



WAS ROBIN WILLIAMS KILLED BY A FOOTBALLER'S CURSE?

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES

NEW NORSE TEMPLE • ALIEN BLACK BALL • GROUNDHOG DAY MAN • ZOMBIE CAT

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

# ForteanTimes

FT325 MARCH 2015 £4.25

THE AMAZING STORY OF

## THE FAT BOY OF PECKHAM



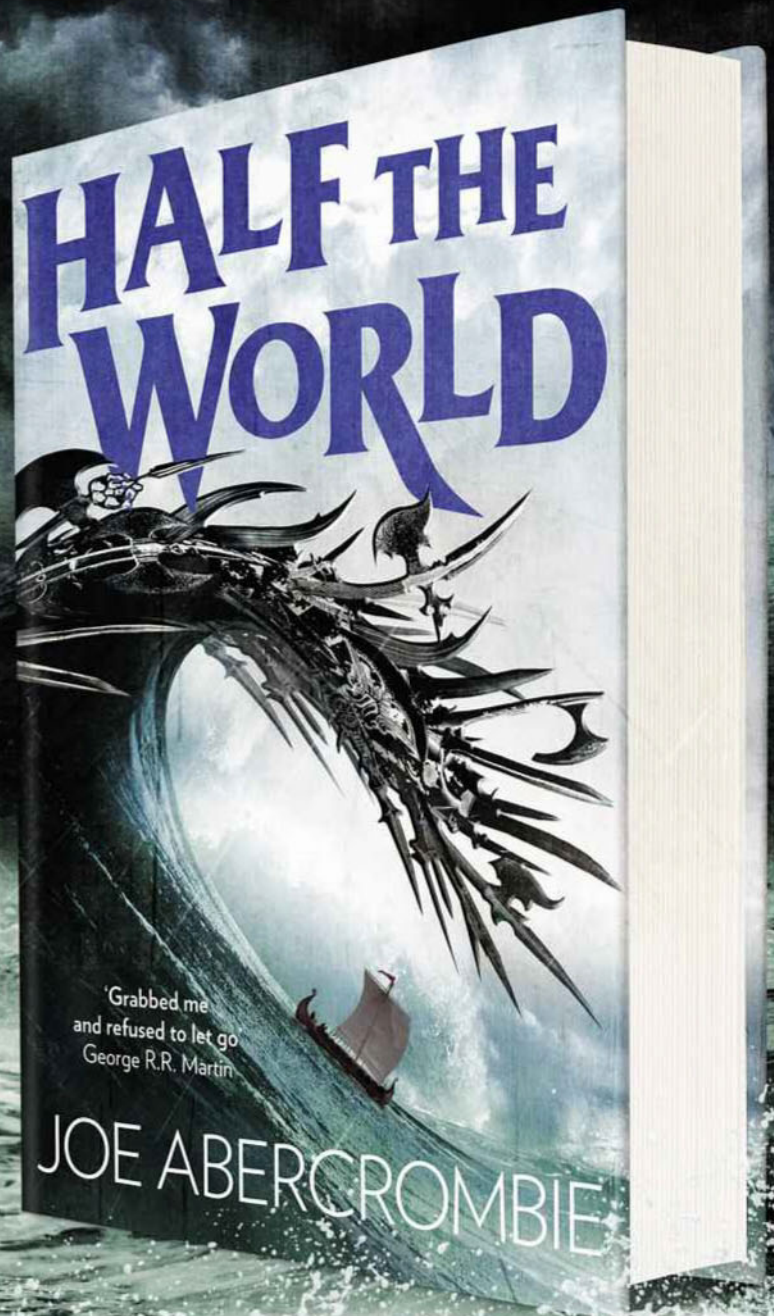
How Johnny Trunley & his Rotund Rivals Conquered the Western World...

+ SALVADOR DALI'S OVERWEIGHT GHOSTS!



FOOLS BOAST  
OF WHAT THEY  
WILL DO.

HEROES  
DO IT.



THE FOLLOW UP TO SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER  
***HALF A KING*** BY **JOE ABERCROMBIE**

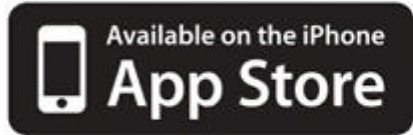


HarperVoyagerUK

[www.harpervoyagerbooks.co.uk](http://www.harpervoyagerbooks.co.uk)



HarperVoyagerUK



## strange days

New Norse temple, zombie cat, Groundhog Day man, world's oldest art, ghost boy, vegetable lamb, girls trapped in time, mummified monk still meditating, amnesia myths, bringing up Bigfoot baby – plus much more.

- 05 THE CONSPIRASPHERE
- 14 SCIENCE
- 16 ARCHAEOLOGY
- 17 CLASSICAL CORNER
- 18 GHOSTWATCH
- 21 ALIEN ZOO
- 23 MYTHCONCEPTIONS
- 26 THE UFO FILES

## features

### COVER STORY

#### 28 THE FAT BOY OF PECKHAM

As an epidemic of childhood obesity sweeps the developed world, **JAN BONDESON** explores a vanished age in which corpulent youngsters were treated neither as villains nor victims but celebrated as prodigies in the music halls and sideshows. Meet Johnny Trunley and his rotund rivals...

#### 36 DALI AND THE OVERWEIGHT GHOSTS

**SD TUCKER** explores an alarming outbreak of morbid obesity amongst 1930s ghosts, and finds Salvador Dalí's bizarre explanations involving Adolf Hitler's fat back and Napoleon's edible trousers rather hard to stomach.

#### 40 THE BLACK BALL

In 1975 an enigmatic object was found in Ukraine – the so-called Black Ball. The late **VLADIMIR RUBTSOV** wondered whether this enigma wrapped in a mystery might be the long-hoped for "indubitable extraterrestrial artefact".

#### 44 THE GHOST HUNTER'S DAUGHTER

As an all-female remake of *Ghostbusters* is announced, **TEA KRULOS** catches up with Alexandra Holzer, daughter of the man who helped inspire the original movie, to talk about discovering that your father was the most famous ghost hunter in America and honouring his legacy today.

## reports

#### 48 FIRST FORTEANS

No 12. Strange bedfellows

#### 74 FORTEAN TRAVELLER

No 98. Knossos, Crete

## forum

53 The Curse of Aaron Ramsey by Rob Gandy

## regulars

- 02 EDITORIAL
- 57 REVIEWS
- 69 LETTERS
- 73 IT HAPPENED TO ME
- 79 PHENOMENOMIX
- 80 STRANGE DEATHS

# CONTENTS

the world of strange phenomena



6 WINTER WEIRDNESS  
Seeing in the New Year, Ukrainian style



14 BAFFLING BLAZES  
Cases of spontaneous combustion



44 THE GHOST HUNTER'S DAUGHTER  
Who you gonna call? Alexandra Holzer!



74 GODDESSES AND MONSTERS  
Looking for the Cretan labyrinth



12 MIRACLE MOGGY  
The cat who came back from the grave

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

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

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

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

**RESIDENT CARTOONIST**  
HUNT EMERSON

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

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.

Change your address, renew your subscription or report problems

UK subscriptions: 0844 844 0049

USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 800-428-3033 (toll free)

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

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

Fax: +44 (0)1795 414 555

**LICENSING & SYNDICATION**

FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION - CONTACT:

Syndication Senior Manager

ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6132

[Anj\\_Dosaj-Halai@dennis.co.uk](mailto:Anj_Dosaj-Halai@dennis.co.uk)

Licensing Manager

CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6550

[Carlotta\\_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk](mailto:Carlotta_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk)

Licensing & Syndication Assistant

NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6134

[Nicole\\_Adams@dennis.co.uk](mailto:Nicole_Adams@dennis.co.uk)

**YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET**

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



© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

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

**SENIOR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE**  
DANIEL STARK  
020 7907 6053  
[daniel\\_stark@dennis.co.uk](mailto:daniel_stark@dennis.co.uk)

**ADVERTISING DIRECTOR**  
STEVE NICOLAOU  
020 7907 6633  
[ryan\\_gw@dennis.co.uk](mailto:ryan_gw@dennis.co.uk)

**DEPUTY ADVERTISING MANAGER**  
CIARAN SCARRY  
020 7907 6683  
[ciarán\\_scarry@dennis.co.uk](mailto:ciarán_scarry@dennis.co.uk)

**SALES EXECUTIVE**  
BRADLEY BEAVER  
020 7907 6701  
[bradley\\_beaver@dennis.co.uk](mailto:bradley_beaver@dennis.co.uk)

**GROUP PUBLISHER**  
IAN WESTWOOD  
020 7907 6000

**CIRCULATION MANAGER**  
JAMES MANGAN  
[james.mangan@seymour.co.uk](mailto:james.mangan@seymour.co.uk)

**EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER**  
GERALDINE GROBLER  
[geraldine.grobler@seymour.co.uk](mailto:geraldine.grobler@seymour.co.uk)

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](mailto:info@seymour.co.uk)

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

**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**

**GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR**

**FINANCE DIRECTOR**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**COMPANY FOUNDER**

IAN LEGGETT  
BRETT REYNOLDS  
KERIN O'CONNOR  
JAMES TYE  
FELIX DENNIS

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

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899  
© Fortean Times: FEBRUARY 2015

# editorial

## Fat is a fortean issue

**FAT CHILDREN AND OBESE GHOSTS**

Our cover story this issue has an undeniably topical resonance: fat has been much in the news in recent months, with a sense that growing levels of obesity threaten a national crisis, sparking anxieties about health, nutrition, the food industry, social benefits, education and parenting. We are, apparently, the second fattest nation in Europe - Hungary leads the pack - and face a sort of obesity time bomb that will eventually do for us all as an explosion of blubber overwhelms the already hard-pressed NHS.

How should we deal with this crisis? On the one hand, the suggestion was made last year that being overweight should be classed as a disability; panicked employers had visions of being forced to install expensive cranes to get their wobbling workforce into their reinforced steel office chairs. Then, in recent weeks, obesity reared its jowly head again, but now, rather than a disability, it had become part of a discourse around the civic, rather than personal, good: the well-upholstered among us were not so much disabled as immoral, and if being prevented from doing a useful job by their mountainous girth they should have their benefits removed until they demonstrate the ability to step away from the trough.

Fat, it seems, is the latest moral panic to exercise the pencil-thin guardians of middle class morality and the advocates of restraint. What, one wonders, would they have made of Johnny Trunley, the Fat Boy of Peckham? As Jan Bondeson shows, Johnny was neither victim nor villain in his own remarkable story: he assiduously avoided the efforts of the moral improvers, dodged the outsized school desk they had made for him, and carved out a career for himself as a prodigy in the music halls and sideshows of the country, earning not opprobrium but admiration - not to mention hard cash - with his corpulent frame. He was not alone; fat boys and fat girls flourished across Europe and the US, at least until the moral tide turned and the 'exploitation' of such physical anomalies came to be viewed as somewhat dubious (although some of today's reality TV shows suggest that such exploitation has returned, only with a less-than-convincing gloss of 'educational' value). There can be many reasons for morbid obesity - more often psychological than physical in origin - but there's a risk that, by stigmatising

and categorising the overweight according to a cause-based schema, we'll end up with a quasi-Victorian situation of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' fat. The evidence suggests Johnny Trunley would have fallen into the latter category, his moral failings literally made flesh as he tipped the scales at 33 stone (210kg), becoming the heaviest person in Britain. But rather than relying on hand-outs, Johnny monetised his mass; and when he finally slimmed down in later life he took a normal job and remained a well-liked member

of the local community.

Perhaps our current obsession with obesity isn't so new. For Salvador Dalí, it was ghosts that were putting on the pounds during the 1930s, much to the artist's annoyance. Turn to page 36 as SD Tucker reveals the full, and very strange, story of Dalí and the overweight phantoms.

**SLENDER SPECTRES**

From fat ghosts to very thin ones. Cannock Chase in Staffordshire must now be the high strangeness hotspot of Britain if coverage in the tabloids is to be believed. First there was 'Pig-man' (see

FT306:70-72), then an invasion of Black-Eyed Kids (FT322:66-32), and now, according to the Metro (25 Jan 2015), the good folk of Cannock are being plagued by the skinny spectre of Slender Man. The descriptions offered by witnesses, though, are a bit of a mixed bag: accounts mention a "lean, shadowy spirit" with "blood-red eyes"; "completely dressed in black with a hat to match"; "a white face with razor-sharp fangs". Is Slender Man becoming a catch-all term for all sorts of spooky entities?

And it's not just Staffordshire. FT contributor Neil Arnold informs us that Slendy has also been spotted as far away as Kent in recent months; we'll bring you a report in an upcoming issue.



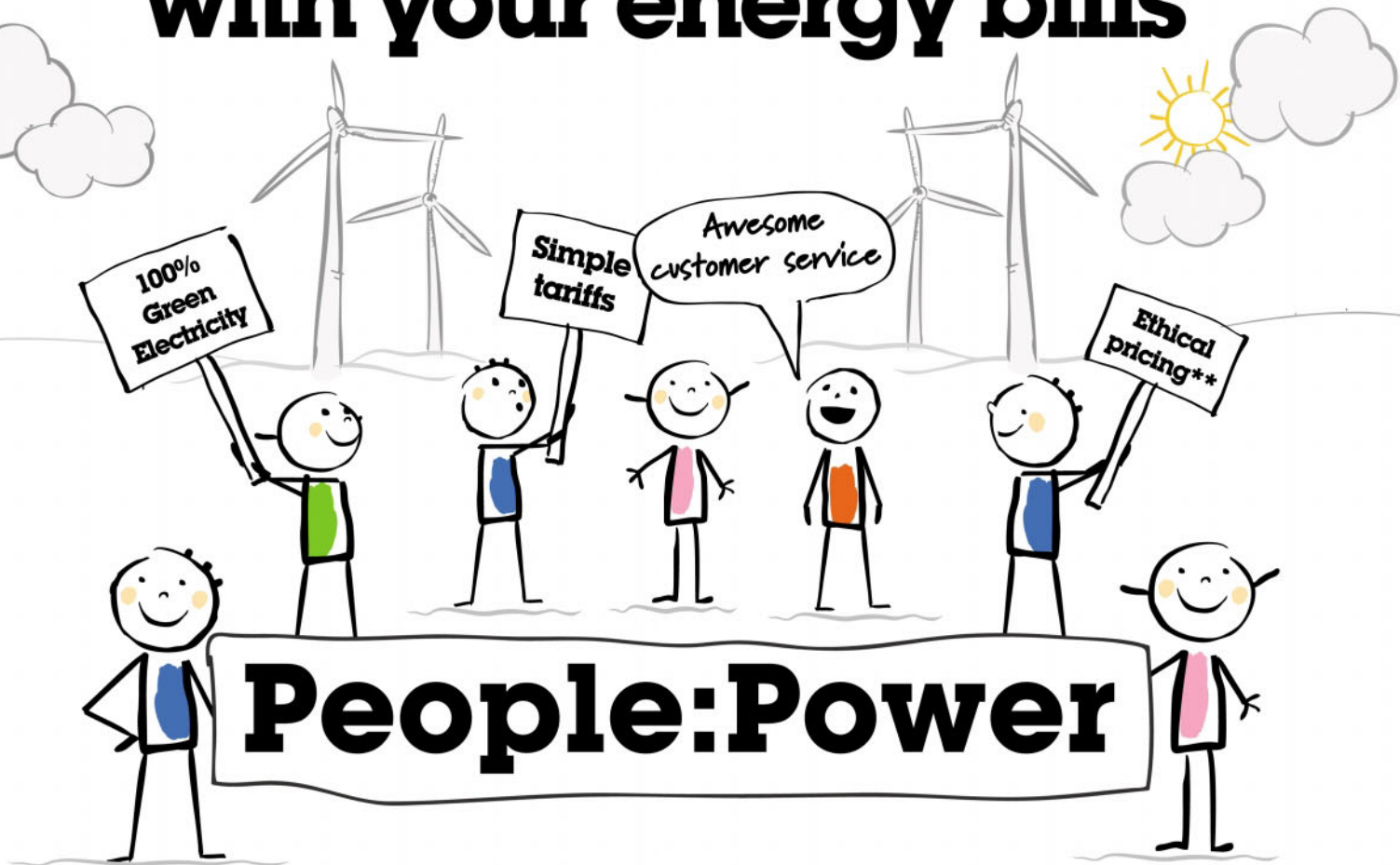
MARTIN ROSS

DAVID R SUTTON  
BOB RICKARD  
PAUL SIEVEKING

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

**SEE PAGE 78**

# Make a difference with your energy bills



**Get 4 Free Abel & Cole veg boxes  
when you switch to Ecotricity\***



We're an energy company unlike any other – we take the money our customers spend on their electricity and gas bills and use it to build new sources of renewable energy, such as windmills.

People:Power is at the heart of what we do – the more people who join us, the more sources of green energy we can build. Join us and you'll receive 4 free Abel & Cole veg boxes\* – it couldn't be easier to switch and takes less than five minutes.

Call us free on **03000 302 302** (quoting BIG1)  
or visit **[www.ecotricity.co.uk/thebigissue](http://www.ecotricity.co.uk/thebigissue)**

## ecotricity

**Terms and conditions**

\*For full terms and conditions, please go to [www.ecotricity.co.uk/thebigissue](http://www.ecotricity.co.uk/thebigissue).

\*\*Our ethical pricing means all customers pay the latest, best price, no matter when they joined and regardless of how they pay.

You can see our latest fuel mix at [www.ecotricity.co.uk/our-fuel-mix](http://www.ecotricity.co.uk/our-fuel-mix).

We hope you'll never need to, but if you'd like to make a complaint or would like to see our complaints procedure, please visit [www.ecotricity.co.uk/complaints](http://www.ecotricity.co.uk/complaints) or call us on 01453 761 482.

# strangedays

## New Norse temple for Iceland

Growth in Paganism leads to plans for first new temple to Thor and Odin in over a millennium

A modern version of Norse paganism has been gaining popularity in recent years as followers regard the stories as metaphors for life rather than worship of the gods. By the time the Icelandic Eddas were written down in the 13th century, an active belief in the pantheon of historic gods they describe was already archaic. For centuries, however, the Viking world from Iceland to the Black Sea had been shaped by the belief in the central world tree of Yggdrasil, the hammer-wielding god Thor, the one-eyed, raven-attended Odin, the fertility goddess Freyja, and a host of elves, trolls and nature spirits. “I don’t believe anyone believes in a one-eyed man who is riding about on a horse with eight feet,” said Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson, a noted film composer and high priest of the Icelandic Ásatrú Association (or Esetroth Fellowship), which promotes the pagan faith.

“We see the stories as poetic metaphors and a manifestation of the forces of nature and human psychology.” However, belief in elves and trolls is still widespread in the country (see FT201:42-47; 311:14-15). Rose Thorsteinsdóttir, a folklorist at the University of Iceland, said: “People tell fairy stories of the hidden people; there are nature spirits that walk over the country and you should not disturb them. These stories are alive.” Roadworks are still occasionally diverted to avoid annoying these denizens of the faery world.

The Ásatrú Association was founded in 1972 and officially recognised as a religion the following year, allowing it to conduct legally binding ceremonies (*blót*) and collect a



ABOVE LEFT: The Icelandic Ásatrú Association at a *blót* in 2009. ABOVE RIGHT: Composer and high priest Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson.

### Belief in elves and trolls is widespread in the country

share of the church tax. It is about to build its first temple or *hof*, where celebrants can worship Thor, Odin and Freyja (aka Frigg). It will be the first pagan temple to be built in the country since the Viking age, 1,000 years ago. Starting this March, the 3,800ft<sup>2</sup> (350m<sup>2</sup>) circular temple will be dug 4m (13ft) down into a hill overlooking the Icelandic capital, Reykjavik, with a dome

on top to let in the sunlight. It should accommodate 250 people at a time. Architect Magnus Jenson has incorporated the ‘golden ratio’ in his design, as well as the numbers nine and 432,000 – which are sacred to the Ásatrú rite and other pagan religions. “The Sun changes with the seasons so we are in a way having the Sun paint the space for us,” Hilmarsson said. The temple will host ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. The group will also conduct naming ceremonies and coming of age rituals. The faithful will gather for weekly study and for the five main feasts of the year, when they will recite poems round a central fire, make sacrificial drink offerings to the gods and

feast on sacred horsemeat. Unlike some pagan groups, they do not practise animal sacrifice, and have severed all ties with groups espousing far-right ideology. “Some of them are really pissed off that a stupid hippy nation should have the sources in their own language,” says Hilmarsson.

Reykjavik City Council has donated the site for the new temple, but the Ásatrú Association will raise the £645,000 building costs itself. Membership of the Association has tripled in Iceland in the last decade to 2,382 members out of a total population of 326,000 – that’s 0.73 per cent of Icelanders. About a third of Ásatrú members are women. *BBC News*, 30 Jan; [R] *Guardian*, 2 + 7 Feb 2015.



## TRAPPED IN A CHILD'S BODY

The girls who stopped ageing when they were toddlers

PAGE 10



## NOT QUITE NIRVANA

Mummified monk said to be alive and meditating

PAGE 22



## ASK A POLICEMAN

New witness comes forward in a classic British UFO case

PAGE 27

# The Conspirasphere

Are the mainstream media and conspiracy theorists feeding off one another? NOEL ROONEY looks at a surprising confluence of official and alternative news

Two stories currently galvanising both the mainstream media and the conspiracy tubes tell us something about the surprisingly – perhaps disturbingly – close relationship between the orthodox and alternative news systems.

The terrible death of Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006 (see FT218:4-5; 324:36-39) made the front pages all over the world. Litvinenko, an ex-FSB operative who had made his own contribution to conspiracy literature, was poisoned with the deadly Polonium 210, apparently delivered via that most genteel of English institutions, a cup of tea. His death followed a series of meetings with two other shady Russian characters, Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitri Kovtun, also ex-members of the FSB/KGB; Lugovoi and Kovtun are considered the prime suspects in Litvinenko's alleged assassination.

Litvinenko's longstanding link to the exiled Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky (pictured at right), and his stream of allegations about false flag operations perpetrated in and by Russia, made him a hated figure in security circles; rumour has it that FSB agents used a blow-up photograph of him for firearms target practice. Berezovsky also died in questionable circumstances, adding to the murky miasma surrounding the life and death of his erstwhile bodyguard.

An official enquiry into the death of Litvinenko has recently opened in London, and already a stream of lurid allegations is gracing the pages of the UK and international press. Behind Lugovoi and Kovtun, according to this rendition, stands the figure of Vladimir Putin, the strongman of modern Russian politics.

The death of federal prosecutor Alberto Nisman in Buenos Aires in late January has opened a can of conspiratorial worms for the Argentinian government. Nisman was

investigating the failure to indict anyone for the bomb attack on a Jewish community centre in 1994, which resulted in the deaths of 85 people, and hundreds of injuries. Strong rumours in the intelligence community suggested at the time that Iran was behind the attack, and that Hezbollah – a Lebanese organisation that has been in conflict with Israel for more than 25 years – carried it out.

Nisman's death from a single gunshot to the temple was at first called a suicide by official sources, but they have since retracted that view and claimed he was murdered in a bid to smear the government. The circumstances of his death are markedly suspicious, and fertile ground for the conspiratorial imagination. Did his bodyguards abandon him? Was he

about to spill the beans on a government cover-up? Why did he borrow a gun from a friend (the weapon that killed him) only days before his death?

Both these cases have to be seen against a background of renewed conflict. The long-running feud between the Israel Defense Force and Hezbollah has recently broken out into open warfare again; and Western

governments are eager to throw mud at Putin to keep the proxy war in the Ukraine from fading into a vestigial European tragedy. In both cases, the mainstream press and conspiracy theorists are equally busy, and equally pruriently fascinated; they are feeding off each other as they feed off the tragedies. It's arguable that, in both cases, they are equally guilty of helping vested interests to foment further conflict – a lesson for the wise?

[www.litvinenkoinquiry.org/](http://www.litvinenkoinquiry.org/)

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/28/whats-behind-the-buenos-aires-cover-up.html>

[www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/01/19/did-iran-murder-argentina-s-crusading-prosecutor](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/01/19/did-iran-murder-argentina-s-crusading-prosecutor)



APP / GETTY IMAGES

## EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### The sadness of a sandwich reminded me of nuns

Irish Times, 24 June 2014.

### Canada urged to lead war on 'killer robots'

Toronto Star, 30 April 2014.

### FDA Approves Cubist Antibiotic for Skin Infections

ABC News, 20 June 2014.

### Mother's breastfeeding battle in café

(London) Eve. Standard, 8 May 2014.

### Many fires for chair to put out

Toronto Star, 19 June 2014.

### Spooked Wizard is rescued from river

Tivy-Side Advertiser, 3 June 2014.

## Winter weirdness

Villagers in Krasnoilsk, Ukraine, dress up as bears and hay bales as they celebrate the winter festival of Malanka on 14 January 2015. The holiday, which involves dressing in elaborate costumes and going from house to house singing traditional songs, is celebrated on New Year's Day of the Orthodox calendar, a week after Orthodox Christmas. The festivities appear to have been too much for one exhausted participant.

PHOTOS: BRENDAN HOFFMAN/GETTY IMAGES







## SIDELINES...

### FATWA ON SNOWMEN

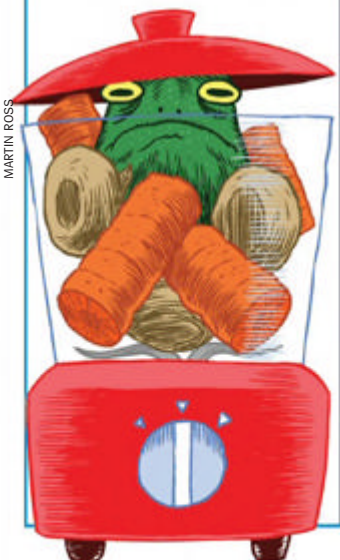
In January, for the third consecutive year, snow covered upland areas in Saudi Arabia's Tabuk province near the border with Jordan. Asked on a religious website if fathers could build snowmen for their children, Sheikh Mohammed Saleh al-Munajjid, a prominent cleric, replied: "It is not permitted to make a statue out of snow, even by way of play and fun." Snowmen are *haram* (forbidden by Allah). *irishexaminer.com*, 13 Jan 2015.

### HYPNO DOG

German Spitz Princess is said to be the only dog in the UK that can put people into trance with hypnosis. The four-year-old has been thrilling audiences nationwide with her owner, Krystyna Lennon. She has been signed up to perform in Dubai and Australia. Princess is a descendent of the first hypo-dog, Oscar, whose owner Hugh Lennon is Ms Lennon's uncle. *Metro*, 11 Nov 2014.

### FROG JUICE

Some Andean cultures believe frog juice can cure asthma, anaemia, bronchitis, sluggishness, tuberculosis, and a low sex drive. *Telmatobius coleus*, a critically endangered water frog from Lake Titicaca, is killed, peeled, and put in a blender with carrots, Peruvian maca root and honey. There is no scientific evidence confirming any medicinal benefits. [AP] 18 Nov 2014.



MARTIN ROSS

## BIGFOOT NEWS

MANIMAL SIGHTINGS FROM LINCOLNSHIRE TO LOUISIANA, PLUS HOW TO RAISE A BABY BIGFOOT



CATERS NEWS AGENCY

ABOVE: Bigfoot researcher Adam Bird's photograph. Is something lurking in the woods in a Lincolnshire nature reserve?

- L Melacetti, 70, a retired farmer living in Avondale, Louisiana, has come forward to claim that she raised a Bigfoot between 1964 and 1972. She found the animal when he was a baby, abandoned in the swamps of Louisiana. "He was so little, so cute," she said. "I had to do something about it. He was so defenceless, lying next to the mud and water, curled, crying like a baby. His parents were either dead or they had abandoned him." The little hominid weighed about 20lb (9kg) and had a hairless face that "didn't look like a human's nor a monkey's. He accepted me as a friend right away. I took him home only for three nights to nurse him back to health." In the course of those three days, she fed the Bigfoot anything she had at hand, including lettuce, tomatoes, eggs and goat milk. He particularly liked tomatoes. After releasing him back into the wilderness, he kept coming back to her small house. "So, every time he came back, usually during the evening, when most people weren't around, I'd give him more food." She lived alone, which made it easy to keep a secret. "He was my

### "Bigfoots are docile and better than most people"

friend. Even though he couldn't speak well, sometimes he'd say words I taught him"; words like "tomato", "food", "love" and "hungry".

Eventually, she says, the beast grew up, and one night she had a pleasant surprise. "He brought a friend with him! At first the other guy was shy, hiding behind the bushes, but little by little, he began to trust me too. So there we were, sitting on my porch, two Bigfoots and I, having dinner under the moon. When people in town began using them CB radios, the Bigfoots didn't visit as much. Then I had to move out because of my age, but I know they are still there, a big group of Bigfoots. I taught them about hunters and other people that might hurt them and not to trust any humans."

Melacetti didn't want to give away the location of the

alleged events, but insisted that "Bigfoots are real and happen to be excellent creatures, docile and better than most people. And by the way, they don't smell bad like some idiots say." When asked about evidence such as photographs she replied that she has some she keeps in a secret spot. She plans to publish her secret journal someday, she said. *Cryptozoology News*, 12 Jan 2014.

- Adam Bird, 31, co-founder of the British Bigfoot Research organisation, might have captured a Bigfoot on film last year. Hearing that there had been a possible sighting in a small wooded nature reserve in Friskney, Lincolnshire, he and some colleagues went to investigate. They heard some strange noises and photographed suspiciously large footprints. "I took various photographs and when I checked back through them I spotted the creepy picture [above]," said Mr Bird. "It looks like a shadowy figure standing within the trees staring at us from afar. It shows something dark, a different colour against all that greenery."

Mr Bird, who lives in Nottingham, has been



investigating UK Bigfoot reports for more than two years. His group have allegedly collected 200 reports of the creatures across Britain, including 50 in Scotland. His interest was piqued while on holiday in Florida at the age of 15 when he spotted a large orangutan-like creature with reddish-brown hair crouching in bushes. In one of his videos, taken in June 2014 at Yellowham Hill, in Puddletown Forest, Dorset, he recorded a clamour of eerie howls. One of his pictures, also taken at Yellowham Hill, shows what appears to be the ungainly footprint of a large human-like creature. Debbie Crossley Hatswell, one of British Bigfoot Research's team members, also claims she saw a manimal at close range when she was 15. She described it as having an ape-like physique, a mouth the same as ours, a huge jaw and dark, tanned, weathered skin covered in dark brown hair. *mirror.co.uk*, 2 Dec 2014.

- Meanwhile in Scotland, Charmaine Fraser, 41, has come forward to claim that she saw a Bigfoot in remote woodland near Arbroath, Angus, during a morning walk with her grandmother's dog when she was a child. Charmaine, originally from Monikie but now living in Edinburgh, has a degree in psychology from St Andrews University. She said she saw the 7ft (2m) black creature – which was “like a gorilla standing upright” – near a disused sandstone quarry in Carmyllie in the early 1980s. “I was with the dog and we were coming down the path that leads to the track running past the bottom of the property and out to the farm road. Just before I got onto the track, the dog stopped suddenly and started to growl, whine and bare her teeth. I looked up to see a large black figure further along the track standing with its back to me. It was reaching up to a branch on a tree at the side of the track and was tall, of thick build with no neck and wide shoulders. I remember standing in shock for a second

or two before screaming and turning to run back to the house. As I screamed, it slowly started to turn round, but I didn't hang about to see its face. Needless to say, my reports of seeing a monster were not taken seriously and dismissed as probably being a neighbour.”

Charmaine said she saw a figure in the same area shortly afterwards with a “humanoid shape” and eyes that shone orange when picked out by headlights in the darkness. She also heard a “long, deep wail” in the same area. “My sister found a den made of branches in the woods, with five or six animal skulls arranged in a semicircle,” she said. “That was several years after my sighting. The strange stories I've heard make me think something could still be there.” The area round the quarry at Carmyllie used to be pinewoods, but almost all has since been cleared for housing. Charmaine, a mother of one, has recently found out about other possible Bigfoot sightings north-east of Carmyllie. She has joined the British Bigfoot Research team as they look to gather evidence. *Sunday Post (Dundee)*, 18+22 Jan 2015.

- Following the news coverage of Ms Fraser's alleged encounter, a former civil servant from Fife said he had seen a similar beast just off the Tay Road Bridge. The man, who asked not to be named, said the encounter happened in August 2005 around 3.40am near the Five Roads Roundabout when he was driving home from work. He said: “I was proceeding home on the A92 when my headlights picked out what I thought was a man standing by the left-hand side of the road. As I approached, the figure stepped out in front of my car and I naturally brought it to a halt. This ‘person’ was a large hairy ape-like creature, which turned to look at the car as I approached. Its eyes gave out a shine which was very noticeable and it crossed the road in about three large strides.”

The man said he felt uneasy, but wound down the window.

“I could hear crunching as something was clearly moving through the forest, but I had no torch with me to shine towards the sounds. There was an unpleasant odour in the air and suddenly I got a feeling I was being watched as everything went very quiet. I then continued home. Thinking back, this individual was well over seven feet [2m] tall and a dark brown colour. Its hair was of reasonable length. I have never seen this again anywhere in Scotland and only confided in my partner. I know unequivocally what I saw and it is still clear in my mind as if it had happened yesterday.”

Daniel Perez, founder of the Center for Bigfoot Studies in the US and long-time friend of *FT*, said he was open to reviewing apparent Bigfoot sightings, but thought it was unlikely the beast exists in Scotland. *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, 30 Jan; *Shropshire Star*, 4 Feb 2015.

- In the US, Bigfoot Project Investments, a small start-up company, is offering \$3 million (£2 million) of shares. Its future profitability depends, to some extent, on the discovery of an actual manimal, dead or alive. Veteran Bigfoot hunter Carmine ‘Tom’ Biscardi said the venture could be a path for those seeking to establish the existence of other fabled cryptids such as Nessie. His company has budgeted \$113,805 (£74,000) a year for expeditions although, until the manimal is discovered, most anticipated revenues will come from the production of documentaries and films about the search. Biscardi claims to have encountered manimals seven times, but in 2008 two men in Georgia sold him a furry carcass, 7ft 7in (2.3m) tall, encase in ice (shades of the Minnesota Iceman!), which they claimed to have found in the woods. It turned out to be a rubber gorilla costume stuffed with animal parts and outfitted with a set of teeth that might have been bovine. “They took my money,” said a duped Biscardi. Oh well, better luck next time! *Times*, 24 Jan 2015.

## SIDELINES...

### TOO BENT TO DRIVE

The Russian government has decreed that the following will no longer qualify for driving licences: transsexuals, transvestites, fetishists, exhibitionists, voyeurs, “pathological” gamblers, kleptomaniacs, amputees, those with hereditary eye diseases and people shorter than 1.5m (4ft 11in). “Promoting non-traditional lifestyles” was outlawed back in 2013, leading to harassment of gay activists. *BBC News*, 8 Jan 2015.

### STOP, OR I'LL FRUIT

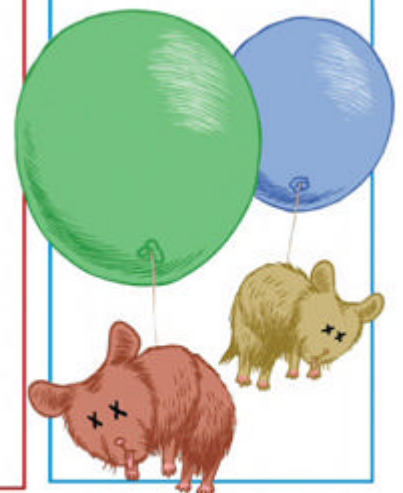
Nat Channing, 28, faces jail for threatening police officers with a banana that they feared was a gun – in Fruitvale, Colorado. *Sunday People*, 30 Nov 2014.

### MAGICAL REALIST

A professional ghost buster has been elected president of the Green Party in the Mexican city of León. Carlos Calderon, 54, insists the film *Ghostbusters* was “a lot of fun” but “based in good solid paranormal research”. *Metro*, 15 Jan 2015.

### RAINING HAMSTERS

In Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, the Parade-Allee circus attached hamsters to balloons and dropped them on children in the audience as gifts – but by the time they reached the crowd they were dead. Children were left in tears and “acutely distressed” and animal rights groups were outraged. *(Queensland) Courier-Mail*, 29 Nov 2014.





## SIDELINES...

### HUNGRY FOR POWER

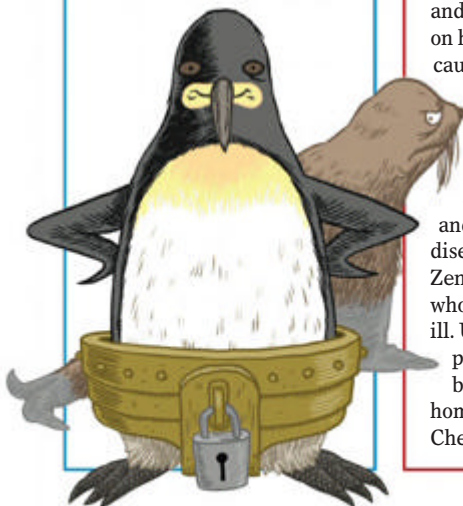
The Asian super ant (or fire ant), which forms colonies of thousands and causes fires because of its fatal attraction to electricity, is spreading across the UK. First identified in Britain in 2009 in Gloucestershire, a colony invaded a house in Hendon, north-west London, last year and more have been found in Buckinghamshire. They occupy plug sockets and power sources, creating a fire hazard. *D.Telegraph, 24 July 2014.*

### PINT OF PALE WHALE

For Iceland's midwinter festival, microbrewery Stedji produces *Hvalur 2*, a beer made with the testicles of endangered fin whales, smoked in a "traditional way" using dried sheep dung. The news has angered conservationists. *Sun, <i>13 Jan 2015.*

### SEALS BEHAVING BADLY

Fur seals have been caught repeatedly screwing king penguins on a remote Antarctic island. This was captured on camera and published in the journal *Polar Biology*. A similar incident was reported in 2006. Scientists are nonplussed. Meanwhile, grey seals off the UK are mutilating and slaughtering porpoises. Over the past decade, 1,081 severely scarred dead porpoises have washed up on North Sea coastlines, mainly in Holland, and at least 17 per cent are estimated to have been killed by seals. *Adelaide Advertiser, Canberra Times, 20 Nov; D.Telegraph, 26 Nov 2014.*



## MEDICAL BAG

GIRLS TRAPPED IN TIME, MAN LOCKED IN HIS BODY AND A MYSTERIOUS SUDDEN PARALYSIS ACROSS THE USA



ABOVE: 20-year-old Zeng Yushan (left) stopped growing at the age of seven.

### LOCKED IN TIME

• Zeng Yushan is 20, but has the appearance and mental capacity of a small child. She was born in June 1994 in Huzhu township, Fushun County, in the Chinese province of Sichuan. At seven years old, she stopped growing and was diagnosed with a tumour on her pituitary gland, which caused a deficiency in growth hormones. Pituitary tumours in childhood are very rare; less than one in 1,000. Zeng's parents couldn't afford to pay for treatment and argued bitterly about the disease before divorcing, leaving Zeng with her father Yul Wei, 43, who subsequently fell seriously ill. Unable to pay their bills, the pair ended up on the streets begging, travelling from their home to the cities of Zigong, Chengdu and Guiyang. In 2013,

## A couple spotted Zeng begging and took her in

Zeng's father died from gastric cancer, leaving her alone. A warm-hearted couple then spotted her begging and agreed to take her in. Guo Liu, 50, said that when they first saw her, he and his wife were unsure if she was a boy or girl because she had no hair, and had suffered horrific physical problems because of her medical condition. Mr Guo said that after the Spring Festival they planned to take Zeng to a specialist in Beijing for hormone treatment. *D.Mail, 9 Feb 2015.*

• Ajifa Khatun was healthy when she was born in May 1994, but stopped growing before her second birthday and now, at the age of 20, weighs just 17lb (7.7kg). Her only words are 'maa' (mother), 'baba' (father) and 'didi' (sister), and she spends her days playing with the local children in Mirapara, West Bengal. She has witnessed her three siblings grow up around her but still has to be spoon-fed by her mother Apila, 42, who said: "She's like a two-year-old, she can only take a few baby steps. I carry her everywhere." Ajifa is probably suffering from a rare autosomal recessive disorder called Laron syndrome, or Laron-type dwarfism. This was first described in 1966 and only 300 cases have been recorded, often affecting people of Semitic ethnicity, although a third of the victims live in Ecuador's southern Loja province. Those with the condition lack a hormone called Insulin-like Growth Factor 1 (IGF-1). They are insensitive to growth hormone but also immune to diabetes and cancer. Some physical anthropologists have proposed that *Homo floresiensis* (discovered in Indonesia in 2003 and nicknamed 'hobbit' – **FT191:4-5**) represented a population with widespread Laron syndrome. *Sun, 28 Jan; D.Mail, 29 Jan 2014.*

### PARALYSIS PUZZLE

Since August, more than 100 children across in 34 US states have developed a mysterious, sudden paralysis. There is currently no cure, but their syndrome at least has a name: Acute Flaccid Myelitis. Victims have unexplained lesions in the spinal column. The kids have a median age of eight, and three-quarters of them were previously perfectly healthy. For most, the loss of feeling occurred only on one side of the body and coincided with a nasty cold, which made health workers initially think that the paralysis was caused by a rare virus called enterovirus D68. EV-D68 is a severe respiratory virus that was going around at the start of school last year, and



because it's a relative of polio, it was thought to be causing the polio-like loss of muscle function. Now, however, researchers aren't sure. Of the 71 paralysed children whose cerebrospinal fluid was tested, none came back positive for enterovirus. The virus has been found in nasal swabs taken from some of the paralysed children, but that doesn't indicate as strong a link as spinal fluid would have.

In Oregon, two girls have fallen victim: seven-year-old McKenzie Andersen is in hospital in Portland, paralysed from the neck

down, while eight-year-old Bailey Sheehan, discharged from hospital in December, is hobbling around with a brace. Researchers in Colorado are currently attempting to determine whether the children suffering from paralysis have elevated levels of enterovirus 68 antibodies.

Mary Anne Jackson, chief of infectious diseases at Children's Mercy Hospital and one of the first doctors to recognise enterovirus D68, said her hospital has had three cases of paralysis. None of the paralysed kids had enterovirus

D68, however, and none of the hospital's 300 patients who had confirmed enterovirus D68 later became paralysed. "Right now we have two scenarios and we have no idea how they're related," said Jackson. Nationally, only one of the paralysed children has fully recovered, while about two-thirds have got slightly better. Treatment is supportive, just like polio, which was eradicated in the United States in 1979 thanks to a nationwide vaccination programme. *The Oregonian*, 23 Jan; *theatlantic.com*, 10 Feb 2015.

## SIDELINES...

### SMALL FRY TARGETED

In a bid to disrupt international travel across the Western world, hackers claiming to be based in Tunisia and the Ivory coast replaced TravelWest's website with a sinister black page in the style of Da'ish (ISIL), Arabic music, and the message: "Hacked By darkshadow / Arab Security Team / Muslum [sic] Hackers". The Western world withstood the onslaught as the website was merely a journey-planner for people in the Bristol area. *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mirror*, 3 Jan 2015.

### YULETIDE LUNATIC

On 17 December, a man approached a woman outside her house in Street, Somerset, waving what appeared to be a long-barrelled weapon and a rubber chicken. He pointed the weapon at her and said he was going to eat her alive. She ran inside and he started banging on the front door and broke a window. He failed to get in and fled before police arrived. *Sun*, 19 Dec 2014.

### DIVINE IGNORANCE

Fewer than half of 3,412 adults surveyed in the US by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life could identify Buddhism as the Dalai Lama's religion. Astonishingly, almost half of Catholics didn't know that their own church taught that the bread and wine in Communion actually became the body and blood of Christ; while a majority of Protestants could not name Luther as the main driving force of the Reformation. *D.Telegraph*, 28 Sept 2010.

### MELODY MALADY

For years, Susan Root, 65, from Coggeshall, Essex, was plagued by hearing "How Much Is That Doggie In The Window?" in her head [FT300:24]; she has finally shaken off that earworm – but now has "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" jammed on repeat in her internal hi-fi instead. "I also hear 'Happy Birthday' now and again, and 'Auld Lang Syne'," said Ms Root, who suffers from a severe form of tinnitus. *Metro*, 8 Oct 2014.



### LOCKED-IN SYNDROME

A South African man locked inside his body for over eight years unable to show he was conscious heard his despairing mother tell him: "I hope you die". Martin Pistorius was just an ordinary boy with an interest in playing with gadgets when, at the age of 12, he suddenly started to shut down. Defying doctors and any attempt at diagnosis, he was sent home from school with flu symptoms and never returned. He stopped eating, his muscles weakened and eventually he stopped moving, and even thinking, altogether. In his book *Ghost Boy*, he relates how his parents were told he was "a vegetable", that he had lost all intelligence, and that they should simply wait for him to die. Yet when he was 16, he awoke – and spent the next eight years as a conscious brain trapped inside a paralysed body.

He was inspired by a bizarre motive to fight and get himself understood: being made to watch repeat episodes of children's TV programme Barney. "I cannot even express to you how much I hated Barney," he said. He was so fed up with being made to watch the singing dinosaur that he made himself learn to tell the time – without the use of a clock – to count down until it was over. "I would watch how the sun moved across the room or how a shadow moved throughout the day," he said. "Simply to make it to when I was taken out of my wheelchair and that for a brief moment, the aches and pains in my body could subside." Though doctors eventually diagnosed Pistorius with cryptococcal meningitis, it remains unclear what made him emerge from his vegetative state when he was 25. He then taught himself to read and write and trained as a web designer. Now speaking through a voice synthesiser and moving with a wheelchair, he lives in Harlow, Essex, with his wife Joanna. *Independent*, 14 Jan; *D.Mirror*, 17 Jan 2015.



TOP: Martin Pistorius in 1994. ABOVE: Martin and his wife Joanna.



## SIDELINES...

### BOOKWORM LAG

An inmate at Garth prison near Preston dug a giant hole in his cell, not in an escape attempt, but to make a study where he could read in peace. Alerted by "noisy hammering" at night, staff found a tunnel behind his bed stashed with books. *Sunday Mirror*, 21 Dec 2014.

### REPEAT SNAP

Claire Ottaway and Michelle Noble became friends when they were in adjacent hospital beds after giving birth to boys Ben and Henry on 8 March 2012. They were back alongside each other in Scarborough Hospital after giving birth to girls Evie and Isabel on 30 July 2014. The odds of giving birth on the same day twice were said to be 270,000 to one. *Metro*, 8 Aug 2014.

### DIDACTIC AFTERLIFE

A head teacher in Romania has been allowed to stay in the class where he taught for 50 years – as a skeleton. Alexandru Popescu donated his bones in the 1960s, but they were confiscated over hygiene worries. After a clean, he has been given back to "help pupils with biology" in Prahova. *Metro*, 23 Oct 2014.

### AVICIDE

For the last five years, a vicious gull has been dragging pigeons by the neck to the Serpentine in London's Hyde Park, before drowning and feasting on their innards with its mate. The behaviour is extremely unusual for lesser black-backed gulls, which usually eat small fish and insects. *Times*, *Metro*, 14 Oct 2014.

### TORTOISE EATS TURTLE

Lola, a 15lb (6.8kg) African spurred tortoise, hadn't passed stool for a month and was evidently unwell. An X-ray revealed a metal turtle pendant in its digestive tract. Vet Don Harris was keeping Lola at his Miami clinic, hoping to get the pendant to pass with laxatives; if that failed, surgery would follow. *[AP]* 29 Oct 2014.

## CONEHEAD BEAR

One-year-old polar bear Nobby plays with a traffic cone – a birthday gift – during his birthday party at the polar bears' outdoor enclosure at the Hellabrunn zoo in Munich, Germany, on 9 December 2014. Polar bear twins Nobby and Nela were born at the zoo on 9 December 2013.

PHOTO: CHRISTOF STACHE/AFP/Getty Images



# Could a closer inspection of the humble beach pebble spell disaster for the theory of evolution?

One fact that gives geology its timetable is the erosion process, solid rock to boulders, boulders to pebbles and from pebbles to sand. Our great scholars collectively agreed that to form all the sand in the world would take a thousand million years, an aeon, and confirmed "This Planet Must Be Old" *Dictionary – Sand' Created over the past half billion years.* From this point onwards everything known to the history of Mankind was constructed - Deetime, Sedimentation, Dinosaurs, KT boundary, Fossil Record, Unconformities, Evolution, and Plate Tectonics. And all are major contributors that give radiometric dating their sub atomic readings.

However' an aeon to form the entire world's sand is totally wrong because beach pebbles are formed by the process of tide-mark, they get bigger not smaller, thus our foundation for Deetime etc are also wrong. Sand was washed onto our shores and come from elsewhere. Every dirty tide leaves a mark, a tidemark, a dirty stain over a previous hardened and scuffed stain. Broken layers clearly seen if one wishes to see them. Dirty layers around the rim, like a washbasin or seabasin, teacup or teaspoon, or grain of sand in an oyster, a pearl, and the process is the same.

At the water's edge grains of sand bond together to form divots, these divots fill with sediments to form grit. A thousand dirty tidemarks later this grit bond together to form odd-shaped shingle, again all clearly seen if one wishes to see. This shingle will gradually form into rounded pebbles too heavy for the outgoing tides to drag back down. Rough tides however have the strength to push them high up the beach away from the tidal action. Debris input is greater than its output.

The erosion process (physics) say rough pounding waves produce sand and calm tropical shores should be solid rock, whereas in reality we have the reverse. And we also have sharp grit at the water's edge where the erosion process is at its greatest and smooth rounded stone at the top of the shore away from the pounding waves, eh!

So it's not 'how long it took a pebbled beach to look like a sandy beach' it's more 'how long it took a sandy beach to look like a pebbled beach' a world of difference, time-wise. Sand is our missing landscapes from places like the Grand Canyon and the Great Butts of Arizona but more importantly the steep sides of these canyons and gorges tell us this missing landscape was displaced while the forming stone was still soft and mud-like.

Correct the timing behind geology and how the pyramids were built becomes simple. Limestone was a different texture six thousand years ago, brittle and lightweight, a cross between pumice stone and cuttlefish, the perfect building material of the day and easily cut with the hardest metal available at the time, copper. Pebbles eroding to sand tell one story, the story we live by today that of deetime and evolution. Pebbles getting bigger tell another which includes how the mighty pyramids were built, and knowing how the pyramids were built tells yet another story, a story quite different to evolution.

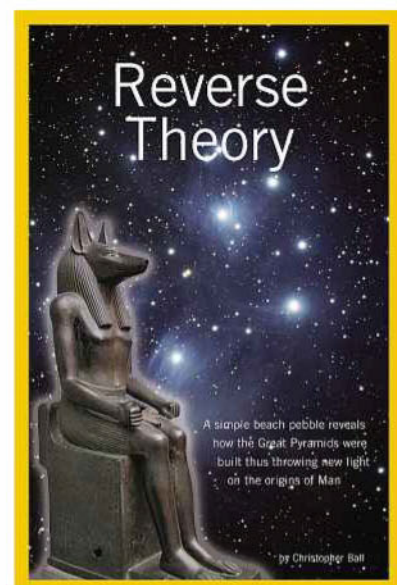
Cement and limestone are one of the same (calcium carbonate) hardening over time, concluding that our missing landscapes were removed just before the pyramids were built. Meaning if it's rock hard now and 6000 year ago you could cut with a copper knife, what was it like 6000 years previous? Thus revealing our sedimentary rock is not so sedimentary, laid in great swathes rather than a process taking billions of years, happening over night, so to speak.

It seems vast amounts of water has recently rearranged this planet. This water flow and coastal pebbles lying deep underwater show a flooding of momentous proportions has recently flattened this planet. And unless natural selection worked at supersonic speed, evolution could not have happened in such a short period of time. Therefore the evolution we are witnessing may have been misunderstood, a bit like our beach pebbles.

To make sense of our fossil record, the steep sides of our missing landscapes show this upheaval was quick and astronomical therefore circumstances prevailed where mankind took a tumble, a fall in stature, down to animal rather than the other way around, the complete Reverse Theory, which just happens to be the name of this powerful and detailed book.

This fall in stature, this newly appointed KT boundary when dinosaurs became extinct, sent some past the point of no return where they simply stayed as animal, crossbreeding to form the animal kingdom, ie Hell. The others, the lucky ones reading this article advanced to become the person's they are today and souls they will inevitably become tomorrow.

But is RT right? Only a closer inspection of the humble beach pebble will call for a geological recount



Reference 'Principles of Geology by Charles Lyell 1830 - Scottish Enlightenment, James Hutton, John Playfair, David Hume, or indeed plain common-sense  
Reverse Theory by Christopher Ball

## BEWILDERING BLAZES

Is nature a secret pyromaniac? **DAVID HAMBLING** investigates the numerous forms of spontaneous combustion, from fiery haystacks and blazing laundry to red-hot cannonballs

**W**hile spontaneous human combustion remains controversial, other forms of spontaneous combustion are well known to science, if not to the wider public [FT318:72, 321:74]. Sometimes things just burst into flames, and such fires destroy haystacks, cargo ships, trucks and timber yards. The term spontaneous combustion applies to any fire that starts without an external heat source.

Pliny the Elder described the effect in his compendious *Natural History* 2,000 years ago: "When the grass is cut it should be turned towards the sun and must never be stacked until it is quite dry. If this last precaution is not carefully taken a kind of vapour will be seen arising from the rick in the morning, and as soon as the sun is up it will ignite to a certainty, and so be consumed."

This description is surprisingly accurate given the unreliability of Pliny's work. When hay is dry, bacteria cannot thrive; if it is damp, they multiply and the hay decays, generating heat. The inside of a haystack is well insulated, so the heat continues to build up, which accelerates the rate of decay. Anyone who has left milk out of the fridge on a warm day will be aware how rapidly bacteria work at 30 degrees compared to four degrees. More decay means more heat, and the upward spiral continues until the temperature reaches about 75°C (167°F). This is so hot it kills off the bacteria, but it is also hot enough to start chemical oxidation.

Oxidation or smouldering combustion is a form of low-temperature burning without flame. Again, because heat cannot escape, the temperature continues to rise, and this speeds up the oxidation in a process known as thermal runaway. The hay turns yellow, then brown, then black, and gives off white vapour just as Pliny described. This vapour, with a rich mixture of flammable hydrocarbons, bursts into flames as soon as it reaches the oxygen of the outside air.

The problem is especially acute



when the harvesting season is damp. When there is known to be a risk, farmers leave a metal crowbar or pipe sticking in the stack. If the crowbar gets too hot to touch, they pull the haystack apart to cool it down.

Garden compost heaps also get warm, but because they are smaller than haystacks and offer less insulation, there usually is not a fire hazard. However, police helicopters with thermal cameras still sometimes direct officers on the ground to what appears to be an intruder in a back garden, only to find a warm compost heap.

Oxidation also causes spontaneous combustion in other materials. Break off a piece of coal, and the freshly exposed surface oxidises slowly, releasing a tiny amount of heat. If you have enough broken coal, and it is piled deep enough so that the heat cannot escape, you have the conditions for thermal runaway. The coal-mining Ruhr area of Germany suffers about 10 major fires a year from spontaneous combustion.

This risk is greater for ships carrying coal, and many were lost in the 19<sup>th</sup> century before the cause was fully understood. The port of Newcastle in New South Wales reported nine coal

fires on ships in 1896 alone. Fortunately, we now have a better understanding of the effect and the types of coal and storage methods that cause it. Modern ships have thermometers to warn of any heating in the cargo and fire-extinguishing systems. Where crews lack adequate training it can still be a problem; in 2005 the bulk coal-carrier *Belo Horizonte* docked in Britain with several fires still burning in her cargo hold.

Spontaneous combustion may also strike in unexpected places. Like coal, freshly cut wood also produces heat, and chipboard or fibreboard made from sawdust may be a hazard. A series of fires on trucks carrying insulating fibreboard panels across Canada in the 1990s initially baffled scientists. They later discovered that the factory was in the dry prairies, and the boards were being transported to Ontario, which is hotter and more humid. As the fibreboard absorbed water from the atmosphere, it started to heat up. This would not be a problem except that the boards were stacked together in two-metre (6.5ft) cubes and were very well insulated, so thermal runaway kicked in.

The spontaneous combustion

of wool was a Victorian mystery. The problem was particularly acute with cargoes of wool, and occurred where oily or greasy bales were stored. The problem was more or less solved by excluding greasy 'pie wool' from bales. As Carol Noble pointed out [FT321:74], there were numerous cases where oily rags caught fire spontaneously. The same combination of circumstances it at work as with chipboard and coal.

Some reactive materials now come with safety warnings about spontaneous combustion. Linseed oil, often used for treating wood, is especially hazardous and there are many accounts of bins or buckets of oil-soaked rags bursting into flames. However, the suggested scenario of baby oil igniting cotton clothing seems unlikely, unless the parents accidentally used linseed oil or another of the highly reactive drying oils that reacts with air.

David Lee notes the spontaneous combustion of dry-cleaned towels on a cruise ship in 1996-7 on the same Letters page. This effect was investigated by the University of Strathclyde in 1999, following a series of fires at laundries. The problem was traced to concentrations of fatty acids from human sweat, which remained in cloth even after washing. Again, these acids cause heat-generating oxidation. A large enough stack of laundry in a warm store cupboard can produce the right conditions for thermal runaway.

Perhaps the most exotic form of spontaneous combustion occurs in old cannonballs recovered from wrecks. Long years underwater corrode them until they become metal sponges with a large surface area; when they are taken out, the exposed surface oxidises and may produce a significant amount of heat. In 2002, Robert Child broke some cannonballs free from the solidified sand in which they were embedded at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. They started to warm up; after a few minutes, one cannonball was glowing red-hot and burned a hole through the tabletop.

Most recently, rust in oil tanks has been shown to catch fire, and no doubt there are many other forms of spontaneous combustion still to be discovered. Nature, it seems, has pyromaniac tendencies.



**RSC**

ROYAL  
SHAKESPEARE  
COMPANY

OPUS ARTE

# HENRY IV PARTS I & II

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"...A TRIUMPHANT ACHIVEMENT"



TIMES

SPECIAL EDITION BOX SET  
**AVAILABLE NOW**  
ON DVD & BLU-RAY  
ALSO AVAILABLE INDIVIDUALLY



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

[www.rsc.org.uk](http://www.rsc.org.uk)



# 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 LEFT:** The incised zigzag markings on this shell could be up to 540,000 years old. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Does this Egyptian rock art show 7,000-year-old swimmers?

## ART BEFORE ART

Art is said to be a key defining feature of the human species – so when did it begin? The usual assumption has been that it bloomed with the advent of modern humans, *Homo sapiens* – we think of the fabulous painted Palaeolithic caves of France, Spain and elsewhere. There have also been (controversial) indications that the earlier Neanderthals knew something of symbolic representation, but nothing earlier. Until now: a hint has emerged of the intentional making of marks, showing some kind of symbolic behaviour, that goes way back – half a million years back.

The hint comes from an archaeological site called Trinil on the Indonesian island of Java, where a distant human ancestor, *Homo erectus*, was already using shells of freshwater mussels as tools. After sifting through a museum collection of many of these mussel shells collected from the site many decades ago, an international research team has discovered one engraved with a zigzag pattern older than the weathering on the shell. Using two different dating methods, scientists at the VU University Amsterdam and Wageningen University have determined that the shell is between 430,000 and 540,000 years old. This makes



the incised markings fully four times older than the previously oldest known engravings, found in Africa. “At the moment we have no clue about the meaning or purpose of this engraving,” commented Wil Roebroeks, Professor of Palaeolithic Archaeology at Leiden University. Because this finding currently challenges accepted scholarship, it is, of course, controversial. *Nature*, Dec 2014; *BBC News*, 4 Dec 2014.

## ANCIENT SAHARAN SWIMMERS

The Sahara Desert is just that, a vast, arid waste, right? So that is why the 7,000-year-old cave paintings of apparent swimmers, in the appropriately named Cave of Swimmers in a very dry region of southwestern Egypt, have always seemed incongruous. (The cave featured in the movie *The English Patient*, incidentally.) The Sahara did once have rivers and fertile areas, but that was long before the date of the rock paintings. However, researchers from the NASA Ames Research Center have now found carbonate deposits lining the walls of two neighbouring valleys in the Gebel Uweinat region, about 125 miles (200km) south of the cave. This indicates the former presence of lakes in the valleys. “The deposits look like a ‘bathtub ring’ around the canyon walls,” as team member, Chris McKay, vividly states. Carbon-dating of samples of the deposits indicate that the two lakes existed about 8,000 and 9,500 years ago, respectively, so spanning the dates of the rock art. Did the rock painters belong to a tribe who in their nomadic circuit visited the lakes, and left, as it were, a pictogram postcard of their watery frolics? *Phys.org news*, 8 Jan 2015.

## AN IRON AGE FROM SPACE

In previous columns we have reported on the veneration of meteorites in the Americas, and the use of meteoric material in ancient Egypt. Now, the story moves towards the Arctic. In August 2014, a team of Scandinavian geologists and archaeologists visited northern Greenland to examine the remains of a meteorite that impacted the area 5,000-10,000 years ago. It was a huge object that broke up in the atmosphere, the fragments being hurled across the Greenland ice sheet and the sea around the Cape York Peninsula (near present-day Thule). These gifts from space allowed the Iron Age to begin in Greenland centuries



before knowledge concerning the mining and smelting of iron was brought by farmers to that land. Virtually nothing was known about the cultural effect of the meteor until the arrival of the research team.

“The story of the meteorites as the whole area’s source of iron have sunk into oblivion,” explained team member Martin Appelt, an archaeologist from the National Museum of Denmark.

The team found that the meteoric iron was traded over huge distances in the eastern Arctic, even well across Canada. The initial reason the meteoric source location was discovered was because of investigation of mysterious piles of basalt rocks at Cape York. (The first person to draw European attention to these strange stones was an Inuit stowaway aboard a British ship anchored in the Disko Bay in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.) It transpired that these had been used as hammerstones to knock off pieces of the meteoric fragments and batter them into shape for harpoons, etc.

# CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 185: TÊTE OFFENSIVE

It seems that the meteoric iron was used from the mid-eighth century by the Palæo-Eskimo Dorset culture, but in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Inuit arrived and took over the trade in meteoric iron. *ScienceNordic*, 13 Jan 2015, translated from *Polarfronten*, a Danish magazine (*Videnskab.dk*).

### AMBER EVIDENCE

Researchers from Oregon State University, the US Agricultural Research Service, and Germany inform us that a wonderfully preserved grass specimen (below) has been found in an amber fossil about 100 million years old in Burma (Myanmar). It was infected by a parasitic fungus similar to ergot, which is psychoactive: it contains the alkaloids from which LSD was synthesised by Albert Hofmann in 1938. It has also been responsible at various times in European (and possibly North American) history for mass outbreaks of hallucinatory chaos in populations that had consumed ergot-infected rye bread. There is also a good case to be made that an ergotised beer was used as a sacramental drink (the *kykeon*) in the Eleusian Mysteries (see this columnist's *The Long Trip*). This amber fossil provides evidence that the availability of a particularly powerful chemical means of inducing altered states of consciousness has been with humanity from the start. Nature's wisdom? *Phys.org news*, 9 Feb 2015.



A non-Nabokovian Invitation to a Beheading, offset by direction to Mike Dash's 'Dry as Dust' FT blog of 25 January 2011, plus Frances Larson's *Severed: A History of Heads Lost and Heads Found* (Granta Books, 2014).

Nothing funny about ISIS decapitations and parades of severed heads (though shades of Irish Murdoch here). Nothing new, either. There's (alas) a rich ancient litany of precedents. Literary as well as historical. And not just classical. We all know the Queen of Hearts' mantra: Off With His Head! Clearly an unusually well-read playing card, since she is borrowing from a favourite Shakespearean ejaculation, e.g. Queen Margaret's (*Henry VI Part III*), "Off with his head, and set it on York Gates; / So York may overlook the town of York."

No shortage of head-lobbing in the OT, along with other savageries, though for sheer horror ISIS and all other sadists must give way to the Assyrians, justly described by Byron as coming down like a wolf upon the fold. Takes a strong stomach to get through the Ancient Biblical Beheadings website.

"He slashed off his head and sent it rolling like a rounded boulder through the crowd" – Homer, *Iliad*, bk. v165. That's poetry on the battlefield, based in reality, surpassed by this piece of Roman grand guignol (Appian, *Civil Wars*, bk. ch26: "Trebonius, who was in bed, told his captors to lead him to Dolabella. One of the centurions replied facetiously, 'Go where you like, but leave your head behind, because we are ordered to bring your head, not yourself.' Dolabella displayed it on Trebonius's official chair, then the soldiers rolled it from one to another in sport along the city streets like a ball until it was completely crushed" – and so Serie A was born. Just possibly, this scene was in Queen Elizabeth I's mind when she remarked to a defender of Mary, Queen of Scots, "I will make you shorter by the head.")

En passant, although both ancient and modern Greeks have a word for it, Greece is strikingly omitted from the extensive Wikipedia list of country-by-country kephalotomies – no Chop-Chop Square in Athens – in which England features among the most prominent.

Cue here for mention of Oliver Cromwell's posthumous severed bonce, a popular 18th-century curiosity ('Oliver's Skull' was slang for 'chamber-pot'), dismissed by Carlyle as "fraudulent moonshine", authenticity defended by Pearson & Morant (*Biometrika* 29, 1934, p109), finally re-interred (1960) at Sidney Sussex, Cambridge [FT115:40-42].

Gaius Rabirius pickled the head of populist agitator Saturninus (stoned to death, 100 BC) and kept it for mockery on his dining-

room table. Thirty-seven years later, he was prosecuted for complicity in murder by Julius Cæsar, defended by Cicero.

The great orator's own truncated head and hands were displayed on the Roman Rostra by Mark Antony in revenge for his Second Philippic's fiery denunciation (albeit never actually delivered). Spectators felt they were really gazing at Antony's 'black soul'.

Earlier, Marcus Gratidianus's head, after his torture and ritualistic dismemberment, was paraded through Rome; in the same year (82 BC) fellow-officer Censorinus's was sent to rival general Marius to lower his soldiers' morale.

Punic spirits were similarly shattered (207 BC) when, to signal a key Roman victory, the head of Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal was (Livy, bk27 ch51) "tossed between the forward posts of the enemy," thus prefiguring Rugby, American, Australian, and Canadian football.

Credit a canny Septimuleius for morbid ingenuity. Enemies of radical tribune Gaius Gracchus had promised bounty-hunters gold equal to his head's weight on its production – shades of *Bring Me The Head of Alfredo Garcia*. Septimuleius dug out the brain, poured in molten lead, thus boosting its avoirdupois to seventeen-and-two-thirds pounds.

In those pre-Instagram days, severed heads were the most reliable proof of an enemy's death. Pompey's Egyptian assassins embalmed his head to send to Cæsar, stomach-turningly described by Lucan (*Civil War*, bk. vv663-91). Roman poets had a suggestive taste for such lucidities; cf. Andrew McClellan, 'Headless but not Harmless' (on-line).

That of Crassus, killed (53 BC) by the Parthians (who blamed poor Roman performance on the Greek porno found in their knapsacks) arrived just in time to be used as a stage prop finale to Euripides's *Bacchæ*, in which Agave enters carrying the head of her royal son whom she and fellow-Bacchantes had torn to pieces. This outdoes even John the Baptist's served up on a platter for Salome. Had Christ, as Paul, been a Roman citizen, he'd have been beheaded, not crucified. That would have made a difference: no symbolic cross, and would the Resurrection have been a headless ghost buster?

Bald heads were a nuisance. A Galba lyncher had to carry that emperor's by sticking his thumb up a nostril (Suetonius, ch20 para2).

Gloating over heads is a regular event in Tacitus' *Annals*, for notable instance Poppæa's glee on seeing that of her murdered rival Octavia. Given the dark nature of this column, a bit of Nero's black humour makes fitting finale: "Why was I ever afraid of a man with such a big nose?"



# GHOSTWATCH

**ALAN MURDIE** explores the ghosts and folklore of a mysterious prehistoric complex

In 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain, it might be thought the day of the M R James-style ghost story, where a scholar or antiquary heads off to some unexcavated archaeological site steeped in local legend and digs up more than he bargained for in the form of nasty supernatural shocks, is well and truly over.

However, just over the last year a locality not far from the village of Great Livermere in Suffolk, where James himself grew up as a child and treated as his college vacation home for many years, is rapidly becoming recognised as the site of a mysterious prehistoric complex with intriguing legends attached. Previously mentioned in FT last year by Paul Devereux [FT312:17], this cursus monument (also classed as a 'causewayed enclosure' by some prehistoric specialists) consists of straight lines and ditches on so large a scale that it can only be fully comprehended from the air (key traces are apparent by way of crop marks visible on Google Earth). A section of this colossal monument runs along the River Lark, stretching between the villages of Hengrave and Fornham All Saints, and has been awarded Schedule Ancient Monument status, with portions dating back to the Neolithic and Bronze Age. It qualifies as the oldest surviving man-made structure in East Anglia and is almost wholly unexcavated. Situated at its heart is the church of Fornham All Saints, indicating a past Christianisation of the old pagan site and a continuing tradition of sanctity.

The full extent of this ritual landscape is not yet known, but it could stretch north into the Brecklands of Norfolk, out west to a Bronze Age barrow cemetery on Risby Heath and east to the village of Rougham and a prominent burial mound called Eastlow Hill. The orientation of the earthworks points south, direct towards St Edmund's Abbey, at Bury St Edmunds. The presence of the monument perhaps explains why Bury was chosen for the shrine and tomb of St Edmund, an East Anglian King martyred by the Danes in AD 869, as the district had already been established as the traditional burial place of kings and chieftains. Traces of a Bronze Age burial ground lie close to the monument, together with a significant concentration of folklore and ghost stories in the wider area, perhaps hinting at earlier religious practices on the site. In short, it is nothing less than part of an enormous spiritual landscape used in one form or another for some 6,000 years and awaiting proper investigation and study.

According to some archaeological theories, causwayed enclosures occur at focal points where different cultures met, and this aspect is currently attracting attention from as far away as Wales. The President of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and veteran folklorist and ghost writer the Revd J Towyn Jones has expressed support for the suggestion of archaeologist Dr Duncan McAndrew that the name 'Hengrave' is a



**ABOVE:** Fornham Hall, Suffolk, now demolished but once haunted by a White Lady. **OPPOSITE:** M R James, who grew up in nearby Great Livermere. **BELOW:** The TV adaptation of James's ghost story 'A Warning to the Curious', which drew on the local folklore of the 'Three Crowns of East Anglia'.



composite derived from words from two different languages – the 'grave' portion coming from the old German for grave or earthwork, dating from Anglo-Saxon period and the old British or Welsh language providing 'Hen' which means 'old' – hence 'Old Earthwork'. The Anglo-Saxons called Suffolk, 'Selig Suffolk' which is thought to have been corrupted into "silly Suffolk" but the original meaning of 'selig' is holy, the place of the blessed dead. (Sources: *East Anglian Daily Times*, 1 Feb + 31 May 2014; Revd J Towyn Jones and Dr Duncan McAndrew pers. comms.)

The location of an ancient ceremonial and burial site above a river valley is reminiscent of the positioning of Sutton Hoo in East Suffolk, itself linked with ghostly sightings of warriors by Mrs E Pretty on whose land the famous ship burial was found in 1939. (See 'My Buried History' by John Preston *Daily Telegraph*, 29 April 2007; 'Sutton Hoo – Finding the Hoard' by Rodney Castledean in *The Unknown*, Dec 1986).

Folklore around the Fornham complex similarly includes a tradition of ancient royal

burials and ghosts. John Gage in *The History of Hengrave* (1810) mentions a local hill known as Kingsbury Hill in Fornham Park and a tradition that three ancient British kings are buried nearby. Today, the village pub at Fornham All Saints commemorates the tradition, being named *The Three Kings*.

This has a resonance and indeed pre-dates one of M R James's most famous stories, 'A Warning to the Curious' (1925). Written some 15 years before the Sutton Hoo discoveries, James used the conceit of the 'Three Crowns of East Anglia' buried in antiquity to protect the land from invasion. One crown was lost to coastal erosion that consumed the ancient city of Dunwich, where Siegbert, son of King Rædwald, established a palace in AD 630. The second crown was dug up at Rendlesham in 1687 by workmen, who melted it down, whilst the third remains undiscovered. Folklorist Jacqueline Simpson maintains that it is an inspired fiction by James (See 'The Rules of Folklore in the Ghost Stories of MR James' in *Folklore* vol 108, 1997, pp9-18); whereas Enid Porter in *The Folklore of East Anglia* (1974) tended to treat it as a local genuine tradition that may have been utilised by him. In James's story the third crown has a ghostly guardian who wreaks a terrible vengeance upon a reckless excavator and treasure seeker. Was the Fornham complex folklore an inspiration for him?

However, at the Fornham site there are not stories of guardian spectres or soldiers, but a marked and exclusive concentration of female phantoms variously dressed in white, grey, pink and red.

John Gage's *History and Antiquities of Hengrave* (1810 and 1822) states that female

water spirits haunted the River Lark through the village. Gage seems to have been captivated by the idea of female water sprites troubling the builders of a mill around which they were supposed to frolic, writing in the style of Chaucer:

*Now there spreaden rumour that everish night*

*The (pitts) ihaunted by many a sprite  
The miller avoucheth and all thereabout  
That they full oft hearken the hellish rout*

Further along the River Lark one finds further traces of these beliefs with pools called the Mermaid or Merrymaid Pits; in East Anglia mermaids were not cute fairytale creatures, but often malevolent sirens dragging victims to watery deaths.

At nearby Hengrave Hall a 'Pink lady' is supposed to haunt the Tudor manor house, which between 1895 and 2005 was run by the Roman Catholic Sisters of the Assumption. The Pink Lady was said to have disturbed guests in their bedrooms as recently as the 1990s since the building has been converted for secular purposes, being seen to glide out through an upstairs window.

At the former gates of the ill-fated Fornham Park, which lies adjacent to the Monument across the river, a dangerous female apparition known as Red Hannah was said to appear at dusk, serving as a bugbear for threatening wayward children. The Park itself was prowled by a sinister White Lady, walking from the lake to Fornham Hall and the ruined church tower. The square tower is all that remains of St Genevieve's church, which burned down soon after building and landscaping for the Hall commenced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to local tradition the fire started in a freak accident on 24 June 1782, caused by a man shooting at rooks or jacksaws, with the shot setting the roof alight. June 24<sup>th</sup> or Old Midsummer's Day or Night was considered a particularly numinous date for ghosts and the supernatural, though other historical evidence places the fire occurring seven years earlier on 17 May 1775.

Despite having at one time being owned by a wealthy Norfolk family, the once beautiful Hall suffered a long decline. Numerous skeletons, laid out in strange positions, were found in the park beneath an ancient pollard ash felled in 1827. Opinion has been divided as to whether the 30 skeletons were dead from the Battle of Fornham in 1173 or from an earlier, perhaps prehistoric burial.

From the late 1890s Fornham Hall was shut up and abandoned by the owners, being requisitioned by the army in both World Wars and later used as a POW camp. After 1945 the Army remained in occupation and inflicted a great deal of damage on the building. One soldier recalled, "It was a weird place if you can imagine something like Miss Haversham's place in *Great Expectations*. Four poster beds, sheets still on the beds and when you tried to pick them up they fell to pieces in your hands."

Further major disturbance of the soil

occurred with the park being developed as a training ground. Following this, troops at the Hall were frightened by appearances of the White Lady apparition which continued until the soldiers left, whereupon the hall was completely demolished in 1951, save for a stable block. Pits and craters created by the army were later used for a while for gravel extraction and in the mid-1970s were earmarked as a toxic waste dump; fortunately the alternative that was developed was a water treatment plant and sewage works. The stable block was turned into private dwellings in 2009.

Another White Lady is said to wander Barton Hill, the nearest prominent high point lying due east of the Monument, in the neighbouring parish of Fornham St Martin. Back in 1978 I heard from a local lady, a Miss Smith who lived in the village all her life, of her childhood encounter with this figure along with her father, who was deeply troubled by the experience. Completing this collection of female spectres to the south is the Grey Lady of Babwell Priory, further linked with the notorious and dangerous Grey Lady apparition of Bury St Edmunds. (Sources: *West Suffolk Illustrated*, 1903, by Horace Barker; *Haunted Bury St Edmunds*, 2007, by Alan Murdie; Fornham File, Bury St Edmunds Record Office).

Such a concentration of female phantoms in around an ancient site is remarkable. Could these be folkloric clues that the site was once a focus of female-centred worship and veneration of goddesses?

How long do oral traditions last? Leaving aside claims of extraordinary human longevity so beloved in fortean circles, an influential academic view of Lord Raglan in 1936 was that no oral tradition endures reliably for more than five generations, or approximately 150 years (*The Hero*, 1936, by Lord Raglan).



However, given that the last Briton with an 18<sup>th</sup> century parentage died only in 1970 (admittedly with a father born in 1799) many exceptions doubtless exist ('Last link with the 18<sup>th</sup> century' a former category in *The Guinness Book of Records*). Indeed, at the other extreme there have been suggestions that some oral cultures may preserve history as myths for thousands of years, with up to 10,000 years even being proposed (See *When They Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind Shapes Myth*, 1994, by Elizabeth Wayland Barber and Paul T Barber). In Britain, an oral tradition spanning the centuries between the Bronze Age and the mediæval writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth in *The History of The Kings of Britain* (1136) has been proposed concerning the legendary origins of Stonehenge (cited in *Quest for Merlin*, 1986, by Nicolai Tolstoy), whilst the prehistorian Leslie Grinsell considered that popular folklore might carry clues about changes to the coastline which occurred in prehistoric times (see *The Folklore of Prehistoric Sites of Britain*, 1976).

Currently, only parts of the ritual complex are protected under the Scheduled Ancient Monument Act 1979, despite in 2007 the then regional director of English Heritage visiting the area and telling locals it was the 48<sup>th</sup> most important historic site in their records for England. In particular, a large section of land containing much archæology within 50 metres of the Monument is being threatened by a major road development scheme proposed by Suffolk County Council in a deal with Countryside Properties of Brentwood to put 900 houses on the site. Trial digging in this field by the Suffolk Archæology Service has already found hundreds of flint tools, a palisaded enclosure, a Bronze Age cremation urn and human remains, with only five per cent of the field excavated. Nonetheless both the County Council and Countryside Properties are shutting their eyes to the situation and trying to force their scheme through, the latter even claiming that there are no areas on the site "that can be classified as a cemetery". (Source: 'Archæologist's woes for oldest cemetery' *Bury Free Press*, 13 Feb 2015) But then putting 900 houses on the oldest burial ground in East Anglia is hardly likely to be a selling point for marketing luxury properties, certainly if prospective purchasers know their M R James.

Sympathetic readers are encouraged to send polite protests to the Development Control Committee, St Edmundsbury Council, Cllr Graham Newman Suffolk County Council and Countryside Properties of Brentwood. As locals told Peter Vaughn in the 1972 BBC television adaptation of *A Warning to the Curious*: "No digging!"

You can see traces of the monument in the fields between Hengrave and Fornham All Saints using Google Earth maps. The Scheduled Ancient Monument Map can be seen on the English Heritage website.

## THE GROUNDHOG DAY MAN

A man with a chronic version of déjà vu is “trapped in a time loop”

A British man has been forced to drop out of university after chronic déjà vu left him unable to lead a normal life. In one of the strangest cases of déjà vu ever recorded, the 23-year-old even stopped watching television, listening to the radio, or reading newspapers or magazines because he believed he had seen it all before. He doesn't suffer from any of the neurological conditions usually seen in people who suffer frequently from déjà vu, such as temporal lobe epilepsy; in his case, the phenomenon may have been triggered by panic attacks, perhaps exacerbated by LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) – although he only took one ‘trip’. In every other respect, he is in perfect health; his brain scan appeared normal. The unnamed student had a history of feeling anxious, particularly a fear of germs, which led him to wash his hands very frequently and to shower two to three times a day, but his anxiety worsened when he began university in early 2007. Feeling depressed, he took a break from his studies, which is when he first began experiencing déjà vu. The early episodes sometimes lasted only a few minutes, but other attacks could be extremely prolonged. For example, while on holiday in a destination that he had previously visited, he reported feeling as though he had become “trapped in a time loop” – a sort of endless *Groundhog Day*.

On returning to university, the déjà vu episodes became more intense. In 2008, he was referred to specialists for neurological examination and was treated with a range of medications, but these failed to help. “Rather than simply the unsettling feelings of familiarity which are normally associated with déjà vu, our subject complained that it felt like he was actually retrieving previous experiences from memory, not just finding them familiar,” said Dr Christine Wells, a psychology expert from Sheffield Hallam University, whose report on the case



### There was one instance when he had déjà vu of the déjà vu

appeared in the *Journal of Medical Case Reports* (8 Dec 2014). “Most cases like this occur as a side effect associated with epileptic seizures or dementia. However, in this instance it appears as though the episodes of déjà vu could be linked to anxiety causing mistimed neuronal firing in the brain, which causes more déjà vu and in turn brings about more anxiety. If proved, this could be the first-ever recorded instance of psychogenic déjà vu, which is déjà vu triggered by anxiety rather than a neurological

condition such as dementia or epilepsy. In relation to our case, distress caused by the déjà vu experience may itself lead to increased levels of déjà vu: similar feedback loops in positive symptoms are reported in other anxiety states e.g. panic attacks. It is plausible on neurobiological grounds that anxiety might lead to the generation of déjà vu.”

The man likened the “frightening” episodes to being in the psychological thriller film *Donnie Darko*. “There was one instance where he went to get a haircut,” said Dr Chris Moulin, a cognitive neuropsychologist at the University of Bourgogne who worked on the case. “As he walked in, he got a feeling of déjà vu. Then he had déjà vu of the déjà vu. He couldn't think of anything else.” It is not known how many people suffer from this “chronic” version of déjà vu, but Dr Moulin

has encountered cases before – with some patients even insisting they had already met him because of their déjà vu. “People greet you like an old friend, even though they've never seen you before. Some of them were on Skype on the other side of the world, but they still had that sense,” he said.

The term déjà vu (French for “already seen”) was coined in 1876 by the French philosopher Emile Boirac. Research indicates that about two thirds of us experience at least one episode of déjà vu during our lives. Unlike many other memory problems, it seems to occur more in young people, often starting at the age of six or seven and reaching a peak between the ages of 15 and 25 before tailing off, according to research by Professor Alan Brown at South Methodist University in Dallas.

Other lesser-known neural phenomena are thought to be related. *Jamais vu* (“never seen”) is the sense that something which should be familiar is alien, for example a common word which suddenly seems strange. *Presque vu* (“almost seen”) is the sense of being on the edge of an epiphany or realisation, for example recalling a memory. *Déjà entendu* (“already heard”) is the sense of feeling sure you have heard something before, like a snippet of conversation or a musical phrase.

“I've had people say to me ‘You don't really believe in déjà vu, do you?’ as if it's something paranormal,” said Dr Akira O'Connor, a psychologist from the University of St Andrews. “I've had letters from some people who believe strongly that it is something spiritual, quoting the Bible and the Qur'an. Some people say I shouldn't investigate it; that ‘explaining rainbows ruins their beauty’. Personally I've always loved getting déjà vu – and finding out what causes it just makes the experience more beautiful.” *livescience.com* 23 Dec 2014; *telegraph.co.uk*, 20 Jan; *D.Mail*, 21 Jan; *BBC News*, 24 Jan 2015.

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

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden – including a possible new species of monkey in the rainforest, an intriguing encounter with a giant eel and news of the vegetable lamb of Tartary's return.



## MYSTERY MONKEY IN BRAZIL

A large monkey unlike any currently known to science has been sighted on three separate occasions, and now photographed (above), in Brazil's Amazon rainforest, according to a recent report released by the country's University of Mato Grosso. It appears to be a form of saki monkey (genus *Pithecia*), but unlike all known sakis the mystery monkey is calico in colour. Consequently, it may be either a previously unrecorded colour variant of a known species of saki or – as suggested in the report – a completely new, currently undescribed saki species in its own right. Sakis can grow up to almost 2ft (60cm) in length, and are therefore quite conspicuous, but the belated discovery of this novel example is due to the fact that the region of rainforest where it occurs has not previously been studied. Sadly, however, this same region is threatened by deforestation, so even before its zoological identity has been determined, the calico saki is already in danger of extinction. [www.natureworldnews.com/articles/11483/20141229/new-monkey-species-already-believed-to-be-endangered.htm](http://www.natureworldnews.com/articles/11483/20141229/new-monkey-species-already-believed-to-be-endangered.htm) 29 Dec 2014.

## GIANT EEL MEASURES UP

Giant eels are a popular identity for water monsters, of both the marine and freshwater variety. However, because the size of eels is notoriously difficult to gauge accurately in the wild due to their sinuous movements and lack of background scale, reports of giant specimens are normally difficult to take seriously – which is why the following account is so significant. On 3 February 2015, Facebook friend Chris R Richards from Covington, Washington State, posted on the page of the Facebook group Cryptozoology the following hitherto-unpublished report of a huge freshwater eel that he and his father had personally witnessed during the 1990s:

“I believe wholeheartedly in giant eels. I saw one as long as my canoe back in the later Nineties. They could result in sea monster claims. Hocking River Ohio. Directly off the side of the canoe in clear water near upper part of river. At first thought it

was a tree with algæ in water, then saw the head and realized the ‘algæ’ was actually a frill. The animal was thicker than my arm. The head was at the front of the 15ft [4.6m] Coleman canoe and the tail end trailed behind my back seat. At the time this was amazing to both my father and I. Only later did I come to fully appreciate how amazing this sighting was. I got to see it the longest as we slowly passed it and I was in the back of the boat. [The eel was] 12 to 15 ft [3.7–4.6m].”

The ‘frill’ was presumably the eel's long, low dorsal fin, which runs along almost the entire length of the body in freshwater anguillid (true) eels. What makes this report so exciting is that there is an unambiguous scale present in it – the length of the canoe, alongside which the eel was aligned, thereby making its total length very easy to ascertain. The only such species recorded from Ohio is the common American eel *Anguilla rostrata* (above right), which officially grows up to 4ft (1.2m) long. Consequently, judging from the scale provided by the canoe, the eel seen by Chris and his father was three to four times longer than this species' official maximum size. Assuming their report to be genuine (and I have no reason to doubt it), there seems little option but to assume that giant freshwater eels do indeed exist, at least in the Ohio waterways. *Chris R. Richards, Cryptozoology group, 3 Feb 2015.*

## AND THE LAMB SHALL RETURN

On 6 February 2015 I visited the Garden Museum in Lambeth, London, to view their most celebrated exhibit – a preserved specimen of the legendary vegetable lamb or barometz. For centuries, many naturalists

firmly believed that China and elsewhere in what was once known as Tartary (a vast area encompassing much of northern and central Asia) harboured an extraordinary bush whose gourd-like fruit opened to reveal small woolly lambs inside. Each lamb remained attached to its umbilical cord-like stem throughout its life, which was usually quite short as its flesh reputedly tasted like crabmeat and its blood like honey, so it was readily eaten by humans and also by wolves, its anchoring stem preventing the helpless animal from fleeing. Some collectors even proudly possessed what were alleged to be preserved specimens of these exotic zoo-botanical lambs. During the late 1600s, however, Sir Hans Sloane and others revealed that these strange artefacts were actually the hairy rhizomes of a large arborescent oriental fern, whose roots and most of its frond stems had been removed, leaving just four stems remaining that had been carefully shaped to resemble legs.

Two such specimens, both well over two centuries old, still exist in British collections. One of these, only very rarely displayed publicly, is held by London's Natural History Museum. The other, displayed more often, is at the Garden Museum, donated many years ago by a Cambridgeshire physician, after being in his family for over 150 years, encased throughout that time in its original glass dome. Arriving at the Garden Museum, I found that it was not presently on display, but after the museum's exhibitions curator, Emily Fuggle, learnt of my interest she very kindly treated me to a private viewing of their vegetable lamb in the museum's store. It is a most remarkable-looking specimen, but Emily informed me

that it is now too fragile and vulnerable to the effects of light and photography from which its antiquarian glass cupola can no longer shield it adequately for it to be placed on display at present. However, I am happy to reveal exclusively here in FT that there are plans for this unique wonder to return on show as a permanent exhibit in 2016, housed inside a special new case affording it full protection, so I am already greatly looking forward to a return visit to see it again. *Emily Fuggle, pers. comm., 6 Feb 2015.*



## MEMENTO MORI

A 200-YEAR-OLD MUMMIFIED, MEDITATING MONK, MANSON'S INTENDED HAS BIG PLANS FOR HIS CORPSE, AND THE CAT WHO CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD

### DEAD – OR MEDITATING?

A mummified monk found in the lotus position in Mongolia is believed to be around 200 years old. Dr Barry Kerzin, a famous Buddhist monk and a physician to the Dalai Lama, allegedly claims that the monk is actually in “very deep meditation” and in a rare and very special spiritual state known as *tukdam*. Over the last 50 years there are said to have been 40 such cases in India involving meditating Tibetan monks.

“I had the privilege to take care of some meditators who were in a *tukdam* state,” said Dr Kerzin. “If the person is able to remain in this state for more than three weeks – which rarely happens – his body gradually shrinks, and in the end all that remains from the person is his hair, nails, and clothes. Usually in this case, people who live next to the monk see a rainbow that glows in the sky for several days. This means that he has found a ‘rainbow body’. This is the highest state close to the state of Buddha. If the meditator can continue to stay in this meditative state, he can become a Buddha. Reaching such a high spiritual level, the meditator will also help others, and all the people around will feel a deep sense of joy”.

Initial speculation is that the mummy could be a teacher of Lama Dashi-Dorzho Itigilov. Born in 1852, Itigilov was a Buryat Buddhist Lama of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, best known for the lifelike state of his body. In 1927, Itigilov supposedly told his students he was going to die and that they should exhume his body in 30 years. The lama sat in the lotus position, began meditating and died. When he was dug up, his body was found to be well preserved. Fearing interference by the Soviet authorities, his followers reburied him and he remained at rest until 2002 when he was again dug up to great fanfare and found still well preserved. The lama was then placed in a Buddhist temple to be worshipped for eternity.

Gankhüügin Pürevbat, founder



ABOVE: The mummified Mongolian monk; not dead, just meditating very hard.

and professor of the Mongolian Institute of Buddhist Art at Ulaanbaatar Buddhist University, said, in reference to the body of Itigilov's alleged teacher: “The lama is sitting in the lotus position *vajra*, the left hand is opened, and the right hand symbolises the preaching Sutra. This is a sign that the lama is not dead, but is in a very deep meditation according to the ancient tradition of Buddhist lamas”.

The body, wrapped in cattle skins, was found on 27 January 2015 in the north-central Mongolian province of Songinokhairkhan. It now transpires that it had been stolen from another part of the country and was about to be sold. An unnamed official said that it was taken from a cave in the Kobdsk region by a man who then hid it

in his own home in Ulaanbaatar, planning to sell it on the black market at a “very high price”. Police uncovered the plot and quickly arrested a 45-year-old, named only as Enhtor. According to Article 18 of the Criminal Code of Mongolia, smuggling items of cultural heritage is punishable with either a fine of up to three million roubles (£28,000) or between five and 12 years in prison. The mummy is now being examined at the National Centre of Forensic Expertise at Ulaanbaatar.

There are some intriguing comments on the *Siberian Times* website. Alex Wilding in Italy writes: “Normally *tukdam* is said to follow death. It lasts for hours, sometimes a few days or even longer. The body, though without breath or heartbeat, stays

fresh and without rigor mortis. When the *tukdam* ends, the body collapses, and is just like any other dead body. The rainbow body, however, is a product of a very specific line of practice, a small and particular part of *dzogchen*. The process starts immediately after death, but the shrinking stops if the body is disturbed. It takes a few days, even a week or two, to happen. So these are two different ideas, and this body fits neither case. It looks much more like what happens after a long, slow reduction in food intake. The digestive system then effectively shuts down – no juice, no bugs, nothing to attack the body when it dies.”

Michael Smith in New Orleans writes: “*Tukdam* (meditative stability on the clear light nature of the mind at the death point) is a very real phenomenon, but doesn't usually last more than a few hours or days, and up to a few weeks in rarer instances. Not over centuries as this report suggests... Dr Kerzin doesn't actually say that the monk is still in *tukdam*.”

*Siberian Times*, 2 Feb; BBC News, 4 Feb 2015. For more about self-mummification, see <http://www.soulask.com/sokushinbutsu-bizarre-practice-self-mummification/>

### LOVED TO DEATH

Charlie Manson's supposed budding romance with a woman 53 years his junior has been allegedly exposed as a money-making scheme, according to journalist Daniel Simone, who has spoken extensively to Manson in Corcoran jail, California, and is planning a book on him. Afton Elaine Burton, 27, now known as Star, was hoping to gain possession of Manson's corpse through marriage so she and her friend Craig Hammond could put it on display in a glass case in Los Angeles, just like Lenin in Moscow or Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi. They apparently thought that



# Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

## 186: WHO AM I?



### The myth

When people have lost their memory, they don't know who they are.

### The "truth"

In fiction, amnesiacs, upon regaining consciousness, generally begin by asking two questions: "Where am I? – and then, a second later, as the full horror of their situation strikes them "Who am I?" But according to the experts in the field, "Amnesiacs never forget who they are". Most amnesiacs suffer anterograde amnesia (difficulty with remembering new information), not retrograde amnesia (which concerns memories of the past). What we see in films isn't amnesia as such, but the extremely rare "fugue state", in which the patient loses all past memories and knowledge of his identity. If this truly exists it's thought to have psychological, not neurological, causes – stress, for instance, rather than a head injury. But psychologists are divided over whether such cases are ever genuine. Memories concerning our identity are amongst our oldest and most-often recalled. As such, they are "overwritten" or hard-wired. It's hard to imagine medical circumstances in which a person might become so damaged as to lose those memories, and yet still be able to function normally. Even someone stricken with a dementia like Alzheimer's is likely to lose their name only after they've already lost everything else. Amnesia, specialists stress, is to do with memory, not identity. Interestingly, when people fake amnesia they tend to overdo the symptoms, so asking "Do you know your name?" is one way psychiatrists use to diagnose malingering.

### Sources

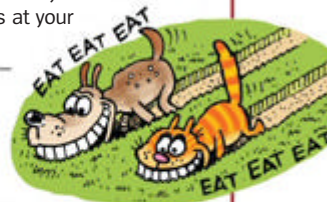
[www.psychologicalscience.org/media/myths/myth\\_14.cfm](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/media/myths/myth_14.cfm);  
[www.memorylossonline.com/spring2002/memlossatmovies.htm](http://www.memorylossonline.com/spring2002/memlossatmovies.htm);  
<http://scienceblogs.com/cognitivedaily/2009/05/27/does-faking-amnesia-permanent/>

### Disclaimer

Please don't forget – this column reports, it doesn't profess. It holds no view on whether "Who am I?" amnesia is "extremely rare" or "non-existent". But if you do, the letters column is at your disposal.

### Mythchaser

Cats and dogs eat grass when they want to vomit. Or possibly to obtain a nutrient which is missing from their pet food. We all know that – but is there any truth to it?



**DON'T MISS MYTHCONCEPTIONS THE BOOK**  
OUT NOW ONLINE AND IN ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS



ABOVE: Manson's would-be widow thinks he'd look nice in a glass display case.

the notorious Sixties hippie anti-hero (whose 'Family' murdered Sharon Tate and others) would draw a huge number of visitors and make them a pile of money. But Manson, 80, got wind of the plan and now no longer wants to marry Burton. Anyway, he believes he is immortal, so he thought the idea of displaying his corpse was stupid to begin with. The marriage license expired on 5 February, though Burton apparently remains hopeful that it will be renewed.

As Manson once said in an interview published in *Rolling Stone* in 1970: "Do you feel blame? Are you mad? Uh, do you feel like wolf kabob Roth vantage? Gefrannis booj pooch boo jujube; bear-ramage. Jigiji geeji geeja geeble Google. Begep flagaggle vagle veditch-waggle bagga?" Curiously prescient, that reference to Google, 28 years before the company was incorporated... *Independent*, 9 Feb 2015.

### MIRACLE ZOMBIE CAT

Bart, a tomcat belonging to the girlfriend of Ellis Hutson in Tampa, Florida, was found lying in the road, stiff in a pool of blood after being hit by a car, and was presumed dead. Hutson said he "couldn't stand" to bury the animal and asked his neighbour David Liss to dig him a shallow grave. Five days later, a bedraggled Bart, weak and dehydrated, was found meowing for food by neighbour Dusty Albritton. Hutson, 52, took Bart to Tampa's Humane Society, where on 27 January the 23-month-old cat had surgery to remove his ruined eye and treat his broken jaw. He was reported to be resting comfortably the next day. The Humane Society called Bart a "miracle cat", while the ordeal has earned him the nickname "zombie cat" on social media. Full recovery was expected to take about six weeks. *BBC News*, 28 Jan; *Sun*, 29 Jan; *Irish Examiner*, 30 Jan 2015.



ABOVE: Bart is making a good recovery after his 'death' and subsequent burial.

POLARIS / EYEVINE

TAMPA HUMANE SOCIETY

HUNT EMERSON



## NECROLOG

This month, we mark the passing of a concert pianist turned much-loved bag lady, an astrologer with a nose for disaster and a Nobel physicist who embraced life's mysteries.



### ANNE NAYSMITH

The daughter of a wayward Army officer and a Russian mother, Anne Smith (who later changed her name to Naysmith) won a place at the Royal Academy of Music at the age of 18, and by the early 1960s was making a career as a concert pianist, sometimes performing under the conductor Sir Adrian Boult. In 1967 she took top billing at the Wigmore Hall. She played at Leighton House in Holland Park, St Martin-in-the-Fields, St James's Piccadilly, and venues in the Home Counties. She taught piano at the Marist convent school in Sunninghill, Berkshire, and later worked at Trinity College of Music in London.

By the early 1970s she had given up teaching and run into money problems. At about the same time a romance with a choral singer failed. In 1977, aged 39, she was evicted from her flat in 22 Prebend Gardens, Chiswick. Believing she had been wronged, she took to sleeping in her car nearby and agitated to get her rooms back. She never did. She spent the next 26 years sleeping in her dilapidated old blue Ford Consul. She achieved notoriety as "the car lady of Chiswick", a dishevelled and familiar sight to commuters in west London. Sometimes she would sit in on local court cases; once a week she could be found in the Barbican music library, examining scores or engaging in spirited and intelligent conversation about music and musicians; or she would chat with

prommers outside the Albert Hall.

In 2002 her beloved car was towed away after a new local resident complained it was blighting the area. She declined the offer of social housing, preferring a makeshift shelter in bushes at the foot of an embankment by Stamford Brook Underground station, where she cooked and tended her little garden. In 2012 her hideaway was left in tatters when workers hacked back the vegetation and cut down the cherry and plum trees she had planted. Transport for London said the workers had not realised the plot was special. She was devastated but set about replanting and restoring the garden.

She slept elsewhere. Neighbours would never say where, in order to protect her, but it is thought that for more than 10 years she bedded down in a school doorway most nights. She would arrive after night classes finished and would be gone before school began the next morning. Until recently she attended evensong at St Nicholas Church, Chiswick, her singing notable for its clarity and beauty. Her ablutions were done in public lavatories or at a doctor's surgery, and she washed her tattered clothes at a petrol station with a hosepipe, wrapping them in old newspapers to dry. As her clothes fell apart she stitched new ones with rags.

She used pigeon feathers to insulate the plastic bags she wore on her feet, and cooked on an

open fire, giving her homemade tomato chutney to regular passers-by. From time to time there were attempts to help her off the streets, by both official agencies and well-meaning music-lovers. Most were politely declined: if she could not return to Prebend Gardens she would remain in her car. She also turned down a free bus pass and other benefits.

Anne Naysmith, who died after being hit by a lorry in Chiswick High Road, never married. On the community website ChiswickW4.com, Robert Fish wrote: "Sometimes I felt sorry for her, but often I reflected that, with that fierce pride of hers, she probably never felt sorry for herself."

Some commentators drew parallels with Miss Shepherd, the musician who lived for 15 years in a van on the driveway of Alan Bennett's home in Camden and was immortalised in his play *The Lady in the Van* (1999). Others saw a link to Diogenes the Cynic, the Greek philosopher who showed his contempt for the material world by sleeping in a large ceramic jar or barrel.

*Anne Smith, afterwards Naysmith, pianist and rough sleeper, born Southend on Sea 1937; died Chiswick 10 Feb 2015, aged about 77.*

### DENNIS ELWELL

Dennis Elwell was born in Aquarius with Scorpio ascendant. As he came into the world, the clock downstairs kept striking until the doctor attending had to ask for it to be stopped. He developed a keen interest in astrology as a teenager after reading *Secret Service of the Sky* by Louis de Wohl, and *A Beginner's Guide to Practical Astrology* by Vivian Robson. While working as a reporter on a local newspaper, he began writing regularly for *American Astrology* and other magazines. He also became a popular lecturer at international astrological symposia and established an astrological consultancy.

Elwell made the news in 1987 when he claimed to have predicted two major disasters that year – the sinking of the *Herald*

of *Free Enterprise* and the King's Cross fire. By his own account, his premonitions began when he looked at the astral charts at the beginning of the year and noticed that Jupiter and Neptune (associated with shipping) were heading into a 90-degree angle, coinciding with a solar eclipse in Pisces in March. The picture was reminiscent of the astrological chart for April 1912, the month that saw the sinking of *Titanic*.

Elwell then claimed to have written to both P&O and Cunard in February warning them they were entering a prolonged period of danger and offering to give them more specific information if they would provide him with sailing schedules of their ships. Cunard wrote back on 20 February, saying the letter had been passed to their fleet commodore, who was on board the *QE2*. The liner was about to leave on a much-hyped voyage to New York following a refit. Elwell's predictions proved spookily prescient when, in mid-Atlantic, cabins flooded, the air-conditioning failed and the captain had to make a 250-mile (400km) detour in fog to avoid icebergs – a precaution which, the company claimed, had nothing to do with Elwell's warnings.

P&O, meanwhile, fobbed Elwell off with a letter assuring him that they were well prepared for any emergencies. But two weeks later, on 6 March, the P&O ferry *Herald of Free Enterprise* pulled out of Zeebrugge harbour with her bow doors open. She capsized and sank, taking the lives of some 200 passengers. Elwell's claims that he had warned the company of impending doom brought much publicity. Subsequently a journalist asked him to explain how the planets could signal disasters. In response he referred her to another forthcoming eclipse, on 7 October, when "Mercury and Pluto would be conjoined in Scorpio in semi-square to Uranus". Mercury, he explained, was about "communication", and Pluto about the subterranean. "How about underground trains?" was her reply, he claimed. On 18 November a fire broke out beneath

the escalators at King's Cross underground station and quickly spread, causing 31 deaths and 20 serious injuries.

In 2007 Elwell was awarded the Charles Harvey Award for Exceptional Service to Astrology by the Astrological Association of Great Britain. He was twice married and had four children.

*Dennis Elwell, astrologer, born Stourbridge, West Midlands 16 Feb 1930; died 13 Nov 2014, aged 84.*

## CHARLES TOWNES

Townes earned the unusual distinction of winning both the Nobel Prize for Physics, for his work on the theory and application of the maser (the forerunner of the laser), and the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. Townes often cited his discovery of the maser – an insight that had occurred to him as he sat on a park bench in Washington DC – as a “revelation” akin to a religious experience, and he was often teased by his scientific colleagues for his religious beliefs. In 1961 he was appointed Provost and Professor of Physics at MIT, and became a champion of the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. He was chairman of the advisory committee for the first human landing on the Moon.

In 1966 he published a seminal article, “The Convergence of Science and Religion”, which established him as a unique voice in seeking common ground between the two disciplines. “My own view is that, while science and religion may seem different, they have many similarities, and should interact and enlighten each other,” he wrote. After learning that he had won the Templeton Prize in 2005, he explained that his views arose out of his perception that science, like religion, embodies paradoxes that can only be resolved by acts of faith. “There are many mysteries still in science, many mysteries and inconsistencies. Quantum mechanics is inconsistent with general relativity... So what do we do? Physicists just accept it. They believe in both. I think that's what we have to do in life, recognise there are inconsistencies, places we don't understand. We have to accept the mysteries and proceed.”

*Charles Hard Townes, physicist, born Greenville, South Carolina 28 July 1915; died 27 Jan 2015, aged 99.*



# FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

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

## FAIRY CIRCLES

In 1841, a humorous book was written, partially in the dialect of Devon, by one Charles Selby: *Maximums and Speciments of William Muggins, Natural Philosopher and Citizen of the World*. Humour does not transfer very well from generation to generation and it would be possible to read tens of pages of *Maximums* without the barest lifting of the corners of the mouth. However, there is one interesting paragraph on p283: “Ask any country lad or lass the meaning of the beaten circles as is sometimes seed in high grass fields. ‘They is pixy rings,’ will be the sure reply, ‘made by the “little people” when they dances in the moonlight”.

At first glance, this is nothing special. It is a mid-19th-century reference to fairy circles: and there are scores, perhaps even hundreds of such sentences between Victorian covers. And fairy circles? They are, of course, rings that appear in the grass. Sometimes they are circles of dead grass, sometimes rings of different coloured grass and sometimes rings of toadstools. Explanations for these rings varied from fungus, to lightning, to ‘airflows’, to, a personal favourite, moles. Nothing to see, move along?

Well, possibly; but there is one peculiar

fact that doesn't fit. Selby's description fails to match the ‘sour ring’, where grass has failed to grow, nor is there any reference to mushrooms or different colours. The circles are, instead, “beaten”. This may just be a slip of the author's pen, but combined with “high grass fields” it recalls modern crop circles. I am ignorant of the history of crop circles and have always presumed them all (though without any effort at research) to be fakes. However, this short sentence made me wonder whether we don't have something with its roots in folklore...

The earliest thing that could be construed as a description of crop circles was a picture (though not the text), of a pamphlet from 1678 entitled “The Mowing-Devil: Or, Strange News out of Hartford-shire”, showing the Devil cutting a field of oats in a strange formation [FT53:38-

39]. The next work discussed by crop-circle enthusiasts appears in *Nature* in 1880: “a few standing stalks as a centre, some prostrate stalks... forming a circle... and... a circular wall of stalks.” I'd certainly prefer Selby to the Mowing Devil, which requires special pleading, and would rank it behind the *Nature* letter. It would be too much to call any of the three proof: but the two 19th-century references are, let's say, suggestive.

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





# the UFO files

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

To contact **The UFO Files**, email: [nufon@btinternet.com](mailto:nufon@btinternet.com)

## FLYINGSAUCERY

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

### THE RISE AND FALL OF BLUE BOOK

In January, many mainstream news organisations got excited about the online disclosure of 130,000 pages of 'declassified' UFO documents from the Project Blue Book archives. But seasoned researchers refused to get too excited, as anyone with even a basic knowledge of UFO history knows the Blue Book files have been in the public domain since 1970. Case files generated by the project, that ran for 22 years until its closure in 1969, were deposited at the US National Archives after the United States Air Force decided it wanted to "make UFOs history". Unfortunately, anyone who wanted to consult this archive had to travel to Washington, DC, and spend hours cranking through obsolete rolls of microfilm to access the 12,618 case files. But thanks to the efforts of an industrious ufologist with the nickname 'Xtraeme', John Greenwald was able to convert images from the files into 10,000 searchable PDF documents. These were uploaded to Greenwald's Black Vault Internet archive in January, and, for a few days, this handy resource was available to anyone with a web browser – leading to the media hype and a huge spike in the number of online searches for Blue Book files. But on 29 January, Greenwald reluctantly took down his database following a wrangle over the legal ownership of the images. Until the dispute is resolved the Blue Book files will remain in limbo, unlike the British MoD files, many of which can be downloaded for a small charge online. But, as Greenwald says, although the USAF material doesn't contain anything new, his laudable efforts to establish a searchable database that allows visitors to do research "without going to any hassle of registering, or even paying for access" should be applauded by all forteans.

*Huffington Post* Weird News, 26 Jan: [tinyurl.com/qeh5cko](http://tinyurl.com/qeh5cko); BBC News Magazine, 26 Jan; Black Vault: <http://projectbluebook.theblackvault.com/>

### THE NASA CONSPIRACIES

Ever since NASA set up a live feed from the International Space Station, UFO hunters have been trying to use it as a source of 'evidence' for a conspiracy by the agency to hide the truth that aliens are visiting the Earth. Last October, some claimed that a 'strange object' was visible near the ISS during a space walk by astronauts Reid Wiseman and Alexander Gerst. But sceptics later identified



this as either a speck of dust or a lens flare from the Sun. UFO watcher Toby Lundh is unconvinced. Toby describes himself as "a persistent viewer" who spends four to six hours every day peering at the live footage from space and, perhaps unsurprisingly, often sees what he believes are UFOs in orbit. He has accused NASA of deliberately cutting the live feed whenever a UFO gets close to the ISS and says footage is removed from its archives "to conceal alleged communication between astronauts and UFOs". Lundh points to two separate incidents in January when he spotted mysterious objects hovering outside the space station. One "looked remarkably like the Starfleet insignia in *Star Trek*", but moments after cameras panned onto the UFO the stream was interrupted for 10-15 seconds. On another occasion he spotted a grey object coming up over the horizon and then disappearing, moments before NASA switched to a different camera. NASA have not commented on the still images captured by Lundh. But UFO pundit Nigel Watson pointed out the majority are "as vague and elusive as those posted by UFO witnesses on Earth" and have similar mundane explanations. But, as Nigel says, "the more NASA denies such things or explains them the more people think there is a conspiracy to hide the truth."

*Daily Mail Online* 26 Jan: [tinyurl.com/o2nve53](http://tinyurl.com/o2nve53)

### THREE GO MAD IN SUFFOLK

It was bound to happen. Take a generation steeped in *The X-Files* and UFO conspiracies and mix it up nicely with the enduring myth of alien visitation in Rendlesham Forest. Stir lightly with some *Blair Witch Project* found footage and lo, you have this year's celluloid saucer smash sensation: *The Rendlesham UFO Incident*. This film genre mash-up tells

the everyday story of three metal detecting chums who go down to the woods hoping to unearth buried treasure. What could possibly go wrong? In typical film fashion, their mobile phones malfunction, tensions rise and the inevitable high strangeness ensues. In a nod to the cattle mutilation myth, dead horses are seen and ignored and it's funny (both peculiar and hilarious) how even though the protagonists lose phone communication, their camera soldiers on to record their trials for posterity! The true star of the real-life Rendlesham UFO mystery, the Orford Ness Lighthouse, doesn't even get a mention in the credits, never mind its own personal assistant. Film makers trying to grasp the nettle of successful UFO films really need more imagination than this and flying saucery suggests they refer to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Communion* as exemplars of the real weirdness and obsessions people experience when meeting 'them' from 'there'.

In a timely, ahem, 'coincidence', a UFO was caught on film over Rendlesham Forest on 26 January, just weeks away from the film's opening. A military helicopter 'seemingly' inspects the UFOs which flash and flicker above it. Is this the truth come to set us free? FT contributor Nigel Watson, author of *The UFO Investigations Manual*, thinks otherwise: "If I was being cynical I'd say this is a stunt to give publicity for *The Rendlesham UFO Incident*. Like this video, it features helicopters and anomalous lights in the sky." We couldn't possibly comment. (See **FT324:66-67** for an interview with the film's director, Daniel Simpson).

[www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=qfYOlwBftRY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=qfYOlwBftRY); [www.openminds.tv/video-shows-flashing-ufos-rendlesham-forest/31872](http://www.openminds.tv/video-shows-flashing-ufos-rendlesham-forest/31872)

## FLAPPY VALLEY: PART ONE

Back in 2011, my fellow FT contributors Peter Brookesmith, Dave Clarke and Andy Roberts wrote an article debating Britain's best-known UFO abduction (FT269:44-47; 270:46-49). This celebrated case involves police officer Alan Godfrey, who in the early hours of 29 November 1980 was, he claimed, abducted from his patrol car after seeing a spinning, domed UFO at close quarters. He had been driving on duty down Burnley Road in the Yorkshire mill town of Todmorden (the area where the award-winning BBC police drama *Happy Valley* is set and filmed). These rugged surroundings have long been associated with UFO activity. Indeed, Godfrey's case came in the middle of an ongoing flap.

I became involved in this investigation soon after the events happened, as my family come from the adjacent mill town of Bacup and my cousin married Alan's sergeant. With PC Godfrey's cooperation I devoted my book *The Pennine UFO Mystery* to his case and others from the surrounding valleys.

One point raised by the authors in their 2011 article was the lack of other witnesses to any part of the patrolman's experience. They felt that if something unusual had occurred on that highway, even at 5am, someone should have supported PC Godfrey's story.

This lack of corroboration was never total, as a report was made to Todmorden police that Saturday from a man describing a light in the early hours moving over the valley between Cliviger and Todmorden. Sadly, he never came forward again. Another witness in the town on the Saturday evening witnessed a light crossing the road close to the spot where Godfrey's police car stopped. And at a farm near Walsden, on the moors above the valley, an even more intriguing sighting had occurred 37 hours after the Godfrey encounter. Walsden was the village where Alan was local hobby.

On that Sunday, a family witnessed a domed object bobbing up and down, in and out of the valley near electricity pylons. Initially, they thought it could be a power company helicopter, but after rushing outside for a good view they realised that it was impossibly silent. Moreover, they saw it again a few months later, right on top of their farmhouse, which confirmed that fact.

The farmer told me how then he and his wife were watching the TV news when the newscaster's face suddenly blurred. "It was just like on *Star Trek* when they say 'beam me up,'" he told me with a puzzled look – concluding that "It was something I can't explain".

However, none of these sightings were directly corroborative of PC Godfrey's encounter, allowing for much speculation by those sceptical writers about visionary experiences or misperception of an early bus traversing the highway. That theory was based



LEFT: In 1981, PC Alan Godfrey stands on the edge of Burnley Road at the spot where he encountered the UFO. The Ukrainian Club is in the background.

on Alan reliving the incident under hypnosis during the investigation. He had said on first spotting the UFO: "It's a bus" – before adding quickly, when its nature revealed itself to him on closer proximity: "It's not a bus".

In late 2014, Alan broke a few years of silence to aid a local charity fundraiser. As a result, one man revealed his intention to talk to the now retired policeman of what he knew. He said to me: "Hi, Jenny. I was on that road at 5am... at the same time as this was happening to Alan Godfrey."

This witness, called Bob, was driving on Burnley Road that night in 1980 and, more importantly, had directly observed part of what had taken place. Though he did not see Alan Godfrey or the UFO he did encounter the physical effects that Godfrey described.

Like the authors of that earlier article, I am unconvinced of the reality of hypnosis claims regarding aliens. Andy Roberts further suggests that some of the details Alan perceived could have been influenced by subconscious recall of a futuristic modular house design that had been on display in Todmorden. It turns out, coincidentally, that Bob made some panels for that very Futuro house. However, I am utterly convinced that PC Godfrey is sincere and saw something he considered strange. Indeed, the physical effects he reported were for me a key reason why I am sure it was something real, not hallucinatory.

Bob – it transpires – was the driver of the works bus that Alan initially thought he might be seeing that night and that Roberts et al think he might have mistook for a UFO. Bob worked for the West Yorkshire passenger transport company (now First Bus) driving a double decker Fleetline to pick up other local drivers booked on the first morning services. He insisted there were no other buses on that road until he delivered these drivers to the depot at Millwood, on the road out toward Hebden Bridge. A couple were in Rochdale and Bacup, but none near Todmorden. In other words, if PC Godfrey did misinterpret a bus that night then Bob had to be driving it.

Around 4.50am Bob drove his Fleetline away from Millwood, heading west into the town centre, then north west onto Burnley Road to pick up the driver of the first bus heading for Halifax. This driver lived in Portsmouth, a village on the Lancashire border a couple of miles north west of where Alan Godfrey had his encounter that night. Bob was alone in his

bus and had to get the driver back to the depot for 5.10am, so was pressed for time. He has always regretted that this prevented him getting out of the bus after stopping on the road to look and see what was happening.

It was clearly *not* the passage of his bus that created these strange forces, as he saw them ahead on the roadside as he approached, and then halted to investigate. It was about 4.55am, he believes, and he was on Burnley Road with the park to his left and the distinctive Ukrainian Club building to his right.

So what did he see? Here is what he told me: "All the litter and twigs on the road ahead of me were blowing like a whirlwind. The swirling was very unusual. Higher up the trees nothing was moving. But lower down on the trees and bushes and the road *all* this stuff was moving."

As he drove towards this strange phenomenon and stopped right next to it, he could see in the light from streetlamps that there was a circle on the roadway.

"It was not the fact that the surface was a big dry patch that first alerted me. Instead, it was all the twigs in a strange pattern that drew me to look there. But closer up I saw the road was swirled dry. I stopped the bus right in the middle of it."

It had rained through the night, but this had stopped shortly before. The road was still quite wet, but not in this region where the strange winds were creating mayhem.

"The dry patch went from one side of the road to the other... possibly over the river, but I could not see that far" (NB: This river – the Calder – is immediately left of the road between here and the park, but behind a low stone wall).

Bob stopped his bus, watching in astonishment. He did not get out, as noted, but was sufficiently intrigued to wind down his cab window and stick a hand out.

"The updraft was amazing. It was *not* a wind blowing at me, like a stormy day. The draft was going upwards from off the road into the sky. But it only went up to about four feet. I moved my arm above shoulder height and there was nothing at all. The trees here were very still. So I moved my arm back down and the strong updraft was still there hitting me."

He left the area, with the effects continuing, picked up the driver, turned around and passed the spot again about 10 minutes later on his way back to the depot. There was no sign of anything unusual and he did not see the swirl.

Bob told me of this still vivid memory: "I want this to go public. Something bloody strange went on."

In the second part of this report I assess what this evidence means and whether it adds a new dimension to our understanding of this major case.

# THE FAT BOY OF PECKHAM

As an epidemic of childhood obesity sweeps the developed world, **JAN BONDESON** explores a vanished age in which corpulent youngsters were treated neither as villains nor victims but celebrated as prodigies in the music halls and sideshows of Britain and the United States.

Meet Johnny Trunley, the Fat Boy of Peckham... and his rotund rivals.

Pictures from the author's collection, unless otherwise noted

**J**ohn Thomas Trunley Jr was born on 14 October 1898, the son of a poor Camberwell scavenger with the same name and his wife Rosetta. John Thomas Trunley Sr was a short, thin man, and his wife of ordinary stature; yet their son was an extraordinary large, sturdy infant. The 1901 Census has the three of them living at 1 Herring Street, Camberwell, but they soon moved into a small terraced house at 12 Colegrove Street, Peckham. Young Johnny Trunley, as the hero of this strange tale was always called, soon attracted notice due to his extreme size and corpulence. In late 1903, he was four feet tall, with a chest measurement of 44in (1.1m) and a weight of 10 stone (64kg). He was enormously strong for his age, and could lift his father from the ground. Johnny soon became a local celebrity. He spent most of his time in or near a beer-house in Willowbrook Road, where he earned various treats by acting as an advertisement and entertaining the customers. When a *Daily Mail* reporter went to see Johnny, it turned out that the Peckham dustmen, police constables and omnibus drivers knew all about his exploits. The unwholesome food he was served at the beer-house meant that he was rapidly increasing in girth.

In November 1903, when Johnny was five years old, the London School Board began to consider how this monstrous child would be supplied with an education. He was not mentally defective, and quite educable, although it would take quite a gargantuan chair and desk to fit him. Although it might be possible to take him to school for physically defective children, if he could be roused and dressed in time, the hulking Johnny might injure the other children or topple over

## JOHNNY SOON ATTRACTED NOTICE DUE TO HIS EXTREME CORPULENCE

the schoolmistress, so a school inspector recommended that he should be exempt from attending school.

But a vocal faction of the London School Board refused to accept this recommendation, believing that, in the modern world, every child should go to school. They had access to a force of School Board officers, whose tasks included fetching truant children and forcing them to go to school. A carpenter was instructed to build Johnny a king-size chair and desk, and a stern schoolmistress was recruited to discipline him. When interviewed in the *Daily Mail*, a newspaper that took a vigorous interest in Johnny's educational tribulations, she assured the journalist that she knew of a way to manage her 10-stone pupil. "Persuasion goes a long way," she said, hinting that she had something in her cupboard that she would make good use of if he proved obstinate. Not unnaturally, Johnny did not like this sinister schoolmarm one little bit. When she annoyed him, he used to lie down on the floor and refuse to get up, and no one at Reddin Street Board School was strong enough to lift the Peckham prodigy. Even when Johnny was sitting quietly at his desk, the other pupils stared at him, to the detriment of school discipline. Johnny was fond of sleeping in the morning, and his parents found it difficult to rouse and dress him. Whenever the Fat Boy played truant, the assiduous School Board officers made themselves known in Colegrove Road.

Once there were deplorable scenes when two sturdy school policemen dragged the howling Johnny out of the house and put him in a cart, only partly dressed, to transport the Peckham prodigy to school. For obvious reasons, the School Board officers were not particularly popular among working-





class people, and there was considerable newspaper interest in the attempts to force Johnny to go to school. Many ordinary people viewed him as a hero: a sturdy, stubborn John Bull who refused to take orders from the creatures of the detested School Board.

### THE PECKHAM PRODIGY

John Thomas Trunley Sr was not the brightest of men, but he could not fail to be impressed with the great interest in his son from the media and the general public. Soon, a Great Yarmouth showman approached him with an offer he could not refuse. On 14 December 1903, the Fat Boy of Peckham made his debut at the Yarmouth Hippodrome, to great acclaim, before travelling to the Waverly Market Carnival in Edinburgh. On 23 December, when Johnny was exhibited at the Camberwell Palace of Varieties, the place was thronged with locals keen to see the Peckham prodigy. The School Board officers, who had already been exposed to a good deal of newspaper ridicule for their failure to bring Johnny to school, were up to their mean-spirited tricks once more: they went to the SPCC, objecting that a child under 11 was performing in a local amusement parlour. The case went to the Lambeth Magistrates, where the exhibition was declared to be fully legal. As a result of Johnny's lucrative exploits on the stage, the Trunley family did not have to face Christmas Day in the Workhouse, and instead enjoyed some hearty Christmas

meals. On 29 December, Johnny appeared in a pantomime at Chatsworth, the seat of the Duke of Devonshire, before the King and Queen. This singular meeting between Royalty and the Fat Boy of Peckham was much commented on in the newspapers – even the

*New York Times*, which found it strange that a boy who in America would at most have been an attraction in a dime museum had attained national celebrity.

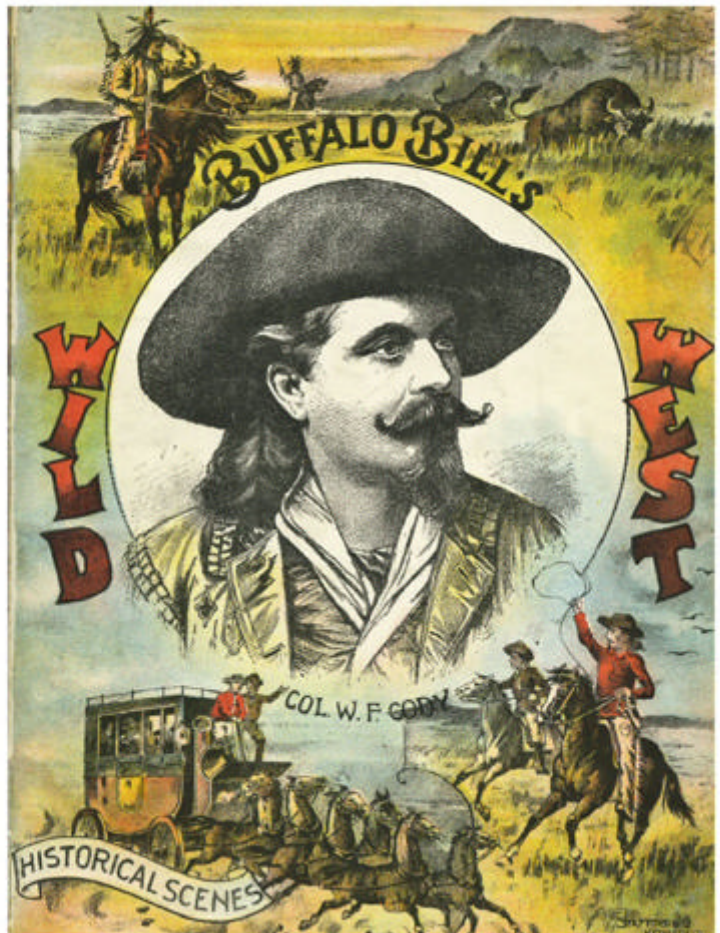
Throughout 1904, the triumphal tour of the Fat Boy continued. The school policemen were still after Johnny, but Mr Trunley said that he was giving his son regular lessons. When it was objected that the scavenger turned showman entirely lacked teaching qualifications, a governess was recruited to accompany the Peckham phenomenon on his tour. As the tour went on, it was considered very droll to have some provincial tailor measure the Fat Boy for a suit of clothes, as funny the 20th time as it was the first. At a music hall sports event at Herne Hill in July 1904, Johnny competed in a race against the diminutive comedian 'Little Dando'. As the Fat Boy gathered speed, and then seemed to stumble, a local humourist exclaimed "Catch him! He'll make a hole in the track!" But Johnny recovered his balance, won the race, and was led away, quite breathless, by his proud father.

Picture postcards were very fashionable in Edwardian times, and Mr Trunley made sure that his son, the family breadwinner, was depicted on a number of them, which all enjoyed healthy sales. One of the earliest of these cards depicted the Fat Boy at the age of six, when he weighed 14 stone. Johnny's success was such that a 'funny' *Daily Mirror* journalist wrote that Peckham must be a nursery for Fat Boys; the mothers purchased quantities of milk and treacle to produce an even more



TOP: Johnny Trunley and his father in 1909. ABOVE: Peckham High Street in 1906; the large building to the left is the Peckham Hippodrome, where the Fat Boy was exhibited.





ABOVE LEFT: A portrait of Johnny Trunley, aged 11. ABOVE RIGHT: A poster for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. BELOW: The "World-famed Peckham Fat Boy" on tour in 1910.

monstrous specimen of boyhood. The school policemen still tried their best to make themselves obnoxious, but the incessant travelling of the Trunleys hampered their activities. Later in 1904, the old London School Board was reorganised into a more modern establishment, run by the London County Council, and this meant a temporary hiatus for the school police. But the London educationalists still considered the schooling of the Fat Boy of Peckham a top priority, and the school policemen issued the Trunley family with a summons that Johnny was to start school on 9 January. According to a *Daily Mirror* journalist, the Fat Boy was in despair at the thought of being forced to go to school, but still he devoured two plates of winkles, 17 slices of thick bread and butter, and two pieces of cake for Sunday tea, as the astonished newspaperman looked on. But a just few days later, there was a knock at the door. Mr Trunley answered it with some degree of caution, fearful that the school policemen were up to mischief again. But outside the door stood a dapper, grey-bearded gentleman wearing a large Stetson hat. As the flabbergasted Mr Trunley stood gaping, recognising his visitor but being quite unable to utter a word, a street guttersnipe passing by yelled out "Gorblimey, Guv'nor! It's Buffalo Bill!"

Johnny Trunley The World-famed **PECKHAM FAT BOY.**



Chest—48 inches. Thigh—34½ inches. Waist—50 inches.  
Calf—23 inches. Height—5 ft. 4½-in. Weight—over 25 stone.  
Age—11 years and 10 months.  
Touring under the Management of Messrs. Balfour Beatty,  
Amusement Caterers, Great Yarmouth.

### ENTER BUFFALO BILL

And indeed it was the celebrated showman William 'Buffalo Bill' Cody who had descended, like a Deus ex Machina, from his great Wild West Show upon the sleepy Peckham terrace. After inspecting Johnny and finding him fully satisfactory, Buffalo Bill offered him a contract with his show, which was currently touring Britain, before going abroad. Overjoyed that his son was to become an international megastar of corpulence, Mr Trunley accepted this offer with alacrity, on the conditions that he himself was to accompany the Fat Boy, to provide him with some elemental tuition, and to protect him against the school police.

Johnny appeared along with Little Anita, the Smallest Lady on Earth, and the Human Skeleton. As the Wild West Show tour went on, the Fat Boy of Peckham was as popular as ever. The newspaper writings about his educational difficulties had been reported in the provincial papers as well, and Johnny was sometimes greeted like a conquering hero: suits of clothes were measured, postcards sold, and country journalists treated to interviews with the Peckham superstar. Johnny had a certain native wit, and if a crowd of country bumpkins was making fun of him, he asked them how much *they* earned each week. On 1 April 1905, the *Daily Mail* could announce that the Fat Boy of Peckham was to join the Wild West Show on an extended tour to Paris, Venice, Rome, and perhaps to the United States.

Buffalo Bill had been very pleased with Johnny during the tour of Britain, but the French and Italian reaction to the Peckham prodigy left much to be desired. With their usual disdain for British fads, the French declared themselves to be entirely unimpressed with the Fat Boy. Linguistic difficulties meant that Johnny was unable to interact with the audience. A picture postcard in French was published to advertise 'Le Garçon Gras de Peckham, Londres, Buffalo Bill's Wild West', but to no avail. Buffalo Bill realised that the usefulness of the Fat Boy as an object of exhibition was geographically limited, and in September 1905, Johnny was back in London, where he was immediately 'nabbed' by the school police and taken to school. But although the snub from Buffalo Bill was a hard blow for Mr Trunley, his son was still famous, and there were other showmen interested in taking over his management. Trunley soon signed a contract with the celebrated music hall impresario Fred Karno, and Johnny performed in various sketch comedies, meeting Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel, among other celebrities.

When there was a lack of music hall engagements, Mr Trunley took Johnny

touring the country. He was a particular favourite at the Peckham Hippodrome, not far from his home, and at Great Yarmouth, where he had many admirers. In November 1906, the *Evening Telegraph* announced that Johnny was to attend a school for the mentally deficient in Gloucester Road, nearly a mile from his home in Peckham. There were problems, though: he could not walk 200 feet without pain, his boots cost 22 shillings a pair, and he ate twice as much as an ordinary man. Nothing much seems to have become of this schooling project, and the *Daily Mail* wrote that the

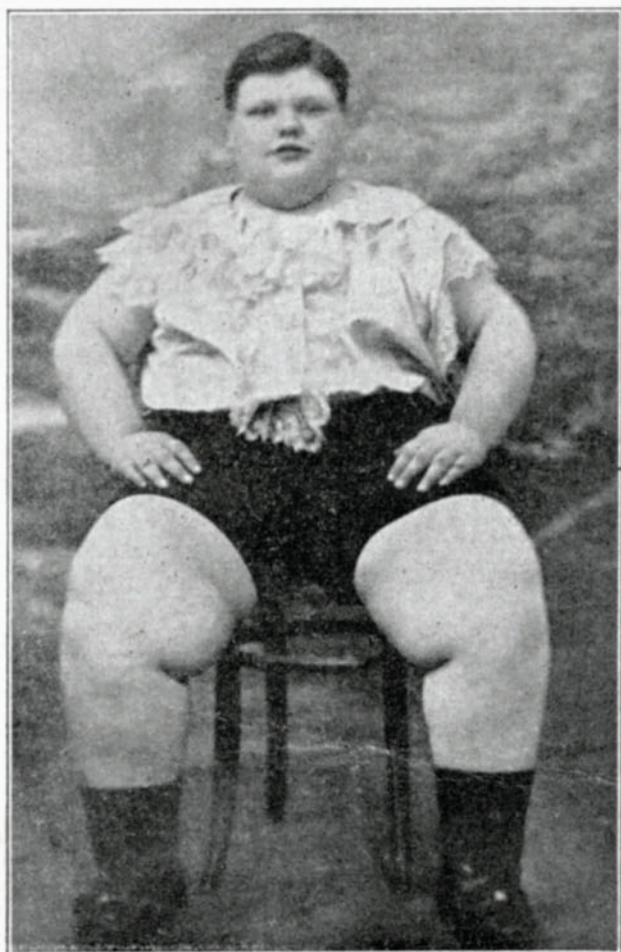
## JOHNNY WAS PROCLAIMED THE HEAVIEST PERSON IN GREAT BRITAIN

wastrels of the London County Council ought to have constructed a special tramline to carry the Fat Boy to school, since no motor omnibus would hold him. Another joker, in the *Buckinghamshire Herald*, suggested that the Fat Boy ought to be housed, at government expense, near the opening of the proposed Channel Tunnel, and used for blocking it in case of hostilities.

### AN ORDINARY MAN

Johnny continued touring for quite a few years. In February 1907, he was barred from appearing at the Winter Halls in Leamington Spa, where the local magistrates found the exhibition to be in bad taste, but the majority of towns and cities accepted him without demur. In Edinburgh, where he was particularly popular, a waxwork effigy of him was unveiled in 1908. In a postcard from early 1908, the hulking Johnny is portrayed together with his father and manager. In another card from late 1909, he is advertised to be over 25 stone (159kg) in weight and touring under the management of Barron Bros., Amusement Caterers, of Great Yarmouth. In April 1910, he was at the Novelty Bazaar, 27 Biggin Street, Dover. The

## JOHNNY TRUNLEY, THE PECKHAM FAT BOY



Measures—Chest 50 in., Waist 56 in., Thigh 34 in., Calf 22 in., Height 5 ft. 2½ in., Weight 20 stone.



ABOVE: Two photographic portraits of the Peckham Fat Boy at the ages of around 10 and – late in his career – 18 years old.



**WILFRID WESTWOOD, TALLEST, HEAVIEST, STRONGEST BOY IN THE WORLD.**  
Age 11 years; weight over 22st.

**BELOW:** The Peckham Prodigy as an ordinary man: Johnny and Florence Trunley, with stepson Reg riding pillion. **ABOVE LEFT:** The Hungarian Fat Boy, who was active in showbusiness from 1904 until 1907. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Wilfred Westwood, the New Zealand Fat Boy, riding a tricycle. He used to perform with an equally fat elder sister named Ruby, but she died of blood-poisoning after pricking her finger on a rose-thorn, and he carried on a solo career.

1911 Census lists both John Thomas Trunleys, the elder of whom gives his employment as a Travelling Showman. But the following year, Mr Trunley died unexpectedly, and Johnny was without his father and manager. Although he kept increasing in weight, turning the scales at 33 stone (210kg) by 1915 and being proclaimed the heaviest person in Britain, his career never recovered from this blow. The Great War affected him badly, and he was very much afraid of the air raids and the sinister 'Zeps'. Due to his nervous disposition and to wartime shortages, his weight plummeted dramatically.

As hostilities ended, the fortunes of the Fat Boy continued to dwindle. Although he soon increased in weight to 21 stone (133kg), he was incapable of regaining his pre-war fame. In a brief acting career, he took part in a play called 'Kill or Kure' at the Stratford Empire, and played the part of a bookmaker in an early silent film. His self-confidence was as high as ever, and he told his friend Charlie Chaplin about his ambition to go to America and challenge 'Fatty' Arbuckle and other overweight Hollywood celebrities. But Charlie warned him that since America already had a great many fat comedians, actors and performers of every description, it would be very difficult for a foreigner to break into the industry.

Johnny Trunley, once the Fat Boy of



Peckham, had become an Ordinary Man. He got a job as an apprentice clockmaker, and later opened his own clock repair shop in Gordon Road, Peckham. He once tried to return to the limelight by challenging Gene Tunney, the world heavyweight boxing champion who had twice defeated Jack Dempsey, but Gene snubbed him. In 1927, Johnny married Mrs Florence Petty, a widow with an adolescent son. A photograph shows the hulking paterfamilias sitting astride a motorcycle, with his short, slim wife in the sidecar and the stepson 'Reg' riding pillion. Johnny and Florence got on well, and had at least one child, John, who later had offspring himself. There is evidence that although still eating heartily, Johnny became rather more health-conscious after getting married, taking regular exercise through swimming,

boxing and club-throwing. The Second World War, with its terrible air raids, again affected him very badly. He caught pneumonia from spending the nights in damp air raid shelters, and went into hospital where the doctors diagnosed tuberculosis. In September 1944, poor Johnny passed away.

His *Times* obituary pointed him out as one of the many cases in which extensive publicity is followed by the most profound oblivion. Over the years, many a plump schoolboy must have been called 'The Fat Boy of Peckham' without having a clue as to the

origin of this cheerful insult.

### THE FAT BOY'S RIVALS

One's immediate reaction, after considering the life and career of the Fat Boy of Peckham, must be that it is quite distasteful, even barbaric, to exhibit a morbidly obese child in such a manner. Today, such a degrading exhibition would of course be speedily prohibited, and one would have thought it would have been considered tasteless and unedifying back in 1903. Three independent factors conspired to allow Johnny Trunley to make his fortune on stage, however. Firstly, the traditional freak show was still alive and flourishing, as evidenced by the exploitation of Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man, in the 1880s, and Krao, the Human Monkey (FT317:76-77) in the 1890s. Although



ABOVE LEFT: Willie Filtz, the rotund American Fat Boy, who was active in showbusiness until his premature demise in 1911. ABOVE RIGHT: A cabinet card showing Amelia Hill, the American Fat Girl, a celebrated predecessor of the Fat Boy of Peckham. BELOW: Lennie Mason, the Leicester Fat Boy.

the tide was slowly turning, with many 'educated' people finding the exhibition of freaks morally repugnant, support for freak shows from the lower classes remained strong, as did the infrastructure for the travelling exhibition of freaks. Secondly, the considerable newspaper publicity around the Fat Boy's educational mishaps made him a national celebrity, and thus set the stage for his exploitation in the sideshow. Thirdly, the popular 'fat baby' competitions arranged by PT Barnum and others had engendered an unwholesome fascination with obese children, both in the United States and in Britain. In the 1880s and 1890s, various grossly obese children were exhibited in the American sideshows, and one or two of them even visited Britain. They were considered as 'phenomena' or 'wonders of nature' rather than unwholesome or unwell.

Johnny Trunley eclipsed all his predecessors, however, and his meteoric success even spawned a few 'Fat Boy wannabes' eager to go on show. The Hungarian Fat Boy was at large from 1904 until 1907, with modest success. In the 1910s, Lenny Mason, the Leicester Fat Boy, managed to usurp some of the fame of the Peckham prodigy following his semi-retirement in 1912, until Lenny himself died prematurely in 1920.



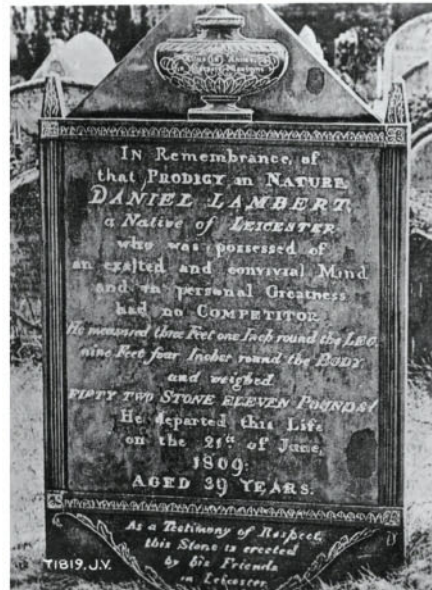
LENNY MASON, Leicester Fat Boy.

The next question must of course be: What was wrong with the Fat Boy?

Some Internet commentators have suggested that there must have been something seriously amiss with his 'glands', although not providing any details exactly what this might have been. A newspaper account mentions that, when he was four years old, Johnny was brought to some kind of medical convention, where he was shown to 700 doctors, one of whom was the celebrated Sir Frederick Treves; they had no clue what ailed him.

In modern medicine, obesity can be separated into a (common) primary form, which occurs without other disease being present, and an (uncommon) secondary form, where the corpulence has some external endocrine or genetic cause. For example, myxoedema (severe lack of thyroid hormone) may cause obesity, as may Cushing's syndrome of hyperproduction of corticotropic hormone. Less common causes include Froelich's syndrome of hypothalamic insufficiency and certain rare genetic syndromes like the Laurence-Moon-Biedl syndrome and the Prader-Willi syndrome.

But Johnny Trunley had no symptoms of either hypothyroidism or hypothalamic insufficiency, nor had



ABOVE LEFT AND CENTRE: A portrait of the celebrated Daniel Lambert, and his gravestone, from an old postcard. ABOVE RIGHT: A Staffordshire pottery figure of Lambert.

he the typical moon-face of the patient with Cushing's syndrome. Patients with the Prader-Willi or Laurence-Moon-Biedl syndromes may become extremely corpulent, but are often quite feeble both bodily and mentally, with a tendency towards diabetes and severe eye disease that may lead to blindness. Johnny Trunley was strong and vigorous as a child, and lived to be 46 years old. There is no doubt that he suffered from primary obesity, which does not appear to have been genetic in origin, due to the lack of any overweight relations; his father was in fact a short, thin man. It is notable that not less than six Trunley children were born in the Camberwell district from 1900 until 1909, so Johnny may well have had several siblings. In late 1904, there was a newspaper story that Mrs Trunley had just given birth to another very large, heavy son; this may well have been the Albert Edward Trunley whose birth was registered in early 1905, but nothing more is known about him than that he expired in 1962. Indeed, the popular belief that very obese individuals have something wrong with their 'glands' is ill-founded; in fact, only a small minority of them have an endocrine cause for their obesity. The 76-stone (483kg) Robert Hughes used to blame his corpulence on a singular accident: when three years old, he suffered from whooping-cough and 'ruptured his thyroid gland'. This explanation, eagerly swallowed by the journalists, deserves a place among the 'greats' of medical cock-and-bull stories, along with the tale of the Irishman who tried to convince the doctor that he had caught venereal disease from borrowing another man's trousers.

In my book *The Two-Headed Boy, and other Medical Marvels*, I described the life and times of Daniel Lambert, a native of Leicester who weighed not less than 52 stone (330kg). When he exhibited himself for money in London in 1806, he was acknowledged as the heaviest man ever seen in Britain. There is no doubt that like Johnny Trunley, Lambert suffered from primary obesity, as did the first man in Britain to challenge his weight record, the

publican William Campbell (see FT298:76-77). Whereas Lambert was said not to have been grossly overweight as a child, Campbell turned the scales at 18 stone (114kg) at the age of 10, roughly the same as Johnny Trunley. Lambert died at the age of 39, and Campbell, whose habits were not conducive to a long and healthy life, at just 22.

Two showbusiness contemporaries of Johnny's, namely Willie Filtz, the American Fat Boy (1892-1911) and Lenny Mason (1903-1920) also died prematurely. It is today appreciated that adipose tissue produces adipokines, noxious signalling proteins that mediate early-onset diabetes, atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease. Thus, being grossly overweight does not just increase the strain on the locomotory and circulatory systems, it literally poisons the body from within. Johnny Trunley's life may well have been saved by his rapid weight loss during the Great War.

As is well known, the globe is today swept by an epidemic of obesity: both adults and children are increasing in weight in an alarming manner. The world's heaviest person, the American John Brower Minnoch (1941-1983) weighed in at 100 stone (635kg), far outclassing Daniel Lambert and the other obese celebrities of yesteryear. Although extremes like Johnny Trunley and Willie Filtz would still attract notice today, some of the other 'fat children' exhibited in Edwardian times would fit in perfectly well waddling around a contemporary schoolyard.

Childhood obesity is a serious health problem, as the aforementioned adipokines are given extra time to undermine health. Moreover, being an overweight child engenders psychological problems as well, from the incessant playground teasing and bullying. One might find it unlikely that a boy who was exhibited in the Edwardian freak-shows as 'The Fat Boy of Peckham' from 1903 (aged five) until 1912 (aged 14) would grow up to become a psychologically well-adjusted person, after suffering a decade of heartless comments and impertinent questions from

the audience, but sources agree that in later life Johnny Trunley was an affable, popular man. He did not appear to feel sorry for himself or embarrassed by his size. He was a good watchmaker, and a kind husband and father. His local popularity was such that hundreds of people attended his funeral in the Camberwell New Cemetery. For many years, the Bun House at 96 Peckham High Street exhibited an old colour banner of Johnny in his prime, but this pub was closed down in 2002 and is today a branch of Betfred. In addition, both the Trunley family home in Colegrove Street, and the watchmaker's shop in nearby Gordon Road, have fallen victim to London's developers.

But although the humble Peckham terraces are gone, and the ordinary people who inhabited them forgotten, the memory of Johnny Trunley, once the celebrated Fat Boy of Peckham, remains to this day. **FT**

#### SOURCES

SL Gilman, *Fat Boys* (Lincoln, NE 2004) and *Obesity: A Biography* (Oxford 2010).

D & F Haslam, *Fat, Gluttony and Sloth* (Liverpool, 2009), particularly pp 42-59.

J Bondeson, *The Two-Headed Boy* (Ithaca, NY, 2004), pp237-60.

*Picture Postcard Monthly*, 350 [2008], pp38-9.

*Times*, 23 Dec 1903, 4+7 Oct 1944; *D. Mirror*, 23 Dec 1903, 4 Feb, 6 July, 20 Dec 1904; *D. Express*, 10 +14 Dec 1903; *D. Mail*, 10+11+20+23 Dec 1903; 6 July, 21 Dec 1904; 1 Apr 1905; 24 Nov 1906.

There are also various garbled Internet accounts of the Peckham prodigy, many of which call him Trundley, as does the aforementioned Professor Gilman.

#### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, a regular contributor to *Fortean Times* and the author of numerous books, including *Queen Victoria's Stalker* (2010), *Amazing Dogs* (2011) and *Murder Houses of London* (2014).

# PHANTOM-MASS

## OR DALÍ AND THE OVERWEIGHT GHOSTS

SD TUCKER explores an alarming outbreak of morbid obesity amongst 1930s ghosts, and finds Salvador Dalí's bizarre explanations involving Adolf Hitler's fat back, Mae West's detachable breasts and Napoleon's surprisingly edible trousers rather hard to stomach.

Illustrations by YOHAN SACRÉ.

**B**y now, I suppose we're far enough into 2015 for most people's New Year dietary resolutions to have ended in little more than the usual miserable, yet wholly predictable, round of cake-based failure – but wait! What if this New Year should happen to be your last? What will happen to all that unshed blubber when you die? Will you continue to carry it with you after death, in unsightly ectoplasmic form, bulging out from the seams of your winding-sheet as your spirit wobbles its way hungrily through the graveyard, looking for chips? Forget all those dusty old saws about why ghosts wear clothes: with a massive obesity epidemic currently sweeping the Western world, the question of whether or not spooks carry cellulite is clearly a far more pressing issue.

Probably the most imaginative attempted answer to this unsettling bodily conundrum came from the pen of Will Self in his 2000 novel *How the Dead Live*, in which the deceased yo-yo dieter Lily Bloom encounters three fellow-spooks called 'the Fats' – her own personal version of 'the Fates' – a trio of blobby ghouls made up from all of the weight she had lost and then gained again *ad infinitum* throughout her entire feast-and-famine lifetime. Hideous creatures, "all wobble and jounce, huge dewlaps of belly hanging to their knees", these eyeless, hairless, nipple-shorn beings are "the Pillsbury Dough Girls of total dissolution", and follow poor Lily around everywhere in imitation of the Chorus in an old Greek play, chanting the words "Fat and old, fat and old, fat and old" at her endlessly, like tripartite manifestations of the manipulative modern female beauty-industry.<sup>1</sup>

Self, though, was writing satire,

### DALÍ DEPLORED THE "ALARMING INCREASE IN WEIGHT" HE NOTICED IN TODAY'S GHOSTS

and most fat ghosts seem to be equally fictional, fulfilling an essentially comic function through their rotundity – the sausage-chomping green splodge Slimer in *Ghostbusters*, for instance. For at least one person, however, the issue of fat phantoms seems to have been a matter of genuine concern, at least ostensibly. That man was none other than the prominent Surrealist painter Salvador Dalí, who published a very odd article in issue five of the *avant-garde* magazine *Minotaure* in 1934. Entitled 'The New Colours of Spectral Sex Appeal', it was nothing less than a

warning against an incredible epidemic of obesity that he saw as then being rife among a population of increasingly greedy and globulous ghosts.<sup>2</sup>

Right from the first sentence, Dalí is blunt in his views on the topic: "For some time now," he writes, "and increasingly so with each passing year, the idea of ghosts has been turning suave, growing heavy and rounded with its persuasive weight, with the plump stereotype... that is characteristic of sacks of potatoes." He goes on to deplore the "extra-soft sagging of today's ghosts", their "compact heaviness", and the "alarming increase in weight" he was beginning to notice every time he saw one; all of which, he said, left him feeling "horrified". But why?

### HUNGRY GHOSTS

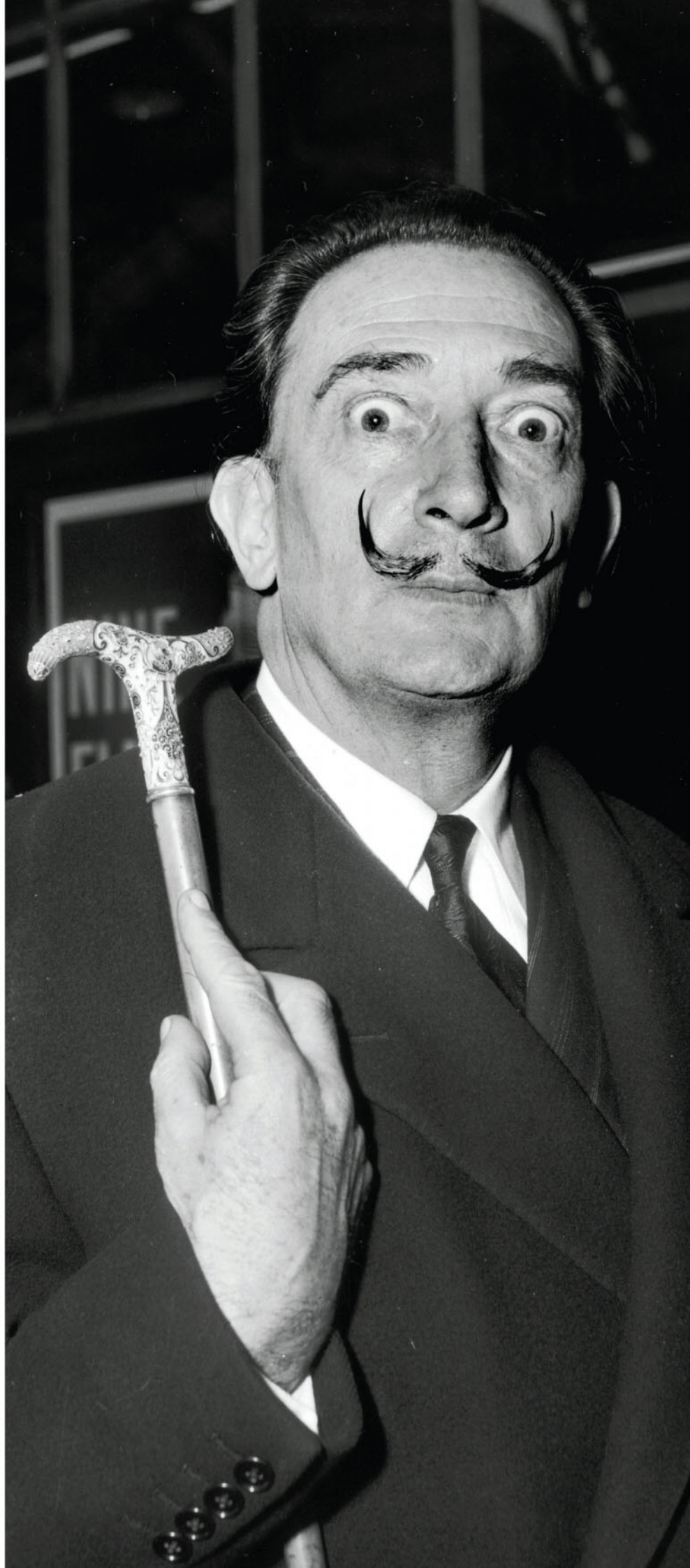
Included alongside Dalí's article in *Minotaure* were reproductions of two of his paintings, namely *The Spectre of Sex Appeal* and *The Enigma of William Tell*.<sup>3</sup> The former is by far the most famous, and shows a tiny Dalí dressed in the blue sailor-suit of his early childhood, staring up at a bizarre and gigantic figure representing a headless (or is it?) naked female body, which appears to have been put together from various rotting and deformed limbs, all held together by big wooden crutches and bits of old cloth. The figure's breasts consist of two lumpy sacks of grain, another of which serves as the figure's abdomen. The general interpretation of the painting is that it represents Dalí's complex feelings about female sexuality; he seems to desire the body which he also simultaneously finds disgusting, a possible legacy of his father's misguided attempt to scare Dalí off from visiting brothels by leaving a book filled with pictures of rotting, syphilitic genitalia around the family home during the artist's adolescence.<sup>4</sup> There is another thing worth noticing



about this 'spectral' woman in the painting, though – namely, the fact that she appears to be surprisingly... well, edible. You could rip open her sack-breasts and scoff the grain from them; her left leg alone could feed a family of four for a whole week. This is not just my own stomach talking; in 1933, Dalí had published another *Minotaure* essay, entitled 'On the Terrifying and Edible Beauty of Art Nouveau Architecture', in which he praised the swirls and curls, the bobbles and bumps, which had been placed on their buildings by architects who had worked in this style, like the Frenchman Hector Guimard, designer of the elaborate, organic-looking entrances to the Paris Métro stations. Dalí was annoyed by the way that some contemporary critics had criticised such edifices by comparing them to cakes with too much icing-sugar squeezed on top as decoration. What was wrong with buildings that resembled cakes, Dalí wanted to know? Why shouldn't a person desire to eat his own house? Declaring grandly that, in the future, "Beauty will be edible or not at all!" Dalí then reproduced some photos of Guimard's Métro-entrances, with captions saying things like "Eat me!" and "Eat me too!" placed by them.

I don't think that Dalí went so far as to actually suck on any cornices himself, but his theorising about the idea certainly left plenty to digest. Obsessed with Freudian notions about the so-called oral stage of infant-development, wherein babies try to stick anything they can get their hands on into their mouths hoping thereby to recreate the satisfaction given them by the maternal teat, Dalí theorised that art nouveau architecture was actually an occult emanation from the hidden dream-lives of people like Guimard. Secretly, the constructions of such architects reflected their repressed quasi-sexual childhood fantasies about eating not only bricks and masonry but inappropriate matter of any kind – indeed, he even went so far as to call art nouveau architecture "glaring ornamental coprophagia", and implied that you could psychoanalyse its creators through their work. For instance, Dalí noticed that the lamps at the Métro entrances looked a bit like female praying mantises – which, of course, devour their male lovers after sex in captivity – meaning that Guimard should really go and seek the couch of Dr Freud immediately.<sup>5</sup>

To Dalí, then, art nouveau architecture was profoundly haunted; cake-like buildings were like visible concrete ghosts and spectres, solid manifestations of their designers' hidden desires. Following this logic, if you looked carefully at any city, then you would soon be able to start spotting the ghosts of people's repressed sexuality everywhere within the built environment. Sure, sometimes a cigar really is just a cigar – but what about a large, straight edifice like, say, the Luxor Obelisk standing in the Place de la Concorde? That couldn't *really* have been meant to stand in for something else, could it? Surprisingly, Dalí was actually pre-empted in such speculations by certain dirty-minded 19<sup>th</sup>-century artists like Jules Breton, who suggested that a giant gloved female hand be constructed from stone

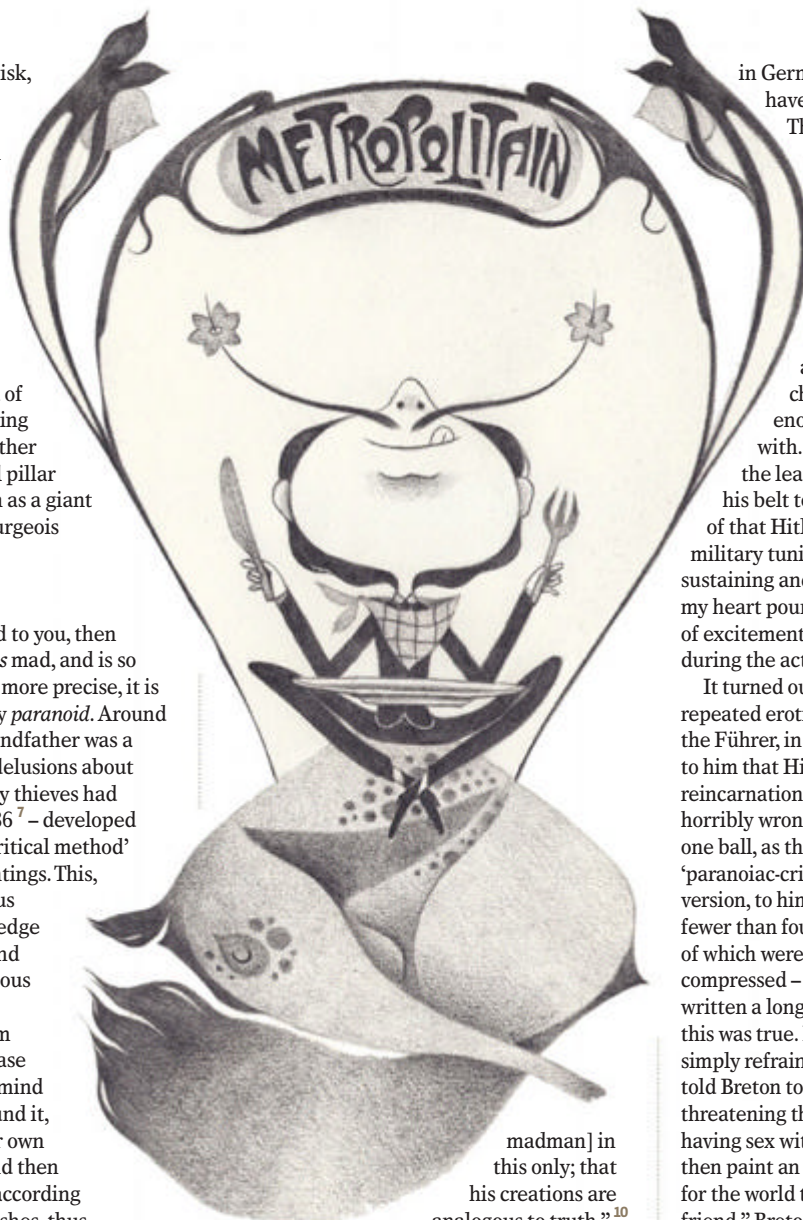


and placed around the obelisk, gripping it in a suggestive fashion. A large stone ball representing the statesman Léon Gambetta's fêted hot-air balloon escape from Paris during the Franco-Prussian War, meanwhile, was identified as being an unconscious representation of a giant testicle by some French artists, and the idea floated of completing the set by building the lonely gonad a twin brother and then erecting a vertical pillar of some kind between them as a giant 'up yours!' to prevailing bourgeois sensibilities.<sup>6</sup>

### THE FAT FUHRER

If this all sounds rather mad to you, then there's a reason for that: it is mad, and is so by specific design. Or, to be more precise, it is not simply mad, but actively *paranoid*. Around 1930-1932, Dalí – whose grandfather was a genuine paranoiac, whose delusions about being followed by imaginary thieves had driven him to suicide in 1886<sup>7</sup> – developed his celebrated 'paranoiac-critical method' of generating ideas for paintings. This, Dalí said, was a spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the interpretive and critical association of delirious phenomena.<sup>8</sup> Basically, it involved fusing Freudianism with alchemy in order to erase the distance between your mind and the physical world around it, putting some aspect of your own psyche into inert matter, and then reinterpreting this matter according to your own unconscious wishes, thus refashioning reality itself. This process has aptly been described as "a form of divination applied to art", and as a systematised way of "seeing multiple images in one object or scene".<sup>9</sup> There are real affinities between this process and the idea of simulacra – Dalí was obsessed with seeing figures and faces in nature which were not really there, and was constantly painting optical illusions which force the viewer to become a little paranoid too, when they see them. For instance, the sack-breasted giantess in *The Spectre of Sex Appeal* seems at first glance to have no head – until you examine closely the seaside cliffs behind her, when a hidden face suddenly appears to emerge from amongst the rocks. Is it *really* there, or are you just turning paranoid, making connections between things that are not really linked?

Famously, Dalí declared (repeatedly) that: "The only difference between myself and a madman is that I am not mad!" In appropriating paranoid thinking in his art, perhaps he was hoping to ward off any of the actual mental illness that ran in the family; or, then again, perhaps he was merely imitating the teachings of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century occultist Eliphas Lévi, a real influence on Surrealism, who had written that: "The man of genius differs from the dreamer and the fool [or



madman] in this only; that his creations are analogous to truth."<sup>10</sup>

Dalí certainly thought that he was a genius – so maybe his dreams were indeed analogous to some kind of truth, no matter how weird they were.

Recently, Dalí had been having repeated dreams about Adolf Hitler, Germany's new leader. He makes reference to them in his essay about obese ghosts, when, describing an image of his childhood nurse taken from *The Enigma of William Tell*, he speaks of her "Hitlerian" back being "soft and tender" – look closely, and you'll see it actually has a bite-mark in it. The full truth about these dreams involving Hitler and his nurse only came to light when André Breton, the so-called Pope of Surrealism, subjected Dalí to a kind of kangaroo-court trial in 1934, to determine whether he could remain a part of the movement. The problem was that Dalí, under the influence of his dreams, had recently been glorifying Hitler and fascism in public, seemingly trying to deliberately offend the left-wing sensibilities of Breton and his chums by making extremely reactionary statements, such as that his favourite train-crashes were those in which the poor proles in third-class suffered the worst injuries.<sup>11</sup> Breton demanded to know – was Dalí a Nazi? Not quite...

As Dalí quite accurately said, had he lived

in Germany, his views would actually have landed him in a death camp.

The thing that Dalí liked most about Hitler, he declared, was the plump edibility of his lovely fat back and the way that this was emphasised by his tight brown-shirt uniform, something that gave him "a delicious gustatory thrill". Like certain art nouveau architecture, Dalí explained, chubby Adolf looked good enough to eat – or to have sex with. "Whenever I started to paint the leather strap that crossed from his belt to his shoulder, the softness of that Hitler flesh packed under his military tunic transported me into a sustaining and Wagnerian ecstasy that set my heart pounding, an extremely rare state of excitement that I did not even experience during the act of love," he later wrote.

It turned out that Dalí had been having repeated erotic and prophetic dreams about the Führer, in which it was mystically revealed to him that Hitler was in fact some kind of reincarnation of his childhood nurse, gone horribly wrong. Rather than having only one ball, as the wartime song implied, Dalí's 'paranoiac-critical' version of Hitler (the true version, to him) had instead been born with no fewer than four testicles and six foreskins, all of which were "evil-smelling" and abnormally compressed – bad karma indeed. Dalí had even written a long manifesto, 'proving' that all this was true. Breton asked Dalí if he couldn't simply refrain from painting his dreams. Dalí told Breton to be careful what he wished for, threatening that he might well dream about having sex with *him* that night instead, and then paint an explicit picture of the event for the world to see. "I wouldn't advise it, my friend," Breton responded, coolly.<sup>12</sup>

### FIGHT THE PHANTOM FLAB

For Dalí, there was a distinct difference between ghosts and spectres, as he explained in his *Minotaure* essay. The paranoiac Hitler was definitely a ghost; ghosts were fleshy and substantial in a horrible way, and stood for his own fear of sexual desire – strip off Hitler's top and all "the terrifying fat of the flesh" would come flopping out, as "the human libido makes distress anthropomorphic" and "transforms metaphysical distress into concrete fat", apparently. Fat Hitler, then, symbolised Dalí's fear of intercourse. In contrast to this, however, were spectres, like the rotting woman on the beach in *The Spectre of Sex Appeal*. Rotting women, thought Dalí, were good – as their decomposition<sup>13</sup> meant that their bodies could be taken apart and then fitted back together again in new and surprising ways for one's own imaginative pleasure. He is quite clear about this – in the future, he proclaims, "sex-appeal will be spectral" and "the spectral woman will be the woman who can be dismantled." Using his paranoiac-critical faculties, Dalí claimed to have foreseen the coming of the first-ever spectral woman, the actress Mae West, back in 1928, in particular her "round, salivary muscles, terribly gluey with biological



afterthoughts”, by which he meant her drool-inducing large breasts, upon which initially firm foundations he seems to imply she built her entire career.

A late starter in Hollywood terms, pushing 40 by the time she got her first contract in 1932, West was already starting to ‘rot’ a little when she landed her first film role, and as such was one of Dalí’s ideal spectral women, as his 1934/5 collage *Mae West’s Face Which May be Used as a Surrealist Apartment* seemed to imply. Here, West is reduced down to the individual components of her face – her lips are a couch, her hair curtains, her eyes paintings on the wall, etc – creating a giant paranoid simulacrum for some fortunate fan of hers to live inside forever. A literal ‘objectifier of women’, Dalí would no doubt have loved the fact that, ultimately, ‘Mae Wests’ came to be a popular slang-term for ‘breasts’ and that, during WWII, Allied air-crews took to calling their inflatable life-saver jackets after her too, due to their pneumatic nature.<sup>14</sup> Reducing a woman to her component assets like this was exactly the kind of thing the self-styled ‘Great Masturbator’ desired.

According to Dalí, who may not have been a regular reader of *Spare Rib* magazine, “the body that can be dismantled” was the natural “aspiration... of female exhibitionism,” as it would allow tomorrow’s rotting, edible, spectral woman “to show each part [of her body] separately,” something that would soon be made possible by the perverse refinement of aerodynamic costumes and corsets, as well as something Dalí called “irrational gymnastics”. Even better, with the march of technology, “new and uncomfortable [artificial] anatomical parts” will be invented for women to attach to their

frames, with “false-breasts, extremely soft and well-moulded, though slightly drooping and growing out of the [woman’s] back” becoming “indispensable city-wear”, whilst special “vibratory metallic fibres on hats” will somehow act to provoke spectral smiles in their wearers. Even obese ghosts like Hitler’s unacknowledged psychic twin Napoleon Bonaparte, whose tight trousers keep in his fat legs much as Hitler’s shirt conceals his fat back, will be redeemed; with his famous bicorn hat and podgy hips constituting distinct and iconic individual components of his body, exactly equivalent to Mae West’s breasts, says Dalí, Napoleon’s ghost too will one day be able to be dismantled and rearranged, which will finally allow the artist to eat the great man’s delicious-looking fat-restraining pants.

Anyone wanting to see what such spectres would actually look like in real life, incidentally, are advised to look at some disturbing artworks made by the German Surrealist Hans Bellmer in 1936 under the collective title of *The Dolls*; Bellmer crafted some life-size ball-jointed female wooden mannequins and then joined them together in weird ways, so that they might have four legs but no arms or head, for instance, and then photographed himself perverting at them sinisterly from behind trees in a forest. His drawing *Children, the Spring Games*, from around that same time is just as odd – severed female breasts and bums are joined together with elaborate mechanical devices in order to create the kind of absurd contraptions Heath Robinson might have imagined, had he been on the Sex-Offenders’ Register.<sup>15</sup> Surrealists were now seeing dismembered Dalinian spectres everywhere, it seemed – the Spaniard had turned them all paranoid!

What would be the ultimate effect of

swapping the former plague of hideously obese ghosts for a new wave of easily-dismantled edible spectres, though? Only good could come of it, Dalí assured his readers. By causing fat people and their ghosts to be “flayed alive” into their component parts and then reassembled, says Dalí, they will all instantly gain the “extra-rapid luminosity of spectral sex-appeal” and the previously “monumental prosaicness” of the entire world around us – including even such boring everyday objects as ironing-boards and large automobiles – will consequently become “ghostly [surely spectral?] and serene”. Someone should tell Rosemary Conley. **FT**

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**SD TUCKER** is an FT regular, whose books are *Paranormal Merseyside*, *Terror of the Tokoloshe* and (forthcoming) *The Hidden-Folk*. Currently working on a book about Britain’s maddest eccentrics, he would doubtless make a very substantial ghost himself.

## NOTES

- 1 Will Self, *How the Dead Live*, 2000, Bloomsbury, p.179
- 2 The article in question is most easily accessed in André Breton, *Anthology of Black Humour*, 2009, Telegram, pp383-386 (translated by Breton’s biographer, Mark Polizzotti). All quotations from Dalí’s essay are taken from here.
- 3 Not to be confused with a controversial 1933 painting of that exact same name showing a half-naked cannibalistic Lenin supporting his giant elongated sausage-buttock in a handy crutch. The *Minotaure* version of *The Enigma* is now lost, but was part of a series of very similar paintings by Dalí – *The Spectre and the Ghost* being one particularly comparable example that is easily available to view online.
- 4 Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, Faber & Faber, 1998, p74
- 5 Gibson, 1998, pp317-319; Katharine Conley, *Surrealist Ghostliness*, 2013, University of Nebraska Press, pp82-84
- 6 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phallic\\_architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phallic_architecture) (citing Thomas Mical, *Surrealism and Architecture*, 2005, Taylor & Francis, p.200)
- 7 Gibson, 1998, p.10
- 8 Dalí cited in Breton, 2009, p.380
- 9 Nadia Choucha, *Surrealism and the Occult*, 2010, Mandrake of Oxford, p60
- 10 Lévi cited in Choucha, 2010, p.68
- 11 Gibson, 1998, p.320
- 12 All info/quotes re: Dalí, Hitler, edible nurse-maids and Breton compiled from Gibson, 1998, p322; Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton*, 2009, Black Widow Press, pp351-355; Robert Descharnes & Gilles Néret, *Salvador Dalí*, 1999, Taschen, p104
- 13 Think about that word in its literal pictorial sense, too...
- 14 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mae\\_West](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mae_West)
- 15 Michael Robinson, *Surrealism*, 2005, Flame Tree Publishing, pp332-335.



# THE BLACK BALL

In 1975 an enigmatic object was found in west Ukraine - the so-called Black Ball. Investigations in Russian scientific institutions have revealed that the age of the Ball is estimated at a few million years. At the core of this sphere is a substance that allegedly possesses the property of antigravity. The late **VLADIMIR RUBTSOV** wondered whether this enigma wrapped in a mystery might be the long-hoped for "indubitable extraterrestrial artefact".

**S**cientists engaged in SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) studies usually pay little attention to claims about traces of ancient extraterrestrial visitations - or palæovisits - to this planet. As a rule, they are inclined to consider the palæovisit problem as imaginary, a dubious field of amateurish interest.

This rejection of the subject (or 'damning' in Charles Fort's sense) seems somewhat strange since, at present, only a few scholars doubt the idea of a multitude of inhabited worlds and the possibility of interstellar travel. Taking into consideration the estimated age of our galaxy - somewhere between 10 and 13 thousand millions years - there is little room for a denial, on principle, of the idea of palæovisitation. Still, the subject remains damned.

When some of the most daring SETI specialists - such as the late Carl Sagan and the SETI pioneer Frank Drake - ventured to discuss the question, they concluded that the only acceptable evidence of a palæovisit would be an "indubitable extraterrestrial artefact" (ETA). Therefore it makes sense to search for such artefacts - or at least to be more attentive to the discovery of anomalies

## THE BLACK BALL WAS FOUND IN 1975 IN A QUARRY IN WEST UKRAINE

in terrestrial strata that defy current rational explanations.

### NOT OF THIS EARTH

What is an 'extraterrestrial artefact'? To put it simply, it is *an object made by extraterrestrials*. Naturally, any search requires some theoretical model of the object to be found or to be searched for. Ideally, a model of an 'abstract ETA' would



be useless for a real search; even a model of a 'specific artefact' – an extraterrestrial computer, perhaps – would restrict the field of our vision and probably cause us to overlook other possible objects (say, extraterrestrial utensils). Similarly, our presumptions about what an ET computer, or ET cutlery, might look like may have little in common with any actuality.

The first criterion of any likely ETA worthy of further examination has to be its strangeness. The Black Ball that we will consider here certainly attracted the attention of researchers because it was very strange. For a start, its shape is too regular for a natural object, and its probable age is too great for it to have been made by humans.

It was investigated on the initiative of three scientists: Inna Petrovskaya (Institute for Space Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Dmitry Menkov (Moscow Physical Engineering Institute), and Valentin Fomenko, a senior research fellow at the Soyuz Scientific and Industrial Association.

The Black Ball was found in 1975 in a clay quarry in west Ukraine, at a depth of about 8m (26ft). This clay layer has been dated geologically to be around 10 million years old. It was discovered by an excavator, who noticed its unusually regular shape. When he struck it against the edge of a bucket, the Ball did not split, but a piece broke away, exposing a black glass-like surface. The worker took the thing home and gave it to his son, a schoolboy. Later a schoolteacher took it to the local museum of regional studies. For some years it was kept at the museum, but then it was taken away by the teacher's son, Boris Naumenko, who worked at the Earth Physics Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

Subsequently, some Moscow parapsychologists laid hands on the Ball – literally. They claimed that it had what they called 'bioenergy' from a field generated by highly advanced extraterrestrial civilisations in outer space. The parapsychologists said that they felt this 'energy' when they held



LEFT: Valentin Fomenko, one of the earliest Russian scientists to examine the Black Ball.

the Ball in their hands. Dr Menkov borrowed the Ball from Naumenko and passed it to Dr Fomenko, who formulated a very detailed and sophisticated programme to study the unusual object by scientific methods.

### THE FACE OF THE BALL

We can get an initial impression of the Ball from two early photographs. Its longer axis measured 87.5mm and the midsection diameter (the largest section perpendicular to the axis) 84.7mm. The Ball weighed 617 grams; its true volume (determined from the water displacement) was 320cc; and its average density  $1.9\text{g/cm}^3$ . This latter figure is much less than the usual density of glass, which ranges from  $2.3\text{g/cm}^3$  for light crown glass to  $6.6\text{g/cm}^3$  for super-dense flint glass. It is also less than the density of quartz ( $2.3\text{g/cm}^3$ ) and obsidian ( $2.2\text{--}2.3\text{g/cm}^3$ ).

By the time of the investigation, two thirds of the Ball's surface were covered with a relatively soft layer of a yellow-grey substance, probably the product of leaching. This layer was 1.5mm thick. It is known that window glass leaches at a rate of around  $0.000003\text{mm}$  per year. If the Ball's surface was anything like window glass, it would have

taken 500,000 years to form a layer this thick. However, the rate of leaching is not constant because, as the thickness of the leached layer increases, the rate inevitably slows down. This is caused when the leaching agents – water or solutions of acids and alkalis – can no longer easily reach the glass's surface. Therefore, 500,000 years are just a lower limit of the Ball's real age: it could be much older.

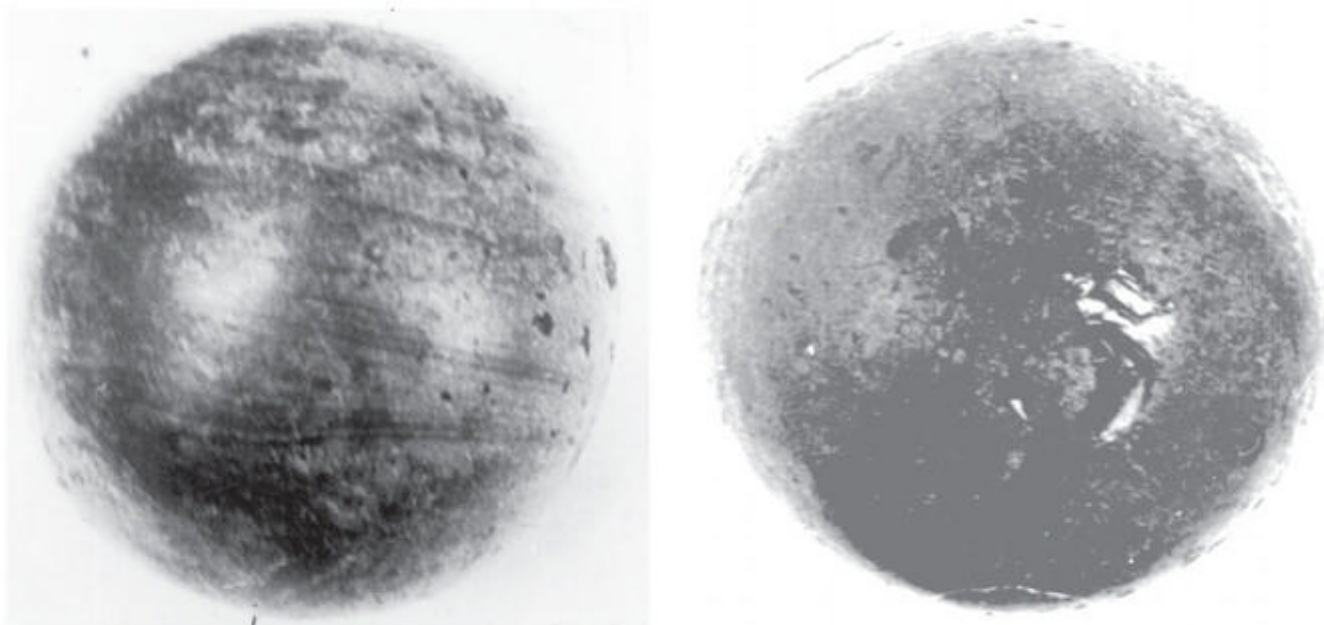
### A CORE WITH A NEGATIVE MASS?

An X-ray study of the Ball made by Dr Fomenko showed that there was an inner core, shaped like a half an egg. The volume of this core was  $80\text{cm}^3$ , comprising 25 per cent of the total volume of the Ball.

To determine densities of the Ball and core, Dr Fomenko used a method that was based on information about the location of the Ball's centre of gravity and equations for weights and torques (or moments) of the Ball, shell ( $q_s$ ), and core ( $q_c$ ). From these he obtained the results:  $q_s = 4.1\text{g/cm}^3$ ;  $q_c = -4.6\text{g/cm}^3$ . This implied that the mass of the Ball's shell was 980g, and that of the core was minus 363g. This result is very strange indeed. To improve accuracy of this measurement, it was repeated three times, but it repeated the conclusion that the density of the Ball's core seems to be a substance with a *negative* mass. To check this result and to determine an experimental error of the Ball's centre of gravity location that could have eliminated this paradox, Dr Fomenko ran a computer simulation of the situation. It was found, however, that the probability of such an error was negligible.

### TRACES OF INTELLIGENCE?

Close inspection of the Ball's contour, approximated by arcs, showed that each of these arcs was a multiple of  $15^\circ$ ; i.e. equal to the 24th part of a complete circle. It is neither consistent with the common division



ABOVE: Two early photographs of the Black Ball.

of the circle into 360°; nor to the division of it into 32 points, accepted as standard in navigation; nor to the 16 points, accepted in meteorology. This observation suggests that the Ball's designer – if there was one – may have used the number 24 as the base of his system of numbers as well as of his system of measurements. In the latter, the unit of angular measurement – one BAU = the Ball's Angular Unit – was equal to 15°, or the 24th part of a complete circle. True, arcs that are multiples of some fractions of a circle occur both in animate nature (e.g. flowers, fruits, star-fish, etc.) and the inanimate (e.g. crystals). Therefore, this fact alone cannot be considered as a proof of the Ball's artificial origin.

Consequently, Dr Fomenko decided to check whether the base-24 system of numbers was also characteristic of the Ball's linear dimensions. He took, as a unit of length (BLU, the Ball's Linear Unit), the 24th part of the Ball's greater axis – i.e. 3.65mm. He discovered that all the radii of the arcs, the distances between their centres, as well as the core's dimensions, were all multiples of one BLU (3.65mm). It is hardly probable that all these figures were multiples of the same linear unit purely by chance.

Studying tables of the linear units used at different times by different investigators, Dr Fomenko and his colleagues could not find units equal to 87.5mm or to 3.65mm. Besides, their number systems were based on 2, 5, 10, 12, 20, 40 and 60 – but not on 24. This base-24 system may, in fact, be considered as more perfect than the one we commonly use, in which its base 10 is divisible only by 2 and 5. In contrast, base-24 has six divisors: 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 12, which are very useful for calculations.

So, according to Dr Fomenko and his colleagues, the Ball's smooth surface, its regular form, as well as the fact that the curvature radii, distances between the arcs' centres, and the core's dimensions are all multiples of the same unit (3.65mm) – and which suggests that the Ball was *purposefully* designed. As this number system is foreign to terrestrial cultures (that we know of), it suggests – with some ambiguity – that the Ball was made on another planet (or at least by extraterrestrial beings).

### A DEPOSITORY OF ANTIMATTER?

Assuming that the 'negative mass' result is trustworthy, we might speculate that the Ball is a repository of antimatter, perhaps even used to power extraterrestrial machinery. It is still unknown whether antimatter has the property of antigravity, but such a supposition seems logical.

Given the disastrous prospect of the two coming into direct contact, how was this antimatter isolated from normal matter? Dr Fomenko gave special attention to the distinct dark outline at the core edges (see photos on opposite page). Could this boundary be a very thin layer of an isolating material, such as a *neutrid*? This hypothetical substance, composed of nothing but neutrons, supposedly occurs in neutron stars (pulsars). Since neutrons can annihilate only when colliding with antineutrons and antiprotons,

and the latter are surrounded by positron ('anti-electron') shells, a *neutrid* material would effectively protect antimatter from annihilation.

Even if this protective *neutrid* shell were just one neutron thick, its weight would be 4.2kg, which exceeds the whole weight of the Ball. However, to be impenetrable by electrons and positrons, it is not necessary for the *neutrid* shell to be *solid*. A 'net' with a 'mesh' of the order of the positron diameter would be enough. The weight of such a net would not exceed 0.5kg.

Thus, a number of the Ball's features testify that its designers used engineering methods that seem rational and understandable from our present-day knowledge. If additional calculations confirm the 'negative mass' result, we will probably be able to conclude that the Black Ball is the first extraterrestrial artefact whose nature and origin may be considered as proven. It only remains to hope that nobody will try to prove this by another method: attempting to open the supposed antimatter depository.

### A STRANGE POSTSCRIPT

Unfortunately, Dr Fomenko could neither confirm the 'negative mass' result with another method, nor complete his investigation. A week after his investigation began he had to return the Ball to Boris

Naumenko at the latter's urgent demand. But the story does not end there.

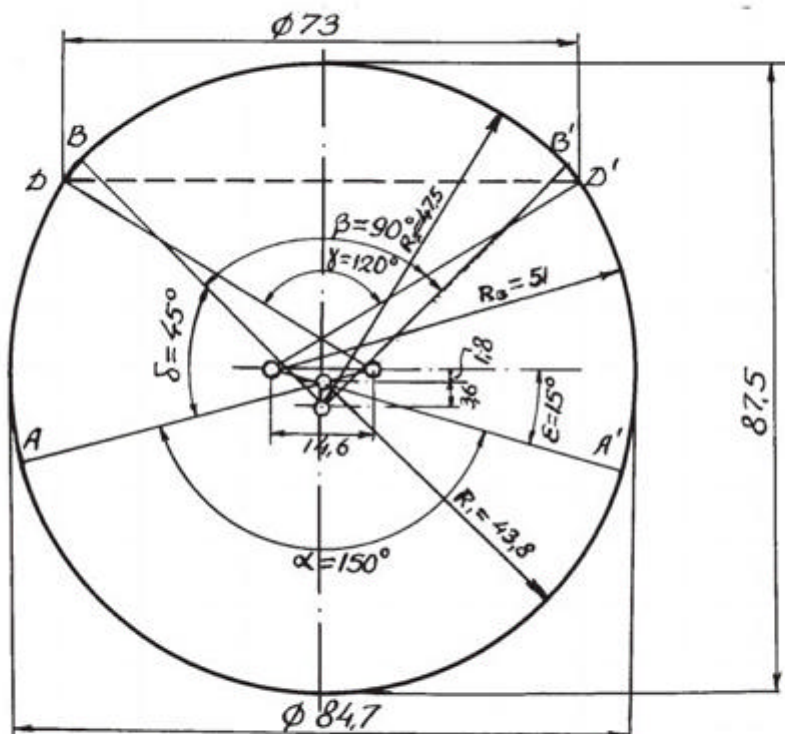
Several years later, one of the largest Russian newspapers – *Izvestiya* – published a long article, entitled 'A Mysterious Ball in the Lubianka Cellars', authored by Yuri Kholodny, a Ph.D. in psychology. According to Dr Kholodny, in February 1981, two leading officials of the scientific and technical department of the Committee for State Security (the almighty KGB) were summoned to the Kremlin, to the no-less-almighty Military-Industrial Commission (MIC) of the USSR Council of Ministers.

There, they were informed about the results of the investigations of Dr Fomenko (whom Dr Kholodny designated just as 'F'). The Commission asked the KGB authorities to find out who was holding the Ball and to withdraw it immediately. At that time, the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was approaching and, therefore, the dangerous substance inside the Ball had to be 'neutralised' as soon as possible. A few days later the MIC sent to the KGB Headquarters a copy of Dr Fomenko's research report.

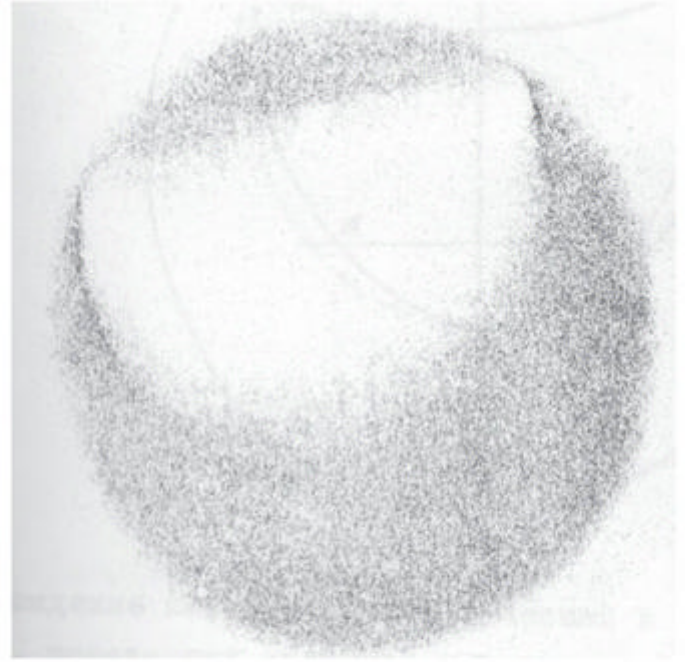
The KGB set up a special working group to solve this question. One of its participants was Dr Kholodny, the author of the newspaper article. This team were soon on the trail of a Moscow parapsychologist – they called 'D' – who had apparently obtained the Ball from its owner, Boris Naumenko. Mr D was using the Ball as the active element of a 'biological field generator' that, he claimed, could influence living beings with beneficial (or possibly not-so-beneficial) effect.

The KGB group confiscated this 'generator' from Mr D and disassembled it, discovering a brown sphere inside. Over two months they investigated this object with great thoroughness. Their main conclusions

## THE KGB SET UP A SPECIAL GROUP TO STUDY THE BALL



ABOVE: Close inspection of the Ball's contour, approximated by arcs, showed that each of these arcs was a multiple of 15 degrees; i.e. equal to the 24th part of a complete circle.



ABOVE: An X-ray study made by Dr Fomenko showed that within the Ball was an inner core, shaped like a half of an egg, with a dark outline at its edges.

were: the black (or rather brown) sphere is composed of glass (but unusual glass, having practically no sodium and a great deal of strontium in its composition); the outer surface of the Ball had microscopic cracks, through which water could percolate into it, so it was not even waterproof, let alone airtight; for this reason it could not contain antimatter; and the 'negative mass' result was due to a 10 per cent error in detecting coordinates of the Ball's centre of gravity.

As for the age of the Ball, Dr Kholodny was somewhat vague: "By radiocarbon dating, specialists from the Geological Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences determined that, although the age of the 'Ball' was not 10 million years, it was nonetheless a centuries-old antique, being, most likely, of artificial origin."

Judging from the information in the *Izvestia* article, the Ball could have been broken during the investigation. This is not directly stated, but the author mentions that *fragments* were shown to Faina Petryakova, a prominent Ukrainian specialist in history of glass. Dr Petryakova concluded that the Ball was a *gallo*, that is a primitive "device" for ironing the sleeves of shirts and blouses that had been in use in the Ukraine in 18th and 19th centuries. Usually, *gallos* were manufactured from waste glass that accumulated in the glass furnace after it had worked continuously for several days.

Since Mr D insisted that the Ball be returned to him, the KGB specialists made a copy of it and installed it into the 'biogenerator'. When returned to Mr D., the device did not arouse any suspicion on his part. It continued working, still emitting the 'biological field'.

Such were the contents of Dr Kholodny's article. Although it looked as if everything was said and done, some points remained unexplained compelling Dr Fomenko to write the following letter to Leonid Mlechin, the editor of *Izvestiya*:

"Dear Mr Mlechin,

"In your newspaper of September 24, this year, you published the article 'A Mysterious Ball in the Lubianka Cellars' by Yury Kholodny, a research worker of a KGB Scientific-Research Institute, who had taken part in an investigation of the so-called 'Black Ball'. He describes an attempt by the KGB to verify the hypothesis that the Black Ball is a container of antimatter.

"I, Valentin Nikolayevich Fomenko, am the author of the report on the results of preliminary study of the Black Ball that is referred to in that paper. That is why I would like to meet Dr Kholodny to discuss with him some questions dealing with this matter.

"As far back as 1981, I talked with a co-worker of Mr Deev, who had encapsulated the Black Ball into a block of epoxy resin. It would certainly be impossible to free the Ball from the resin. It seems, therefore, that not only had the KGB palmed off a forged "gallo" on Mr Deev [referred to in the article by Yury Kholodny as 'D'], but also Mr Deev had palmed off a copy of his generator to the KGB. The following points in Dr Kholodny's article seem to confirm this assumption:

"[Kholodny] writes that the colour of the ball, found in the 'device', was *brown*. But the real Black Ball consisted of a black glass-like substance, covered with a yellow-grey leached layer. There were no brown spots on it at all. Kholodny describes its fragments as *bottle-green* in colour; but in fact, the colour of the Ball's shell also was *deep black*. The shell was opaque even to the light of a powerful halogen lamp. Besides, the Black Ball had no microscopic cracks in its shell. Inside the Black Ball there was not a void, but a core, whose density was four times less than that of the Ball's shell. This was established by an X-ray study of the Ball. By the way, in the process of our investigation of the Black Ball, we also considered – and rejected – the hypothesis that it was a *gallo*.

"The only possible conclusion is that the KGB specialists investigated a real *gallo* (with a void inside it), but not the real Black Ball.

"There are, in the article, some strange assertions as well. In particular, according to it, 'by radiocarbon dating, specialists from the Geological Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences determined that, although the age of the Ball was not 10 million years, it was nonetheless a centuries-old antique'. This is absurd, since there cannot be any carbon at all, let alone radiocarbon, in the 'bottle' glass of a *gallo*.

"In this connection, I would like to meet with the author of the paper to discuss the matter in detail. If you cannot give me Dr Kholodny's telephone number, please let him know my own number (attached). Please ask Dr Kholodny to call me at any time that suits him.

"Sincerely yours, Valentin Fomenko, Ph.D."

Since then there has been no reply. This is one enigma that remains a mystery. **FI**

#### NOTE

Further reading and much greater detail can be found in *Investigating the Anomalies: Mysteries from Behind the Former Iron Curtain* (RIAP, 2011); edited by Vladimir Rubtsov. Contributors included Victor Zhuravlev, Yury Morozov, Matest Agrest, Valentin Fomenko, Nikolay Vasilyev, Vladimir Rubtsov, Mikhail Gershtein, Yuly Platov, and Lev Gindilis.

#### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**VLADIMIR RUBTSOV** was a physicist and fortean. A member of the Russian Academy of Cosmonautics, he was the author of *The Tunguska Mystery* (2009) and hundreds of papers on scientific

# The Ghost Hunt

As an all-female remake of *Ghostbusters* is announced, **TEA KRULOS** catches up with Alexandra Holzer, daughter of the man who helped inspire the original movie, to talk about discovering that your father was the most famous ghost hunter in America and honouring his legacy today.

**H**ow many of you know about Hans Holzer?" Alexandra Holzer asks. She's crowded into an elevator with about 15 people at the Chicago Ghost Conference, being held at Carl Schurz High School. The elevator is heading up to the fifth floor for a short investigation of the school's music room, where there are claims of spirits lurking in the corner and tinkering around on the piano.

Her question is greeted with an awkward silence.

"Oh boy," she says, disappointed, and looks at the elevator wall. Later I ask her if she thinks this was just a shy silence.

"Maybe." She answers. "His recognition is mixed and that's not good enough for me. It's got to be higher."

This lack of familiarity is disheartening because if there were ever a Mount Rushmore of "ghost hunters," Alexandra's father – Dr Hans Holzer – would definitely have his hawk-like features chiselled there.

Hans Holzer was born in 1920 in Vienna, Austria. He studied archaeology and history at the University of Vienna, but, with World War II on the horizon, his family determined they would move to New York City in 1938. He went on to study Japanese at Columbia University, although his real interests lay elsewhere. Thanks in part to an uncle who told him ghost stories, Holzer had a passion for the supernatural since he was a young boy, and went on to devote his life to all things 'paranormal'. He wrote more than 120 books on ghosts, UFOs, the afterlife, ESP, witchcraft, and related topics. He also taught parapsychology at the New York Institute of Technology.

"During the Seventies and Eighties, he was the 'ghost man'," Alexandra explains. She says her father's collection of artefacts related to his studies and circle of friends involved in the parapsychological field made living in the Holzer house "like growing up in a living museum". Her mother was also out of the ordinary. An artist and descendent of Catherine the Great, Countess Catherine Buxhoeveden married Holzer shortly before his first book, *Ghost Hunter*, was published in 1964. The countess joined him in his travels and employed her artistic talents on illustrations for his early books. They divorced when Alexandra was 13 years old.

ALEXANDRA HOLZER

## He wrote more than 120 books on ghosts, ESP, witchcraft and the afterlife

Alexandra became aware that her father's interests might be termed "unusual" at an early age, and it was a while before she grew to appreciate them.

"I was about eight years old when I figured out he wasn't normal," she smiles, "because when I started going to school my mother would wrap up my father's books as gifts – books on witches, warlocks, UFOs, the Amityville Horror. The teachers would open up the gifts in the classroom and all the kids' eyes grew, the teachers' mouths dropped,

and I sank down really low in my chair like I wanted to hide. I said 'Oh my God, that's him? No!'"

### Rebel Without a Ghost

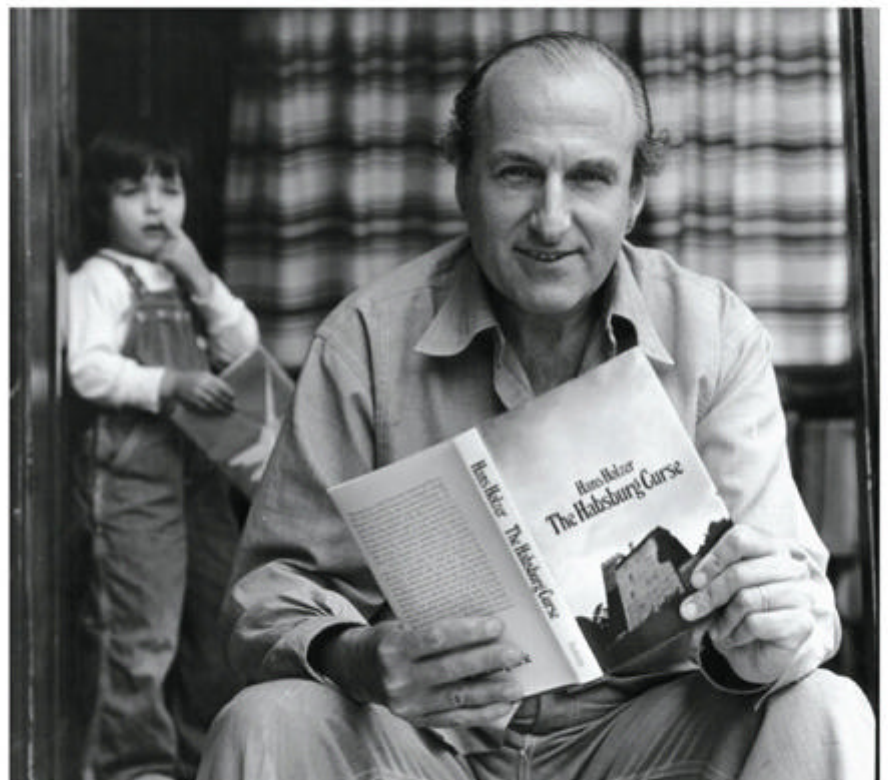
As she grew into a young woman, Alexandra went through a rebellious phase and tried to escape her father's eerie legacy.

"I ran off to art school to get away from my father, because I thought he was weird. I wanted to get away from the paranormal and be with creative people. I really didn't care. I was too young. When you're at a certain age, you don't get what your parent does, even if it's as weird as that. He'd say 'Oh look – I'm on TV!' And I'd say, 'Yeah, that's nice.' I just didn't get it."

Alexandra might not have been getting it, but others were. Holzer became renowned as the foremost US authority on all things related to ghosts. His expertise was used on shows like the classic *In Search Of...* and subsequent television programmes and documentaries dedicated to the paranormal.

In another contribution to pop culture, Dr Holzer helped inspire the beloved horror-comedy *Ghostbusters*. Dan Aykroyd, who wrote and starred in the movie, is on record as a Holzer fan. "I became obsessed with Hans Holzer, the greatest ghost hunter ever," Aykroyd said. "That's when the idea of my film *Ghostbusters* was born."

Holzer's most famous case was the alleged haunting of the Lutz family on Long Island, New York, commonly known as the



# er's Daughter



WENDY SCHREIER

FACING PAGE: Dr Hans Holzer and a young Alexandra photographed in 1975 . ABOVE: Alexandra Holzer today. BELOW: One of Holzer's many bestselling books about ghosts.

Amityville Horror (see FT190:32-37).

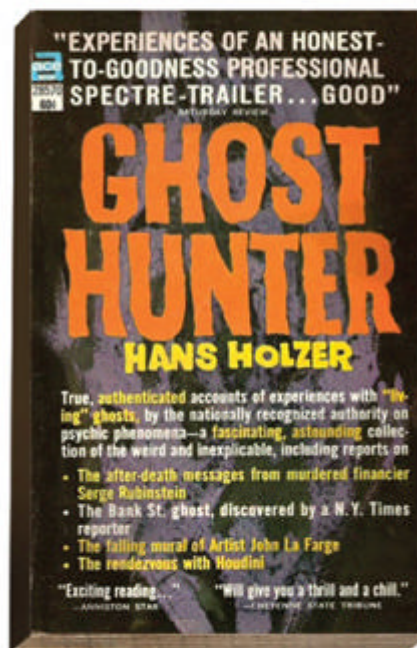
The Lutz family moved into 112 Ocean Avenue in Amityville 13 months after the home was the scene of a gruesome murder of the former tenants, the DeFeo family. On 13 November 1974, 23-year-old Ronald DeFeo Jr, the eldest child, systemically worked his way through the house in the middle of the night, shooting his mother and father and four siblings in their beds. After the Lutz family arrived, they claimed that between December 1975 and January 1976 they were terrorised by entities, and abandoned the house just 28 days after moving in. The incident spawned a bestseller (*The Amityville Horror: A True Story* by Jay Anson, 1977) followed by a string of additional books on the case, Hollywood movies (11 to date, with a 12<sup>th</sup> slated for 2015), and TV documentaries.

Dr Holzer travelled to the house in January 1977, and was joined in his investigation by medium Ethel Johnson Meyers. In addition to conducting interviews and research, Holzer often brought a medium with him on a case. "A scientific investigation must have a well-trained transmedium for communication. It is the only way," he once stated in an interview.

In the Amityville house, Meyers claimed that she had identified the house's angry spirit: Shinnecock Indian Chief Rolling Thunder,

which helped Holzer put together a theory that the house had been built on sacred Native American burial grounds, the cause of the malicious haunting.

The Amityville Historical Society has



refuted claims that the house is built on any such burial grounds, while other researchers who have investigated the case argue that it was an opportunistic hoax contrived by the Lutz family and their lawyer, embellished and exaggerated to help make money from selling a good ghost story.

Dr Holzer wrote both non-fiction (*Murder in Amityville*, 1979) and fiction (*The Amityville Curse*, 1981, and *The Secret of Amityville*, 1985) about the case, as well as other popular non-fiction volumes on the topic of ghosts includes *Ghosts I've Met* (1965) *Hans Holzer's Haunted Houses: A Pictorial Register of the World's Most Interesting Ghost Houses* (1971) and *Great American Ghost Stories* (1990).

## Second Generation

"Probably by my late 20s I started to mature a bit and when I started to see the people he'd have over, I'd think, 'these are really interesting people, they're very spiritual, some are a bit wacky, but there's something to what he does.' But I didn't have a pinnacle moment of understanding who he was until my 30s, where I was like 'OK, I get it.' Then I had my own awakening and epiphany and it just kind of vibed at that point, so I'd say it took almost two decades to get to that point."

Alexandra says that epiphany came when

her aunt passed on.

“At her service, I felt her come over and hug me. My whole body went warm and I’m sitting there crying hysterically because I didn’t like it, I didn’t understand it. I felt she was hugging me because she knew that out of everybody except my mother I was destroyed [by her death]. I knew it was her. I don’t know how to explain it, I just knew. That flipped me.”

Alexandra says the experience helped inspire her to follow both investigating and writing. She wrote a sci fi/fantasy novel, *Lady Ambrosia: Secret Past Revealed* (2007), and a memoir of her family, *Growing Up Haunted: A Ghostly Memoir* (2008).

Hans Holzer died on 26 April 2009. After his death, Alexandra stepped up her active investigations, using the family formula for ghost hunting, which she calls the “Holzer Method.” Alexandra runs her group ‘Hunt With Holzer’ with fellow investigator David Lawson. “We create events with people and give that personal contact and have groups investigate using my father’s method. We learn about other people’s methods and keep it unified; help and learn and move on and document.”

“It’s basically combining science with metaphysics,” Alexandra explains, describing the Holzer Method. “My father had his predecessors and everybody was very scientific, and then he had the mediums and intuitiveness. Although he was a sceptic, he believed if you combined the two, you’d have better results, and that’s when the method was born. It was his brainchild to say we’re going to do it this way and we’re going to do it that way and we’re going to get more data so that we can understand what happens when we die. And not everything is science, and not everything is spiritual – there’s a combination of the two.”

In addition to Hunt with Holzer, Alexandra visualises a documentary or feature film based on her father’s life. She says it’s a longtime goal of hers, one she spoke to her father about. She feels Holzer’s place in history has been forgotten and overshadowed, and hopes such a project will help her father’s legacy live on.

Back at the Carl Schurz High School investigation, her group has moved from the fifth floor music room to a smaller music room filled with rows of keyboards on the fourth floor. An electronic voice phenomenon (EVP) session is taking place. Investigators are asking questions in the dark room, hoping to illicit a response. After a minute of silence, Alexandra addresses the group, telling them that she is still in communication with her father.

“My father comes through when we’re doing things,” she says. “So if anyone wants to ask if Hans Holzer is here, it’s actually pretty normal. I mean it’s a little paradoxical, but feel free to ask him a question.”

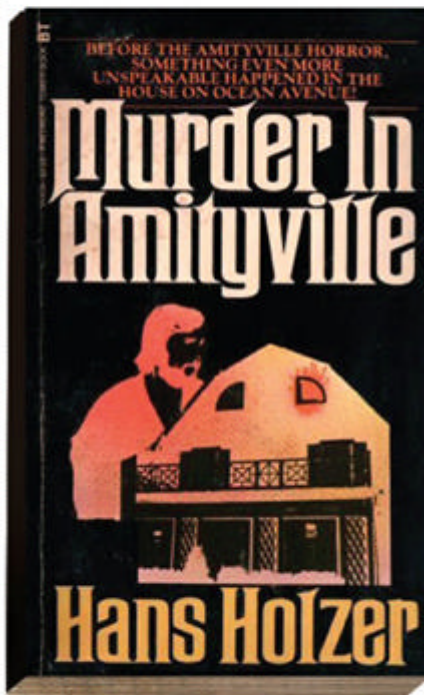
Alexandra is seated near the teacher desk at the head of the classroom. On the desk in front of her is the REM-pod, a device that measures fluctuations in electro-magnetic fields. Triggered lights and sounds on the device is said to be an indicator of a potential ghostly presence.



ABOVE: The Holzer family on the tennis court during a holiday in Austria in the mid-1970s. Left-right: Hans, Alexandra’s older sister Nadine, Catherine, and Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA HOLZER

## Alexandra feels that Hans Holzer’s place in history has been forgotten



“Hans Holzer if you’re here, can you put that green light on?” a participant asks from the darkness.

Silence. The REM-pod light does not turn green.

“You should ask him. He’ll listen to you,” another participant suggests to Alexandra.

“He didn’t listen to me in life!” She laughs. “You think in the afterlife he’s going to listen to me? Really?” The group breaks into laughter in the dark.

“Daddy you want to play with some lights?” Alexandra asks. The REM-pod remains idle.

“Do you feel he follows you around?” someone else asks her.

“He does. He’s a pain.” A second of silence. “Did someone just hum?”

“I heard it!” a participant says. “I heard hmmm from over here.”

The group listens to an audio recorder and hears a ghostly sound they determine is an EVP they’ve captured of a girl saying “daddy.” **FT**

Alexandra Holzer’s website is [alexandraholzer.com](http://alexandraholzer.com)

### Author Biography



TEA KRULOS is a journalist from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is author of *Heroes in the Night* and his new book *Monster Hunters: On the Trail With Ghost Hunters, Bigfooters, Ufologists, and Other*

*Paranormal Investigators* is out June 2015 from Chicago Review Press. He has written previously for FT on the real-life superhero movement and the Human Fly.



A GERRY ANDERSON PRODUCTION

# THUNDERBIRDS™

## Officially Licensed Merchandise Gerry Andersons Classic Thunderbirds

In the run up to this special 50th anniversary celebrating Gerry & Sylvia Anderson's iconic TV programme, Thunderbirds, a range of limited edition collectable licensed Thunderbirds gifts has been launched.

Including a range of limited circulation collectable pins.

- **Doctor Who**
- **Stress Toys**
- **Wallets**
- **Collectables**



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

t: 01279 833215

e: [info@greatbritishcollectables.com](mailto:info@greatbritishcollectables.com)

# THE FIRST FORTEANS

## 12. STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

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

What follows are various brief notes which I could not incorporate into previous instalments of this series, some of which were too short for their own entries or were about people whom I felt knew of Charles Fort but on whom I could find little worth citing. I'm sure there is much more to discover about the first British Forteans; the fan archives are vast and I had no time to explore them fully.

There was no useful list of UK forteans in the early issues of *The Fortean Society Magazine* and *Doubt* and it was no fun trawling for scraps through Thayer's eccentric and cramped layouts, extravagant prose and odd opinions. Worse still was his headache-inducing system for dating issues, adding an extra month to honour Fort. Still, there we see novelist John Cowper Powys among the founders of the Fortean Society (FS), and psychical researchers Harry



Price and Raymond Cass among the members. Here too was Tomas Elsander (whom Thayer ranked with Eric Frank Russell in sending quantity and quality of newsclippings) and Hastings Russell (12<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford), made a Fellow of the FS in 1944. Other 'Named Fellows' included Aldous Huxley, Eric Dingwall, JBS Haldane and Eric Temple Bell (who wrote SF as John Taine), which means they were invited but there is no mention of their acceptance.



**NANDOR FODOR (1895-1964) & HEREWARD CARRINGTON (1880-1958)**  
Psychical researcher Hereward Carrington who co-wrote *Haunted People: The Story of the Poltergeist down the Centuries* (1951) with Nandor Fodor, was an Honorary Founder of the FS. He moved to the US in 1900, joining the American Society for Psychical Research five years later and becoming one of their senior investigators and author of over 100 books in the genre. However, Carrington, while born British,

spent the rest of his life in the USA – like Ivan Sanderson, so I regard both as honorary American forteans.

On the other hand, Fodor – author of the 1934 *Encyclopaedia of Psychic Science* – was born in Hungary, though his most productive years were in Britain and America. After meeting Carrington, he gave up law and journalism, becoming a disciple of Freud, and developing a psychoanalytical approach to mediumship and spiritualism. He was a member of the FS – and like Dingwall, had corresponded with Thayer – and his books on poltergeists and psychical research – which cite cases from Fort – were touted in *Doubt*.

### **HARRY PRICE (1881-1948) & ERIC DINGWALL (1890-1986)**

In 1934, the Council for Psychical Investigation was formed at the University of London to take over Harry Price's National Laboratory of Psychical Research. Established by Price in 1925, the lab pioneered a scientific approach to investigating mediums, ghosts and poltergeists. Fodor wrote approvingly of Price's methods and cautious curiosity, arguing that the field owed him "a greater debt" for making psychical research accessible to the public.

Eric Dingwall was an anthropologist who became a senior investigator for the Society for Psychical Research and, from 1947, catalogued erotica in the British Museum Library. His ground-breaking four-volume *Abnormal Hypnotic Phenomena* (1967-68) is still a standard reference. Mediums would fear Dingwall's unsympathetic investigations and his scepticism only increased with age.

Dingwall, for undiscovered reasons, took exception to Price, resulting in a hostile analysis of Price's investigation of Borley Rectory, and worse, accusing Price of fabricating key evidence. Fodor sprang to Price's defence with a remarkably personal statement, confessing that the



TOP LEFT: Hereward Carrington. TOP RIGHT: Eric Dingwall. ABOVE: Nandor Fodor was a disciple of Freud and pioneered a psychoanalytic approach to psychical research, as illustrated in this article from a 1949 issue of *Mechanix Illustrated*.

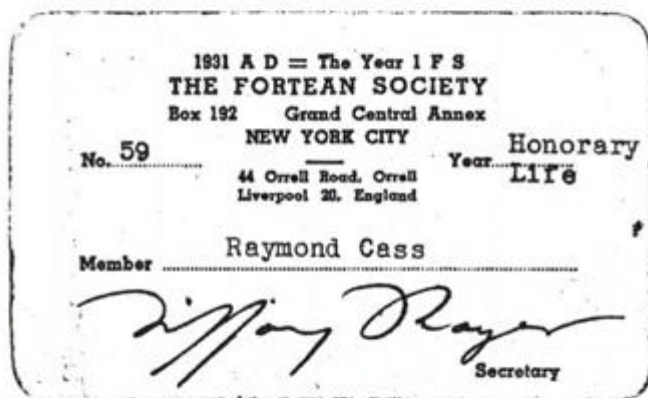
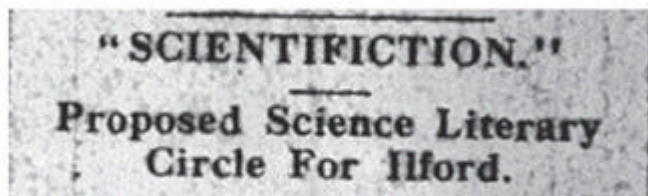
“ferocious intensity” of Price’s critics baffled him and was, itself “pathological and worthy of investigation”.

It is one of fate’s ironies that the libraries of both Dingwall and Price now lie adjacent within the archives of University College.<sup>1</sup> For more on Price see FT116:40-43; for Dingwall, FT:299:44-49, FT300:50-54.

#### RAYMOND CASS (1921-1977)

Cass was one of the leading figures in British research into the Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP). Born in Hull, he was, apparently, interested in paranormal phenomena since, at the age of seven, he believed he heard a male voice call his name from an early radio that was switched off. Later, on joining a local spiritualist group he discovered that an ancestor, Robert Cass (d.1898), “could levitate a heavy table with three men on top to the ceiling”; and in 1773, another ancestor, Molly Cass, was persecuted for her mediumship. At the age of 17, Raymond was told by the famous medium Helen Duncan – the last person to be imprisoned under the British Witchcraft Act of 1735 – that he would develop “voice mediumship”. He kept up his interest in “psychic affairs” until 1945, when his release from a German POW camp required him to find a profession. Interested in acoustics, he established a successful and long-lived business developing hearing aids. It was not until 1971 that Konstantin Raudive’s book *Breakthrough* re-kindled his interest in the electronic mediumship of tape-recorders and radios. By the time he died in 1977, at the young age of 56, his experimentation was studied in Germany, Japan and the USA.

Cass probably became a member of Thayer’s Fortean Society through his interest in science fiction around 1930. Douglas Mayer – then a young student in Leeds – had a letter published in *Wonder Stories*



## CASS WAS TOLD BY MEDIUM HELEN DUNCAN - THE LAST PERSON TO BE IMPRISONED UNDER THE 1735 BRITISH WITCHCRAFT ACT - THAT HE WOULD DEVELOP “VOICE MEDIUMSHIP”.

proclaiming his formation of the Institute of Scientific Research, one of the first regional SF fan groups which he describes as “a small English science society” also interested in radio research. In 1935, Mayer was rewarded by the American Science Fiction League with an affiliation. This stimulated a flurry of proposals to establish local SF groups across the UK, including Belfast, Nuneaton, Glasgow, Manchester and Barnsley. Fan historian Rob Hansen notes that one of these start-ups was by a “Raymond A Cass of Hull”. It is highly likely, then, that Cass learned of Fort through the fan community and the proselytising of Eric Frank Russell in the early 1940s.

#### WALTER GILLINGS (1912-1979)

Walter was crucial in providing the initial environment in which UK SF fandom took root, and within which the UK forteans flourished. Gillings lived in Ilford, on the eastern edge of London; he was 18 and training to be a reporter on *The Ilford Recorder*. In his school days, he had attempted his own SF magazine. It was handwritten, with ink illustrations to his own stories and “a circulation of ten” but it instilled in him a flair for writing and editing.

As SF historian Rob Hansen notes, it was *Wonder Stories* that set things in motion. In 1930,

Gillings noticed a letter in the April issue of *Wonder Stories*, from another resident of Ilford, Len Kippin, an amateur radio enthusiast. As a commercial traveller in boroughs of east London, Kippin acquired SF magazines wherever he found them; at that time they were sporadically imported and randomly distributed. Kippin and Gillings met and formed the Ilford Science Literary Circle (ISLC). Gillings concocted a ‘Letter to the Editor’ and had it inserted into his own paper. Hansen calls it “the earliest known written record of fan activity in this country”.

The inaugural meeting of the ISLC was held in Ilford on 27 October 1930. Afterwards, Gillings wrote to *Wonder Stories* describing their success and other UK readers began contacting him directly. The Ilford gathering also inspired Colin Askham and Leslie Johnson in Liverpool to attempt a group. Johnson later went on to co-found the British Interplanetary Society. Many groups never got off the ground and, less than a year after forming, the Ilford group too disbanded.

#### BENSON HERBERT (1912-1991)

Herbert, a qualified physicist credited with coining the word ‘paraphysics’ in the early 1960s,

**BOTTOM:** Raymond Cass with a device for recording paranormal voices. **TOP LEFT:** A record of the first meeting of the first UK fan group, in Ilford on 27 Oct 1937, reported by Walter Gillings in the *Ilford Recorder* (31 Oct 1930). **LEFT:** A copy of Raymond Cass’s Fortean Society membership card, signed by Tiffany Thayer, which Cass sent to FT.

believed that all psychical phenomena had either an electrical origin or – at least – an electrical component. An active member of the SPR for many years, Herbert had widened his investigations to include UFOs, witches and mediumistic ‘physical phenomena’. He took advantage of the schisms within the SPR in the mid-1960s to form his own independent unit, the Paraphysical Laboratory (the ‘Paralab’) on Lord Longford’s estate at Downton, Wiltshire, where he researched into ‘psychokinesis’ (PK).

Although not well known in the West today, according to one source Herbert is “much valued and still studied in the Soviet bloc”. In 1970, Herbert was invited by Soviet scientists to be the British representative at the Prague Symposium on Psychotronics (variously defined as the military use of psychical abilities or ‘applied psychokinesis’). In 1972, he went to Leningrad to study the famous Russian PK medium Nina Kulagina; a heavy chair moved at her will and her touch left a burn mark on his arm for a week. In the Paralab, he studied Suzanne Padfield, whose apparent abilities included bending beams of light.<sup>2</sup>

Crucially for Western EVP enthusiasts, Herbert’s own periodical, the *Journal of Paraphysics* – (I was a subscriber) – became a regular conduit for news of continental research by Jung’s student Konstantin Raudive in Latvia, Hans Bender in Germany, and others in Russia. Both the ‘Paralab’ – which was once raided by British Intelligence agents – and the *Journal* ceased when Herbert’s health failed in 1987.

Even less well known is that between 1931 and 1943 Herbert wrote several SF stories and, in the mid-1940s, bankrolled Utopian Publications, which published two SF anthology magazines for the UK market – *American Fiction* and *Strange Tales* – which he edited with Walter Gillings. In 1947, Herbert pulled out of editing two issues of *New*

*Worlds*, which had to be finished by Sam Youd (who wrote SF as John Christopher) anonymously. Harry Turner remembers the issue as displaying a significant divergence from the fare that SF fans expected: “its coverage of psychical research, occultism, Spiritism, and astrology got a general raspberry from fans”. Also, in his memorandum about the 1938 London SF convention, Turner recalls “spending a lot of time arguing with Benson Herbert about surrealism, then currently attracting attention as a way-out and controversial art form in the British press.”

#### ERIC NEEDHAM (1921-1983)

Needham, another of the Manchester ‘Rocket Boys’ and a fan writer, said of Fort: “Plots come ready made to me. It is a literal fact that after heavy showers of rain I’ve looked for frogs on rooftops and fire-escapes. No luck. Then I find reference to falls of frogs and all sorts of Fortean phenomena in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. And in Titus Livius, plus Machiavelli, too. They are there, if you look for them. Biggest snag is persuading fans that literature can be fun.”<sup>3</sup>

#### MP SHIEL (1865-1947)

Shiel was an acclaimed writer of 27 novels and more short stories filled with discourses on supernatural, philosophical and mythological mysteries. His masterpiece, *The Purple Cloud* (1901), was praised by both HG Wells and HP Lovecraft.

In 1944, Malcolm Fergusson – an American soldier stationed in the UK – managed to track down and interview Shiel in Horsham, Sussex. Fergusson describes a letter he had from Shiel, with this interesting passage: “He read slowly, he said. He did not write of conventional ghosts or supernatural phenomena... He added that he enjoyed reading Charles Fort, the American writer who harangued at science for its myopia and thrust forward a bewildering array of data on the supernormal into its range of vision. Shiel spoke of the migration of lemmings and suchlike matters as typical of this interest.”

#### EGERTON SYKES (1894-1983)

Sykes – a renowned mythologist and amateur archaeologist – was heavily influenced by the novels of Jules Verne as a boy. From the age of 18, he began collecting books on Atlantis

and corresponding with every authority on the subject between 1912 and 1950. Most of his life was spent as a British Intelligence Officer working in 28 countries – the perfect cover for his determination to locate books in their native languages. His library – said to be the largest private collection on Atlantis in the world – is now housed with the Edgar Cayce Foundation’s Association for Research and Enlightenment (ARE).

Like Rupert Gould, Sykes was hospitalised with ‘shell shock’. After WWII he retired to Brighton, from where he published journals – *Atlantis* (1948-1976) and *New World Antiquity* (1954-1979) – and his own 1970 expansion of *Ignatius Donnelly’s Atlantis: The Antediluvian World* (1949).

Few know that Sykes appeared among the London Circle, shortly after it relocated to the famous White Horse pub in 1946. In 1948, Ken Slater was trying to organise a fan-run Science Fantasy Society to buy and swap books and magazines. As Rob Hansen records: “It was clear there was little real enthusiasm for the organisation. Ken Slater made a final attempt to inject some life into it around this time

by arranging for one Egerton Sykes, an individual whose sole qualification seemed to be that he was perpetually on the verge of setting off for Mt Ararat in search of the Ark, to take over as secretary. However, the London Circle was as disinclined to be organised as ever and when Sykes showed up at the White Horse he was told, apparently none too diplomatically, that there was no money or publicity to be made out of organising fandom. He was never heard from again.”<sup>5</sup>

#### HARRY TURNER (1920-2009)

A memoir of Eric Frank Russell’s interest in Fort is given by the artist and fan historian Harry Turner, one of the Manchester ‘Rocket Boys’. He writes that he first met EFR – “15 years my senior” – at a meeting of the BIS in July 1938 in Chingford. “Guest of honour was Bob Truax of the American Rocket Society, then a midshipman working at the US Navy experimental station at Chesapeake Bay and conveniently in the UK on a training cruise.” Arthur C Clarke also attended.

Turner described EFR as “very much a kindred spirit” and the pair kept in touch “through letters and exchanges

in fanzines, and the chain-letters that circulated in early wartime years... He won me over wholeheartedly to Charles Fort... bowled me over with *Sinister Barrier* in *Unknown*, and wrote some printable (and unprintable) letters of comment when I started pubbing a fanzine, *Zenith*, in 1941.” Turner adds that when, prior to his WWII overseas posting, he was in Blackpool searching secondhand book stalls “for reading matter for that journey, I was lucky to pick up the 1931 US edition of Fort’s *Lo!*, which accompanied me on the voyage. It’s survived the years and still lurks on my library shelves next to *The Complete Books of Charles Fort*.”<sup>6</sup>

#### OTHER FORTEAN INFLUENCES

The period I’ve chronicled ends in the decade 1945-1955. This post-war period was an exciting time for curious and inventive minds. Certainly something wonderful was happening in the early 1950s and, in closing this series, I’d like to pay tribute to some of those writer-artists who inspired me: in particular Sydney Jordan (b.1928) and his colleagues, whose long-running strip ‘Jeff Hawke: Space Rider’ began in the *Daily Express*, in February 1954; and Nigel Kneale (1922-2006), whose ‘Quatermass Experiment’, broadcast in mid-1953, was written while he was a staff drama writer at the BBC. This period began with Frank Hampson’s ‘Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future’, in the inaugural publication, in April 1950, of the kids’ weekly, *Eagle* (which, somehow, my Dad got for me when we lived in the Far East).

Looking back, it seems to me that the creators of these stories primed me to be receptive, later, to Charles Fort. They were my first introduction to SF and fortean tropes. Dan Dare, for example, was chiefly written and drawn by Frank Hampson but, during its first three months, Arthur C Clarke served as its ‘scientific advisor’.

As WWII ended, Sydney Jordan was training at a college “for would-be aeroplane designers” near Reading. A fellow student there was Willie Patterson (d.1986), who would, in 1956, join Jordan as co-writer of ‘Jeff Hawke’. Between 1956 and 1969, Patterson became the main writer, building up Hawke from a demobbed pilot to the level of a space and time travelling ambassador from



TOP: Benson Herbert with Nina Kulagina. ABOVE: BIS meeting in Chingford, July 1938: in honour of visiting US rocketeer Bob Truax (holding rocket part). In attendance were Eric Burgess and Harry Turner (2nd and 3rd from left) and Arthur C Clarke (on far right) with Maurice Hanson (to his right).

Earth, frequently frustrating the plans of galactic 'civil servants' and villains, or correcting the anomalies when those plans went wrong. The stories of this period have been described as the first British comic for adults; the quality of the writing was good enough for me to insist my parents get the *Daily Express*.

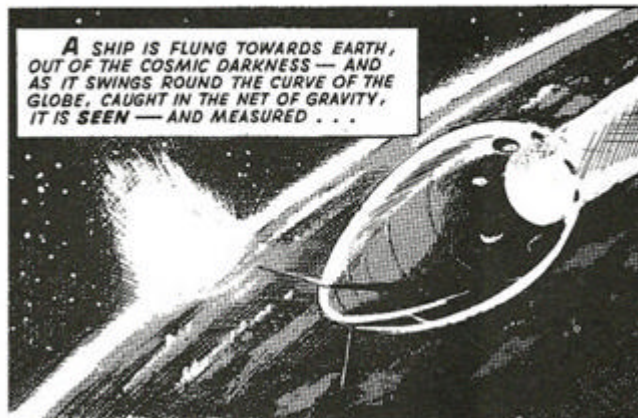
Both Jordan and Patterson also did some work for *Eagle*, and later acknowledged that their characters, institutions and plots in 'Jeff Hawke' were largely modelled on what they had encountered in their training days. Although their college was not within the RAF, it was visited by flyers and officials, and kept up with new wartime technologies. It is not unusual to hear of other writers who lived through WWII using their experiences as inspiration for their characters and plots.

Further, on this topic of transmission and influence, I've always felt that the adventures of Professor Bernard Quatermass might well have been inspired by *Sinister Barrier*, considering that some Quatermass plots also involved possession or control by aliens or invading entities.

From the web I take this description of Quatermass: "[He] is a pioneer of the British space programme, heading up the British Experimental Rocket Group. He continually finds himself confronting sinister alien forces that threaten to destroy humanity... In Nigel Kneale's 1996 radio serial 'The Quatermass Memoirs', it is revealed that the Professor was first involved in rocketry experiments in the 1930s, and that his wife died young. The unmade prequel serial 'Quatermass in the Third Reich', an idea conceived by Kneale in the late 1990s, would have shown Quatermass travelling to Nazi Germany during the 1936 Berlin Olympics and becoming involved



STARRING **FORREST TUCKER · PETER CUSHING**  
WRITTEN BY AUBREY BARING · VAL GUEST · NIGEL KNEALE · G. HILL · WILBY · Directed by JOHN BRISTON · REGALSCOPE PRODUCTION



TOP: A poster for Hammer's *The Abominable Snowman*, written by Nigel Kneale.  
 ABOVE: A typical panel from Sydney Jordan's 'Jeff Hawke' newspaper strip.

with Wernher von Braun and the German rocket programme."<sup>7</sup>

Doesn't that put you in mind of those early boy rocketeers who formed the British Interplanetary Society and shared an interest in SF?<sup>8</sup> BIS founder Philip Cleator even made a trip to Germany in 1934, visiting the pioneer rocket group that included Von Braun and Willy Ley. Could the young Nigel Kneale (who would have been 17 when *Sinister Barrier* was published) have been a member of the BIS or overlapping SF groups in London? If he had been, he would have had every opportunity to absorb all the

ingredients of Quatermass's background.

For example, in a rare article on 'The Flying Saucers' for *Tomorrow* magazine (March 1952), EFR claimed that ordinary people were being tricked by authorities into believing the saucers were all illusions and misperceptions. It is interesting to note that in this article – some 16 years before von Däniken – EFR had suggested that the Egyptian gods might have been visiting aliens. And in another, earlier story – 'Titans of the Twilight' (1941) – he mentions the discovery of a statue of an Inca

god that seemed to be wearing a crash helmet... what EvD might have called a *space* helmet.

Jordan and Patterson also seemed unexpectedly prescient in their Jeff Hawke strip, featuring Egyptian pyramids on Mars long before von Däniken and the discovery of the infamous Sphinx-like 'Face'. And again, in their 1958 story 'Out of Touch', in which a three-mile-long spaceship enters our Solar System, inside which is a self-contained world its inhabitants call "Rhaam". This was 15 years before Arthur C Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama*. However, their most famous glimpse of the future came in an innocent panel in their 1959 story set on the Moon, which showed a pillar of Moon-rock bearing a metal plaque with the legend "On August 4<sup>th</sup> Earth year 1969 the first being set foot on the Moon at this point. His name was Homo Sapiens." Jordan shrugged off being only two weeks out for the eventual landing (21 July 1969), saying he based his date "on my knowledge of American/German spaceflight engineering".

Nigel Kneale, though, is still my favourite with memorable TV adaptations, including *First Men in the Moon* (1964), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1954) and *The Woman in Black* (1989); and among his own productions are *Beasts* (1976, a six-part anthology of horror shorts) *The Stone Tape* (1972, about EVP), *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1968, predicting 'reality TV'), *The Creature* (1955, hunting the Yeti), *Quatermass and the Pit* (1955 & 1967, witchcraft, ghosts and Martians) *The Crunch* (a nuke in London) and, top of my list, *The Road* (1963, loosely based upon Glanville's story of the Tedworth poltergeist of 1662, but with a perfect final twist). To close the circle, this was one of Harry Price's favourite cases, starring in his *Poltergeist over England* (1945). **FT**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** – For their generous help, my thanks go to the SF fan historians and archivists who went out of their way to preserve the correspondence, images, fanzines and reports of the day. Chief among those are Rob Hansen's **FIAWOL** archive: [www.fiawol.org.uk/](http://www.fiawol.org.uk/) FanStuff//; David Langford for his **Ansible** archive: <http://news.ansible.co.uk/>; Greg Pickersgill for his **Gostak** archive: [www.gostak.demon.co.uk/](http://www.gostak.demon.co.uk/); Peter Weston for permission to use images from Mike Rosenblum in his collection, and for his **Relapse**: <http://efanzines.com/Prolapse/>; Philip Turner for permission to use images from Harry Turner's **Footnotes to Fandom** archive: [www.htspweb.co.uk/fandf/romart/het/footnotes.htm](http://www.htspweb.co.uk/fandf/romart/het/footnotes.htm); and Jill Godfrey for permission to use Harold Gottliffe's photos from the above sites.

1 E Dingwall, KM Goldney and Trevor H Hall, *The Haunting of Borley Rectory: A Critical Survey of the Evidence* (1956). Nandor Fodor, 'Was Harry Price a Fraud?', *Tomorrow* vol 4, no 2 (1956); reproduced on the Harry Price website at [www.harrypricewebsite.co.uk/Borley/](http://www.harrypricewebsite.co.uk/Borley/)

PriceatBorley/fodor-hbr-review.htm  
 2 At least one commentator noted that Herbert "had one of those names" that people muddle; to this day, he is often cited as 'Herbert Benson'.  
 3 Written in 1954, first published in Ethel Lindsay's *Bletherings* #4, 1972.  
 4 Malcolm Fergusson, 'The Lost Club Journal', at <http://homepages.pavilion.co.uk/tartarus/shiel.html>  
 5 An excellent portrait of Sykes is Anne Ruby, 'The Making of an Atlantean Scholar', *Venture Inward*

(July/Aug 1999), pp22-25, 42-43 at [www.seachild.net/sykes/](http://www.seachild.net/sykes/); See FF9, 'The Pubs at the End of the Universe', **FT320:48-50**.  
 6 Harry Turner, 'Footnotes to Fandom: Remembering Eric Frank Russell', at [www.htspweb.co.uk/fandf/romart/het/footnotes/efr.htm](http://www.htspweb.co.uk/fandf/romart/het/footnotes/efr.htm); also FF2 'Rocket Boys', **FT309:50-51**; Truax: [www.htspweb.co.uk/fandf/romart/het/footnotes/1938.htm#truax](http://www.htspweb.co.uk/fandf/romart/het/footnotes/1938.htm#truax)  
 7 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard\\_Quatermass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Quatermass)  
 8 See **FT309:50-51**.

# FREE

## CHRONO VIRUS AUDIO BOOK

### when you subscribe

#### Your Phenomenal Offer

- Get your first 3 issues for £1
- **FREE Chrono Virus audio book**, written by **Aaron Crocco** and read by **Osian Edwards**
- **SAVE up to 21%** on the shop price if you continue your subscription
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops



**SUBSCRIBE TODAY**  
 quoting your offer code below

Visit [dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes](http://dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes)  
 or call **0844 844 0049**  
 or complete and return the form below



### ForteanTimes 3 TRIAL ISSUES ORDER FORM

- YES!** Please start my subscription to *Fortean Times* with 3 issues for £1 and send me my Chrono Virus audio book for FREE.
- OR I am an existing subscriber. Please extend my subscription with this offer.

**YOUR DETAILS:**

Mr/Mrs/Ms	Forename
Surname	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone	
Mobile	Year of birth
Email	

**CHEQUE & CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: £39.98 FOR 12 ISSUES (SAVE 21%)**

I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd.

Please charge my:  Visa  MasterCard  AMEX  Debit/Maestro (issue no. )

CARD NUMBER	START DATE	EXPIRY DATE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SIGNED  TODAY'S DATE

**DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT: £19.99 every 6 issues (SAVE 21%) – UK ONLY**

	Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit	
Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society		Originator's Identification Number
To the manager: Bank name		7 2 4 6 8 0
Address		
Postcode		
Account in the name(s) of		
Branch sort code		Signature(s)
<input type="text"/>		Date
Bank/Building Society account number		
<input type="text"/>		

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account.

Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website [www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/](http://www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/) or call us on 0844 844 0053 or 01795 419 844. If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise, that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, email and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via [www.subsinfo.co.uk](http://www.subsinfo.co.uk) or [privacy@dennis.co.uk](mailto:privacy@dennis.co.uk) or 0844 844 0053 or 01795 419 844.

Gifts limited to first 100 orders. Please allow 28 days for delivery. UK only. This offer is limited to one offer per household

**Return this order to:** Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR,  
 Fortean Times, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park,  
 Sittingbourne ME9 8GU (NO STAMP REQUIRED) OFFER CODE: P1413P

HAVE YOUR SAY

# forum



## The curse of Aaron Ramsey

Was Robin Williams killed by a footballer's 'kick of death'? **ROB GANDY** asks if Arsenal supporters will soon be singing 'Another One Bites the Dust'.



**ROB GANDY** is a visiting professor at the Liverpool Business School, John Moores University. He has written for FT on Merseyside doppelgängers, ghostlore and the mysterious Marsupilami.

**R**obin Williams, the great American actor, comedian, film producer and screenwriter, tragically committed suicide on 11 August 2014. The reasons put forward for this, discussed in various media, have varied but appear to include depression, the effects of the drugs he was taking for Parkinson's Disease, financial worries, and a downturn in his acting career. However, surely the strangest cause attributed to his death is "the Curse of Aaron Ramsey".

"Who is Aaron Ramsey?" many will ask – certainly outside of the United Kingdom, and particularly in America. They will find that he is a Welsh footballer, born in 1990, who plays midfield for Arsenal in the English Football Premier League and the Wales national football team. Arsenal signed him for £5 million in 2008 from his hometown club, Cardiff City. They will then, inevitably and rightly, ask the follow-up question: "What has Aaron Ramsey got to do with Robin Williams?"

The answer is: "Nothing". But in its 13 August 2014 issue, that esteemed British newspaper the *Daily Star* headlined with: *Robin Williams dies, Aaron Ramsey scores – has the Arsenal star's curse returned?*

The 'curse' is supposed to be that whenever Aaron Ramsey scores a goal, the death of a celebrity occurs. The *Star* piece goes on to say: "The strange phenomenon became apparent throughout 2011 and 2012 when a big-name celebrity died within days of the midfielder scoring a goal for Arsenal. And hours after the star scored in his club's Community Shield victory on Sunday, the tragic death of comedy actor Robin Williams was announced. Many on Twitter have talked of the curse returning, while others slammed the



disrespectful nature of the coincidence. There has not been a case of the curse since November 30, 2013, when *Fast and Furious* actor Paul Walker died in a car accident. Ramsey scored two goals against Cardiff that day. But after the midfield dynamo scored 14 more goals last season, the curse was forgotten. Previously, four celebrities passed away as the Welshman scored four goals for his club".<sup>1</sup>

Four major celebrity deaths are then listed as being linked to Ramsey finding the net:

Osama bin Laden was declared dead on 2 May 2011, and Ramsey bagged a goal against Manchester United the day before.

Apple guru Steve Jobs died at his home in California on 5 October 2011, and Ramsey hit the headlines by scoring in a north London derby against Spurs the weekend before.

Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi was captured and killed by rebels on 20 October that year, and Ramsey was there to bag an injury-time winner against Marseilles in the Champions League.

Finally, Whitney Houston was found dead in her bathroom on 11 February 2012. Just hours before, the Gunner had struck against Sunderland.

Others believe he may have killed off other celebs with his goals, including legendary basketball player Ray Williams and Russian billionaire Boris Berezovsky.

Now I know that it is questionable

**ABOVE:** Ramsey scores! And Sir Richard Attenborough dies the following day...

whether some of the above should be described as 'celebrities', but there is no doubt that they are all famous people, even if infamous might be more appropriate for Bin Laden and Gaddafi. So how on earth did this 'curse' come to prominence?

Nick Enoch asked the question about the alleged phenomenon in the *Daily Mail* on 15 February 2012,<sup>2</sup> only four days after Houston died on 11 February, with the deaths of the other three celebrities occurring over the previous eight and a half months. As you need a minimum of three events even to be *thinking* about a pattern, it's clear that someone picked up on it at some time between Gaddafi's and Houston's deaths.

At the time that reference was made to the 'curse', Ramsey had not been a prolific goal scorer: his goal at the time of Bin Laden's death was only his sixth for Arsenal in three seasons, which had admittedly been disrupted by a serious leg break. His seventh goal for Arsenal was when Jobs died; his eighth was when Gaddafi died; and his ninth was on the day of Houston's death. Spooky! Added momentum was given to the 'curse' when Taiwanese animators NMA produced a humorous but controversial cartoon clip of Ramsey as the 'celebrity slayer' – "Aaron Ramsey's 'Kick of Death'" – which went viral on the Internet.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately, there is nothing in the 'curse', and there is a very simple explanation. On average, the number of deaths every day in the UK is just over 1,500<sup>4</sup> and in the USA it is over 7,300,<sup>5</sup> so if you include the number of deaths on the day before and the day after Ramsey scored a goal, then you treble these numbers to 4,500 and 21,900 respectively. It is virtually certain that there will be some celebrities included in such numbers, however these might be defined. There are specialist websites that list famous people that have died each day: The Life In Legacy website<sup>6</sup> is primarily US-focused, but has lists of deaths for each week going back as far as 2007, with around 30-40 people recorded for each week; the IMDB website has pages for 'Most Popular People With Date of Death'<sup>7</sup> in a given year; and Wikipedia has 'Lists of Deaths By Year' going back to 1987, with generally more than 10 deaths recorded for each day.<sup>8</sup> So, there are inevitably going to be around a couple of dozen celebrities, or people famous for one thing or another, who die on the three days surrounding

an Aaron Ramsey goal. Just pick the one who is most famous and add him or her to the 'curse'!

As stated above, the 'curse' was forgotten when Ramsey banged in 16 goals for Arsenal and two for Wales in 2013/14. So, just for fun – and definitely not to provide evidence for the 'curse' – I identified all the goals scored by Ramsey from when he first moved to Arsenal,<sup>9</sup> and selected famous

people that died on the day he scored, or a day either side, given that deaths in North America could be recorded as the day before because of time zones. I have used the above and similar Internet sources, and then created my own roll-call of Ramsey's 'victims'. The result is the list provided. You will see that Ramsey even brought the curtain down on George W Bush's favourite pooch, and nearly nailed

Nelson Mandela!

Interestingly, at the time of writing this article, Ramsey scored in Arsenal's 2-2 draw at Everton, and Sir Richard Attenborough, the celebrated Oscar-winning actor and director died the following day after a long illness.<sup>10</sup> Attenborough was Life President and a lifelong supporter of Chelsea FC, Arsenal's great north London rivals.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, it was easy to create this

list, which shows that the 'curse' is nonsense. With so many deaths of celebrities each day and football matches now taking place every day of the week, it is possible to name any footballer and link a famous death to every time they score. I have every confidence that the story of the 'curse' started in a north London pub in a chat between some Arsenal supporters over a pint. Given Ramsey's limited number

SEASON	DATES AARON RAMSEY SCORED (Ramsey was playing for Arsenal unless stated otherwise)	CELEBRITY VICTIM (DATE OF DEATH IN BRACKETS)
2008/09	21 Oct 2008	John Ringham: English actor known for <i>V for Vendetta</i> (2005), <i>Woof!</i> (1989) and <i>The Secret of Eel Island</i> (2004). (20 Oct)
2009/10	22 Aug 2009	Elmer Kelton: Western novelist whose book <i>The Good Old Boys</i> was made into a 1995 TV movie starring Tommy Lee Jones. (22 Aug)
2009/10	14 Oct 2009	Captain Lou Albano: professional wrestler in 1980s who appeared in Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" music video, and played Mario on <i>The Super Mario Bros.</i> (14 Oct) [Playing for Wales]
2009/10	14 Nov 2009	Dennis Cole: American TV actor. (15 Nov) [Playing for Wales]
2009/10	5 Dec 2009	Jack Rose: guitarist whose improvisations on 6-string, 12-string, and lap steel guitar won him a devoted cult following. (5 Dec)
2009/10	30 Dec 2009	Rowland Howard: Australian rock musician, guitarist and songwriter, best known for his work with the post-punk group The Birthday Party and his subsequent solo career. (30 Dec)
2009/10	3 Jan 2010	Donal Donnelly: Anglo-Irish actor best known in the cinema for roles in <i>The Knack... and How to Get It</i> (1965) and <i>The Godfather: Part III</i> (1990). (4 Jan)
2010/11	22 Feb 2011	Dwayne McDuffie: African-American comic book and animation writer best known as one of the founders of Milestone Media, an imprint of DC Comics dedicated to promoting better stories and characterisations for minorities. (21 Feb) [Playing for Cardiff City on loan]
2010/11	1 May 2011	Osama bin Laden: shot dead by US Navy Seals in his compound in Pakistan (2 May)
2010/11	27 May 2011	Jeff Conaway: American actor who starred in the TV sitcom <i>Taxi</i> (1978-81), and played Kenickie in the movie musical <i>Grease</i> (1978). (27 May) [Playing for Wales]
2011/12	2 Sept 2011	John Hoover: Alaskan artist who used imagery and tales from Native traditions in contemporary works. (3 Sept) [Playing for Wales]
2011/12	2 Oct 2011	Steve Jobs: Apple guru dies at his home in California after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. (5 Oct)
2011/12	7 Oct 2011	Julio Mario Santo Domingo: Colombian magnate whose \$8.5 billion fortune made him one of Latin America's richest and most influential men. (7 Oct) [Playing for Wales]
2011/12	19 Oct 2011	Colonel Gaddafi: captured by rebels near his hometown of Sirte and dies from his injuries. (20 Oct)
2011/12	11 Feb 2011	Whitney Houston: found dead in a bathroom at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles. (11 Feb)
2012/13	3 Oct 2012	Big Jim Sullivan: British guitarist, complications of heart disease and diabetes. (2 Oct)
2012/13	22 Mar 2013	Ray Williams: American professional basketball player, died after suffering from colon cancer. (22 Mar)
2012/13	14 May 2013	Boris Berezovsky: Russian business oligarch, government official and mathematician, found dead at his home in England. (23 Mar) [Playing for Wales]
2012/13	14 May 2013	Billie Sol Estes: Texas king of con men who became notorious with the scandal that broke out during JFK's administration involving phony financial statements and nonexistent fertiliser tanks, for which he served several years in prison. (14 May)
2013/14	21 Aug 2013	Elmore Leonard: American crime writer behind novels including <i>Get Shorty</i> , <i>Out of Sight</i> and <i>Rum Punch</i> . (20 Aug)
2013/14	27 Aug 2013	Mike Winters: British comedian, who with his brother Bernie, pioneered television comedy. (26 Aug)
2013/14	6 Sept 2013	AC Crispin: SF author who wrote popular tie-in novels to <i>Star Trek</i> and <i>Star Wars</i> and helped to run the online watchdog "Writer Beware". (6 Sept) [Playing for Wales]
2013/14	14 Sept 2013	Salustiano Sanchez-Blazquez: world's oldest man (112), a Spanish-born, self-taught musician, coal miner, and gin rummy aficionado from western New York State. (13 Sept)



of goals at the time, his scoring a couple around the time of Jobs's and Gaddafi's deaths will have been very notable and generated jokey comments; this might have been reinforced by someone checking to see if anyone had died the previous time he scored and finding Osama bin Laden. And from there, it would have grown, with Houston's death and the NMA cartoon sending it viral. The only difference between

these celebrities and other famous people was that their deaths dominated the media for some time, just as Robin Williams's did. Given the media references to the 'curse', I have no doubt that Ramsey and the Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger will simply laugh it off; but I will be watching to see if Arsenal fans start to sing Queen's "*Another One Bites The Dust*" every time Ramsey scores in the future. **FT**

## NOTES

- 1 [www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/394206/Robin-Williams-dies-Aaron-Ramsey-scores-has-the-curse-returned](http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/394206/Robin-Williams-dies-Aaron-Ramsey-scores-has-the-curse-returned)
- 2 [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2101478/When-Arsenal-player-Aaron-Ramsey-scores-famous-dies.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2101478/When-Arsenal-player-Aaron-Ramsey-scores-famous-dies.html)
- 3 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeNXIVn1iz4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeNXIVn1iz4)
- 4 <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.country.country-GBR?lang=en>
- 5 <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/?theme=country&vid=20800>

6 <http://lifeinlegacy.com/>

7 [www.imdb.com/](http://www.imdb.com/)

8 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists\\_of\\_deaths\\_by\\_year](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_deaths_by_year)

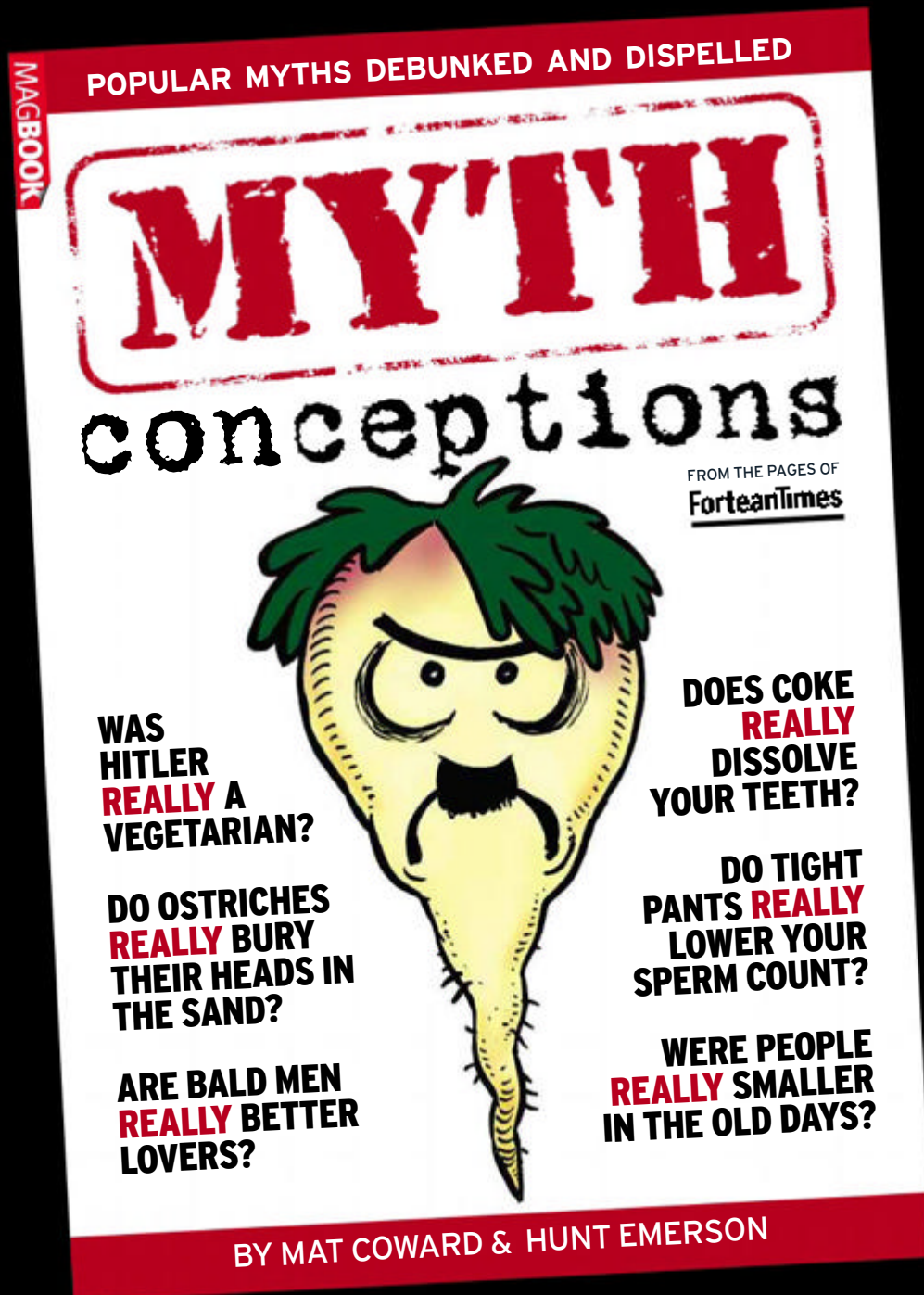
9 [www.soccerbase.com/players/player.sd?player\\_id=46488&season\\_id=138](http://www.soccerbase.com/players/player.sd?player_id=46488&season_id=138)

10 [www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-11230065](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-11230065)

11 [www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-2733409/Chelsea-pay-tribute-club-s-Life-President-Lord-Richard-Attenborough-death.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-2733409/Chelsea-pay-tribute-club-s-Life-President-Lord-Richard-Attenborough-death.html)

SEASON	DATES AARON RAMSEY SCORED (Ramsey was playing for Arsenal unless stated otherwise)	CELEBRITY VICTIM (DATE OF DEATH IN BRACKETS)
2013/14	18 Sept 2013	Ken Norton: the world heavyweight boxing champion famously broke the jaw of Muhammed Ali in the first of their three fights but lost the next two. (18 Sept)
2013/14	22 Sept 2013	Dr David Hubel: half of a scientific team that won a Nobel Prize for explaining how the brain assembles information from the eye's retina to produce detailed visual images. (22 Sept)
2013/14	28 Sept 2013	John Calvert: Hollywood illusionist whose magic tricks won him numerous fans and several film roles, including three movies during the 1940s in which he played the detective known as the Falcon. (27 Sept)
2013/14	15 Oct 2013	Sean Edwards: 26-year-old top British racing driver, who was leading the season's Porsche Super cup championship, was killed instantly when his car hit a barrier and burst into flames in Queensland, Australia. (15th) [Playing for Wales]
2013/14	19 Oct 2013	Lawrence R Klein: economic theorist who predicted America's economic boom after World War II and was awarded the 1980 Nobel Prize in economic science for developing statistical models used to analyse and predict global economic trends. (20 Oct)
2013/14	2 Nov 2013	Noel Harrison: British actor and musician, son of the late actor Rex Harrison, who recorded the Oscar-winning ballad "The Windmills of Your Mind," the theme from the 1968 heist movie <i>The Thomas Crown Affair</i> , which won the best-song Oscar. (19 Oct)
2013/14	6 Nov 2013	Editta Sherman: photographer who made portraits of celebrities and lived for 61 years in a studio penthouse above Carnegie Hall until forced out in 2010 in a landlord-tenant struggle. (1 Nov)
2013/14	30 Nov 2013	Clarence (Ace) Parker: oldest member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame (101) who spent part of his career in baseball. (6 Nov)
2013/14	30 Nov 2013	John Cole: former BBC political editor who was chief reporter during the Thatcher era and covered major stories including the Brighton bombing and the Miners' strike (7 Oct)
2013/14	30 Nov 2013	Paul Walker: <i>The Fast and the Furious</i> star died after he lost control of his Porsche, which crashed into a telegraph pole and burst into flames. (30 Nov)
2013/14	30 Nov 2013	(Plus, perhaps, Nelson Mandela & FT favourite Colin Wilson who both died on 5 December? I know it's stretching it!)
2013/14	20 Apr 2014	Alistair MacLeod: award-winning Canadian author best known for his short-story collections and novel <i>No Great Mischiefs</i> (1999) (20 Apr)
2013/14	11 May 2014	HR Giger: Swiss artist who designed the creature in Ridley Scott's sci-fi horror classic <i>Alien</i> . (12 May)
2013/14	17 May 2014	Dr Gerald M Edelman: leading theorist on the workings of the brain who shared a 1972 Nobel Prize for a breakthrough in immunology and later contributed key findings in neuroscience and other fields. (17 May)
2013/14	17 May 2014	Miss Beazley the Scottie: former President George W Bush's beloved Scottish terrier. (17 May)
2014/15	11 Aug 2014	Robin Williams: American actor, comedian, film producer and screenwriter, committed suicide. (11 Aug)
2014/15	12 Aug 2014	Lauren Bacall: American actress, and famously the wife of Humphrey Bogart, died following a stroke. (12 Aug)
2014/15	16 Aug 2014	Sylvia Hassenfeld: matriarch of the founding family of the toy company Hasbro, maker of GI Joe, Mr Potato Head, and the Transformers. (16 Aug)
2014/15	23 Aug 2014	Sir Richard Attenborough: Oscar-winning actor and director died after long illness. (24 Aug)

# THE TRUTH ISN'T OUT THERE...



AVAILABLE FROM [AMAZON.CO.UK](https://www.amazon.co.uk)  
OR VISIT [MAGBOOKS.COM](https://www.magbooks.com) FOR MORE INFORMATION

[amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)

This month's books, films and games

# reviews



## The pebble chuckers of Oz

The reports of suburbia's Humpty Doo, the screaming Coalbaggie Bogey and other poltergeists of Australia are strangely similar to 600-year-old European tales



### Australian Poltergeist

**The Stone-Throwing Spook of Humpty Doo and Many Other Cases**

Tony Healy & Paul Cropper

Strange Nation Publishers 2015

Pb, 304pp, illus, bib, ind, £24.99, ISBN 9781921134340

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £24.99

Renaissance Europe was plagued by noisy ghosts, recorded in books by Ludwig Lavatar (1527–1586) and Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576), which rapped and banged, upset objects and furniture, threw stones and lit fires. Reformation accounts of such manifestations featured in debates about the existence of Purgatory and the fate of the soul. (See *Poltergeists: A History of Violent Ghostly Phenomena* (2011) by P G Maxwell-Stuart and *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France* (2011) by Timothy Chesters).

What have these stories to do with poltergeist reports from Australia, a country then undiscovered by Europeans? Absolutely nothing, save that the phenomena they describe are identical to those that have been erupting in ghost-shattered homes across Australia since 1845.

Veteran researchers Tony Healy and Paul Cropper have delivered the most comprehensive review of Australian poltergeists yet, making for fascinating reading, though it is repetitious in places, solely because of

the unchanging nature of the disturbances described. This encourages the authors to bring their own comments, arguments and sometimes wry observations to the cases. They are unafraid to share their perspectives and opinions, but admit that no theory explains all aspects of the data collected.

The book begins with their field investigation into the Humpty Doo poltergeist, which invaded a suburban home in 1998. Stones and gravel seemingly materialised from the air, inside and outside. Knives, broken glass, bottles and pistol cartridges were thrown around, though no one was injured. Some kind of intelligence appeared to be at work, with words being crudely spelled out with pebbles on the floor. Most interestingly, they obtained anomalous thermal signatures of a flying glass shard and a bullet cartridge by using infra-red equipment.

Chapter two looks at the Mayanup Poltergeist that began on a large homestead in 1955 and spread to three neighbouring farms. The authors believe that several hundred people witnessed the events – principally the throwing of stones, which were often hot and sometimes too hot to handle. Later stages involved falls of objects including potatoes, tin cans and coins, inside and outside.

Chapter three covers another farm-based poltergeist which attacked a milking machine in 1949. Chapter four examines a Canberra case of 1992–97; and chapter five, 1935's fire-starting poltergeist of Cannibal Creek. Families troubled by poltergeists over a century apart in 1887–1990 are reviewed in chapters six to

**“Fires cannot be explained away as psychological misperceptions; they are objectively real”**

10. Chapter 11 covers what the authors dub “Spookiest of all: the Coalbaggie Bogey”, one of the rare class of poltergeists that acquired the power of speech, including “strange voices, loud cooeyings and awful screamings”, as well as a mix of sensible and banal utterances. It is reminiscent of other claimed cases such as the Bell Witch of Tennessee (1817–21), Gef the Talking Mongoose on the Isle of Man in the 1930s and the Enfield poltergeist of 1977–78. Chapter 12 provides a chronology and critique of other 52 Australian cases reported 1845–1998.

The final chapter focuses on the variables in poltergeist cases recorded across Australia. No one theoretical explanation can fit them all. Paul Cropper favours psychokinesis unwittingly generated by the subconscious minds of individuals; Tony Healy favours discarnate action, perhaps by spirits.

Finally, they add three appendices on recent fire-raising poltergeists in Asia; three examples of ‘wild talent’ stories from archives involving individuals; and a brief survey of some of the more extraordinary theories about the causes of poltergeists.

The fortean challenge posed by these Australian poltergeist cases is two-fold. First, there is

the remarkable uniformity in the nature of the disturbances, thousands of miles and hundreds of years apart, effectively ruling them out as some culturally specific hallucination.

Secondly, poltergeist phenomena involve physical events: they are defined by physical effects and produce solid evidence in the form of moved and damaged objects. Fires, the movements of large pieces of furniture and the repeated falls of stones observed by multiple witnesses are clearly objective occurrences leaving physical traces. It is these physical and public aspects which place poltergeist effects on a different level to many other claimed psychic experiences that occur on a subjective level (e.g. telepathy and clairvoyance).

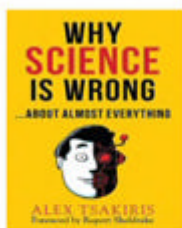
Fires cannot be explained away as psychological misperception or individual mental aberrations. Such physical events are objectively real, whatever their cause.

Importantly, the authors are prepared to examine and weigh the totality of evidence in each case, to try and find the most probable solution. In a few cases a hoax is suggested but others defy any normal explanation when all the available facts are considered. Noting that “patterns of polt activity in Australia confirm very closely to those recorded throughout the centuries in Europe, Americas, Africa, Asia and the Middle East” they draw attention to certain striking similarities and matches in reports individual incidents from widely separated locations. The details may be small, seemingly

*Continued on p58*

# Right or wrong

Science is right enough about many things, and dismally wrong about others



## Why Science Is Wrong... About Almost Everything

Alex Tsakiris

Anomalist Books 2014

Pb, 178pp, appdx, notes, ind, \$14.95, ISBN 9781938398315

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £10.00

When a review copy of *Why Science Is Wrong* showed up, my reflexive response was to forget about it till the next time I write about crackpots. Then, fortunately, I noticed the publisher, Anomalist, and blurbs from the likes of Jeffrey J Kripal, Dean Radin, and Jeffrey Long. This is no crank book. Still, Rupert Sheldrake, who wrote the Foreword, feels compelled to observe that science “is right about a great many things, or right enough.”

Alex Tsakiris, who hosts the Skeptico podcast, is trying to communicate that science’s materialist ideology is indefensible and has been since physicists’ discovery of quantum mechanics. Most *FT* readers would agree. Many who have followed developments in consciousness studies, parapsychology and research into near-death experiences will find little to dispute here.

What makes Tsakiris’s book so eye-opening and often hilarious is that it exposes hardline defenders of the old order as woefully, even militantly, ignorant. Tsakiris politely pushes them until they’re forced to confess as much, if they haven’t slammed down the phone by then. Prominent psychologists, neuroscientists and professional debunkers turn out to know little

about what they’re denouncing or to be unaware of refereed papers in professional journals which cast into doubt the favorite prosaic explanations for extraordinary experiences.

One consequence is that the skeptics who appear on his show are wont to complain of being “sandbagged”. Translated, that means they found themselves up against an interviewer who had done his homework. The relationship between debunkers and reporters is ordinarily thus: debunker speaks, reporter writes it down. No probing questions are asked or welcomed, and the resulting article reads more like stenography than journalism. Tsakiris doesn’t play that game.

I leave it to those who read the book to learn the names associated with the above, but a few will be familiar to *FT* readers, including the prominent debunker who goes to comic lengths to salvage a “skeptical” claim in the face of assertions from informants (in this case law-enforcement officers) whose patience he tries as he seeks to revise their testimony to his liking. A prominent critic of parapsychology admits that she hasn’t read the literature in a long time and knows little or nothing of the current findings that discredit her well-worn talking points.

Offsetting the chest-thumping bloviation are observations by physicists, neuroscientists and others who are engaged in consciousness research and uncovering data that upend the ever shakier official ideology while pointing to the new science just around the bend. Tsakiris’s book isn’t fat and scholarly, but it’s smart and cheeky, and it’ll confirm all your suspicions.

Jerome Clark

### Fortean Times Verdict

PROBING DISECTION OF MILITANT SCIENTIFIC IGNORANCE **8**

## Strandbeest

The Dream Machines of Theo Jansen

Lena Herzog & Lawrence Weschler

Taschen 2014

Hb, 328pp, illus, £34.99, ISBN 978386548496

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £31.49



In 1990, Theo Jansen noticed that the high tides of each passing season seemed to be registering higher up the beaches of the Low Countries. He planned to find a way to transfer sand grains from the bottom of the beach to the top in order to maintain the giant dunes, using wind-powered creatures he called Strandbeests. By the end of the following year, he had a walking mechanism consisting of 11 segments, and had discovered the ‘magic ratios’ that allowed the legs to make long, slow strides. None of this was based on living creatures; he generated the ratios via computer algorithm in a kind of natural selection. Cantilevered sails power the beasts, and compressed air is stored in plastic ‘lungs’ for when the wind drops. “They are assembled in fact from solid shafts of air protected by a thin layer of plastic,” he says. Each new generation of Beests is classified with a Latin name.

“They are very much alive,” says Jansen, but this book is unable to capture that. Instead, we have large stills of Jansen and his Beests. Deprived of their main purpose, they look like tubular sculptures. Without the centipede-motion of the legs, or the gracefully waving sails that gives the Beests a claim to being an artificial lifeform, the book falls far short of conveying their other-worldliness. The engineer wishing to study Jansen’s methods will find next to no technical information. Those wanting to see the Beests gliding eerily across the beaches will find no DVD to show their full glory. This is a photographer’s book that freezes the Beests into sculptural forms, but misses what makes Jansen’s creations so special.

Jerry Glover

### Fortean Times Verdict

MISSED CHANCE TO SHOW THE WONDER OF AN ARTIFICIAL PLYLUM **5**

Continued from page 57

insignificant when viewed alone, but when taken together the resemblance between cases is striking. As the authors state, “most readers will agree it is extremely improbable that different people, so separated by distance and time, would simply have imagined and invented the same crazy little details.”

The authors have unwittingly touched upon a working rule of law known as ‘similar fact evidence’, which has been used to prove the guilt of serial offenders in cases before the courts in England and Commonwealth countries for over a century.

With the poltergeist we do not have the guilt of an individual, but rather evidence in the form of potential hallmarks of an unexplained force or process manifesting across the Australian continent – and many other places around the globe – for which there is currently no explanation.

Thus, the authors have provided both a useful guide to Australian poltergeists and a valuable comparative resource for anyone seriously investigating such phenomena in other parts of the world.

Alan Murdie

### Fortean Times Verdict

ANTIPODEAN POLTS ARE NOT SO VERY DIFFERENT FROM OURS

**9**

## The End of Days

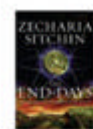
Armageddon and Prophecies of Return

Zecharia Sitchin

Bear & Co 2014

Hb, 308pp, illus, ind, \$24.00, ISBN 9781591432005

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.19



This, the seventh and concluding volume of Sitchin’s Earth Chronicles series, seeks to demonstrate ancient knowledge of wars and catastrophes to come, using ancient Egyptian writings, the Old Testament, Leonardo da Vinci paintings – along with Sumerian and Akkadian texts, taken from pictogram and cuneiform tablets. It covers ground which will be familiar to Sitchin devotees: Ancient Near East myths

apparently describing visits to Earth by advanced space travellers from the planet Nibiru. These beings, the Annunaki, still have a “probably robotic” (p296) presence on Mars, which will be used as a stopping point for their eventual return to Earth, 3,500 years after their departure.

Sitchin was allegedly one of few people able to read, transliterate and translate Sumerian pictogram and Akkadian cuneiform writings. As such, he provides an intellectual, scholarly foundation for spurious but ever-popular ‘God was an astronaut’ theories. His undoubted facility with the languages and writing systems of the Ancient Near East has led him in curious directions.

In this volume, he writes confidently of ancient spaceports having been established in Egypt’s Sinai desert, and ancient Iraq’s Nippur. Regarding the large platform-like stone structure at Baalbek, Lebanon (of unknown function), Sitchin declares that the “landing place” mentioned in the Epic of Gilgamesh refers to this structure. In fact, most translations of Gilgamesh don’t feature the phrase “landing place”; those that do appear to be referring to a dock or harbour for ships.

Sitchin finds supporting evidence in the Old Testament too; the Tower of Babel was apparently a launch tower for rockets. He also cites material artefacts from the period – such as those of ancient Egypt, which (he says) depict rocket ships docked in underground silos. He uses an apparently disparaging tone at one point, speaking of “ancient astronaut” theories, as if those 1970s cult bestselling paperbacks were unconnected with his own (admittedly more scholarly) offerings.

Like other Sitchin books, *The End of Days* is a curious mixture of quasi-academic work (citations, index) and baldly-stated, unreferenced claims such as the above.

Chris Josiffe

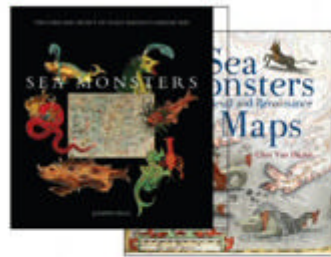
### Fortean Times Verdict

AN ODD MIX OF QUASI-ACADEMIC WORK AND BALD ASSERTIONS

4

# Crypto cartography

Feast after famine, as two equally good books on marine monsters appear, so choose between historic breadth or depth



## Sea Monsters

The Lore and Legacy of Olaus Magnus's Marine Map

Joseph Nigg

Ivy Press 2013

Hb, 160pp, illus, appxs, bib, ind, £20.65, ISBN 9781782400431

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £20.65

## Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps

Chet Van Duzer

British Library 2013

Pb, 144pp, illus, notes, ind, 14.99, ISBN 9780712357715

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.49

Sea monsters were frequently depicted on early maritime maps, inviting discussion in modern times as to whether any of them were inspired by real creatures. Now two lavishly illustrated book devoted to cryptozoological cartography have come along in quick succession.

The principal difference between them is that Nigg deals with possibly the most famous and influential of all the maps portraying sea monsters – the *Carta Marina*, prepared in 1539 by Swedish cartographer–historian Olaus Magnus. Van Duzer surveys and discusses not only this but also other monster-illustrated European maritime maps from the 10th to the early 17th centuries.

By concentrating upon a single map, Nigg’s book provides more information concerning it and illustrations from it than does Van Duzer’s. He introducing the history and significance of the *Carta Marina*, and then presents a series of gloriously illustrated and

detailed chapters, each devoted to a different sea monster. These are divided into Olaus Magnus’s commentary on the monster; a full-colour, detailed double-page spread illustrating it; an ancestral lore section documenting the monster’s origin and occurrence in the texts used by Olaus; a discussion of the map’s legacy relative to the monster; and the modern-day take on the monster.

The book is completed with useful appendices and an index. In the glossary, Nigg speculates on which animal(s) may have inspired each of the monsters; this will interest mainstream zoologists and cryptozoologists.

Van Duzer’s book pursues a chronologically arranged path through the history of sea monsters on maps, from classical antecedents to the final examples of note from the late 16th and early 17th Centuries. His fact-filled, monster-brimming text is divided into sections with attention-grabbing titles such as ‘Sea Monsters on the Ceiling’, ‘How to Buy a Sea Monster’, ‘Lighting a Fire on a Whale’s Back’, and ‘The Curious Career of the Flying Turtle’. There are illustrations throughout, an extensive series of endnotes and two different types of index.

Nigg’s volume wins hands-down on the illustrations front, with dazzling images on every page. Van Duzer’s suffers from a surfeit of dull browns and sepia pictures. By virtue of its larger page size, Nigg’s book is able to present its images in a larger, clearer, more detailed format. Its layout, in which each monster type is

assessed separately, means that information is very accessible, collating all that the reader needs to know about each type in a single location. This information is more dispersed in Van Duzer’s book.

Van Duzer’s book is more fun, due to his talent for unearthing amid the standard fare all manner of quirky, unexpected information. He is also documenting many different maps, not just one, so the range and variety of monsters he covers is greater.

Both books are comprehensive and remarkably lacking in the basic zoological errors that, sadly, I have come to expect in even the most extensively researched cryptozoological tomes.

So, which is the better of these two very fine books? For sheer beauty, Nigg’s; for compulsive reading, Van Duzer’s.

These labours of love will make handsome, informative and invaluable additions to the library of any sea monster enthusiast or cartography aficionado.

If you’re seeking the origins of and explanations for sea unicorns and sea pigs, giant sea worms and even more gigantic sea serpents, pristers and krakens, the rockas, owl-faced ziphius, aloes, hoge, duck tree, winged sea dragons, mer-folk, sirens, island whales, and much more besides, you definitely need these books.

Highly recommended!

Karl Shuker

### Fortean Times Verdict

TWO FOR ALL AFICIONADOS OF CARTOGRAPHY AND MONSTERS

9

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

## FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP

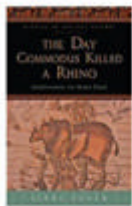
Telephone: 08430600031 Fax: 01326 569555 Email: FT@sparkledirect.co.uk

Address: Fortean Times Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 0TP.

We accept all major credit and debit cards including Switch & Amex. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to the FT Bookshop. Delivery is 7–10 days, subject to availability. Postage & packing is free within the UK.

## Fun 'n' games

How many books – however excellent – on Roman entertainment do we need?



### The Day Commodus Killed a Rhino

Understanding the Roman Games

Jerry Toner

John Hopkins University Press 2014

Pb, 136, illus, bib, ind, \$18.72, ISBN9781421415864

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.00

Toner's latest is an excellent book, but neither needed nor wanted: there are umpteen others on Roman 'entertainments', though there is no mention (save Hekster's) of Commodus biographies by Jasper Burns (2012) and Geoff Adams (2013, who scoops Toner on, for instance, the emperor's Hercules mania). And, for light relief, since Commodus's cognate ostrich massacres are its linchpin, see also Mary Beard's superlative *Roman Laughter* (2014); Amanda Pranter's *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1991) also provides novel food for thought.

In concision and readability, Toner out-writes the opposition. Six tersely lucid, jargon-free, wit-laced chapters and epilogue whisk us from rhinocerosotomy through gladiators, chariot races, and racy theatrical mimes to a heart-wrenching finale on the unspeakable arena deaths of female Christian martyrs.

Chapter Four on the logistics of transporting the countless hapless animals from far-flung provinces to Rome is the glittering jewel in Toner's crown.

Many striking (albeit preceded by Fagan and Baldwin) aperçus include 'good' emperors' spending as lavishly on these blood-feats as 'bad' ones, and the hopeful possibility that the Circus

Maximus's much greater audience capacity than the Colosseum implies minority taste for 'Death in the Afternoon' (or morning or evenings).

Fortean titbits include: pre-games mutual strangling by Saxon gladiators; a novice fighter's suicide by choking on a public lavatory sponge (Roman bum-cleaner); and circus fans sniffing horse dung to check the quality of their favourites' fodder.

Devilled details: Dio Chryostom is mis-dated; Fronto is misrepresented on Bread and Circuses; and Tertullian's crowd-slogan 'Christianos ad leones' confirms the lion cafeterias were frequently open. More might have been mentioned about women performers, e.g. Petronius's British-style chariot combatant; and I fancy many rather than "few" free poor men signed up in hopes of gladiatorial fame and fortune. Surprisingly little use is made of the work of Kathleen Coleman, the doyenne of the subject and advisor to *Gladiator*; and John Traupman's Princeton thesis is available in print.

Toner bashes the Romans for their sadistic pleasures, but they had no monopoly on this. Read Casanova on the crowd revelling in the torture-execution of would-be French regicide Damien, Boswell on jostling for the best view of Tyburn hangings and the regular tales from North Korea, not to mention 'snuff films' and violent pornographic websites. Details, expense, and scale may vary; human nature does not.

The plethora of books on these Roman horrors clearly implies an insatiable thirst among readers.

One thing neither Toner nor anyone else can explain: how did 'rhino' come to mean 'money' in old British slang?

Barry Baldwin

#### Fortean Times Verdict

ONE OF THE BEST (AND MAY IT BE THE LAST) ON ROMAN GAMES

9

## Yurei

### The Japanese Ghost

Zack Davison

Chin Music Press 2014

Hb, 224pp, illus, £15.99, ISBN 9780988769342

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.99



The growing popularity of Japanese, or J-Horror, amongst Western audiences is bringing more entities like *The*

*Ring's* Sadako into our popular culture; the problem is, for the most part, we aren't entirely sure of just what it is we are seeing. This is what Zack Davison aims to rectify in *Yurei: The Japanese Ghost*.

Davison works primarily as a translator and writer of Japanese language and culture. A notable work includes his translation of Mizuki Shigeru's *Showa: A History of Japan* series. Davison also maintains a popular blog, *Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai*, in which he translates and presents Japanese ghost lore and weird tales. *Yurei: The Japanese Ghost* expands somewhat on the blog, exploring what Yurei mean to Japanese culture.

This is a book of many layers. Immensely enjoyable, it makes a core feature of Japanese life accessible by virtue of the fact that it is extremely well written, taking the reader on a lively journey through history, culture and religion.

It is clear that Davison is passionate about his work, and his enthusiasm is infectious. He makes it clear just how important the supernatural is to Japan. It is a culture that is very comfortable with the notion of spirits of the dead, right into the modern era – evident in the casual way Davison describes his friends noting he and his wife shared their home with a Yurei when they lived in a cultural apartment in Ikeda, just outside Osaka.

One thing that Davison is quick to point out is that a Yurei and a Western ghost are somewhat different things. The term Yurei doesn't translate as 'ghost'.

Western ghosts, he argues, are storytelling devices of an interchangeable nature, whilst Yurei follow a strict set of rules. They tend to dissipate when

they fulfil their aims, very rarely hanging around in the same way as, for instance, a Scottish ghost.

Yurei have a central position in Japan. Davison discusses Lafcadio Hearn's notion of *The Rule of The Dead*, where the spirits of the dead look out for the living, so long as the living make the adequate tributes and prayers, mostly during Obon, the season when spirits return from the afterlife to pay a visit to their living nearest and dearest.

Japan even has three 'superstar' Yurei, Oiwa, Otsuyu and Okiku, whose influence has reverberated down the centuries. These three are still feared, and respected, today. Davison explores the origins of the tales of all three in his unravelling of the development of strange stories, *kaidan*, from the tales told in the Kojiki, to the mania for strange tales in the Edo period. This gave rise to a parlour game, *Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai*, where the players light 100 candles, extinguishing them one by one as each tells a bizarre tale. Kabuki theatre also met the thirst for *kaidan* by producing terrifying plays, the appearance of a terrifying Yurei thrilling the audience. Davison makes note of the influence of artist Maruyama Okyo's painting *The Ghost of Oyuki* in providing the standard image of what a Yurei looked like, as well as describing the different types of Yurei you may encounter.

Of particular significance is Davison's profiling of Lafcadio Hearn, the writer famous for bringing *kaidan* to the West with his translations, as well as his general documentation of Japanese life. Hearn seems to have fallen into relative obscurity with the general public. Davison offers an excellent introduction and good pointers of where you might start if you wish to explore his work.

There is certainly a lot packed into what is quite a short book. As well as bringing Yurei to life, for want of a better phrase, it may also have the after-effect of some rather eerie dreams.

Mandy Collins

#### Fortean Times Verdict

AN EXCELLENT INTRO TO GHOSTS' ROLE IN JAPANESE CULTURE

9

# Sci-fi and fantasy round-up

David V Barrett on an early PKD novel, post-apocalyptic sibling conflict, an irreverent reworking of mythology, a cult *policier*, some alt hist and two Moorcock doorstops

## Gather Yourselves Together

Philip K Dick

Gollancz 2014

Pb, 377pp, £9.99, ISBN 9780575132542

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.49

## The Fire Sermon

Francesca Haig

HarperVoyager 2015

Hb, 419pp, £12.99, ISBN 9780007563050

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69

## Resurrections

Roz Kaveney

Plue One Press 2014

Pb, 389pp, £12.99, ISBN 9780986008597

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99

## Foxglove Summer

Ben Aaronovitch

Gollancz 2014

Hb, 377pp, £14.99, ISBN 9780575132504

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99

## Irregularity

ed. Jared Shurin

Jurassic London 2014

Pb, 302pp, £12.99, ISBN 9780992817213

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99

## A Cornelius Calendar

Michael Moorcock

Gollancz 2015

Pb, 865pp, £12.99, ISBN 9780575092525

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99

## Kane of Old Mars

Michael Moorcock

Gollancz 2015

Pb, 409pp, £9.99, ISBN 9780575092525

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.49

An interesting bunch of old and new this time, both of well-established SF writers and newcomers.



*Gather Yourselves Together* is Philip K Dick's first- or second-written novel, with nearly half a century between its writing in 1948–50 and its first publication in 1994, 12 years after his death. Although not new, it's not widely known, so

this reissue is welcome. Though not science fiction, it shows Dick beginning to work with the themes that would become hallmarks of most of his work – the alienation of the ordinary man and woman. Verne, Barbara and Carl are left behind by the American Metals Development Company when it pulls out of its massive site in China; they are left to themselves, with the fairly undefined task of handing over the site to the Chinese. Two of them had a very brief fling a few years earlier; the third is sexually inexperienced; all three have their inner demons. Dick explores their inter-relationships as they are thrust together in unusual circumstances as the factory site becomes a disorientating and alien environment; he excels at showing how apparently “normal” people are screwed up and confused inside. There's even a brief mention of Gnostic duality, the focus of Dick's final novels. It's not his finest work by any means, but it's a must for PKD fans.



Set in a fairly standard post-apocalyptic world, *The Fire Sermon* has a far-from-standard central concept. As a result of radiation all human births are twins, one boy, one girl. One child is perfect; the other has a physical deformity – a missing limb, for example – or more rarely a psychic ability. They are separated in early childhood, the former to live comfortable lives as Alphas, the latter to be subsistence farmers or corralled into ghetto villages as Omegas – but there's a strange complication: when one twin dies, so will the other. Having hidden her ability as a seer until her teens (causing tension with her brother Zach because he can't be identified as an Alpha), Cass is now living in the underclass, while Zach has become a harsh young leader of the Alphas. The

first of a trilogy, this very well written first novel by Francesca Haig is a fascinating story of the increasing conflict between the two of them, as Cass becomes more and more involved in a rebel group, refusing to be crushed by the Alphas.



*Resurrections* is the third and best-so-far of Roz Kaveney's startling reworking of mythology, *Rhapsody of Blood*, telling the interweaving tales of two very different women. Maya the Huntress, immortal but determinedly not a god, wanders through history protecting people from aggressive gods or, often worse, vicious human warlords and dictators. In the present day (some of the time) Emma Jones, still without her ghost lover, comes into a far greater destiny than she'd ever have imagined – and discovers that Hell is full of unpleasant people, as well as a lot of people who really shouldn't be there. For anyone with a Christian background it's strange to see the primary figures of the religion treated with the same delightful irreverence Kaveney has shown to other gods and goddesses in the previous books; you'll never view Jesus or Judas in quite the same way again.



Ben Aaronovitch has become a cult writer with his humorous novels about Peter Grant, a young policeman in a tiny unit of the Metropolitan Police dealing with crimes with a supernatural element. This time, to his great discomfiture, the very urban copper is sent outside London into the leafy countryside of Herefordshire. *Foxglove Summer*, even when dealing with the dark topic of child abduction, is a delightful and perceptive romp, a decidedly skew-whiff police procedural. The involvement

of ancient and powerful mythological beings is darker and scarier than in the previous books. There's even a brief mention of *Fortean Times* near the end!



*Irregularity* is an intriguing anthology of alternative history stories from small press Jurassic London and the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. The stories, all with a scientific basis, are set in tweaked versions of real history, such as a steampunk Victorian age – rather nicely illustrated by Gary Northfield based on artwork in the Museum. Several of the writers are academics, including Profs Adam Roberts and Roger Luckhurst. A few problems: two of the stories are transposed in the Contents, and the book began physically falling apart on first reading. More seriously, several of the stories had great situations but didn't really follow them through with satisfactory plots – but despite that, highly recommended for some wonderfully left-field ideas.



With *A Cornelius Calendar* and *Kane of Old Mars*, Gollancz have reached the end of their reissues of many of Michael Moorcock's most influential works, revised and updated by the author. The first is a massive volume containing *The Adventures of Una Persson and Catherine Cornelius in the Twentieth Century*, *The Entropy Tango*, *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle* and several novellas; the second contains *Warriors...*, *Blades...* and *Barbarians of Mars*, originally published under the pseudonym Edward P Brabury. But the best news of all, just announced, is that Moorcock's first new novel in nearly 10 years, *A Whispering Storm*, will be published in July – and will definitely be reviewed here.

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



### X + Y

Dir Morgan Matthews, UK 2015  
On UK release from 13 March

X + Y marks documentary filmmaker Morgan Matthews's first foray into fictional storytelling, though the naturalistic look and feel of his non-fiction roots are evident in this gentle story of a teenage mathematical genius diagnosed with a form of aphasia; the film connects with his world emotionally rather than through the limitations of his condition. Matthews's previous film, the documentary *Beautiful Young Minds*, featured a young subject suffering from a neurodevelopmental disorder that fostered mathematical ability who attended the International Mathematics Olympiad (IMO). This was clearly the inspiration for X+Y's main character and for the backdrop his story plays out against.

At a young age Nathan (Asa Butterfield, last seen in *Ender's Game*) has two significant events happen: he is diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum and he loses his father, the one person he can communicate emotionally with. Now raised by his single mother Julie (Oscar-nominated Sally Hawkins), Nathan relates to the world mathematically and through patterns and colours, a symptom of his condition. When his mother decides to encourage his mathematical genius she enlists a private tutor, Mr Humphries (Rafe Spall), who urges the boy to try out for the UK International Math-

ematical Olympiad team. Nathan leaves his native Sheffield and travels to Taipei under the tutelage of Richard (Eddie Marsden) for a mathematical training camp with other international IMO contenders. Here, he meets Zhang Mei (Jo Yang), a young Chinese girl who awakens something new and emotional in the reticent Nathan.

This is a remarkable debut for Matthews. The cast excels, judging their performances beautifully and mirroring the film's natural look and at times funny story. The three leads – Butterfield, Hawkins and Spall in particular – give stand-out performances, exercising their acting muscles and demonstrating that they've done some research to portray these individuals and articulate their conditions. The interaction between Nathan, his widowed mother and the broken Mr Humphries seems organic and realistic; nothing is forced, the dialogue rings true and both Nathan's autism and Mr Humphries's Multiple Sclerosis are acted with a sense of undiluted realism. Marsden, always a joy to watch, plays his typical grey character, likeable yet on the edge of unnerving. Yang's debut performance is also worth a mention, running through a range of emotions in the sweetest love story I've seen on screen for a long time.

Matthews and his cinematographer Danny Cohen (cameraman on *This Is England*) light and shoot the film in a documentary style, allowing the actors and the scenes to breathe and unfold in a natural way

– an approach that makes the film all the more enjoyable and believable. Occasionally, shots attempt to show how Nathan understands our world through light, colour and pattern; it's an effect that works very well when the film relocates from Sheffield to the Taiwanese capital, giving the viewer a unique look at another culture and allowing us to enjoy Taipei as Nathan does.

Matthews has excelled himself with this film, exploring in a gentle, heart-warming way the beauty of mathematics, the beauty of the world we live in, the beauty of Nathan's innocence and his gentle emergence into a bigger emotional world.

Mark McConnell

### Fortean Times Verdict

BEAUTIFULLY ACTED, AND MATTHEWS EXCELS HIMSELF

9

### Predestination

Dir the Spierig Brothers, Australia 2014  
On UK release from 20 February

It's not been a bad couple of years for Ethan Hawke. In 2013, along with Richard Linklater and Julie Delpy, he brought us the charmer that was *Before Midnight*, in 2014 he was back (sans Delpy) doing the rounds with the triumphant *Boyhood*. In amongst all the drama, the depictions of adolescence and the Sun-setting relationship saga, however, lies this little sci-fi flick that explains why I'm currently feening for a Hawke!

*Predestination* sees him as a

bartender/temporal agent who is sent on a final assignment to catch an elusive criminal, the 'Fizzie Bomber', who is responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians in New York City. Armed with a time machine, neatly disguised as a vintage violin case, and a transformed "Unmarried Mother" (Sarah Snook), the unnamed agent faces a race against time to create a future that would be better for us all.

Time-travel is often attempted in films, but rarely is it as intricate as in this tale, and seldom do the twists and turns amount to an engaging and affecting ride that surprises right up until the end. Directed by the Spierig brothers and adapted from a Robert A Heinlein short story, *Predestination* is an assuredly realised picture that strikes the right balance between the fun stuff and the profound, and also manages to convincingly tackle more delicate themes while still remaining firmly within the realm of science fiction.

The brothers do, at times, try to cram a little too much into the movie's modest frame, so from time to time we are left more bewildered than bewitched; but this in no way detracts from an otherwise highly enjoyable film, that features an ever-reliable performance from Hawke and an outstanding turn by fellow Australian and newbie Snook. Definitely worth a watch. Fohnjang Ghebdinga

### Fortean Times Verdict

HAWKE IS AS GOOD AS EVER IN FUN TIME-TRAVEL TALE

8

### Ganja and Hess

Dir Bill Gunn, US 1973  
Eureka, £15.99 Dual Format

*Ganja and Hess* was written and directed by (and co-stars) Bill Gunn in 1973. It stars Duane Jones (best known as the hero of George Romero's landmark *Night of the Living Dead*) as Dr Hess Green, a wealthy academic who is stabbed with an ancient African dagger by his assistant George Mada, who then commits suicide. After the incident, Hess finds that he has contracted a disease with symptoms similar to vampirism. To compound his problems, Mrs Ganja Mada (Marlene Clark) arrives demanding to know where her husband is.

*Ganja and Hess* is a difficult



film for several reasons. First off, until recently it was very difficult to get hold of. Secondly, if you did manage to get hold of it, it was usually in a poor quality and severely cut form, which more or less ruined it. Thirdly, it is deliberately slow-paced and there is little incident. This Blu-ray reissue of the original release version has been mastered from a 35mm negative and provides a welcome and long overdue solution to the first two of these problems. However, that third reason is perhaps the most important, because *Ganja and Hess* has often been lumped in with the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s – it was produced by and concerns African-Americans – and also with the horror genre because of the vampirism angle.

In fact, those categorisations, while understandable, are not a particularly good fit for *Ganja and Hess* which is a world away from, for example, *Shaft* on the one hand and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* on the other. There are horror elements, albeit ones which call to mind other oblique genre films, such as George Romero's *Martin* and Harry Kumel's *Daughters of Darkness*. But, it seems to me, the film, with its rudimentary, grainy photography, has the look of an experimental feature and is striving for, and achieves, the social and emotional concerns of someone like John Cassavetes.

Gunn's theme in *Ganja and Hess* is not vampires in the mythological sense but as a metaphor for the idea of preying upon others. Hess is shown to be a respected but aloof man who seems distanced from his ethnic roots, surrounding himself with the trappings of the white upper-middle class and even employing a black butler. Ganja is a woman who has experienced a troubled childhood and become determined to do whatever it takes to survive. So when she learns Hess's secret, she uses it to what she considers to be her advantage. The two characters, now linked by their shared 'disease', feed off other marginalised characters – black and white – for sustenance. The film, then, is perhaps less a celebration of black identity than a critique of the extent to which ethnic minorities are perhaps too ready to prey upon themselves, while at the same time understanding that their often limited opportunities give them no

## THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! ([www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com](http://www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com); @revpeterlaws)

**BIG FINISH** ([www.bigfinish.com](http://www.bigfinish.com)) The really big fans of vintage TV shows are a little like historians. They stumble across a programme that they love (often during their formative years) only to see it cancelled and banished to the past as the TV world moves on. They're left, therefore, with a limited amount of stories to enjoy, which become like precious artefacts. Episodes are watched and re-watched; plots, actors and dialogue are discussed online and at conventions, where fans dig deep into every inch of the limited data available. Imagine the thrill then, when they discover a show that they loved is still going on, complete with brand new stories, in some quiet corner of the Internet.

That's where Big Finish step in, using the thrifty medium of audio drama to revive worlds long thought lost, with full-blown, radio-worthy productions that contain the killer ingredient for fans: actors from the original series. Since an actor's voice doesn't age like their physical appearance, it makes these new additions feel both contemporary and retro at the same time. This isn't some reboot of the original series – these are more like lost episodes.

*Survivors* is a great example. Terry Nation's timely 1970s show remains disturbing because it was a zombie apocalypse movie without the zombies, its central question more pertinent than ever: how the heck would we rebuild society if it really did fall apart? Here, grizzled hero Greg Preston (Ian McCulloch) has a clash of ideologies with a crazed sociologist who wants to re-order the post-plague world with a copy of Haralambos in one hand and a rifle in the other.

More straight-up horror is to be found in Big Finish's revival of the daytime soap *Dark Shadows*. I listened to their new series, called *Bloodlust*, and was surprised at how much 'visual' depth it adds to the TV version. I love the original show, but it sometimes felt inevitably bound by its studio-based sets. As charming and effective as the original was, Collinsport just feels bigger in the audio world.

It's not just TV show revivals, incidentally, rich productions of classic literature are on offer too – *Frankenstein*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Day of the Triffids* are good examples – yet a look at the website proves that the Big Finish folks have cult TV running through their veins.

Such an emphasis means



there's an unavoidable air of nostalgia about what they do; the company name derives from the title of an episode of the 1980s TV show *Press Gang*.

Revisiting these shows reminds us of a time when things felt a little more enchanted, reality a little less dark. It's an interesting human quirk, this desire to return to our earlier lives, and Big Finish creatively plug into this common compulsion: those old monsters keep coming, and those weirdly ageless heroes keep destroying them. Just when you thought that old light was out, it turns out that, somewhere, it's still burning.

### Fortean Times Verdict

AUDIO TREATS FOR NOSTALGIC TV FANS: RECOMMENDED

8



FOUR BRAND NEW STORIES BASED ON THE CLASSIC TV SERIES

FOUR BRAND NEW STORIES BASED ON THE CLASSIC TV SERIES

alternative. It could also be argued that the ancient African dagger that spreads the disease is a metaphor for the curse of being of an African-American in modern US society.

It's an interesting and unusual film, but it's still not an easy one to like. Some sequences go on for far too long, the cinematography is often dimly lit and rather ugly, and the lack of any sympathetic characters is alienating. However, the acting is terrific; unusual for a semi-experimental low-budget production.

Bill Gunn directed only one more project after this, but did enjoy some critical success as a playwright. He died in 1989, aged just 54. Duane Jones, despite appearing in two landmark genre movies, also had a short acting career, but became a drama teacher and champion of ethnic theatre. He too died young, in 1988 aged 52. Marlene Clark on the other hand had a long and varied career in film and television, including some fondly remembered genre movies including *Enter the Dragon* and *The Beast Must Die*.

This release has an impressive array of extras, including an audio commentary by Clark and members of the production team; a documentary; an e-copy of the script; and an essay on the film by Kim Newman.

### Fortean Times Verdict

A LANDMARK IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CINEMA

7

## The Changes

Dir John Prowse, UK 1975  
 BFI, £24.99 DVD

Nicky Gore (Victoria Williams) is doing her homework when there's a disturbing sound – and suddenly her father is smashing the TV set and everything else technological in the house. Down the street, across the city, throughout Britain, it's the same: TVs, radios, kettles, toasters, cars – any sort of machine is smashed in horror and fear. People start to leave the cities in droves, many heading to the coast to get to France – but Nicky becomes separated from her parents and is left to fend for herself.

This is the unsettling beginning to *The Changes*, a 10-part BBC children's series broadcast in 1975 and now released for the first time on DVD as part of the British Film

Institute's science fiction season.

The general concept of the story, adapted from a trilogy of novels by Peter Dickinson, is an excellent example of what Brian W Aldiss called "cosy catastrophe", the classic British disaster scenario, as in the works of John Wyndham, Terry Nation's *Survivors* and so on, in which civilisation falls apart, our social mores crumble overnight and local power is grabbed by the man with the biggest weapons and the nastiest thugs. Superstition and brutality go hand in hand; halfway through the series Nicky is going to be stoned as a witch, simply because she is able to go near a tractor. The series also takes a healthy swipe at misogynistic attitudes – how easily women become subservient to men.

*The Changes* is most notable for the four episodes in which Nicky travels with a group of Sikhs, carrying their possessions and their grandmother on hand-carts. In 1975, Sikhs were still fairly unusual in much of Britain, and the sensitive portrayal of the way they care for Nicky, as opposed the way they are stigmatised by white English villagers as "The Devil's Children" (the title of one of Dickinson's original novels), was a ground-breaking statement by children's TV against racism, bigotry and ignorance. (The DVD includes a 1983 educational film from the Central Office of Information, *At Home in Britain*, in which three Asians – a Hindu, a Muslim and a Sikh – talk about their beliefs and practices and how these affect their way of life here.)

Nearly 40 years on, *The Changes* stands up well in content and quality. Being shot entirely on location, in city and countryside, farms and cottages, canals, quarries and caves, brings an at times startling visual clarity and a realism to the story that the wobbly sets common to TV drama of the period could never have achieved.

Music and disturbing sound effects are by Paddy Kingsland of the innovative BBC Radiophonic Workshop, who contributes his recollections of composing and recording the music in one of several informative essays in the chunky 32-page booklet.

David V Barrett

### Fortean Times Verdict

EXCELLENT CHILDREN'S SF WITH A STRONG MESSAGE

8

## SHORTS

### DEAD SNOW 2: RED VS DEAD

Entertainment One, £12.99 (DVD) £14.99 (Blu-ray)



A sequel to the entertaining gross-out original, this ups the ante in both the horror and comedy stakes. Picking up where the first film left off, it follows sole survivor Martin (Vegar Hoel) as he attempts to make his way home pursued by Nazi zombies under the command of General Herzog (Orjan Gamst). It transpires that Herzog wants to complete a mission left unfinished when he and his men were killed during WWII – namely to wipe out every living thing in town. For reasons I won't bore you with, Martin has Herzog's severed arm attached in place of his own missing limb and finds that it gives him the power to create and control his own zombies; useful when facing down an undead army complete with a tank stolen from a war museum. He also enlists the aid of three American geeks – the self-styled Zombie Squad – who have been preparing for just such a showdown. It's very silly, unbelievably violent and in monumentally bad taste; the ending in particular is jaw-droppingly filthy. It has to be said, however, that there are decent laughs amid the carnage, the attention to detail is good and technically it's very accomplished. **DK 6/10**

unfished when he and his men were killed during WWII – namely to wipe out every living thing in town. For reasons I won't bore you with, Martin has Herzog's severed arm attached in place of his own missing limb and finds that it gives him the power to create and control his own zombies; useful when facing down an undead army complete with a tank stolen from a war museum. He also enlists the aid of three American geeks – the self-styled Zombie Squad – who have been preparing for just such a showdown. It's very silly, unbelievably violent and in monumentally bad taste; the ending in particular is jaw-droppingly filthy. It has to be said, however, that there are decent laughs amid the carnage, the attention to detail is good and technically it's very accomplished. **DK 6/10**

### WHERE THE DEVIL HIDES

Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment, £9.99 (DVD)



Almost certainly the best Amish slasher flick I've seen this year, this has just enough about it to keep you interested. Colm Meaney is Eli Beacon, the fire-and-brimstone elder of an Amish community that believes in a prophecy about a devil child who will be the sixth of six girls born on the sixth day of the sixth month. He intends to kill them all at birth, but is prevented from doing so by Jacob (Rufus Sewell),

the father of one of the newborn girls. Cut to 18 years later and those girls have grown into young hotties who, as all Amish girls do, enjoy skinny dipping and going to the local keg party. Only someone starts murdering them; are they doing it to stop the prophecy or bring it about? It's ludicrous, of course, but none the worse for that. Meaney, Sewell and Jennifer Carpenter, as Jacob's wife, do most of the heavy lifting as far as acting is concerned, leaving the younger cast members to do the necking, running around and, er, dying. As a slasher it works well and keeps you guessing until the big reveal. On the other hand, and I admit I may be placing the film under greater scrutiny than it was ever meant to bear, its attitude toward religion is somewhat mendacious. I don't want to give the game away so I'll say no more except that director Christian E Christiansen (no, really) rather wants to have his cake and eat it **DK 6/10**

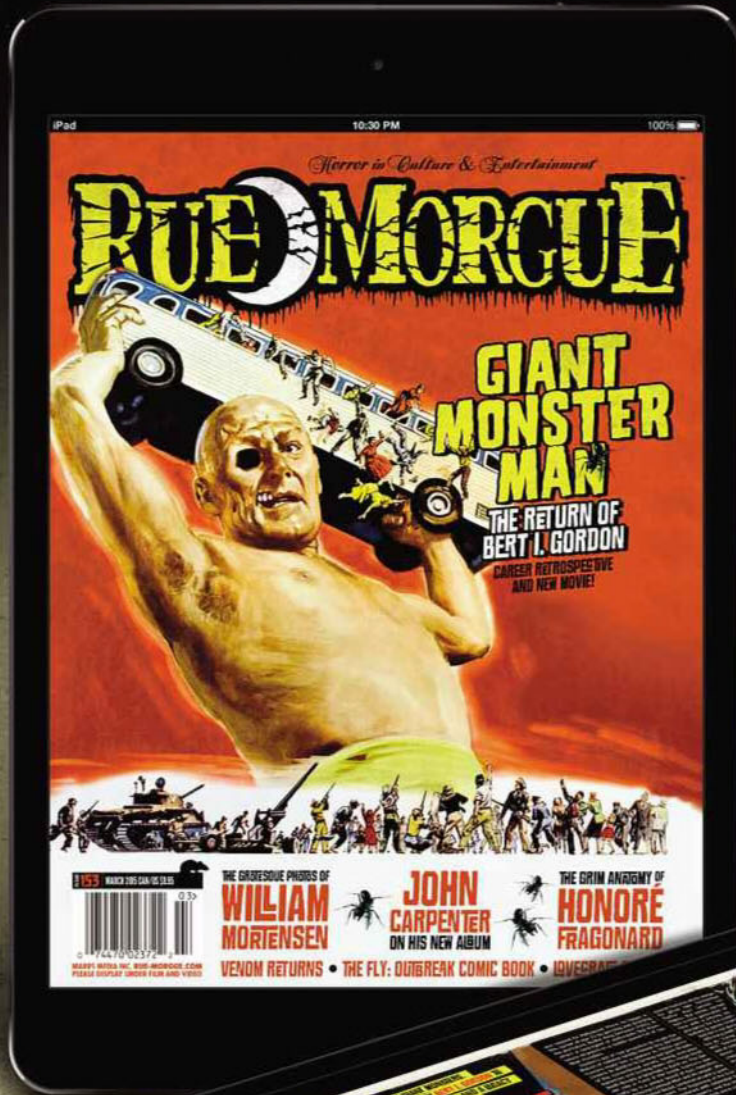
### DARK HOUSE

Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment, £9.99 (DVD)



Despite its almosy ostentatiously generic title, Victor Salva (*Jeepers Creepers*) has turned in a really odd film here, throwing everything but the kitchen sink into the mix: mysterious PK powers, the number 23, shambling, axe-wielding inbreds, angels, demons, a house that follows the protagonist around and the bloke from the *Saw* franchise. Sadly – despite the odd bit of visual invention – such prodigality isn't really a good thing, it turns out, and even if you can figure out what's going on, you'll probably be hard pressed to care. **DS 4/10**

RUE MORGUE DIGITAL  
TRY IT FOR  
**FREE**  
TODAY VIEW OUR 100<sup>TH</sup> ISSUE



**THE WORLD'S #1  
HORROR MAGAZINE**  
IS AVAILABLE PRIOR TO NEWSSTANDS ON  
**IPHONE, IPAD, IPOD TOUCH,  
PC/MAC AND ANDROID DEVICES**

BONUS CONTENT, AUDIO AND VIDEO  
HIGHLIGHTS AND LOTS MORE!



**\$4.99** PER ISSUE

**\$49.95** ONE YEAR  
SUBSCRIPTION  
11 ISSUES

VISIT **RUE-MORGUE.COM** OR YOUR PLATFORM'S APP STORE

Experimentelle Fliegende  
Untertassen Korps  
www.smdeeming.co.uk



Join the UFO forum  
will you be ready?

**Michel Nizan**

The only known biography  
of an actual member of the  
Illuminati.

Buy online now for only £10

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

**LOOKING TO  
BE PUBLISHED?**

SUBMISSIONS AND  
SAMPLES WELCOMED.  
ALL WORK CONSIDERED.  
NO AGENT REQUIRED.

**AUSTIN MACAULEY  
PUBLISHERS LTD**

CGC-33-01, 25 Canada Square  
Canary Wharf, London, E14 5LQ  
Tel: 0207 038 8212  
[www.austinmacauley.com](http://www.austinmacauley.com)  
mail@austinmacauley.com

On the Far Side of the Universe, do they Love?  
Do they have War? Art? Humour? Sex?  
Zy'Thra-Lyn: Death Three Ways

**ZY'THRA-LYN:  
Death Three Ways...**

The First Tome of the  
Space Lord Chronicles

Zy'Thra-Lyn: Death Three  
Ways The First Tome  
of the Space Lord Chronicles

Self Published  
Exclusively  
through Amazon

for Kindle at £1.99 or  
FREE with  
Kindle Unlimited &  
K.O.L.L.

Beth Orion

**HISTORY THROUGH COINS**

Home study coin collecting  
course. Where to find them,  
how to identify and photograph  
them. A must for every new  
collector. Makes a great present!

Support whilst you learn  
Course material supplied on  
CD, USB or as download  
Coins available for purchase

[WWW.HISTORYCOINS.CO.UK](http://WWW.HISTORYCOINS.CO.UK)

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

**ForteanTimes**

**OUTERSPACE  
SCREENSAVER**

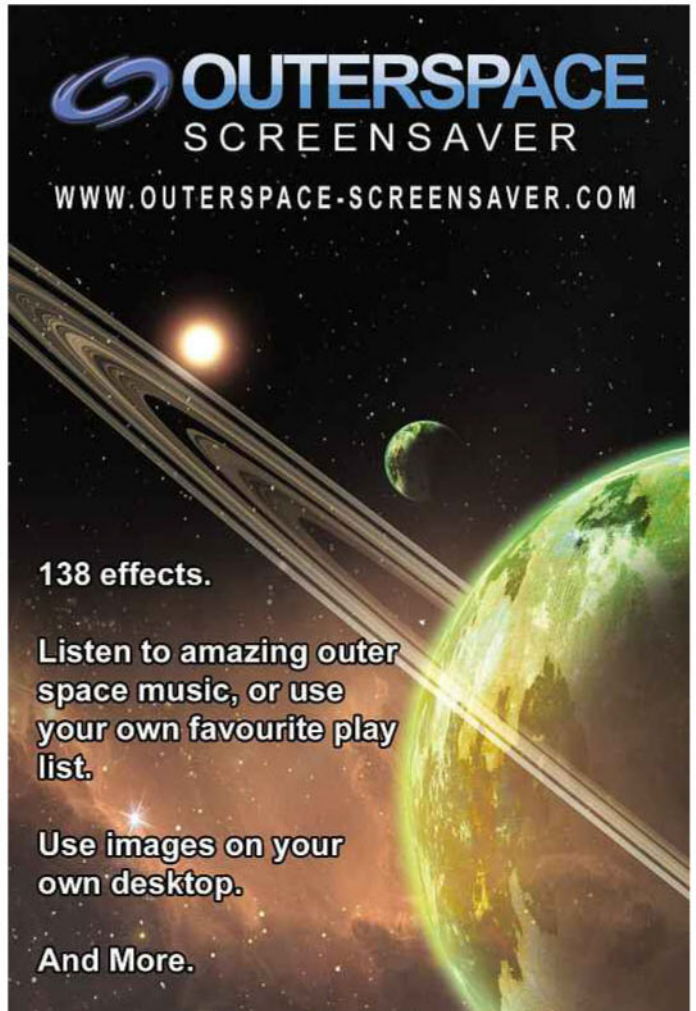
[WWW.OUTERSPACE-SCREENSAVER.COM](http://WWW.OUTERSPACE-SCREENSAVER.COM)

138 effects.

Listen to amazing outer  
space music, or use  
your own favourite play  
list.

Use images on your  
own desktop.


And More.



**HOW WE WERE MADE**

A book of revelations

William by Neil



4th  
Edition

ISBN 978-0-9545957-3-9  
[www.willmneil.co.uk](http://www.willmneil.co.uk)

Send a cheque or postal order for £15,  
with your details, to: P O Box 2467,  
Reading, England, RG4 7WU

Also from Waterstone's, or  
any bookshop, and  
[amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

216

**WANTED**

1960's & 1970's CONCERT POSTERS  
AND ALL ROCK & POP MEMORABILIA  
FROM THE 50's, 60's, 70's & 80's

**THE BEST CASH PRICES PAID FOR YOUR**  
CONCERT, GIG & TOUR POSTERS, FLYERS, HANDBILLS,  
PROGRAMMES, TICKETS, SIGNED ITEMS,  
PERSONAL EFFECTS, OZ MAGAZINES, SHEET MUSIC  
AND ANYTHING UNUSUAL THAT IS  
MUSIC RELATED.

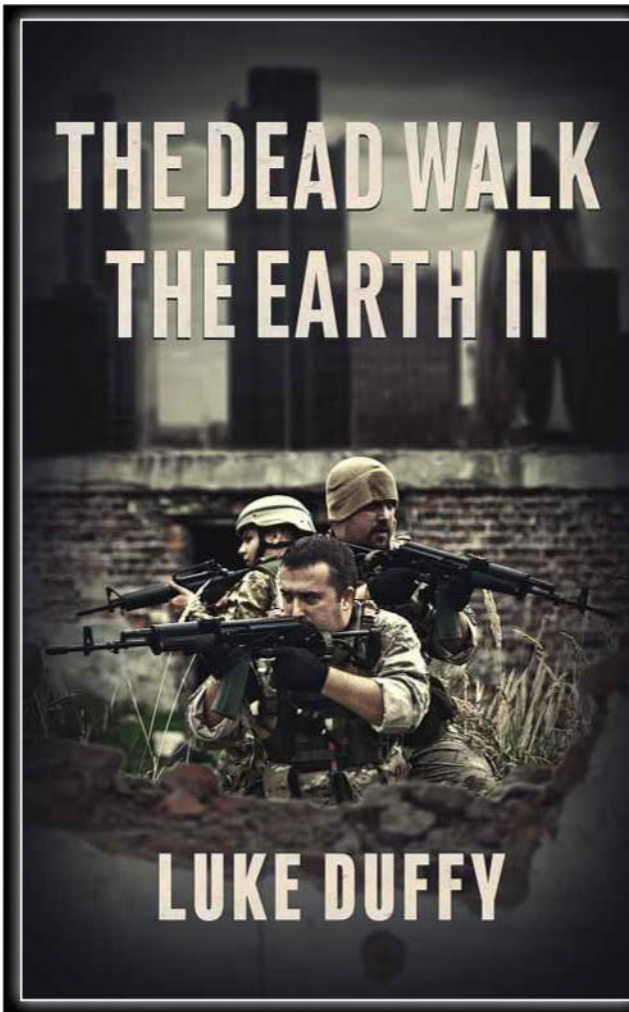
WE WILL PAY UP TO **£5000** FOR AN ORIGINAL  
**BEATLES** CONCERT POSTER, **£4000** FOR THE  
**ROLLING STONES** AND **THE WHO**, **£2000** FOR  
**JIMI HENDRIX** AND **LED ZEPPELIN**, **£1500** FOR  
**PINK FLOYD** AND **CREAM** AND VERY HIGH PRICES  
FOR OTHER 1960's & 1970's ROCK  
AND POP MEMORABILIA

LARGE COLLECTIONS PURCHASED AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

**Briggs** FREE QUOTATIONS **Briggs**

01494 436644

BRIGGS ROCK AND POP MEMORABILIA  
Loudwater House, Loudwater Road, Loudwater, High Wycombe, Bucks HP10 9TL  
email - [music@usebriggs.com](mailto:music@usebriggs.com)



The mainland is lost, conquered by the armies of walking dead that now roam the earth, consuming all in their path as they spread like a black plague through the wasteland that had once been civilisation. As the remains of the human race retreat to the islands, clinging to them like life rafts in an ocean of terror, the ravenous monsters, the evil shadows of humanity, become the dominant species on the planet. Disease, famine, and death begin to spread through the cramped refugee camps, threatening the continued existence of the living and forcing the remnants of the government and armed forces to begin an offensive that would recapture the ground that they have lost to the infected hordes. The survivors of the team, finding themselves placed at the spearhead of the great counterstrike, are given a special mission that would help tip the scales against their rotting enemy. Now they must fight for the entire world.

UK Registered Charity 1119902

## AN URGENT APPEAL for the strays in Sri Lanka

They arrive broken in body and spirit but we nurse them back to health and happiness. Animal SOS Sri Lanka is a small UK Registered Charity working every day to alleviate the widespread suffering of stray animals in Sri Lanka. There are 1000's of destitute strays battling disease, hunger and horrific injuries and they URGENTLY need our help. As well as caring for over 600 rescued strays in our beautiful sanctuary, we offer emergency veterinary care, rehabilitation, adoption schemes and neutering/anti-rabies/ animal welfare education through our weekly outreach programs. We are a lifeline to so many animals in the most dire need. They need us and we need YOUR support.



**AIBERT**

[www.animalsos-sl.com](http://www.animalsos-sl.com)

**WE URGENTLY NEED DONATIONS TO CONTINUE THIS LIFESAVING WORK. PLEASE HELP**

**PLEASE HELP US TO CONTINUE GIVING THESE ANIMALS A FUTURE BY DONATING TODAY.** *There is no greater gift*

Please LIKE us on

I enclose  £100  £50  £25  Other £

Mr/Mrs/Ms.....

Address.....

.....

Email.....

**Give more at no extra cost to you:**

**GIFT AID.** I would like Animal SOS Sri Lanka to reclaim tax on this & all future donations until I notify you otherwise. I confirm I am a UK taxpayer & that I pay as much income or capital gains as Animal SOS Sri Lanka will reclaim in the tax year (currently 25p in every £1 donated.)

Signature..... Date.....

Please make cheques payable to: Animal SOS Sri Lanka. Post to: 12 Cheyne Avenue, South Woodford, London E18 2DR  
 Or make a secure donation online [www.animalsos-sl.com](http://www.animalsos-sl.com) {E} [info@animalsos-sl.com](mailto:info@animalsos-sl.com) {T} 07773 746108 *thank you!*



Thinking Church...

Thinking culture...



Thinking politics...

Thinking scripture...



# THINKING Faith

THE ONLINE JOURNAL OF THE JESUITS IN BRITAIN

---

[www.thinkingfaith.org](http://www.thinkingfaith.org)

 Thinkingfaithjournal  @thinkingfaith

Dear FT...

# letters



## Toad in the hole

A friend of mine called Steve worked in a factory that made paintbrushes. One of his colleagues, the foreman in the saw-mill, showed him a log that was not feeding properly into the blade. Steve suspected the familiar problem of a knot in the wood, but after the log had struggled through, they could see that the problem was a fist-sized void, within which was a toad, neatly cut in half but still writhing in its death throes. It died a few seconds later. By its width, Steve reckoned the log, which was rosewood, was about 100 years old. There appeared to be a tiny pin-hole leading into the cavity, which presumably had provided air and very small edible creatures to sustain the toad; but how it managed to survive so long was a mystery.

**Huw M Youd**  
*Wheatley, Oxfordshire*

## McMinnville photo

I read the article on the McMinnville, Oregon, UFO photograph's "exposure" [FT321:28] with great amusement. By using Kevin Randle's statement that the 1950 photograph taken by Paul Trent is "either a craft from another world or a hoax" as the starting point, Dr David Clarke and Andy Roberts propose that it is indeed the latter.

Randle's statement is absurd. It would be more accurate to say that either the photograph's subject is "unidentified" or it is a hoax. As forteans, we suspend judgement until something is either proven or disproven. And the belief that UFOs represent some sort of craft from another planet or galaxy has been discarded by an ever-growing portion of the people who nevertheless believe that they are something real. Keel and Vallee both rejected that position in the 1970s. No honest person can say that he or she knows *what* they are.

At any rate, sceptics have long believed that, in the McMinnville case, a wire was used to suspend a car part (or some such thing) in

## Simulacra corner



Kevin Harvey noticed this quizzical face on one of the Stonehenge megaliths. In 1995, *Fortean Times* ran a photo of this face taken by Evan Dvorsek [FT80:17], but that was before we used full colour (apart from the covers).

*We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to [sieveking@forteanimes.com](mailto:sieveking@forteanimes.com) – and please tell us your postal address.*

midair and that the Trents then photographed that. However, as the authors admit, no one has proven that to be true. "As we have often said," the authors continue, "the simplest explanation is often the best one." Especially if that's the explanation that one is predisposed to believe.

"The simplest explanation" to any anomalous event is "it didn't happen", or "it's a fraud," or that "the witness is a liar" – but that hasn't always proven to be the best answer. If it were, then no one would bother to examine the evidence of this or any other such event. I certainly admit that the photograph could be a hoax; the point is that that hasn't been prov-

en, and until it is, the question is open. It speaks volumes about the evidence that the photographs have continued to be debated for 64 years. I have no axe to grind here; I would be delighted to see this case decided one way or another. If that can't be done, then why are Clarke and Roberts even bothering to bring it up?

**Bryan White**  
*Duncanville, Texas*

## Reputations

Thanks for printing part of my letter in response to Robert Guffey's article on horror comics [FT320:28-35, 322:68]; but I'm disappointed that you omitted my

challenge to Guffey that he use orgone to cure any future cancers.

Re: Joseph McCarthy: I fear that you suffer from the same anti-McCarthy brainwashing as the unfortunate Guffey. You have been exposed to material written and filmed by his enemies. Try reading these for a bit of balance: *Blacklisted By History* by M Stanton Evans; *American Betrayal* by Diana West; *Clever Girl* by Lauren Kessler; *Hollywood Party* by Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley; or watch the un-edited films of the McCarthy and HUAC hearings. McCarthy campaigned for and won the African-American vote in every election. Very few politicians even bothered with the Black vote in those days. Joe was a staunch supporter of the NAACP and integration. Many of his opponents were segregationists. You quote Nigel Mortimer saying that Wilhelm Reich had "the most honourable motives". Really? OK, Guffey cherry-picks from *Fury On Earth* in which Myron Sharaf (a Reich acolyte) admits that Reich was a rapist. No doubt he was a well-intentioned rapist; he merely wanted to adjust his victims' orgone. The Reichian therapists who raped their child patients were equally well-intentioned. The kids didn't appreciate it, but...

You say that Reich's early books are rated highly in the field of psychoanalysis. Uh... you mean the pseudo-scientific quasi-religion that is discredited by medical science and is an embarrassment to modern psychiatrists? *That* psychoanalysis? You say that opinion is split regarding Reich's later work – yup, it's split between scientists and space cadets. I don't want to believe that you sprang to Reich's defence because *Fortean Times* accepts advertising revenue from a company selling orgone products. I don't want to but... Say it ain't so, *Fortean Times!*  
**John Jerome**  
*London*

**Editor's note:** It ain't so. *Fortean Times* has never self-censored or turned down a feature to please or pacify an advertiser.

## The Doors

While it is well known that 1960s rock group The Doors derived their moniker from Aldous Huxley's classic psychedelic essay *The Doors of Perception*, it is also interesting to note a more directly fortean dimension to their music (or at least Jim Morrison's so-called affectations as a rock'n'roll 'poet'). Mick Wall's recent biography of The Doors, *Love Becomes A Funeral Pyre* (Orion, London 2014), contains the following passage in a chapter discussing the formation of the band in relation to Morrison's friendship with keyboard player Ray Manzarek at UCLA in the mid-60s:

"When, in June 1965, Ray graduated with a Masters Degree from UCLA, Jim was mailed his BA diploma, refusing – as with his high school graduation – to even show up at the ceremony. Instead, he chose to spend the afternoon with Dennis Jakob, gathering his numerous ringed notebooks into a pile then feeding them one by one into the building's basement incinerator. When Dennis asked for just one page to hold on to, Jim smiled that stunned, lazy smile and drawled, 'Don't worry, I'll just make new ones.' The books were only 'Things I'd seen and heard,' he told Dennis. 'Especially things that have no meaning'. Dennis wasn't so sure but in they went, into the burner, anyway. Along with the Senior Thesis that helped him get his BA, which he had worked and reworked into something he titled *Notes on Vision*, heavily influenced, Dennis wrote later, by *The Book of the Damned*

by Charles Fort, a decidedly bizarre almanac of UFO sightings, hostile weather and unexplained phenomena, some of which Jim would eventually return to and re-describe in his poetry collection *The Lords: Notes on Vision*" (pp.66-67).

Hours of fortean fun can now be had interpreting the Doors' oeuvre in light of this revelation. The Doors' most famous hit – 'Light My Fire' – is obviously about spontaneous human combustion. Their second album, *Strange Days*, is so named because it is actually the first fortean concept album. And, given that Morrison's reading of Fort suggests a wider interest in esoterica, acolytes of David Icke may argue that his rock-star persona as the 'Lizard King' indicates that he was trying to tell us something about Illuminati control of the music industry before his premature demise (or liquidation for revealing too much?) I'll leave the fortean analysis of *The Lords: Notes on Vision* to someone with more appreciation for Morrison's poetry than myself.

**Dean Ballinger**  
*Hamilton, New Zealand*

## Borrowed scenes

It was interesting to read Clive Potter's thoughts about the origins of Psychic Questing and The Green Stone affair [FT324:72]. He shows interesting parallels in the plot of a *Doctor Who* story that ran in the months leading up to the reported psychic messages received by a group of UK paranormal witnesses and researchers in 1979. This led them on quests to find buried artefacts and to collect assorted items such as swords and stones. This period of soothsaying spawned several popular books as the questing movement became something of a cottage industry. It led to claims about the supernatural origins of the great British storm that devastated parts of southern England in 1987. That awful night is infamously recalled for the misfortune of BBC weatherman Michael Fish telling the nation that no hurricane was heading our way – just before one did!

Its place at the hub of a reputed battle between dark forces is probably less familiar to the public.

Clive also notes that I wrote about how synchronicity appears to link fact and fiction as they ferment out of the collective subconscious in slightly different ways. I had (happily!) forgotten the rather pompous name I conjured up for it – psychic parallelism. I wonder why that never caught on... But I think there is something to this suggestion that events emerge from our psyche in the form of dreams, visions, real encounters and entirely imaginary stories all distilled from a soup of culturally topical ideas and images. You can see this in the way that Hollywood or TV often conjure up several similarly themed 'new' projects that they swear are just coincidentally like others that are being created concurrently. Echoes of Fort's "steam engine time".

I have also seen it in the world of the paranormal. Clive mentions how I noted the numerous threads that wove the Stephen Donaldson 'Thomas Covenant' novels in the early 1980s with the questing stories – seemingly independently, because they preceded much of his work. And I was fascinated to hear from gifted science fiction writer Ian Watson that when he moved into a certain part of the Midlands and wrote his seminal UFO novel *Miracle Visitors*, major UFO stories seemed to surround him in real life. In fact, he was in the midst of a veritable wave of some of the strangest UK close encounters just as he was writing his novel about the link between mental images and UFO sightings. I tend to think that this is down to a wider consciousness shared by us all from which we may not be aware that we are taking ideas and moulding and shaping them in some way.

Some of us invent tales or fictionalise these ideas; others find them leaking into their dreams, visions and borderland experiences that hover on the edges of reality. It may be down to the personal psychology or visual creativity of the person involved. Visually creative people are at the heart of all this, which is why creative writing is so prominent.

Alien abduction cases often

include story elements that coincide with something from other similar, recent events. It is as if a motif gains currency for a while as it bubbles near the top of this collective pool of images forming the cultural mind-set. You can also see how the form of the aliens being witnessed morphs to follow an accepted norm that alters subtly as the years go by, without anyone really noticing that a huge game of unintentional follow-the-leader is taking place.

More interesting, given Clive's letter, many abductions subconsciously seem to include – without the witnesses realising the fact – bits from then current science fiction TV and films. *Blake's Seven*, *Buck Rogers* etc have all featured and I recall one famous British abduction including an unusual alien entity that the witnesses appeared not to realise was very like a race of aliens that had recently been in *Doctor Who*. These things are more common when regression hypnosis is employed to 'uncover' the abduction lurking behind a screen of amnesia, for too long assumed by ufologists to exist – in my view, disastrously. I feel there is no real memory to uncover, so the subconscious delves into that collective image pool to hone one that will convince. There has even been an abduction in which the witness described imagery that had come straight out of the then popular TV soap *Dynasty* – even though they seemed unaware of its source. How much – if any – of what emerges from this sea of imagery is 'real' is open to question.

**Jenny Randles**  
*Pensarn, Conwy*

## The making of Nessie

The early episodes of the Loch Ness monster story (see "Nessie, daughter of Kong" by Charles Paxton, FT323:54-55) are certainly not straightforward, and are often related inaccurately.

One of these common errors is that the "monster" received its name in 1933 from the editor of the *Inverness Courier*, and that it hit international headlines only in the autumn of 1933.

I recently came upon the fascinating fact that the 1930 sighting of Nessie (Ian Milne's report of a





## Black-eyed Swedes



Here's a strange parallel to the 'Black-Eyed Kids' feature [FT322:26-32]. These graphics show a rather forgettable Swedish crime novel from 1956, *Döden skriver svenska*.

This literally means 'Death writes Swedish', but a more meaningful translation would be 'Death sits an exam'. The cover illustration is equally undistinguished – except for the four black-eyed girls, who might just as well be interpreted as aliens. There is nothing spooky or alien about the story, which is a totally straightforward crime yarn involving a 19-year-old getting killed as she sits an exam. (Spoiler alert: She is pregnant by a teacher. This doesn't explain why he should choose to kill her in the most public way imaginable,



but there's crime fiction for you.)

The cover is by one Rolf Lagerström, who seems to have been a prolific illustrator. A Google Image search will throw up dozens of his book covers in typical Sixties style, which are all rather better than this one – I would guess this is one of his earlier efforts. Unfortunately he has no Wikipedia entry. This was long before the familiar meme of 'Greys' had been established – if it had been, he couldn't have drawn the girls like this, or everyone would have thought it was SF. He was probably experimenting with different ways of stylising human figures; maybe Swedish girls at the time went in for heavy black eyeshade. On the other hand, I wouldn't think that became popular until the Sixties, so he would be some 10 years ahead of his time. All in all, I've never seen 'normal' human faces depicted quite like this.

**Nils Erik Grande**

*Oslo, Norway*

large back in Dores Bay which was covered by the local paper, the *Northern Chronicle*, on 27 August 1930) was reported in at least two American newspapers at the time: "People in the vicinity of Loch Ness in Scotland are much mystified over reports of a monster having taken up its abode in the lake. Three young bankers from Inverness were [angling?] from a boat on a calm [night?]. Then there was a churning and splashing of the water as if a fight between two large fish was in progress. Then it suddenly came towards the boat at a great speed and when about 300 yards [274m] away turned to the right and disappeared with a wriggling motion into a deep bay. It raised a wave about two and one half feet [76cm] high sufficient to rock the boat. A keeper on the shores of the lake says that some time ago he saw a monster swimming down the lake and that it looked like a boat upside down." ("Scotch Lake Becomes Place of Mystery", *Hartford Courant*, 12 Oct 1930; the same story essentially was covered by *The Sun*, 19 Oct 1930, under the headline: "Weird Lake Monster Reported in Scotland. Fishermen At Loch Ness Report Being Startled By It".)

So the Loch Ness monster already made headlines in the US in 1930! Interestingly enough, the original Scottish reports do not

talk of a monster, but of a large fish. Despite this early publicity, the monster quickly faded away again. Local monster supporter Alex Campbell had to undertake a second start, in 1933, and this time it worked.

Regarding the long neck, there must have been many different influences: the traditional water-horse, the fact that early witnesses assumed it might be a sea-serpent trapped in the loch, and the fact that the sea-serpent was already then synonymous with a surviving plesiosaur. In that way, when the *Inverness Courier* carried a satirical "interview with the monster" on 15 August 1933, it referred to "Mr Otterserpentdragonplesiosaurus" and could assume that everyone understood what was meant.

For a detailed account, almost day by day, of the first few months of what was slowly to become Nessie, please consult the essay in my book *Investigating The Impossible* (Anomalist Books 2011).

**Ulrich Magin**

*Hennef, North Rhine-Westphalia*

Charles Paxton's excellent Forum piece on *King Kong* and the Loch Ness monster [FT323:54-55] notes that Rupert Gould, author of the 1933 book *The Loch Ness Monster*, "was definitely thinking about long-necked aquatic monsters before the film's release".

However, there was a film before 1933's *King Kong* that could have influenced Gould and others into thinking of the possibilities of long-necked aquatic monsters. The film in question is the 1925 silent movie adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's novel *The Lost World*.

With hindsight, *The Lost World* can almost be viewed as a dry run for *King Kong*. It featured pioneering stop-motion special effects by Willis O'Brien, who would go on to produce the seminal effects for *King Kong*, and also included several dinosaur sequences. In one sequence, an Allosaurus attacks an Apatosaurus, with the latter falling off the isolated plateau – the titular 'Lost World' that comprises the dinosaurs' habitat. Professor Challenger and his expedition found the Apatosaurus trapped in a muddy swamp at the foot of the plateau. Challenger brings the beast back to London to exhibit it, thereby proving his tale. However, the dinosaur escapes when being unloaded at the docks and wreaks havoc in the city – a plot strand that will feel very familiar to *Kong* fans – until it reaches Tower Bridge. The bridge collapses under the creature's weight, causing the dinosaur to fall into the river and swim down the Thames, thereby making its escape from civilisa-

tion. Indeed, the images of a long-necked dinosaur swimming down the Thames that are seen in *The Lost World* are reminiscent of the (in)famous 1934 'surgeon's photo' of Nessie.

As early as 1922, Conan Doyle showed a test reel of O'Brien's dinosaur footage to a meeting of the Society of American Magicians, which included Harry Houdini. Doyle refused to discuss the provenance of the film, leading to a front-page *New York Times* article that stated: "Monsters of the ancient world, which he (Conan Doyle) has discovered in the ether, were extraordinarily lifelike. If fakes they are masterpieces."

It is at least possible that Rupert Gould and some of the Loch Ness monster's 'eyewitnesses' in the 1930s might have either seen or heard about *The Lost World*'s swimming dinosaur sequence in the 1920s. Perhaps they also read about it – given Conan Doyle's Scottish origins, one imagines the film received publicity in the Scottish press upon its local release. As such, it's possible that one specific sequence could have influenced the rise of descriptions of the Loch Ness monster as being a long-necked dinosaur, which have now become an established part of Nessie lore.

**Martyn P Jackson**

*Cramlington, Northumberland*

## John the woodwose?



To continue with the topic of the wodwose/ woodwose [FT320:72], I may have a possible explanation of the association with baptismal fonts. At the beginning of December 2014, I was able to view the interior of the Russian Orthodox church of Saint John the Baptist in Narabundah, ACT, Australia. The church contains a number of icons including a Black Madonna, and the upper walls feature exquisite late-20<sup>th</sup> century Greek-style murals, scenes from the life of Jesus on the right and those of St John the Baptist on the left.

As I was studying these scenes, I realised that one of the pictorial attributes of St John was his goathair cilice. This hair shirt was consistently depicted as a blue undergarment

covered by his green robes, the hair on the shirt falling in ordered waves. Initially, I thought that the woodwoses described in Matt Salusbury's woodwose article [FT318:28-33] were representations of St John; however, once I did some research, I could see that this was not the case. In his iconic representation, St John always has his robes over his hair shirt, which is obviously clothing; he frequently carries a cross and may have wings as well. A good example of this icon can be viewed at [icon-reader.wordpress.com](http://icon-reader.wordpress.com). Comparing this to the woodwoses, they appear to be hairy, unwinged men who carry clubs.

In Christian ideology, as well as foreshadowing the coming of Christ, St John is the first of the Green Martyrs, those saints who chose to struggle with their faith in the wilderness. In the aspect of the woodwose as a warrior for God, is it possible that in their association with baptismal fonts, in particular, they represent St John the Baptist?

While I was researching this, I stumbled across more images of 'woodwosettes' as mentioned by Angus Crowe [FT319:73], this time in tapestries (specifically on the website [polarbearstale.blogspot.com.au](http://polarbearstale.blogspot.com.au)). In these



cases, the women also have their breasts exposed, although there were plenty of other indicators of their gender. Also, in these tapestries, both the woodwoses and the woodwosettes appear to be wearing hairy clothes rather than being hairy in and of themselves.

**Catherine Gilbert**

*By email*



## Not more caviar!

Mat Coward asks if there is any evidence of anyone going on strike for the right not to eat oysters or similar [FT324:23]. I have come across something along these lines in the *Adventures and Inventions of Stewart Blacker* by Barnaby Blacker. Blacker was an inventor and aviation pioneer who had some involvement in the British Occupation of the Caucasus during the Russian Civil War of 1919, and he records a complaint from British troops in Ashkhabad about being fed too much of "that 'ere fish jam" – caviar. While they didn't mutiny or go on strike they certainly weren't happy about it. Blacker agreed that caviar really wasn't all

that nice without butter, and set off to track some down for them.

**Ian Simmons**  
*Newcastle upon Tyne*

Editor's note: reader Erwin Snelders directs us to an article by Nolar Moore on [Knowledge-nuts.com](http://Knowledge-nuts.com), which points out that lobsters were so plentiful on the US east coast in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that "the crustaceans eventually acquired a stigma, and – according to American observer John Rowan – became 'signs of poverty and degradation'. They were only served to prisoners and indentured servants, but even these slaves and crooks had rights. Indentured servants from Massachusetts got so fed up with

eating lobster every day that they took their masters to court, and the judge ruled in their favour, ruling the servants would only have to eat lobster three times a week." <http://knowledgenuts.com/2013/11/05/lobster-was-once-a-poor-mans-food/>

## Marilyn Manson

It was disappointing to see Jenny Coleman repeating the tired old tabloid myth [FT322:29] that the Columbine School massacre was inspired by the two perpetrators' alleged admiration for Goth rock star Marilyn Manson (aka Brian Warner). Although admittedly the statement is qualified with the phrase "said to", in the interests of

objectivity the article should have pointed out that the idea that the killers had anything but contempt for Manson or Goths in general was an invention of sensationalist reporting, discounted over 15 years ago.

The lazy meme that invariably seeks to blame such crimes on the entertainment industry does much to obscure their true causes and leads to the demonisation of 'al-ternative' subcultures. While I am unable to summon up much enthusiasm for Mr Warner's music or his creepy persona, the irony behind it is self-evident and his comments on 'Bowling for Columbine' are lucid, intelligent and not at all defensive.

**Mike Chivers**

*Waterlooville, Hampshire*

First-hand accounts from *Fortean Times* readers and browsers of [www.forteantimes.com](http://www.forteantimes.com)

## Colour precedent

Whenever FT publishes a "TV message from the future" story [e.g. **FT304:75, 306:69**], I'm reminded of my very own television mystery.

Australian television in the 1960s was strictly black and white; colour was not introduced until the mid-1970s. Around 1965, I was watching daytime television on one of the three commercial stations then operating in Melbourne. A commercial came on, filling the screen with the familiar AMPOL logo. In those days, AMPOL (the Australian Motorists Petrol Company) operated service stations throughout the country. Its logo was an oval filled with three horizontal stripes – red at the top, white in the middle and blue at the bottom. The central white stripe held the name AMPOL in either red or, in this case, black.

As the commercial began, an announcer stated gravely: "This is an AMPOL *Technicolor* commercial!" At this point, the logo began to flicker noticeably – clearly a stroboscopic effect caused by alternating blank frames with the logo. Incredibly, this produced the illusion of not one but two distinct colours, with the AMPOL logo standing out in its usual red, white and blue. I vividly recall being not only amazed that this was possible, but also slightly disappointed that the colours were washed out and pale, with the red stripe looking pink.

It's now about half a century since I saw this revolution in television technology and to this day I have been unable to find any mention of it. I never saw the advert again, have never met anyone who saw it, and can find no references to it on the Internet.

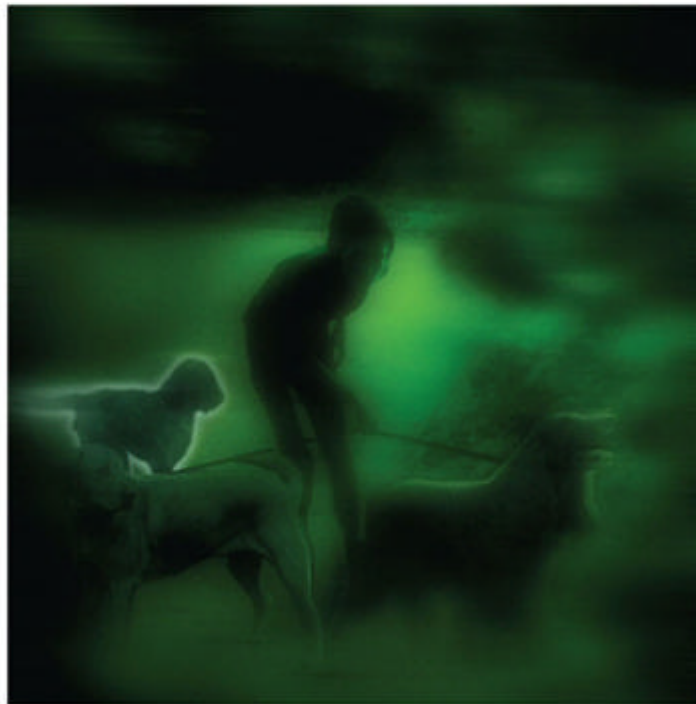
I'm now left wondering if it's even possible. Can the illusion of two separate colours be created on black and white television? (The TV system in use at the time was 25 frames per second, 625 lines vertical resolution PAL.) If not, just what did I see? Any insights from readers would be most welcome.

**CF**  
*Brisbane, Australia*

## Noisy dressing gown

My father, Barry Gibbons, and my aunt often told me the following true story, and I recently got my father to write it down. He is from Boston, Lincolnshire, but now resides in Denmark.

"In the 1970s, when I was 21, I went to Warrington [in Cheshire] to find work. I found lodgings at an old lady's house. Her husband had recently died. Over breakfast she said: 'Would you like my husband's dressing gown? I only bought it for him just before he died. It's silk.' After two weeks the lady fell ill and I had to find other lodgings. I went to sleep in my new lodgings with my new dressing gown in the wardrobe, only to be woken by my bed being violently shaken. This happened several times during the night. I was so scared that I stayed under my blankets until the morning light came. I immediately packed up my belong-



## "When I described the second dog, she said it sounded like her dog that had recently died"

ings and went to stay with my parents in Boston. I didn't want to go back to the lodgings.

"At my parents' home, I went into my normal room, hung the dressing gown in the wardrobe and climbed into my old bed. That night there were loud bangings on the ceiling and roof, so frighteningly loud that my parents heard it in the next bedroom. We all got up, asking 'What the hell was that?' My father and I were about to go to the front door to check what it was, when the banging started on the front door – so loud it was frightening. I returned to Warrington the next day, and forgot to take the dressing gown. My mother rang me up two days later, and said that more bangings on the door had occurred while I was away. My sister heard it too. We worked out that it must be the dressing gown. After throwing it away, the disturbances ceased."

**Ayeisha Kirkham**  
*Newark, Nottinghamshire*

## Canine revenant

I own four dogs, two of them inherited due to the deaths of both my brother and mother. Walking these four in my local park – Oakwell County Park, West Yorkshire – I was approaching a wooded area when a lady came out of the woods

towards me. She had with her three dogs, two spaniels and a Labrador, and I commented that she must be nearly as mad as me. As the lady and I continued our walk all the dogs trotted alongside as we talked, and she told me a few strange things including how she came to own the Labrador – through a charity auction – and she predicted the breed and colour. She said she was being taught to develop her psychic abilities and wasn't surprised by her prediction.

We walked and talked for a further half hour until we came to the park exit, when she put

the Labrador and one spaniel on leads. I asked why she wasn't doing the same to the second spaniel. She replied that she didn't have another spaniel and asked what I had seen. When I described the second dog, she said it sounded like her dog that had recently died and who loved that particular walk. His death had left a space, enabling her to bid for the puppy. I haven't seen the lady since, although she lives within a couple of miles of the park.

**Lindy Pickering**  
*East Bierley, Bradford*

## Shed of mystery

A few years ago, my son and I happened to visit a local branch of a large DIY chainstore in Nottingham. As it was summer, there were a number of display garden sheds outside the store, all with their backs to a blank wall, and their doors opening out onto the path outside the building. As we walked along, I noticed a stocky figure of indeterminate gender with long hair, wearing what I thought was a pale jumper and dark trousers, step out across the path and into one of the garden sheds.

Now, as my son and I were walking in the direction of the sheds, when we got to the one that the figure had walked into, I had a peek to see what they were doing in there... but the shed was empty. I would have put this down to a trick of the light, or even my imagination, had my son not exclaimed: "Where did that person go?" Needless to say, there was no back door to the shed and no hole in the ground. Where the figure went is a true mystery.

**Chris Shilling**  
*Sheffield, South Yorkshire*



# FORTEAN TRAVELLER

## 98. Knossos, Crete

**MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO** travels to the myth-rich island of Crete in search of the goddesses and monsters that fed her childhood imagination

Everybody, I believe, treasures at least one tale that speaks to them, and it doesn't matter if it comes from the other side of the world. My father told me the myth of the Minotaur when I was too young to understand the difference between mythology and fairy tales. On the island of Crete a wise man named Dædalus built a labyrinth to house a half-human, half-bull monster who had to be appeased with regular human sacrifices, and whom everybody called the Minotaur. Athenian prince Theseus wanted to confront the monster, but no man, not even wise Dædalus, knew how to get to the heart of the maze where the Minotaur lived. However, my father continued, there was a smart young woman named Ariadne who did. She gave the prince a ball of thread so that he could unwind it to mark his way and follow it back to the entrance.

Helped by her cunning, Theseus killed the Minotaur.

The story had a monster, a labyrinth, a smart heroine and a great deed; but what I found most exciting was that, unlike in other favourites of mine (Puss in Boots or Snow White), the place where the adventure occurred could be seen on a map. Naturally, I decided I had to visit the island of Crete, although this didn't happen until nearly three decades later. The turquoise sea and the promise of a feast of olives and *kalitsounia* were appealing, but if I'm honest, I was just answering the call of the myth, of the monster trapped in the labyrinth and the mysterious Ariadne, wise as a witch.

### KNOSSOS: IS IT THE LABYRINTH?

It doesn't matter that Knossos was likely a political centre and not the

**BOTTOM:** The ruins of the palace of Minos at Knossos discovered by Sir Arthur Evans, who later rebuilt and repainted large parts of the structure.

**BELOW:** The bust of Sir Arthur Evans at the main entrance.



home of a mythical monster: the legend seems tangible when you set foot in the ruins of the palace, just three miles to the south of Heraklion, the busy capital of the island. Knossos is the second most visited ancient site in Greece; a vast, positively labyrinthine structure, which explains why it's generally identified with Dædalus's creation. Our bus stops on an avenue of tourist shops crammed with straw hats and Minotaur fridge magnets. We've been awake since six to avoid the crowds and it pays off: it's just after 8am now; the morning light is exquisite and the ruins are silent.

The palace became a cultural icon thanks to Sir Arthur Evans, whose bronze bust, brooding into the sky, welcomes the visitors by the main entrance. He excavated Knossos from 1900 and was responsible for the controversial restorations that became its trademark: the bright rusty-red columns and the vibrant, stylised frescoes depicting dancing princes and princesses, ecstatic bull-leapers and sinuous dolphins. With his archaeological work in Knossos, Evans unveiled a sophisticated and hedonistic civilisation that fascinated the masses, much like Schlieman's Troy<sup>1</sup> or Howard Carter's Tutankhamun. He called them the Minoans after Karl Hoeck's initial use of the word, in honour of King Minos, Crete's legendary ruler. Like Schlieman's discovery of Troy, the excavation in Knossos had a clear euhemeristic appeal: with it, Knossos emerged from the darkness where myths dwell, suggesting that there was, perhaps, a historical basis for the myth of the Minotaur.

### TRACES OF THE MINOTAUR

Overlooking the scenery at the East Propyleia in the palace there's a pair of stylised bull horns, awe-inspiring in size, almost like the Minotaur's. They're a modern reproduction of a protective symbol that Evans called the horns of consecration, common in Minoan Crete, usually placed on the roofs of buildings of religious significance, tombs and shrines. The ubiquitous symmetric double axe is also part of the iconography of Minoan bull sacrifice. Its name, the *labrys*, is probably the root of the word 'labyrinth', the palace of the double axe, that referred to Knossos. But perhaps the most suggestive traces of this ancient civilisation are the *taurokatharsia* or bull-leaping frescoes, representing bold rituals with stunts and acrobatics. Reproductions can be seen on the walls of Knossos, though we have to wait until the following day to see the originals at the Archaeological Museum in Heraklion.

When we think of bull-worshipping civilisations, the Minoans might be



MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES



MARIA J PEREZ CUERVO

the first to spring to mind, but bulls have been considered sacred animals since Antiquity. Aurochs and bison were already depicted in Palaeolithic caves. What makes bull symbolism fascinating is that it shares both lunar and solar qualities: the Egyptian bull Apis or the Sumerian Gugalanna were lunar deities, yet the Vedic god Sūrya was solar and the Mythraic Mysteries of the Roman Empire are a celebration of a Sun god killing a bull.

But let's get back to the Cretan monster. Since Homer, poetic tradition has considered the Labyrinth the home to Asterion, or Minos's bull, the Minotaur. He was the monstrous descendant of the Cretan bull, a beautiful snow-coloured creature that Poseidon gave to king Minos as a gift. Minos refused to sacrifice it to the god, so Poseidon punished the king's hubris by cursing his wife Pasiphæ to fall madly in love with the white bull – so much so that Pasiphæ desperately asked for the help of one of the wisest men in Greece: the mythical inventor Dædalus. He built a hollow wooden cow for her to hide in and copulate with the animal. Thus, the unlikely affair was consummated, and the Minotaur – “the twin form of bull and man”, as described by Ovid<sup>2</sup> – was born. He was nursed by Pasiphæ until his ferocity became impossible to tame. Then the king had to seek advice from the oracle of Delphi. The pythia told him to have Dædalus build a maze to house the monster. However, the Minotaur would have to be appeased with regular human sacrifices: every seven to nine years, seven young men and seven maidens would sail from Athens to feed the monster. One of these chosen seven was Theseus, the prince of Athens, who would eventually kill Asterion.

### HUMAN SACRIFICES

Perhaps because we want to believe that there is some truth in myths, it's tempting to search for an historical explanation for them. JG Frazer certainly attempted to do so in his seminal (and deliciously Victorian) *The*



## We want to believe that there is some truth in myths

*Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (1890). He pointed out that the Minotaur sacrifice, held every eight years, coincided with the “normal length of the king's reign”. After each eight-year period, the king would retire to the oracular cave on Mount Ida to receive guidance from Zeus.<sup>3</sup> Frazer suggested that the monster could have been a red hot brazen bull in a sacred ceremony that involved roasting humans alive to renew the strength of the king or the Sun. The brutal image is reminiscent of that of Moloch, the god of Canaan, which jumped out of the pages of the Old Testament to influence iconic silent films *Cabiria* and *Metropolis*.

Of course, Frazer's suggestion wasn't based on archaeological evidence, since Knossos hadn't even been excavated yet. But could there be a fragment of truth to that part of the story?

TOP: Two views of the palace at Knossos.

ABOVE: One of the bull-leaping frescoes on the palace walls.

More recently, three archaeological discoveries have suggested that the sophisticated bull-worshipping civilisation had a darker side.

In 1967, archaeologist Peter Warren found fragments of a human skull at the early Minoan site of Fournou Korifi. The lack of other bones ruled out the possibility of a burial, so he worked with the hypothesis that the skull had been deliberately placed there, which would indicate ancestor worship or human sacrifice. Over a decade later, in 1979, the discovery of several skeletons in Anemospilia, a Minoan site near Heraklion, raised many questions. The scene that the archaeologists found remained frozen in time, buried by the effects of a violent earthquake. A skeleton found on an altar-like construction appeared to be that of a young man who had died of blood loss, probably after his carotid artery was severed, and there was evidence that his legs had probably been bound. Next to him was a large blade, and among the debris, a jar that contained bull's blood. A third discovery was unearthed, again by Peter Warren, in Knossos in 1980: about 200 bones of children between 10 and 15 years old were found in the North House. At least 20 of these bones showed butchering marks, perhaps

made with a thin obsidian knife, which again pointed to ritual cannibalism. It's difficult to reconcile this darker side with the elegant vitality and the intelligence that the frescoes exude.

### THE MISTRESS OF THE LABYRINTH

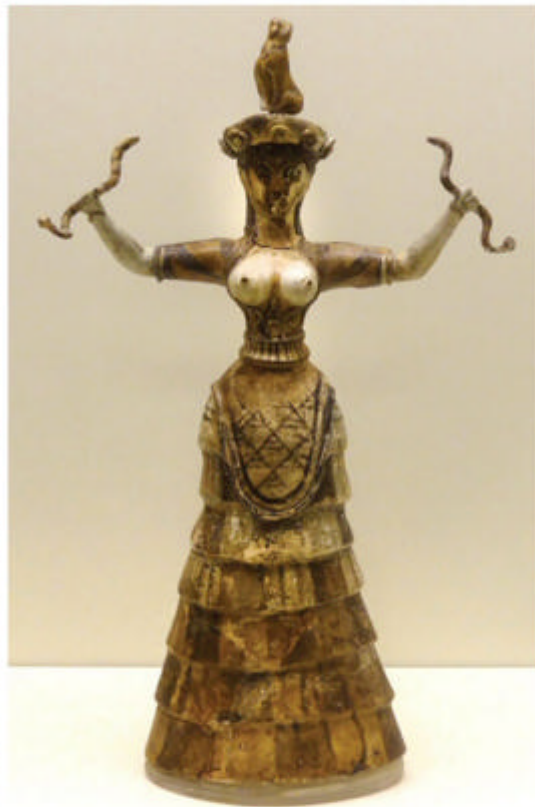
Ariadne remained the most elusive figure on my visit to Knossos. In the myth, she is the daughter of King Minos and Pasiphæ, and therefore the Minotaur's half-sister, a detail often overlooked but one that gives her more complexity. In the fascinating (if snubbed by academics) *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves translated Homer's verses from the *Iliad* as "Dædalus in Cnossos once contrived/a dancing floor for fair-haired Ariadne". Scholar Károly Kerényi translated it as Ariadne of the "beautiful braids of hair", an epithet that Homer used more often to refer to goddesses. Both Graves and Kerényi theorised that Ariadne, *arihagne*, the utterly pure, was therefore a goddess; Kerényi identified her as the "mistress of the Labyrinth" and noted that, in an inscription on a Linear B tablet, the libation offered to her was equal to the amount of honey offered to all the other gods. For him, this extraordinary distinction could only be explained if she was a Great Goddess.

Kerényi also noted that Plutarch (c. AD46-120) referred to a cult of Ariadne in the island of Naxos in his *Vita of Theseus*. Curiously, according to him, the Naxians recognised two Ariadnes. The celestial one was married to Dionysos, whereas the earthly one helped Theseus, eloped with him, and was abandoned by him shortly afterwards. She retired then to Naxos, where she died. Plutarch wrote that there were two celebrations for these two Ariadnes, though they were very different in spirit: the one for the goddess was joyful, the one for the mortal, gloomy and sorrowful.

### THE SNAKE GODDESS

Searching for references to Ariadne in Knossos I look at Minoan art, where anonymous women appear prominently. I see no threads and no labyrinths, but there is a bull: two fair-skinned female acrobats stand next to it in the *taurokatharsia* fresco.<sup>4</sup> I also find out that the iconic 'Ladies in Blue' fresco is a reconstruction based on very small fragments, visible because they appear slightly offset from the main composition. Despite the critics (Evelyn Waugh thought it looked like a cover of *Vogue*), it's a beautiful piece of art.

The most intriguing Minoan female figures can't be found in the palace, but in the museum of archaeology of Heraklion. They're two faience figurines<sup>5</sup> that have become the Rosetta Stone of the collection, as the crowd gathering around them suggests. Discovered by Evans in 1903, during his fourth campaign at Knossos, the first was a large fragment of a female figure sporting bare breasts and an apron



over a long flounced skirt. In her right hand she held a slithering snake. Evans referred to the figure as a "priestess or votary" and thought it part of a shrine. The figure was promptly reconstructed with another snake in her left hand and a head with expressive features, probably inspired by that of the bigger, somewhat rougher statuette that was found next to it.

The small figurine is widely known as the Snake Goddess, and Evans referred to the larger one as a Mother Goddess. They share the same glass case, and the same enigmatic stances, proudly showing their breasts. Evans suggested a link to the cult of Wadjet, the Egyptian cobra goddess who offered protection to women at childbirth and who had an oracle in the city of Per-Wadjet, still active in times of Herodotus. However, they could also be linked to Kebechet, the daughter of Anubis, depicted as a woman with the head of a snake. This goddess assisted her father in embalming during the process of mummification, and was therefore connected to the renewal of life. Snakes aren't just a symbol of fertility and rebirth, they are also the guardians of the underworld, and, in this chthonic form, they're part of an oracular tradition.

There's a third female figurine in the museum that intrigues me, with her stylised lines, sphinx-like smile and eyes that appear closed. Her hands are raised in a silent greeting, and she's wearing the pods of opium poppies around her head. This Poppy Goddess dates from the 13th century BC and was found in a sanctuary in Gazi, suggesting that opium could have been used as an entheogen in

ABOVE: The faience 'Snake Goddess' figurine.

TOP RIGHT: The 'Ladies in Blue' fresco.

#### NOTES

1 Schlieman had actually wanted to excavate the hill where Knossos sits, suspecting there was a complex underneath.

2 The Minotaur is usually depicted with the head of a bull on the body of a man.

3 "Knossos, where Minos reigned who every nine years had a conference with Zeus himself" (Homer, *The Odyssey*, XIX, 172-178).

4 In Minoan frescoes, women are portrayed with pale skin, as opposed to men, whose skin appears browned in colour, a convention borrowed from Egyptian art.

5 Faience was used in Ancient Egypt and symbolised the renewal of life.



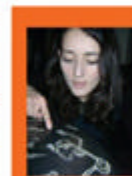
MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO

Minoan religious rituals. According to Kerényi, there could have been a connection between these and the Eleusinian mysteries, the religious ceremony held around the autumnal equinox in Eleusis. These so-called Greater Mysteries, *ta Mysteria*, were cults to Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and fertility, and her daughter Persephone, abducted by Hades. Little is known about the celebration, but Kerényi quotes first century BC historian Diodorus of Sicily, who writes: "Elsewhere such rites are communicated in secret, but in Krete, in Knossos, it had been the custom since time immemorial to speak of these ceremonies quite openly to all". Earlier, I referred to my journey as a pilgrimage. Visiting the place where a myth may have originated can be a numinous experience, particularly when the myth has a personal meaning, as it has in my case. Reflecting upon it, I realise it's because it holds the first reference to women's wisdom that I can recall. The mysterious Ariadne doesn't reveal herself – or perhaps she does, but under the appearance of a goddess.

The physical traces of a bull-worshipping cult and the references to a Great Goddess feel like glimpses of the great mystery, a passage to an otherworld populated by archetypes and mythical creatures. The myth is serving its function, at least according to Mircea Eliade: in answering its call, as I walk among the ruins, I'm detaching myself from the present, returning to a mythical age and coming closer to the divine. **FT**

#### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Diodorus of Sicily: *Bibliotheca historica*  
 JG Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1890)  
 Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (Faber and Faber, 1948)  
 Homer: *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*  
 Carl Kerényi, *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life* (Princeton University Press, 1996) and *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter* (Princeton University Press, 1991)  
 Plutarch: *Parallel Lives*.



MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO is a Bristol-based journalist whose odder interests include gothic Victoriana and doppelgängers. A regular FT contributor, she is on Twitter as @mjpcuervo.

# SECRET NEW WAYS TO STOP THE WEB WATCHING YOU

MAGBOOK

PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY ON THE WEB

HOW TO **STAY**

# ANONYMOUS

**ONLINE**



HIDE EVERYTHING YOU DO FROM PRYING EYES

**ON SALE  
NOW!**

Order your print or digital MagBook at [magbooks.com](http://magbooks.com)

## how to subscribe

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £39.98; EC £47.50; USA \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £55. Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

### North America (US & Canada)

Subscribers should contact: IMS, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 800-428 3003 (toll free); Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at [www.imsnews.com](http://www.imsnews.com).

### UK, Europe & rest of world

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times** Dovetail Services, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU, UK. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only. Telephone payments and queries: 0844 844 0049. Fax payments and queries: 0844 815 0866. E-mail payments and queries: [ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk](mailto:ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk)

## how to submit

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by FT readers and contributors in any medium or format.

### Illustrations

Contact the art director by email ([etienne@forteantimes.com](mailto:etienne@forteantimes.com)) before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

### Article submissions

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD, UK or email [drsutton@forteantimes.com](mailto:drsutton@forteantimes.com). As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate.

### Letters

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email [sieveking@forteantimes.com](mailto:sieveking@forteantimes.com). We reserve the right to edit submissions.

### Books, periodicals, DVDs and other material for review

Send to: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD, UK.

### Caveat

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. FT can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.



## Clippers wanted!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: **1 MAR 2015**. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

**Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK**  
**E-mail: [sieveking@forteantimes.com](mailto:sieveking@forteantimes.com)**  
**or post on the FT website at [www.forteantimes.co.uk](http://www.forteantimes.co.uk), where there is a contributor's guide.**

# Why Fortean?



**F**ortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932). Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

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

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

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

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

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

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

**FT** toes no party line.

## Special Correspondents

**AUSTRALIA** Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC), **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Steve Scanlon, Janet Wilson. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Kate Eccles, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Owen Whiteoak, Bobby Zodiac. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Chris Williams. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Greg May (FL), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

## Fort Sorters (who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Chris Josiffe, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

## Clipping Credits for FT325

Gail-Nina Anderson, Gerard Apps, David V Barrett, Louise Bath, James Beckett, John F Callahan, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Graham Cordon, Elizabeth Cumming, Emily Davies, Brian Duffy, Kate Eccles, John H Evans, Paul Farthing, Rob Gandy, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Alan Gibb, Benjamin Gleisser, Tony Healy, Hugh Henry, Colin Ings, Paul Jackson, Tim Greening-Jackson, Tony James, Richard Lowke, Diana Lyons, Bert & Betty Gray-Malkin, Nick Maloret, Greg May, John Palazzi, Chris Peat, Martin Piechota, Zvi Ron, Tom Ruffles, Matt Salusbury, Paul Screeton, Jonathan Sibley, Tony Smith, Nidge Solly, Paul Street, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Carole Tyrrell, Jebadiah Valentine, Nicholas Warren, Len Watson, Owen Whiteoak, Paul Whyte, Janet Wilson, Bobby Zodiac.

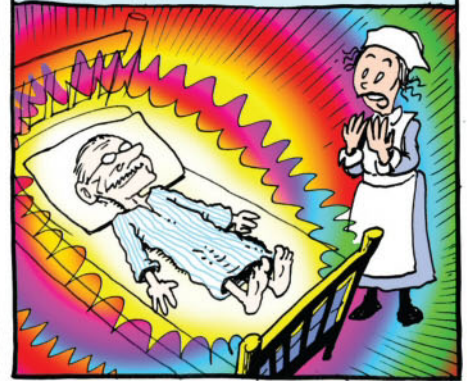


# PHENOMENOMIX CARL JUNG Part 5 HUNT EMERSON + KEVIN JACKSON

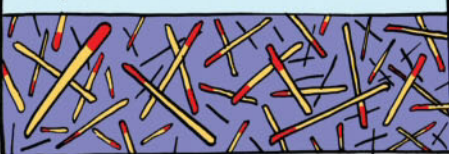
IN THE LATE 1940s CARL JUNG HAD A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE! WHILE UNDER ANAESTHETICS, HIS MIND SOARED 1000 MILES FROM EARTH, AND GAZED DOWN IN WONDER!



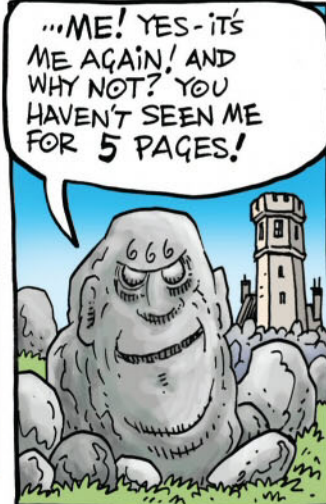
WHILE, BACK ON EARTH, HIS SICK BODY GLOWED WITH A BRILLIANT AURA...



HE RETURNED TO HIS EARLIER STUDY OF THE I-CHING, AND WROTE AN INTRODUCTION TO RICHARD WILHELM'S NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE ORACLE! IT BECAME A MASSIVE BEST-SELLER, AND THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE - NOT ALL OF THEM HIPPIES - BEGAN TO CONSULT IT...



IN HIS OLD AGE, JUNG ENJOYED STONE CARVING IN THE ROCKS AROUND HIS TOWER! ONE OF THEM - "THE TRICKSTER" - LOOKS REMARKABLY LIKE...



HIS INFLUENCE ON ARTISTS OF ALL KINDS SPREAD HIS FAME AROUND THE WORLD! "JUNGIAN" ARTISTS INCLUDE HERMANN HESSE...



... JACKSON POLLOCK ...



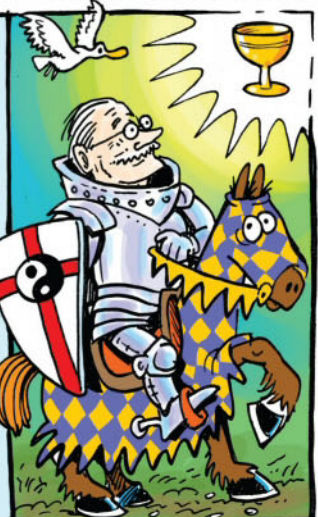
... AND PETER GABRIEL ...



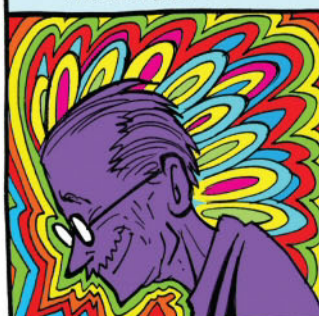
AS HE GREW OLDER, JUNG BEGAN TO SUSPECT THAT LONG-DEAD FRIENDS AND RELATIVES WERE VISITING HIM IN THE FORM OF ANIMALS...



AND HE RE-VISITED THE CHRISTIANITY OF HIS EARLY YEARS, GROWING FASCINATED WITH THE MYTH OF THE HOLY GRAIL!



BUT HIS FOLLOWERS SAW HIM LESS AS A CHRISTIAN MYSTIC THAN AS A KIND OF WESTERN ZEN MASTER...



JUNG DIED IN THE EARLY 1960s - JUST A BIT TOO SOON TO WITNESS HIS CULT STATUS IN THE NEW AGE...

~ DESPITE THE WEIRDNESS OF HIS EXPERIENCES, JUNG WAS AT HEART A SCIENTIST! BUT TODAY HE'S FAMOUS FOR HIS BRILLIANT IF STRANGE INSIGHTS INTO MYTH AND RELIGION - IN FACT, AS A TYPE OF MODERN WIZARD!



# COMING NEXT MONTH



## WESTMINSTER WEIRDOS

BRITAIN'S MADDEST MPs AND  
MOST PECULIAR POLITICOS



## THE AMAZING DR FALK

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE  
BAAL SHEM TOV OF LONDON



CRUCIFIXION SCIENCE,  
THE MANNA MACHINE,  
KILLER KANGAROOS,  
AND MUCH MORE...

# FORTEAN TIMES 326

ON SALE 2 APRIL 2015

# STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



Last summer, police in Mount Laurel, New Jersey, were allegedly called to an unnamed motel after the body of a young woman had been found under a bed. According to medical opinion, it had lain undisturbed for about five years. "I dropped the television remote, and when I went to check under the bed I found her," said Aaron Silver, who was staying in the room. "I clean that room every day," said housekeeper Anita Rodriguez. "I noticed a smell several times, and told my manager. He told me to just use extra Febreze in the room and it would go away eventually. I always hated cleaning that room." *Empire News*, 24 July; *nymeta.co*, 26 Aug 2014.

After this news story was published, Mount Laurel Police spokesperson Lt Stephen Riedener described it as "absolutely false", further noting that it didn't even correctly name his department's police chief, identifying him as "Joe Goldsmith" instead of Dennis Cribben. Besides, the story originated at *Empire News*, one of many fake news sites. Folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand first heard a "dead body under hotel bed" story in 1991, and the lack of circumstantial detail led him to class it as an urban legend. However, many similar stories are undeniably true: the Snopes legend website recounts 10 authenticated cases of odorous dead bodies being found under hotel and motel beds since 1982 ([www.snopes.com/horror/gruesome/bodybed.asp](http://www.snopes.com/horror/gruesome/bodybed.asp)). On 15 March 2010, for instance, the remains of Sony Millbrook from Memphis were found inside the frame of a bed at a Budget Inn motel an alarming 47 days after her initial disappearance – even though the room had been cleaned and rented several times. For a 1999 case, see **FT127:16**. *antiviral.gawker.com*, 30 July 2014.

William Wilson of Cape Coral, Florida, thought he was getting a great deal on a foreclosed home he bought at an auction for \$96,000. However, he discovered an unexpected 'bonus' inside: a corpse on the master bedroom floor. Neighbours said two sisters had lived in the house but no one had seen them for a while. Police blocked off the property and launched an investigation. *Fort Myers (FL) News-Press*, 5 Nov 2014.

A television fitness instructor killed while filming on a railway line in Los Angeles was reportedly trying to outrun a train for a sports drink commercial. Greg Pitt, 37, the star of the Bravo television series *Work Out*, tripped and couldn't get out of the path of the train near Burbank station. "He wanted to push things to the limit," said his girlfriend, Christina Stejskal. "He's just like Superman." *D.Telegraph*, 21 Jan 2015.

Richard Mileski, 60 (or 70), from Chicago, the owner of a Mexican wildlife sanctuary, died on 14 October after being kicked, bitten and sat on by an enraged camel. "Between the blows and the weight of the camel on top of him, he was asphyxiated," said a civil defence official. The camel weighed over 600kg (94 stone). Staff at the Tulum Monkey Sanctuary wildlife

park in Yucatan, southern Mexico, had to use a rope and a pickup truck to pull the camel away from the body. It was suggested the camel was annoyed at not getting a drink of Coca-Cola, which Mileski gave it most days. *MX News (Sydney)*, 16 Oct; [rt.com/news](http://rt.com/news), 17 Oct 2014.

A male camel in rut trampled two people to death at Camel Kisses Ranch in Texas. It charged ranch owner Mark Mere, 53, as he entered the pen it shared with two females, before killing Peggy McNair, 72, when she tried to shut the gate of the pen. The camel was put down. *Metro*, 12 Jan 2015.

Beekeeper Steven Adderson, who was allergic to bees, suffered fatal anaphylactic shock on 17 June 2014 after being stung once on the ankle. The 39-year-old engineer from Downham Market, Norfolk, died as he tried to help a neighbour tackle a rogue swarm of bees. "He had put on his suit," said his father Graham, "but was in such a rush to get to work that he forgot the boots."

A gardener in Arizona died after 800,000 Africanised bees attacked him, having been driven into a frenzy by his lawnmower. The 32-year-old man suffered a heart attack and was dead on arrival at hospital. He was tending a lawn at the house of a 90-year-old man in Douglas, near the Mexican border. The bees swarmed from the attic; their hive, 4ft (1.2m) wide and 6ft (1.8m) high, was thought to be a decade old. It was later destroyed by a beekeeper after workmen removed part of the roof. *Eve. Standard (London)*, 9 Oct; *D.Telegraph*, Sun, 10 Oct; *D.Mirror*, *D.Mail*, 24 Oct 2014.

A wild boar caused the death of a motorist on the M4 near Swindon on 5 January. The unnamed 47-year-old man, from Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire, was killed when his Seat Ibiza collided with the animal before hitting a lorry. Wild boar were hunted to extinction in Britain at least 300 years ago, but have been making a comeback in the last few decades; they have virtually no natural predators. A fully-grown male can weigh up to 200kg (440lb), and the animals often stray onto roads. In 2013 there were 43 road accidents involving wild boar in the Forest of Dean, which for the first time was more than those involving deer. *D.Telegraph*, 7 Jan 2015.

Lucie Brownlee was trying for a baby with husband Mark, 37, when he suffered cardiac arrhythmia and died. His last words were: "You've still got your socks on." *Sun*, 18 July 2014.

## THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2

ON SALE NOW FROM  
WH SMITH AND AMAZON.CO.UK  
TO ORDER DIRECT CALL 0844 844 0053



# Why Not Be A Freelance Journalist?

**A**s a freelance journalist you can have an exciting and financially rewarding career. A recent survey shows that freelancers can earn up to £40,000 a year writing for newspapers, magazines, trade and technical publications, TV and radio.

Freelancing means you are your own boss with the freedom to work when and where you please. You can be either a full-time career journalist selling your services to the highest bidder or a part-timer submitting the occasional article to earn an extra income. It's up to you to decide how far you go. Plus, if you want to work on staff, freelancing is a great way to gain the necessary journalistic experience.

To succeed as a freelance journalist – at whatever level – training is essential. Our first-class home-study freelance journalism course



– with personal tuition – gives you all the training you need.

Professional journalists and writers show you how to write articles, features, reviews for a wide variety of newspapers and magazines. You are advised on style, content, presentation, copyright, ethics and law. Most importantly you are shown **HOW TO SELL YOUR WRITING in the UK and around the world**. Finally you are taken behind the scenes at a newspaper office, advised on how to get a staff job and much more.

We are so confident that we can help you become a published freelance journalist that we give you a **full refund guarantee**. This states that if you have not earned your course fees by the time you finish the course we will refund them in full.

**Whatever your journalistic ambitions – for an extra income or an exciting new career – this is the place to start.** No special background or experience needed. **Ideal for beginners!** Earn while you learn. 15 day trial. Details FREE. No obligation. Visit our website or call our freephone number NOW!

## Your Course

28 Information Packed Modules  
3 Supplements:

Spelling, Punctuation & Style  
Getting The most From Interviews  
Profit From Your Photography

15 Tutor Marked Assignments  
Certificate of Achievement

- First-class home-study course from professional journalists and writers
- Expert tutors
- Flexible study programme
- Help to sell your writing
- Enrol any time
- Student Community Area
- Ideal for beginners
- Full refund guarantee
- Earn while you learn

**“ I enrolled with The Writers Bureau on a Freelance Journalism course. By the following year I had had considerable success. Under the guiding hand of my tutor I had work accepted by the Financial Times, Daily Express, Daily Mail, Evening Standard and numerous magazines.**

*Monica Weller, Surrey* ”

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

Freephone 24hrs

**0800 298 7008**

Please quote ref: AT5315J



[www.facebook.com/writersbureau](http://www.facebook.com/writersbureau)  
[www.twitter.com/writersbureau](http://www.twitter.com/writersbureau)

email: [15J1@writersbureau.com](mailto:15J1@writersbureau.com)  
Please include your name and address

Members of The British Institute for Learning and Development and ABCC

Please send me free details of how I can become a successful freelance journalist.

Name .....

Address .....

Postcode .....

Email .....

Freepost RSSK-JZAC-JCJG

**The Writers Bureau College of Journalism**

Dept AT5315J, Manchester, M3 1LE

**17** Years of Success

**THE TERRIFYING CONCLUSION  
TO THE [REC] FRANCHISE**



**[REC]**  
APOCALYPSE



**ON BLU-RAY & DVD MARCH 2<sup>ND</sup>  
ORDER YOUR COPY NOW**

**amazon.co.uk<sup>®</sup>**

FREE UK DELIVERY AVAILABLE ON ELIGIBLE ORDERS.  
TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY. SEE AMAZON.CO.UK FOR DETAILS.