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strange days

Mystery lake appears in Tunisia, Hulk puppies and two-nosed Snuffles, dream lottery win, Bolivia flips the clock, dead men standing, Costa Rican spheres, old cats and ancient yews, naked cannibal attacks – and much more.

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MATT SALUSBURY gets on his bike and heads for the wilds of Suffolk in search of the woodwoose – a mediæval wildman carved on the fonts and porches of churches throughout the county. But what is this hairy man-beast, and do its ecclesiastical appearances commemorate a real British Bigfoot that once stalked the English countryside?

34 DOCTOR WHO: FORTEANA IN TIME AND SPACE

Cryptozoological creatures, ancient astronauts, conspiracy theories and UFOs: Doctor Who has tackled a wide range of fortean themes over the decades, reflecting as well as influencing the wider popular culture of which it is itself a part. Whovian scribe **PAUL CORNELL** surveys the series's treatment of such topics and asks whether it can really be considered a fortean programme...

40 LONDON'S HAUNTED MURDER HOUSES

London is full of properties that once witnessed bloody murders and subsequent hauntings. Some have vanished, some still stand, but their violent histories are largely forgotten. **JAN BONDESON** explores the once-notorious 'Murder Neighbourhood' of old Bloomsbury.

48 EVOLUTION'S MAZE

During the 1920s, eugenicist William McDougall began a series of experiments with rats in mazes that he believed provided evidence of 'soft inheritance' – the idea that "intelligent or purposive effort could produce an appreciable change in the constitution of the human race". **TONI MELECHI** uncovers a fascinating chapter in the history of pseudo-science.

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AFP / GETTY IMAGES

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Ghastly deaths and ghostly doings

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

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

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 USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 888-428-6676
 Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com
 Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)1795 592 909
 Fax: +44 (0)1795 414 555

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PUBLISHED BY DENNIS PUBLISHING,
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 London W1T 4JD, UK
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PRINTED BY POLESTAR BICESTER

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

Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 7881272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES
 12 issues: UK £39.98; EU £47.50

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$89.99. Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434. Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA. US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 500, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA. REST OF THE WORLD £55; US \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED
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FINANCE DIRECTOR BRETT REYNOLDS
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COMPANY FOUNDER FELIX DENNIS

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
 Circulation 17,024 (Jan-Dec 2011)

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
 © Fortean Times: AUGUST 2014

editorial

Where the wild things are

This issue's cover story started off as a commission for the Fortean Traveller section of the magazine, but grew in the telling. We sent FT regular Matt Salusbury - better known for his travels in search of pygmy elephants (see FT301:72-74) - into the wilds of his native Suffolk in search of the woodwose, a mysterious hairy wildman who can be found carved into the porches and baptismal fonts of a number of churches in what the local tourist board - not without reason - has dubbed "the Curious County".

Matt returned from his cycling tours with a wealth of woodwoses - see pp30-36 for the full story - but also a number of questions. What, in fact, is a woodwose? Why do these distinctly un-Christian figures crop up in churches? Do they record some genuine encounter with a British Bigfoot? Are they connected with the famous story of the Wildman of Orford recorded by Ralph of Coggeshall at the turn of the 12th century in his *Chronicon Anglicanum*? Does a large, shaggy creature haunt the woods and fields of rural Suffolk today?

People have speculated in the past that the woodwose is anything from a relict Neanderthal to a supernatural figure like the panic-inducing Big Grey Man of Ben MacDhui, to a composite symbolic figure rehearsing mediaeval ambivalence about our relationship to the natural world.

Much of this, of course, is in the realm of speculation; but given that the figure of the Wildman is so culturally pervasive - there's no shortage of them to be found across Europe in statues, coats of arms and still extant masquerades and pageants (see FT309:6-7 for some stunning examples) - why does the appearance of the woodwose in English churches seem to be limited, almost exclusively, to Suffolk? Perhaps FT readers know of a wealth of woodwoses to be found beyond the county boundaries - if so, we'd like to hear about them.

FROM ICONOCLASM TO ISIS

Some of Suffolk's woodwose carvings have been badly damaged over the centuries, mostly by Protestant reformers with a confirmed distaste for church decoration. Far worse has been taking place in northern and western Iraq over recent weeks as the jihadists of Islamic State (the murderous zealots formerly known as ISIS) have been destroying Shiite and Sufi mosques and shrines as they continue their rampage across the country. In late July, residents of Mosul reported that the terrorists had blown up the Mosque of the Prophet Younis, or Jonah, reputedly the burial place of the whale-escaping biblical figure.

Despite a lack of coverage from British media - seemingly fixated on the Israel-Gaza situation to the exclusion of all else - and silence from European and US governments, it's clear that a terrible humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Iraq; it's not just revered religious sites that are being threatened and destroyed, but people of faith themselves. Mosul's Christians have been driven from their homes and threatened with being "put to the sword" if they don't convert to Islam. The vicar of Iraq's only Anglican church wondered whether he was witnessing "the end of Christianity" in the region, once home to a million Christians.

The latest victims of the jihadist onslaught are members of smaller religious minorities - Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriac Catholics, and now the Yazidis of northern Iraq. Twelve years ago (FT171:4) we reported on the threats to such pockets of ancient religion in the Middle East posed by the chaos unleashed by the US invasion of Iraq; this time, rather than collateral damage or opportunistic victimisation by local

Sunnis, we appear to be seeing a deliberate attempt to snuff out religious minorities (the word 'genocide' is being used), including the Yazidis - an ancient offshoot of Persian Zoroastrianism - who are viewed by Sunnis as Devil-worshippers. Forced to flee when their stronghold of Sinjar was stormed by the jihadists in early August, some 40,000 Yazidis trying to make their way to Kurdistan are now stranded on Mount Sinjar - incidentally thought to be the final resting place of Noah's Ark in local legend - without food or water, facing starvation or dehydration if they stay put and death at the hands of Islamic State if they return to their homes. Hundreds are already dead. As we go to press, the news is that the jihadist forces have now overrun Qaraqosh and other remaining Christian towns in northern Iraq and tens - perhaps hundreds - of thousands more people have been displaced. *Guardian*, 24 July; 7 Aug; *Independent*, 26 July; *D. Telegraph*, 6+7 Aug 2014.



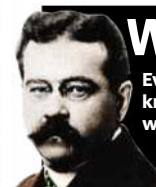
"LOOK, IT'S A VERY ENGLISH WILDMAN!"

the hands of Islamic State if they return to their homes. Hundreds are already dead. As we go to press, the news is that the jihadist forces have now overrun Qaraqosh and other remaining Christian towns in northern Iraq and tens - perhaps hundreds - of thousands more people have been displaced. *Guardian*, 24 July; 7 Aug; *Independent*, 26 July; *D. Telegraph*, 6+7 Aug 2014.

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Why Fortean?

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

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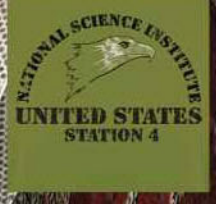
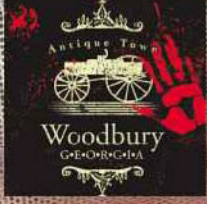
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strangedays

Instant geography lessons

A mysterious lake appears in the Tunisian desert, before turning to sludge, plus Siberian holes

TUNISIA'S MYSTERY LAKE

In the first week of July, shepherds crossing the desert in southern Tunisia came upon a lake in a canyon 15 miles (25km) from the city of Gafsa on the road from Om Larayes. The mysterious body of water, which observers estimate covers an area of about a hectare (2.6 acres) and measures around 18m (60ft) at its deepest points, seems to have formed quite rapidly. The lake appeared in the desert like a mirage; one minute there was nothing but scorching sand, the next a large expanse of turquoise water. For locals, roasting in the 40°C (104°F) heat, the temptation to cool off in the inviting water quickly overcame any fears about the pool. Hundreds flocked to what quickly became known as the Lac de Gafsa or Gafsa beach to splash, paddle, dive, and fling themselves from rocks into the lake, ignoring warnings that the water could be contaminated with carcinogenic chemicals, riddled with disease or possibly radioactive. Even after the water turned a murky green, they arrived in droves, undeterred.

Mehdi Bilel was returning from a marriage in the north of the country when he spotted the lake. "After several long hours on the road without a break, I honestly thought I was hallucinating," he said. "I don't know much about science and thought it was magic, something supernatural." Journalist Lakhdar Souid wrote: "Some say it is a miracle, while others are calling it a curse. In the first few days, the water was crystal clear; a turquoise blue. Now it's green and full of algæ, which means it's not being replenished."

Local geologists suspect seismic activity may have ruptured



"Some say it is a miracle, others call it a curse..."

the rock above the water table, sending the water to the surface. If the lake has indeed formed in this way, the cracks from which the water came could cause the water to flow the other way and drag swimmers to the bottom.

Gafsa became the centre of the country's mining industry after phosphate was discovered there in 1886. Tunisia is now the world's fifth largest exporter of phosphate. Souid wrote in the *Tunisia Daily*: "This region is overflowing with large deposits of phosphate, which can leave behind radioactive residue so there is a real risk that the water is contaminated and carcinogenic. There's no security of any kind. The site is certainly stunning and there are many large rocks perfect for diving." *Guardian, Huffington Post, 1 Aug 2014.*

SIBERIAN CHASMS

In mid-July, reindeer herders in the Yamal Peninsula of northern Siberia (otherwise known as "The End of the World") came upon a massive chasm in the permafrost about 200ft (60m) wide. Yamal holds some of Russia's largest gas reserves and the crater appeared 19 miles (30km) from the biggest gas field, Bovanenkovo. Since then, two further craters have been found – one 50ft (15m) across in the Taz district; another between 200 and 330ft ((60-100m) across in the Taymyr Peninsula. All three are north of the Arctic Circle and one (unspecified) is up to 300ft (70m) deep.

Explanations have included everything from meteorites to stray missiles or aliens, with some claiming they could be connected to fracking. Chris Fogwill of the University of New South Wales has suggested the first hole was created when a pingo – an

earth-covered mound that forms in Arctic and subarctic regions – collapsed. However, Vladimir Romanovsky, a geophysicist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, thinks the chasms are a previously unseen type of sinkhole, caused by water from melting permafrost or ice, a symptom of global warming. Somehow, rather than sucking collapsed material inside of them, the holes appear to have pushed material out. Images of the holes show loose earth surrounding them almost as though an explosion had taken place. "One actually erupted outside," said Romanovsky. "It's not even in the [scientific] literature. It's pretty new what we're dealing with."

Vasily Bogoyavlensky, deputy director of the Oil and Gas Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, speculated that the melting of underground ice freed shale gas that then built up high pressure and broke through to the surface. "At some point an explosion took place without any flame," he said. *dailymail.co.uk, 16 July; [AFP] 27 July; [R] siberiantimes.com, 30 July; Independent, 1 Aug 2014.*





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‘Captain Kaye’ and a secret colony on the Red Planet
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Unleashing sweary spirits and risking possession
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FINE YOUNG CANNIBALS
More cases of crazed naked folks going on biting rampages
PAGE 20

They're dropping like ninepins

Two more outbreaks of mass hysteria among Japanese youngsters

On Saturday night, 21 June, a number of young female members of a Meiji University tennis club, gathered outside a Shinjuku theatre in Tokyo's fashionable Shinjuku district, began collapsing, though male members of the same group were "not severely affected" (whatever that means). No serious injuries were sustained. The situation quickly went viral on Twitter, where many speculated that some form of chemical poisoning had occurred.

Nine days later, on 30 June, 26 students at a girls' high school in Fukuoka Prefecture collapsed in an apparent outbreak of mass psychogenic illness or "mass hysteria". According to Yanagawa High School, a private school in



the city of Yanagawa, a first-year student suddenly shrieked in the middle of a class and fell down at about 10am. Two other students in the class fell into a similar state soon afterward, followed by students from other classes who came to check on the incident. Some of the girls turned pale. The school sent the 26 students home and cancelled all classes later in the day. Those afflicted soon recovered, though the school remained closed on the following day.

"We don't know why such an incident happened, but we need to take good care of the students," said Vice Principal Shigemitsu Mori. "I'll talk to them more to find out what happened." Twitter and other social media were abuzz with rumours of the students "becoming possessed with evil spirits". Psychiatrist Rika Kayama said the group panic attack might have been triggered by "occultism". *feedproxy.google.com*, 23 Jun; *Japan Times*, 1 July 2014.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Dance and eat haggis to save lives at sea

Hull Daily Mail, 22 Jan 2014.

Cockroach restaurant fined for poor hygiene

Adelaide Advertiser, 13 Feb 2014.

Limerick man jailed for tiger kidnapping

Irish Post, 8 Feb 2014.

Singing fish scares away Minnesota burglar

Miami Herald, -Feb 2014.

I MET JESUS ON THE A30

Sun, 28 Jan 2014.

Ghost ship packed with cannibal rats is not likely to crash into UK, say officials

Guardian, 24 Jan 2014.

Giant strawberries hit shelves in M&S

Wolverhampton Express & Star, 13 Feb 2014.

Woman claims lawyers should have told her divorce would end her marriage

Independent, 10 Jan 2014.

'Fairies' dogging on duke's estate

D.Mail, 17 Jan 2014.

Iranian news agency says US is secretly run by Nazi space aliens

Washington Post, -Jan 2014.

UFO cult backs Africa's first clitoris restoration

Your Health (Asia One), 11 Feb 2014.





STRANGER THAN FICTION

The saying goes that the camera never lies, but Catalan artist Joan Fontcuberta uses his work to question the use of the photographic image as evidence. He creates narratives documenting such 'impossible' subjects as mermaid fossils, mysterious fauna from a fictional professor's lost archive, 'rare' plant species made of inorganic materials, and levitating monks from a miraculous

Finnish monastery, all of which can be seen in a new exhibition in London and Bradford.

"Photography is a tool to negotiate our idea of reality," Fontcuberta has said. "Thus it is the responsibility of photographers not to contribute with anaesthetic images but rather to provide images that shake consciousness. My work tries to implement a pedagogy for critical doubt."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Hydropithecus of Cerro de San Vicente*, 2006, from the Sirens series by Joan Fontcuberta. *The Miracle of Levitation*, 2002, Joan Fontcuberta. *Giliandria Escoliforcía* from the Herbarium series by Joan Fontcuberta, 1984. *Cercophitecus Icarocornu* from the Fauna series by Joan Fontcuberta and Pere Formiguera, 1985.

All images © Joan Fontcuberta/Joan Fontcuberta and Pere Formiguera

JOAN FONTCUBERTA: STRANGER THAN FICTION will run at Media Space, Science Museum, London, to 9 Nov 2014, before transferring to National Media Museum, Bradford, from 19 Nov 2014 to 8 Feb 2015.

SIDELINES...

FOOD IRONY

More than 100 delegates attending a food safety summit at the Baltimore Convention Center in Maryland on 8-10 April – including representatives from the US Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and major food companies – came down with suspected food poisoning, most of those affected complaining of diarrhoea. The cause of the illness was unidentified. [R] 30 April 2014.

MEMBER MAGNIFIED

A Malaysian man who paid £83 online for a penis enlarger was sent a magnifying glass with one helpful instruction: "Do not use in sunlight". The man, named only as Ong, contacted Malaysia's customer complaints bureau, claiming the glass was worth just £5, but a lawyer said suing the scammers was almost impossible with no proof of purchase. *MX News (Sydney)*, 4 June 2014.

LEGO, TOOL OF SATAN

Polish priest Slawomir Kozrzewa has warned parents that Lego is the tool of Satan, with its series of Zombie mini-figures and Monster Fighters like Lord Vampire, which can destroy children's souls. The facial expressions of Lego figures have certainly become angrier in recent years, which has compounded their evil potential, according to the Polish cleric. He added that My Little Pony is a "carrier of death". *D.Telegraph*, 2 April 2014.



Dogs of distinction

Minty-fresh pups and a dog with an olfactory superfluity



GOING GREEN

When hunting dog breeder Aida Vallelado Molina saw these newborn puppies (above), she tried to rub them clean, but they remained green. The pair, born in Laguna de Duero, Spain, on 3 June, were smaller and weaker than the others in the litter. One, a female, died shortly after birth, while the other, a male, was alive but very weak, and was beginning to lose his green colour. A green labrador puppy (right), born in England in 2012 and dubbed 'Hulk', lost its colour about 10 days after birth. The cause for the colouring was given as exposure to a pigment called biliverdin, which can be found in the placenta and is sometimes responsible for the greenish hue seen in bruises. Maybe the Spanish puppies had also been exposed to biliverdin.

A green puppy was born in northern Italy in 1984 [FT42:18] and a green kitten in Denmark in 1995 [FT85:10]. Glowing green mice were produced in a Japanese lab in 1997 by incorporating a gene from a fluorescent jellyfish



into a mouse embryo [FT102:9]. Polar bears occasionally turn green from algae growing in their hollow hair shafts [FT186:6]. *The Local (Sweden)*, 11 June; *Metro*, 13 June 2014.

TWO-NOSED SNUFFLES

Aptly named Snuffles, a Belgian shepherd puppy, has a harmless congenital defect that means his nostrils are split in the middle and can each move independently. By the time he was five months old last January, he had been rejected by four owners and was passed to the Dogs Trust in Glasgow. After his

picture was splashed across the popular press on 8 February, many people worldwide applied to adopt him, and he moved in with a family in East Lothian who owned another dog and had an acre of land for him to play on. "He may not have the looks of Lassie," said Sandra Lawton, manager of the Dogs Trust, "but he has a heart of gold and can claim to be a dog in several million." *D.Mail*, *D.Mirror*, 8 Feb; *Sunday People*, 9 Feb 2014.

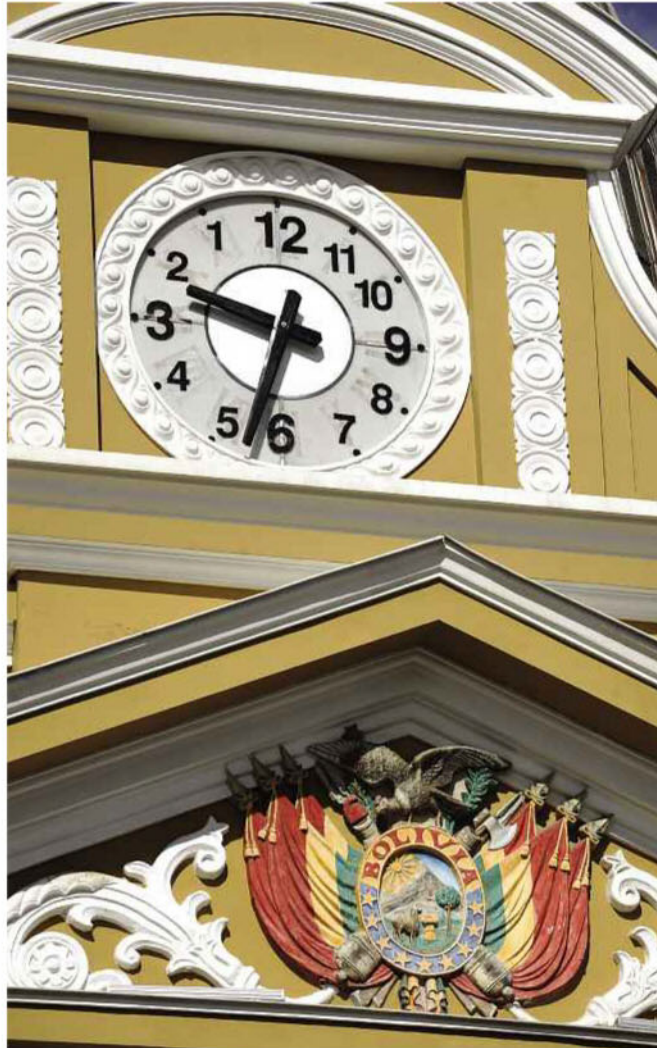


Bolivia flips clocks

Morales goes widdershins to decolonialise time-keeping

On the southern hemisphere's Winter Solstice in June, Bolivia's leftist government flipped the clock atop the Congress building so that while it still told the right time, the hands now turn to the left, a direction known elsewhere as counterclockwise or widdershins. Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca said it was only logical that a clock in the Southern Hemisphere should turn in the opposite direction of a Northern Hemisphere clock; and Marcelo Elio, the President of Congress, called the reform "a clear expression of the decolonisation of the people" under President Evo Morales, who became the country's first indigenous president when he won office in 2005 and is up for re-election in October. Vice-President Alvaro Garcia said the government was contemplating similarly modifying all clocks at public institutions. He recalled that during an open-air Cabinet meeting, Choquehuanca placed a stick in the ground and showed that the Sun's shadow rotated counterclockwise around it, a display Garcia called "mind-opening". Political opponents, on the other hand, denounced the move. Opposition legislator Norma Pierola said the government "wishes to change the universal laws of time" (well, no, not really).

Victor Hugo Cardenas, a former vice president and, like Morales, a member of the Aymara people, said it's true that when the Aymara meet, they form a circle and greet each other in counterclockwise order; but he said the clock reform elevates that vision "to the ridiculous for political ends". Morales has made other attempts to shed colonial influence, giving native Andean beliefs equal weight with Christianity. His friend and ally, the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, made a similar shift in 2006, redesigning his nation's flag so a galloping white horse featured on it faces left instead of right. [AP] 26 June 2014.



TOP: The counter-clockwise clock in front of the Bolivian Congress in La Paz
ABOVE: Hugo Chavez speaking in Caracas in front of the flag's left-facing horse.

SIDELINES...

SAVED BY DOLPHINS

Adam Walker, aiming to be the first Briton to finish the Oceans Seven challenge, said he was rescued by dolphins after he was tailed by a shark on a notoriously tough stretch of sea last April. He was joined by the pod as he swam the 16-mile (26km) Cook Strait between the North and South Islands of New Zealand in eight hours and 36 minutes. The dolphins swam with him for over an hour. *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 30 April 2014.

FAT BOY SLIMS

Ross Connor, 33, from Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, shed eight stone (50kg) from his 20-stone (127kg) frame after a year at a kickboxing gym in Phuket, Thailand. Trying to fly home, he was detained by border guards who did not believe he was the same person, but won them round after showing images documenting his weight loss. *MX News (Sydney)*, 15 May 2014.

TINY TROUBLEMAKERS

Feral gangs of chihuahuas have been roaming the streets of Maryvale in Arizona looking for trouble. Children and adults have been chased by packs of up to 15 of the abandoned dogs, which can grow up to 10in (25cm) and have not been spayed or neutered. Animal Care and Control has received more than 6,000 calls complaining about the problem. *Metro*, 21 Feb 2014.

THERE'S CRIME AFOOT

Michael Brown, 31, sucked a woman's toes at a Wal-Mart store in Lincolnton, North Carolina, after convincing her he was a podiatry student and persuading her to take off her shoes. He then offered to pay for her groceries after she appeared outraged. He was jailed for 60 days. Another foot fetishist – Sho Sato, 28 – stole 450 pairs of high heels from hostess clubs in Japan, and hid them from his wife in a rented flat in Tokyo. *Metro*, 31 Jan; *Western Mail*, 22 Mar; *Irish Independent*, 12 April 2014.

JORGE BERNAL / AP / GETTY IMAGES

MARTIN BERNETTI / AP / GETTY IMAGES

MARTIN ROSS



SIDELINES...

BEAVERS IN OTTER

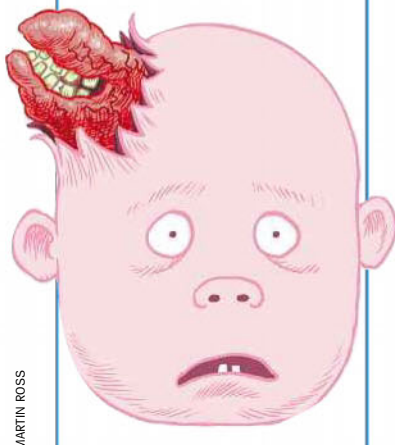
Three wild beavers (*Castor fiber*) have been seen in the English countryside in what is thought to be the first sighting of its kind in about 800 years (though beavers survived in Scotland until about 1600). They were filmed together on the River Otter in east Devon. The sighting suggested a small breeding population now existed outside captivity. *D.Mail*, 22 Jan, 28 Feb; *Guardian*, 28 Feb 2014.

JADE JACKPOT

A half-buried jade boulder 18ft (5.4m) wide, that could weigh up to 50 tons, has been found in the mountainous northern Burmese state of Kachin, where rebels have been fighting the government for 50 years. The government has placed the boulder under armed guard as officials negotiate with rebels about what to do with it. If it is top quality jade, it could be worth billions of pounds. *D.Mail*, 22 Feb 2014.

TEETH IN THE BRAIN

Doctors in Baltimore have removed a tumour that contained several fully-grown teeth from the brain of a four-month-old boy from West Virginia. The craniopharyngioma tumour was found after a paediatrician noticed his head was unusually large. Medical literature has recorded only five other cases of teeth found in such tumours. (*Melbourne*) *Sunday Age*, 2 Mar 2014.



MARTIN ROSS

An American on Mars

Whistleblower reveals details of top-secret space missions



GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Perhaps the pseudonymous 'Captain Kaye' had seen the 2000 film *Red Planet*.

Last April, an American man, using the pseudonym Captain Kaye, claimed that he spent 17 years on Mars serving at a secret military base whose main mission was to protect five civilian space colonies. Kaye said that the Mars Defense Force recruits personnel from different military services, and that he was recruited from a covert branch of the US Marine Corps called "Special Section". The air is breathable on the planet's surface, allegedly, and the temperature can be warm at times. The headquarters for the Mars Colony Corporation, located inside a Martian crater, is called Aries Prime. Kaye also claimed to have spent nearly three years serving in a secret 'space fleet' run by a multinational organisation called the Earth Defense Force, which recruits military personnel from countries including the US, Russia and China. He was trained to fly three different types of space fighters and three bombers. Training took place on a secret Moon base called Lunar Operations Command, Saturn's moon Titan, and in deep space. There are two indigenous

tour of duty, events changed dramatically when virtually all combat personnel from the Mars Defense Force were asked to retrieve an extraterrestrial artefact from a cave sacred to the indigenous reptilians. Over 1,000 men and women were killed in a subsequent battle and only 28 of Kaye's colleagues, including himself, survived. He attended a retirement ceremony on the Moon, presided over by VIPs including ex-Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

We are told that parts of Kaye's testimony are consistent with the claims of other whistleblowers who have "revealed" secret events on Mars. Michael Relfe, for example, claims that he also was recruited for a 20-year tour of duty that involved covert operations on Mars, while Laura Magdalene Eisenhower, the great granddaughter of President Eisenhower, claims that covert efforts were made to recruit her to join a colony on Mars headed by the renowned paranormal researcher Dr Hal Puthoff. And Kaye's claims that Mars has a breathable atmosphere "is supported by a number of NASA images revealing small animals on the surface" – according to our primary source, *exopolitics.org* (8 April 2014). FT can't resist the lexilink to the Hollywood actor Danny Kaye (real name David Daniel Kaminsky), who played the fantasist Walter Mitty in the 1947 film, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. *D.Mirror*, 25 June 2014.

"There are two species on Mars – reptilian and 'insectoid'"

species on Mars – one reptilian, the other "insectoid" – both highly intelligent and very aggressive in defending their territory, but not interested in territorial gains: as long as the Mars Defense Force and Mars Colony Corporation do not encroach on the territory of the indigenous Martians, there will be stable relations. After serving 17 years of a 20-year



Jackpot premonition

York waiter dreamed numbers of winning lottery ticket



ROSSPARRY.CO.UK

ABOVE: Hayati Kucukkoylu with the disputed winning lottery ticket.

A restaurant owner who scooped a million-pound lottery jackpot has been forced by a judge to split the money with a waiter who dreamed about the win the night before. Hayati Kucukkoylu, 47, who runs the Kapadokya Turkish restaurant in York, saw his numbers come up in the Euromillions draw on 30 January 2012. But Fatih Ozcan, who worked at the restaurant, demanded half the money, insisting that had it not been for him, his boss would never have entered the draw. Ozcan argued that it had been his idea to buy a ticket, having seen the jackpot win in his dream. On 14 July 2014, a High Court judge agreed with his claim and ruled that the pair share the money equally.

The dispute began after the draw, when Kucukkoylu insisted that the jackpot was rightfully his because he paid for the ticket and chose the winning numbers. Ozcan, who had gone to a local supermarket to buy the ticket, was adamant that

it was his premonition that prompted the win. The waiter contacted police and the lottery organisers, Camelot, and falsely claimed his boss had stolen the winning ticket from his jacket pocket. Kucukkoylu was arrested on suspicion of theft and was questioned for nine hours.

Handing down his ruling, Judge Mark Gosnell said that Ozcan's explanation about the dream was entirely "plausible". He said Ozcan "dreamt that he was holding a large bundle of cash and standing in front of him was his boss", and added: "Mr Ozcan is a strong believer in the power of dreams and interpreted this to mean that he and Mr Kucukkoylu would win the lottery." The judge said that the following day, the waiter "pestered" his boss for three hours before he finally agreed to enter the Euromillions draw. Before arriving at his ruling, the judge examined CCTV footage from the restaurant which showed the two men filling in the winning ticket together. He said

the footage also suggested each had paid half of the £9 stake. Describing it as a "troubling case", he said Ozcan had admitted lying to police, but he said he also had "concerns" about the reliability of Kucukkoylu's account.

Ruling that Ozcan's story was "inherently more plausible", the judge said: "I cannot see why he would be so determined to make his employer play if he was not directly to benefit. It is much more likely that he would badger his employer for hours if his dream was that they had played together and he needed his employer to play for the dream to come true." Although Ozcan gave his boss the lottery ticket, he kept the receipt.

The *Daily Telegraph*, which reported this case on 15 July 2014, commented: "Ozcan... has some claim to be the most successful oneiromancer since Joseph (of multi-coloured clothing fame)." *dailymail.co.uk*, 14 July 2014.

SIDELINES...

STORKS RETURN

Two white storks were set to make history by being the first to breed in Britain since 1416 (that was on St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh). The four-year-old birds built their nest on a disused 18th-century chimney at Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. *D.Mail, Metro*, 2 April 2014.

SURBITON HUM

Residents near the railway station in Surbiton, southwest London, have been disturbed by a constant hum that can be heard in their homes day and night, and has driven them to distraction. Its source is unknown. "I can only describe it as a white noise and quite low frequency," said a resident. Unidentified deep hums have been heard in many places worldwide. *Times*, 3 Mar 2014.

BEE THERE, STING THAT

A Texan family was attacked by a swarm of bees in Beeville, Bee County. Richard Cantu was working on his tractor when the bees stung him, his son and his grandson. *MX News (Sydney)*, 3 June 2014.

TIE RISK

In undercover footage taken in the staffroom of Olive Primary School in Blackburn, Lancashire, for Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme, Muslim teaching assistants said that the wearing of ties is forbidden as they could turn into serpents on the Day of Judgment. They also said that clapping was "satanic", music should be banned as "un-Islamic", and homosexuals should be "stoned to death". *D.Telegraph*, 14 July 2014.



MARTIN ROSS



SIDELINES...

MOSS REANIMATED

Cores of moss from deep in the Antarctic permafrost, carbon-dated to at least 1,530 years BP, have been brought back to life in an incubator. The study, by the British Antarctic Survey and Reading University, is the first to show such long-term survival in any plant and raises the possibility that more complex life forms could do the same. *D.Mail, 18 Mar 2014.*

ACCIDENTAL SAVIOUR

A suicidal man threatening to jump off London Bridge on 12 March inadvertently saved the life of another man drowning beneath him. When police and a lifeboat arrived they found the second man in the water weighed down by heavy clothing, suffering from hypothermia and confused about how he came to be in the Thames. Both men were saved. *D.Telegraph, 15 Mar 2014.*

FOR EXTRA CRUNCH

Journalist Berenice Baker, 46, discovered a dead 2in (5cm) locust in her salad (£1.89 from Waitrose in Bayswater, London) and took it back for a refund. *Metro, <i>4 April 2014.*

A SNACK TOO FAR

A man used a crowbar to break into Deli A Go Go in Cardiff – before stealing a single bag of sour cream and sweet onion Kettle chips. CCTV footage showed that he forgot his crowbar and returned to retrieve it. *Metro, 27 Mar 2014.*

IRON CURTAIN LEGACY

A seven-year study in Sumava National Park in the Czech Republic has found that red deer still balk at crossing areas where there had been three parallel electrified fences patrolled by armed guards marking the Iron Curtain until 24 years ago. Scientists conducting research on German territory reached similar conclusions. Average life expectancy for deer is 15 years, so no living animal would have encountered the barrier. *[AP] 23 April 2014.*

THE MYSTERY ORBS OF COSTA RICA



Among the six locations designated last June by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as World Heritage Sites are a group of four pre-Columbian archaeological sites in Costa Rica's Diquis Delta, include graves, paved areas and mounds. Most intriguing from a fortaean point of view are the stone orbs (or petrospheres) – ranging in size from 2ft 4in to 8ft 5in (70–256cm) – that dot the sites. Including those on the Isla del Caño, there are over 300 of these orbs, some weighing up to 16 tons. Locally, they are known as Las Bolas. Most are sculpted from gabbro or granodiorite, a coarse-grained equivalent of basalt; a dozen or so are made from coquina, a hard material similar to limestone formed from shell and sand in beach deposits, and another dozen from sandstone. They were made world-famous by the opening sequence of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, when a mockup of one nearly crushed Indiana Jones.

The orbs were initially reported in the late 19th century, but scientific interest was first piqued after a great many more were discovered in the 1930s by the



United Fruit Company clearing the jungle for banana plantations. Workmen pushed them aside with bulldozers and heavy equipment; additionally, inspired by stories of hidden gold, they began to drill holes in the orbs and blow them open with dynamite – until the authorities intervened. However, many still remain where they were placed centuries ago, and judging by the style and carbon-dating of associated pottery, can be dated from AD 1000 to the coming of the Spaniards; however, this methodology only provides the date of the latest use of the orbs, which could be many centuries older.

There have been claims that the orbs came from Atlantis, or were created naturally (like the stone balls found in Jalisco, Mexico), while a local legend maintains that the native inhabitants had access to a potion able to soften rock. Many of the orbs were found to be in alignments, consisting of straight and curved lines, as well as triangles and parallelograms. One group of four orbs was found to be arranged in a line oriented to magnetic north, leading to speculation that they might have been arranged by people familiar with the use of magnetic compasses or astronomical alignments. Some have regarded the spheres as navigational aids or relics related to Stonehenge or the Easter Island heads. In the cosmogony of the Bribri, shared by the Cabecares and other native American groups, the orbs are "Tara's cannonballs". Tara or Tlatchque, the god of thunder, used a giant blowpipe to shoot the orbs at the Serkes, gods of winds and hurricanes, in order to drive them out of these lands. However, no one actually knows how the orbs were made, or why. *Live Science, 23 June 2014.*

Experimentelle Fliegende Untertassen Korps.



Me290



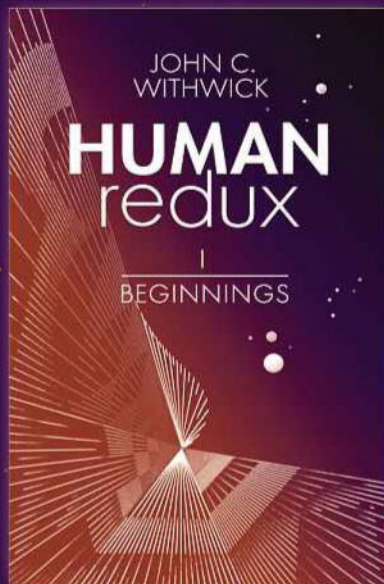
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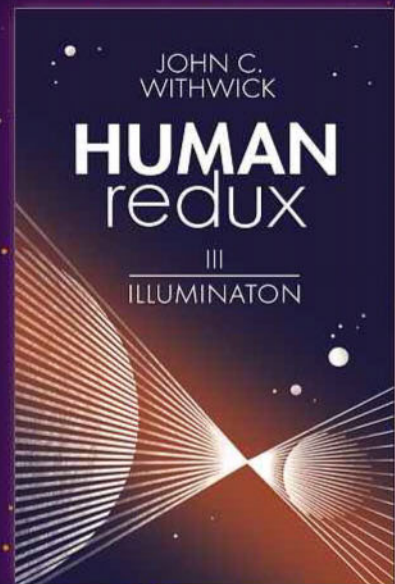
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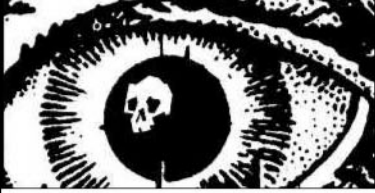
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*Chart position within Sci-Fi Time Travel Chart.



GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE channels some recent cases of 'ouija possession' and swears spirits

A DANGEROUS GAME?

Depending upon your point of view, the ouija board is either a parlour game that taps into the unconscious, a legitimate way of contacting the spirit world, or a dangerous practice that exposes users to malevolent discarnate entities. Those sharing the third of these perspectives will doubtless feel vindicated by the recent story of three young Americans in Mexico who developed classic signs of possession after playing with a ouija board.

The three affected were all visiting family in the village of San Juan Tlacotenco in southwest Mexico. Within minutes of beginning their session with the board, Alexandra Huerta, 22, went into a trance and started growling and thrashing around. Her distress was soon shared by her brother Sergio, 23, and their cousin Fernando Cuevas, 18, both of whom experienced twitching muscles and hallucinations. Their frightened relatives called a local priest who declined to intervene (allegedly because the trio were not regular churchgoers), forcing their family to seek medical help for them.

Paramedics who duly arrived reported that the stricken trio "had involuntary movements and it was difficult to transfer them to the nearest hospital because they were so erratic". A clip of film showing Alexandra lying on a stretcher, growling and giggling maniacally was released to the press and can be viewed on the Internet. On entering hospital, the three were given painkillers with Victor Demesa, 46, the director of public safety in the nearby town of Tepoztlan, confirming: "The medical rescue of these three young people was very complicated".

And indeed it might be, for although many similar cases have been recorded over the centuries, possession states – however occasioned – can be hard to distinguish from a range of other recognised medical and psychiatric disorders, not to mention occasional frauds. (Source: 'Three American friends hospitalised after becoming 'possessed' following Ouija board game in Mexican village' *D.Mail*, 23 June 2014.)

One thing we can do is acquit the ouija board itself of blame. It is not the board that causes such problems per se, but more the mentality of those using it. Patented twice in the USA between 1891-92, ouija boards typically consist of no more than a flat wooden or cardboard surface marked with the letters of the alphabet, numbers and the words "yes" and "no", with a pointer fixed in the centre, which can be moved when the users' fingers are placed lightly on top. Millions of such boards have been produced commercially, with the American

courts having ruled ouija boards a game rather than a religious or spiritual tool, at least for taxation purposes, in 1921. Many users improvise with home-made boards, adapting an upturned wine glass or tumbler as a pointer. (See *Ouija: The Most Dangerous Game*, 1976, by Stoker Hunt).

Although there were certainly many concerns expressed about Spiritualism by mainstream religions prior to World War II, no one really paid much attention to the ouija board in the beginning. Early views were that it was basically a form of automatic writing or planchette that involved laboriously spelling the letters rather than writing them, with many of the messages arising from the subconscious mind. In 1895 the physical

messages. Cambridge classicist Margaret Verrall and her daughter Helen Verrall used automatic writing for many years and never suffered; nor, arguably, did poet WB Yeats or his wife, who channelled thousands of pages of material. If automatic writing and ouija channelling in particular were inherently dangerous activities, then more evidence should date from this period. Just how widely known the ouija board was is shown by the true story from World War I of canny British soldiers in a Turkish prisoner-of-war camp using one to trick their captors in an audacious escape plan. (See *'The Road to En-dor'* (1919) by EH Jones, one of the soldiers involved).

The view that ouija boards are in some way especially dangerous only really developed when other forms of mediumship went into comparative decline. During the "occult explosion" of the 1960s there was much personal experimentation with ouija boards across North America, with sales of boards by 1966 rivalling those of *Monopoly*. Stories of harmful ouija séances spread during this time, since irresponsible experimenting often unnerved and traumatised sensitive and unstable people.

There is no doubt that young people often succeed in scaring themselves by fooling with ouija boards. A notorious example from Britain occurred in March 1970 when eight public schoolboys who had formed an "Occult Society" at Arnold School, Blackpool, terrified themselves

with ouija messages obtained during a ghost hunt. Peter Roscoe, 16, and eight companions had been given the backing of their headmaster, Mr OC Wigmore, to hold a ghost hunt in the cellar of a building at the school. During their vigil they held a ouija séance and contacted the spirit of a woman murdered with an axe in 1854, who claimed she was haunting the school for revenge; the spirit of an executed sailor also supposedly came through. The boys described the

cellar becoming icy cold, and all suffered extreme fear and shock. Their trauma received widespread coverage in the *Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and a host of regional newspapers (Source: 'Schoolboys Terrified at Séance' *Evening News*, 17 Mar 1970 etc).

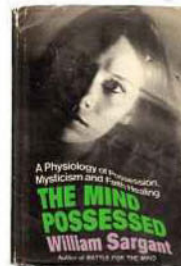
For sceptical psychologists of the time such as Dr William Sargent, extreme states of fear, trances and nervous breakdown

that arose from such dabbling were identical to the physical and mental symptoms associated with nervous collapse or "shell-shock" that occurred among combatants during both World Wars. Following studies of brainwashing in the Korean War, Sargent maintained the power of suggestion could



researcher Frederic Myers stated: "Let me once more point out that there is nothing *superstitious* in experiments of this kind. We are not asking for such messages as authoritative revelations from the spirit world but rather as indications of what is going on in ourselves beneath the threshold of our consciousness." (See *Journal of the SPR* vol.7, 1895-96, p.31). The following year another practitioner, Ada Goodrich-Freer, noted such messages "were often at best much on a level with nonsense dreams, suggested and aided by some subjective perceptions," a view partly shared by the better-read theologians of the day, such as Dr John Nevius, author of *Demon Possession and Allied Themes* (1896). (See also *The Science of Spirit Possession*, 2014, by Terence Palmer).

Indeed, the ouija board was eclipsed by the much more impressive spirit channelling undertaken by many intellectuals during the 19th and early 20th centuries. These included Victor Hugo and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who engaged in numerous experiments without any harm (save to their reputations), though they were often disappointed by the supposed "spirit"



easily trigger emotional and mental collapses, with his studies identifying similar ‘possession’ symptoms amongst religious revivalists, voodoo practitioners and screaming teenage girls enraptured by the Beatles and the Osmonds during the 1960s and 1970s. (see *The Mind Possessed: A physiology of possession, mysticism and faith healing*, 1973, by William Sargent).

Of course, there are other views, including those of certain psychical researchers and some Spiritualists (though Spiritualism is the only religion to back the use of the ouija board) who believe boards open one up to invasion by malevolent spirits. Victor Zammit, author of *A Lawyer Presents the Evidence for the Afterlife*, argues: “No skeptic has been able to explain how groups of normal decent people have elicited horrible blasphemies, curses and all kind of terrifying threats from the Ouija board in a way that they certainly did not from other methods which supposedly projected the unconscious.”

Emphasising the obscene and offensive material sometimes emerging in ouija communications, Zammit suggests malicious spirit entities are at work, an idea traceable back to the French spiritist philosopher Allan Kardec (see <http://www.victorzammit.com/>). Certain ghosts and poltergeists have been known for vile and sulphurous language. Utterances by the Enfield poltergeist (1977-79) were often offensive – though the robust investigators Maurice Gross and Guy Playfair took them in their stride.

Indeed, in England in June 2014 “a foul-mouthed phantom” haunting Oadby and Wigston Town Hall featured in a Channel 4 TV show entitled *Man vs Weird* (though judging by its typical output, swearing, cursing and obscenity is commonplace on Channel 4 – no need for unclean spirits). Nonetheless, the perceived novelty of “a foul-mouthed phantom” swearing at Spiritualist Don Philips, who runs his own team of “ghostbusters” called GSI Paranormal UK, became a news item in its own right. Don was called in to investigate the voices and cries of children heard in the Leicestershire building, which dates from 1850.

Filmed on a night-time investigation at the Council HQ, Don, 48, was later to be seen telling viewers that after the vigil he has received a message from beyond the grave containing a very strong swear word and a threat to kill him. (Source: www.leicestermercury.co.uk/Ghost-hunter-sworn-spirit-8216-haunted-8217-Oadby/story-21199081-detail/story.html#ixzz36R423wb)

In an article *Channelling: Sick or Scientific?* published in 1999, the author JM Decupypere provides a possible explanation for such profanity: “[U]nfortunately many an adolescent has been given the creeps and as a matter of fact some of the



IT EMERGED THAT ‘OSCAR WILDE’ WAS CONTACTING TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE SIMULTANEOUSLY

company might be very undesirable indeed. However, not all of the bad language that occasionally emerges should be regarded as ‘coming through’ a lower entity: coarse language is typical of the adolescent, and the séance offers a perfect opportunity for its covert use... This is why some authors (over)emphasize the danger of Ouija board experiments.” (*Journal of the SPR* vol.63 No. 856).

With ouija channelling it is perhaps a case of you get back what you give out, since if it is the unconscious mind at work, you are effectively engaged in an exercise in talking to yourself (or selves). Releasing a flow of information from the subconscious can be very disturbing, given what some people contain in their deeper selves. Thus, whilst clever literary individuals such as Hugo and Yeats obtained messages from equally erudite communicators, less educated and more uncultured mediums generate more basic and coarser material. In some cases, secondary personalities may become very developed, posing as a variety of different channelled guides and communicators. Occasionally, powers of telepathy, precognition and clairvoyance or psychokinetic effects may be demonstrated also originating within the living human mind, and it has been proposed that the ouija board could be a way of studying them. (See ‘Some Alternative Approaches to Investigations in Telepathy’ by DJ Whitten, *Journal of the SPR* 49, 1977, pp. 644-7).

Dr Nandor Fodor, a Spiritualist who became a Freudian psychoanalyst (see *On the Trail of the Poltergeist*, 1958), believed deeper secondary personalities might even separate from their originating minds (a kind of psychic ‘lobotomy’) and create

effects independently. This is an extraordinary idea, but in light of the famous ‘Philip Experiment’ in Toronto in the 1970s it is arguably no stranger than the concept of discarnate spirits. In passing, one cannot help but note the difference between spirits and channelled alien entities regarding foul language; non-human entities from other planets or stellar systems seem remarkably free of swearing and offensive vocabulary, perhaps because they are deemed more culturally advanced, and not prey to human emotions. (This also applies with extraterrestrials in fiction; the Daleks of *Dr Who*

would lose much of their aura of inhuman malevolence if their metallic speech regularly featured four-letter expletives).

There can also be personal confusion amongst alleged communicators themselves as to personal identity – for example in the records and book compiled by Hester Travers Smith, who believed she communicated with Oscar Wilde through ouija boards, over a lengthy period. Her book *Psychic Messages from Oscar Wilde* (1924) had a foreword by the physicist Sir William Barrett and received a great deal of attention. During sittings it emerged ‘Oscar Wilde’ was contacting two different people simultaneously, prompting the following exchange:

“Question: What do you mean? Surely there are not two Oscar Wildes? Answer: Does that cause you to wonder? Yes, it really is so. Quite possibly our name is legion. The soul is no indivisible unity, no solitary shadow seated in its house of sin. It is a thing, highly complex, built up, layer upon layer...” (*Proceedings of the SPR*, vol.34, 1924).

Of course, the hypothesis that the unconscious mind is largely behind ouija messages could be wrong or only partial; it may be that spirit communication does occur and the possibility ultimately cannot be excluded. As T Arthur Hill wrote when discussing ouija experiments in 1919: “We need to guard against using the subliminal self [an old term for the unconscious] with a comfortable feeling that we have thereby explained things”.

For believers, the spiritual aspect of the ouija board is that it attracts low-level entities; the late Professor Archie Roy in *Archives of the Mind* (1996) compared it to casually picking up strangers in a bar. Even the humanist parapsychologist Hans Bender (1907-1991) warned against ‘mediumistic psychosis’ which could result from the irresponsible use of the board (see Stoker Hunt, op cit). Just as there are some people who should never touch a drop of alcohol or a single peanut, certain vulnerable people should never try ouija boards or channelling.

See also ‘Ouija Madness’ by Robert Damon Schneck **FT249:30-37** and ‘The Medium is the Message’ by Jeffrey Vallance, **FT269:48-49**.



ARCHAEOLOGY

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



ABOVE: These mysterious Amazonian earthworks appear to predate the rainforest. BELOW: Norfolk's second "Seahenge" was found on Holme Beach earlier this year.

MYSTERY AMAZONIAN CIRCLES

A range of earthworks scattered throughout the Bolivian and Brazilian Amazon, comprising square, straight and circular ditches, are being studied by archaeologists and environmentalists. These artificial earthworks remain a mystery: they may have had defensive, drainage, or, more probably, ceremonial functions. They were substantial features, with ditches up to 10ft (3m) deep and 13ft (4m) wide. The researchers took core samples of the sediments from them and have discovered that they were created 2,000-3,000 years ago, before there was rainforest in the Amazon Basin, when the environment was, in fact, savannah. (We have reported in previous columns that giant geometric earthworks – enclosures and road-like features – are being increasingly discovered as the Amazon becomes ever more deforested). *livescience*, 7 July; *Phys. Org*, 8 July 2014.

OLDE ENGLAND (VERY OLDE)

Up until recently, Thatcham in Berkshire was considered to be the oldest settlement in the United Kingdom, but a project run by the University of Buckingham's Humanities Research Institute has now found that Amesbury in Wiltshire, 60km (37 miles) west of Thatcham and a stone's throw from Stonehenge, has apparently been a site of continual occupation since 8,820 BC. This provides evidence that people were

living more settled lives earlier than had been assumed, well before the building of Stonehenge. *History Today*, *Guardian*, *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mail*, 2 May 2014.

ANOTHER TIMBER CIRCLE

In 1998, a prehistoric timber circle, nicknamed "Seahenge" and comprising a ring of what had been oak posts and a central feature formed by the upturned stump of a giant oak tree, was revealed by the tidal erosion of sand on the coast of Norfolk [FT121:8, 126:66, 131:6, 149:23]. Cross-checking between radiocarbon dating and the annular tree rings in the central stump showed that it had been felled between April and June 2050 BC.

Now we have the announcement of another such timber circle on Holme Beach, very close to the site of Seahenge. It is situated below the high water mark, and its visibility comes and goes depending on the motion of the sands with the tides. The ring is formed by the remnants of oak posts. Dating results indicate that the timbers for the feature were felled at virtually the same time as for Seahenge and archaeologists are therefore fairly sure that it was built by the same Early Bronze Age people. The exact purpose of either circle is unknown, though obviously they were ceremonial in some sense, and archaeologists say this second feature will not be excavated. *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 July 2014.



NPS ARCHAEOLOGY

CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

179: 'E-GYPT-ME! (TITLE IN THE SPIRIT OF CARRY ON, CLEO!)

METEORITE SHOWER

It is funny how things go. This column very recently [FT316:14] described how meteoric pieces were greatly venerated by ancient (pre-Columbian) American Indians. Now we learn that the same sort of thing happened on the European side of the Pond. Archæologists from the Institute of Archæology and Ethnology in Szczecin, in north-west Poland, have found a meteorite fragment (below) in a shaman's shelter dating back 9,000 years. The roughly cylindrical pyrite fragment, just over 3in (7.8cm) long, seems to have been venerated, because it was found with other objects that were considered sacred at the time, including an amulet and a rod or wand fashioned from deer antler and marked with geometric symbols.

The Stone Age site was found during excavations at Bolków, by Lake Swidwe in western Pomerania. "The meteorite was brought to the shelter as a special object – they seem to have recognised it was not of this world," Professor Tadeusz Galinski of the Institute is reported as saying. "The thing became an object of belief, and maybe even shamanic magic. They may have realised it was different if it was spotted as it fell to Earth, and would have been identified by the crater it made, and the heat it would have had from entering the Earth's atmosphere. In addition, the side profile shape suggests various associations; the original finder millennia ago probably saw in it shapes of a mysterious world of spirits." *D.Mail Online*, 12 July 2014.



WRITINGS ON THE WALL

A large toilet block and previously unknown inscriptions and graffiti have been uncovered by Polish archæologists at the Christian monastery at the El Ghazali oasis near the town of Merowe in northern Sudan. In cleaning the plastered walls of parts of the toilets and other parts of the monastery complex, graffiti dating to the early part of the 7th century AD were revealed. The dozens of previously unknown inscriptions and drawings depicted both saints and images of Jesus. The cult of angels was extremely popular in al-Ghazali, it appears. Among the inscriptions on the walls of the North Church were the names of the four archangels – Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel. Inscriptions were also found scratched on everyday ceramic vessels. *Past Horizons*, 19 May 2014.

Principal Sources: thousands of papyri from diverse Egyptian sites, above all Oxyrhynchus, its name inspiring Peter Parson's superlative study, *City of the Sharp-nosed Fish* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 2007) and Tony Harrison's musical *Trackers of Oxyrhynchus* (1996). Many are translated in Jack Lindsay's *Daily Life in Roman Egypt* (Frederick Muller, London, 1963), with a fair sampling in my 'Crime and Criminals in Græco-Roman Egypt,' *Aegyptus* 3/4, 1963, pp256-63.

"Egypt, a land difficult of access, divided and disrupted by weird cults and uncontrolled excesses, lawless and anarchic" – Tacitus, *Histories*, bk1 ch11.

"Egyptian-style bandits who grab and strangle us" – Seneca, *Epistle* 51. These ancestors of Thugee were so notorious that they had a special nickname, 'Stelites' = 'The Infamous Ones' – recalling Kenneth Williams's classic line in 'Carry On, Cleo!': "Infamy! Infamy! They've all got it in for me!"

Juvenal, his view perhaps coloured by exile there (thus his ancient biographers, dismissed as simple inference by some editors) lacerates Egyptians and all their ways in his Fifteenth Satire, beginning:

All know the monstrous worship that defiles the Egyptians. They adore the crocodile the ibis gorged with snakes. In awe they gape before the golden image of an ape, where broken Memnon twangs to dawning skies and hundred-gated Thebes in ruin lies. For fish of river or sea the rites are done, whole townships worship dogs; Diana none. The leek's taboo. Don't chew an onion-head. O holy race, whose gods are garden-bred. They spare the woolly race and won't permit the threat of any goat-bitch to be slit, but unrebuked at meals of human flesh they sit.

(Tr. Lindsay, p113)

The last line leads into Juvenal's main theme, a violent punch-up between two neighbouring villages resulting in one straggler being captured and consumed. Most commentators agree this was based on an actual incident. Egyptian anthropophagy is attested by (e.g.) Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, ch72 paras380b-c, and Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, bk71 ch4; for discussion and

bibliography, cf. Gilbert Highet, *Juvenal the Satirist* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1954), pp284-5.

Suetonius (*Nero*, ch37) reports the emperor's notion of throwing living people "to a certain Egyptian *polyphagus* (glutton) accustomed to chomping raw flesh and anything else given to him." These creatures crop up several times in later Roman sources; cf. my 'Polyphagus: Glutton or Crocodile?', *American Journal of Philology* 98 (1977), pp406-09, also FT137:22.

Nero's monster (Name Harpocras) ate his way through the following typical menu: boiled boar, hen with feathers on, 100 eggs, 100 pine-kernels, hobnails (not Hobnobs!), broken glass, broom bristles, four tablecloths, sucking-pig,

bundle of hay – "and still seemed hungry" – puts Monty Python's Mr Creosote quite in the shade.

Crimes reported in the papyri (most in the form of complaints documented in local police reports) run the whole gamut: burglary, highwaymen, kidnappings, muggings, murder, ram-raiding, Uncle



Tom Cobley and all. Two exotic items: the man who attempted to arrest a footpad who had attacked his child while carrying the wee victim in his own arms – an armless effort, surely; the nuns of the Convent of Ama Juliana who colluded with thieves to steal and sell a piece of the House's silver plate for sale to a local silversmith fence.

But, most people's favourite may be this complaint: "An Egyptian woman known as Psenobastis leant out from her upper story and emptied a chamber-pot over me, soaking me to the skin. When I angrily reproved her, she ripped my cloak, exposed my chest, and spat in my face. I have witnesses to prove this."

An Egyptian Karen Matthews? (cf. Owen Jones, *Chavs* (Verso, London, 2011, pp16-37). Maybe. But the complainant was a salesman of sorts, so she may be the heroine – if only we could do the same to telemarketers...

Fort's one big Egyptian anecdote (*Books*, pp678-9) involves the illness and death of Lord Carnavon, supposedly the victim of King Tut's curse. On the day Lord C fell ill, a naked man was observed galloping around his Newbury Estate. On the day he died, the mystery stalker was seen no more – makes a change from all those movie Mummies lumbering about in bandages...

OLD, OLD, VERY OLD

Europe's oldest tree found in a Powys churchyard, plus a round-up of super-oldests from the animal kingdom



ABOVE: The 5,000-year-old yew in St Cynog's churchyard, Dwfynnog, has now seen off all contenders for title of Europe's oldest tree.

EVERGREEN

Hundreds of ancient yew trees in Britain date back at least 600 years, but a 60ft (18m) wide specimen in the Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales is believed to trump them all, and is in very good health. It stands in St Cynog's churchyard at Dwfynnog, near Sennybridge in Powys. "I'm convinced this is the oldest tree in Europe," said Janis Fry, 64, who has studied yews for more than 40 years. "It was planted on the north side of the ancient burial mound which is now the churchyard, probably in honour of a Neolithic chieftain. It is so old that it has split into two halves – one 40ft [12m] wide and the other 20ft [6m] wide. Its DNA has been tested by the Forestry Institute and its ring count is 120 per inch, which makes it [more than] 5,000 years old." The dating of ancient trees is notoriously tricky. Carbon dating depends on finding a fragment of the oldest part of the tree – and ancient trees are generally hollow, making dendrochronology a matter of extrapolation.

The yew previously thought to be Europe's oldest tree (more than 4,000 years BP) is in a graveyard in Fortingall, Perthshire. According to legend, Pontius Pilate was born under the tree when his father was the regional Roman commander [FT64:12]. London's oldest tree is probably a yew in the churchyard of St Andrews, Totteridge Lane, Barnet, which could be 2,000 years old.

One reason for the yew's longevity is its ability to split under the weight of very old growth without falling victim to diseases in the fracture. It is also able to grow new shoots, even in old age, and it grows very slowly, enabling it to survive harsh conditions such as drought. Beams made of yew may even sprout again, long after they have been built into houses. The tensile strength and durability of yew timber are vital in the yew surviving to such remarkable ages. The thin shells of hollow boles hold together and support long branches for centuries where no other wood could do either.

Many pagan religions believed yews were sacred because they were evergreen (symbolising eternal life) and fallen branches could easily regenerate and take root on nearby soil. Yggdrasil, the World Tree or *axis mundi* in traditional Nordic religion, was previously seen as a giant ash, but some scholars now identify it with the European yew (*Taxus baccata*). Old yew trees are often found in churchyards because the early Church routinely took over pagan religious sites. Their dense, dark shade adds an appropriate note of sobriety to these resting-places for the dead. The roots of the yew are very fine and – according to one folk tradition – will grow through the eyes of the dead to prevent them seeing their way back to the world of the living. There is no tradition of planting a yew when a church is built. Nevern in Pembrokeshire has its Bleeding Yew, out of which blood-red sap oozes from a wound 7ft (2m) from the ground [FT43:42].

Some ancient yews may have been planted by the earliest

Christians to mark the position of hermits' cells. At Hope Bagot, beneath Brown Clee in Shropshire, is one of the many yews in Britain associated with holy wells. One of the world's oldest surviving wooden artefacts is a spearhead made of yew found in 1911 in Clacton, Essex, estimated to be about 450,000 years old. Yews have entered gazetteers through names such as Ewhurst in Surrey, Ewshot in Hampshire, and Uley in Gloucestershire. York is a corruption of an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'the place where yew grows'. *D.Telegraph*, 8+9 July 2014.

ANIMAL VETERANS

- A tabby cat called Pinky, belonging to Ann and Bob Higginbottom from Dunston in Lincolnshire, is thought by some to be the world's oldest living domestic cat. She was born in July 1986, making her 28. Pinky and her brother Perky, who died 10 years ago, were rescued by the Higginbottoms after being born on a farm and taken to an RSPCA rehoming centre. Mrs Higginbottom, 73, said: "[Pinky] is amazing really, completely deaf but her eyesight is just as sharp as ever. She likes to sit by our koi pond and just watch them as they swim about." *D.Mail*, 18 July 2014.

Pinky will have to live more than another decade to beat Lucy in the feline longevity stakes. This venerable pussycat, living with Bill Thomas in Llanelli, South Wales, was 39 in February 2011 [FT288:20]; since we heard no news of her death, she might have lived a few more months, or even years. The 'official' (Guinness-recognised) champion is Creme Puff, a Texas cat who died on 6 August 2005 aged 38 years and three days.

- Other old cats deserving a mention include Poppy, nicknamed "stropo Poppy", a deaf, blind and frail tortoiseshell cat living with Jacqui West in Bournemouth, Dorset, and recognised by Guinness last May as the world's oldest. She was born in February 1990 and died on 6 June 2014, aged 24. Lucky, another cat living in Bournemouth, was at least 26 when Poppy was



ABOVE: Pinky (left) celebrates her 28th birthday and possible title of world's oldest cat, once held by Poppy (right), who passed away earlier this year aged 24. **BELOW:** Shayne.

given the longevity title. She was a kitten in October 1987 when Maureen Orchard found her begging for scraps. Possibly older than either is Snowy, cared for by Claire Wills of Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire, who claims that her pet is 27. *D.Mail, D.Mirror, 20 May; D.Express, 31 May, 13 June; BBC News, D.Mail, 11 June 2014.*

- The world's oldest horse died in 2004 at the age of 51. Badger, a grey Arab-Welsh cross, died just weeks after being moved to the Veteran Horse Society in Pembrokeshire, west Wales. Another horse reached the same age in 2013 and was declared the world's oldest. This was Shayne, a chestnut Irish draught cross, who was put down at a sanctuary in Essex. The oldest horse ever recorded was Old Billy who died in 1822 aged 62.

Several donkeys have lived to be 54: Sancho in Lulworth, Dorset, in 2001 [FT157:9]; Suzy, who died in New Mexico in 2002; Rosie in Belper, Derbyshire, in 2009; and Eeyore in Mottram St Andrew, Cheshire, in 2011 [FT288:20]. *D.Mail, 31 Dec 2009, D.Express, 17 April 2004; Sunday Telegraph, 10 Mar 2013.*

- Splish and Splash, thought to be UK's oldest goldfish, belonged to Richard and Ann Wright of Brockworth in Gloucestershire. Their children won them at a fair in 1977. Splish died in April 2013, aged 35, leaving Splash to swim on alone. In the previous three or four years the fish had finally begun to show their age,

losing their gold colour and turning silver. The all-time oldest goldfish is listed as Tish, who died in North Yorkshire in 1999 aged 43; but Goldie, belonging to Tom and Pauline Evans in Bradninch, Devon, turned 44 in January 2004, having been bought by Mrs Evans's father in 1960. There was no proof of purchase, so no 'official' recognition. *D.Mail, D.Express, 24 Jan 2003; D.Mirror, Metro, 15 Jan 2004; D.Mail, 19 April 2013.*

- A 116-year-old tortoise, handed down through three generations of the same family, could be Britain's oldest pet. Tommy, actually a female, was bought as a 10-year-old for £1 from a London market by Margaret

Cloonan in 1909. It now lives in Croydon, south London, with her granddaughter, Sheila Floris, and her husband Carlo. It lives in the garden and has a favourite spot under the hedge. It roams loose during the day, munching on grass and dandelions. The Hermann's tortoise was named Tommy when first purchased, but about 20 years ago the family was surprised when their pet began to lay eggs. *D.Telegraph, 15 July 2014.*

- Another ancient tortoise called Tommy (or rather Thomas) also turned out to be female. This one died at the age of 130 after being bitten on the leg by a rat in its owner's garden in Guernsey in 2013. June Le Gallez inherited Thomas 35 years earlier from a

cousin. Thomas spent five days on a course of strong antibiotics, being fed through a tube, but the wound became so infected that the family had no choice but to put it to sleep. *D.Express, 15 May 2013.*

- Giant tortoises leave Tommy and Thomas far behind. Harriet, for instance, turned 175 in the Australia Zoo near Brisbane in 2005, making her the oldest known living animal on Earth. However, Tui Malila, a Malagasy radiated tortoise once owned by Captain Cook, lived to be 188 (or 192); while Adwaitya, an Aldabra tortoise from the Seychelles that died in a Kolkata (Calcutta) zoo in March 2006, was claimed without solid evidence to be 255 years old. [FT206:24-25, 212:8].

- The oldest gorilla in the UK died in April aged 54, after a life spent at one wildlife park. Western lowland gorilla Mouil was a mother to eight and some of her offspring are part of breeding programmes in Europe. She died of natural causes at Howletts Wild Animal Park near Canterbury in Kent. *D.Mirror, 25 April 2014.*

- One of the oldest elephants in captivity died in August 2013, aged 53. Jenny, belonging to Belfast Zoo's Asian elephant herd, suffered a heart attack caused by an aggressive cancer. She had been at the zoo for four years and was also being treated for a foot injury from her time in an Italian circus. *Metro, 30 Aug 2013.*



FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

More naked cannibal rampages, return of the Bristol Croc and feral fantasist hit with bill

DEFONSECA MUST PAY [FT235:11]



In *Misha: A Memoir of the Holocaust Years* (1997), Misha Defonseca claimed she had wandered across Europe during

World War II as a small Jewish girl, occasionally spending time with wolf packs who adopted her as their cub. In 2008 it emerged that her book was a fantasy, she was raised a Catholic, and her real name was Monique De Wael. She said that her account was “not the true reality, but it is my reality”, and “there are times when I find it difficult to differentiate between reality and my inner world”.

Before the fabrication was exposed, the author and her ghostwriter Vera Lee had won \$32.4 million (£19.4m) from her US publisher Mt Ivy and its founder Jane Daniel after bringing a copyright case against them. Daniel went on to appeal the ruling, and to conduct her own research into the story, discovering that De Wael was actually enrolled in a Brussels school in 1943. Now a judge has ruled that despite the author’s claims that she believed her story to be true during the publication process, she will have to pay back the money she was awarded, which amounts to \$22.5m (£13.5m). *Guardian*, 12 May 2014.

CANNIBAL RAMPAGE [FT290:26-27, 291:10-11]



In 2012 FT noted a spate of violent incidents involving nudity and attempted cannibalism, blamed on a street drug dubbed “bath salts”. In July 2014, it took 10 police officers to hold down a frenzied 28-year-old British man (above) who was chasing holidaymakers and



sinking his teeth into them in the Punta Ballena area of Magaluf in Majorca. He was thought to be under the influence of the stimulant MDPV found in some bath salts, and dubbed “Cannibal” in this news report (although the unnamed man later confessed to taking several different drugs). The “Cannibal” drug was also linked to a 17-year-old English girl taken to hospital in Magaluf after biting people on 2 July. Police thought her drink had been spiked with the drug, which they believed originated with dealers in San Antonio on the neighbouring island of Ibiza. It was blamed for Rudy Eugene’s notorious 2012 attack on Ronald Peppo in Miami – although the pharmacology in these news reports is hopelessly vague. *D.Mirror*, 5 July 2014.

Florida witnessed several similar incidents earlier this year. On 8 February it took a squad of deputies in Palm Beach wielding batons, a police dog, a stun gun and a 10-minute struggle to take down Conrad Hopper, 17, naked and in the throes of “excited delirium”, who had broken into the house of a 15-year-old boy and tried to attack him while shouting nonsensical things, such as, “5, 6, 7, 8, grandma, girlfriend, 1, 2, 3, 4.” Hopper tried to attack the cops with a “large clock, which had numerous sharp utensils protruding from its entire border”. Eventually, Hopper – still thrashing around

– was subdued and given a shot of Valium on a gurney, “which still had no effect in calming him down.” Three days earlier, deputies in West Palm Beach shot dead a naked Anesson Joseph, 28, (above right) who reportedly bit a teen’s face and attacked a retired cop. He charged at deputies before being shot down. *huffingtonpost.com*, 10 Feb 2014.

HAUNTED HOSPITALS [FT311:16-17]



A mob of 200 youths broke into the grounds of Clayton Hospital in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, on 4 January 2014, after rumours that the abandoned 19th century building was haunted went viral on social media. Four were arrested but later released without charge. The hospital had been boarded up since it was



closed in 2012. *Wakefield Express*, 10 Jan 2014.

THE BRISTOL CROCODILE [FT313:10]



Since it triggered a huge police search last February, the “Bristol crocodile” kept a low profile until (apparently) photographed on 24 June by jogger Tamara Blanco, 29, in the river Avon near the Clifton Suspension Bridge. “I felt scared at the time because the thing – whatever it was – was moving in the water,” said the shop assistant, a Spanish national living in Bristol. “I wanted to stay to see it properly but there was no one around and I just didn’t feel comfortable.” The object in her photo could be interpreted as a crocodile’s snout. Reptile expert Joe McQuade, known as Crocodile Joe, said it was “not impossible”



A^Z ALIEN ZOO

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

for a croc to survive in British waters – although he speculated the creature could be an alligator, which could survive colder temperatures. *theguardian.com*, 26 June; *D.Mail*, 27 June 2014.

• On 19 May, a dead crocodile, 4½ft (1.4m) long, was spotted in a stream at Carnwath Golf Course, near Biggar in South Lanarkshire, and reported to the Scottish SPCA. The creature was later identified as a West African dwarf crocodile. It had tapes wrapped around its head and somebody had made a half-hearted attempt at taxidermy: it had no internal organs and its legs were stuffed with straw. Its provenance was unknown. *Western Daily Press*, 7 June 2014.

LIFE SAVERS [FT316:6-7]

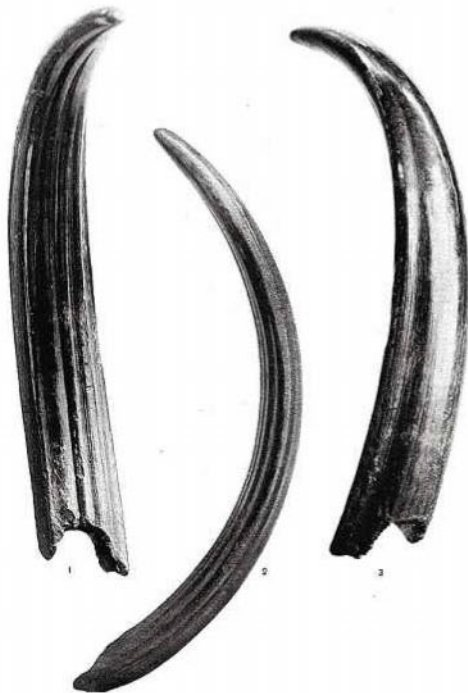


George Vinall, 25, from Eastbourne, served on the front line in World War I. On 17 July 1915 he wrote a letter home enclosing his

Bible and three shrapnel bullets. He related that he was about to lie down in his tent when he saw a friend approaching and stepped towards the door to speak to him, an action that saved his life. German shells began raining down and he dived for cover in a nearby trench.

A dozen men were wounded, two fatally. One bullet was embedded in Vinall's kit where his head would have been; another in the pocket of his tunic, having been stopped by his Bible. It had come to rest at Isaiah 49, verse 8: "I will preserve thee". Vinall was so convinced that God had saved his life that he became a Bible translator after the war. The story is featured in *Hear My Cry*, just published by the Bible Society. *D.Telegraph*, 10 July 2014.

• Bus driver Ricky Wagoner's account of being randomly shot at by teenagers in Dayton, Ohio, on 24 February, the Bible in his chest pocket stopping two bullets, is not supported by the evidence and a reconstruction of the incident, according to the police, who accused Wagoner of spinning a yarn. *Dayton (OH) Daily News*, 19 June 2014.



SEARCHING FOR THE TOOTH - OR TUSK!

In 1904, while visiting an ivory market in Addis Ababa, Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), Baron Maurice de Rothschild and French zoologist Henri Neuville noticed on one stall a very unusual tusk section (the basal portion was missing, having been sawn off), dark in colour and bearing long grooves on its upper surface. The stall owners had no idea of its provenance, so, greatly intrigued, Rothschild and Neuville purchased it. After studying it for two years, comparing it closely with tusks from a wide range of other mammals including fossil ones, they published a very comprehensive scientific paper in October 1907, in which they stated that they were unable to assign the tusk with confidence to any known animal, and considered that it could be from an undiscovered species. Moreover, according to some Somali hunters that Neuville had spoken to, it was from a very strong, hippo-sized, unidentified aquatic creature that inhabited Lake Abaja and certain others in eastern Africa.

Rothschild and Neuville deposited the tusk at Paris's National Museum of Natural History, but when Dr Bernard Heuvelmans attempted to access it around 20 years ago, the museum's staff were unable to locate it, and suspected that it had been lost, probably many years ago. Matt Salusbury, who referred to it briefly in his book *Pygmy Elephants* (2013), has been researching it for some time, as have I. (I uploaded an extensive article of mine concerning the tusk's history and nature onto my ShukerNature blog on 3 July 2014: <http://karlshuker.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/the-curious-case-of-rothschilds-lost.html>.)

Matt is currently attempting to find out whether the tusk is not actually lost but merely mislabelled, quite possibly as a walrus tusk, which it most closely resembles, and also whether it might have been transferred to some other museum, such as London's Natural History Museum, or the Natural History Museum at Tring – which was originally the private museum of Lord Walter Rothschild, a distant relative of Maurice, and someone who had exhibited the tusk on Maurice's behalf at a meeting of the Zoological Society of London in 1905. Let us hope that Matt's endeavours are successful, because today's array of sophisticated analytical techniques might then reveal the cryptic identity of the creature from which it originated.

HARE TODAY, FOUND TOMORROW?

Over the years, *FT* has published a number of readers' letters documenting sightings across the British Isles of mystifying creatures resembling giant hares (sometimes dubbed king hares) or enormous rabbits (e.g. **FT220:77**, **233:75**, **278:76**, **291:71**, **293:69**). But that is all that they have been, sightings – until now... perhaps. On 9 June, Mary Epworth tweeted me with news that she has been told about king hare reports from around where she lives, on the East Hertfordshire/West Essex border. Although she couldn't supply specific details, what she could – and did – inform me in a second tweet was the tantalising claim that there is supposedly a photograph of one such creature in a pub in this region, although no one apparently knows which pub! So, thirsty *FT* readers: if any of you hail from that area and have seen such an exhibit in your local drinking establishment or know of its whereabouts, we'd love to hear from you and to see a snapshot of it if possible. Over to you! *Mary Epworth, pers. comms*, 9 June 2014.

FOR CROWING OUT LOUD - AGAIN!

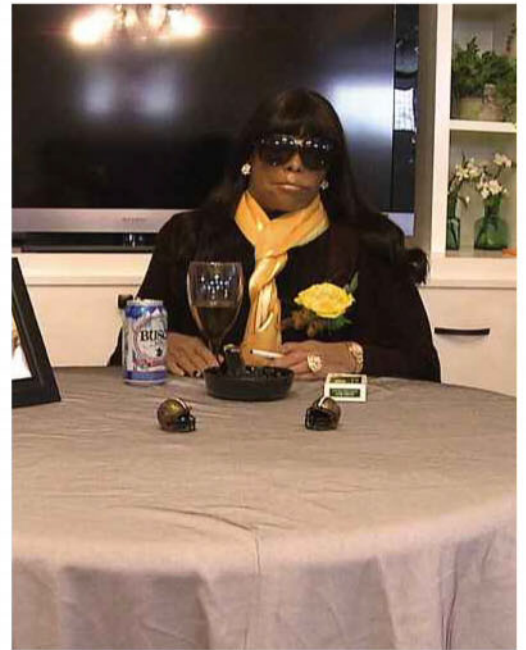
One of Africa's most extraordinary mystery reptiles is the crowing crested cobra – supposedly a very large snake instantly distinguished from all known species by its rooster-like coxcomb and facial wattles, plus its astonishing ability to crow like a rooster too. A smaller version has also been reported from certain Caribbean islands, and there are claims of comparable crypto-snakes from several other countries too, including the Philippines (as I reported in **FT245:16**), where it is known as the banakon. I have now received further information concerning what appears to be the same Filipino cryptid, although the name applied to it on this occasion is the trabunko.

Philippines-based correspondent Omi Draper has informed me that he once interviewed a farmer who saw one many years ago and who informed Omi that it emits a loud rooster-like cry when about to die. Moreover, Omi learnt from a local friend that in one area these snakes used to be actively hunted, captured alive, then sold to Chinese buyers who believed them to be servants of certain Chinese deities. Omi traced a Chinese temple that had allegedly bought one such snake, but he had no luck in seeing it. Quaint folklore, or curious fact? *Omi Draper, pers. comms*, 10 July 2014.



IMITATION OF LIFE

The residents of New Orleans and Florida are putting the fun back into funerals by thinking outside the box.



ABOVE: Family members pose with the body of Christopher Rivera, while Miriam Burbank parties *post mortem*. BELOW: Angel Luis Pantojas Medina, the original *muerto parao*.

Recently, friends and family of Miriam Burbank, who died aged 53, requested that she attend her own service – which she duly did on 12 June, sporting sunglasses and propped up at a table with a glass of Busch beer in one hand and a menthol cigarette in the other. As word of this spread, Louis Charbonnet, the funeral director who posed Mrs Burbank in his parlour, was inundated with calls from locals requesting that they too attend their own funerals in life-like poses reflecting their characters.

Charbonnet, whose Charbonnet-Labat Funeral Home was founded in 1882, began offering his unusual service in 2012 following the death of Lionel Batiste, a band leader and dapper man about town who had told his friends that he didn't want people looking down on him at his funeral. At his service, he was displayed standing up, leaning on a lamppost, hands on his walking cane, beloved derby (bowler hat) tipped rakishly to one side. In April, the family of Mickey Easterling, 83, a prominent socialite, arranged for her to be viewed as if greeting guests to

Billy was towed to the cemetery astride his Harley Davidson

her funeral while sitting behind a bench in the lobby of an historic theatre. She was dressed in an evening gown, complete with ornate hat and a pink feather boa. Charbonnet is not the first to

pose cadavers in such a way. In Chicago in 1984, a well known gambler called Willie 'Wimp' Stokes, shot dead aged 28, attended his funeral at the wheel of a coffin resembling a Cadillac Seville; and in early 2014, the family of biker Billy Stanley, 82, honoured his wish to be towed to a cemetery in Mechanicsburg, Ohio, astride his customised Harley-Davidson Electra Glide cruiser, on which he was buried, inside a glass casket. Meanwhile in Florida, Walter Bruhl, 81, has arranged to be propped up against a wall with

a whisky in his hand when friends and family see him one last time at a funeral home in Punta Gorda.

Charbonnet said he was inspired by a recent craze for seating and standing corpses started by the Marin Funeral Home in San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico. This began in 2008 when the family of Angel Luis Pantojas Medina, a 24-year-old murder victim, held his funeral in the living room with his body tethered to the wall – an event which became known as *muerto parao*, or dead man standing. It was followed two years later by Carlos M Cabrera Mercado, who was dressed for his wake like Che Guevara, sitting cross-legged on the floor with a cigar in hand, and deceased paramedic Edgardo Velazquez who was displayed behind the wheel of his ambulance.

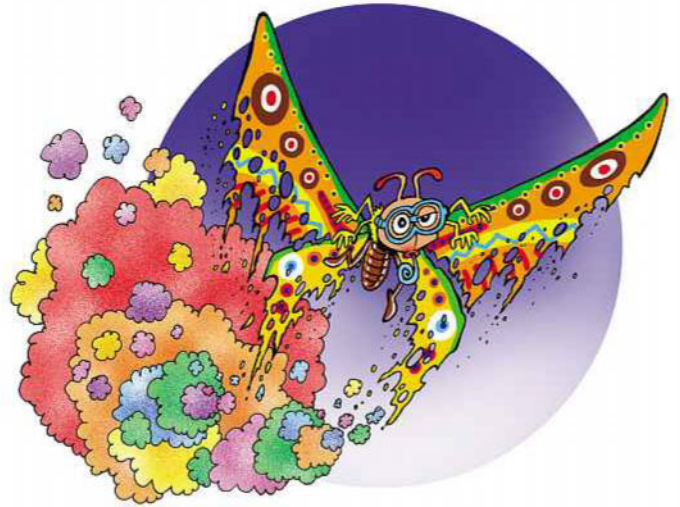
This year, the robed body of Christopher Rivera, 23, a shooting victim and boxer, was viewed in a boxing ring, and an elderly woman, Georgina Chervony, 80, was propped up in her rocking chair. *Sun*, 22 June; *D.Telegraph*, *Int. NY Times*, 23 June; *D.Mirror*, 24 June 2014.



Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

179: BUTTERFLY DUST



The myth

If you touch a butterfly's wing, and it leaves a dusty deposit on your fingers, the creature will no longer be able to fly. You've effectively killed it, you clumsy sod.

The "truth"

The name of their order, *Lepidoptera*, means "scaly wings", and most species of butterflies and moths have wings covered with tiny scales, arranged like roof tiles. The main purpose of the scales is to produce colours and patterns on the wings, to attract potential mates, and at the same time repel, or else hide from, potential predators. The males of some species use scales to produce pheromones. Scales also serve to give stability to the structure of the wing, and possibly aid temperature control, so they do indeed play a role in flight. However, butterflies lose scales (which are non-replaceable) all the time, throughout their lives, while going about their everyday business, of fluttering, causing typhoons, etc. The idea that any disturbance at all of the magic wing-dust will leave a butterfly flightless is groundless. The amount of scales lost from normal, gentle handling will make no appreciable difference to the insect. Researchers routinely tag butterflies, which presumably do not tumble to the floor the moment they're released.

Sources

www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/reports_anatomy.php;
www.kidsbutterfly.org/faq/appearance/5;
www.learnaboutbutterflies.com/Anatomy%203.htm;
http://insects.about.com/od/butterfliesmoths/f/touch_butterfly_die.htm

Disclaimer

All the same, it seems reasonable to assume that butterflies would prefer not being mauled by sausage-fingered children – wings and other body parts can certainly be accidentally damaged by rough handling. Whatever the exact truth about dust disturbance (and please do tell us more via the letters page), the expert consensus seems to be that it's fine to touch butterflies when necessary, such as when freeing them from inside a car, but best to leave them alone otherwise.

Mythchaser

A reader wants to know whether the term "Black widow spider" is an example of what she calls *mythconomenclature* – in other words, is it true that black widows do *not* routinely eat their mates?



ABOVE: Carlos M Cabrera Mercado enjoys a last cigar; Mickey Easterling appears to greet the guests at her funeral; Edgardo Velazquez behind the wheel of his ambulance.

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NECROLOG

This month, the Highlander who encountered the Morar lake monster, a pioneer bioarchaeologist and syphilis researcher, and one very primitive Baptist minister



DUNCAN McDONELL

Steering his small motorboat towards the western end of Loch Morar on 16 August 1969, Duncan McDonnell (correct spelling) experienced what was very probably the most significant lake monster encounter of the past half-century.

The report that he subsequently made is significant for two reasons. First, it attracted wide attention from the world's media, helping to explode the notion – far more common then than now – that Loch Ness is the only place in the world where lake monsters are sighted.

Secondly, and more importantly, it recorded what really was an encounter, not a sighting. McDonnell and Willie Simpson, his companion on the boat that day, reported a very close brush with a substantial animal, which not only collided with their boat, but had to be fended off using an old oar, which McDonnell snapped in two in his attempt to push the creature away. If McDonnell was telling the truth (and very many, not least in the Morar district, were sure he was), he not only had the unique experience of testing his strength against a lake monster's; he was also a one-man reproach to those who argue that monster sightings are nothing but a melange of lies, errors, wishful thinking and the misidentification of distant but everyday objects.

Duncan McDonnell lived all his life in the beautiful surroundings of the Morar district, at the heart of the "Rough Bounds" of the Scottish Highlands. His family had been in the area for generations; his grandfather (whose nickname 'Solomon' denoted an education

unusual for the day) was census-taker for the district, and his father Donald was a musician famed for his ability to make a fiddle sound like bagpipes.

McDonnell himself grew up in Bracara, overlooking the loch, and claimed more than half a dozen encounters with its monster, known popularly as Morag. These 'claims' were scarcely in the league of those advanced by Alex Campbell, the determined populariser of the Loch Ness Monster. He spoke only rarely and reluctantly about his experiences; one of the more impressive aspects of his 1969 encounter was that he and Simpson had privately agreed not to speak of the incident, and were angered when a relative's loose tongue alerted the press.

Probably the earliest of McDonnell's sightings occurred in childhood, most likely some time in the 1940s, and was recalled in 2009 for the local historian Alasdair Roberts: "Fourteen of us saw it together when we were walking home from the school at Bracarina." On another occasion, he saw what he thought was a head and neck protruding three feet above the loch's surface.

The 1969 encounter was vividly embroidered when it made the press, which published versions in which the monster snapped his oar in two with its teeth and was wounded by a shotgun blast discharged by Simpson. These stories encouraged the men to submit their own accounts to the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau – which was sufficiently impressed to form a separate Loch Morar Survey the next year.

The McDonnell-Simpson encounter began late in the evening, at the end of a day's fishing. The sun had set, but the light was still good and McDonnell was motoring at about six knots while his friend was making tea in the cabin. Then, McDonnell said, "I heard a splash or a disturbance in the water astern of us. I looked up and about 20 yards behind us this creature was coming directly after us in our wake. It took only a matter

of seconds to catch up on us.

"It grazed the side of the boat, I am quite certain this was unintentional. When it struck the boat it seemed to come to a halt or at least slow down. I grabbed the oar and was attempting to fend it off, my one fear being that if it got under the boat it might capsize it." The animal, he added, was 25ft or 30ft (7.6–9m) long, with a rough skin that was a dirty brown in colour. It had three humps (McDonnell later corrected this to undulations) that rose about 18in (46cm) above the surface. The top of a snake-like head a foot (30cm) across was also seen. When pressed against with an oar, the body felt solid, McDonnell said – there was no 'give'. He thought it might have been an overgrown eel.

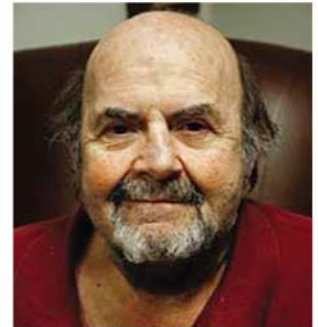
Duncan McDonnell was a well-liked and respected member of the Morar community. He was a steady Catholic, who regretted the withering of the local congregation but remained noted for his geniality and his habit of always wearing a deerstalker cap.

Duncan McDonnell, lake monster witness, born Bracara, Morar, Scotland 1932; died Mallaig 12 May 2014, aged 82.
Mike Dash

GEORGE ARMELAGOS

This professor of anthropology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, was a pioneer in the field of bioarchaeology who upset many preconceptions about the past, including the ideas that the move from hunter-gathering to agriculture represented progress, that the spread of deadly pathogens from the Old World to the New was a one-way process, and that the age of antibiotics began with Alexander Fleming.

In *Paleopathology at the Origins of Agriculture* (1984, edited with MN Cohen), he described how the move from foraging to settled agriculture from around 10,000 years ago had led to declining health and an increase in nutritional and infectious diseases among human populations. For example, an examination of 600 skeletons from an Indian burial site in Illinois



showed that after intensive maize cultivation was adopted around AD 1200, the incidence of anaemia rose to 64 per cent from 16 per cent, while average life expectancy dropped to 19 years from 26.

Analysing the results of more than 20 studies, Armelagos found that in virtually all cases the height and health of the people declined. As people became dependent on particular food crops, the variety in their diet became restricted, making them more prone to nutritional ailments. Meanwhile, demographic growth spurred by agricultural settlements led to an increase in infectious diseases, probably exacerbated by poor sanitation and proximity to domesticated animals.

This trend, he found, was repeated worldwide, with one exception: in peoples living in the Nile Valley in what is now Sudan nearly 2,000 years ago. Armelagos and his colleagues studied bones from Nubia, a kingdom south of ancient Egypt, which were remarkably free of signs of the sort of infections associated with settled societies. Analysis of the bones showed that the Nubians were regularly consuming tetracycline, a broad-based antibiotic, most probably in their beer. Indeed their bones were saturated with tetracycline. The antibiotic is naturally produced by a soil bacterium called streptomycetes, and scientists believe that streptomycetes might have thrived in vats of Nubian beer – a cereal gruel made out of fermented bread. The high concentrations of tetracycline in Nubian bones, however, suggested that Nubians were regularly consuming the antibiotic and were doing so on purpose, having

mastered the complicated brewing process necessary to produce antibiotic beer routinely, contradicting the notion that the drugs are a modern invention. Armelagos described the discovery as “like unwrapping an Egyptian mummy and seeing a pair of Ray-Ban sunglasses strapped to the head”.

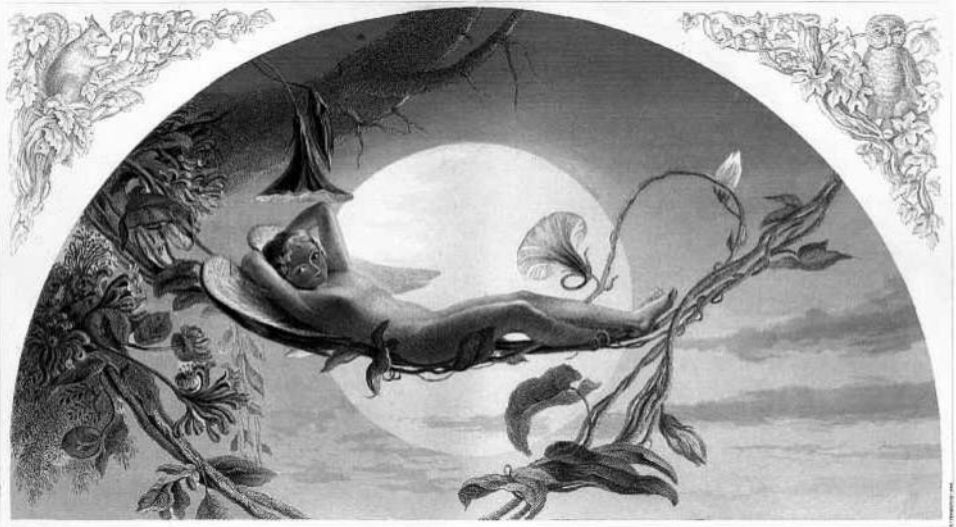
Armelagos also led research on the origins and spread of syphilis. The popular hypothesis was that it had been brought back from the New World by Columbus and his crew, while sceptics claimed that it had been endemic in Europe for centuries but had not been distinguished from other rotting diseases such as leprosy until around 1500. However, analysing skeletons dating from before 1492, Armelagos found that they failed to meet at least one of the standard diagnostic criteria for chronic syphilis, such as pitting on the skull, and pitting and swelling of the long bones. European skeletons meeting the criteria that apparently predated 1492 came from coastal regions where seafood was a large part of the diet, notorious for throwing out radiocarbon estimates by hundreds – even thousands – of years.

George John Armelagos, pioneer bioarchaeologist, born Detroit, Michigan 22 May 1936, died Atlanta, Georgia, 15 May 2014, aged 77.

FRED PHELPS

Phelps was a clergyman who founded the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) based in Topeka, Kansas, in 1955. He provoked universal disgust by picketing funerals of Aids victims and soldiers with his tiny congregation (consisting almost entirely of his relations) wielding banners with slogans such as “God hates fags” and “Thank God for dead soldiers”. Phelps was a disbarred lawyer and a former civil rights activist who had once been honoured by the NAACP. An era of intense national media coverage was kick-started in 1998 when WBC picketed the funeral of Matthew Shepherd, a gay 21-year-old student from Wyoming, who was tortured and killed in what was said to be a hate crime. “Matt in Hell” said one of Phelps’s signs. Phelps described the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 as a “glorious sight”. He believed that the US was beyond redemption.

Fred Waldron Phelps, self-proclaimed Primitive Baptist, born Meridian, Mississippi 13 Nov 1929; died Topeka, Kansas 19 Mar 2014, aged 84.



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

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

CAULS FOR SALE...

Belief in the magic and lucky properties of the caul, the amniotic sac with which a tiny percentage of babies are ‘masked’ when they enter this world, features in several antique, mediæval and renaissance accounts.

For example, the 16th-century ‘good walkers’, the *benandanti* of Friuli in Italy, who flew out and fought witches in the skies above their villages, were chosen because they had been born ‘hooded’. However, it is surprising how long belief in the caul’s efficacy and even caul sales survived in the UK.

The best source of information for this hidden trade comes, of all places, in the small ads of 19th-century national and provincial newspapers. For instance, 18 June 1886, *Lloyds Weekly* carried three different adverts for “child’s caul”: one for £4, one for £3 10 shillings and one open to offers. Just to put this in perspective a laundry maid was typically paid about £20 *per annum* in the 1870s.

Few people today would be aware what a caul looks like: at least not the sanitised versions passed down in families and sold to the superstitious. Imagine an Autumn-leaf-yellow, wrinkled, collapsed, papery bag. However, the adjectives employed in newspaper adverts suggests that those looking to buy a caul knew exactly what they wanted: the £4 caul above was “very fine”; a caul from 7 April 1878 was described as being

“unusually large”; while another in the same issue was “a full-size double male child’s caul”. I can see no way in which a purchaser would have been able to tell the difference between the amniotic sac (fished out of the afterbirth) and a genuine magical caul, a portion of the sac, which on rare occasions adhered to a child’s head.

I was curious, though, as to who actually bought these objects, spending a couple of months’ pay into the bargain. A “poor woman” who applied to *Reynolds’ Newspaper*, 3 April 1853, to ask where she could sell a caul in her possession, was told: “Sea captains will frequently give five or even ten pounds for a child’s caul.

You should either advertise it in the *Times*, or apply on board some ship in dock.” *The Freeman’s Journal*, 9 October 1874, has a small ad addressed “To Captains” offering “a child’s caul”; it is sandwiched jarringly between an appeal for a lost cheque and a notice about the sale of an ageing Brougham.

And why the interest at sea? In a word, drowning. Children born with the caul could not apparently perish in the water. *Notes and Queries* (1899, 26) has a charming report about a buoyant caul baby: “When his mother tried to bathe him he sat on the surface of the water, and if forced down, came up again like a cork.” And when did caul sales die out in the UK and Ireland? Anecdotal evidence suggests just before World War II.

Simon Young writes on folklore and history and runs www.fairyist.com

“WHEN HIS MOTHER
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UFOs? THAT WAS US!

During the Cold War, intelligence agencies guarded all their secrets within layers of impenetrable security. But today MI6 has its own website and its US equivalent, the CIA, has an active Twitter account. Last year the agency confounded conspiracy theorists when it confessed that its secret facility at Area 51 in Nevada really did exist (see **FT308:24**). But it claimed the remote airstrip was used exclusively from the 1950s to test-fly the top secret U2 spyplane (above) and other cutting-edge black project aircraft such as the Lockheed A-12 and the SR-71 Blackbird. It said there are no flying saucers hidden at Area 51 and the only back-engineering done there was on captured Soviet-era MiG jets.

Having caught the disclosure movement by surprise, in July the agency took to social media to repeat its claim that the U2 was responsible for many UFO reports by aircrew logged by Project Blue Book. In a Tweet to mark the anniversary of the first successful photo reconnaissance flight by the U2 on 4 July 1956 @CIA announced: "Remember reports of unusual activity in the skies in the '50s? That was us." This was followed by a story in Oslo's largest evening newspaper, *Aftenposten*, that said the U2 was responsible for a 1950s UFO flap in Norway when civilian and military pilots reported seeing mysterious craft hurtling ahead of them at incredible speeds. Observers on the ground said they had seen "fiery objects" flying way above the top ceiling used by military aircraft at heights above 60,000ft (18,300m). The CIA's official

history of the U2 says that "at this time no one believed manned flight was possible" at this altitude and "no one expected to see an object so high in the sky."

As friendly countries were kept in the dark about spyplane overflights, we have been pondering which other classic UFO reports from this period could be explained. One puzzling unsolved case from the British Air Ministry's files has long been suspected as a prime candidate. In April 1957, just nine months after the U2 began its long-distance operations from Germany, RAF radars at West Freugh in Scotland detected a cluster of solid objects moving at 70,000ft (21,300m) above the Irish Sea. The sighting led to questions at the Joint Intelligence Committee in Whitehall and British newspapers speculated this UFO might have been a Soviet intruder probing NATO defences in the North Atlantic. Was the West Freugh UFO a 'special' – and if so, was it one of ours or one of theirs? Time for the CIA to 'fess up.

BBC News; *Aftenposten*, 3 July 2014; @CIA

WILD IN THE COUNTRY

The peace and quiet of the idyllic Surrey countryside was shattered early in July when police were called to investigate a mysterious black object flying through the sky. The 'object' eventually crashed to earth and dog teams were sent to root out what had caused all the fuss. Of course, the mystery was quickly cleared up and the whole episode forgotten by media and witnesses alike. Why then are we bothering to discuss it here? Well, as we all

know, UFO reports that are initially unexplained but quickly solved are two a penny and barely rate a mention in the UFO literature or online. In the mainstream media, stories about UFOs are usually brief and often there just to liven up an otherwise dull news day. But FlyingSaucery believes it is these run-of-the-mill, quotidian, UFO sightings that provide clues towards the solution of the mystery.

On the surface, this story is just another straightforward case of mistaken identity, or misperception. But from our experience this is the most important cause of most UFO reports. Look closer at this case you can see how the UFO phenomenon persists and adapts itself to the prevailing zeitgeist. Most unusual sightings are linked both by witnesses and the media to ideas about extraterrestrial craft: in this case, Surrey newspapers said the scare happened "just days before World UFO Day" on 2 July.

But those who saw the object invoked a different type of phenomenon to 'explain' the sighting. Witness Becky Marsden said the thing she saw whilst out riding with her boyfriend looked more "like something out of a horror film." She said it was "similar to two Dementors from Harry Potter flying towards her." This raises several questions. Firstly, had this sighting taken place a century ago, when horror films did not exist, there would have been no direct comparator of this kind for her to draw on. We suspect what Becky and the other witnesses really meant was they were frightened by seeing something they could not immediately identify. This fear and lack of context led them to join the psychological dots. They saw something they couldn't identify and had no name for. This generated fear, which in turn created a need to define the object as 'something'. The nearest comparison was something from popular culture – in this case the Harry Potter movies. Perhaps this case implies that 'classic' UFOs that are perceived to be carrying aliens from outer space may be on the wane.

Oh, and what was this aerial human-scarer? Nothing but a piece of windborne agricultural netting lifted from a farmer's field by a freak wind and sent spiralling upwards into the sky. There is nothing more frightening than the ordinary when seen out of place. And that, pilgrims, may well be the secret to the flying saucer mystery. Discuss!

Surrey Advertiser, 2 July: www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/ufo-sighting-like-something-out-7354803

BEAM ME UP...

UFO commentator André Skondras seemed taken aback by some comments on British TV in mid-July when media scientist Professor Brian Cox told the ITV *This Morning* audience that teleportation was now a reality.

This should not be news to readers of this column (see **FT216:28**). Experiments in transferring light from one place to another – by deconstructing and rebuilding at the new location – have been occurring in physics labs since the late 1990s. Whether this ever becomes *Star Trek* style ‘transporting’ rather than high-tech photocopying is another question; and, of course, doing the same with anything as complicated as a human being is not yet feasible. But if it does become so, it will have major implications for science and pose some big questions – such as exactly what gets teleported from A to B: the real you or a facsimile?

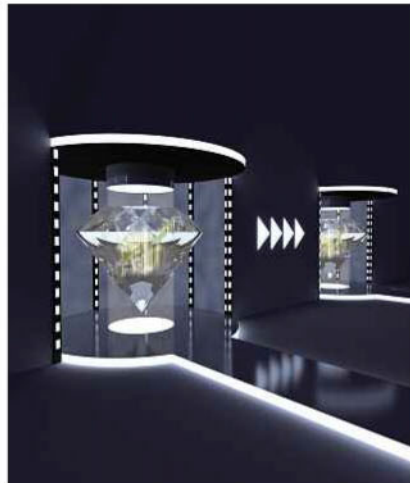
Most teleportation experiments have been using quantum physics to ‘move’ data ‘instantly’ in the quest to develop super-fast computers. These tests transfer packets of energy from one place to another by a sort of linked recreation process that acts in remarkable ways that even Einstein considered too fantastic.

Last year (**FT301:27**) I looked at modern research in this area, but some new findings were published in *Science* on 29 May 2014 by the Kavli Institute at Delft University in the Netherlands. They achieved near 100 per cent perfection in teleporting quantum energy bits across 3 metres (10ft) of space – a goal previously not possible and, of course, essential if teleportation is to be regarded as a reliable method of data transfer. To make this breakthrough, the researchers used linked electrons held at very low temperatures in diamond and the team are sure they can increase their range. Much lower degrees of perfection over 100km (60 miles) have already been achieved.

But Skondras was most excited by the UFO implications and sent a missive to the UFO community about Cox’s acceptance of teleportation. Use of this word actually began with Charles Fort back in 1931 (see **FT192:54–56**), so teleportation and strange phenomena have been bedfellows from the start; ufological excitement, it is supposed, may be because some aliens reputedly arrive and depart in this magical fashion.

Skondra cited as an example the so-called ‘Cumberland Spaceman’ case which has also been subject to some discussion in these columns lately (see **FT305:28**). The 50th anniversary of this famous case occurred in the week that the Kavli report was published and a video analysis on You Tube from Gordon Hudson has been attracting attention. It offers his simple assessment of the ‘spaceman’ in the background of a family shot taken by fireman Jim Templeton on Burgh Marshes, Cumbria, in May 1964 and suggests a person walking away from the camera who was not noticed on the day.

A teleporting person might regain the



vanished mystery of this case, but Hudson’s more credible explanation is of a passer-by who by chance resembled a ‘spaceman’ in the finished photo. Rather as a seagull looks like a seagull when you watch it fly above but has a habit of manifesting on film like a classic flying saucer when frozen by the shutter of a camera. On seeing the weird photo that fate creates it is easy to assume that some bizarre cause must apply; and so a legend is born.

In my view, whilst I am unpersuaded by Hudson’s answer, it is certainly more likely that an unseen ordinary human strayed into Jim Templeton’s shot than did a teleporting entity. My doubts only exist because 20 years ago – when I met the family whilst researching this case – I asked Jim and his wife if this solution was possible. They felt that they would have seen intruders on the open marsh, but did not, and Mrs Templeton was with their other daughter with a good view. Who knows if they just missed a momentary intruder (with or without a teleport)? But I imagine teleportation is not the last knot that will tie itself around the facts of this story on a long road toward illumination.

However, there are cases in the UFO records where teleportation might provide a slightly more hopeful area of exploration. Take a very strange episode that I looked into some years ago where a man in his 20s was driving through the village of Little Houghton in Northamptonshire in September 1973. He read the time as 2am from a church clock. Claiming not to be intoxicated despite being at a late night dance – precisely because he knew he faced a long drive home – the man says there was a ‘discontinuity’ at this point.

One moment he was passing the church, the next he was at Bromham, 16 miles (26km) away in the direction of Bedford. He was on foot – with no sign of his car – and dripping wet, even though the weather was dry. It was also now daylight and hours later.

Assuming he’d had a car accident, though apparently unhurt, he called a friend and they retraced the route until, some five miles (8km) away, they discovered his car in a field near a village called Turvey. The car was locked (he had the keys in his pocket) and it was inside the heavily mud soaked field with no sign of

tracks leading to its position. The gate to the field was bolted. The car was undamaged and worked perfectly, but the mud made it impossible to drive away and the farmer had to tow it out with a tractor.

Weather data showed that rain had fallen during the missing few hours, and, presumably, therefore, after the car got into the field – but how or why this occurred and why the driver abandoned it there is unclear.

Of course, the man might have decided to park off-road because he was tired, and then became trapped by the sudden rain, unable to drive out again. But why drive into the middle of the field? Or forget what occurred? Or, indeed, not stay in the car until daybreak when passing help could be easily summoned?

A clue comes from something that the driver did not immediately recall. It was in 1975 when he first remembered the immediate moments before waking up miles away. He recalled the sight of a fuzzy white light heading towards the windscreen. So, now, the incident became a UFO sighting. If – and it is, of course, speculative – teleportation can occur in nature in extreme circumstances, might this rare phenomenon offer a possible explanation of events in this case?

Yes, it may be stretching possibility, when accident, memory loss, and so on, might offer the simpler solution. But that is before you take into account that this is not a unique example. I have come across very similar incidents all over the world, and they share certain patterns with incidents within the realms of physics.

When at a book fair in Hungary, I came across a case from 1992 on the shores of Lake Balaton that might sound familiar. Briefly, a woman driving late at night saw a fuzzy white glow head for her windscreen; then it was some hours later and she was scrambling away from her car for help. After hospital treatment for minor injuries, including a red rash on her exposed flesh, the police recovered her car from a field. This was well away from any road and surrounded by days-old snow, but without any tyre marks indicating how it had been driven there. The car was undamaged other than the door handle, which was all but welded shut as if by some intense localised heat that had left no other traces.

There are cases like these from most continents – seemingly independent and spread across the decades. There appear to be too many examples for us not to at least consider an admittedly strange possibility.

Is some rare phenomenon occurring from time to time within our atmosphere that might be akin to a large-scale version of those modern lab tests? If so, and humans and their vehicles are passing through the looking glass via teleportation, then what do we make of the amnesia that results?

And, harking back to the question posed earlier, how sure can we be as to which ‘you’ emerges from the other side of this journey through space and time?

IN SEARCH OF THE WOODWOSE

MATT SALUSBURY gets on his bike and heads for the wilds of Suffolk in search of the woodwose – a mediæval wildman found carved on the fonts and porches of churches throughout the county. But what is this hairy man-beast, and do its numerous ecclesiastical appearances commemorate a real British Bigfoot that once stalked the English countryside? Photographs by the author.

Suffolk, mainland Britain's easternmost county, last year adopted the controversial slogan "the Curious County". The churches of mostly rural Suffolk do harbour a curiosity, though – woodwoses (or wodewoses: literally "wild-men-of-the-woods"), hirsute animals brandishing clubs. Particularly in Suffolk Coastal District, few churches are without at least one woodwose. Believed to date from the 15th century, these are carved on the staves of stone baptismal fonts, or as a relief hewn into the porch of a church, where they are usually to be found with a club and shield raised as they close in for combat with a dragon or wyvern.

The woodwoses on the font of St Andrew's Walberswick are ruined: some of their heads are gone and you can just make out the wavy hair on the torsos that remain. When I first saw the ruined Walberswick woodwoses, I mistook them for a particularly hairy Adam and Eve.

The Protestant reformers – enforcing an edict of 1540 from the Tudor boy king Edward VI ordering the smashing of statues in churches – showed predictable hostility to these and other Suffolk woodwoses. Some local woodwose-bearing fonts only survive because the idolatrous bits were plastered over until the commissioners had gone away.

While the seaside village of Walberswick is a famously fashionable holiday resort – the haunt of Hampstead literati and the Freud family in particular – Suffolk's woodwoses tend to be in out-of-the-way

I FIRST MISTOOK
THEM FOR A
PARTICULARLY
HAIRY ADAM
AND EVE

of Suffolk Coastal District and the western edge of Mid-Suffolk District in a day by car. A determined, fit cyclist in good weather could do them in a full day. I made a woodwose run from Halesworth station to the villages of Crediton, Cratfield, Badingham and onward to Darsham station in a day's cycle ride before sundown, including pub and tearoom stops for the rainy bits. Peasenhall and Sibton are do-able by bike in a long afternoon from Darsham or Saxmundham stations.

The diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich even lays on occasional "woodwose bike routes" that cover two or three "woodwose churches" in a day at a more leisurely pace than my Stakhanovite two-wheeled woodwose road trips of well over 20 miles each.

Holidaying "smart set" Radio 4 listeners (and – a few summers back – then Prime Minister Gordon Brown, up for his hols in the trendily retro holiday resort of Southwold, where beach huts change hands for over £100k) mostly dash into the far less chic town of Halesworth just long enough to fill up the 4x4 with posh dinner party ingredients and then speed out again. Halesworth has its own miniscule museum, and is famed among trainspotters

for its "moving platform", a combined railway platform and level crossing. The parish church of St Mary's Halesworth does, however, have woodwoses on the font.

The standard woodwose-on-a-font configuration is four of them facing outward,



places unlikely to feature in glossy Sunday supplements any time soon. The area of the county with the greatest density of "woodwose churches", inland from the "Suffolk Heritage Coast" and west of the A12, is so far off the map there's actually a 'Lonely Wood' there, and several 'Lonely Farm' addresses.

You could take in most of the woodwoses

ABOVE: A helpful sign in the drive-through churchyard of St Mary's, Chediston.





ABOVE LEFT AND INSET: Worn woodwoses on the font of St Mary's, Chediston. BELOW: The Christlike face of a Chediston woodwose. ABOVE: And a Satanic Halesworth bull.

rarely more than a foot high, generally flanked by sitting lions, along with the angels and winged animals representing the Four Evangelists: Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Most of Suffolk's woodwose-bearing fonts conform surprisingly closely to this arrangement. The head of the bull signifying St John in Halesworth church looks strangely satanic, while some of Halesworth's font woodwoses stand with their legs crossed, their clubs resting on the ground.

From Halesworth the road to my next woodwose stop, the very small and mostly thatched village of Chediston, took me along a "roadside nature reserve" and then through miles of rape crops with the occasional field of alpacas.

The churchyard of St Mary's Chediston is a thoroughfare, with a battered "Please drive very slowly in the churchyard" sign. The woodwoses on the 15th century font in the otherwise bare church looked almost exactly like Halesworth's, except that some have surprisingly Christ-like beards and expressions, and the seated lions flanking them had broad grins.

The next woodwose font halt was St Peter's Sibton, which used to be an abbey church (you can see the ruins of the abbey in a distant field). The four Sibton woodwoses have more muscular limbs and thicker hair, and stare suspiciously at you as they guard the font. Most beasts in mediæval art were in some way allegorical, and woodwoses were said to represent strength. They're also the right shape to fit neatly within the space of the upright staves of a font: tall and thin, holding a club.

The Church of St John the Baptist lies on the edge of the ancient market town of Saxmundham, right next to its Tesco and Waitrose superstores. St John's has just two woodwoses on its font, which is – I have to agree with the assessment of church's own guide – "a splendid specimen in an excellent state of preservation."

Saxmundham's woodwoses are 18-in (46cm) Renaissance works of art – why they aren't



as well known as the works of Michelangelo is beyond me. Their extraordinarily detailed little faces have all the dignity of biblical patriarchs, and their features could pass muster as a slightly retro Neanderthal reconstruction. Flanked by the standard smiling lions (these ones have their tongues out), the burly, thick-limbed "Sax" wildmen sport late 15th century woollen hats and are otherwise naked under their thick, superbly detailed fur. One has his club raised, another rests his on the ground, his legs crossed.

WOODWOSE VERSUS WYVERN

More imposing than little woodwoses on font staves – in the humble opinion of this woodwose aficionado, at least – are the woodwoses carved on Suffolk church porches. Sometimes they're well over 2ft (60cm) high.

The porch of St John the Baptist Badingham has a very worn outline of a woodwose with long hair on its head and a thick club raised at an equally worn wyvern. Either the elements have eroded both protagonists away, or the religious reformers have defaced them. In any



ABOVE: A handsome Saxmundham woodwose brandishing his club and wearing a fetching woollen hat.



ABOVE: A woodwise on the porch of St Mary's, Cratfield, and another on the font of St Michael the Archangel, Framlingham. BELOW: A wary woodwise, St Peter's, Sibston.

event, you can barely see their outlines. Out in the middle of nowhere, nearer Badingham than anywhere else, I came across a stately hall whose name had long faded from its sign in the drive, leaving only the words "No Salesmen" legible.

The boring old font in St Mary's Church, Cratfield, has realistic biblical human figures, possibly damaged by Tudor church reformers. Cratfield's woodwise on the porch may be less than 2ft tall, but he's impressive. With his legs tucked into the space available above the arch over the door, he has an angry expression, short curly hair on his head and a pointy beard. While most woodwoses on Suffolk church porches are fighting two-legged wyverns, this one's going up against a fat dragon with two sets of legs.

Badingham and Chediston are far enough away from anywhere else that those doing the woodwise run might consider a stop at the King's Head (aka 'The Low House') in Laxfield. The King's Head is listed as a "heritage pub", which could be code for "eccentric layout", as it's a pub with no bar. I walked into a dead end with taps and barrels, and a price list hanging up, and a sort of partition where the crisps and peanuts were on display, and someone asked if they could help me. "I'm looking for the bar," I said. "We haven't got one," the not-barmaid replied. They bring the drinks to your table, somewhere in a warren of multiple snugs with high-backed pews.

Arriving at Peasenhall, you get a sense you are back in civilisation. Not only are there signs for the A12 again (East Suffolk's link to London, and the nearest it gets to a motorway), there are *two* tea rooms.

Woodwise spotters hold up as the finest example of the genre the porches of either Cratfield or Peasenhall, and I have to say the latter is a particularly magnificent example and my own favourite. The woodwise above the porch at St Michael's Peasenhall is in slightly better condition than Cratfield's; he has the happier face of a serene, somehow slightly comic and yet also slightly disturbing,

THEIR DETAILED FACES HAVE ALL THE DIGNITY OF BIBLICAL PATRIARCHS

noble savage. Peasenhall Man's body hair falls in luxurious curls, and he has a lot of fine detail on his shield, while the wyvern approaching him across the porch is more wriggly and serpentine than Cratfield's obese example.

I was impressed on all three of my woodwise tours by how all the local churches are left open to the public all day. The proprietor of the Halesworth wine shop said St Mary's Halesworth had been robbed just the week before, with money taken from the office and a Mother's Day flower display ruined. The dragnet was closing in on the ecclesiastical thieves, though, with both Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies on the case. Just over the Norfolk border in Gillingham, someone had robbed an undertaker's, and left an identical shoeprint to whoever had plundered St Mary's Halesworth.

The carved wooden figure of St John the Baptist, on the top of the font cover that covers the font the woodwoses are on, was "nicked a couple of weeks ago" and is "probably in Holland by now" according to the man I met in St John the Baptist church, Saxmundham. (Holland is closer than London, as the crow flies.)

A sign at Badingham featured a pick-up truck silhouette with a red line through it,

and warned of "CHURCH THEFT!" The sign noted: "Trucks and workmen will be accompanied by a church warden. If not – they're are probably stealing the roof."

WHAT IS A WOODWISE?

Nobody really knows what the woodwoses are doing here, and why there are so many of them in Suffolk. Are they just for show,





of woodwoses in the part of the county where they are most abundant. In the course of my investigations, I discovered Suffolk also has woodwoses in its churches at Woolpit (known to forteans for its “Green Children”; FT57:39; 222:54-55; Fortean Studies 4:81-95; 6:270-277), Waldringfield (with goat’s feet), Wissett, Barking (near Wickham Market), Covehithe, Nacton, Haughley, Yaxley, Harkstead, the church of St Clement’s, Ipswich, and St Mary, Newbourne (in whose churchyard George Page, “the Suffolk giant” is buried). Outside Suffolk, woodwoses in churches are rare in the rest of England, although there’s one over the Norfolk border in All Saints, Hilborough. Zuilen, now part of the Dutch city of Utrecht, proudly displays woodwoses on its coat of arms, as do the Earl of Atholl and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, and there was even St Onuphrius, a woodwose saint in both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. He was a fourth-century “Desert Father” of Egyptian Christianity who lived as hermit for many

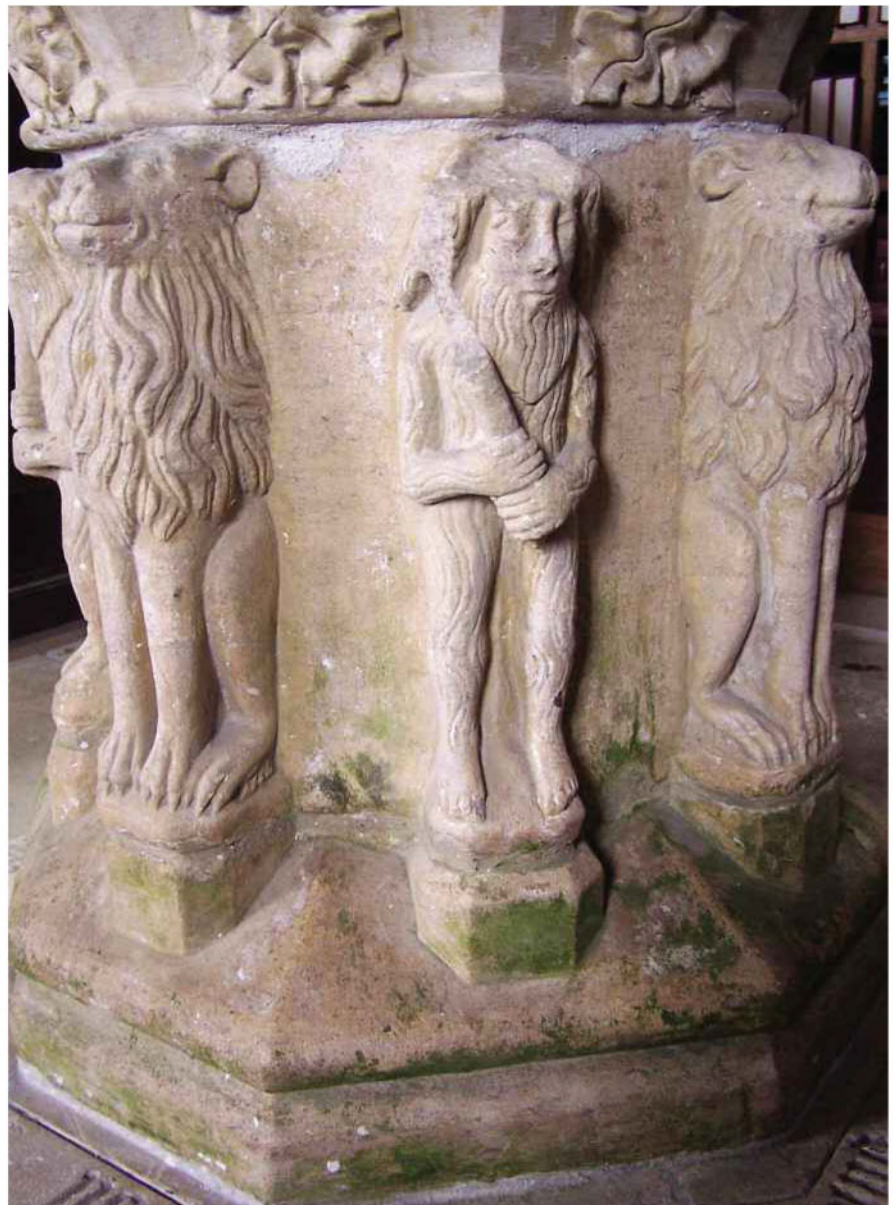
or do they commemorate some kind of local English wildman-of-the woods, a British Bigfoot, or what cryptozoologists call “relict hominids”? There are indeed accounts of two historical Suffolk wildmen, including the famous capture of a wildman in the Suffolk port of Orford whose description was remarkably similar to the manimal depicted on so many of the county’s churches.

Cistercian abbot and historian Ralph of Coggeshall, writing in approximately 1200, recorded in his *Chronicon Anglicanum* how around 1161: “In the time of King Henry II, when Bartholomew de Glanville was in charge of the castle at Orford, it happened that some fishermen fishing in the sea there caught in their nets a wild man. He was naked and was like a man in all his members, covered with hair and with a long shaggy beard.”

Ralph added that the Orford wildman “would not talk, even when tortured and hung up by his feet... He was allowed to go into the sea, strongly guarded with three lines of nets, but he dived under the nets and came up again and again. Eventually he came back of his own free will. But later on he escaped and was never seen again.” When I last visited Orford Castle a few years ago, there was an atmospherically dimly lit display with a realistic model of a bald, man-sized captive wildman with a long beard. There are still woodwoses on the font at the church St Bartholomew in what ‘Visit Suffolk’ call the “diminutive gem” that is Orford today.

And there’s a Wild Man Inn in the village of Sproughton, on the western edge of Ipswich. The pub’s said to owe its name to a creature which during its construction, roughly contemporary with most of the woodwoses in the county’s churches, “terrified the builders in a nearby waste.”¹

It turns out my woodwose tours only scratched the surface. I’ve since managed to view more wildmen in churches in the towns of Framlingham and Orford and the villages of Middleton and Theberton. But even then I had taken in a mere 12 examples



TOP AND FACING PAGE TOP: The wyvern and the woodwose of Peasenhall prepare to face off. ABOVE: A fine woodwose font, with smiley lions, at Holy Trinity, Middleton. FACING PAGE: Witness sketch based on a 2011 encounter.

years and had thick body hair and a loincloth made of leaves.

WILD IN THE COUNTRY

It's tempting to think that Suffolk's woodwoses remember an actual briefly captive wildman, or even a species of relict hominid living among us in the flat plains of East Anglia, but folklorist Gregory Forth points out that unlike the Asian and American traditions of Bigfoot, *almasti* and so on, there are very few surviving accounts of actual sightings of hairy wildmen in Europe.² At the time most of Suffolk's woodwoses were carved on the county's church fonts and porches somewhere in the 15th century, they were "thought to be mythical" or at least to "live outside Europe," according to Forth.

Unlike the Asian and North American big hairy men, who were viewed as a creature different from humans, the Christian doctrines of Man made in the image of God and of the Fall meant that woodwoses had to become "feral men", originally human but who had grown apart due to 'outrageous hardship' or turned wild through an "upbringing among wild beasts". The woodwose's hairy coats were regarded as a consequence of their "wildness... not their natural state", according to Forth. One distinguishing feature that set Europe's woodwoses apart from the wildmen and big hairy men outside Europe was that they had long hair on their heads and beards, making them more human-like.

Some of the attributes of European woodwoses were that they didn't speak, they seemed to enjoy thunderstorms, and they had some kind of Tarzan-style "sympathy" with animals, as well as knowledge of medicinal plants. Sometimes woodwoses snatched and ate human children. Male woodwoses were said to occasionally abduct human women, while "wildwomen" had the power to disguise themselves as human females in order to seduce men.

The Renaissance saw a rebranding of the woodwose as an extinct creature, or a savage human, like the "savage" peoples then being discovered outside Europe. By the 17th century, "wildmen" had pretty much vanished from English literature and written sources, as a fascination for the newly discovered non-European "wild" races had instead taken hold.

To bring the Suffolk woodwose mystery up to date, the Paranormal Database (www.paranormaldatabase.com/suffolk/suffpages/suffdata.php) received a report from a lorry driver who in May 2011, en route to Suffolk's busy international container port of Felixstowe, was passing through fields near the village of Elveden along a busy stretch of the A134 road in the north-east corner of the county. He saw from his cab a light brown-grey ape-like creature, at first walking on all fours, with an "almost hyena-like movement", before it got up on its hind legs. The "semi-human like" creature looked up at the witness,



showing its "forward facing eyes, long snout but a shorter face than a deer" and "small upright dog-like ears," before bounding off on all fours again.

And shortly after my woodwose rides I interviewed "Phillip" (not his real name) who told of a strange late afternoon encounter in the summer of 2011 while walking with his partner back from a festival in Peasehall towards their tiny campsite in Sweffling. From his description, Phillip's sighting was along a stretch of Rendham Road, with woods immediately to the east.

In an experience he estimated lasted two or three minutes, Phillip "became aware something was watching us, following us... almost parallel with us." He "didn't know what it was" at first, "just a feeling I got," before his "peripheral vision on the left side saw this figure... if I turned my head I didn't see it." The entity was a "vague impression, it didn't look directly at us." He felt it was "looking sideways at us, not turning its head." He caught the occasional "fleeting glimpse, like a snapshot." It was "there one minute and not there." (The description of an entity walking "parallel" but not visible if you look at it directly is noteworthy. Some of the "Black Shuck" phantom dogs in Suffolk traditions appear alongside witnesses on lonely country roads at night and walk in step with them, and are benign and protective, but only if you avoid looking them in the eye. (See FT195:30-35)

Phillip described what he saw: on two legs, "seven or eight feet tall... silver grey, dark." He had the sense that it was "friendly". He'd had a similar encounter earlier in woodland in Wales, with an "impression of a tall and hairy" entity, "not as distinct" as his Suffolk manimal encounter. Phillip's partner didn't see anything.

An artist by profession, Phillip sent me a pencil drawing of the apparition on the road from Peasehall. It showed a tall, very hairy, bulky biped in profile with stooped shoulders and an indistinct head, with trees in the background; more Bigfoot than woodwose. He confirmed that neither he nor his partner knew at the time of the wildman on the porch of the nearby St Mary's church, Peasehall. Could it be that the little woodwose carvings actually commemorate some local protective spirits, like the "tall, hairy entity" that Phillip experienced – glimpsed fleetingly, yet giving the people of that corner of Suffolk in the 15th century the impression of something "friendly"? **FT**

NOTES

1 John Michell and Robert JM Rickard, *Phenomena – a Book of Wonders*, Thames and Hudson, 1977, p111.

2 Gregory Forth, "The Wildman Inside and Outside Europe", *Folklore* vol 118, no 3, Dec 2007.

www.suffolkonboard.com has details of local bus services, and the book-in-advance Suffolk Links services on which you can take bikes. Abello Greater Anglia's East Suffolk Line, has hourly trains to Saxmundham, Darsham and Halesworth from Ipswich and Lowestoft, also with space for bikes. For diocesan woodwose bike routes, visit www.stedmundsbury.anglican.org.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



MATT SALUSBURY (seen here on assignment in the rape fields of Chediston Civil Parish) is a regular FT contributor and journalist based in Dunwich. His *Mystery Animals of Suffolk* (CFZ Press) is due out in 2015.

DOCTOR WHO

FORTEANA IN TIME AND SPACE

Cryptozoological creatures, ancient astronauts, conspiracy theories and UFOs: *Doctor Who* has tackled a wide range of fortean themes over the decades, reflecting as well as influencing the wider popular culture of which it is itself a part. Whovian scribe **PAUL CORNELL** surveys the series's treatment of such topics and asks whether it can really be considered a fortean programme...

Doctor Who, as most readers will know, is a British television series that was originally broadcast between 1963 and 1989, returned in 2005 and continues today. It's at once an institution, the heart of a geek subculture and a global phenomenon.

If we define fortean topics as those dealing with unsolved mysteries, then at first sight *Doctor Who* isn't a very promising venue for such discussions. Unlike *The X-Files*, which tried to keep its secrets, *Who* is often a rather reductive show, where telepathic powers are a result of living near a space-time rift,¹ and the supernatural is (nearly) always shown to have a scientific explanation. Astrology, for instance, as revealed in spin-off series *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, is just a plot by an ancient alien.² Magic, as demonstrated in 'The Shakespeare Code' (2007) is just science based on words, even when used by witches – who are also really aliens.

However, *Doctor Who* is also a show about an alien who uses a police box to travel between genres. It only sometimes does Hard SF. There is also, in its DNA, populist panto. It's a series that can guest star, in episodes made by the same production team, both sceptic Richard Dawkins³ and medium Derek Acorah.⁴ So it usually tries, with fortean matters as with everything else, to have its cake and eat it. Let's explore what the series has made of various key fortean topics.

FLYING SAUCERS

The Daleks, always pop culture creatures, often use flying saucers as their preferred mode of transport, starting with 'The Dalek Invasion of Earth' in 1964. (In the movie

THE DALEKS USE FLYING SAUCERS AS THEIR MODE OF TRANSPORT

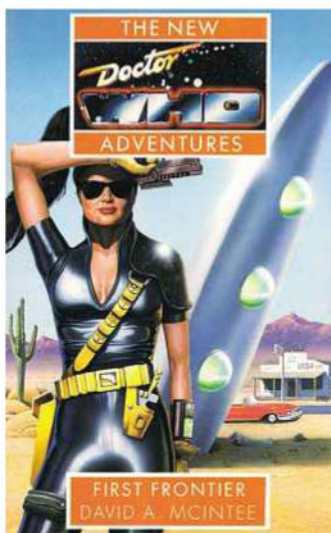
version,⁵ their ship looks more like a flying mouth organ.) Nothing is made of the shape onscreen, but Dalek creator Terry Nation once equated UFO sightings with Dalek ships.⁶ In 1965, in the Dalek comic strip in *TV Century 21*,⁷ the shape of Dalek flying saucers changed, influenced by the saucers George Adamski claimed to have encountered in 1952.⁸ These went on to become, from 2005's 'Bad Wolf', the version used in the new series. The Cybermen (in 1967)⁹ and the Dominators (in 1968),¹⁰ also travel in saucers without any mention of the UFO mythology, this being just what 1960s aliens do. In the new series, apart

from the Daleks, saucer-shaped craft are used by the Adipose,¹¹ Jathaa,¹² and Krillitane,¹³ sightings of the latter being the sole attempt to link these appearances with UFOs. At this point, the cultural reference being touched on is the film *Independence Day* with an image of the sky full of huge saucers. Following the start of *The X-Files* (1993), 1994's *Doctor Who* novel *First Frontier*¹⁴ introduced the Tzun – the *Who* universe's 'Greys' – who crashed at Roswell; as did the Nedenah – also the *Who* universe's Greys – introduced in the 1997 novel, *The Devil Goblins from Neptune*;¹⁵ as did the Grey Aliens – also the *Who* universe's Greys – introduced in the 2009 animated adventure *Dreamland*. The Silence, from 2011's 'The Impossible Astronaut', with their big-eyed grey faces, involvement in American politics and ability to erase memories, are the most recent version. Sometimes the *Who* universe's desire to embrace pop culture as swiftly as possible gets a little out of hand.



LEFT: The Daleks' spacecraft in the comics came to resemble classic Adamski saucers.





ABOVE: The use of flying saucers in the series morphed from a generic mode of alien transport favoured by 1960s aliens such as the Daleks and Cybermen to the incorporation of the myths of Roswell, Greys and the Men in Black.

THE MEN IN BLACK

As revealed in the 2010 *Sarah Jane Adventures* episode 'The Vault of Secrets', between 1953 and 1972 the Alliance of Shades employed android Men in Black to erase human memories of extraterrestrial encounters and store alien debris in an other-dimensional vault. The process is described as an 'abduction', *Who*'s latest version of the flying saucer is seen in the vault, and – although the episode's lizard man is nothing like those of conspiracy lore – the story also includes the *Who* universe's only references to implants and anal probes. UFO lore is here once again being viewed purely through contemporary cultural references.



Tibetan monastery in 1967's 'The Abominable Snowmen', and resurrected that same year in 'The Web of Fear'. (The Great Intelligence returned to torment Matt Smith's Doctor in 2012's 'The Snowmen' and its sequels.)

However, the series reveals a genuine Yeti – a thinner version of the same costume – at the end of that first story. Both Yeti stories (and the anti-pacifist fable 'The Dominators') were co-written by future *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* writer Henry Lincoln.¹⁶ The other notably forerun author to write for *Doctor Who* was Kit Pedler,¹⁷ author of *The Quest for Gaia*¹⁸ and presenter of *Mind Over Matter*, a TV show investigating psychic powers.¹⁹ He co-created the Cybermen with Gerry Davis.

THE OCCULT

That some form of mystical power, similar to that of the Ascended Masters referred to by Theosophists, existed in Tibet was accepted in *Doctor Who* as early as 1964's 'Marco Polo', when the levitational powers of certain monks were referred to. High Lama Padmasambhava in 'The Abominable Snowmen' may be intended to be literally the eighth century sage Guru Rinpoche, since he shares his name. (The former High Lama's centuries-long lifespan might be a result of his possession by the Great Intelligence.) This was changed in the 1974 novelisation, at the request of subsequent *Who* producer Barry Letts, himself a Buddhist. In that same year, Letts, writing the serial 'Planet of the Spiders',²⁰ introduces a Buddhist abbot into the series, calls him K'Anpo Rinpoche, and then reveals him to be a Time Lord! The portrayal, in those episodes, of the titular Spiders as both science fictional aliens and metaphorical Buddhist demons of selfishness is one of the series' best forays into the realm of religion. The story also starts with a display of real psychic powers, and features a healing blue crystal from Metebelis Three. During Letts's tenure as

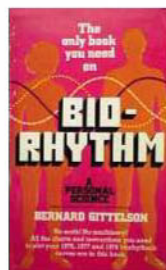
producer the series also visited a very 1970s Atlantis, also crystal-powered. As companion Jo Grant says in the 1971 Letts co-written story 'The Daemons',²¹ which features ritual Satanism as a source of psychic power and a white witch whose beliefs aren't at all crushed by the Doctor's fierce materialism: "But it really is the dawning of the age of Aquarius. That means the occult. Well, you know, the supernatural and all that magic bit." The pseudoscientific ideas of Bernard Gittelson²² made their way into the series in 1978, Douglas Adams having the Doctor declare during 'The Pirate Planet' that: "My biorhythms must be at an all time low". Continuing the series' tendency to have its cake and eat it where magic is concerned, 2013's 'Hide' featured parapsychologists whose ghost turned out to be a time traveller, but also a genuine psychic.

FAIRIES

The 2006 episode of spin-off series *Torchwood* entitled 'Small Worlds' establishes the Cottingley Fairies as real in the *Doctor Who* universe; they are creatures who live outside time and steal human children.

GHOSTS

The aforementioned space-time rifts, time travellers, 'psychic residue' from powerful emotional events²³ and the atmosphere left behind by the spooky alien called Light,²⁴ as well as various misidentifications of monsters, account for almost all ghosts in *Doctor Who*. (Though who knows what's going on with the spooky manifestations that are left unaccounted for in the 2008 *Torchwood* episode 'From Out of the Rain'?) *Torchwood* goes so far as to state that there isn't an afterlife,²⁵ then, eight episodes later,²⁶ shows a dead character joyously heading into one.



DEMONS AND DEITIES

The Doctor identifies Sutekh, the vastly powerful ancient alien he encounters in 1975's 'Pyramids of Mars', as also going under the name of 'Satan'. Another demonic being,

calling itself 'The Beast' and voiced by the same actor, Gabriel Woolf, appears in 2006's 'The Impossible Planet'/'The Satan Pit', while a huge demon, Abaddon, similar in appearance, menaces Cardiff in *Torchwood's* 2007 'End of Days'. The *Who* universe's stance on these quasi-deities remains uncertain, though various other great mystical powers, like the enigmatic Eternals from 1983's 'Enlightenment' and numerous individuals of enormous power like 'The Nightmare Child'²⁷ have been namechecked as fighting in 'The Last Great Time War'. This sounded more like Ragnarok than a military campaign until we saw skirmishes from it in 'The Day of the Doctor' (2013). The bull-like creature from 2011's 'The God Complex' feeds off the faith of others, but can still be imprisoned. The Doctor himself, especially as Jon Pertwee, has something of Lucifer about him, trapped on Earth, having fallen from what then appeared to be a heavenly planet of superior beings.²⁸ He later goes one further than the fallen angel by successfully destroying his former home.²⁹ He also, as we learn in the very first *Doctor Who* adventure, 1963's 'An Unearthly Child', gave humanity the knowledge of fire.

VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLVES

Both are unequivocally real in the *Doctor Who* universe. In 1980's 'State of Decay' it's revealed that vampires, led by the Great Vampire, were driven out of this universe by their mortal enemies the Time Lords, but survived in another dimension. Whatever scientific basis they might have isn't revealed, but they possess most of the attributes of supernatural vampires. Hæmovores, from 1989's 'The Curse of Fenric', are creatures from the far future, the last inhabitants of Earth, who survive on blood. Plasmavores³⁰ are humanoid bloodsuckers of the present, but the Saturnyne hid their alien nature by pretending to be 2010's 'Vampires of Venice'.



The first werewolf to appear in *Doctor Who* was the unfortunate Mags, the Vulpanan, in 1988's 'The Greatest Show in the Galaxy', who suffered lycanthropic transformations of an unexplained nature, but the full-blown condition, into a "lupine wavelength hæmovariform" (which is surely pushing the *Who* magic/science cake-eating handwave as far as it can go) was only revealed in 2006's 'Tooth and Claw'.

THE LOCH NESS MONSTER IS THE PET AND FOOD SOURCE OF THE ZYGONS

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE

It's suggested that there may be more rifts in space-time like the one in Cardiff, which has been seen to abduct aircraft crews and displace them across decades,³¹ but the closest actual *Who* reference is the Master, in 1971's 'The Mind of Evil' listening to the King Crimson track 'Devil's Triangle'.

ARTHURIAN MYTH

As revealed in 1989's 'Battlefield', in a parallel universe the Doctor served (or will someday; he hasn't yet as far as we're aware) as Merlin to King Arthur. In the *Doctor Who* comic strips of Steve Parkhouse (left),³² Merlin, who crosses over into various titles in the Marvel Universe,³³ is referred to as a Time Lord, and regarded as an equal by them, without being a Gallifreyan.

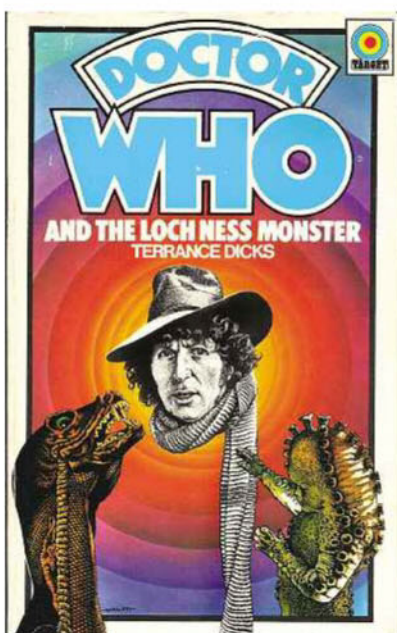
CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The conspirators attempting to return humanity to a 'golden age' in 1974's 'Invasion of the Dinosaurs' have set up a fake space mission, similar to the 'Moon Landings were Faked' conspiracy, to fool those involved into thinking that the planet they land on is a new one, and not Earth, which in the meantime is to be forcibly wiped clean of pollution, free choice and permissiveness. A couple of references suggest the conspirators might also have a problem with 'international bankers'.

However, the forteen topic that *Doctor Who* deals with most often is unquestionably...

ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS

In *Doctor Who*, aliens or time travellers are responsible for: the formation of Earth;³⁴ life on Earth;³⁵ the invention of the wheel;³⁶ the construction of the pyramids;³⁷ the invention of astronomy;³⁸ the Mona Lisa (twice, sort of; it's complicated);³⁹ the aggressive traits of *Homo sapiens*;⁴⁰ the destruction of the Neanderthals;⁴¹ the concept of Satan;⁴² the



ABOVE: Cryptozoological mysteries such as the Loch Ness Monster and the Yeti turned out to have their explanation in alien science in the world of *Doctor Who*.



ABOVE: The theme of 'Ancient Astronauts' dominated many *Doctor Who* storylines of the 1970s, including *Pyramids of Mars* (1975) and *The Face of Evil* (1977).

extinction of the dinosaurs;⁴³ the destruction of Atlantis (three times, two of them by different aliens, referred to within two years, under the same production team!);⁴⁴ the construction of Stonehenge;⁴⁵ the end of the siege of Troy (the Doctor);⁴⁶ the Great Fire of Rome (the Doctor);⁴⁷ the Great Fire of London (the Doctor);⁴⁸ the legend of Medusa;⁴⁹ the continuing existence, sonnets and inspiration of, Shakespeare;⁵⁰ Newton discovering gravity (the Doctor);⁵¹ Hans Christian Anderson's story of 'The Emperor's New Clothes' (the Doctor);⁵² the mystery of the *Mary Celeste*;⁵³ hæmophilia or possible lycanthropy in the Royal Family;⁵⁴ the novels of HG Wells;⁵⁵ the First World War;⁵⁶ Hitler's annexation of Austria;⁵⁷ the death of President Kennedy;⁵⁸ and the singing career of Bing Crosby.⁵⁹ The Doctor also delivered,⁶⁰ heard the voice of,⁶¹ was attacked by,⁶² and, according to the Master, *actually was* Genghis Khan.⁶³

Erich von Däniken published *Chariots of the Gods?* in 1968.⁶⁴ From 1970 to 1979, there's only one year (1973) in which *Doctor Who* doesn't make at least one reference to the classic Ancient Astronaut myth. Von Däniken was very much part of the BBC's cosmology at the time, with documentaries such as *The Case of the Ancient Astronauts* (1978) debunking, but having a splendid time with, his theories.

Let's chart *Doctor Who*'s fascination with the Ancient Astronaut myth year by year.

1970: I've heard it said that Malcolm Hulke's *Doctor Who* stories 'The Silurians' (from this year) and 'The Sea Devils' (from 1972) were clearly influenced by Ivan T Sanderson's *Invisible Residents: The Reality of Underwater UFOs*,⁶⁵ but I'm not so sure. The book came out in the USA in 1970; the first of these stories was broadcast in January of that year, and written the year before. Sanderson's book didn't get a British edition until 1974, two years after the story it most resembles. Sanderson asserts that the seas are either home to visiting aquatic aliens or an ancient undersea intelligent race, perhaps predating humanity. The Silurians, (who've

THE TOPIC DEALT WITH MOST OFTEN WAS ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS

recently returned to the series,⁶⁶ notably in the form of Victorian adventuress Madame Vastra⁶⁷) are just that, though living on land, but it's hard to see how Sanderson could have

influenced Hulke, or vice versa.

The Sea Devils are much more like the creatures Sanderson envisages, but they don't do the key thing that his beings do: fly UFOs. Hulke, a lifelong Marxist who seems to have had an interest in the fortean, has human beings reduced to quivering wrecks by a 'race memory' of the Silurians. In one of his *Doctor Who* novelisations,⁶⁸ he has the Doctor check out Ezekiel Chapter 1, verses 5-6, saying that he wonders

if the creatures described are aliens or time travellers. "The whole universe is full of mysteries," he says. "The important thing is to keep an open mind." A very fortean point of view.

1971: The demonic appearance of 'The Dæmons' explains why powerful beings and individuals – including, the Doctor asserts, Moses – are often depicted with horns. The titular creatures influenced the development of mankind in many ways, including inspiring the industrial revolution (presumably hiding said horns under a top hat).

1972: 'The Time Monster' features one of Atlantis's

three destructions, this time by an alien Chronovore.

1974: 'Death to the Daleks' (which ends with the destruction of the Dalek ship by a heroic suicide bomber named, erm, Galloway) features the Exxilons, who influenced many young cultures, including the builders of Peruvian temples on Earth.

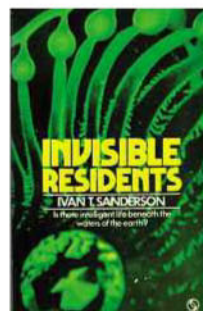
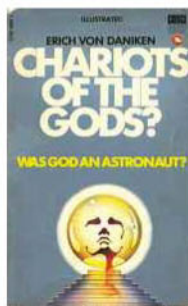
1975: 'Pyramids of Mars', featuring the aforementioned Sutekh, details a 'War in Heaven' between factions of the Osirian race. This influenced Earth culture, leading to the building of the pyramids, one of which is Sutekh's prison. His robots look like mummies, his teleporters like mummy cases. His enemy Horus, fiction here predating 'fact', is responsible for the building of pyramids on Mars (though Cydonia isn't mentioned). I wonder if the link between pyramids and Mars can be traced to any source earlier than this *Doctor Who* story.

1976: In 'The Masque of Mandragora', an alien influence on history is again worshipped as a supernatural power, a metaphor for superstition holding back science in Renaissance Italy.

1977: In 'The Face of Evil' the Doctor is himself the ancient astronaut, a giant carving of Tom Baker coming to be worshipped, over centuries, by an alien tribe. The props and set designs, featuring technology made into ritual objects, are clearly influenced by Von Däniken. In 'Image of the Fendahl', a 12-million-year-old human skull becomes the focus point for the Fendahl, a being that "is death". An attempt by the Time Lords to kill it destroyed the fifth planet of the Earth's solar system. Gestalt psychic powers and the supernatural as alien science form part of a

plot which ends with a scientist called Fendahlman realising that he's been genetically influenced to return the alien to life.

1978: In 'Underworld' we discover that the Time Lords were ancient astronauts too, influencing a race called the Minyans. By this point, the Ancient Astronaut mythos pervades popular culture so much that it's as if the influence





ABOVE: Whether the latest incarnation of the Doctor (Peter Capaldi) will continue to explore fortean themes will be revealed when the new series of *Doctor Who* hits television screens later this month.

can go both ways, with these far-future aliens unconsciously re-enacting the adventures of Jason and the Argonauts – something the script acknowledges rather than explains.

1979: In ‘City of Death’ we discover that Scaroth, last of the Jaggaroth, splintered in time, has caused all human advancement in order to finally get humanity to a point of technological development where he can travel back in time and save himself. He fails and his ship explodes, leading to the creation of life on Earth. In ‘The Horns of Nimon’ we again see mythological elements appear in a story set in the future.

By the time the new series came along, the popular imagination was no longer interested in ancient astronauts. The Dogon, in the *Doctor Who* universe, are a many-eyed reptilian race mentioned in *Torchwood*,⁶⁹ but nobody sees fit to point out that they share a name with the tribe in Mali said to have been influenced by aliens in *The Sirius Mystery*.⁷⁰

The new series does have, however – as does pop culture in general these days – a more informed understanding of how fortean myth seeps into the popular consciousness, from the various responses to the titular beings in ‘Army of Ghosts’ and the media frenzy over

the cubes in ‘The Power of Three’ (2012), to the framing of the legend of The Last Centurion, as seen in ‘The Big Bang’ (2010)⁷¹ as the sort of thing one might have read about in *The Unexplained*.

There’s only one direct reference to Charles Fort in *Doctor Who*, and that’s in Gareth Roberts’s novel *The Highest Science*,⁷² in which a ‘Fortean Flicker’ causes strange juxtapositions and coincidences, including transporting a party of London commuters waiting for the 8.12 from Aldgate to the planet Hogsuum. However, I’d suggest that the series has a very specific claim to being fortean – one based on its very nature. Fans of *Doctor Who* argue over the proper titles for televised stories. We argue over who counts as a companion and who doesn’t. This being a series in which time can be rewritten, we argue about the very existence of a *Doctor Who* ‘canon’. *Doctor Who*’s utter uncertainty about what has happened in its own universe, and its joy in that uncertainty, strikes me as the most fortean thing of all. **FT**

Thanks to: Ian Edmond; Anthony Keetch; Alistair McGowan; Jonathan Morris; Lance Parkin; Andrew Pixley; Jim Sangster.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



PAUL CORNELL is an award-winning writer of novels, short fiction and comics, as well as a TV screenwriter for *Doctor Who* and other series. His latest book is *The Severed Streets* (Tor, 2014).

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LONDON'S HAUNTED MURDER HOUSES

PART 1

London is full of properties that once witnessed bloody murders and subsequent hauntings. Some have vanished, some still stand, but their violent histories are largely forgotten. In this first instalment of a two-part article, **JAN BONDESON** explores the once-notorious 'Murder Neighbourhood' of old Bloomsbury.

Houses in Montagu Street, Bedford Place, in Harley Street, in Euston Square, in Burton Crescent, all of which still stand, have the stain of unavenged blood upon them, as has Great Coram Street, not so very far away from those mentioned.

Guy Logan, from *Famous Crimes Past & Present*.

It is not generally known that in late Victorian times, the part of Bloomsbury between Euston and the British Museum had a distinctly sinister reputation. Mysterious murders of women, many of them unsolved, abounded in this strange 'Murder Neighbourhood' of fly-blown brothels and lodging-houses, and not a few of the murder houses were reputed to be haunted. On at least two occasions, streets containing haunted Bloomsbury murder houses were renamed, in vain attempts to remedy their gruesome reputation.

12 GREAT CORAM STREET

Harriet Buswell, who called herself Clara Burton, was a young London prostitute. Once she had been a ballet dancer at a music hall, and the kept mistress of an army major, but in recent times life had not been treating her kindly. She was drinking more than was good for her, and her only child had been 'farmed out'. Harriet lived in a lodging-house at 12 Great Coram Street and made a precarious living as a street prostitute. On Christmas Eve 1872, the contents of her purse amounted to one shilling, and she was behind with the rent. Desperate to pick up a client, she went out in the evening, dressed in her tawdry finery. Harriet returned after midnight

HARRIET WAS LYING ON THE BED WITH HER THROAT CUT



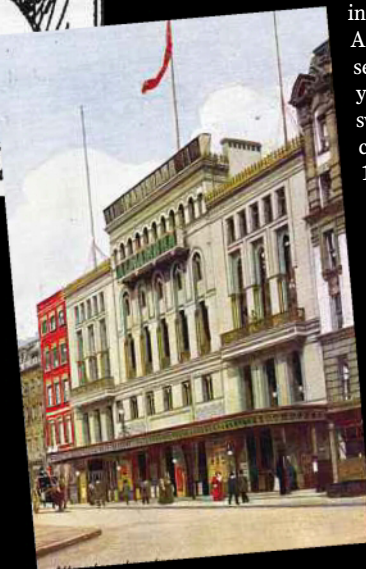
Harriet buswel. (From a photo)

with a 'gentleman friend', who walked straight up to her second-floor room as if he knew the place and had perhaps been there before. The landlady was delighted and surprised to receive half a guinea for the rent that was owed. Harriet did not

seem fearful of the man she had brought home, but childishly pleased that he had bought her some fruit and nuts.

On Christmas Day, no one stirred in Harriet Buswell's room. She was habitually a late riser, but when one of the other lodgers came knocking at midday, there was no response. When the door was broken open, Harriet was lying on the bed with her throat dreadfully cut. The murder weapon, presumed to have been a sharp knife or razor, was not found in the room. A jug full of bloodstained water indicated that the killer had washed his hands. An apple was found in the murder room, and some person had taken a bite from it; it did not match Harriet's teeth, so the detectives made sure a cast was made to prevent this clue being ruined by the effects of shrivelling. A number of people had seen Harriet with a man at the Alhambra Theatre, and some other central London locations, and a fruiterer had sold them some of his goods. They thought that the man had looked foreign, possibly German, but otherwise their

descriptions diverged in a worrying manner. A servant girl had seen an unshaven young man with a swarthy, blotchy complexion leave 12 Great Coram



LEFT: Harriet Buswell, murdered on Christmas Eve 1872 after a visit to the Alhambra. **FACING PAGE:** Esther Praager is found murdered.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TRAGEDIES. (Illustrated.)

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STARTLING MURDER MYSTERY.

A WOMAN FOUND STRANGLED IN BLOOMSBURY.



ABOVE LEFT: The murder house at 12 Great Coram Street, from a feature in *Lloyd's News*, 20 Oct 1907. ABOVE RIGHT: Harriet Buswell found murdered at 12 Great Coram Street, from the *Illustrated Police Budget* of 1906.

Street around 7.15am on Christmas Day. She later added that he had seemed furtive, and turned away as if he did not want to be identified. The police attached considerable importance to this observation, and all over the country, the hue and cry was on for dodgy-looking Germans with unprepossessing skin conditions.

After a reward of £200 had been posted for the detection of the Great Coram Street murderer, the amount of alleged witness testimonies and letters to the police was the largest since the hunt for the London Monster back in 1790. Various mischievous people informed against old enemies, and other jokers offered some friendly advice to the detectives. It was recommended that all Germans in London should be imprisoned in a sort of concentration camp, so that the witnesses could see them and pick out the murderer, and that Harriet Buswell's body should be exhumed and her eyes photographed, in case an image of her killer appeared in them. A man using the signature 'M.D.' presumed that Harriet had used lemon juice locally to prevent venereal disease, and that this liquid had entered her guest's urethra, the pain sending him off into a murderous rage. This hypothesis, which is not as crazy as it sounds, would have received useful support if a freshly squeezed lemon had been found in the murder room.

Apart from one landlady, who had shown Harriet the door after she mistreated her little daughter, the murdered woman did not appear to have any enemies. The major who had once 'kept' her was serving abroad, as was another man who had written her a bundle of love letters. A number of Harriet's regular clients were also tracked down, but they also had alibis for the time of the murder. Harriet had been collecting

cabinet card photographs of her friends and other people, and much effort was put into identifying all the persons on the cards.

In late January 1873, the police got a tip-off that a party of Germans from the emigrant ship *Wangerland* had made a trip to London on 23 December. The detectives brought the two best witnesses down to Ramsgate, where the ship was still becalmed, since the surgeon's mate Carl Wohllebe was under suspicion. An identity parade was arranged, with some other Germans from the *Wangerland* making up the numbers. The detectives were astounded when both witnesses pointed out the ship's chaplain, Dr Gottfried Hessel, and identified him as the man they had seen with Harriet Buswell.

And indeed, Pastor Hessel *had* come along for the trip to London on 23 December. Inquiries with the Berlin police showed that he had a bad reputation for various dubious financial transactions in the past, and these were supposed to be the reason he joined the emigrant ship, intending to start a new life in Brazil. He had no convictions for violent crime, but was known for "keeping very low company". Dr Hessel didn't seem like a tough, brutal murderer, however: he suffered from bronchitis and coughed incessantly. He had recently married, and his wife was very solicitous of his health.

Before Hessel faced the Bow Street Magistrates' Court, a marathon set of police line-ups was held: some witnesses picked him out as the man they had seen with Harriet Buswell, others thought he looked rather like the one they'd seen, and an impressive number said he looked nothing like him at all. A hotelier said that after returning to Ramsgate, Hessel had asked for turpentine to clean his clothes, and put several bloodsoaked handkerchiefs in the

laundry. But in the end, Hessel's wife and the surgeon Wohllebe put forth a modestly solid alibi, indicating that the pastor had been staying in a London hotel at the time of the murder, and that he had been lying ill in bed. The magistrate, Mr Vaughan, declared that Dr Hessel was certainly innocent. The police detectives still strongly suspected that he was the guilty man, and the crime writer Hargrave Adam, who had good police contacts, insinuated that his alibi had been a concoction. The case against him would have been stronger, however, if he had been known to visit London before to seek the company of prostitutes.

As for Gottfried Hessel, he proved to be a great whinger, complaining at length about the quality of his prison cell: there had been an unpleasant draught, and he had only been served two eggs with his luncheon, and not enough *Bier* for his liking. In the end, this unprepossessing creature was awarded £1,000 compensation, and an apology from Prime Minister William Gladstone. There is nothing to suggest that he went to Brazil, since a newspaper notice records that he was the translator of a German edition of the lectures of Ernest Renan, given in London in April 1880.

As for the murderer of Harriet Buswell, the police investigation collapsed after Gottfried Hessel had been released, and the killer was never found. There is, however, a note in the *Illustrated Police Budget* for 1906, to the effect that a few years earlier, a German silversmith named Toller had died in America. Among his effects was found a cabinet card photograph of Harriet Buswell, marked 'CB' and with the date 24.12.1872, wrapped in a page from a Sunday newspaper giving an account of the murder. Since the *Illustrated Police Budget* had a low reputation,

this may well be a hoax, but it is noteworthy that the police files on the Great Coram Street murder make particular mention of Harriet Buswell's collection of cabinet cards.

As for the apple found in the murder room, the cast of it was never used. Sherlock Holmes would, of course, have given Dr Hessel another apple to eat, snatched it from him after one bite, and made a comparison with the cast, but he had not been invented by that time, and good old-fashioned policework was considered more important than such flashy showmanship. Or perhaps the dodgy German parson was wearing patent dentures, thus invalidating any evidence from the apple. The apple and the cast were deposited in that rather disreputable repository of criminal memorabilia, the Crime Museum at Scotland Yard, from which they are since alleged to have been lost.

As for the murder house at 12 Great Coram Street, it was reported to be haunted: all the tenants moved out, and the house was put up for sale. A lady evangelist bought it for a knockdown price and reopened it as Miss Stride's Home for Destitute Girls and Fallen Women. The haunting continued for several decades: the second floor back room, where the murder had been committed, was always kept locked, due to the eerie, otherworldly sounds emanating from it at night. The haunted house stood for many decades, even after the street had been renamed Coram Street in 1901. In 1912, a woman named Annie Gross shot her rival Jessie Mackintosh dead in the lodging-house at 2 Coram Street. Both murder houses are gone today, replaced by mansion flats.

THE BURTON CRESCENT MURDERS

The once elegant Georgian terraces of Burton Crescent were situated at what might be called the epicentre of the Murder Neighbourhood. By late Victorian times, many of the large old houses had been

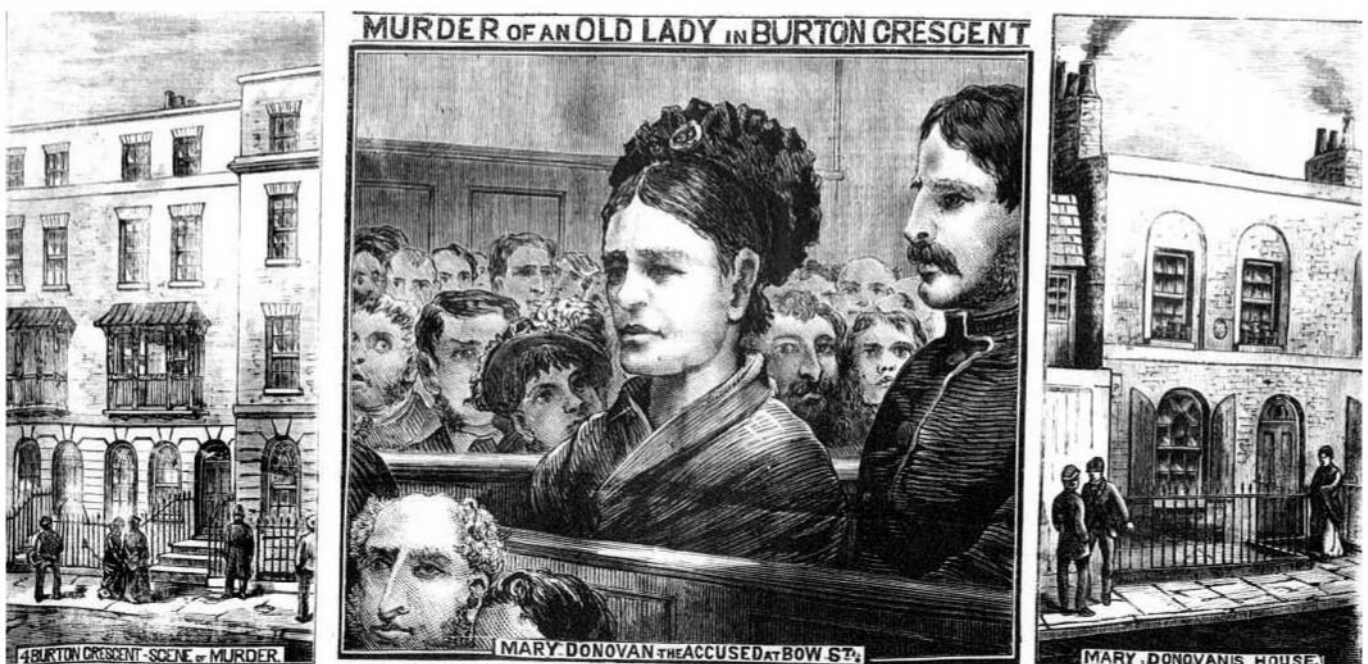
converted into seedy hotels, lodging-houses and brothels. No 4 Burton Crescent, one of the few remaining private houses, belonged to the elderly widow Mrs Rachel Samuels. She had only one lodger, the music professor John Borchidsky. When he returned home in the wee hours of 12 December 1878, he found Mrs Samuels dead in the kitchen. She had been murdered by a heavy blow to the back of the head. Being known for her reluctance to spend sixpence if she could avoid it, Mrs Samuels had only employed one daytime servant, a young girl, but a former live-in servant of hers named Mary Donovan sometimes came to see her, and she had done so the evening of the murder. The police detectives knew that Mary Donovan was a somewhat shady character, and she was promptly arrested. When Mary's wardrobe was searched, one of her skirts appeared to be stained with blood.

When Mary Donovan was charged with murder at the Bow Street police court, she protested her innocence with impressive candour. When examined by an expert, both her skirt and her boots turned out to be stained with blood, but Mary said it was her own, since she had once cut herself by accident. She was a far from pleasant-looking woman, but had no convictions for violent crime and was known to be attached to old Mrs Samuels. After several grillings

at Bow Street, her ordeal was at an end on 10 January, when Harry Poland, prosecuting, addressed the magistrate, saying that although every effort had been made by the police to obtain further evidence against her, none had been found. The debate concerning her guilt has been ongoing, but the Bow Street magistrate was probably right to say that no jury would convict on the evidence presented. Mary Donovan said that when she had visited Mrs Samuels on the evening of the murder, she had seen a workman on the premises, and there had also been a visit from a man who wanted lodgings. None of these people was ever traced, since the police thought Mary Donovan was lying. As for the musician Borchidsky, he had a solid alibi. Although a madman named James Wells confessed to the Burton Crescent murder in 1880, he was not believed, and the murder of Mrs Samuels was never solved.

A few houses away from the gloomy abode of Mrs Samuels was 12 Burton Crescent. In 1884, this house was a small brothel run by a certain Mrs Apex. The 24-year-old prostitute Mary Ann Yates occupied a large room on the first floor. Her real name may well have been Anne Marshall, and her parents were said to have hailed from Reading, but they had long since ceased to play any role in her sad and degrading life as a street prostitute. In spite of a deformed arm, Mary Ann was reasonably attractive, and she took a steady flow of customers back to 12 Burton Crescent. On Saturday 8 March 1884, Mary Ann and her colleague Annie Ellis, another resident of No 12, had a drinks party, consuming two brandies and many 'lemon-and-bitters'. Then they went out to Euston Road, where Annie saw Mary Ann with a well-dressed, gentlemanly-looking young man, and presumed that she had brought him back to the brothel. On the following Sunday, Annie rose half an hour after midday. She went to look for Mary Ann, and was horrified to find her dead in her

A MADMAN CONFESSED IN 1880 BUT WAS NOT BELIEVED



ABOVE: The murder house at 4 Burton Crescent, and other vignettes from the unsolved murder of Mrs Samuels. From the *Illustrated Police News*, 28 Dec 1878.



first-floor room. She had been knocked on the head, and then strangled to death with a towel.

In spite of the crowded nature of the house, no person had seen the customer enter or exit the building. The prostitute Kate Mansfield, who lived next door to Mary Ann, had heard her speaking to someone, exclaiming: "I shan't!" Kate's male bedfellow had heard screams later in the night, and asked Kate if her friend was in hysterics. The police tracked down a number of Mary Ann's former customers, but found nothing suspicious about their stories. Mary Ann had a boyfriend named Alfred Marsh, who actually came to visit her on the Sunday

SHE HAD BEEN KNOCKED ON THE HEAD AND STRANGLED WITH A TOWEL

she was found dead, but he had an alibi. A man named Charles Ellis, who described himself as an engineer although he really was a sailor, came under scrutiny since he lived in a second-floor room at 12 Burton Crescent, but although he might well have been a 'bully' looking after the prostitutes living on the premises, no solid evidence against him was unearthed. The murder of Mary Ann Yates was never solved, nor was a single credible suspect identified. It may well have been a coincidence that Seymour Boyer Relton, a well-dressed, gentlemanly young man who was known to frequent the better class of prostitutes, went insane and murdered his mother on 18 March 1884.

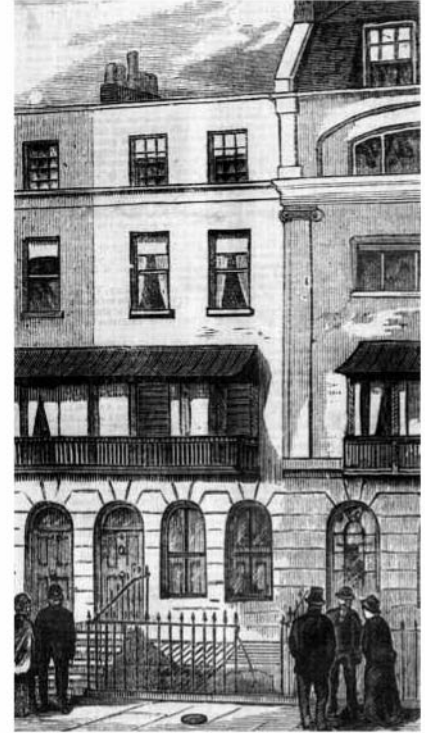
The two murder houses at 4 and 12 Burton Crescent became quite notorious. Both were reputed to be haunted, although the ghosts lacked the persistence of the spectre of Harriet Buswell. Due to its bad reputation, the residents made sure that the name Burton Crescent was changed to Cartwright Gardens, a name it still retains. It remained murder free until 1930, when the Yorkshire coal merchant Albert Allen gassed his girlfriend Phyllis Crummy at the hotel at No 55. The murder houses at numbers 4 and 12 later became victims of the expansion of London University's halls of residence, which destroyed the entire eastern terrace of Cartwright Gardens.

4 EUSTON SQUARE

In the late 1870s, the lease of the large terraced house at 4 Euston Square was held by the bamboo furniture maker Severin Bastendorff. He used the rear of the premises as a workshop, employing several men, and the house was crammed full of lodgers, who were looked after by a servant named Hannah Dobbs. A native of Luxemburg, Bastendorff had an eye for the

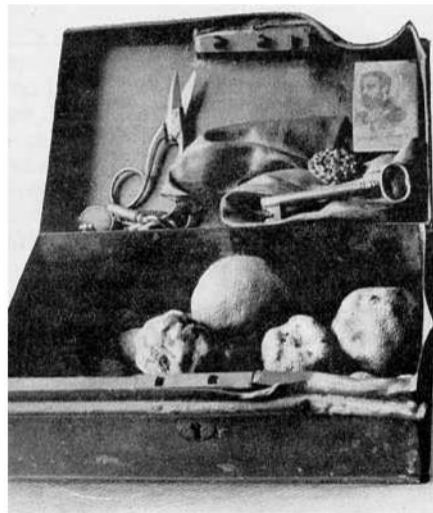


ABOVE: 12 Burton Crescent, where Mary Ann Yates was murdered. From the *IPN*, 22 Mar 1884. TOP: The remaining terraces of Cartwright Gardens, as they look today.



ABOVE LEFT: The discovery of the body of Miss Hacker. ABOVE RIGHT: The house at 4 Euston Square, said to have been haunted by Miss Hacker's ghost for decades.

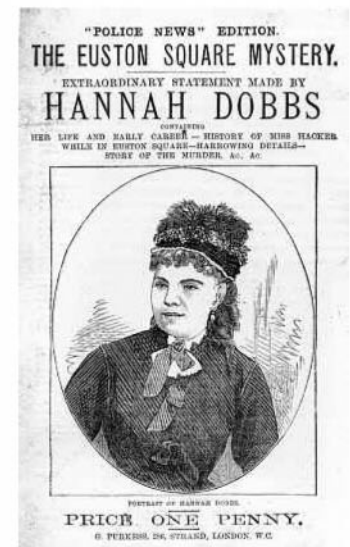
ladies, and Hannah was actually his mistress. When one of the lodgers, an elderly spinster named Matilda Hacker, disappeared, nobody was much bothered, as she was in the habit of frequently changing lodgings. In 1879, when two new lodgers moved into No 4, they asked for the use of one of the coal cellars, and Bastendorff readily agreed. But when the cellar was cleared, it was found to contain the mummified remains of Miss Hacker. She had been murdered, and had a rope around her neck. Since Hannah Dobbs had pawned various items belonging to Miss Hacker, she soon became the main suspect. There was grave suspicion against Severin Bastendorff, but he could prove a moderately solid alibi for the time when Miss Hacker disappeared, and if he had known that the body was in the coal cellar, why had he agreed to have it cleaned? Bastendorff had a brother named Peter, a



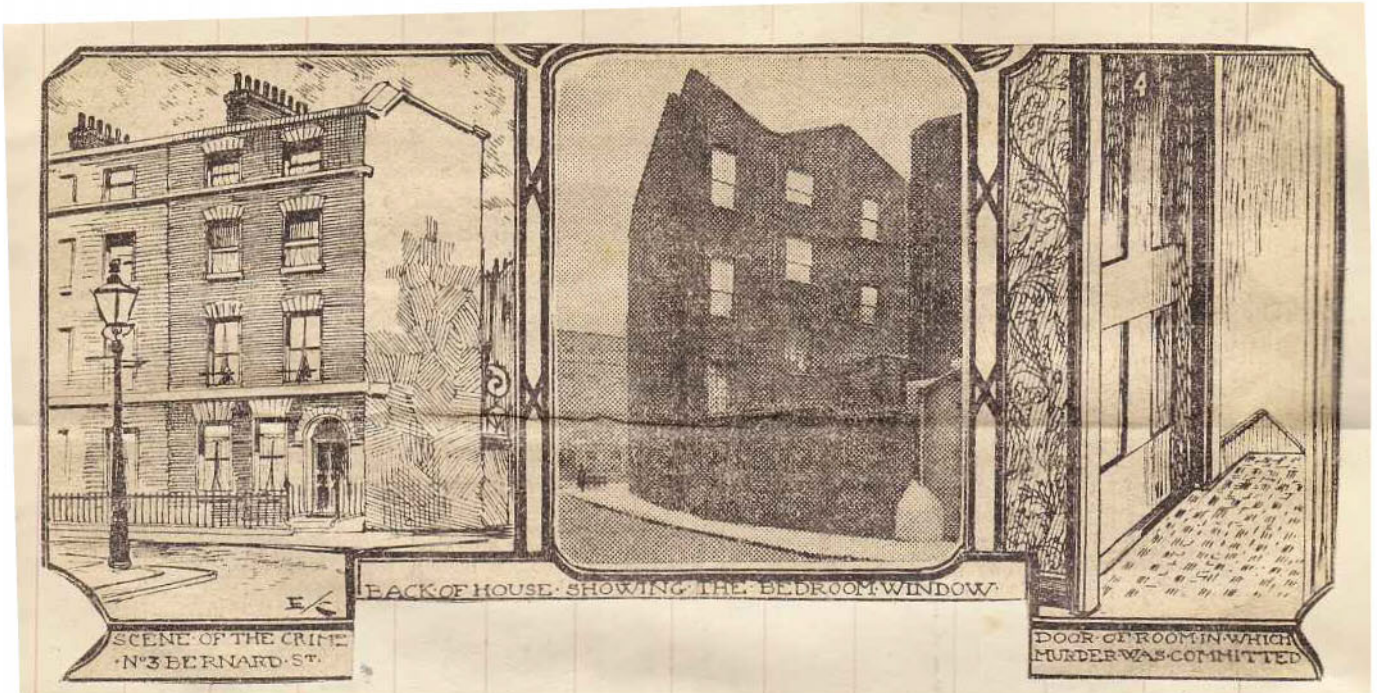
shady character who also enjoyed the favours of Hannah Dobbs. The two brothers were very much alike, something that might come in useful to fake an alibi. When Hannah Dobbs stood trial for the murder, she was acquitted due to lack of evidence, and Miss Hacker's murder remains unavenged.

Since Severin Bastendorff had clearly lied in court, denying that Hannah was his mistress, he was sentenced to two years in prison for perjury. Peter Bastendorff is said to have died in Paris in 1897. Brother Severin made it out of prison, but in 1886, he went stark raving mad and beat up his wife with an umbrella. He died from bronchopneumonia at Colney Hatch Asylum in 1909, having suffered from 'chronic mania' for 21 years.

As for Hannah Dobbs, she published a sensational pamphlet about the case, suggesting that the Bastendorffs had



ABOVE: Portraits of Matilda Hacker and Hannah Dobbs and the title page of Hannah Dobbs's pamphlet. CENTRE: Matilda Hacker's cash-box, found by the police among the belongings of Hannah Dobbs, from Major Arthur Griffiths's *Mysteries of Police and Crime*.



ABOVE: The murder house at 3 Bernard Street, from a newspaper article in the crime archive of Mr Stewart P Evans. BELOW: 3 Bernard Street today.

murdered several people at No 4, and that a dog had also been killed and eaten on the premises. After a brief period of literary fame, she is likely to have changed her name and lived happily ever after. The residents of the southern part of Euston Square successfully petitioned to have that part of the Square renamed Endsleigh Gardens, something that amused 'Dagonet' (George R Sims) of the old *Referee* newspaper:

To Endsleigh Gardens they would change
 The blood-besprinkled name;
 They felt like *ton* might then arrange
 To live there just the same.
 Miss Hannah tells of awful deeds
 She taints the local air;
 To link *ton* with Miss Dobbs's screeds
 Is not to *Eus ton Square*.

The murder house at 4 Euston Square kept its sinister reputation for decades to come: it was reported to be haunted, and strange groans and screams were heard in Miss Hacker's old room. The bloodstain on the floorboards in the murder room could not be removed by any amount of scrubbing, and no dog would pass this room of horrors without snarling, whining and giving indications of intense terror. Still, the haunted house survived until the 1960s, when it became a victim of the reconstruction of Euston Station. Some old houses in Endsleigh Gardens still stand today.

A NOTORIOUS NEIGHBOURHOOD

The infamy of the Murder Neighbourhood would continue for several decades to come. 53 Whitfield Street, where Elizabeth Stoffel was murdered in 1891, no longer stands; nor does No 8 in the same street, where the servant girl Sophie Richard was

THE HAUNTED HOUSE STOOD FOR SEVERAL DECADES



murdered in 1899, or 115 Whitfield Street, site of the unsolved murder of the prostitute Dora Piernicke in 1903. Grafton Street and Guilford Street were also home to strange and mysterious crimes. The unsolved murder of the young prostitute Esther Praeger at 3 Bernard Street in 1908 did nothing to improve the reputation of the area. This murder house still stands today, and looks pretty much unchanged since the days when it was a seedy lodging-house for prostitutes. George R Sims was probably thinking of the Murder Neighbourhood when he wrote, in his *Mysteries of Modern London*:

There are streets and squares and terraces in London which have been renamed in order that they may no longer be associated in the public mind with the dark deeds of which they have been the scene. Sometimes, where the renaming has been a difficult one, the houses have been renumbered. But many remain as they were, and Londoners pass them daily and hourly, little dreaming of the drama that once made them notorious. FT

NEXT ISSUE: ANATOMY OF A MURDER HOUSE



This is an edited and adapted extract from Jan Bondeson's *Murder Houses of London* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud 2014).

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, a regular FT contributor and the author of books including *The London Monster* (2000), *Blood on the Snow* (2005) and *Amazing Dogs* (2011).

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EVOLUTION'S MAZE

During the 1920s, eugenicist William McDougall began a series of experiments with rats in mazes that he believed provided evidence of 'soft inheritance' - the idea that "intelligent or purposive effort could produce an appreciable change in the constitution of the human race". **TONI MELECHI** uncovers a fascinating chapter in the history of pseudo-science.

In the summer of 1920, the Wistar Institute, America's oldest biomedical research academy, received an order for three male and six female pure-bred white rats. Wistar's 'standard' rats, the first mass-produced laboratory animals, were in great demand among biologists and physiologists. This latest tail-twitching batch was to be sent to William McDougall, at the psychology department of Harvard University. Newly arrived from England, Professor McDougall proposed to prove that, contrary to the dominant version of evolutionary theory, "intelligent or purposive effort could produce an appreciable change in the constitution of the race".

Awaiting the rats: a galvanised tank, a little over a metre in length, with three chambers, each with a gauze-covered glass gangway inclined at a 45 degree angle, and doorway access between chambers. Six times a day, this simple maze would be filled with six inches of water, and the rats would be dropped in. To escape the water without incurring an electric shock, the rats would have to *learn* to escape via whichever gangway was not illuminated. By forging the association between light and shock, McDougall believed that 'organic evolution' would produce a newly-wired survival instinct that would automatically steer subsequent generations of untrained rats away from the danger that was hiding in the light.

McDougall began his evolutionary experiment by allowing the Wistar rats to breed, one male to two females. Taking the six litters that were produced, he divided them into two equal half-stocks by randomly selecting half of each litter. To avoid consequent crossing of the half-stocks he snipped the tip of the right ear from the first and the left ear from the second (which would remain as a control group, receiving no training in the maze). Then, after staining each rat from the first half-stock with its own distinguishable bright yellow marking, the rats were, at between

WISTAR'S 'STANDARD' RATS WERE IN GREAT DEMAND



21 and 28 days of age, taken from their nesting boxes and dropped gently into the watery maze. Thin-lipped and heavy-eyed, McDougall looked on, ominously watching the progress of the rats, noting which litters showed a strong bias to the left or right, and recording the time that each took to find the dark exit.

THE ISLE OF EUGENIA

William McDougall (1871-1938) was Edwardian England's most prominent evolutionary refusenik. Towards the beginning of his career, while lecturing at the University of London, he had made

the acquaintance of Francis Galton, the grandfather of eugenics. Galton's attempts to stoke up interest in his plans for the creation of "a high human breed" were enjoying a second summer, and McDougall, climbing enthusiastically aboard the eugenic bandwagon, assisted Galton with the design of a programme of mental testing (conceived as a first step in stemming the tide of 'adverse selection'), becoming a staunch advocate of fiscal incentives to raise the birth rate among the dwindling middle-classes. Lamenting the decline of the Empire, weighed down by the spectre of fast-looming degeneration, McDougall insisted that selective human breeding was the only way forward.

An early pioneer of psychology as a laboratory science, McDougall went on to make a case for what he called hormic or purposive psychology, mapping the most distinctive and universal of human urges, from the urge to find food and escape danger, to making shelter and establishing dominance over one's peers. Drawn to "the way America seemed to experiment, to act, to put things through on a large scale," McDougall left Oxford for Harvard in 1920.

Never shy of broadcasting his reactionary views, a frosty reception awaited him in New England. Colleagues winced at his "uncompromising arrogance". Students complained of his aloofness and his "high oratorical style". The New York press lambasted his gloomy prognostications on the decline of the intelligent classes. And, by way of final insult, his fellow psychologists, particularly the behaviourists, made it known that they considered McDougall and hormic psychology "relics of a bygone and superseded age".

Behaviourism was on the brink of becoming the dominant school of American psychology. Through control of the environment, John Broadus Watson and

ABOVE: William McDougall, who in 1920 left Oxford for Harvard to pursue his experiments.





THE WISTAR INSTITUTE

ABOVE: Philadelphia's Wistar Institute was the first independent medical research facility in the US and home of the world's first standardised laboratory animal.

his followers were seeking to demonstrate that that it would be possible to steer and direct the habits of any individual. Heredity counted for nothing. The mind was a *tabula rasa*, a blank page awaiting instructions. "Give me a dozen healthy infants," Watson memorably remarked, "and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and, yes, even beggar man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors."

Nature versus Nurture? Heredity versus Environment? In lecture halls and auditoriums across the United States, McDougall regularly took aim at the growing army of behaviourists and cultural

anthropologists who claimed that there was no evidence for innate mental tendencies. Writing in *Scribner's Monthly*, the true-blue hereditarian proposed a sanitary alternative to the Behaviourists' equitable wonderland: the Island of Eugenia, home to a gifted elite that had passed "full inquiry into their family history and their intellectual and moral qualifications". The citizens of Eugenia would, at the age of 20, be encouraged to explore the world at large, to study at the great universities, and, if they so chose, to leave the island for good. Those that returned would, however, be expected to fulfil their *noblesse oblige* by marrying early and granting their Athenian utopia a family of five to 10 "beautiful, strong, and perfect children, the delight of their parents and the hope of the world".

If McDougall's maze experiment was designed as an animal proxy of this eugenic daydream, his initial results were disappointing. The Wistar rats were slow on the uptake, much slower than McDougall had expected. The statistics, in whatever way they were tabulated, did not at this stage support McDougall's belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics. His first impressions were that the task was stretching the intelligence of the rats to its limit: some of his first-generation rats were taking up to – and in excess of – 300 immersions, and half as many shocks, before showing clear evidence of aversion to the bright gangway. Perhaps 'organic evolution' was not quite the force that he had reckoned on.

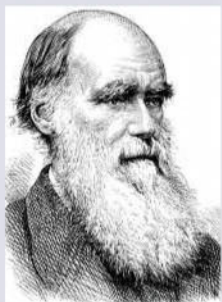
THE SPIRIT OF LAMARCK

The early theorists of 'evolution' had in some form all subscribed to the idea that characteristics acquired by a species in its own lifetime could be inherited. Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, author of the pioneering *Philosophie Zoologique*, a book which Darwin had greatly admired, made a powerful argument for the power of habit as a modifier of physical characteristics, famously invoking the example of the giraffe's neck. By the mid-1840s, Darwin had voiced serious misgivings as regards the Lamarckian "nonsenses" of "a tendency to progression". For Darwin, the giraffe's elongated neck was first and foremost an artefact of natural selection. Quite simply, those animals with the longest necks would have had access to the highest branches, allowing them to survive in times of drought, and thus, in time, "an ordinary hoofed quadruped might be converted into a giraffe".

By the turn of the century, a genetic revolution was under way. Researchers such as Thomas Hunt Morgan, a zoologist from

DARWIN'S PANGENESIS

Darwin was unwilling to altogether surrender the Lamarckian hypothesis. As a *secondary* driver to evolutionary change, Lamarck's hypothesis, known to modern geneticists as 'soft inheritance', remained more than plausible to him. In the last chapters of *On the Variation of Animals and Plants* (the clumsy compendium which he offered up in further support of the theory of natural selection, in 1869), Darwin noted how the inheritance of acquired characteristics had left a permanent impression on several species, including the domesticated duck.



To explain the modifications that had taken place through domestication (and physical changes that seemed to have been wrought by the use or disuse of a particular organ, as with the mole's blindness) Darwin imagined a process which he dubbed pangenesis: a form of inheritance that rested on the agency of as yet undiscovered particles which he called 'gemmules'.

It was a hazy theory for which he claimed no experiential evidence, but, once again, Darwin showed himself willing to consider that the environment might lead a species to acquire characteristics that could be passed on to its offspring. Evolution could, in other words, be engendered through the simple force of habit.

the University of Columbia, showed that inheritance was not a blending of parental characteristics, but a process determined by the particular genes that were strung into the chromosomes that were passed on, one from each parent. The multiplicity, the sheer variety of possible arrangements, made possible by a pool of 30,000 or so human genes, meant that natural selection never dealt the same hand twice.

In the light of this research into animal and human chromosomes, the Lamarckian hypothesis seemed neither a credible supplement nor an alternative to Darwinian natural selection. But McDougall was not alone in the search for Lamarckian adaptations. While he monitored the performance of the first generations of his Wistar rats, evidence for so-called soft inheritance was independently found in two European laboratories.

In Vienna, a young biologist by the name of Paul Kammerer soon claimed to have engineered a Lamarckian transformation in the midwife toad, *Alytes obstetricians*. With news of Kammerer's experiments blithely heralded as a death-knell for Darwin's theory of evolution in the popular press, the world-renowned physiologist Ivan Pavlov reported an equally striking phenomenon in an experiment in which rats were trained to search out cheese on the sound of a bell. After six generations, Pavlov found that the number of rings required to trigger the searching for cheese had dropped to only five, a 60th of that required by the first generation. In July 1923, Pavlov announced that he thought it probable that future generations would immediately begin searching for food "on hearing the bell, with no previous lesson".

Buoyed by these findings, McDougall secured more funding for the maze experiment. Within a year, the performance of the Wistar rats had radically improved, and after training 17 generations McDougall was confident enough to prepare evidence of the Lamarckian hypothesis for a meeting of



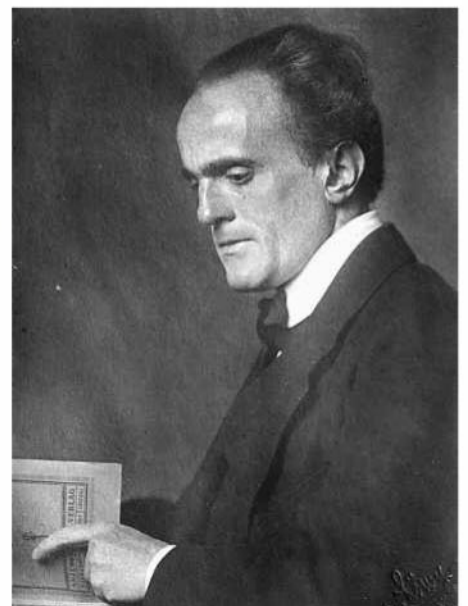
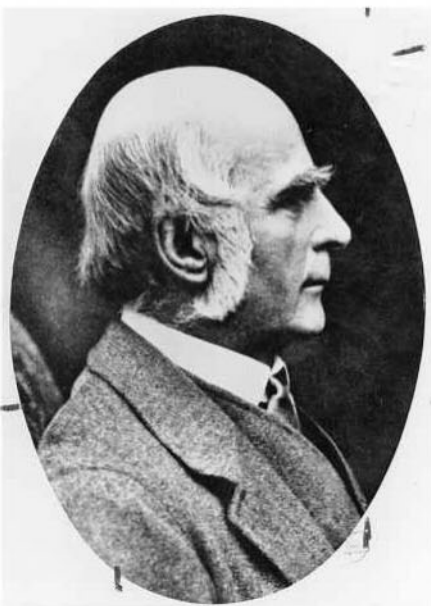
ABOVE: It's estimated that more than half of all of today's laboratory rats are descended from the Wistar line.

the British Association in July 1926. By this time, Kammerer's work had been exposed as a forgery, and Pavlov was on the back foot, sheepishly retracting his initial findings. McDougall, however, stood firm. No "wand-

waving mathematician" would, he blustered, be able to "exorcise the spirit of Lamarck" from his figures. Any experimenter who cared to undertake the same experiment would, he honestly believed, draw the same conclusion.

McDougall's star had by now begun to wane. Dedicating much of his time to psychical research, he left New England in 1928 to find a more congenial home for his Lamarckian experiment. The newly opened department of psychology at Duke University, North Carolina, promised an altogether more hospitable and supportive environment. Evolution had been effectively erased from Carolina's school curriculum, and Duke's deep-pocketed president, William Preston Few, was unconditional in his support for McDougall's magpie search for "facts incompatible with materialism". The transfer enabled him to delegate the water maze experiment to a young botanist by the name of Joseph Banks Rhine, the would-be

HE DELEGATED THE MAZE EXPERIMENT TO A YOUNG JB RHINE



ABOVE: (Left to right) Francis Galton, pioneer of Eugenics; Ivan Pavlov and Paul Kammerer both believed their experiments demonstrated Lamarckian transformations.

father of parapsychology.

The statistics that Rhine went on to record during the maze experiments provided McDougall with his best evidence yet for Lamarckian inheritance. Yet during the five years that Rhine spent accumulating data, he saw something else at work. The increasing escape rate of the rats was, Rhine believed, indicative of the same kind of “para-psychical abilities” that could explain the remarkable feats of migration undertaken by birds, seals and penguins, as well as the homing abilities of pigeons. Mental telepathy could, both Rhine and McDougall agreed, be the secret wellspring of Lamarckian inheritance.

Despite ill-health and financial worries – after being scammed for \$23,000 dollars in a fake oil investment – McDougall remained a tireless propagandist of the Lamarckian hypothesis, rarely missing an opportunity to champion his findings. The magnitude of McDougall’s claims was certainly not lost on the popular or scientific press. “If his data and inferences become established,” announced *The American Naturalist*, “McDougall will have inaugurated a revolution in genetics.” Across the Atlantic, there was talk of McDougall having arrived at “a turning point in biology”. The ghost of Monsieur Lamarck’s giraffe seemed poised to return to the scientific fold.

“SOMETHING GREATER THAN HIMSELF”

Within the psychological community, bemused intrigue turned to outright disbelief. In 1929, at a lecture at Yale University, the president of the International Congress of Psychology, James McKeen Cattell, stood up to express frank incredulity at McDougall’s findings, insisting that whatever differences in performance he had measured were “in no way correlated with, or expressions of, differences of innate constitution.” Various biologists followed suit, seizing upon the dubious and inconsistent methods that McDougall and his co-workers had employed. For instance, the ‘random selection’ of rats to be trained for the task, made by opening their cage and taking the first two animals that approached, was, as one experienced breeder of rats pointed out, tantamount to selecting the most active and clever. Inconsistency in the intensity of electric shock administered made it difficult to see whether differences in learning ability were truly hereditary. And, on the basis of McDougall’s presented research, there was simply no way of telling whether rats trained in one generation were represented by their descendants.

McDougall carried on regardless. Believing that he had succeeded in inducing a progressive series of adaptations in his laboratory rats, he castigated his critics for being blinded by the same “mechanistic prejudice” that had thrown doubt on Dr Kammerer’s “complete and trustworthy”



THE EXPECTANCY EFFECT

The story of McDougall’s Lamarckian misadventure has a cautionary coda. Almost 40 years after McDougall had published his first report on his maze experiment, Robert Rosenthal (left), a psychologist from the University of Ohio, recruited a dozen students to run a five-day maze experiment on 60 albino rats. Aware of the wildly divergent results that mazel learning experiments had produced since the turn of the century, Rosenthal wished to measure how experimenters were unconsciously influenced by what they “expect or want to obtain.”

To measure this ‘expectancy effect’, Rosenthal told half his students that they would be monitoring the performance of rats specially bred for intelligence, and in particular their ability to learn to navigate mazes; the other half were informed that they would be observing notoriously slow learners. In reality, the rats, which were randomly assigned, were all standard bred, but the results clearly showed that students who believed they were monitoring maze-bright rats recorded a “significantly better performance”.

evidence for Lamarckian adaptation. Bristling at the aspersions that had been cast on his methods, he continued to use the pages of the *British Journal of Psychology* to decry his Darwinian enemies.

The ways in which McDougall had doctored his findings, rejecting evidence that did not meet with his theory, were nevertheless plain to see. For example, when confronted by a very slow advance in the rats’ performance after the 17th generation, McDougall proposed that degeneration had set in. Conversely, when control groups comprising untrained stock began to show a decrease in errors, McDougall was all too quick to ascribe this anomaly to a probable improvement in stock. It was for this reason that the biologist JB Haldane accused him of “contriving to eat his cake and have it”.

Foremost among the experimenters that accepted McDougall’s invitation to replicate his maze experiment was Dr Crews of the Institute of Animal Breeding. After five years, Crews found no iota of evidence in support of Lamarckian adaptation. Examining the pedigree and record charts which he had made sure to maintain (McDougall’s record keeping was decidedly shoddy), Crews hit upon a couple of clues as to how McDougall might have been *honestly* misled. Firstly, Crews found that there were among his stock two genetic strains: the ‘quick’ and the ‘slow’. By unwittingly selecting more of the former, McDougall would have skewed his findings

to produce the illusion of Lamarckian inheritance. Secondly, Crews found that a surprising number of his rats, 39 in all, had never received a single shock in the water maze. Chance was a powerful and unavoidable factor in the experiment.

Despite the barrage of criticism from biologists and animal breeders, McDougall regarded the points that Crews and others had made as of “minor importance”. Standing by his methods and conclusions, he maintained that the scientific community had an “ill-founded bias” against any alternative theory of evolution. In his last

book, *The Riddle of Life*, written only a few months before he died of cancer, aged 67, McDougall reflected on his “well-devised experiment”, now in its 18th year, revealing how it had confirmed to him that the received theories of memory and heredity were untenable:

“The Lamarckian hypothesis has been repudiated by many, probably a large majority of, biologists just because it seems to be incompatible with a materialistic theory of memory... My own experiment on this problem... has dealt with 49 successive generations of rats, all of which have been trained to the execution of the same task by a long course of effort, of repeated trial and error; with the result that the later generations show a very greatly increased facility in mastering the task, an increase measured by reduction of the amount of training required by approximately ninety per cent. Thus the evidence supporting Lamarckian transmission supports also the non-material basis for individual and racial memory.”

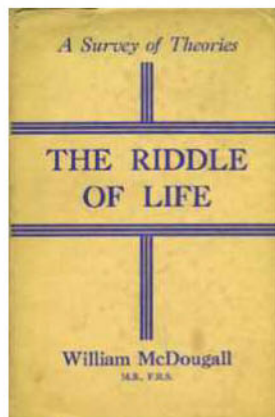
For a new generation of scientists, these claims were “a veritable nightmare of false logic” and “insufficient evidence”. McDougall’s Lamarckian experiment had allowed him, and him alone, to see that hereditary memory was more powerful and mysterious than his materialist foes could grasp. To adapt the words of Julian Huxley, a biologist who was equally keen to shine a light onto “man’s most fundamental instincts”, it was as though McDougall had tried “to discover something, some power, some force or tendency, which was moulding the destinies of the world – something not himself, greater than himself, with which he yet felt that he could harmonise his nature, in which he could repose his doubts.”

Forty-nine generations of maze-trained rats had transported McDougall to the sun-bleached shores of his own private Eugenia. **FT**

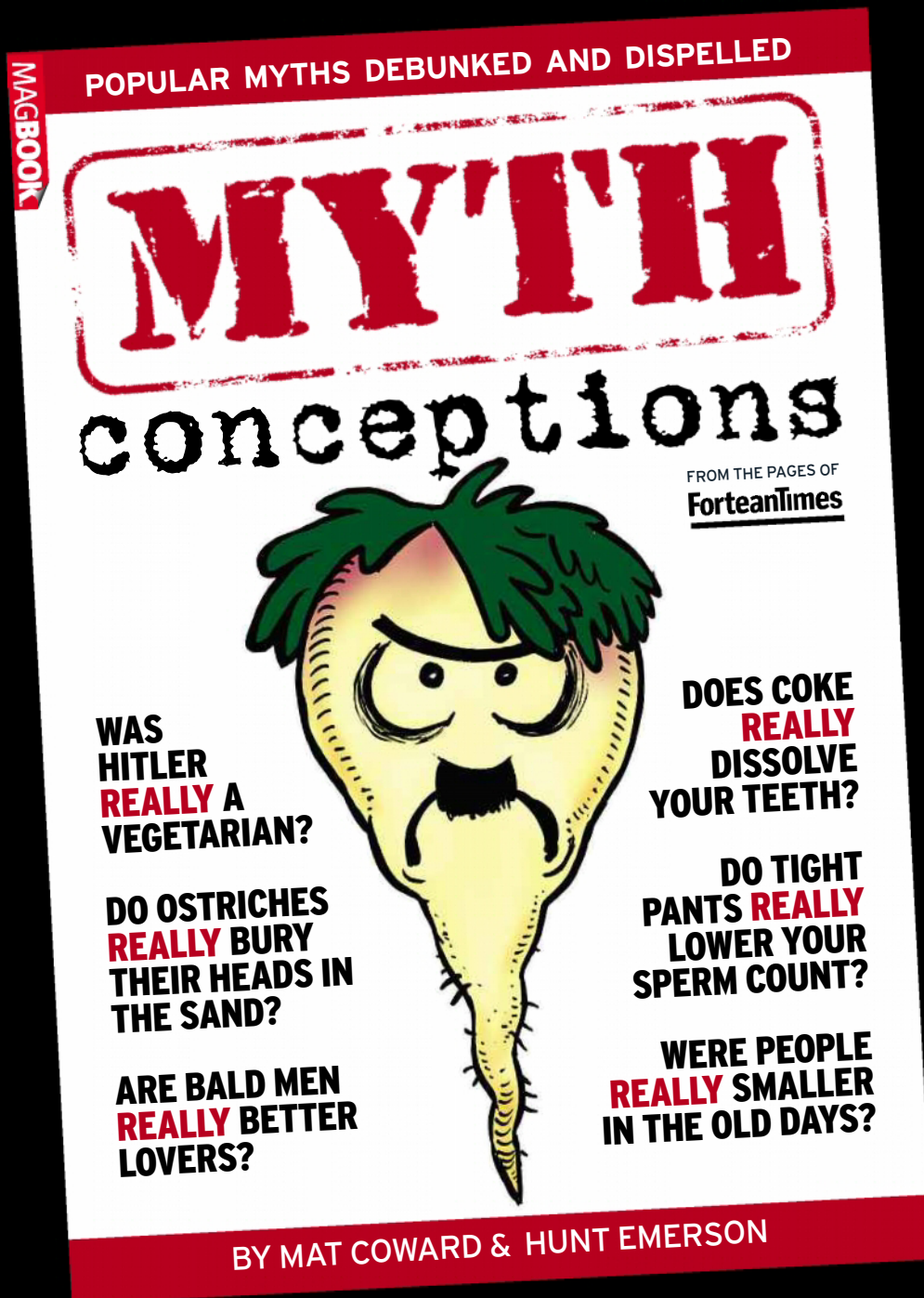
AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



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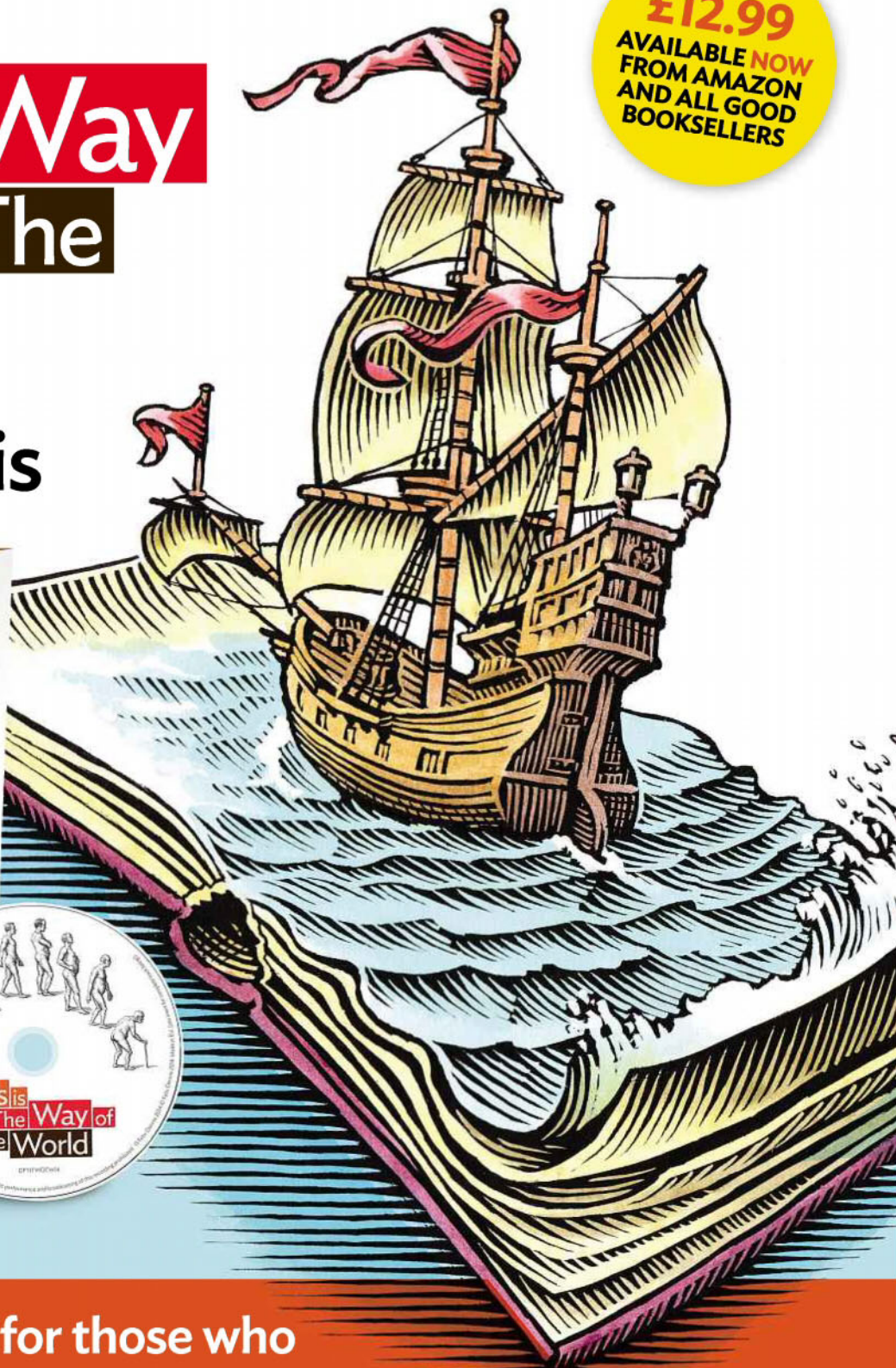
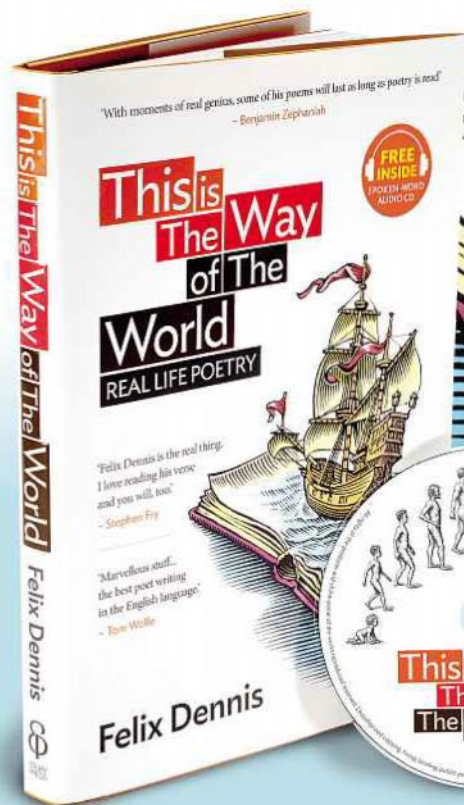
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Dark matter vs dinosaurs

Need to get across a complex scientific topic to a mass media audience not normally interested? **ANDREW MAY** suggests you call in the dinosaurs.



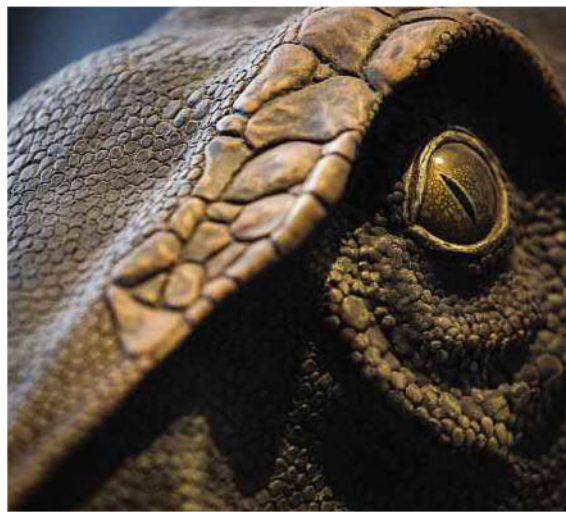
ANDREW MAY is a former scientist and regular FT contributor with a lifelong interest in pulp fiction and weird stuff. He blogs at forteana-blog.blogspot.co.uk/

It's never easy for scientists to interest the public in their work, and only the luckiest get to see their research splashed all over the mass media. A few science topics – anything to do with dinosaurs, for example – are guaranteed crowd-pleasers, but most subjects leave readers yawning. Dark matter is definitely in the latter category.

No one has ever seen dark matter, or has any idea what it consists of. Its existence can only be deduced from its gravitational effects on visible matter. There does, however, seem to be a lot of it about – possibly as much as 80 per cent of the total mass of the Galaxy. The reason it's so mysterious is that, apart from gravity, it doesn't appear to interact with normal matter at all. Scientists have always assumed the dark matter is spread out in a spheroidal halo around the Galaxy, precisely because it's so weakly interacting. If there's no way for it to dissipate energy, it can't settle into a thin disc like ordinary matter.

Recently a team led by Lisa Randall, a Professor of Physics at Harvard University, has proposed a different theory based on the idea of “dissipative dark matter”.¹ If it exists, this variant of dark matter would be capable of forming a thin disc of its own in the same plane as the visible disc of the Galaxy.² That's a novel suggestion – but not, you might think, the sort of thing that's going to generate tabloid headlines. And yet a tabloid headline is precisely what it did generate.

The headline in question appeared in the *Daily Mail* on 7 March 2014: “Were dinosaurs wiped out by DARK MATTER? Force sends comets hurtling towards Earth every 35 million years, claims theory.”³ Virtually identical stories appeared in various other media outlets



around the same time. Why did a left-field theory on an obscure academic subject suddenly become newsworthy? The answer, of course, lies in the clever – if tenuous – link to dinosaurs.

Most people will have come across the theory that dinosaurs were wiped out by the impact of a large asteroid or comet. What is less well known is that numerous other large-scale extinctions have occurred throughout geological history... and many of these, too, appear to be correlated with impact events. There is intriguing – though far from clear-cut – evidence that these events take place at regular intervals, approximately every 35 million years.

That's an extraordinarily long time. Other periodicities on Earth, and elsewhere in the Solar System, tend to be much shorter than that. Times measured in tens of millions of years are more commonly associated with the large-scale dynamics of the Galaxy. For example, the Solar System takes something like 250 million years to complete an orbit round the centre of the Galaxy. In the course of this orbit, the Solar System also oscillates up and down in a perpendicular direction, repeatedly passing through the central plane of the Galactic disc. The frequency

with which this occurs is close enough to the frequency of impact events to suggest a cause-and-effect connection.⁴

The idea is that, on each pass through the Galactic plane, something happens to disrupt the Oort Cloud – a diffuse shell of comet-like material surrounding the outer Solar System. The result of this disruption would be a sudden influx of comets, some of which would hit the Earth and – so the theory goes – lead to the observed periodic extinctions.

As so often happens in science, a theory that sounds great when you're waving your hands in the air starts to look less attractive when you get into the mathematical details. Early calculations assumed the perturbing force came from close encounters with giant gas clouds.⁵ But the gravitational effect of such encounters wouldn't be enough to cause the necessary perturbations, time after time. So attention shifted to bulk tidal forces produced by the Galactic disc, with the idea that its gravity would pull more strongly on one side of the Oort Cloud than the other. Even then, the detailed calculations seemed to show the resulting forces would be too weak... assuming the disc consists of nothing more than its visible component.

This is the point at which dark matter comes to the rescue. If the visible density of the disc is augmented by a dark component, then all the pieces might just slip into place.⁶ The disc, enhanced by dark matter, exerts a periodic tidal force on the Oort Cloud. This leads to a periodic influx of comets, which leads to an increase in impact events, which lead to extinctions. It all hinges on the first link in the chain, which should be testable in the near future. Observations planned for the Gaia spacecraft, launched in 2013, should be capable of confirming or ruling out that all-important notion of a dark matter disc.

But what about the dinosaurs? It seems they were just a headline-grabbing gimmick all along. The specific event that did them in, the K-T extinction, occurred approximately 65 million years ago. If you look closely at Professor Randall's graphs you'll see that event doesn't fit into her 35 million year cycle... and it's usually attributed to an asteroid rather than a comet, anyway. **FT**

NOTES

1 www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S212686413000289

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A scandal in the Secret Garden

MICHAEL BARRON reports on the ongoing row between mainstream British Judaism and followers of Kabbalah, and asks why some of the latter believe that access to esoteric texts should be restricted to those in the know.



MICHAEL BARRON has written extensively for many Jewish publications including the *Jewish News* and *Essex Jewish News*, and has been involved with museum projects such as 'Discoveries: Art, Science & Exploration from the University of Cambridge Museums'.

In 2013, the Limmud Jewish educational and cultural festival, which takes place over the Christmas period and has been dubbed the "Jewish Glastonbury", decided to cancel two scheduled talks by Marcus Weston, a trustee of London's Kabbalah Centre. Limmud executive director Shelley Marsh said because of the "the deep discomfort that Marcus Weston's sessions have created, Limmud is withdrawing them from the programme." There were many within the Jewish community who made it clear that it was not Marcus Weston as a personality that was the problem, but Kabbalah itself, which is being perceived as a "cult". For example Rabbi Yitzchak Y Schochet shared his own thoughts on the matter:

"I will give the naïveté of the programme organisers the benefit of the doubt, but for those of us who have been intimately involved with the Kabbalah Centre, and certainly several of its victims, it is seemingly nothing less than a cult. An in-depth exposé was done by the BBC and most broadsheets in this country carried stories about its dubious dealings. Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks issued a statement from his office denouncing the Kabbalah Centre and in the United States it is on an official cults and missionaries watch list. In short, there is little difference between the Kabbalah Centre and Jews for J. Both essentially look to lure the Jew into a belief that has nothing to do with Judaism per se...

"The Kabbalah Centre however has nothing to do with Jewish observance whatsoever. One needs to only scour through the Internet to find all the claims against the centre and its categorical cult like tactics...

"It beggars belief that Limmud would entertain this. I call upon the organisers of Limmud to withdraw its invitation to the Kabbalah Centre. Failing that I



"Kabbalah is a belief that has nothing to do with Judaism"

call upon Chief Rabbi Mirvis and my esteemed colleagues to withdraw their attendance from Limmud."¹

Limmud's actions build upon the former chief rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks's decision in April 2004, together with the London Beth Din and the United Synagogue, to issue a public warning, which was read out in synagogues, that the Kabbalah centre "does not fall within the remit of the Chief Rabbinate or any other authority in the UK recognised by us."

The purpose of this article is not to revisit news stories of alleged scandals involving Kabbalah, but to examine why Kabbalah – not confined to Judaism, yet deeply rooted in the Torah and Jewish esoteric teachings – has become increasingly viewed with suspicion amongst many sections of the Jewish community. Whether

ABOVE: A display in the window of the New York branch of the Kabbalah Centre, best known for visits from celebrities such as Madonna.

justified or not, this suspicion is strong. Limmud – whose mission and values strongly encourage diversity and "seek to create cross-communal and inter-generational experiences" and to "encourage people not to stereotype others" – has effectively resorted to a sort of excommunication.

In his recent book *The Secret Garden of the Soul: An Introduction to the Kabbalah*,² Allan Armstrong explains that there is a misconception that Kabbalah is an esoteric system of spiritual development that emerged within mediæval Judaism. Gershom Scholem, the eminent scholar of Jewish mystical traditions, defined Kabbalah as "the sum of Jewish mysticism" which predates the mediæval period. Many kabbalists agree with him, tracing the roots of Kabbalah back 3,000 years earlier to the time of Moses, who is believed to have transmitted its essence to 70 elders of the people of ancient Israel. Rather than being a mediæval invention, then, Kabbalah is seen as a spiritual discipline that has evolved over a prolonged period of time. The kabbalists only became a "distinct spiritual movement" in the 13th century, which resulted in well-known publications including the *Zohar*. Armstrong argues that the Crusades provided a safe environment to study

Kabbalah, linking the West with the East and leading to the kind of cultural renaissance witnessed in 15th century Florence.

Whilst Kabbalah clearly distinguishes itself from Judaism, the spiritual paths taken by both are very similar. To be a good kabbalist one needs a good understanding of Judaism. It is therefore no surprise that the Jewish community has “made a significant amount of valuable Kabbalistic material available to the English speaking world”.³ The written Torah is described as a garment concealing a deeper meaning known as the “soul of the law”. Both place great importance on the Hebrew alphabet, agreeing that each letter has its own numerical value and agreeing on exactly what these numerical values are.

“There is no real beginning [to Kabbalah] other than the study of scriptures, especially the Mosaic books that compose the Pentateuch,” insists Armstrong. He goes even further stressing that “the Bible is at the heart of the kabbalah, not the *Bahir*, not the *Sephur Yet Zirah*, not even the *Zohar* – all kabbalist teachings concerning the inner life are set in a biblical context”. Therefore the Kabbalist views the study of scripture as “a profound engagement in meditation”. Both Judaism and Kabbalism believe in the separateness of creation from God – that the divine entity (*En Sof*) does not reveal itself in a finite way. The earliest description of The Tree of Life with its 10 spheres (*Sephiroth*) with 22 paths connecting them came from the great Jewish sage Simeon ben Yohai. Rabbi Isaac the Blind elaborated, stating that the *Sephiroth* are expressions of divine will that preceded the physical Heaven and the physical Earth.

“Cults” are often associated with magic and superstition. Many of mainstream Judaism’s spokespersons openly and publicly term Kabbalah a “cult”. In *The Secret Garden of the Soul* Armstrong takes up the opportunity to try and demonstrate that the “majority of true kabbalists openly disavow many of the magical practices commonly associated with practical Kabbalah”. He continues that such practices are “not only irrelevant to the regeneration of the soul but they often embrace practices that inevitably disrupt the natural order of things, and frequently forge unlawful connections between forces and entities that should be kept separate. Such activities are considered to be a rebellion against the will of God as established in the natural laws of

creation”.

When it comes to speaking God’s name in Hebrew, kabbalists fall into the same school of thought as magicians and other esoterically minded people who want to hear and recite the original, lost pronunciation of *YHVH*. Majority Jewish thought sees this as blasphemous and is content to recite *Adonoi* instead. While such an issue is bound to create debate, it’s not just such differences of religious opinion that have turned much of Jewish opinion against Kabbalah. Something more is clearly felt to be at stake. Rabbi Avi Shaftan writes that: “Limmud’s leadership felt that a particular brand of Jewish expression [Kabbalah] had misled Jews and, if granted legitimacy by being included in the event programme, would be empowered to further do so. An entirely defensible, indeed proper and principled position”.⁴ The *Jewish Chronicle* cited evidence of such deception in 2008 when reporting how Kabbalists ran a charity called Spirituality for Kids (SFK) in primary and secondary schools in two London boroughs, categorising the lessons under personal health, social and citizen education, rather than religious study, which would have meant that parents would have needed to be notified.

Limmud still have on their website a list of original presenters and programme, including Marcus Weston himself, with a brief although interesting introduction about his work with Kabbalah.⁵ Arguments put forward by some Jewish rabbis, such as Rabbi Levi Brackman, against Limmud’s decision appear to support the Kabbalists: “It is... ironic that an organisation such as Limmud, itself castigated and excluded by the Orthodox for years, would now exclude a Jewish group that continues to have a big impact on Jews, Judaism and the way Jews think about their Judaism. From my experience it is clear that the Kabbalah Centre has impacted the lives of thousands of Jews around the world and is a very powerful force that engages Jews in their Judaism. Many people come to my own synagogue and become involved with Judaism in my community only because they were first exposed to it by the Kabbalah Centre.”⁶

On the other hand, Rabbi Brackman also says: “Let me be clear, however, I have no reason or desire to defend the Kabbalah Center per se. In fact, I disagree with much of what the Kabbalah Center espouses and many of its actions”. Brackman correctly points out that Judaism has become, and is increasingly becoming, more “varied

and diverse”, a “trend accelerated over the last 50 years,” and that “given this reality, it is unlikely that any one form of Judaism will see eye-to-eye with the other”. Nonetheless, different denominations have reached out to each other: for example, Ephrim Mirvis, the current Chief Rabbi of the UK, was the first to attend Limmud. Another example is the leader of the Reform movement being invited to sit with the head of the Chabad movement, Rabbi Yehudah Krinsky, at the Chabad International Convention.

While the intentions of these offerings of olive branches can be debated, the fact is that they *are* increasingly being offered – although few to kabbalists themselves. Pressure is actually being put on Jews not to do so. “The last time I wrote anything even remotely positive about the Kabbalah Centre,” says Rabbi Brackman, “I was subjected to intense criticism and disparagement from some on the right wing of Orthodox Judaism in the UK. One rabbi publicly attacked both my integrity and intellect simply because I dared point out that the Kabbalah Centre might not be all evil and may, in fact, be doing some good. With this article I expect similar wrath and hatred to ensue”.

If one is unconvinced by the arguments put forward by Judaism against Kabbalah as a “cult”, perhaps Kabbalists themselves can offer a less opaque explanation. Armstrong describes Kabbalah as an “obscure system of spiritual development”. He continues: “But its nature is still concealed in the mists of antiquity – which is perhaps as it should be”. Esoteric scholar RA Gilbert (who provided Armstrong with a foreword for *The Secret Garden of the Soul*) has written an open letter arguing for restricting access to “ritual and expository texts... to those who can demonstrate that they have both a moral and spiritual right to access”.

Many intellectual or spiritual pursuits that subsequently turn into life-changing passions stem from an initial casual interest. Due to Kabbalah’s perceived insistence on secrecy, and the Limmud’s position, it is difficult to see how many people, Jewish or non-Jewish, will be able to turn that casual interest in Kabbalah into an active one; indeed, within the Jewish community such interest is likely to result in suspicion and hostility. **FT**

NOTES

- 1 www.shul.co.uk/readArticle.php?article=1038#.U8WSkvidWH6
- 2 The Secret Garden of the Soul: An Introduction to the Kabbalah page xvi
- 3 The Secret Garden of the Soul: An Introduction to the Kabbalah page 3
- 4 www.cross-currents.com/archives/2013/12/30/a-lesson-from-limmud/
- 5 http://limmud2013.sched.org/speaker/marcus_weston.6d5tkul#.U59cxvldWH5
- 6 <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/limmud-loses-credibility-caves-to-unfair-rabbinic-pressure/>. Subsequent quotes from Rabbi Brackman are from the same blog.

HAVE A READ... IF YOU DARE!

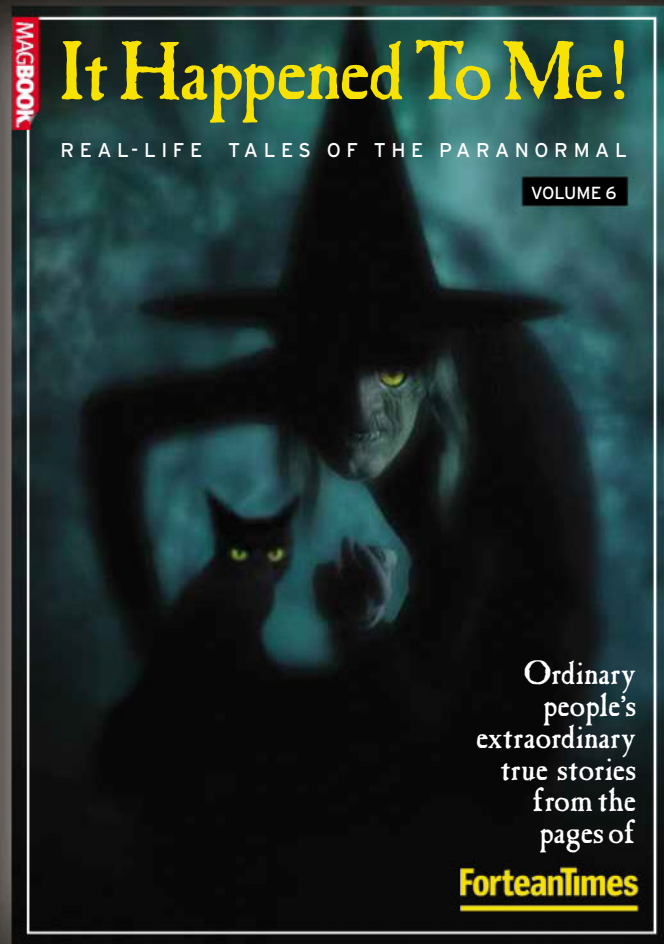
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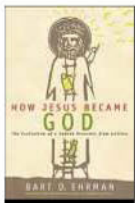
This month's books, films and games

reviews



Biblical history versus faith

A response to Bart Ehrman's rigorously argued study of how Jesus came to be seen as God is scuppered by *ad hominem* attacks and misrepresented arguments



How Jesus Became God

The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee

Bart D Ehrman

HarperOne 2014

Hb, 416pp, \$26.99/£17.99, ISBN 9780061778186

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.19

How God Became Jesus

The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature – a Response to Bart Ehrman

Michael F Bird et al

Zondervan 2014

Pb, 236pp, \$16.99, ISBN 9780310519591

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £10.99

Bart D Ehrman has really rattled Evangelicals with his series of popular books on New Testament scholarship. They don't like it that ordinary people are reading what's been taught for years in university courses – including to student priests. They're so concerned that before Ehrman's latest book, *How Jesus Became God*, was published, they asked for an advance copy then rushed out a response to it, *How God became Jesus*, published simultaneously.

(This may all be a publisher's publicity gimmick: Christian publisher Zondervan is owned by HarperCollins, Ehrman's publisher. The two books even use the same cover artist.)

One massive difference between the books is their understanding of scholarship.



Ehrman stresses that historians cannot make judgements on spiritual matters – healings, miracles, the resurrection – which are outside their remit. He's not talking about whether Jesus is God – that's a matter of faith; he's talking about how the first Christians came to believe that Jesus is God – and that's history. In contrast, the Christian scholars emphasise their faith, as if that strengthens their arguments.

The big question of Ehrman's book is how the early Christians came to believe that Jesus, a man who had lived and preached in Judea, was God. It's easy enough to see how Pagans (in this context, non-Jews from a Greek culture in Roman-ruled lands) could come to believe this; but how did any Jew, with the strict monotheism of the religion, come to accept Jesus as God?

Ehrman first looks at "divine humans in ancient Greece and Rome": Gods who temporarily become human, semi-divine beings born of a God and a mortal, and humans who become divine. It's not that Alexander was equal to Zeus or a Roman emperor to Jupiter; there was "a spectrum of divinity" – but those at the bottom of the scale were still worshipped.

Controversially he argues that this same progression existed in Judaism too. Although there was One Creator God, below him were other figures with greater or lesser degrees of divinity, such as the "thrones, dominions, principalities or powers" of Colossians 1:16. The Old Testament has numerous examples of angels appearing to people, then speaking as God. There are angels who become men, and men who become

"There was a 'spectrum of divinity' but those at the bottom were still worshipped"

angels. Ehrman's point is that there's no cleancut division between God and man, making it easier, for believers, for the man Jesus to become God.

Ehrman presents his case clearly and at length, with plenty of supporting evidence. He explores whether Jesus thought of himself as God (answer: no) before looking at how Jesus's followers came to believe that he had risen from the dead. Not every reader will agree with his conclusions, but his arguments deserve serious consideration.

So when did Jesus become God? Ehrman shows that the process happened very quickly, within 20 years of the crucifixion – but that we shouldn't assume that the first Christians had the same perception of Jesus as God that later developed. Even in the New Testament there's a multiplicity of ideas. Some thought that the man Jesus was exalted into godhood either at his resurrection, his baptism or his birth/conception; others had an incarnational belief, that he had always existed through eternity as God, and became a man – the belief that became orthodoxy.

He covers in some detail the complex development of theology in the first few centuries of Christianity, both on the God-man nature of Christ and on the trinitarian view of God. It's

amusing to note that the leaders of the Early Church, including the apostles, the writers of the New Testament and the bishops of Rome (in retrospect, the first popes) were, by later definitions of orthodoxy, all heretics.

The whole point of creeds wasn't to state what we believe; it was to state what was true belief as opposed to false belief – to pinpoint the heretics. A whole third of the creed that came out of the famous Council of Nicaea in 325 (not the Nicene Creed, which was at least 50 years later) thunders, "But as for those who say [four or five variant beliefs]... these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematises." A creed was a weapon for the Church to smite the enemy.

Many Christians casually assume that people in the New Testament believed exactly what Christianity teaches today – and that everything that Christians believe today is stated clearly in the Bible. Five minutes with any of Ehrman's books – or those of most other biblical scholars – would quickly show up both fallacies.

Ehrman's book took him several years to write; the Christian scholars knocked out their response in a few weeks – and it shows. Several of the writers resort to snide *ad hominem* attacks, and a number of their arguments misrepresent Ehrman.

The general editor and writer of several chapters, Michael F Bird, is by far the worst offender. He briefly cites some of Ehrman's arguments, quotes some of his supporting examples, then blithely says that

Continued on page 60

Shared beliefs

A paranthropologist outlines an evolutionary basis for the paranormal



Why People Believe in Spirits, God and Magic (The Paranormal)

Jack Hunter

David & Charles 2012

Ebook, 127pp, £4.59, ASIN B00B03HSDI

AVAILABLE FROM AMAZON

Jack Hunter is an anthropologist; he is also the founder and general editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Paranthropology*.

Why People Believe in Spirits, God and Magic attempts to answer this question from a social anthropological point of view.

Hunter, a doctoral candidate whose scientific interests clearly fall within the field of the spiritual and paranormal, has quite a few publications under his belt. This ebook is a rather endearing and level-headed, objective (scientific) review of the anthropological basis for visions, spirituality and mysticism.

He provides an overview of supernatural traditions and practices around the world. The author also explores anthropological interpretations of supernatural and spiritual experiences, including the paranormal experiences of anthropologists undertaking fieldwork.

Essentially, the theory goes, we are the children of evolution and it has been a significant advantage for our ancestors to develop acute senses that can recognise danger, threat and predators lurking in the

bushes. It is not much of a leap to understand that these same ancestors were better off seeing a threat one time too often than not seeing the predator that was there on one occasion.

This bias towards a slight over-sensitivity and the general lack of negative evolutionary consequences caused by false positive response (such as seeing imagined threats) makes us what we are today. We see simulacra in trees and on rocks and when the sun shines in a certain way, shadows catch out attention; we take note very quickly of anything that is unusual or different from our concept of normal. None of this is helped by the plethora of natural (and latterly synthetic) agents that can “broaden the mind”. As Voltaire said, “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him.” In one sense it could be hypothesised that rituals lead to religion because questions such as “Why do we bury the dead?” will lead inevitably to answers relying on current interpretation of the world and the afterlife.

Jack Hunter’s work takes us neatly through the development of the study of the paranormal as an anthropological discipline. More importantly, the development of shared beliefs leads to social cohesion and from there no doubt the seeds of inter-societal animosity.

This is not to say that the supernatural or paranormal is not real, merely that there is a serious point to be made that once we started to control the environment around us and communicate on a higher level, it became inevitable that we began to consider and find answers to questions that lay beyond the normal pattern of daily life.

Paul Little

Fortean Times Verdict

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF PARANORMAL EXPERIENCE

8

Continued from page 59

these don’t mean what Ehrman says they mean – but with little explanation. He makes his case by assertion, not by argument.

He mocks Ehrman for saying that the New Testament is full of copying errors, deletions and additions and then using this corrupted text to explore the life of the historical Jesus. How can he possibly do this? he asks with sham amazement, saying it’s “methodologically impossible”. “Sham”, because Bird is sneering at Ehrman for doing exactly what biblical scholars have been doing for the last century: pointing out the problems with the text, then trying to work out which parts of the gospels are most likely to be original. Ehrman spends pages explaining his methodology (which is the methodology of most biblical scholars) very clearly; Bird’s attack is fundamentally dishonest.

Some of the other chapters are better argued, but still misrepresent what Ehrman says and belittle him personally – hardly sound scholarly tactics.

The Christian scholars almost seem unaware that academics by definition disagree with each others’ interpretations – even more so, perhaps, when dealing with scanty and disputed data from 2,000 years ago.

They attack and demean Ehrman for coming to different conclusions from their own. They also largely ignore the fact that much of what Ehrman says isn’t unique to him; his great skill is in popularising what New Testament scholars have been teaching for decades. So why attack him in such a personal way? It can only be because non-academics – ordinary people – read Ehrman when they don’t read other scholars. And that scares the writers of this book which at times is an offence to the concept of scholarship.

Of course Ehrman’s work can be challenged – but for God’s sake do it honestly.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

EHRMAN: CONTROVERSIAL BUT WELL-SUPPORTED SCHOLARSHIP
BIRD ET AL: DISHONEST AND SLOPPY SCHOLARLY RESPONSE

9
2

Cumbrian Alchemy

Robert Williams & Bryan McGovern Wilson

University of Cumbria 2013

Pb, 95pp, illus, refs, notes, bib, £19.99, ISBN 9781868979393

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £19.99



I initially thought *Cumbrian Alchemy* was a catalogue to accompany Robert Williams

and Bryan McGovern Wilson’s art project, but it is integral to the project. *Cumbrian Alchemy* draws together apparently disparate strands; the energy coast, the historic landscape and the storytelling of Cumbria.

Dr Paul Abratis presents radioactivity in Cumbria as natural history, tying together power stations, processing and natural occurring phosphates into a fascinating exploration of this little understood subject. David Barraclough sets the landscape in an archaeological context, and explains how human communities in the area are tied to the ebb and flow of natural events, particularly glacial activity. He elegantly presents Braudel’s three different scales of time, and weaves this into the context of the project.

Folklore occurs throughout, with Alan Cleaver talking about it as Genius Loci, embodying the spirit of the place. For me, the most powerful piece is John Disney’s narrative of the Heysham Hogback stone. Rarely have I read a modern transcript that so perfectly captures the ebb and flow of oral storytelling.

At the end of the volume Williams and McGovern Wilson make the point that art can avoid a moral judgement, in this case particularly of nuclear power, so it doesn’t destroy the power of the metaphor.

Art also brings together the three strands. A central theme of the book is the transmission of knowledge across the *longue durée* to communities who do not share the same language as us. The figure of Oppenheimer, here silver faced and dressed in distinctive hat and suit, becomes a folkloric avatar for the alchemy of the nuclear industry. In the photos this silent man is almost monumental in his positioning in the landscape. (When I started reviewing this FT316 arrived, with

a white masked Rollo Ahmed on the cover echoing the silent, silver, face of the Oppenheimer figure.)

The haunting photographs and Bryan McGovern Wilson's drawings express the complexity and beauty of the point where the three themes meet. A beautiful volume that succeeds in its aim to start conversations about the alchemical nature of our landscape.

Steve Toase

Fortean Times Verdict

EXCELLENT STUDY OF CUMBRIA'S LANDSCAPE AND ARCHÆOLOGY

8

The King Who Refused to Die

Zecharia Sitchin

Bear & Co 2013

Hb, 250pp, \$17.10. ISBN 9781591431770

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.90

Released in 2013, but only just reaching us, is this book from that prolific scholar of Babylonia, Zecharia Sitchin who died in 2010 [obit FT271:24].

His previous 14 books re-interpreting the Sumerian myths as a literal record of Ancient Astronaut visitation have a dedicated following; on the other hand, even though he earns credit for teaching himself ancient Sumerian and Akkadian, his translations have drawn biting scorn from academics.

Nevertheless, the Sitchin bandwagon rolls on with this novelisation of the story of the hero Gilgamesh and his search for the immortality promised him by the goddess Ishtar. All the Sitchin tropes are employed to depict the Anunnaki from the planet Nibiru who created Earth and came in their rocketships to live on Earth in old Sumer. This is a tale that spans millennia, for the modern protagonists are descendants of those Old Ones who travel back in time after having (quite literally) divine sex.

As a novel this was fun, but Sitchin fans will take it seriously as yet another brilliant thesis in his contentious canon.

Bob Rickard

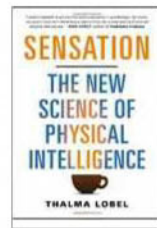
Fortean Times Verdict

A TALE THAT SPANS MILLENNIA - OH, AND THE SEX IS DIVINE

5

A fun read, obviously

Embodied cognition lends itself to popular narrative, but this book's lack of analysis and insight undermines academic cred



Sensation

The New Science of Physical Intelligence

Thalma Lobel

Icon Books 2014

Pb, 245pp, refs, ind, £12.99. ISBN 9781848316591

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69

Holding warm coffee makes you friendlier; you view morally suspect behaviour more leniently after taking a shower; and are more likely to cheat when you are wearing sunglasses. It's only recently that research into what is now known as 'embodied cognition' has revealed how much physical sensations influence our thoughts. Thalma Lobel, a leading embodied cognition researcher, pulls together the threads and summarises the stimuli that are known to influence us and how.

Lobel outlines the experiments that reveal how temperature, texture, colour, size, taste and smell act on our psyche. We like people who say they enjoy sweet foods more than we do those who say they like bitter food; someone exposed to a bad smell immediately becomes more judgmental; and mental representations of body movement affect how we think. Saying 'think outside the box' helps people think more creatively, it seems.

Some discoveries seem incredibly obvious; we perceive powerful people as being taller than they are; women in red dresses are more sexually attractive than women in identical dresses of a different colour; and people whose personal space is invaded respond by wanting to

assert their individuality. Not stunning revelations.

Being about our everyday behaviour, embodied cognition research lends itself to popular narrative, and Lobel emphasises this with personal anecdotes that throw light on the implications of the work. While each story Lobel tells is the product of solid academic research, all referenced back to the original papers (I wish more writers did this), it comes over as curiously insubstantial. Psychologists have discovered that given the choice between using hand sanitiser or mouthwash after delivering an unethical message, those who did it by email predominantly went for the sanitiser, while those who left a voicemail went for the mouthwash. They are subconsciously cleansing the body part involved in doing something they felt ashamed of. The analysis rarely goes much deeper than that; Lobel confines herself to summarising research, saying 'Ooh, that's interesting!', then skips off to something else, often her skiing holidays, shopping trips, granddaughter or happy youth in the Israeli military. I know more than I need to about Lobel, and a lot less than I want to about embodied cognition. The whole thing comes over more as a glib piece of dubious pop-psychology of the kind confected by newspaper columnists and TV pundits rather than a serious look at an emerging field of science by someone in its forefront. This is a pity. Psychology and neuroscience have never been more exciting than they are today, and there is a considerable appetite for

popular books on the research. Readers want, and by and large are capable of dealing with, fairly in-depth examinations of the findings of contemporary science, its origins and its implications for society, but there's very little of that here.

I would like to have seen more on the background, explaining why researchers thought the various stimuli might have the effects they do, the reasons the experiments were designed the way they were and the implications for our lives. These are touched on, but not fully addressed. There is a sense that each of the psychological phenomena described here exist in isolation, creating the impression that we are largely helpless automata, easily manipulated by environmental cues, as there is no real attempt to create a synthesis and to integrate the findings of embodied cognition research with the wider functions of the human psyche. Nor is there any real critique of the experiments.

Lobel goes out of her way to reassure us that the stories she relates are all the result of solid, peer reviewed academic research, published in the best journals, and leaves it at that, as if this were the gold-standard of unquestionable veracity, which it clearly isn't. While this book is informative, it is superficial, never providing the insight you feel the author is capable of.

Ian Simmons

Fortean Times Verdict

INTERESTING, BUT SUPERFICIAL AND OVER-RELIANT ON ANECDOTES

6

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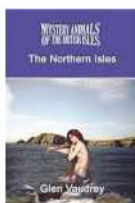
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The wilds of Scotland

Scotland's (Denmark's?) carnivorous sheep, marmennil, noggle and sjödreygil meet dead sea serpents (and a lake monster)



The Northern Isles

Mystery Animals of the British Isles series

Glen Vaudrey

CFZ Press 2011

Pb, 196pp, illus, appxs, bib, ind, £12.50, ISBN 9781905723744

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.50

Sea Serpent Carcasses Scotland

From the Stronsa Monster to Loch Ness

Glen Vaudrey

CFZ Press 2012

Pb, 123pp, illus, chron, bib, ind, £9.99, ISBN 9781905723935

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.99

Following his book on cryptids of the Western Isles in CFZ Press's 'Mystery Animals of the British Isles' series, Glen Vaudrey has produced another on cryptids of the Northern Isles, as well as one on Scottish sea monster carcasses.

Vaudrey has documented a diverse array of Northern Isles crypto-fauna, some of which are unheard-of beyond their homeland. Their names alone elicit curiosity: marmennil, noggle, sjödreygil, nuckelavee, the Quholm hound and the Scalloway floater.

There are also more familiar cryptids and creatures of legend, including sea serpents, merfolk, finfolk, selkies, water horses, late-surviving great auks, and sheep that have turned to savage carnivory to supplement their mineral-meagre diet on remote isles.

The depth of coverage of each case is impressive, as are the illustrations, many seldom seen elsewhere. Each entry in his



spotter's guide to the principal types of creature documented in the book has an identikit picture so you know what you have encountered should you be (un) fortunate enough to come upon it.

Vaudrey spreads his crypto-net some distance northward; he also includes some some captivating mystery beasts from the Faroes, which, when I last consulted an atlas, were part of Denmark. I have no qualms about his doing so, other than his failure to include any mention of their endemic and very enigmatic pied ravens, now seemingly lost, but among my all-time favourite mystery birds.

Not to worry: there are more than enough mysteries of many other kinds to satisfy the most jaded cryptozoological reader, let alone enthusiasts like myself.

The same is true of Vaudrey's foray into the carcasse-strewn chronicles of Scotland's sea serpents, though as the subtitle reveals, it also encompasses that nation's most celebrated freshwater equivalent, a certain Loch Ness monster.

Arranged chronologically, the text is divided into sections devoted to a carcasse-related location and time, beginning with Alba in AD 900 and ending with Bridge of Don in 2011. Other such locations include Benbecula, Loch Ness, Isle of Man, Orkney, Prestwick, Troon, Stronsa, Gourock, Barra, Usan, and the North Sea.

Each case is accompanied by a map showing its location for those unfamiliar with some of the more obscure places where carcasses have turned up, and it was good to see so many rare archive photos and news reports.

All of the famous cases are here, such as the mysterious big-toothed Gourock carcasse (generally, sea serpent remains are conspicuously lacking in teeth), the six-limbed Stronsa beast, the Orkney Islands' so-called Scapasaurus, an

assortment of globsters, and many more besides, as well as a few cases that were totally new to me. And fresh from its previous appearance in Vaudrey's *Northern Isles* book, the Scalloway floater also receives coverage here.

I quibble at Nessie's inclusion in this book, not only because this is by definition a freshwater aquatic cryptid, not a sea monster, but also because I feel that Vaudrey may have sold himself short here. Why not instead make Nessie the jewel in the crown of a separate, companion book devoted to the freshwater monsters of Scotland, of which the Loch Ness Monster is just one (albeit the most famous) of many?

But back to the present book. The usual (and unusual) suspects are paraded and pontificated over – oarfishes and plesiosaurs, basking sharks and conger eels, beaked whales, giant squids, gargantuan octopuses, stupendous marine worms, long-necked seals *et al* – and the result is a slim but fact-packed, invaluable resource for everyone interested in Scotland's abundance of maritime crypto-mysteries.

We still may not know the identity of Gourock's mega-tooth or the four-flipped sea monster washed up dead yet tantalisingly undecomposed at Prestwick, for instance, but their remarkable histories and those of all of the others carcasses included in this fine book have been painstakingly researched by Vaudrey, and are preserved here now by him in meticulous detail for ready access by generations of future investigators. And that is no mean achievement. Dr Bernard Heuvelmans, the modern-day doyen of sea serpents, would have approved, and so do I, wholeheartedly.

Karl Shuker

Fortean Times Verdict

MUST-READ BOOKS FOR FANS OF SCOTTISH CRYPTOZOOLOGY

8

The Mythical Zoo

Animals in Myth, Legend, and Literature

Boria Sax

Overlook Duckworth 2014

Hb, 352pp, illus, bib, ind, £18.99, ISBN 9780715647325

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.09



Boria Sax views the representation of animals as a means to explore human identity. His wide-ranging survey of the animal kingdom in terms of mythology, folklore, philosophy, art, literature and popular culture perform lacks depth, but teems with curious links and allusions.

In chapter one – "Almost human", covering primates, bears, beavers and pigs – we learn that Georges-Louis Leclarc de Buffon, the 18th century naturalist, believed all animals once had a civil society with laws, before they were enslaved by humans. The last remnants could be found in the New World, where beavers still built villages, created constitutions, and held courts. This whimsical view was upheld as late as 1774 by Oliver Goldsmith in his *History of Animated Nature*.

Chapter two, on "tricksters", deals with coyote, fox, jackal, rabbit and hare, while under "sages" we find bees and wasps, ravens and rooks, owls, carp and salmon. The "tough guys" are badgers, fleas, pigeons, and rats. Then there are chapters on musicians; mermaid's companions; beasts of burden; lost souls; creatures underground and by the seashore; and noble adversaries. Under "man's best friends" we are reminded that our word 'pussy' comes from Pasht (Bastet), the Egyptian goddess with a cat's head and a woman's body.

This handsome book full of charming engravings is marred by a blizzard of typos: Jericho is not in Turkey; William Blake was not writing in the 1890s; Theseus wanders through the labyrinth, not the minotaur; and Mrs Twigg-Winckle is presumably the anorexic twin of Beatrix Potter's homely hedgehog.

Paul Sieveking

Fortean Times Verdict

WIDE-RANGING AND INTERESTING STUDY OF ANIMALS IN MYTH

6

ALSO RECEIVED

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

The EU

The Truth about the Fourth Reich, How Hitler won the Second World War

Bruce G Hallenbeck

Stackpole Books 2014

Pb, 74pp, bib, £7.99, ISBN 9780953506125

A specious rant, calculated to thrill Europhile and Eurosceptic conspiracy lovers. According to the author, what Mussolini and Hitler began was finished by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown: the framework of a United States of Europe (although they say this inclines towards the USSR model more than the USA). Sample factoid: the EU directive on duck eggs runs to 26,911 words; the Ten Commandments just 300. Nick Clegg condemned this slender tract as “peddling outlandish myths” (*D Express* 17 April 2014); he was probably trying to confuse his critics by talking sense.

Alchemy and Mysticism

Alexander Roob

Taschen 2014

Hb, 575pp, ind, £12.99, ISBN 9783836549363

Prof Roob shares his fascination with “the picture puzzles and linguistic riddles” that populated the key documents of the alchemists and mystics driving the Renaissance. His introduction takes us from the philosopher’s veneration of Hermes and Thoth and the Emerald Tablet to the books of ‘symbols’ of Michael Maier, William Blake and Athanasius Kircher, through the use of symbolism by the great painters, the beautiful illuminated pages of the 16th century *Splendor Solis*, and touching upon cabalists, freemasons and the pioneers of medicine, chemistry, and optics along the way. Within a general structure – based on such alchemical scenarios as conjunction and separation; transmutation and purification; the tree and the wheel; the egg, stone and fluid – nearly every page bears a colour illustration with Roob’s clear analysis. The whole book is a visual delight, its discoveries bordering on the surreal. For instance, a very Platonic quotation from the 16th century mathematician

Giordano Bruno on the indestructibility of matter (whose parts are mutable and interchangeable “at the same time and in a single minute”) which could describe a modern hologram, is illustrated by Bhaktivedanta painting of the ‘Cycle of Rebirth’. It is, in every way, illuminating.

Unconventional Flying Objects

Paul R Hill

Hampton Roads 2014

Pb, 429pp, bib, indexes, \$24.95, ISBN 9781571747136

Paul Hill, an aeronautical physicist, is investigating the science of UFO flight. Written after a career with NASA and NACA, this book is his 25-year search for the physics of these anomalous objects. He explains that UFO is a bad term as the objects do not use the atmosphere for support or locomotion. They don’t fly, he says: “They are vectored along trajectories.” This conclusion is borne out through whole chapters of detailed analysis of witness, film and radar observations. Hill had his own UFO sighting in the 1950s but had to keep it secret as he pursued his career. This is the most novel UFO book for a long time and invites the testing of Hill’s deductions and theory. It presents (at last?) a solid challenge to the sceptics.

The Bank Holiday Murders

Tom Wescott

CrimeConfidentialPress 2014

Pb, 204pp, notes, refs, £6.99, ISBN 9780615932934

If you’re thinking, “Just what the world needs, another Ripper book,” you may be wrong. Wescott, a veteran Ripperologist, starts five months before the (generally accepted) first of Jack’s victims, Polly Nichols, and asks why the police investigating Nichols’s murder apparently “recognized that a series of murders was taking place”. His answer is that the well-known series was preceded by the slaughter of Emma Smith and Martha Tabrum; as he notes the three women had similar biographies and were killed just yards apart. Well written and researched, Wescott makes a convincing case.

FORTEAN FICTION

Elmer Crowley, A Katabasic Nekyia

Tom Bradley, illus: David Aronson & Nick Patterson

Mandrake of Oxford

Pb, ISBN 1906958-55-8



In *Elmer Crowley*, Tom Bradley dismantles and re-welds biography, novel, creative non-fiction and metaphysical treatise into a bizarre satire. Aleister Crowley, alias ‘The Anti-Christ’, has bungled his karma and ended up the *Looney Tune* character Elmer Fudd. The whole outlandish premise plays out as a mockery of occultism’s darkest delusions. The subtitle means a descent into a ritual by which ghosts are invoked to divine the future. The narrator is the incarnated ghost of Crowley. He and Hitler are sometimes compared for the similarities of their occult-based belief in “Do As Thou Wilt” as justification for turning hapless followers into “stringless marionettes.” Crowley’s opening words refer to Hitler as his “magickal child,” setting the moral tone for what follows. Numerous themes branch out from this initial assertion with key scenes wickedly illustrated, adding ‘graphic novel’ as yet another misleading descriptor of Bradley’s furcated katabasis.

Crowley, Fudd, Hitler, Buddha, Yeats, Heliopolitan hierophants, the Goddess Baubo, assorted “Nilotic dream despots”, a carrot-eating Madame Blavatsky, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and their Warner Brothers producer, Leon Schlesinger bounce and boing their way across human history. These are the launch points for Bradley’s inquiries into questions of meta-ethics and truth against a background of “Esoteric Hitlerists.”

Crowley’s tragic flaw is his fixed idea that “magick is done to the strains of incantatory monotony, not self-conscious art.” This translates into control of non-questioning followers to serve his ends, noting with admiration that the A-bomb is “the most magickal blackjack to come swinging along since the sage Aurva armed his king with the fire missile in the Vishnu Purana.”

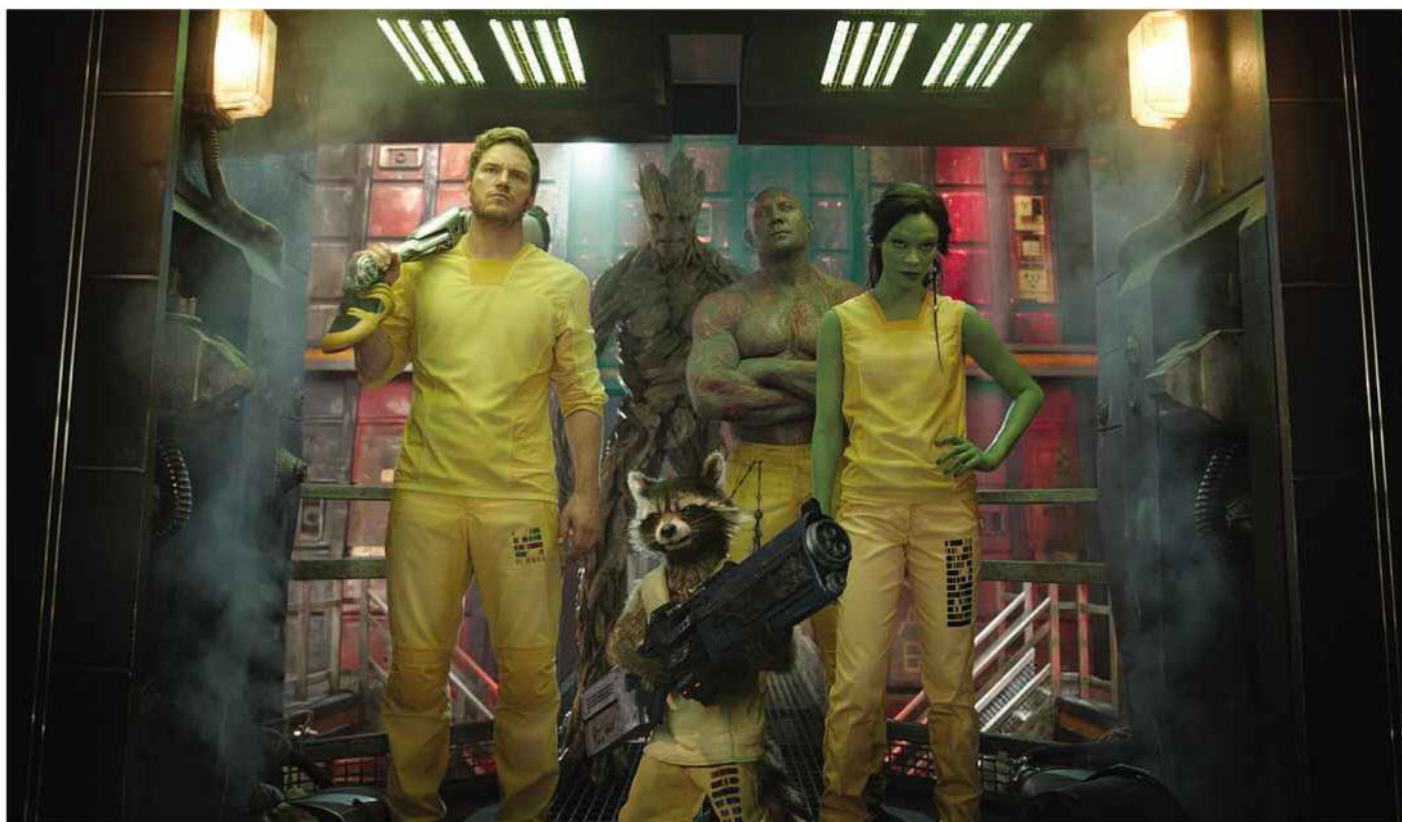
Crowley and Fudd share a speech defect: the inability to pronounce the R sound (“that wascal wabbit”). “Many fine magi,” Crowley claims, “perhaps even a slim majority... are poorly spoken.” That would include (besides Buddha and Hitler’s doctor) Leon Schlesinger, the money behind the Warner Brothers cartoons. Crowley and Schlesinger meet at a Hollywood orgy over a shared pederastic interest in a youth who also has a speech impediment. Whether Elmer Fudd’s “babbling weakness” on screen is a gibe at Crowley’s lisp is something the reader will have to determine. Either way, reincarnation as a lisping Looney is not an inapt destiny for the Anti-Christ who infamously wrote in his *Confessions*, “direct injury [is] the proper conjuration to call up gratitude.”

Doing as one wills, central to Crowley’s philosophy of Thelema, easily leads to a perverted will to power. Crowley realises after it’s too late that his magick act stinks. “Is ‘wayward sorcery’ a damnation offense as [Madame Blavatsky] proclaimed?” All you need is love, not will. As Bradley has stated elsewhere, “The universe runs on a Theosophical rather than a Thelemic dispensation.”

Elmer Crowley may confound those who want their words to move through books like soldiers in formation and come to a uniform halt at the end. But readers willing to navigate outside the usual throughways will find themselves in the higher vistas of this rich and complex tome, slim enough for the slow and multiple readings it deserves.

John-Ivan Palmer

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



Guardians of the Galaxy

Dir James Gunn, US 2014
On general UK release

“There ain’t no thing like me, ’cept me,” growls Rocket, the genetically modified, borderline-psychotic talking raccoon at one point in *Guardians of the Galaxy*; it’s a verdict that might apply equally well to Marvel Studios’s latest film: a fast, furious, and frequently hilarious space opera that, while it makes use of genre tropes aplenty – from prison break and caper movies to old-school adventure serials – doesn’t play quite like anything else we’ve seen in a long while. The gorgeously retro posters for the film promised something different from the lumbering and overblown Hollywood norm, harking back to an age (not so long ago; it only ended in the 1980s) when mainstream genre movies could still occasionally surprise and anything, despite the lack of CGI, seemed somehow possible; including fun.

If *Guardians* manages to recapture something of the feeling that films like *Star Wars* or *Raiders of the Lost Ark* delivered, then that’s in large part down to its engagingly

eccentric cast of characters rather than its standard space opera plot. The ‘Guardians’ themselves are a ragtag team of misfits that as well as the aforementioned Rocket (Bradley Cooper) includes a sentient, ambulant tree with a three-word vocabulary (“I am Groot”) voiced by Vin Diesel, Drax, a revenge-obsessed, tattoo-covered alien muscleman (David Bautista) and green-skinned female assassin Gamora (Zoe Saldana). Finally, there’s Peter Quill (Chris Pratt), kidnapped from Earth as a child in 1988 and now eking out a living as a small-time intergalactic crook with the totally unearned code name of Star Lord. It’s this cocky orphan of the spaceways who leads us into the film’s far-flung alien worlds, and his prized Walkman and ‘Awesome Mix Tape’ that provides its bizarrely appropriate soundtrack of 1970s hits, from Bowie’s ‘Moonage Daydream’ to The Five Stairsteps’s ‘Ooh Child’.

Our reluctant anti-heroes are thrown together in the quest for a cosmic MacGuffin (“An Ark of the Covenant, Maltese Falcon kind of thing” as Quill describes it), which quickly turns into a battle to save the Universe when said artefact falls into the dangerous hands of

Kree religious zealot Ronan the Accuser (Lee Pace).

Grizzled comics veterans like me might remember a previous incarnation of the Guardians – an equally ill-assorted bunch from the 31st century trying to wrest the Galaxy from its alien conquerors – but the current line-up is a disparate bunch of characters created by the likes of Jim Starlin and Bill Mantlo back in the 1970s and ’80s and only brought together in recent years. Turning this motley crew into anything resembling a super-team is no easy matter; *Guardians* never lets you forget that its roster of reluctant heroes don’t even share cultural references or linguistic idioms, let alone a common purpose, and the film gets some great comic mileage out of things lost in translation or misunderstood. Drax doesn’t understand the notion of metaphor, (“Nothing goes over my head. My reflexes are too fast. I would catch it”), Rocket doesn’t know what a raccoon is, and Gamora has certainly never come across key Earth texts like *Footloose* or heard of Kevin Bacon. This lack of common cultural bonds – each character firmly believes that the others are either insane or imbecilic, and frequently says

so – means they have to discover something they do share. In this case, it’s loss – of home, parents, identity – and it’s the forging of a common purpose that ultimately brings them together. In that sense, *Guardians* is a universal tale about the formation of a new family out of the ashes of dispossession – and thanks to the sharp script, direction and performances it’s charmingly told.

The cast is pretty well faultless. Chris Pratt struts the fine line between likeable loser and total dick with poise and precision, Zoe Saldana gets to do a damn sight more than she ever did in *Star Trek* (and is a fetching shade of green), and wrestler Dave Bautista turns in a performance that’s both very funny and surprisingly moving. Support from the likes of Karen Gillan, Michael Rooker, Benicio Del Toro, Glenn Close and John C Reilly is uniformly spot-on. Perhaps the film’s biggest triumph is realising its two non-humanoid CGI creations, the tortured, snarky Rocket and the dignified, lumbering Groot, so completely that the suspension of one’s disbelief is simply never an issue. And, after all, what’s not to love about a violence-crazed raccoon with a very

large gun?

Visually, too, *Guardians* is a departure from most SF-style films of recent years, with an astonishingly in-your-face colour palette and a look that replicates perfectly the SF book covers of the 1970s: achingly blue skies, vast spacecraft, futuristic cities and stunningly desolate planetscaping all look as impossibly, gorgeously hyper-real; Chris Foss was even brought in to work on the ship designs. Co-writer (with Nicole Perlman) and director and co-writer James Gunn, working with a much bigger budget than he's been used to, has done a splendid job, cramming so much into this hyper-kinetic cherry bomb of a movie (its two hours whizz by) that it's easy to miss things in the constant pile-up of sight gags, fizzing one-liners and space stuff flying all over the screen; in terms of sensory overload, it's as if Terry Gilliam had taken speed and directed his own bonkers version of *Star Wars*. In 3D, it was quite overwhelming; I'd imagine that in an IMAX cinema it could fry your eyeballs.

If you can find the time to focus your critical faculties for long enough, you'll realise the film's not perfect; the villains – as so often – disappoint and the third act battle is a little unsurprising. For those of us not noted for our sense of fun, it's also hard to accept that something this relentlessly hilarious and enjoyable – it had 1,600 people laughing out loud and hooting with delight – can actually either be worthwhile or good for you.

But while cynics and miserabilists should probably stay away, I imagine that, like a successful panto, this will deliver for the rest of the family. There's plenty of business to keep younger viewers happy while the grown-ups enjoy the cheeky humour and sly self-referentiality and comic fans spot the various nods – but *Guardians* never feels cynically kitschy or pleased with itself; in telling its story with such a freewheeling sense of fun and adventure, it makes wide-eyed innocents of us all – for two hours, anyway.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

WILDLY ENTERTAINING SPACE OPERA WITH ADDED RACCOON

9

The Congress

Dir Ari Folman, Israel/Germany/Poland/Luxembourg 2013
On general UK release

The Congress sees *Waltz With Bashir* director Ari Folman move away from the more harrowing subject of the war in Lebanon and turn his gaze on Hollywood to illustrate how this land of make-believe – and our insatiable appetites for mythical stories – could potentially put society in peril. Grappling with our perception of reality, the power of fantasy and our thoughts on human existence, it's an interesting idea that gets a bit lost in a trippy, kaleidoscopic garden of animation.

Playing herself, Robin Wright stars as an actress on the wrong side of 40, struggling to find roles for a mature woman. Believing her best work is behind her, Wright's agent (Harvey Keitel) and a "Miramont" studio boss (played by Danny Huston) persuade her to sell her body to science in exchange for a lot of money, an early retirement and immortalisation on the big screen (through a computer-generated image) as her more desirable, younger, *Princess Bride* self. After this, it's one giant leap for mankind as the film jumps forward 20 years to Wright attending the Futurist Congress, a gathering showcasing the studio's latest technology, which allows anyone to cross over and experience life as an animated avatar.

Wright naturally plays herself perfectly, and the rest of the cast is equally up for taking on Hollywood and its more extreme and eccentric tendencies. However, in spite of its able actors, *The Congress* fails to connect in the same way other Hollywood stories have over the years.

Ambitiously, Folman gives us both live-action and an abundance of psychedelic animated sequences, but it all adds up to a slightly disjointed production. The events in the real world don't connect harmoniously with those in the animated one; other characters are neglected in favour of Wright and her many transformations; and the film juggles the future and the past via the two mediums in a way that eventually makes it difficult to distinguish reality from fantasy and to care about any of it.

The Congress is an alluring con-

cept, but Folman shifts gears a few too many times to make this ride as affecting, engaging and enjoyable as it could have been. If, however, the moral of the story is that reality is ultimately what we want it to be, then let's all jump into a Volkswagen and join Forlman in his lysergic retro world, because it sure is pretty!

Fohnjang Ghebdinga

Fortean Times Verdict

OFTEN BEGUILING TRIP INTO HOLLYWOOD'S FANTASY-LAND

6

Frau im Mond

Dir Fritz Lang, Germany 1929
Eurekal, £15.99 (Dual Format)

Sometimes catching up with a widely acknowledged cinema classic can be a fraught affair, sometimes leading to disappointment. That may be a first-time viewer's response to the early scenes of Fritz Lang's acclaimed 1929 late silent science fiction movie, *Frau im Mond*.

Renowned for its uncannily accurate depiction of the process of launching a Moon-bound rocket, the first hour or so might test the patience of even the most dedicated viewer. That's quite apart from the necessary adjustments that have to be made in order to approach the idiosyncrasies of silent cinema, such as the declarative acting and over-reliance on melodrama. Before the film gets to the interesting space stuff, much of it is given over to an espionage tale in which various interested parties – mad scientists and big business (the rocket results from the efforts of a private company) alike – squabble over the plans for the space mission, intended to raid the Moon's apparent abundance of gold! These early sequences (the movie is just under three hours) are much more in keeping with Lang's previous work, like *Dr Mabuse, der Spieler* (1922) or *Spione* (1928), which shares *Frau im Mond's* leads, Willy Fritsch and Gerda Maurus), than *Metropolis* (1927).

Like those previous works, this was co-written with Lang's wife Thea von Harbou, the model for the human and robot Maria in *Metropolis*. Also contributing was German rocket scientist Hermann Oberth, who'd originally planned to build a genuine working rocket for the movie. That didn't happen,

but the film's inclusion of a countdown to launch influenced both Werner von Braun (developer of the V2 missile) and NASA, who themselves brought von Braun to the US after the war for his rocketry expertise. The sequences following the designing, building and launch of the rocket are riveting, amazing in how true to the eventual reality much of it is, but also how bizarre some of the more fanciful ideas about the Moon and the possibilities of travelling there were. So worried was the 1930s Nazi regime about the scientific content of the film, they banned it under the guise of state secrecy (an interesting aspect further explored in the 15-minute documentary that accompanies the film).

Real science does rather go out the window once the protagonists land on the Moon: whatever credibility points *Frau im Mond* wins in its approach to rocketry, it nearly loses after it reaches the Earth's orbiting companion. Not only does the movie Moon have a breathable atmosphere, but the surface is littered with gold nuggets and potted with boiling mud holes! Almost everything prior to and up to the landing on the Moon anticipates the eventual Apollo missions, while everything afterwards falls back on hokey sci-fi serial ideas. Despite that, *Frau im Mond* is a great-looking film, from the shadowy spy antics of the early section, to the pristine grandeur of the rocket launch and journey into space, especially when seen on the Blu-ray release.

Alongside Lang's future city tale *Metropolis*, this film deserves its classic status. It's not only a silent cinema classic that repays patience with its opening act, but it made important contributions to the real-life sciences of rocketry through exploring imaginative ideas on screen. As important as *Frau im Mond* was to the development of science fiction at the movies, its bigger achievement might have been in its undoubted contribution to real-life science fact (see Bob Rickard, 'The First Fortean #2: The Young Rocketeers', FT309:50-51).

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT, BUT REQUIRES PATIENCE

7

Raze

Dir. Josh C. Waller, US 2014
Koch Media, £15.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

Raze wears whatever grindhouse credentials it owns on the grubby, sweaty, tight-fitting T-shirts the girls who have been abducted and forced to fight to the death are clad in. With the threat of family waiting to be executed and in thrall to a secret society of gambling spectators with brutal male jailers in tow, the girls do fight. Any prurient boys or girls out there expecting a turn-on from lasses stripping down to their underwear and indulging in a tickle fight or two are in for a rude awakening. Heads are smashed in with bare fists, skulls are split against stone walls and eyes are gouged out with those good ol' opposable thumbs which have helped to make us all so human. It makes the impact of the sudden shocking physical violence in *The Killer Inside Me* appear like a couple of light skirmishes.

A young woman wakes up to find herself in a dungeon after a one-night stand. She finds her way out, only to be confronted by Sabrina (Zoe Bell), who looks as if she has just woken up after 10 successive one-night stands. The girl fights because Sabrina forces her to. It all ends very badly for one of them. Turns out the perverse married couple in charge are the current overseers of a live girl-on-girl snuff racket that's been running underground for generations. Any punters not present at the venue can watch it via the live feed, making bets on the winner. Fifty girls start out; one remains standing at the end – and with victory comes her promised freedom and the safety of her loved ones.

It all sounds pretty daft as a narrative, but from its opening, with a jarring yet deft fake-out concerning the main protagonist, it almost never lets up until the end. In their solitary waiting cells, closely confined, the girls are forced to bond, be it from desperation or manipulation. Director Josh C. Waller's execution of this idea is as limber and as muscular as the girls in battle. There is definitely a nod to *Enter the Dragon* in all this (at one moment there is a blatant reference). It only briefly gets out of shape when the perverse couple

start spouting a load of flabby nonsense about goodness knows what before the climactic last third. Who cares? Girls are killing each other, it's horrible, and you root for one of them to survive.

Zoe Bell handles the blood-drenched, bone-breaking action sequences with gritty aplomb – which comes as no surprise given she was the stuntwoman for Uma Thurman in Tarentino's *Kill Bill*. The violence is unrelentingly brutal, one fight after another following in rapid succession, each more savage than the last.

Is *Raze* merely an exploitative, misogynistic exercise? No more than it can be accused of being a misandrist one, because what males there are in this film don't come out of it with any credit at all. Any 'message' is lost amid all the flesh and blood carnage, unless it is one of mere nihilism; this starts grim and ends grim. I certainly did not enjoy what I watched – it was gut-wrenching – but, honestly, I was entertained. A lot. Whether by accident or design, that contradiction got me thinking after the whole harrowing experience was over.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict
THE ULTIMATE BAD HAIR DAY FOR THE PC BRIGADE **7**

Zombie Hunter

Dir. Kevin King, US 2013
Signature Entertainment, £14.99 (DVD)

Danny Trejo (Machete) leads a group of fairly anonymous survivors through a post-apocalyptic world as they battle against drug-created zombies that are out to eat them. This movie found at least some of its obviously very limited budget through a Kickstarter campaign (well, if it's good enough for Veronica Mars...), but it really wasn't worth the effort or the trust of those who donated. With Trejo and that title, some camp fun might be expected, but instead dullness dominates. The somewhat out-of-place CGI monster at the climax doesn't make sitting through the rest worthwhile. Dead on arrival.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict
A LOW-BUDGET ZOMBIE FLICK DISTINCTLY LACKING IN BITE **2**

SHORTS

THE CAT

Matchbox Films, £9.99 (DVD)



Pet shop worker So-yeon inherits a Persian cat, only to be haunted by a feline-like little girl with green cat eyes who throws her life into turmoil... or is it just her imagination? As those close to her begin to die, and the strange girl continues to lurk, So-yeon must seek help from an unlikely quarter. Byun Seung-wook's *The Cat* is a remix of many themes from Japanese and Korean supernatural cinema of the past decade or more, so there's nothing new here to distinguish this effort. It's more of a slow-burn psychological horror than one to make you jump out of your seat, but it'll remind you of many better movies. **BJR 5/10**

VIKING: THE DARKEST DAY

Signature Entertainment, £5.99 (DVD), £6.99 (Blu-ray)



Vikings are all the rage, with the successful History Channel drama series promising a third season next year. That kind of well-made drama always inspires cheap, straight-to-DVD knock-offs. Despite that, *Viking: The Darkest Day* does have its quirks. Very loosely based upon the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, the story sees a young monk charged with delivering the Lindisfarne Gospels to Iona (their real world relocation being a bit of a mystery), but he's harassed by a Viking "death squad" out to stop him (a cheeky gambit that keeps the cast numbers down). An atmospheric opening quickly surrenders to an action-driven chase structure, although there is a bit more religious history here than might be expected and far less Viking action than might be hoped for. There's also a tribe of Sawney Bean-inspired cannibals for good measure. **BJR 4/10**

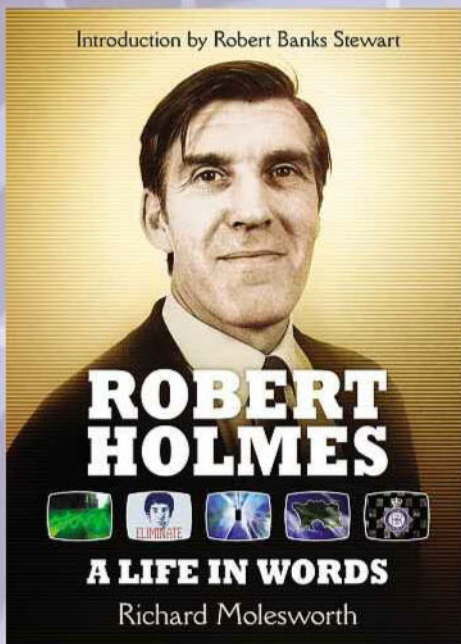
HAUNTER

Studiocanal, £9.99 (DVD), £15.99 (Blu-ray)



Canadian horror *Haunter* is a sort of ghostly *Groundhog Day*. Lisa (Abigail Breslin, of *Little Miss Sunshine* fame) wakes to find herself trapped in a nightmare of eternal recurrence in her family home. Her parents neither believe her nor listen to her protestations that when they awake the family are reliving the same experiences of the same – as it turns out, fateful – day over and over again. As Lisa delves deeper into the mystery she discovers the house is haunted by the ghost of a serial killer with the power to possess the living. A battle ensues between Lisa and the murderer to stop him taking over another living victim. It's only by foiling his plans that she will be able to break the nightmare cycle and free her family from purgatorial entrapment. Breslin is an affecting young actress, but the film's succession of scares diminishes in direct inverse proportion to the accruing of revelatory detail. And there is only so much she can do with looking alarmed in close-up as she walks about the house – always shrouded by forbidding *Silent Hill*-type mists – in her quest for answers. *Haunter* has neither the panache nor the flesh-and-blood substance of Vincenzo Natali's earlier *Splice*, but he is a film maker intent on exploring different avenues of horror and this latest effort does demonstrate a certain delicacy in the way it creates a foreboding atmosphere through the depiction of the ordinary gone strangely out of kilter. Some people may well think that this is enough. **NC 5/10**

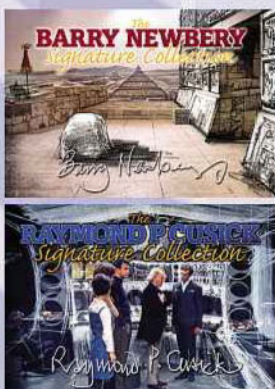
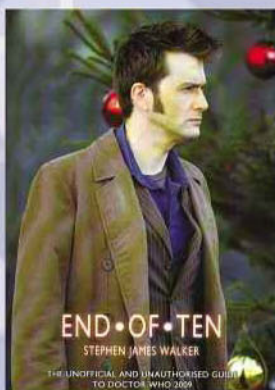
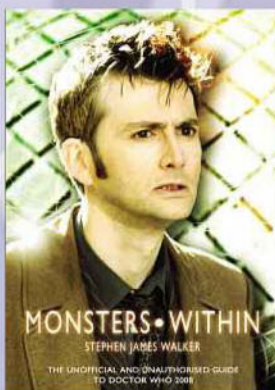
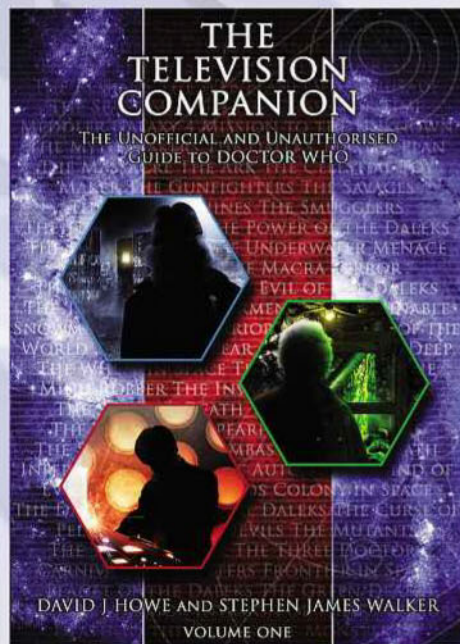
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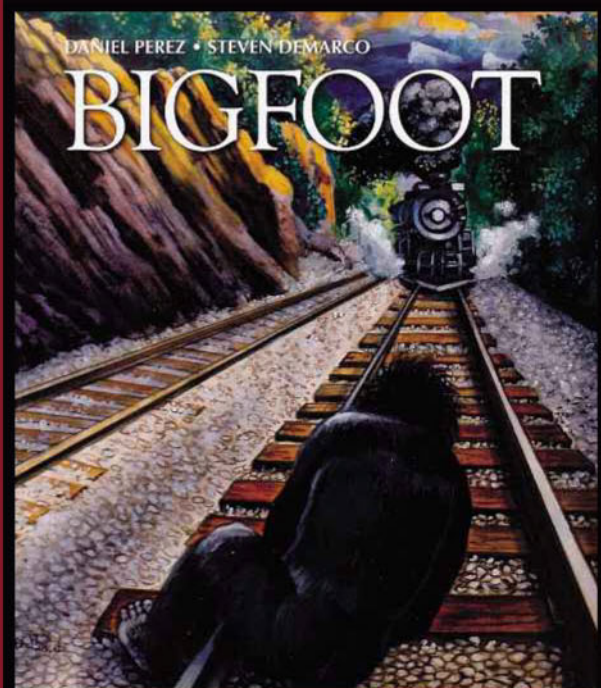
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Dear FT...

letters



Favourites found

Regarding the 'Mystery Stories' in the 'Fortean Top 40' [FT308:31], I have recently trawled through back-issues and have located the remaining two stories – the 'toxic waste squid' story was cleared up (pun intended) in a letter in FT311:73-74.

Mikita Brottman's recollection of a story about a man "who rode his bicycle so fast that his trousers caught fire" appears to relate to 'Trouser Kindling' [Sidelines, FT237:8], in which a Polish cyclist (at least reportedly) did indeed receive second-degree burns from pedalling so hard that his trousers caught fire. There's a rather amusing illustration by Martin Ross accompanying the piece.

Scott Wood's memories of 'a news story about a haunted house in Lambeth', featuring apparitions of a floating foetus and Elvis Presley must surely be of 'Return of the Demon Elvis' [FT77:15]. This story was about claims of "a demon disguised as Elvis Presley" haunting a flat on the Clapham Park Estate in the London borough of Lambeth. The flat's resident didn't see "Elvis" herself (a neighbour did), but she did report seeing "a five-month-old foetus hovering in the kitchen and black smoke in the sitting room". The haunting apparently ended after a blessing of the flat by a local vicar.

Ian Sneesby
London

Ancient Purgatory

Regarding Purgatory ["Pilgrims from Hell", FT312:29], Maria Cuervo has evidently read too many revisionist Baptist apologetics. The Catholic Church did not introduce the doctrine of Purgatory, much less invent it in the 13th century. Purgatory can be readily found in Jewish Apocrypha, New and Old Testament Scripture (1 Cor. 3:10-15, Zech. 13:8-9 for instance) and in the writings of the Church Fathers from as early as AD 96 by the likes of Tertullian,

Simulacra corner



Ian Cardy noticed this thoughtful rock face on Monte Baldo in the Italian Alps, near Lake Garda.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and fig-

ures, 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 – and please tell us your postal address.

Cyril of Jerusalem and (at more length) St Augustine in *City of God*, to name but a few historical sources that testify to this widely accepted Christian belief.

Joseph William Moloney
By email

Seneca White Deer

I recall reading in FT about white deer as anomalies [FT70:11, 236:25, 259:6]. At the time I didn't think of passing on any information about the herd of white-tailed deer on the grounds of the former Seneca Army Depot, located between Cayuga

Lake and Seneca Lake in the towns of Romulus and Varick, New York. The newsletter from Seneca White Deer (a non-profit organisation aiming to preserve the herd), refers to a news story in the Syracuse (NY) *Post-Standard* (6 June 2014) about recent efforts to save the herd, which numbers about 200, making it – they say – the largest white deer herd in the world.

The US Army created the Seneca Army Depot during World War II, and fenced in a number of deer. It seems that there were genes for white fur among those deer, because over the years a

herd of white deer has grown, although there are also some normal brown and some piebald. Since the Army stopped using the depot a few years ago, there have been plans to take down the fence and open up the land for development, which is scheduled to happen in 2016. Doing so would, of course, end the isolation that created the herd.

John F Callahan

Highland Park, New Jersey

Bow and arrow

While reading the latest issue of *Fortean Times* on the bus home today (30 June 2014), I was surprised to read a story in Sidelines [FT316:8] purporting to be a report from the *Glasgow Herald*, itself reported in the *Irish Independent* in November 2013. The tale of a woman shooting her husband with a bow and arrow because she "didn't want to wake the children" was an almost verbatim echo of a joke I had heard told on the Les Dawson Radio Show on *BBC Radio 4 Extra* that very morning: a show dating from March 1985. Is this a case of ostension – or just careless reporting of an urban myth?

Darren Rosenberg
Wallasey, Merseyside

Many Scots will recognise your bow and arrow Sideline as an old Glasgow joke, not a news story. Billy Connolly tells it in the classic 1975 *Play for Today*, *Just Another Saturday*.

Lewis JW Hurst
Edinburgh

Editor comments: As we say at Fortean Towers, we're only as good as our sources (which we always provide), although sometimes one source trumps another. Maybe a mischievous sub on the Glasgow Herald inserted it as a joke – or was him/herself duped by an informant... Urban legend transmission is a murky business and a good joke will always sprout legs. Of course, it's not entirely impossible that it might have actually happened...

Bolly boycott

A fellow member of a badge forum gave a talk in Guernsey on the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry during the Great War. “At the end,” he wrote, “I was given a bottle of champagne and one member of the audience said ‘I hope it’s not Bollinger’.

When I asked why, he said that no ex-soldier should ever drink Bollinger because in the aftermath of the war the family had insisted that all war graves be removed from their land.” Does anyone know if this is true?

Graham Wheeldon

By email

Devilish critters

Dr Melba T Ketchum of the Sasquatch Genome Project maintains that Sasquatch is a human hybrid with mitochondrial DNA of a human female and nuclear DNA of some unknown third species, possibly angels [‘Hairy Cousins?’ FT308:8]. The same theory accounts for the creation of the race of giants known as Nephilim. According to the sixth chapter of Genesis, fallen angels had intercourse with human females. In his remarkable book, *The Nephilim and the Pyramid of the Apocalypse*, Patrick Heron recounts that God sent the Great Flood to destroy these giants created by Satan’s ‘genetic engineering’ in an attempt to abort the birth of the Messiah.

Satan also pulled a ‘Jurassic Park’ before it was a book or a movie. To mock God and His creations, Satan took DNA from God’s living creatures and contaminated it with his own evil to create a bizarre menag-

erie of creatures which we know from ancient Greek and Roman sculpture as well as statues unearthed from Mesopotamia. After the Flood, as the Earth became repopulated, we are told that Satan repeated this and these creatures are still with us today – from hairy bipeds we call ‘Bigfoot’ to bipedal reptoids known as ‘Lizardman’. Very few Bigfoot sightings are without descriptions of ‘red glowing eyes’ and a smell of sulphur: a sign of demonic presence, we are told.

Greg May

Orlando, Florida

Pets of war

Arcane though it may sound, the information about British pets being put down in huge numbers at the start of World War II [FT313:9] has become familiar in popular culture since 2009, when *Glorious 39* was released. Written and directed by Stephen Poliakoff, the movie is a fictional drama reflecting many of the real issues of 1939, including the pressure to have pets euthanised, which yields some particularly eerie and disturbing imagery. Within the plot, this campaign is presented as part of a movement to depress and dishearten the population so that they will give up the idea of fighting Germany and instead go along with the policies of the pro-appeasement party.

Gail-Nina Anderson

Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Hazardous rags

In “The Baldoon Mystery” [FT315:30-39] one of the possible poltergeist manifestations was that “blazes broke out in bundles of clothes” (p.32). The theme of burn marks, smouldering and even fires occurring in piles of clothes is one that seems to occur regularly in poltergeist reports.

To this day on Royal Navy ships regulations state that wet rags must *not* be stored, and dry rags are stored in compart-

ments intended for Dangerous Goods. This is because they are known to ‘spontaneously’ combust. I can’t explain the physics behind it, but I can confirm that rags are stored with care and monitored, and even rags being transported (ships get through loads of them) are handled as Dangerous Goods.

Bert Gray-Malkin

Bristol

Fortean history

In “The First Fortean” # 7 [FT315:50-52], Bob Rickard is right that Rupert Gould would not have appreciated the writings of Charles Fort. However, Fort was read in quite advanced intellectual circles in England in the mid-1930s. He is referred to (in company with William James, JB Rhine, Margaret Murray, and Alexandra David-Neel) by the writer, traveller and anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer in *Bali and Angkor; or Looking at Life and Death* (London: Michael Joseph, 1936), in a passage on p.89, discussing what he calls M.E., Mental or Mystical or Magical Energy, “as you will”. The reference, however, is to *Wild Talents* (New York: Claude Kendal, 1932), and not to *Lo!* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931), the only Fort volume published in Britain before World War II. Gorer’s friends included Edith Sitwell, George Orwell and Margaret Mead. His discussion of mesaline was known to others, among them (I suspect) those émigrés to California Aldous Huxley and his associate Gerard Heard (who thought UFOs were piloted by insects).

Steven Yates inquires about an early TV show devoted to oddities [FT315:72]. Can he have in mind ‘Explain This’, written by Larry Forrester and Peter Robinson, a regular item on a magazine programme called *Kaleidoscope*, which finished its run in June 1952? It was followed by a series of articles by the pair in *Everybody’s Weekly*. More TV items by the same writers featured in *Teleclub*, a show for teens, in 1952. *Unsolved Mysteries: a Collection of Weird Problems* attributed to Valentine Dyall (radio’s “The Man in Black”) with “contributions

and historical research by Larry Forrester and Peter Robinson” (the real authors, of course) was published by Hutchinson’s in 1954, a reprint appearing in 1974. This is an interesting compendium of “unsolved mysteries”, written in a popularising way, but the solutions proposed in the appendix are a little jejune. Some of the TV films were shown abroad in cinemas, as I have a recollection of seeing one devoted to Nostradamus about 1957 in Dublin.

Re Russian Yetis [FT315:40-44]: The 1963 Russian book by Boris Porschnev (discussed and pictured) was translated into French for Bernard Heuvelmans and published by him as the first part of *L’Homme de Néanderthal Est Vivant* (Paris: Plon, 1974), the second part of which deals in detail with Heuvelmans’s discovery, along with Ivan T Sanderson, of the “Minnesota Iceman” (from which I drew material for articles in the *Unexplained* partwork). Though this is one of Heuvelmans’s books that has not made it into English, and seems to be unknown in the Anglo-American world, it at least makes the Russian information accessible in a Western language.

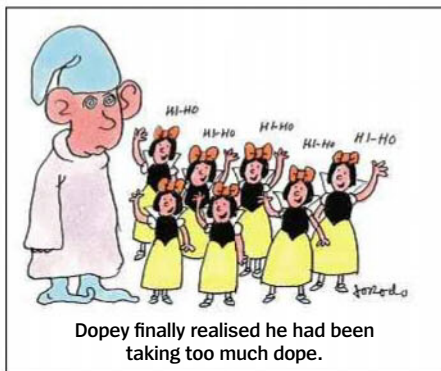
Peter Costello

Dublin, Ireland

In “The First Fortean” #7 [FT315:51], Bob Rickard writes: “We have searched for any hint that [Rupert T.] Gould had read or knew of Fort’s books”, but basically comes up empty. However, Tiffany Thayer, writing in *Doubt* [unnumbered issue, but #23 in the sequence], p.351 column 2, à propos Gould’s recent demise, says: “Rupert T. Gould, author of *Oddities, Enigmas, The Loch Ness Monster, The Case for the Sea Serpent*, and other books on Fortean topics, died [...] at Canterbury. YS [Your Secretary, i.e. Thayer] had some interesting correspondence with this Brains Truster in [1937 and 1938], but the Briton could not appreciate Fort’s humor and so never became one of us [i.e., joined the Fortean Society].” While leaving uncertain the degree to which Gould was familiar with Fort, this nevertheless proves that Gould had some contact with Fort’s writings, however brief. If Thayer’s and/or Gould’s papers are archived somewhere, it should be possible to follow this up.

Barry C Noonan

Madison, Wisconsin



Dopey finally realised he had been taking too much dope.

Buried railways

I can add some background to the story of Pamela Goodsell claiming to have discovered a train full of skeletons in Crystal Palace Park in 1978 [FT315:55]. The search for Thomas Webster Rammell's Crystal Palace Pneumatic Railway had been well publicised in 1975. The London Underground Railway Society's Peter Davis was extensively interviewed on national and local press and TV, where he explicitly mentioned the hope of finding the train in the tunnel – see for example the *Times* (21 July 1975):

PLAN TO DIG FOR TRAIN IN 'LOST' TUNNEL – What could have been the earliest underground passenger train in Britain may be unearthed in a lost tunnel at Crystal Palace when railway enthusiasts begin excavating next month... "With any luck we will find the train inside the tunnel..."

I took part in the subsequent digs on 3 and 10 August 1975 facilitated by GLC member and Chairman of the London Subterranean Survey Association the late Ellis Hillman, which unfortunately found nothing.

So Pamela Goodsell was well aware of the possibility of the train still being there, though the skeletons were her own. I was told that after being unable to lead enquirers to the hole she claimed to have fallen through she subsequently moved to the position of the experience being 'psychic'.

What is perhaps less well known is that the belief that the train might be in the tunnel was well founded. Rammell had previously laid a 2ft (60cm) gauge Pneumatic Despatch Company parcel-carrying tube up Eversholt Street in 1861-3. When this was investigated in 1930 after a disastrous gas explosion in the larger tube down High Holborn, it was discovered that the four carriages had been run into the middle of the tube and left there. A large hole was dug in the road and the carriages extracted with some difficulty. Two are now in the British Postal Museum and



Archive store in Debden, half of one is in the London Museum, and the fourth was destroyed in the bombing of the Hull Transport Museum. So it was reasonable to infer that Rammell's practice on abandonment was to run the train into the middle of the tunnel.

Unfortunately, when the Crystal Palace tunnel was eventually located in 1989, it was found that it had been demolished and infilled, leaving only the brick track-bed intact with no sign of the train (or skeletons!). This did at least resolve the question of the gauge, which proved to be the standard 4ft 8½in (1.435m).

Roger J Morgan
London

Roger J Morgan is a retired architect and former member of the London Subterranean Survey Association who has written a yet-to-be-published biography of Thomas Webster Rammell (1814-1889), civil engineer, inventor and promoter of the Pneumatic Railway.

I read with interest the forum piece on the Crystal Palace skeletons and was put in mind of a possible alternative inspiration for Pamela Goodsell and her tale of skeletal commuters. In 1966, when Pamela was seven years old – the perfect age to have terrifying images imprinted on the corner of your mind – Adam Adamant encountered a strikingly similar set of tube passengers, only in that instance on the Waterloo & City line, in the *Adam Adamant Lives!* episode 'Ticket to Terror'. Since the broadcast, like many TV shows of the era, the tapes were junked and this episode no longer exists – but stills from the show are available (see left) and I would argue they offer a convincing source for Pamela's 1978 encounter.

Greg Maughan
By email

TOP: An entombed Pneumatic Despatch carriage is exhumed from Eversholt Street. **CENTRE:** Street urchins rather than skeletons in the exhumed carriage. **BOTTOM:** Adam Adamant in 'Ticket to Terror'.

Point of view

While reading 'Out-of-body on demand' [FT312:12], I was struck by the language used: "The woman who can leave her body at will", "who can will herself out of her body", "She could dislocate her consciousness from her body", etc. I realised that I had become very familiar with such phrases from similar accounts without stopping to think what they meant or indeed if they meant anything at all. In what sense had this woman "left her body"? What would the part of her that had "left her body" be? There seems to be nothing in this account to suggest anything other than the fact that we experience the world via our senses and our mind, which is a product of our brains. We can no more will our mind out of our body than we can will our lungs out of our body. Some people may imagine that they are looking at their body from the outside. This experience may appear real to them but, as this article rather carefully points out, the researchers "relied upon 'the participant's descriptions' without determining whether any part of it was hallucinatory."

It is certainly fascinating to try to understand how the different areas of the brain are



Natural balance

I found this 'yin-yang' stone on the north shore of Oahu, one of the Hawaiian Islands. **West Hogan** Los Angeles, California

responsible for different feelings and states of mind, but there is no cause to evoke any supernatural or paranormal explanation and there is nothing here to suggest that consciousness can inhabit any other space than the amazing world between our ears.

Martin Stubbs
London

Jungle walrus

Why can't the Dingonek ["a tusked, predatory water monster... said to inhabit river systems across tropical Africa"] be a jungle walrus? ["Speculative zoology" FT316:52-53.] Why did Heuvelmans bother complicating things by proposing evolving sabretoothed cats? After all, there are pinnipeds all over the place – and there are river dolphins.

Bobby Zodiac
Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire

Hidden prehistory

After reading the review of *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America* by Richard J Dewhurst [FT315:59] I knew I had to buy it. It is a fascinating book, raising more questions than answers, and I would recommend it to any fortean. I look forward to more about this subject and maybe a statement from the Smithsonian Institution about the artefacts they have hidden away!

Jim Price
Liverpool

Roman twilight

Though I am a great fan of Classical Corner, I was a little disappointed that, in his latest column [FT315:15], Barry Baldwin fell back on the well-worn line that the "Romans evacuated Britain in the fifth century". This is a period which I have always found fascinating and it has long struck me as highly unlikely that the Roman troops in Britain, who had been locally recruited for generations, would have obeyed such orders from the centre, effectively calling on them to abandon loved ones, property and homeland. What probably happened was that a local wannabe emperor, most likely Constantine III, induced his troops – with promises of wealth

and an early return – to follow him into Europe in order to press his claim to the Imperial Throne. It all ended badly, of course. Constantine was defeated and executed and what was left of his army was absorbed into the forces of the Western emperor Honorius.

Geoff Clifton
Solihull, West Midlands

Barry Baldwin replies:
I agree with Geoff Clifton that the end of Roman Britain is a complex matter of long-standing debate. Contrast Theodore Mommsen (1885), "it was not Britain that gave up Rome, but Rome that gave up Britain," with Michael Jones (The End of Roman Britain, 1998) saying it was Britain that left Rome. Stripping Britain of Roman troops began in AD 383 with the would-be usurper Magnus Maximus. The historian Gildas (c. 540) says all the soldiers and civilian administrators were removed at this time. Gildas exaggerates, but his words are a pointer.

In 401/402, General Stilicho removed Roman troops from Hadrian's Wall, needing them for his defensive wars against the Ostrogoths and Visigoths. Numismatists say that no hoards of Roman coins dating from after this have been found in Britain. The increasing frequency and success of raids by Picts, Saxons, and 'Scotti' also suggest a fatal weakening of the Roman presence.

In 407, a new would-be usurper, Constantine, removed what troops were left to Gaul. One consequence was renewed Saxon raids on the island. According to the Byzantine historian Zosimus, Britain was now defenceless. In 409/410, its inhabitants appealed to the Western Roman emperor Honorius for help. He replied, in the text known as 'The Rescript of Honorius' that the Britons must look to their own defences – again, see Gildas and Zosimus.

For a somewhat different Marxist-inspired theory, see EA Thompson (my old Nottingham professor), 'Britain, AD 406-410,' Britannia 8 (1977), 303-18, who, relying on Zosimus, sees appeals for help motivated – as in Gaul – by Roman officials' fears of dissident peasants.

In 446, faced with ever-increasing raids, Britain appealed to general Aetius (nicknamed 'Last of the Romans') for assistance. He rejected this, having bigger and more dangerous enemy fish to fry; see Bede's History, bk1 ch13.

On balance, then, it is reasonable to say that Roman Britain came to an effective end during the reign of Valentinian III (assassinated in 455, after he had insanely liquidated Aetius), a view confirmed by (e.g.) Bede, bk1 chs12-16. Perhaps the last notable Roman in Britain (Bede again) was Ambrosius Aurelianus, a freelance general who orchestrated a defeat of the invading Angles in 493. One must, of course, toss into this historical melting pot the late 5th/early 6th-century general or self-styled emperor Artorius, often equated with 'King Arthur' – but that is perhaps a story for another time.

Simcoe-nicity

As I read *Fortean Times* on the train this evening [9 July], I was enjoying the article about the Baldoon Mystery. Imagine my surprise when I came across the reference to the Eva Brook Donly Museum in Simcoe, Ontario [FT315:38]. I had just reached the bottom of a bottle of Centennial Simcoe Pale Ale from the Kernel Brewery in London SE16. Synchronicity is one thing, but real ale synchronicity is a new experience for me. Long may it continue!

Simon Robinson
By email

Dragons' heads

Re "The Last Polish Cavalry Charge" [Mythconceptions, FT316:23]: the Polish aristocracy claimed descent from the Sarmatian Cavalry of the Roman Army, 5,500 of whom were sent to Britain in AD 156 by Marcus Aurelius. They carried on their lances inflatable dragons' heads of white and red streamers, with reeds in the mouths to hiss at the gallop. There are echoes here in the Polish flag and Welsh dragon. They were in Britain for around 20 years; the veterans were settled in Ribchester on the Ribble.

MC Welsh
Birkenhead, Merseyside

it happened to me...

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Making memories

Lately, the rumblings in my stomach have taken on a 'squawking' character. Often they sound eerily like someone speaking down a bad telephone line – you can hear the inflections, but you can't make out what they say. The similarity to EVP and other spirit voices is obvious. Maybe this could open up a whole new field of occult research. It's not as daft as it sounds – lots of people take orbs seriously, for example.

On a more serious note, I've noticed a startling change in the way my brain works the last few years. (I'm 60 this year, so I'm getting on a bit.) I've always had hypnagogic hallucinations, particularly hearing sounds when I fall asleep. Sometimes I can hear people speak intelligible sentences – the most memorable instance was when I clearly heard my mother ask a knowledgeable technical question about computer programming. Since she knows absolutely nothing about this, the sound could not have been 'remembered' by the brain; it must have been completely synthesised.

Anyway, this is old hat. In later years, I've started having hypnagogic false memories! I can 'remember' people that never existed, places I've never been to, and fictional actions I either have done or should have done. Rather unpleasant, actually, since it can be quite a job to sort the bogus memories from real ones. The interesting bit is that this is qualitatively different from ordinary dreaming or hallucinating. If I dream of someone I've never met, I recognise it as a figment of my imagination. If I 'remember' the same person, the brain seems to attach some kind of 'memory marker' to the experience, and this serves to make it 'real'. The same thing probably happens when people have 'real' false memories, if you pardon the expression. My

false memories disappear when I'm fully awake, but if the 'memory marker' persisted, there would be no way to distinguish them from real memories.

A related – but different – phenomenon is distorted memories of real events. We almost never remember things correctly, and the more distant the event, the more unreliable the memory. I have sometimes been able to watch false visual memories actually being made in my brain. The most dramatic occasion happened a few years ago.

In 1964, when I was 10, my father bought a caravan and my family went off on our first extended camping holiday. One day when driving in the south of Norway, we passed the home of the author and Nobel Laureate Knut Hamsun. My father said, "Let's drop in and see if Marie Hamsun [Hamsun's widow and a celebrated author in her own right] is there. Maybe we can get her autograph". So we did. Now, my father was an intelligent, sensitive and thoughtful man, and it was completely out of character for him to do a crass thing like that. Some years ago I asked my mother about it on the phone, and she told me that I'd got it all wrong.

Firstly, Hamsun's home was open to the public as a tourist attraction, and we had planned to go there beforehand. Secondly, Marie Hamsun was not in attendance – there

were several staff around to sell tickets and give guided tours. We did, however, see her as she was sitting on a bench in the grounds, and then my father asked me to go get her autograph. This story is not very interesting in itself. But as my mother was telling it, I could actually see new visual imagery of the occasion form in my brain. It's improbable that any of these visual memories were real – at least one of the images came from the cover of a book about Hamsun, and another I suspect came from a completely unrelated visit to a historic building.

Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

Strange Germany

While stationed at Spangdahlem AF Base in Germany, I had some strange experiences. One day a couple of friends and I decided to walk to an Italian restaurant and took an alleyway as a shortcut. This alleyway would have taken us straight on to the restaurant in no more than five minutes, but as we walked things just did not feel right. Even though it was early evening it got dark quickly and was taking much longer than it should have. It wasn't long before we hit an unfamiliar area. There were no streetlights to be seen and no people or vehicles. All the buildings were of a very old style but seemed as if they weren't as old as their design would suggest. For over an hour we walked through this bizarre twilight world. Finally, we stepped out of an alley into a cross street and found ourselves just a few feet from the restaurant. It was no longer dark; the sun was just beginning to dip behind the horizon. The whole journey had taken us only about 10 minutes, which contradicted what our watches kept telling us while we were walking. Yet, once leaving the alley everything was back to normal.

The second time something odd happened was while I was doing my evening walk/run around the inside perimeter of the base. This took me past a location known on base as the "witch's gate", named for an unusual stone marker just outside the gate. To me it looked like an ancient property marker, but everyone always said it was a grave. As my walk took me near to that location everything went silent. I stopped as this was unusual. As

I stood there I got an intense feeling of being watched and started hearing loud movement through the tree branches above me. It felt as if something old and hideous were stalking me. I actually couldn't shake off the picture of some octopus-type creature brachiating through the trees, as absurd as this sounds. Freaked out, I hurried back to the barracks.

The third incident: I was coming back from Bad Durkheim with a friend when we pulled over to relieve ourselves. While standing there waiting for him, I noticed once again that all sound had stopped. All I could hear was the small stream nearby. My friend returned to the car also feeling uneasy. Suddenly there was a rushing sound like a massive wind through the trees, and a horrible smell like that of rotting fish and brine along a beach hit our senses. At that point we heard a massive splash and decided it was time to get the heck out of there.

When I left the military and returned to Wyoming, I was discussing that last situation with some of my friends as we walked across a bridge. Suddenly everything went silent again. We all smelled the horrible seaside-type smell and heard a huge splash. We didn't stick around. None of my friends doubted my previous experience.

Anthony Lund
Billings, Montana

Phone phun

I think it was in 1979 that Dave Hall and I were sitting around my apartment in St Louis, Missouri, when the phone rang. I only heard dead air till a ring started at the other end of the line. It rang a few times, then someone picked it up and asked who I was and why I called. I explained my end of things and we hung up. The phone rang again and the same thing happened, but with a different person answering. This happened again and again with different people. Then I was connected with Ben Kloepper, a friend from college who lived far across town whom I hardly ever called. We were both amazed at the phantom connection and after we hung up it happened one more time. It was Ben again. Then no more calls. Was "it" satisfied?

Francis X Weyerich
Seattle, Washington



Marie and Knut Hamsun

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Why Fortean?



Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature

of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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AFTER MEETING THE DEVIL, STRINDBERG BECAME MORE AND MORE CONVINCED THAT EVERYONE HAD IT IN FOR HIM...

HE THOUGHT THAT PANSIES WERE GIVING HIM WARNING SIGNS...

LOOK! OUT, THEY'RE AFTER YOU!!

THUNDERSTORMS MADE HIM BELIEVE THAT THE POWERS WERE HURLING LIGHTNING BOLTS AT HIM...

...AND HE WAS OBSESSED BY THE IDEA THAT HIS ENEMIES WERE TRYING TO KILL HIM WITH ELECTRICITY!

BZZZT BZZZT

ONE NIGHT HE WAS ATTACKED BY A VAMPIRE...

...AND THREW HIMSELF OUT OF HIS BEDROOM WINDOW TO ESCAPE!

ON A VISIT TO HIS DOCTOR, HE SAW THE SHAPE OF PAN IN THE WALLPAPER...

HE WAS SO FRIGHTENED AND DEPRESSED THAT HE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE - NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME... HE INHALED THE FUMES OF CYANIDE!

PEE YEW!

HE FAILED - BUT CAME ROUND TO SEE THAT HE WAS TRULY LIVING IN...

...HELL!! EXACTLY AS DESCRIBED BY DANTE!

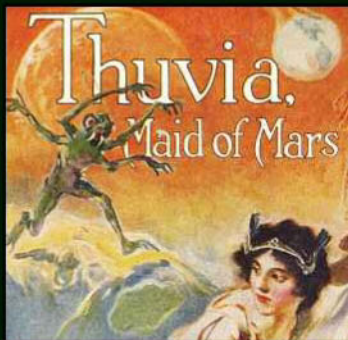
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STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



A vintage mystery: Retired brewery manager Frederick Heathcote, 77, and his wife Muriel, 75 were last seen alive at their home in Bangor Road, Johnstown, Wrexham, North Wales, on New Year's Eve, 1995. Their mummified bodies were found 53 days later on 22 February 1996, sitting side-by-side on a settee with the gas fire still switched on after police, alerted by concerned neighbours, broke down the bolted and locked door. Empty coffee cups and a clipped out mail order form lay on a table in front of them. An inquest the following June heard that there was no evidence of foul play or a double suicide.

Consultant pathologist Dr Tony Burdge said it seemed "beyond the realms of possibility" that the couple had died simultaneously of natural causes. Cause of death could not be established because the bodies were badly decomposed, having been cooked in front of a gas fire for two months. Recording an open verdict, the assistant deputy coroner for North East Wales said "It is clear that whatever overtook them was sudden and unexpected." The couple's grandson, Jeremy Marshall, had a theory. He speculated that snow could have blocked a flue serving the gas fire, allowing lethal carbon monoxide to build up. Well, maybe... *Sunday Telegraph, 25 Feb; D.Post, 14 June 1996.*

Beverly Mitchell, 66, was found dead under a pile of debris on 14 June this year after the ground floor of her house in Cheshire, Connecticut, collapsed into the basement under the weight of all her hoarded clutter. Two days earlier, a postman called police to request a welfare check because Mitchell's mail had been piling up for at least a week. Officers went to the house, saw the floor-to-ceiling clutter and thought no one was home. Officials didn't realise until the next day that the floor had collapsed. They cut a hole in the side of the building and began removing debris with a backhoe, eventually locating Mitchell's body. *[AP] 16 June 2014.*

Another postman raised the alarm when he saw mail piled up inside the house of Denis Walsby in Romney, Hampshire. When police broke down the door, they found his body at the foot of the stairs, surrounded by boxes and papers from floor to ceiling. The dates on some of the mail suggested he had been dead for eight months. He was described as a "human hamster" who had collected rubbish to turn his front room into a makeshift "nest". A post mortem examination found that he had died from a head injury, but it was not known how he had sustained it. *D.Telegraph, 11 July 2014.*

Architect Colin Machin, 50, was found dead in his chest freezer in Alva, Scotland. Police were treating the death as "unexplained" but not criminal. It was thought he might have fallen in, got stuck under the heavy lid and frozen to death. *MX News (Sydney), 2 July 2014.*

Nicholas Cruz, 31, and his wife Kristina Munoz, 26, both died on 5 June when their separate

vehicles collided head-on near Marhard Pullet Farm, North Texas, where they were both employed. The crash happened three miles (5km) west of Odell. *(Queensland) Sunday Mail, 8 June 2014.*

Mason Tipping, a 22-month-old boy, was crushed to death when the chest of drawing he was climbing fell on him at home in Essex. His father Adrian had screwed the bottom drawers shut to stop young Mason scaling the chest, but this made it top heavy. *Metro, 2 May 2014.*

A renowned coffee expert was crushed to death by a falling coffee machine he was taking down at Chicago's Grant Park on 24 May. Jim Karr lost his balance and grabbed onto the machine, which then fell on top of him. He died from head and chest wounds. Karr was brewing director at Chicago's Intelligentsia coffee for seven years. He left in 2012 to co-found SteamVolt coffee company. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 30 May 2014.*

French mountaineers found the body of a young climber who disappeared on Mont Blanc more than 30 years ago. The body released by ice melt in early July on the Talefre glacier was identified as that of Patrice Hyvert, 23, who vanished on the mountain in 1982. Early in March that year, Hyvert, an aspiring mountain guide, left his home in Chamonix to attempt a difficult solo climb of the 13,500ft (4,115m) Nant Blanc glacier on the French side of the mountain. *D.Telegraph, 9 July 2014.*

When police found Manny Edwards, 18, in a pool of blood with head injuries, they thought he had been attacked; but CCTV showed he had crashed into a metal bus stop while running to catch a bus in his home city of Birmingham on 17 March. He died later in hospital. *Sun, 20 Mar 2014.*

In the early hours of 5 May, a naked man was seen running through traffic in Portland, Oregon. Later he was hit and killed by a car as he performed push-ups in a busy road. *Metro, 6 May 2014.*

A former SAS serviceman who crossed the Atlantic in a home-made boat drowned in a river after his rubber dinghy suffered a puncture. Martin Weston, 86, of Corfe Castle, Dorset, had taken in 32ft (10m) fishing boat back to its moorings and was motoring back up the river Frome on 17 May 2012 when the accident happened. In 1971 he made a 3,000-mile (4,800km), 40-day crossing of the Atlantic with his 17-year-old son Paul in a home-made boat. *D.Telegraph, 24 Aug 2012.*

THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2

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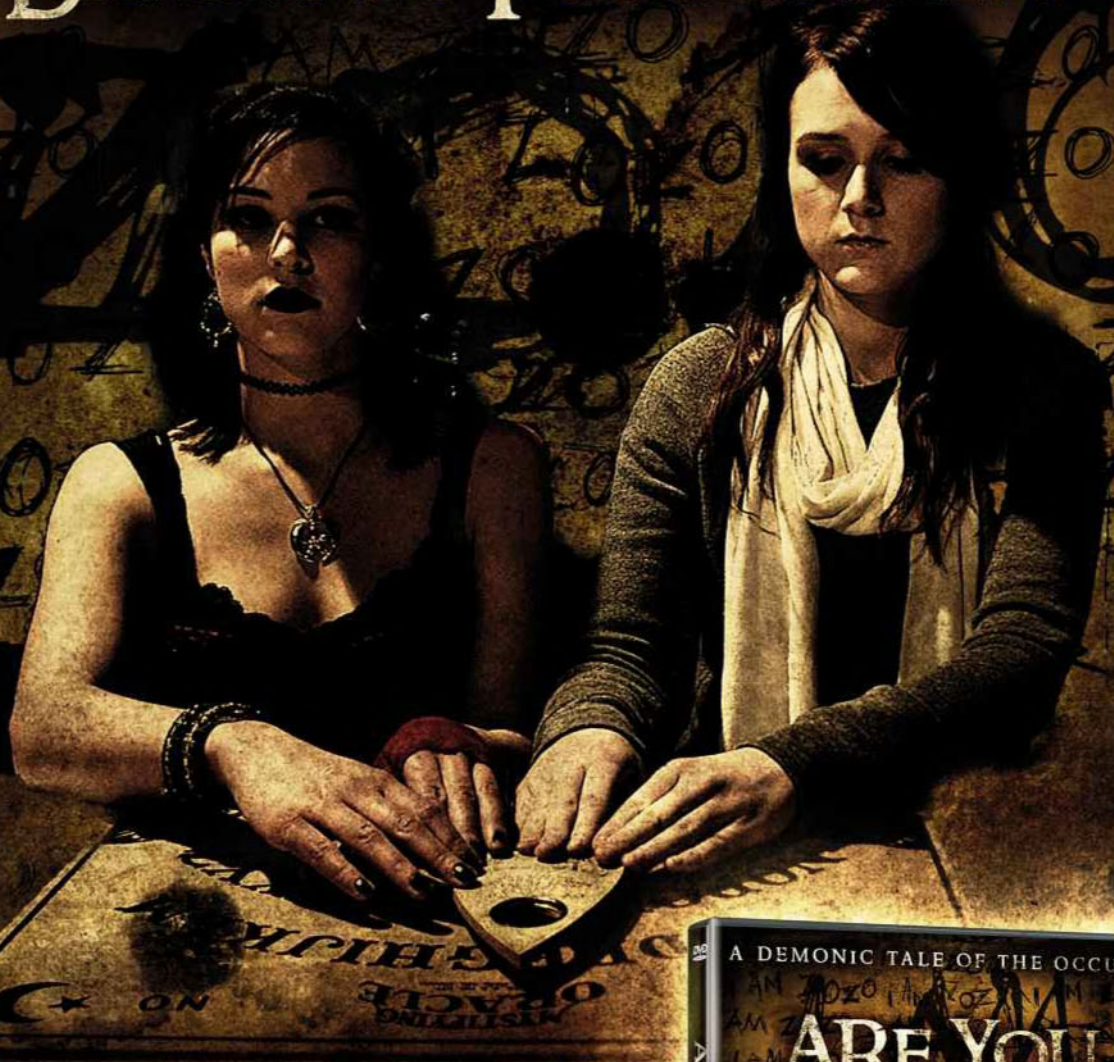
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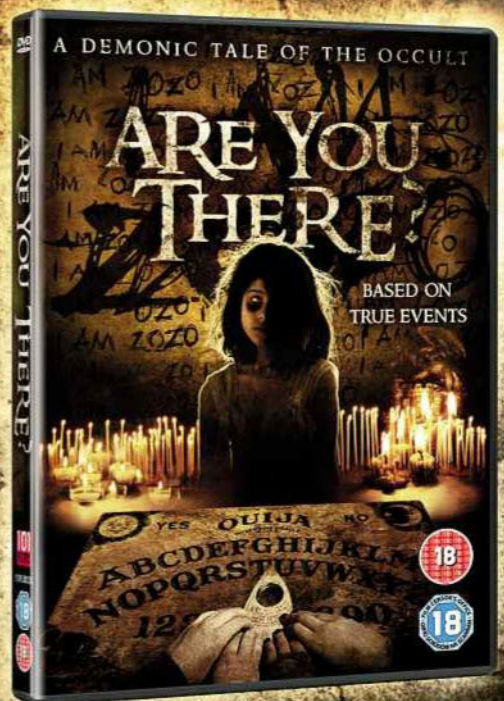
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