



BEAT THE DEVIL

THE VATICAN'S EXORCIST RECRUITMENT DRIVE

MADONNA OF THE ROCKS VIRGIN MARY'S AVALANCHE MIRACLE

THE FUTURE IS ORANGE HOW HINDUS ARE REWRITING HISTORY

EYES IN THE SKY CHINA'S HIGH-TECH SURVEILLANCE STATE

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS

CHILD-SNATCHING PANIC • WEATHER THEFT • DAREDEVIL RACCOON • SUPER-OLDIES

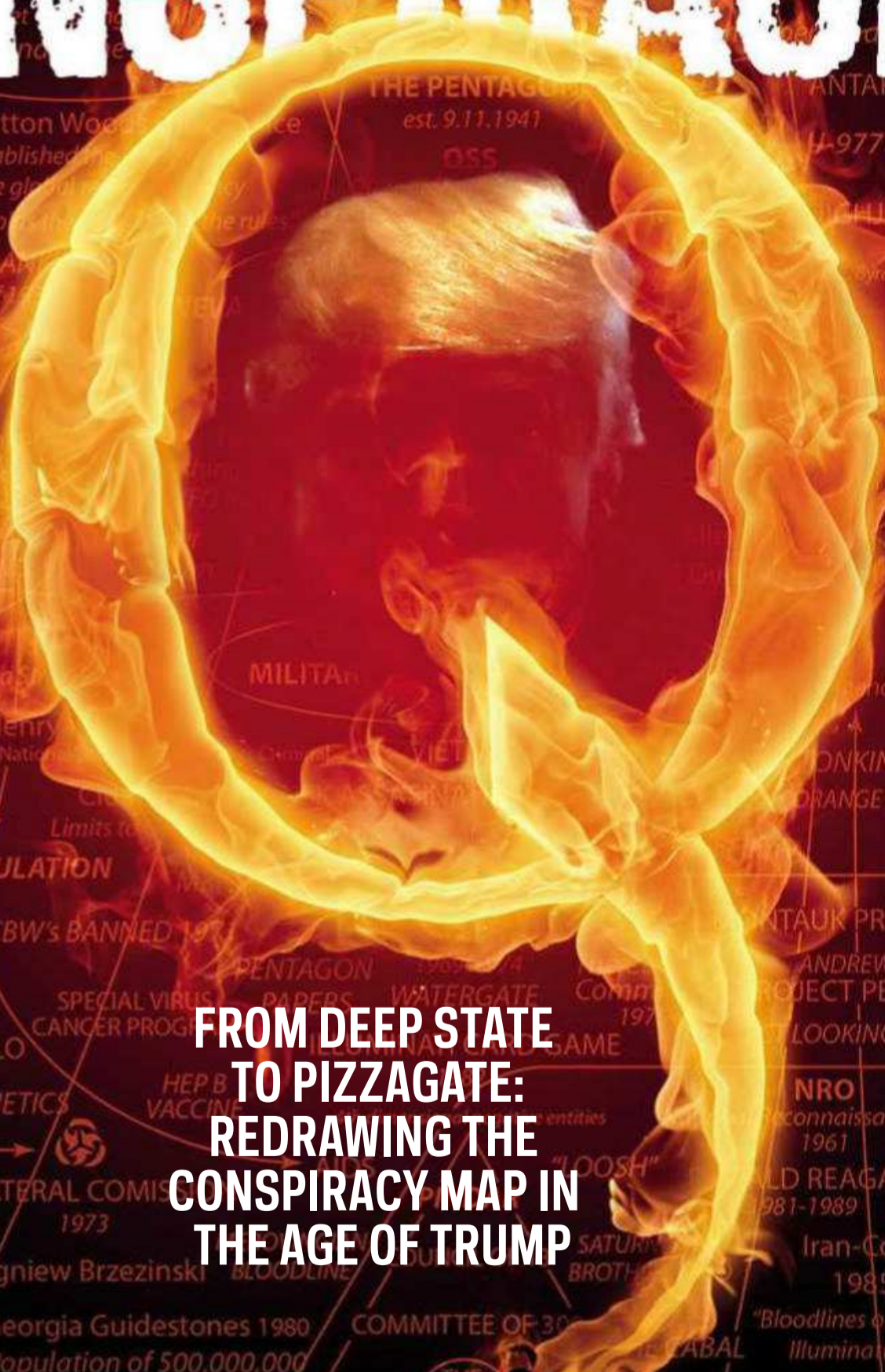
THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

ForteanTimes

FT371 OCTOBER 2018 £4.50

THE MOTHER OF ALL CONSPIRACIES



HUNGER GAMES

THE LIVES OF THE FASTING ARTISTS

SCREEN MEMORIES

JOHN KEEL IN HOLLYWOOD

ONE MAN AND HIS GHOSTS

THE HAUNTING OF DAVID BARTON

FROM DEEP STATE TO PIZZAGATE: REDRAWING THE CONSPIRACY MAP IN THE AGE OF TRUMP



\$4.99
PER ISSUE



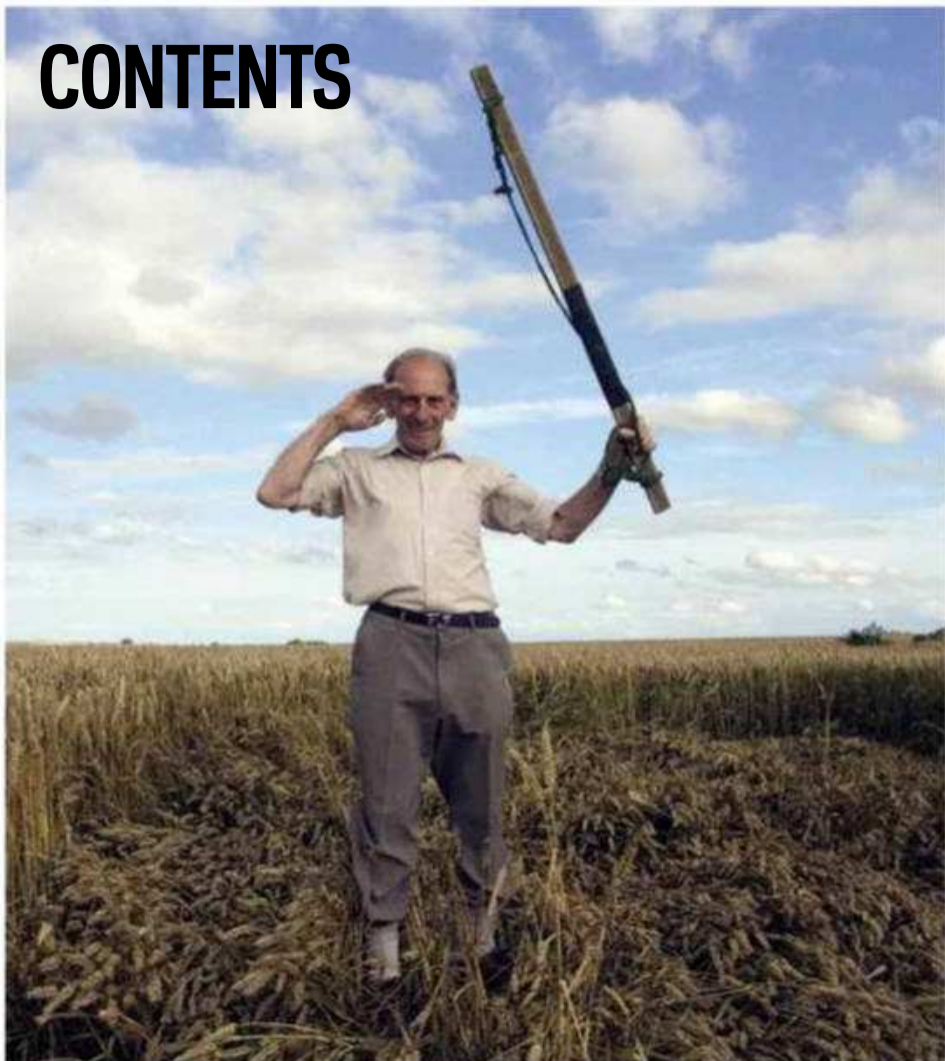
A
MONSTER
APP

THE WORLD'S #1 HORROR MAGAZINE
IS NOW AVAILABLE PRIOR TO NEWSSTANDS
ON **iPHONE, iPAD, IPOD TOUCH AND PC/MAC.**
NOW WITH BONUS CONTENT, AUDIO AND VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS AND LOTS MORE!

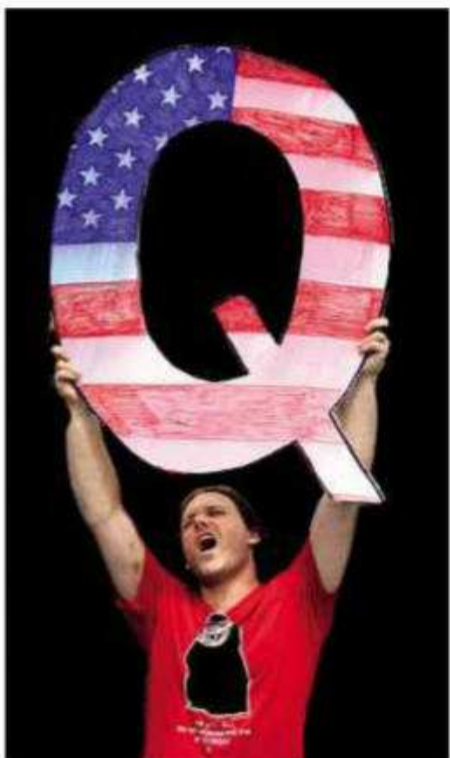
VISIT RUE-MORGUE.COM OR THE APP STORE

FOLLOW US ON **INSTAGRAM, TWITTER AND FACEBOOK**

CONTENTS



28 Cream of the crop: Doug Bower remembered



32 Unravelling the Q Conspiracy



46 Lives of the fasting artists



26 Beat the Devil: Exorcists versus Mexico's Santa Muerte



FORTEAN TIMES 371

Why fortean ?

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

SEE PAGE
78

STRANGE DAYS

A digest of the worldwide weird, including: Exorcism update, reckless raccoons, child-snatching panics, super-oldies and more.

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 12 SCIENCE | 23 ALIEN ZOO |
| 14 ARCHÆOLOGY | 24 STRANGE CONTINENT |
| 16 GHOSTWATCH | 30 THE UFO FILES |

FEATURES

32 COVER STORY

GATHERING STORM: THE QANON CONSPIRACY

A sprawling online conspiracy theory with President Trump as its chief hero has caught the interest of the mainstream media. But who is the mysterious 'Q', whose cryptic Internet posts promise a coming political storm? **NOEL ROONEY** descends into a warren of post-truth rabbit holes in search of answers.

40 THE HAUNTING OF DAVID BARTON

ROB GANDY shares another selection of first-person accounts of weirdness from the Southport area: this time, though, the events described all happened to one man...

46 HUNGER GAMES: LIVES OF THE FASTING ARTISTS

Fasting doesn't sound like much of a spectator sport, but Victorian and Edwardian audiences flocked to see champion fasters do their thing, as **JAN BONDESON** explains.

REPORTS

52 STRANGE STATESMEN

The Future is Dark, it's Orange **SD TUCKER**

60 BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

Dragons in Cryptozoology **THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE**

FORUM

57 Dublin's pleasing terrors **MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO**

58 John Keel's adventures in Hollywood **BRIAN J ROBB**

REGULARS

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 02 EDITORIAL | 73 LETTERS | 79 PHENOMENOMIX |
| 63 REVIEWS | 78 READER INFO | 80 STRANGE DEATHS |

ROB IRVING

RICK LOOMIS / GETTY IMAGES

YURI CORTÉZ / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

EDITOR
DAVID SUTTON
 (drsutton@forteantimes.com)

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

ART DIRECTOR
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
 (etienne@forteantimes.com)

BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
VAL STEVENSON
 (val@forteantimes.com)

RESIDENT CARTOONIST
HUNT EMERSON

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES
 www.managemymags.co.uk
 customercare@subscribe.forteantimes.com

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

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

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

LICENSING & SYNDICATION

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

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



© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

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

PUBLISHER

DHARMESH MISTRY
 dharmesh_mistry@
 dennis.co.uk

CIRCULATION MANAGER

JAMES MANGAN
 james.mangan@
 seymour.co.uk

EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER

GERALDINE GROBLER
 geraldine.grobler@
 seymour.co.uk

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

HELINA OZYURT
 helina_ozyurt@
 dennis.co.uk

DIRECTOR LIFESTYLE

ANDREA MASON
 020 3890 3814
 andrea_mason@
 dennis.co.uk

SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE

BRADLEY BEAVER
 020 3890 3722
 bradley_beaver@
 dennis.co.uk

SALES EXECUTIVE

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

GROUP ADVERTISING

PRINTED BY WILLIAM GIBBONS & SONS LTD

DISTRIBUTION

Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide
 by Seymour Distribution Ltd.

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

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

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$89.99. Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434. Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.

US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 500, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

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

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED

GROUP CFO/COO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
COMPANY FOUNDER

BRETT REYNOLDS
KERIN O'CONNOR
JAMES TYE
FELIX DENNIS

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

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

EDITORIAL



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

THE Q CONUNDRUM

This issue has some dark threads running through it, perhaps unsurprisingly given that our cover story this month focuses on the Conspirasphere's new kid on the block, QAnon. Once in a while, a conspiracy theory breaks out of the online ghetto and goes mainstream, which QAnon did – big time – after the media spotted people at pro-Trump rallies wearing 'Q' T-shirts and waving placards bearing mysterious slogans such as "Trust the Plan", "We are Q", or "wvg1wga". We still don't know exactly what QAnon is, although Noel Rooney does his best to find out (see p32). Its adherents claim that the enigmatic Q is a Trump administration insider who has been leaving a trail of clues that an army of assiduous Internet 'researchers' have been decoding and sharing online; others have suggested that someone has set out to definitively prank the alt-right. Either way, jaded conspiracy watchers will note that QAnon recycles some of the most popular (and most unpleasant) tropes of the genre: MK Ultra mind control, sex slaves, paedophile rings and the Rothschilds, to name but a few. But what's immediately striking about QAnon is that, unusually for a conspiracy theory, it casts the government – and specifically the President – as the good guys, fighting to free the USA from the tentacles of the deep state as bravely as Fox Mulder ever did back in the paranoid 1990s.

President Trump, obviously taking a break from playing 4D chess with his opponents, has even found time for a meeting with a prominent voice of QAnon; just as we were readying this issue for press, *The Daily Beast* website (24 Aug 2018) published a photo of the President posing with Lionel Lebron and his wife in the Oval Office. While some were obviously hoping that President Trump was acknowledging his awareness of, or even involvement in, QAnon, Lebron subsequently said that the subject was not discussed.

GUNNED DOWN

Whether QAnon remains largely the preserve of online dot-joiners or spills disastrously into the 'real' world remains to be seen, but there's no doubt that at least one of its strands – accusations of organised paedophilia in high places (see this month's Conspirasphere, p5, for more on the subject) – has already done so. Some particularly disreputable specimens of the American alt-right (though not directly connected with QAnon) have been using

the old trope of the elite paedophile ring to attack their most hated enemies: Hollywood liberals. *Guardians of the Galaxy* writer/director James Gunn recently saw his reputation and career destroyed when alt-right social media figure Mike Cernovich decided to trawl through Gunn's decade-old tweets and republish them, highly selectively, online to paint a picture of Gunn as a child-molesting monster. Cernovich, it should be remembered, was one of the key pushers of the Pizzagate conspiracy, which resulted in an armed man walking into a Washington, DC, restaurant looking for Democrat paedophiles and opening fire with an assault rifle. Cernovich's army of trolls made sure that Gunn's admittedly tasteless jokes were inflated into "10,000 paedophile tweets", the story quickly jumping from right-wing sites like *The Daily Caller* to the mainstream media. Gunn was summarily booted from his directing contract at Disney; his real crime had been to publicly and repeatedly criticise President Trump, but the alt-right smear had worked: he was now, in many people's minds, a paedophile, deserving of sacking and fit to be lynched.

The growth of such online witch hunts, conducted in full knowledge of the likely outcomes by politically motivated actors posing as concerned individuals, is cause for concern: when such 'crusades', predicated on hatred for political opponents or perceived outsiders, spark moral panics, then the consequences can be dangerous. Transplant accusations of paedophilia to a different cultural context and the results can even be fatal: in India, where the ultra-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party is rewriting history (see *Strange Statesmen*, p52), stories of 'child lifters' snatching young children, circulated on social media, have resulted in over 30 people being tortured, lynched or beaten to death by mobs; the perpetrators of these imaginary crimes are often ethnic or cultural outsiders (see p20). While the antics of Cernovich and his ilk have so far only destroyed careers, not taken lives, the popularity of QAnon suggests it may be only a matter of time before such paedophile conspiracy theories and smears draw real blood here in the West.

David Sutton
 DAVID R SUTTON

Bob Rickard
 BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
 PAUL SIEVEKING

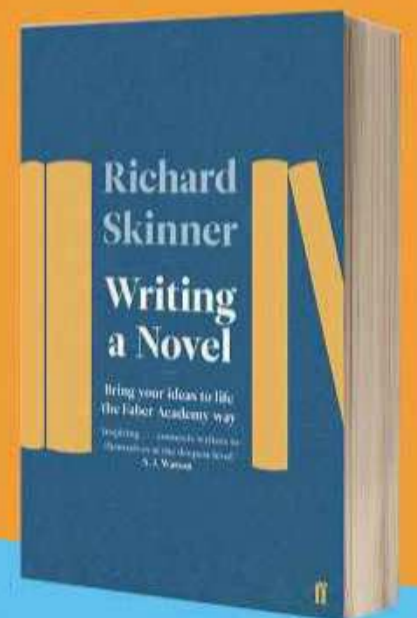


Start *your* story today

Writing is a present participle: the only way to do it is to do it.

Faber Academy creative writing courses give you the time, space and support you need.

Call us today on 0207 927 3827 or search 'Faber Academy' to find your perfect course.



FABER ACADEMY



The essential companion,
out now in paperback.



A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

STRANGE DAYS

THE PURLOINED WEATHER

Israel snaffles Iran's snow; Volkswagen robs Mexico of its rightful rainfall



YASSER AL-ZANYAT / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

LEFT: An aerial view of the Alborz mountains in northern Iran; has Israel stolen the country's snow?

At a press conference in July, Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali, head of Iran's Civil Defence Organisation, accused Israel of 'manipulating weather' to prevent rain over the Islamic republic. "Israel and another country in the region have joint teams which work to ensure clouds entering Iranian skies are unable to release rain," he said. "On top of that, we are facing the issue of cloud and snow theft." He cited a survey showing that above 2,200m (7,200ft), all mountainous areas between Afghanistan and the Mediterranean are covered in snow... except Iran.

However, Ahad Vazife, head of Iran's meteorological service, said that General Jalali "probably has documents of which I am not aware, but on the basis of meteorological knowledge, it is not possible for a country to steal snow or clouds. Iran has suffered a prolonged

drought, and this is a global trend that does not apply only to Iran. Raising such questions not only does not solve any of our problems, but will deter us from finding the right solutions."

The general's allegations of weather pilfering were not the first time an Iranian official has accused the country's foes of stealing its rain. In 2011, former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accused Western countries of devising plans to "cause drought" in Iran, adding that "European countries used special equipment to force clouds to dump" their water on their continent. *Metro*, 3 Jul 2018.

- Mexican farmers have accused Volkswagen of prolonging a drought in the state of Puebla to protect its cars by using sonic cannons to prevent hail forming. The German company, which produces more than 450,000 vehicles at the plant, has been

using "hail cannons" to disperse storm clouds menacing the thousands of cars parked on its lots. They were set to fire automatically under certain weather conditions. Local farmers say the technique is causing a drought that has made them lose 2,000 hectares (nearly 5,000 acres) of crops. Scientists are sceptical of the cannons' effectiveness, but the farmers say they have dispersed not only hail storms but all precipitation since May – the start of the rainy season – and were seeking 70 million pesos (about £3 million) in compensation. Volkswagen announced it was taking the cannons off automatic mode and installing anti-hail nets. *zerohedge.com/news*, 23 Aug; *D.Telegraph*, 24 Aug 2018.

- By June 2017, the vineyards of Burgundy in France were protected by a "hailstone shield", a network of 125 generators that send silver iodide particles to the clouds with the intention of stopping the formation of destructive precipitation. The move followed several years of severe storms in the region. In 2016, Macon and Chablis were particularly hard hit. No reports of the shield's effectiveness (or otherwise) have been seen at Fortean Towers to date. *Irish Independent*, 15 April 2017. (The weather-modification properties of silver iodide were discovered in 1946 by atmospheric scientist Bernard Vonnegut, brother of the writer Kurt Vonnegut – see FT137:14.)

- In 2016 the Cypriot government accused the RAF of interfering with the weather by cloud-seeding, so its Tornado and Typhoon aircraft could fly to Syria and Iraq in clear conditions. The claim was made after local weathermen forecast heavy rain for early February only for the period to remain dry. The UK Ministry of Defence said there was no truth in the claims. *Mail on Sunday*, 21 Feb 2016.

- Diverting water from the south of China to the north is not the country's only crazily ambitious drought alleviation scheme. The government is also thinking about setting up what would be the world's largest cloud-seeding operation in Tibet. China has been using the technique since 1958. Now a state-owned defence company has built 500 burners on Himalayan ridges in the path of the monsoon. They are testing a system that involves projecting particles of silver iodide into the atmosphere. When the water-laden air of the monsoon hits the particles, ice crystals are supposed to form and later fall as rain and snow. The plan is to build tens of thousands of these burners and increase rainfall by up to 10 billion cubic metres a year in an area the size of Iran that feeds the Yangzi and Yellow rivers as well as others upon which China's neighbours depend.

However, the largest study of iodine cloud-seeding so far, the Wyoming Weather Modification Pilot Program, found in 2016 that, although the technique can increase precipitation if wind and other conditions are just right, it cannot do so reliably over a long period or on a large scale. Changing the weather in the fragile environment of Tibet could also be fraught with unintended consequences. *Economist*, 7 April 2018.



RECKLESS RACCOONS

The epic climb that became an Internet legend

PAGE 10



COCKATOO CONUNDRUM

Frederick II's mystery bird identified

PAGE 23



MADONNA OF THE ROCKS

Virgin Mary saves church from avalanche

PAGE 24

THE CONSPIRASPHERE

Tales of sexual abuse by political elites and high-level establishment cover-ups are common tropes in conspiracy theory. **NOEL ROONEY** wonders where rumour ends and fact begins.

THE POWER AND THE PERVERTS

The repeated attempts, and failures, to carry out an inquiry into allegations of sexual abuse, mainly of children, by powerful figures in the UK political establishment, made me think back on some of the more spectacular accusations of sexual misconduct, and worse, levelled against the world's most powerful people; and how these stories very rarely make it, in their most extreme (or pure, perhaps) form, into the mainstream. The Conspirasphere has regularly seen lurid (and also impassioned) crusades against the sex crimes of the elite; they are often championed by leading figures in the alternative news world (David Icke and Alex Jones spring to mind) and often, also, feature people who claim to be victims of such terrible crimes.

A few of the more notable examples of such rumours from recent history:

George H W Bush was accused, in the 1990s, of operating, or participating in, a paedophile network centred on the White House. Even murkier rumours circulated a few years later, alleging that he had a predilection for raping women and shooting them at the point of climax (his, one assumes). It was even suggested that a special unit of the US military was responsible for kidnapping his victims and disposing of them afterwards.

A particularly outrageous rumour about Dick Cheney, former Vice-President to George Bush Jnr, claimed that he was given to lying under glass-topped tables, pleasuring himself, while a paid prostitute would perform what a polite five-year-old might refer to as a 'number two' on top of it. These rumours tended to inhabit the darker edges of those stories claiming Mr Cheney had been integral to the false flag version of the 9/11 tragedy; in many respects, the sexual elements seemed to give colour and credence to the political misdeeds of which he, and others, were accused.

Bill Clinton, while president, was famously

caught up in a sex scandal involving White House intern Monica Lewinsky, an affair which nearly saw him impeached, and which brought allegations from a number of other women to light. Hillary Clinton is regularly 'accused' of being gay, although more exotic allegations of rape have been made against her in the past. At one time, whispered allegations of paedophilia were made against Vladimir Putin (who refuted them by riding a bear).

And every so often, a case emerges from the shadows, like that of Marc Dutroux in Belgium at the turn of the century, which appears to confirm the whispers and rumours in the most horrible way, and leaves us wondering where the lines between lurid fantasy and terrible truths can safely be drawn. Dutroux, a convicted paedophile, was accused of kidnapping and murdering at least four young women in the 1990s; Dutroux, in some versions, claimed he was merely a procurer for a circle of paedophiles that included Belgian royalty, and the murders were wet work on their behalf. The fact that it took nearly seven years to bring him to trial only added to the rumours of a cover-up in high places.

Sexual abuse of power certainly happens, and perhaps more often, and widely, than the mainstream, or the establishment, is comfortable admitting. People who sincerely believe they have been victimised by members of the elite find themselves among others who are either deluded, or tell lurid stories for more mundane reasons of financial gain, public attention, or political revenge. In the Conspirasphere, stories of sexual perversion among the elite are part of a generalised picture, spreading across the world and stretching back through history, which brings a very particular shade to the truism that power corrupts. The stuttering progress of public inquiries into such crimes, alleged or otherwise, does little to quell the deep unease that attaches to these dreams of power.

EXTRA! EXTRA!



FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

SELF-DRIVING CARS WILL SOON OVERTAKE HUMANS

Irish Times, 2 Nov 2017.

Woman stunned by £284bn electricity bill

BBC News, 28 Dec 2017.

RARE WATCH ONCE OWNED BY EGYPTIAN KING TO GO UNDER HAMMER

Reuters, 20 Mar 2018.

Killed woman jailed for fraud

Gold Coast Bulletin (Queensland), 9 Nov 2017.

ZAMPA WANTS DEATH BOWL

(Melbourne) Herald Sun, 11 Dec 2017.

Catfish suspended over sex harassment claims

BBC News, 18 May 2018.



SIDELINES...

ARMADA SHIPWRECK

A shipwreck found underwater off the coast of Suffolk is believed to have been a warship from the Spanish Armada. Divers surveying the seabed off Dunwich, once an important port, found a three-ton siege gun and recovered a cannon dated to around 1540. *Sunday Telegraph*, 25 May 2018.

GROOM'S A WIMP

A bride from the eastern Indian state of Bihar refused to marry her betrothed when he “started behaving in a strange manner” and admitted being afraid when lightning hit a field during the wedding vows. The groom’s relatives protested, as some of the rituals had already been performed, and there was a mass brawl and three arrests. *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 July 2018.

PHANTOM RABBIT FLINGER

Over two weeks in June, several dead rabbits were thrown through windows of student flats at the University of Kent’s Canterbury campus. Kaylin Moir, 18, watched in horror as one flew into her friend’s flat and hit her friend’s boyfriend. Returning to her own flat, she found another rabbit on her kitchen draining board. The university was investigating. *D.Telegraph*, 15 June 2018.

EXHAUSTING

While attending a music festival in Winsted, Minnesota, Kaitlin Strom, 19, got her head stuck in a truck’s oversized exhaust pipe. She was freed by firefighters using a power saw. A journalist speculated: “Alcohol may have been a factor”. *People*, 9-23 July; (Sydney) *D.Telegraph*, 15 June 2018.



MARTIN ROSS

HANGING IN THERE | Our regular round-up of the world’s super-centenarians



HERIKA MARTINEZ / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: Celino Villanueva Jaramillo. ABOVE RIGHT: Manuel Garcia Hernandez with two of his great-granddaughters.

Celino Villanueva Jaramillo, a farm worker who never married and had no known living relatives, died in hospital on 18 April 2018 in the southern Chilean town of San José de Mariquina. He had fallen out of bed a week previously and broken three ribs, one of which pierced a lung. After an emergency operation and being placed in intensive care, doctors were initially optimistic he would survive; but his damaged lung became critical, and on 17 April a priest was called to deliver the last rites. Celino was allegedly born on 25 July 1896, making him 121 years and 267 days old and the world record holder – indeed only a year short of the all-time undisputed oldest person, the Frenchwoman Jeanne Calment, who died in 1997 aged 122 years and 164 days. However, he had not been recognised by Guinness due to the lack of official verification of his birth date. “We’re very sad,” said Ivonne Morales, who together with her mother Marta Ramírez had adopted Celino when he was 99 years old and destitute. “He was an integral part of our family, the man of the house.” He was feted by politicians, including Chile’s billionaire president, Sebastian Piñera, as the country’s oldest citizen. He was buried in the Indigenous Cemetery in Mehuin. *theguardian.com*, 19 April 2018.

• Manuel Garcia Hernandez, a Mexican chicken farmer, has a birth certificate and official ID

card stating that he was born on Christmas Eve 1896, making him 121 and the world’s oldest man – but at the time of the news report (*D.Mail*, 19 May 2018) he had yet to contact *Guinness World Records*. He rises every day at 5.30am and has a banana and apple smoothie, oatmeal and two eggs before tending his birds.

• Freddie Blom of Cape Town, in South Africa, turned 114 on 8 May 2018 and is said to be the oldest person alive, but this is yet to be verified by the *Guinness World of Records*. The title was held by a Jamaican woman, Violet Moss-Brown, until 15 September 2017, when she died at the age of 117 years and 189 days.

Blom is a tall, well-built man, sporting a slightly unkempt handlebar moustache and grey stubble beard. He was born in

Adelaide, a small rural town in the Eastern Cape, in 1904, and moved to Cape Town at an early age. Because he didn’t attend school, he is unable to read and write. His first job was as a farm labourer before moving to a company that installed pre-cast concrete walls known locally as vibracrete. He retired in his 80s. He walks unaided, if slowly and, besides being a touch hard of hearing, he has absolutely no ailments. Janetta, his wife of 48 years who is 29 years his junior, says he has been remarkably healthy and has only been to hospital once – many years ago when he had a problem with one of his knees. Many people initially doubted her husband’s age. “There were questions about it when he applied for his identity document several years ago, but his niece went to East London to get his birth



WILLEM VAN DER MERWE / XINHUA / ALAMY LIVE NEWS

ABOVE: Freddie Blom celebrates his 114th birthday in Delft, Cape Town, South Africa.



certificate which provided the proof that was needed.”

Although he gave up drinking many years ago, he is still a regular smoker. “Every day I still smoke two to three ‘pills’ [tobacco tightly rolled into a cigarette-length piece of newspaper],” he said, speaking in Afrikaans with a loud and clear voice. “I use my own tobacco because I don’t smoke cigarettes. The urge to smoke is so strong. Sometimes I tell myself I’m going to stop but it’s just me lying to myself. My chest chases me to have a puff and I’m then forced to make a ‘pill’. I blame the devil for that because he’s so strong.” He offers no special secret for his longevity. “There’s only one thing – it’s the man above [God]. He’s got all the power. I have nothing. I can drop over any time but He holds me... My heart is strong but it’s only my legs that are giving in – I can’t walk the way I used to.” *BBC News, 29 May 2018.*

- Robert Weighton, England’s oldest man, turned 110 on 29 March 2018, and exchanged cards with his exact contemporary, Alfred Smith, who is Scotland’s oldest man. It was only in 2015 that the pair learned they shared a birthday in 1908. Though they correspond, they live 470 miles apart and have never met. They are three years younger than Bessie Camm (113) of Rotherham, South Yorkshire – Britain’s oldest woman. Weighton was born in Hull, one of seven children of a vet, and lives in his own independent flat in a care centre in Alton, Hampshire. After completing an apprenticeship in marine engineering, he spent two years in Japan learning the language and then got a job teaching English in a Taiwanese missionary school. He married his wife Agnes in Hong Kong in 1937, and they had three children. In WWII, he worked for the British Political Warfare Mission in the US, and afterwards lectured on engineering at City University in London for 25 years. Agnes died in 1995 aged 86. The widower had no advice to offer on longevity. “I just haven’t died yet, that’s all... I think laughter is extremely important. Most of the trouble in the world is caused by people taking themselves too seriously.”



YELENA AFONINA \ TASS VIA GETTY IMAGES



ABOVE: Koku Istambulova has not mellowed with age. LEFT: Masazo Nonaka gets his Guinness certificate.

- Alfred Smith attributes his longevity to porridge, with added milk and brown sugar. He was born the fifth of six sons to farmers John and Jessie Smith of Invergowrie, near Dundee. With four of his brothers he emigrated to Canada in 1927, where he farmed in Govan, Saskatchewan, but returned to Scotland on the death of his father five years later and took over the family farm with his brother George. In 1937 he married Isobel, who helped him run his own farm in Perthshire, where they raised two children. He retired in 1978, and lives with his daughter Irene Noble, 80, in St Madoes, Perthshire. Isobel died in 2003, aged 97. “Dad smoked until he was 80,” said Irene. “That’s the secret to living to 109.” *D.Mail, D.Express, 26 Mar; Dundee Courier & Advertiser, 29 Mar 2018.*

- Masazo Nonaka – a former innkeeper living in Ashoro on the Japanese island of Hokkaido – was officially recognised the world’s oldest man on 10 April, at the age of 112 years and 259 days. The previous record holder

was the Spaniard Francisco Olivera, who died in January aged 113 years and 47 days [FT365:23]. Nonaka was born on Hokkaido on 25 July 1902. His family has run a hot springs inn for four generations, and he regularly soaks in the springs at the 105-year-old inn, now run by his granddaughter Yuko. He enjoys eating sweets, especially cakes. He has outlived all seven of his siblings, as well as his wife and two of their five children. *D.Telegraph, 11 April; Metro, 12 April 2018.*

- Nabi Tajima, an ancient Japanese lady and ‘officially’ the world’s oldest person, died on 21 April, aged 117 years and 260 days – leaving more than 160 descendants. She was born on 4 August 1900 and lived in Kikai, a small island off Kyushu. The longevity title passed to another Japanese woman, Chiyo Miyako, born 22 May 1901, who died on 22 July 2018, shortly after being recognised as the champion oldie by Guinness. She was aged 117 years and 61 days. *Times, D.Mail, 23 April; [CNN] 28 July 2018.*

- Koku Istambulova, a woman from the Chechen Republic with a claim to be the world’s oldest person at 129, does not have a sunny disposition. She said: “Long life is not at all God’s gift to me – but a punishment.” *D.Star, 6 June 2018.* We are reminded of that old chestnut: “Life is a terrible vale of tears – and it’s over far too soon.”

For our last round-up of super-centenarians, see FT365:22-23.

SIDELINES...

PRESIDENTIAL PEE

A story line in an Afghan soap opera called *Da Pulay Poray* aims to counter folk beliefs in the country’s Pashtun belt that polio vaccine drops are a plot to sterilise Muslims, or even that they are George Bush’s urine. *Sunday Telegraph, 15 July 2018.*

DEERLY BELOVED

RSPCA officer Alan Browning used a pole to rescue a drowning roe deer from a garden swimming pool in Hedge End, near Southampton. He performed CPR on the young male, and after five minutes of chest compressions, the deer coughed up some water, stood up, and ran off. *Sun on Sunday, D.Telegraph, 28 May 2018.*

SOLE KISS

A fisherman from Boscombe, Dorset, nearly died after trying to give a Dover sole the kiss of life. He had to be resuscitated by paramedics after the 14cm (5.5in) fish had jumped down his windpipe. *D.Telegraph, 25 June 2018.*

DEAD SNAKE BITES BACK

Jennifer Sutcliffe was gardening at her home near Lake Corpus Christi, southern Texas, when she came upon a 4ft (1.2m) Western diamondback rattlesnake. She called her husband Jeremy, who decapitated it with a shovel. Ten minutes later, the bodiless head bit his hand when he went to remove it. He fell into a coma and had to be given 26 doses of anti-venom to keep him alive. He was put on a ventilator for several days. *Houston (TX) Chronicle online, 6 June 2018.*

POUNDWORLD PRANK

A mother and daughter were tricked into acting out a series of humiliating tasks whilst shopping in Poundworld, Barnstaple. A prank caller phoned the shop and convinced staff to carry out a ‘staff training exercise’, which involved tying string around Naomi and Pamela Desmond’s ears, throwing water over them and making them crawl round on their hands and knees. The hapless pair believed they were competing for a £3,000 prize. *Western Daily Press, 24 May 2018.*



SIDELINES...

DOG HAS HEN PARTY

Cathy Dongon, 22, got a shock when she went into her farmyard in Mindanao, Philippines, to find her pet dog mating with a chicken. *D.Star*, 14 June 2018.

WORLD WIDE WEB

The trapdoor spider (*Moggridgea rainbow*), found only on South Australia's Kangaroo Island, only travels a few feet from where it is hatched. It was thought to have "split" from its South African relations some 95 million years ago when the landmasses separated. But the genetic link between the two species is much closer than previously believed, and scientists now think the species crossed the Indian Ocean between two and 16 million years ago, well after Australia's formation. *D.Telegraph*; (*Queensland*) *Courier-Mail*, 4 Aug 2017.

MAN BITES DOG

Anthony Gabbott, 56, bit back when two Staffordshire bull terriers attacked his Alsatian puppy on a country walk in Plumley, Cheshire. When hitting didn't work, the financial planner sank his teeth into one of the dogs' ears. It howled and let go, and both terriers ran off. *D.Mail*, *D.Telegraph*, 11 April 2018

BIGFOOT ON ICE

Dog trainer Peter Caine has revealed what he claims to be the frozen head of a Bigfoot killed by his father in 1953. The gruesome, hairy object appears to have teeth. Sceptics were dubious, since he had already unveiled a foot allegedly from the same Bigfoot, at the beginning of 2017, and there have been no DNA tests or expert analysis. *coasttocoast.com*, 13 Dec 2017.



MARTIN ROSS

MEDICAL BAG

Health benefits of cow urine, dangers of paper cuts and a miraculous canine cancer cure...



© SWNS.COM

ABOVE LEFT: María de la Luz Rodríguez: pregnant at 70? ABOVE RIGHT: Johanna Pakenham: too much water led to hyponatremia.

PREGNANT AT 70?

María de la Luz Rodríguez, 70, from Mazatlan, Mexico, claimed last May to be six months pregnant with her eighth child. If her claim is true, she will become the oldest mother in history, beating the current record holder by four years. This is Maria del Carmen Bousada de Lara, from Cadiz, Spain, who was aged 66 years and 358 days when she gave birth to twin boys in December 2006. Ms Rodriguez has revealed the ultrasound scans, which she claims confirm she is pregnant with a baby girl. She said: "They told me it is a girl. Look, you can see her little face." She first suspected she was pregnant three months earlier, she said, when "my legs hurt and I was vomiting and felt dizzy", adding: "Now they have done around 10 ultrasounds. The doctors couldn't believe it."

According to other reports, after news of her pregnancy went viral in Mexico, Ms Rodriguez was contacted by the local hospital, which claimed to have no record of her pregnancy, or of the ultrasound pictures she has been showing to reporters. The last news to reach FT suggested that the woman expected to have an appointment with a gynaecologist on 18 July, while another Mexican newspaper claimed that the pregnancy had turned out to be a tumour, for

"Consumption of cow urine will lead to a healthier population"

which Ms Rodriguez was now receiving treatment. Since then, the story seems simply to have petered out. (*Sydney*) *D.Telegraph*, (*Queensland*) *Courier Mail*, *El Diaro de la Ciudad Victoria*, *Oddity Central*, 23 May 2018. For other claims of ancient motherhood, see FT53:26, 59:34, 202:14.

WATER TORTURE

A marathon runner was left fighting for her life in a coma after drinking too much water during the race. Johanna Pakenham, 53, sank more than a dozen bottles to cope with the heat during April's event in London. She has no memory of crossing the finish line and was later rushed to hospital after suffering a seizure at home. She slipped into a coma with the life-threatening condition hyponatremia, when drinking too much water flushes vital sodium out of the body. (In 1995, this killed Leah Betts, not ecstasy.) The electrolyte regulates water in blood cells and can be replenished with

sports drinks, but very low levels of sodium can cause confusion, seizures and comas. Johanna, a mother of four from Wadwick, Hampshire, completed the marathon – the hottest on record with temperatures of 73°F (23°C) – in six hours, 35 minutes. She says partner Richard and daughter Emma noticed she was unwell as they headed home. She had a seizure as Richard spoke to an NHS call handler. He then performed CPR until an ambulance arrived. Johanna woke from her coma after three days and was recovering at home. *Sun*, 12 May 2018.

TAKING THE PISS

"We are promoting cow urine as a health drink, not just as a medicine," Dr Prakash Chandra Saxena of the Government Ayurveda College and Hospital told a press conference in Pilibhit [Uttar Pradesh, India]. "Drinking 20ml of cow urine daily acts as a preventive against seasonal diseases like fevers and coughs, and regular consumption increases people's immunity. Our aim is to make cow urine easily available to the public in bottles, just like any other health drink. We plan to do this on a large scale, so we are contacting dairies and gaushalas [cow shelters] to ensure a steady supply of urine."

His colleague, Dr Naresh



Chandra Gangwar, then explained how the hospital will incorporate cow urine into its pharmacopoeia. "Ayurvedic medicines have no side-effects, and demand for them is increasing in this country. Several researches have shown that cow urine is beneficial in treating various ailments. The state government has placed the order, and besides promoting cow urine as a health drink, we will start making medicines from it, to treat jaundice, piles, cancer, liver conditions, and skin-related problems. Widespread daily consumption of cow urine will lead to a healthier population." *Dhaka Tribune, 11 Feb 2018.*

TINY CUTS NOT TRIVIAL

A woman will have all four limbs cut off after a paper cut gave her deadly sepsis. Marguerite Henderson, 54, spent a week in a coma, as doctors feared she would die. Two days after noticing the finger wound, she was too ill to see a GP. A day later she was rushed to A&E as she couldn't walk, had blue lips and was turning grey. When her organs failed, she was put on dialysis in Kirkcaldy, Fife. Doctors thought she would recover after a two-day medical coma, but she lay unconscious for a week. The NHS will offer basic prosthetic limbs. *Sun, 31 Mar 2018.*

- Jaco Nel, 52, lost his legs, five fingers and part of his face when his cocker spaniel Harvey licked him and he got sepsis. He saw a tiny cut on his hand and washed it, but two weeks later he had flu-like symptoms and was unable to stand, speak or use his hands. The NHS psychiatrist from Manchester was taken to A&E where he collapsed. He was placed in a coma for four days with a 20 per cent chance of survival. Three weeks later, medics found he had sepsis, gangrene in his legs and fingers and failing kidneys. During six months in hospital, he had both legs amputated below the knees, three ops on his right hand and one on his face, where his nose and mouth were eaten away. He needs more facial surgery. *Sun, 13 April 2018.*

ALL CHANGE

The patriarch of the Harrott family used to identify as a woman, his two children have each switched gender and his fiancée was previously a man. The first person in the family, from Queen Creek, Arizona, to come out as transgender was Joshua, 13, who now identifies as a girl. Her decision inspired her mother, now called Daniel, to embrace his masculinity. Mr Harrott, 41, who gave birth to his children as a woman, said he had long felt he was born in the wrong body, but that cultural

norms prevented him from expressing himself. Only when Joshua said that he wanted to live as a girl did he learn the word 'transgender'. His other child, Mason, 11, who was born as a girl, has come out as a transgender boy. About 150,000 American teenagers aged 13 to 17 identify as transgender and a 2016 report indicated that there were about 1.4 million transgender people in the US. The family, including Mr Harrott's fiancée, Shirley Austin, 62, who was born a man and is not related to the children, all have help from each other in learning their new identities. Mr Harrott said that his family was still "very traditional". *Times, 18 Dec 2017.*

DOG CURED OF CANCER

Avril Priestley's five-year-old Golden Retriever Ella was diagnosed with bone cancer in April 2017. Vets said would not live much longer than four weeks without the amputation of one of her legs and a course of chemotherapy. But Mrs Priestley, 73, and husband Andy decided the dog should simply enjoy what life she had left rather than endure agonising treatment. They fed her on steak, pork loin and chicken, and allowed her to sleep on their bed. Meanwhile, as well as giving Ella small doses of painkillers, Mrs Priestley, a retired healer, carried out regular treatment, laying her hands 'with love' on the dog's front right leg.

In the New Year – having moved from Barnsley to Exeter – the Priestleys decided to go to their new local vet to check on the progress of the cancer. They were amazed when the vet – Dr Chris Vogt at the Polsloe Veterinary Clinic in Exeter – rang and said, "There has been a miracle". There was no longer any sign of the cancer. "We will never know if it was the healing," said Mrs Priestley, "but Andy and I are just thrilled to have Ella well." Although very rare, there are reports of cancers spontaneously disappearing, not only in animals but also in humans. Scientists believe in these cases the body may trigger an immune response against specific antigens displayed on the surface of tumour cells. *D.Mail, 5 Mar 2018.*

SIDELINES...



MARTIN ROSS

EXPLODING CATERPILLARS

A Lancashire wildlife expert claims a virus is turning oak egg moth caterpillars into "exploding zombies". While carrying out a butterfly survey, Dr Chris Miller noticed dead caterpillars hanging from branches and blades of grass, together with the remains of caterpillar skin. His research indicated that caterpillars infected by a baculovirus are compelled to climb to the tops of plants in search of sunlight, where they explode, thus spreading the virus to other victims. *BBC News, 2 Aug 2017.*

CRAWLING CHAOS

Experts were mystified when over 20 rare curled octopuses crawled out of the sea and onto a West Wales beach. The solitary cephalopods, usually found at depths of 300ft (91m), were spotted hauling themselves up New Quay beach, Ceredigion, on three successive nights. A local man deposited many of them back into the sea from the end of the pier. Recent storms may have caused the octopuses' unusual behaviour. *D.Telegraph, Western Mail, Guardian, 31 Oct 2017..*

PLAYING WITH FIRE

Gerwyn Miles found a WWII bomb on a beach in the Far East more than 70 years ago, passed it round various relatives in the UK for decades and took it into a primary school to show his granddaughter's classmates. During a clear out of his house in Bridgend, South Wales, 12 years after his death, his daughter found it and called in the bomb squad. They determined it was live and blew it up. *D.Express, 26 April 2018.*



ABOVE: All in the family: (Left-right) Shirley Austin, Joshua Harrott, Daniel Harrott, and Mason Harrott.



SIDELINES...

SEWAGE TREATMENT

Tiffany Alberts, 41, from Wolcott, Indiana, was accused of attempting to inject faeces into her son's IV bag with a syringe. The 15-year-old was receiving cancer treatment at the Riley Hospital for Children, Indianapolis. Alberts claimed her actions were intended to get her son moved from the hospital's ICU to another ward where "the treatment was better." *Press Trust of India, 27 Nov 2016.*

LOUGH NESS MONSTER

A 4ft (90cm) snake-like creature was spotted in Charnwood Water, Loughborough, Leicestershire, by a terrified dog walker. The horrified witness watched as a duck struggled before being pulled below the water's surface. It has been suggested that the mystery creature is an over-sized pike. *D.Star online, 25 Oct 2017.*

SOUND OF SILENCE

A 30-minute recording of a Nottingham Young Quaker meeting consisting of the sounds of breathing, rainfall and a clock ticking – inspired by the BBC's "slow radio" season featuring recordings of birdsong and chanting monks – attracted 400 listeners and inspired several to attend a Quaker meeting for the first time. *D.Telegraph, 9 April 2018.*

BLOODY SCAM ALLEGED

Legendary Marvel Comics pioneer Stan Lee, 95, is suing his former manager, Jerardo Olivarez, alleging he had made fraudulent payments to a fictitious charity from Lee's bank account after obtaining power of attorney over him. Lee also claimed Olivarez had a nurse extract large amounts of blood from him with a syringe, containers of which were then sold via the fake charity for thousands of dollars. *kinja.com/plumberduck, 16 April 2018.*

HEALTH WARNING

MPs should quit social media to protect their mental health, said the parliamentary health watchdog, adding that, for politicians, being active on Twitter was the "equivalent of dipping their private parts in honey and exposing them to angry bees". *D.Telegraph, 3 July 2018.*

RECKLESS RACCOONS

The daredevil climb that became a media sensation

Crowds cheered as a raccoon's dizzying ordeal came to an end after it began to climb a 25-storey building, got stuck, and then decided to ascend to the roof, although it took more than 24 hours. Onlookers, reporters and social media users fretted about the welfare of the creature as it climbed the UBS Tower office building in St Paul, Minnesota, on 12 June, taking periodic rest breaks on window ledges. An animal welfare team captured it in a live trap filled with cat food and later released it into the wild. *D.Mail, D.Telegraph, 14 June 2018.*

• Another adventurous raccoon was spotted in Cambridgeshire in March 2017 and eventually caught after a protracted chase, ending on the roof of a house in Broughton. An embedded microchip showed she was registered in France. "We think she hopped on a lorry in Calais," said Josh Flanagan, a volunteer at Fenland Animal Rescue. "It was confirmed that she had escaped her enclosure in France.... We've had reports of a stray raccoon several times since September [2016], so it's likely she's been living rough and fending for herself since then." As the French weren't interested in repatriating the animal, she was sent to a sanctuary near Rochester in Kent. *BBC News, 13 May 2017.*



TWITTER/ @JOHNSON88BEN



TWITTER/ @KATHERYNNINICK



TWITTER/ @TIMNELSON_MPR

**WEAR
JEANS
CHANGE
LIVES
FRIDAY 21 SEPT**



**Look good. Do great.
Buy a limited edition
Jeans for Genes Day t-shirt.**

All profits from the sale of the t-shirt will help transform the lives of children with life-altering genetic disorders.

Modelled by Felicity Hayward

Designed by Chunchen Liu from Kingston School of Art

jeansforgenes.org/shop



Someone to watch over me...

DAVID HAMBLING tracks the rise of China's surveillance state, from smart-glasses to robot birds

An article in the *South China Morning Post* reported that the government is using birdlike drones to spy on its people. The piece claims that more than 30 Chinese government and military agencies have deployed the drones, adding a new twist to old fears about domestic surveillance. Are robots disguised as pigeons really watching you?

The claims echo sightings in the US of 'dragonfly drones' in the early-2000s. These were black, robotic-looking insects which hovered over anti-war demonstrations, apparently observing them. The story was picked up by the *Washington Post*, who found three witnesses to the artificial dragonflies. The idea was not completely outlandish; the CIA's museum in Langley, Virginia, features a robot dragonfly, the Insectohtopter, built back in the 1970s. It was apparently a failure because of its inability to cope with crosswinds and was never used (see **FT231:14**). The sightings quickly tailed off. If the dragonflies were part of a spying programme, its cover had been blown and it was quickly abandoned.

More recently in war zones, the US military have deployed drones like the *Priora Maveric*, which have a bird-like profile. Although they are still driven by propellers, their electric motors are inaudible at cruising altitude and they can pass as circling buzzards or vultures. A similar craft downed in Somalia went as far as having moving wingtips to give the impression of flapping, although the craft still had propellers (see **FT345:16**).

According to the *SCMP* article, the Chinese have taken robotic birds much further. Their pigeon-sized drones fly by flapping their wings and are hard to distinguish from the real thing. The spy birds, produced under a project called 'Dove', are said to fly for up to half an hour at speeds of up to 25mph (40km/h).

Nobody else has a robotic bird so advanced. The nearest equivalent operational drone in the West is the *Robird*, an imitation falcon developed specifically to scare birds away from runways and other danger zones. The makers, *Clear Flight Solutions*, are a spin-off of the University of Twente in the Netherlands. They don't sell their drones, only lease them out. The *Robird* flies for about 10 minutes on



LEFT: A Chinese police officer sporting a pair of facial recognition sunglasses.

one battery charge, reflecting the fact that this type of flight is still highly inefficient compared to propellers.

Trawling through scientific papers turns up sporadic Chinese work on flapping-wing robots. The *Dove* programme is said to be led by Prof Song Bifeng of Northwestern Polytechnical University in Xi'an. Song's name appears on papers about "flexible wing MAV [Micro Air Vehicle]," but the studies are largely theoretical and mathematical in nature. The work is more about understanding the physics of flight, with little to indicate a project that has made it to a finished product.

What is more important is the context in which the bird drones are supposed to be operating. Staking out a suspected insurgent hideout in rural Afghanistan might require a stealthy drone, while the situation is very different on the streets of Shanghai.

China now has over 170 million CCTV cameras, a number set to grow to 400 million by 2020. These are increasingly linked to centralised facial recognition systems. In a demonstration for the BBC, one such system located a BBC reporter in Shanghai within seven minutes. On another occasion an actual suspect was picked out from a crowd of 60,000 attending a pop concert by cameras with facial recognition. Needless to say, traffic-monitoring cameras that track vehicle registration numbers are widespread.

In March, China announced that it was expanding its 'facial recognition sunglasses' scheme that had been tested in parts of Beijing. These are glasses worn by police with a built-in camera, also linked to the national facial recognition system. The police now act as mobile CCTV, spotting any wanted criminal with a glance.

On top of this, in June 2018 there were

over 1.5 billion mobile phone subscriptions in China, more than one per person. Only half of these are smartphones, but the proportion is rising fast. In the UK, the police can only get authorisation to track a mobile phone when a serious crime has been committed; Chinese rules are more relaxed.

Similarly, it is possible to use a mobile phone as a bugging device, given the necessary

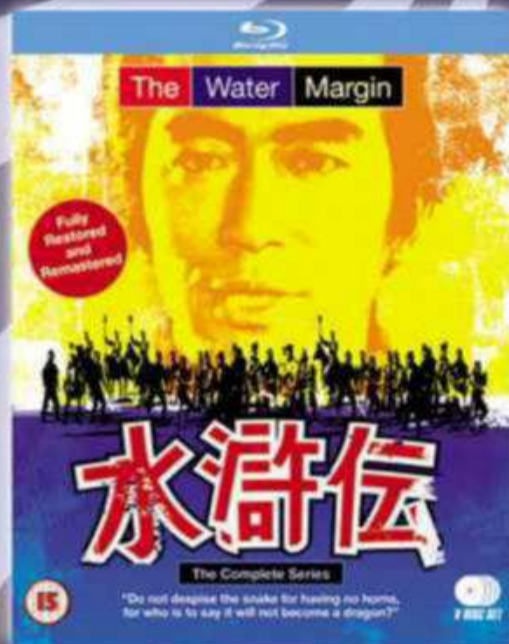
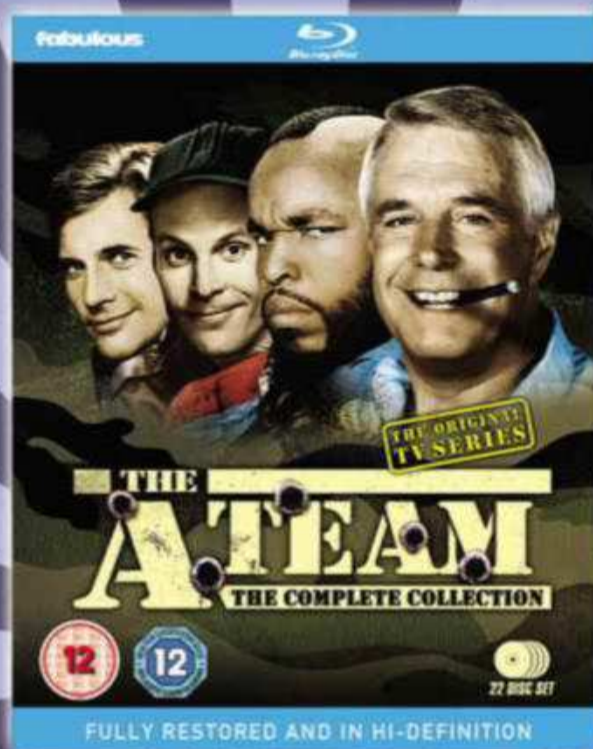
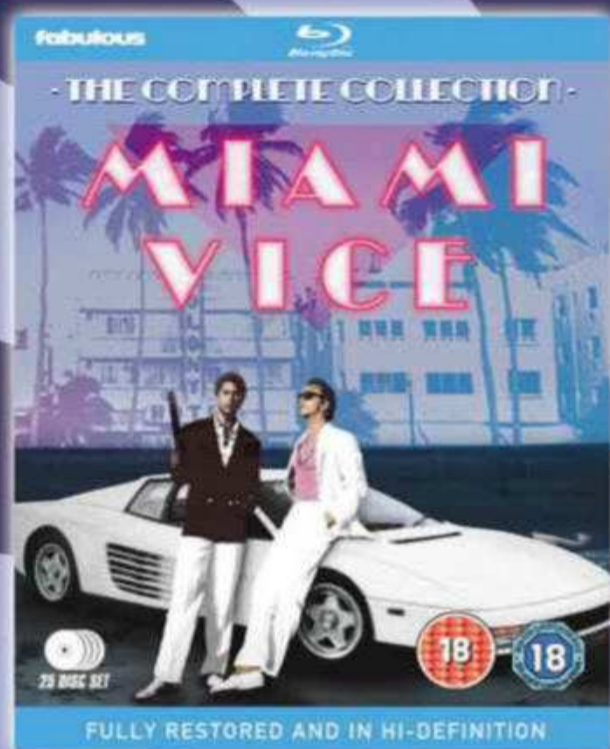
access. The Chinese state authorities, if they wish, already have the technology to track, monitor and listen in on most of their population.

The surveillance also extends to activity online. The Internet is essential for any would-be political movement, and China is a leader in its ability not just to block sites that it finds offensive, but also to track down online discussions that mention unrest, strikes or other anti-social activity. While Chinese levels of Internet censorship occasionally seem farcical – such as blocking searches related to *Winnie the Pooh*, who has been used to poke fun at premier Xi Jinping – the reality is a state with an unprecedented grip on its Internet.

Facebook covertly using your data is one thing, but China aims to produce an online "social credit score"; this is already partially in place, but will be fully operational by 2020. The idea is to determine who might be a disruptive influence. It includes obvious black marks like driving infractions and being caught smoking in a non-smoking area, but also factors in behaviour like buying too many video games, posting 'fake news' online, and presumably, spending too much time reading or searching for the wrong websites. 'Bad citizens' can already be blacklisted for jobs, blocked from travel, and even have their broadband speed reduced. 'Good citizens' can get discounts, cheaper loans and other benefits.

In the US, a robot dragonfly might make sense to get close to a high-value suspect, but using them to observe anti-war protests seems like a waste of effort. Similarly, robot birds seem distinctly redundant in China's surveillance state when they have so many other ways of gathering data. If you are a Chinese dissident, robot pigeons – if they exist – are the least of your worries.

CLASSIC TELEVISION NOW ON BLU-RAY



AVAILABLE FROM ALL GOOD RETAILERS

fabulous

www.fabulousfilms.com



PAUL SIEVEKING uses his ancient ochre crayon to enumerate this month's phenomenal finds

THE SHIGIR IDOL

Researchers have found evidence suggesting that the famous wooden Shigir Idol from the Ural Mountains is actually more than twice as old as Stonehenge. Russian miners discovered the idol in an ancient Siberian peat bog back in 1890. It was constructed from several chunks of larch wood, and remained preserved because of antimicrobial properties found in the peat. The idol is also covered extensively with markings, some of which depict tiny human faces. Experts have studied the carvings over the years, and many have suggested they could represent a form of art, possibly linked with spiritual or religious activities. Some observers even believe that complex 'runes' cut into the wood are encoded information about the origins of the Universe. The idol was originally 17ft (5.3m) tall, but parts of it went missing during the Soviet Era. Now only 9ft (2.8m) remain along with sketches drawn in 1914 by a famous local archaeologist, Vladimir Tolmachev.

In 1997, archaeologists in Russia carbon-dated the idol and concluded it was approximately 9,500 years old – but its origin has now been pushed back a couple of millennia. A team in Mannheim, Germany, expressed interest in taking a closer look at the idol, which is normally housed in the Sverdlovsk Regional Museum in Yekaterinburg. Using accelerated mass spectrometry, they found the idol to be approximately 11,500 years old, placing its creation at the end of the last Ice Age – and making it the oldest known wooden monumental sculpture ever found. The researchers report that they also found another face carved into the wood, bringing the total to eight. Further study of the idol should help advance our understanding of Early Holocene hunter-gatherers. Thomas Terberger, a professor at the Department of Cultural Heritage of Lower Saxony and part of the team that studied the Idol, said: "In those times, the hunters, fishermen and gatherers of the Urals were no less developed than the farmers of the Middle East." *Mikhail Zhilin et al: 'Early art in the Urals: new research on the wooden sculpture from Shigir' (Antiquity, 2018); Phys.org, 27 April; independent.co.uk, 3 May 2018.*

OLDEST BREAD

From a 14,400-year-old hunter-gatherer site in Jordan's Black Desert, scientists have discovered the earliest known evidence of bread-making. Until now, the oldest



LEFT: The Shigir Idol, 8ft shorter and 2,000 years older than when discovered.

BELOW: A fireplace at Shubayqa 1.

OPPOSITE: The ancient ochre crayon.

Two buildings were uncovered at the Shubayqa 1 site in northeastern Jordan, each containing a large circular stone fireplace within which charred breadcrumbs were found. Analysed under the microscope, the bread samples showed telltale signs of grinding, sieving and kneading. The people living in the area at the time would have hunted gazelle and trapped smaller animals such as hares and birds. They also foraged for nuts, fruit and wild cereals. The researchers think the bread was made when people gathered together for a celebration or feast; it could be seen as the catalyst for the first human community. Perhaps growing cereals for bread was the driving force behind farming thousands of years later – or maybe it was the brewing of beer... or both. [R] *BBC News, Times, D.Mail, 17 July 2018.*

bread came from Çatalhöyük in Turkey; the Jordanian discovery pushes back the first evidence for bread by more than 5,000 years. The Stone Age bakers – from the Natufian culture – took flour made from wild barley, einkorn or oats, mixed it with pulverised tubers from an aquatic papyrus relative, added water, and then baked it. The bread was unleavened and would have resembled pitta bread or chapatti. Researchers who tried to reconstruct the recipe said the mixed grains gave the bread a nutty flavour, much like today's multi-grain loaves. Our ancestors may have used it as a wrap for roasted meat – thus, as well as being the oldest bread, it may also have been the oldest sandwich.

OLDEST CRAYON

An ochre crayon just 22mm long, probably the world's oldest and thought to have been used to draw on animal skins 10,000 years ago, has been found near the site of an ancient lake now covered in peat near Scarborough, North Yorkshire. An ochre pebble was found at another site on what would have been the opposite side of the lake. The area is near Star Carr, one of the most famous Mesolithic sites in Europe. Archaeologists from the University of York found the items at Seamer Carr and Flixton School House. Previous finds at Flixton include a Mesolithic pendant and more than 30 red deer antler headdresses. Lead



ALEXIS PANTOS / SHUBAYQA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

author of the study Dr Andy Needham said: “Colour was a very significant part of hunter-gatherer life and ochre gives you a very vibrant red colour. One of the latest objects we have found looks exactly like a crayon; the tip is faceted and has gone from a rounded end to a really sharpened end, suggesting it has been used.” *BBC News*, 26 Jan 2018.



ANCIENT JAWBONE

An upper *Homo sapiens* jawbone from the Levant extends the migration of *Homo sapiens* out of Africa further back. The jawbone, thought to be from a young adult, was found near the coast in the Misliya Cave on Mount Carmel, northern Israel, in 2002. Three dating techniques – in Australia, France and Israel – now indicate it is between 177,000 and 194,000 years old, the oldest bone from our species ever found outside Africa. Sophisticated stone tools and blades found nearby suggest the inhabitants were capable hunters, who used slings and elegantly carved blades to kill and butcher gazelles, oryx, boars, hares, turtles and ostrich. There was also evidence of matting made from plants that may have been used to sleep on. *Science*, *Guardian*, 26 Jan; *NY Times*, 27 Jan 2018.

SUFFOLK HENGE

A “phenomenal” Neolithic ceremonial henge of “international significance” has been unearthed near Woodbridge in Suffolk, along the cable route connecting a £2.5bn offshore wind farm built by Scottish Power Renewables to the National Grid. Project manager Vinny Monahan said: “Nothing compares with the intensity and complexity of this site and how it was utilised for thousands of years.” The intended 23-mile (37km) cable route runs from Bawdsey, north of Felixstowe, to Bramford, just west of Ipswich, and is being altered to skirt round the henge. Among the finds are wooden posts more than 4,000 years old and the skull of an aurochs, a prehistoric cow that may have been ritually slaughtered. The henge consists of a ditch with an external earthwork, and a burial mound at the centre. The surrounding ditch has a perfectly preserved walkway, with wood in some places “as good as the day it was placed in the earth”, according to Mr Monahan. “You can see tool marks, and the differences in handedness of people, whether they were left-handed or right-handed.” The site is about 10 miles from Framlingham, where the popular BBC TV series *Detectorists* was filmed. *BBC News*, 28 June; *D.Telegraph*, 29 June 2018.



CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD
COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

229: HEARD BUT NOT SEEN

In classical times, Fort and *FT* scribes would have been called ‘Paradoxographoi’, a term coined by the 12th-century Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes (*Histories*, bk. v154; cf. Anton Westermann, *Paradoxographoi* (1839).

Fort himself largely passed over antiquity, dubbing the Greeks ‘thrice-accursed’ plus the dismissive “Ancient wisdom drips in a patter of slimy opinions” – *Books*, pp55,396 [cf **FT164:23, 165:19**].

A suggestively large number of Greeks and Romans, also several Byzantines, compiled collections of *Mirabilia*, implying much (as Marx called it) ‘Book-worming’ on their part and a ready market for the results. Not just (to us) obscure (as we were stigmatised at school) ‘ink-stained wretches’, but such big names as Cicero, fragments of whose *Admiranda* are quoted in Pliny’s *Natural History* (e.g. bk. ch21 para85) and surface in his own *On Divination* (bk1 chs36,98) and *On the Nature of the Gods* (bk2 ch14)

Monty Python’s Australian philosophers may have called him “a bugger for the bottle”, but there’s no bigger Greek name than Aristotle. One of the treatises ascribed to him is *On Marvellous Things Heard* (*De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus*). Jonathan Barnes, editor of his *Complete Works* (Princeton, 1995, vol2 pvii) asserts that no one has ever doubted its spuriousness. Not quite true: the great scientist Robert Boyle in his *Strange Things* cites it in good faith; cf. Michael Hunter, *Aspects of the Life & Thought of Robert Boyle, 1627-1690* (2015, p177).

For present purposes, who wrote it does not matter. The title suggests that you could always hear people talking about fortean oddities, though various authorial references also imply reading. X the unknown has little or nothing to say about himself or his research methods.

The collection comprises 178 short chapters. Launcelot Dowdall’s 1909 translation is now online; there’s also WS Hett’s 1936 Loeb one. The only full commentary (so far) accompanies the Italian bilingual edition by Gabriella Vanotti (Milan, 2007); cf. Laura Gibbs’s review-article, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2009.02.22 (online). What here follows is perforce a short protreptic selection, with standard chapter enumerations.

A lapel-grabbing opening entry describes a monstrous creature (*bolinthos*

or *monæpus* in local lingo) that defends itself by ejecting vast amounts of scorching-hot excrement over 40ft (12m) distances – beats anything in Jurassic Park.

About two-thirds content subsumes bestiary and natural lore. Arabian camels will not mate; a driver who used a colt for coition was then bitten to death by it. Cretan goats wounded by arrows expel them by eating dittany. Armenian leopard-traps are bated with human excrement. Cypriot mice eat iron. Cappadocian mules breed [**FT175:16**]. Frogs in Cyrene and Seriphus don’t croak, but find voice if transported – adds to Fort reports on ‘frogeity’ (p81).

Wondrous waters include a whirlpool that restores life to dead birds (29), a spring that heals wounds (117), another whose water kills animals (121), two rivers that respectively turn cattle black and white, two more that transmogrify drinkers into cowards or blondes. A group of entries (35-43) enumerate long-lasting or eternal fires. Those in Lycia (Turkey) were a hot topic for our own Paul Sieveking (*New Statesman*, 2 July 1993) and Ulrich Magin (**FT328:76-77**).

No shortage of ‘human interest’. Umbrian women (80) almost always bear twins or triplets. Hapless Ligurian women (91) give birth at work, wash the infant, promptly return to work, oblivious or otherwise to the local river (92) so high that you can’t see people on the opposite bank (a tale embroidered by Strabo, *Geography*, bk5 ch25). They’d be better off in Iberia where female-crazed blokes trade five men for one woman and buy nothing but the same.

The statue of Bitys (156) killed his murderer by falling on him. Our author drily comments: “One would suppose this sort of thing does not happen at random”.

Perhaps suitably, the collection ends (178) with a fellow who recovered from a 10-day coma to announce it was the best time of his life. A similar entry (31) has a chap saying the same about sitting and applauding in an empty theatre. And, who better to close this selection than (32) the publican who sold wine by day, went insane each night – the ultimate Mad Man?

“The disputes of ancient Greece are no nearer solution now than they were several thousand years ago – all because, in a positive sense, there is nothing to prove or solve or settle.” – Fort, *Books*, p107.



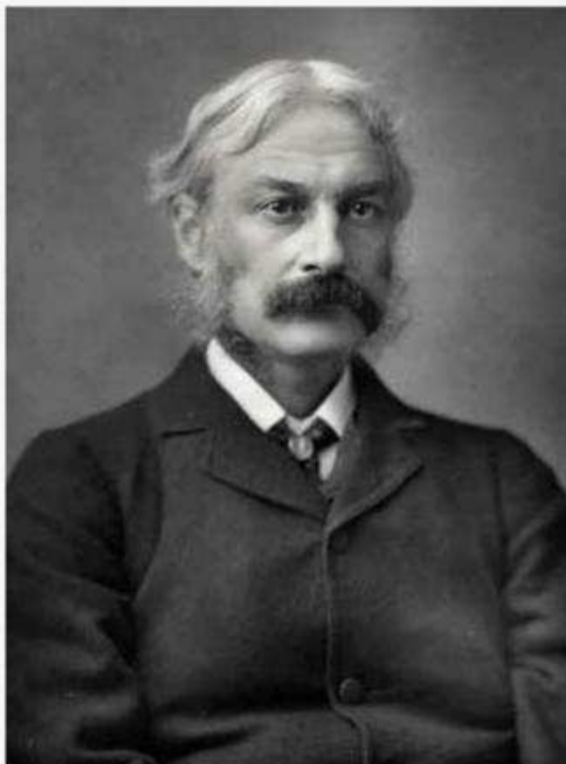
Dreams and ghosts, part one

ALAN MURDIE wonders whether ghosts might be collateral damage in modernity's war on sleep

Earlier this year *New Scientist* magazine (24 March 2018) published an interesting feature "Broken dreams", focusing upon dreams and what may happen if you don't get enough of them. Declaring "Modern life is squeezing dreams out of our sleep – with possibly serious consequences" its author Rowan Hooper stated "dreams are much more than mystical night-time adventures" and drew attention to contemporary research by scientists proposing that having periods of dream-rich sleep (REM) is "vital to learning and creativity and promotes a healthy mind in a variety of ways". Unfortunately, modern fast-paced lifestyles in developed nations are robbing a growing section of the population of sufficient sleep with the loss of valuable periods of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep during which dreaming occurs. Being deprived of sufficient periods of REM sleep may have negative impacts upon mental health and wellbeing.

In highlighting the importance of dreams, I was impressed particularly by the deft piece of intellectual leapfrogging employed with the line that dreams are "much more" than "mystical night-time adventures". After all, this is exactly what numerous human societies before ours long believed dreams to be, although it is now a viewpoint that modern science has largely rejected. Prior to the scientific estrangement from dreams, beginning in the mid-17th century, Western cultures devoted far more attention to their dreams, but owing to their subjective, one-off and unquantifiable nature it proved difficult to assimilate them within new materialistic scientific and philosophical frameworks. The result has been marginalisation, with dreams viewed as largely meaningless or merely 'anecdotal', to the point where "we do not regard our dreams as significant, at least in public discourse" (see Katherine P Ewing in 'The Dream of Spiritual Initiation and the Organisation of Self Representation among Pakistani Sufis' in *American Ethnologist*, vol.17, no.1, Feb 1990, pp56-74).

On pondering these implications, I found myself wondering whether, if we are losing dream-rich sleep, can we also expect fewer good ghost sightings? With *New Scientist* providing almost a rallying call to appreciate the importance of dreams and for their greater study before they go extinct, it occurred to me that a dream-deprived culture is very likely also to be a ghost-deprived one. At least, that



LEFT: Andrew Lang, psychical researcher and collector of fairy tales, published *Dreams and Ghosts* in 1897.



is a prediction that may be offered if the close relationship between apparitions and dreaming states (or at least states where the mind is relaxed) postulated by a number of psychical researchers is correct. For it is precisely in relaxed and half-awake conditions that people in the Western world seem most prone to seeing ghosts.

Such a link seems to have been instinctively recognised by earlier writers; accounts of weird dreams and prophecies are often mixed with collections of ghost stories. Lord Halifax with his Victorian and Edwardian gleanings published as *Lord*

Halifax's Ghost Book (1936) includes many examples of peculiar dreams that seemingly came true. The first more scientifically conscious approach was with Andrew Lang (1844-1912), whose *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts* (1897) supplies a fine collection of both from diverse sources. (Lang is an interesting figure who is to be one of the subjects of a conference in London – *Anthropology and Folklore in Conversation: Revisiting, Frazer, Lang and Tylor* – organised by the Folklore Society and the Royal Anthropological Institute on 28 October 2018). Joining the Society for Psychical Research in 1904, he became its President within seven years.

Not confining himself to gathering hair-raising or extraordinary tales of historical and anthropological note, Lang would take great pains searching back to the earliest and best accounts and locate original documents. Lang showed there were effectively two theories: a hallucinatory theory whereby dreams were products of the brain; or an animistic, spirit hypothesis that dreams emanated from a realm beyond.

Later 20th century researchers, uneasy with traditional explanations of ghosts as spirits of the dead, followed the hallucinatory approach but found it impossible to exclude a psychic element. The most detailed modern theory of apparitions proposed by a psychical researcher was that of George Tyrrell, originally outlined in a lecture 'Apparitions' given appropriately on 31 October 1938 at an SPR meeting and later extended into a book, *Apparitions* (1942, 1952).

By training as an electrical engineer, during the mid-1930s Tyrrell conducted experiments in precognition using an automated apparatus that randomly illuminated one of a set of lightbulbs. Subjects had to guess which bulb would be the first to light up. His subjects achieved positive results, going far beyond chance expectation, leading him to believe he had demonstrated precognition. However, he found other scientists, even many psychical researchers, curiously unenthused by the evidence. He later addressed this reluctance in two books *The Personality of Man* (1947) and *Homo Faber* (1951)

examining the ramifications of psychical phenomena for science and philosophy and ascribing reluctance to examine such findings to a built-in psychological resistance and biologically programmed fear of the unknown. His research also took him into the territory of ghosts, leading him to analyse cases accumulated by the SPR and visiting haunted houses. He maintained ghosts to be mental projections produced by telepathy and constructed within the mind of the witness or percipient.

Tyrrell proposed two stages in seeing a ghost. The earliest stage is in some ways the most mysterious – the apparition arises at some level in the unconscious. Tyrrell suggested that paranormal cognition occurs firstly by telepathic contact at an unconscious level. Sometimes the idea that generates an apparition originates with a living person, in others with a person as they die (so-called crisis apparitions) and in some cases possibly involves an idea remaining after the physical death of its originator. It is not a cut-and-dried ‘message’, but a relatively general idea or ‘theme’. The results of it have to be ‘signalled’ to consciousness. The mind duly develops the second stage where the information is processed into consciousness, through dreams and certain waking experiences that resemble ordinary cognition and perception.

In this second stage, the signal undergoes creative dramatisation, sometimes highly symbolic (e.g. a person who has drowned being seen dripping with water). This image, worked up by the unconscious, is then projected on to the ‘screen’ of the subject’s surroundings and ‘seen’ as a ghost. Labelling these two stages, Tyrrell humorously dubbed them the ‘the producer’ and ‘the stage-carpenter’. The ‘stage carpenter’ element is responsible for the detailed imaginative dramatisation, as within dreams. ‘Stage carpenter’ is an understatement. The ‘stage carpenter’ is also an accomplished dramatist, costumier, make-up artist, director, editor, location manager, stunt and fight-arranger and animal trainer, providing, at its best, lifelike and full-blown figures complete with features, apparitional clothes and accompaniments (e.g. horses, carriages, cars) to match. But this process may go awry when apparitional details become blurred or distorted by the unconscious imaginative powers of the recipient. Features may be warped and incomplete with the right elements omitted or the wrong ones included.

From a rigid scientific perspective, Tyrrell’s theory was very much a case of ‘new ghosts for old’, replacing traditional entities or spirits with nebulous terms couched in scientific phraseology.



Dreams of snakes have long been considered to be bearers of wisdom in shamanistic cultures

Mainstream psychology had been doing much the same in the medical field since the 19th century, with states previously labelled as spirit or demonic possession being newly diagnosed as ‘hysteria’ or ‘multiple-personality disorder’; only by aligning itself with a materialist position did psychology gain acceptance as a science (this materialist philosophy was at its most extreme in the 1930s with behaviourism, which tried to reduce the whole human mind to a series of conditioned reflexes).

With certain sleep scientists and psychologists considering that dreams are good for creativity, it may be wondered if Tyrrell’s notion of ‘the stage carpenter’ element is being implicitly acknowledged, albeit from another direction? Whilst not in any way confirming Tyrrell’s theory, examining such an issue does suggest that science is on the way to recognising at least one phenomenon that has been popularly known for centuries: that some of us may wake up inspired after sleep, for good or ill.

Progress in science and the arts is packed with examples. For instance, the theory of general relativity came to Albert Einstein from an idea planted in a dream. Andrew Lang quotes the case of Professor Hilprecht, whose archæological problem was solved by help from the dream-figure of an Assyrian priest. Coleridge’s poem *Kubla Khan* famously sprang from a dream.

The chemist Kekulé had a dream of a snake biting its tail, which enabled him to

LEFT: Researcher and writer George Tyrrell believed ghosts to be mental projections.

solve the riddle of the structure of benzene molecules, laying the basis for organic chemistry. Dreams of snakes have long been considered to be bearers of wisdom in classical and shamanistic cultures, though on the negative side, there are exceptions. For example, the manslaughter case of *Lipman* [1970] 1 QB 152, who strangled his girlfriend after taking LSD whilst dreaming he was wrestling snakes at the centre of the Earth; he received seven years imprisonment. Had Lipman simply been dreaming without deliberate illegal intoxication, it is likely he would have been acquitted; normally since the 19th century a person who harms another merely as an innocent sleepwalker will escape conviction (for example, the case of *Boshears* [1961] where an American serviceman stationed in Britain strangled a girl in a nightmare and was acquitted).

Ideas from dreams may be connected with the emergence of fragmented images that people experience drifting into or out of sleep. Dr Andreas Mavromatis in *Hypnagogia* (1987) modified an earlier system by an earlier psychologist, FE Leaning (1925), providing a classification scheme that identified six recurrent themes: (1) Formless, e.g. waves, clouds of colour, (2) Designs, e.g. geometric and symmetrical patterns and shapes, (3) Faces, figures, animals, objects, (4) Natural scenes of landscapes, seascapes, gardens, (5) Scenes with people, (6) Print and writing in real or imaginary languages.

The process at work remains mysterious. The act of dreaming is no uniform activity but can be divided into many categories, e.g. nightmares, lucid dreams, archetypal dreams, sexual dreams, and waking dreams – all dependent upon the perspective applied by the classifier. Ghosts have often been explained away as dreams, but a number of researchers have postulated an altogether more complex connection. Tending to use jargon, speaking of ‘hypnagogic’ and ‘hypnopompic states’ (when what they basically mean is ‘half awake and half asleep’), it has been noted that a great many ghosts are seen at night in conditions conducive to sleep, consistent with findings that early mornings are peak periods when anomalous apparitional experiences tend to be reported (e.g. *Phantasms of the Living* (1886) E Gurney, F Myers and F Podmore; *The Census of Hallucinations* (1894) E Sidgwick et al) and I would also propose that there is a distinct time-of-day and time-of-night phenomenon.

Read a great many ghost experiences (as I have done over the years), and you realise



GHOSTWATCH

no one sees a ghost at breakfast time. The stories do not begin “I was eating my cornflakes when I saw”, although people come down to breakfast and tell the story of what they saw the previous night. But as you go through the day the frequency of sightings goes up with a peak between midnight and 4am. The late Dr Peter Hallson, who conducted studies over a long period, estimated that in some (48 per cent) of cases, ghosts are seen either on awakening or in conditions that were conducive to sleep. Dr Hallson told me: “When next you hear of an apparitional experience, there is a good chance that it was seen when the percipient was wakening from sleep!” It proved true with the one apparition I have seen myself.

The question that Tyrrell left unresolved was essentially Lang’s: whether one needed to postulate any external intelligence (such as a spirit) or whether everything could be explained solely as the product of living human brains (a division still found within parapsychology). The difficulty that remains is determining who or what is organising the images within the brain of the sleeper. Although not explicit in his closely reasoned books, Tyrrell may have been much more a believer than was apparent. Veteran psychical researcher Dr Donald West tells me he found Tyrrell in the last decade of his life (he died in 1952) to be of a spiritualistic, even superstitious turn of mind, leading him to block the then much younger and rather sceptical Dr West from then becoming Research Officer for the SPR.

This question remains, though avoided in Rowan Hooper’s feature in *New Scientist*, which eschews detailed discussion of unconscious mental processes and omits any suggestion that dreams might be a bridge between the self and another reality. Modern science, marinated in materialism, can be claustrophobically restrained in its focus, often finding it difficult to admit or openly explore many peculiar aspects of dream and apparitional experiences. Many in science would view with horror the presumptions raised by some of these questions, or the approach of writers such as Edgar Allan Poe who proposed “a class of fancies, of exquisite delicacy, which are thoughts... psychical rather than intellectual. They arise in the soul... only at its epochs of most intense tranquillity.” (In Mavromatis, *Hypnagogia*, 1987.)

On this point, I cannot resist again quoting Rowan Hooper where (although he may well not agree) he expresses himself more deeply than he realises. Discussing the benefits of dream-life, he makes reference to “those most bizarre of dreams where you meet people at the bottom of the ocean and think nothing of



ABOVE: Chemist Friedrich August Kekulé famously claimed to have identified the ring-shaped structure of the benzene molecule after dreaming of an ouroboros-like serpent biting its own tail.

breathing water, or converse with dead relatives.”

Concepts of the bizarre are relative, determined by cultural standpoint. Modern science ascribes all dreams to creations purely within the brain. From this perspective, figures that appear as people in dreams are simply puppets created by the unconscious mind of the sleeper by some unknown mechanism. Yet whether consciously appreciating it or not, Hooper has set down two scenarios common to supernatural tales and shamanistic experiences in widely separated cultures over many thousands of years. Trips beyond the body, to the furthest reaches of the sea or into the heavens, or into another dimension – and meeting the dead (or other discarnate entities) – prove recurrent themes, and what, for millennia, the bulk of humanity has believed has actually taken place on some level.

We should resist any rush to judgment to dismiss the accumulated beliefs of so many cultures, simply on account of the orthodox Western perspective. Not only do we have much to learn about the brain at night, and the processes of dreaming, but also it would be a major error to assume that our modern patterns of sleeping are universal or representative.

Westernised societies today have less time asleep, and are sleeping differently compared with those of the past. Detailed histories of humanity asleep – a third of human history after all – have only begun to appear recently, all the more extraordinary, given that we spend in the normal course of an adult life “Twenty years asleep” as archæologist Sir Mortimer Wheeler entitled the last chapter of his autobiography, *Still Digging* (1956).

Sleep is not what it used to be. We

sleep very differently from earlier, pre-electrical cultures and a substantial case can be made for our experience of sleep being altogether very different from that of mediæval peasants, Romans or Ancient Egyptians and hunter-gatherers, all who experienced far darker nights. Historical evidence suggests the practice of two episodes of sleep each night; the watches in Shakespeare and prayers and observances in monasteries reflected this. How we sleep and dream today, immersed in a world of artificially and perpetually illuminated towns and cities with motorised traffic, aircraft and ceaseless electronic noise, media and chatter surrounding us are an anomaly in historical terms. Consequently, our sleeping patterns and, hence contemporary dream-life may be viewed as a freak in the long history of humans at night. (See *At Day’s Close: A History of Nighttime*, 2005, and ‘Segmented Sleep in Pre-Industrial Societies’, 2016, in *Sleep* vol.39 no.3, pp715-16 both by A Roger Ekirch; also ‘Sleeping In: A Short History on Sleep before the Industrial Revolution’. <http://historycooperative.org/sleeping-in-a-short-history-on-sleep-before-the-industrial-revolution/>

Regarding the question of what organises dream and ghost imagery and the apparent manifestation of other personalities and entities, I was interested to come across writing on dreams by a forgotten figure from English 20th century philosophy and psychical research. This was by Professor LP Jacks (1860-1955), professor of philosophy at Oxford. Author of the book *All Men Are Ghosts* (1913), he engaged in some intriguing speculations on this very subject, to which we will turn in my next column.

FROM CHASING CROOKS TO WRITING BOOKS



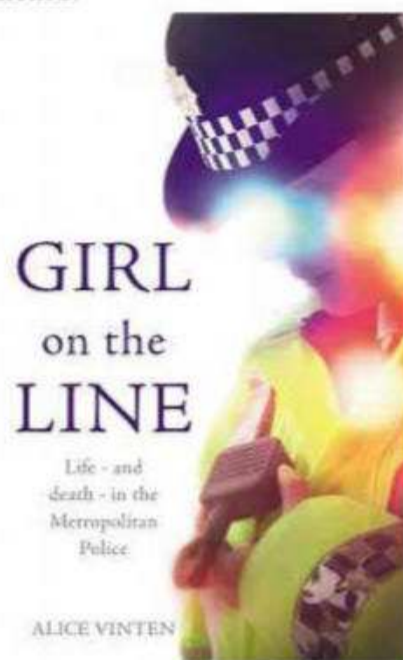
When police constable Alice Vinten enrolled on a home-study course with The Writers Bureau, she never dreamed she'd end up leaving the Met' to write full time. She'd always wanted to be a police officer but now in her latest book, *Girl on the Line*, she tells us what it was really like for a woman on the front-line of London's constant battle against crime.

During her ten years as a London copper, writing helped Alice to process and deal with the challenges of her job. After a while a memoir began to take shape. Over time it became increasingly important to her that she portray the real struggles and experiences of front-line police constables, and how they affected women in particular. With her book she hopes to bridge the gap between the public and the people who protect them on a daily basis.

The idea that her memoirs might be interesting to other people developed when she began a writing course with The Writers Bureau. She quickly gained praise from her tutors for her writing, giving her the confidence to pitch her memoir to a number of publishers.

When she found Two Roads Books and read about their mission to publish voice-driven narratives, she knew she'd found the perfect home for her book, *Girl on the Line*. Using their online submission portal she pitched her idea and was delighted when she was invited in to meet the team, and ecstatic when they offered to publish her memoir.

"We're so pleased for Alice, she's written a cracking book," says Susie Busby, Principal of The Writers Bureau. "She's worked hard and taken chances to progress as a writer. We're very proud to have played a part in her development and wish her all the best for the future."



Alice has been an avid reader since childhood. Growing up, she demolished mountains of books ranging from Point Horror through to the Bronte sisters and Jane Austen. Particular favourites were (and still are) Stephen King, Christopher Pike, Judith Kerr, Roald Dahl and Judy Blume.

From a young age she was determined to join in with everything that 'the boys' did. Along with a friend, she became one of the first girl scouts in Hertfordshire, a fact she is still proud of to this day! After completing her A-Levels, she studied Social Policy at Portsmouth University, before working at the local council in the homeless department whilst waiting to join the Metropolitan Police.

As a mother to two boys she's always nagging them to read more. She is also a lover of all things creative. As well as her memoir, Alice has also written four craft tutorial books and contributed to UK craft magazines. Her passion, however, is crime writing and she is currently working on her first crime novel.

Alice had two ambitions when she was young: to be a police officer and an author. She never dreamed that she would achieve both.

If you've got a gift for words, or have a story to tell and want some advice on telling it, contact The Writers Bureau at: www.writersbureau.com 0800 856 2008. Please quote AT918

Why Not Be A Writer?

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

To help you succeed, we offer you a first-class, home-study course from professional writers – with individually tailored tuition and expert personal guidance from your tutor. You learn about writing articles, stories, novels, romances, historicals,

journalism, writing for children, radio, TV, the stage etc. You are advised on style, presentation, HOW TO SELL YOUR WRITING, copyright – and much more. In short, you learn how to be a successful writer.

If you want to be a writer, this is the way to start! It's ideal for beginners. No previous experience or special education required. You can earn while you learn. Details free. Full refund if not successful. Visit our website or call our Freephone number NOW!

0800 856 2008

Please quote AT918

Embark on an exciting writing journey of your own for only £444 (instalment terms available).

www.writersbureau.com

Please send me **free details** on how I can become a writer. No stamp required. We do not share your details with others.

AT918

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

Address

Post Code

Email

Freepost THE WRITERS BUREAU

www.facebook.com/thewritersbureau
www.twitter.com/writersbureau

★ Trustpilot email: 18W1@writersbureau.com

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Writers Bureau 29 Years of Success Members of ITOL and NAWE



CHILD SNATCHER PANIC

Viral videos and WhatsApp messages have led to a deadly outbreak of fatal beatings and lynchings

INDIA'S CHILD LIFTERS

In the summer of 2017, mass hysteria gripped much of north India as hundreds of women, from villages and cities, complained of having their braids chopped off by mysterious attackers [FT358:6-7]. The frenzy generated a culture of vigilantism that claimed one person's life and left several injured. A year on, mass hysteria fostered by rumours of child abductors on the prowl has left at least 31 people dead across 10 states. This time it is far more widespread and deadly, boosted by social media. A striking difference is that in all cases of lynching incited by rumours of child abduction the victims were outsiders – ethnically and culturally if not necessarily geographically – whereas some of the people targeted for allegedly chopping braids had turned out to be fellow villagers or townfolk.

The concept of the 'child lifter' has existed in many Indian communities for a long time, primarily as a tool for parents to control the behaviour of their children. Over time, it has mutated into belief, spread by word of mouth. The Assamese have several terms to describe child lifters: they are called *Xupa Dhora* in non-tribal areas and *Phanka Dong* in Karbi Anglong, where two men from Guwahati were lynched by a mob in June (see below). In Bengali, the child lifter is called *Chhele Dhora* and in Odia, *Pilla Chor*. *Chhele Dhora* appears in a short story in the *Taranath Tantrik* anthology, written in the 1940s by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, the famed author of *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito* and *Apur Sansar*. In a study on the depiction of women in Purana traditions published in 1998, Aparna Roy, a scholar from the University of Allahabad, identifies the child lifter with Putana, one of the many forms of mother. In Hindu mythology, though, Putana is a demon who breastfed the infant Krishna – depicted in the epics as an act of maternal devotion – only to be



TOP: The parents of lynching victim Nilotpal Das hold up a picture of their son at their home in Guwahati. ABOVE: The episode has sparked numerous angry protests – so angry, in fact, that some would like to see the lynch mobs hanged.

killed by him.

Yet, as police officials in several states have pointed out, rumours about the prowling child lifter have incited violent mobs even in places where this concept seemingly does not exist in the language or folklore, particularly in western and southern parts of the country. In these places, the mob generally used the local term for thief to describe the suspected child lifter. Messages circulated through social media are cutting through historical and cultural beliefs, which used to operate within closed communities, but are now scattering, making them more difficult to examine. The child lifters are allegedly killing the children for their body parts.

Until this year, fears about child lifting rarely led to such a

spate of killings – at least none have been widely reported. One of the earliest reported cases of the lynching of alleged child abductors took place in 1982, when 17 Ananda Margis, followers of a socio-spiritual movement founded in Bihar in 1955, were lynched by mobs at three separate places in Kolkata in a single day. The killings came to be known as the Bijon Setu massacre, which the Mamata Banerjee government formed a commission in October 2013 to investigate. Most recently, before this year's spate of such lynchings, seven persons were killed by mobs on suspicion of being child lifters in Jharkhand's Bagbera and Rajnagar on 18 and 19 May 2017.

On 8 June 2018, Nilotpal Das (29), an audio engineer and

Abijeet Nath (30), a digital artist – both residents of Guwahati, the largest city in Assam – drove to a picnic spot in Assam's Karbi Anglong district to visit a waterfall and on their return journey stopped in the village of Panjuri Kachari to ask for directions – where they were beaten and hanged from a tree by a mob numbering up to 500 who believed they had an abducted child in their black SUV. (The attack continued even when no child was found.) Police later made 16 arrests. A video of the attack went viral; one of the men can be seen pleading for his life. In the previous month, rumours of child kidnappings had spread across India via WhatsApp and Facebook, and had already led to the deaths of seven other people.

One video disseminated on WhatsApp, a Facebook-owned company, purportedly showed a child being abducted. In it, two men on a motorcycle pull up to a group of children; one of them grabs a child and they ride off. But the video was not real: an unedited version showed it to be a child safety film from Pakistan. The last segment, showing one of the men holding up a sign that reads "It takes only a moment to kidnap a child from the streets of Karachi", had been edited out in the WhatsApp version. The latter was accompanied by text messages that talked about "kidnappers" arriving in the city with the aim of snatching children. Though it was initially spread via the messaging app, the panic was further fuelled when some regional media channels picked up the rumours, lending them credibility. This prompted local people to attack those who looked unfamiliar or were unable to speak the regional language.

In Tamil Nadu last April, a man was beaten to death by a mob after being seen aimlessly wandering the streets, while in May a 55-year-old woman was lynched for giving sweets to children. Police made 30 arrests and began awareness drives to counter the rumours. Also in May: a man in the southern state

BOTH PHOTOS: BIJU BORO / AFP / GETTY IMAGES



of Andhra Pradesh was lynched for speaking Hindi and not the local language, Telugu; a man in neighbouring Telengana was killed by a mob while entering a mango orchard at night; and another man in Telengana was lynched when visiting a village to see his relatives. Local police arrested people who circulated false video messages online. Kaalu Ram, who had moved to the southern city of Bangalore to look for work, was tied up with rope and beaten to death with cricket bats. (One social media message had announced the arrival of 200 kidnapers in Bangalore.) A transgender woman was lynched in the southern city of Hyderabad. Police marched alongside Hyderabad residents with loudspeakers chanting, “Don’t believe the rumours”. In other southern states like Karnataka, police set up social media control rooms from where they monitored posts, viral messages and videos.

On 13 July, the rumours claimed another life in the Bidar district of Karnataka. Mohammed Azam Ahmed (32), of Malakpet in Hyderabad, a Google software engineer, was beaten to death while a Qatari national, Salham Eidal Kubaisi (38), and Noor Mohammed Sadique and Mohammed Salman from Barkas in Hyderabad, suffered critical injuries and were admitted to hospital. Three WhatsApp administrators who circulated photos and messages that the four men were child kidnapers were arrested, along with 30 people who were part of the lynch mob.

Kubaisi’s wife Zaibunnisa said that the four had set off from Hyderabad to meet a relative at Bidar and attend a social function. After the function, they were en route to see a piece of land that they were interested in purchasing. “When they stopped for tea near a school at Murki village in Aurad Taluka at about 4.30pm, they saw schoolchildren heading home,” she said. “Salham started handing out foreign chocolates, which he was carrying, to students. However, someone raised an alarm that strangers were luring kids with chocolates and people started gathering immediately.”



ABOVE: Mohinidevi Nath displays a photo of her cousin Shantadevi Nath, who was killed by a mob that falsely believed she was intent on abducting children on the outskirts of Ahmedabad in India’s western Gujarat state in June.

With 200 million users, India is WhatsApp’s biggest market

(Another account said one of the children started crying, alerting adults who accused the men of being child lifters.) The four men, sensing danger, fled in the red Toyota Innova they were travelling in, but by that time some people had taken photographs of them and circulated them on WhatsApp with the message that they were kidnapers and should be stopped. The photos and the messages soon went viral. “According to the victims, in the next village, villagers blocked the road with a felled tree. To avoid the blockade, Azam, who was driving, tried to go around it at high speed but ended up jumping over a culvert and the vehicle fell into the ditch. The mob pulled them out and beat them mercilessly,” said Ahmed Balala. “I met the victims and they said that two policemen reached the spot but could not prevent the mob from beating them up.” Three policemen were injured in a rescue attempt. It was not clear whether Azam Ahmed died due to injuries sustained when the vehicle went off the road or because he was beaten to death.

On 20 July, following a

government warning that it could face legal consequences if it remained a “mute spectator”, WhatsApp announced that the forwarding option for Indian users would be curtailed so that a single person would be able to forward one message only five times. However, this would not stop other members from a group from forwarding the message to a further five contacts of their own. The company also said it would be removing the “quick forward button” next to messages containing pictures or video. With more than 200 million users, India is WhatsApp’s biggest market. Its users forward more messages, photos, and videos, than any other country in the world. Up to this point, groups on WhatsApp could have a maximum of 256 people. Many of the messages that are believed to have triggered violence were forwarded to multiple groups that had more than 100 members each. Police say it is proving hard to get people to believe that the messages are false. In a recent lynching in the north-eastern state of Tripura, the victim was a man employed by the local government to go around villages to dispel rumours being spread on social media!

“The herd mentality means that not taking part can lead to you fearing that you may be next, and that has become a part of the psychology of India,” said Dr Era Dutta, a clinical neuropsychiatrist based in Kolkata.

BBC News, 11 June, 20 July; Irish Times, Metro, 12 June; nextshark.com, 30 June; scroll.in, 12 July; countercurrents.org, 15 July; D.Telegraph, 16+21 July, 5 Aug 2018.

FEAR OF A BLACK AMBULANCE

An attack on a supposed child-snatcher took place in Romania in July. In 2016 Romanian writer Doina Popescu-Braila had hit on the idea of converting an old ambulance in order to travel round on a book tour as cheaply as possible. She lives and sleeps in it and uses it to sell her work. Its purpose is unambiguously proclaimed by a sign on the side that says *Ambulanta pentru literatura* (“Ambulance for literature”).

On 4 July she parked near Bucharest’s main railway station, but just before midnight a hostile crowd gathered, believing the ambulance was there for the abduction of children. Initiated by several ‘hysterical’ women, the incident snowballed as more people arrived. Social media posts publicised what was happening, drawing still more participants. “They started filming me, they got into the ambulance and someone put out a cigarette on my cheek,” she said. “They started going through my things, they saw the caravan toilet chemicals and believed it might be blood or a medical substance of sorts. I showed them my books and they got so scared as if I was showing them voodoo dolls. When the police got to the scene, there were close to 500-600 people from the surrounding neighbourhood encircling the van. A woman even stole the ambulance number plates to help fuel the general hysteria.” A commentator puts the crowd number at 100, a more plausible estimate.

Popescu-Braila herself rang the police, who arrested three people, a man and two women. (The *Romania Insider* report indicates five men were directly involved in the assault.) Demonstrators then gathered at the police station, angry that the writer had not herself been arrested. She was given medical treatment, but refused to go to hospital because she feared for her safety there. She was upset

SAM PANTHAKY / AFP / GETTY IMAGES



STRANGE DAYS

DOINA POPESCU-BRAILA

at the lack of support and the way the incident was treated by a sensationalist media in search of ratings: “I am shocked to see no other writer or intellectual taking a stance against this incident. I am even more surprised by how the entire thing was depicted on TV, with some news shows, in their quest for ratings, talking about the ‘black ambulance’ as if it were a real thing not a bogus story.” This was the first time Popescu-Braila had run into trouble. Despite her ordeal, she vowed to continue her tour.

The black ambulance is an urban legend in parts of central and Eastern Europe, used by organ harvesters to ply their grisly trade abducting children and murdering them for their blood and body parts. According to the *Euronews* report, such stories originated in Poland and were promoted both to help instil hatred of the West and to help cover up abductions by the secret police. However, an article on Polish urban legends notes that in the 1960s the vehicle was a Soviet Volga, painted black, and the alleged market was the Soviet Union (presumably symbolising blood-sucking Russia) rather than the West. The legend migrated to Czechoslovakia, where the car became a black ambulance. In



ABOVE: Doina Popescu-Braila and the innocent ambulance that sparked the panic.

The black ambulance is an urban legend in Eastern Europe

both Poland and Czechoslovakia the fear was alive in the 1980s and 1990s, and evidently travelled to Romania.

A paper presented by Petr Janáček at the 30th Perspectives On Contemporary Legend Conference, at Göttingen, Germany, in 2012, was titled ‘The Black Volga Revisited: Child Abduction Legends and

Rumours in Countries of the Eastern Bloc’, and he draws attention to the complex nature of the theme. While prevalent in various countries previously within the Soviet orbit, such rumours were not confined to them he said, having appeared in places as far apart as Italy, Brazil and Nigeria. He notes that these stories began circulating in the 1930s, with a generic black Soviet car as the basis. They have constituted a stable and long-lasting narrative with social, economic and political implications, for example attitudes to state-run health services and xenophobia towards Jews, Germans and Arabs, all of whom at various times were

accused of driving black vehicles in pursuit of children.

Janáček considers racism the most common driver nowadays – but this would hardly cover Popescu-Braila’s dreadful encounter. As Tom Ruffles says: “The only common feature between the author and the alleged organ harvesters is the ambulance, but here it is blue and white, not black, and has its function displayed on the side as well as her name in very large letters... It is also curious that it occurred in the middle of Bucharest rather than in a rural area, where superstitions might persist longer than in an urban environment. Perhaps there was an anti-intellectual element, dislike of an independent woman travelling alone, or a group of poorly educated and bored individuals seeking a licence to vent their frustrations on someone seen as an eccentric outsider.”

Romania-insider.com, 6 July; *Euronews*, 9 July 2018; www.whalekiss.com/2018/02/08/polish-urban-legend/; www.radio.cz/en/section/panorama/the-black-ambulance-and-other-urban-legends; www.folklore.ee/FOAFtale/ftn79.htm; special thanks to Tom Ruffles: <https://thomasruffles.blogspot.com/2018/07/a-black-ambulance-in-bucharest.html>, 10 July 2018.

UNDER HER SPELL

A Liberian nurse was jailed at Birmingham Crown Court for 14 years after being convicted of sex trafficking five Nigerian women using voodoo spells. Josephine Iyamu, 53, ran a trafficking ring from her two-bedroom flat in London whilst working as an agency nurse. She used black magic ceremonies to terrify her victims into obedience, beating them with bloody chicken carcasses, forcing them to eat chicken hearts and drink blood laced with worms.

Following a nightmarish five-day journey to the Libyan coast during which they endured ambushes and gang rapes, the victims were put on an inflatable boat crammed with hundreds of migrants bound for Italy. From there, the women were taken to Germany where they entered the sex trade.

They were charged £33,000 each for the journey, which Iyamu demanded they

pay her. Claiming she only earned £14,500 a year as a nurse, Iyamu, known to her victims as ‘Madame Sandra’, lived a lavish lifestyle with £700 designer shoes, a £400,000 London home, and a mansion in Benin City, Nigeria, complete with servants.

A suspicious brothel owner in Trier, Germany, brought the women to the attention of German police, who contacted the UK National Crime Agency. After launching their investigation, the NCA arranged for a Nigerian priest to perform a ceremony via videolink to free the women from the black magic spell they believed had been placed upon them.

Iyamu is the first person in the UK to be convicted under the Modern Slavery Act of 2015 after trafficking victims from outside the UK. *D.Mail*, 29 June; *D.Mail, Metro*, 5 July 2018.

RIGHT: Josephine Iyamu, aka ‘Madame Sandra’, was arrested at Heathrow Airport.





KARL SHUKER reports on a newly described extinct gibbon and an enigmatic parrot identified



LEFT: The partial cranium and mandible of the newly described Chinese *gibbon*. ABOVE: One of the pictures of Frederick II's mysterious white parrot. RIGHT: The colour sketches identify the bird as a sulphur-crested cockatoo.

PICTURING A NEW GIBBON?

A new species of extinct gibbon has recently been officially described and named in the journal *Science*, and is so different from all others that it has required the creation of a new genus. What makes this find more remarkable still is that instead of being merely another fossil species, one that vanished way back in prehistoric times, this new gibbon may have only died out a few centuries ago, during historical times, and was therefore familiar to modern humanity. Hailing from China, it has been formally dubbed *Junzi imperialis* by a team of researchers that includes Dr Sam Turvey from the Zoological Society of London's Institute of Zoology, with whom I have been communicating regarding their highly significant discovery.

It is presently known from a single partial cranium and mandible found inside a burial chamber in central China's Shaanxi province, dating back around 2,300 years, alongside the remains of several other species, including leopards, lynx, cranes, various domestic animals, and a black bear, and may have been a pet, as gibbons were highly prized in this capacity within China back then. The research team believes that its species' extinction probably resulted from adverse human activities, such as hunting and habitat destruction, which, if correct, would mean that this is the very first species of ape known to have died out due to such interactions. Moreover, the team also considers it likely that this is not the only Chinese gibbon species to have become extinct in historical times – the researchers believe it possible that additional lately-lost species still await

formal discovery in this vast country via the eventual uncovering of preserved physical remains.

There is a second, equally intriguing but entirely independent line of evidence indicating that this prospect may indeed be true. A number of early classical Chinese paintings depict gibbons that don't resemble any Chinese species still in existence. True, these may conceivably be very stylised portrayals of still-surviving Sinitian gibbons, or they may even be representations of non-native specimens brought into China from elsewhere in Asia as exotic, greatly valued pets. However, there is also an exciting third possibility – that such illustrations are bona fide depictions of native but now-extinct Chinese gibbons, perhaps including the newly unveiled *J. imperialis*. Moreover, this would not be unprecedented; species such as China's very own giant panda and Roxellana's snub-nosed monkey, as well as Africa's gerenuk and Grevy's zebra, for instance, were all first made known to science via early pictorial evidence before physical, tangible evidence of their reality was obtained.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-44541847> 21 June 2018; <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/06/vanished-ape-found-ancient-chinese-tomb-giving-clues-its-disappearance> 21 July 2018; *Science*, vol. 360, pp. 1346-9, 22 June 2018; Dr Samuel Turvey, pers. comms, 16, 24 July 2018.

COCK-A-HOOP OVER COCKATOO

And speaking of iconographical surprises of the zoological kind: historians have long known that sometime between AD

1217 and 1238, al-Malik Muhammad al-Kamil, the fourth Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, presented a mysterious white parrot to the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II of Sicily. However, its taxonomic identity has remained controversial until now. Melbourne University researcher Dr Heather Dalton and a team of Finnish scholars recently revealed (via a paper in the journal *Parergon*) that, while studying a Latin falconry book entitled *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* ('The Art of Hunting with Birds') written by Frederick II in the 1240s and containing over 900 pictures of animals kept in his palaces, they discovered no fewer than four colour sketches (plus a written description) of his enigmatic white parrot. These conclusively identified it as a female sulphur-crested cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* – a species native to northern Australia, New Guinea, and certain Indonesian islands. Consequently, not only do these images constitute the earliest known European depictions of a cockatoo, pre-dating by 250 years the previous holder of this record (an artwork by Italian painter Andrea Mantegna dating from 1496), but also they provide proof of merchant trading between northern Australia and the Middle East, whence exotic items would in turn be imported into Europe. Frederick II's falconry book is in the Vatican Library.

<https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/how-did-a-cockatoo-reach-13th-century-sicily> 25 June 2018; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-44610271> 26 June 2018; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/26/images-of-cockatoo-on-13-century-vatican-manuscript-inspire-trade-route-rethink> 26 June 2018.

JOHN HARRISON / CREATIVE COMMONS

STRANGE CONTINENT

ULRICH MAGIN and THEO PAIJMANS round up the summer's oddest news items from across Europe...

BVM SAVES CHURCH

On 29 May 2018, 5,000 cubic metres of rock became dislodged from the mountainside above the sanctuary of Madonna di Gallivaggio in Valchiavenna, Lomardy, Italy. The mass thundered down the slope, and rocks began to land on the roof of the church. Then, suddenly, the avalanche deviated from its path, sparing the building. The archpriest of Chiavenna, Don Andrea Caelli, believes this was the result of a heavenly intervention. "Something happened that is inexplicable. A supernatural presence protects the valley and it has protected the sanctuary. And, for me, Mary has influenced the passage of this landslide." A still from a video taken of the geological event shows what many have interpreted as an image of the Virgin. *Provincia di Como, 31 May 2018.*

CROP CIRCLE CONCERNS

When a crudely made crop circle appeared in a field of grain near the Dutch town of Zevenbergen, Brabant, farmer Örjan Schrauwen, in whose field the circle had appeared overnight, was not impressed. He immediately climbed into his tractor and mowed the part of the field where the circle had been made. His crops had sustained little damage, as the circle was a small one, but to the irate farmer it was a matter of principle: "You just need to stay out of my field and not stamp on the grain!"

Elsewhere in Brabant, near the village of Hoeven, farmer Jack Verhulst discovered another rudimentary circle in a field of grass on his land on 13 May. Verhulst, who has found circles in previous years, took a more enterprising approach; for a small voluntary fee, people were allowed to enter his field and visit the circle. Verhulst had discovered the circle



ABOVE: The avalanche that miraculously spared Valchiavenna's church, with the BVM visible in the massive clouds of dust.

while inspecting his fields, but wasn't in the least bit angry, he explained: "On the contrary, I think crop circles are beautiful." He added that he thought the crop circles were "too perfect" to be made by humans. "I am a level-headed farmer but I know that there are more things in Heaven and Earth," he concluded. *De Telegraaf, 14 July, Omroep Brabant, 14 May 2018.*

GIANT FLYING TRIANGLES

When Frederic K and a companion were watching the night sky at around 11.30pm on 12 August in the French village of Viry, not far from Geneva, they spotted something quite different from the shooting stars they were expecting. "Looking up at the sky, we distinctly discerned a black triangle with some kind of 'position lights' at each point. The machine was almost motionless, but it rotated slightly. It made no sound," K later stated. He ran inside to fetch a cell-phone in order to film the object, but when he returned it was gone. He was struck by the immense size of the triangle and was certain it was not an aircraft, declaring it to be several times the size of an

airliner such as an Airbus A320.

A week before, on 6 August, a resident in the Dutch town of Heemstede, Noord-Holland, was observing satellites, aeroplanes and stars in the night sky at around 11.20pm when he suddenly saw "a triangular formation, entirely without sound... It was too fast for a regular plane or satellite, and three white dots of light remained precisely in place in the formation, maintaining a constant brightness... My impression was that it was a solid object, but it went so fast that I can't say this with certainty. In any case, it had to have been a large object", claimed the eyewitness, who was named Gerard but no last name given. *Ovnis-direct.com, 16 Aug; Ufomeldpunt.nl, 6 Aug 2018.*

WEIRD WHISTLING NOISE

Since March of this year, inhabitants of the Dutch village of Leerdam have been plagued by a mystery sound described as a low whistling or humming noise that erupts about every four minutes and lasts two seconds. One inhabitant tried to locate the source of the sound by walking around the village.

While he couldn't pinpoint the exact source or find an obvious cause, he suggested the sound emanated somewhere in the neighbourhood of an old water tower. *Algemeen Dagblad, 15 Mar 2018.*

GERMAN CROCODILES

Employees of a primary school at Ratingen, Germany, informed fire-fighters that they had seen a crocodile on the lawn on 25 May 2018. A reptile expert arrived, equipped with a cage, only to find that someone had already cornered the croc and put it under a plastic box. The specialist removed the box – to reveal a tiny toy crocodile. On 30 May, the same scenario was repeated in Nagold, Baden-Württemberg, when several alarmed citizens called police to report a rather static crocodile in the Waldach River. And static it proved to be when police, on nearing the creature, found it was a 8ft (2.5m) soft toy.

On 27 June, police received a report from a bathing lake near Tauting, Bavaria, of a crocodile that had surfaced there. As police approached the pond, they clearly saw the reptile's head peeping above the water.



An intrepid passer-by, certain it was a model, jumped into the water and retrieved it. *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, 26 May; *Pforzheimer Zeitung*, 3 June; *tz*, Munich, 29 June 2018.

MISTAKEN OBSERVATIONS

On the early evening of 28 April 2018, a man saw a hang-glider crash into Lake Garda at Toscolano Maderno, Italy, and raised the alarm. Searches started at 7.30pm, but fire-fighters, coastguards and the police could not confirm the crash. None of the pilots who reported flights on that day was missing. The next day, a helicopter from Malpensa airport, near Milan, checked the lake, also without success. *Giornale di Brescia*, 29 Apr 2018.

On 8 July at 8pm, fire-fighters and police in Bonn, Germany, received information that a man in a canoe had collided with a freighter in the Rhine, and then capsized. Officials searched the river with boats and a helicopter for an hour, then called off the search without finding the canoe, the man, or any indication that the accident had happened. *general-anzeiger-bonn.de*, 18 July 2018.

This is the second such “phantom boat” in four years in Bonn. On 10 July 2014, Königswinter police searched the Rhine after eyewitnesses reported an abandoned canoe. There had been heavy storms,

and the owner was feared to be in trouble. Police searched the banks and the river, but found neither person nor boat. *HonnefHeute*, 11 July 2014.

MATTERHORN MYSTERY

When the body of a man was discovered in ice on the Italian side of the Matterhorn glacier in 2005, the only clue to the identity of the frozen corpse was a watch, which indicated that the unidentified man might have been French. Now, after 13 years, his daughter has come forward to identify the mystery man as Henri Joseph Leonce le Masne, an official of the French Ministry of Finance. Le Masne had gone out for a brief walk to a mountain cabin at Cervinia on his 35th birthday on 26 March 1954. Despite an extensive month-long search, he was not found and his fate remained unknown until his daughter heard a recent radio appeal for information by the Italian police. *Corriere della Sera*, 28 July 2018.

DANGEROUS WILDLIFE

Giant, aggressive monster worms have been reported in France. The hammerhead flatworm, *Bipalium kewense*, can reach a length of 16in (40cm). A citizen science project by researchers of the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle in Paris, led by Jean-Lou Justine, asked people to send in sightings

of the creature. The response revealed that the animal had reached Europe from eastern Asia decades ago. This species of flatworm uses the natural poison tetrodotoxine to kill its prey. The flatworm poses no danger to humans, but can decimate local populations of earthworms. *heute.at*, 29 May 2018.

Meanwhile, *Russia Today* has discovered monster rats in Sweden. In the Johannedal quarter of the northern city of Sundsvall, locals “live in constant terror of a merciless foe”. Rats as large as cats force the locals to barricade doors and refrain from going outdoors. Authorities believe the rats evolved on a local recycling plant. “These are no normal rats,” Benny Sagmo of the Planning Office of Sundsvall is reported to have said to Swedish paper *Norran*. “If we do not stop them, they will become even larger.” *RT Deutsch*, 22 June 2018.

Another terrifying threat to Europe came from the sea. In June, a great white shark, said to be the first in Spanish waters, was reported by a research team led by Fernando López-Mirones. The encounter took place at Cabrera Island, south of Mallorca. “The picture we took makes it difficult to judge size exactly, but the animal must be around 5m [16ft] long. We filmed it for 70 minutes,” the biologist said. “There had

been unconfirmed sightings in the past, but this is the first scientific confirmation.” However, only a few days later, a Madrid newspaper reported that additional observations by other researchers had identified the animal as a much smaller and less threatening porbeagle shark, *Lamna nasus*, which usually reaches a length of about 2.5m (8ft). *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, 30 June; *ABC*, 4 July 2018.

ENTOMBED CAT

After spending two weeks trapped behind a wall without food or water, Jimmy the cat was at last reunited with his owners. The Maine Coon lives in Bretten, near Karlsruhe, Germany, and belongs to Dieter Taubert and his girlfriend Meike Vielsack. 14 days earlier, he had been accidentally walled up in a space behind the garage of a newly built house. Nearby residents heard him meowing and notified Taubert. On 31 July, police smashed a small hole in the wall with a hammer. Jimmy was reluctant to leave his hiding place at first, only making brief appearances when his owners tried to tempt him with what the police described as “the finest delicacies and the smell of freedom”. Eventually gaining confidence, Jimmy finally emerged after dark. *web.de*, 1 Aug 2018.



ABOVE LEFT: The hammerhead flatworm is no friend to Europe’s native earthworms. ABOVE RIGHT: Meike tries to coax Jimmy from the wall in which he was entombed.

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL

Exorcisms are on the increase, with the Vatican fighting off freelancers and folk saints as well as Satan himself



ALBERTO PIZZOLI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES



YURI CORTEZ / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: Priests and seminarians wait to attend a Vatican-sanctioned class on exorcism at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A devotee holds figures of Santa Muerte, venerated by Mexico's narcos, gangsters and hustlers, during a celebration at a sanctuary in Santa Maria Cuauhtec, Tultitlan, Mexico.

The past two decades have seen a sharp rise in the number of requests for exorcisms. To meet this increased demand, a Vatican-sanctioned conference for trainee exorcists has been held each year since 2004 at Rome's Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University. The six-day *Corso Esorcismo e Preghiera di Liberazione* event, held this year in April, addresses the phenomenon of demonic possession in its theological, biblical, anthropological, cultural, phenomenological, psychological and pharmacological aspects.

Asked why there had been such a steep rise in exorcism requests, delegate Father Anthony Barratt claimed that the Internet has made Satanism more accessible than ever before. And Father Jose Enrique Oyarzun claimed that "Digital technology is invigorating him [the Devil] and leading people astray." Others pointed the finger at occult-themed Hollywood films and popular books like the *Harry Potter* series. Also singled out for blame were Tarot cards, Ouija boards, alcohol and drug addiction, pornography, consumerism, homosexuality and promiscuity.

Seeking to move with the times, the Church is embracing modern technology. "There are

priests who carry out exorcisms on their mobile phones. That's possible thanks to Jesus," said Cardinal Ernest Simoni of Albania. Some expressed surprise at this, pointing out the necessity to be physically present in order to restrain patients who might injure themselves through violent contortion of their bodies during the rite. And in another nod towards modernisation, Catholic bishops in the USA recently agreed to publish a translation of the exorcism ritual, as some priests may not be familiar with the traditional Latin. *Times*, 24 Sept 2016, 28 Oct 2017; *D.Telegraph*, 17 April 2018.

- Father Emmanuel Coquet of the Paris diocese conducted around 50 exorcism rites in 2017, a fivefold increase from a decade ago. He suggested that the increase in requests is linked to the way that clients now present themselves as helpless victims. In the past, he said, afflicted persons would first try to help themselves with prayer and church visits. Now, however, they are more inclined to turn immediately to professionals, having themselves forgotten the correct prayer formulations that might offer protection. Another qualified exorcist for the Paris diocese, Father Georges Berson,

said that of the roughly 2,500 requests a year they receive, the vast majority (estimated at 97-98 per cent) are from those with emotional or psychological problems. Such people, he said, are gently turned away and advised to consult a medical practitioner instead.

Asked how they distinguish between genuine possession and mental illness, exorcist-priests said there are certain indications they always look out for. Patients (as they are referred to) will sometimes manifest superhuman strength, blasphemy in a gravelly, growling voice, speak in ancient languages (typically Latin, Hebrew or Aramaic) unknown to them, and display clairvoyant knowledge of faraway people and places, or ability to predict the future. Another telltale sign is a patient's distress in the presence of holy symbols such as crucifixes. Some priests at the conference claimed to have seen patients vomiting nails and shards of glass. *D.Telegraph*, 17 April 2018.

Fortunately, full possession by a demonic entity is quite rare; more often, the exorcist-priests speak of cases of "vexation" or "oppression" (partial demonic control of an individual). The actual process of an exorcism is often relatively boring, said

Father Cesare Truqui, who teaches the official exorcism rite at the week-long conference. The ceremony typically sees the exorcist laying his hand on the patient's head, as he begins to recite the Lord's Prayer. However, in a few cases, it is at this point that a possessed person may then speak on behalf of the Devil. On one occasion, Fr. Truqui recalled, the hairs on his arms stood upright when a patient declared, "I am the prince of this world, I am Satan." The cleric added: "When you listen to a satanic growl, once you listen to the Devil's voice, you can recognise it." *Guardian*, 11 April 2018.

- Because official Catholic exorcists in France, Italy and elsewhere refuse most petitioners, private entrepreneurs have stepped in to fill the gap. Mr Jean Clement, who claims to be a priest of the 'Coenobite Order of Exorcist Priests of Saint Pacôme' has been advertising his exorcism services online since 2010. He too has noticed an increase in demand, and charges £135-£270 for an hour or two. Many of his clients, he says, are from African or Caribbean countries, but nearly half are Europeans. *D.Telegraph*, 20 Nov; *Sunday Telegraph*, 26 Nov 2017.

228: LEONARDO'S BIKE

The myth

Leonardo da Vinci invented the bicycle.



The "truth"

In 1974 an academic working on the largest collection of Leonardo da Vinci's papers, at the Catholic University of Milan, discovered an astonishing sketch. Unmistakeably, it showed a rough design for a modern bicycle – complete with chain, pedals, saddle, handlebars, and two wheels of equal size. Blimey! said the world. Is there *nothing* that man didn't invent, or at least envisage? It was accepted early on that the drawing was not in Leonardo's own hand, but believers argued that it was the work of an apprentice, presumably recalling a lost picture, or even model, made by the master. The much-disputed origin of the bike had been pushed back by 400 years. Why had this piece never been noticed before? Because accompanying it on the same sheet were graffiti of penises. To protect the world from these rude willies, someone in the 16th century had folded the sheet over and glued it together. The inevitable debunking arrived in 1997, the main evidence coming from an art historian who, in 1961, had examined the folded sheet against a strong light, and seen just two circles. These circles, the scholarly consensus now says, were adapted into a full-scale bike sometime between 1961 and 1974, perhaps as a deliberate forgery, or simply as a doodle.

Sources

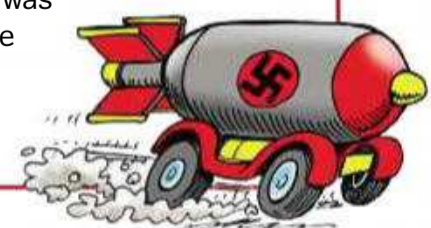
www.newscientist.com/article/mg15621044-300-on-ye-bike-leonardo;
www.bikebiz.com/features/happy-birthday-dr-lessing

Disclaimer

Leonardo's Bike still has its defenders – especially in Italy – and routinely appears in histories of cycling. Without chemical analysis of the crayon marks themselves (something unlikely to happen, for both conservatorial and political reasons), it's hard to see how a final ruling can ever be achieved.

Mythchaser

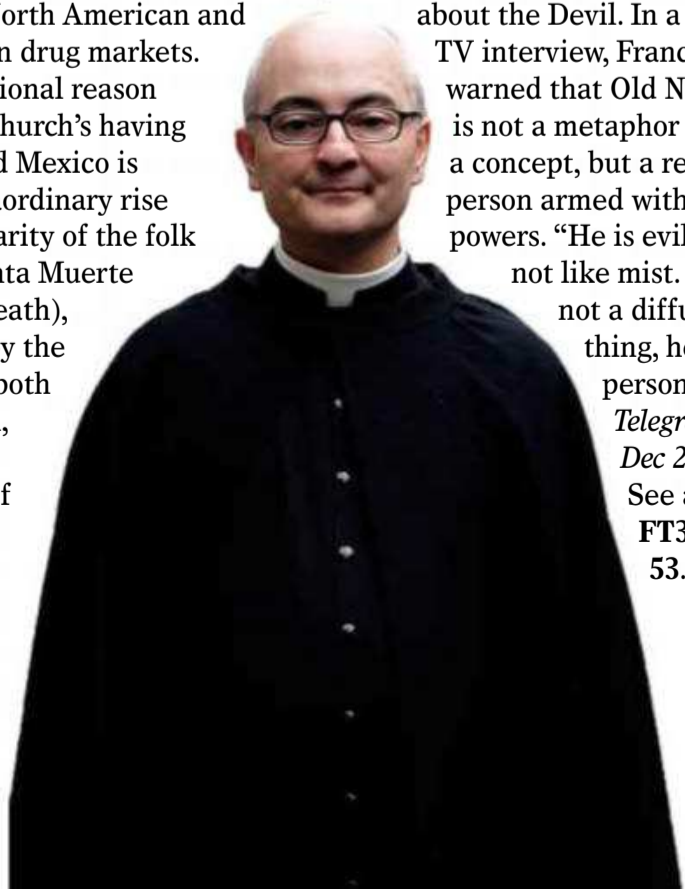
It's often said that during WWII in Britain more people were killed by traffic accidents during the blackout, which was intended to inhibit enemy bombing, than by the bombing itself. Is this true, or is it an example of the "grim irony" myth type so popular in wartime?



The Vatican is strongly opposed to these freelance exorcists, some of whom sell DIY exorcism kits at 60 euros each. Is this disapproval simply that of one business faced with a rival firm seeking to poach its customers? Several Catholic priests have firmly stated that exorcisms should be free, since the ability to conduct them is a gift from God.

Outside of the Catholic Church, exorcisms are offered in the form of 'deliverance' services at Protestant Pentecostal churches. In Europe, such churches are bucking the trend of dwindling church attendance as they cater for growing migrant communities, often of African origin. In some African countries, exorcism has become a popular psychiatric therapy, but has also led to some horrific incidents whereby children, believed to be possessed, are ostracised, tortured, and sometimes killed.

- In extreme circumstances, an entire diocese or even country may be exorcised. In 2015, the *Exorcismo Magno* rite was conducted in Mexico. Father José Antonio Fortea (pictured below), who led the ceremony, stated that it could be "useful in situations in which great violence has been unleashed in a country." Ever since 2006, when the then President Felipe Calderón launched an all-out assault on drug cartels, Mexico has seen an estimated 151,000 deaths and another 26,000 disappearances; the ongoing conflict driven by competition for the North American and European drug markets. An additional reason for the Church's having exorcised Mexico is the extraordinary rise in popularity of the folk saint Santa Muerte (Saint Death), viewed by the Vatican both as a rival, and as a symbol of Mexico's narco-culture. Some Mexican



parishioners claim to be possessed by the "skinny lady", and ask that they be exorcised.

Since the 1980s, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) movement in Latin America has presented an alternative to Pentecostalism, with priests specialising in "liberation" or exorcism ministries. As in Africa and its diasporic communities, exorcism is sought by people afflicted with a wide assortment of social ills, including "alcoholism, unemployment, physical illness [and] domestic strife," as well as "demonic oppression." *Catholic Herald* magazine, 6 Nov 2015.

The rise of CCR amongst the working-class global South may have alarmed some in the Vatican; some bishops have denounced its informal exorcisms as unauthorised and lacking in the proper episcopal consent. However, the movement's growth is in part attributable to Pope Francis having himself conducted what was widely reported as an informal exorcism on a Mexican parishioner in a wheelchair who had travelled to Rome for this purpose in 2013.

- Argentinian Francis, the first pontiff from the Americas, known for his progressive views on climate change and income inequality, has also expressed more traditional positions on some theological matters. His election to the Papacy in 2013 is seen by some to have encouraged belief in demonic possession, because of his numerous pronouncements about the Devil. In a 2017 TV interview, Francis warned that Old Nick is not a metaphor or a concept, but a real person armed with dark powers. "He is evil, he's not like mist. He's not a diffuse thing, he is a person." *D. Telegraph*, 14 Dec 2017. See also: **FT313:30-53.**

NECROLOG

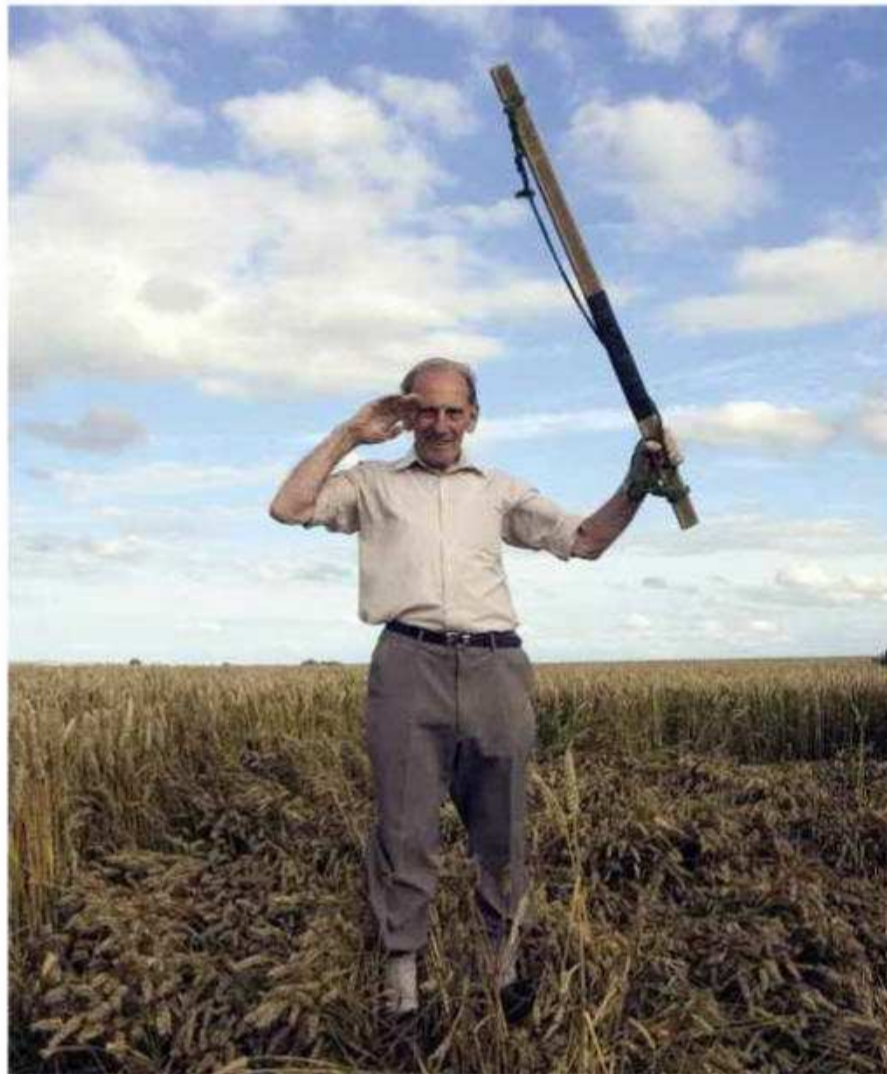
One half of the extraordinary partnership behind the coming of the crop circles heads for the field of dreams; plus the doctor who studied bereavement illusions

DOUG BOWER

Doug Bower was a reluctant cultural hero. It was a measure of his charm that he refused to acknowledge the artistic implications of his idea in 1976 to enter a wheat field and “make it look as if a flying saucer has landed”. Other artists recognised this as a heroic intervention. Some, myself included, have described Doug as the most influential artist of the 20th century. Sadly he’s no longer around to dispute this. On the morning of Saturday 21 July, a month into his 94th year, Doug slipped away as quietly as he ever did leaving a field, just a stone’s throw from his birthplace, to join Ilene, his loving wife of 70 years who passed away in November 2017.

Doug’s generous, easy-going manner disguised a self-disciplined formality. He came from more conventional artistic stock. He was the great-great-grandson of Maritime artist Charles Martin Powell (1775–1824), who specialised in epic seascapes, and Doug’s own paintings – in either oils or watercolours – were recognised to be of high enough quality for inclusion, several times, in the Royal Academy Summer Show, as well as other exhibitions, including an annual open showing of contemporary British watercolours at the Bankside Gallery in London. His work sold internationally. Running parallel to his career as an artist, Doug was a photographer, aware of the nuances that make a good photograph, and an accomplished birdwatcher and naturalist, his wildlife sound recordings residing in several archives. There were occasions when the latter made a handy excuse for his nocturnal excursions into the countryside to make crop circles.

Doug’s legacy of mischief had relatively mundane beginnings. He told the *Daily Mail* about a local Upham man who would go



to the pub every night and on his way home would take off garden gates and leave them further up the lane. Doug would witness the upheaval in the morning on his way to school. The man was a practical joker, he remembered, and this rubbed off on Doug. Just as he became a hero to us, the gate devil of Upham was his hero.

After an otherwise desperately deprived childhood in the early 1930s, the son of a drinking, gambling Bedroom Steward on *HMS Queen Mary*, at 15 years old Doug entered service as a Section Man on the four-funnelled ocean liner *RMS Aquitania*. In three years or so he made 53 crossings from Southampton to Halifax, Nova Scotia. He loved this period of his life, and mostly he loved the storms, when he would sneak up on deck – out-of-bounds and not tied down – armed with his box Brownie camera. And the rougher it was, the better Doug liked it, he recalled recently. We

could have lost him right there.

After this, he went on to work in a sawmill in Eastleigh, with occasional trips to fell trees on the Longwood Estate, near Winchester. With war raging in Europe, at 20 he grew discontented with his Reserved Occupation status and volunteered for the RAF, as a Warrant Radio Operator/top gunner. The year was 1944. Doug’s basic training was marked by a terrifying cocktail of sound, silence, and enormous explosions of V1 Doodlebug flying bombs devastating London neighbourhoods.

Doug flew more missions over Germany than he cared to remember, sometimes back-to-back. He cried on recalling Dresden: “All those lives!” I suggested that it must have been a relief to return, and maybe have a pint. “Drinks?” he exclaimed. “There was no time for that. Perhaps enough for a bit of bread and cheese

and off you go again, on the next raid.” He was 21 when the war ended. Soon, he was courting Ilene, whom he met at a church dance, and they were married in 1948 at that church, St Mary’s in Twyford, Hampshire. 70 years on, we joined Doug for her funeral there, which was very distressing for him. In truth, Doug probably died more from a broken heart than illness.

Some days, around 6am, Ilene would jump on the back of Doug’s motorbike and together they would ride A-roads to the Lake District. Hardknott Pass was a favourite destination. One morning, Doug was returning from a leg-stretching stroll from there to where Ilene was setting out a picnic, and he saw she was joined by a couple and another man. This man was also an artist, and he and Doug immediately hit it off. His name was LS Lowry. Generally, it did not take Doug long to invite someone to visit for a cup of tea. When Lowry visited Southampton in 1956, that’s just what he did. “For years the BBC hounded Lowry for an interview and there he was pouring his heart out about all his lost loves in our living room,” Doug told me. Lowry suggested that Doug repay the visit in London, where Lowry had an exhibition, as he had something for him, but Doug never did. He liked the man and went to see his work but he didn’t think much of it; it wasn’t his cup of tea.

In 1976, the year Lowry went to his own grave, Doug and his friend and fellow RAF veteran Dave Chorley snuck into a wheat field on the Longwood Estate and laid down a simple circle, 30ft (9m) across. They used to meet for a beer every Friday evening to exchange RAF stories, to talk about art, life, and whatever else was on their minds. Doug reminisced about how, 18 years earlier, he and Ilene, tired of the daily slog in England, had set sail on a £10 assisted passage to Victoria, south Australia, to start



a new life. The couple bought a plot of land and built a bungalow on it. Doug worked the land. It was out there in the heat, clearing tuffets, that he nurtured his interest in UFOs, an interest he enacted, and thus brought to life, in that field in England. It was classic ostension – defined in the context of folklore as legend telling by action. Doug told Dave about the mysterious ‘saucer nests’ he’d read about in a newspaper. How the so-called experts – and there were plenty of them in those days, just as there are now – said that it was definitely where UFOs had landed. Doug saw no reason to disbelieve them. “There was no such thing as hoaxing or anything like that in those days,” he remembered. “So I just took it that the report was correct, and that UFOs had landed. Well it had to be something, didn’t it?” Doug and Ilene returned to Hampshire in 1968, and opened a gallery and picture-framing studio. He continued painting. His frames would have been made well – made to last. He was conscientious like that.

Doug wouldn’t have called his first circle an artwork, but that’s what it was. Or would have been had it been noticed. But his and Dave’s Friday night meetings were such fun that they persevered each summer, until in 1980, in a field near Westbury, someone noticed and their circle made the newspapers. The headline linked the event to the Warminster UFO flap that had fizzled out some years earlier (see FT331:40-47): “The Return of the Thing”, ran the headline. Doug and Dave were unaware of the tendency, endemic in paranormal research, of theories to attract their own proof. Explanations were many and various; the field of cereology, as it came to be called, was a veritable nirvana for explanationists of every stripe. But very few reckoned on just a couple of blokes. One scientist even saw in the circles an explanation for UFOs; and they didn’t come from outer space!

What! Doug & Dave hadn’t worked so hard for their efforts to be so easily explained,

had they? In response, their single circles morphed into couplets, triplets, groups, then, in 1990, pictograms, inspired by a particular painting, ‘Young Woman’, by French artist Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, featuring bars and lines and circles, from a book on Constructivism that Doug had in his studio. By summer 1991, others had joined in, and the shapes were becoming increasingly impressive – way beyond Doug and Dave’s capabilities – and centred on north Wiltshire, in the Pewsey Vale and nearby Avebury. The *Sunday Telegraph* arts critic, John McEwen, compared the circles to the work of artists such as Richard Long, while expressing disappointment that the circles had met with so much scepticism in the art world rather than rejoicing. He argued that the idea that they are ‘hoaxes’ is irrelevant; “Whoever or whatever made them is an artist of genius,” he proclaimed.

A big word, genius; it would have made Doug laugh, then spit (figuratively of course). But, he accepted that the patterns they swirled bore similarity to prehistoric rock art, and were related to symbols from mystical alchemy, rune languages, mandalas, and sacred geometry, which perhaps came from somewhere deep within – inner space – and that their work could therefore be considered devotional art, and of the highest quality. Moreover, their activities revealed an important distinction with regard to art: that religious awe directed at individual genius is rendered irrelevant in light of the spiritual sensibility the work itself succeeds in evoking. The art lies in human response, in the circus that surrounds the work – less in what is made than in what is made of it. This only occurs in certain conditions. The key to a good mystery is to not find answers, only more questions. Secrecy makes mystery. Mystery breeds imagination. Imagination begets art; then the formula folds into itself to create all manner of interesting possibilities. Taking something in your head and

putting it out there in the real world can be a powerful thing.

“I couldn’t wait for a visit from another planet,” Doug told John Lundberg in 2005. “That was what I was waiting for. I figured that I wouldn’t live long enough to see an alien visitation so it was up to us to get something down and make it happen for ourselves.” Doug regretted admitting having made crop circles. Not making them, but telling people about it. This was not his choice but Dave’s, and Doug recognised the power of mystery – of keeping schtum – against the temptation to shout “we made that”: ecce homo.

That genie hasn’t been recaptured. Today, no matter how clever and intricate the circles have become – let’s face it, they’ve been circling the drain for the past decade or two – they rarely evoke the wonder of Doug’s simple imprint. That the circles should die with him: what better tribute to a man who invented an art form yet refused to see it in those terms, true to the last.

One day, when those who insist that crop circles are all about them, not us, have gone, the true phenomenon might return. Quietly, again, the spirit of Doug reasserting itself. Perhaps it will revert to relatively small, localised outbreaks, echoing a time when a man saw magic in communion with a mystical landscape and acted upon it.

Douglas Bower, pioneering circlemaker and an extraordinary fellow, much loved by those who knew him, born Horton Heath, Hampshire, 25 June 1924; died West End, Hampshire, 21 July 2018, aged 94.

Rob Irving

DR WILLIAM DEWI REES

This family doctor made several classic studies of death and bereavement and was a pioneer of the hospice movement.

In 1971 he published a paper on “The Hallucinations of Widowhood” in the *British Medical Journal*, based on interviews with the residents of the mid-Wales market town of Llanidloes where he had his medical practice. He found that

illusions of the dead spouse – feeling their presence, seeing, hearing, even touching them – occurred in almost half the subjects. They were about as common in men as in women and often persisted for many years – suggesting that the experiences were more than a psychological response to the immediate pain of loss.

A widow of four years told Rees that she had seen her husband “only once. He was walking through the gate. He looked very happy.” Another, widowed eight years, reported: “I often hear him singing.” A widower of 16 years said: “I think she got me my present house... I like the feeling she is in the house.” The incidence was higher among those who had been happily married for many years and had children, and among professional and managerial classes. In most cases, the phenomena were described as helpful.

Four people decided not to remarry because they “felt” their dead spouse’s disapproval. A 71-year-old woman who had been widowed twice felt the presence of both her late husbands. Even so, hardly anyone in the study had breathed a word of their experiences to friends or family. (“They’d say I was silly,” said one subject, adding: “I don’t want to upset them.”) In Japan, by contrast, a culture in which ancestor worship is normal, 90 per cent of widows reported feeling their dead husbands’ presence.

A study by a team at the University of Milan, published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* in 2016, stated: “Overall, evidence suggests a striking high prevalence of PBHEs [Post-bereavement hallucinatory experiences] – ranging from 30 per cent to 60 per cent – among widowed subjects, giving consistence and legitimacy to these phenomena.” The researchers came to this conclusion after combining the results of all previous peer-reviewed English language research that had been conducted on PBHEs. (*D.Mail*, 12 Mar 2016).



Interstellar allies and innocent sponges

PETER BROOKESMITH surveys the latest fads and flaps from the world of ufological research

RETURN OF THE TROTS IN SPACE

Never had much time for Marxism, personally, or any of the other -isms that followed in its wake; few Marxists, meanwhile, have taken even a passing interest in UFOs. (One of the small blessings of ufology is that, a few notorious conspiracists aside, it's pretty much apolitical.) A recent article reminds us, though, that there was once a strand of Marxist ufology called Posadism; it has been on the go since the 1930s and is now enjoying a mild revival. You can read something of the history of this strange phenomenon courtesy of a blog (www.versobooks.com/blogs/3932-the-secret-history-of-marxist-alien-hunters) by AM Gittlitz, who describes himself as a 'zinester', freelance writer and bike courier, apparently delivering fried chicken to people in NYC condominia. Okay, a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

It all started with 'father of rocketry' and 'Cosmist' Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, who "believed a socialist humanity ought to free itself of its geocentrist outlook and seek contact with advanced extraterrestrial societies". He also said: "Time must pass until the average level of humankind's development is sufficient for nonearthly dwellers to visit us." Some Trotskyists took up the torch, reckoning after World War II that overt visits weren't going to happen until we Earthlings had learned to behave ourselves, especially with nuclear weapons. This curiously echoes Stanton Friedman's notion that the aliens began visiting in appreciable numbers after 1947 because of the Bomb. Stan may be a bit surprised to find himself in the company of a bunch of Trots.

In 1968, Juan R Posadas proposed that instead of hanging about calling on the aliens to intervene to help us resolve the problems we have on Earth, "the essential task is to suppress poverty, hunger, unemployment, and war, to give everyone the means to live in dignity and to lay the bases for human fraternity."

Posadas (also, by the way, an enthusiastic advocate of human-dolphin communication) believed that the aliens must, of course, be communists. As Gittlitz explains, for Posadas: "Any species advanced enough to travel light years would have long solved these issues caused by the temporary afflictions of capitalism and the nation-state", which (without the Marxist determinism) is what the dear ol' contactees of the 1950s had concluded too. Perhaps paradoxically, Posadas also thought a nice



ABOVE: The joy of Posadist Internet memes.

nuclear war would help clear the way for the revolution.

It gets seriously weirder after that, with Posada's successor on this fringe of fringes, Dante Minazzoli, barraging Hynek and Vallée with letters, and hoping the end of the Cold War could make the aliens change their minds. (That went well, didn't it? But Minazzoli blamed the CIA.) The next great thinker in this tradition, Paul Schulz, somehow managed to conflate Marxism with the effusions of Swiss contactee Billy Meier. There's more, including why Posadism is enjoying a revival of sorts, particularly among purveyors of Internet memes, and I do urge you to read the entire article. What one comes away with, though, is the powerful impression that Marxism, or being a Trot, doesn't actually make your ufology any less confused than it would be if you left out the politics. Gittlitz's take: "In searching for aliens, [these Marxists] believed, we are forced to confront the alien logic of capital that controls the world. In this struggle, [they] saw a potential ally in our interstellar neighbors. The prospect of such an encounter might be terrifying, but it's hard to imagine our new alien overlords could be any more inhumane than the humans who currently dominate the planet." Well, that depends on which humans you mean, I guess. And which aliens. [For more on on Posadism, see Matt Salusbury, 'Trots in Space', FT176:40-45.]

HERE WE GO AGAIN

Nothing of substance has emerged on the AATIP/TTSAAS front, and an article in the

Sunday Times (12 Aug, online behind a paywall) tells us nothing new either. Jacques Vallée has apparently claimed, at the 61st Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association, that by putting together ARPA workers and psi-research folk such as Hal Puthoff and himself during their time at the Stanford Research Institute, he more-or-less invented the Internet. For some reason one feels this isn't quite the whole story. It seems that the older they get, the more eccentric and, shall we say, *detached* ufologists get. Vallée also took the opportunity to announce his retirement from ufology on the grounds that ufologists were too superficial in their approach. Not entirely wrong, but... And if memory serves, he's announced his retirement before.

OH NO, NOT THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE!

Oh yes, though. The bullet points from the *Daily Mail* (8 Aug 2018):

- Explorer Darrell Miklos has been using secret maps created by famed NASA astronaut Gordon Cooper to find shipwrecks in the Caribbean
- Diving at an undisclosed location near the Bahamas he found what he believes is the first evidence of an extraterrestrial visit to Earth hundreds of years ago
- What he thought could be an ancient shipwreck turned out to be a huge USO (unidentified submerged object) with 15 300ft-long obtrusions jutting from its sides
- "It was a formation unlike anything I've ever seen related to shipwreck material, it was too big for that."

Miklos elaborated: "It's almost like there are five arms coming out of a steep wall cliff and each one of these is the size of a gun on a battleship. They're enormous and then there's five over here and five over there, 15 in total... There's identical formations in three different areas and... they don't look man made, certainly nothing I've ever seen...."

Well, he got one thing right. They're probably *not* man-made. They're probably coral-made. But this is cable TV and the Bermuda Triangle, where anything goes. Readers with long memories and the capacity to grin may recall the 'Eltanin Antenna' (FT183-42-46, 184:50-54), which was alleged to be extraterrestrial and responsible for all manner of weird shit. It turned out to be an innocent sponge, going, or rather growing, about its lawful occasions as such. And no doubt the truth will out eventually with this one. Bet you a quid.



The Campaign for Real Aliens

JENNY RANGLES teams up with Captain Sensible and wonders why all our aliens are so... human

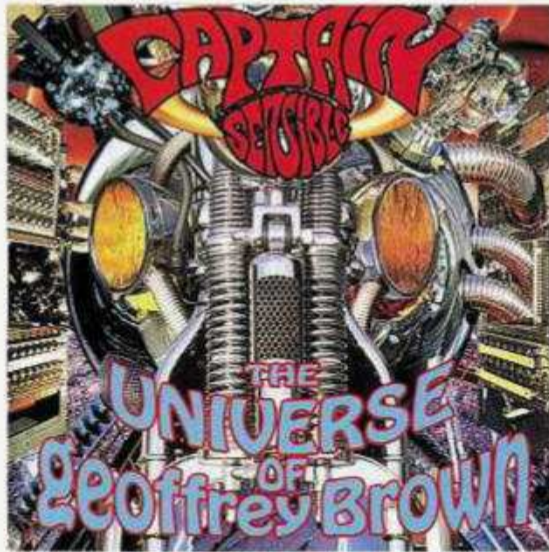
I got a surprise recently whilst researching a new book and by chance learned that I was now a recording artist. My brother was in a 1960s band and played the Cavern in Liverpool, and my cousin made the charts in Australia – but I’m completely tone deaf. So you can imagine my shock on finding that in 1993 I actually introduced the opening bars of a concept album: *The Universe of Geoffrey Brown* by Captain Sensible. This intriguing musical composition about a man who starts receiving strange messages from aliens gets off to a rousing start (!) with my voice intoning through the first bars the profound words: “Aliens, by definition, would be alien.”

Just what was I trying to say in those words that will live forever (or for as long as anyone listens to the Captain’s music)? Let me try and explain.

When the album appeared, I was exploring the idea of alien contact. Peter Hough and I had just published *Looking for the Aliens*, in which we talked to scientists, science fiction writers and religious groups trying to grasp why humanity is so obsessed with the idea that we are not alone. I followed that with my book *Star Children*, in which I talked to those who claimed alien contact. Had Geoffrey Brown been real then he would certainly have been on my list of interviewees.

From this investigation I began to grasp that something interesting might well be going on beyond the obvious. A lot of it revolves around what we mean by the word ‘alien’. In UFO terms, it is a visitor from what is usually conceived of as another world, travelling aboard a ‘flying saucer’ for some nefarious purpose. But what would such an alien really be like?

Award-winning Science Fiction writer Bob Shaw is best known for imagining ‘slow glass’, through which light takes years to pass and so can gradually reveal scenes from a point in the past. This intriguing idea has a basis in real science, as light can be slowed down by passing it through various media. More to the point, we look through a Universe of virtual slow glass each night because of the finite speed at which light travels and the vast distances of space: we see our own Sun as it was eight minutes ago and the nearest star just over four years in the past. Distant galaxies are so far away that primitive humans did not even exist on Earth at the time the light left ‘there’ to arrive ‘here’. Such galaxies could have been obliterated a million years ago and we would not know, because to us it has not happened yet. Once you attune to those concepts, ideas about aliens zipping around the Solar



System are more akin to Greek myths than any likely reality.

Shaw spoke about the human conception of aliens that science fiction has wrestled with for two centuries: “In spite of a writer’s best efforts, aliens turn out to be humans dressed up as something else – physically different, but with mental processes that are the same.” To demonstrate the rarity of someone imagining a truly alien being, he cited a 1930s story by Stanley Weinbaum called ‘A Martian Odyssey’. Weinbaum’s creature is not human, animal or plant, but entirely unique, with a mode of communication we cannot imitate and movements so extraordinary that one step takes them over a building. The ecosystem also has wonderful surprises: intelligent vegetables, able to communicate and OK with being eaten as they lack any concept of life or death. This kind of alien reality is noteworthy because it is so rare; Hollywood opts not to make movies about such things because audiences need to relate to the idea of an alien and not find it incomprehensible. So, we get cuddly *ET*, or the ravenous predators of the *Alien* films. These are concepts that play well with the human mind because we can relate to them as part of our primæval experience: early humans had to know when to run away from a sabretooth tiger, but could see a smaller feline as worth domesticating to stop mice stealing our food store.

Shaw saw the same problem with many real-life alien contact cases. If he was in a jungle he would see a cobra and run, he said, not stop to consider a way to communicate. Yet these are two species from the same planet separated by the inability to comprehend and lacking any method to talk it over before one attacks the other. When you look at an alien contact case – two species from supposedly different

worlds interacting – it seems implausible. Could they truly share complex ideas with us?

There are clever writers whose work takes account of these differences. The now 90-year-old science fiction writer Patrick Tilley wrote a brilliant alien contact novel called *Fade Out*. He once told me that it was on the way to the big screen when Steven Spielberg, with his more movie-friendly aliens, got in first. I always believed this was a lost opportunity, as *Fade Out* features a truly alien intelligence, not a humanised idea of one. Significantly, Spielberg’s film is based on the childlike ‘Greys’ of UFO lore, mildly ghost-like humans who you can imagine inviting over to lunch without fearing that you might *be* lunch; they are enough like us to at least be on the same wavelength.

Thinking about how we should be imagining aliens, Tilley noted that the “critical question is: just how would we recognise an alien intelligence?” He pointed out that we might assume it needed human-like hands to build a spaceship, because that is our experience on Earth. But what if they have an entirely different way of creating things, one involving the mind, say, not the body?

In *Fade Out*, Tilley’s aliens find and return to Earth the plaque from our *Voyager* space probe, which had brazenly revealed our presence to the cosmos. Humans see this return as the aliens accepting us into the galactic club. But from an alien perspective, Tilley says, they might be clearing up our garbage, ensuring no other race stumbles on it and comes here expecting to find an advanced species.

Just look at the history of UFO contactee cases, from George Adamski’s friendly Venusians to the entities emerging from regression hypnosis experiments on abductees: the aliens are all humanoid, often with hints of cultural stereotypes deriving from the differing nations that report them.

These beings from afar are less alien than species with which we share our planet, many of which – like dolphins and whales – have language, emotions and intelligence that are very different from ours.

This is what I was driving at in the brief comment that opens the Captain Sensible album. Aliens, by definition should be alien. But it is incredibly hard to conceive them as such, as our close encounters show; perhaps only really talented writers can get over that barrier and imagine a truly strange entity. In ufology our aliens, by definition, are really not alien enough.

THE GATHERING STORM

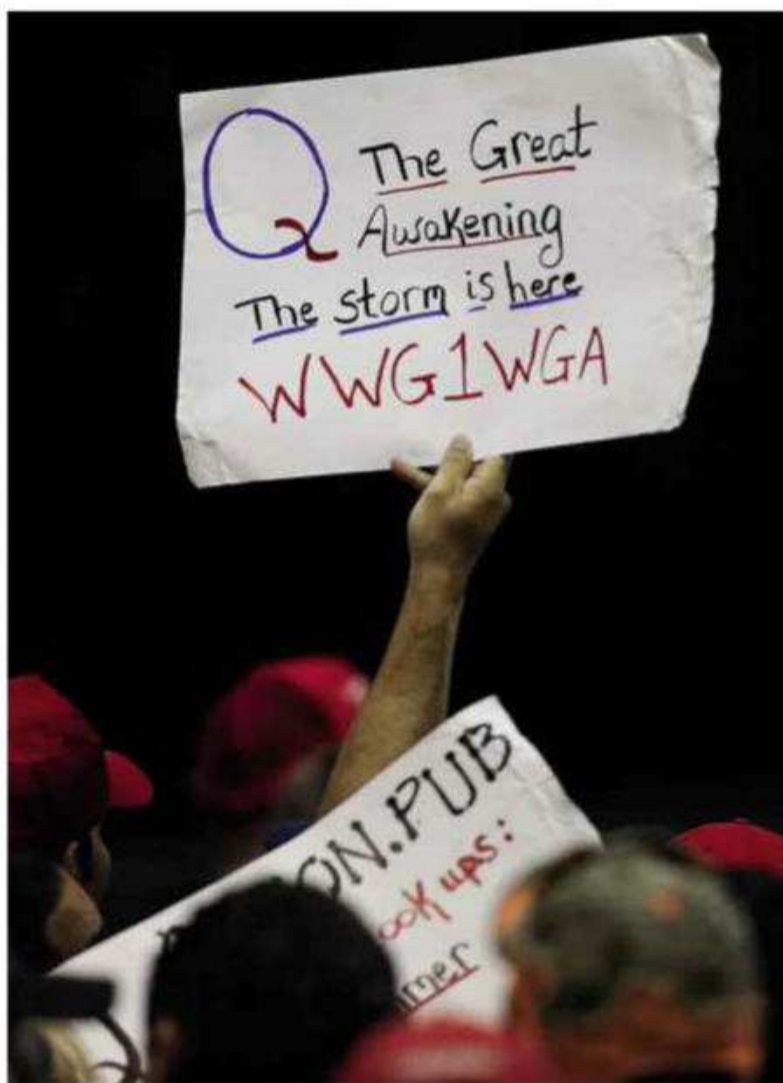
Inside the QAnon Conspiracy

A sprawling online conspiracy theory with President Trump as its chief hero has recently caught the interest of the mainstream media. But who is the mysterious 'Q', whose cryptic Internet posts promise a coming political storm? NOEL ROONEY descends into a veritable warren of post-truth rabbit holes in search of some answers.

On 28 October 2017, someone posted the first of many messages on the 4Chan message board (see side panel). The message, like the thousands of posts that have followed, was a series of cryptic comments on US politics and, in particular, the supposedly covert activities of Donald Trump. This first post appeared to be from a Trump administration insider, confidently predicting that Hillary Clinton was to be arrested imminently, and that the US government was preparing to stop her from fleeing the country. Many of the subsequent posts have run under a heading – 'Calm Before the Storm' – which is a reference to an off-hand comment made by Trump at a (very public) meeting with some US military top brass. When journalists present asked him what he meant by this remark, he replied, "You'll find out". And, perhaps, find out we have.

The poster began to use the handle 'Q', and the posts soon adopted a gnomic style of writing that intrigued a few avowed conspiracy theorists online, to the extent that a group of them worked to make the mysterious messages more widely available and discussed. So almost from the outset, QAnon had a cabal of promoters who made the wider community of Trump supporters, alt-right adherents and denizens of the Conspirasphere aware of the postings; and their efforts were handsomely rewarded. QAnon, and the vast panoply of interpretative takes on it (or him or her or them) has now made the big time; the mainstream media have adopted QAnon as their conspiracy theory *du jour*, producing hundreds of articles ranging from amused speculation to dire warnings about the end of civilisation as we know it.

How did a false prediction from an



LEFT: Trump supporters display QAnon signs at a 'Make America Great Again' rally in Tampa, Florida, in July 2018.

FACING PAGE: The Q-Map (see p36).

And, perhaps more importantly, why?

The eruption of QAnon into public discourse is a story with a lot of interwoven strands: a country riven by political divisions; a culture of media fear-mongering and state secrecy ripe for exposure; a community of disenfranchised people believing their time has come; and a blatant campaign of marketing by people who feel the Internet, and its more gullible users, owes them a living.

Q has somehow managed to encompass, and embroil, all these disparate elements into a narrative phenomenon that pushes the envelope of post-truth meme culture. Or, alternatively, this is a hoax, a prank perpetrated by those who want to discredit the alt-right and the Conspirasphere and have a good, Situationist laugh while they're at it.

Bizarrely enough, both these interpretations may be correct.

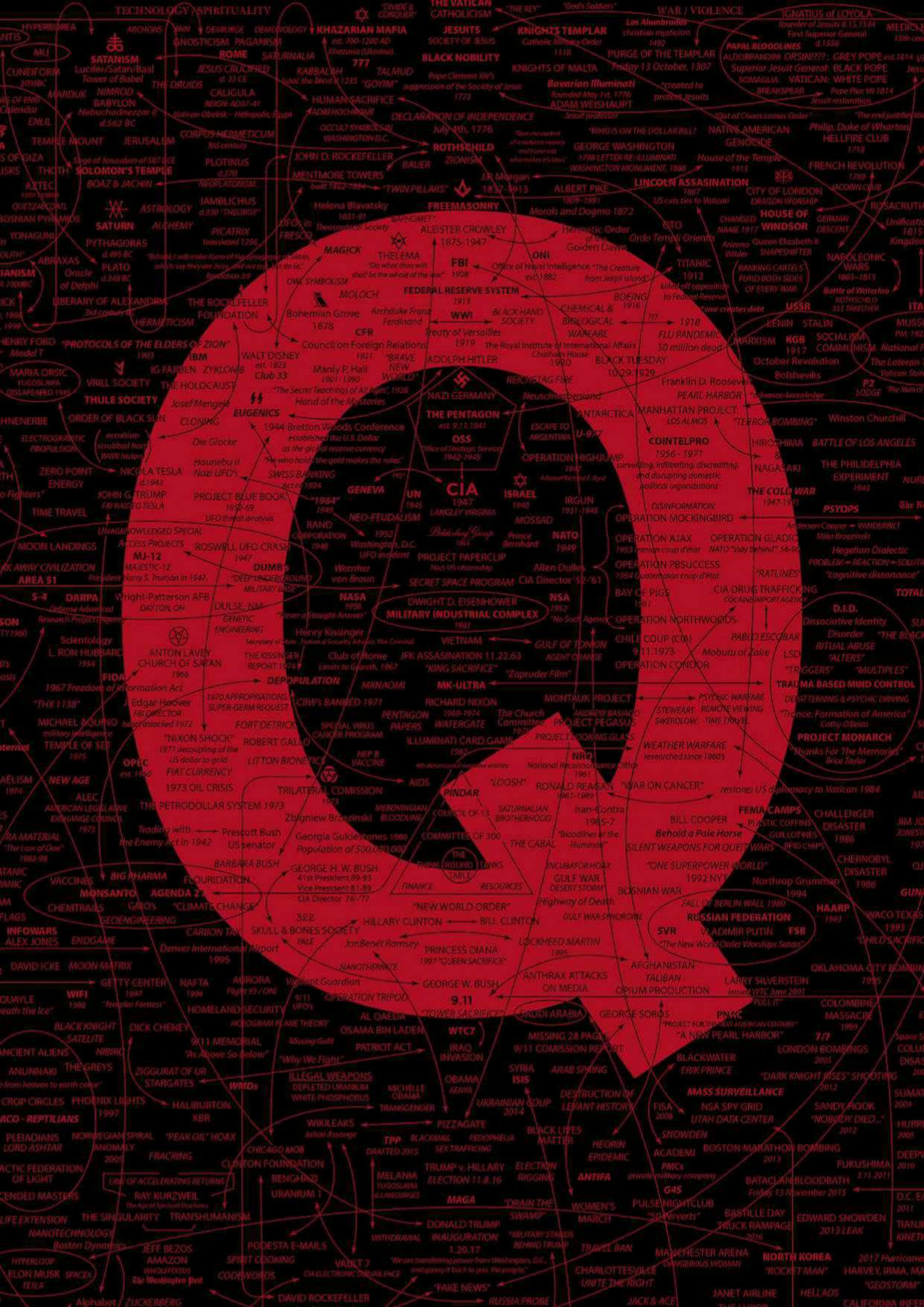
Perhaps most bizarrely of all, this is a conspiracy theory narrative where the incumbent US government (in particular the President and his closest advisors, or cronies, if that's your bag) and even elements of the deep state, are actually the good guys.

WHO READS Q?

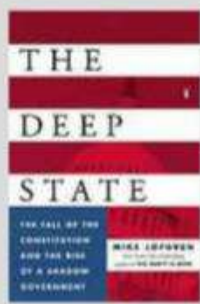
By now, it's fair to say that QAnon has two distinct audiences: the by turns amused, bemused, and simply confused readers of the mainstream press; and the devotees – red pill takers, 'woke' members of the alt-right, avid Trump supporters, and assiduous

A seemingly endless stream of heavily coded and cryptic messages

anonymous source, followed by a seemingly endless stream of heavily coded – or so cryptic as to be tantamount to meaningless – messages, come to such public prominence?



THE DEEP STATE



The term 'deep state' originated in Turkey in the 1990s, when the military began to collude with drug traffickers and hit men to wage a dirty war against Kurdish separatists.

The term was first applied to the US administration by Mike Logfren, a writer and former Congressional Aide, who defined it as: "a hybrid association of elements of government and parts of top-level finance and industry that is effectively able to govern the United States without reference to the consent of the governed as expressed through the formal political process". (Mike Logfren, *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government*, Penguin Random House, 2016.)



BLUE PILL/RED PILL



In the cult sci-fi film *The Matrix*, the protagonist, Neo, is offered a choice by Morpheus, the rebel leader: take the blue pill, retreat into a beautiful dream, and remain a prisoner; or take the red pill, and wake up to a world of uncertainty and danger. Taking the red pill has become common parlance on the alt-right for being 'woke'; it has become particularly closely associated with the Incel movement, a group of anti-gay, male 'liberation' supporters, and with groups such as Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW).



4CHAN: ANTI-SOCIAL MEDIA?

4Chan is a website that hosts a number of message and image boards. It was started in 2003 by Christopher Poole, then a 15-year-old student, who envisaged an English-language version of Futaba channel, a Japanese message board mostly discussing anime, manga and hentai. It quickly developed a reputation for outrageous posts and decidedly liberal moderation; it also gave birth to the hacktivist group Anonymous (all posts on 4Chan are anonymous) who allegedly became a thing after accidentally flash-mobbing a demo against Scientology. 4Chan, and its relative 8Chan, have been involved in a number of online controversies and scams, and both are considered rather less troll-safe than Facebook or Twitter.

Anonymous ID: gb953qGI No.147005381  
Oct 28 2017 14:33:50 (EST)

>>146981635

Hillary Clinton will be arrested between 7:45 AM - 8:30 AM EST on Monday - the morning on Oct 30, 2017.

Anonymous ID: BQ7V3bcW No.147012719  
Oct 28 2017 15:44:28 (EST)

>>147005381

HRC extradition already in motion effective yesterday with several countries in case of cross border run. Passport approved to be flagged effective 10/30 @ 12:01am. Expect massive riots organized in defiance and others fleeing the US to occur. US M's will conduct the operation while NG activated. Proof check: Locate a NG member and ask if activated for duty 10/30 across most major cities.

ABOVE: The very first Q posting, from 28 October 2017; the prediction of Hillary Clinton's arrest turned out to be inaccurate, of course, but this was just the beginning.

dot-joiners at the hermeneutic end of the conspiratorial continuum. These audiences have little in common; the former looks on from outside at the exotic, and possibly dangerous, phenomenon of conspiracy theory gone public; the latter sees itself as vindicated, at last, by revelations (from a real insider) that confirm what they have always (or at least, since they began 'researching' online) believed.

The online magazine *Vox* has carried out some interesting analysis of the people who read and subscribe to QAnon sources on Reddit. According to their research (albeit from a single source) the typical QAnon reader also looks at posts about Donald Trump, conspiracy theory in general, politics, connections between the Bible and politics/conspiracy, crypto-currency, and libertarian politics; s/he is typically a gamer (the investigation starts by charting the Reddit activities of someone who plays the popular fantasy card game *Magic: the Gathering*), and is a fan of UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) and MMA (Mixed Martial Arts). But the determining common denominator is support for Donald Trump.

Those who make the most effort to interpret Q's utterances and pull them together refer to themselves as 'bakers', an allusion to the fact that Q's posts are often offered as 'breadcrumbs' rather than full-blown narratives. They constitute a very small proportion of all followers; out of over 54,000 followers on Reddit, a mere 210 posted over a quarter of all posts on the topic, and this group tended to post only on the QAnon sub-Reddit and nowhere else. There is clearly a hard core to QAnon, a group of dedicated people who see themselves as apostles for, and initiates into, the curious catechism of the rabbit hole offered by the hidden prophet known as Q.

But who actually is this online oracle?

WHO IS Q?

Q has offered very little by way of identification, other than the ominous moniker, and as all posts on 4Chan and its offshoots are anonymous, has no obligation to do so. One inference of the tag Q is that it denotes high-level security clearance (and this interpretation appears to have been endorsed by Q); in the parlance of the US Department of Energy (is that why Chernobyl is on the Q-map?) Q indicates the equivalent of Top Secret. Q is also, of course, the title of the head of the Research and Development department of Her Majesty's Secret Service in the James Bond movies (and 'research' as a synonym for Internet browsing is typical of the alt/conspiracy community).

A third, intriguing possibility is that Q is a quasi-biblical reference. In New Testament studies, Q refers to an undiscovered text that lies behind the canonical gospels (here Q stands for *Quelle*, a German word meaning 'source'). Given the tone of Q's posts, and the beliefs of the core community, this is a beguiling thought; I haven't seen this reference offered as an identifying tag, but there is a lot of Q material out there, so it's quite likely that someone has made the link.

Theories on the real identity of Q tend to focus on the idea that s/he is a member of Trump's core team (and a photo purporting to show that Q was on the President's personal aircraft, Air Force 1 – now a staple of the interpretive activity known as 'Q proofs' – is seen as corroborating this view). But there are those who believe that Q is Trump himself, and an outlier group who think that Q is actually John F Kennedy Junior; in this rendition, Kennedy faked his death (in an air crash in 1999) and has been working behind the scenes ever since, posting as Q for some, and running the whole shebang according to others.



RICK LOOMIS / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A supporter holds up a “Q” sign at a Trump rally in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, on 2 August 2018. **BELOW:** Tributes to John F Kennedy Jr and his wife Carolyn Bessette outside their New York home in 1999, following their deaths in an air crash. Some believe that JFK Jr faked the whole thing and is actually Q.

The most extreme version of this theory is featured in a video interview between alt-right journalist Liz Crokin and well-known YouTube psychic Jenny Moonstone, which is worth viewing, if only as a primer into the intuitive approach to conspiracy theory.

It’s also worth noting that the JFK Junior identification inevitably recalls the assassinated president, JFK senior, and thus links two US presidents (perhaps the only two presidents) who stand as conspiracy theory good guys; odd bedfellows, but likely resonant for many in the Conspirasphere.

Q GOES PUBLIC

Internet conspiracy memes tend to stay on the margins until real people do real things; thus Pizzagate (see panel) only became a media sensation when an armed man approached the restaurant at the centre of the online allegations, claiming he wanted to do some ‘self-investigation’ (real world research, one might say). Similarly, QAnon really hit the headlines when one Matthew Wright, armed with a rifle and a handgun, barricaded himself in his vehicle, at the Hoover Dam (bordering the US states of Nevada and Arizona), holding a sign that said “Release the OICG memo”, a reference to an alleged secret report into Clinton and the Democrat paedophilia ring.

Media reports have struggled to articulate what QAnon is about



The publicity was bolstered by images of people holding up QAnon signs (or cut-outs of the letter Q) at Republican rallies featuring Mr Trump. And of course there was the celebrity endorsement, most notably that of Roseanne Barr. Ms Barr was fired from her high-profile TV show after a series of racist tweets, but she clearly still has a following, and she is an avowed supporter of Trump. Another celebrity to endorse the movement is Curt Schilling, a former baseball star who now works for Breitbart, the home of most things alt-right.

And thus began an avalanche of more or less informed media reports about QAnon in the US and UK. Those reports have tried, and largely struggled, to articulate what QAnon is about; most have painted a caricature portrait of disaffected right-wing religious patriots (the ‘deplorables’, to use Hillary Clinton’s famous phrase) basking in their 15 minutes of fame, afforded them by the same media that signally fails to understand them.

So what is Q saying, and why are so many people listening?

WHAT IS Q TALKING ABOUT?

The main initial thrust of the QAnon messages (amongst a veritable warren of more or less conventional or obscure conspiracy rabbit holes) is that Donald Trump



LEFT: The long-term Democratic plan to destroy America according to one QAnon website. BELOW: Matthew Wright and the vehicle with which he managed to block traffic at the Hoover Dam.

a certain resonance here); where we go one, we go all (often rendered as wwg1wga) – litter the conspiratorial regions of the online landscape, and have turned up in force (on T-shirts and car stickers, on signs both homemade and bought) at Republican political rallies, demonstrations against immigration, and almost everywhere the alt-right has a presence. In April of this year, around two hundred QAnon supporters actually held their own march in Washington DC; this may seem a paltry figure, but the march took place some while before the Q-thing had achieved critical mass and gone properly public.

There are other elements to the main message which, to the casual observer, might seem to be attempts (possibly desperate attempts) to explain the apparent chaos of the Trump presidency as a series of clever ruses, designed to hide the real, and perfectly coherent (trust the plan) actions of his administration. For instance: the Republican defeat in the Alabama special election for the Senate seat vacated by Jeff Sessions was deliberate, and was planned in advance, to uncover a plot by rogue (for which, possibly, read Democrat) elements of the deep state to use rigged voting machines to change election results in their favour; a plot funded and perhaps orchestrated by George Soros, the Hungarian billionaire philanthropist who has become a very special hate figure for conspiracy theorists in general, and alt-right activists in particular.

Along the way, Q references a whole universe of conspiracy theories; pretty much every one in existence, it seems. For instance, there are frequent allusions to the idea that all mass shootings in the USA are actually false flag operations designed to enable large-scale gun control; quite why or how the Trump team hasn't gained control of these other government-inspired actions against the people is never explained. Fortunately, though, for those who struggle with this avalanche of coded information, QAnon has provided us with a map.

THE QANON MAP

The idea of a map setting out the connections between various conspiracy theories is not new. Conspiracy maps actually predate the Internet; I remember, one afternoon in the 1980s, spending a couple of hours trying to understand a huge placard mapping it all, from the Vatican to the Rothschilds, outside the Royal Courts of Justice (in the company, incidentally, of an Ethiopian passer-by who was easily the tallest person I have ever met).

The Internet has enabled a huge number of people to set out their view of the world in graphic form. Maps plotting the connections between various conspiracy theories are a staple of the genre. The original QAnon map (now known widely as the Q-Map) was

and his Special Counsellor, Robert Mueller, under the cover of investigating claims of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential elections, are actually orchestrating a mass arrest of Democrat politicians and staff who are, it is claimed, guilty of crimes of pædophilia on a horrific scale. Indeed, many of the guilty have already been (secretly, and in some cases despite the arrestees having subsequently appeared publicly) taken into custody, and some are in, or on their way to, Guantanamo Bay; others are doing their best to conceal ankle bracelets (security tags restricting their movements) when they appear in public.

This putative cull of the Democratic Party is understood by most readers of Q to be the 'Storm' (or at least the start of it). Q has claimed that a currently secret official report into the nefarious sexual activities of Democrats, and the government's actions, is scheduled for imminent release; all, that is to say, will soon be revealed. In the meantime, supporters are advised to 'trust the plan'.

A casual perusal of almost any social media platform (but particularly Twitter and Reddit) turns up thousands of messages saying just that: trust the plan. In fact, QAnon folk have developed a whole vocabulary of coded shibboleths along these lines, most derived from actual Q postings: some have become catch-phrases that, in themselves, gain traction for the QAnon constituency even among people who have only the vaguest idea of what these gnomish slogans signify to the initiated. Prominent figures in the alt-right, and on the right of the Republican Party, have been known to retweet some of these phrases while claiming ignorance (wink, nudge) of their meaning.

The best-known slogans – trust the plan; we are Q; the Calm before the Storm (there is a video clip of Trump's original pronouncement on YouTube that has garnered thousands of views); learn to read the map; the Great Awakening; the Storm is coming (fans of *Game of Thrones* may sense

In April, QAnon supporters held their own march in Washington DC



THE CORE CONSPIRACIES: PIZZAGATE, SETH RICH, AND THE CLINTONS

The Pizzagate affair surfaced during the 2016 presidential election campaign. Hacked emails from John Podesta, a Clinton insider, disseminated by Wikileaks, were purported to include coded references to pædophilia and child murder. The conspiracy centred on a pizza restaurant called Comet Ping Pong, which received hundreds of threats from conspiracy theorists and alt-right supporters, culminating in a shooting incident.

Edgar Maddison Welch, from North Carolina, fired three shots from an assault rifle in the restaurant. He surrendered to the police and told them he was 'self-investigating' Pizzagate and was here to rescue the children. Welch was hailed as a hero by elements of the alt-right and, despite plentiful refutations from law enforcement and intelligence sources, the Pizzagate affair has never quite gone away.

Seth Rich, an employee of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) was shot to death on 10 July 2016. Within days, the Conspirasphere was alive with speculation that his death was a political assassination; it was suggested that he was responsible for leaking DNC emails implicating Hillary Clinton in engineering the idea



TOP: The Comet Ping Pong pizza restaurant in Washington, DC. ABOVE LEFT: Murder victim Seth Rich. ABOVE RIGHT: Hillary and Bill Clinton at the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

that Russia was interfering in the US presidential election campaign.

A chance remark by Julian Assange, founder of Wikileaks, during a televised interview with *Nieuwsuur*, a Dutch current affairs programme, added fuel to the fire; if Wikileaks thought Rich was bumped off for political reasons, it must be true. Was this yet another unfortunate corpse to add to the Clinton Body Count? A subsequent retraction from Wikileaks did nothing to stem the flow of rumours, and Rich has become an icon of alt-right martyrology.

The common denominator between these affairs is the Clintons. Bill and Hillary Clinton are default hate figures for the alt-right in the USA, and for the conspiracy world in general. They are alleged to be behind multiple murders, collusion with evil regimes (particularly Saudi Arabia and, ironically, Israel), and both are seen as sexual perverts: Bill Clinton's history of sexual misdemeanours, going back to the Monica Lewinsky affair and beyond, and rumours that Hillary is gay (as if that somehow matters) are taken as proof that they head a gang of powerful perverts and pædophiles enmeshed in the tentacles of the deep state.

apparently put together by Dylan Louis Monroe, an alt-right activist and long-time cartographer of strangeness, from a detailed reading of Q posts over late 2017 and early 2018. All the great themes of the Conspirasphere are here: from ancient aliens and the Ascended Masters to the Committee of 300 and the New World Order; Bill and Hillary Clinton get their very own location, as does, curiously, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

The map is seen by many commentators on Q as proof positive that the posts are both true and written by someone with access to the deepest, and most arcane, sources. Those with a less nuanced point of view might see it as a crude catch-all of every alternative idea produced since Ignatius Donnelly. Most versions available online include an overlay of connecting arrows and pointers to show the reader exactly how it all fits together. There are YouTube videos showing the QAnon map

alongside other, older and newer, maps of the genre; some of these videos have an air of breathless reverence about them that makes one wonder if the crude term 'cult', used by some critical observers of the Q phenomenon, may not be too far from the truth.

THE LANGUAGE OF Q

Q's posts are laconic, gnomic and frustratingly oblique, tantalising fragments of information (or, more accurately, hints that there is information to be gleaned) among exhortations that have the quality of mantras. Key characters, organisations and events in the Q narrative are identified only by abbreviations. Thus the posts can come across, equally, as shorthand memos from an obvious insider, or the tattered utterances of a deranged mind.

Let's look at a typical Q posting. This one (source: <https://qanon.000webhostapp.com/>) is from quite early in the thread, but displays

most of the characteristics of Q language.

November 5, 2017 1:31 am

UserID: v3eCc2tY PostNo: 148023976

Ten days.

Darkness.

Scare tactics (MSM).

D's falling.

R's walk-away/removed.

SA --> US --> Asia --> EU

Disinformation is real.

Distractions are necessary.

Focus was US today while real happening in SA under same context (military control, martial law, missile strike (rogue) etc).

Necessary.

POTUS' Twitter attack (see above).

Important.

Why is this relevant?

What was the last Tweet by POTUS prior to SA?

Why is this relevant?



MARK WILSON / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: Joining the dots: QAnon followers are adept at finding lexilinks and synchronicities to produce 'Q Proofs'. ABOVE RIGHT: President Trump's 18 July press conference was interrupted when the lights went out; for those in the know, the event had been already been foreshadowed in a Q post from November 2017.

SA (1), US (2), Asia (3), EU (4).
 Where is POTUS?
 Why is this relevant?
 Military operations.
 Operators in US.
 Snow White
 The Great Awakening
 Godfather III
 Q

The post opens with an opaque reference to a time period; this is a standard trope in the Q lexicon, (a tactic often referred to by interpreters as a marker, or time marker) and forms the basis of much of the Q Proofs. It contains a number of one-word one-liners (darkness, necessary, important), again typical. The meat of the message appears to be about events in Saudi Arabia (SA usually refers to Saudi Arabia), and their relevance to future events (or processes) in the US, Asia and the EU. The mainstream media (MSM) seem to be what Q means here by 'focus' in line 9, and the doings and sayings (here tweets) of POTUS (the President) are apparently relevant.

There are plenty of questions posed in the post, and again this is typical. One of them is a further time marker (What was the last tweet by POTUS prior to SA?). The QAnon community treats these questions ('Why is this relevant?') as coded invitations to interpretation; finding answers to the questions is a gateway to the bigger picture for Q-proofers. References to the US military, and hints at military operations, are staples; Q assumes that the US military is working with Donald Trump to bring about the Storm.

Most of the abbreviations here are relatively easy to understand (D for Democrats, R for Republicans, SA and

POTUS) but this is not always the case; there are, fortunately, glossaries available online to help with the more obscure examples. The cultural references (Snow White, Godfather III) are particularly oblique and puzzling; what does a fairy-tale character offer to the stew of domestic and international politics on display here?

And finally there are the shibboleths: some of them, like the Great Awakening, having the character of slogans; others, such as 'Distraction is necessary', coming across like unshackled fragments of a Confucian stream of consciousness. This is a fairly standard post, in terms of length and content; despite (or perhaps because of) its cryptic, opaque nature, this constitutes the source material from which the edifice of Q Proofs is built.

Q PROOFS

Conspiracy theorists are nothing if not diligent in pursuit of details, and establishing patterns from disparate and fragmentary sources: this is how the big picture is constructed, how the secret is revealed. In the case of Q, and the intrepid interpreters who produce the analytical graphics known as Q Proofs, their exegetical work is biblical in scope and scale. If the Q posts represent a kind of contemporary version of the Dead Sea Scrolls, then the Q Proofers are its assiduous Essenes; and their efforts are often appreciated and rewarded by reciprocation from the source itself. Q has explicitly (inasmuch as anything offered by Q is explicit) referred to the Q Proofs in later threads ('Graphics are useful'; in Q-speak,

that's tantamount to enthusiasm).

Q proofs fall into two categories: some deal with a single line from a Q Drop (as the posts are often known); others link a series of comments or posts to ongoing, or supposed, actions by the Trump team in pursuit of the Storm.

For instance, Q says, in a post dropped on 2 November 2017: "Should the lights go out please know we are in control". On 18 July 2018, Mr Trump was holding a press conference on the issue of election interference (a favourite topic of both the Donald and his arcane ally Q) when the lights went out in the conference chamber. Trump was, at the moment the lights went out, talking about his faith in US intelligence agencies; in fact, he was saying: "It must be the intelligence agencies". Ergo, for a Q Proof uploaded shortly afterwards, when the lights go out, it must be the intelligence agencies. This is single-strand synchronicity spotting of a very high order.

The more developed Q Proofs tend to link a theme in Q's posts with an event, or series of events, in the real world. These patterns of coincidence (known in the parlance as Qincidences) can be extremely complex, involving time markers, Trump quotes and tweets, random details from news reports or TV programmes, and high levels of creativity on the part of the interpreters. Much of this work is carried out under the banner 'future proves past'.



An example of the more developed style of proof: quite a number of Q drops refer to ‘tarmac’; this is a reference to a meeting between Bill Clinton and Loretta Lynch, then Attorney General of the USA, in June 2016, where Clinton allegedly offered Lynch a Supreme Court position if Hillary was elected president. In April 2018, Trump tweeted on the subject in his usual bluff, whimsical style. Within days, a Q Proof appeared linking Trump’s tweet to the relevant Q Drops; for the QAnon community, this is proof that the Clintons were trying to buy off the judiciary to prevent further investigation into the allegations of paedophilia that continue to cling to them.

Q Proofs are proliferating online at quite a rate, and may soon come to outnumber Q Drops. More to the point, they appear, for the QAnon believers, to flesh out the bones and crumbs that Q offers, and serve as real-world evidence of the hidden conflict being played out between the Trump administration and the deep state.

THE Q HOAX

In recent years, there has been a growing trend for conspiracy theorists to be very sceptical about new conspiracy theories (this goes against the grain of current academic thinking on the subject, which regularly claims that belief in one conspiracy theory is a kind of gateway drug to believing in all of them). This was particularly evident with Flat Earth Theory (see FT338:20-21, 368:10), which many dismissed as an attempt to discredit conspiracy theorists by making a patently ridiculous idea popular. This sceptical approach to novel material has certainly livened up a few chat rooms.

QAnon is not immune from such thinking. There are plenty of posts suggesting that Q is yet another piece of Russian interference in the American political scene, or simply a prank gone viral. One theory I found particularly engaging was that QAnon is a hoax perpetrated by a bunch of Italian left-wing pranksters going under the name the Wu Ming Foundation. This group is made up of, among others, four writers – Roberti Bui, Giovanni Cattobriga, Federico Guglielmi, and Luca di Meo – who, in 1999, published a novel, under the pen name Luther Blissett (a popular pseudonym for Italian pranksters and anarchists at the time), called (but of course) *Q*. The novel is a mediæval romp that comes across like Situationist Umberto Eco, and includes a fair sprinkling of conspiracy theory. The Wu Ming gang haven’t actually come out and admitted being Q, but have

offered the tantalising comment that “Coincidences are hard to ignore”.

If Q is a hoax, it’s a curiously assiduous and devout one. It’s difficult to imagine a prankster putting in the considerable leg work required; there have been hundreds of posts to date, and Q has responded directly to the efforts of the QAnon community to promote and interpret the material. Setting an alluring meme afloat in the ether to see who bites is one thing; nurturing it on an almost hourly basis, and evolving to acknowledge and encompass the vast panoply of secondary material is quite another.

There are also rumours online that the hacktivist group Anonymous have ‘declared war’ on QAnon; they claim to know the identity of Q, and are about to unmask the culprit/hero.

It’s unlikely that Anonymous would waste such effort on a hoax, so in many respects their ire argues for the authenticity of the phenomenon.

If they do make good on the rumours, then we might expect that the crypto-bubble is about to burst... but not before a few people have made a real killing on Q merchandising.

MARKETING QANON

The way the QAnon community tells it, Q’s enigmatic posts took off because the time was right;

the world needed to know, and Q was the person to tell the story. But there are other versions of the story of how QAnon came to the attention of the Conspirasphere, and the wider public, and one version in particular suggests a rather more mundane motivation.

Soon after the posts first appeared, in November 2017, two 4Chan moderators (known respectively as Pamphlet Anon and Baruchthescribe, now outed as a South African gentleman named Paul Furber) allegedly ‘reached out’ to a small-time YouTube commentator named Tracy Diaz. Diaz had come to some prominence through posting videos on the Pizzagate affair; she was also recovering from bankruptcy and looking for ways to increase her following, and her revenues. The three decided to engineer a much wider audience for Q, and thus Q-anon, an obscure commentator on things political, became QAnon, Internet phenomenon.

Diaz’s first post on Q attracted over 250,000 views, and she has (in a video now deleted) admitted that: “Because I cover Q, I got an audience”. It was also Diaz, allegedly, who suggested that Q move to Reddit, where

there was a larger, and less belligerently marginal, audience, than 4Chan. Reddit gave Q critical mass, and from there it migrated to Facebook and Twitter, and gained even more traction.

If you care to browse these things (and I sometimes do) you can find websites, and FB pages, where you can purchase a range of QAnon-related merchandise: T-shirts, car stickers, baseball caps and other paraphernalia vital to the spread of the message, and quite clearly generating dollar revenue for someone (though Ms Diaz and her pseudonymous partners are not saying anything on that subject as yet). Given the celebrity endorsement we have already noted, you could say that this is one rabbit hole that is quite literally fur-lined.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that Q, that laconic raconteur of the arcane, is guilty of perpetrating a scam. It is just as likely that Diaz and co are merely the drivers of a snake oil bandwagon. And without them, Q might well have languished on the margins of the margins, a very small voice in a very large ether. But, after wading through the swamp of Q-related material, the exploits of Diaz et al (not to mention Wu Ming and the Russians) do add weight to the real question: are we witnessing the truth gone viral (in which case we have to admit that Mr Trump really *does* know what he’s doing), or is this merely the fizz and bang of an exploding meme?

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

A complete string of Q posts can be found at <https://qanon.000webhostapp.com/>

The Q Map can be found (among many other places) at <https://throughthelookingglassnews.wordpress.com/2017/11/24/q-anon-learn-to-read-the-map/amp/>

For a mainstream press take on Q, see www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/jul/30/qanon-4chan-rightwing-conspiracy-theory-explained-trump

A very large collection of Q Proofs can be found at <https://qanonproofs.com/>

A glossary of Q abbreviations can be found at www.reddit.com/r/greatawakening/comments/8ddns2/q_abbreviations_guide_april_19_2018/

A typical debunking article can be found at www.dailydot.com/layer8/qanon-the-storm/

The BuzzFeed article claiming Q is a hoax can be found at www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanhatesthis/its-looking-extremely-likely-that-qanon-is-probably-a

Vox magazine’s analysis of QAnon supporters on Reddit can be found at www.vox.com/2018/8/8/17657800/qanon-reddit-conspiracy-data

Material on the Seth Rich murder and Pizzagate can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Seth_Rich and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pizzagate_conspiracy_theory

🔥 **NOEL ROONEY** is a poet and longstanding *fortean*. He writes *FT*’s regular ‘Conspirasphere’ column.



THE HAUNTINGS OF DAVID BARTON

ROB GANDY shares another selection of first-person accounts of weirdness from the Southport area: this time, though, the events described all happened to one man...



ABOVE: An artist's impression of what David saw in the bedroom of his home in Ashton Road, Southport, on a midsummer's evening in 1957.

After my presentation about *The Old Man of Halsall Moss* (FT328:32-39) in November 2016, to raise money for Southport's Queenscourt Hospice, I was approached by a gentleman with his own road ghost-related experience. This appeared as 'Footsteps at Midnight' in last issue's *Strange Stories from Southport* (FT370:42-45). The gentleman was David Barton (a pseudonym), a businessman from Formby who had lived in the area all his life. During our correspondence about 'Footsteps at Midnight' he told me he had written a short (draft) book about the many strange experiences which had occurred throughout his life. He did this "for the record", as evidence of some things that cannot be readily explained. I found his first-hand stories fascinating, and informally shared David's document with Alan Murdie, FT's resident ghost expert, who thought it illustrated the truth of the view that if you have one weird experience, you usually have several more over your lifetime, particularly if the first occurred in childhood. I agreed with David to write them up as a FT article as they would be of great interest to

If you have one weird experience, you usually have several more

forteans. The six stories are set out below, chronologically.

ASHTON ROAD: THE OLD LADY

The first home David remembers living in was a three-bedroom semi-detached house in Ashton Road, Hillside, a pleasant area of Southport. One midsummer evening in 1957, when he was six years old, David went to bed at around 7pm, happy and content knowing that either his mum or dad would soon be up to tuck him in and tell him a story. Broad daylight filled the room from the window to his right. A wardrobe was on the left-hand side of the room, with a bedside table

completing the furnishings. The bedroom door had no lock or catch, unlike any others in the house; the reason for this only became evident some years later.

David lay there for a few minutes, listening to his parents chatting below, when before him, to his left, the translucent figure of an old lady appeared from the front of the wardrobe and started to move very slowly across the room towards the window. This gossamer form appeared to be wearing a blue dress with large white spots; strangely, she was followed almost immediately by a figure of the same shape, which was more transparent and showed little colour. He was not frightened; just very curious. He moved down the bed nearer to the apparition, and watched as it neared the window and disappeared.¹

He immediately ran downstairs and excitedly told his parents what he had just seen. Understandably, they suggested he had been dreaming, but David would not have it, and said he could not have been asleep because he had only just gone upstairs. His parents didn't argue the point and that was an end to the matter, although



ABOVE: A view of Ashton Road, Hillside, as it appears today. It remains a pleasant and peaceful suburb, despite David's experiences of ghostly old ladies and disembodied hands. **BELOW:** Liverpool Road, Birkdale, the scene of David's terrifying encounter with an evil darkness and the site, it seems, of a long-lived haunting.

he recalls hearing them mention his story to friends some weeks later, without seeming to doubt him.

The family left that house in 1962. On the day they moved, David went next door to chat to their neighbours – a lovely old couple, both retired teachers. He had spent many hours over the years in their kitchen, usually eating their delicious freshly baked scones. After chatting about preparations for the move, his schoolwork and suchlike, the neighbour asked if he remembered seeing a lady in his bedroom, which of course he did. She then told him that before the family moved into the house, an old lady had lived there. One day, the neighbours had noticed many milk bottles on the doorstep and contacted the police when there was no answer at the door. The police had to force entry, and found the old lady's upstairs bedroom door was locked. They had to break in, only to find her dead. The neighbour said his description of the ghostly lady exactly matched the appearance of the former occupant who had passed away in his bedroom. It had been decided not to mention anything to him because there was concern he might have been upset and frightened.

ASHTON ROAD: THE PHANTOM HAND

David was about eight years old when he and his older brother (who is nine years older) came in from the back garden one warm summer afternoon. The back of the house was

well elevated and the side/back door into the kitchen was accessed from a flight of steps, roughly six feet up from garden level. Given the hot weather, their mother had the kitchen window wide open.

The two of them hurried up the steps and through the door, turning simultaneously towards the sink and window to wash their hands. Suddenly, they both froze in their tracks, speechless. There at the window was a disembodied hand, palm facing towards them, as if ordering them to stop. Neither spoke but they looked searchingly into each other's eyes – a moment David will never forget. As one, they flung the back door open and raced down the steps to below the window. The bottom of the window was eight or nine feet above them. It was only at this point that David's brother spoke, asking: "Did you see the hand?" David confirmed that he had, and so they examined the surrounding area for some sort of explanation, but found nothing.

They never saw the hand again, but it was reassuring that his brother gave exactly the same account of what had been seen to their parents, before pleading for David's confirmation, which was readily given. David's recollection is that it was a man's right hand, with no wrist visible, held up like a policeman stopping traffic. Also, the hand was *outside*, rather than inside, the window – far too high for anyone to be reaching up from the garden.

LIVERPOOL ROAD, BIRKDALE

Around 1969, David's brother and his new wife moved into a flat above a doctor's surgery. The arrangement was that if they cleaned the surgery and waiting room they could live there rent-free. Coincidentally, their mother, their two aunts and their maternal grandparents, along with a housekeeper, had lived in the same house many years previously. The house was detached, three storeys high and well

elevated, with large double front doors. It had once had a long front garden, before this was shortened by road widening, and must have been an imposing home when their mother lived there.

The ground floor now consisted of doctors' offices, waiting rooms, and a kitchen, with stairs leading to a small cellar. At the top of the main stairs was the door to the flat, which had a bathroom, a very large bedroom, a kitchen, a living room and a spare room cum bedroom. A further



staircase led to the upper floor, where the housekeeper had once lived. Halfway up this second stairway a large stained-glass window provided additional light.

David was still living with his mother, and one evening they visited his brother and his wife. They talked for a few hours, when typically the brothers started teasing each other, with his brother pushing David out of the living room on to the darkened landing. David felt confident his brother would be behind the door, with his foot pressed firmly against it to keep him out. So he decided not to give his brother further entertainment and leaned back against the doorframe.

Unlike his brother, David had no fear of the dark and felt quite relaxed. He laughed to himself, imagining his brother's frustration at not hearing him banging on the door. A few minutes passed when David became aware of something in front of him – a darkness that felt very unpleasant and quite evil. He was filled with a sense of intense foreboding. Then immediately ahead of him there was a sound like that made when rubbing a shoe across concrete. He was terrified and could not bring himself to turn away from whatever was before him. He moved his hand down, feeling for the door handle, keeping his back firmly against the doorframe. The handle turned and he gently opened the door and moved round into the room, trying desperately to appear calm.

Instantly his mother asked what was wrong, declaring he looked like he had seen a ghost. He tried to hide his true feelings and said he was very tired and needed to get home to bed. They shortly set off home, with David driving. His mother then asked questions about what had happened. Initially he continued to say he was tired and needed his sleep, but she was having none of it and persisted with her interrogation.

Once home and sitting by the fire with mugs of tea and cigarettes, David described

exactly what had occurred on the landing. His mother listened intently. She waited until he had finished before raising her eyes and looking directly into his. She made him promise never to repeat to his brother what she was about to tell him, particularly because of his somewhat nervous nature. David agreed and drew himself closer to listen. She explained she had lived in that house for a comparatively short time before the family moved to a similar property nearby (something David had always thought was a little odd). She told him that throughout her time in the house, she was woken each night by a sound on the landing, which she described as "like the tearing of lino". This went on every night and prevented her sleeping. It was so disruptive her father and mother finally decided to move; she felt certain they must also have experienced something that disturbed them, because their new home was only a few hundred yards away. In those days, children were "seen and not heard" and while David's mother described her father as a loving, kindly man, her mother would brook no nonsense.

David later discovered that previously there had been two suicides in the house, coincidentally both young medics. One died in the bathroom and one hanged himself. David suspected the latter to have happened on the landing, although he had no way to confirm this. He also conducted a little experiment, tearing a piece of lino and simultaneously rubbing his shoe over concrete: the sounds were virtually identical.

David never again felt comfortable when calling to see his brother and his wife, and avoided going to their flat at night. He kept his promise, and never told his brother what had happened or what their mother had revealed to him. He has since lost touch with his brother, but knows that if anything else strange had happened in the flat then his

brother would have told him, but he never did. Whatever David experienced the night he visited his brother appeared to have been in the house for over 50 years, at least since his mother's childhood.

THE HAUNTED HOSPITAL

Around 1976, David managed a retail store on Lord Street in Southport, with daily collections of money carried out by a large security company. Each evening, two men arrived in their armour-plated van and entered the store wearing crash helmets and safety glasses. Over time, he became friendly with some of the regular guards and they would chat over a mug of tea while the cashier balanced the books and prepared the money.

They would talk about their working day: awkward customers, traffic wardens, and anything vaguely amusing. One evening they mentioned the Southport Sanatorium for Children, in Hawkshead Street, which had been closed for several years; their company was employed to guard the premises to prevent vandalism and theft. It had treated children from across Britain who suffered from non-contagious diseases, with the aim of aiding their recovery or allowing them to enjoy a medically supervised holiday. (It must be said that the building's slightly sinister appearance, as evidenced in old photographs, makes it hard to imagine any youngster enjoying a holiday there!) The Sanatorium opened in 1878 and closed, nearly a century later, in 1971.

The company provided static 24-hour on-site security, requiring staff to be present overnight. The guards told David that their colleagues at the hospital site would hear children's screams and crying every night. This resulted in staff spending the night outside the hospital in a van, rather than staying inside in relative warmth and comfort; nobody was prepared to remain within the building after darkness fell. New arrangements were made with the local Council for only external security for the site. Enthused, David said he would love to stay in the building one night. The guards immediately offered to make the necessary arrangements, and said they would have a whip-round amongst their colleagues at the depot to raise what was a considerable sum of money for those days, if he spent the entire night in the hospital. David jumped at the chance.

He admits to later having second thoughts, but reassured himself that he would be able to leave at anytime. The static patrol outside the site offered a safe haven if he panicked. Unfortunately, a few days later the guards told him that their area manager could not allow the plan "just in case something went wrong", particularly as he was not a member of staff. A few years later, the building was demolished and houses built on the site. David has always viewed this as a lost opportunity; given his track record, he undoubtedly would have experienced something had his vigil taken place...



ABOVE: The Southport Sanatorium for Children photographed at some point in the late 19th or early 20th century; just the place for a holiday... or an abortive ghostwatch.

THE GHOSTS OF AINSDALE LIDO

Around 1989, David was involved in plans to redevelop the site of the Lido at Ainsdale-on-Sea. Built in 1933, it originally provided facilities for hundreds of holidaymakers and visitors, who arrived by train at the nearby station. From 1941 to 1946 the site acted as a naval Gunnery school, HMS Queen Charlotte. Subsequently the buildings reopened as a café, and then a nightclub, function suite and public house, with varying degrees of success.

During refurbishment in the 1970s, some workmen would stay overnight in the premises, but after a few disturbed nights they ceased this practice. Each man would race to clear the building to avoid being the last person on site. David met one of the builders some years later, and the man told him of these events. He explained that when they arrived each morning they would find their equipment had been moved with nails and screws scattered everywhere. David also witnessed strange things, particularly in the larger of the various rooms.

One evening, David was at a pre-opening meeting, in what was to become the restaurant, discussing various plans. The room, which previously housed the nightclub, was large, with split seating levels. During the discussion, he noticed a colleague suddenly appear shocked, her facial expression changing instantly. Later when they were alone, she told him that as she looked towards the kitchen entrance she had seen the dark outline of a figure, which then simply disappeared. She was someone neither given to imagining things nor inclined to exaggeration, and only recounted her experience when pressed.

David subsequently became used to catching sight of something out of the corner of his eye, two or three times a week over the next year or so; it was more of a *movement* than a figure, but it was “person-sized”. David named the thing “Fred”, welcoming his visits with a friendly greeting. When David arrived on site early in the morning, before anyone else, he checked the property throughout. Each day, he entered the men’s toilets to find the air filled with the pleasant aroma of pipe tobacco; but after a few minutes the smell would disappear, to be replaced by the artificial floral scent of the automated air fresheners. This continued throughout his eight years with the project.

One afternoon, he was sitting in the restaurant drinking coffee and chatting with the manageress of a nearby nightclub. It was a bright, warm day, but his companion started to shiver quite violently, her face turning pale. She explained that, out of the blue, she had become freezing cold, describing the sensation as “unreal”. They stood up and moved away and she immediately felt fine again.

David’s last significant experience was during the early hours of a New Year. The place had been very busy, with every table filled. When the customers had gone, the remaining staff were invited for a New Year’s



ABOVE: Three ages of the Ainsdale Lido. The top photo shows the Café in its 1930s prime; the middle one, the abandoned restaurant in 2007; the final image is of the Visitor Centre, all that remains today.

DAVE MCALEANY IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



ABOVE: The Chequers Inn, Doddington, where a rare sighting of a disembodied hand was made in 2007.

drink “on the house”. David realised he had not eaten anything all day, and went into the kitchen hoping to find something to make a sandwich. Unfortunately, all the cupboards were bare, so he turned to rejoin the staff when, as if some unseen mouth were beside his ear, he heard a long, drawn-out sigh, as clear as day. By then, he had become accustomed to the spirits not being confined to bottles behind the bar. So he said aloud: “Happy New Year, Fred!” and rejoined the others.

The Lido is now demolished, the one remaining building housing a Visitor Centre.

THE AINSDALE ABC

David often worked very late into the night at The Lido. One night, around 3am, he drove eastwards along Shore Road towards Ainsdale Station. At a point where the road has an upward gradient, and before it reaches any houses, he saw ahead of him, illuminated by the streetlights, a large black animal walking slowly from left to right across the brow of the road, before disappearing into the bushes. It was perhaps 50-66ft (15-20m) away and had a long tail, shaped exactly like that of a big cat. His best guess was that the creature was the size of an adult German Shepherd dog. He believed he had seen a puma or panther.

The following morning he felt compelled to report his sighting. He found an organisation dealing with such matters on the Internet, and telephoned them. His details were noted. He was somewhat disappointed to be told such events were not uncommon, even along the Ainsdale and Formby coast. He asked himself whether there might be a link to the local legend of the Formby Hell Hound, sometimes called “Old Trash”.² Sightings of this beast, described as a huge dog-like black shape, stretched back many years. Whatever

the reality, the plentiful local wildlife, particularly rabbits, is arguably sufficient to sustain any such large animal.

DISEMBODIED HANDS

Alan Murdie advised that the vision of a phantom disembodied hand was particularly rare, but was not without precedent. David’s case showed these reports do exist outside folklore. Reports of disembodied hands and arms date back centuries in ghost literature. One example is the disembodied “fine white hand” of the deceased wife of Sir Walter Long (1591-1679), which intervened to deter a clerk from executing a legal document to disinherit her son after Sir Walter remarried.³ Victorian folklorist Andrew Lang recorded a 17th century case where witnesses saw a phantom hand wielding a hammer, which kept knocking. Lang commented: “This Hand is as familiar to the research of the 17th as to the 19th century.”⁴

In East Anglia, around 1950, a large cupboard inside the ruined Boardley’s Farm, Oulton, Suffolk reputedly had “a bloody hand” floating or lying inside it. It reportedly belonged to a brother of a former owner who died in the building after losing his hand in a threshing machine accident. A spiritualist who entered the cupboard with a local man claimed “something” was there.⁵

In 1958, a hand and arm were seen waving at an upstairs window of Capesthorpe Hall, Cheshire, by the owner’s son, although this was later dismissed as a dream.⁶ A disembodied hand also featured in a poltergeist case in Gloucestershire in the early 1960s. The most recent example Alan identified was from the new incumbents at the Chequers Inn, Doddington, in Kent. They reported the movement of glasses, doors opening at 5am and, more unusually, a phantom arm and hand witnessed waving in the kitchen one morning.⁷

CONCLUSIONS

Arguably David has had more than his fair share of strange experiences. The events he recorded were important to him and by writing them down he hoped they might stand as evidence, albeit he cannot be certain of what. He is not a religious person, but has always wondered if there is something, another life, waiting beyond this one. Maybe some of his stories suggest that this might be the case.

I warmly applaud David’s attitude and efforts, and thank him for his advice and patience. Many people have strange experiences in their lives, some of which have a rational explanation of which they are simply unaware. But others are just plain weird and establishing a scientific causation can be very difficult. Sceptics and cynics will dismiss such experiences as misperceptions, hallucinations or hoaxes, and I know that many witnesses do not share their experiences with anyone, even close family and friends, for fear of ridicule.

At the end of the day, we are all limited by our personal senses, and all we can do is be honest and truthful. I would recommend that everyone who has similarly odd experiences should write them down “for the record”, otherwise they will be forgotten or become distorted over time and eventually evaporate into the ether. Even if they are only written for one’s family, such records will be valuable, and if a larger audience is appropriate, then *FT*’s own *It Happened To Me* section is an excellent outlet. I think I’d better dig out my old diaries...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Alan Murdie for his advice and references.

REFERENCES

- 1 Alan Murdie noted that the apparition of the old lady here bears some similarity with the haunting of Spencer Grove, Hackney, in 1968-69, where a female figure emerged from a wardrobe and had spots on her dress; see Peter Underwood, *Haunted London*, 1973.
- 2 www.formbybubble.com/single-post/2015/10/30/Old-Trash-%E2%80%93-Phantom-Black-Dog-of-%C2%A0-Formby-Sands.
- 3 Owen Davies, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*, 2007.
- 4 Andrew Lang, *Cock Lane and Commonsense*, 1896.
- 5 RA Haxell, *Lantern*, Summer 1979.
- 6 Andrew Green, *Our Haunted Kingdom*, 1973; George Owen and Victor Sims, *Science and the Spook: Eight Strange Cases of Haunting*, 1971.
- 7 Personal communication to Alan Murdie, 28 July 2007.

◆ **ROB GANDY** is a visiting professor at the Liverpool Business School, John Moores University. A regular contributor to *FT*, he has written on ghostlore, football curses, hoaxes, statistics, souling plays and phantom hitchhikers. He will be back with a final batch of stories gathered from Southport.

The easiest way to buy your next car

Skip the forecourt - great deals from the comfort of your home



With over 40,000 new and used cars to choose from across the country, buyacar.co.uk makes it simple to find the car you want and will deliver it straight to your door.



Zero hassle

Choose from thousands of cars, apply for finance online with us and value your existing car - all from the comfort of your home.



The very best prices

Whether buying outright or taking one of our affordable monthly payment plans, we've travelled the UK for the best deals - so you don't have to.



Peace of mind

All our cars come from UK main dealers and go through rigorous checks and tests before they arrive at your door.

All cars come with a 14-day money-back guarantee

Find out more at buyacar.co.uk

100% would recommend!

All members of staff are lovely and willing to help.



SHANNON

Pleased with service

The process of getting the car was very easy and secure.



DANIEL

Easy Peasy!

No trawling garage showrooms! Already recommending to friends & family.



KAREN

Purchased VW Golf

I was nervous about buying on the internet. Needn't have worried.



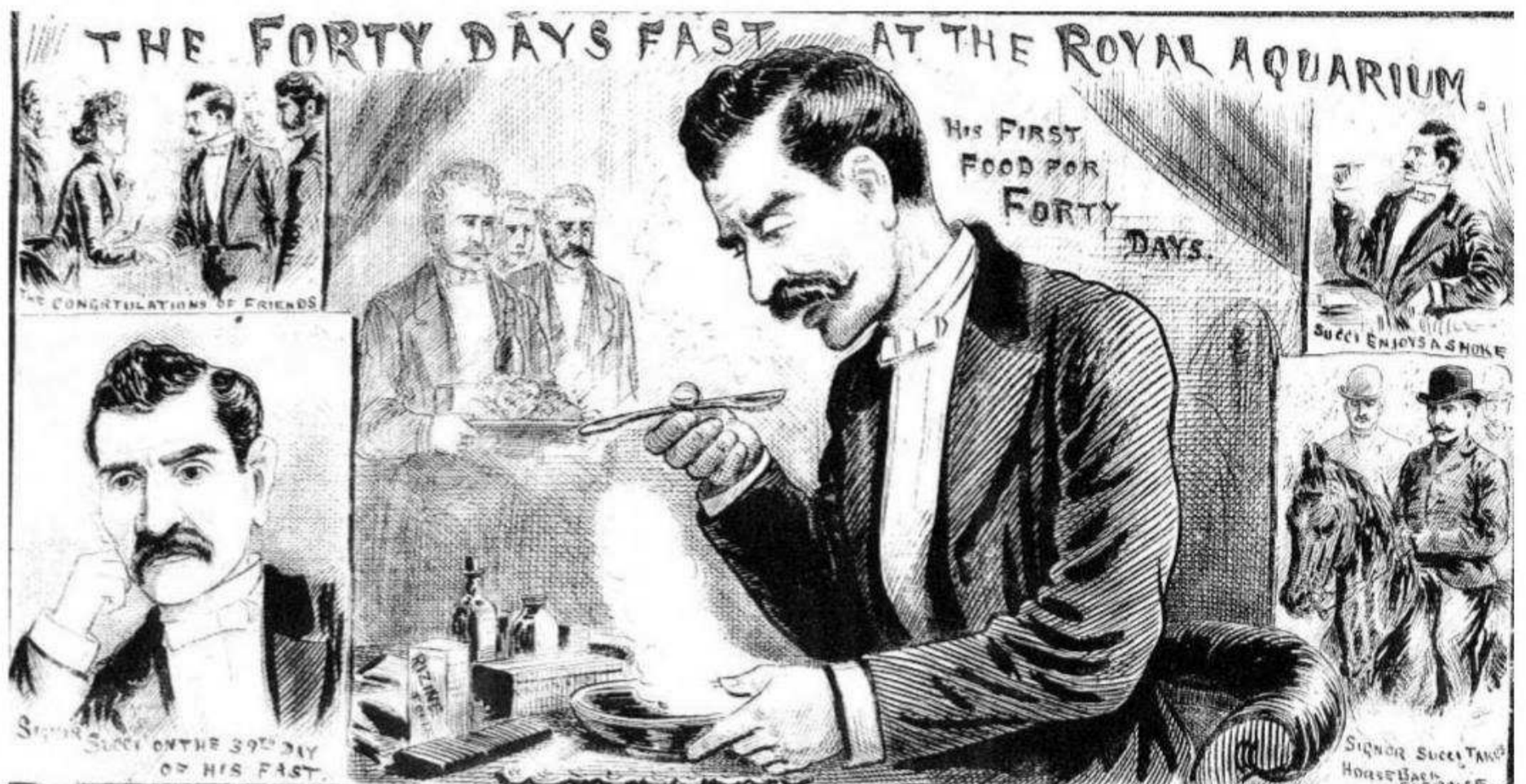
SIMON

READ MORE REVIEWS ON TRUSTPILOT

HUNGER GAMES

LIVES OF THE FASTING ARTISTS

Fasting doesn't sound like much of a spectator sport, but – long before modern-day 'endurance artists' such as David Blaine made the headlines – Victorian and Edwardian audiences flocked to see champion fasters do their thing, as **JAN BONDESON** explains.



FACING PAGE: Signor Giovanni Succi the Fasting Man appears at London's Royal Aquarium, from the *Illustrated Police News*, 26 April 1890. **ABOVE:** The end of Succi's 40-day-fast, and his first meal, as recorded in the *Illustrated Police News*, 3 May 1890.

That great pioneer in the annals of fasting, Signor Giovanni Succi, was born in the coastal town of Cesenatico, Italy, in 1853. His early career was uneventful, and he became a bank clerk in Rome, but in the 1880s he travelled as a commercial agent in Madagascar and East Africa, and claimed to have discovered an elixir that enabled him to fast for extended periods of time without any ill effect. To prove that his elixir worked, he made himself available to the medical profession in Italy and France. Experiments began in Paris, where Succi fasted for 14 days and nights. In August 1886, he completed a 30-day fast in Milan, and in December the same year he won a bet for 15 000 francs by repeating the same feat in Paris. In 1888, he was awarded a diploma by the Medico-Physical Academy of Florence after

Succi made a comfortable living showing off his fasting prowess

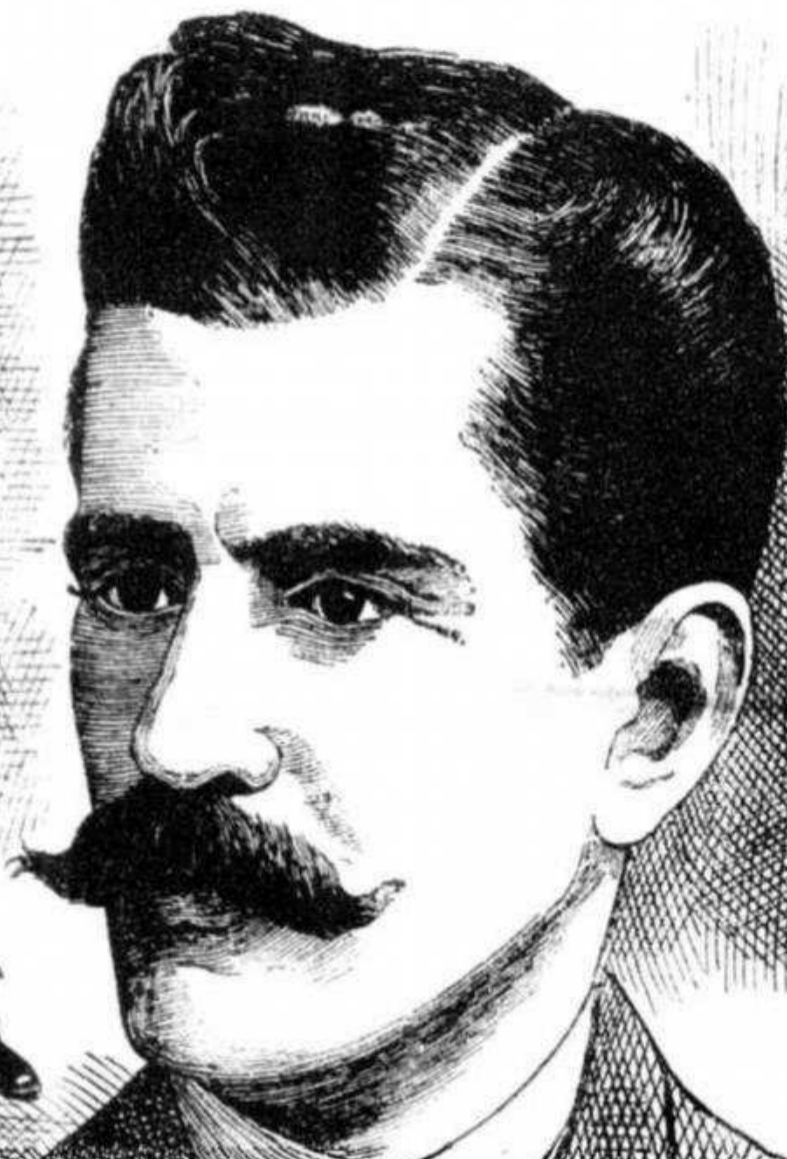
successfully completing another 30-day fast. 'Fasting Artists' were considered quite a novelty in the 1880s and 1890s, and Succi could make a comfortable living travelling round Europe to show off his fasting prowess. A short, black-haired man with typical Italian looks, he was agile and muscular, and an excellent fencer. In March 1890, he came to the Royal Aquarium in

Westminster, where he wanted to complete a 40-day fast. There was immediate interest from Londoners, who took a keen interest in fasting artists, as well as from the medical profession, who saw a golden opportunity to study the physiology of fasting first-hand. After beginning to fast, Succi took neither solid nor liquid nourishment; he drank only water, and regularly sipped small quantities of his elixir. He smoked one or two pipes each day, and occasionally a cigar or cigarette. On the 40th day of fasting, he remained in good health: his pulse was regular and fairly firm, and his heartbeat, though feeble, was distinct. He had lost more than 34lb (15kg) in weight – more than 26.5 per cent of his original body mass.

His 40-day fast made Giovanni Succi the most famous fasting artist in the world. He was paid £3,000 for his ordeal, and had no shortage of other offers. Later in 1890, he

SWORD EXERCISE.

SUCCI IN AFRICA.

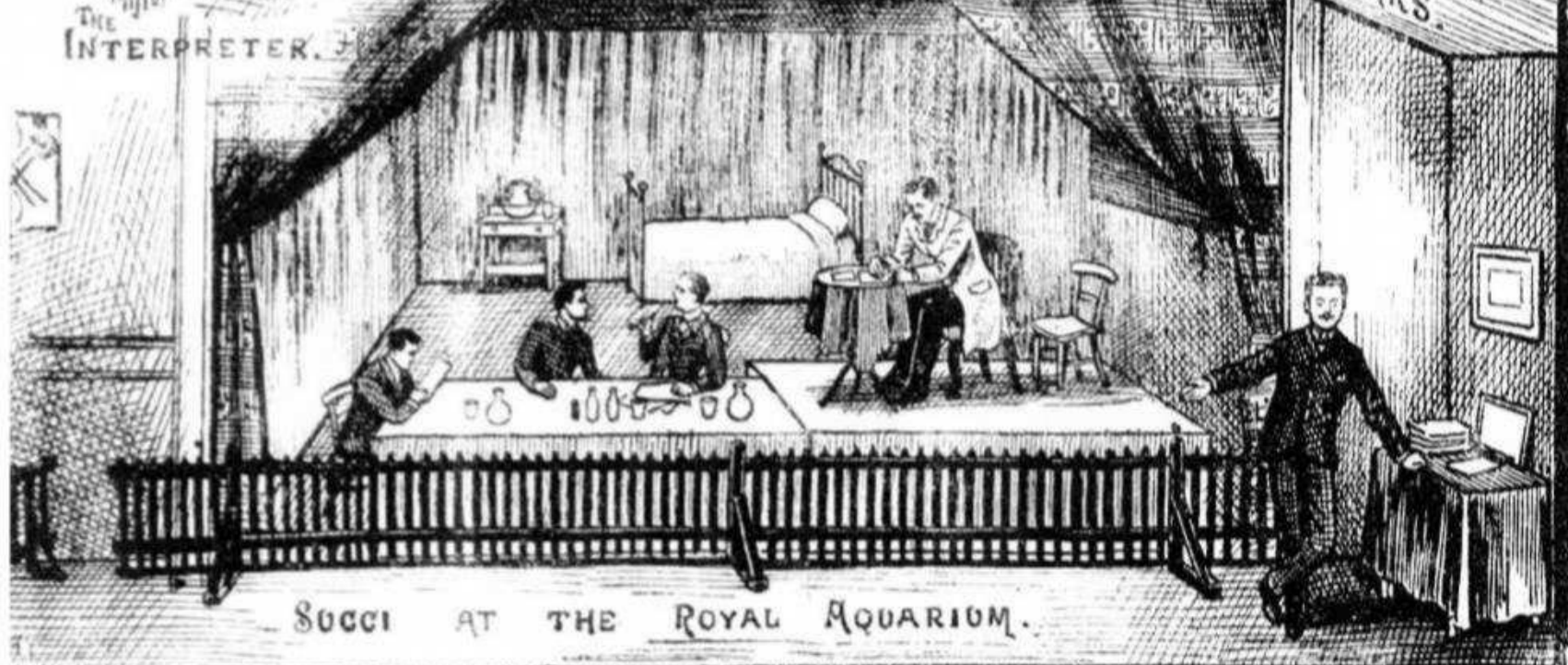


SUCCI THE EASTING MAN.

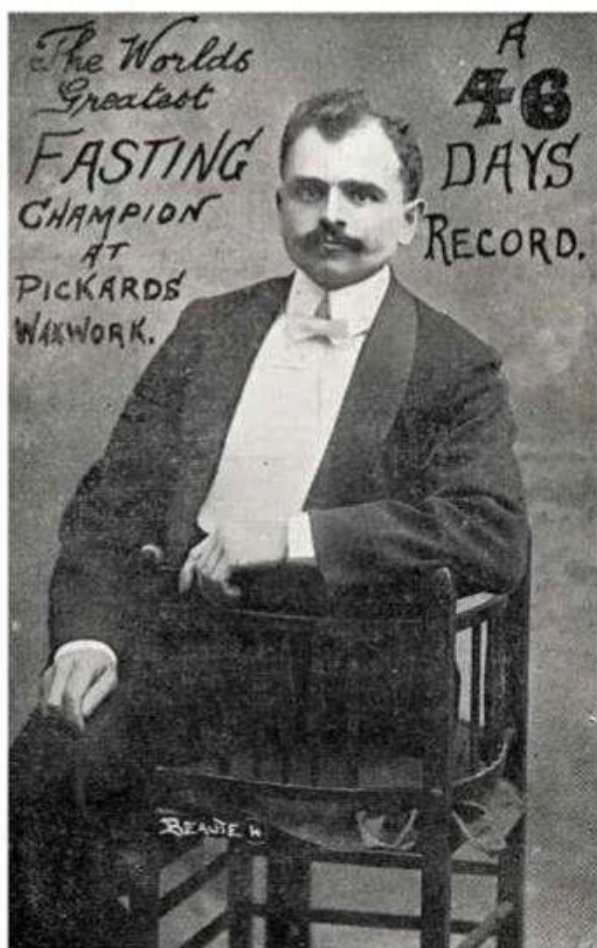


THE INTERPRETER.

AS HE NOW APPEARS.



SUCCI AT THE ROYAL AQUARIUM.



ABOVE LEFT AND BELOW: A postcard celebrating Beauté's 46-day fast at Pickard's Waxworks in Glasgow, with an interesting message on the back. ABOVE CENTRE: A signed postcard showing Giuseppe Sacco-Homann ABOVE RIGHT: A signed postcard showing Ricardo Sacco; each Sacco denounced the other as an impostor.

completed a 45-day fast in New York. In 1892, he was back at the Royal Aquarium for an intended 52-day fast, but he felt very ill on the 44th day and had to take nourishment. When he came to Vienna, disaster struck: during a 50-day fast, it was discovered that he had nourishment smuggled in to him. This exposure did not end his career, however: in Verona, he was bricked up inside a small prison without windows, and in Florence, he was imprisoned in a cell without food. In December 1896, when Succi was performing at a music-hall in Paris, he went stark raving mad and broke everything in his room. When two police constables appeared on the scene, the frenzied Italian threw empty champagne bottles at them, until he was eventually secured and tightly bound. Succi fell on evil times in the 1900s. In Vienna, he was paid only £20 for a 30-day fast. According to a newspaper article from 1908, he was working as a male nurse at the asylum in Nanterre outside Paris, commenting that "Fasting does not feed the faster!" It would appear that he died destitute in Florence in 1918.

EDWARDIAN FASTERS

The Victorian craze for fasting artists started by Giovanni Succi continued into Edwardian times, in spite of the similarity of the fasters and the drabness and boredom of their 'performances'. Going to the local pier or amusement parlour to check out the progress of the Fasting Man on show was still considered excellent entertainment among Edwardian working people. Various contenders emerged to compete for the title of Britain's leading fasting artist.

The earliest of them was Victor Beauté, a native of Switzerland, who made his debut in Paris in 1903. In February that year

In December 1886, when performing in Paris, Succi went stark raving mad

he fasted for four weeks at the Brighton Aquarium, locked into a little hut to prevent any attempt at cheating. He took his first meal before a large and admiring audience: two cups of strong cocoa, some broth, an egg, some bread and butter, and some raw beef finely minced. In November 1906, he completed a 38-day fast at Glasgow,

subsisting on mineral water and cigarettes alone; towards the end, doctors wanted to end the fast prematurely, since Beauté was too weak to even smoke, but the hardy Swiss held out until the end. There was much interest among the Glaswegians in this extraordinary fasting artist, and Beauté became quite famous. There were at least three picture postcards celebrating his achievements. In April 1907, he set a new world record by fasting for 48 days at Stewart's Waxworks, 164 High Street, Edinburgh. In June the same year, he completed a 32-day fast in Dundee, returning in September for a 35-day fast at Humber's Waxwork and Novelty Saloon. When the fast was completed, he had lost 31lb (14kg) in weight; the people of Dundee rewarded him with a standing ovation and a silver cup. In February 1910, Beauté completed a



38-day fast at the Exhibition Hall in Bristol. In April the following year, he fasted for a month at Bostock's Jungle in Sheffield, being allowed two pints of mineral water and a dozen cigarettes per day. In June 1912, he wanted to fast for 40 days at the Panopticon Exhibition in Belfast, but the fast was ended prematurely after doctors declared that his life was in danger. After this dismal failure, Victor Beauté left Britain, for good.

There was room for more than one fasting artist on the Edwardian stage, and in January 1906, an Austrian who called himself Giuseppe Sacco-Homann made his debut at Hengler's Italian Circus in London, completing a 45-day fast. Not less than 2,000 medical men, and a great number of ministers of religion, had been invited to witness the contest. A *Daily Mail* journalist was also present when the fast was completed: "Forty-five days without food is the record of Herr Sacco, who entered a sealed chamber at Hengler's Circus on January 18 and emerged on Saturday afternoon. It was a robust man of 14 stone who entered the little chamber at the circus. The man who came out and greeted the crowds who had gathered to witness the release was a 10-stone piece of hunger. The dress which fitted Sacco perfectly when he commenced to fast hung as loosely on him as a bag..." A few years later, Sacco-Homann set a new world record, fasting for 52 days at the King's Hall in Birmingham. He remained active in 1913, completing a 50-day fast at Leicester. In May 1914, he wanted to fast for 60 days in Sunderland, but on the 39th day he desperately smashed his way

out of the glass cage in which he had been confined. At the outbreak of World War I, he probably returned to his native land.

It is curious that in 1908, there were *two* fasting Saccos at large in Britain: a writer in the *Sheffield Daily Independent* found it droll that, as Giuseppe Sacco-Homann was completing a 34-day fast in Birmingham, an individual who called himself Ricardo Sacco was fasting away in Sheffield. Both Saccos made bombastic statements to the newspapers, each denouncing the other as an impostor, and claiming sole right to the honoured name of Sacco. Both issued picture postcards to advertise themselves. Ricardo Sacco was also a proficient faster. Already in 1907, he had completed a 38-day fast in Scarborough, and the following year he fasted for 42 days in Newcastle, losing three and a half stone (22kg) in weight and consuming 1,500 cigarettes. In 1913, he was sealed up in a glass chamber for a 35-day fast at the New Exhibition Hall in Dover. He went abroad in 1913 and was gone until 1928, when he attempted a 58-day fast at the Kursaal in Southend; after a valiant effort, the fast was interrupted on medical advice after 47 days. Undaunted, the now 48-year-old Sacco wanted to beat the world fasting record by completing a 65-day fast at Blackpool in September 1929. After a Herculean effort, he succeeded, going from 11 stone 2lb (70kg) in weight to 8 stone 2lb (52kg). He had declared that this would be his final fast, and here he was telling the truth: the celebrated fasting artist never recovered, and died from exhaustion the following month. The

coroner's inquest returned a verdict of death by misadventure. Posthumously, 'Sacco' was revealed to have been the Dutch baker Richard Hans Jones.

Alf Wilson, a young Stockport railway worker, declared that he was Sacco's rightful heir. In 1930, he fasted for 65 days at Butlin's Amusement Park in Skegness, subsisting on soda-water and cigarettes alone. The following year, his world record was beaten by the New Zealander Raymond Tac, who fasted for 68 days inside a sealed cabinet on Clacton Pier. Undaunted, Alf made plans for a 70-day fast at the Hessle Road Amusement Centre in Hull, locked inside a glass cage fitted with electric light and an emergency bell. A short, insignificant-looking young man, aged 29 and weighing just 9 stone (57kg), Alf was nothing much to look at, and many people doubted he had what it took to reclaim his world record. But Alf managed to prove them all wrong, completing his 70-day fast in January 1932. By this time, there was very little interest in fasting artists, and it is not known whether his record still stands today. At least, no newspaper ever mentioned the competitor Raymond Tac reclaiming it.

THE FASTING WOMEN

There were also at least five female fasting artists. Madame Christensen, said to be a native of Sweden, was active as early as 1898, when she was advertised as fasting for 30 days at the Royal Aquarium in London. Her portrait in the *Illustrated Police News* shows a sturdy dame looking far from



ABOVE LEFT: A postcard signed by Alf Wilson, the Stockport fasting wonder. ABOVE CENTRE: Miss Marie Buschart, the 'Continental Lady Fasting Champion'. ABOVE RIGHT: Agnes McDonald at Stewart's Waxworks in Edinburgh (from the collection of Mrs M Mekie and reproduced by permission).

half-starved. Mme Christensen would be under observation throughout her fast, and there was light-hearted newspaper speculation that some German-speaking joker would try to tempt her by speaking about the delicious *Frankfurterwurst* and *Rothkraut* she was missing out on. There were regular bulletins to the press once the fast had begun, and the first 15 days were completed in good order. But after 18 days of fasting, Mme Christensen's medical attendants recommended that she should throw in the towel and start taking nourishment again. This was an anticlimactic ending to this much-publicised fast, but Mme Christensen continued performing. She was still at the Royal Aquarium in 1902, when she was said to have completed a 35-day fast. Her later activities have remained unrecorded.

In July 1907, a Fasting Woman named Marie Buschart made a brief appearance in Great Yarmouth. An Austrian by birth and 25 years old, she planned to fast for 28 days, locked into a wooden cage. A postcard shows her looking sturdy and strong; in an interview with the *Yarmouth Independent*, she was quietly confident, pointing out that in her native Austria she had once completed a fast of 33 days.

Locked into the wooden cage, which was tastefully decorated to suit her æsthetic temperament, Buschart occupied herself with translating German into English. She was given free access to mineral water and was visited daily by a doctor. Vast crowds of people came to see her, from 10am until 10.30pm each day, admission 2d. There were regular newspaper bulletins as the fast progressed, the final one dated 17 August, when she successfully completed her 28-day fast; she told the audience that she felt weak but well, and that she very much longed for some nutritious food.

Miss Agnes McDonald, the British Fasting Woman, performed in Dublin in July 1907, and at Stewart's Waxworks in Edinburgh in September the same year. Her career ended in an unexpected manner that October: "That the heart can be full while the stomach is empty has been proved by the announcement of the engagement of Miss Agnes Macdonald, the fasting woman, who is now going through a performance in Edinburgh." Agnes was mid-way through a 33-day fast when she met Mr Frederick Ottley, assistant to the showman, and they began a conversation through the grille of the glass cage to which she was confined. After he had proposed to her and been accepted, he handed her a pearl engagement ring through the grille. A grand engagement party was to be held at the showman's



LEFT: A postcard showing the women's champion faster Irene Clifford

of Ricardo Sacco attracted only limited newspaper publicity, although he literally starved himself to death in order to beat the world record. His death, at a comparatively young age, was tragic indeed, but the foolhardy faster had only himself to blame for his premature demise. Alf Wilson, who would have been a celebrity in Edwardian times, was considered merely an eccentric in the early 1930s, in spite of his two fasting world records. Today, the achievements of the humble Stockport railwayman who challenged the foreign fasters are quite forgotten; Wikipedia maintains a chilly silence about Alf's 70-day fast, and not even the omniscient Google has much to tell about his long-forgotten show business career, which remains buried in the files of old local newspapers.

The fasting artists of late Victorian and Edwardian times have had the occasional successor, like 'endurance artist' David Blaine, who in 2003 fasted for 44 days inside a Plexiglas cage suspended at the South Bank in London (see FT178:05). In the 1950s and 1960s, therapeutic fasting was popular in the treatment

of morbid obesity and obesity-induced diabetes, with patients fasting for upwards of 200 days to normalise their weight or reduce their insulin dependence. In 1973, a grossly obese young man underwent a supervised therapeutic fast of 382 days in Dundee, reducing his weight from 456 to 180lb (206 to 82kg), and maintaining his normal weight for five years afterwards; but although his fast was accepted by the Guinness Book of Records, the patient was allowed to go home, where he may well have had access to food supplements of some description. Anyway, these medical experiments to make morbidly obese individuals lose weight have little relevance to the exertions of the fasting artists of old, none of whom was overweight to start with.



Extracted from Jan Bondeson's book *The Lion Boy and Other Medical Curiosities* (Amberley Publishing, 2018).

♦♦ JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, a regular contributor to FT and the author of numerous books, including *Queen Victoria's Stalker* (2010), *Murder Houses of London* (2014), *Strange Victoriana* (2016) and *The Ripper of Waterloo Road* (2017).

apartments once Agnes had completed her fast. There is nothing to suggest that these two ever married, however, and the whole thing may well have been a publicity stunt.

Miss Irene Clifford, aged just 23, made the headlines in 1932 after completing a 40-day fast for a wager of £100 and setting a new women's world record. Special police had to be called in to pacify a crowd of 500 cheering people outside the Chatham music hall where she was performing. In 1934, after she had married a man named Hobday, with whom she was living in Gravesend, she completed a 50-day fast at the Plymouth Amusement Arcade, subsisting on soda water and cigarettes. When she was released from the glass cabinet where she had been confined, by Harry Roberts, the captain of Plymouth Argyle FC, she looked very pale, thin and weak, and had kept to her bed for the last 14 days of the fast; still, she could delight in once more becoming the world record holder among the female fasting sorority, having beaten the record of a 47-day fast recently set by Miss Deane, of Balham.

LEAN TIMES

Fasting artists quickly went out of fashion after the Great War, and it is not for nothing that one of Franz Kafka's short stories deals with a 'hunger artist' whose career is now in decline and who realises the utter pointlessness of his achievements. The return

ETHICAL VITAMINS WITH AN ORGANIC HEART

Visit your local health store
to discover the right programme
of food, lifestyle and supplements
for your individual needs.



viridian

www.findahealthstore.com



THE FUTURE'S DARK, THE FUTURE'S ORANGE

As Indian politics comes under intense hyper-nationalist pressure to rewrite the past, with claims that Indians invented the Internet and the country's squirrels once had the capacity to build large infrastructure projects, **SD TUCKER** reads up on some very horrible histories indeed

Readers may remember the late-1990s BBC comedy sketch show *Goodness Gracious Me*, which featured a character named 'Mr Everything Comes From India', a profoundly chauvinistic/mentally disturbed individual who maintained, in the face of all evidence to the contrary, that all persons and inventions of note throughout history had originated on the Indian subcontinent. The British Royal Family? *Indian!* They all live in the same house and have a long history of arranged marriages to their cousins. Jesus Christ? *Indian!* He worked for His father. Superman? *Indian!* In what other country was it possible to run faster than a speeding train?

The normal method of such comedy is to take a genuine pre-existing personality trait and then exaggerate it wildly for comic effect, but it would appear that in creating this particular humorous character, the scriptwriters were in fact simply being true to life. That, at least, is the conclusion to be drawn from examining the numerous bizarre statements made in recent years by Indian politicians belonging to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who currently run the country under the banner of Hindu nationalism. If Mr Everything Comes From India ran for election wearing a BJP rosette, he would undoubtedly win, given that other BJP figures have increasingly developed the peculiar habit of claiming that such classic symbols of modernity as cars, aeroplanes and the Internet were all originally invented some 3,000-plus years ago by ancient Indians living during the Vedic period of c.1500–c.500BC (see **FT369:8**), as revealed in ancient epic poems and religious texts such as the *Mahabharata* and *Rig Veda*, which we might term the Indian equivalents of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.



LEFT: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets attendees at a BJP Parliamentary committee meeting in New Delhi on 31 July 2018.

with an absurdly literalist mindset, it is possible to *interpret* such tales as being factual in nature, if you really want to. UFO fans will be aware that Desmond Leslie, the Anglo-Irish aristocrat and early British saucer-obsessive (see **FTFT225:40-47** and p32 of this issue), trod such a path in his best-selling 1953 book *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, which famously mined Vedic texts and Sanskrit sagas for 'evidence' that atomic bombs, flying-machines and laser-weapons were all known of in ancient India, having presumably been introduced there by aliens. Disturbingly, if you take away the ET element, the current political leadership of India appear to think much the same thing.

CHARIOTS OF THE GODS?

Even the current Indian PM himself, Narendra Modi, has got in on the act, informing a conference of doctors in Mumbai

in 2014 that no matter how good modern-day Indian physicians may be, they pale into insignificance when compared with their ancient ancestors. According to Modi, "We can be proud of what our country achieved in medical science" during the Vedic period, particularly with reference to the figure of Lord Ganesh, the elephant-headed Hindu god with a human body. How did this odd-looking fellow's peculiar appearance come about? Modi had the answer: "There must have been some plastic surgeon at that time [the Vedic period] who got an elephant's head on the body of a human being and began the practice of plastic surgery." Of course! Dr Moreau? *Indian!*

Modi's claims sound almost reasonable when compared to some of the other historically illiterate idiocies to have emerged from the mouths of BJP politicians.

"OUR ANCESTORS SHOWED GREAT STRENGTHS IN SPACE SCIENCE"

These texts, collectively termed 'Vedas', are 'historical' only in the way that Homer's epics are; they do reveal certain details about how life was once lived in ancient India, just as Homer reveals certain details about how life was once lived in ancient Greece, but they also feature tales of gods, demons and supernatural events which are clearly not *literally* true. Nonetheless, read

In 2017, the BJP's Junior Education Minister, Satya Pal Singh, said that students at Indian engineering colleges should be taught that the aeroplane had not been invented by the Wright Brothers after all, but by Shivkar Bapuji Talpade (see FT357:26-27), an Indian inventor who had once constructed some kind of barely viable cylindrical structure made of bamboo which was apparently able to float in the air for a small period of time due to the cunning use of a chemical reaction involving liquid mercury and lighter-than-air hydrogen. This was therefore not really an aeroplane at all, but Mr Singh appears to think that it was, and was struck by the fact that Mr Talpade was a scholar of Vedic texts such as the *Ramayana* and *Rig Veda*. These texts feature tales of flying chariots like the *Pushpak Vimaan*, ridden by the evil fiend Ravana when out on a mission to kidnap the wife of the noble Hindu god Lord Ram. Apparently, it was reading about these airborne chariots that inspired Talpade to construct his faulty device. As Talpade had therefore made use of a pre-existing verbal blueprint in the *Ramayana* to construct his 'aeroplane', Singh argued that the nation's engineering students should really be taught that the aerospace industry had actually originated in India a few millennia previously. Furthermore, because "plants in the Kingdom of the Demon King Ravana were not watered as they contained *Chandramani*, a mythical elixir", Singh seemed to imply that ancient Indians had also invented some kind of early Miracle-Gro.

Directly echoing Desmond Leslie, whether he knows it or not, Modi has also openly proclaimed that "our ancestors had, at some point, displayed great strengths in space-science". How so? Some notable Indians, such as Vasudev Devnani, Rajasthan's State Education Minister, and G Madhavan Nair, former chairman of ISRO (the Indian equivalent of NASA) would interpret this as simply meaning that certain ancient Indian astronomers had somewhat anticipated Isaac Newton's theories about gravity over 1,000 years before he first formulated them – which is not *entirely* untrue, just greatly exaggerated. However, Nair has also claimed that the Vedas contained many other profound anticipations of modern-day knowledge about outer space, but they had unfortunately been written "in a condensed format" with all the vital mathematical proof left out, thus allowing glory-hunters like Sir Isaac to steal the Indians' rightful credit.

The BJP's Chief Minister of Tripura State, Biplap Kumar Deb, has even gone so far as to claim that communications satellites and the Internet were invented by ancient Indians, as proved by certain passages in the *Mahabharata* in which information about a distant battle is relayed to a blind king by his charioteer. How did the charioteer



LEFT: Indian members of the Hindu nationalist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) take part in a drill; or are they perhaps impersonating ancient Indian flying machines?

know about the details of this far-off conflict, though? Simple. He looked it up online. "It means Internet was there, the satellites, and that technology was there in this country at that time," said Deb. "The richest culture belongs to our nation and I feel proud of it. Even today, in Internet and software technology, we are ahead. See Microsoft, it may be a US company, but most of its engineers are all from our country." How could they not be, with at least a 3,000-year head-start on rank amateurs like Bill Gates? ¹

Worse than this, though – far worse – were the opinions given by the BJP's Chief Minister of Gujarat State, Vijay Rupani, during the opening of a space-research facility in 2017. Here, he praised India's modern development of space rockets and ICBMs, saying that such things had in fact been invented by Lord Ram many thousands of years ago, but that these missiles had been described as being simply 'arrows' which he shot at enemies in the old Vedic texts. This was not so, however, as Lord Ram in fact possessed great "engineering skills", as could be proved by the fact that, according to legend, he had built a structure called 'Rama's Bridge', a chain of limestone shoals which had once connected mainland India with the (now) island of Sri Lanka. This is a real geographical feature, but it is a 'bridge' in the same way that Giants' Causeway is a 'bridge' – i.e. in the metaphor of myth only. In the *Ramayana*, it is said that Lord Ram constructed this bridge so he could cross into the lair of the Demon King to rescue his kidnapped wife, together with the help of a huge army of ape-men and helpful squirrels. These squirrels and ape-men, said Rupani, were "the engineers of that [Vedic]

era", working to put Ram's plan for a bridge into action. "Imagine bringing together [all these different animal-engineers to build his bridge] ... it was [an act of] social engineering by Lord Ram," argued Rupani, meaning that not only was Ram busy "developing weapons and infrastructure" for the benefit of ordinary Indians, he was also bringing different races such as ape-men, humans, gods and super-intelligent squirrels together to live in social harmony for the benefit of the entire Indian nation. Apparently, Lord Ram "brought people from all castes and communities together". ² Was this, then, what the BJP was now busy doing too? Er, no.

UTTAR RUBBESH

The BJP belong to an exceedingly nationalistic social movement in India known as *Hindutva*, or 'Hinduness'. *Hindutva* was adopted by the BJP as its official ideology in 1989, which is not entirely surprising as the BJP itself is merely one of the affiliated political wings of a wider *Hindutva* umbrella organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or 'National Patriotic Volunteer Organisation', which aims to force India to undergo a process of 'Saffronisation' – that is to say, turning everything figuratively orange-coloured, like the hue of Hindu and Buddhist holy-men's traditional Indian robes. ³ All foreign influences – whether colonialist, Islamic, Marxist or otherwise – are to be purged, in the name of promoting a truly *Indian* India, not some poor photocopy of the West with a few decorative *ashrams* thrown in for the sole benefit of The Beatles.

The rise of *Hindutva* in contemporary

India can sometimes throw up the election of some rather unsavoury characters, such as Yogi Adityanath, a saffron-robed Hindu priest who is the BJP's Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh – the biggest State in all India, with over 200 million inhabitants, a sizable minority of whom (40 million) are Muslims, not Hindus. Adityanath is believed by some of his followers to be the reincarnated avatar of some Hindu god or other; if so, then it cannot have been Lord Ram, as Adityanath seems eager to sow division amongst members of the different religions under his care, and has in the past been imprisoned for allegedly inciting riots. On the other hand, he reputedly has the ability to talk directly to the over 500 cows, monkeys, dogs and birds that he keeps as pets, so perhaps will one day be able to bring all of Uttar Pradesh's animals together in loving unity to build a big, Donald Trump-style wall to keep any more Muslims out. He has in the past openly called for a Trump-like travel ban on Muslims entering India, has boasted that "if given a chance" he would install statues of prominent plastic-surgery victim Lord Ganesh "in every mosque", and accused Muslim males of attempting to engage in a "love jihad" by seducing honest Hindu girls and making them go down on their knees and bend to Mecca. He has also "requested" that those who worship the Sun god in a non-standard way go and drown themselves or else kindly agree to live within a dark room for the rest of their lives, and accused Mother Teresa of engaging in a malign "conspiracy" to turn India Christian.

Whilst Adityanath claims to hold no prejudice against those of other faiths, some voters may not have fully absorbed this message, at least not to judge by an alarming incident in which one of his supporters shared a stage with Adityanath and approvingly stated that, once his god-like hero had been elected, Muslims would be banned from voting and dead women's corpses be raped in celebration.⁴ Hardly building bridges, is it?

Hindutva ideologues' clear distrust of Muslims can be seen in the repeated denigration of the Taj Mahal by BJP politicians. The Taj Mahal, of course, was built as a mausoleum in memory of his favourite wife by Shah Jahan, a Muslim Mughal Emperor – and thus, to some, stands as a giant monument to the alarming notion of 'love jihad'. According to Yogi Adityanath, the Taj Mahal "does not reflect Indian culture", just as the Eiffel Tower has nothing to do with the French, and under his watch it was once left out of a tourist information booklet detailing various sites to visit whilst in Uttar Pradesh (though this was supposedly due to a misunderstanding about the booklet's actual purpose).

Meanwhile, in 2017, BJP lawmaker Sangeet Som said that, as it was clearly a "blot on Indian culture" created by

"traitors", the very fact of the Taj Mahal's true historical origins should be wiped away entirely. "Do you call it a history when the one who built the Taj targeted many Hindus in Uttar Pradesh and Hindustan [for persecution]? If this is history, then it is very unfortunate, and we [the BJP] will change this history, I guarantee you." After mass Twitter-storm outrage ensued, a BJP spokesman clarified their position on the Taj Mahal, however. People need not worry, the gigantic building's existence would not be denied, merely altered, as "history cannot be erased, but at least it can be well-written". The rewrite suggested by BJP MP Surendra Singh was to rename it the 'Ram Mahal' after Lord Ram, or maybe 'Patriotism Mahal', after his own prejudices. Singh would have been quite happy for the damn thing to be demolished, even in spite of its eight million visitors per year, but it was "made from Indian soil" so this would have been sacrilege.⁵

ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUITCAKES

The BJP's parent organisation, the RSS, have previous form when it comes to rewriting history. Their second leader, MS Golwalkar, published a book in 1939 arguing, like certain Nazis, that the Aryan

race originated in India and at the North Pole simultaneously. Unlike the Nazis, he argued that this seemingly contradictory feat was made possible because the North Pole itself was really Indian, but had since somehow "emigrated" northwards to the lands of ice and snow, perhaps to escape the monsoon season. In order to spread such knowledge, the RSS have since set up various publishing companies whose books include such harmless *QI*-style facts as: "India is the most ancient country in the world", "There were cars and planes in ancient India" and that, following the introduction of peace-loving Buddhism into India, "Cowardice spread throughout the kingdom".

Hindutva proponents claim that, following independence, Marxists began a Gramsci-style 'long march through the institutions', replacing the true Indian history represented by the *Mahabharata*, with its flying saucers and nuclear weapons, with false ones about the colonialist exploitation of the oppressed native proletariat by invading "Britishers".⁶

Long marches can always be combated by counter-revolutions, however, and it appears that the levers of civil power are now being recaptured by the Saffronists, particularly in the education system. Foremost amongst those who seek to rewrite the Indian curriculum is Dinanath Batra, a retired headmaster, RSS man and amateur historian whose books – which feature glowing forewords from none other than Narendra Modi – have been placed on the official reading lists of some 42,000 schools by the BJP in Gujarat State. "It's time to cleanse our education of all Western influences," says Batra, and he has certainly done so – by making up mad stuff and then passing it off to innocent children as real. According to his

"THERE WERE CARS AND PLANES IN ANCIENT INDIA"



LEFT: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who apparently has the ability to talk to the animals but is less keen on the state's Muslim population or the Taj Mahal.



LEFT: A supporter of the BJP dresses as the monkey god Hanuman at a party event in Uttar Pradesh.

officially approved textbook *Shining India*, for example, “What we know today as the motorcar existed during the Vedic period. It was called *anashva rath*. Usually a *rath* (chariot) is pulled by horses, but an *anashva rath* means one that runs without horses ... what is today a motorcar. The *Rig Veda* refers to this.” No it doesn’t. Equally dubious are Batra’s lessons on geography, in which pupils are taught that, contrary to most maps of the world, India is really much larger than most people think it is, encompassing as it does Pakistan, Burma, Afghanistan, Tibet, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan; none of which really exist, when you stop and think about it, because *they are all Indian!* This is all very odd, as Mr Batra is most famous for getting the American historian Wendy Doniger’s book *The Hindus: An Alternative History* pulped by Penguin Books all across India, on account of its supposedly dubious revisionist ideas about ancient Indian history; presumably his true complaint was that as Doniger’s book featured no mention of Vedic Ford Fiestas, it wasn’t quite revisionist enough.⁷

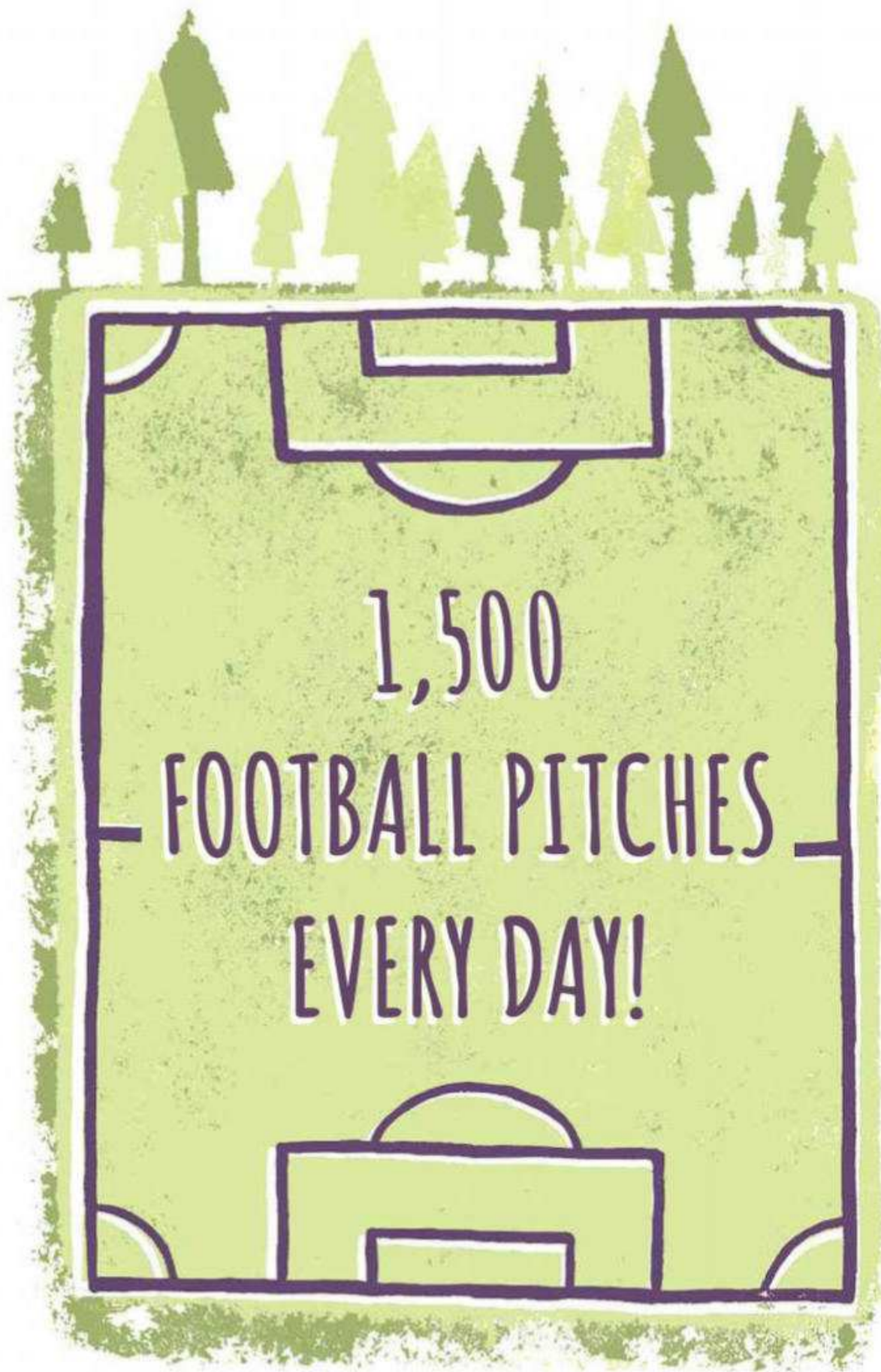
The potentially dangerous effects of this State-sanctioned programme of blatant lying can best be seen in the widespread violence which erupted during the run-up to the intended 2017 release of the Bollywood movie *Padmaavat*, which tells the ‘true’ story of how a 14th-century Muslim Mughal Sultan laid siege to an Indian kingdom after catching a glimpse of its beautiful Hindu queen, Padmavati, falling instantly in love with her and wishing to make her his. In reality, this story was invented by a 16th-century poet who openly called his work fiction, and most (normal) historians agree there is little real evidence that Queen Padmavati even

existed outside of the poet’s head. However, if true, then this story represents an early example of ‘love *jihad*’, so the *Hindutva* crowd became outraged when they heard of the film’s impending release, especially when they arbitrarily decided that it absolutely *must* have included an outrageously explicit pornographic sequence in which the Mughal dreams about penetrating his desired Hindu victim. The fact that no such scene existed in the film was of no importance. When the director denied it was there, the Saffronists, who naturally refused to watch such filth, simply said he was lying and threatened to cut off the lead actress’s nose in punishment for her participation in what was obviously a hardcore Muslim porn movie. A BJP politician then offered an amazing reward of £1.16 million for anyone who could manage to chop off the heads of this abhorrent actress or her dirty director. Predictably, whipped-up mobs then went on the rampage, torching vehicles, burning effigies, vandalising cinemas, promising murder and blocking roads. British cinemas even received threats that their premises would be destroyed if they dared screen the film over here.⁸

What’s surprising is that the BJP’s frankly insane pronouncements and actions have barely been reported in the UK. You would think that when Mr Modi met his British counterpart Theresa May recently, the streets would have been lined with angry protestors... but no; instead, the outrage was reserved for the visit of the equally orange figure of President Trump. “The world must take notice,” one Indian columnist has pleaded. “Our government has created the Taliban in India.”⁹ But we don’t, and prefer to focus on the Twitter rants of the POTUS. Why the discrepancy?

NOTES

- 1 Microsoft’s current CEO is in fact of subcontinental heritage, thus putting an end to Gates’s demonstrably racist act of cultural appropriation in allegedly ‘inventing’ Microsoft Windows. *Times*, 2 Apr 2018; www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/28/indian-prime-minister-genetic-science-existed-ancient-times; www.ndtv.com/india-news/wright-brothers-who-indian-invented-aeroplane-says-union-minister-satya-pal-singh-1752922; <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agartala/internet-and-satellite-existed-since-mahabharata-era-claims-tripura-cm/articleshow/63808175.cms>; <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/a-bid-to-change-history-of-gravity-as-we-know-it/articleshow/62436479.cms#highlights>; www.firstpost.com/living/aryabhata-discovered-gravity-newton-says-former-isro-chief-g-madhavan-nair-2118331.html.
- 2 www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/lord-ram-s-arrows-were-like-missiles-developed-by-isro-now-says-gujarat-cm/story-JqIPemorRm08Yi5bfCqwOL.html.
- 3 Whilst obviously privileging Hindus, *Hindutva* ideologues do admit that representatives of the other ‘*dharmic*’ religions, namely Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains, are welcome inhabitants of India, on account of their millennia-old presence there. However, potentially troublesome minorities like Christians and Muslims are only tolerated so long as they toe the line, don’t agitate for special treatment or privileges, and accept that the overriding mainstream culture of the land is to be Hindu.
- 4 *Times*, 21 Mar 2017; www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-39403778; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yogi_Adityanath; www.firstpost.com/india/mother-teresa-was-part-of-a-conspiracy-for-christianisation-of-india-says-bjp-mp-adityanath-2845382.html.
- 5 Surendra Singh is also on record as saying that “prostitutes are better than government officials”, perhaps the only accurate statement he has ever made. *Times*, 13 June 2018; www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-41635770; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-41482311>.
- 6 www.hindustantimes.com/india/saffronising-textbooks-where-myth-and-dogma-replace-history/story-CauM4dmmsPGrjZ3APAvNxO.html.
- 7 Mr Batra has sometimes denied being affiliated to the RSS, though he is continually linked to it in the Indian media, and the school of which he was headmaster was the first one in all India to be run by the organisation. *Times*, 30 July 2014; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinanath_Batra; www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/test-tubes-in-hastinapur/291554 (and too many additional sources to list!).
- 8 *Times*, 25 Nov 2017; www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-42048512.
- 9 *Times*, 25 Nov 2017.



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

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

UNFAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005-2015

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

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





Dublin's pleasing terrors

MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO attends the 2018 Dublin Ghost Festival in search of revelations rather than explanations...

The second Dublin Ghost Festival, held in the capital's Freemasons Hall on the last weekend of June, was a real delight, but it almost didn't happen. Two years earlier, Brian J Showers had co-organised the first festival with bestselling Irish writer John Connolly. It was a gruelling task they both fitted around their day jobs, so they treated it as a one-off. But it was a success. A year later, people kept asking Showers to do another one, so he decided to let fate have the last word. He sent a courteous e-mail to illustrious author Joyce Carol Oates, with little hope of a reply. "I thought, 'Why would she say yes? I'm just some guy who's writing to her. She doesn't know me, and she doesn't have any reason to trust me'." Oates, who recently turned 80 and has just published the Lovecraft-inspired *Night-Gaunts and Other Tales of Suspense*, agreed to fly from America to be the guest of honour. And Showers – this time on his own — gathered an eclectic group of authors and publishers to join her in discussing their respective work within gothic or supernatural fiction: Reggie Oliver, Andrew Michael Hurley, Lisa Tuttle, VH Leslie, Nicholas Royle, Helen Grant, and the owners of Tartarus Press, Ray Russell and Rosalie Parker. "I wouldn't have done it, if it hadn't been for Joyce," Showers insists.

The early comers gathered at a pub on Thursday night for an informal ghost story reading by Reggie Oliver, an art at which he excels, perhaps due to his theatrical background or his elocution, which wouldn't sound out of place in a classic Hammer



TOP: Reggie Oliver speaks on 'The Lure of the Ghost Story'. ABOVE: A panel with Helen Grant, Reggie Oliver, Joyce Carol Oates and Andrew Michael Hurley.

film. On Friday afternoon, a couple of Gothic Dublin walks departed from the Freemasons Hall, with local historian Pat Liddy tracing the steps of Stoker, Le Fanu, and Wilde.

Later that evening, under the dim lights of the Grand Lodge Room, the festival officially started with Oliver analysing "The Lure of the Ghost Story" before performing another reading. But the Dublin Ghost Festival is a literary festival, which means it's essentially concerned with the aspects of literary creation. One of the first panels debated what makes a good ghost story. The panellists agreed on the importance of atmosphere, subtlety, and ambiguity. Oliver put it this way: in a ghost story "there needs to be a revelation, not an explanation." Hurley, whose debut novel *The*

Loney was published by Tartarus before it was picked up by John Murray and brought to a mass readership, referred to the act of mapping as an antidote to our fear of the unknown: "Once you name something, you can control it." In supernatural fiction, some things are best left unnamed.

Joyce Carol Oates discussed the traditional division between realism and the supernatural or the weird. In the latter, she included works by Faulkner, Toni Morrison, or Nabokov. To Oates, the ghost is often the embodiment of an obsession: "You can be haunted by something in an area of your life, and then it becomes an obsession. There's not that much stretch between an obsession and an actual ghost."

Among the attendees to the festival were filmmakers, authors and publishers, book

collectors and dealers, artists and illustrators. "You could put some of them up on stage and they'd have just as valid reason to be there as anyone else," Showers argues. They were, indeed, people who know their genre well, voraciously hovering over the tables in the trade hall. Showers's own Swan River Press had a stall; so did Tartarus Press, known for its exquisite hardbacks wrapped in cream jackets. Rare book dealers brought their treasures: first editions, oddities, signed copies. And, although some names kept reappearing (Aickman, Jackson, Machen, de la Mare), there was also a panel about overlooked favourites, where the guests, moderated by Lisa Tuttle, nervously acknowledged the expertise of the crowd before revealing their choices.

Showers was told he could turn the festival into a bigger event, but he likes the atmosphere as it is. He's reluctant to use the label that someone came up with to define it: "boutique festival", which nevertheless describes it well. "One of the things that makes it so enjoyable is the intimate aspect. You can go up to one of the guests and you could easily end up grabbing a bite to eat with these people."

Will there be a third round? Showers doesn't give a straight answer. He's recovering from an illness that hit him right after the weekend and he looks pretty exhausted. I ask who he'd like to see in a future one and his eyes shine with enthusiasm. "I'd love to see Guillermo del Toro and Mike Mignola. And Rosemary Pardoe and Michelle Paver. And I'd love to meet TED Klein..."

For more information, visit <http://www.swanriverpress.ie/> or <https://www.facebook.com/DublinGhostStoryFestival/>

◆ **MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO** is a Bristol-based journalist and FT regular who specialises in history, archaeology, myth and mystery.

John Keel's adventures in Hollywood

BRIAN J ROBB investigates how the author of *The Mothman Prophecies* tried to break into Hollywood in the 1960s and tried writing for *Lost in Space*.

Writer and ufologist John Keel was perhaps best known as the man behind *The Mothman Prophecies*. His 1975 book highlighted the mysteries surrounding the December 1967 collapse of the Silver Bridge over the Ohio River (see FT156:26-54). The story was most widely disseminated through the 2002 film adaptation directed by Mark Pellington and starring Richard Gere. That, however, was far from Keel's first involvement with Hollywood.

Keel had a variety of professional experiences before writing his fortaean classics. Born in New York in 1930, he was an early fan of sleight-of-hand magic; his first published writing was on the subject, appearing while he was still at school. Upon leaving, he worked for newspapers before joining the US Army during the Korean War, as part of the Armed Forces Network in Germany. One of his Forces radio shows was entitled *Thing in the Sky: The Flying Saucer Story*. In his book *Operation Trojan Horse*, Keel categorised this experience as training in propaganda techniques and psychological warfare.

In the mid-1950s, after leaving the Army, Keel travelled (financed by his magazine articles), wrote for men's adventure magazines, and focused on radio work. In the later 1950s, he was working for publisher Funk & Wagnalls as an encyclopædia editor. It was in the late 1960s, after his Hollywood escapades, that fortaean subjects (especially UFOs) came to



LEFT: The young John Keel.

dominate Keel's writing.

What is less well known about Keel is that he made repeated, often unsuccessful, forays into Hollywood. You won't find many of his Hollywood credits in the IMDb, however. A member of the Writers Guild of America, Keel got his start by writing material for comedian Merv Griffin on partially scripted game show *Play Your Hunch*. Produced by Goodson and Todman Productions, it primarily ran on the NBC network between 1958 and 1962. Griffin presented all but the final year of the couples' game show, where Keel was the Head Writer, a role he described on a resumé as "wrote special material for many performers".¹

The better part of three years on *Play Your Hunch* led to further television writing work, including for children's shows such as *Mack and Myer for Hire* and *The Chuck McCann Show*. Airing between 1963 and 1964, *Mack and Myer for Hire* was a sitcom produced by Sandy Howard Productions for Trans-Lux Television. It starred Mickey Deems (*Three's Company*, *Get Smart*) as Mack and Joey Faye (Phil Silvers's one-time Broadway comedy

You won't find many of Keel's Hollywood credits in IMDb

partner) as Myer, a pair of bumbling handymen who travel from job to job on a motorcycle and sidecar, causing havoc. Each episode ran for about 12 minutes (designed to be featured within longer Saturday morning variety shows) and over 100 instalments were produced. Keel functioned again as Head Writer, as well as Associate Producer, on the show, describing the stories as "slapstick comedies". For some episodes, Keel adopted crazy pseudonyms (presumably to hide the fact that he was writing so many of them), including the delightful 'Darwin Fudwopple' and the telling 'Fillmore Zilch'.

During 1964, Keel also wrote a television pilot for a proposed series called *The Keystone Kops*, modelled after the old Keystone silent comedies and drawing upon his *Mack and Myer* slapstick

experience. Keel also wrote skits for *Candid Camera* and drafted the text for a children's record about the history of manned flight (according to his friend Doug Skinner, Keel was "a lifelong aviation buff").

Keel even developed several story pitches for (of all things) the biggest animated show on American television prior to *The Simpsons*, *The Flintstones* (1960-1966). The show was a rarity in the 1960s, a primetime animated comedy series about the adventures of a Stone Age family. Along with a sample script from *Mack and Myer for Hire* (#64), Keel submitted five story outlines to *The Flintstones'* producers, animation house Hanna Barbera, in the Fall of 1965. 'Bad Day at Black Rock' was modelled after a Western, complete with a mysterious stranger arriving in town hunting for Fred Flintstone, while 'Pop Art' saw Fred take up painting, becoming a Beatnik figure. Keel attempted to introduce computerisation to *The Flintstones'* prehistoric world in 'Automation', while 'Wilma, Stage Mother' was a behind-the-scenes Hollywood exposé in which Wilma attempts to make a movie star of Pebbles. Perhaps the most interesting (given Keel's later obsessions) was 'Walk in Space', which saw Fred and Barney test-driving an amusement ride that simulates being a pilot – only they actually end up in orbit. He resisted the urge to include flying saucers or aliens, but it must have been difficult. All his story outlines were rejected.²

Keel had a particularly productive period in 1965, but many of the ideas he proposed failed to take off. These included an animated series called *Snooper Scope*, about a detective and his trio of sidekicks who set out to thwart the schemes of the evil 'Disc Spicable' who is out to steal the world's water. Written for Copri Films, a company that



dubbed and distributed Japanese animation in the US, this was possibly a script to be used on a repurposed pre-existing Japanese property. He also drafted a pilot episode script for a German TV series called *The Outer Space Explorers*. Projects that did pay off during this period include scripts for *The Clay Cole Show* and a game show pilot, *Face the Music*, with Sammy Kaye.

One of Keel's more ambitious projects at this time was a proposed horror movie titled *World of the Living Dead*, drafted for Goodwill Productions Inc. This might have been a proposed remake of the 1932 Bela Lugosi classic *White Zombie*, but little is known about it – the title certainly anticipates the influential 1968 George Romero film, *Night of the Living Dead*. One film proposal where Keel's outline survives is *The Nudist from Outer Space*, an attempt to jump on the nudie-cutie cheapo film bandwagon. The outline featured a canoodling couple harassed by four nude female aliens who emerge from a "strange ball of light" that has descended in the forest. Keel described what transpires as being in the manner of a "bedroom farce" crossed with *The Twilight Zone*, in which the nudist aliens are in pursuit of a fugitive from their own world. Amazingly, there were no buyers for this masterwork.³

Although Keel was reputed to have written for both *Get Smart* (1965-1970) and *The Monkees* (1966-1968), none of the credits reads like a Keel pen-name; perhaps these were rejected storylines rather than finished scripts. The closest his work came to the screen in a dramatic series in the 1960s was through his involvement with *Lost in Space*.

Recently rebooted by Netflix, *Lost in Space* (1965-1968) lasted three seasons (a total of 83 episodes), beginning in black and white with fairly serious dramatic storylines before concluding in lurid colour and with pantomime monsters like the 'carrot-man' (from penultimate episode 'The Great Vegetable Rebellion'). Keel, a science fiction fan from his youth, decided to have a go at



drafting a *Lost in Space* storyline during the show's early episodes.

His notes begin with a handwritten list of the series's regular characters, and a notation of some of the gadgets used by the crew of the *Jupiter 2* spaceship, and the name of their 'space pet', Bloop. His outline is entitled 'Circle of Time' and concerns the arrival of a 'space jelly'-like creature from a group of meteors that crash onto the planet where the 'Space Family Robinson' are stranded. It's not a bad attempt, notably better than some episodes that actually made it into production, and features young Will Robinson trapped in a different 'time track' to the rest of the family, which leads to the haunting vision of him returning to an aged and derelict *Jupiter 2* with the rest of his family long gone.⁴ There's no indication among Keel's extant papers as to why the storyline was rejected (or if it was even submitted), but later episodes of *Lost in Space* echo some of Keel's story suggestions. In the third season instalment 'Flight

into the Future', Will Robinson and Dr Smith fall asleep only to reawaken 270 years into the future, where they meet their own descendants. A late first season episode, 'The Space Croppers', features another future descendant of Dr Smith, a werewolf creature curiously called 'Keel'. If it was sent in, his story may have been rejected due to the rather adult emotions faced by young Will Robinson finding himself trapped in the future and mourning the rest of his family, or perhaps because Keel's characterisation of the ever-cowardly Dr Smith was somewhat 'off-model'.

As the 1960s wore on, Keel was growing ever more unhappy with the television business. In a January 1966 letter to Senator Robert Kennedy, Keel complained of having worked "in the wasteland of television".⁵ Keel's failures in Hollywood led to a period of introspection. In a 1967 letter to Jerome Clark, Keel lamented his time spent in television and the path down which it had led him. "A few years back, while wallowing in television, I decided to enter psychotherapy," he writes. "In those days, I found myself making daily compromises with my cumbersome ideals and it was tearing my soul out... [Therapy] enabled me to kick the TV business and return to more worthwhile, though less profitable, pursuits."⁶

Much later, Keel had a beef with creator Chris Carter over the 1990s incarnation of *The X-Files* that he felt was trading

LEFT: Keel spent his early years in Hollywood writing for children's programmes like *The Chuck McCann Show* and as Head Writer on the game show *Play Your Hunch*.

on material he'd made famous. A 1997 episode made direct reference to Keel's Mothman. "They stole a lot of stuff," Keel told the *Daily Sentinel* in 2003. The then 72-year-old Keel held a grudge, but as ever was quite willing to write about forteen matters – for a pay cheque. "They had the audacity to write to me, and see if I had any more material. Screw them... If they wanted me to write an *X-Files*, I'd do it for the usual fee!"⁷

John Keel died in 2009, aged 79. His writing and his reputation as a chronicler of high strangeness live on, but he may not be remembered in the way he had hoped. "Nobody is an authority on UFOs," he said in a 1985 interview. "I expect to be remembered as an author and playwright, if I am remembered at all." Perhaps in that statement there lies a clue to the truth behind the fusion of Keel's screenwriting experiences and his later forteen works: he simply knew how to tell a good story.⁸

For much more on John Keel and his wayward life, you can do no better than to consult his friend Doug Skinner's *John Keel: Not an Authority on Anything* blog at <http://www.johnkeel.com/>. See also FT253:38-42.

NOTES

- 1 John A Keel resumé, 1965, www.johnkeel.com/?p=286
- 2 www.johnkeel.com/?p=1161.
- 3 www.johnkeel.com/?p=1958.
- 4 <http://www.johnkeel.com/?p=1641>; www.johnkeel.com/?p=1651.
- 5 Letter to Senator Robert Kennedy, 19 Jan 1966, www.johnkeel.com/?p=1579.
- 6 Letter to Jerome Clark, 16 Mar 1967, www.johnkeel.com/?p=2749.
- 7 *Daily Sentinel*, 31 Jan 2003, p21.
- 8 *Shavertron* #22, Mar 1985.

◆ **BRIAN J ROBB** is a regular FT contributor and author of *Counterfeit Worlds: Philip K Dick on Film and Timeless Adventures: How Doctor Who Conquered TV*.

THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE PRESENTS

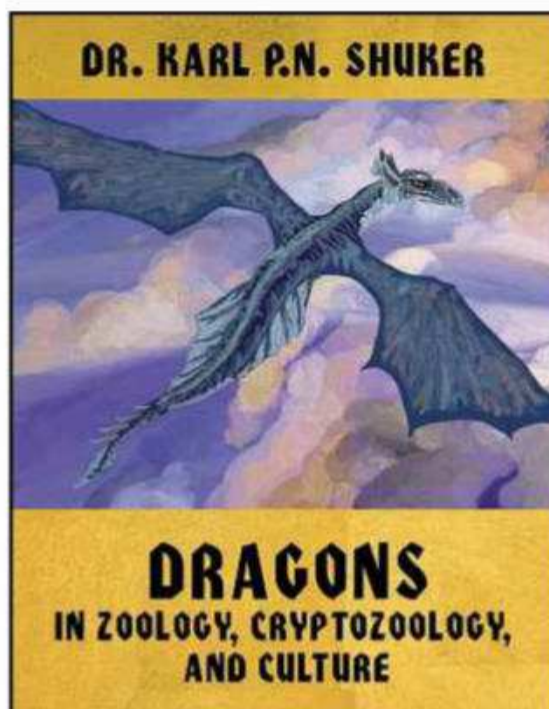
BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

37. NEVER LAUGH AT A LIVE DRAGON

Out here in the West, we might be forgiven for not realising dragons and unicorns have something in common. Dragons are fearsome, scaly, flying things that are generally in a bad temper and breathe flames all over the place. Unicorns are mild and meek and gentle creatures, unless provoked. But both have a fondness for virgins of the female persuasion. Unicorns will lie down docilely (and chastely) with them, and go to sleep. Dragons, on the other hand, like to chain comely maidens to rocks and, in due course, eat them – without, it seems, benefit of either anaesthetic or barbecuing, although the latter would surely cause them no difficulty, and maybe improve the flavour. The other thing that dragons and unicorns have in common is that for centuries people have believed they are not ‘mythical’ creatures, but living, breathing, actual animals. This, as we’ve argued before, gives them a fair claim to reality, not least because people have *behaved* as if they’re real. And all other things aside, that makes them interesting, liminal, quintessentially fortean creatures. Now, go back to our opening sentence. The dragon as we tend to think of it today hardly exhausts its manifold manifestations – even in the West. Unlike unicorns, dragons have evolved morphologically down the ages and have, or have had, habitats just about anywhere you can think of, except maybe Antarctica. So now read on...

In *Dragons in Zoology, Cryptozoology, and Culture*, Karl Shuker, of this parish, has produced the most comprehensive and concise account of dragons ever to see daylight. Better yet, it consumes less than 200 pages of main text and is brilliantly illustrated throughout. It could have been 2,000 pages, so densely packed with information is it. Encapsulated, here, is pretty much everything you need to know about dragons, and a comprehensive reading list for those who want to track down more detail.

What becomes clear very early on is that there is no one, definitive dragon. These are deeply ambiguous creatures. Even in Wales, where it’s difficult to escape the national emblem (red, winged, quadruped, and ubiquitous) – so difficult indeed that the visitor may start to wish they’d chosen an earwig or a snail or a sheep instead: it would be so easy to forget a sheep, as Jorge Luis Borges once said of a tiger – the dragon question is unresolved. Go to the mostly sleepy market town of Newcastle Emlyn, and in the grounds of the castle ruins, strategically set on a sharp bend in the River Teifi, you can read about the demise of the last dragon in Wales. (Shuker tells a slightly different version from what follows.) Sometime in the long-distant past, the townsfolk were having fun at a fair when an enormous *green* dragon – or actually wyvern, the two-legged variety – landed atop the castle and lay down for a



snooze. This did not reassure the citizens, however, and one brave youth – some say he was a soldier – spread a large red shawl on the river. The wyvern awoke, spotted the shawl and flew down to grab or perhaps attack it, whereupon the youth, lurking nearby, speared the beast. It writhed and thrashed in its death throes, its venomous blood poisoning the river, but was soon washed away. This, Emlynites boast, was the last dragon in Wales. The legend is possibly a metaphorical (and somewhat garbled) rendering of the brief occupation of the town in 1403 by Owain Glyndwr, who

had raised his *gold*-bewyverned standard against English rule. It seems fair to have doubts about this, given that the Welsh national dragon is red, and a quadruped. And why would the Welsh celebrate the downfall of the last of their very own power animals, even if it was green? All very strange.

Shuker could have called his book *1,001 Facts About Dragons You Never Heard Before*, although one doubts he’s kicking himself for not going with that one. We had noted, for instance, that occidental dragons are generally seen as malevolent whereas oriental ones are regarded as objects of respect and veneration, benign by default, and becoming churlish only when provoked or ignored. We hadn’t – consciously at least – noticed previously that in the legends Western dragons have a tendency to die various painful species of death for their sundry annoyances, and this aspect of the tales may well have been designed to explain why we don’t see them around much anymore. Among the final solutions to the dragon problem have been such excruciating methods as stuffing a calf’s skin with quicklime and putting it in the way of the gullible (and anyway, greedy) creature, with a devastating consequence.

If dragons often have grim endings, they may also have peculiar beginnings. Consider the unsurprisingly rather rare cockatrice. This came into existence only if “a round leathery shell-less egg laid by a seven-year-old cockerel when the dog star Sirius was in the ascendant was hatched by a toad in a dung heap.” This seems to be another of those folkloric tricks to account for why you don’t run into a cockatrice very often, if at all. Should you be so unfortunate, you would see a “truly grotesque type of wyvern-like dragon” with “a pair of large bat-like wings, a long coiled tail... and a single pair of sturdy rooster-like legs... it also sported a coxcomb on its head, a pair of pendulous facial wattles, a pointed horny beak... and even the ability to crow like a farmyard rooster too.” If you don’t want to be hassled by a one of these, keep a weasel and some rue in the voluminous pockets of your poacher’s jacket wherever you go, and the thing will leg it. One of these horrors apparently harassed the Cumbrian

village of Renwick in 1733. Local hero John Tallantine, lacking the requisite weasel, did the pragmatic thing and lanced the creature dead with a sharpened rowan branch. These monsters also hang about in places as far apart as North Africa, Iceland, and Korea, where in keeping with oriental tradition it gently hauls the chariots of legendary heroes “or those of their parents”. How did these weird creatures, clearly imaginative products, arise in places so distant from one another? Shuker doesn’t say, or even speculate.

At least the cockatrice had but one head. Dragons’ heads may number anything from two to perhaps a dozen. Others besides this weird bird-thing have rather un-dragonish visages – some resemble cats, some humans; the bunyip looks rather like a walrus, or perhaps some ill-bred dog. The piasa of Illinois had the face of a bloke, complete with beard. It also sported antlers. As did the wakandagi, water dragon of the Missouri River. Meanwhile, in deep caverns and hollows in the Ozarks lived a tusked dragon, the web-footed gowrow. These creatures “hatched from eggs the size of beer barrels, and were initially carried by their mothers in a pouch – the world’s only marsupial dragon?” Albania, Armenia and Lakes Ainslie and Utopia in eastern Canada all have, or had, unicorn dragons (didn’t we say there was a connection?). And just to be extra tricky, there are dragons that walk up and down in the Earth looking like humans (among other things) much of the time. While we’re used to wyverns and the ‘classical’, quadruped fire-breather of Western folklore and heraldry, it’s apparent that what you think a dragon looks like depends heavily on where you grow up.

In the Far East, what you see as a dragon will tell you both how old it is, and where its interest lies; or, to put it another way, what it symbolises or portends. Oriental dragons take 3,000 years to grow up. Starting life as a water snake, they grow a carp-like head in five centuries or so. Over another 1,000 years they acquire scales, four legs, a long tail, and a bearded face. Half a millennium on, and they’ve grown horns, through which they hear. After a further 1,000 years, a rare few have sprouted wings. As for the significance of their colour, Shuker tells us: “Oriental dragons existed in every conceivable colour and size, and their specific roles could be determined simply by observing their precise coloration. For instance, a yellow dragon normally brought good fortune, whereas an azure blue dragon heralded the coming of spring and also (at other times of the year) the forthcoming birth of a very important person, and



LEFT: A detail of the Nine Dragon Screen in the Forbidden City, Beijing. BELOW: A Welsh dragon.

animals, otherwise known as cryptids. It does occur to one to ask, on occasion, that just as no one has reliably caught or photographed a dragon, which are patently the product of the imagination, why exactly should such perennially elusive creatures not be equally so? Aspects of Western materialism do irritate from time to time, especially among fortune tellers, who are supposed to know better.

More interesting to this weary soul are Shuker’s discussions of dragons in alchemy, astronomy, heraldry, *feng shui*, tattoos, and arts of all kinds, times and places. In his survey of dragons in fiction, he reveals that there is even a Marxist dragon, one Felameezar-aziz-Sulmonmee, who appears in Alan Dean Foster’s *Spellsinger* series. One looks forward to the dragon jazz fan and the one who paints portraits on black velvet. One small quibble with this section: Ursula le Guin’s *Earthsea Trilogy* is mentioned as a children’s book, and Shuker doesn’t mention her dragons’ most endearing feature, which is that they tell fibs, somewhat after the manner of leprechauns, partly *fer the craic*.

Another tale Shuker doesn’t relate (granted it may be apocryphal) relates to the first performance of Wagner’s opera *Siegfried* at Bayreuth in 1876. In this appeared the dragon Fafnir, which had to be constructed in two parts (cf. the pantomime horse). One half turned up in due time for rehearsals. The other did not. Anxious enquiries revealed that some innocent had misheard ‘Beirut’ for ‘Bayreuth’, and there dispatched it. But fortune smiled, and Fafnir’s other half, so to speak, did arrive in good time for the first performance.

Shuker’s catalogues of dragons in films and fiction and so on are just that, and consequently read rather dully, and inevitably will become dated. They deserve revisiting and expanding by someone with the requisite critical skills. Nonetheless, they have value as expanders of the eternally growing reading list. And one has met people who say they won’t read a book, any book, if it doesn’t have a dragon in it.

Shuker ends with speculations on why the dragon appears in (it seems) all human cultures. Probably the weakest part of the book, we pass over it in silence. This is nonetheless a brilliant, compact compilation of dragon stuff, and should be on your bookshelf.

Karl PN Shuker, *Dragons in Zoology, Cryptozoology, and Culture*, Coachwhip Publications, 2013

“BOOKS ARE
A UNIQUELY
PORTABLE
MAGIC.”

Stephen King



a black dragon signified impending destruction... Indeed, analysing ancient Chinese texts, linguist Michael Carr discovered over 100 different dragon types, each with its own specific name, form, and role.” With such remarks, here one would have liked a few more pages, or at least a table, especially as Carr’s study doesn’t appear in the bibliography (long as that already is).

Having given an exhaustive account of the world’s dragons, their appearance, habitat, diet, and so on, Shuker turns to the way we see or might see dragons. This doesn’t involve esoteric means of conjuring them up, but speculations on what actual known animals may have inspired dragon stories, not all of which, to our jaded self, seem terribly plausible. This is nonetheless a necessary exercise if one is to cover all the bases; and, to be fair, he does feature some entertaining fake dragons, including a recipe for making what was known as a Jenny Haniver (although why so-named, we don’t find out). Shuker also explores the possible relationships between various as-yet uncaptured and unphotographed

FREE **ForteanTimes** EXCLUSIVE MUG

when you subscribe

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

Your Phenomenal Offer

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



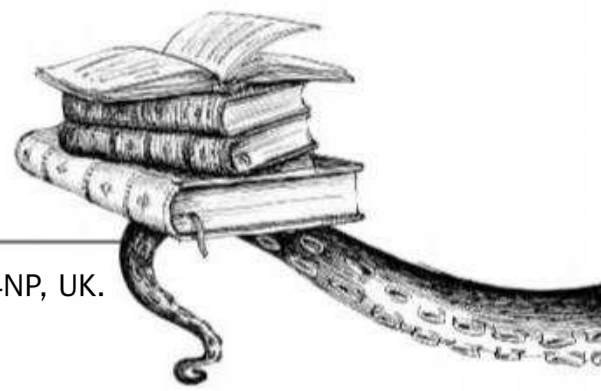
YOURS FREE!

SUBSCRIBE TO ForteanTimes TODAY!

Call +44(0)330 333 9492

Or visit dennismags.co.uk/forteanimes

QUOTING OFFER CODE **P1705P**



No more waiting for the barbarians

This study of DNA – in which almost everything is counter-intuitive and nettles are firmly grasped – asks whether you can be a barbarian if you're more sophisticated than the people you are replacing

Who We Are and How We Got Here

Ancient DNA and The New Science of the Human Past

David Reich

Oxford University Press 2018

Hb, 335pp, illus, £20.00, ISBN 9780198821250

“Now what’s going to happen to us without barbarians? Those people were a kind of solution”.

Cavafy’s second-most popular poem (after ‘Ithaca’, of course) is ‘Waiting for the Barbarians’, where an effete, tired but splendidly bejewelled urban(e) people look out and beyond for an external solution; alas, vainly in the poem. Did Reich have this in mind when on page 128 he writes “We geneticists may be the barbarians coming late to the study of the human past but it is always a bad idea to ignore barbarians”? So correct; as history teaches us time and again, a lack of response is often fatal for people and their established culture and ideas.

He rightly and justifiably compares the genome work of the last half decade to carbon-14 dating in terms of its radical and revolutionary importance to the correct understanding of human prehistory/history. He stresses that genome work has only really started and its initial, but fairly substantial, results and their interpretations certainly will be refined and possibly superseded. Indeed, 70 years on, almost no original 14C dates are used, for as the technique and underlying theory have become more sophisticated and are combined with dendrochronology, so the numbers have been corrected. It will be the same here and some, perhaps more than some, of the speculation and interpretation of

the data expounded in this tome, will be shown to be of its time, and premature. However, nothing will ever remove the importance of Reich and his team’s work, or of this book. It is too early to tell how far its influence will reach, certainly beyond archæology, or, if it is to become one of the most important books of the early 21st century, but the odds are good.

In popular archæology slight new discoveries ‘rewriting history’ appear seemingly monthly, but Reich’s work based on the ever mutating (at a fixed rate, so recording a ‘genome half-life’) combinations of just four letters T G C A replaces much learned history/archæology. ‘Known’, established facts, one by one, are shown to have been misinterpreted or wrong. Just as the Beaker People in Britain (data from skeletons within their ‘well-furnished’ bling-filled graves) in the Chalcolithic/EBA almost totally swept aside (90 per cent replacement) the indigenous Neolithic population (who may well have only just laid down their stone tools after completing the first monumental Stonehenge) so archæological cultural certainties of the second half of 20th century are shown to be shibboleths (and rapidly are being abandoned... so bye-bye The Beaker Package and exclusive diffusionism and welcome back, Beaker Folks.)

In the first four chapters Reich explains the genome and discusses our ‘deep genome’. This records the interactions between *Homo sapiens sapiens* and *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens denisova* (Denisovans) and then the later inter-couplings between Humanity’s Ghosts and modern humans. These are just a warm-up, but a pretty intensive one, before the

“Established facts, one by one, are shown to have been misinterpreted or wrong”

main ‘historical’ chapters.

A Byzantine question: can you be a barbarian if you are (materially or scientifically) culturally more sophisticated than those you replace? This could well be a sub-text to chapters ‘The collision that formed India’ and ‘In search of Native American Ancestors’, and helps explain the difficulties encountered in collecting data from Indians and then interpreting and expressing/publishing/co-publishing the results. Similarly, it seems that rediscovering a West African tribal identity for most African Americans is a pipe dream and should be ‘Root’ed out. The problem is that genome data hack at the foundations of present day belief and pride in ‘the ancient origin’ for national and group identities. The genome make-up of present-day populations in modern nations has little correspondence with that of their earlier peoples. Manifestly there is no Promised Land – our ancestors have not ‘always’ lived here.

Almost everything in the book seems counter-intuitive. Three random but not atypical examples: present day ‘Eskimos’ are genetically closer to modern Frenchmen than to their present day neighbours in Siberia; South Sea Islanders are linked to Taiwan as well as PNG (The Genomic origins of East

Asians); after the initial exodus from Africa there has been a backwash of new returnees as evidenced by genome and linguistic work (‘Rejoining Africa to the Human story’). The combination of Reich’s work and linguistics (especially words for parts of ancient wheeled vehicles) appears to be more powerful in plotting mass movements than classifying changing styles in material culture (‘The making of modern Europe’).

Of course, this oversimplifies Reich’s ‘historical’ work and this part of the book needs to be read slowly and then re-read, clinging to the essential lifelines given by the maps and timelines that initiate each chapter.

Reich’s last three chapters should be the world-changing ones. He discusses what the genome tells us about sexual politics (‘The genomics of inequality’): powerful men mate with subordinate women, many subordinate women. Chinggis (Genghis) Khan is said to have had 1,000–2,000 children and in areas of the old Mongol

Empire his direct decedents make up eight per cent of men. How did he find time to create one of the world’s most extensive empires?

Reich critically discusses the value of personal ancestry testing (‘The genomes of race and identity’), noting there are too few data for this to be worthwhile buying (yet). He has not had his own genome read, “Ashkenazi Jews are already over-studied” (p271). He is at his boldest when discussing the presence, importance and future significance of (the small)



Continued on next page

Spectral fields

A year's worth of music and films to accompany your haunted landscapes

A Year In The Country

Wandering Through Spectral Fields: Journeys in Otherly Pastoralism, the Further Reaches of Folk and the Parallel Worlds of Hauntology

Stephen Prince

A Year In The Country 2018

Pb, 335pp, £15.95, ISBN 9780957400726

First, some advice. When you start to read *A Year In The Country*, open your favourite music and film purchasing websites, and get ready to pause regularly to track down obscure movies and albums.

It feels timely for *A Year In The Country* to come out now. A quick glance back at the letters pages following Bob Fischer's recent 'The Haunted Generation' article in this very magazine shows the appetite for folk, folk horror and hauntology.

The book has the subtitle 'Wandering Through Spectral Fields' and is a collection of 52 essays (one for every week of the year), drawn from the website of the same name, covering everything from *Bagpuss* to *Berberian Sound Studio*, *Ghost Box Records* to *Vashti Bunyan*, *Queens of Evil* to *Quatermass*.

As Prince says in his introduction to the book, the chapters can be read in order, or as standalone essays. They could also be read one a week over the year to tie into the rhythms of the seasons.

There is a sensitivity here, and Prince has a talent for teasing out details. For example, he draws parallels between the current trend of people being priced out of areas like London, and the post mediæval Inclosure Acts, and how this has been done through the removal of legislation rather than new laws.

He also talks about the "inclosure of creativity". These are interesting ways of framing a wider debate and probably deserving of a book on their own.

The strength of Prince's writing, and the connections he makes, is that he treats hauntology as a cultural ecofact rather than an academic category. It's something to be recognised within music and films rather than used to box them in. As a result I've discovered a lot of new films I want to go and watch, such as *Butter on the Latch* and *No Blade of Grass*.

It's also good to see familiar friends like *Folk Horror Revival* and *Tales From The Black Meadow* mentioned.



He also talks about mini sub-genres a lot (such as trance film, pastoral fantasy, and pastoral science fiction), that

reminded me of something the author China Miéville said about inventing new genres as a creative, rather than proscriptive, act.

At some points there is a slight repetition (acknowledged by Prince as deliberate to allow the reader to dive in at any point), and at first the lack of illustrations seems as if it could weaken the text. The author has come up with a creative way around this. Instead of including photos and line drawings in the book, he is placing them on the *A Year In The Country* website, giving each chapter its own post, so the images can be viewed while reading the text without making the book the size of an abandoned electricity pylon.

A Year In The Country is an excellent introduction to hauntology and related subjects, particularly as it guides the reader through some of the more obscure fields.

Steve Toase

★★★★★

Continued from previous page

genetic differences between populations (races). This he does clearly, rationally and with more (academic) honesty than many in his field. Very firm nettle grasping, probably leading to rash misinterpretations from others.

'Melting Pot' by Blue Mink in the late 60s was a plea for a racial/genetic mixing/harmonising (it is a great song). Reich's work shows that the 'great big melting pot' has been bubbling for tens of millennia, sometimes spilling over and losing content, but always churning.

This book is disturbing but ultimately liberating. We are all genetic mongrels, more Scruffs than Crufts (even within the purer pedigrees of the Sub-Saharan San and Andaman Islanders) with many in Eurasia hoarding bits/traces of the Mongol Hordes; Neanderthals; Siberian Denisovans; Ancient Hunter Gatherers; Anatolian and Iranian Farmers; Indo-European-be-spoked, be-wheeled, out-Steppe-ing pastoralists and so, so, many more.

It's what makes us, ever unsettled, forever moving. It's in our nature, it's in our (spliced and diced) genes. Reich shows, globally.... we are all Barbarians.

Rob Ixer

★★★★★

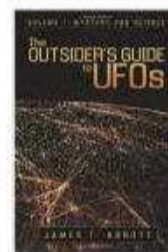
The Outsider's Guide to UFOs

Volume 1: Mystery and Science

James T Abbott

Archway Publishing 2017

Pb, 354pp, gloss, bib, ind, \$22.99, ISBN 9781480854550



James Abbott regards himself as a dispassionate, open-minded 'outsider' who has never met a ufologist, never been a member of a UFO group and never seen a UFO. Nonetheless the subject has always fascinated him and he gives us this view of the UFO evidence from his outsider's perspective.

Abbott tackles the UFO phenomenon in three parts. The first looks at the history of sightings from the phantom airships to classic cases of the 1950s and 1960s and includes a survey of the major government investigations conducted by the US, France and the UK since

1947. Part 2 deals with sightings made by pilots and police, mass sightings and landing cases. Part 3 considers the issue of disclosure and the science of UFOs.

For the sake of clarity, Abbott concentrates mainly on UFO sightings rather than on alien abductions and the more esoteric realms of ufology. As we might expect from an expert who has worked in the aerospace sector, he presents the case in a very clear and organised manner.

Yet the major flaw of this work is that Abbott is very literal-minded and offers us a book that seems to go back in time to the nuts and bolts ufology of the 1960s.

As an outsider he seems to lean heavily on books by mainstream ufologists like Hynek, Keyhoe, Friedman and Pope. He is aware of works by Klass and *FT*'s own David Clarke but does not agree with their sceptical viewpoints and explanations.

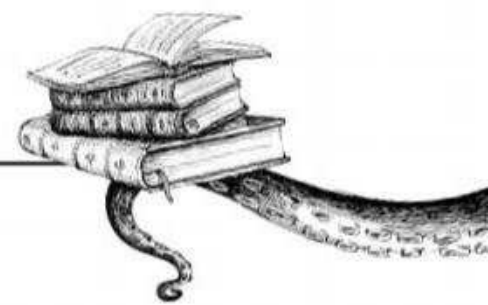
He references a few websites but does not seem to have ever looked at a UFO journal or

magazine – if so he might not have noted in regard to 19th century sightings: "...no one has convincingly connected HG Wells and people seeing things in the sky in Edwardian times, surely the things they would see would be objects shaped like artillery shells, not the massive, lighted airships which were reported."

I will point him to Jules Verne's 'Clipper of the Clouds' published in 1886 and translated into English the next year that does feature a "massive lighted airship", and numerous authors have written about the links between SF and UFO reports. I suppose his get-out clause is whether they do this 'convincingly' or not!

When he reviews specific cases he sees them through the distorted lens of UFO books that are there to please the believers – they are not textbooks. His review of the Rendlesham case is a good example of his sanitised version of events, and underlines the fault with his and most UFO books – they do not look at the wider psycho-sociological or political context of these stories.

At the end Abbott thinks there is a core body of reports that are worthy of proper scientific



investigation. Well knock me down with a tractor beam, that is certainly THE ANSWER we insiders have all been waiting for, and we should all celebrate the arrival of an outsider to enlighten us!

Pardon my sarcasm but I've heard the call to (hard) science since the 1970s, and if Abbott thinks a UAP research body funded to the tune of \$60m a year would solve the UFO anomaly, he is deluded.

Nigel Watson

★★★★★

The Dragon

Fear and Power

Martin Arnold

Reaktion Books 2018

Hb, 328pp, illus, bib, ind, £18.00, ISBN 9781780238975

In one form or another, dragons feature in the literature and mythology of cultures around the world. They're enduringly popular and freighted with powerful symbolism, standing both for the power of nature and for the vices and failings of humanity. In *The Dragon*, Martin Arnold surveys the role of dragons in European and Chinese mythology and literature, ending with a look at dragons in modern popular culture.

The Dragon offers a wide-ranging tour of dragons in different cultures, including readable summaries of a range of different myths. Using these examples, Arnold paints a picture of dragons as symbols that embody different concepts. In classical and pre-Christian European sources, they represented the chaotic powers of primal nature, while in mediæval art they came to stand for vices like greed. In Chinese dragon lore, a similar connection to the power of nature could be politicised and tamed, roped into service to the ideal of imperial authority.

Finally, Arnold looks at the changing role of dragons in modern literature, from the nursery dragons of children's fiction through Tolkien and McCaffrey to *Game of Thrones*. This section traces the developing ideas of dragons as creatures with a connection to humans and of dragons as a

representation of power. *Game of Thrones*'s dragons-as-WMDs metaphor represents a new set of anxieties in a society less



concerned about being at the mercy of nature and more concerned about its own capacity for destruction.



Arnold writes in an engaging and vivid style, giving *The Dragon* the tone of an erudite conversation rather than an academic work. Relatedly, it also includes some moments of strange speculation and demonstrates more authority in some areas of

mythology than others. Arnold is also sometimes given to interpreting any vaguely lizard- or snake-like monster as a dragon, but this is a minor point in an entertaining and well-written text. Visually, *The Dragon* is impressive, with over 80 colour illustrations featuring dragons from a wide range of different manuscripts and artistic sources. Although much of the material in this book will be familiar to a dedicated student of folklore and mythology, *The Dragon* is nonetheless a wide-ranging, assured and entertaining survey of a legend that has continuing appeal.

James Holloway

★★★★★

Neurotheology

How Science Can Enlighten Us About Spirituality

Andrew Newberg

Columbia University Press 2018

Hb, 320pp, ISBN 9780231179041

There are observable links between brain activity and spiritual practice. Indeed studies suggest that people who regularly meditate have larger brains than those who do not. But does this show that religion lies within and is a product of the brain and, that like weightlifters building muscle, brain-builders can add bulk to their grey matter through such practices as meditation?

Or, to take the related questions further, is consciousness solely a result of brain activity, or is the brain merely the conduit for a far wider awareness? Put another way, are we creatures of mind, body and spirit – or simply mind and body?

These questions are at the

heart of an emerging science, 'Neurotheology', and in his synonymous book Andrew Newberg reviews the limited research that has been conducted to date and projects ahead to what might be possible.

Much has been discovered about the workings of the human brain, but such is the mystery and complexity of the organ that, in all probability, only a fraction of what there is to know is currently known.

Much, it is believed, is known about God, from scripture, revelation and religious practice, but such is the enormity of the idea of God that this knowledge too is just the smallest fraction of the unfathomable whole.

In bringing together the modern study of the brain and nervous system, neurology, and the ancient discipline of theology to create neurotheology – Andrew Newberg hopes that our understanding of both God and the brain will be expanded.

Newberg's own background is rooted in science. He is a medical doctor and heads a research institute linked to an American university hospital. The research he cites in his book includes experiments involving brain-scans of people involved in religious practice and the administration of drugs. What he lacks in his background is theological training and a real understanding of deep spirituality. The book's weakness is that neurotheology, being such a young discipline, as yet has no answers to offer to some intriguing and monumental questions. The book's strength is that it is admirably sane, with no hint of the wackiness that can so often accompany works claiming to 'know' what is at the root of spiritual experience.

The problems of interpreting experimental findings is illustrated by the story of the nun and atheist. A nun agreed to undergo a brain-scan while at prayer. On seeing the results, she said how meaningful it was to her to see the changes in her brain that occurred. It supported her belief in the importance of prayer. A while later an atheist reviewed the same results and concluded with satisfaction that they demonstrated how religion was nothing more than brain

activity.

Dr Newberg is well aware of the problems involved in combining two subjects with very different methodologies. As a science, neurology relies on observation and controlled experimentation. Theology interprets subjective experience within the framework of a belief system. Neurotheology, Newberg argues, must be open to all possibilities and should it be shown beyond doubt that religion and spirituality are nothing more than the manifestation of brain activity, then that conclusion must be accepted. Similarly if the opposite is found, the neurotheologian must be open-minded. An admirably fortean sentiment.

Ted Harrison

★★★★★

Artificial Intelligence

Everything You Need to Know About the Coming AI. A Ladybird Expert Book

Michael Wooldridge

Michael Joseph 2018

Hb, 53pp, illus, £7.99, ISBN 9780718188757

There is not a spare word in this tiny book; a few more pages would have given more room to breathe. However, to cover artificial intelligence – AI – succinctly in so few pages is a wonder, and kudos to Michael Wooldridge, the head of the Department of Computer Science at Oxford, for pulling it off.

Praise, also, to Stephen Player for his Ladybird-with-a-twist illustrations: the Man in his Chinese Room is crammed into a too-small room like a beetle-browed Alice in Wonderland.

Wooldridge starts with a survey of where we are with AI (answer: nowhere near where SF would have us believe) before sketching the leading lights – Alan Turing, John Searle, Marvin Minsky and the rest – and explaining concepts such as combinatorial explosion, heuristics, and the Travelling Salesman Problem in very few words. Seriously impressive.

William Darragh

★★★★★



Black cats in the shadows

Sightings of black panthers are commonplace in Texas, even if many are misidentified moggies, and this intriguing book covers them in detail

Shadow Cats

The Black Panthers of North America

Michael Mayes

Anomalist Books 2018

Pb, 250pp, \$19.95, ISBN 9781938398902

First things first: this is really a book about black panthers of Texas, despite a subtitle that indicates a wider scope. The book includes a short chapter on folkloric panther accounts but is mainly devoted to modern incidents and photographs, many of them sent in to Mayes at his *Texas Cryptid Hunter* blog. As a citizen of the Southeast, I can testify that stories of black panthers sightings are just as commonplace here as they are closer to the Mexican border.

Having said that, this is an intriguing book. Though modest in scope, it is detailed in the particulars. The author is, by his own admission, an enthusiastic and enlightened cryptozoologist, a history teacher by day rather than a trained expert. He brings out the expected suspects: giant feral cats, escaped exotics, the jaguar, the humble ferret-like jagarundi. He delves into the science of melanism to determine just how common melanistic (i.e., black) jaguars are in the Southwest portion of North America today. He speculates that the mixed deciduous forests of the American South may serve as habitat for large cats, and he notes that the majority of Texas sightings occur in areas that receive the most rainfall. He asks six experts in the zoology field whether there may be black panthers in North America.

Yet the question remains: why are humans so intent



on seeing these animals as black? Why does the black cat have such a fascination for the human mind? Any psychiatry student will automatically wonder if there is any connection to the Jungian “shadow” that lurks in human consciousness, perhaps also inspiring sightings

of human ghosts. The author’s emphasis on misidentification is perhaps a little forgiving, downplaying the possibility that many of America’s big

cat encounters have been the products of hallucination, tall tale-telling, or flat-out lies. The author also emphasises photographic evidence. Nothing is wrong with this, but I wouldn’t have minded if the author had spent more time on audio encounters. YouTube is full of recordings of supposed cougar cries that usually turn out to be nothing more than fox calls. No doubt such misidentified calls have fuelled the imagination over the years and contributed to ‘panther’ lore. Mayes does discuss the supposed ‘woman-like’ cry of the cougar, differentiating it from the sounds of the jaguar. But he makes no mention of the fact that the high-pitched fox is often mistaken for the cat. For that matter, the turkey is capable of making some strange calls, as are other birds. The catbird is one that could easily be mistaken for a cat in the darkness by hunters and wanderers.

Even as the book makes for an intriguing read, it is also a little frustrating in its inconclusiveness, as is any book that attempts to bring science into the realm of hearsay. Chasing the shadows of folklore is frequently a maddening pursuit, and the

most maddening chapter here comes late in the book, in a chapter called ‘The Texas Hair Samples’. A reader sends Mayes an account of hitting a large black cat on Highway 90, south of Madisonville, Texas. The author’s requests for scientific testing go largely ignored. Depending on your point of view, this is either evidence of the hardheadedness of the scientific community or just proof that scientists have better things to do than investigate every cryptid story that comes along. The author asserts that he never requested DNA tests from any university, because he didn’t want to seem pushy or force them to spend a lot of money. Yet one wishes he had, because without any conclusive tests, the mystery goes unsolved. The likelihood is that the sender probably didn’t hit an unknown species of black panther. What he hit was probably just an oversized cat. Yet as long as the hair remains untested, the true believer can always hope... Mayes says the hairs are resting in a packet in his desk, waiting for the day when some expert agrees to take them in. Any takers?

There is something a bit silly in the knowledge that the majority of puma sightings are nothing more than misidentified house cats. It is a testament to the ability of the human mind to make something out of nothing. When Mayes winds his book down with final explanations, it is both extremely predictable and a little sad to learn that most of these supposedly mysterious panther encounters are simple misidentifications. Yet the author keeps our hopes up by encouraging us to carry our cameras, just in case. You could be the one to document a previously unknown species of cat.

Brett Taylor

★★★★★

Beyond the Bermuda Triangle

True Encounters with Electronic Fog, Missing Aircraft, and Time Warps

Bruce Gernon & Rob MacGregor

New Page Books 2017

Pb, 223pp, illus, bib, ind, \$16.99, ISBN 9781632651013



Bruce Gernon, a commercial pilot, Coast Guard and latterly an expert on all things Bermuda Triangle, uses his own time-warp experience as he piloted a return flight from Andros island to Florida to explore the history and bizarre phenomena that define the area. Co-authored with Rob MacGregor, an author with Hollywood credentials, *Beyond the Bermuda Triangle* draws on the testimonies of pilots, sailors and others who have come face to face with strange sentient fogs, disorienting magnetic fields, time-shifting vortices and underwater gateways to establish a broader and more culturally and geographically historical continuum.

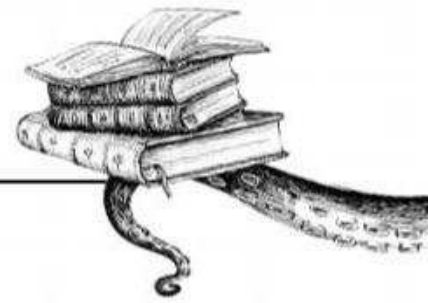
For the aficionado such areas of interest as the Dragon’s Triangle of the Western Pacific and the genre defining case of Flight 19 – lost forever following an engagement with ‘electronic fog’ – are discussed alongside secretive governmental underwater research agencies looking at time-space gateways and the efforts of maverick scientists such as David Pares to build a warp drive in his garage.

As with many such studies of the Bermuda Triangle, the implied scientific claims made therein add to the exoticism of the diverse narratives as we fix a course through rough waters of magnetic anomalies, UFOs, fringe science and insane weather.

Well illustrated and indexed and with a short bibliography, *Beyond the Bermuda Triangle* is very readable and although much of the terrain will be familiar to its audience, the authors do suggest that a more strategic enquiry into errant meteorology and ‘electronic’ fog may provide some myth-busting answers.

Chris Hill

★★★★★



ALSO RECEIVED

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

The Many Faces of Coincidence

Laurence Browne

Imprint-Academic 2018

Pb, 202pp, illus, notes, bib, index, £14.95, ISBN 9781845409159

There hasn't been a serious study of the phenomena we call 'coincidences' for some time, and the decades since the musing of Koestler, Jung and Brian Inglis have thrown up no new model that helps us explain or even understand the nature and consequence of coincidence.

Nearly all of the prior debate falls into two camps (whether coincidences can have 'meaning' or are 'simply' mechanistic accidents). Of course 'meaningfulness' comes with the extensive baggage of subjectivity, a taint that materialists find quite distasteful. Browne's book developed out of his PhD thesis and makes a brave attempt to find a new way of looking at the subject. His first step is to accept that there are both causal and non-causal coincidences; then he divides them into four classes according to the way they are explained (by random chance, by conventional causality, by paranormal causality and by 'synchronicity').

After reviewing the history of thinking about coincidence, Browne looks at 'probability', and then cosmology ("an extremely rich field") using the 'just so' conditions necessary for life to begin and evolve as a prime example.

The penultimate chapter examine the claims that meaningful coincidences provide glimpses of "an underlying psychophysical unity". In particular the physicist Pauli believed he saw this in the workings of quantum physics, as did another physicist, Fritjof Capra, who went on to write *The Tao of Physics*. This culminates in a heady but enjoyable discussion of classical Daoist philosophy as providing a language with which to better express the paradoxical nature of "underlying unity". Despite his difficult topic, Browne writes clearly and carefully making this valuable contribution accessible

to non-physicists and mathematicians.

**The Life of Yogananda
The Story of the Yogi Who Became
the First Modern Guru**

Philip Goldberg

Hay House 2018

Hb, 336pp, b&w plates, notes, bib, ind, £20.99, ISBN 9781401952181

Long before the Beatles brought their guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to the West, the Theosophical Society embraced a young yogi called Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), whose system of Kriya yoga soon became part of every Theosophist's spiritual life. Largely because of the promulgation of Theosophy by Madame Blavatsky and her colleagues, Yogananda toured the West, teaching yoga. Schools and societies sprang up almost everywhere he lectured; and through these, his philosophy of 'Self-Realisation', based upon the ancient scriptures of India, became as popular in the West as in India. He lived in the States from 1920 until his death in Los Angeles, only returning to India in 1935–36 (during which he taught Mahatma Gandhi). In 1946, he published his enduringly popular *Autobiography of a Yogi*. While much of it is Yogananda's stories about other people, Goldberg explains, nearly three decades of Yogananda's American life, challenges, controversies and relationships remained "unknown to even his most ardent devotees".

Goldberg's detailed research completes the story of how this remarkable yogi became 'the First Modern Guru'. Easy and informative reading; the perfect companion to the *Autobiography*.

**Egregores
The Occult Entities That Watch
Over Human Destiny**

Mark Stavish

Inner Traditions/Bear 2018

Pb, 160pp, notes, bib, ind, \$16.99, ISBN: 9780620555774

The term 'egregore' ('watchers') evolved through Greek via Aramaic. As described in the Book of Enoch, they were fallen angels who once looked after

man but coveted women and fathered the Nephilim. Stavish, however, applies the term, generally, to any occult entities or 'thoughtforms' created by a group of people. His examples range from 'guardian angels' to manifestations such as the 'Angels of Mons'. Shamanic and tribal totem animals, poltergeists, 'banshee' type family curses, *genii loci*, and apparitions of deities are all here. Discussion of the process of deliberately generating such autonomous entities ranges from the use of Ouija boards, magical conjuration (in Qabalah and the Western magical and alchemical traditions), and séances to the intense meditations of Tantric adepts. We might add the 'night siege' experiences of isolated, panicked groups.

Stavish is to be congratulated for his fresh perspective on some very old material. Well written and researched, it deserves to be read.

**A Passage Through
Eternity
The Enigma of the Dead, UFOs
and Aliens**

Philip Kinsella

Privately published 2018

PB, 277pp, ISBN 9781977067289

This continues the story of the Kinsella twins – Philip and Ronald, an author-illustrator team – from their previous books. The formula is the same – pretty much a conversational memoir of their experiences and adventures, emerging from their childhood milieu of fantasy and SF books and comics into the 'real' world of everyday life that somehow includes psychical phenomena, UFOs, Grey aliens and a great deal more under the heading 'unexplained'.

Philip presents their conclusions in an engaging manner, but like other books of this type it remains deeply personal and lacking the sort of documentation that makes it useful to scholarly study.

With zero marketing (no pricing and multiple defunct email addresses) this can only be found through Amazon.

**The Frighteners
Why We Love Monsters, Ghosts,
Death & Gore**

Peter Laws

Icon Books 2018

Hb, 312pp, £12.99, ISBN 978178578220

Peter Laws is *FT*'s resident 'sinister minister' and regular reviewer of morbid and bizarre entertainments. This book presents his views on "why we love monsters, ghosts, death and gore" and why as an ordained Reverend who is supposed to be a nice person, he spends his time "watching gruesome horror films, shooting zombies and writing crime novels". The easy answer is: so we don't have to. But what does the macabre have to do with humanity, society and spirituality? The gruesome and even the disgusting can provide "safe" ways to confront our mortality". As he strides through the dark alleys of modern culture, Laws's sense of humour adds value to his insights and assessment of the underlying issues. A perfect present for a horror fan or horror-curious friend.

**Who Are You, Really?
The Surprising Puzzle of
Personality**

Brian A Little

Simon & Shuster 2017

Hb, 108pp, £8.99, ISBN 9781471156113

How often have you been told, unhelpfully, "Just be yourself"? Unhelpful, because at that moment you might plunge into the internal quandary of having to decide which of your many aggregated aspects is the real you. It's a question Prof Little likes to ask in his pursuit of defining personality and how it comes into being. He has identified five 'big' traits that underlie 'well-being' (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism), which are modulated by a host of 'lesser' traits which are more volatile and can induce behaviour "counter to one's first nature". This book grew out of a 2016 TED talk. It's a complex topic, but Little carefully explains... especially that it is natural to have many 'selves' without being disingenuous, conflicted or lacking a moral compass.

SEND REVIEW DISCS TO: FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD, UK.

Turning the screw

Sarah Waters's class-conscious slice of country house Gothic gets a suitably slow-burning and sombre big screen adaptation, with the emphasis as much on character as chills



The Little Stranger

Dir Lenny Abrahamson, Ireland/UK/France 2018

On UK release from 21 September

In this adaptation of the Sarah Waters novel of the same name, mysterious happenings haunt an English country house after a young doctor is called to check on the health of a maid who has fallen ill. As he becomes increasingly entangled with the lives of the residents of the decaying mansion, strange events begin to occur with increasing frequency – but is something supernatural at play or is there a rational explanation for it all?

Just as the book keeps building momentum only for the ghostly narrative to seemingly reach one dead end after another, the film likewise keeps teasing the mystery behind whatever might be going on, only to snap back once again to mundane reality. This will undoubtedly

Strange events begin to occur with increasing frequency

frustrate any viewers expecting a conventional ghost story filled with jump scares and spectral entities aplenty, but it's appropriate in this case, because *The Little Stranger* is first and foremost a tragic drama. As a result, those who favour more character-driven pieces will likely find plenty to enjoy here, as the intrigue of this particular story is found within the various subtle cues provided by the performances and the way in which the mystery slowly and tragically unwinds.

The subtlety of the narrative is evident throughout the film, not only in terms of the muted

colour palette and slow pacing, but also with regard to the acting. The main characters are complex and nuanced, but rarely overly dramatic. This creates a tension and a mounting sense of unease; it's understated, but consistent throughout the film, thereby making the viewer constantly question what is going on. Domhall Gleeson fits in with this approach especially well; the character arc of his enigmatic Dr Faraday is particularly interesting, in part because of the delicacy of his performance.

This is a very different sort of film to Park Chan-Wook's 2017 *The Handmaiden* – an artful adaptation of Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* – but this is only fitting when one considers how different the two source novels are in terms of setting, tone and themes. Whereas the former is a more sensational tale, *The Little Stranger* is a slow-burning story; while some will dislike its

deliberately subdued approach, others will appreciate *The Little Stranger* for its sombre tone, recognising that this is, in fact, its greatest strength.

Leyla Mikkelsen



BlacKkKlansman

Dir Spike Lee, US 2018

On UK release

Based on the unbelievable but true story of how a black cop infiltrated the Colorado Springs chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1970s, writer and director Spike Lee's latest film approaches its subject with trademark wit, uncompromising social commentary and a visual style that is as much unadulterated Lee as it is a fitting evocation of the era in which the story takes place.

Excellent acting brings out the different personalities and dynamics, ensuring both genuine comedy as well as a gut-wrenching sense of unease throughout. A snappy buddy-cop dynamic is established between John David Washington, portraying the black Ron Stallworth, and Adam Driver, who plays the white cop who must impersonate him when meeting with the Klan in person.

Topher Grace's portrayal of Klan leader David Duke also stands out, striking a perfect balance between his white-bread personality and the sinister bigotry underlying it and highlighting one of the most dangerous types of people associated with groups such as the Klan: the charlatan who continuously re-brands his hateful ideology in an attempt to make his hideous views appear palatable enough so that he, or someone like him, might one day get to a real position of power.

Never compromising the balance between genuinely hilarious entertainment and the unsettling similarities between



the Klan of the 1970s and the racism of contemporary America, *BlacKkKlansman* was always going to be an intriguing film. In the current climate, it stands as an unapologetic wake-up call: the ugly things we are seeing now have always been there, and they will continue to be a part of society if we don't weed them out.

Leyla Mikkelsen



The Addiction

Dir Abel Ferrara, US 1995

Arrow Video, £19.99 (Dual Format)

Abel Ferrara's career has to date encompassed three phases: the grainy, underground initial forays into genre film-making, including the notorious *Driller Killer*; then the mainstream years; and finally, since roughly the turn of the century, a return to obscurity and diminishing audiences.

The Addiction comes from more or less the peak of his career and in some ways is typical of his oeuvre, being a heady brew of religion, sex, violence and metaphysics. Chucked into the mix for this movie is horror, dealing as it does with the descent into vampirism of student Kathy (Lili Taylor) after she is bitten while walking home one night. Plenty to get one's teeth into, you might think, but it's actually an almost total dud. The acting is OTT, some of the dialogue cringe-inducing ("Have you read *Naked Lunch*?" a vampire lord – Christopher Walken, natch – inquires at one point) and there are plot holes galore. By far the worst aspect, however, is the unbearable pretentiousness. I realise the film concerns a philosophy post-grad student and that Ferrara believes he has *Something To Say*, but it has all the profundity of a Lloyd Cole lyric sheet, name-dropping philosophers like mad as if the script was written by someone (actually regular Ferrara collaborator Nicholas St John) who had just finished *Philosophy 101* and had his mind blown. At times, it resembles nothing more than an Ingmar Bergman parody made by Woody Allen (and anyone who has seen the hilarious *Love and Death* will know how adept Allen is at that). I will give credit, though, to the beautiful b&w photography by Ken Kelsch. For what it's worth,

and I know the film does have its devotees, the extras on the Blu-ray are comprehensive.

Daniel King



No Second Chance

Dir François Velle, France 2015

Netflix/Europa, £19.99 (DVD)

No Second Chance ('Un Chance de Trop') is a French TV drama based on Harlan Coben's novel of the same name. In the TV version a young doctor, Alice Lambert (Alexandra Lammy), wakes in hospital after being shot in her kitchen, to find that her husband has been killed and her baby stolen. She receives a massive ransom demand, but the money is snatched and her baby isn't returned. Her wealthy parents-in-law, who provided the ransom, are angry that she has allowed their grandchild to disappear.

Over the course of six episodes and two years, Alice searches for her baby. There are plot strands involving the police, a former detective who was once Alice's lover, organised crime, shady lawyers, Alice's drug-addict sister, and her increasingly dubious parents-in-law. The police might as well be the Keystone Cops for all the good they do, running around in circles and bungling everything they attempt, including the most cack-handed stake-out imaginable. Everyone else just gets dodgier and dodgier as the story progresses – except it doesn't really progress much. Despite car chases and gunfights, very little seems to happen to further the plot, episode by episode, making the whole thing remarkably dull. None of the characters, including Alice, is particularly likeable; it's hard to care what happens to any of them. The story is set in Paris, but it could just as easily be anywhere.

The series is in French, with English sub-titles. There are three very short mini-features in which everyone says how great it was to work with everyone else, particularly the creator and the original author. Coben was showrunner, so presumably he approved the casting, the directing and the changes to the plot – and must bear some responsibility for this uninspiring and tedious series.

David V Barrett



SHORTS

A GHOST STORY

Lionsgate Home Entertainment, £9.99 (Blu-ray), £7.99 DVD)

Casey Affleck plays a mumbly musician who dies and returns as a ghost, appearing as the classic sheet-with-eyeholes. The build-up to this is good, and the ghost itself looks suitably odd, but the film then dithers about for the next hour. It seems to be constantly aiming for profundity but generally coasts along at banality. There is one truly excellent scene, which sees two ghosts communicating their sadness, but nothing else matches its sheer potency. Rooney Mara eats a pie for an interminable length of time, ghostly Affleck haunts the family who move into his house and we follow him into what appears to be the far future, then back into the past. The film begins with an epigraph from Virginia Woolf and you get the impression the filmmakers were aiming to replicate her modernist approach to time passing – things change but they also stay the same – but the themes explored here have all been done far better elsewhere. Some people will cherish this; I just wanted to sleep. **Martin Parsons** ★★☆☆☆

BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY

Fabulous Films, £39.99 (Blu-ray)

If, like me, you don't mind your science-fiction served with a dollop of disco and high camp, then you're going to have a blast with *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*. It's 1987, and a gallant, deep-space astronaut is blown out of orbit. Frozen in suspended animation, he wakes up 500 years later. Back on Earth, he battles accusations that his generation caused the nuclear holocaust, but he wins the future-folk over by showing them how to bust a move on the dancefloor. Looking spectacular in hi-definition, the series serves up a whole 1,896 minutes of retro sci-fi bliss. But these old shows don't only run on nostalgia; I watched this re-release with my six-year-old son, and he was riveted – especially by Hawk, the brooding bird-man who shows up in Season Two. Oh, and the Space Vampire 'horror' episode is priceless. **Peter Laws** ★★★★★

THE QUIET EARTH

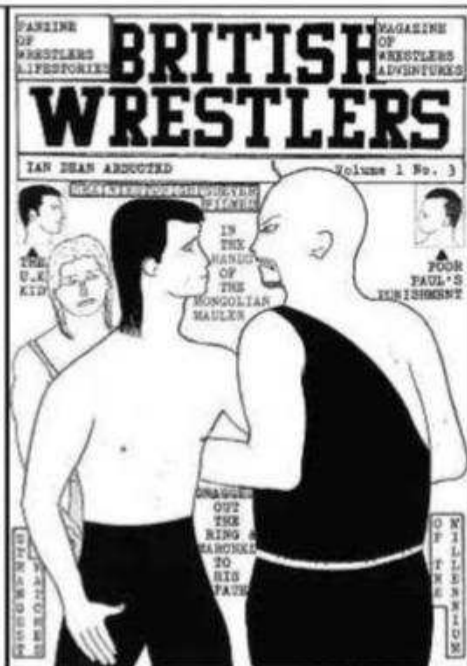
Arrow Video, £19.99 (Dual Format)

You don't often encounter people who have seen *The Quiet Earth*, but when you do, they rave about it. The reason for its relative obscurity is probably that it is a film from New Zealand with a non-star cast and a low budget. The reason people rave about it, though, is that it's challenging, exciting, witty and very well made. Zac (stalwart of New Zealand cinema Bruno Lawrence) wakes up one morning to find that everyone else in town, and seemingly the world, has vanished. Evidently a top-secret energy research project that he was a part of malfunctioned, leaving him the last man on earth. Initially, he deals with his situation in a clear and practical manner; but then his mind starts to disintegrate as fear, loneliness and boredom overcome him. What the film does well is eschew the standard pandemic/nuclear/zombie reasons for the apocalypse in favour of genuinely thought-provoking ideas about science, international co-operation and perhaps even cosmology. The film isn't solemn or unexciting though: there's enough of the standard post-apocalypse movie about it to keep fans of the genre happy. On top of that, it is also rather funny: there's a great sequence in which Zac proclaims himself emperor of the world, to an audience of cardboard cut-outs of historical figures, including Hitler. Two other reasons you should watch it: first, the score by John Charles, which is sublime; and second, the ending, which is among the most satisfying and yet head-scratching in all of cinema. The Blu-ray transfer is good and there are some fine extras on the disc as well, including a potted history of apocalypse films by Kim Newman. **Daniel King** ★★★★★

To advertise here call Imogen on 020 3890 3739

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

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



Welcome to the Weird Tales Radio Show,
your fortnightly fix of ghost stories, urban
myths, magick
and folklore.
Plus some cool music.



Available as a free
podcast on iTunes,
YouTube and
multiple podcast
platforms.

www.WeirdTalesRadio.com

To advertise here please email
imogen_williams@dennis.co.uk
or call 0203 890 37 39

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
ForteanTimes



Free Advice & Order Line
01904 789559

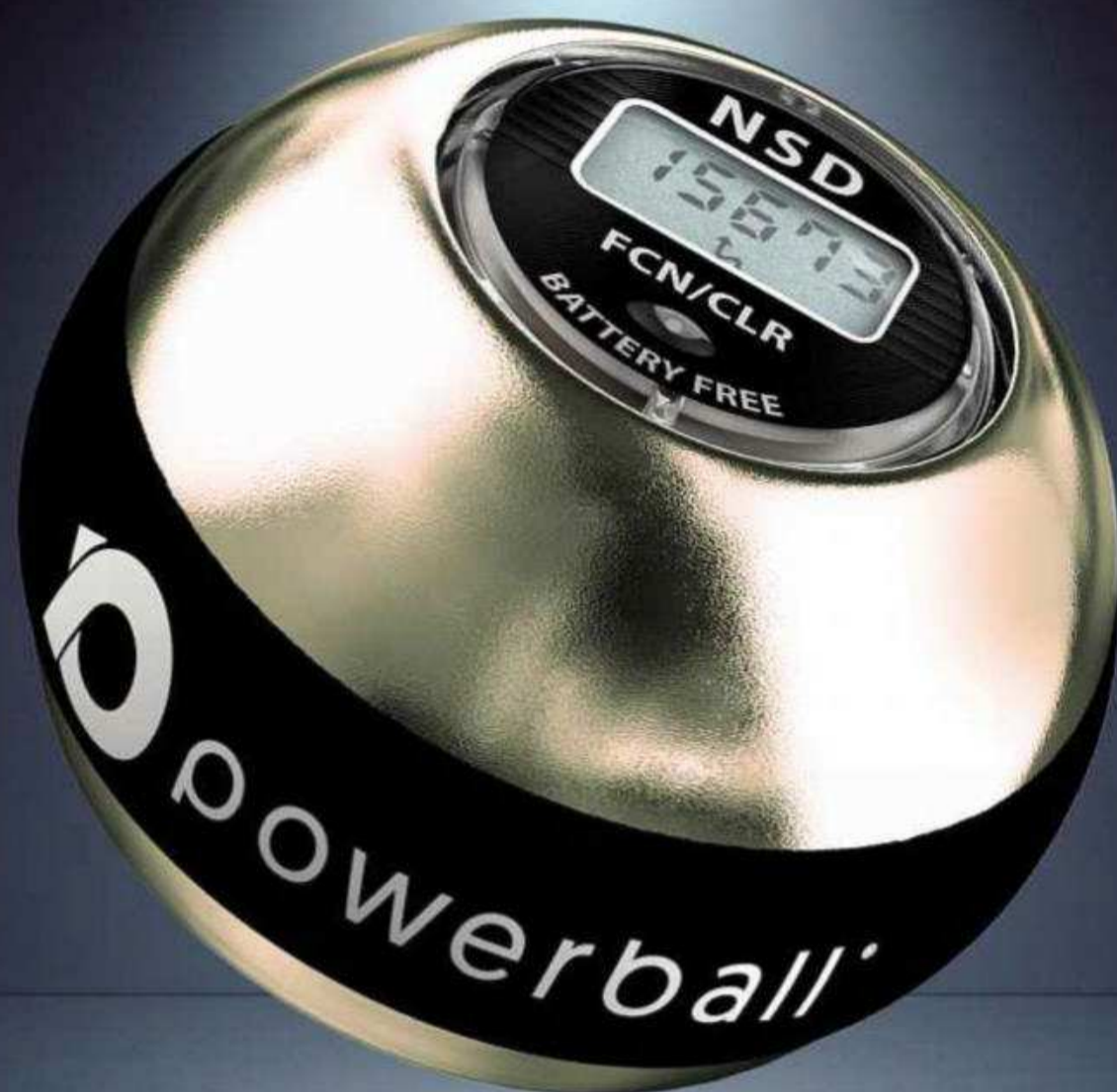
Waterfall D-Mannose®

The **Award Winning** Bladder Supplement
with Dedicated **Customer Support.**



www.sweet-cures.com

THE MOST AMAZING **DEVICE** YOU'LL EVER HOLD IN YOUR HAND



Powerball® gyroscopes - up to 30% off in-store this week

Helpful for golf, sprained wrist, grip strength, carpal tunnel, tennis, climbing, guitar, tennis elbow, cycling, RSI, piano, broken arm, gardening, shooting, martial arts, drumming, squash, hockey, cricket, arm wrestling, basically...everything

 powerballs.com



The Ultimate Designer CD/DVD Organiser!

arrowfile
The Collectable Storage Specialists

Keep 5 times more in the same space!

Stunning Limited Offer

£22.95*

Normally ~~£36.34~~

Please quote promotional code **FTM0818** on your basket page

Transform your Collection..



The Professionals Choice
Photos, Memorabilia & Collectables



Novella Wine CD/DVD Organiser Ref: **K-512**

SAVE up to £27!

Is Your Collection Getting Out of Hand?

- One Space Saving CD/DVD Organiser Stores up to 120 Discs
- Find your favourite group/artist or track in seconds
- Protect your discs from dust, dirt, light and scratches
- Match your CD/DVDs with their booklet covers

This Amazing Offer Includes:



10 Black Refill Pages ~~£10.95~~



Music Labels ~~£3.25~~



Pack of CD Index Sheets & Dividers ~~£6.20~~



Page Numbers ~~£0.99~~

Extra refill sleeve pages RJ0CD44 (pk of 10) £10.95
Additional Album PLUS FREE Slipcase K-513 £14.95

Each album will hold up to 60 CDs with 60 covers or 120 CDs without covers
Album Size: 292mm x 337mm x 75mm. Total Album Capacity: 15 Sleeve Pages.

*Plus Standard UK delivery £5.95 | One album or double album set offer per household | 10% code can't be used on above offer

FREEPHONE 0800 027 0636

For Special Offer quote code: **FTM0818**



Order Online - **WWW.ARROWFILE.COM/CDOFFER22**

and ADD **FTM0818** in the promotion code box in your basket

PROTECT, ORGANISE AND DISPLAY

FLEXIBLE ARCHIVAL STORAGE AND PRESENTATION SOLUTIONS

arrowfile
The Collectable Storage Specialists

Suppliers to photographers, photographic and family history societies, schools, medical establishments, museums, businesses, as well as collectors, hobbyists and musicians.



Binder Albums with slipcases including Family History



Portfolios Ring Binders, Presenters, Cases & Archival Refill Sleeves



Digital Photo Slip-In Albums - 6x4", 6x4.5", 7x5", 8x6" & more -



Traditional Photoboard including Wedding Themed Albums



Pocket Refill Sleeves - Slides, Docs, Postcards, Photos, Stamps etc.



Stamp and Coin Storage - Binders, Sheets, Cases, Drawers



Photo Frames - Wood, Bronze, Metal etc



Display Presentation Cabinets and Cases



Archival Storage Boxes, Binder Files PLUS Indexing and Dividers



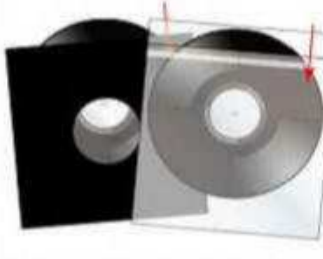
Viewing and Scanning Equipment



Photographic Accessories including Negative bags



CD/DVD Organisers, Zipper Wallets and Portfolios



Protective Sleeves and Covers for 7", 10" & 12" Vinyl Records



Vinyl Record Storage Cases



Digital Convertors & Vinyl Record Players

Flash Foto Ltd T/A Arrowfile, 147 Churchill House, Stirling Way, WD6 2HP Reg No. 1561035

SPECIAL READER OFFER - 10% OFF all Arrowfile Storage Products until 30 Sep 2018 - †Use Promo Code: FTMDIS18

LETTERS

CONTACT US BY POST: BOX 2409 LONDON NW5 4NP OR E-MAIL SIEVEKING@FORTEANTIMES.COM
PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS



Trashing von Däniken

The Hierophant's Apprentice does a rather nasty hatchet job on Erich von Däniken ['What have the gods ever done for us?' FT367:58-59]. Von Däniken's books, although imperfect, opened a lot of eyes and taught us to look beyond our 'spoon-fed' reality and made us realise there could be more to mankind than the 5,000 year history of man put forth by conventional history. He discovered a lot of anomalies which he interpreted in his own way and that are slowly being supported by more and more scientists, historians, and archaeologists.

Frank DJ Eriksen-Miller
Highgate, London

The Hierophant's Apprentice responds: Mr Eriksen-Miller doesn't name the "more and more scientists, historians, archaeologists" he claims are coming to support von Däniken, so it's difficult to concede anything on that point. One's own impression is the opposite. The anomalies VD allegedly discovered were largely invented by his predecessors, whom Ronald Story discusses at length in Guardians of the Universe? And historians and archaeologists have known for ages that mankind has been around for rather longer than 5,000 years, doing interesting things without being encumbered with the assistance of extraterrestrial tutors.

Well, possibly

The first three letters in the "It Happened To Me" section of the last issue [FT369:76] concerned various types of aerial phenomena, which mystified the letter writers. I suggest these might be explained as Earth Lights, produced by tectonic pressures occurring in areas where there are minor fault lines.

This theory was first publicised by Paul Devereux in his 1982 book *Earth Lights*. They can appear in all sorts of shapes, sizes and colours, and have been seen by various peoples of the world as supernatural phenomena. For instance, Native Americans saw them as ghosts of their ancestors,



SIMULACRA CORNER

Lunar pussy

Joe Galvin took this photo on 1 August 2018 when he awoke, looked outside and saw a very large cat, circling the Moon over a boatyard in Brightlingsea, Essex.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP or to sieveking@forteanimes.com.

in Asia they were considered to be gods, and nearer to home the Irish perceived them as fairies. They usually appear as lights which can move around erratically and unpredictably, rather like sparks from a bonfire, but caused on a much larger scale by the forces of the earth.

Eric Fitch
Hereford

Nazca 'ape'

The mystery of the Nazca ape [FT367:14, 369:73] can be quickly solved. It is not fortean, but linguistic. While English has two words for the higher primates, monkey and ape, German has only one, *Affe*. To distinguish, monkeys are called *Halbaffen* (semi-apes), and apes are called *Menschenaffen* (human apes). However, the simple ape is more often used in non-zoological contexts. So the monkey of Nazca is simply known as the *Affe von Nazca* in German, and anybody who translates this into

English, and has no knowledge of zoological distribution, will have this as ape of Nazca. The German is correct but the translation is mistaken.

And, although conventional zoology allows no apes in the Americas, cryptozoology does. Just ask Ivan T Sanderson or Loren Colman, who identified at least four, if not more species of ape in North America alone: the True Giants (*Gigantopithecus*), Bigfoot/Sasquatch, NAPES (North American Apes, similar to chimpanzees), and pygmies.

Ulrich Magin
Hennef, Germany

Ape rape

I am currently reading through Professor Bryan Sykes's book, *The Nature of the Beast: The first scientific evidence on the survival of apemen into modern times*. The front cover carries the subtitle: *The Yeti Enigma – A DNA Detective Story*. Having read and enjoyed his first book, *The Seven Daughters*

of *Eve*, some 15 years ago, I knew it would be an interesting read – and so far (about half way through) I am not disappointed.

However, one thing he mentioned, (when talking about the possibility of primate/human hybrids), really amazed me – In Chapter 11, he reported the following: "Recently I was told by a primatologist that rape by orang-utans is a known occupational hazard for female field workers in Sumatra, but she did not know of any recorded offspring." Elsewhere, he mentions other anecdotes of abduction and/or rape of human females by gorillas and chimpanzees. While I was aware that some dolphins appear to be sexually interested in female swimmers, this was the first time that I have ever heard of alleged primate/human mating taking place. I would be interested to learn more about these allegations.

David Poulten
By email

LETTERS

The pipes are calling...

In his enthusiastic promotion of dowsing [FT369:56-57], Ian H Machell claims that “Experienced dowzers can determine... the depths, directions and any faults in buried pipes, cables etc.” In 1979 James Randi conducted an experiment in Italy to test just such claims and the results are described in some detail in his book *Flim-Flam!* (1982). In it he writes: “All [the dowzers] had positive dowsing reactions and were certain they were correct, but actually had detected nothing at all. All had considerable reputations as successful dowzers... Their first and only proper tests had proved the subjects did not have the ability to dowse. Yet I am quite sure that these people still claim they are dowzers.” This capacity for self-delusion brings to mind Richard Feynman’s assertion that “The first principle is that you must not fool yourself – and you are the easiest person to fool.” Food for thought for any readers who, having followed Mr Machell’s instructions, now believe they can use a pendulum to detect the ‘ghost’ of a pencil.

Martin Stubbs
London

Regarding the Forum piece on dowsing, I’d like to comment on the pendulum experiment the writer suggests. If you rest your elbow on a table, with or without a pendulum, and look at your hand against a suitable background – such as a copy of FT – you will see continual slight

movements, which I suggest is the most likely reason for the pendulum swings the writer says will occur. I would also suggest that if you know an item is there, or has been (a “ghost”), you may unwittingly influence you pendulum according to your expectations.

- In the “Seafood Special Delivery” [FT369:4], I agree that a wind-speed of 34.8 miles a second would be “shocking”, to say the least. I doubt there would be any remaining windscreens, cars, streets, or people left to photograph them. I suspect that the reported speed was 34.8 m/s, which in this case would be metres per second, towards the lower end of the hurricane scale.

- Regarding the photo of three people [FT369:75] in Letters – “Do you recognise them?” – my wife and I agree that they look like a mother and her sons. There is a distinct resemblance between the two men, and the body language in the pose seems to bear out our theory. Also, the table looks like the trestle type that you would get if you hired out a village hall for example, and the taller of the men has a newspaper in front of him. This suggests to me that this is more likely to be a family event rather than anything more “official”.

Dave Miles
By email

Dog-hanging

Regarding the report of a farmer in South Wales jailed for hanging his sheepdog [‘Merciless’, FT369:10]: in Dylan Thomas’s play *Under Milk Wood*, the town gossips are discussing

the previous husbands of Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard:

“SECOND WOMAN – but Mr Ogmores was a proper gentleman
FIRST WOMAN – even though he hanged his collie.”

Is this a

weird coincidence or, worryingly, a reference to actual Welsh practice?

- ‘Tree News’ [FT369:12] reports the attack on Old Knobbly, “the oldest oak in England”, where, according to the *Daily Mail*, “Legend has it that women hid in the oak’s hollow trunk to avoid being burnt alive in the 1640s.” It seems no one told the *Daily Mail* journalist that witches were not burnt in England in the 17th century, or even before...

Tina Rath
London

Matt Salusbury comments: Burning at the stake would seem to have been a fate reserved for heretics and traitors, not witches. Actual witch burnings across Europe were an early phenomenon – in the early 16th century – and were already highly unusual by the time of Witchfinder General Matthew Hopkins in the 1640s.

*While researching the subject, the only English witch I came across who was burnt at the stake was “Mother Lakeland of Ipswich” (see *The Folklore of East Anglia* by Enid Porter, BT Batsford, London 1974.) At her trial, Mother Lakeland stated that she had formed her own congregation to hold what we would regard today as a harmless Bible reading circle. When questioned on whose authority she’d set up this group, she answered that it was “on the authority of the Holy Spirit.” This didn’t go down well. With everyone in such a panic over witches and Royalist plotters, people didn’t want to hear about spirits, holy or otherwise. Witnesses testified in her trial that Lakeland had three imps – two little dogs and a mole that she used in her witchcraft. Another of her imps of unspecified shape was sent to kill a Mr Beale, who was taken very ill but didn’t die.*

Malay mystery

Monday 30 July 2018 saw the publication of the long-awaited final report into the disappearance of flight MH370, a Malay-

sian 777-200 aircraft flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing which vanished on 8 March 2014 after sending a final, routine, sign-off message to Kuala Lumpur Air Traffic Control [FT345:12, 352:8]. The final report – running to well over 1,000 pages – was a product of all of the countries involved in the search and included the analysis of the few wreckage pieces found to date. Alas – and predictably – it failed to answer virtually all of the key questions that remain. It also contradicted some significant assertions made previously by the Malaysian authorities such as when, exactly, the aircraft reappeared on Malaysian Primary Radar after initially vanishing at or around waypoint IGARI: the ‘hand over’ point from Malaysian to Vietnamese Air Traffic Control.

Other unanswered questions include when, exactly, the Malaysian authorities first realised the plane had deviated so markedly from its original, intended, flight path, who took control of the aircraft in order to divert it, and – most crucial of all – why the satellite communication system (SATCOM) rebooted in-flight at 18.25 UTC after an interrupt that the report asserts could have lasted for anything from 22 to 78 minutes.

The SATCOM question is key. Rebooting in-flight is highly unusual and suggests some sort of restoration of power to the Satellite Data Unit after a prior interruption. Much rests on it, given that without this restoration of power there would have been no sequence of ‘handshakes’ with the INMARSAT satellite, which allowed investigators to subsequently determine that the aircraft had reached a terminus somewhere in the vast Southern Indian Ocean.

I was surprised that the final report did not spend more time on the reboot question. In its conclusion the report states that it is not known why the SATCOM behaved as it did. The 18.25 log-on is described as “abnormal” and the report sets out various possible explanations for this. What it freely admits in its conclusion is that analysis





cannot explain why the SATCOM rebooted at all. There have been many attempted explanations from elsewhere, of course, including that of aviation expert Jeff Wise, whose excellent blog on MH370 continues to be an island of sanity in what has often seemed to be a sea of confusion. Wise cites state-sponsored hijacking as the explanation for MH370's disappearance and he points the finger of blame firmly at the Russians in a complex thesis in which he argues that an on-board hack into the plane's Satellite Data Unit resulted in a false data trail leading authorities to the Southern Indian Ocean in search of wreckage, when in reality the plane was taken north to an airbase in Kazakhstan (and is presumably still there). Of course, such a thesis is itself open to question at many points and fails to explain why so many pieces of aircraft wreckage have washed up.

In this regard it is worth noting that the final report into the disappearance also included, as one of its appendices, the long-awaited French report into the flaperon that washed ashore on the island of Reunion in July 2015, some 16 months after the aircraft disappeared. Distinctive damage to the flaperon's trailing edge led some at the time of its discovery to speculate that it had been torn off MH370's wing during a rapid descent at the point of fuel exhaustion. This was of more than mere theoretical interest as it implied a near-vertical final dive, which would in turn indicate that the aircraft wreckage could not be far from the last recorded 'handshake' between the aircraft and the satellite. However, information contained in the much-delayed French report contradicted this vertical descent scenario and indicated instead that the flaperon was still attached to the aircraft when it hit the water. If correct, this would strongly suggest that MH370 was still under somebody's conscious control at the very end of its flight and might therefore have been manually glided a considerable distance from the location of the final 'handshake', thus increasing

considerably any potential area in which wreckage might be searched for.

The report, together with accompanying comments from Malaysian authorities, signally failed to assign any direct blame for the aircraft's diversion, although it did all but entirely rule out the possibility of mechanical error. In fact, it simply reiterated conclusions already contained in the previously widely leaked Royal Malaysian Police report into the disappearance which stated that there was nothing to indicate that either Captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah or First Officer Fariq Abdul Hamid was responsible for the diversion at waypoint IGARI. In fact, the final report left very much open the possibility of third party involvement in the disappearance without specifying who the third party – or parties – might have been. For many, this conclusion was somewhat disingenuous, given that the behaviour of the aircraft at and immediately subsequent to the initial diversion gave a strong suggestion that it was being flown by someone with considerable expertise of Boeing 777-200 systems. Although analysis of the data from the flight simulator in Captain Shah's home basement turned out to be inconclusive – and very far from straightforward – his considerable experience of flying Boeing 777 aircraft and his known interest in various aspects of their operation has led many to the conclusion that it was he who took the plane: perhaps by first locking the inexperienced First Officer out of the cockpit with some simple ruse.

But even here a mystery remains. In the history of commercial aircraft murder-suicides in which pilots have taken planes and then deliberately crashed them, there is nothing remotely comparable to MH370. In particular, the very large amount of time that elapsed between the plane's initial diversion and subsequent terminus cries out for explanation. Could the taking of MH370 have been as a 'bargaining chip' in some sort of negotiation that was



Something over Macclesfield

Erika Groeneveld took this photograph over Macclesfield in Cheshire on the evening of 2 August 2018. It was sent to Fortean Towers by her friend Richard Muirhead, who suggested it depicted a meteor trace.

simultaneously taking place on the ground? Might this explain the possibility – based on analysis of the INMARAT data – of a 50 minute-plus loiter in which the plane could have been circling before it set off on the final leg of its tragic journey? And might the 18.25 reboot have been caused by the aircraft automatically restoring power to its systems after an earlier interruption caused by some sort of damage to it? The reboot coincided almost to the minute with the aircraft's passing out of Malaysian airspace: could this be simple coincidence or something more? These are just some of the questions that remain, even after the publication of the final, massive, report into flight MH370's disappearance: a disappearance that remains

the single most baffling aviation mystery of our – or any – time.

Mark Fox

By email

Whopping salaries

The 'Joined at the Hip' report [FT369:9] asserts that the Hilton sisters "earned \$4,000 (£3,000) a week, about three times the average American salary at the time." That would make the annual average salary in 1927 getting on for \$69,000.

According to the website visualizeeconomics.com, the average annual salary was about \$15k. I think the news report compared their weekly earnings with the average *monthly* salary.

Tom Ruffles

By email

LETTERS



A fan out West

All my life I have dealt with the paranormal. I am a sensitive and a paranormal investigator. I consider myself a fortean investigator, because I investigate all things paranormal. Your magazine is a blessing for me, because I could be investigating a cryptid or maybe a UFO case and your magazine will cover information that is beneficial to the case I am working on. Keep up the great work. Here is a picture of me in a bookshop with the latest issue.

Deanna Jaxine Stinson

Esoteric Detective, Halo Paranormal Investigations – International, Elk Grove, California

Cranefly Conundrum

Re the September 1938 advertisement for 60 daddy-longlegs [“Cranefly Conundrum”, FT367:9]: cranefly larvæ – also called leatherjackets – are known to feed on mosquito larvæ, which become plentiful around September when mosquitoes hibernate. September is also the time of year that daddy-longlegs start to proliferate in Britain. The craneflies could probably be used to get rid of mosquitoes before they reach maturity, and September is the right time of year for such an operation. Mosquitoes, after all, are responsible for more human deaths than any other creature on Earth throughout human history. While craneflies are incapable of killing mature mosquitoes, they were definitely believed to do so, and still are in many places, which is why they are also called “mosquito hawks”. Daddy-longlegs are considered a beneficial predator, because they eat a variety of smaller insects as well as gobbling up insect faeces and carcasses.

Oddly enough, in 1935, Lord’s Cricket Ground in London was among a number of venues affected by leatherjackets, the larvæ of craneflies. Several thousand were collected by ground staff and burned, because they caused bald patches on the wicket and the pitch took unaccustomed spin

for much of the season. Perhaps the 1938 advertisement had been placed by a cricket fan, eager to contribute to the destruction of a species capable of affecting in a bad way the local wicket and pitch!

Cellar spiders, which are also called daddy-longlegs around the world, but primarily in Australia, are (like craneflies) also harmless to humans, but not so harmless to other spiders, including brown widow spiders in California and other poisonous species. It’s possible that the advertisement was a request for cellar spiders. They are far preferable to other types of spiders – the types that cellar spiders have been known to replace in a closed environment.

James T Carlson

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Chaos magic

As a long-time proponent of chaos magic (CM), I was much perturbed by Gary Lachman’s excellent article, “Donald Trump: The Mind Magician” [FT369:40-45]. As Lachman describes, CM is a results-oriented system of occultism that focuses upon shifting one’s internal beliefs, which has the knock-on effect of “bending” what subsequently happens in reality. CM was invented in the late 1970s, its founders opposed to the metaphysical frameworks

of preceding occult traditions (e.g. Thelema, Theosophy). Having disposed of these, the practitioner must decide how and for what CM is used, reflecting the DIY attitude of the Punk era in which CM was formulated. Without an explicit ethical framework, CM can be practised by anyone of any political or moral outlook.

Lachman describes how the far right is currently appropriating the techniques and cultural trappings of CM. Indeed, some of the founding figures of CM themselves seem to have moved towards an increasingly right-wing ideology. My concern is that CM may soon come to be regarded as a neo-fascist ideology, rather than a politically neutral technique.

Although CM lacks an ethical framework, in my experience it nevertheless contains a developmental dynamic. Bending reality for personal benefit is well and good, but, over time, the magician may be confronted with deeper questions: Why do I want to change things so much and so often? or Who is this “I” that wants all this stuff anyway? Many chaos magicians are subsequently led into spiritual and ethical enquiries, investigating other magical or religious traditions, which then become integrated into a more mature CM practice. This

trajectory often leads to a moral and political outlook radically at odds with those under focus in Lachman’s article.

So, not all CM practitioners are alt-right adherents, and CM will not necessarily lead in that direction. Unlike some traditions, CM does not tell practitioners what to believe, but provides techniques for a direct experience of how powerful our beliefs are in shaping reality. Charles Fort also knew this, but expressed it from a more ironic angle: “I cannot accept that the products of minds are subject-matter for beliefs” (*Lo! Pt 1, Ch 3*). CM involves not only changing beliefs in order to realise personal aims, but also confronting the implicit question Fort raised: whether what gives rise to our beliefs possesses any kind of authority or solidity, and what the full consequences may be for our shared reality if we ascribe weight to them.

Duncan Barford

Brighton, East Sussex

Gary Lachman’s feature suggesting a possible influence of chaos magic on Donald Trump via the American ‘alt-right’ was intriguing. The meme seems a very appropriate socio-magical sigil for the great “I am”, the self-confessed “superlative” Trump – “Me” “Me” all the time. His contradictory off-putting style has an obvious chaotic ring to it, which unsettles the more conventional, staid diplomatic stance of his political allies and enemies, as well as his own staff. Despite this, Trump proclaims himself a “stable” genius. Perhaps his horse has not bolted but remains in his control – if loose-reined. Perhaps he is more grounded than he appears. He seems to perform his own Yankee version of the ‘gyana’ or ‘chin’ mudra when emphasising a point, bringing the tip of his thumb and index finger together. In yoga, this symbolises the unity of universal and individual consciousness. I suggest this tongue-in-cheek, sitting cross-legged while winking.

Terry Little

Sherborne, Dorset

IT HAPPENED TO ME...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteanimes.com

Flying dandy

One summer evening about four years ago, I was attempting to photograph bats on Milton Common, Portsmouth. Their rapid flight made this difficult, but I thought if I click away at random I might have some success. The fact that I was using a basic Kodak Easy Share C653 digital camera didn't help much. However, I did get one or two half-decent (if grainy) pictures showing bats illuminated by the camera flash. On reviewing the photographs on the camera later, I noticed I had captured several flying insects – probably moths or caddis flies or the like. This one [shown at right] caught my attention, as it looked distinctly un-insect-like. On enlarging the image, it appeared to show a diminutive winged figure wearing 18th century costume and sporting a wig with a ponytail! It also appears to be wearing a pair of natty (or should that be gnatty?) boots.

Nick Maloret

Milton, Hampshire

Galway fairy

I am only 10 but I like reading your magazines when my daddy gets them because they are so interesting. The other day I saw what I am sure is a fairy. It had white wings that whirred really fast. I couldn't see any arms but it had legs with what seemed to be feet and a seemingly orange-faced head. It flew in circles then set off over my head. It then hovered over an apple tree before disappearing suddenly. This happened at dusk at about half past ten.

Leela A Kingsnorth

Tynagh, Co Galway, Ireland

Lucky tiger

Reading the article about the tiger in Siberia [FT367:12] prompted me to relate the following. During the night



of 12 April 2018 I had a very short dream in which someone called me to my front door. I opened my flat door into a small communal hallway to be confronted by a large tiger, which roared and jumped at me. It hit me with such a force I fell back and rolled several times back into my hallway. I immediately woke up, realised I had been dreaming and soon fell asleep again. The next day, my son rang and asked if I would like to put a bet on the Grand National due to be run the next day, 14 April, at Aintree. I never normally bet, having lost on several occasions, but decided to have a look at the runners. One of the horses was called Tiger Roll, ridden by Davy Jones. I rang my son and asked him to put my stake on the horse. Tiger Roll came in first and I won £98!

Tony Davenport

Wirral Peninsula

Premature return

I believe my father may have had an example similar to the concept of the *Vardogr* in Norwegian lore. Back in the 1950s when he was a teenager, his parents would always go out

to the local club in Stockport for midweek bingo and a few drinks. This was a well-established, regular routine (which may be relevant for this phenomenon). My father was in the bathroom, brushing his teeth at the sink and preparing to go to bed. Looking in the mirror, he could quite clearly see his parents standing in the bathroom doorway, smiling at him but saying nothing, with my grandfather's arm around my grandmother's shoulders. He thought it a little odd, as they were back much earlier than usual, but finished up in the bathroom before going downstairs to speak with them. When he realised that in fact his parents were not there, he got pretty spooked! They did of course return for real later on – I don't know the time that had elapsed from the mirror sighting – and he was able to verify that they had not popped back earlier.

Duncan Kaiser

By email

Cap vanishes

Quite recently, I tried to unscrew a metal twist cap from a wine

bottle, but it wouldn't budge. My next resort was to use a washcloth as a "soft wrench" for better purchase and leverage, which often works. But this time nothing happened, meaning that running hot water over the cap to expand it was the only remaining option. But before doing that and while continuing to try turning the cap, there was suddenly liquid running over my hand and onto the floor. Removing my hand and the cloth, the bottle was now completely open though not much had spilled. Yet the cap was gone. It was not in the cloth, nor on the floor, nor in the space under the edge of fixtures – the kitchen stove and the sink cabinet on either side of where it would have to have fallen. Under each fixture, that space does not go back very far, so that was easy to check. Moreover, my ears are sharp enough to have heard this object fall on the hard linoleum floor. So the cap's disappearance is as hard to understand as it would be for many people, including myself, to believe that the cause was paranormal.

Richard Porter

Denver, Colorado.

Exeter ABC

Around noon sometime in late May or June 2011, I was on the M5 on the outskirts of Exeter, travelling by coach to Bristol. I looked out of the window to my left and saw, about 500ft (150m) away, a massive cat standing completely still in a field, close to a large tree. It was brown, roughly the height of an Alsatian dog but somewhat longer, with a tail almost as long as the body. The head was round with rounded ears. I had it in view for around 10 seconds. I am a former zookeeper and am familiar with big cats. The animal appeared to be an adult puma. No one else seemed to notice it.

Richard Freeman

Zoological Director, Centre for Fortean Zoology, Exeter

READER INFO

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £48; Europe £58; USA \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £68. Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

NORTH AMERICA (US & CANADA)

Subscribers should contact: IMS, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 800-428 3003 (toll free); Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

UK, EUROPE & REST OF WORLD

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times**, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.

Telephone payments and queries: 0330 333 9492.

E-mail payments and queries: customer@subscribe.forteanimes.com

HOW TO SUBMIT

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by FT readers and contributors in any medium or format.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Contact the art director by email (etienne@forteanimes.com) before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, PO Box 71602, London E17 0QD, UK or email drsutton@forteanimes.com. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate.

LETTERS

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteanimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

BOOKS, PERIODICALS AND REVIEW MATERIAL

Send to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP.

CAVEAT

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. FT can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.

CLIPSTERS WANTED!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: **1 OCT 2018**. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK
E-mail: sieveking@forteanimes.com

WHY FORTEAN?



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

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

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

in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

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

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

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox. **FT** toes no party line.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS

AUSTRALIA Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC), **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Steve Scanlon, Janet Wilson. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Kate Eccles, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Owen Whiteoak, Bobby Zodiac. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Terry W Colvin. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Greg May (FL), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

FORT SORTERS

(who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Chris Josiffe, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

CLIPPING CREDITS FOR FT371

Richard Alexander, Gerard Apps, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Rob Chambers, Peter Christie, Terry Colvin, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Graham Cordon, Mat Coward, Eric Ebeling, JD Evans, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Rob Gandy, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Alan Gibb, Anne Hardwick, Tony Healy, Kevin Hubbard, Martin Jenkins, Bob Johnston, Rosalind Johnson, Martin Judkins, Robin Lee, Kevin Lynch, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Mason, Greg May, John Palazzi, Jim Price, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Steve Scanlon, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Pam Thornton, Joe Trainor, Chris Tye, Nicholas Warren, Len Watson, Zane Whitehorn, Owen Whiteoak, Paul Whyte, Rosemary Williams, Janet Wilson, Bobby Zodiac.

PHENOMENOMIX BERBIGUIER Part 3 HUNT EMERSON and BOB RICKARD

BERBIGUIER SOUGHT OUT PHYSICIANS TO RELIEVE HIM OF HIS IMP-INDUCED 'INSOMNIA', BUT THEY GAVE HIM UP AS -COMPLETELY INSANE!

WOOF WOOF

HE EVEN CONSULTED WELL-MEANING PRIESTS WHO HUMOURED HIM WITH FAKE EXORCISMS, AND ADVISED VISITING FOUR CHURCHES A DAY!



FINALLY, IN 1816, HE CONSULTED THE PIONEER OF PSYCHIATRY, DR. AUGUST PINEL...

DR. PINEL
BRAINS FIXED

THE DOCTOR IS IN

TO HIS HORROR, HE FOUND PINEL WAS ALSO A GOBLIN GENERAL!

OH NO!

PINEL'S PUNISHING REGIME INVOLVED ICE-WATER BATHS, SEDATIVES AND DIETARY CONTROL...

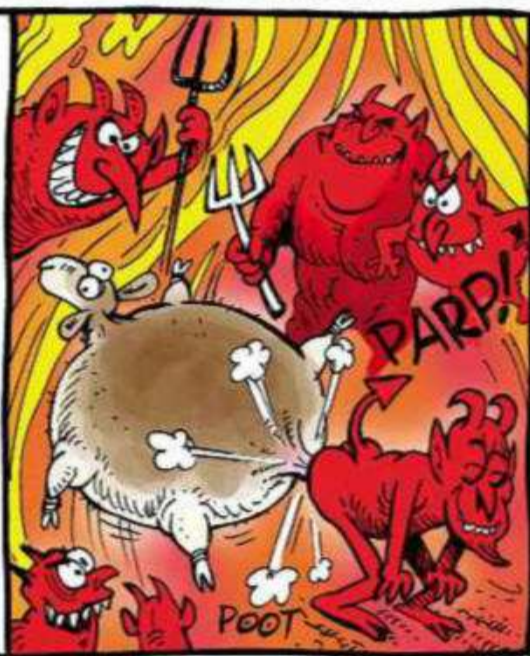
AAAAAAGGHHH! DR. PINEL-HOW CAN THIS BE CONTROLLING MY DIET?

YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE EATING, DO YOU? NOW JUST BE QUIET AND GO TO SLEEP!

BUT NOTHING COULD SHAKE BERBIGUIER'S DELUSIONS, OR HIS SINCERE PIETY AND DETERMINATION TO RID THE WORLD OF IMPS! NOT EVEN SOME PRETTY ODD HALLUCINATIONS...

...INCLUDING "THE DEVIL'S TRAMPOLINE" - HOW THE DEVIL CREATES BAD WEATHER!

"A HE-GOAT'S SKIN IS INFLATED IN THE CENTRE OF HELL BY A DEMON WITH INFERNAL BELLOWS..."



...PRESIDED OVER BY THE INFAMOUS BELPHEGOR, AND HIS MAGNETIC WAND!

THE INFAMOUS B

"IMPS BOUNCE ON THE GOAT, UP INTO THE CLOUDS, WHERE THEY CONJURE UP BAD WEATHER!"

BOING

NONE OF THIS ASSISTED POOR BERBIGUIER WITH HIS IMP PROBLEM, BUT DESPITE THESE SETBACKS HE RESOLVED TO CURE HIMSELF, AND SET ABOUT WRITING HIS MEMOIRS...

THE DISTRACTION HELPED...

ZZZ SNORE

...BUT IT WAS THE DEATH OF HIS SQUIRREL-FRIEND COCO THAT TIPPED HIM OVER THE EDGE!

ROLL

BERBIGUIER ROLLED OVER IN BED AND SQUASHED THE SQUIRREL!

BUT HE PUT THE BLAME ON OTHERS!

THEY'VE ALL GOT IT IN FOR ME!

COMING NEXT MONTH



THE SECRET WAR WINSTON CHURCHILL'S WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA



SPELLBOUND BELIEF, RITUAL AND THE USES OF MAGICAL THINKING



CRINOLINE INFERNO, FORT DOWN UNDER, DEMON HOUSE, AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 372

ON SALE 11 OCT 2018

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

A television producer died when a vape pen blew up and projected fragments into his skull, in what appears to be the first death attributed to vaping products in the US. Tallmadge Waksman ('Wake') D'Elia, 35, also suffered burns over 80 per cent of his body in a fire on 5 May caused by the exploding e-cigarette. His body was discovered by firefighters in the burning bedroom of his family home in St Petersburg, Florida. The vape pen, manufactured by Smok-E Mountain, was a so-called mechanical mod, meaning it drew power directly from the battery and did not regulate the voltage in the same way as other e-cigarettes, which have more safety features. However, between 2009 and 2016 there were 195 separate incidents of explosions and fires involving an e-cigarette in the US, resulting in 133 acute injuries, 38 of them severe. In 2015, an e-cigarette exploded in the face of a 29-year-old Colorado man, breaking his neck and shattering his teeth. A fire in January this year at Denver International Airport was blamed on a vape pen's lithium-ion battery. *BBC News, 17 May; D.Telegraph, 18 May 2018.*

An Irish farmer died of a suspected heart attack after his television exploded. Wilson McGirr, who was in his 60s and lived alone, had been watching a programme on 2 April when his TV set blew up and caught fire. He apparently feared it would set fire to his house in Raphoe, Co Donegal, and managed to take it outside onto the street. He may have been the victim of heart complications as well as possible smoke inhalation. He called for help but then collapsed. He was taken to hospital but died two days later. *Times, 5 April 2018.*

Prasert Chuayjit, 59, was killed in Thailand's Satun province on 13 June when a grenade he was cleaning exploded. The blast tore off his left arm and the shrapnel disfigured his face. His son said Prasert had found the grenade a year ago and he liked to take it out and clean it now and then, although his children had warned him against doing so. *The Nation (Thailand), 13 June 2018.*

An award-winning film director was headbutted to death by a giraffe while shooting footage at the Glen Afric, a game farm in North West province, South Africa, on 2 May. Carlos Carvalho, 47, was taking closeups of the animal named Gerald when it suddenly swung its neck and knocked

him flying 5m (16ft) (through the air. Carvalho died of his injuries that night after being flown to a Johannesburg hospital. He was the director of photography for *The Forgotten Kingdom*, the first feature film produced in Lesotho. *Sunday Express, 6 May; independent.co.uk, 7 May 2018.*

A crocodile killed a Protestant pastor near a lake in southern Ethiopia on Sunday, 3 June. Docho Eshete was conducting a baptismal ceremony for about 80 people on the shore of Lake Abaya in the town of Arba Minch. "He baptised the first person and he passed on to another one," said local resident Ketema Kairo. "All of a sudden, a crocodile jumped out of the lake and grabbed the pastor." While fishermen and residents used fishing nets to prevent the croc from taking the pastor's body into the lake, the croc escaped. Eshete died after being bitten on his legs, back and hands. *BBC News, 5 June; D.Telegraph, 6 June 2018.*

Elizabeth Mary Isherwood, 60, a retired police officer from Wolverhampton, died after getting trapped in a pitch-dark airing cupboard while on holiday. She tried to break out using a piece of water pipe, but after breaking the pipe, she got sprayed with water and subsequently died from hypothermia at Plas Talgarth Country Club near Pennal, Gwynedd. The inquest in Caernarfon was told Ms Isherwood checked in on 23 September 2017, but her body was not found for a week.

She evidently got trapped the night she arrived or the morning after. Her family believe she had taken a wrong turn after using the en-suite bathroom at night. The cupboard's internal doorknob disintegrated, meaning she could not escape. Banging was heard at the complex for more than 24 hours, but other guests thought it was maintenance work. It was only when water started gushing through the ceiling of an apartment below that it was realised there was a problem and a maintenance worker found her naked body. *Metro, 20 June; BBC News, 20+21 June; D.Telegraph, 21 June 2018.*

Sharon Reid, 61, who had terminal lung cancer, died on 17 September 2016 after she "blew herself up" at St Margaret's Hospice in Yeovil, Somerset. Her cigarette had set fire to her oxygen tank and she was thrown backwards out of her wheelchair. It is thought she died instantly. *D.Telegraph, 22 Nov 2017.*



From Apple to Zeiss, and everything in between



Try these magazines from just £1:
magazinedeals.co.uk/tech

Whether you're an IT professional or a first time buyer, Dennis technology has a magazine for you, all of which are written and produced by expert editorial teams.

We cover the whole spectrum of technology news, reviews and features.



CONSCIOUSNESS & HUMAN EVOLUTION 2018 CONFERENCE LONDON OCTOBER 19-21

*3 DAYS OF SPECIAL TALKS TO GIVE YOU TOOLS
TO DEVELOP YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS*

*GREGG
BRADEN*

*ANITA
MOORJANI*

*RUPERT
SHELDRAKE*

*LYNNE
McTAGGART*

*DR. LARRY
DOSSEY MD*

*DRS. JJ & DESIREE
HURTAK*

MEDIA PARTNER

KINDRED SPIRIT

PLUS MANY MORE WORKSHOPS FROM CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

**DON'T MISS OUT. LOG ONLINE
TO BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW!**

WWW.TCCHE.ORG