

WHAT HATH OLD BRINDLE WROUGHT?

In May, 1963 a brief Associated Press article appeared in the Albuquerque Journal. It reported that the Hornchurch Drum and Trumpet Corps, of Hornchurch, England, had been practicing in farmer Reed's pasture, and when the drums crashed and the trumpets blared starting the march "Semper Fidelis" six cows belonging to farmer Reed dropped dead.

This was a blurb made to order for our bulletin board at the lab, and it triggered comments.

I claimed the article to be patently false, believing it impossible to scare a cow to death with mere noise. Had I not seen it tried?

Paul Mutschlecner was unimpressed with this argument, saying the cows had just died of "coronaries". I knew better, but there was work to do, and we discussed it no more.

Time passed—a lot of time passed, and another item appeared in the Albuquerque Journal reporting a difficulty experienced with a Pershing Missile.

February 28, 1964.
The Albuquerque Journal
C-2 Albuquerque, New Mexico

Misses Safety Zone, Army Admits

Cattle Herd Scattered By Missile Fragment

GALLUP (AP)—A Pershing artillery missile carried beyond a safety zone and scattered a herd of cattle in a misfired shot Tuesday, the Army confirmed Thursday.
The Army said it was making a new study of the abort area near Ft. Wingate after Tuesday's errant shot strayed beyond the safety zone and landed within 250 yards of rancher Arthur Fox's house.

Rainmaker Says
4 Inch
A

Fox, who was in the field feeding his cattle, said a missile chunk the size of a pickup truck fell in the field, scattering his 150 cattle over several sections.

I immediately made the argument that scattering cows made sense, and none of them died. Paul's argument was that this only demonstrated that the Hornchurch Drum and Trumpet Corps was more deadly than one of our Pershing Missiles.

The argument once having waned, waxed. We compromised by deciding to write two letters, one to the Director of the Corps, and one to Mr. Reed. We believed that if the event in question

happened in a pasture, Hornchurch must be a small town, and the letters might be deliverable.

We never had a response from Mr. Reed, but we did hear quite promptly from Mrs. Keeler, the wife of the Director. By purest chance, one week before our letter arrived the Keelers had discovered that Mr. Reed had "concocted" the story so that the Corps would not practice in the camp adjacent to his field. Brian Keeler had taken our letter to the Editor of the Hornchurch Recorder and a nice article was published.

COW KILLING TALE MAY HAVE BEEN A LOT OF BULL

—says bandmaster

MUD sticks. And for nearly a year Hornchurch Drum and Trumpet Corps have smarted under the tag: "The boys who killed the cows!"

Their confidence was shaken, their pride hurt and their playing, maintained bandmaster Brian Keeler, suffered as a result.

Until this week none of the band had the slightest doubt that their rendering of Semper Fideles last May caused the death of six cows in calf.

Practical joke

Events, however, took a new turn this week with the shock disclosure by 29-year-old City bank clerk Mr. Keeler that the "cow-killing" incident on Farmer Read's land may well have been a hoax!

Brian's father, Mr. Cecil Keeler—he is public relations officer for the band—explained: "If our information is correct, we have been the victims of a really vicious practical joke.

"My son has it from an extremely reliable source that no cows died on Farmer Read's land and that the story was simply a means of stopping our boys playing."

No carcasses were ever seen

after the incident, pointed out Mr. Keeler, and the band was not sued for damages.

He continued: "By a coincidence, I received a letter from a farmer in Mexico this week who had read the extraordinary tale about Farmer Read's cows.

"He said quite frankly that he didn't believe the story and sent as his reason a cutting from a Mexican newspaper.

"It told how an artillery missile the size of a lorry dropped into a field among 150 cows," he said. "Not one animal suffered even the slightest shock."

No comment

Nobody at Grange Farm Youth Camping Centre—where the band played Semper Fideles—would comment on the incident this week.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture told our reporter: "If the cows were in a rather weak state it might be possible to frighten them to death. But I've never heard of a similar case."

Quite an informative article! We were pleased to be described "a farmer in Mexico", and the missile to a lorry. We were exceptionally pleased with the words of their Ministry of Agriculture that if the cows were in a rather weak state it might be possible to frighten them to death. Weak State indeed!

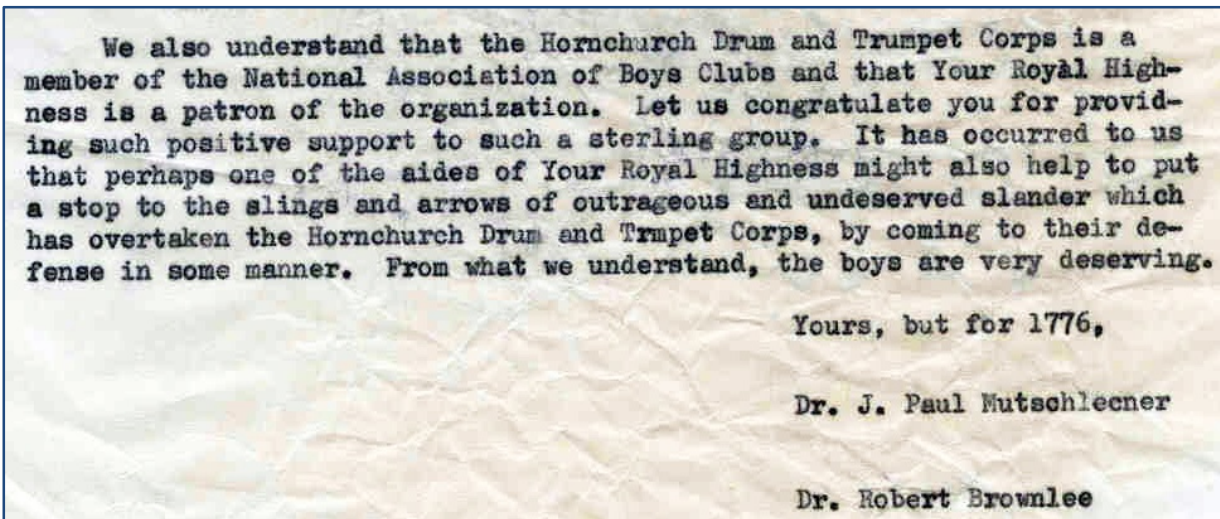
I felt that I had won the argument, but there were complications. Specifically, we had a number of British Colleagues at the lab preparing for a British nuclear test. They were quite intrigued by these events, and when they returned to England they went to Hornchurch to learn more about the Corps, and Hornchurch. When they returned they gave us the "Official Guide" to Hornchurch and we discovered that it is now a suburb of London.

Hornchurch Recorder

The population was more than 150,000 and growing, and the place was anything but the sleepy village we had imagined. Indeed, the fact that our letter was delivered was pretty surprising.

Mrs. Keeler included in her letter the thought that we might be able to see the boys some day. She reported that they had a cows head on the arm patch of their uniforms, and that crowds mooed at them when they appeared in public—they were the “cow killers”. That was why Mr. Keeler had tried to set the record straight. We had responded to her letter with the information that we were going to be going to England in the near future, and would like to hear the Corps.

We also dreamed up the idea of writing to His Royal Highness, Prince Phillip, who was a patron of such activities as the Hornchurch Drum and Trumpet Corps. Paul drafted a wonderful letter, asking for an aide to come to their defense. From my perspective it was how Paul closed the letter that made it truly historic. The last paragraph is shown below:



We also understand that the Hornchurch Drum and Trumpet Corps is a member of the National Association of Boys Clubs and that Your Royal Highness is a patron of the organization. Let us congratulate you for providing such positive support to such a sterling group. It has occurred to us that perhaps one of the aides of Your Royal Highness might also help to put a stop to the slings and arrows of outrageous and undeserved slander which has overtaken the Hornchurch Drum and Trumpet Corps, by coming to their defense in some manner. From what we understand, the boys are very deserving.

Yours, but for 1776,

Dr. J. Paul Mutschlecner

Dr. Robert Brownlee

Ultimately we had a very nice response from Buckingham Palace, from Squadron Leader David Checketts.

On August 9th we met Mr. Keeler at the front of Westminster Abbey, and he took us to his home for a splendid English lunch. It was toward the end of the meal that Mr. Keeler said “We’ll have to be moving along, for the BBC will be here to interview you at Two, and then there is the parade at Three”.

To our amazement, The BBC guy who arrived did the morning show on BBC that was entirely comparable to our “good morning America” show. The interview went pretty well until suddenly, out of the blue, came the question “Now, why don’t we just be honest here, and you admit that you are really Pershing missile experts, here to learn whatever you can about the dangers of the Hornchurch Drum and Trumpet Corps?”

I almost fainted away because in fact I was on committee that was evaluating Pershing Missiles from the point of view of safety, and on the way from Los Alamos to London I had attended a classified meeting in Washington about Pershings and their troubles. My response was a classic fumbling, bumbling kind of mindless “harrumphing”, and it demonstrated how unprepared I was to be interviewed.

For the parade we rode with the Mayor and his wife in their official car that greatly resembled cars used by the Royals. On the way around the track Paul kept holding his hand up with the classic V signal of Winston Churchill (who was still alive on this occasion) and Addie Leah and I tried to copy those peculiar hand waves that the Royal family keep making.

The families and friends of the band members were in the stands, and in front of us the entire band played, opened ranks, and we were invited into the group to inspect, and were each given instruments with which we could play along.

During this entire affair, representatives of eight London newspapers were present taking lots of pictures. This could have been just a bit intimidating for Mexican farmers, and it was certainly so for us also.



Here we see one of hosts, a mother, the Mayor’s wife and the Mayor, Paul, me, and Addie Leah.



A close-up of a close-up inspection is fun to see, as is a careful look at the Mayor's wife. As seen through eyes nearly forty-four years older, she is the spittin' image of Mrs. Bucket from the British comedy program "Keeping Up Appearances".



Our more formal picture gives one a much better feeling for the importance and formality of the day.



Robert Brownlee, Mayor Sidney Legg, Addie Leah Brownlee, Mrs. Legg, Mr. Brad Harman, J. Paul Mutschlecner

We made the next morning's papers without difficulty.

SCIENTISTS

CLEAR

THE

BOY

BANDSMEN

By Daily Mail Reporter

TWO American scientists have cleared a boys' band of killing five cows. The cows, who were in calf, died in a field at Chigwell, Essex, near where the Hornchurch Drum and Trumpet Corps were practising in May last year.

The cows' owner, Mr. Peter Read, of Home Farm, said that the music stampeded them and they collapsed and died of fright.

Yet when parts of a missile fired from Los Alamos testing ground, New Mexico, crashed near a herd of cows a few miles away they showed no signs of alarm.

Acute

So American scientists wondered whether English cows had more acute hearing.

Yesterday two of the scientists who are visiting this country, Dr. Paul Mutschlecner and Dr. Robert Brownlee, made a special trip to Hornchurch Stadium to hear the band.

Their verdict after an hour-long display of marching and countermarching? The band was innocent.

"The deaths of the cows must have some other explanation, because we certainly don't think they could have been caused by the band's music," said Dr. Brownlee.

D Monday August 10 1964 5

Boys' band cleared of killing cows with music

TWO top American scientists have cleared a boys' band of killing five cows with their music.

The cows, which were in calf, died in a field while the 35 members of the Hornchurch, Essex, Drum and Trumpet Corps were practising nearby.

Their owner said the band's music was the only possible explanation for the cows' deaths. But the incident, which happened last year, was followed by an accident in New Mexico, U.S.A., in which a missile exploded soon after take-off from the Los Alamos firing range and a section bigger than a truck crashed in the middle of a herd of cows.

The cows merely raised their heads and wandered slowly away.

DISPLAY

American scientists decided to see for themselves if the hearing of English cows was more acute.

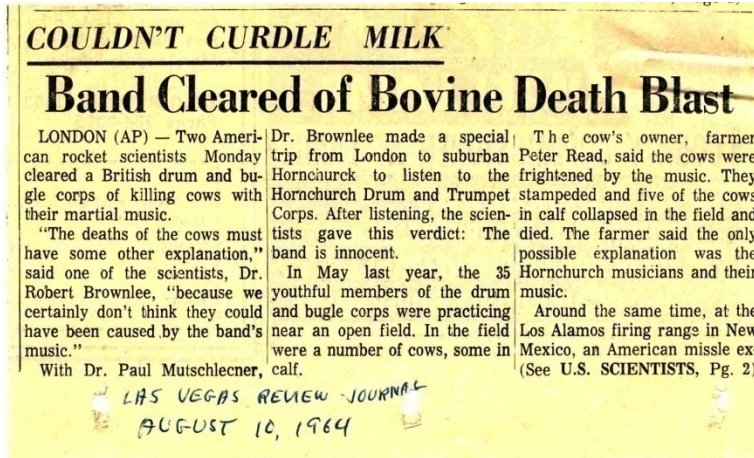
Two American experts visiting this country, Dr. Paul Mutschlecner and Dr. Robert Brownlee, made a special trip to Hornchurch stadium yesterday where the band put on a display for their benefit.

The scientists' verdict: The band was innocent.

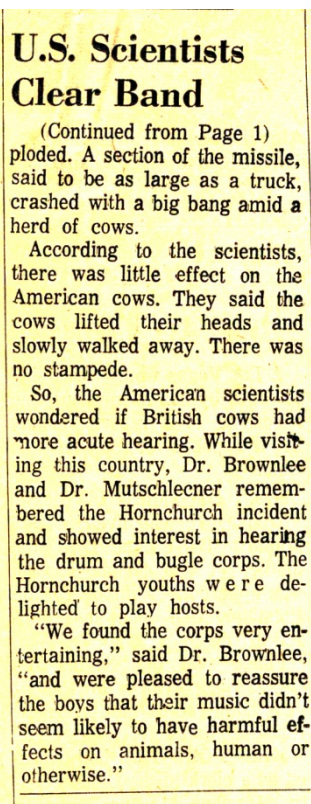
Said Dr. Brownlee: "When that lump of missile failed to scare our cows, let alone kill them, we seriously wondered what makes English cows tick.

"We found the band very entertaining, and were pleased to reassure the boys their music had no harmful effects on animals, human or otherwise."

Once again Hornchurch made the international press!

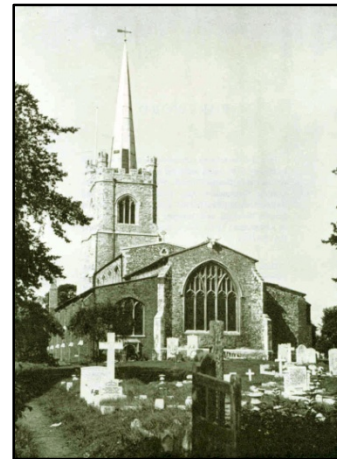


It was the Las Vegas paper's account that gave us the most difficulty, for now our colleagues discovered we were "rocket scientists", and that was



mighty hard to live down. Amazingly enough, our names were spelled correctly, and that also did not do us any good.

Hornchurch will live long in our memories.



But surely, Old Brindle could not have been responsible for ALL of this!

We visited Hornchurch again in 2003, and continue to admire the Church.

