically similar to space. Rather than looking upon the world as three-dimensional space modulated by the passage of time, Eternalism regards space-time as a four-dimensional solid (often referred to as the 'block universe'), where time is seen as the fourth dimension; or at least the passage of time is seen as the way in which we perceive this fourth dimension. So space-time, and by extension everything within it, has length, breadth, width and duration. The passage of time thus becomes a subjective phenomenon, for all events, both in the future and the past, are co-existent at various points on



## Eternalism says that all points in time are equally real

the time-dimension<sup>5</sup>.

This might perhaps be better understood through an analogy. Suppose we have a two-dimensional figure, such as a rectangle, and look at it from a third dimensional viewpoint, i.e., from above. Then it becomes possible to see how far the rectangle stretches along both its dimensions, length and width. Let's now apply a similar idea to a four-dimensional solid, but rather than taking the whole of space-time, let's take as an example one item within it: a person living from 1960 to 2040. If it were possible, at this moment in 2013, to look at that four-dimensional-solid person from a putative fifth-dimensional perspective, then one would see their length, width and height, and also their duration, from 1960 to 2040, with everything that happens to them between those dates. The implication is that the future exists, ahead of this moment, just as the past exists behind it. It's only

our perception that's trapped in this 'present moment'. The past is known, because it has already been perceived; the future is unknown because it has not yet been perceived.

If the future already exists, of course, this implies that the Universe is deterministic, because upcoming events can only proceed along one unalterable course. This may explain why Eternalism is unpopular in some quarters, particularly with religious believers who embrace a Creator God, as this would imply that God has created both the good and evil in the world, rather than evil being the result of human free will; 'free will' being a concept that becomes irrelevant in these circumstances, even though we have no alternative but to act as if we had it anyway. However, it's also problematical for opponents of Creationism, as Eternalism implies that the entire 'narrative history' of the cosmos, from the beginning to the end of time, came into being with the Big Bang... an implication which would, no doubt, be eagerly seized upon by proponents of 'Intelligent Design'<sup>6</sup>.

According to Eternalism, then, everything that has or ever will happen in the Universe is imprinted on the fabric of time and space. This does, of course, sound very similar to Blavatsky's notion of the Astral Light, stripped of its occult fripperies (and its various consultation processes). One's left wondering whether those who devised the Eternalist view of time realised that certain aspects of their ideas had been heralded by an occultist in the 1870s, long before the Einsteinian Universe it depends upon had been formulated. And, equally, if Madame Blavatsky realised that her notion of the Astral Light implied a deterministic Universe and, indeed, if that was what she intended. But perhaps the answers to those questions are only to be found in the Akashic Record itself... **FT**

### NOTES

- 1 Peter J. Carroll, *Liber Kaos*, Samuel Weiser, Yorke Beach, ME, 1992, pp41-51.
- 2 Veolita Parke Boyle, *The Fundamental Principles of Yi-king, Tao, the Cabbalas of Egypt and the Hebrews*, W & G Foyle, Ltd, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 1934, title & p2.
- 3 Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford UP, 1994, p58.
- 4 HP Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Theosophical University Press, Pasadena, CA, 1972, Vol 1, p178. See also Vol. 1, xxv-xxvii; Vol 2, p588.
- 5 Daniel Peterson and Michael Silberstein, 'Relativity of Simultaneity and Eternalism: In Defense of the Block Universe' at [www.fqxi.org/data/forum-attachments/RoSandBlockworld.pdf](http://www.fqxi.org/data/forum-attachments/RoSandBlockworld.pdf).
- 6 See *Theosophy* Vol 93, No 1, Fall 2004; a special issue devoted to Intelligent Design.



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# Occulture vultures

**GARY LACHMAN** attends the Occult Humanities Conference in New York's East Village and finds that, these days, esoterica is the hottest ticket in town for arty types and academics in search of the next major cultural mash-up



**GARY LACHMAN** is a founding member of *Blondie*, a regular contributor to *FT* and the author of numerous books, the latest of which is about Madame Blavatsky.

**T**he occult has certainly come up in the world. From being a dubious pursuit on the fringe of mainstream culture – at least according to most official accounts – the strange world of magic, the supernatural and the esoteric has recently become the hottest thing in town, if the attention it's receiving from both the academic and the art world is anything to judge by. Conferences and exhibitions exploring the influence of the occult on Western culture abound. It seems artists and academics can't get enough of it. In recent years I've lectured at nine conferences in six countries on two continents, all dedicated to the idea that the occult, the poor relation of Western culture, should be taken more seriously. That the wider intellectual world is waking up to what many of us have known all along is curious. Why this sudden interest in something that has been a part of Western culture for centuries? Does it suggest a real understanding of what the historian of the occult James Webb called "rejected knowledge", and all that this implies? Is it a kind of Freudian 'return of the repressed', with the 'dark side' of human life breaking through cultural inhibitions and reaching the light of day? Or have artists and academics simply run out of material and are picking through Western culture's rubbish in the search for something 'new'?

That the art world should pay attention to the occult is not surprising. The two have often been fellow travellers, and the occult interests of important figures such as Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Marcel Duchamp, Hilma af Klint, and Joseph Beuys – to name a few – have been well documented, if tepidly accepted, by the critical establishment. But that academia should open its doors to what it usually considers rank superstition is unusual. We can't speak of a conversion experience, but the fact that in recent years more than one mainstream university has offered courses in Western



**ABOVE:** Conference organisers Jesse Bransford and Pam Grossman.

## The art world and the occult have often been fellow travellers

esotericism, Hermeticism, mysticism, and other 'superstitious' traditions suggests an appreciable shift, a grudging recognition that the occult, whatever one might think of it, is part of Western consciousness, and deserves study.

A recent mash-up between the occult, academia and the art world that I attended was the Occult Humanities Conference held in New York's East Village on 18-20 October 2013. The event was a collaboration between independent researchers and practitioners, academics from a variety of fields, and the Steinhardt Department of Art and Art Professions at New York University. Over three days, academic scholars in art history, literature, and

anthropology; independent occult researchers, publishers and curators; and occult-oriented writers, musicians, and performers gathered to celebrate what has become known as 'occulture'. This portmanteau term refers to the fact – long recognised by initiates – that the occult has both its own culture and has informed the wider culture around it. Occulture is rather like psychogeography, in the sense of being something one has done for a long time, without knowing what it was called; many an urban wanderer came upon unusual things before the Situationist Guy Debord gave the practice a name. In the broadest sense, occulture means that many artists, writers, musicians, filmmakers and other cultural creators were interested in the occult, and that many occultists had a knack for art. It also means that the different but related fields of the occult, art, the 'counterculture', new religious movements such as paganism and wicca, and much else have recognised they have a lot in common. That commonality was much in evidence during the Occult Humanities Conference.

The conference's co-organisers, Jesse Bransford and Pam Grossman, are a good example of the kind of fellow traveller familiar to occulture. Bransford is both an artist and an academic – he teaches art at NYU – and Grossman is an independent researcher and curator, whose blog *Phantasmaphile* ([www.phantasmaphile.com](http://www.phantasmaphile.com)) – dedicated to Art, Culture and Mirabilia – is a good example of the mixed bag of goods occulture deals in. Grossman is also one of the founders of *The Observatory*, a multimedia space in Brooklyn, which offers lectures, exhibitions and performances with a magical and esoteric bent ([observatoryroom.org](http://observatoryroom.org)), and she is also involved with *Abraxas*, an international journal of esoteric studies. Her talk, on finding the magical amidst urban blight, was an essay in occult psychogeography, and sent more than one attendee onto Manhattan's streets in search of the miraculous. Bransford's own blog, *Sevensseven* ([sevensseven.com/artists.html](http://sevensseven.com/artists.html)), is also dedicated to art that is informed with magic, and his talk, which closed the



conference, highlighted one of the dangers in meddling with the black arts. While working on a decade-long project devoted to the seven ancient planets and involving the symbols and talismans associated with them, Bransford found himself subject to a series of strange experiences which, if they did not convert him to a belief in the reality of magic, certainly convinced him that these powerful emblems and insignia were not to be trifled with. Another artist, Chicago-based Elijah Burgher, talked about his paintings, and the strange blend of magic, ritual, and homoeroticism that informs his work; the result, to me at least, seemed like a weird combination of David Hockney pastels and Crowleyan sex-magick.

Earlier magical artists were also on hand. Susan Aberth, an art historian from Bard College, took us on an engaging tour of the work of the surrealist-occultist Leonora Carrington, lighting up areas earlier critics ignored. The anthropologist Amy Hale did the same with the magical creations of Ithell Colquhoun, pointing out Colquhoun's early forays into Goddess worship and Earth Mysteries, while Robert Ansell, an independent curator, publisher (Fulgur Esoterica) and editor (*Abraxas*) presented a multimedia introduction to the curious 'Neither-Neither' magical aesthetics of South London's Austin Osman Spare. It was during Ansell's talk that we were informed of the recent death of the Australian writer Neville Drury, an occultist of many years, whose passing will be felt.

The literary-scholarly side to occulture was presented in two fascinating lectures. Laurent Ferri, a curator of rare books at Cornell University, related the curious history of Cornell's celebrated witchcraft collection, a remarkable library that contains, among other items, the surrealist Kurt Seligman's personal occult selection. And William Kiesel, editor of *Clavis Journal of the Art Magical*, director of Ouroboros Press, and founder of Seattle's Esoteric Book Conference, took us on a guided stroll through the history of alchemical vessels, physical and spiritual. As Kiesel's talk showed, in terms of weird landscapes, strange figures, and unusual juxtapositions, the alchemists were ahead of the surrealists by centuries.

The scientific/ technological character of occulture – yes,



ABOVE: Artworks by Elijah Burgher.

BELOW: Mark Pilkington, exploring the meeting ground between magic and technology.

science can be occult too – was also on hand. The Brooklyn-based photographer Shannon Taggart introduced us to her explorations into spiritualism, which focus on her attempts to capture the elusive psychophysical substance of ectoplasm on film. The results of her work with a variety of mediums were both entertaining and unsettling. And Mark Pilkington of Strange Attractor spoke about the meeting ground between magic and technology, using the strange disciplines of radionics and psychotronics (another portmanteau term, bringing the soul – psyche – together with electronics) as an example. His talk was perhaps the most occulturist of the weekend, blending science, magic, science fiction, art and several other ingredients, which, sad to say, escape me now.

To relieve the pressure of assimilating all this strange and thought-provoking material, Meredith Yayanos of the Parlour Trick soothed our febrile consciousness with her eerie theremin melodies, and the Seattle-based street magician Acep Hale had a rapt audience for his hypnotic feats and esoteric sleight-of-hand; no doubt Derren Brown could learn a few tricks from him. My own contribution was as part of a panel including Pam Grossman and Mitch Horowitz, vice-president and editor-in-chief of Tarcher/Penguin, the preeminent mainstream publisher of esoteric literature, and author of *Occult America*, in a discussion about the influence of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky on

modern culture. More than anyone else, Blavatsky is responsible for the modern occult revival of which occulture is the latest development, and it was fitting that she should have co-founded the Theosophical Society in 1875 in a room on Irving Place, a few blocks from where the conference was being held. Blavatsky's contribution to modern occultism, and modern life in general, is so enormous that a whole conference could be devoted to her – a hint, perhaps, to future organisers?

All in all, the turnout was very good – more or less a packed house – and I suspect people left knowing a bit more than when they arrived, and were energised for future explorations. While the Occult Humanities Conference and similar events will most likely not effect an immediately visible change in how mainstream critics and historians view the occult – miracles, however, do happen – what they will do is encourage the growing sense that there is more to the occult than what the long-enshrined reductive modern outlook suggests. The aim is not to get everyone to perform rituals or read their Tarot – something, in fact, that many people already do. But events like these can illustrate the fact that the occult is, in the philosopher Ernst Cassirer's term, a 'symbolic form', a means through which the human mind has understood itself and its world, and through which it continues to do so, despite the efforts of the dismissive sensibilities which reject it. This is why it is fitting that the occult should be seen as one of the humanities, as part of those pursuits – like philosophy, art, and literature – that make us human. **FT**





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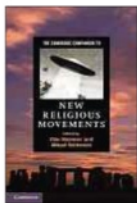
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It's difficult to know where to pitch academic books. Too low, and they're not much use to scholars; too high, and their readership will be minuscule. When they're collections of papers, they need strong editors to ensure a uniform level.

*The Cambridge Guide to New Religious Movements* appears to be an overview of the entire subject, which would suggest pitching it at undergraduates. Some chapters assume so much knowledge that they'd overwhelm most undergrads, let alone general readers. The editors' worst decision was to put David G Bromley's chapter 'The sociology of new religious movements' at the beginning. Bromley knows his stuff – he's professor of Religious Studies and Sociology at Virginia Commonwealth University, and I've written for his excellent *World Religions and Spirituality Project* site ([www.has.vcu.edu/wrs/](http://www.has.vcu.edu/wrs/)) – but an overview of all new religious movements (NRMs) of the last 40 or 50 years in 14 pages is asking for trouble, and placing it at the start will put off all but the most determined reader. There are two more chapters on social

science perspectives before the book moves on to a few themes and then nearly a dozen chapters on individual movements. Douglas E Cowan writes well on how NRMs use the Internet – and how most people use the Internet, customising and filtering in what's become known as "the daily me", a confirmation bias whereby what we tend to see and value online is stuff that we already agree with. And so we accept some things as true while dismissing others as propaganda. (This is why the Internet is such a valuable tool to conspiracy theorists, whose sites cite and support each other in an endless sycophantic cycle.) NRMs can use the Internet to promote their activities – but so can their enemies, as the Church of Scientology has found to its cost.

Garry W Trompf writes about history and the end of time. NRM leaders "show a panoramic grasp of events to unveil the group's role in humanity's destiny". This can involve the rewriting of history, "adherents discarding or deliberately altering conventional interpretations, along with selective memory, antagonism toward contrary viewpoints (e.g. anti-evolutionism), not to mention forgetfulness of any facts giving the leader an ambiguous or banal image". Hagiographies of leaders such as L Ron Hubbard bear that out. Since Weber, charismatic authority has been one of the focuses of the social study of religion. Catherine Wessinger cites Jude Coney on the similarity between devotion to a charismatic leader and falling in love; I have often argued that the bitterness of some ex-members of NRMs is akin to feelings of hurt and loss after the break-up of a relationship. Wessinger also deals with the

### "The bitterness of some ex-members is akin to feelings after the break-up of a relationship"

problem of multiple claims of charisma, including access to new truths from prophecies, visions and dreams, and how this can lead to schisms in movements, or alternatively to a situation where only the founder or the current leader is allowed to receive such privileged insights.

Open University professor Graham Harvey has a fascinating chapter on the use of ritual in NRMs to reconcile "tensions between ancient origins and recent organisational structures, or resonances between old and contemporary acts" – a way to link tradition and innovation. Sabrina Magliocco writes about the paradox at the heart of modern Pagan religions, that they are simultaneously "a reaction against the excesses of modernity" and "a product of modernity, urbanisation, the development of individualism and modern concepts of personal growth and self-realisation".

There are interesting chapters on three movements which are controversial in different ways: the Church of Scientology, the Raelian Movement and Satanism.

Some of the chapters are uncomfortably heavy reads, others get it just right. It's a good test of academic books to compare topics you're familiar with and those you're not, for content and comprehensibility

– in this case, for me, Theosophy and Jihadism respectively.

James A Santucci sets out his aims at the beginning of his chapter on Theosophy: to present the people and events leading to its founding; to define and describe Theosophy; to outline its teachings; to give an historical overview, including its split into three main branches; and to look at the impact of Theosophy on the religious mindset today. My heart sank when I read that summary – but he achieves it clearly and thoroughly: masses of information in just 12 pages, but presented in a readable way.

Reuven Firestone does a pretty good job of explaining the intricacies of Jihadism, its origins, its aims, its justifications, and the similarities to and differences from Islamism. I'd have to read this chapter at least once more to fully grasp its complexity, especially with the unfamiliar Arabic terminology, but a first reading gave me a good enough understanding of where people like Osama bin Laden are coming from, and where they fit into the history of militant Islam.

There's some excellent material in this book, especially on individual movements, but you have to wade through some academic stodge to get to it. The editors, both Danish professors, have made little attempt to think about the readers. I'm not sure who Cambridge University Press thought they were aiming it at, but it's certainly not an introductory text, even at undergrad level.

David V Barrett

### Fortean Times Verdict

INTERESTING, BUT TOO HEAVY TO BE A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

7



# Land of Lincoln

The state with the most hairy hominid reports also has the odd swamp thing



## Monsters of Illinois

Mysterious Creatures in the Prairie State

Troy Taylor

Stackpole Books 2011

Pb, 122pp, £11.34, ISBN 9780817736404

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £8.99

Troy Taylor's website describes him as "an occultist, supernatural historian and the author of 84 books on ghosts, hauntings, history, crime and the unexplained in America." An Illinois native, currently residing "at an undisclosed location in Chicago", he concentrates on strange events in his home state, and *Monsters of Illinois* fits that mould.

This book consists of six chapters, the first devoted to an overview of Bigfoot sightings in the Land of Lincoln. Evans tells us that Illinois boasts more hairy hominid reports than any other US state east of the Mississippi River, offering selected incidents logged between September 1883 and July 2005.

Space limitations prohibit an exhaustive list – 166 and counting, based on data from the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization – but Taylor presents enough details to inspire further research.

His second chapter deals with the 'Big Muddy Monster', a Sasquatchian 'swamp thing' that agitated residents of Murphysboro and environs during 1973. His conclusion: "The only thing we know for sure [...] is that it was an enigma and remains so today."

Chapter Three examines a menagerie of mysterious

creatures, including reports of black panthers and 'African' lions at large, elusive kangaroos that have been photographed but never caught, and a short list of aquatic cryptids: misplaced alligators dating back to 1902, a hulking monster in Lake Michigan that rivals 'Champ' of Lake Champlain, and Stump Pond's 12ft (3.7m) 'serpent', glimpsed sporadically between 1879 and 1965.

Taylor's fourth and fifth chapters discuss things with wings. A petroglyph of the Piasa 'bird', first noted by explorer Jacques Marquette in 1673, is a staple of fortean literature. Whether it is somehow linked to modern tales of giant 'thunderbirds' in Illinois remains a controversial question, but Taylor touches base with the classic rash of Illinois sightings from summer 1977 to make his case.

Chapter six veers off-course from straight cryptozoology to deal with the matter of 'phantom attackers'. Specific Illinois examples include the classic 'Mad Gasser of Mattoon', who violated urban bedrooms during 1944; the elusive 'Blue Phantom', who fired shots at motorists on Route 66 in the early 1950s; and a supposed vampire – or, at least, a caped kook – who prowled Chicago's Casimir Cemetery in 1978.

None qualify as cryptids *per se*, and all may be explained in terms of human agency or mass hysteria, but no review of Illinois enigmas is complete without them.

Whether your interest tends toward actual or hypothetical 'monsters', or fortean phenomena in general, this roundup of Prairie State anomalies is worth perusing.

Michael Newton

### Fortean Times Verdict

DECENT STUDY OF THE PRAIRIE STATE'S ENIGMATIC CRITTERS

8

## The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth Century Spiritualism and the Occult

Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (eds)

Ashgate 2012

Hb, £85.00, ISBN 9780754669128

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £85.00



Here you can read about the exploits of Professor Molecule, FRS, XYZ, BIGASS, and Audacia

Dangereyes, both thankfully entirely fictional, as well as the usual suspects, such as Sir William Crookes and Daniel Dunglas Home. Edgar Allen Poe returns from the grave to illustrate Roland Barthes's "death of the author" concept in a novel and literal context. The complex case of the 'cross-correspondences' – cryptic clues delivered via mediums and believed to derive from key figures in the early history of the Society for Psychical Research – draws the SPR into the realm of literary criticism, although beginning in 1901 they are surely too late to be considered "19th century". Edward Bulwer-Lytton and his occult novels come under scrutiny, as they must, and we are pressed into the heaving bosom of Theosophy to marvel again at the chutzpah of Helena Blavatsky.

We are thrown into legal disputes and media duels between illusionists and spirit mediums that reveal their similarity and the problems this posed. We learn of the overlooked role of food and laughter in the séance. Sitters share jokes with the spirits and juggle hot potatoes from the "land of souls". We see women breaking through the social barriers of the times in their new roles as mediums. The unlikely duo of Henry James and Oscar Wilde present a common complaint that Spiritualism and especially psychical research have robbed the supernatural of its former holy terror. Where Wilde satirised the problem in "The Canterville Ghost", James wrote *The Turn of the Screw*.

From laughter and food we

are led to the body and the unexpected intimacy of the séance room, where spirits might touch sitters, remove items of their clothing, or even – as in the case of Catherine Berry – leave suggestive white stains on their dresses. We see a world of spirits shot through Frederick Hudson's camera lens draped in black satin petticoats. All in all, the contributors give us new and surprising insights on the Victorian 'borderland', and the living and 'dead' who peopled it.

However, this is not always the book that one would expect from the title. Out of 17 contributors, 12 teach in English departments, and that leads to a certain sort of emphasis. Nowhere else could one read about the mediæval conception of Christ's wounds in comparison to Cylon 'skin jobs' in *Battlestar Galactica*. Whilst the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a standard-bearer of 19th century occultism if ever there was one, skulks around the edges, largely in explanatory asides to the career of WB Yeats. The key occult figure of Eliphas Levi is missing and along with him any consideration of continental spiritualism, psychical research or occultism of the period.

There will always be oversights in a project of this nature, and overall the editors and contributors have delivered first-class research. Seen as a mostly literary research companion for academics and students, it admirably fulfils its role.

Leo Ruickbie

### Fortean Times Verdict

FASCINATING RESEARCH INTO THE VICTORIAN BORDERLANDS

9

## The Tradition of Household Spirits

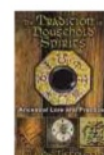
Ancestral Lore and Practices

Claude Lecouteux (trans John E Graham)

Inner Traditions 2013

Pb, 277pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £14.99, ISBN 9781620551059

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.99



Claude Lecouteux has written books on folk beliefs and practices. This one forms part of a trilogy on traditional spirits. Originally published in 2000 in French, *The Tradition of Household Spirits*



promises much for lay reader and scholar alike as a general overview of folk belief centred on the home, and explains practices which stay with us today.

Unfortunately, though it is packed with various tidbits, such as how a person's shadow was bricked up in a church to act as a guardian, Lecouteux recounts what should be a fascinating topic in a pedestrian manner. The lack of structure as he moves from one traditional practice to another sometimes makes it difficult to see when he is writing about a new belief.

It's a shame, as this is the raw material that the likes of MR James crafted his brilliant stories from. One can only hope that someone else can have another go at a book like this and do the subject matter the justice it deserves.

Mandy Collins

### Fortean Times Verdict

EXCITING SUBJECT BUT SUFFERS FROM LACK OF STRUCTURE **5**

## Introducing Particle Physics

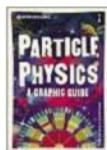
A Graphic Guide

Tom Whyntie & Oliver Pugh

Icon Books 2013

Pb, 192pp, illus, ind, £6.99, ISBN 9781848315891

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £6.64



Of all the branches of fundamental physics, the search for subatomic particles is arguably the most fascinating for researchers, and the least fascinating for the public. Popular science shelves are filled with books on cosmology, quantum theory and relativity, but particle physics is so far removed from everyday experience that it's an uphill struggle for authors to make it attractive and exciting for the general reader.

The comic-strip format offers a potentially entertaining way to convey complex ideas – witness van Lente and Dunlavey's excellent *Action Philosophers* series, or the brilliant collaborations between our own Hunt Emerson and Kevin Jackson. But *Introducing Particle Physics* comes across as a lazy man's comic strip

– nothing more than black-and-white photomanipulations with superimposed speech balloons. I was sure I wasn't going to like the book, and the glib tone of the first few pages did nothing to dispel this impression. But then there's a sudden aboutface – the authors stop trying to be funny, and start turning out the most lucid account of subatomic physics I've ever come across. The more obscure the subject gets (and with concepts like asymptotic freedom and spontaneous symmetry breaking, it really does get very obscure), the more effortlessly they manage to explain it.

In the end, I really enjoyed the book – I even got used to the black-and-white photographs and speech balloons!

Andrew May

### Fortean Times Verdict

FIRST-RATE CONTENT, BUT THE FORMAT IS AN ACQUIRED TASTE **9**

## LSD and the Divine Scientist

The Final Thoughts and Reflections of Albert Hofmann

Foreword by Christian Ratsch

Park Street Press 2013

Pb, 128pp, £12.99, ISBN 9781620550090

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99



This slim tome gathers together the transcripts of four lectures given in 1979–1997 by Albert Hofmann, the discoverer of LSD, with a foreword by ethnopharmacologist Christian Ratsch, and an afterword from psychedelic artist Alex Grey. Hofmann's sensitive personality and constant attempts to balance his scientific and his essentially pantheistic worldviews shine through. These lectures date from the last 25 years of his life, after he had retired from Sandoz, and it's clear that Hofmann greatly valued the LSD experience but saw it as a means to an end, signpost to other ways of seeing the world so that ultimately we can all realise "We are all here to experience happiness".

Andy Roberts

### Fortean Times Verdict

LECTURES BY THE PANTHEIST WHO VALUED HAPPINESS **8**

# We're doomed

Regrettably, it turns out that the only thing we have to fear isn't fear itself



## Encyclopedia Paranoica

The Indispensable Guide to Everyone and Everything You Should be Afraid or Worried About

Henry Beard & Christopher Cerf

Duckworth Overlook 2013

Hb, 385pp, bib, £15.00, ISBN 9780715646069

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.50

Well, this is fun. Unless, of course, you have even a smidgeon of hypochondria, in which case you'll be found whimpering under a blanket. A flick through the cross-refs gives a hint of delights to come: "anaphylactic shock. See: condoms, allergic reactions to" (though eczema's also a problem – birth control suddenly doesn't look so appealing, does it?); "baby boys, urogenital abnormalities in. See: food containers, plastic"; "disembowelment, accidental. See: hot tubs" or (one for the laydeez) "chlamydia. See: sexually transmitted diseases; romance novels".

This is not a loo book. You are warned about the resultant hæmorrhoids and pelvic floor prolapse, for starters, and if you flush the loo without lowering the cover, you will have misted it – and your toothbrush, probably – with vaporised toilet water.

There is a nicely judged humour undercutting some of the findings. The Cumbre Vieja mega-

tsunami, for instance, "would not be the end of the world but it would make for quite a day". And the authors are happy to tackle some fairly abstruse ideas in the Doomsday Argument (we're nothing special and, as Professor Gott suggested, "Further consideration indicates that we are unlikely to colonize the galaxy") and the contradictory but equally gloomy Fermi's paradox (we're on our own here, chaps, and our extinction is looking pretty inevitable). The entry on zombification – the mathematical modelling of 'voudou flu' – admirably demonstrates the danger of an unexpected (See: black swans) and virulent public health threat.

A few fortean staples get a mention, naturally. HAARP gets the blame for the troubles at Fukushima, though geoscientist Lauren Moret pins it on "an international racketeering network" as part of its "intentional genocidal" plan. For each warning, there is an equal but opposite warning. Rather than being good for the sight, carrots cause macular degeneration, so stick to spinach... which will weaken your bones. Chew on that, Popeye. A bit of meditation to calm those fears? Beware of "uncomfortable kinesthetic sensation, mild dissociation, feelings of guilt [...] and psychosis-like symptoms, grandiosity, elations, destructive behavior, and suicidal feelings."

Val Stevenson

### Fortean Times Verdict

NO, YOU'RE NOT BEING PARANOID – LIFE IS, INDEED, OUT TO GET YOU **9**

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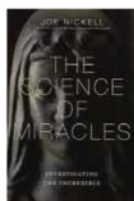
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# B&W miracles

A science-based debunking of miracles jettisons the baby with the bathwater



## The Science of Miracles

Investigating the Incredible

Joe Nickell

Prometheus Books 2013

Pb, 376pp, illus, notes, refs, ind, £13.99, ISBN 9781616147419

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.59

Joe Nickell debunks and exposes unsupported paranormal stories. Since 1995, he has been the world's only professional, science-based paranormal investigator (see FT283:63, for example).

In that the book conveys the sense of adventure surrounding the investigation of any mystery, this is entertaining reading. It also aims to be a comprehensive, science-based study of miracle claims. He evaluates the evidence in six major categories of claims: miraculous images (such as "weeping" icons); magical relics (like the Shroud of Turin and the Holy Grail); miracle healings (at Lourdes or at the hands of healers such as Benny Hinn); visionary experiences (including near-death experiences); saintly powers (such as stigmata); and "the devil's work" (such as demonic possession).

*The Science of Miracles* is a collection of anecdotes from the author's investigations, liberally spiced up with references to his many interviews and debate appearances. The amount of actual science within the pages is limited, and what there is has generally been carried out by others. However, the book contains numerous references to other literature. When the author does describe his own investigations, it is clear that

he is not averse to putting on a disguise to obtain access and close scrutiny of the miracles; the end, apparently, justifies the means. The scientific aspect is the close observation (when possible) of the artefacts and personages in question combined with a forensic examination of available literature.

The author's logic proposes that identifying a contradictory theory is the same as proving the fallacy of the original theory. This black-and-white approach is all too common but is too simplistic to be called scientific.

I have no axe to grind either way, but to me the investigations in this book appear superficial. It is easy to consider that the author is too easily convinced by his own arguments.

The book rambles through a predictable selection of miraculous events and judges them by the cynicism of the 21st century and indeed the knowledge of this age. There was little thought presented about the possibility that these miracles may have been more miraculous at the time they took place. It is also nearly impossible to understand what the facts were and what are the well-meant Chinese whispers handed down from antiquity; just as materials are corrupted by the passage of time, so are messages from the past.

Joe Nickell has investigated many things and looked carefully at many assumptions and this experience is clear in the pages of this ultimately unsatisfying tome.

It is interesting to consider that Scully in the *X-Files* always managed to miss what she was experiencing, blinkered as she was by a preset notion of what was possible.

Paul Little

### Fortean Times Verdict

TAKES AN ANECDOTAL AND SLIGHTLY BLINKERED APPROACH

5

## Losing the Head of Philip K Dick

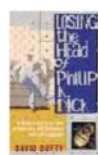
A Bizarre but True Tale of Androids, Kill Switches and Left Luggage

David Dufty

Oneworld 2013

Pb, 259pp, illus, ind, £12.99, ISBN 9781851689224

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69



It is appropriate that the one science fiction writer reincarnated as a semi-autonomous artificially intelligent android should be

Philip K Dick. Dick was obsessed with the idea of simulacra, robotic human substitutes, replicants, what it is that makes us human (or otherwise) and the confused boundary between life and death. That the head of the android Philip K Dick should vanish on a flight to Las Vegas, triggering paranoid accusations and court cases, is even more perfectly Dickian, given the overarching paranoid worldview of his novels and their tendency to hinge on inexplicable incidents. *Losing the Head of Philip K Dick* tells how the android came to be created by Hanson Robotics in Texas, and how its head came to vanish so abruptly and completely en route to a presentation at Google HQ.

It is not just his fictional interests that made PKD the perfect writer to have an android based on him. Before his death in 1982, aged only 53, he had the reputation of being a recluse, with a personal life disrupted by mental illness, drug use and marital difficulties. However, in retrospect he turned out to have been a rather generous interviewee, speaking at length to all sorts of publications, thereby leaving an extensive archive of ideas and thoughts behind. In addition, he'd written *The Exegesis*, a vast tome articulating the ideas behind his final books, including *VALIS* and *The Divine Invasion*. This detailed the philosophy he derived from a visionary experience triggered, he believed, by being zapped with a pink ray by an orbiting extraterrestrial intelligence. This meant that the AI system underpinning the android could be programmed with a vast amount of material expressing Dick's thoughts and

ideas, and this could be used as the basis for live real-time answers to questions people asked it, so that the response you would get was spookily close to what the real Dick might have said. Dufty is good at giving a clear picture of the technical challenges that David Hanson and his colleagues faced in turning this into reality, and the processes by which they resolved them, starting, bizarrely, with an exercise involving hacking a singing Billy Bass fish. The end result was so effective that it thoroughly startled Dick's daughter Isa with an unprompted rant about her mother when she met it, convincing her that they'd captured the true essence of PKD. Following its debut, the android spent 2005 doing the rounds of comics, SF and tech conferences in the US, including participating in the launch of the film *Scanner Darkly*, based on a Dick book, until in February 2006 it took the fateful trip to Google and vanished, never to be recovered.

Following this disaster, Hanson had no urge to recreate PKD, and went on to other robotics projects. However, interest in his creation did not wane, and the vanishing android became part of tech legend. Finally, in 2011, he gave in and decided to create a new PKD. The time that had elapsed would allow him to address the project anew and build him with current state of the art technology. So now, once again, there is a Philip K Dick android out there to discomfort and amaze, and it will be making its UK debut at Maker Faire UK in Newcastle at the end of April 2014, along with its creator. While I can't help feeling that *Losing the Head of Philip K Dick* ought to be called *Bring Me the Head of Philip K Dick*, this is an excellent look at a little-understood corner of digital technology that uses its iconic subject as a way to highlight the challenges that still exist on the road to creating androids of the kind that SF has led us to expect. Data he is not, but the android Philip K Dick is quite a phenomenon in his own right.

Ian Simmons

### Fortean Times Verdict

THE CURIOUS TALE OF DICK'S MISSING BRAINBOX

9



# ALSO RECEIVED

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

### Ancient Treasures

Brian Haughton

New Page Books 2013

Pb, 235pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, \$16.99, ISBN 9781601632494

The late John Michell thought there was something mythic about searches for lost mines, hidden caches and buried treasure and with those obsessed with locating them which was far more than a desire for wealth. He would have appreciated this book, which examines 16 treasure-finds ranging from prehistory to the present. The well-known hoards of ancient Greece, Egypt, Rome, and the Viking and Spanish fleets, are joined by the less-familiar stashes of Sveso (Roman vessels worth \$200 million); the amber-panelled room stripped from one of Tsarina Elizabeth's palaces by the Nazis in 1941; Chinese treasure ships; the Morgantina set of Greek silverware unearthed in Italy in 1979; the mediæval treasures of the monastery of St Severtius in the Harz Mountains, again looted by Nazis; and what is described as "one of the biggest heists in archæological history" during the civil war in Libya in 2011, when the finds recovered from the excavation of Cyrene vanished from a Benghazi vault. The final chapter is arguably the most interesting, being accounts of four controversial items – the Scythian 'Golden Tiara of Saitaphernes'; a 2,600-year-old mummy of a Persian princess found in Pakistan; the gold 'cauldron' found at the bottom of Lake Cheimsee in Bavaria; and, our favourite, a curious "Buddhist" statue recovered from Tibet by the German Expedition of 1938–39, said to have been carved from a fragment of the Chinga meteorite which fell in Russia more than 10,000 years ago and was located only in 1913 [FT295:4] – with expert arguments about whether they are genuine or fake. These stories and more are told at a cracking pace and if ever there was a book to inspire a young archæologist this is it.

### One Simple Idea

Mitch Horowitz

Crown 2013

Pb, 324pp, \$24.00, ISBN 9780307986498

Horowitz – a senior publisher at Tarcher/Penguin and "noted spirituality historian" – presents a history of 'Positive Thinking' and its grip on American life, thought and culture. Critics of the movement behind Positive Thinking tend to dismiss it as a fad, taught in Ponzi scheme-type tutorials, and accuse it of implying that anyone who suffers from bad luck or illness has not applied themselves to strengthening their mind and will to achieve recovery. Horowitz admits that, up to now, the movement had no formal structure, and its assertion that "there are no accidents" has been "difficult to defend", but seeks to remedy it in this book. Horowitz is an engaging advocate, insisting that the 'think positive' mantra works as a valid tool for navigating life's difficulties. He argues that illness, luck, natural disasters etc are subject to "rules of mechanics, chance and physical limitation" and that the key to minimising their effects and maximising their potential benefits is an understanding of those rules. It is up to you what you take from his arguments, as Horowitz clearly believes that strength of mind can influence the world about us, even down to subatomic and quantum levels. We would suggest that Nassim Taleb's books on the 'black swan problem' will better help you understand the role of chance in nearly all walks of life.

### The Future of Human Experience

J Zohara Meyerhoff Hieronimus

Destiny Books 2013

Pb, 302pp, bib, ind, £16.99, ISBN 9781620550878

With her husband, Dr Bob Hieronimus, Zohara has been a force in 'New Age' broadcasting for nearly three decades. Their '21st Century Radio' show was

syndicated to more than 100 local radio stations, providing intelligent and informed interviews with scientists, thinkers, researchers, shamans, psychics, visionaries and ordinary folk with personal experience of anomalous events, on subjects ranging from metaphysics, symbolism and holistics to UFOs and all aspects of paranormal experience and research. Zohara asked their guests for their predictions, and noted that despite their different disciplines and experiences "the similarities in their forecasts were striking". They are consolidated and discussed in this dense but readable book. From the psychosocial impact of new research into neuroscience, nanotechnology and

genetics, robotics and computing, animal and plant intelligence, astronomy and physics, ancient civilisations and the leading edge of research into near-death experiences and alternative modes of spirituality and consciousness, these essays and interviews make for important reading. Among those represented here are Robert Schoch, Raymond Moody, Michael Cremona, Ray Kurzweil, Fred Alan Wolf, Ingo Swann, Larry Dossey, Eugene Mollove, and a great many others. It was delightful to find this is not a typically frivolous New Age-y book but an intelligently analysed, well considered and clearly expressed report on contemporary futurism that deserves to be widely read.

## FORTEAN FICTION

### Red Rock

Kate Kelly

Curious Fox 2014

Pb, 224 pp, £6.99, ISBN 9781782020615



A fast-paced thriller featuring ancient mysteries, sinister monks, a shadowy elite and secrets too dangerous for the world to know... it may sound like yet another clone of *The Da Vinci Code*, but this Young Adult novel offers a new twist on an old theme. It's an example of the newly emerging genre of "cli-fi" – climate change fiction. Set in a future drastically reshaped by global warming, the story begins with the young protagonists discovering the relics of a pre-human, high-tech civilisation under the melted ice of Greenland. There follows a desperate search for a doctoral thesis in the flooded ruins of Cambridge, before the action moves to the more exotic locations of Malta and the Italian mountains.

*Red Rock* contains much that will appeal to budding conspiracy theorists. The governments of the world are controlled by a secretive, authoritarian space agency, which is hiding the truth about what lies on Mars while pursuing its own sinister agenda. There are hints of a powerful new form of energy – a McGuffin pursued with equal vigour by our heroes and the evil space agency, while a mysterious order of Maltese monks will seemingly go to any lengths to prevent either party from succeeding. As with any good thriller, the protagonists are scarcely given a moment to breathe, with the space agency and/or the monks hot on their heels at every turn.

The weakest part of the book is its rather clunky start. It's never easy to get a non-series sci-fi novel going, because the author has to introduce the characters, futuristic setting and plotline before the reader has built up any emotional investment in them. Once the action gets going, however, *Red Rock* is hard to put down, and its subject-matter is sophisticated enough to appeal to old adults (like this reviewer) just as much as the young adults it's targeted at.

Andrew May



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



## The Phantom of the Opera

Dir Rupert Julian, US 1925  
BFI, £22.99 (Blu-ray)

The original 1925 film adaptation of Gaston Leroux's novel *The Phantom of the Opera* was the *Blade Runner* of its day. That's not to suggest the Lon Chaney shocker was a pivotal piece of ground-breaking science fiction. No, the 1925 *Phantom* resembles *Blade Runner* only in the number of variant editions that existed. Due to frequent reworkings, there is no such thing as a 'pure', definitive version.

The first preview screening in January 1925 got a poor reaction and led to a revised ending and scenes of comic relief being added. The official world premiere in San Francisco in April 1925 was then critically panned, so the film was revised again, losing the comedy but keeping the new ending. The 'official' release in September 1925 included on this comprehensive DVD/Blu-ray release maintains its uncannily cinematic effect even after nearly 90 years. Its ineffable layers of mystery have been preserved through time, surviving a troubled production and release. There was a fifth variation, a sound version reworked from the original,

released to cinemas in 1929. New footage, music, and dialogue scenes were all poorly added to 'modernise' the four-year-old movie for the world of talking pictures. "Slow and stupid" was how the *New York Times* greeted this version, and only the fifth reel (about 12 minutes, plus the sound trailer) from this lost variant, featuring the dramatic chandelier fall and consequent audience stampede, is included as an extra here.

This BFI dual format release features the best quality composite Kevin Brownlow restoration (based on the 1929 re-release and with a Carl Davis score, complete with spectacular colour-tinted sequences), while also including the existing longer but lower quality 16mm version from 1925 (with new music by Ed Bussey).

The story of the spurned composer (Lon Chaney) who keeps his hideously scarred face hidden behind a mask and lurks in the catacombs beneath the Paris opera house is well known. His unrequited love for his innocent singing student Christine (Mary Philbin) leads him to take unwise risks and puts his entire existence in jeopardy. For many, the most familiar moment is the Phantom's unmasking, but the movie is worth seeing

in its entirety if only to appreciate the contortions Lon Chaney underwent to play the part. A major extra included is the near 90-minute documentary *Lon Chaney: A Thousand Faces*, the compelling story of Chaney's life and work. *The Phantom of the Opera* is an enduring beauty and the beast tale that continues to be reworked, but in many respects the team behind this first attempt got much of it right, and it has rarely been bettered.

Brian J Robb

### Fortean Times Verdict

CINEMA CLASSIC WELL WORTH A REVISIT ON BLU-RAY **9**

### InRealLife

Dir Beeban Kidron, UK 2013  
Dogwoof, £12.99 (DVD)

It's an event that I'm sure we've all witnessed in some shape or form. And it inspired director Beeban Kidron to make *InRealLife*. A furious friend said she'd seen a girl pulling out her smartphone to check her messages – in the middle of the eulogy reading at a funeral...

Kidron's aim is to explain in this documentary (to herself as well as her viewers) how teenagers interact with the web and with each other. As research, she spoke to

hundreds of kids, parents, authors and academics and she presents in-depth conversations with five of the youngsters as well as the thoughts of some of the experts.

All the subjects you would expect are covered: addiction to online porn, gaming, isolation and, in a particularly moving interview, the lengths one girl has had to go to to keep hold of her Blackberry so that she can message constantly.

Much of this is worrying but, as we're reminded in a snippet from a 1962 piece of film, we've always fretted about how changes in technology are going to tear the fabric of civilisation apart. Has web porn really made certain teenage males act any worse towards girls than they ever did? Is playing online games any different from sitting in your room listening to music? Is bullying, and its consequences, worse for being online? (80 per cent of youngsters surveyed say that they could get away with more online, so that at least may well be true.)

Privacy and the commercially driven act of sharing online is addressed: as Julian Assange in a very short piece says, "Google knows you better than your mother knows you" (even if you don't use Google, apparently). Interspersed throughout the film, we're taken on a journey along the physical presence that is the Internet – the wires buried in sewers and under oceans, flowing into gigantic buildings owned by a handful of extremely powerful companies. The Internet, we're told, isn't really about connections, as the marketing people would have us believe. It's all about data and dollars and it's strayed miles from the technology its inventors imagined it would be (they had no idea what they were unleashing, says one expert who was around at the birth of the Internet).

*InRealLife* is food for thought, but of course there's no real conclusion to be had. The web is still evolving and new generations are having to learn to navigate it for themselves. As activist and entrepreneur Joi Ito says, maybe the only thing we can do is let our kids find their own way, just like they have to do in the real world.

Julie McNamee

### Fortean Times Verdict

KIDS ONLINE: CAUSE FOR CONCERN OR MORAL PANIC? **7**



### La Belle et le Bête

Dir Jean Cocteau, France 1946  
On UK release from 3 Jan 2014

Jean Cocteau's 1946 film *La Belle et le Bête* is one of three classic films being re-released in selected cinemas by the British Film Institute as part of their programme 'Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film'. The other two are Werner Herzog's 1979 *Nosferatu the Vampyre* and Jack Clayton's 1961 *The Innocents*.

Based on a version of the well-known fairytale, this is a beautiful and often surreal rendering. A merchant, lost in a forest, stays overnight in a weird and wondrous castle, where gates and doors open before him and disembodied hands hold out candelabra to light his way and pour his wine. The next morning, he plucks a rose to take back to his daughter Belle – Beauty (Josette Day). The Beast (Jean Marais) appears and says he must die for stealing the rose – unless his place is taken by one of his daughters.

In a familiar fairytale trope, the two older sisters are over-dressed, vain and spiteful, while Beauty is made to clean and serve. Her present life offers little, while the Beast promises excitement and danger; without telling her father, she mounts the magical horse and rides off to his castle. The Beast instantly falls in love with her and, more slowly, she with him, and the story works through to its fairytale conclusion.

The Beast's castle is a gothic wonder, with more than a touch of Gustav Doré. As well as the disembodied hands, which care for Beauty, dressing her and doing her hair, there are carved heads which turn and watch, and talking mirrors. Beauty takes it all in her stride. But so does the viewer: when she puts on a glove and it transports her almost instantaneously back to her father's house; when she weeps diamonds; when her string of pearls turns to mouldy old rope when one of her sisters picks it up; we accept all of this as completely believable. Cocteau's genius is in transforming the fairytale from storybook to celluloid and making the magical credible.

There is a remarkable contrast between Beauty's two worlds. Her father's home (styled after Vermeer paintings), with her sisters

## THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

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### NOSFERATU

Dir FW Murnau, Germany 1922  
Eureka Entertainment, £12.99 (DVD),  
£14.99 (Blu-ray)

*Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* takes Dracula to the max, or more specifically to Max Shrek the German character actor who offers a look and feel for the Count that is as much at odds with the suave Lee and Lugosi versions as it is with Stoker's silver haired aristocrat. Here he's King Rat: bald head, rodent teeth, claws and eyebrows that seriously need a trim. He's the pestilence personified, who during gripping scenes in Bremen, north Germany, summons his smaller brethren to engulf the town with the plague. Here, vampires are an infection.

Not only does Graf (German for Count) Orlok look different from Stoker's creation, there are also name changes and plot tinkering to differentiate Murnau's film from the original book. Such efforts were clearly not enough for Stoker's widow, who took the film-makers to court and won for copyright infringement. The tragic result? Almost all copies of *Nosferatu* were destroyed. Once she had died and old copies started to crop up, Murnau's masterpiece

was re-embraced as not just a horror gem, but a bona fide classic of modern cinema, though not all seemed to think so. In 1928, the French writer André Gide labelled it "heavy-handed, absurd and unimaginative." There's just no pleasing some people.

The film is steeped in metaphor, and contains some stunningly composed imagery. Stoker's Count may not have cast a shadow, but here Graf Orlok throws a silhouette against a wall that became the poster boy for German Expressionism. It adds a little to general vampire lore too, introducing the notion of sunlight being intolerable for a vampire, rather than just unpleasant. Admittedly, it's possible to overstate the film's influence on the popular view of vampires, since it only gained a wide release in the 1960s, by which time Universal and Hammer had firmly put their stamp (or teeth marks) into the public image of the Count. Still, at almost 100 years old, it's a slice of pure and almost hypnotic Gothic horror. And in our present world of teenage vampire romance, it's refreshing to see a vampire who actually looks undead.

Eureka's new Blu-ray release looks very fine in its HD restora-



tion and boasts commentaries, a Murnau documentary and more.

I have an abiding memory about *Nosferatu*. When I was 12 years old, my English teacher spoke to the class about an 'obscure' silent vampire movie that we should try to appreciate in the distracting world of *Knight Rider* and the Spectrum 48k. I put my hand up and said, "I've seen that, Miss." Doubt forced her eyes into a roll. "Is that right? Then who played Graf Orlok?" To which I replied, "Max Shreck, miss. He looks a bit like Reggie Nalder in *Salem's Lot*."

Someone sniggered, and she quickly changed the subject. In horror-nerd land, I think you have to call that an epic win.

### Fortean Times Verdict

THE EXPRESSIONIST HORROR CLASSIC WE NEARLY LOST

9





constantly sniping and her brother and his friend always gambling and arguing and fighting, is full of noise and bustle and aggravation. The Beast's castle is peaceful, restful; the Beast himself is gentle, solicitous about her happiness. There are long scenes of the two of them with no dialogue, the action driven by Georges Auric's spectacular score.

This new restoration is clean and crisp and wonderfully atmospheric, and makes use of Cocteau's own diary, detailing his experimenting with different film stock and the problems he had filming, to clarify how he wanted the film to look and sound. He'd have been delighted with it.

David V Barrett

### Fortean Times Verdict

A FAMILIAR FAIRY TALE BECOMES A GOTHIC CLASSIC

9

## City of Women

Dir Federico Fellini, Italy 1980

Eureka, £20.42 (Blu-ray), £18.37 (DVD)

Not particularly well regarded upon original release, Federico Fellini's dream-like *City of Women* perhaps plays better today as a dislocated fantasy than it did at the dawn of the 1980s. Fellini's favourite actor Marcello Mastroianni (*La Dolce Vita*, 8½) stars as an older man lost in a world of women (of every type and persuasion), each of whom seems to represent a particular take on femininity and feminism. Seemingly intended as a riff on both the director and star's past work, this is a depiction of a once virile man entering old age yet still full of desire. As always with Fellini, there is something of the circus about it, and the film seems to be almost a 'greatest hits' compilation of much of the weirdness seen in previous Fellini outings. Packed with dream-like and phantasmagorical images, Fellini's psychosexual concerns are often front and centre. *City of Women* is about as far from the director's cinematic beginnings in neo-realism as you can get. It's a fecund fairytale, one that revels in the battle of the sexes – a conflict no side can ever win.

Brian J Robb

### Fortean Times Verdict

LAVISH, LASCIVIOUS AND FULL OF UNFORGETTABLE IMAGERY

7

## Robin Redbreast

Dir James MacTaggart, UK 1970

BFI, £12.99 (DVD)

Norah (Anna Cropper) is a television script editor who has just broken up with her partner. Getting little support from her cynical London friends, she decides to spend the summer at the country cottage she has bought as a second home, thinking that this will prove a gentle distraction from her woes. What with mice scurrying about in the walls and birds coming down the chimney, this inveterate townie soon finds that rural life brings worries of its own – and that's before she meets the locals, a collection of inbred eccentrics who seem increasingly odd, and even vaguely threatening. Mrs Vigo (Freda Bamford) dispenses folk wisdom and knows everything that goes on in the village, while Mr Fisher (a blandly sinister Bernard Hepton) looks for potsherds in Norah's garden, seeks to preserve local customs and reads Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, shoring the fragments of ancient ritual against the ruins of modern British life. Norah, a sexually liberated product of the Sixties, has a one-night stand with local gamekeeper Rob – an awkward autodidact who is obsessed with the SS and practises karate in the woods wearing only his underpants – and falls pregnant due to the sudden disappearance of her contraceptives. As she decides to bring the baby to term, there appears to be a conspiracy to prevent her leaving the village before Easter.

A politer version of the folk horror of films like *Blood on Satan's Claw*, *The Wicker Man* or *Straw Dogs*, John Bowen's script is very much a product of its time, although a curious offering for the *Play for Today* strand (it was broadcast on 10 December 1970). Its confrontations between urban interlopers and loony countryfolk aren't anywhere near as brutal as those staged by Hardy or Peckinpah, but this being the BBC they play out with an edge of brittle middle class uneasiness that gives the whole thing a unique feel. It's well worth seeking out.

David Sutton

### Fortean Times Verdict

FASCINATING FOLK HORROR TV RARITY UNEARTHED

7

## A MARTIAN MUSICAL

### JEFF WAYNE'S THE WAR OF THE WORLDS: THE NEW GENERATION

Universal Pictures, £19.99 (DVD), £24.99 (Blu-ray)



If you are of a certain age and proggy sensibility, you'll have fond memories of *Jeff Wayne's The War of the Worlds* in its gatefold sleeve LP incarnation when, in the late 1970s, its symphonic Martians invaded the airwaves. Justin Hayward singing 'Forever Autumn' on *Top of the Pops*; Rock Follies gal Julie Covington giving her all as Beth; David Essex as an unhinged Artillery-

man intent on building a brave new world; the late great Phil Lynott, of Thin Lizzy fame, as a barking mad Parson Nathaniel wanting to get all touchy feely with our Martian neighbours; and the rich, resonant tones of Richard Burton as the narrator-protagonist figure of the Journalist. There was an undeniable element of bombast running through the whole enterprise, but it was great: a musical retelling of HG Wells's classic SF novel combining symphony orchestra and synthesisers that was outlandish in 1978, but not as outrageous as the other alien invasion that was punk rock.

This recently updated, on-stage musical version was filmed at the O2 in London last year in front of a live audience. The latest incarnation replaces the innovative holography of Richard Burton (originally used in the show's 2006 incarnation) with a new narration delivered by (an equally holographic) Liam Neeson. While Neeson's burnished Irish tones don't quite compete with one of the great voices in the history of stage and celluloid, he does have the necessary gravitas to provide a fulcrum for the dizzying swirl of orchestra, keyboards and rock band that would do for half a dozen Yeses, a Genesis or two and an ELP thrown in for good measure (with plenty of instruments to spare); and all conducted from the podium by Jeff Wayne himself. This on-stage array of musical weaponry is dwarfed by the huge screen behind the musicians, on which scenes from the narrative are portrayed with some impressive production values, CGI and the giant Martian tripod towering over them all. A wonderful touch is the inclusion of representations of Michael Trim's original album illustrations on screen, a seminal influence on so much of the Steampunk imagery that surrounds us today.

As an audio experience, *War of the Worlds* on LP simply enveloped you – it was great through headphones – and the same is true of this live stage version. Even allowing for probable antecedents in Rick Wakeman's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and *The Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (which Wakeman turned into a preposterous live stageshow on ice, *Jeff Wayne's War of the Worlds* has always been a on-off – a musical experience which inhabits its own space and never seems to pall, no matter how many times you return to it.

In this performance, Marti Pellow's narrator isn't bad, if not particularly memorable, but Jet Black's lead singer Will Stapleton as the Voice of Humanity is outstanding, as is Kaiser Chiefs' Ricky Wilson as the Artilleryman, Kerry Ellis as Beth and (yes) Jason Donovan as Parson Nathaniel; the latter two, in fact, provide one of the high points of the whole drama.

I never got to see this live (there's another chance when the musical goes on tour again for a last time in 2014), and while I don't have the New Generation CD version (maybe it's time to check it out) this is an excellent record of what was undoubtedly a splendid spectacle; if you enjoyed the original, then this version, with its new live licks, will happily take you out of this world for a couple of hours.

Nick Cirkovic 7/10



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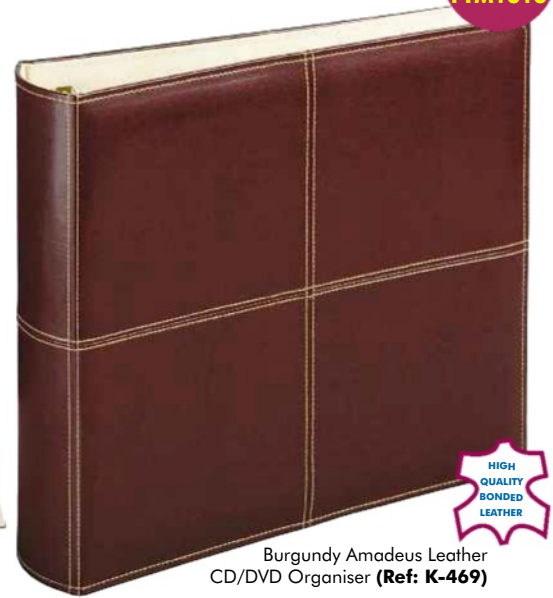
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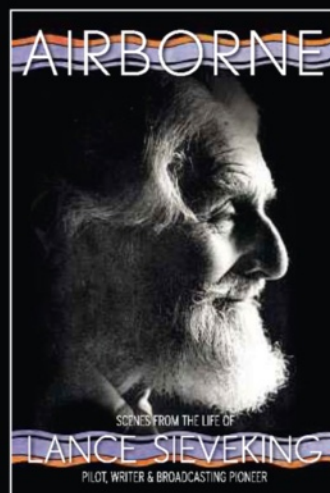
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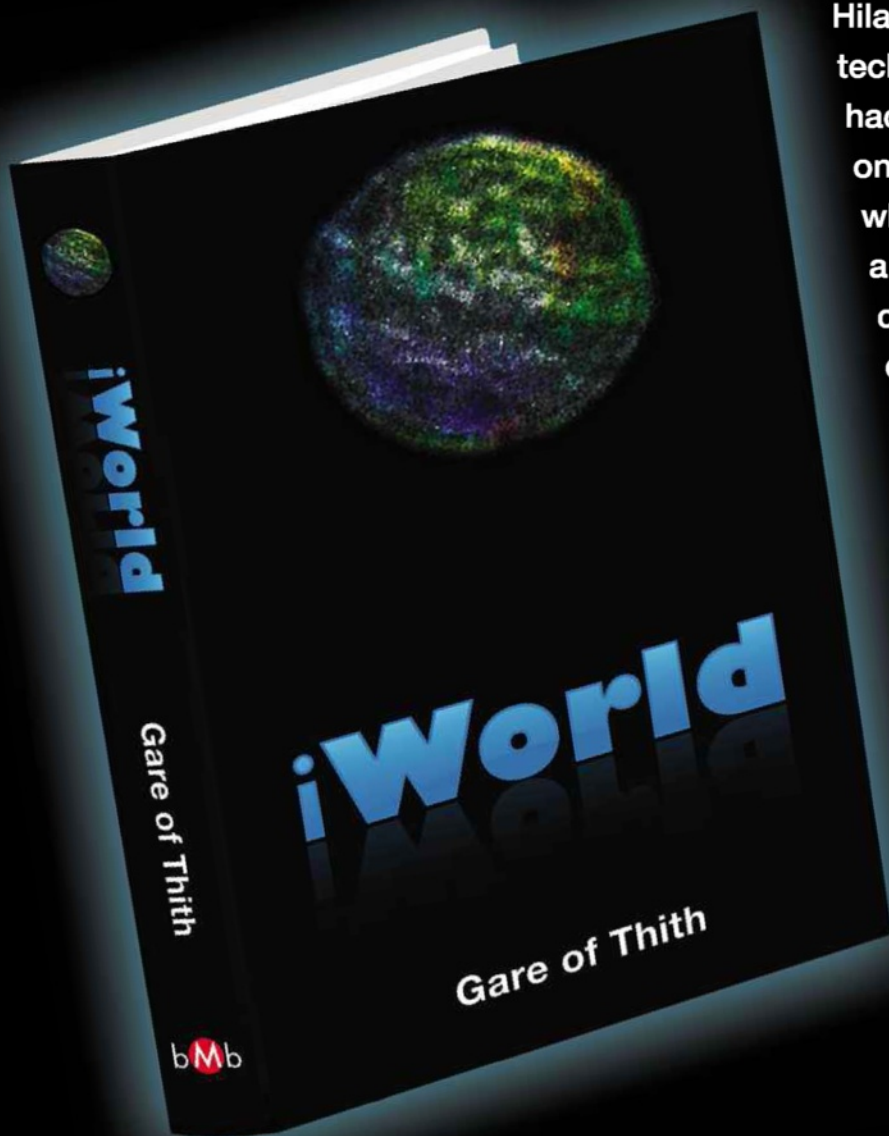
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Dear FT...

# letters



## Criticising Keel

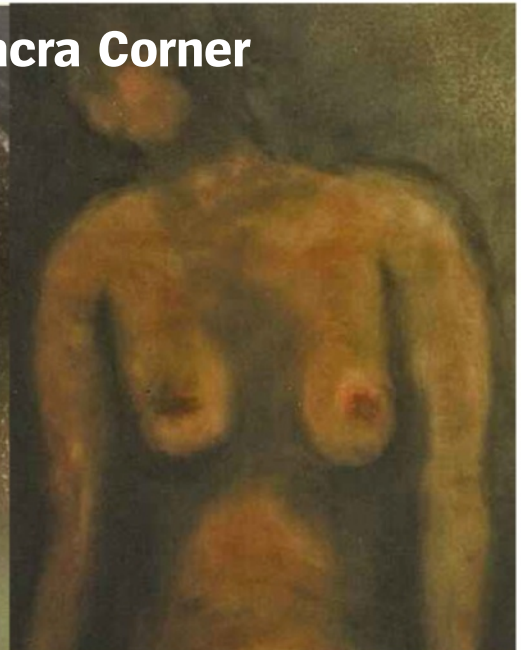
In his remarkably uninformed letter [FT308:67], Joseph Barnes complains that I did not criticise John Keel while he was still alive so that he could respond to my charges. Evidently, he has never read or heard of my blistering "Keel vs. Ufology" [FT156:39-42], published in 2002. Keel died seven years later without ever attempting a rejoinder. Since the facts I laid out were irrefutable, that's no wonder. I also wrote disparagingly of Keel in my *UFO Encyclopedia* volumes in the 1990s. There, citing specifics, I summed him up as "credulous, paranoid, and crankish... a failed prophet... with a following of true believers who... hung on his every word" (2nd ed., 1998, p.551). He didn't respond to that either.

Barnes also would have the unsuspecting believe that I have never disavowed my early, Keel-influenced writings. Also false, as everyone who has followed my work will know. Starting more than three decades ago and to the expressed disappointment of some readers, I publicly and repeatedly disavowed the outlandish notions proposed in my first two books. Writing in 1989 in CUFOS's *International UFO Reporter*, I further characterised those writings as "naive" and "phenomenally silly". When Anomalist Books reprinted those volumes (written with Loren Coleman) under one cover in 2006, we provided a new introduction in which we excused the theories proposed therein as the product of young forteans' excitable excess, stating: "Soon after those books were published, our ideas and perspectives began moving on to what we believe are more intellectually sustainable interpretations". The introduction also takes note of our youthful embrace of a "preposterous hoax" and our credulous acceptance of stories based in "fantasy-ridden imagination".

I can't help noting that Barnes ignores the substance of my most recent criticisms of Keel (FT305:56-57) and instead elects to attack the messenger. I recognise the rhetorical strategy all too well. It's pure Keel. Barnes has indeed learned from the master.

**Jerome Clark**  
 Canby, Minnesota

## Simulacra Corner



This image of a woman found in a used coffee filter (top, left) was sent to Jeffrey Vallance by Sharyl Gates of Albany, California.

When he sent it, Jeffrey commented: "After much deliberation, thinking that the woman might look like a Orthodox icon of the Virgin Mary or an old Japanese print by Hosoda Eishi, I decided it looked more like a painting by the Greek artist Peter Kosmidis (top, right)."

• Lisa Gledhill wrote to FT in December 2012: "During a recent Christmas lunch at the National Trust Headquarters canteen, my colleagues and I were amazed to discover a likeness of Trust founder Octavia Hill in a bowl of cranberry sauce (bottom). Some of us chose to take this as a sign that Octavia is still watching over us in this, the centenary year of her death. It is already being referred to as 'The Miracle of

Heelis' (the name of our HQ building here in Swindon). However some heretics say it looks more like Emily Bronte."

*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) with your postal address)*



Social Reformer and Co-Founder of the Nation



## Cockfosters witch

With reference to the letter about the Cockfosters Witch (FT's *It Happened To Me!* v.6, p101): research for my book *Ghost Tours of Hertfordshire and Essex* led me to a story of a witch that haunts Camlet Moat, an old fortification in the grounds of Trent Country Park. This is adjacent to Cockfosters where the boys saw the witch. The moat can be seen on the south side of Hadley Road. I think the graveyard to which they were referring is the one that almost leads into Trent Park. The ghost of an old witch creeps around the moat, hobbling painfully and using a walking stick. The figure, wearing black, is said to be a crone who lived in nearby Enfield Chase and was well known to be a witch. She was executed in 1622. It seems a strange coincidence that someone encountered a witch that links with the local folklore and other sightings in the area.

Incidentally, the ubiquitous ghost of Dick Turpin haunts this area [see FT309:14-15]. He is seen riding furiously across the surrounding common land and roads, and is also observed skulking between the trees in Trent Park, wearing a tricorn hat, riding coat and boots.

**Jenni Kemp**  
By email

## Forty

I applaud the Forty-tude of Ted Harrison's numerical researches ["Life begins at 40..." FT308:53]. It makes a change from our old friend 23. I can't, though, resist adding one more. Not Classical,

this time, but in its way a Classic. Namely, the pop ditty '40 Cups of Coffee', originally by Ella Mae Morse (1953), later (1957) performed on the Ed Sullivan Show by Bill Haley & the Comets – you can see their version on YouTube.

**Barry Baldwin**  
Calgary, Alberta

## Stuffing Outrage

Regarding the article "The curious world of Walter Potter" [FT307:36-41]: personally the article sickened me. I found the photo "The Kittens' Tea & Croquet Party" both sickening and disgusting. I am not having a go at Dr Pat Morris who has written a scholarly article, but I think the photos should have been edited.

**Miss Carol Susan Moonbeam Lynch, BA (Hons)**  
Bransholme, East Yorkshire

## Kitchen Fright

My daughter Dawn, her partner and their son, two-year-old Liam, are staying with us temporarily while they search for a house. Liam is a joy, a most happy-go-lucky child who almost never cries or gets upset.

One Thursday morning [6 June 2013], Dawn woke him up at 6.15am to get him ready to travel to his other grandparents, who help look after him during the week. Going to use the small downstairs lavatory, she deposited Liam outside and left the door open so she could keep an eye on him. Suddenly, Liam looked up and into the kitchen and gave a huge grin. Everyone knows this means he has seen someone he recognises. Thinking I or my wife

or his father had come downstairs unexpectedly, Dawn was about to close the toilet door when Liam began screaming and forced his way into the lavatory in a fit of absolute terror. He had never done anything remotely like this before and, venturing forth (having to use some force to get Liam out), Dawn found no one in the kitchen. The

rest of the household remained asleep. Liam was still shaking and crying and, when asked what caused it, simply repeated, 'Man! Man!'

Make of this story what you will. Dawn took this opportunity to tell me that she had always thought our house to be haunted and related various phenomena from when she was growing up, such as the TV turning itself on and off. I think that a child's imagination is strong and little Liam's mind was playing tricks with him, but I'm always open to the suggestion of a spirit presence – it's just that in nearly 30 years of living here, I haven't come across it myself.

**Michael Slatter**  
By email

## An In-Joke

Peter Capaldi's credit as "W.H.O. Doctor" in *World War Z* [FT308:68] was not synchronicity or precognition. Although his casting in *Doctor Who* had not yet been publicly announced when the film was completed, the filmmakers were aware of it and credited him that way as an in-joke.

**Philip Eagle**  
Woodford Green, Essex

## Thumbs up

I enjoyed your conspiracy issue (FT307). Tom Heywood's article on the JFK assassination literature I found particularly useful. There is such a huge literature that I couldn't possibly get through it in my lifetime – so to be able to narrow it down to a few of the best books was just what I wanted. I decided to start with the books by academic historians, and see what that leads to.

**David Cooper**  
Lincoln

## Eerie Bomber

The extract from Alan Clark's diary [FT306:68] took me back to evenings in the early 1980s. When walking my dog in the Craven area of Yorkshire at around 6:30pm, I would hear and often see a 'Lancaster' bomber passing overhead; but it was not what

it seemed. The plane was actually a close look-alike, the Avro Shackleton, which carried an airborne anti-submarine and early warning system for the RAF. It was so regular that its sound became an evening time check until it was scrapped in 1990. The plane looked similar to its cousin, the Avro Lancaster; it was driven by four large sets of propellers, giving it the characteristic sound of a World War II bomber. With the sighting made at the height of the Cold War submarine tracking era and close to the southern approaches, I suspect that this is what Alan Clark saw. Through the 1950s and 1960s, I lived close to a Transport Command airfield and worked where there was a flying Lancaster. Even in the 1980s, the Shackleton experience was nostalgic.

**John Tucker**  
Ulverston, Cumberland

## "Friends in Space"

I am writing in response to Nils Erik Grande's letter about an old bit of sf [FT308:69]. If we are remembering the same thing, it was an ITV Playhouse production called "Friends in Space", broadcast in the UK on 5 March 1980, starring Robert Stephens and Eleanor Bron. Apparently it was a comedy though I don't remember it as such myself – mind you, I was only 11 so maybe I just didn't get the joke. I mostly remember the alien, which was a glass sort of thing ["resembling a translucent half-jellyfish, half-lampshade, half-man thing, which they rather brilliantly name 'The Nigel'".] <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0192043/> <http://www.tvcream.co.uk/?p=2406>

**Carl Roehad**  
Kidderminster, Worcestershire

## Church Fire Portent

During my school's summer holidays in 1992, I was staying with my grandmother in Oakham, West Midlands. One evening as I was telling her about my day, walking over local fields with friends and seeing a far-off lightning storm, she interrupted and asked if I could open the windows and take out the TV aerial. Surprised, I enquired why. As the storm approached, she relayed the following story her mother had told her as a youngster, about an incident on 18 June 1913.

"It was a warm and humid





midsummer's evening," she said. "My mother was in the kitchen, ironing, and as there was a storm brewing all the windows were open. She was facing the kitchen window looking out into the garden when she became aware of what she described as a white dove 'floating' through the open window and making an unusual 'hissing' sound as it passed her and 'floated' towards the range and chimney stack before 'melting' behind a picture of the local church. Within a few hours of this happening the church was ablaze!"

Looking up contemporary press coverage, I found that the church fire was described as 'mysterious' and also arson, with two theories surfacing: that the arson was linked to 'rioting suffragettes' or 'striking steel workers' – although no one seems to have actually established the true cause of the fire.

There are a few interesting points to this tale. My grandmother was one of nine children. Two of her younger sisters had died during very early infancy and were buried together in the local churchyard (St Giles, Rowley Regis, Worcestershire). However, it was discovered around this time that their grave had been disturbed and a path built over them before a headstone could be erected. This had caused great distress to my great grandmother and she always believed that the 'dove' was a sign or warning from her two children about the impending fire. This could also explain why she had a picture of the church on the wall above the fireplace.

Could the 'mysterious' fire have been caused by lightning? The description of the 'dove' 'floating' and 'hissing' certainly suggests ball lightning. The current church tower has a lightning conductor but from pre-1913 photos it appears the old tower did not. My grandmother lived in Oakham on the Oakham Road, which back then came under Rowley Regis. The geology of the area is one of an igneous basalt/granite composition, which along with its elevated position might attract more than its fair share of electrical/atmospheric energies. This might account for the number

of stories my grandmother told me of exploding haystacks. Or was the floating dove a supernatural warning about impending disaster? I like to think it was a mixture of both.

**Andy Arnold**  
Wordsley, West Midlands

## Shag A Dog Story

Further to the recent correspondence about the similarities between Evelyn Waugh's mental breakdown and that depicted by Arthur Mills in his book *Crook Frightfulness* [FT305:32-39, 307:70], it may be reflected that in undergoing his 'little episode', Waugh was in fact merely getting a taste of his own medicine. After all, Waugh was actually responsible for a primitive form of so-called 'gang-stalking' against a 'targeted individual' himself, his victim being the young Waugh's History tutor at Oxford, CRMF Crutwell. Crutwell, the blameless author of such no-doubt fascinating titles as *A History of Peaceful Changes in the Modern World* and *The Medieval Administration of the Channel Islands 1199-1399*, rubbed Waugh up the wrong way by criticising him for focusing rather more upon the social distractions of undergraduate life than upon his academic studies. A mutual dislike was born, one that Waugh was to nurture obsessively throughout the rest of his adult life.

Initially, he pursued his feud in print, by penning unflattering stories about a sexually deviant Oxford don who was clearly based upon Crutwell, and placing them in student magazines for him to read. Then, together with an accomplice, he began spreading



## Cartoon Colin

I've been thinking about the writer Colin Wilson lately, on account of him dying the other week [see p24], which led me to draw this picture of him. So I thought I'd send it to you on the off-chance that you're looking for a cartoon of the young Colin Wilson, and that Hunt Emerson has suffered some kind of injury to his drawing hand. An outside chance, I'll grant you.

[He had; but he's better now – Ed.]

Coverage of Wilson's death seemed a bit muted in the press, which I suppose is what happens when you die at the same time as Mandela. Wilson's writing could be eccentric to say the least, but I know I'm not the only person whose teenage ennui was eased by reading *The Mind Parasites*.

**Davey Jones (Viz cartoonist)**  
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

rumours that the life-long bachelor Crutwell enjoyed raping dogs upon a recreational basis, and started up a less-than-noble tradition of students repeatedly barking out loud beneath the poor man's window at night. He even went so far as to buy a stuffed dog and place it in the quadrangle after dark, to further humiliate his enemy. According to a BBC4 documentary broadcast a few years ago (*Fathers and Sons: The Waughs*), the very pinnacle of Waugh's campaign came when he allegedly managed to persuade a local member of the Canine Defence League to stand for Parliament on the single-issue platform of preventing Crutwell from sexually abusing stray animals in his rooms – something which, admittedly, sounds sadly apocryphal.

Even when Waugh later found fame, he continued the persecution, inserting a variety of unsavoury characters with the

name 'Crutwell' into his numerous novels, many of whom he depicted as being either criminals or outright madmen. As may have been expected, Crutwell awaited the publication of each of Waugh's new books with great dread but, to his eternal credit, never sued or made any whinging public complaints to Waugh's publishers about his hurt feelings (take note, Ed Milliband; at least the *Daily Mail* didn't accuse your father of engaging in illegal inter-species relations as well as in international Marxism). Given all this, maybe Waugh's later breakdown could be said to have been in some sense unconsciously modelled upon all this unwarranted but amusing nastiness; after all, if he could lead a campaign of relentless public persecution and unwarranted innuendo against someone, then why shouldn't someone else then be able to do the same thing to him?

**SD Tucker**  
Widnes, Cheshire

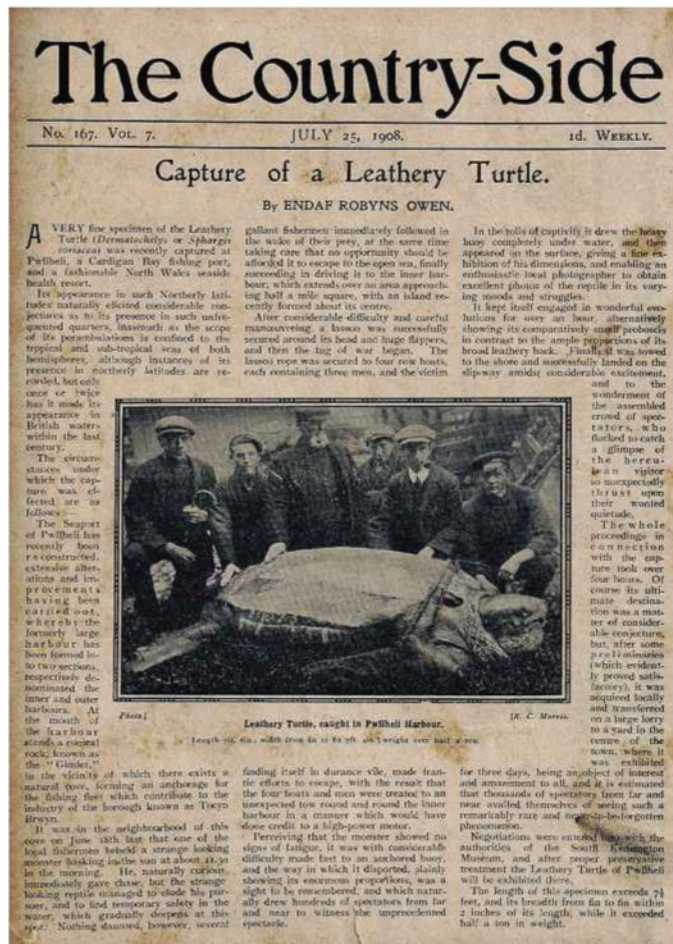


## Tunguska & Hummadruz

FT readers who are unfamiliar with Edwardian nature publication *The Country-Side* may be interested to hear about the wealth of fortean material lurking therein. This British periodical was started by naturalist E Kay Robinson in the early 1900s and contains many fascinating accounts of curiously shaped vegetables and plants, simulacra, animal intelligence and cannibalism, strange deaths ('farmer killed by weasel') insect and animal folklore, bird mimicry, weather weirdness, out-of-place animals, albino birds and oversized and oddly-shaped hen's eggs as well as other general oddities and themes familiar to modern day forteans.

For example, the 22 August 1908 edition contains a first-hand account of the striking visual effects witnessed throughout Europe in the aftermath of the Tunguska impact: "With regards to the glows in the sky seen recently, which many people believe to be the aurora borealis, I was in Amsterdam at the time, and think you may like to read the following taken from my diary, and written at the time: 'On June 30th a strange glow was visible in the sky until nearly midnight. It did not appear until about nine o'clock, and all sunset reflections had faded sometime before. At the time of the appearance the atmosphere was clear, the weather very sultry and the wind north-east. The phenomenon appeared as a deep orange glow in the north; it resembled a very intense sunset, or the reflection of a great fire, only it was steady and fixed and there was no play of colours. It made the town almost as light as day, the colours of the boats in the harbour showing clearly some distance away'". The writer of the letter was 16-year-old Agnes M Miall who would later establish herself as an author of stories and books such as *The Bachelor Girl's Guide to Everything* (1916).

A letter from Lady MS Jenkyns of Botley, Hampshire, was printed in the 26 June 1909 issue, detailing her experience of hearing a loud, mysterious 'humming on the air' while walking across a flat, open field on 31 May that year: "My companion said it must be a swarm of bees, but when we got near a tree the sound was not so loud. Then



**A Vegetable Hand.**—There have appeared from time to time in the columns of THE COUNTRY-SIDE photographs of vegetable freaks bearing likenesses to various animals, etc., but now, we believe, have been such fully absurd



caricatures as is the very hand-like carrot which we now publish. As can be seen on the attached label, the carrot was grown by Mr. T. Underwood, of Sandy, Bedford.

LEFT: the cover for 25 July 1908 containing the story of a half-ton leathery turtle caught in Pwllheli harbour and an image of a hand-shaped carrot from the 10 October 1908 issue.

we walked up to the top of the field, and the humming ceased, but we could hear it faintly behind us. As we returned we came into it again quite as loud. It was Bank Holiday and there was no machinery or any sound of that sort. The flowers in the field are just buttercups, etc and are the same or rather better at the top. We looked about for flies, but couldn't see half a dozen. We agreed it was like the noise of bees in a lime tree, only there wasn't a lime tree and we couldn't see any bees. I have never heard this in any parts of the grounds, though I am often wandering about alone listening to everything." Shortly after, in the

edition of 28 August 1909, a WM Bunce of Ascot, Berkshire, wrote in with a similar experience: "Several times while crossing Ascot Heath last week during the hot weather, I heard a loud humming high up in the air, but although I repeatedly looked up quickly, I could see nothing to account for the sound. I also noticed it a week or two ago. I have only noticed it on hot days."

Another Berkshire correspondent's letter in the 2 October 1909 edition concerned the apparent ability of insects to foretell stormy weather: "A fairly large species of *Brachelytra* (rove beetles) had not been noticed by me before in the garden. About 12 o'clock I caught one specimen, but at one o'clock at least 100 swarmed over my head, about one to five yards up. They seemed doubtful sometimes which way to go. Several other Coleoptera rose and took flight also. The storm broke at 2.15."

Finally, another curious insect-related experience was related by William Kingdom of Bristol in a letter appearing in the 30 October 1909 issue under the heading: 'Luminous Creatures': "Last night I noticed what I thought were two glow-worms, but, lighting a match, I found one was a centipede and the other a spider." The editor's reply states that whilst it is fairly common to find luminous centipedes, he has never heard of an instance of spider luminosity before, but suggests the spider may have been smeared with fluid from the centipede.

**Alistair Moffatt**  
Halifax, West Yorkshire

## Another aptonym

Knowing that it is a fortean trait to enjoy those strange cases of people who seem inexorably drawn to their profession by virtue of their name – for which *New Scientist* journalist John Hoyland coined the term "nominative determinism" – I wonder if readers might share my amusement in the fact that the man appointed to run the department that decides which 'foreigners' are allowed in to the country, the Chief Executive of the UK Border Agency, enjoys the appellation of 'Rob Whiteman'.

**Kris Hall**  
London



# it happened to me...

Have you had strange experiences that you cannot explain? We are always interested in reading of odd events and occurrences. CONTACT US BY POST: **FORTEAN TIMES, BOX 2409, LONDON, NW5 4NP** OR E-MAIL TO [sieveling@forteanimes.com](mailto:sieveling@forteanimes.com) Or post your message on the [www.forteanimes.com](http://www.forteanimes.com) message board.

## Make Mine A Double

Following your feature on psychic photography [FT256:51-55] I feel I should share something that has been occurring for over a decade. I have taken many photographs of unexplained phenomena, including several of myself beside a doppelgänger (usually more than one). In one of these shown here, I stand on the left while what seems to be an older version of myself appears to the right. In the other, a doll-like apparition resembling myself appears. I haven't used double exposure, Photoshop or similar forms of trickery, nor would I have reason to, as I have not shown these pictures to anyone outside my family. These images have both puzzled and disturbed me and, until an adequate explanation is presented, I am left to believe I am being haunted by myself!

**Tovah Greene**  
*Seattle, Washington State*

## Bookstall Double

When I lived in Cambridge I was perusing the market in the town centre one morning when I came across a copy of *I Robot* by Isaac Asimov on a bookstall. I handed the seller my money. For a moment he looked at me and appeared a little confused. Then he said, "You've just paid for that, haven't you?" When I denied this he told me that just a moment earlier someone who looked exactly like me (including my goatee beard and woolly hat) had been to the stall and purchased a copy of the exact same book. Was it just someone who looked like me or something stranger? I don't know but I do like to think that for a moment I entered the Twilight Zone.

**Matthew Thorley**  
*By email*

## Bus Double

Once, I was queuing to get onboard a London bus. I looked at my reflection in the bus window, but something seemed wrong. Firstly, my reflection didn't have on what I knew I was wearing. Secondly, though I was puzzled by this, my reflection showed a different expression – of open-mouthed astonishment. I only realised what was happening, that I was



looking through the window, when the conductor said the bus was full. It pulled away, taking my 'reflection' with it. I sometimes wonder where my doppelgänger ended up and what would have happened if I'd got a seat on that bus and then realised what I had seen.

**Derek Wood**  
*By email*

## Where's your buddy?

I had second thoughts as I pulled into the parking lot of the shopping centre. The neighbourhood wasn't safe even in the daytime – but I had to buy that light bulb! I was expecting company in the morning and I needed a light bulb for the nightstand lamp in my guest bedroom. As I stepped from my car into the deserted parking lot I wondered if the drugstore was still open at this time of night. The lights were on, so I walked toward the store entrance, ignoring the two men standing by the door.

Moments later, as I was reaching for that light bulb from the store's shelf, all hell broke loose. I heard a scream and the sound of feet running down the next aisle. When I walked to the front of the store, two men – the store manager and a customer – were struggling to keep a man pinned to the ground. The two men I had walked past going inside the drugstore had pulled a gun on the cashier in an attempted robbery. The gunman had fled, but his accomplice was now being held on the floor as they awaited the police. I looked down at the alleged robber as he was held fast by the two men. Looking at me, he said sarcastically: "Where's your buddy?"

I was alone when I brushed past them going into the store. As I was driving home I shuddered to think how easily those two men could have accosted me outside that store. And what did the gunman's accomplice mean when he said, "Where's your buddy?" Did that man see someone with me as I entered the drugstore

late that night? Could he have seen my Guardian Angel? To this day I wonder what those two men saw as I walked past them. Whoever – or whatever – they saw kept me safe from harm in a dangerous situation.

**Greg May**  
*Orlando, Florida*

## Double-Take

On 1 November 2013 I took my dog Alfie out on our usual morning walk in the park and ended up alongside a shallow stream that joins the local river Wandle. It was one of those sunny but cold autumnal mornings, and while Alfie happily sniffed the leaves, I looked down at the water and saw two ducks (one male, one female) swimming along. When they reached a clump of weeds only a few metres across from me, I momentarily looked away. It couldn't have been more than two or three seconds, but when I looked back again the ducks were back where they had started! It was as if time had reset. There was no way they could have swum back; there simply wasn't time. If they had flown back I would have seen and heard them. There were no other ducks about either in the river or on the banks. It was just plain weird – as if in seconds an invisible force had gently put them back. In fact the two ducks in question looked as confused as I did and flew off quacking in alarm. I walked on, but for the life of me couldn't work out what had just happened. I'm a sensible librarian and was quite sober at the time.

**Amanda Townsend**  
*Wallington, Surrey*

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







# FORTEAN TRAVELLER

## 91. Bali's big bird of paradise

**BOB RICKARD** visits the Garuda Wisnu Kencana park in Bali and mourns the world's greatest bird-man statue that never got off the ground.

In 2012, the 10th anniversary of the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002 was commemorated at the island's Garuda Wisnu Kencana cultural park. The memorial service was hosted by the Australian government and attended by around 1,000 people and the world's news media. When it was first planned in 1966, the location was intended to be an ambitious showcase for the richly artistic Balinese culture, but now, as someone said to one of the island's noted bloggers, Anton Muhajir, "It's like visiting a cemetery."

If you ever have the good fortune to visit Bali, and have the time, make sure your tour guide takes you to see the Garuda Wisnu Kencana – known locally as the GWK – a privately owned arts centre on the southern tip of Bali, site of what could have been the world's grandest religious statue... had it ever been completed. Depicting the Hindu

god Vishnu mounted on his celestial companion Garuda, it would have stood at a towering 479ft (146m) high with a wingspan of nearly 210ft (64m) across, gaining it a place among the greatest religious statues in the world. It would have been visible for 12 miles (20km) around.

The location of the GWK could not have had more potential. It sits atop a sentinel hill on a plateau by the village of Ungasan, south of Denpasar, at almost the perfect centre of the southern Jimbaran peninsula. The 618-acre (250ha) site had been a limestone quarry and much more excavation was needed to place the statue and infrastructure. A rectilinear grid of canyons was gouged out of the white limestone and many of the columns at its centre were removed to form a wide-open space. The amphitheatre is approached through a shadowed

**BELOW:** The great head of Garuda, languishing in the GWK.

**OPPOSITE:** The 75ft-tall torso of Vishnu, enjoying magnificent views of the surrounding countryside.

canyon-path, dank in that high Bali humidity. Nearly every visitor emerging, blinking, into the piercing sunlight has to stop for a moment to take in an amazing sight. There ahead of you is the biggest eagle-like head you've ever seen, looming over the tiny tourists who pose within snapping distance of its cruel beak. This is the head of Garuda – the divine bird-steed and companion of Lord Vishnu (or Wisnu as they call him in Bali) – and it forms one end of the plaza. Some other parts of the huge sculpture project are scattered around the park. Placed in its own plaza at the highest point of Ungasan hill is the 75ft (23m) high copper torso of Vishnu himself, enjoying magnificent views of the surrounding Jimbaran lowlands. In an adjacent canyon are the god's arms and in the park's main gallery are models for a hand and Vishnu's lips. That's as far as the sculptor Nuarda got.

The GWK project began under Indonesia's second president, Suharto. Born in 1921, he came to power in Indonesia in 1966-67, sweeping away the corrupt economics and chaotic politics of Sukarno's 'Old Order' following an anti-Communist purge in which an estimated half a million people died. Within three decades, Suharto's grand ambitions calcified into a virtual military regime supported by a narrow civilian elite. Sometime before the upheaval of 1998 – which replaced Suharto's 'New Order' with a pro-democracy movement – the GWK project was initiated as a curious mix of mythological art, national pride and Suharto's megalomania.

While the majority of Indonesia follows Islam, the island of Bali is predominantly Hindu and has been for around a millennium and a half. One of the last outposts of the Javanese Majapahit Empire (AD 1293–1520), the colony on Bali flourished up to the 15th century, which saw the expansion of Islam and the arrival of Westerners, mostly the Portuguese.

For decades, the award-winning local sculptor Nyoman Nuarda has championed the island's artists and performers, as direct inheritors of the creativity of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Majapahit culture; and it is to Nuarda that much of the credit is due for the artistic and spiritual vision of the GWK project. Whether Suharto directly asked Nuarda (as some sources say) to create a heroic statue that would dwarf the Statue of Liberty; or whether Nuarda, with an eye to the approval of his ancient Hindu gods, chose the theme of Vishnu the Creator riding Garuda, hardly matters now. Spreading out around the great monument, the park was envisioned as a performance centre seating 7,500 in an amphitheatre as well as a smaller theatre, museum, craft galleries, restaurants and other artistic attractions.





With hindsight, the description of the main attraction in an early project document seems like a triumph of ambition over economics. “[The] giant statue of Wisnu [will be] built with total height of 75 metres [246ft] [and mounted on] a statue of Garuda with height of 70 metres [230ft] to be a single monument. [...] The statue of Garuda itself has a wing span as long as 66 metres [217ft]. The weight of both statues is approximately 4,000 tons. Both statues are built with selected construction materials mixed with copper, steel, and brass. Certain parts of the statues will be covered with golden layer.”

Almost immediately the plan hit difficulties, not least delays with committees and funding. Apparently very few big investors came forward. Construction didn’t begin until 1997, and it quickly became clear that the project would cost hundreds of billions of rupiah. Nuarta told newsmen that the original estimate for the statue alone was Rp9.5 billion. During the delays, the rising prices of raw materials have pushed that up by 400 per cent, to an estimated bill at Rp700 billion.<sup>1</sup>

The Balinese I spoke to seemed pessimistic about the project being finished. Apart from the pervading gloom of daily reports of “corruption, terrorism and security instability” there was a sense of resignation that the necessary subsidies to the predominantly Hindu island’s budget would not be forthcoming from a far-away Islamic government which has other economic priorities in these troubled times.

Despite official recognition of the beneficial impact that the completed project will have on Bali tourism, indeed for Indonesia generally, the grand promises have not been delivered. When the former head of the Bali Police, Mangku Pastika, was appointed chairman of the GWK Foundation, he declared: “We will continue building the park in May 2008.” On a visit he made to the GWK in 2006, Indonesia’s president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono – who was noticeably absent from the recent bombings memorial ceremony at GWK – spoke, not of funding, but of finding investors for the project, adding: “I promise you that we will finish the project. It is the pride of the nation.”

Only about 10 per cent of the site has since been developed, and that must have looked pretty impressive at the time. When I visited it in May 2009, it was a depressingly shabby shadow of the magnificent dream. The architecture of the buildings is outdated; its extensive areas of concrete discoloured by years of rain and darkened by lichen; its paved plazas and cobbled walkways buckled with subsidence, cracks and colonies of weeds. I got the impression of stumbling around in an alien ruin, a feeling many others have shared. Another of the comments gathered by blogger Muhajir said, “It is very sad to enter an empty gallery with no art objects and visitors.”



## The statue would have been visible for 12 miles

Despite the unfulfilled words of politicians, Nyoman Nuarta still carries a torch for the project. His dream of the GWK, surprisingly, is not centred on his statue but on the park as a national centre for the arts and crafts as a matter of national pride. Even barely begun, he says, the GWK project has attracted millions of curious visitors, as many as “5,000 a day” at peak times, and he still holds out for “the goodwill of the President”.<sup>2</sup>

The GWK park is in daily use, paying for its upkeep with a steady several thousand tourists a day, local visitors and patrons of its excellent restaurant. Its amphitheatre is also used as a venue for outdoor music festivals and ceremonies. Now, after years of waiting, it looks as if the combination of Nuarta’s faith, national pride and an sound eye for a commercial opportunity will turn white

*I’d like to thank Stephen Flynn of the international design and architectural consultancy Shielsflynn, who worked on the original conceptual designs – and subsequently Nyoman Nuarta’s Sculpture Park in Bandung, Bali – for information on the origins of the GWK Park project. Thanks are also due to the Shielsflynn associate Rahman Andra Wijaya in their office in Bogor, Bali, who made inquiries on my behalf. Any errors are mine.*

elephant into a golden Garuda. This unexpected revitalisation of the project began sometime in mid-2013 when a large national property developer – PT Alam Sutera Realty Tbk – pledged around US\$14.4 million, but for the completion of the statue only. Already, the first of around 400 lorry-loads of more than 700 copper and brass panels – are being delivered to Nuarta’s studio complex in Bandung, where 200 local welders and sculptors shape and assemble the cladding. Nuarta has promised around US\$10 million of his own funds to cover changes he wants to make, including a second version of the famous Wisnu bust. “I am relieved and very happy,” he told the *Jakarta Post*. He said the project had haunted him and his family faced derision over the delays; now, aware of the other winged chariot at his back, he wants to devote all his time and resources to complete the giant statue by 2015.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Google-assisted translation of AFN report, dated 4 July 2005: [www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=373752&page=3](http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=373752&page=3)

<sup>2</sup> Google-assisted translation of an AFN report, dated 18 Feb 2006: [www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=373752&page=3](http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=373752&page=3)



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# Why Fortean?



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FT toes no party line.

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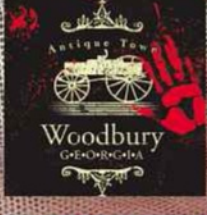
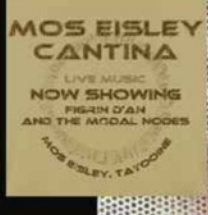
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# PHENOMENOMIX

WB YEATS P&Z • HUNT EMERSON and KEVIN JACKSON

WB YEATS JOINED THE GOLDEN DAWN, WHERE HE MET CROWLEY. THEY GOT OFF TO A BAD START WHEN YEATS WAS UNIMPRESSED BY THE BEASTS POEMS...

SHITE AND ONIONS! YOU CALL THIS STUFF POETRY!

CROWLEY WAS ANGRY BUT NOT INTIMIDATED! HE DESCRIBED YEATS' RESPONSE AS...

**BILIOUS JEALOUSY!!**

FOR THE REST OF HIS DAYS, CROWLEY WOULD DISMISS THE IRISH POET AS A LANK, DISHEVELLED DEMONOLOGIST.

MEANWHILE, YEATS CONTINUED HIS OCCULT MALARKY OUTSIDE THE GOLDEN DAWN. HE TOOK HIS FRIEND GEORGE RUSSELL TO A GENTEEL TEA PARTY... RUSSELL WAS TERRIFIED! THE PARLOUR WAS "INFESTED WITH YELLOW DEVILS!"



ON A VISIT TO GALWAY, YEATS DID A "LUNAR EVOCATION" AND SUMMONED THREE MANIFESTATIONS - THE GODDESS DIANA...

... A CENTAUR ...

... AND THE THIRD - A SORT OF MIX OF THE TWO!

TO BOOST HIS VISIONARY POWERS, WBY BEGAN TO TAKE MIND-ALTERING DRUGS... IN PARIS HE LEARNED TO SMOKE HASHISH...

HEY DON'T BOGART THAT JOINT, WILLY...

...AND IN LONDON HE TRIED MESCALINE, BUT GAVE IT UP BECAUSE IT GAVE HIM BREATHING PROBLEMS!

HE ALSO COLLABORATED WITH AN ALCHEMIST FRIEND WHO THOUGHT HE COULD MANUFACTURE AN ELIXIR OF LIFE, WHICH HE TESTED ON RABBITS...

I'M A VERY VERY OLD BUNNY...

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOME OF ALL THIS OCCULT ACTIVITY WAS THE RAISING OF A SPIRIT AT A SEANCE...

IT WAS LEO AFRICANUS - A 16TH CENTURY SPANISH-ARAB EXPLORER... WHO, AT THIS SEANCE, SPOKE WITH AN IRISH BROGUE!

HELLO DERE! WOULD YEZ HAVE A MISTER YEATS AMONGST YEZ?

NEXT TIME MORE SPIRITS! A FAILED EXORCISM! AND A MAJOR RUCK WITH CROWLEY!



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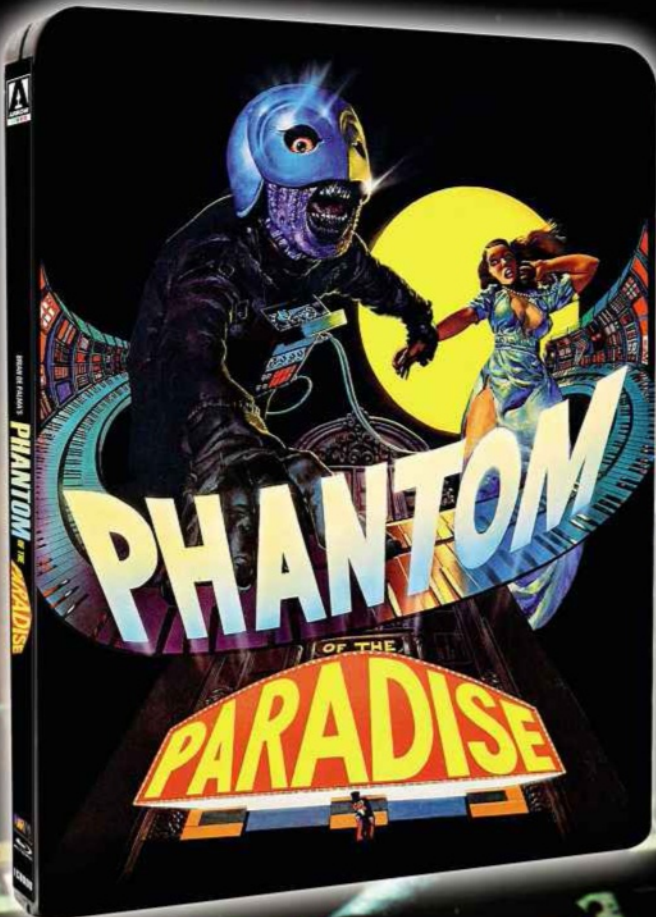
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