

THE TOWER OF CRAB MAY WELL HAVE BEEN CORNISH, BUT IT STILL GETS SHORT SHRIFT FROM LEVITICUS >>



HAMMER & PINCERS

The day after Shambo, the tubercular Welsh bullock sacred to worshippers at a Hindu temple in Wales, lost his appeal and was executed at dawn (or possibly not at dawn), I spent the day flanked by a handful of Jews, surrounded by hundreds of Indians.

Can you guess why?

Was Shambo, perhaps, killed according to the laws of *kashrut* with me in attendance to catch the blood for heathen sausages, while burly Jewish heavies busted us through the moiling Hindu throng?

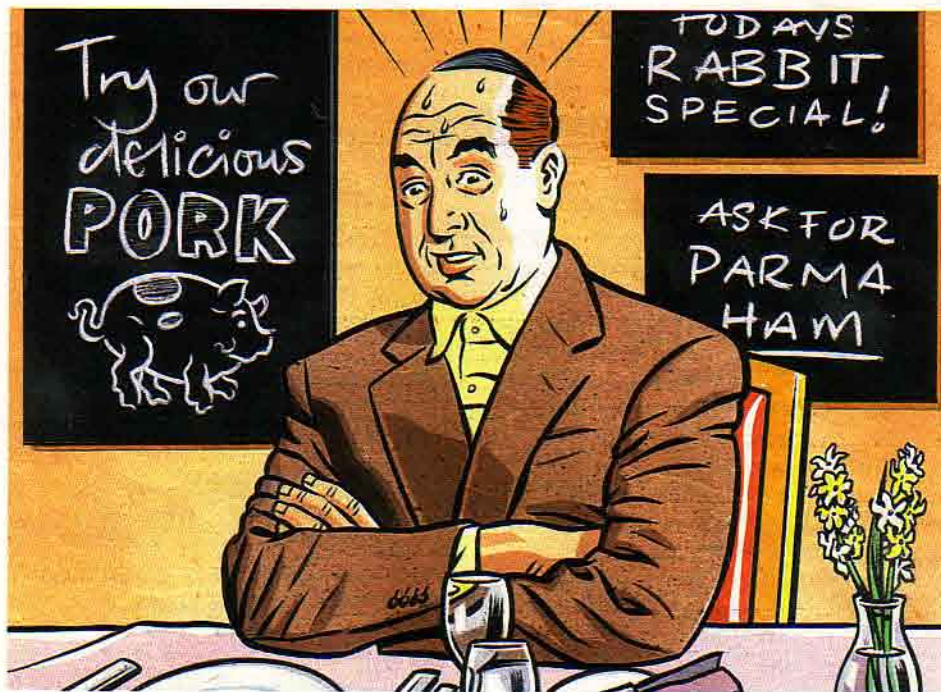
Was I involved in a Jewish revisionist re-enactment of events at the Little Big Horn, in which George Armstrong Custowitz's Seventh Volvo Cavalry faces a last stand against the Apache?

Was I rowing up the Ganges with an all-Jewish boating team during Kumbh Mela?

No, no, and close, but no.

I was at the second day of the Trent Bridge Test against India, the guest of Jewish friends, and sitting in a predominantly Indian section. The cricket, needless to say, was not interesting. The single determining factor of whether a day of Test cricket turns out to be a great one or an impossibly mundane one is whether or not I got up at dawn and drove 150 miles to see it live. On this occasion, the England tail capitulated with barely a whimper in the morning and two unknown Indian openers grimly accumulated the necessary runs as slowly as it is possible to do without swapping your bat for a banana.

This was especially annoying because I was sitting all day next to my friend Dinah Rose, a brilliant QC who thinks cricket is very boring. I had hoped today to persuade her that she was wrong, an almost impossible



thing to do with barristers. She had brought *The Guardian* with her and told me to nudge her if anything interesting happened. She went un-nudged. Thus rather making her point. To be fair, she never once in seven hours nudged me to say she had found anything interesting in *The Guardian* either.

She was, however, prompted by a front-page photograph of Shambo (animal rights, ethnic sensitivities, provincial location, depressing end – Shambo's story was born for *The Guardian* front page) to tell me that her good friend Maya Lester, a barrister at Brick Court, had been on Shambo's defence team.

"Maya is the envy of the bar," said Dinah. "It's very rare these days to see your unsuccessfully defended client executed."

And back we went to our respective megaliths of tedium (indeed, if you had to explain the attributes of our various national newspapers to an alien who understood nothing but cricket – an Australian, for example – then you could not do better than to compare *The Guardian* to watching gutsy but unbeautiful opposition grimly accumulating the necessary total to ensure a draw).

But later that day, at dinner, the issue of religion and the life and death of animals was to loom large once more. We had been booked in by our local hosts, Jonathan and Lydia, to a place called the Hammer & Pincers. It was, said Jonathan, just a quite nice local joint in Wymeswold, nothing flash. Flash would have been Sat Bains (celebrity chef, television coverage, cutting-edge techniques), but that was full. And so was the other place people sometimes go in Nottingham, I forget its name.

I worried a little that a newish restaurant deep in the Leicestershire countryside (as this turned out to be) might turn out to be a well-intentioned nightmare and that I'd be in a pickle if my hosts were expecting me to review it. But from the moment we sat down my worrying heart was soothed.

On the table, you see, was a little laminated sign announcing: "We don't have to go far for local ingredients", and it went on to detail such things as "Wysall Pigs – 400 yards up Wysall Lane, outdoor-reared Gloucester Old Spot", "Tom Brown Eggs – About 1.5 miles, Gressingham duck eggs, cream legbar blue eggs...", "Lubcloud Dairy >>