

Zip agony for DJ Rick

Shockwaves hit the airwaves for one radio DJ when he had to race to a casualty department after a trouser zip accident.

DJ Rick Jackson said he had to cancel his radio show yesterday and rush to hospital when he was unable to free his manhood from his trousers.

The 26-year-old from Clonville, Hants, said: "They always called me Big Rick but now I feel more like Little Richard."

Jackson had been due to present the breakfast show on Hampshire station Power FM.

But instead his girlfriend Kerry Collins drove him to Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth

where doctors freed him from his predicament. He said: "I have never been in such agony. It's every chap's worst nightmare."

"I was getting dressed in a hurry when suddenly there was this most excruciating pain. And there was nothing I could do about it. I was stuck fast."

His co-host took over the breakfast show at the Fareham-based station. Presenter Ana Schofield, the daughter of EastEnders star Leslie Schofield, said her colleague had been coy about the nature of his injury. She said many male listeners had phoned in to offer sympathy, but women had been asking for records like Natalie Imbruglia's Torn.

BBC joins folk revival

Renewed interest in folk music has led to the BBC organising its own awards to recognise major stars in the field.

The "new folk" scene is thriving and some of its brightest stars like Kate Rusby and Eliza Carthy – both past Mercury Music Prize nominees – are lined up to perform at the event next month.

US protest singer Joan Baez and world music star Yousouf N'Dour will also be performing at the ceremony at London's Waldorf Hotel to be broadcast by BBC Radio 2.

Both Carthy and Rusby have helped to inject youth into the folk genre and broaden its appeal. A

new-found enthusiasm for folk was thought to be responsible for a major increase in the sales of acoustic guitars last year.

Comic and singer Mike Harding will host the BBC Folk Awards on February 7 which are intended to raise the profile of artists in folk, roots and traditional performers.

They will include a lifetime achievement title and stars like Maddy Prior of Steeleye Span, Ralph McTell and Dave Swarbrick of Fairport Convention will be presenting awards. The event will be broadcast on February 9.

Court clash on killing of Jews

Historian David Irving denied that millions of Jews were systematically killed by the Nazis in concentration camps gas chambers.

Mr Irving, the 62-year-old author of Hitler's War and Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich, told Mr Justice Gray at the High Court in London yesterday that the "gas chambers Holocaust" was "a big lie".

Mr Irving is suing Professor Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Books for libel over the suggestion in her book, Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory that he was a "Holocaust denier".

They deny libel and plead justification. Giving evidence, Mr Irving said they would find it very difficult to suggest that the systematic extermination of the Jews was a Third Reich decision, a Hitler decision.

Millions
Asked if he accepted or denied there was any systematic gassing of Jews in concentration camps, at Auschwitz or elsewhere, he said: "If we can leave out the word systematic I do not deny that there was some kind of gassing at Bergenau. It is highly likely that there was."

But, cross-examined by Richard Rampton QC, Mr Irving said: "I deny the gas chambers. I deny that the Germans killed millions in gas chambers."

He added: "I'm denying that any kind of multiple millions of people were killed in the gas chambers at Bergenau."

Asked if he accepted that the Nazis killed millions by violent means and not just by disease, overwork or starvation, Mr Irving said that he did.

He added: "Whether it was in the order of millions or not, I would hesitate to specify. Perhaps one million. Less than four million."

The hearing continues.

Brown's flat buy details released

The chartered surveyors who sold Chancellor Gordon Brown his Westminster flat have released details of the sale.

Tuckerman Chartered Surveyors, whose office is in the same street as the home, said there had been no impropriety in the sale.

The company said yesterday that the property had been sold for £130,000 to Mr Brown in October 1992, after being originally put up for sale for £163,000.

Reports that Mr Brown had bought the flat, owned by one of the failed Maxwell group of companies, for a discount have prompted Tory calls for an inquiry.

Yesterday Tuckerman's managing director Terence Osborne issued a statement that the company was "instructed to sell the property by Arthur Andersen on May 1, 1992."

The property was originally marketed at an asking figure of £163,000 to include carpets and curtains.

"The asking price was reduced to £155,000 at the beginning of July and reduced again on August 25 1992 to £145,000, to reflect the poor state of the market."

It added: "Terms were finally agreed with Gordon Brown MP at £130,000 in September, with exchange and completion taking place in October."

"There was no question of impropriety at any time. The terms agreed reflected the condition of the flat and the state of the market."

Hysteria 'led to school illness'

Dozens of students and teachers in a Tennessee school suffered nausea, dizziness, headaches and drowsiness caused by mass hysteria, say experts.

More than 170 people at Warren County High School in McMinnville sought emergency aid during the November 1998 outbreak.

The school was closed for more than two weeks and nearly 100,000 dollars (£62,500) was spent on emergency care alone.

Government investigators studied the school grounds and analysed blood samples. They examined puddles and grease traps and checked an air space above the foundation. They looked for viruses, germs, pesticides, herbicides or poisons that could make so many people ill so quickly. They found nothing.

Severe
Now, in an article in the New England Journal of Medicine, experts blame the outbreak on mass hysteria – real symptoms set off by spreading anxiety.

Investigators say such outbreaks are more common than recognised at schools and in other close-knit communities. And they say cases of mass hysteria – called "psychogenic illness" – will become more frequent and severe with rising public worry over biological terrorism.

New technology may also be promoting new forms of hysteria. Dr Ron House, a University of Toronto researcher said internet messages about real or imagined symptoms of conditions like chemical sensitivity now appear to be setting off such outbreaks in people at great distances from one another.

The phenomenon, though, has long historical roots. Hundreds of outbreaks of mass hysteria have been documented over the past century.

Bad fuel grounds aircraft

An investigation into a fuel contamination scare which grounded 5,000 light aircraft in Australia is to look into whether bad fuel played a role in any crashes in the past 18 months, an official said today.

The government has announced a wide-ranging inquiry into the contamination crisis, which safety officials said was the worst of its type in the world.

All piston-engined aircraft which may have received aviation fuel produced at one of Mobil Exxon Corp's Australian plants between November 21 and December 23 have been grounded because of potential contamination which can block fuel systems.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority's grounding order has shut down hundreds of charter companies, flight schools and other operations which use small planes in south-east Australia, where the fuel was distributed.

Alan Stray, deputy director of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, said the contamination could go back 18 months.

'Burglary cause of death' jury told

An 86-year-old Birmingham woman died of stress caused by a burglary at her home by two brothers, posing as water board officials, a court heard. The brothers plead guilty to one charge of burglary but not guilty to unlawful killing.

Glady's Kay died in Birmingham's Heartlands Hospital on March 23 last year after being admitted with chest pains brought on by a distraction burglary the previous day after brothers Thomas and James "Jimmy" Hanrahan had tricked their way into her ground floor flat at Kingston Road, Small Heath, Birmingham, and stole £1,221 in cash.

The brothers, aged 20 and 19, and both of no fixed address, appeared at Birmingham crown court yesterday.

Mr Philip Parker, prosecuting, said: "36 hours after a burglary was committed at her home, when she was present, she died."

"It is the prosecution case that these two defendants are also responsible for her death because, in essence, they caused the stress which caused her death."

The court heard how the brothers went to Mrs Kay's ground-floor flat shortly after 11am on March 22 1999 saying they were from the water board.

Once inside the pensioner's home, they asked the woman to run the taps in the bathroom, but as she was doing so, she noticed her bedroom door and her dressing table were open and her property was disturbed.

Screams
A near neighbour saw the men go into the house and, being suspicious, called the police, Mr Parker said.

When officers arrived, all three were in the rear of the flat, but hearing Mrs Kay's screams and cries and trying to enter the lounge, police found the door barred from the inside.

Officers broke into the room and discovered Jimmy Hanrahan attempting to escape by a rear window and Thomas trying to leave by the front door.

Jimmy Hanrahan was sprayed in the face with CS spray by an officer and his brother was arrested as he tried to burst past another policeman at the front door.

Gloves were found at the scene as well as a red-handled screwdriver, the court heard.

"Mrs Kay was badly affected. Neighbours saw her emerge from her flat and ask for help. She had terrible chest pains."

"She was visibly upset. She was holding her chest and an ambulance was called," Mr Parker said.

The pensioner's condition deteriorated in hospital.

"There is a direct cause between the burglary and the death," Mr Parker told the jury.

The hearing continues.

EastEnders' glamorous barmaid plans to marry
EastEnders beauty Tamzin Outhwaite has told of her joy after announcing she is to follow in the footsteps of her TV father by getting married.

The 29-year-old actress, who plays Queen Vic barmaid Melanie Healy, became secretly engaged to her producer boyfriend Marty, whose surname has not been given, on Christmas Day.

A spokesman for the BBC1 soap confirmed that Glaswegian Marty proposed to Miss Outhwaite over a romantic dinner on the island of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean.

Miss Outhwaite said: "We are absolutely thrilled, as are both our families."

The star's real-life engagement came in the same week that millions of



Event manager Gareth Lloyd prepares for the borough trail

Residents are urged to put their best foot forward in the first Dudley Borough Trail of the 21st century.

Dudley planning and leisure department has again teamed up with Action Heart, Stourbridge HF Ramblers and Dudley Ramblers for the 19th annual event.

Event manager Gareth Lloyd, who is already preparing to step out, said he was hoping that 2000 people would sign up for this year's event.

He said: "The borough trail is always a very popular family event where people can choose their own pace of walking, discover the hidden secrets of the borough and start walking towards a healthier lifestyle."

The event takes place on Sunday April 30 and for an application form call 01902 326665.

US sues shuttle firms
The US government is suing three companies for allegedly concealing fraud by a sub-contractor that spent millions from space shuttle programme funds on homes, jewellery and exotic holidays.

The Justice Department lawsuit has named Rockwell International, Boeing North American and United Space Alliance, the current space shuttle contractor.

Government lawyers claim Rockwell officials knew about the improper costs from sub-contractor Omnigrip and submitted false claims to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which resulted in overbilling and cost overruns between 1986 and 1993.

viewers watched her Albert Square persona when businessman Ian Beale. The on-screen couple split days later, on New Year's Eve, after it emerged that Ian's claim that his daughter, Lucy, had cancer was a lie. Since joining EastEnders as blonde bombshell Melanie in October 1998, Miss Outhwaite has become one of the most glamorous and popular stars.

Farmers call for Euro cash

Struggling farmers today called on the Government to provide assistance to help them survive their current crisis by taking advantage of funds available from the European Union.

National Farmers Union president Ben Gill is leading the call for compensation to alleviate the impact of the strong pound which has caused severe financial hardship among farmers.

An NFU spokesman said: "We are calling on the Government to formally apply for the remaining £550 million in agri-monetary compensation that is available for this year."

"The EU recognises that because we are operating in sterling and everyone else uses euros British farmers are disadvantaged because of currency fluctuations."

"It makes £450 million available in agri-monetary compensation and although some of that has already been committed, we are applying for the remaining amount which is £360 million."

"The UK Government has to apply for it and we will be pressing them to do so. It is not automatic because the Government has to contribute to this too."