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The
Collected Shorebrush
Volume 1

A collection of miscellaneous nonsense writings
By Ian P. Hudson

The pieces in this collection first appeared in SEMantics between March 2002 and May 2004. This volume, which is published electronically, will be updated periodically.

Ian P. Hudson 16 June 2004.

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Cast of characters

Who's Who in Shorebrushland

- “Iron-Nostril” **Balzarotti**, Perugian nasal pea-pushing champion (from Beachcomber) (142)
- “Bauhaus Bert” **Béton**, the Belgian architect (146)
- “Jacaranda” Jack **Bigbog**, gardening expert (146)
- Euphonius **Blasensieger**, trumpeter (149)
- Blatherskite **Blunt**, chat show regular (144)
- Plad S. **Cargo**, Francophile Texan gastronome (141)
- Angelica **Clary** (deceased), former Mistress of Marjoram to the Princess of Tarragon
- Sir Basil **Clary** (deceased), sometime Purslane Preserver to the Duchy of Droxford, and great niece of Angelica who was, as a young girl, briefly Mistress of Marjoram to the Princess of Tarragon. (143, 153)
- Miss Dowsabel **Clary**, Pennyroyal Plucker In Ordinary to the Marquess of Monxton and Mewsey, daughter of the late Sir Basil Clary (143)
- Mr Justice **Cocklecarrot** of the Queen’s Bench (137)
- The **Duke of Droxford** (143)
- Evans the Hearse**, nasal pea-pushing champion (from Beachcomber) (142)
- Grindelia **Growfast**, gardening expert (146)
- Inspector **Hawkshaw** (retired), late of the Yard (142, 143, 146,)
- The Arkansas **McSpreaders**, American branch of clan
- Malachi **Molestraddler**, retired politician and Parliamentary pundit (146)
- Marquess of **Monxton** and Mewsey (153)
- Dr Julius **Mousetrouser**, famous musician and inventor of the allegedly patented tromboncellino (149)
- Mr Justice **Muskmelon**, formerly a pupil of Cocklecarrot at the Inns of Court (149)
- Patrick **Pitchfork**, portrait photographer (143)
- Marcus **Plinge**, TV producer (137, 139, 144)
- Prodnose**, who argues with Shorebrush as he writes 153
- Neverov **Said**, Tajiki footballer (at Bromsgrove Thursday) (139, 145)
- Tinteville **Snappdriver** barrister (in footsteps of uncle Tinklebury from Beachcomber) (149)
- Princess of **Tarragon**, employer in post ‘Mistress of Marjoram’ of Dowsabel Clary’s illustrious great-aunt Angelica
- Mammula **Thrust**, top model and socialite (144, 145)
- Dipso **Toper**, a man about town and (mostly) the Chive and Chipmunk (a pub) (142)

Threadgold Twinepartner, nightclub proprietor (145)

Viscount Vobster, primogenit and heir to the Marquess of Monxton and Mewsey (153)

Groups & Organizations

Borborygmus Research Fund (146)

Boundless Brass PLC (149)

Bromsgrove Thursday Football Club (see **Neverov Said**)

Chocaholics Anonymous (146)

Barbarossa Boys, the nanoid nine (sons of the 12 red-bearded dwarves of Dibden Purlieu) (143)

Horrids department store (146)

Hu Am Ai Record Company Inc (149)

Peckham Philharmonic Orchestra (149)

Twinepartner's nightclub

... and, indeed, What's What

The knews in briefs

It is a well-known fact that television documentary directors are obliged by their standard terms and conditions to spend at least half of whatever screen time they devote to humble victims — whether of some rare disease about which a breakthrough is imminent or has just occurred, of some extremely common (sometimes to the point of vulgar) disease that has gone untreated because of the dreaded Health Service Under-funding syndrome, of bureaucratic incompetence over their benefit entitlements that has left them penniless for years, of a spouse's incompetence at DIY that has left them living among rubble for several years, or of any other calamity providing an excuse for a "fly-on-the-wall" camera to be in their homes — with a voice telling the heart-rending story over footage of the victim making a cup of tea in their kitchen.

Now docusoap director Marcus Plinge has gone to the High Court to have this clause overturned because unlike his fellows (but exactly like your humble reporter) he hates tea — indeed can't stand the sight

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or smell of it — and believes that under the European Convention on Human Rights (which as we all know is now part of British law) it is a cruel and unusual punishment to force a person to film somebody pouring boiling water onto dried leaves containing an addictive alkaloid and then, by stirring the brew, wafting the dreadful, nauseating aroma round the set, and emitting that horrible dead tinkle that a stainless steel teaspoon makes against a pottery mug.

The case opened recently for opening arguments, and is expected to last several months. The tea importers' association declined to comment.



Mystery continues to surround the question of what became of the twelve red-bearded persons of diminutive stature after the retirement from the Bench many years ago of Mr Justice Cocklecarrot. Scotland Yard believes they may have retired to Peru.

The success of "reality TV" or fantasy game shows, where contestants are sent to Orwellian houses, desert islands, SAS boot camps, a home frozen in some time in the previous century or WW1 trenches ,to see how they cope, has led docusoap director Marcus Plinge to develop plans for a show where participants are left in the middle of an alligator swamp in the Florida Everglades with only a party balloon and a mobile phone with 5 minutes' battery life, for emergencies. Cameras tied onto trees will record whether they survive.

First, the BBC did a series of advance trailers for a season of broadcasts of football matches, featuring irrelevant quotations from famous plays, in a portentous voice-over which said the games would be "great drama". Then ITV Digital went broke over-bidding absurdly for broadcast rights to football, and there were whimpers of financial pain from stupid football clubs who had committed absurd amounts of money to employing (mostly foreign) players they clearly couldn't afford.

Now sense has prevailed. We can reveal here a top-secret plan to abandon actually competing, and instead simply to stage football matches for TV using players as actors — or actors as players, as the

case may be. Judging by recent events in certain careers, the two trades are already interchangeable. Busy docusoap director Marcus Plinge has revealed exclusively to Shorebrush that, as an expert in erasing the already faint borderline between reality and fiction on TV, he has been approached to work with the FA and the Premier League on plans to produce a season of televised matches the way they do attempted murders in Eastenders: film several variations on the results so nobody but the producers know the result that will be broadcast, and share out the wins to achieve the optimum spread for the profit margins of the various major businesses, or "clubs" as they are still laughingly known, involved.

Asked how he'd cope with becoming an actor so soon after arriving at the club, new Bromsgrove Thursday signing and former Tajikistan forward Neverov Said, rumoured to have cost a billion Tajik roubles, smiled knowingly: "It's nothing new", he said. "In the Soviet Futbol Liga*, all results were part of a five year plan anyway!"

Vinnie Jones was said to be laughing. Shorebrush does not do or watch any sport, ever, and never has.

*The actual Russian is *Футбол Лига*.

Every little helps

Following concerns about supermarket safety, executives of giants Asdesco and Sainway have been holding talks about a requirement that those employed to collect and return trolleys from car parks hold HGV licences, on the grounds that a long train of trolleys poses as big a danger as an articulated lorry. They dismissed for the time being a demand from consumer groups that those employed to stack empty baskets, or pile up baked bean cans on special offer, be graduates in civil engineering.



The appeal of game shows and quizzes that put their contestants through physical and psycho-logical stress grows apace. You may have seen clips from Japanese (and, incidentally, Dutch) shows where contestants are put in close proximity with snakes, crabs and other creatures likely to make their toes curl, mostly courtesy of Chris

Snails' space

News about China's space programme has apparently suggested a business opportunity to francophile Texan gastronome Plad S. Cargo. He heard that in January 2001, the second spacecraft launched, since China began work towards a manned space flight programme, carried a monkey, a dog, a rabbit and some snails into orbit.

After the recent announcement that China plans to put men on the Moon within a decade, and ultimately set up a mining base there, Cargo realised that the best way to ensure enough protein in the lunar workers' diet would be to take live animals and breed them at the point of consumption; however supplying beef or pork by this means would be rather tricky, so he approached the authorities in Beijing with the idea of accustoming Chinese astronauts to French food and

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Tarrant*. Determined to go one better than insults and bullying from dominatrix question mistresses, and the setting of husbands against wives or best friends against one another, sometime docusoap director Marcus Plinge is now in discussions with Japanese TV companies to bring torture to British screens with local contestants. Anyone desiring to sing Land of Hope and Glory all the way through while suspended upside down wearing only a nappy, with their head in a vivarium full of tarantulas while being sprayed with ice cold water, in the hope of winning a holiday of a lifetime for two, should start learning the words of all the verses now!

* Incidentally, Tarrant told Michael Parkinson (28 April) that Who Wants To Be A Millionaire is the only foreign game show Japanese TV has bought from abroad, and they have to do it just as everywhere else, the way Tarrant does it, with no scorpions down the trousers after the £1000 point or any other variation.

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taking on space flights stocks of live edible snails as a breeding colony, from which inmates could be cooked and eaten as required. Since holidays in France are not among the usual perks offered to Chinese astronauts, a restaurant on the rocket base serving snails in garlic butter would accustom future space travellers to this molluscan menu.



Shorebrush tried to get a reaction to this idea from Beijing, but Ouyang Ziyuan, chief scientist with China's Moon exploration programme, was unavailable for comment.

Tall Tales

Organizers of Mensa Games continue to neglect the sport of nasal pea-pushing. Memories of classic bouts between Evans the Hearse and 'Iron-Nostril' Balzarotti at Aberbananer mean nothing to modern gamesmen; for whom the Perugian's tremendous left-nostril punch is but a distant memory.



Word at the Gumshoe Club has it that Inspector Hawkshaw (retired), late of the Yard, has taken up the trail of the dozen gingerly barbate

More Tall Tales

It was with considerable gladness that we learnt of the investiture of the new Pennyroyal Plucker In Ordinary to the Marquess of Monxton and Mewsey: Dowsabel Clary. Miss Clary comes from a long tradition of herbaristic husbandry; her father was of course the late Sir Basil Clary, sometime Purslane Preserver to the Duchy of Droxford, and her great aunt Angelica was, as a young girl, briefly Mistress of Marjoram to the Princess of Tarragon.

The appointment is no sinecure: according to an ancient statute, the incumbent's duties include "perusal, pyckying, perceptione and prouisionyng of þe Penryyall and like herbes to whatsoever savorye dysshes shall be in preparation to þe marchesale kycchynes".

In the brief ceremony at Farley Mount Pyramid, the postulant plucker pronounces a prepared promise to procure pure pennyroyal at its peak of perfection. Posing the picture by the post-Ptolemaic pointed pavilion, portrait photographer Patrick Pitchfork pouted positively. "Perfect!" he opined as he packed his paraphernalia.



Issue 142 August 2002

differently tall persons. Treating the case as one of historical curiosity, but with previous access to the Yard's files, he traced the source of the story that they had fled abroad to one Dipso Tooper, a man about town and (mostly) the Chive and Chipmunk, where Hawkshaw found him. As a boy, Tooper heard tales of the law-courts from his father, an usher; and the ludicrousity of those featuring that incorrigible crew had affected him permanently. It transpired that the Andean story was a misapprehension; Tooper had told those present that the destination was not "darkest Peru" but "Dibden Purlieu"!

Issue 143 September 2002

The self-selecting sleuths at the Gumshoe Club have heard something of how Inspector Hawkshaw (retired), late of the Yard, fared on his mission to Dibden Purlieu. It seems he found clues to the recent movement of certain young bloods who formed a gang called the Barbarossa Boys — an ominous appellation — and moved into the city only to disappear from view — behind the counters of various retail outlets.

Of their now elderly sires, three succumbed to old age; the rest have only once turned to litigation since they settled down, in an attempt to gain an injunction against a local hamster hair stylist's and baby bison beverage bottle-washer's, which they claimed played Pet Shop Boys performances at such high volumes as to disturb their afternoon naps in gardens a mile away. By a weird coincidence, the case was heard by Mr Justice Muskmelon, formerly a pupil of Cocklecarrot at the Inns of Court.

The nanoid nine claimed *Nolle exsurdari* and the defendants riposted with *Cricetidae saltantes*. The judge adjourned the hearing *sine die* pending choreographic and trogontological reports.

Gallotaurean gossip

Issue 144 October 2002

Viewing figures have apparently broken all records for the latest celebrity torture (or so-called reality TV) show *Luminary Lacerations*. Thirteen million people apparently phoned their votes to have top model and socialite Mammula Thrust suspended by her 5 centimetre silver lacquered fingernails above an area of Florida swamp that is home to dozens of big alligators.

Runner-up, with nearly twelve million votes, was chat show regular Blatherskite Blunt, who was to have been set the task of eating a hundred swamp bees, the stings on the tongue resulting from which would have made it impossible for him to talk for several months.

Although only 50 miles from Miami, the group were stranded on a patch of ground in the middle of Monroe County in impassable swamp. We gather that producer Marcus Plinge had to pay for the services of national park game wardens to verify that local fauna were not disturbed by the contest.

Quidhunc

Issue 145 November 2002

We hear that revellers have recently spotted Neverov Said, the Tajiki football star signed by Bromsgrove Thursday, in the company of top model and socialite Mammula Thrust, who recently survived her sensational appearance on *Luminary Lacerations*. They are apparently often seen together at Twinepartners nightclub. Close friends report that Said has been especially supportive during Miss Thrust's convalescence, following a traumatic manicure in which several of her famously long silver-lacquered fingernails had to be trimmed after damage while working in Florida. Asked about their future plans together, the couple dismissed rumours of a romance and assured reporters that they are "just good friends".

ଠଡ଼ି
ଋଢ଼ି

Rumours continue to circulate about the true identity of R..McGedden, the man behind Densa. As well as a badge and membership card, we hear that life members of Densa receive a Certificate of Densanity, a Densawallet in quakeproof Densarette, plus the unique Densil (the unleaded pencil). Members criticize Mensa's entry criterion for its limited appeal; in contrast Densa is open to the top 98% by IQ of the population.

Ah, winter! If we cling — despite traditional British scepticism as to whether summer lasts longer than a day or two in a year with an R in it — to the tidy model of four seasons of three months, and if we assume for further convenience that the year began (like this column) in March, with the Spring, the first of December is the beginning of winter.

PRODNOSE: That's a lot of assumption.

MYSELF: Well it's safer than a lot of consumption.

The scepticism is out of date! By the last decade of the 20th century, whether through global warming or trends on a geologically long time scale, we veer from floods to drought. A quick look in any large bookstore confirms this, for despite the electronic age the book business is booming! Gardening sections may swell with a tide of TV makeover show tie-ins from the likes of Grindelia Growfast and 'Jacaranda' Jack Bigbog, but there's a vast array of other titles reflecting both the huge interest in horticulture and our changing climate. One section on desert flora showed all stages of the public's involvement from *Cactus Watering for Beginners*, *The Wonderful World of Cactus Watering*, and *Easy Cactuses For Young Waterers* through *The Cactus Waterer's Companion* and *A Hundred Cactuses I Have Watered* (this by retired politician and pundit Malachi Molestraddler, of all people) to *Not A Drop: Water Avoidance Exercises For Growing Better Cacti*.

At the other extreme "Bauhaus Bert" Béton, the Belgian architect, plans to rebuild a Sussex housing development ruined by floods entirely on 3 metre stilts, complete with elevated footpaths and ramps up to similarly parking for cars, since it's bound to be flooded again before long.



While still thinking of the possibilities of both a deep freeze with blizzards and a warm winter when we won't even need overcoats, with ears to the parquet and nose to the plexiglass of the information

super-highway, our spies have found out what festive foolery those in the public eye are planning.

For Neverov Said, the 25th is like any other day and he'll be training as usual for a match on 26th. His erstwhile companion Mammula Thrust is taking her mother to Martinique until January. The Marchioness of Monxton and Mewsey was spotted in Fortnum's, placing orders for porcelain pots of persimmon preserve as party presents for the personnel of her husband's patrimonial palace. There are rumours he has retained portrait photographer Patrick Pitchfork to picture his family in pensive poses in the snow — if there is any in the south of England.

Miss Dowsabel Clary, Pennyroyal Plucker In Ordinary to the Marquess, has limited freedom to keep in with her old social circles this year, as she has to be in attendance at certain dates for the culinary ceremonials of that hidebound household, including the marquesal mint marination.



It's being said that Blatherskite Blunt is telling his friends that Threadgold Twinepartner, nightclub proprietor and heir on his mother's side to the Thoroughgrip Garterette fortune, plans the most extravagant New Year's Eve party in his establishment's history, with two thousand and three guests and the newly retired archbishop of Canterbury arriving with a black cope and a scythe as Old Father Time. Lambeth Palace put out a statement saying it would not dignify such rumours by denying them.

Many of Blunt's friends with nothing better to do for Hogmanay have bought the special tickets, on the basis that at those prices he must be up to something, though the nightclub publicity machine has announced that profits from the evening will go to charity, specifically Chocaholics Anonymous and the Borborygmus Research Fund.

Reports that sales of haggis hampers at famous emporium Horrids are breaking all records are rather misleading. It seems a floor manager

sited a seasonal special counter selling reproduction 78 RPM gramophone discs in genuine shellac next to the Highland counter in the food hall and most of its stock was trampled by a clan coach party of the Arkansas McSpreaders in their rush to buy hampers on their way to Heathrow.



Inspector Hawkshaw (retired), late of the Yard, has reserved his place at the Chive and Chipmunk Christmas dinner and will be joined there by Dipsy Tooper, and by Marcus Plinge who is making a series about how the “upper-underclass” cope with everywhere else being shut for the day.

Tread the boards with boughs of holly...

As usual this season, ghastly attempts at “crossover” are rife. TV gardeners Grindelia Growfast and “Jacaranda” Jack Bigbog are appearing as Jack’s mother and the giant, in *A Tale of Two Beanstalks* (it says here), “an avant-garde yet Dickensian adaptation of a popular fairy tale set at the time of the French Revolution” — a blatant excuse for horticultural ribaldry if ever I saw one.

Bromsgrove Thursday’s Tajiki star Neverov Said, out of action because of a wrist strain, has been allowed by the club to star in Aladdin at the Bromsgrove Burlesque and Ballroom. His regular companion top model Mammula Thrust appears slightly improbably as the princess Thin Thong.

Meanwhile Dr Julius Mousertrouser, famous musician and inventor, has been persuaded to forget his quarrel with Euphonius Blasensieger,

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the trumpeter he sued for sued for theft of intellectual property rights; they are to join portrait photographer Patrick Pitchfork, barrister Tinteville Snapdriver, and seven of the nine Barbarossa Boys in a charity football match against a team of staff from Horrids department store on Boxing Day. As usual, proceeds will go to the Borborygmus Research Fund and Chocaholics Anonymous. TV producer Marcus Plinge declined an invitation to take part on the grounds that he is too busy to join the team for training while working on his Christmas special for channel 47, a fly-on-the-wall docusoap in which the Marquess of Monxton and Mewsey spends a week as a barkeep at the Chive and Chipmunk public house, learning to cope with inebriated regulars such as Dipsy Tooper, self-styled “man-about-town”.

The patience of Mr Justice Muskemelon was tried as surely as the case before him in the High Court recently, *Mousetrouser versus Blasenstieger*, *Boundless Brass PLC*, *Peckham Philharmonic Orchestra*, *Hu Am Ai Record Company Inc.*, et al.

Dr Julius Mousetrouser, famous musician and inventor, sued for theft of intellectual property rights in his allegedly patented tromboncellino. He told the court that a soprano slide trumpet was custom made by Boundless for use by trumpeter Mr Euphonius Blasenstieger in a performance by Peckham Philharmonic that was recorded and sold by Hu Am Ai. Mr Tinteville Snapdriver (endeavouring as always to emulate at the Bar the success of his uncle Tinklebury half a century ago), cross-examining, asked the witness for the derivation of the name.

WITNESS: Following musical tradition, it is a diminutive of tromboncello, which is in turn a diminutive of trombone.

JUDGE: As violoncello is a diminutive of violone.

WITNESS: Exactly, my lord.

COUNSEL: But the instrument made and used by the defendants is a trumpet.

WITNESS: Ah, well, in Italian, just as -cello and -ino are diminutives, meaning a smaller version, -one is an augmentative, meaning a larger version; a trombone is a large tromba, which means (in Italian) a large trumpet. The slide trombone is therefore a large slide trumpet

COUNSEL: Are there small slide trumpets?

WITNESS: There are now, although normal trumpets have valves instead of a slide. But [to the bench] there are also valve trombones, my lord.

COUNSEL: Ah. So the instrument you claim to have invented, this tromboncellino, is in fact a small version of a small version of a large slide trumpet. But if one small cancels out one large, as it were, your invention is a small slide trumpet.

WITNESS: Er, yes.

COUNSEL: Which would make it at most a soprano trumpet, not a soprano.

WITNESS: Not necessarily! Brass instruments like trumpets are usually referred to by pitch.

JUDGE: Ahem! By pitch? How does cricket come into this case?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud; I believe the witness is talking about the other kind of pitch.

JUDGE: What? Coal tar and asphalt?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud; the range of notes of which an instrument is capable. Doctor Mousetrouser, can you explain precisely what you mean?

WITNESS: I mean that trumpets are made in many pitches referred to by the note you get with no special alteration (by valve or slide) of the length of the tube.

We talk of soprano, alto and tenor saxophones, but not of such trumpets.

JUDGE: Why?

WITNESS: Well, perhaps, my lord, because the saxophone reminds people of the human voice, but the brass instruments do not.

There is a rumour that at this point the judge muttered "They haven't heard my wife", but that was not entered into the court transcript.

WITNESS: Thus Bach wrote pieces for the trumpet in D; and there are trumpets in F, B flat, or E flat. Thus it is not clear what precisely is meant by a soprano trumpet, since a soprano version of a trumpet in F might be regarded as a soprano version of a trumpet in B flat.

COUNSEL: Why?

WITNESS: Because F is higher than B flat.

COUNSEL: Not necessarily! There is, is there not, a note F lower than any given B flat? Namely the octave below the B flat that is higher than the F you first mentioned?

JUDGE: Mr Snapdriver! You are losing the rest of us with these intricacies!

COUNSEL: Sorry, m'lud; but of you think of a piano, there are only seven white note names, A, B, C, D, E, F, G and then you get A again. So if we stay with notes near the middle of the keyboard, for any given F there is a B flat above it and another below it.

JUDGE: Surely these high pitched trumpets are nearer to the top of the keyboard than the middle?

COUNSEL: Yes, m'lud; but not so near that we fall off the top end where there are no more notes.

(At this point Mr Blasenstieger was seen to pass a note to Mr Snapdriver, who read it carefully before continuing.)

COUNSEL: Doctor Mousertrouser, the soprano slide trumpet works by

sliding part of the tube in and out to change its length does it not?

WITNESS: Er, yes.

COUNSEL: And the typical notes played by this soprano slide trumpet are in the same range as those made by a swanee whistle, as made famous by

certain veteran comedians on a radio panel game chaired by a veteran jazz trumpeter?

WITNESS: Er, yes.

COUNSEL: So is it not true that all the elements of the instrument apart from the precise range have existed for centuries? And that the upper limit of the range of a trumpet is limited only by the skill of the player?

WITNESS: Er, yes.

JUDGE [*banging gavel on bench*]: Case dismissed!

Praeterpicayune perissology

They say convent-educated girls are the wildest. It all depends.

PRODNOSE: On what, pray?

On the girl, of course! But sometimes — to forge a fervid farrago of the farrier's and florist's philology (that's a mixed metaphor, to you) — when a shrinking violet inviolate gets the bit between her teeth ... well, the fact is, word has reached us of a budding romance in the hitherto sheltered life of Miss Dowsabel Clary. This spring blossom of a lass has been glimpsed several times about the naughtiest nightspots of New Milton arm in arm with Viscount Vobster, primogenit and heir to the Marquess of Monxton and Mewsey.

Now, as all avid analysts of these annals will aver, delicate Dowsabel, daughter of the late Sir Basil Clary (sometime Purslane Preserver to the Duchy of Droxford), is in her primary penteteric¹ as Pennyroyal Plucker In Ordinary to the said Marquess; and by the arcane canons of that ancient avocation (instilled in her at the knee of her illustrious great-aunt Angelica, sometime Mistress of Marjoram to the Princess

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of Tarragon) duty bound to ... well, let's just say: to *Be Good*. Such was ever deemed only proper for a fragrancier, a herbalist — nay, indeed a *spice girl* (before the term was perversely purloined by a juvenile Tin Pan Alley quintet).

On the other hand, although his father the Marquess has threatened with libel certain newshounds who dared to hint that “Vobster” could be a contraction of “violent mobster”², the lordling relies on his inheritance more than his intelligence, having escaped the public school system with a windsurfing proficiency certificate and a proverbial otic *Ctenocephalides*.

So the juxtaposition of these unlike souls may well presage — ahem — *ructions*. Whether it's a matter of scales falling from eyes, coiffed tresses being released, or indeed classic innocence undone, 'tis a consummation devoutly to be ditched. Watch this space.

¹ *penteteric*: 5-year stint

² in fact, the hamlet is just west of Frome

As the picture box in the corner brings ever more channels into the home, the war between quantity and quality rages on. Blatherskite Blunt says the ever-desperate Marcus Plinge is planning a fundraising spectacular in aid of the Borborygmus Research Fund to go out on Channel FortySeven, in which, once again, celebrities are placed in mortal danger to see who survives the longest. *Inter alia*, parliamentary pundit and ex-MP Malachi Molestraddler will be dropped without a parachute from a helicopter onto a spot in a cornfield just in front of a combine harvester, of which the driver will be blindfolded and wearing head phones playing Wagner's *Tannhauser*. Grindelia Growfast, celebrity TV gardener, will sit in a greenhouse nude and plastered in treacle, while a thousand giant African wasps and a million mutant greenfly are released by a stunt entomologist.

Much excitement, and a tuba octet, accompanied the recent performance by Euphonius Blasen sieger at a "late late late night"

Prom of the new trumpet concerto by Castelnuovo de Tesco. By a clerical error, this unusual concert was omitted from all the printed Proms literature and the audience consisted exclusively of the composer's fellow Geordie supermarket shelf fillers, but they filled the "shelves" and the floor of the Albert Hall anyway.

De Tesco (no relation to his Florentine near-namesake: his birth certificate says Wayne Wax) dedicates this new work, as he did all the others, to his native city. To the normal resources of a symphony orchestra he adds not only the tubas but also a Tyne ferry fog-horn and an ambulance siren.

For the new year schedules we can look forward to another fascinating fly-on-the-wall series about "real people", this time following the daily life of Mrs Doris Damper, who has worked on the biscuit line at Conglomerated Cookies for over forty years.

Sex, drugs and tales for toddlers

It is my awesome duty today to tell you, intrepid reader, of a discovery of such enormity that one must dredge one's memory deep for its equal.

It has come to our attention that the leading national television service has been purveying what purports to be a harmless diversion for toddlers, called *Fimbles*. We gather that a Fimble is a giant walking, talking (or squeaking) knitted toy, somewhat resembling a

tapir walking on its hind legs. Each has stripes like those of a tiger in various places, including its pointed face, and all are in impossibly bright colours such as blue with green stripes. Their companions including a frog and various other creatures, all of which are soft toy puppets.

Amazing but true! Not an April Fool's Day story!

Now, we find that these beings are far from innocent in their conception! A mere glance in the Oxford English

Dictionary reveals several perturbing facts. The word *Fimble*, which you might assume to be made up, with no prior meaning, has *three* of them! The oldest goes back to 1484, and is the gravest: “the male plant of hemp, producing a shorter and weaker fibre than the female plant ... also [called] *fimble hemp*”. And as we all know, hemp is the “annual herbaceous plant *Cannabis sativa*”!

Given the sort of people who work in television these days, this fact makes it clear why the characters in *The Fimbles* are decked in such lurid — dare one say, psychedelic — colours: the entire depraved production was conceived in a drug-induced dream!

But stay, now probably nervous reader! That is not all: there is another significant entry in Doctor Murray’s life’s work. Etymologically unrelated, and dating from 1577, we have the verb **Fimble** meaning “to move the fingers lightly and frequently over anything”; transitively, “to touch lightly and frequently with the ends of the fingers”.

PRDNOSE: Dash it all, sir, this is a family show!

You discern, I take it, the point at which I am driving?

PRDNOSE: Hurrumph! [*Exits*]

This explains why Fimbles are so often seen with their hands — or paws, or what-have-you — raised in front of them waving their fingers. It is ... well, highly suggestive — of things that I can here only describe as being of an adult nature, surely?

PRDNOSE: [*Returns with Radio Times*] When did you say this was on? [*Hunts through pages.*]

I didn’t. Sundays, BBC2 I think. But there’s more! Nestling between these shocking references to a culture given to carnal orgies under the influence of drugs, we find yet another homonymous **Fimble**. You won’t believe this!

PRDNOSE: After the other two, I am ready for anything.

Apparently it is a *ring* or *hasp*, that goes with a hook, for fastening a gate!

PRDNOSE: And?

Well, what works for a *gate* works equally well for a *big front door*; and also you need a high wall round your garden ...

PRDNOSE: ... with broken glass on top!

... Er, quite so; and a high gate, fastened well down on the inside with a hook and fimble to deter interlopers from peeping in at your windows during ... ahem.

PRDNOSE: It’s conclusive evidence! Inform Scotland Yard!

Where’s the phone number for the Vice Squad?

Calm down! We’ve no proof of intent. It’s a matter for the Forensic Branch of the Juvenile Amusements Artistic Criticism Society of England.

PRDNOSE: Otherwise known by their abbreviations.

What’s their number? I’m going to ring up the JAACSE!

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In the breach of contract case Thrust v. Pitchfork (Muskmelon J presiding) temperatures rose as the model told the court how the society portrait photographer refused to “shoot” her in the costume she wanted to wear after paying a large sum for it, supposedly the year’s chef d’oeuvre from *couturier bizarre* Luc-Ulysse Culbutier.

In his turn the respondent explained that although his portfolio included “many a fine composition representing the undraped female form” he never sank to vulgarity, and in his view a so-called frock made from a bucketful of lager can ring-pulls and those plastic loop quatrefoils used to make four-packs, connected together with paper clips — even if these had been electroplated — was irredeemably vulgar. He quoted the small print of his contract, which stipulated that he was not obliged to work with anything vulgar and had final artistic discretion on what constituted vulgarity. At one point, cries of “You te’w ‘im Mammula! That’s me ge’w!” from Mrs Thrust in the public area led the judge to clear the court.

புனைபெயர்

On another artistic front, the legendarily reclusive and conservative Marquess of **Monxton** and Mewsey has apparently cause to celebrate. After living rakishly for several years, his son Viscount Vobster suddenly settled down and set himself to study botany, horticulture, and perfumery at the Monxton Academy of Rural Sciences. The only possible explanation for this extraordinary *volte-face* is that Miss

Dowsabel Clary — in the father’s employ and, last summer, often in the son’s luxury two-seater — has exerted prodigious powers of moral improvement.

Now, in a *volte-face* of his own, the Marquess is to build a gallery for the 21st century art that he has just started to collect, and has commissioned the extreme *avant-garde* TervezőÉpítés-Mé rnök [you’ve guessed: he’s Hungarian] to design it [Mr Tervez ő is famous for his *jövőház* or “future-house” designs, which are said to look like Budapest pastries made for mouths the size of a large marquee. Marcus Plinge has already tried to persuade them both to appear in his new arts series for Channel 13, to be presented by critic and pundit Simon [Brew all [So far [Brew all’s [views [on [h [aving [a [Tervez ő in [the Hampshire countryside are unknown. He’s on holiday in Barcelona.

புனைபெயர்

For those who haven’t heard this one yet:

Ok, so they had to confiscate the child’s [circle-drawing] compass at the airport, but why the plastic set-square and protractor? Officials said it was because they were *weapons of maths instruction*. <Groan.> Until next time, boys and girls...

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Notes by the author

... who has tried for years to make jokes he wouldn't have to explain afterwards

These pieces were originally written to amuse my readers during my time as Editor of SEMⁿtj^s, the Regional Newsletter for South East Mensa (SEM) (the part of England from Salisbury in Wiltshire to Ramsgate in Kent and from the south fringe of the Thames Valley to the south coast). Even though those readers, Mensans all, by definition have IQs in the top 2% of the population, many of them didn't "get" Shorebrush to start with — if they read it at all. And of course some people, as Lewis Carroll complained in *The Hunting Of The Snark*, "always look grave at a pun" — that is, they don't find puns amusing. I do, as do most young children and lovers of verbal humour.

A lot of the humour of Shorebrush is in the puns in names of characters, and punning allusions to real characters, minor celebrities, and stock comedy types. There is fun in digging up arcane, hyper-erudite words that when interpreted have very down-to-earth meanings. This trick is used several times in titles. For example, take Gallotaurean gossip. The made-up term **gallotaurean** is derived from the Latin *gallus*, meaning a cock or rooster — from which comes the twenty-centuries-old joke behind the rooster as a symbol or mascot for Gaul (Latin *Gallus*) or modern France — and *taurus*, meaning a bull; it is a pseudo-scholarly adjective meaning "cock-and-bull" as in a cock-and-bull story! Geddit? Similarly with *Praeterticayune perissology*: **picayune** means "of little value, petty, trifling" and prefix *praeter* adds the sense "beyond, beyond the range of, more than"; so *praeterticayune* means "extremely petty, beyond trifling to of microscopically little importance". Perissology is a very obscure word (but it's in the OED 1st Edition) meaning use of too many words, redundancy, pleonasm. For word lovers it's part of the fun working out the often simple meaning behind these arcane, obscure phrases.

The basic idea for Shorebrush was to do for the 2000s what J.B.Morton did for the 1950s and 1960s in the "By The Way" column in the Daily Express. The column was begun in July 1917, full of military and society tittle-tattle, and written by one Major John Bernard Arbuthnot MVO who used the pseudonym "Beachcomber". In 1919 he became Assistant Editor of the paper and the column was taken over by Dominic Bevan Wyndham Lewis, the paper's then literary editor. He set the style for the column which it kept till 1975. J.B.Morton, a frustrated reporter who happened to share an office with Lewis, took over the column in April 1924, and stayed at the job until 1975! He hadn't been very keen on news as a reporter and he wasn't particularly keen on reality as the new Beachcomber; he gradually introduced regular imaginary characters. No Beachcomber material is used anywhere by Shorebrush, but he occasionally refers or alludes to some of them in connection with the new characters in Shorebrushland.

If you consider any of these characters you will see in their names punning references to real people, to Beachcomber characters (or possibly other famous fictional characters), or to some characteristic of their personality or occupation. For example the Bromsgrove Thursday Football Club player, Neverov Said, is from Tajikistan. Those countries are former Soviet republics so had an imposed Russian language and public culture, but were ethnically Islamic, with Arabic name influence. Our player has a Russian style first name (actually it's his middle name) and now uses an Arabic family name. The effect is a phrase including well-known piece of terminology concerning one of the more obscure rules of the game he plays. If you didn't "get" that when you came across him in the story where he appears, WAKE UP! Heh, heh.

Other characters refer to TV presenters and other "celebrity" type figures, or to some of the quaint aspects of English society. The characters and stories tend to be based in the South East of England, the region of Mensa in the newsletter for which the pieces first appeared. Television has been such a dominant medium of communication for the last few decades — although the Internet is fast catching up technically and with that and the proliferation of FM and digital radio channels every TV network and satellite or cable channel is having to fight increasingly desperately to keep any kind of respectable audience numbers — and quite a lot of the comment is about the world of TV entertainment. What will fill future columns is anybody's guess. I make no long term plans...

Ian P. Hudson 16 June 2004