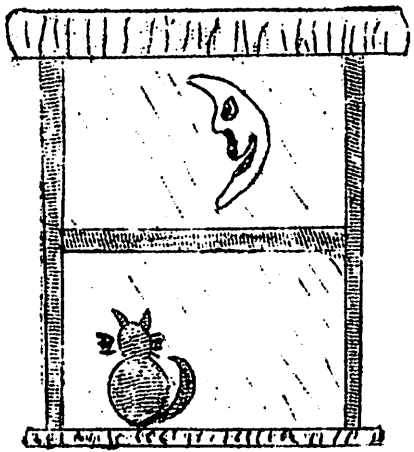


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THIS AND THAT

Members who have been in the Association a fairly long time will notice that one of my regular columns "Talking Point" is not in this time. But it is in a way as I usually do the comments in draft form and then lift out various comments to make them a part of "Talking Point." This time I have left them in the reviews, so those of you who expressed an interest in witchcraft will find remarks scattered throughout the mailing comments. And as you will notice on page 27, I am continuing the story of Camp Crazy in the next issue. Heck, if I'm not careful I won't meet the deadline.

Apropos of my remark in the review of Random on capital and corporal punishment, I have since read in the newspaper that the Lord Chief Justice himself has accused the Government of inconsistency on this point.

There have been various comments for the past few mailings that the quality of OMPA was dropping considerably and looking back I am inclined to agree, but sincerely hope that the nadir has been reached and that we are now on the way up again. I would like to go on for longer on this theme, but time is of the essence and it is getting dangerously near the deadline. Besides, it is better to try and do something towards helping to get the Association out of its rut and the following pages are my two pennorth. I hope that I don't give you too many bad dreams - and Ethel, I hope you are satisfied with the long review I have given Scottishe. Now will you stop worrying about whether you are helping to keep OMPA going, drat you!

In the last few months I have seen two entirely differently produced productions at The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford on Avon. The first was a production of the "Taming of the Shrew" and was sheer joy to watch. The company played it fast and flat out for laughs and had the audience from the time

(Continued on page 28)

COUNTDOWN

(Being a sort of review cum comment cum general natter on the 27th OMPA Mailing).

MAILING COMMENTS (Ellington) Ha! I see that since you can't get in the word via your unprintable cat you've got it in in Morse. You'll be putting in ~~... /28/... /~~ As for women, well at one time I did think they were the catty sex, and the girls in the sparking plug testing bay where I was stationed the high priestesses of the art of cattiness. Then I worked for a while in the workshop stores and found out that the blacksmith shop couldn't stand the sight of the men in the carpenters' shop, the carpenters couldn't stand the fitters, the fitters couldn't stand the turners, and the turners couldn't stand the blacksmiths - and my word! Weren't they catty about each other when they came into the stores for stuff. Compared with that lot the girls in the plug bay were beginners at a Sunday School tiff. On the whole, I have found that I can get on reasonably well with either sex, as long as neither tell me I ought to do this or think that. Mind you, in the WRAF it depended what command you were if you were friendly with women. I didn't mind the tomboyish type of female, but didn't care for the masculine type (I felt sorry for the genuine invert, but unfortunately the perverts outnumbered them). The latter were rare in most commands, but in a couple of home commands they were very prevalent. I remember thinking at one camp that it was the hell of a thing when you had to lock your bunk door against members of your own sex. As far as Lady C. is concerned, when I saw Daphne at Easter she suggested that Lawrence had tried to point out how industrial slums were wrecking the rural areas, But he didn't have to be so damned depressing about it! In any case, why couldn't he have stuck to one theme or the other - the distressed areas or the distressed female. He was preaching on one hand and condoning adultery on the other. Besides, his gamekeeper didn't ring true. Mellors had pulled himself up by his bootstraps and the last thing that sort of person does is to use the language of the farmyard, the mine, or the factory, to the people of another class, especially a woman of a higher class. Even in the Forces, most of the really rough types apologised if they said the four letter word in front of girls (wrong, really, as it only called attention to the slip). I had better qualify that and say most girls - the men did not consider themselves bound if the girl herself used the same sort of language and there were some. Again, in the book Mellors was not the only one who used the word. Sir Clifford's friends did - and in front of Constance. Far from showing how modern and daring he was in using that language, Lawrence was only betraying his ignorance of certain social courtesies. And one does not have to belong to

an upper class to know them. But the one thing that should be kept in mind, I suppose, was the fact that Lawrence was a sick man when he wrote the book and by following the almost depersonalized sex in it one can watch the progress of the disease that eventually killed him. It seems almost incredible to think that it was the same man who wrote Lady C. and that classic "The Woman Who Rode Away."

Odd you should mention The Memoirs of Hadrian - I'm half-way through it at the moment. To tell the truth I have been half-way through it for a long time - for some reason I have found it extremely heavy going. I have said that inverters are sick people who need help, but I still don't see the need to canonize them in these so-called modern novels. We don't canonize people with cancer or T.B. (except DHL) or ulcers. But what the hell - it's really nothing new. After all, some clot was sainted because he sat on top of a pillar for forty years, another for not washing for about twenty, and the sister of a Greek Emperor because she didn't take a bath for sixty years, only washing her hands to receive the Host./ Talking of baths reminds me of your comment that you read that too many hot baths causes loss of virility. I remember Bill telling me that that was how the Romans eventually lost what they won - because too many hot baths had enervated them - but he couldn't remember where he had read it.

I was really surprised at the comment that Sandra's article on witchcraft caused, but are you sure that there is very little witchcraft in the States, Dick? Mind you, a lot of our so-called covens who regard themselves as witches and warlocks are nothing of the kind. They are just practising the "old religion", which is more or less based on nature worship (devil worship is something entirely different). What they don't seem to realize is that even when the "old religion" was practised in this country the worshippers regarded witches or their equivalent with horror. The Saxons brought the word witch to this country, as the Celts had never heard of it until they came. Genuine Black Magic is a conglomeration of deliberately debased rites of several religions, the modern type being mostly a travesty of the Christian rites. It is the age old struggle for the impersonal Power - some use it for good and some use it for evil. But these covens who talk about themselves are harmless and on Walpurgis Night (April 30th) they probably pranced around a bit, muttered a few ancient prayers, and went home thinking that they had been awfully daring. The practising Black Magic types do not talk about themselves or what they are up to and they can be damned nasty. This year they probably drooled with joy because the full moon coincided with Walpurgis Night. And Dick, if there is very little witchcraft in the States, how come the shop in Los Angeles which caters for witches does such a roaring trade. Damn! I've mislaid the address and I was going to print it, too. Never mind, I may come across it.

BJOTTINGS. (Bjo) You like cats, Lewis Carroll, Da Vinci - I was beginning to wonder if we had everything in common except artistic ability. Hell, we're accident prone, too! Then I found it - you've got ulcers. Tsk! At your age, too. Never mind - you'll know what sort of a diet on which to put John when he's a tired, middle-aged business man. In London the doctors prescribe the Windmill Theatre - wartime motto: "We Never Clothed". The business men forget their ulcers, but it's hell on their blood pressure. I am glad to know that Spindrift recovered. One feels so helpless when animals are sick or hurt, as they can't tell you how or where they hurt. We talk about our dumb friends, but do they think we are the dumb ones? After all, they understand a lot of what we say, but how much do we understand what they say? Bill was reading a book the other day in which the author suggested "A dog knows that Man is God - that's intelligence. A cat knows that man is not God. That's wisdom." The same author had also noticed that dogs brought up with cats were smarter than dogs brought up by themselves. But Selina - and I'm not saying it because she is our cat - is about the smartest feline I've come across. I hold up various things and tell her what they are several times, then I name an article and she puts her paw on it. Quite often she jumps on to the table with an eager, interested look on her face, puts her two front paws on my dictionary (her desk) and we know she wants another lesson. With the aid of the Scrabble letters, we have taught her to pick out at least three letters of the alphabet (CAT, natch). This is a cunning plot, of course, to get her to do Vagary eventually, if I am a bit short of time. I seem to have wandered off the subject a bit, but I did like your zine and am sorry that you will have to cut down activity, but I know how it feels to be pushed for time.

RANDOM (Buckmaster). Some nicely thought out comments on women. We often disagree on subjects, Daphne, but I am in agreement with you here. And you have pointed out the difference between being "intelligent" and "studious" or "earnest". Years ago women did not have a chance to prove they could be intelligent, for the reason you have pointed out - running a house took all her time. Not so long back, I tried an experiment. Every evening for over a week - and the weekend as well - I went at the house, cleaning, ironing, dusting, the lot! I didn't read and I didn't write. At the end of that time my mind felt absolutely stale - I not only couldn't think, I didn't want to think. To me, although it has to be done (I don't mind surface untidiness, but I don't like dirt) housework is the most frustrating of all jobs, because there is no sense of accomplishment. It's never finished. When you have finished cleaning a house can you sit back with a sense of achievement. No, because the point where you started needs cleaning again - it's a vicious circle. For a woman who doesn't want to think or read or write housekeeping would be ideal, but if she wants to think, etc. it can be soul destroying unless she

unless she has time to do other things. Oh, yes, I agree that intelligence can be used in housekeeping, especially if you are not enthusiastic about, because then you figure out a way of doing it quickly but efficiently. Well, why not get a cleaner, did I hear someone mutter? Have you ever tried to get a cleaner?

My pet hate is shopping. I used to dread Saturday morning, but then the three supermarkets near us decided to stay open late on Friday evenings. This was an absolute godsend, as the old dears who have had the whole week to get what they want invariably clutter the High Street on Saturday morning and slow everything down to snail's pace. (I know they have to live, but why do 99% of the dodderers and selfish fussybuds retire to Cheltenham?). But on Friday night I can dash out, find the supermarket with the least queues at the paydesks and do the bulk of my shopping there, I go out a second time to the least crowded supermarket and get the rest of the stuff. So in just over half an hour on a Friday night I've done what would have taken three or four hours on Saturday morning.

But to get back to women. Yes, women doctors, teachers, etc. are often said to be "like men". A common error, because what should be said is that this sort of woman often has a masculine mind - and a woman can have a masculine mind and still be feminine. Vivky vacky with men, of course. At the turn of the century, when the fight for emancipation was hotting up, the Suffragetes had to be masculine minded and tough, but I can't say I agree with their crankiness. Women obtained their emancipation after World War 1 by proving they could be sensible and practical - they rose to the occasion. Throwing stones through windows and themselves under horses and chaining themselves to railings only got them the reputation of being thorough irresponsible. On the radio the other week I actually heard an ex Suffragete describe how she set fire to the home of a countess. Why? Because the woman happened to have a title, or refused to join the Suffragete movement, or what? A home is a home, be it castle or cottage, a place to go back to and keep the memories and treasure of your life. Does it matter whether one is a countess or a cook. When I think of the irreplaceable paintings and books that probably went up, and the thought that that house may have been a family's home for generations, I could weep. My sympathy will never go to people who try to further a cause by destroying or defacing beauty or monuments we are trying to preserve (like the cloth-headed CND types who daubed Stonehenge). No, it was the women who did not do cranky things who furthered the emancipation of women. Although it is a sad thing that, since emancipation, so many women who get given authority mistake it for power.

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case of Margaret Allen, the Lesbian who batted a nasty old woman over the head and was hanged for it in 1948. Now Margaret Allen was a genuine invert, whose mother realised that she wasn't "quite like other women" and who did her best to protect her daughter. Margaret Allen was deeply attached to her mother, which was rather unusual, because the masculine type Lesbians I have come across usually had a father fixation. Unfortunately, Mrs. Allen looked after her strange daughter too well, because when she died "Bill" as she was called, was too impractical to look after herself. Add the fact that "Bill" was ill, short of money, was going through the change of life, and had had the misfortune to fall in love (with a woman, of course) and one can get an idea of how mentally disturbed she must have been. She had been a bus conductress and all her regular passengers remembered how kind and patient she had been. Despite her kink she got on reasonably well with the townspeople. Nobody was particularly fond of the woman she killed, who had the reputation of being a mean old miser. And like so many tragedies it was caused over something utterly trivial. Margaret Allen had promised to try and get Florence Chadwick some sugar. She couldn't manage it immediately, but Mrs. Chadwick pestered and pestered her. One Saturday morning she went into "Bill" Allen's cottage, where the latter was dashing round getting ready as she had an appointment. The visitor couldn't - or wouldn't - see that she had picked the wrong time. Suddenly something snapped and before "Bill" Allen realised what she was doing she had bashed in Mrs. Chadwick's skull. She made some attempt to disguise her crime, but two days later she made a statement to the police.

She was sent for trial, found guilty and condemned to death. Her crime was entirely unpremeditated, but Ruth Ellis, several years later, went out with a gun with the deliberate intention of shooting her faithless lover. She, too, was in a highly disturbed mental state, yet thousands of people signed the petition for her reprieve. It was a terrible tragedy, yet "Bill" Allen's whole life had been a bigger tragedy. All the country was in an uproar over the condemnation of Ruth Ellis, yet when a petition was got up for "Bill" Allen's reprieve, only 132 people could be found who would sign it. In one unpremeditated moment she had killed a woman who was known to be a pest. But "Bill" Allen was Lesbian. It did not matter that she was a genuine invert, who had been born "wrong", she was a social outcast. I can't help having an uneasy feeling that so few people signed the reprieve because she was socially "untouchable". Did she go to her death not so much because she had committed an unpremeditated murder, but because she was a "pariah" among normals?

And talking of hanging brings me to another point. Did you read the news that Parliament had refused to bring in a bill allowing for this nasty little Teddy boys who have been doing so

much damage to persons and property to be caned? The Bill was thrown out, yet the Bill put forward for raising the hanging age from 18 to 21 was also thrown out. The amendments, rather. This seems to me to be a strange state of affairs. The Government look with horror on the thought of caning an 18 year old (something that might make him think twice about hurting anyone else) yet they agree that he can be hanged. To me, this is a ridiculous anomaly.

Ha, yes! I remember Redbeard and his talk on anarchy. Remember the heckler who kept him going?

When I received the first copy of Esprit as a general zine, I remember saying to Bill, "Oh, no, Daphne can't drop out of OMPA." And RANDOM has proved what a loss it would have been if you had, so don't. That sounds a bit involved, but you know what I mean. I hope.

VIPER 2 (The Big 'Un). Like I've already said in the review (sort of) of the Dick Ellington zine, the so-called "witches" who talk about themselves are harmless. Sometimes I have a suspicion they are men and women who are bored to death with the local Rotarian clubs and Women's Institutes. But I bet most of them have already found out there are born committee members and organisers among them. Perhaps some of them are worshippers of the "old religion", which I think nowadays is just a sort of nature worship without the blood sacrifices, but I suspect a number of them do it for a lark. It is the people who do not talk about what they do who are the dangerous ones and they are not peculiar to the British Isles, but far more widespread than you think. If you would like to know more about the "old religion" I can recommend Margaret Murray's "The God of the Witches", in which she advances some unusual theories about William Rufus, Thomas à Becket, Joan of Arc, and Gilles de Rais, and Christina Hole's "Witchcraft in England". Incidentally witch is derived from the Saxon word "wicca", meaning wise. There were - and probably still are - three sorts of witches. The white witch, who used her power for healing and good; the black witch, who used her power for evil and cursing; and the grey witch, who was the most dangerous because she could "overlock" or cancel the spells of the other types. I found that little bit of knowledge in a book entitled "Poisonous Plants", published by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. Er, yes - quite! If I have time I'm going to put in this zine the story of a year I spent at a camp in Germany. I wouldn't believe in all this nonsense - until I came up against it. Let us say that there exists some sort of power. This power is neither good nor bad, and if certain people have the ability to draw on this power they can use it for good or evil. There are various spots where, if you are in the least psychic, this power can be felt. Sounds crazy doesn't it? But if you are ever in this country, I'll take you to one of these spots.

Yes, well, I wouldn't say my mailing comments are reviews, but more of a chat about a subject which the zine under discussion has sparked off. I like to see mailing comments as at least you know that someone has read what you have taken the trouble to write. Mind, I feel a bit guilty over that last remark as until the last couple of mailings I was just skimming. In fact, I didn't even notice that a couple of members were being rude about me. Tsk! All that effort and I hadn't even noticed - and I certainly don't intend to start arguing now.

The only Mary Renault novels I have read are "The Last of the Wine" and "The King Must Die," but both had a thoroughly authentic ring about them. She must know Thucydides "The Pelopponesian War" backwards, but she obviously knows and loves the scenes of which she writes./Have you read Alfred Duggan's "Devil's Brood"? If not, how would you like the pb edition? I'll swap for a Habakkuk. /When I started reading F.M. Busby's "IN The Road," my first reaction was "What the hell is this?" Bill took a look and enlightened me. "It's beat - migod! what a wonderful take off of Kerouac!" He gleeed over it and when I read it through I realised why. Bill reminded me of a book he had got from the library about beats "The Darma Bums". I did read some of it, but decided if I wanted to gawp at lots of dirty words I could go and read them on a lavatory wall, except I'd feel rather out of place in a men's convenience, and the only place I ever saw bad words in a Ladies(!) was the Town Hall cloakroom in Enniskillen.

I once read serials instalment by instalment, but having been caught half a dozen times, I decided I'd collect all the parts before reading it. That was after I'd missed the last part of "Mission of Gravity" in Astounding.

ERG (Jeeves) The news that six coloured sailors were taken off a British ship was reported on the home front. I read it in the "Daily Telegraph", and it was also mentioned the in the radio programme "Any Questions". As a matter of fact, the ship was going to South Africa and the Navy transferred the coloured sailors to save them the unpleasantness that would have probably been their lot had they gone ashore in South Africa./ You say if we used the United Nations properly the world wouldn't be in a mess. I'd qualify that by saying that if the people who ran the UN ran it properly there wouldn't be such a mess. /I see you mention fox hunting. Did you read of the RSPCA meeting when blood sports were under discussion. Stap me! Compared to that lot those over publicised LC meetings of a couple of years ago seemed like gentle old ladies' sewing circles./ As for segregation - well, the Congolese and their confreres in Angola have not forwarded the cause of their black brothers much, have they? It's a pity they didn't follow the dignified example of Nigeria when she gained her independence.

BURP (Bennett). When I saw the CND rally last year before the marchers arrived I asked a policeman how many people were in the Square and he told me 55,000 and that the marchers would make another 45,000. The Daily Telegraph estimated 100,000 - a paper not given to exaggeration - but there was quite a spill over into the various streets. I haven't read "Fair Stood the Wind for France," but you have aroused my curiosity./ I agree with you about "The Woman Who Rode Away" and think it a pity that LCL was not written in the same style./ Do visit York if you can find the time, Ron, I think you'll like it. And take a look at the street called The Shambles, which starts at Monkgate (I think) and ends at Whipma Whopma Gate. The Minster is worth seeing, too, although being there during the war I did not see those famous stained glass windows, as they had been removed for the duration. Which was just as well - I remember the Baedeker raid on York. And one of the City's Chinese Laundries was owned by a Chinaman called Wong Jock. Another laundry, one Fung Foo, was in Monkgate.

AMBLE (Mercer) Odd you should mention thinking of pre-war as pre-call-up. I never had any doubts about when the war started, maybe because I was about 500 miles from home and the world's worst driver very kindly drove me back to a worried mother. (She also drove me nearly mad with fright on the journey - I shall never understand why we only had one accident. She did her best to shove another driver over Shap Fell, with the result that both cars nearly went over in a loving embrace). However, I digress. I was in the W.R.A.F until 1955 and a year or two before that a group of us were discussing what we were going to do when we were "out". One Waaf used the phrase "After the war, I'm going to---" and it was quite some time before any of us noticed it because we were thinking along the same lines. /Yuk! I like crit (d) "I object to you, and try to pretend that you don't exist." So you've noticed that method, too! Your talk on maths reminded me of a problem one of Area Managers told me of the other day. Three men went in to a poultry shop to buy a chicken. The woman behind the counter charged them 30 shillings and they each paid 10 shillings. After they had left the woman decided she had charged them too much and sent a boy after them with five shillings. The boy gave them each a shilling and pocketed the other two. Therefore each man had paid nine shillings for the chicken. Three nines are twenty seven. The boy had kept two shillings, and two plus twenty seven is twenty nine. So what happened to the other shilling?

SCOTTISHE (The Wee 'Un) What the hell do you mean by saying you are thinking of leaving OMPA? Isn't it bad enough to have lost Willis, Bulmer and Clarke without you nattering about leaving the Association. Admittedly, OMPA has come near to being moribund, but dammit, woman! It's shots in the arm like Scottishe that keeps it alive. In fact, if there were more zines like yours, OMPA would not only keep alive, but would be much enlivened. You want

to know what members think of Scottishe? Och, awa' wi' ye, hinny! I dinna ken what the rest of the members think (but I should not think you have need to worry) but I can tell you what I think. If you leave us and take witty contributors like Willis and Maciavarley and your own pertinent writings as well, I think you will be a mean wee besom! So there! Your mailing comments are short, but to the point. Multum in parvo, as it were. Furthermore, you have a gentle way of ticking members off if you think they need it. That is, that is you can be firm without being offensive or personally insulting. In other words, your criticisms are constructive, not destructive, and this is a good thing.

As I have already said, I was surprised at the amount of comment Sandra's article on witchcraft caused. As for occult power-well, I always had an open mind about, but if I can get the story of Camp Crazy in this issue, you will know what convinced me. Unfortunately, I am psychic to a certain degree and don't think I'm bragging. I'm complaining! It is not a gift, but more of a curse, although like other "gifts", it comes and goes. Because of this I am likely to sense whether the atmosphere of a place is good or bad. I have already mentioned witchcraft in other mailing comments, but here I would like to quote from Margaret Murray's "Witch Cult in Western Europe":

"... the lascivious dances and sexual experience that were alleged to be part of the procedure at the Sabbaths, is explainable on the theory that the witches were members of fertility cults, such as have been known amongst men from the earliest times; The Devil who appeared to his worshippers was undoubtedly a man, often disguised in animal form; the flying on broomsticks may be accounted for by the fact that in the half underground huts of primitive times the chimney was in the centre of the roof and was also the door; and the belief that witches could transform themselves into animals, a belief that can be paralleled in many countries today, may be explained, perhaps, by the ceremonial donning of animal skins. Such a garb was adopted by the "Sorcerers" of prehistoric times, a fact that lends weight to the view that witchcraft was a continuation of the old pagan religion.

" As reasonable beings we may find some satisfaction in the thought that that our fathers were not deceived on so colossal a scale and over so long a period as has been supposed; but our satisfaction is as nought when we recall the appalling atrocities that marked the attempt to suppress the cult. We think of the feeble old women who were "waked" by having an iron bridle bound across the face with four prongs which were thrust into the mouth and so attached to the wall that the wearer could not stand upright, sit, or lie down, while men constantly stood by for sometimes days on end to prevent her sleeping even for a moment and ready to catch the first raving admissions of guilt. We think of

the thumbscrews, the "boots" in which legs were broken by wedges and the braziers in which the victim's legs were heated over a fire. We think of the brutal scourgings; the prickings all over the body in search of the insensible spot which would be an infallible proof of guilt; the duckings in rivers when the trussed accused could prove their innocence by sinking to the bottom. We think, finally, of the hangings and stranglings, the burnings at the stake. These things make up one of the blackest, most terrible chapters in the whole of human history."

Not pretty, is it? In his book "The Story of Wookey Hole," L.B. Thornycroft, D. Lt. comments that the early Christian missionaries reluctantly gave their consent for some of the rites and beliefs of the pagans to be incorporated into the new religion to facilitate conversion, but the ordinary folk continued for many centuries as only nominal Christians. But as the new religion became firmly established it decided to suppress all religions that were not acceptable to the Catholic system. The writer states that in the thirteenth century the Inquisition was established (as a matter of fact, it was established in the time of Theodosius the Great) for the purpose primarily of combatting witchcraft and sorcery and that soon in Britain thousand of people were being charged, tortured and often executed. The persecutions reached their zenith in the sixteenth century when Romans and Protestants each tried to outdo the other in putting down witchcraft. In the Bishopric of Bemberg 600 supposed witches were executed in six months, and about the same time 500 in Geneva. 400 died in a single execution at Toulouse and a judge in Nancy bragged of condemning 800 witches in sixteen years. In one year 1,000 supposed witches died and as late as 1670 many were burned in Sweden. The writer goes on to state that thousands of reputed witches were put to death in Europe and Britain.

Now I don't think witchcraft (the black sort) is necessarily the "old religion". That sort of witchcraft has always been the dark mockery of all religions, including our previous ones. L.B. Thornycroft is also wrong in giving the impression that the Inquisition gained a firm foothold in Britain. It came here once and that was to deal with the Templars, and when those poor wretches had been dealt with that was the end of the Inquisition in this country. On the whole, Britain had a better record than the European countries as far as torture was concerned. She was not perfect by any means, but at least she didn't make an art of torture (although the Tudors came near it). But witchcraft was not even a capital offence in England until the Reformation, when the pagans with only a thin coating of Christianity became fanatical converts of the Reformed Church. The witches (proved or otherwise) went through hell in Tudor and Stuart times. However, in 1612, James VI and I forbade the burning of witches - they were to be hanged instead. Mind you, witchcraft was not

the only crime for which a woman could be burned alive. Until quite late in the eighteenth century a woman could be - and was - burned alive for the murder of her husband by poison.

In 1645, Matthew Hopkins, self appointed Witchfinder General, went from town to town for a fee of 20/- hunting down witches, although witchfinders were not recognised in English law. God knows how many innocent people he sent to their deaths in the space of two years, but fortunately this son of a Puritan minister died in 1647. No doubt if Charles I had not been so busy being harried hither and yon, this Hopkins excrescence would have been put down very firmly. Whatever the Stuart kings may have been, it is eternally to their credit that the first one to sit on the English throne forbade the burning of witches, the second one abolished the Star Chamber, and the third abolished torture, although to be hanged drawn and quartered still remained the penalty for high treason and for striking an officer if in the Services. I may expand upon the "Black Lodges" in a later issue, but if your curiosity has been aroused I suggest that you read Dennis Wheatley's latest book "The Satanist".

Walt as interesting as ever and his mention of Ezra Pound reminded me of a story told by mother-in-law. Bill had already mentioned that his mother had known Ezra Pound as "Ray", as his friends called him. When mother in law was Christine Chester Logie she knew Ray quite well, but he had a habit of talking almost non-stop, especially about Ray, so she developed the trick of not hearing him, with the result that one evening he got very offended with her. He had proposed twice and she hadn't heard him. Anyway, **Christine** did become engaged to him eventually, but broke it off after a week as she came to the conclusion that there were other ways of meeting her Maker without being talked up to him. Though some of her friends said that during the period he knew her, Ezra Pound wrote some of his best poetry. Bill's mother was born in America and brought up in North Carolina where her father had a plantation.

The pocket book article by Maciavarley was fascinating, but 2½D royalty per book for the author seems a poor reward to me. No wonder Sir Alan Herbert and his colleagues are campaigning./ No, Ethel, for Pete's sake don't leave OMPA. Look how you've managed to keep me going.

UL (Metcalf) Well, you manage to say quite a lot in very few words without being obscure, but how about an occasional article? Judging from your mailing comments, I am sure you could do it./ When did this story of the supposed Jap offer of surrender come out? I couldn't have been reading my newspapers properly to have missed that item. Or is it just more anti-Red propaganda being

churned out? Frankly, I am so sick of the Communist anti-West propaganda and the West's anti-Communist propaganda that I don't believe much of what either side says. It reminds me of two small boys, both of whom have been thoroughly naughty, each trying to blame the other for everything. But it seems to me the world is in a state of retarded adolescence and I suppose until we reach maturity in a few thousand lifetimes, we need to be protected from each other. So using the Bomb on the Japs was an inexcusable brutality, was it? So was the treacherous attack on Pearl Harbour and the treatment of p.o.w.s in Jap hands. That so-called surrender may have been another of their sweet little tricks. Sometimes I think the Americans are far too trusting a race (except where Russia is concerned, but then, nobody in the West seems to trust that country). It is a great and noble thing (I am not using those words in a derogatory sense) to forgive one's enemies, but even if you forgive them you don't have to trust them. /What does spelunking mean? Is it what we call pot-holing over here? That is exploring caves and suchlike.

VERT(mayne). Well, Ivor, to be honest there were parts of this I didn't quite dig. But being neither a jazz nor a beat fan, this was only to be expected, I suppose. This doesn't mean, of course, that I don't think you should write about these things. After all, it is your zine and it would be a sad thing to have another spate of proposals, this time about what articles should be used and what shouldn't. The book about junkies (The Naked Lunch) sounded completely mad to me (was it written under the influence?) Ye gods! Another march? So they are going to Moscow this time, are they? And how many little embryo Communists^{will} the full fledged article? I have no doubt they will be feted all the way to Moscow, which will be a deliberate policy, of course. Let's hope there will be no more George Blake types among them.

PARAFANALIA (Burn) It is the hell of a thing when you read an Ompazine, find it thoroughly interesting and then can't find much to say about it. I enjoyed this issue Bruce, and I am very sorry that it doesn't spark me off into a couple of paragraphs. However, perhaps I'll find something to ramble on about it in your next zine and can give you a couple of paragraphs to make up for this brief mention.

And that is the end of the mailing comments. In fact, I am surprised that I managed to go on for so long on such a small mailing. Let us hope that OMPA, having been in the doldrums for quite some time now, will perk up and be the lively apa it once was. Not in the same way, of course, for we all change with the passing of time, but surely it can be just as interesting in a different way.

NOT YOUR PHILOSOPHY, HORATIO!

In the last issue of Vagary I said that I would write of a place with an atmosphere that "reeked" of evil. Well, here it is and, although it may sound incredible, it is the truth. In fact, I shall probably have to understate because there are things that I know readers will find difficult to swallow. But what I am going to relate is true - I only wish it were not.

A number of us arrived in Germany in August, 1948, and the day following our arrival we assembled at Sundern to hear where we were posted to and if we could be given some idea of the place. Another Waaf, Rae by name, and myself were posted to a place neither of us had heard of, but it was place whose name had about a dozen different meanings in German. Crazy, illusion, delusion, ghost, spirit, wild, bad, and devilish were some of the meanings, so I shall refer to the place as Camp Crazy. This is in case a present member of OMPA may one day join the forces and find himself posted there. I don't want to worry him before he arrives.

Rae and I asked some airmen about this place, but all they said was that the place was surrounded by barbed wire and that it used to be a place for loonies - there had even been a tram to take them back and forth. What they did not tell us was the reputation the camp had acquired for itself, probably thinking if we did not notice its atmosphere no harm had been done, whereas if they spoke of it, they might put ideas into our heads.

The tram turned out to be a fact, but when we arrived at Camp Crazy in the evening we were met, the beds in the room we were to share had been made, and we were taken for a meal. In short, we received a friendly welcome and the girls at the camp went out of their way to make us feel at home.

However, in a day or two we began to wonder about the place. Someone had mentioned that the camp had an "atmosphere", but did not specify what sort, and the main topic of conversation was about the soldier who had wandered into the woods on the edge of the camp and there had hanged himself. What horrified me at the time was that the personnel who were discussing it seemed not so much appalled as indignant. "As if we don't put up with enough here," remarked an airman, "without strangers coming here to do themselves in."

I had been working in the Orderly Room a week when one of the airmen mentioned that he did not like the "atmosphere" of the place. "What atmosphere?" I asked. "It's bad - and depressing,"

he replied. I argued that it was not and said that I was usually sensitive to atmosphere and hadn't noticed anything wrong with it. "It creeps up on you after about a fortnight," he said, "and if you're sensitive to atmosphere it will hit you twice as hard. If I were you, I'd ask for a posting." I said, of course, that I would not do anything of the kind, but I was later to recall his advice and wish I had taken it.

It was about two weeks after we had arrived at Camp Crazy when I had the first inkling there was something wrong with the place. I awoke one night on hearing Rae call out and when I looked at her I saw her sitting up in bed, her eyes starting out of her head and looking badly frightened. "This place is scaring me," she gasped. "Nonsense, you've had nightmare," I answered. She insisted that she had not and that there was something evil in the air. All I wanted to do was to get back to sleep, so I was not as sympathetic as I should have been. Remembering that she was a Roman Catholic I replied irritably, "Well, in that case, why don't you tell your beads? That should drive any evil away." She looked a little startled at receiving this advice from an Anglican, but it seemed to work for her.

A week later, it was my turn. I had been reading in bed, but after I had put the light out and was just dropping off to sleep, I felt a blast of hot, stuffy air come through the room. This was followed by a nauseating stench which seemed to be a mixture of sulphur and decay. Puzzled, I was wide awake in a moment. Despite the fact the windows were wide open, the room had become extremely hot and stuffy. Not only that, but the smell ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and was followed by what I can only describe as a shifting of the atmosphere. Then I felt it! A terrible depression, followed by an unreasonable fear and a feeling of "Oh. What's the use!" Why not end it all?" I was appalled at the thought, for never in my life had I consider doing away with myself, and being a very staunch Anglican at the time, to me suicide was a terrible crime. It still is, for that matter. I called to Rae to see if she were awake. She was and she had felt this change as well and was scrabbling for her rosary. Now don't ask me to explain this because I can't, but as she told her beads the bad feeling seemed to weaken and the room grew less stuffy. By the time she had finished it felt quite normal.

Naturally, in a day or two I had persuaded myself that it was all imagination and that the few tales I had heard about the camp had put ideas into my head. The fact was, that after a few mild excursions into the occult I had decided that it was a subject best left alone. So having firmly avoided the occult, I failed to realise that what had happened that night was the beginning of a sustained psychic attack. In fact, if anyone had told me that at the time I would have laughed and told him not to be a bloody fool.

In any case, other things were beginning to mystify me somewhat. Although I had been on the camp less than two months I was surprised at the number of courts of enquiry and courts martial that were held. This was incredible, even for a camp where all the bad boys of B.A.F.O were reputed to be sent. Even when we were away from camp for a weekend the spell seemed to follow us. There was the time when a group of us had gone to the weekend leave centre at Iserlohn and where we managed to get mixed up with a brutal attempt at murder on our way back to camp. But that is a story on its own that I shall leave for a later issue.

One of the places in S.H.Q. that was affected was the Release Section. Now, having been a release clerk for a couple of years after the war, I usually stood in for Audrey when she went on leave. As I doubled the job with my own I only spent my time up there when an airman came in for his release papers. I noticed nothing at first, then two or three days later I was in the Release Section when I noticed the air had become hot and stuffy and then came the ghastly stench of sulphur and decay. I grabbed the papers I was working on and bolted to the Orderly Room. About five minutes later a pale looking airman came in looking for me. He had been in the Release Section, waited for about thirty seconds, then fled. The first think he wanted to know was if there were anything dead under the floorboards up there. I suggested that he came back with me and when we returned the stench had gone and the air felt quite clear. The airman had not been long on the camp and I didn't enlighten him.

It was about this time that the police sergeant had left the guardroom to look for one of his corporals who should have been on duty. He reached the police block, happened to glance up and next second was tearing up the stairs and into the billet, and hauling in the missing corporal on the end of the rope with which he was attempting to hang himself. The corporal, when he could talk, was in quite a state. He had never felt like that in his life was his remark, but just as he was coming on duty it had suddenly got extremely hot and stuffy and a terrible smell came from somewhere, then he felt a deadly wave of depression sweep over him and the feeling of "what's the use of anything." "It was almost as though something was telling me to hang myself," he complained. The corporal should have been court-martialled for this, but was posted instead. This was, after all, a better method than making him feel ten times worse by dragging him through the brou-haha of an investigation.

The next week another corporal went back to the police block for something he had forgotten and as he was going up the stairs he noticed a terrific heat. When he returned about three minutes later he found the stairs blazing. Fortunately, he kept his head and not too much damage was done, but this was not the first time

that fires had broken out on camp for no reason at all. Only a week after this incident a couple of us went into the telephone exchange to leave a message for one of the girls. We both noticed how hot it was in there, but what the other girl did not notice was that the radiators were stone cold. I had noticed that because of my habit of leaning against them. Less than five minutes later we saw the fire engine going full pelt towards S.H.Q - part of the exchange was on fire

In the meantime, WAAF "B" Block, in which I was billeted, seemed to get worse and worse. Rae had been posted by this time and I had another girl in the room with me who was extremely fortunate as she never seemed to notice the hot blasts, the stench and the dreary, dreary feeling of is life worth living that followed these manifestations. I stuck it out as long as I could, but eventually became so afraid that if I fought against this thing it would win one night, so I started taking a seasick tablet to get to sleep. That sounds crazy, but the tablet contained a drug that knocked one out. Unfortunately, I have a high tolerance to drugs and I found one night that instead of putting me to sleep the damned thing had only made me very thirsty. The ablutions were only just across the corridor and I crept off to get some water. The atmosphere in the corridor nearly knocked me back. So bad (not a stench this time) was it, that for a moment I was literally rooted to the spot.

Have you ever heard a deathly silence? That sounds very paradoxical, but it is difficult to explain. Although there was not a sound to be heard the very air seemed to be in motion and three times as thick as it should have been. And all the time, just on the edge of consciousness and on the other side of that weird, thick silence there seemed to be whisperings and mutterings and movement. Hell, I know it sounds melodramatic and hackneyed, but about the only words I can think of to describe this was that evil hung in the air like a palpable thing. I got the water and spilt most of it in the rush to get back to my bunk.

The next day I had a quiet think to myself. Was it the effect of the tablets I had been taking plus a too powerful imagination? There was only one way to find out and that was to stop taking the tablets for a few days. I did this, but one night I went out into the corridor, thinking I had heard someone creeping about. The R.A.F. sergeants' block was next door and newcomers to the camp were often confused and I thought that the shuffling I'd heard was a sergeant who had lost his way. I wasn't even thinking of the atmosphere. But as I groped for the corridor light switch I felt it again - the same queer thick silence with the same impression of whisperings and sniggerings just beyond the range of consciousness. And this time I was clearer headed than on the previous occasion I went out. I switched on the light, but there

was not a soul in sight. Since the footsteps had shuffled past my door no one could have got out of the block without my seeing or hearing him or her.

I suppose I was lucky in a way having Ann for my roommate, as she was so very unimaginative that even the atmosphere of the camp could not get through to her. Perhaps because of her lack of imagination she to block off things just a little. Except for one bad night when I awoke at one in the morning with the awful feeling that something was hovering nearby and that the something was not very nice. It made me feel really ill, yet when I switched on the light there was nothing to be seen. Ann woke up and I asked her for an aspirin and it seemed do damned silly to say that something I couldn't see was scaring the daylight out of me. She gave me one, but it didn't improve matters and I had a sudden and nasty feeling that a thing of some sort was trying to get into this world through me. Don't ask me to explain this, but just try to imagine how it felt to be used in an attempt to gain entry into a world that the thing - whatever it was - should not have inhabited. I fought - I sat up in bed absolutely bending my will against this strange power, but the thing was gaining and I had practically used up all my reserves of will. Just as I knew I couldn't hold out any longer, Ann woke up again and looked at me - I hadn't switched the light out - and asked if I were ill. Before I had a chance to say yea or nay she had gone into the next bunk for the Waaf sergeant, who took one look at me and told Ann to 'phone sick quarters. I insisted I was all right, Betty said I was not and when Ann came back she made a strong cup of tea. In the meantime, the nursing orderly turned up and took out a thermometer. I said I hadn't got a temperature, but the orderly insisted on taking it. When she looked she told me to pack my small kit as I was going back to sick quarters with her. I had not got a high temperature - it had dropped to 95.5.

Perhaps it was just as well that the orderly took me off to sick quarters as I felt that if the thing came back again I would not be able to fight it off. When the M.O. came in to see me the next morning I would not tell him anything beyond the fact that I had suddenly felt dreadfully ill. I certainly wasn't going to tell him what had really happened because it sounded so batty and I didn't want him to think that I had gone off my trolley. It was not until two months after we had all left the camp that I found out that the M.O. was also affected by its atmosphere and that whenever a Waaf was on duty in sick quarters at night, he not only made one of the R.A.F. orderlies stay in sick quarters, but he himself slept on a camp bed in his office. So if I had told him, far from packing me off to a hospital, he would have had me posted within two days.

A day or two after this Butch, A R.A.F, corporal, shot himself. Butch was a man who had spent a lot of his service on the Continent and had helped a great deal to repopulate the devastated areas. He was always being marched in on a charge and he was always getting away with it as he knew Kings Regulations and the Manual of Air Force Law better than the admin. staff did. And he was usually a very cheerful chap. The strange thing was that only a fortnight before Butch had been in the Victory Bar down in the village and told a group of his friends the perfect way to commit suicide.. No-one believed him, of course, but on the day his suicide was discovered, Butch was supposed to have come to the Orderly Room for some papers. I had them already, but no Butch. I rang the armoury, where he worked, and asked if he were there. The armoury sergeant replied that he thought Butch had gone straight to S.H.Q. before reporting for duty and why not try the guardroom - he was probably on another charge. I tried the guardroom, but he wasn't there either. Half an hour later I tried the armoury again, but there was still no sign of Butch. The sergeant said his bunk was next to the armoury and he'd go and have a look. He went and found the bunk door was locked. This struck him as strange as it should have been left open in the morning for inspection. Something must have made him suspicious as he got another airman and between them they knocked the door in. Soon after this he rang me and said that Butch would not be in for his papers and I thought then there was a queer note in his voice. No wonder! The sergeant and the airman had found Butch very neatly on his bed and very dead. The night before he had blanched all his webbing, pressed his best blue, polished his buttons, and then sat down and carefully worked out a trajectory for a .303 bullet fired from a rifle in an ingenious pulley arrangement that was worked by tugging a cord. Butch dressed himself in his best blue, arranged his pillows, then sat down very carefully on his bed and jerked the cord. He made a very neat job of it, as I saw the photographs afterwards. The hole was drilled in the middle of his forehead just above the eyes and but for that one would have thought that he was peacefully asleep. The photographs of what was left of the back of his head, of course, told a very different story.

Yet Butch had seemed such a happy go lucky chap, and some days later I asked his friend Maxie what on earth had made him do it. Maxie hesitated, and then said, "Well, not long before he did it I saw him in the showers and noticed the bad rash on his back and asked him why he didn't go sick. He told me it was too late - that he was well into the secondary stage, and that he had not realised earlier because the first stage must have been so slight he hadn't noticed it. Perhaps he couldn't face the thought of ending up with G.P.I." That made the tragedy even worse because it was the very next day that I saw the post mortem report and there wasn't a sign of any sort of venereal disease. But Butch

had only anticipated by about six months. His liver and kidneys were all to hell, his heart had got rocky and he had an abscess on the part of the brain that hadn't managed to blow away.

We had become quite used to attempted suicides as there was one on an average of every three weeks, but for some reason or other the corporals seemed to be affected the most. There was the corporal who had been hauled before the C.O. as he had been heard to say that he would shoot himself. The corporal said he would not only shoot himself, but he would take the C.O. with him. He was posted and on his way to another unit the same day. Then just after Christmas two of the police corporals had vanished - not that anybody cared (not even the other police) as they were two of the nastiest little jerks in the guardroom. At the time of their disappearance a Volkswagen also vanished, as did a number of blankets and a quantity of petrol. It was said that they had been seen heading in the general direction of Switzerland, but by the time the Swiss police had been informed the birds had flown. Six weeks later they were picked up in Paris, minus Volkswagen, blankets and petrol. They were brought back to camp for a Field General Court Martial, because we were on active service out there. They were charged with being absent without leave, of illegally disposing of Air Force property, of illegal entry into Switzerland and France - and do you know what they got. Reduced to the ranks (they were only acting, anyway), a severe reprimand apiece, and a posting to the most out of the way unit that could be thought up. To this day I have not got over the lightness of their sentence, especially as an airman in the R.A.F. Regiment who had been charged with being in improper possession of another airman's shoes (and it had been extremely possible that he had genuinely made a mistake in thinking they were his own when packing to go on leave) received six months detention. Just what did those damned cops know that enabled them to get off so lightly?

To quote Shakespeare "sorrows come not as single spies, but in battalions." The camp had scarcely got over the shock of Butch's suicide when a corporal nicknamed Blackie put the end of a Lee Enfield in his mouth and pulled the trigger, making a thoroughly messy job of it. He had been depressed as he had been attached to the R.A.F. Regiment and nobody loved that lot except the R.A.F. Regiment. The final blow came on the day when he was told that he was transferred permanently to the Regiment, and to get the flashes up on his shoulders.

Not counting the soldier who hadn't really belonged to the camp, anyway, and working on the theory that things happened in threes, everyone waited for the third death. After Blackie's little effort we had already received bad publicity in the "Daily Express" as the "Suicide Camp". The newspaper referred to our dark distinguished looking C.O. Actually, he looked like an

unshaven version of Edward G. Robinson. The C.O., of course, kept the reporter away from the camp personnel and the German workers, one of whom had told us that even when the Germans had the camp there was a high rate of suicide.

We had not long to wait for the third death. There were two, as a matter of fact, because of two tragedies in quick succession at the married quarters which were just outside the camp bounds. A flight sergeant and his wife had gone down to the Married Quarters club one evening, and before they left the house they had made sure that the children were in bed and there no fires left alight anywhere. As the club was not far away they were taking it in turns to go back about every twenty minutes to see that everything was all right. Yet the flight sergeant had not been back five minutes after his check when someone rushed into the club and told him his quarters were ablaze. They managed to rescue all the children except one - by the time they reached him the poor little devil was dead.

Before the camp got over that shock, the worst one so far, when a sergeant who lived in a fifth floor flat in married quarters died very mysteriously. He was found at five in the morning under the window of his flat and fully clothed, and the poor devil was still alive when he was found. He was rushed off to hospital but died twelve hours later without saying what had happened. It was known that all was not well with his private affairs and that he had been very upset lately because although he and his wife badly wanted a family the doctors had told him he would never be a father, but at the time of his death there was a rumour that his wife was expecting. It was never found out exactly what happened and a verdict of accident was brought in at the inquest, yet the same question was lurking at the back of everyone's mind. Was it accident? Or suicide? Or murder?

In the meantime, of course, courts martial, courts of inquiry, formal investigations and attempted suicides were occurring with monotonous regularity and once more I was "attacked."

I now had the bunk to myself, which on any other camp would have pleased me no end, but didn't one bit on this haunted hellhole. I had been reading late one night, quite a light whodunit, and did not notice a damned thing when I switched off the light. Here I should explain that I had a standard lamp on the locker by my bed and the main light was usually out. Sleep was a long time in coming and didn't arrive after all. Quite suddenly I had the feeling there was something in the room and although I had the windows wide open the room was unbearably warm. The feeling grew stronger and no matter how much I told myself it was an over-worked imagination, whatever it was wouldn't go away. It seemed as though I'd got a Lovecraft "nameless horror" all to myself. I

aidn't want it. The room was in absolute darkness and I couldn't imagine what was coming toward me in dark because, imagination or not, by now I was convinced I had some sort of visitor. I had a strong impression that whatever it was had hardly any form, but was just a revolting shape and/pair of stretching arms. As I had this impression the air grew even hotter, and the smell of sulphur and decay was the strongest I had ever known it. Suddenly I could stand it no longer and sitting up in bed, I reached for the light switch. Now when one sits up in bed to reach for a switch one automatically supports oneself with the other hand on the bed. This was what I did, but a split second before I reached the switch something had clawed me right down the face. When the light went on there was nothing to be seen. I must have yelled out for a moment or two later, Pip shot through the communicating door from the next room. As I had decided it was my imagination, after all, although my face was irritating me considerably, I had quite a shock when she shriekd "My God! You've got blood on your face!" When I looked in the mirror there were three scratches from my hairline to my chin and all bleeding. The other girl who had been in Pip's room had just been posted; and as there was now a spare bed in there I adjorned to it for the rest of the night.

Pip suggested next morning that I should have the scratches seen to at sick quarters and I dropped in there on my way to breakfast. "What scratches?" asked the orderly and when I looked into a glass there wasn't a mark on my face, yet Pip had seen them only a few minutes previously. When I arrived at the orderly room the marks were back again, but by this time I had invented a story to account for them. I forgot what it was now, but the chief clerk told me long afterward that he hadn't believed me as he was convinced that nothing human could have made the marks on my face. Oh, well!

A day or two after this we had another draft of airmen and Waafs in from the UK. The day they arrived the Riding Club held a dance in the village and two of the new arrivals - a Waaf corporal and a RAF corporal went to it. They left it about half past ten as, not being sure of their way round they thought it best to get back to camp to give themselves time to find their bearings. But Camp Crazy was a fairly big place and they got lost. Eventually they found themselves at the top of a slope by a ruined block and sat down, one on each of the stone pillars on either side of the steps, figuring out that someone was sure to come along soon and direct them to their respective blocks. That's what they thought - nobody went near that block at night.

So there they sat, conversing and waiting patiently for someone to arrive. It was not long before Molly felt uneasy and she

noticed that the RAF corporal was very fidgety and kept looking over her shoulder. For some reason or other it did not occur to her to look round herself, but she did know that the place was giving her the creeps. Then, just as she was about to say something to the airman, right between them strolled a German storm trooper - and then she noticed something else. She could see the corporal through the storm trooper. But she decided she was seeing things so kept her mouth shut for a few minutes. Then she suggested to the airman that as no one was going come that way they had better move and try to find the billets for themselves and besides, she didn't like the spot. At that the corporal asked her if she had seen anything. Molly said she had and it turned out that the corporal had seen the same thing, but he, too, had thought it was his imagination. He had seen it before Molly had - it had been walking up and down behind her for some minutes. Need I say that their feet hardly touched the ground as they fled?

Molly was the first to ask one of the German civilians what the camp had been before the R.A.F. took over. It seemed it started out as a cavalry training unit, but we knew this as the ground round the camp had been specially built up to train the cavalry. We often used the cavalry training grounds when we went out riding. Then for a short while Rommel had his Afrika Korps stationed there, but he got them moved as he said that his men were crack troops, that Camp Crazy was destroying their morale, and good soldiers were killing themselves for no reason at all. After that it was a military hospital, but the doctors kicked up a fuss as too many patients died when they should have recovered. Then it became a Russian p.o.w. camp, and I believe it stayed as that until the end of the war and the R.A.F. moved in.

A couple of miles from Crazy was a village whose name, translated into English meant Phantom Heath. This village was perpetually out of bounds because of typhoid, and if that disease seemed to go on too long there always another to take its place. I don't believe that the villagers were perpetually sick of some disease or other, but it was good psychology on the part of the powers-that-be. If they put the village out of bounds because of peculiar goings on there, half the camp would have spent its time nosing round the village. On the other hand, nobody was going to rush off madly to catch a dose of typhoid, typhus, dysentery or whatever the current illness happened to be.

Mad, mad fools that we were! After Molly had related what she had seen (she never did learn to keep her trap shut at the right time), some of us decided we would have a ghost hunt. The night it was supposed to take place I was duty NC.O. Not that I was going to let that stop me, but just after eight o'clock a couple of Waafs complained that a peeping tom was lurking round

the billets. So I left the duty airwoman in the admin. office and went to collect my fellow ghost hunters, firmly believing that a couple of excitable airwomen were merely imagining a peeping tom. All the ghost hunters except little Ann had decided they had something else to do. Ann and I started up towards the ruined block, but we walked more and more slowly. Finally, I said to Ann "There's courage in numbers and we aren't enough numbers." Ann agreed with me and we retraced our steps. At the bottom of the slope and between the Waaf and the RAF sergeants' block stood half a dozen aircrew who had flown a kite in that day. They had heard about this ghost hunt and were waiting to see what had happened.

It turned out that the aircrew were from my previous camp in the UK and I knew a couple of them - in fact, I had been out several times with Jack. We confessed that we were too scared to go on and the aircrew boys said that the other sergeants in the mess had been trying to kid them that there was something screwy about the place. They mentioned the Waaf who had been mysteriously clawed, but when I showed them the scratches - which had come up again - they could only goggle. And I pointed it that it was not a cat. Cats were rare in Germany - I only saw three in over two and a half years. Anyway, we invited them to go up to the ruined block with us and watch. So about eight of us went up there and stood outside the block. After about five minutes one of the sergeants remarked that he couldn't see anything, but hardly had he spoken when there was the most tremendous crash from somewhere inside the block. I was holding Jack's hand and I felt him damned near leap out of his skin and uniform, too. "Someone larking about in there," suggested one of the aircrew weakly. "Nobody goes near that place after dark," I said coldly, "and besides, that crash was from the top of the block and the stairs have been in ruins for years." Ann and I had the hell of a job to keep up with them to the bottom of the hill.

Here a note of high comedy entered into things. As we arrived at the Waaf blocks I saw to my astonishment that an airman was attempting to peer into the windows. Those two girls had seen a lurker, after all. With a yell of "Hey, you!" I set off in full cry, but just as I was in grabbing distance of peeping tom's coat tails, Jack grabbed me. "Do you want a hobnailed boot in your face?" he asked, and told me to ring the guardroom. But I decided the airman had probably had a fright and wouldn't be back again that night. As it happened, I was wrong. Jack suggested going to the Malcolm Club for a drink, but I had to relieve the duty airwoman for a couple of hours, and told him to call back at the block later and when we could have a chat about old times. I had been in the admin. office for about an hour when Jock and Audrey R. screeched that the lurker was back. I went outside and had a look, but there was no one in sight. Back I

went and when the duty airwoman appear I said that I was going outside to have a look for the peeping tom. Actually, I had gone outside to meet Jack and we stayed standing by the corner of the block talking quietly. About twenty minutes later I heard a scream from Jock's room and rushed in to find her and Audrey R. holding on to each other in terror. They swore the peeping tom was back and they had heard him shuffling outside their window. Then I realised that Jack and I had been standing near there, so I had to go out and look for me and pretend that Jack was helping me. Soon after this he went back to his own billet and I settled down as I thought to a quiet hour in the admin. office. I had reckoned without Jock and her friend. Again they screeched and this time I went out with a poker. As I was wearing battledress, which blended very well with the night, I reckoned that I could be on anyone who came along before he realised I was there. For nearly an hour I crouched by a corner of the block getting colder and colder. But the crumb must have noticed me come round the corner, because while I was crouched there waiting for him to turn up, he was in the middle of a bush waiting for me to go away. Of course, five minutes after I had gone in to the block, the louse was back peering into the windows again. There was the usual screech from the usual two, but this time I had had enough - I 'phoned the guard-room. One of the Jones' twins, who was my duty airwoman, came out with me to see what sort of a patrol the police would send up and met a sergeant and corporal, who had come up in a car. We circled the blocks and suddenly the corporal said he had found footprints.

We dashed over to have a look at them. "If we can find an airman wearing rubber boots, we've got him," announced the corporal triumphantly. "Since it's a muddy night, half the personnel will be wearing rubber boots," I replied acidly. "I'm wearing them myself. As a matter of fact, it's my footprints you've found." At this moment the car lights were switched off and we looked round to see who was fooling about with them. As we looked they went on again. The sergeant and corporal started towards the car and before they reached it the lights had been switched on and off at least twice. The sergeant called back to me "I'll send someone down to patrol the blocks," and before I had a chance to answer they had piled into the car and were down the road trying to exceed the speed of light. "Funny," remarked Jones II, "I wonder if they disappeared so fast, because no one was near that car when the lights were going on and off." Then it penetrated! We were in the block and the doors firmly bolted before one could say "Ghost."

By this time, it was quite late and I thought that the troubles were over, but I was too optimistic. The usual screech from the usual two came half an hour later and swearing, I got out of bed and went along to their room. Jock was very nearly hysterical and when I asked her what the hell was the matter she told me that she had gone to bed, then died and gone to hell. I firmly resisted a temptation to make her words come true and told her not to be such

a dope, that she had had a nightmare. "I didna" wept Jock. "I died, went to hell and when I got there, there was a queue and the de'il told me I'd have to wait three years and kickit me oot." My next remark was unprintable, but this caused another flood of tears. "I tell ye he kickit me oot of hell. I've got the marks on my back. Look." And she jerked her pyjama jacket up and pants down, and showed me her back.

To coin a phrase, my blood ran cold. There were marks on her back and they were fresh bruises. Then I noticed that Audrey was in pyjamas, but that her bed hadn't been slept in. It turned out that she was so scared that she had climbed in with Jock. There wasn't room in a single bed and she had edged Jock out. Herfidgetings had caused Jock to start dreaming and she had acquired the bruises when she had fallen out of bed and caught her back on the edge. I explained this to her, told them both not to be bloody idiots, and if I heard another peep out of either of them, I'd disembowel them and strangle them with their own guts. They must have believed me, as the rest of the night was peaceful.

The next day was bright and clear and Mary, the P.T.I. decided we would go up and into the ruined block while it was daylight and see what did cause that thump. We went up there in the lunch hour and looked into the rooms downstairs. Soon after we did so, we heard someone walking about upstairs. "Ah, someone with the same idea as ourselves," said Mary. "Yes," I agreed, and then remembered something. "How did they get upstairs when there aren't stairs any more?" I asked. Mary may have been the P.T.I. but I have a strong recollection that I was the first to take a flying leap through the window and get the hell away from the place.

It was not long after this that I acquired a poltergeist.

(To be continued in the next issue, as it has put the fear of God in me again to remember all this. Happy nightmares!)

From the foregoing, readers may get the impression that a laugh was never heard at Camp Crazy, but there were many moments of light relief, which I hope one day I shall find time to write about in the magazine. Since some of you may - or may not be agog, I will try and get a zine in the next mailing and finish off the story of the camp that nearly finished me off.

Bobbie.

No doubt some of you are thinking "But there must be some some sort of explanation!" There was, as you shall see in the next issue, but the explanation was as crazy as the incidents I have already related.

the play commenced. Dame Peggy Ashcroft played Katherine brilliantly, and Peter O'Toole was a joy as Petruchio. Tut! I see that in the first sentence of this paragraph I have the words "produced productions". My apologies. The other play I saw was "Hamlet." I only hope the ghost of Will Shakespeare wasn't hanging around, he would have wept blood. After seeing Michael Redgrave's Hamlet a few years back, this present one was more than a disappointment - it was a horrible shock. At Stratford there is a tremendous amount of audience participation, but not at this production. I suddenly realised that although I knew the speeches fairly well, they were delivered so badly that I lost interest and found that I had completely lost the place as it were. Lines that should have been emphasised were thrown away, and that lines that could have been thrown away were emphasised. Ian Bannen (Hamlet) delivered one of the soliloquies sitting in a trunk, at the end of which the lid slammed shut. Unfortunately, he opened it again. The audience sat through the play completely unmoved and unstirred, except for ten delightful seconds when the stroller who acted the Player King did Hecuba for Hamlet. With a few words and gestures he conveyed the feelings of that unhappy queen in burning Troy. So tense did the audience become there was not a sound from them, not even a cough or any shuffling. I did notice in this production that Hamlet's advice to the players was cut out, and can only conclude that the director didn't want to remind the audience how the play should have been produced. The blood bath at the end, which can be very tense, was watched with complete indifference by the audience. Since the play had been murdered in the first scene who was interested in a lot of mouthing ghosts. The two intervals were spent by the audience in niggling about it. I read as many reviews as I could find afterwards and should say that that production received the biggest panning Stratford has ever suffered. It was deserved.

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