

ACORN

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Editor
Ivan Acorn

Editorial

This issue my editor's column takes a look at the *Acorn Society* membership – our ages, status, and for those circumcised, the age at which we were cut. But, at the end of 2003, there were only 110 of us – a rather uncomfortable fact. This is far too few, compared with the number of guys interested in foreskins and circumcision in the UK, not to mention overseas. So, a New Year's resolution (if it's not too late for these) is for us to undertake a recruitment campaign. The first stage of this is to revamp the web site which has not been touched for a number of years. The core activity of the Society is the **printed** newsletter and this will certainly continue in this form. But a web site can be a very useful publicity tool to which potential members can be referred for information. (Sample copies of the newsletter will of course be sent by post to those who have no Internet access.) So, in the next edition, we will be launching the new website as a prelude to a recruitment drive.

A quick reminder. The next *Acorn* meeting will be held in Leicester over the weekend of 27th/28th March (details page 5). If you can make it, please do. There is no reason to feel shy or inhibited. The atmosphere is very welcoming and it soon feels entirely natural to be discussing your favourite subject with fellow aficionados.

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E-Mail may be sent to:
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Editor's Column

Who Are We?

That we share a fascination with circumcision and foreskins is taken as read. But just who are the members of the *Acorn Society*?

At the end of 2003, there were 110 of us. We are predominately UK based (97 members) but have a sprinkling of members in mainland Europe (4) and in the rest of the world (9). There are 79 circumcised members and 22 uncircumcised with 9 members not declaring their status. Ninety-nine members confessed their age. The average is 54 with our youngest member at 23 and our oldest at 87. Three quarters of us are between 40 and 70 (see Figure 1).

There is no significant difference between the overall age profile of the circumcised and the uncircumcised.

Figure 2 shows the number of members circumcised at each age and Figure 3 shows a plot of age circumcised against age now.

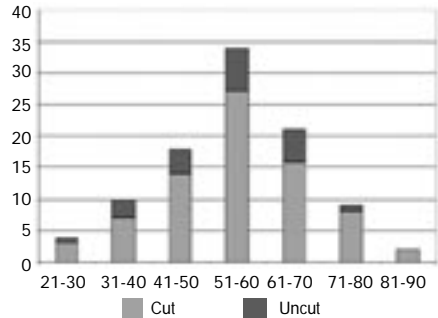


Figure 1: Age distribution of members

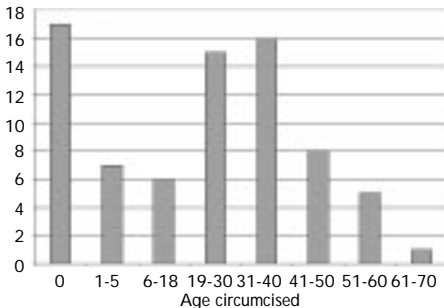


Figure 2: Number circumcised at each age

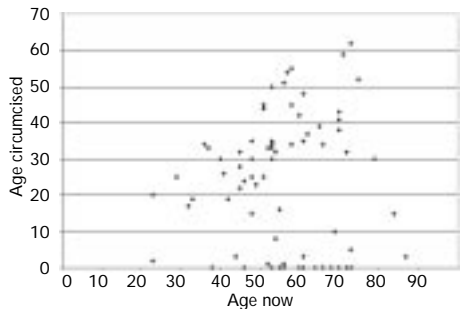


Figure 3: Age of circumcision by Age now

Figure 4 shows the decade in which members were circumcised.

What do the data tell us? Of the circumcised, 23% were cut in the first year of life, another 9% by the age of 5 and a further 8% by the age of 18. Thus 40% of the circumcised members were circumcised as children (in the broad sense), leaving 60% who were cut as adults. Advancing years appear not to be a barrier to getting circumcised. 19% were over 40 before they underwent the knife and two intrepid members waited until their seventh decade before losing their foreskins.

Figure 4 gives a clue about this delay. The reasons for members being circumcised as adults is not recorded but it is safe to guess that the majority were elective. Such circumcisions were very difficult to obtain before the 1980's. There was a medical interdict against circumcision from the late 1940's onwards and this is borne out by the low numbers of members circumcised in the 20 years 1954-1974 as compared with the previous and following decades. As elective circumcision became more widely available, the numbers jump significantly with many more members obtaining circumcision in the thirty years since 1974.

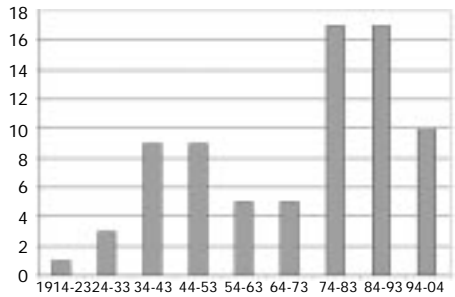


Fig 4: Decade of circumcision

Figure 3 bears this out. All things being equal, one would have expected adults wanting elective circumcision to get cut in their twenties. But figure 3 actually shows a surprising correlation between age now and age circumcised i.e. the older the person now, the older he was when circumcised. On reflection, perhaps we should be less surprised. Someone aged 70 now would have been 50 in 1983, someone 60 now would have been 40 then, someone 50 now was 30 then. Thus the ages of 50, 40 and 30 respectively probably represent the earliest at which these cohorts could arrange, without extreme difficulty, to have themselves circumcised. And this is what figure 3 tends to show. If the same analysis were to be done in twenty years time, the pattern would almost certainly be different. Then, I would expect the majority of blobs for people up to the age of 60 to be concentrated in the age circumcised band 20-30. Partly this is because routine infant circumcision is much rarer now and thus future circumcised members of *Acorn* are likely to be largely those who elect to be cut as adults. And since thankfully it is now much easier for those who want rid of their foreskins to arrange it without question or embarrassment, those adult electives are likely to arrange their cut early in their adult life i.e. in their twenties.

One interesting question. Why are all those members who were circumcised electively as adults still members of *Acorn*? They wished to be cut, they've had their op, they are now circumcised. Isn't that the end of it? Apparently not. Most men circumcised electively as adults are entirely happy with their new state (although it may take one or two revisions to gain perfection!) Nevertheless, for most, the interest does not die. Similarly, the fact that we have uncircumcised members across the age range shows that interest in foreskins (and their removal!) does not wane with age. For all, foreskins and circumcision remain subjects of intense fascination.

And as long as they do, *Acorn* will live on!

Ivan Acorn

My Muslim Son – Part II

A corn readers may recollect that in *My Muslim Son* (issue 2/2003) I described how I eventually came to the decision to go ahead with the circumcision of my Anglo-Indonesian nine year old son. As you will see, the operation which took place on 31st July in Jakarta during the school holidays was not the positive experience that I had planned. Let me elaborate.

First, finances were tight since it had cost about £2000 for the four of us, two adults and two children, to fly out there. My wife and her brother, a man on a modest wage with an eleven year old boy due to be circumcised at the same time, were keen to have the operation followed by a ceremony at home two days later with invited guests paying their respects by giving the boys money. This meant hiring in catering, and the combined expense was therefore going to be high. Second, the doctor, chosen on the recommendation of one of my wife's relatives, was not to be consulted prior to the operation with the boys in attendance because my wife and her brother, who were paying, wanted to save money.

After a long hellish early morning drive through a suffocatingly hot and traffic clogged Jakarta, the boys, my wife and her brother (another one acted as the driver) and I arrived at the clinic where we were introduced to the doctor. My brother-in-law, yet again as with the circumcision of his elder son (this circumcision was video filmed) chose not to be involved with discussion of the methods, which were either laser or knife/scissors, or the operation itself. The non-English speaking Muslim doctor put my wife and me off laser, commenting that a by-product of laser was the smell of burnt flesh though on the other hand it was a bloodless procedure.

My son, dressed in his chequered sarong, collarless shirt and white skull cap, was the first to go. Nervously he entered the operating room and lay on the prepared couch, one of three in the room. When the doctor examined his penis, he was concerned about its small size and proceeded to induce an erection, as well as retract my son's adhesion free foreskin. Accompanied by a headscarfed nurse, he then injected a local anaesthetic into the base of the penis, which caused my son much distress and, disconcertingly, drew blood. Standing at my son's side, clutching his hand, I watched the doctor pull the trunk like foreskin forward, hold it with forceps and pinch the penis to ensure that the anaesthetic had taken effect, and then make a dorsal slit up to the corona. The foreskin was next cut off and the frenulum left intact. My wife photographed the event from the start to the stitching and bandaging.

What was not recorded on film was what occurred subsequently at the clinic. It broke my heart to see my son lying on the couch in the foetal position sobbing: "I never wanted this to happen." "Had I betrayed him?" I kept asking myself. And there was more.

Towards the end of my son's circumcision, I noticed a young boy come in. He had seen what was going to happen to him too and was determined not to be part of it. However, his parents had other ideas and refused to listen to his pleas.

Eventually, in a shocking spectacle, he was dragged onto a neighbouring couch and forcibly circumcised by another doctor while his parents pinned him down and kept his legs open. He wailed: "I want to go home, I want to go home", but it was useless. I wish that I had had the courage to intervene.

Sickened by this sight, I said a silent prayer that my nephew's circumcision would pass quietly. Unlike my son and I, he was well endowed which allowed the doctor to circumcise him in a flaccid state, although adhesions between the glans and the foreskin had to be removed first. Indeed, my nephew, a small skinny waif, was so quiet I barely thought he was alive.

The outcomes for the two boys were fair. My chubby son quickly recovered to display a penis where the glans is only fully exposed when erect; my nephew endured infection post-operatively but is the one who is truly a 'roundhead'. The outcome for me is that I am even more cautious than before for my five year old son whom my wife also wanted cut. If his turn comes, there will be a consultation in English in England. Until he can retract his foreskin without pain, there will be no operation. Watch this space for the next instalment: *My Muslim Son - Part III?*

H.F. - Cambridge

Important Reminder

Some of you have yet to renew your subscriptions for 2004. Reminders for the guilty are enclosed. For those who do not renew, this will, I'm afraid, be the last issue which you receive. Please renew - we certainly don't want to lose you!

Acorn Spring Meeting

A meeting of the *Acorn Society* has been arranged to take place on the 28th and 29th March 2004 at the Ramada-Jarvis Hotel, Leicester.

The cost of Dinner, Bed and Breakfast (shared twin bed room) is £47.00 per person per night. We have taken an option on a small number of single rooms for which the cost is £51.00 per night.

Experience suggests that a number of members will gather on the Friday evening and meet informally. The larger number usually arrives for the meeting on Saturday afternoon, about 2.00 pm, and stays over to Sunday morning.

Some of our members will attend the meeting on Saturday and will not take overnight accommodation - the choice is yours!

BOOKING and further information.

By telephone: Call Douglas on 07788 126 706. Evenings and weekends are usually the best time to call.

By post to the Acorn PO Box. Please be prepared to give a telephone number or email address for confirmation of your booking.

More About *That Statue*

The last two issues of *Acorn* have carried articles regarding Michelangelo's famous statue, commonly called 'David'. Anthony's article (Issue 6/2003) appears to contain a number of factual errors which are worth noting.

Firstly, there is no evidence that Michelangelo was intending to sculpt the Jewish boy who slew Goliath. He does not seem to have given his statue a name. It is most likely that some museum curator, anxious to thoroughly label all his exhibits decided that it looked like David and thus named the statue as we now know it.

If Michelangelo had indeed intended to sculpt David then he would clearly have known that the boy would have been circumcised. However, as with most artists, he would also have been moved to use artistic licence to fit in with what was expected by people of the time (after all, he needed to sell his works to make a living and couldn't go against what potential buyers liked).

The classical form was to always present the glans as covered. Also the genitals were presented proportionately smaller than might be expected for the size and age of the subject, thus grown men were depicted with the genitals of teenage boys (and a correspondingly small amount of pubic hair – as can be seen in this statue).

Anthony repeats the oft-stated claim of the anti-circ lobby that Jewish circumcision originally only removed the very tip of the foreskin. There is absolutely no evidence to support this claim. What evidence we can glean clearly points to a more complete circumcision. Let us consider a few facts:-

1. From a surgical point of view, it is almost impossible to cut through the foreskin without it being under tension – this would be even more critical when using a relatively blunt flint knife! – and when under tension it is unlikely that the cut would be made close to where it was being gripped at the tip, it is much easier to cut closer to the glans thus leading to at least part of the glans being exposed.
2. We know from wall paintings and examination of some mummies that the ancient Egyptians circumcised by pulling the foreskin out and cutting off a substantial portion of it. If only the tip had been removed it would not have been possible to confirm the circumcised status of the mummies. The Biblical Jews lived in captivity in Egypt for a long time and almost certainly one nation actually learnt circumcision from the other, thus a significant difference in method is improbable and so the Jews almost certainly also removed more than just the tip.
3. Many tribes around the world (eg the natives of Australia and Africa) independently adopted circumcision as part of their tribal identity. Every one of them, even those only performing a dorsal slit, exposes the whole glans in their operation. What reason is there to conjecture that the Jews were any different?

4. Since many men are born with a short foreskin which does not cover the whole glans in later life it is very unlikely that a procedure designed to provide a 'tribal mark' would be done in such a way that a significant number of men (including many outside the 'tribe') wouldn't actually have to undergo it to appear to have the 'mark'.
5. Underlying the religious requirements of both Jews and Moslems to abstain from pork and to be circumcised there are actually very sound medical reasons based on the environment in which those great religions began. From a medical standpoint, circumcision is highly desirable in situations where there is a lack of water for washing and also high temperatures and a lot of fine sand (as many a British soldier has found in desert campaigns from WW2 to the present day). However, if the tip alone is removed then the situation is actually made worse because there is still a large moist area under the foreskin to trap the sand, etc but a much larger and looser opening to allow it to enter in the first place. Only a complete circumcision totally eliminates the problem.
6. We do know that in the post-Biblical times when Greece was the 'centre of world culture', some Jews had become slack in their observance of circumcision so that it was possible for many to pull their foreskin remnant forward and tie it over the glans to match Greek sensibilities in the Gymnasium. This does not prove anything about the original method of circumcision, only that, at that time, the inner skin was not necessarily fully removed but just turned back.

I have carefully re-read Genesis chapter 17 which recounts God's original command to circumcise, and the circumcision of Ismael; and chapter 21 recounting the birth and circumcision of Isaac. Nowhere is there any mention of an axe being used, nor of any rebuke by an angel. It would seem that this is yet another of Anthony's fantasies.

Finally, whilst there are no doubt some of Jewish origins who have abandoned circumcision, they can no more now be called Jews than those of Christian ancestry who reject Christ or refuse baptism can now be called Christians.

Vernon - London

That Statue - A Postscript

With regard to the photograph of Michelangelo's David: I am sure that the penis shows Michelangelo's depiction of the male genitals as following the Greek ideal of a diminutive uncut penis, more suitable for a young boy than a mature man. It is a great sculpture and should not be altered in any way. I suggest that, if Ben Glazner does not like Michelangelo's concept of an uncut penis, he take up a mallet and chisel and a block of marble to produce his own version of an authentic circumcised David. I by far prefer to see a circumcised penis rather than a childish looking uncut one, but I recognise a masterpiece when I see it; so it should be left alone as Michelangelo produced it.

D.B. - New Zealand

The Story Of Dave's Dick

Part Three: Life as a Cut Guy

The immediate post-operation period was not entirely a comfortable one. A hot stinging sensation was gradually becoming more apparent, changing slowly into the dull throb of a toothache, but powerful pain-killers soon calmed it down. Potential erections kept occurring throughout the homeward journey, which required considerable brain power to subdue. When bedtime arrived everything was fine, the pain had all but disappeared and I went to bed a very happy person. Sleep that night was wonderful, as I did not sleep well the previous night, being too full of apprehension and excitement.

However, subsequent nights were not as good, as several times each night I was rudely awakened by considerable penis pain, which I soon realised was being caused by a very hard erection. Now I realised the reason for the fairly massive plaster that the Doc had wrapped around: it had to withstand these onslaughts of raised blood pressure and stop the stitches being ripped out. These erections, of course, were being caused by the desire for a pee, and the only way to deal with this was to go as quickly as possible, which soon relieved the situation.

On close examination everything seemed to be fine. There was not much bruising and very little swelling. The Doc appeared to have done a marvellous job. As far as could be seen, the frenulum had been removed and the shaft skin seemed very tight. It was difficult to tell with the dressing still in place, as it was obviously preventing expansion of some of the skin. The following day, less than 24 hours after being cut, I was required to play the organ (not mine) in our local town church for a charity service. This was not easy, although I did manage to drive the car myself. I had to be somewhat careful with playing the pedals, which require a fair amount of movement of the lower half of the body. When asked by the vicar how I was, I told him the true facts, causing great embarrassment. This is when I realised that circumcision is not a subject that can be discussed openly, which is a great pity, especially when one has just gone through the experience and wants to share it with others.

Taking a shower was one of the most difficult tasks while the dressing was still on. The Doc had told me not to get it wet, which seemed rather difficult under the circumstances. His advice was to wrap it in cling film, which seemed to me to be very comical. So, I tried it, but immediately got the inevitable erection, which was fortunately not as painful as the nocturnal erections. With the aid of a flannel I was able to prevent most of the dressing from getting wet.

Eight days later on 12th December I went back for the after-sales service when Doc removed the heavy plaster bandage by cutting it off. For the first time I was able to see my



new dick, and I was so thrilled that I could feel an erection coming on, one which was not going to be stopped. I apologised, but the Doc retorted “Don’t worry about that! It’s useful so that I can see if I have removed the correct amount of skin. I don’t often get the chance to see an erect penis.” Strange, I thought, I imagined that most men would get a hard-on under those circumstances. But after all that, he did not remove the stitches, which surprised me. So, following the recommendation of many others who have been circ’ed recently, I whipped them out on the tenth day, but kept a clean dressing on until all weeping had ceased. I did not want to run the risk of getting suture tunnels, which can be so disfiguring – and appearance is all important to a man with a newly circumcised penis!

On 13th December, the ninth day after the circ, everything seemed to have healed beautifully, so I did not replace the dressing. For the first time I was able to experience a bare cut cock – and, wow, what an experience! It was so sensitive that I got a real hard-on in the middle of the street, and had to cover my front with my bag. In fact, I had to stop walking until things calmed down. And, what’s more, I was back at the organ playing for a carol service that same day! Fortunately, this effect soon subsided, and I was able to walk normally only a couple of days later. I started using an antiseptic wound healing cream at this point, which seemed to help to soften the scar and accelerate the healing.

A few days later I began to get the natural desire for some sort of relief. After all, it was now over two weeks since I had had any form of sex, and I was beginning to get desperate, but I had been told that I must desist for three weeks to one month. I realised that this degree of abstinence was not going to be possible, so I tried gently massaging the glans, avoiding any movement to the shaft skin. This seemed to work quite well and I brought myself to ejaculation, which was a huge relief. But during this process I had strange feelings inside my penis, as if something was parting company. I have no idea what caused this feeling, but I suppose it could have been the severed blood vessels floating around and finding their new positions. But this did cool my emotions and made me determined to show more restraint.

At five weeks after the op it became apparent that the frenulum had not been removed. There was a tight bridge of skin joining the shaft and the glans that was pulling the glans downwards quite considerably. This was even tighter than before circumcision, due, I suppose, to the shortening effect of the removal of the foreskin. The Doc agreed that he would do something about it, but suggested waiting until the original wound had healed thoroughly.

Five months after circumcision the frenulum was attacked, but when the wound had healed I was still not satisfied, as there was still a tightness, with a degree of pain during sex, and it looked very untidy. So, back to the Doc again! He agreed to do a radical frenulectomy,



but warned me that the tightness could be due to scar tissue, in which case further surgery would not ease the problem. However, I decided that I would take the risk. This proved much more painful than the original cut. The injections were quite nasty and the after-effects of the excision lasted longer. The frenulum is obviously a strange and difficult structure, causing annoyance to many people both before and after circumcision.

How does it feel after almost two years? Firstly, there is no regret at going for circumcision, even though there is a degree of disappointment. Now that I have got through the euphoria of the actual circumcision, my everyday life has returned to normal, and is no longer penis-orientated, which it was for several weeks. While it lasted, although exciting, this phase was quite worrying because, being self-employed, it was interfering with my work and causing a lot of lost time. Physically, things are much better. When flaccid, my penis feels very comfortable. I no longer have to choose between covered or bare glans, neither of which situation was satisfactory before cutting. Now, it just feels absolutely natural, better than either of the previous states, and has a better appearance.



However, I think that some people on the pro-circumcision groups exaggerate the benefits, to the point at which it becomes an all-consuming fetish. "Sex is a million times better!", they say. Well, it may be for some, but for others it will prove less exciting. Every penis is different, with different lengths of foreskin, different degrees of tightness, and different proportions of glans to shaft. All of these parameters contribute to the ultimate result. The anti-circ lobby makes a great deal of the reduction in sensation that accompanies the loss of the foreskin. They are not entirely wrong: I miss some of the exquisite tingling sensations that the foreskin used to produce, especially during the onset of erection. There can be no doubt that the stretch sensors in the foreskin play an important role in the sensations of erection and movement. Now I am sometimes uncertain whether I am actually having an erection, and have to check with my hand to feel if my dick is hard. The sensations during masturbation are also weaker, and a different technique has to be adopted. But when the technique has been perfected, orgasm is still good!

Finally, what about intercourse? There is a distinct difference, both for me and for my wife, who says it feels different, but can't quite explain why. There is undoubtedly a reduced sensation, which can be an advantage in that it reduces the risk of premature ejaculation. The tight shaft skin results in more friction, especially during the outward stroke, which gives a most pleasant sensation. But there are times when I find myself having to work so hard that my wife complains I am making her sore before reaching a climax.

So, in summary, I am proud of my new dick and proud to be circumcised, even though I have some misgivings. I have no desire to return to my previous state and in common with everyone else who has been circumcised as an adult, I wish

I'd had it done sooner. As the Doc said after the op, it is probably better to be cut before puberty, and then you will never know what you have missed! The converse is that I found the experience very emotional and would happily go through it all again – but I don't think I will bother with any revisions, as I am perfectly happy with it as it is!

Dave – Notts.

Wilfred Thesiger R.I.P.

Wilfred Thesiger died on 24th August 2003 aged 93. Intrepid explorer, especially in Arabia, Thesiger's main interest as far as *Acorn* readers are concerned will lie in the time that he spent in Iraq. He lived with the canoe-borne marshmen of Iraq over a period of seven years, attaining acceptance only by learning the unusual skill of circumcision. This is recorded in his book *The Marsh Arabs*.

As a European Christian, he was finding difficulty in being accepted. For instance, the stricter Shias would not drink from the same cup as an infidel. This changed when he stopped in a large village in the Amaira country on his way north. After dinner, his host asked what Thesiger kept in his boxes. On being told they contained medicines, Thesiger was asked whether he was a doctor ("I know about medicine") and whether he could circumcise. At this stage, Thesiger had never performed the operation although he had watched it being carried out numerous times. So he took a chance and answered that he could. This led to a request for Thesiger to circumcise the host's son, Kharibid. It had been some years since anyone had come who knew how to circumcise and the boy could not marry until he had been done. Thesiger agreed somewhat apprehensively.

Amongst the Marsh Arabs, circumcision was often deferred to manhood and was done by specialists who travelled round from village to village, although Thesiger is disparaging about the technique and cleanliness of these practitioners. Often wounds became infected and took months to heal. Not unnaturally, there was some reluctance on the part of fathers to allow their sons to undergo this hazardous operation.

The operation was performed next morning in the open air with Kharibid sitting on a mortar and with a small crowd looking on. Unfortunately for Thesiger, the boy had an attached foreskin so his very first circumcision operation was not the most straightforward. Thesiger started to prepare a syringe to anaesthetise the area but Kharibid told him to "just cut it off" and couldn't be persuaded otherwise. He remained motionless during the operation and, at the end, just stood up and said: "Thank you."

After the operation was complete, the boy who had been assisting Thesiger himself sat down on the mortar and said: "Now it's my turn." With a shock, Thesiger realised that the nine boys standing round had all come to be circumcised – although boys is really a misnomer since the youngest was fifteen and the eldest twenty four. So Thesiger did as requested and operated on all of them.

By the time that Thesiger reached the next village, the news had spread and a score of boys were waiting to be circumcised. From then on, few of the people were willing to let the local specialists circumcise them. They preferred to wait until Thesiger visited their village, or they sought him out elsewhere. On one occasion, one hundred and fifteen turned up and Thesiger was hard at work from dawn until midnight. In *The Marsh Arabs*, there is a photograph of an Arab youth, naked except for headdress, sporting a clearly circumcised penis – witness, presumably, to Thesiger’s skill.

Thesiger spent the final decades of his long life living among the Samburu of northern Kenya. Thesiger became embroiled in a series of disputes with local administration officials, particularly over them using a local witchdoctor to circumcise the young Samburu boys. As in Iraq, so in Kenya, the local practitioners caused pain and infection through their crude, unhygienic methods. When the officials took no action, Thesiger bypassed them and started undertaking the circumcisions himself.

Eventually, Thesiger became so frail that he had to return to England. But his heart was always with the native peoples whom he had befriended and who had befriended him. His attitude to circumcision was straightforward. He saw that it was an important rite to these peoples, he saw the butchering which they suffered for the sake of initiation, he knew this to be unnecessary and he took practical steps to ensure that the operation became the simple, relatively distress free ritual which he knew it should be. He is no doubt sorely missed by those amongst whom he lived for so long.

Ivan Acorn

No Regrets

The first circumcised cock I ever saw was when I was about 6 at first school and stood next to a friend in the toilets. I asked him why his cock was different and he said he had to go to hospital and when he woke up that’s what it was like. I remember saying to my mum about his willy being different and she just said some boys had to have that done.

I never saw another one until I was at middle school and we had swimming lessons. Out of a whole class there was only one cut guy. We never made fun of him and I must say that at that age I began to be fascinated by it.

It was when I reached secondary school that my eyes were really opened. Although still a minority there were cut guys a-plenty in the games changing rooms, and I got to see again that very first cut cock from first school. Andrew was loosely cut and the skin bunched behind his glans but all the cut cocks looked so much better and there began my desire to get cut.

When I was 19 I finally decided to do something about this. I had seen an advert for circumcision in the Sunday papers so wrote away for an information pack. It was being carried out by the Surgical Advisory Service – do they still

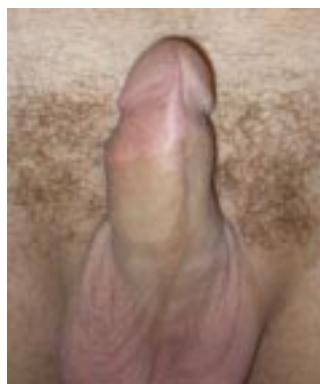
exist? – at the Marie Stopes clinic in London. I paid my money and went for the op.

The doctor asked me various questions as to why I wanted this done and then examined me. He said everything was fine and off to the operating table I went. I found the injections very uncomfortable. but after that I never felt anything. At that time (14 years ago) I did not know anything about styles. All I knew was I liked cut cocks from the porno books I had seen and wanted one myself. The op did not take long. I was bandaged and checked over and that was it. I was a cut guy at last. As I walked back up Tottenham Court Road I wanted to tell everyone that I was cut!



The bandages stayed on for a couple of days and then came off. The stitches soon followed. I ended up unpicking and taking them out myself as I did not want skin tunnels. I was finally cut, but I was not pleased with the result. I had been cut by the freehand method, and although the left hand side was fine, not as much had been taken off the right hand side so when flaccid the right half of my glans would be slightly covered by bunched up skin. It was also very lumpy. I contacted the surgeon and went for a check up. He agreed it was not perfect and was very apologetic but he would not consider doing anything for a full year as he said the swelling and scar tissue had to fully go down.

A year later I was booked in for a revision. Again I found the injections the worst part. The revision did not take as long as the original op, and I have been left with a high and tight circ. The skin is not drum tight, but then some slight movement is good...well I think so, and also I don't want my balls half way up my shaft. I have a very prominent scar about an inch behind the glans and the difference in skin colour from the inner and outer skin is very clear to see. I know not everyone likes the ring scar but I really find it attractive.



In 2000 I had one final revision when I had a frenulectomy carried out by a Dr D'Silva in Luton. That took quite a while to heal, but he has done a great job. My frenulum was rather large but it is now a very thin line with no pulling whatsoever. It took a year of massage with vitamin E oil to reduce the hardness of the scar so that today nothing can be felt where I had my fren removed. I would ideally love to have the classic V cut where the fren is totally cut out from the glans. Perhaps one day...

I have never regretted having this done!

J.F. (rah1970@tesco.net)

Deadlier Than The Male – Again

In the issue 5/2003, there was reference to the TV series of uro-genitinary ops carried out by Miss Christine Evans (*Deadlier than the Male*). It prompted me to re-run an earlier video.

This lady is the Clarissa Dixon Wright of men's underpant department surgery who, also a year or two ago, gave us a splendid demonstration of surgery for Peyrone's disease. The patient then was a very public-spirited guy who was bravely prepared to have the nation view his bits in widescreen. Prior to the programme we were given a public health warning that some of the photography was explicit – all the more reason to watch it for we circ devotees. Would there be a sighting of his status? Surely they couldn't show the operation and hide that?

The film started with an interview with the couple in their middle forties who had suddenly found their love life seriously curtailed. The man's pecker had developed a constrictive fault about half way up and refused to inflate properly above it. The resulting 'bendy toy' was literally not up to the job.

His wife, rather an attractive if modest and shy lady, (who wouldn't be, in this situation?), confessed that they wouldn't be seeking treatment in the form of this risky op. if good sex had not been an important part of their relationship hitherto.

At the consultation with Miss E and when she pulled down the guy's jockeys it was gratifying to see he was, against the odds for his age group, nicely circumcised. No wonder his beloved found their intimacy pleasurable, I thought. I could also imagine more than a few puzzled women at home challenging their partners with: "Yours doesn't look like that?"

On the operating table it was explained that once the patient went under, they would connect his penis up to a saline pump to induce and maintain a good erection during the whole operation. And so it was. This brought his penis up to full screen for extended close up scenes during which we could see his circumcision was a nice tight version of the operator's art. The sort most of us would be proud to own.

In the background were three or four assisting nurses whose eyes above the face masks showed more than a passing interest. The lady in charge of the pump seemed to be enjoying her job. There was a male nurse with a large Polaroid camera taking pics as commanded by Miss Evans whenever she paused for this purpose – which she frequently did.

The next bit was not for the squeamish as Miss E quickly applied the scalpel all the way around just below the coronal rim. Rather indelicately she likened this to 'skinning a rabbit'. As she stripped the whole shaft skin down to the base, the arterial plumbing was revealed in one gory trunk of pipes and inflated flesh. It became worse as Miss E attacked the fibrous tissues causing the problem. There were audible 'cracks' as this was snapped off to give the underlying erectile parts the space and freedom to work that they had previously enjoyed.

When Miss E reached critical points she gave cautionary commentary about the danger of cutting vital nerves with likely permanent loss of function – not comforting for the patient who was having it all done under local. He was conscious but couldn't see anything (a mercy!). However the lady operator seemed very skilled and knowledgeable. Her manner suggested jolly abandon but I suspected that she was, under it all, a clever woman exercising great care. How else could you risk playing this show in front of the cameras.

Later we learned there was a happy and successful outcome as the film followed up. The only negative thing revealed at the inspection was that the penis appeared to have healed with a looser circumcision and the remaining foreskin was bunched at the rim. This may have been deliberate. When quizzed as to why she hadn't made the incision at the half way point where the problem was, she said her reasons were merely cosmetic. She said she had followed the line of the original circumcision which gives a much better cosmetic result. So under all that brusqueness is a lady who really cares about men.

I'd love to watch her do a circumcision as I suspect she is very pro (only a hunch). However I guess they would be hard put to spin out the surgery for fifty minutes viewing. Then again if they went into history and interviewed a lot of circumcised guys 'before and after', maybe not.

Let's hope.

G.D.

But What's Best For His Brother?

On an internet discussion list recently, a mother told how, after some difficulty, she had arranged for her four year old son to be circumcised. She was delighted to report that the operation had been carried out successfully and without trauma to the boy. However, she had decided against circumcising her elder son, who had just turned 7. She felt that he was now old enough to remember the event well into adulthood, so it would be best for him to make the choice himself after he turned 18.

Some members of the discussion list questioned this decision. One said that, from experience, he knew that, when one brother was circumcised, it was highly advisable to get the other brother done as well, irrespective of age. Circumcision was one thing that could unite their brotherhood whereas one being different from the other could and had caused friction among some siblings.

Another member listed what he perceived to be the benefits of circumcision before the age of puberty:

- * At this age, the boy's interest in his sexual development increases, and the advantages of circumcision can be explained convincingly.
- * His penis and foreskin are larger than an infant's, allowing greater surgical accuracy.

- * The glans is free to develop fully during the adolescent growth spurt, unrestricted by foreskin, allowing a more bulbous glans to form.
- * The adolescent growth spurt may tighten the shaft-skin.
- * He already has experience of the advantages and disadvantages of a foreskin.
- * He can be told that circumcision is a preparation for the bodily changes of adolescence, including the greater need for cleanliness.
- * Healing is likely to proceed rapidly, less impeded by the powerful erections of puberty.
- * Circumcision can be promoted as a 'rite of passage' from 'boy' to 'man', bringing entitlement to respect.
- * The decision is covered by parental authority to give consent.
- * The matter is already up for discussion in the family, as a consequence of his younger brother's circumcision, and the elder boy can see that it is 'no big deal'.

A third member pleaded that the mother should not insist on waiting until the older boy reached 18. Now that his brother had been circumcised with little fuss, he might ask about it for himself. Furthermore, it was much easier and less of a disturbance to his life if he could be done before puberty. The mother should make sure that he knew that he could get circumcised at any time. A slightly more forceful reminder a short while before he changed schools at around 11-12 years old would be in order as this was probably the next best time to perform the operation.

It would be interesting to hear *Acorn* members' views on this subject. Leaving aside the question of circumcision at or soon after birth, if one son has to be circumcised in childhood, should any other sons be circumcised at the same time, or should they be left intact? And what about a step-son or an adopted boy brought into a family where his step brothers are circumcised? In other words, is uniformity or diversity best? Let's hear your opinions.

Ivan Acorn

Boohbahs

I wonder if your members are at all aware of a range of children's toys, based on the *Boohbahs*, a television series. The toys are soft and come in a range of bright colours, each purporting to represent an individually named character. Most interesting of all, however, is the fact that each of these Boohbah's heads resembles a large glans penis complete with a roll of soft fabric that is exactly like a retracted foreskin. The head and plush prepuce look identical to the penis of an uncircumcised man! The 'neck' can even be rolled up or down to cover the dome-shaped head. The heads themselves look like nothing more than policemen's helmets. Me, I bought a purple Boohbah...

K.G. - London

ACORN

Issue
N^o 2 2004
Editor
Ivan Acorn

Editorial

The new *Acorn* website has been launched. For some years the Society has had a web presence but the URL (web address) was not intuitive and people tended to come across it only by chance. It was also very basic with a short 'mission statement' for the Society and an application form. In an information hungry world, the web is now the central information source and an internet search is the first recourse of information seekers. The Society needed to update.

We are grateful to Vernon for arranging the hosting of the site with its new, more obvious address – www.acornsoc.org.uk – and to GD for redesigning the site and rewriting the material in user friendly form. The site now has a more extensive introduction, a downloadable application form and taster articles from back issues of the newsletter. The site can and will be expanded in the future, not least by providing links to other relevant sites. But web maintenance can be a time-consuming business and there is no intention of duplicating the other circumcision/foreskin sites already in existence with their extensive archives of articles and photographs.

Members of *Acorn* value the newsletter in its current form –

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selected, edited articles over the whole range of the subject with the opportunity to contribute and debate, available in printed form (for those who wish). This will continue – that is guaranteed. But a more up-front, up-to-date web presence will be an invaluable aid in spreading the word about the Society and in recruiting new members. And for those of you without web access at home, why not venture down to your local internet café and learn how to access the new website. It might open your eyes to a whole new world!

Editor's Column

Acorn Society meets in Leicester

What better venue than the Cromwell Room for members of the *Acorn* Society, Cavaliers and Roundheads alike, to come together for their annual meeting. On the weekend of 26th-27th March, about 25 guys descended on the Ramada Jarvis Hotel in Leicester to share their mutual fascination with foreskins and circumcision. Some arrived on Friday evening and left on Sunday; others came just for the day. As with all events of this kind, the meeting was as much about informal chat at the bar and over dinner as about the formal proceedings.

The meeting proper took place on the Saturday afternoon, starting with Society matters. The Treasurer presented the accounts and the Society was shown to be financially sound with balances of over £2000. Recruitment was discussed; although renewals are at a high rate for 2004, the Society's long term survival depends upon recruiting new members. A budget was agreed and the Chairman and Treasurer were delegated authority to start a publicity campaign in cooperation with a couple of members who have offered help in this area. Future meetings were discussed. It quickly became obvious that the meetings are highly valued by the members and are, for them, an integral part of belonging to *Acorn*. The possibility of meeting twice a year was explored but a final decision was left until the next meeting in November. Ivan reported on the newsletter with which members seemed basically happy and Vernon talked about the development of the new *Acorn* website (see page 1).

The formal business having been despatched reasonably speedily, members broke up into informal groups to address the real business of the day – the discussion of foreskins and circumcision. It would be inappropriate to report these proceedings in detail for the whole point of this part of the meeting is to allow members to share in total confidence their experiences, hopes, fears, fantasies, questions, answers. For some, it was perhaps the first time ever that they had been able to discuss their interests openly in a sympathetic forum. Even for the veterans, it may have been their first conversation on the subject since the last *Acorn* meeting. The friendly, inclusive atmosphere meant that everyone soon felt at home, and groups formed and reformed naturally throughout the afternoon. For those wishing to browse the past, Vernon had brought all issues of the newsletter since the very first edition. Also on display was a TaraKLamp, although since it remained firmly within its cellophane package, one assumes that the same number of cavaliers left the meeting as arrived!

Guys fascinated by foreskins and circumcision have often in the past felt alone in their interest and therefore lonely. The value of the *Acorn Society* has been to bring such like-minded people together, to demonstrate that, far from being alone, they form part of a community diverse in age and background but united in interest and support for each other. For many, the newsletter is sufficient link into that community to sustain and stimulate interest; for others, the opportunity for actual conversation and debate is invaluable – long may the *Acorn Society* continue to facilitate this!

Ivan Acorn

My Story

I heard of circumcision at an early age as I had a tender foreskin and my father did not have one at all. The (Jewish!) GP said he did not think it necessary for me to be done, so I wasn't.

I had a bush of curly pubic hair at the age of 11 before any other boy in my class and by the time I was 13 was indulging in mutual masturbation. I gradually extended my repertoire and at 19 was having sexual relationships with men usually several years older than me. This often included my taking an active role in anal intercourse. This puzzled me rather at first. Then one of them told me; my not overly big cock encouraged him to try something he had always been too scared to try. The rigidity of my erections was often commented upon too. For many years I had a very active gay sex life. Intercourse was not the be all and end all for me however. Seeing other people's bodies, kissing, fellatio, fondling and masturbation are equally valid. Long before AIDS I decided that wearing a condom was healthier and it also reduced the sensitivity of my foreskin; it was short, the skin was thin and easily hurt. It retracted itself on erection and sometimes got in the way. I wished I had been circumcised when a lad.

In my early 30's I was as randy as ever. I wasn't coming four times a day like I was at 16. But I made sure I did once a day, preferably with someone else. If not, I had plenty of porn mags (gay and straight given to me by a neighbour) to toss myself off with. He was bisexual and made me curious about losing my virginity with a woman. Eventually I met two couples where the husband was bisexual and enjoyed the threesomes (and occasionally foursomes with my neighbour) very much. I did not change my emotional and romantic attachment to men but I liked the contact of soft tits and vaginal intercourse compared with the hardness of the male body. The women and their husbands remarked too on the rigidity of my rod and the different feel of different cocks in their orifices.

To return to foreskins, my neighbour had a big fat cock but his foreskin did not retract easily and like so many men's cocks would have looked a lot better circumcised. I also had a relationship for several years with a colleague. He was short and stocky, good-looking, muscular and adventurous. His cock was big and beautiful with a very prominent vein down the middle. His foreskin was thick, long and ample and having had 'docking' demonstrated by another colleague, I showed him how to do it. It was easy to hold the glans of my erect cock under his

capacious (and always very clean and tasty) foreskin. I could not reciprocate with my tight short one. He had a very good example of a foreskin that worked well, gave extra pleasure and was attractive to look at. It would have been criminal for him to be circumcised!

In my mid-forties, my foreskin gave me more and more trouble with inflammation. It became cut easily with intercourse even when I wore a condom. GUM clinics prescribed creams that had only a temporary effect. One specialist said that circumcision was too drastic. I was really fed up.

I heard that an acquaintance a little older than myself had recently been circumcised, so I went to see him. He had had the same problems as me and eventually was operated on through private medical insurance and was so much better. I decided to see my GP and assert my strong wish to be circumcised. He referred me to the local Urology Department and the young female Asian doctor immediately agreed to the operation. I was elated.

The operation was carried out in day surgery under general anaesthetic. Beforehand the two surgeons discussed with me what I wanted. I refused a local anaesthetic which I could have had in addition to the general; I did not like the idea of a needle in my manhood! I asked for the skin on my shaft not to be very tight – I wanted a little give in it. I was out for twenty minutes and came to in a small ward. My cock looked barely recognisable with the stitches, bruising and swelling. Not long after, I was padded and strapped up and taken home by a friend. The pain was negligible and I never had to take even an aspirin. The general anaesthetic took about three days to wear off and I enjoyed the long sleeps I had. After three days I took off the bulky dressings and strapping but a couple of days later I woke up in some pain with a hard-on. In the bathroom I discovered that I was bleeding somewhat, so I put on a new dressing for a couple of days more.

I never looked back. I was off work for a week and the walk to work, my first since the operation, was a bit painful but pleasurable so. I felt my knob rubbing against my pants. Since then I have been much more aware of my prick and get erections in my trousers more often and without any discomfort. I like its streamlined look when it is erect; when it is flaccid it is slightly bigger than before since it does not have a foreskin into which to retreat. Intercourse (even anal) is a pleasure not a pain: I should like some vaginally now and again. I can now masturbate in two ways – moving the skin of the shaft up and down or moving my hand over the skin of the shaft and knob. The latter creates some friction and is best done with a little lubrication with KY. For some time I have very much enjoyed using a vacuum developer. I'm not bothered about making my cock bigger, and its hardness and angle of erection have not altered since puberty. But the erection produced so quickly is intensely pleasurable, even more than with your own hand and your cock does expand more in the tube. You will want to delay ejaculation for quite a while. My circumcised cock delights in this treatment – I couldn't have done it before. Another side effect is that I don't have dribbles running down my leg after a piss. Before, I always drew back my foreskin and shook my cock but there were always some wayward drops.

So, I was circumcised – at the grand old age of 52! It made a difference to my sex life and my self esteem. Friends who have seen before and after like the result. I'm now 56 and semi-retired and find that I am fitter and need sex more often than when I was working full time. My circumcision has given me confidence to seek new adventures. I should welcome hearing from other members of their experiences, techniques etc.

A.C. – Stockport

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Epilogue To Circumcision

As a new member of the *Acorn Society*, I have been following with interest the various views that have been expressed regarding its ethos, in particular whether it should be a society that promotes circumcision. I was also very happy to supply the three-part story of my circumcision. All is now revealed!

From the moment when I first discovered the glans lurking beneath my foreskin, through the period of experimenting with skin-backing to the permanent state, I had always hankered after a bare glans, a desire that seemed to be totally irrational. Now, having been circumcised, not because I felt an imposter, as has been suggested, but because I had been caught up in the fanaticism of pro-circ groups on the Internet, I also thought that sex might be better with a tight shaft skin. My enquiries of the various groups were met with replies such as “Sex will be a million times better!” and “You’ll never regret it!” and “You’ll wish you had had it done sooner.”

Well, after two year’s experience as a cut guy, I am just slightly disappointed, as I don’t seem to have reached the heights that were promised. I have a penis of which I am very proud, which looks better, which feels better when flaccid, and which is cleaner. And it works well, and I still get great pleasure from using it. But I miss very much the wonderful sensations that the stretch sensors in the foreskin used to give. The onset of an erection is less exciting, and I sometimes have to work so hard that my wife becomes sore before I reach a climax. I remember discussing this with the Doc when I went back for a frenulectomy, and his comment was that circumcision is best done before puberty, so that you don’t miss what you have never experienced.

If I could turn the clock back, I think I would still go ahead with circumcision, but it is not nirvana, neither should it be promoted as such. There can be no doubt that the effects of circumcision and the degree of satisfaction obtained from it will depend on many factors and will be different for every individual. It will depend on the tightness of the foreskin, its length, the relative sizes of glans and shaft, the sensitivity and age of the man. All of these parameters should be taken into account before making the decision to be cut.

My feelings now are that, despite what the Doc said about being cut before puberty, I found it an amazing experience, an experience that would be denied a

man if he were cut as a baby. I am therefore not in favour of infant circumcision. But regarding adult circumcision, I think it should be considered very carefully and not rushed into with the impression that sex will be raised to unimaginable heights.

When I joined the *Acorn* Society, I was assured that it had a good mix of cut and uncut, gay and straight, shaved and hairy. This is the way it should remain, and it should not be allowed to degenerate into yet another pro-circ lobby. There should be no pressure one way or the other, so that we can all simply rejoice in the delight we gain from discussing, comparing – and using – our penises. Having read the most sensible and balanced article written by the Editor in issue 2/2003, I was somewhat taken aback by the bigoted and rather offensive article that appeared in the next issue. Let us keep *Acorn* as an open society, with members of all sexualities, some straight, some gay, some cut, some intact, so that nobody feels inferior and everyone is able to hold open and easy conversation.

Dave – Notts.

Comment on Dave's Story

Part three of the story of Dave's dick (issue 1/2004) made interesting reading, enhanced, I must add, by the photos. I would like to congratulate Dave on what I see is now a smooth, firm and very handsome cock. How does it feel to a red-blooded heterosexual to have another guy admire his cock...?

Feeling 'absolutely natural' is a curious, seemingly contradictory concept for one who has just had part of his cock removed, but I can somehow see what he means. I too take the view that a well-cut cock somehow looks more 'natural'. There must be a psychological reason for that somewhere. I look forward to the day also when, like Dave, I no longer have to choose between a covered or bare glans, and can lose that flap of skin which hides, and prevents from full development, potentially the most attractive part of a man's whole body.

The frank way that Dave assesses his post-op situation, including the short-comings, is laudable. I admire his conviction that, regardless of everything, circumcision was the right thing to do. It absolutely was, of course.

R.M. – Suffolk

The Cavalier Viewpoint

At the risk of reopening the debate, I take the *Acorn* year of 2003 as a representative sample over a representative period, and have to conclude that the magazine content has progressively moved towards the pro-circ lobby. There was just a solitary single paragraph item 'In praise of the penis' in issue 5. Nothing at all in issue 6 of a pro-foreskin view. Through the full six issues, I can identify only five pro-foreskin pieces, including mine in issue 2.

Amidst the bias furore in mid-year, a voice of reason and moderation emerged from David, our former long time editor. He put things into perspective with his original definition of *Acorn* as a group “interested in foreskins and circumcision” and for everyone “interested in getting their cock into the best possible shape” (presumably whether circumcised or not). His final observation was extremely telling: “had it not been for debate and simply a one subject group, it (*Acorn*) wouldn’t have lasted two years”.

I fear that this is exactly what is happening and that the debate is waning. Not just with the balance of articles in the magazine over which I accept our editor has no control, if content from the pro-foreskin lobby simply isn’t forthcoming. But more fundamentally, shouldn’t we be considering why the pro-foreskin lobby is increasingly poorly represented? Here I believe is where the subtle but very potent reason lies for *Acorn* as an organisation moving slowly but surely to a one subject, pro-circumcision group.

Of the five pro-foreskin items in the year, two were promptly rounded on and condemned – “We don’t want to read about smelly foreskins” was directed at Y.A., and R.B.W. then had a barrage of three condemning pieces in issue 3. After braving this for many years he has sadly thrown in the towel (an excellent way to do it with the book review in issue 3, also subsequently denounced of course). OK, it’s a viewpoint and obviously held by a majority in *Acorn* but if R.B.W. is pilloried for hating his circumcised state, what about the continuous torrent of “hated foreskin”, “repulsive elephant trunk”, “useless bit of skin”, and, in issue 6, “spared (by circumcision) the encumbrance of my anteater in sexual activity” – even more contentious but never, at least in the magazine, condemned or even criticised. Equally extreme, the steady stream of revision circumcisions and DIY circumcisions recounted in graphic detail. Anathema to me, but tolerated as a topic within David’s “group interested in foreskins and circumcision” definition. On the other hand, mention smegma, an equally valid topic within the definition, and “we don’t want to read about smelly foreskins” is the cry. Clearly what is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander. There is imbalance, but in reaction more than content – if you’re pro-foreskin you are either in possession of a smelly foreskin or rabidly anti-circumcision.

This situation must in time squeeze out contributions from, and subsequently membership of, confirmed cavaliers and any anti-circumcision lobby. “Good riddance” would certainly seem to be the verdict for R.B.W., from those who can’t stomach any strong but logically argued view opposed to their own.

Let me say: those in possession of a foreskin, sadly or not, are in the majority, and an increasing majority, and they have the more promising future. This is why perhaps, in contentment with their state, they don’t feel the need to argue their case. It’s argued for them by sheer weight of numbers of those intact, as nature intended, and enjoying all the benefits that it endows. My diminishing personal reason for remaining as a voice in the growing wilderness of *Acorn* is two-fold.

1. I am not anti-circumcision. Circumcision for religious reasons – OK. For the very few medical reasons, BXO but little more – OK. Even for so-called aesthetic

reasons, including revisions and DIY – OK, but only if past the age of legal majority. Younger than this, an infant or boy is not mentally or sexually mature enough to make his own adult decision on circumcision in possession of all the facts. It is wrong for someone else, even his parents, to make that decision for him.

2. As a cavalier who had a foreskin problem – yes, a tight, overhanging anteat – and very nearly succumbed to misguided medical opinion and circumcision. With knowledge now proliferating on what can be done non-surgically, I have, albeit in middle age, cured the problem with dilation to stretch my foreskin. Even before this, I was aware of some of its benefits. Now I experience and enjoy the full package. Had this information, not discovered by me until a decade or so ago, been available 40 years ago, I could have enjoyed a more fulfilled sex life. I hope my successful non-surgical experience might encourage those younger with a similar tight foreskin (and I'm sure there are many) to correct the problem and preserve and enhance their foreskin benefits.

So my position is pro-foreskin, not anti-circumcision. I simply support the minimisation of unnecessary circumcisions. I won't reduce my argument for this case to an anti-circumcision rant even though some of the pro-circ lobby avidly resent this. In issue 3, JH says that he will be waving farewell to *Acorn* if it veers from being pro-circ. This is like the little boy taking his bat home if everyone doesn't play the game his way. As for those of us remaining in the pro-foreskin lobby, let me challenge the pro-circ lobby (nay, all members) to reread my piece 'Foreskin Benefits' in issue 2/2003 and, unlike when it first appeared, be prepared to make some observation, or better still, logically debate, contest or even agree with its content.

As our editor said when he took over, the worst thing is not criticism, but silence ... to which I add the rider – providing that the criticism is not totally destructive and has some worthwhile foundation and sound logic to it. I wait to see whether we still have healthy controversy and worthwhile debate in *Acorn*. Or may it just be that my list of foreskin benefits is complete and correct – Q.E.D?

F.S. – Derbyshire

[Editor's note: the benefits of a foreskin listed by FS in issue 2/2003 were as follows:

1. Protection of the glans so it's kept sensitive and moist, and therefore much more receptive to the subtleties of foreplay, intercourse or masturbation.
2. It has "frenar bands" around the inner walls of its tip. These numerous nerve endings are supremely sensitive to heighten the sensations from almost every type of sexual activity.
3. It gives its owner flexibility. With full coverage, a man can retract partially, or totally to simulate a short foreskin or a circumcised state. Not possible, unfortunately, from the circumcised corner.]

Circumcised For Masturbating

I was circumcised on my fifteenth birthday – my mother said that that was my birthday present for that year. This was many years ago and some of the facts are forgotten, but others are as yesterday.

I was caught masturbating maybe a dozen times, always in my bedroom, in bed, pumping away. I always got a tongue-lashing for doing it and scolded that it was a very bad thing. I was warned of the dire consequences: my father would be told and then I would go to the doctor to straighten things out and stop the nonsense. Finally my mother took me to the doctor and had me cut in his office. I watched the whole procedure in horror. I was strapped to a steel table as he first cut the end off and the skin dropped down showing the meat underneath. It looked like a freshly opened can of Spam. Then the doctor used scissors to go around the head. I can remember the knife and scissors cutting. It hurt the worst when the skin underneath at the frenulum was finally severed. I don't remember any needles or anything but there could have been. It all took no time. Only the sewing took time and he didn't get the skin lined up perfectly – but it's OK. The penis was really swollen and black and blue for a week then it healed up in about 3 weeks so no bandage was needed.

It is a tight circumcision. I was left $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch of frenulum and about three quarters of an inch of foreskin on the top. I had to put a sock over the head as I kept getting erections from the chafing. I couldn't jerk off for about a year until a friend told me about Vaseline and I was back in business. I was warned that I would face worse consequences if I still tried to masturbate.

I had my two sons cut at birth and they see nothing to it. They like it and think that it is the normal way. My son has his own son cut. They cut him really tight so the balls come up the penis quite a way when he has an erection. He said he couldn't masturbate and he has just got married at eighteen! Too bad so young.

I have much interest in the subject and I am now very glad they did it to me as the women always loved my being cut.

Old Joe

Celebrity Circumcision – Richard Branson

(From an interview for the Daily Telegraph
in March 2001 by Giles Brandreth)

Richard Branson's first marriage, to a 20-year-old American girl, Kristen Tomassi, didn't last long. According to Richard, they had "a bizarre sexual allergy to each other. Whenever we made love, a painful rash spread across me which would take about three weeks to heal. We went to a number of doctors, but we never resolved the problem. I even had a circumcision to try to stop the reaction. Being circumcised aged 24 is not a good idea, particularly if the night after your operation you find yourself watching Jane Fonda's erotic film *Barbarella*."

Remembering Thesiger – and T. E. Lawrence

The title 'Wilfred Thesiger R.I.P.' in the Contents of issue 1/2004 at once caught my eye, and I read the article with avidity. Thesiger was a really remarkable, not to say, unique man.

I have the American editions of the four Thesiger books: *Arabian Sands* (1959), *The Marsh Arabs* (1964), *The Last Nomad* (1979-80: British title *Desert, Marsh and Mountain*) – all published by E. P. Dutton, and *The life of my choice* (W. W. Norton 1987-88). I also have *Marsh dwellers of Southern Iraq* by Thesiger and Gavin Maxwell¹, in the February 1958 issue of *National Geographic* magazine. I presume that the photograph mentioned in the article, of a naked circumcised youth, is the one printed as Plate 6 of the Dutton edition of *The Marsh Arabs* where it is captioned 'A boy from Qubar'. The same photo appears on p 207 of *The Last Nomad*; there it is captioned 'A boy of the Central Marshes'. However, in both cases the photo is so dark that the boy's genitals cannot be seen. I suspect that the publisher purposely had the prints darkened and the genitalia obscured. There are other nude photos in *The Marsh Arabs*, but none of them shows genitals.

There are several mentions of circumcision in Thesiger's first book *Arabian Sands*. For instance, on p 64 and Plate 17, there is fifteen year old Bin Anauf "a handsome youth with brooding eyes and a curious cock's-comb of hair, a sign that he was still uncircumcised". Cf *The Last Nomad* pp 43 and 78. On pp 91 and 92 of *Arabian Sands*, Thesiger describes an extreme form of circumcision (also described by Sir Richard Burton) in which not only the foreskin but the entire skin of the penis is removed.

In sharp contrast to such travellers as Thesiger, Charles M Doughty and (especially) Burton, T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia) seems to have ignored or sidestepped the topic of circumcision in his writings. I have collected writings by and about Lawrence since 1984, but so far I have found only one reference to circumcision, and it is a figurative and rather playful one. Writing to E. T. Leeds from Carchemish, Syria on 4 April 1914, Lawrence remarked: "Months since I wrote: – and now the circumcised are with us. You, O Leeds, cannot appreciate what a Cowley upon the Euphrates is..."². The reference is to a visit to Carchemish by Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley (1861-1931), sometime Bodley's Librarian at the University of Oxford. The editor, J. M. Wilson, states in a footnote that "Dr Cowley was the world's leading non-Jewish authority on Rabbinic Hebrew Literature". Some have speculated that T. E. Lawrence himself was circumcised. It's certainly possible (he was born in 1888); but I have found no evidence of statements that he was cut or uncut.

M.S. – USA

¹ Thesiger, not an easy man to work with, remarked that "Gavin Maxwell's *A reed shaken by the wind* was a brilliant piece of verbal photography, but at such close quarters I found him trying, inclined to be querulous and neurotic" (*The Last Nomad* p 174).

² T. E. Lawrence: Letters to E. T. Leeds (Whittington Press, 1988) pp 98f.

Pearly Penile Papules

Pearly penile papules are pinhead-sized outgrowths arranged neatly in rows on the sulcus or corona of the glans penis. Sometimes mistaken for genital warts, they are in fact harmless and do not require treatment. They are not contracted or spread through sexual activity. Almost half of all men may have a few of these but they appear in abundance in perhaps up to 20% of men. Several studies have shown that they are twice as likely to occur in uncircumcised as in circumcised men.

In one study eight hundred and forty consecutive male patients were examined for the presence of pearly penile papules. The age and presence or absence of circumcision were recorded. Two hundred and fifty-three (30.1%) patients had lesions, and there was a significantly increased incidence of pearly penile papules in uncircumcised men. The incidence of papules was greatest in young adults and tended to decrease with increasing age.

Often, lesions cause great anxiety to patients until their benign nature is clarified. Even then, their presence can cause embarrassment since the man fears a negative reaction from potential partners when they are first seen.



One member of *Acorn* suffers from these papules and writes:

"I have a 'condition' which I have now learned is called Pearly Penile Papules. These white spots on the corona of my penis caused me such sexual anxieties as a young man that I elected to live a very sexually inactive youth. I saw a doctor about them years ago and he assured me they were 'normal' and harmless but to me they were a great source of embarrassment. I have now learnt not to let them be a reason for sexual inactivity. To be honest, few people have ever taken notice of them, or should I say have ever chosen to comment about them. In fact, there has been only one occasion when someone commented adversely about them in a sexual situation.

"At the moment, they are covered by my foreskin, and when I am erect, my foreskin sits neatly behind the corona, thus (sort of) hiding the little blighters. But if I were to be circumcised, they would be out there all the time! Without my foreskin there would be no hiding them! For me, their removal is a priority over circumcision. I know (because I have encountered these papules on two former partners) that during oral sex they can be felt by the tongue. I have three very prominent ones around the area of my frenulum and they can feel like grains of sand. All in all, this does not lead to great sexual confidence.

"I would so desperately like to be rid of these 'things' so that I have no fear of embarrassment over my penis. My research on the Internet has led me to believe from American websites that these papules can be removed successfully with the

use of cryotherapy (sounds risky and painful) or laser therapy, but I cannot find an organisation that seems to offer these procedures in this country. Do you have any information about this that may be of assistance to me? Amongst your members, so to speak, is there anyone who had the same problem and has had a successful treatment?"

Ivan Acorn

A Thirty Year Wait

As a new member, I do appreciate your forum on the subject of circumcision, especially as it affects one personally. Here in the USA, as I grew up, almost all my school mates were circumcised. My father thought it was some scheme to enrich the physicians. In the 1930's, people were out of work and not ordering babies. So my father argued that they were adding \$50 circumcision fee to every boy baby to make up for the fewer births. He didn't think very globally. So while my older brother was circumcised, my younger brother and I were not. To make matters worse, my mother laughed about it a lot, calling this lone red-head her 'different' son.

I didn't have to be at Kindergarten long to have someone tell me my penis was funny looking as I stood at a urinal. Mom's solution was to hide. I found a way to go to schools that didn't have but one year of gym class instead of six and I paid my own way for this private education to avoid the embarrassments. I was a very handsome young man and everyone seemed to be looking for that defect in me.

Now, some are issued with foreskins that fit and some get extra, extra large that are unattractive even in Europe and the UK, I'm sure. In America, they are freakish! In the US army, at age 22, I had another soldier totally embarrass me in the shower room in front of about 20 other naked circumcised guys, asking about my 'stump'. Poor fool apologised profusely when he found out I was the C.O's clerk. I did find a time later at night to take my shower with fewer people. I remember being checked out of the US army with a large group of black men and in this circle, there was I, the only foreskin. It is not fun to look unusual there. All during this time I wanted to be circumcised but couldn't figure out how to get it done.

After my first son was born and circumcised, I showed up at a physician's office and asked about it. He treated me like I was truly weird and actually told me it was an issue that I would never get over. Perhaps he was prophetic. He sent me to a urologist who kept me overnight in hospital and did it under general anaesthetic. He left it with more skin on one side so it could be 'winking'. He also left a stitch that appeared as a bump for about 20 years before I had it removed by another surgeon. Should have had it all straightened out that day.

One of my swim chums actually called my asymmetry to my attention one day although he still has all of his foreskin. As a daily swimmer, I still see men who have their foreskins who are very careful to dress as privately as possible. I know that they were affected as I was as the odd man in so many situations. It is a

selfish parent that does not think of the community that a boy will grow up in. My father supposedly said: 'Let them wear it off as I did.'

I have two grandsons. Only one is circumcised as the Mom couldn't bear to see the other done. Of course, she didn't grow up in a boys' locker room. In the US, women get a lot of privacy and expect that men get the same. I'm still working on that case lest he feel he's the odd man somewhere. Of course, in the US, there's a move to circumcise less, promoted by health insurers and some liability cases such as my daughter-in-law reported about a micro-penis accidentally circumcised causing a big problem for an already big problem. I wish that I had never had to give it a second thought. I do know that I have had 30 years of much better sex after 30 years of tearing of foreskin and pain at every intercourse. Yes, I really was a good candidate for circumcision and you can't wear it off, dad.

I encourage any man who wants to have this minor operation to go for it. You have nothing to lose but a piece of skin which often causes problems. You'll look better and feel better about yourself. Find a doctor that does it often!

Californian

Synechotomy – An Alternative To Circumcision?

Synechotomy, Yes; Circumcision, No. That's the message of the distinguished Mexican physician, Professor Straffon. He is a paediatric surgeon who has spent much of his working life studying the male prepuce. His conclusion is that circumcision is not only unnecessary, it is positively damaging. He believes that the foreskin has multiple protective functions – from embryo through to old age – and that it plays an important role in sexual reproductive activity.

However, Professor Straffon does support the practice of synechotomy and he has been promoting this for over forty years. The purpose of synechotomy is to free the adhesions between the foreskin and the glans and then to stretch and retract the foreskin so that the glans can be fully exposed. This should be done at about the age of three months. Adhesions, Professor Straffon believes, are used by medical practitioners as an indication for circumcision, especially in the United States. Removing adhesions cures the problem whilst preserving the foreskin.

Professor Straffon advocates performing the procedure in a single operation, always using synechotomy forceps. These enable the adhesions to be separated, the opening of the prepuce to be expanded with gentle dilation and the foreskin to be fully retracted back from the glans. There are no probes, nor rough or repeated manual handling. The process is easy, quick (10-20 seconds),



Synechotomy Forceps

undamaging, non-mutilating, and almost painless. After the operation, a cream or ointment containing a powerful anaesthetic, a non-inflammatory steroid, and an antiseptic should be applied to the area for a period of at least 10 days.

Synechotomy is important not only in preserving the prepuce, but also in the provision of hygiene in the uncircumcised. Retracting and stretching the prepuce while urinating and during bathing – even in pre-school children – to expose the glans of the penis helps produce early a lifetime habit of genital hygiene. Professor Straffon likens synechotomy to vaccination or immunisation as a measure to prevent future illness. Synechotomy avoids problems such as balanitis, phimosis, smegma, cysts and paraphimosis. It has the same prophylactic advantages as circumcision without the mutilation caused by that operation.

By means of synechotomy, many Mexican and Latin American little boys have been spared prepuce excision, and have been able to learn correct early genital hygiene that was previously unknown in uncircumcised children. Professor Straffon insists that presently there is no scientific evidence to circumcise a child or adolescent, if such boys have been taught early genital hygiene after synechotomy.

Of course, synechotomy goes against the current received wisdom that adhesions should not be forcibly broken but that the foreskin should be allowed to develop naturally, at least over the first five or six years of life, by which time, in most cases, it will be fully retractable. However, the operation does hark back to an earlier era. In those days, if a baby boy had not been circumcised, the mother was encouraged to ease back the foreskin gently and gradually at each bath time. But if sufficient progress had not been made over the first few weeks of life, the doctor or clinic nurse would then separate the adhesions by forcibly pulling back the foreskin, often to the severe discomfort of the baby.

It is unclear whether Professor Straffon advocates permanent retraction of the foreskin where this can be achieved. If the foreskin is permanently retracted from an early age, its full development may well be inhibited, resulting in a short foreskin. Many would see this as the ideal solution – a permanently exposed glans but with a residual foreskin retained to add sensitivity during sexual activity.

On one of the fathering internet discussion boards, a father strongly recommended the procedure:

“I advise parents of boys with unretractable foreskins to submit them to synechotomy, as an alternative to circumcision. My sons were treated with synechotomy at the age of six months and they have been taught since early childhood to wear their prepuces retracted. They have never had smegma nor a sensitive head. This practice is very healthy and aids the correct growth of the penis and the glans in puberty. The constant push of the rolled skin behind the



Foreskin Covering



Foreskin Retracted

head makes the edge of the glans more prominent, which then impedes the prepuce from going forward. However, if after puberty, the foreskin is too long for it to remain retracted, I then recommend circumcision.”

I.G. – London

More on Jewish Circumcision

Anthony in his piece ‘No Taking The Michael’ (issue 6/2003) claims that in Biblical times, Jewish circumcision consisted of the excision of just the protruding tip of the foreskin. With all due respect, I believe that even before the times of Judas Maccabees (at around 140 BC) circumcision almost certainly resulted in a completely exposed glans. While it is well known that circumcision methods changed at that time, and the tearing of the remainder of the inner foreskin was introduced, it is also well known that this change was introduced to make ‘foreskin restoration’ impossible, which was attempted by many Jews in order to fit into the non-circumcising Hellenistic environment, for example at the public baths or the gymnasia. If the ancient method of circumcision had not resulted in an exposed glans, which made the Jews when naked unmistakably recognisable, the Jews would not have wanted to hide their circumcision before the Greeks, and the whole problem would not have existed.

I have one more argument proving that the ‘original’ method of Jewish circumcision had indeed resulted in a completely denuded glans.

Circumcision (or the equivalent surgery of the penis) evolved separately in most hot climate areas of the world. The motivation behind it was, most probably, a mixture of practical observation and spiritual beliefs. A tight and unretractable foreskin carries the risk of serious infections and inflammation, especially in a hot climate, and especially if the foreskin is very long. In addition, a too long and tight foreskin would hamper proper intercourse and thus procreation, which would result also in a deadly danger, the ending of the community. The bare glans is also a symbol of manliness and genital power, which is why circumcision is often a rite marking the passage to manhood.

Consequently, the denuding of the glans was introduced in all communities which lived in hot climates. The process was most often the removal of the foreskin, but sometimes it was made by a long dorsal slit of the foreskin, which also resulted in a bare glans, with the remains of the split foreskin hanging down on either side. (The most unusual way of denuding the glans is the buttonhole technique, used by the Masai in Kenya, whereby they make a vertical slit in the foreskin, like a buttonhole, then pull the glans through it.)

In contrast, circumcision was not introduced in communities in cool climates (most of continental Europe and Asia), among people which had quite short foreskins (in South East Asia), or had constant problems with overpopulation, such as the Greek communities of the Eastern Mediterranean. Men of oriental races (Japanese, Chinese, Viet, etc.) grow quite short foreskins, and they are expected to keep the foreskin pulled back behind the glans after puberty, so they

do have a bare glans. (A short foreskin held pulled back is almost indistinguishable from a loose circumcision!) It is well-known that the ancient Greek cities had a constant problem of overpopulation, due to the lack of space and the lack of enough food. (You just have to look at the map of Greece and the Greek archipelago: high mountains, few arable lands and the sea all around the place.) Birth control was a great problem then, and it resulted in a rule requiring men not getting married before turning 30. I suspect that the institutional pederasty (in its original meaning, sexual encounter or at a least petting-type of thing between mature men and juveniles) was also part of the birth control rules, as was 'infibulation', the use of a leather strap to keep the foreskin long and tight (as it very clearly appears on Greek sculptures, vases etc.)

The Israelites (the people of Abraham) were one of the nomadic peoples of the Middle East, along with the Arabs (more precisely, their ancestors), living in a hot climate, with a constant problem of not enough people at hand. Circumcision there was introduced probably ten thousand years ago, and to serve its purpose, it must have involved the complete denuding of the glans, as it is the essence of the process. The ancient method, applied also by the Israelites (Jews), must have been the pulling ahead of the skin, as far as possible, and cutting it right before the glans. Naturally, the glans was protected with some device, such as a piece of wood. After the cut, the remaining skin was pushed back and the wound bandaged. The result is a 'high' circumcision, which can be loose or tight, depending on the amount of skin cut off, but the glans is bare, with more or less skin bunching up behind it.

In the past centuries, circumcision was introduced in several regions in which the climate and other circumstances would not have made it inevitable. The spread of Islam is one of the major factors, but I suspect that in most areas where Islam has become the main religion (Middle-East, parts of Africa) circumcision was already practised. In Western Civilisation, most notably, in the English-speaking parts of it, circumcision was introduced mainly on preventative medical grounds, which are now receiving more and more support from medical research projects.

Andras - Hungary

A Date For Your Diary

The next meeting of *Acorn* will be on 12th & 13th November 2004 at a venue in the Midlands. More details later but make a note in your diary now!

ACORN

Issue
N^o 3 2004
Editor
Ivan Acorn

Editorial

This is an issue of contrasts. We start by looking at those guys amongst us who are so committed to being fully circumcised that they have undergone a second cut. And there is another group of members queuing up behind them to travel down the same route. At the other end of the spectrum, Smurf tells us how he tended Ashley's phimotic foreskin, originally destined for the surgeon's scalpel but now in full working order.

We go to Scotland to hear JT's story - he had to come south to get his circumcision. Does anyone know whether elective circumcisions are available north of the Border? And then to Hungary where Andras tells us that circumcision is becoming increasingly popular, so much so that Andras runs a Hungarian equivalent of the UK Circclist mailing list.

And as ever there is a note about celebrity status. David Beckham's status remains elusive even after the allegations of his affairs and his triumphs and disasters in Euro 2004. However, perhaps the attention has now shifted to Wayne Rooney. But with his background he can't be anything but uncut...can he? Next issue it will be the artist Damien Hurst who is uncovered.

Ivan Acorn

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Second Time Around

Most uncut men blanch at the thought of undergoing circumcision. How is it then that there a number of men who line up to be circumcised not once, but twice, or even more? Out of the current subscribers to *Acorn*, 84 are circumcised and, of those, 20 have undergone at least one revision circ. It's obviously a matter of interest as to why these guys underwent the knife a second time and I therefore invited members who had had a revision operation, or who were considering one, to complete a questionnaire. Thirteen questionnaires were completed, seven by guys who had already undergone revision, six by guys who were seriously considering it.

First interesting fact. Of the thirteen in the sample, twelve were circumcised as adults. Is it perhaps that when one is cut as an adult, one has expectations as to what the results will be, whereas if one is circumcised in infancy or childhood, one accepts the penis as you have always known it? Three of the first circumcisions were carried out for medical reasons – phimosis, balanitis, very sore foreskin. A further three were carried out for medical reasons but there were also aesthetic motives. Perhaps the medical conditions were used as an excuse to fulfil a wish to be circumcised? The remainder were all elective – for aesthetic or other reasons.

First circumcisions usually resulted in the glans being exposed in a flaccid state but with some foreskin remnant bunched behind the glans. In two cases the glans was still partially covered. On erection, in three cases there was still bunching behind the glans; in the remainder, the glans was fully exposed but there was slack in the shaft skin. The frenulum was left untouched in all but two cases. The style of cut varied: 50% high, 50% low (where high is arbitrarily defined as having at least one inch of inner foreskin left).

The guys who have had a second cut must obviously have been dissatisfied with their first circumcision. Why? One member put it very succinctly: "I wanted the glans completely exposed." This seems to sum it up for most of the others although they were more explicit about the finish achieved: "Skin bunching"; "Too much shaft skin left"; "Sometimes loose skin would almost half cover the glans"; "Too much foreskin left on". Even though only one out of seven had the frenulum removed on the first cut, none of the other second timers quoted the retention of the frenulum as a defect of the first circumcision. Nevertheless, three had it totally removed on the second cut, and one partially. Perhaps the frustration after the first cut of not having the glans exposed subsumed disappointment that the frenulum remained. As one guy said: "Having seen photos where the glans rim was fully exposed, I decided to have a radical revision performed to ensure that the glans rim and groove would be exposed even when completely flaccid." Such aspirations were only likely to be achieved with a complete frenulectomy.

The second cuts all resulted in low cuts – one guy was left with $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of inner foreskin, everyone else with much less. High and tight was obviously just a dream for these guys – but perhaps too much inner foreskin had been removed first time

to allow a high finish. So, did they at least get the tight finish they craved? Not completely by any means. Four guys now have a drum tight shaft skin when erect, with three of them fully exposed when flaccid with no bunching. Of the other three, the glans is fully exposed when erect although there is still some slack in the skin; when flaccid, there is still a foreskin remnant bunched behind the glans. Tightness of finish did not appear to be related to growth on erection. Of the drum tight, no bunching group, expansion on erection varied from 50% to 75%; of the others, expansion varied from 42% to 66%.

So how did these seven stalwarts feel about their revision after the event? The picture is very positive. Six out of seven agreed or strongly agreed that the appearance of their penis had been improved when flaccid, and all seven agreed, five strongly, that the erect penis also looked better. For two guys, sensitivity of the glans had increased, one was neutral and in the other four sensitivity had decreased, although for at least one, beneficially so. Masturbation was more pleasurable for virtually everyone. There was even stronger agreement that oral sex and sexual intercourse were more pleasurable.

Psychologically, the revision had also had an effect. Everyone agreed that they were more confident as a person after the revision, two very much more so, whilst everyone was more willing to appear naked before men. The response about being naked before women was more equivocal, possibly because several of the respondents were gay! And most would be willing to undergo the knife again if necessary. Two are actively considering this – to tighten up the shaft skin and to remove any remnants of frenulum. As one said: “If needed, I would love to have it done again. It was great and no pain at all.”

So it appears that the revision operations were a great success, the only complaints being where the cut was not sufficiently radical. One member summed up his feelings: “I love the fact that my glans is totally exposed even when flaccid; and the exposure of the groove where the frenulum was has really increased sensitivity there. I just like the fact that anyone who sees me naked, knows immediately that I’ve been circumcised, there is no way that I can hide the fact or change the fact, and there is no way that I would want to.”

For those considering a second cut, they are largely seeking a final result where, flaccid, the glans is fully exposed with no bunching behind the corona; erect the majority are looking for a drum tight finish although two wish to retain some slack in the shaft skin. One guy is nervous about being cut too tight: “I once saw a man who had an extreme cut, which



After 1st Circ.



1 Mo After Re-circ

was so tight the head had lost most of its shape due to stretching and it looked and felt awful.”

Most received a low cut on their first circumcision so do not have a lot of inner foreskin to lose second time around – but this does not seem to be a matter of concern. But where the frenulum still exists, all want it to go.

If they get the cut they want, all agree, most of them strongly, that the appearance of their penis will be improved both when flaccid and when erect. They don't really expect any change in the sensitivity of their glans but they believe in general that masturbation, oral sex and intercourse will all be more enjoyable, though a minority expect no change. Half the guys expect the operation to increase their confidence as a person and make them more willing to appear naked in front of other men.

From the experience of those who have already had a revision, the expectations of this second group are entirely reasonable and they should feel able to go ahead with confidence. How likely in fact are they to proceed? One person is looking to have it done immediately, four others within five years and the last sometime in the future. What is inhibiting them from going ahead? Cost appears to be the main problem, coupled with the difficulty of finding a surgeon and the fear of poor results. Value for money is always relative. But with people like Dr Zarifa openly advertising revision circumcisions on his web site and with excellent reports from many pleased customers, anyone who can rustle up £700 and can get to London is likely to achieve their wishes. As one satisfied customer wrote: "I am writing to thank you for the re-circumcision you performed on me just over three weeks ago. Everything has healed perfectly and I must say I can now appreciate what an excellent job you did."

For most men, once is enough (for some, more than enough). But for those who feel dissatisfied with the appearance of their circumcised penis, revision is an option that appears to work on all fronts. Obviously the message is: "Go for it!"

Ivan Acorn

Resignation

After much thought, and a degree of sadness, I have decided to resign from *Acorn* and will therefore not be renewing my membership for the coming year.

There are a number of reasons for this but the main one is that I am **very** pro-circumcision and feel that *Acorn* is no longer for me while it represents men who wish to retain their foreskins as well as those who do not. If in the future, *Acorn* decides to be a **pro**-circumcision group, I would most certainly be interested in rejoining. There really are far too many 'NORM' type organisations around these days and the **pro-circ** lobby should, in my view, be better represented – a position *Acorn* could and should ideally fill. In my view, especially with a huge majority of members according to your survey being cut, it is time for *Acorn* to come off the fence.

After some ten years of membership, I feel that the articles are these days rather similar in content to those of the past – and some a complete turnoff for me when they discuss in detail what I consider to be a useless piece of flesh!

J.H. – Dorset

Ashley – A True Story!

It was early summer, about two years ago (2002), when I met Ashley for the first time. He was just seventeen but, due to an under-active thyroid gland, he looked to be about twelve, and was actually shorter than me! Being only five foot five myself, this made him just a tad over five feet tall. He was introduced to me via a 'text message' by a friend of mine who also knew him. I was told that he was probably gay, but had trouble making friends due to his unusually small stature and slightly effeminate ways. At the time, it was intended that I just became his friend, being that there was a considerable number of years between us and he understandably seemed to be looking for someone around his own age. I accepted this fact without question, happy to have a new friend locally who shared the ridicule I had suffered due to my distinct lack of height!

After a quite lengthy session of 'texting' each other, we finally arranged to meet up that evening. I offered to take him for a drive out to Herne Bay as I knew of a nice place to buy a takeaway there and we could sit on the beach to enjoy a good chat. It was during our little moonlit snack that I happened to mention a caravan which I owned. He showed great interest as I explained how well stocked up and equipped it was, including electricity etc.

"So how far is it from home?" he inquired.

"Not that far at all actually. About ten miles or so." I told him.

"Maybe if it's not too late, and if you don't mind, we can pop by there on the way back?" he asked enthusiastically.

"Sure! If you really want to see it then I would be only too pleased to show you around," I happily agreed. So there it was, my first real indication that he genuinely liked, and clearly trusted, me. After all, you wouldn't ask to be taken somewhere private like that unless you did trust the person you were with. I still knew that he was really after someone his own age and figured I would just take things as they came, not wanting to spoil a possible friendship by appearing at all forward. We eventually finished our food, then I drove us back to the yard where my caravan was sited.

The drive there was a strange thrill in itself, with me frequently noticing the subtle and flirtatious glances I was getting from Ashley as we drove along listening to the car stereo. Not a word had been spoken about relationships or sex, but the whole journey seemed full of that unexplainable feeling that things were going exceptionally well.

When we arrived at the caravan I gave him the 'Grand tour' of the site, thoroughly explaining what, and where, everything was. Before long we were both sat comfortably inside and an even stronger sense of undeniable mutual attraction flooded over me. I suddenly felt a little awkward and didn't know quite what to say or do next.

"Drink?" I casually asked, with an obvious hint of embarrassment.

“No thanks, I’m just fine as I am,” he answered, smiling nervously and looking straight into my eyes. I hardly noticed his actual answer as his young eyes seemed to pierce right through mine and reach inside me. This was the look which confirmed all my feelings thus far, as now I was certain that our relationship was to be something considerably more than ‘just good friends’.

Well I am sure that you have now guessed that the inevitable did, indeed, transpire that night. Interestingly, however, it was during those first intimate moments together that I discovered something about Ash that would ultimately bring us even closer. The knowing looks led to him resting his head on my shoulder.

“I like it here. Can we stay a bit longer?” he asked.

“Certainly! We can stay as long as you like Ash,” I told him. I rested my head gently on his and I felt his hand go around my back to pull me closer. One thing instinctively led to another and soon we were hugging and kissing each other quite passionately.

We soon found ourselves stripped off, totally naked, and in each other’s arms kissing again. As the impulsive situation naturally progressed, our busy hands explored each other’s naked bodies and inevitably ended up with some intimate fondling. His penis, as you might expect with his thyroid problem, was notably small and modest looking. However, he quite clearly knew what it was for and had no problem in making it stand rigidly to attention, long before we even got undressed as I recall! It wasn’t until I attempted to gently retract his foreskin that I realised there was a slight problem.



“Mine won’t do that,” he said, disappointedly.

“Yes, I can see that!” I replied, noticing how incredibly small and tight the opening was.

“My mother has told me it needs to be circumstised,” he went on.

“You mean circumcised? For a little bit of phimosis?” I said with horror.

“Yes, that’s it. I will have to go into hospital and have it done,” he calmly explained. My mind filled with thoughts of pure repulsion at the very thought of mutilating such a beautiful and natural looking appendage.

“But there’s no need to have it all chopped off, just because it’s a little bit tight! Do you realise that you will be losing the most sensitive piece of skin on your whole body, and the normal mechanics of your cock will never again be possible, like, for ever!?” I exclaimed. He looked a little shocked at my adverse reaction to his statement but seemed quite intrigued by my knowledge in this area.

“No!” he said, “I had no idea it was that important. But that’s the only way to cure it,” he added.

“No it isn’t the only way, in fact, it’s almost never necessary to remove any skin at all! At worst you only need a small cut here.” I said, pointing to where a small dorsal cut may, in a few extreme cases, be necessary.

“So what else can be done then? I’ve never been able to pull it back at all.”

“Not even in the bath, when it’s completely soft?” I quizzed.

“No, not really. Well, maybe a tiny bit, but not like you can with yours,” he said as he inquisitively pulled my foreskin right back behind the flange and stared admiringly at my exposed and shiny glans.

“But Ashley, mine **was** like yours once, and the doctor advised my mother to have me circumcised. But she wouldn’t allow it to go ahead. So, the doctor advised her how best to try and alleviate the problem more naturally,” I explained.

“Go on, what did you have to do then?” he asked enthusiastically. I could tell that he didn’t really want to be circumcised at all and had only adopted such a casual attitude in the belief that it was the only option. Now I had given him hope of a possible alternative and his hunger for that knowledge was plainly evident. I started to explain what had been told to my mother, which she, in turn, had told to me.

“First of all I need you to clearly understand the difference between ‘discomfort’ and ‘pain’,” I started to explain to him. “Then you must accept the fact that there will need to be a great deal of ‘discomfort’ involved in remedying your problem, but never should there be any real ‘pain’. This will only be for brief, but regular, periods of time and eventually you should be cured for ever and still have your totally natural dick intact,” I told him.



“Well can you show me what to do and how to do it then?” he asked, anxiously.

“Of course Ashley, I would be happy to,” I said, and before I knew it I was ‘Doctor Dave’ as far as Ash was concerned. I liberally applied my preferred lube all around the tip of his erect penis, a physical state which was more common than the flaccid state in the case of young Ashley! My own treatment, initially carried out by my mother many years ago, used Vaseline to soften and lubricate the skin. But I was not keen on it being so greasy and messy, so I chose to stick with the much favoured water soluble varieties. I only use ‘Sensilube’ by Durex for my slippery needs, not KY jelly as many of you might expect. It has a consistency extremely close to natural precum and does not dry into unpleasant lumps and flakes like KY often does. That said, it is the perfect lube for me and, along with the occasional use of fresh cum, both were to prove invaluable in Ash’s ‘home treatment’ course.

I showed Ashley how to carefully tease back his tight foreskin to the point where great discomfort bordered with the beginnings of pain. This was hardly any distance at all to begin with and the urethral opening, or meatus, was about all he could reveal before the pain started. The positioning for these subtle differences of physical sensation was achievable by the tiniest of movements and he seemed to grasp the concept of this very quickly indeed. By using plenty of lube, whilst stretching and holding the preputial opening to this newly discovered threshold for a few moments, it very quickly became evident that this procedure was really working. He also realised that any discomfort experienced during this stretching action completely disappeared as soon as the foreskin was released and allowed to return to its natural resting position. In fact, he told me that it actually had a very pleasant tingly sensation for several minutes after each session and there was no pain or discomfort whatsoever! I was obviously very keen for this to be a great success, but never allowed things to go too quickly and risk his tight foreskin becoming dangerously stuck behind the flange of his glans, or 'paraphimosis'.

Over the next few days we developed a kind of routine, which involved a little bit of stretching, followed by wonderful sex and a little more stretching after that. The second sessions of stretching were always the most productive as I would often substitute some lube with our fresh cum. (An advantage of this was that the sperm and semen mixture actually helps to soften and relax the skin. These useful properties are quite well known and documented, not to mention the obvious erotic benefits!) This went on, sometimes several times, for about three or four weeks until we suddenly had a wonderful surprise.

It was evening time and we had taken an early night to listen to music and, well, you know what else! Having stuck to our little 'routine' we had enjoyed sex and I was embarking on the second session of stretching. He had now learnt how to perceive the various levels of discomfort, and how to convey them accurately to me as I worked on his phimosed foreskin. Admittedly, it did feel particularly soft and supple that night and things seemed to be going very well indeed. I managed to retract it to the furthest point achieved so far without any problem or report of discomfort. As this was almost all the way back already, there was not much more required to actually breach the glans completely and achieve full retraction. I applied a little more 'natural' lube and continued to gently draw it back whilst being personally guided by Ash's prompts. Suddenly, his foreskin slipped behind the flange of his engorged glans and I looked to see his reaction.

"Does that not hurt?" I asked him, somewhat anxiously.

"No, not at all. How far is it back now?" he enquired.

"Err, all the way back Ash!" I told him.

"No! Not yet surely?" he exclaimed, looking down at my proud achievement.

"Yup, all the way back mate. How does it feel?"

"Fine, totally fine considering this is the first time in my life that I have ever actually seen that part of my own dick!" he said, ecstatically.

“Well there it is mate, in all its natural glory!” I proudly announced. And yes, there were a few minor deposits harbouring unpleasantly beneath, but these were easily removed and his newly exposed penis tip keenly experienced its first human cleaning action, namely by me!



After that, I was a little worried that we may have trouble returning his foreskin, but with another liberal dousing of lube, and a little persuasion, it suddenly slipped back over the glans with no problem. From then on it got easier and easier to fully retract his foreskin and eventually it was performing perfectly normally. Ashley could now experience penile pleasures which, hitherto, he had not even known were possible.

We stayed together for a few months and his problem never came back. Eventually, with my busy and antisocial work life, we stopped seeing each other and he did find somebody of around his own age. We parted on good terms, both wanting to remain friends and, two years on, his doctor has agreed that there is no longer any need for the operation. It's a great pity that he, and countless other medical practitioners, did not suggest this kind of treatment first, instead of just saying “chop it off”. Surely a few days, weeks or even months, of this self treatment are infinitely better than just having it removed!?! I understand that in certain cases, such as extreme paraphimosis or recurring balanitis, part, or even full, circumcision may be the only answer. But these instances are incredibly few and far between, which means a great number of these operations are not necessary at all. So the old saying of “No pain, no gain!” rings true once again and I feel proud to have saved this most wonderful piece of skin from the surgeon's knife.

I am sure you have now worked out that I am most definitely against cutting. So here are my personal, and quite sensible I hope, reasons for my particular way of thinking.

Routinely circumcising babies at birth is, in my view, a wholly barbaric and unnecessary abuse of their human rights, and I only wish that this would stop, immediately! I know the argument of not experiencing pain at that age, and less trauma with better healing, but why do it in the first place!?! The greater bulk of the world (excluding religious reasons) don't do it and manage perfectly well, and have done for **millions** of years! So why do it when there is no real need to (apart from selling the removed foreskins to American pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies for product testing! – Yes, that does happen!)? So, why not cut a baby's fingers off at the same time? That way they could never get them burnt or injured. Oh, and remove the whole penis and testicles, just in case they get infections or cancer! It's a stupid argument in my view and, having delved deeply into both sides, I still cannot justify it in my mind, or in my heart. The main point is that it **can** be done later in life **if** required, despite the loss of slight healing advantages described earlier. But, and most importantly, it **cannot** be put back if the person grows up and decides that they **do** want a foreskin. Somebody else, for whatever reason, has taken that choice away from them, and that is fundamentally **wrong** in my eyes.

Ok, so a cut cock is supposed to be cleaner and more hygienic. Don't pro-cutting people ever wash their dicks then!?! All it takes is a quick rinse with clean water and the body's natural cleansing mechanism will take care of it perfectly well in between times. Smegma, far from being a dirty and smelly secretion, is now recognised as being one of the cleanest and most biologically beneficial substances known to man! Its natural ability to fight off germs and many infections, whilst simultaneously moisturising and protecting the inner foreskin and sensitive glans, is second to none. The only time that it becomes a little unpleasant or objectionable is when the owner does not wash regularly, thus allowing it to build up and start to smell. So getting cut for that reason is just plain lazy if you ask me! The aforementioned glans are not supposed to be exposed to the elements in any case and they suffer major keratinisation and great loss of sensitivity as a result. The complete loss of the natural mechanics of an intact penis is another thing I could never accept. I appreciate that not every intact male experiences this sensual marvel of natural movement but, for those that do, it is truly a wonderful sensation that virtually eliminates the unpleasant 'friction' problems that both men and women suffer during sex with a cut guy. If a good reason to get cut is to deliberately reduce sensitivity and prolong your performance as a result, then shame on you! Personally, I would rather train myself to last longer, which I have done with great success, and learn how to do it more than once!

I am aware of the HIV/AIDS argument too, where the inner foreskin has been proved to increase the chances of infection, and circumcision undeniably **reduces** that risk. But using that to justify getting cut can lead to a degree of complacency, and thus, increased exposure, which ultimately raises the risk of possible infection again. It will not stop you catching HIV, and most certainly will not stop you passing it on to a sexual partner. So you still need to wear protection, which makes you no better off than a guy who is uncut!

Also, of course, there is the element of 'personal choice' and, although I cannot imagine why anyone would actually **choose** to be cut, I firmly believe that it is everyone's right to make that choice. Although I do believe that before deciding they should be fully in possession of all the 'for' and 'against' facts on both sides so that they can best make that judgement themselves.

Well that's my little story, which I assure you **did** happen, along with some of my personal views and opinions on this very emotive subject. Of course, I do not intend to offend or upset any of you 'pro-cut' readers, but I think it's good to hear opinions from 'the other side' occasionally, and I am sure that much of what I say does make sense. I trust this is of interest to the 'like-minded' readers also, and look forward to any comments from both sides of the fence. At the end of the day, I wish everyone good health and happiness, hoping you accept that this is just my personal view and respecting the fact that I have chosen to share it with you all.

Smurf - Kent

A Scottish Story

I was born in Edinburgh in 1953. I would describe myself as bi-sexual but I have never had penetrative sex with a male. I have however enjoyed the company of many young men over the past half century and have enjoyed mutual masturbation with them. I view the male body as a thing of great beauty which can be improved in only one way – by circumcision.

I was not circumcised at birth but my interest in the subject began when I was about six. I was staying with my grandmother – it must have been about 1960. Her sister, my great-aunt, who lived in Canada, was visiting and many members of the extended family came to visit during her stay. One of them had recently had a son and during her visit to my grandmother's house his nappy had to be changed. My great-aunt watched and when the soiled nappy was removed, she turned to my grandmother and said: "Don't you circumcise them here?" My grandmother replied: "No – do you?" "Oh yes," replied my great-aunt. My interest was aroused.

By coincidence a near neighbour of my grandmother had her fourth child (her second son) a few weeks later. I knew the family well – I was friends with her existing family who were of a similar age to me so I was invited in to see the new baby about a week after mother and child got home from hospital. The baby was lying naked in front of the fire while his mother changed his nappy and I immediately noticed that Robert's penis was different from mine. There was no skin on his and my mind went back to the conversation between my grandmother and my great-aunt. "Was this circumcision?" I asked myself. Indeed it was and I subsequently discovered that Robert's elder brother was circumcised as well.

My first three years of education were spent at a local authority school. There was a gym but no swimming pool or showers, so I never had the opportunity to see other boys naked. I have a dim memory of a medical examination conducted by a nurse. I had to drop my pants but she only looked at my genitals – she did not touch them.

When I was eight, my parents sent me to a boys only college in Edinburgh. It was quite a culture shock for me. Pupils were addressed by surname and discipline was severe – the tawse was put to good use and teachers were addressed as "Sir". What struck me most however was the acceptance of communal nudity. I rapidly overcame my initial shyness and seized the opportunity to indulge my interest in the subject of circumcision.

On my second day we had swimming in the school PE department. After our swim we had to remove our trunks and put them through a mangle before returning to the changing area. A member of staff was on hand to ensure this rule was obeyed. Obviously no boy had any secrets when naked and I was amazed at the number of circumcised penises I saw that day. Out of a class of thirty boys, twelve were circumcised. Throughout my schooldays I would estimate that 25% to 30% of boys were circumcised.

As was usual during my school days, we were medically examined at 8, 13 and 16 years old, and after each examination two or three boys in my class would be absent for a week or reappear in the showers after the holidays minus their foreskins. I always took a careful note of such things. You may think that I am digressing from the subject but I wish to describe medical inspection procedures at the time as I believe that many boys nowadays are not examined as thoroughly.

At the appointed time I put my hand up in class and told my teacher I had an appointment with the school doctor. I left the classroom and went to the medical inspection room. I knocked on the door and, when I went in, the doctor pointed to some chairs, told me to strip and wait. As I was undressing, there was a boy getting dressed after being examined and another boy (Blair his name was) naked in front of the doctor being examined.

The room was Spartan with no screens and as I waited my turn, I watched Blair's examination. Blair was circumcised and I saw the doctor squeeze and pull his penis while pressing the area behind his scrotum. This manipulation resulted in an erection and when the doctor had finished, Blair walked towards the chairs, his face beetroot red. Then it was my turn.

My height, weight and eyesight were checked and the doctor spent a minute or so with his stethoscope checking my heart and lungs. I was then ordered to stand, legs apart, in front of the doctor. He held my testicles firmly and asked me to cough. He took hold of my penis and pushed the foreskin back, examined the glans, squeezed my penis and drew my foreskin forward again. He then pressed the area behind my scrotum two or three times, squeezed and pulled my penis again and retracted my foreskin again. While, unlike Blair, I did not get a full erection, the examination did result in tumescence of my penis. As I was getting dressed, Callum was being examined. I discovered later that the doctor was not satisfied with the retractability of his foreskin and he was circumcised during the Easter holidays.

I mention my experience of school medical examinations because, as will be apparent to the reader, in my younger days, no boy would have left school uncircumcised if he had a tight foreskin. My experience over the past twenty years leads me to believe this is no longer the case and I think this stems from a decision made by Kenneth Clarke (then Minister of Health) that school pupils would no longer be examined by a doctor but be 'checked over' by the school nurse. This was to save money. While I have met many young men (from Inverness to London) who have been examined as thoroughly as I was by school nurses, I have met many more who have been failed by school health services. Some only had to strip to the waist. In other cases, testicles were examined and the penis ignored. In a few cases the 'examination' was a fully clothed chat across a table during which the boy was asked if both testicles had descended!

There are exceptions. Six months ago I met a Welsh guy in Amsterdam. He was eighteen and he told me about his medical examination at a comprehensive school in Flint four years before. The boys had to report to the sports hall, strip and stand in a row. The doctor (not nurse) accompanied by a member of the school staff walked down the line checking testicles and foreskins. David told me that at

that inspection, four out of fourteen boys were circumcised and that to his knowledge, no boys were circumcised as a result of the inspection. Catholic colleges in Hull and Yorkshire are again (according to my informants) places where boys are examined with circumcision in mind.

When I left school, I moved to London in 1972 to work in the Civil Service (my interest in circumcision undiminished) and joined the local football team. (There is no better way to see naked men than in a communal shower.) I was again amazed at the number of circumcised penises I saw there. They were all young men (20-22) and came from all parts of the UK – from Glasgow, Liverpool, Sunderland, Inverness, Coventry. I would estimate that, as at school, about 30% of my peers were circumcised.

Until my move to London, I had never discussed circumcision with anyone. I have mentioned my bi-sexuality – I have sex with women and admire and masturbate men. London was an eye-opener for me. It was (and is) possible to meet men from all over the world and I did. I met many Americans (but only two uncut), Australians (all cut), Kiwis (50% cut), Arabs and Malaysians (100% cut), South Africans (40-50% cut) and discussed circumcision with them all. I never met any man who regretted his circumcision (despite the pain involved for Turks and Muslims who did not benefit from pain relief). Nor did I meet a woman who did not prefer her lover to have a circumcised penis. And so I decided that it was time for me and my foreskin to part company.

In October 2002 I flew to Luton from Edinburgh. I arrived at the surgery to find a fellow Scotsman in the waiting room. I went into the surgery, removed my trousers and pants and lay on the couch. The doctor injected me, cut me, stitched me, bandaged me and that was it. I was done, circumcised, cut. Pain was minimal (no worse than the dentist). But the end result was not as tight as I would have wished, so I'll need to have another operation to get more skin removed.

My interest in circumcision is undiminished. It is, I think, a procedure that should be promoted on the grounds of public health – a reduced incidence of venereal disease, AIDS, cervical cancer, penile cancer, prostate problems. In addition, the penis looks better and doesn't smell – and women love it. If I had my way, all boys would be cut at birth. But if any members are still in any doubt, my advice would be to take the plunge and get it done. You will not regret it and the pain is worth it.

J.T.

The Meatus

Recently there have been a couple of comments on the state of the piss-slit (meatus). Jack (Issue 1/2003) referred to one that had pouting edges and the slit appeared to be open. I suppose that as in all other aspects of circumcision, there is as much variety in the state of the slit as in the scar and shape of the knob. It would be good to see some reference to the state of the slit and individual preferences from other members.

D.B. – New Zealand

Circumcision Is Becoming Popular In Hungary

Misi (26), an outspoken young man living in a small town 20 kilometres from Budapest, Hungary says “Every male should be circumcised”. He got circumcised four months ago, because his foreskin became very tight in the past two years.

Fifteen years ago, Hungary was a non-circumcising society, in which circumcision had been only performed in the small observant Jewish community or for medical reasons, as a treatment of certain penile illnesses. In the mid-sixties, only the Hungarian translations made from Dr. Spock's best-sellers, *Baby and Child Care* and *Teenagers' Book* mentioned infant circumcision as a social custom in the U.S. The translation was very much softening the (then) strong pro-circ attitude of the author. The other available sources on children's health and nursing were in favour of the conservative methods of treating a tight foreskin, such as forced retraction of the foreskin to tear the adhesions. Generally, most people knew that circumcision was something that Jews were doing with the penis of young boys, but what it was that was done was not at all clear to everybody. There was also some resistance in gentile families against doing a circumcision, even if it was medically necessary, because it was thought to be a purely Jewish custom.

Most young men and women came across circumcision for the first time when they watched a porn movie or looked at porn magazines, which were smuggled to the country from time to time. Zsolt (32), who chose to get circumcised two years ago, says: “I was at high school when I watched, together with my class-mates, a porn video that was smuggled in by the father of a friend of mine, a lorry driver, who went to the West every month. We all realised that every guy on the film had a cock that was different from ours, with a very clearly defined red glans, with no excess skin. I learnt a few years later that it was because they were all circumcised.”

In a lot of families, especially in religious families, everything that has something to do with sex or the genitalia has been taboo until only very recently. Mothers and sometime even the fathers were shy about speaking with their sons about sexual life, and did not find the way to teach the boy how to clean his penis every day. Thus, they also failed to recognise if the boy had a phimosis and needed a circumcision. School physicals were also quite relaxed, and the school physicians (who are very often females) did not always pay attention to genital cleanliness of the boys. Nevertheless, a careful school physician, especially from the ‘old school’, would look at the boys’ penises at the regular annual check-ups and teach them how to keep it clean. Ferenc (39) says he owes a lot to his school physician who taught him (and the other boys as well) how to keep his cock clean, even though he chose to get circumcised earlier this year.

From the mid-1980s, however, as more and more people could travel abroad, new ideas and information reached Hungary. More and more young men and women went to school in the West and elsewhere and young Westerners came to Hungary as tourists or to work here as language teachers, journalists or businessmen, and they brought with them their views, their ideas and their way

of living. The world wide web became available in Hungary from the mid-1990s, and you could find in no time any information you wanted.

Most probably, because of this influx of new information, thoughts and ways of life, non-religious and non-medical circumcision may have started to be more and more widely practised in the last ten odd years, as suggested by several sources of information. Nowadays, a lot of families decide to get their sons circumcised as infants or as schoolboys, and teenage boys and young men see the doctor and ask for a non-medical circumcision, very often at the suggestion or request of their girlfriend or wife.

The Hungarian language web is full of discussion threads that deal with the pros and cons of circumcision, and many young men and women give their stories or the stories of their boyfriend's circumcision. Last year two Hungarian language web-sites were opened that deal exclusively with the matter of circumcision, which both provide a lot of information on circumcision, peppered with personal stories. Viktor (25) is a young IT specialist, who volunteered to be the web-master of "Jóvágású fiúk lapja" (the page of clean cut boys, all in Hungarian, see at: www.freeweb.hu/korulmetelve) after he got circumcised a year ago, because of a phimosis. He said he wanted to help those guys who had problems with their foreskin, like he had before, and his own main source of information was the Internet.

Usually, if the father has been circumcised as a child or, very often, as an adult, because of a tight foreskin or some other penile problem, he and his wife will appreciate the benefits of circumcision and get their own offspring circumcised, before starting at school at the latest. Klára, a mother of two boys and a grandmother of three, says: "My husband is circumcised, and we decided to get our two sons circumcised before they went to school. My mother-in-law was a nurse and she also insisted on having her grandsons circumcised. We very much agreed, as we saw enough boys suffering from a tight foreskin and an inflamed glans. The boys are grown-ups now and they are very satisfied with their circumcised organs, as are their wives. I now have three grandsons, and they all got circumcised as infants."

Zoltán (35), is married, and he decided to get circumcised four years ago. "I had no problems with my foreskin, but I wanted to get rid of it since I was 17. To keep my glans dry and clean, I have been keeping my foreskin peeled back for ten years. When I finally made the decision to get circumcised, my wife very much supported me. I was done in December 2000, and I am very satisfied with the result. It is so much better to be circumcised: better health and better sex, you know." Zoltán and his wife have a son aged 7, and they are now thinking of getting the boy cut too. "I still haven't decided it yet. Sometimes I think that he also should have the choice, as I had. On the other hand, as a father I have a duty to do my best for his health and well-being."

Hungarian women are sometimes quite ignorant about circumcision and circumcised partners, but in most cases they are very positive about it. The husband of Livia, a young Hungarian woman, had to be circumcised shortly after their wedding, because he had a severe phimosis and a frenulum breve. She had

no sexual contacts with circumcised men before and was a little bit worried about the outcome of the surgery. But after the short healing period, they now have a lot better sex, and she says she is very proud of the circumcised cock of her husband. They agreed they would get their sons circumcised before leaving the hospital.

Rita, a Hungarian girl, has very similar views: "A few years ago, my boyfriend had a very sore cock, because he had a short frenulum and every erection was a nightmare for him, so he had to be operated upon. When he finally decided to get it done, we agreed that he should ask for a full circumcision. Now he has a neatly cut cock, and I am very proud of him and his willy. When we are strolling on the nudist beach, he looks so good and masculine with his nicely circumcised cock."

Naturally, not everybody is enthusiastic about being circumcised. Imre is now in his late 20s and he had to be circumcised at six because of a phimosis. He still feels miserable about it and complains about a numb penis. Imre keeps looking for a way to get a foreskin restoration and contributes a lot to the various discussion forums on the Hungarian web where he tries to dissuade other men wanting to get circumcised.

The Hungarian medical profession is not anti-circ or particularly pro-circ, though a lot of them still would look at circumcision only as a remedy for certain penile illnesses and not as a useful preventive measure. Nevertheless, most doctors in Hungary would be ready to do a circumcision on request, without any apparent medical reason. In theory, social security pays for a circumcision only if it is medically necessary, and a voluntary circumcision would cost about 30-60,000 Forints (U.S. \$120-240). The operation is always freehand, as Plastibell and Gomcobell are not known in Hungary, under local anesthesia on an outpatient basis. Dr. Ferenc Fekete (45), a renowned urologist who runs a private clinic for male problems in Budapest, says he is very much in favour of circumcision, and does about fifty operations a year.

Hopefully, circumcised boys and men will soon be a familiar sight in gym locker rooms or pool showers and on the nudist beach in Hungary.

Andras - Hungary

Has Beckham Been Circumcised?

Rebecca Loos, David Beckham's former personal assistant, has claimed to have had an affair with the England captain. Beckham has described the allegations by Ms Loos, first made in the *News of the World*, as ludicrous, and has instructed lawyers. But in an interview with Sky Television, for which she is understood to have received £150,000, Ms Loos said she had no reason to lie about the alleged affair. Asked if she could prove that the affair took place, Ms Loos said: "There is something I know about him, an intimate part of his body that I think only women who've been in bed with him would know." When asked if the Real Madrid midfielder had been circumcised, Ms Loos said: "I'm not talking about that. If I do ever need to talk about that, it will be in a court, not on television."

ACORN

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Ivan Acorn

Editorial

Self-circumcision is not usually the subject of prime time TV. But the new Channel 4 programme, *Nip/Tuck*, broadcast on Wednesday evenings at 10.00 pm, has this topic as a running story, at least in the first three episodes. In episode 1, Matt tells his cosmetic surgeon father that he wishes to be circumcised – and is told that he has psychological problems (ring any bells, anywhere?). In episode 2, he performs a self-circumcision, and in episode 3, it is tidied up. Perhaps the interests of *Acorn Society* members are a little more main stream than we thought!

On page 8 of this issue, we give details of the next *Acorn* meeting in November. If you have never attended before, please do consider coming. The atmosphere is warm and friendly, and whether you are roundhead or cavalier, pro-foreskin or pro-circ, you will be very welcome. This issue also sees the revival of *Contact Corner*. The *Acorn Society* is a community and one of its functions is to help members to get in touch with each other. So, if any member wishes to make contact with others, perhaps in their area, via the *Acorn* mailbox, please let me know and I shall be happy to insert details in the next issue.

Ivan Acorn

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Only foreskins need be worn!

This edition will arrive as many of you are watching the Olympic Games. Imagine, however, an athlete from the first games in 776 BC propelled forward to the modern Olympiad. Little would be familiar other than the Greek landscape. Certainly he would be surprised at the athletes' shorts and singlets. He had competed in the nude. No doubt about his status!

Not that there would have been such doubt anyway since in those days the foreskin was de rigueur and the exposed glans was frowned upon. It was taken as an indication of sexual arousal and was therefore considered to be indecent. To ensure that the foreskin did not inadvertently retract during their exertions, the athletes bound the end of the foreskin, making retraction impossible. To prevent their genitals from flapping around and reduce risk of chafing and tearing, the athletes used a kynodesme (literally a 'dog leash'). This was a thin leather thong wound around the akroposthion (the extremity of the foreskin) that pulled the penis upward and was tied in a bow around the waist, or secured by some other means. Vase paintings and statues frequently portray nude athletes wearing the kynodesme. One of the most informative iconographic representations is found on an Attic red-figure calyx-krater painted by Euphronios, dating from 520-510 BC which shows a young athlete in the process of grasping the lips of his akroposthion with the fingers of his left hand and pulling the prepuce taut while his right hand is poised ready to loop the kynodesme around the neck of the akroposthion.

In fact, the device served a dual purpose since it was worn from early in training onwards. The idea was that it should inhibit erections and thus make intercourse or masturbation difficult if not impossible – an early and primitive form of chastity belt. Many athletes forwent sexual activity during training. Signs of sexual interest during athletics were regarded as laughable. The process of binding the foreskin thus became known by the slang term kunodesme, 'putting the dog on the lead'.

The practice evolved into a permanent form in Rome 200 to 400 A.D. The Romans pierced the prepuce of athletes and slaves with metal rings that they welded shut. The Romans called this device a fibula. Its function was to prevent erections – not for protection but to ensure the athlete didn't break training and the slaves didn't procreate. The theory that orgasm and ejaculation weakens the athlete persisted until recent times – it was an accepted part of, say, a boxer's training that he should desist from sexual activity whilst in training. This idea certainly seems to have gone out of the window of late with wives and girl friends accompanying football and cricket teams on overseas tours. Does this perhaps explain some of our poor performances on the field?

Lack of a foreskin inhibited participation in those early games, which was a barrier particularly to Jews. (At that time, Islam with its similar mandatory circumcision requirements did not exist.) This led to Jews seeking to restore their foreskins in order to cover their glans again and allow them to compete – and this

in turn led the mohelim to require a return to a more radical form of circumcision. This in turn has led to a myth that Jewish circumcision consisted originally of just a token removal of the tip of the foreskin. This in fact is unlikely if only because, if it were true, there would have been no need for anyone to undertake restoration as they would still have had a covered glans!

Furthermore, since around 20% of males are born with a short foreskin which, in adulthood at least, doesn't cover the whole glans it would have been impossible to distinguish between the circumcised and those with a short skin. Since the purpose of circumcision was to set a Jew aside from his fellow men it would have made no sense to circumcise in such a way as to be indistinguishable from a large proportion of non-Jews. It is known from Egyptian mummies that the Egyptians practised full circumcision and the Jews are likely to have copied circumcision from the Egyptians, or vice versa. Also all other tribes around the world who practise ritual circumcision ensure that the glans is entirely exposed.

All the evidence thus points to Jewish circumcision always having been aimed at a complete foreskin removal: there is no evidence to the contrary. What we do know though is that by Hellenic times the practice of circumcision had become sloppy (possibly deliberately so in some cases) so that it had become possible for many Jewish athletes to pull the remains of their foreskin forward and tie it to pretend to be uncircumcised and thus be permitted to take part in the games. Just as today we find many doctors incapable of performing a first class circumcision, but nevertheless offering their services as circumcisers, so it is likely that as the Jewish race spread outside of the original Promised Land many of their mohelim were not as skilled as they should have been. Or perhaps, since it was a father's duty to circumcise his own son, many fathers only did a half-hearted job 'just in case the boy might want to compete in the Games when he was older', or simply because of their lack of skill at the job.

Whatever the reason for it, the only evidence we have is that some Jews at that time were able to hide their true status. It was thus decreed that circumcision should henceforth be not only complete (as tradition required) but be shown to be complete and irreversible - thus the required tearing of the inner foreskin. This more radical form of Jewish circumcision persists to the present day.

If uncircumcised uniformity was the norm at those first games, that is unlikely to be the case in Greece today. It is a fair guess that the teams from the Middle East, the USA, Islamic nations in Africa and the Far East, and many other African countries will be almost exclusively circumcised, whilst those from Europe, India and China will be uncut. And no doubt the contingent from Japan will have foreskins retracted in direct opposition to that early tradition. Unfortunately, we shall be unable to monitor the exact proportions from our television couches. Nevertheless, the skin tight lycra shorts favoured by sprinters in particular leaves little to the imagination. I shall be happy to print your speculations next time!

Ivan Acorn

[I am grateful to Vernon for the information about Jewish circumcision.]

Save That Foreskin!

[In issue 6/2003, Daniel told how his fifteen year old son was keen to be circumcised because he had a rather tight foreskin. I.N. offers some advice.]

I very much hope that Daniel does not get his 15 year old son circumcised because of his tight foreskin since I know of a remedy that works in most cases of phimosis. It is very simple and straightforward. First, anyone who has phimosis must take hold of the foreskin on both sides with the index finger and thumb of each hand and then very gently pull the tip of the foreskin out to both sides with both hands about five or six times and then with the same method pull the foreskin forward the same number of times. This must be done every day until the tightness begins to slacken and must be continued until the foreskin can be drawn back behind the corona thus uncovering the glans completely. Needless to say, erections often occur and if an erection is felt coming on then stop until the penis returns to its flaccid state. Masturbation can help but be careful depending on the tightness of the foreskin since paraphimosis can occur.

I passed this advice to a couple that I was friendly with back home in Scotland. One of their sons, 13 at the time in 1975, had reached puberty the same year and developed phimosis. The lad was the youngest of four sons and at the time his older brothers were 20, 18 and 15. It was the 20 year old that told me about his younger brother having a tight foreskin. He discovered it by accident when he had to answer a call of nature and found his younger brother trying to pull back his foreskin in the toilet. He went in there to masturbate thinking that it would help the phimosis but to no avail. Circumcision was mentioned and the 20 year old knew that I was circumcised because we used to go swimming together in the local swimming baths where we shared a changing cubicle. I was 28 so we were close in age. I went to his house with him when his parents were at home and we spoke with them about their youngest son's phimosis. The father told me that he had discussed circumcision with his wife and they were both in agreement about getting it done as soon as possible. I mentioned about the method that I have just described and both parents were very keen to try it out, the father especially because he had been circumcised due to phimosis in 1945 when he was 15. His circumcision had been very painful with a great deal of discomfort. He didn't want his youngest son to go through what he had. The 13 year old used the method and, to cut a long story short, after a period of time his phimosis disappeared.

Fortunately none of the other sons had tight foreskins. All four sons are now married and have taught their own sons the method and so far there haven't been any cases of tight foreskins amongst the couple's grandsons (seven in number). Over the years sadly I've lost contact with the family except for the youngest son who has two sons 16 and 13 and is a widower. His wife died in childbirth in 1990 when their second son was born. We are close because of what I did for him in 1975 when he was 13 and now that he is 41 he takes an interest in his own sons in case they ever get tight foreskins.

So, Daniel, please do think about what I've mentioned. At least give it a try and you may change your mind. The method doesn't work for everyone but it is worth trying. If your 15 year old son has no success then go ahead and get him circumcised. Most likely he will get teased about being done, more so these days as circumcision is a great deal less common than when I grew up in the 50's and 60's when it was common to see a circumcised male. Even then I was teased from time to time. Some of the remarks weren't nice.

Having said all of that, I am still a strong supporter of circumcision, but only on religious grounds.

I.N. - Manchester

Smurf - A Response

I was disturbed to read the story *Ashley - A True Story* (issue 3/2004) which talked about Ashley, aged 17 but looking 12. I consider this to be verging on 'Kiddie Porn'. I really think the whole story is a fantasy dreamed up by 'Smurf' who is obviously into the younger person.

All this talk about retracting foreskins doesn't really have a place in a pro-circumcision magazine. I know that we have to read both sides of the story but personally I think that a non-circumcised penis is a very ugly thing compared to the beauty of a fully circumcised one. The suggestion that circumcision is the lazy man's way of curing objectionable smells caused by smegma is complete balderdash! Before I was circumcised, I washed my penis, and still do, several times a day but the objectionable smell soon returned. Since circumcision I have not had this problem re-occur.

I do not consider intercourse with an intact penis to be "truly a wonderful sensation". I do however consider that intercourse with a circumcised penis is truly a wonderful sensation! I should know having been circumcised at the age of 40 at my own choice and having experienced both sides of the coin so to speak. I do not think that 'Smurf' being uncircumcised is in a position to comment on the difference between a circumcised and an uncircumcised penis. How can he know if he has only experienced the latter?

All I can say is since my circumcision, which I consider in some ways was the best thing that ever happened to me, everything has been a million times better than with that wretched foreskin!

Neville - Northolt
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Liberal Upbringing

There are two schools of thought about sex instruction and children. Firstly there are those who insist that kids should at an early age be given explicit lessons to enable them to avoid pregnancy and disease and those who take the old-fashioned view that children should be protected from sexual knowledge until near maturity. I was lucky enough to come in the first category and am grateful for not having to face the awful inhibitions suffered by those kids whose sexuality is repressed or warped and who so often as a result suffer from neuroses for the rest of their lives.

I was brought up in a sexually-charged atmosphere. My mother walked out on my father in my infancy and we went to live with an old school friend of hers, 'Auntie' Mabel, a bawdy, fun-loving lady who seemed to be obsessed with sex and was utterly without inhibition. Happy-go-lucky boyfriends were constantly coming and going and there were parties, some of them developing into sexual orgies and although I was not allowed to be present, I was always eavesdropping or peeping and saw more than was good for me on many occasions.

At school too, I was privileged to have a circle of friends of both sexes who were committed to the investigation of sexual knowledge. One of my earliest sexual recollections was, at the age of six, being the centre of attention when a young lady called Angela decided to perform her party piece and show off her expertise in the subject of the male anatomy, in particular how to provoke an erection – she had apparently been practising on her two brothers. She took matters into her own hands, literally, by getting it out and showing the others how holding it between finger and thumb and sliding the foreskin to and fro would inevitably lead to a spectacular increase in size and stiffness, making it even more satisfying to handle. To show off her superior knowledge, she induced the other girls in the group to have a go, instructing them in the art of drawing the foreskin right back to reveal the knob and then pulling it forward to its normal position in front of it. I found all this handling terribly exciting and felt all trembly as a succession of soft female fingers handled and rubbed my small but fiercely erect penis. Genital handling became a regular occurrence and certainly destroyed any inhibitions I might have had with the other sex. In later years Angela proved to be a very knowledgeable young lady because she was able to instruct us in the other penile variation, circumcision, explaining how some boys had the skin cut back to uncover the knob, to our disbelief since none of us had heard of such a thing.

Meanwhile back home, I picked up further information about sex when being bathed, since we all took a bath together. I never ceased to find it stimulating to see mature females nude and always developed an erection – Mabel laughed at it and made embarrassing comments about what a fine big dicky I had and how I would make some girl happy one day. Mother just laughed and went on sponging me down, but when it came to my dangly bits, there was always a bit of a production, with Mabel insisting against my mother's wishes, that she should draw my skin back to ensure I hadn't got a tight foreskin. Mother was of the opinion that foreskins should be left alone – they'd come back of their own accord

when ready, but under Mabel's insistence she sometimes did draw my skin right back to show my blood-red tip, immediately pulling it forward again while Mabel chuckled her approval. On several occasions Mabel sat on the loo and took a noisy pee, grinning coyly while mother ignored her. I didn't though.

A couple of years later at the age of 13 when getting undressed for bed, I decided to show off my knowledge and asked Mabel what circumcision was. She was curious to know that it was a girlfriend who had raised the matter ('Saucy minx!') but pulling my pyjama pants down, she indicated with her finger nail round where the rim of the glans bulged out under the foreskin, as the site where the cut was made. I asked her why it was done and she said these days it was only for religious reasons. When I said it must look funny to have your knob exposed all the time she made me pull my foreskin right back to show me what it would look like and laughed when I developed a hard-on. She asked me if I ever played with my willy to make it stiff. I said yes and told her what the girls at school had done. She giggled and told me it was not so much fun to play with if you didn't have a long skin to rub up and down. She then said a funny thing - "In the games lovers play, your foreskin is your best friend and don't you forget it!" I didn't.

At about this time, Mabel took it on herself to ensure that I received proper sex lessons since they were not provided at school. She explained one day in the kitchen, as she peeled the potatoes, how the sex act took place and warned of the necessity of safe sex. I was intensely curious about female anatomy and although I had seen both mother and Mabel nude on so many occasions, was only conscious of the long split in the bulge of flesh between a female's legs, knowing nothing about what it hid. Mabel being the lady she was didn't hesitate. She pulled her knickers down and gave me a demonstration, separating her vulva and giving me a Cook's tour of all the bits. I noticed her clitoris was like my penis and, as she pointed out, was fully hooded by a foreskin like mine. In my dismal ignorance, I then asked her if she peed through it. She laughed and pointed out the vent just underneath it, asking me if I'd never seen girls at school take a pee. When I said no, she hesitated, said, "Oh well - why not?", swore me to silence and then laid on an impressive exhibition, releasing a powerful cascade into a bucket! My reaction was like your contributor Steve's, in *Acorn* 2/99 - I was flabbergasted and horrified!

This was all exiting stuff and I was sexually aroused as never before by her total lack of inhibition. However it is important to state that I only experienced what a boy in one of the less prudish nudist environments would be exposed to - never once did Mabel allow me to touch her private parts and she never touched mine. It was, as she said, purely a matter of instruction and in later years I was grateful for it.

As I reached maturity, I came across the novelty of circumcision when I dated a Jewish girl for several months. She told me her family would have strongly disapproved if they'd known she was having it off with an uncircumcised gentile, but made it clear that when she married she would stick to the faith, so there was no question of a permanent relationship. From her point of view, she wanted to know what sex was like with a foreskin before being married to a circumcised man. She never stated a preference, but her ardent response and clear enjoyment

were enough for me. We talked for a long time about circumcision and she made it clear that she had nothing personally against foreskins. They were just incompatible with her all-important religion. There were times when I regretted that I was not circumcised myself to enter this world that was closed to me. It was never a serious proposition though – I was too conscious of the pleasure embodied in my skin pullover – and I now understood what Mabel meant.

After careful thought I have come to the theory that circumcision is probably allied to sexual repression. Although I admire the commitment of Muslims and have absolutely no criticism of the religion itself, all the Islamic countries, where circumcision is universal, strictly ban all forms of pornography and sexual licence, especially as far as Muslim women are concerned. Nudity is treated with revulsion and both men and women are required to be fully covered at all times – no shorts or T shirts. The US as usual is a baffling mixture with the bible belt and deep south embracing circumcision whilst banning pornography and any manifestation of sexuality, whilst in California and New York, where the majority of boy babies are now allowed to remain intact, they permit virtually anything. Meanwhile in uncircumcised Europe, Britain excepted, anything goes. You can buy hard core pornography virtually anywhere and prostitution, whilst often officially prohibited, thrives as battalions of young women ply their trade, including many from the old soviet empire, desperate to give their sexuality free reign and make a few bob into the bargain. In Britain of course, things have to be different – they always have been. Although routine infant circumcision is now never performed, the stifling prudery of the early part of the century when circumcision was at its zenith here, still lingers on – as Steve said in 2/99 – while Jack Straw betrays his liberal conscience and panders to Mary Whitehouse and her doomy acolytes by cracking down on porn. However anyone who watches Channel 4 and 5 will know that things are changing. Programmes like *Ibiza Uncovered* and *Sex and Shopping*, with a continual diet of up-front mixed-sex nudity, are a clear indication that, not only are foreskins virtually universal, but the shackles imposed by the old women of both sexes in our society should be treated with contempt.

J.O. – Herts.

Acorn Meeting

A Meeting of the *Acorn Society* will take place on the afternoon of Saturday 13th November. We have taken an option on a number of twin bed and single bed rooms for the nights of Friday 12th and Saturday 13th November. The charges are: Shared room £47.00 per person per night, Single room £51 per night.

Further information and booking of accommodation via Douglas 07788 126706. Evenings and weekend are best times to call.

Members may be relieved, or even disappointed, to know that there will be no need to present accounts at this meeting.

Douglas

Zsolt's Story

When I was younger, I did not understand why those men whom I saw in porn films did not show their foreskins. I liked it, though I did not know what it was. Later, at school we spoke about these types of films and I learnt that those guys were all circumcised. Then the whole matter was forgotten. After I had completed my military service in 1991, I started to go to the nudist lakes around Budapest with my then girl friend. These lakes are actually gravel pits, filled with cool, clear water, on which the first nudist beaches were formed in Hungary. Once, we saw a family where the father and his teen-age sons were all foreskin-less. My girlfriend became very excited at the sight of the uncovered glans, and asked me to keep my glans bare, with the foreskin always pulled back. To tell the truth, I liked it too, so I fulfilled her wishes and pulled the skin back, but it soon slipped forward. Then I kept on pulling it back until it stayed that way. Of course, it was not that easy, since when I put on my boxers, it stayed retracted at first, but then rolled back to cover my glans and trapped my pubic hair with it, which was not very pleasurable! Then I found out that if I pulled back my foreskin, as I used to do it, and then rolled it back to the groove behind the glans, the rim would keep it back and I would also look circumcised. In turn, I had to be more careful about keeping it clean.

I lived for eight years with my foreskin always pulled back, and after a while I realised that my foreskin had become a lot shorter. Years ago it had overhung the glans; now it was covering less than half of it.

After having kept my foreskin always pulled back for eight years, I started to gather all possible information about circumcision, how it was done, what the results were and whether or not it was done for adults. I mulled over what to do for a year; I read everything I found on the Internet; I thought about all the stuff that was written in the discussion forums and asked the e-mail Doctor on one of the Hungarian medical advisory sites. He responded very quickly and gave a name and a phone number. After a few days of further chewing it over, I called the doctor, named Dr Ferenc Fekete, who gave me a date. I raised the issue of getting circumcised with my girl friend (this was a new one), and she assured me she would support the idea. I went to see the doctor and after 30 minutes we agreed that I would call if I made up my mind. This was in early February 2000, and after twelve days, I called the Doc to say that I wanted the thing. He gave me a new date, the next Tuesday morning, when I had to go to the Urology Department at the Medical University in Budapest, and explained to me how I could get there. I had a very simple digital camera, and I decided to take shots of my dick before and after. I made a few pix of my uncut dick and waited for the next Tuesday to come.

So Tuesday morning, 29th February 2000, arrived. TOP SECRET. Nobody knew about the whole thing. I took my back-pack and I left home as if I were going to work. The closer I got to the hospital the more troubled I became. The Doc had told me in advance not to eat but to drink more than usual. That I did. I arrived and at the check-in counter some nice-looking girls, 10 years younger than me,

were sitting. "This won't be easy," I thought, but then the Doc arrived and said that I had come to see him. He asked me if I still wanted the operation. Then he took me to the 2nd floor where a young nurse of my age (28) took my data; then a young doctor arrived and asked if I were nervous. I said yes, naturally, then he gave me some pills, which I took, and told me to walk around, until I felt the result. In about 20 minutes I became very relaxed and calm, and I only remember that I called the doctor by his first name.

Then Dr Fekete arrived and took me to his office, where he examined my dick and asked how much skin he should cut off. I told him he should cut off the whole foreskin, as I came for a full circumcision and not for just a correction. "OK", he agreed. In a few minutes, another guy arrived who guided me to the surgery room. When I was undressing I thought there was no way back, but the doctor once again asked if I really wanted the operation. Of course I answered yes, and lay down on the operation table. The surgery assistant, a young chap, put a strap on my limbs, to fix me to the table. I asked him to tell me what was what, just to keep me busy, though by then I was not worried at all, as the pill I had taken had made me sort of euphoric. Then a kind elderly lady came and cleaned my prick with a dark red liquid, and then they pulled up the sheet in front of me, so that I saw nothing. There were already four of them occupied with me. The doctor told me that he would inform me of every step they made and that he would then start the operation. I got 3-4 jabs below my glans, but that was the most unpleasant part of the whole surgery, and after it I felt nothing at all. After a few minutes I put my hands behind my head and lay on the table as if I were on the beach, sunbathing, and listened to their chit-chatting. When one of them said something funny, we all laughed. After about 20-25 minutes, we were ready, and they put a bandage on my dick and left. The surgery assistant guy led me back to the place where I started the whole process about half an hour before. Dr Fekete arrived and gave me a few suggestions about the next few days. Then I paid the bill (as I was there on a private basis) and left and went home on foot.



I took the underground, then the train, etc. At home, I was prepared for the worst, that it would hurt like hell. But nothing happened. I called the doc to ask what I should expect, and he assured me that it could not be worse than a slight tooth-ache. "A slight tooth-ache ...", I repeated, but I was not convinced at all. I thought that as the surgery was painless, all the worst things would come after.

But nothing. It was unbelievable, I had no pain, whatsoever. After a few days I went to see the Doctor once more, and I told him that it had not hurt so far, so what should I expect in the following days. He said if it had not hurt in the first 2-3 days, there should be no pain at all. Oh Christ, I thought, I had not had the cut done before because I was scared of the pain. The sutures fell out by themselves and I had to dip my cock into camomile tea to avoid any infection.

After about three weeks my girlfriend could enjoy my newly trimmed cock, and it was so wonderful to be and to make love without a foreskin.

In the years since I have been quite often with my girlfriend to the nudist lakes, and quite a few older women (in their 40s) have asked me about my circumcision. In Hungary not too many men are circumcised, but it is becoming more popular among young men. I do recommend everybody to get circumcised as I feel a lot healthier since I had it done.



Zsolt - Hungary

Dissimilar Siblings

In issue 6/2003, the issue was raised as to whether, if one brother in a family needed a medical circumcision, any other brothers should also be circumcised. This question was posed in the 'Dear Dr Cath' column in the Sunday Mirror in late February under the title: 'Not to be snipped at'.

Q: Our son has to be circumcised due to a very tight foreskin. Our other boy is fine but we're worried they will notice how different they are. Should we have him circumcised too?

A: This used to be a common operation in young boys but now fewer than one in ten teenagers have had it done.

Circumcision is a painful operation and unless he's a small baby, your son will need a general anaesthetic. It's an extremely safe and routine operation, but all anaesthesia carries a risk and nobody should have an operation without good reason. There is no medical advantage here, so your second son should not have it done.

I know the boys will spot the difference, but you could take this as an opportunity to discuss with them how everybody is individual and that differences are a normal part of life. Your second son will only think he's odd within your family - with most of his friends he'll be quite normal.

Celebrity Status – Damien Hurst

Damien Hurst, the controversial artist, famous for sharks in formaldehyde and cut-up cows, is uncircumcised – and we have the photograph to prove it. The revelation came from the fashion photographer, David Bailey, who is himself circumcised. The two held a joint show, *Stations of the Cross*, at the Gagosian Gallery in London during May. The show uses the traditional stages of Christ's Passion as the starting point for thirteen huge photographs.

One image is of Simon helping Jesus, with David Bailey as Simon and Damien Hurst as Jesus. Simon is kneeling before a full-frontally naked Jesus. The picture is revealing, with Damien sporting rather a long foreskin. As David says: "He gets the starring part, and I'm just Simple Simon. And I'm circumcised – he's not."

So, after the controversy in recent issues of *Acorn* about Michelangelo's *David* depicting an uncircumcised Jew, we now get a totally inauthentic Jesus. But at least we now know the truth about Damien Hurst!



Ivan Acorn

Religious Circumcision and the NHS

[The following exchange of letters appeared last autumn in an electronic magazine for GPs.]

Why do health authorities fund religious circumcision?

I was alarmed to read that some NHS health authorities are offering circumcisions to religious minorities (Clinical, October 13). While this may reduce the health risks associated with private procedures, that is no reason for them to get state funding. The state would be unwilling to fund female genital mutilation on the grounds that it is child abuse, so why should it fund what amounts to male child abuse?

In 1989 the United Nations Convention on Human Rights of the Child stated that ritualistic circumcision violated a child's right to bodily integrity. Your article implies that Muslims automatically and unquestioningly circumcise their male children. In fact, many Muslim authorities have great difficulty reconciling this

procedure with the child's right to bodily integrity. Jews are also increasingly questioning the wisdom of circumcision.

Circumcision of healthy children amounts to criminal assault since valid consent cannot be obtained from the child and parents have no legal right to consent to non-therapeutic procedures on their child's behalf. It is time we ended the hypocrisy of allowing circumcision while at the same time condemning female genital mutilation.

Further information can be found at www.norm-uk.org

Dr Simon Fisher, Newcastle upon Tyne

Why Muslims opt for circumcision

In his condemnation of routine infant male circumcision, Dr Simon Fisher says those of the Muslim and Jewish faith are beginning to question the wisdom of the procedure. I perform many routine (male) circumcisions and it is my experience that true followers of both these faiths request the operation on their sons for an entirely valid reason – it is part of their cultural heritage.

There is no medical reason why a Jew or Muslim should not, for example, eat pork, but for us to attempt to rationalise this on scientific grounds would be both insensitive and inappropriate.

Dr Fisher refers to an anti-circumcision website. Perhaps I can suggest www.circinfo.com as a site that provides sound and reasoned advice.

Dr M Barrie, Kingston upon Thames

I must take issue with Dr Simon Fisher when he states that many Muslim authorities are questioning circumcision. As a member of a Mosque committee who attends national meetings, I am not aware of any such questions. To be a Muslim a man has to be circumcised. This is usually done at an early age and healing is quicker in younger age groups. Not having a son circumcised is a restriction on religious practice, which is also a fundamental right.

Dr Fisher should provide details of his source of information.

Dr Zahid Ghufoor, Streatham

Contact Corner

Midland based member, circumcised, feeling isolated, would like to meet with other members in the region to talk about circumcision. Contact via the *Acorn* mailbox or by email.

*John – West Midlands
jmb1925@hotmail.com*

The Marie Stopes Clinic

Several times I have read mention of the Marie Stopes clinic in London and a Dr Hussain. This is where I had my circumcision done a good few years ago. I had originally intended using my local private hospital but they required a letter of referral from my GP, something I was none too keen to try for as he had already thought it necessary to try to stop me being gay!! That same year a friend had been circumcised locally with what I considered an excellent result. It was quite tight with a low cut, the only sign of which was an extremely fine white line close to the rim of his glans. This looked very natural. To my eye, many adult circumcisions with a high cut don't look natural enough. This problem rarely seems to arise with child circumcisions, probably because of growth and time factors.

Anyway, back to the clinic. I arrived and after being asked why I wanted to be circumcised, the job was done without further discussion. Times were different then; the doctor knew best and you were not involved in the process as these days. So I just let him go ahead. There was no discussion about aftercare other than to take the prescribed medication and remove the bandage in a couple of days. The result was a fairly high and uneven cut with suture marks, albeit nice and tight. Quite severe pain went on for several weeks and I had to request a repeat prescription. So I would not recommend the Marie Stopes clinic. But as I said, times have changed.

My friend and I, having experienced as adults both cut and uncut states, are strong advocates of circumcision. We would not want to go back, except in my case I would have gone about it differently. We both feel our parents should have had us circumcised. I think mine considered it but never discussed it with me – there was no medical need but there was the opportunity.

I agree with what J.T. (issue 3/2004) says about medicals. Having worked in schools, the lack of medical examinations is apparent. Parents are not well informed and almost everyone in the current climate is scared witless about going near boys' cocks, let alone examining them. Whilst this situation may be understandable, it can only be to the detriment of some boys.

C.H.A. – North Kent

To Lube Or Not To Lube

I was most surprised to read Jack's remark (issue 2/2003) that, "Like most well circumcised men I can only jack off with lubrication". This has not been my experience. None of the 15 cut guys I've been with have had any problem wanking dry, nor have I since I had mine cut. For myself, and for my circumcised partners, wanking with lubricant is simply a delightful optional extra made easier and better by the absence of a foreskin, but not necessitated by it.

S.M.

Penis Pain

In *The Times* each Saturday, the honorary consultant paediatrician at Great Ormond Street hospital answers parents' queries. The following exchange took place in August.

Q: Our oldest son is 8¹/₂ years old. We have been encouraging him to start pulling back his foreskin but he says it hurts, and some of the foreskin seems to be stuck to the top of his penis. Should the skin just peel away over time or is it more serious?

A: Some boys still have a tight foreskin at the age of eight, but in most cases it is beginning to show signs of retracting of its own accord by then. If the problem isn't treated, there won't be any immediate problem but your son could experience difficulties later in life.

It would be a good idea to see your GP, who may suggest referring him to a surgeon who would be able to review the situation. If he does need treatment, there are several options. A simple circumcision is one. The foreskin can also be stretched under general anaesthetic. If there is a particular desire to preserve the foreskin, a procedure known as preputioplasty, which involves making an incision in the foreskin, is a third option.

The Economics of Circumcision

Our cash strapped NHS probably de-listed 'Circumcision on Demand' as much on grounds of cost as anything else. Thus the managers and accounts administrators are as blameable as the anti-circ proselytisers for virtually eliminating the procedure as a prophylactic. This smacks of economic as well as medical short sightedness.

Consider the official NHS figure of 30,000 necessary circumcisions per annum. That's the figure banded around in recent times and the nearest estimate which will serve for a little illustration. At a very conservative estimate this is going to rack up a figure of thousands of pounds per circ. If that sounds excessive, let's set out a typical cost scenario for a boy who develops a foreskin problem which results in one of those 30,000 circs.

- 1 Mother takes son for several visits to GP with foreskin problem before losses are cut (so to speak!) and patient is eventually referred for circumcision. It certainly is rarely suggested the first time a patient presents. GP's professional time per hour – say 15 mins per consultation plus admin staff and running expenses of doctor's premises. You are probably looking at £50 per visit if fully costed. Average situation requires a probable total of 4 visits, say £200 in all.
- 2 Cost to NHS of medication; creams, antibiotics etc, subsidised for adults, free to children. Guess at £200.
- 3 Add cost of referral for initial consultation with specialist/surgeon prior to procedure. Not cheap! £250.

4 The event; Surgical day case at hospital: Overheads of light, heat, building maintenance, insurance, admin appointment costs, surgeon and anaesthetist's fees, nursing costs, plus medication and disposables used for each procedure. Perhaps £1,000 all in.

5 Follow up appointment at hospital or doctor's surgery £50

TOTAL for above around £1500 to £2000.

CONTRAST with cost of RIC:

Almost all the costs are already being borne by the maternity unit – the baby is there anyway. So are the staff. A RIC could be included as part of the OB's or midwife's skills – at 'run-on' rate. You could, if necessary, (and a good idea in my humble opinion), train nurse practitioners to carry out circumcision. (They do at Bradford Royal Infirmary.) For infants it is a simple procedure lasting only a few minutes. None of the formidable list of costly provisions for an older child or an adult day case apply. Yes, there might be a slight addition for the training mentioned, insurance, dressings, disposables etc but these would be small in comparison.

Not costed into any of the above are the spin-off savings in respect of recent research findings. Less cervical cancer, and vaginal infections of partners and no time off work for adult patients.

With NHS current policy of only circumcising when it really is medically necessary, we're looking at £1500 x 30,000 circs = £45m, maybe more?

The nanny government and doctors are always exhorting us to lead healthy lifestyles. We are bombarded with advice: Don't smoke, don't drink or eat too much, avoid unhealthy foods. Do attend screening programmes, have cervical smears, and mammograms and have check-ups at 'well person' clinics. Watch your weight, watch your cholesterol, check your blood sugar, check your blood pressure. Do everything you can to avoid illness and accidents. Think of the savings on NHS budgets, resources and ultimately your taxes. Oh, and DO get your children immunised. BUT DON'T CIRCUMCISE THEM!

Does it stack up?

G.D.

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ACORN

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Editor
Ivan Acorn

Editorial

Circumcision as a subject is rarely absent from the media. Often there are questions to 'the doctor' from worried men experiencing foreskin problems or perhaps parents with sons suffering from phimosis. Usually such articles are reasonably balanced, even if they reflect the conservative attitude to circumcision adopted by the UK medical profession. But at the end of September, a quite astonishingly biased article appeared in *The Independent*. This in effect advocated a total ban on male circumcision. Parents would no longer be able to elect to have their sons circumcised whether for social or religious reasons. It was recognised that the religious ban might meet resistance, but if female circumcision has been outlawed, why not male? As for circumcision for medical reasons – that is unnecessary.

Acorn tries to steer a middle course between roundhead and cavalier and normally such an article would have passed without comment. But this seems a bridge too far, and it is worrying to see the more extreme propaganda of *Norm-UK* being reprinted by a respected broadsheet.

Meanwhile, a new Yahoo internet group, circuk, has arrived – a UK based pro-circumcision group, for all those in

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favour of circumcision, or those considering it for themselves or their sons. Whilst such information groups are welcome, isn't this yet another case of the pro-circ lobby preaching exclusively to the converted? It could be that, if they don't get out there and start proselytising about circumcision, they will find that *Norm-UK* has won the day!

Ivan Acorn

Editor's Interview

Military Cuts

Rumours abound about the attitude of the military to circumcision, and how far it is encouraged/required especially for personnel serving overseas. IDK has contributed previously to *Acorn* and he kindly agreed to be interviewed about his circumcision observations during service in World War II.

Q: Given your age, I am assuming that you saw military service during World War II?

A: A correct assumption! I had nearly six years including France 1940, 8th army, Egypt, Libya and later Palestine.

Q: I know that you were circumcised as a very young boy. What proportion of the men that you served with do you estimate were also cut?

A: 25%-30%, I was surprised to see so many cut. But there were variations and in one unit it was 40%-50%. I have two photos, each of a group of six including me. In one, four were cut; in the other, only one. Broadly speaking, units I served in had many volunteers comprising young qualified professionals (i.e. at least 21 years) with average age 23-27 and several skilled tradesmen of similar age - and each group had equal proportions cut.

Q: I have heard that circumcision was often prescribed for servicemen overseas in Africa or the Far East. Did you ever come across this?

A: I only came across one soldier who had been sent for circumcision prior to a Middle East posting. I noted his circular bright red scar just back of the ridge and he told me about it (noting my cut as we were bathing, as was the custom, nude). Before a unit went overseas, it was mobilised - all stores, equipment, vehicles checked. At the same time, the men's health, teeth and inoculations were all checked and brought up-to-date etc. 'Short arm inspections' or FFI (Free from infection) inspections were routine. But it was unusual for foreign service to automatically require circumcision. I have heard that it was the custom for the East India company to recommend that all new personnel be 'cut'. My younger brother went to Burma and never had any suggestion that he should be cut.

After the war, in our prefabs, my next door neighbour had served in the Navy, mostly Mediterranean. He was in a motor torpedo boat based at Alexandria with sorties to various Greek Islands where they would hide and rush out on raids. This gave much spare time for sun and sea bathing, as ever, nude. Of the eight or

nine crew on his boat, all had been circumcised (including himself) except one – and on returning to Alexandria, he duly went into hospital to be cut. From this my neighbour took it for granted (erroneously) that to be A1 and serve overseas in the Navy, you *had* to be circumcised. He was generalising from one instance. My brother-in-law was Navy, uncut, A1 and served all round the world!

I can only recall one other case of a man needing circumcision. This was the transport corporal, by his own account a womaniser, 'very active' with his girlfriend. We were mobilised and were going overseas and there was a strong suspicion once we were en route to the Middle East that the girlfriend was pregnant. He even looked into the question of marriage by proxy and all the way out to Cape Town he was worried and agitated. Somehow during our four days there he got word that all was clear and that he was not going to be a father. We duly landed in Egypt and he left the unit to go into hospital to be circumcised. For what reason we knew not – but it could not have been a tight foreskin!

Q: I've also heard that circumcision was routine for anyone treated for VD. Did you come across this happening?

A: There may be some confusion here since often foreskin and genital problems were dealt with in the VD unit. For instance – consider these cases. There was a Batman who, though married, was a bit of a womaniser. Word came through that he was to be released and sent home, being a skilled shipyard worker. He was uncut and found to have some foreskin irritation – so he was sent to the VD department of Aldershot hospital where it was quickly cleared and he was pronounced OK. Another uncut and respectable married man had similar irritation and we all regarded him as honest and decent. The army did not supply sheets or pyjamas – you slept in your shirt – and his problem was caused by blankets! In the Middle East we had mosquito nets etc but rarely used them and we would sleep naked in bed. My great pal (uncut) was asleep, his loose foreskin retracted and a mosquito 'got' him on his glans. He went for necessary treatment *at the one and only centre* i.e. the VD wing of the hospital.

One young soldier in a unit in the desert requested circumcision and was told it could be done. He was exceedingly modest and bashful. His doctor realised this and told him not to worry – he would be treated in the VD ward because there the orderlies/nurses were all male and there would be no embarrassment!

Although propaganda and statistics up the desert gave very long odds against being killed, the most likely causes of being sent back to the base hospital were burns (petrol) and dysentery. But there was a strong belief that some men achieved base by rubbing sand into their glans and foreskin. Common in the desert were desert sores – any slight cut or abrasion could 'go wrong' and one had to report sick even though the incident was slight. Imagine how quickly a sandy balanitis got one sent down to base! It was said that the hospital at Alexandria had one ward devoted exclusively to doing circumcisions.

So I can't confirm circumcision being a treatment for VD. I suppose only a visit to public records at Kew could give figures and data on circumcisions up the desert.

Interestingly the Health Museum in Cairo had one small room where the walls were 'decorated' with wax(?) models of penises in various states of disease/VD/decay etc – there must have been at least 100 models and all were circumcised.

The army system anti VD was the ET packet – ET being 'early treatment' – these were available in the guard room and anyone going out for an evening's fun was required to collect and as necessary use the contents. These were: cotton wool, soft soap and a tube of mercuric oxide(?), a strong germicide. Before sex, the instructions were to liberally smear "the knob, the ring and the bridle string with mercury ointment and inject some 'up the pipe' before indulging". Just what the female was supposed to do whilst this performance went on beggars belief. Afterwards the organ was to be washed. Condoms, then called French Letters, were not supplied and were seen as good for birth control rather than disease prevention. Interestingly, though, French letters were supplied to both German and Italian troops and we often found them. One war time tale was that among wrecked ships in Tobrook harbour was one containing bodies of prostitutes sent out for the Italian soldiers' comfort.

There was a tale that there was a sadistic NCO orderly at the VD Centre and his delight was to do treatment with an 'umbrella' catheter. This was inserted, opened and excruciatingly pulled out, preferably with a spiral action. The unhappy patient then visited the urinal for relief but the pain was so great that the flush pipes which they gripped were bent and distorted! Obviously fairy tales, but clever propaganda to keep the lads pure!

Q: Did you ever come across any regiments where circumcision was the tradition?

A: At Tobrook in early 1943 I did come across a unit where they all were circumcised. But the reason was that we did recruit and take into the army Jewish and Arab boys/youths and this unit was an Artisan Company (probably similar to the Pioneer Corps) and was Jewish – hence lack of foreskins. But I did find elsewhere a Jewish boy – saved from Vienna just prior to the war – and he had NOT been circumcised. Apparently there are strict rules about the health of the infant and if they are not well they cannot be circumcised on the 8th day – obviously he was a sickly infant and was subsequently overlooked.

Q: Thanks very much for your full answers. Just one last question. Do you think that being circumcised was an advantage to you in the places that you served – and, bearing in mind the current war in Iraq, do you think that there would be advantages in any soldiers due for posting to the Middle East to be circumcised before they go as part of mobilisation?

A: This is a tricky one. I must say Yes to being circumcised being an advantage for me; but I had little experience of foreskins being a disadvantage to those soldiers who still had them. This may have been due to the fact that I was in the RAMC and all service was in Field Hygiene Sections, so knowledge of the sick was virtually nil apart from unit contacts.

As circumcision is not as widely practised as it once was, I have no doubt that it would not be practicable to include it when mobilising troops for Iraq. Further, there would be some who would be strongly opposed to losing their foreskin.

Additionally, it is unlikely that such action would be endorsed by the medical profession – so I'm afraid that circumcising troops en route for Iraq is just a pipe dream.

Through Female Eyes

Many members are interested in the female viewpoint about circumcision. Andras, our Hungarian member, has provided the following translations from a Hungarian language web site of the thoughts of girlfriends, wives and mothers on circumcision.

From a young mother

My good husband is circumcised – he had a tight foreskin, so he was done for medical reasons. Now we must decide whether or not we should get our little boy circumcised. The paediatrician is absolutely for it, so is my husband, and I just cannot decide. They say that a phimosis might develop later, so a boy is not necessarily born with it. (When my husband was operated upon, an old chap in his 70s was also there, and he felt so ashamed to be undergoing circumcision. He said he had never had any problems with it before.)

I have to fight with our son every evening when I want to pull back his skin. Whether it hurts him or he just hates it, I don't know. Anyhow, we still wait a bit.

Anna

In Hungary circumcision is done, unfortunately, only when it is already unavoidable, while in other parts of the world, this little surgery has a prophylactic role. I think a circumcised penis is so different, it is so much more 'masculine' and 'aesthetic' than the other form. This is just my personal opinion, but I am very much for it. I realize that it is becoming popular in Hungary, and not only among neonates and kids, but more and more young men decide to get rid of the foreskin, very often on the advice of their girlfriends or wives.

Nelli

My husband had a short frenulum problem, but no tight foreskin. Nevertheless, the specialist suggested that the whole foreskin be removed, not just a cut through the frenulum. We had our son circumcised at four. His foreskin was stuck to the glans and so tight that he could hardly pee, but we did not try to force it back. Fortunately, he had no serious irritation, just the end of it was a little red. The paediatrician referred us to a doctor at the Children's Hospital in Budapest. Our boy was done on an outpatient basis. He received a general anaesthetic, and we were able to go home the same day. So we had both 'done', and I am very proud of their willies. I think it is just a matter of decision, takes some courage, but once you are over it, then it is fine.

A wife and mother

My husband realised that he had a problem with his equipment only when we started to sleep together. He admitted that he had a tight foreskin when he was a boy. He could hardly pull it back - he could only uncover about one third of the glans.

The specialist offered the simplest solutions: a dorsal slit, cutting through the frenulum, or a partial removal, but he added that if we wanted a complete removal, that would also be very simple and deliver the best results. Naturally, we chose a full circumcision.

We had our two sons fully circumcised at ages of 4 and 5.5 without any hesitation, even though only one of them had a tight foreskin. They have never had any problem with their circumcised organ, nor have they been teased by the others. Moreover, the kindergarten teacher said she was very much in favour of circumcision, when we talked to her about what had happened to our boys.

Livia

When we started dating, three years ago, I realised that my (now) husband had a very serious phimosis. He could hardly pull back the foreskin and it was also difficult to keep it clean. We tried to use lubes and to 'exercise' it, but with very little success. Then after about a year, a friend of ours referred him to a specialist, who suggested a circumcision without delay. He was very helpful and explained the surgery in detail, and offered a choice for the style, whether loose or tight, or high or low. Finally we opted for a tight and high circumcision, with the inner foreskin tightly pulled over the penis shaft.

The operation was done under local anaesthetic and it took about 45 minutes. After a week the sutures were removed and we could try it out a month after the circumcision. The end result: when the penis is flaccid, the skin has some movement, but it is absolutely stretched when he becomes erect; the colour changes at about 4 centimetres below the glans and reveals proudly that he is circumcised. My husband suffered a bit because of the sensitive glans touching his briefs directly, and he very often got an erection, but after about a few weeks, the glans became coarser and all discomfort was gone.

I have never had a circumcised man before, and I can surely say that our sex life has improved so much. First, because we can freely enjoy our bodies; second, because of the circumcision, my husband lasts longer and making love is a lot stronger sensation for me too. On top of all this, a fully circumcised penis looks unbelievably erotic for me. I am very proud of the circumcised prick of my husband.

I fully support the full circumcision of men, and I am sure I can say so on behalf of most women. I have agreed with my husband that we will have our future sons circumcised before we leave the hospital.

Meli

My husband is Nigerian and he got circumcised as a baby. They do the operation because they want to save the child from infections which may evolve under the

foreskin, if it remains uncleaned for a few days, and we all know that a lot of boys and men tend to forget to clean themselves down there. If a man is circumcised, then no special care is needed, as it gets clean anyhow at every bathing or showering.

We are expecting a baby now, and if it is a boy, we will get him circumcised before leaving the hospital, and won't wait until he grows up. It will not be painful at all, as it is just a tiny piece of skin, and he won't remember it, like my husband. So anyone who has a son born should do it immediately, but if the kid is older and has not been done yet, it is never too late.

His girlfriend wanted him circumcised

I got circumcised at 20. My then girlfriend (who is now my wife) persuaded me to get it done, and I am still grateful for it. The operation was done at the Urology Department of a Medical School in South Hungary. I had to sign a form, stating that it was solely on my wish and at my risk, etc. They must have been doing a lot of voluntary circumcisions because they had a printed consent form for it. The operation itself lasted for about 45 minutes, and I had no problems whatsoever with it.

A girl

Unfortunately, circumcision is not customary in Hungary, but I am very much for it. I had my first and so far only cut boyfriend in England, and it was so wonderful. Now I do enjoy the Jewish girls.

I was au pair at a family where they had their two sons circumcised at 4, even though they were both healthy (meaning that they had no problems with their wee-wees). It was very interesting, as I had not seen such a thing before.

The Cruellest Cut Of All

An article by Jerome Burne from *The Independent*

Every day for the past six months, John has been wearing two 6oz metal ball-bearings attached by straps to the end of his penis. He's not a fetishist; he's on a course of DIY plastic surgery to correct what was, in his view, a terrible wrong inflicted on him when he was a baby. John was circumcised and he wants his foreskin back.

Your first reaction might be that John is the sort of chap who could have featured in one of Graham Norton's trawls through the wackier shores of the web. But the organisation he belongs to, known as *Norm-UK*, boasts the art critic Brian Sewell as its patron and features a number of doctors on its board. Largely unnoticed by the wider public, the once uncontroversial topic of male circumcision has become hot. One campaigner claims that it violates at least seven human rights.

Forty or 50 years ago, circumcision was unremarkable – as many as half of newborn male babies in the UK were circumcised on the grounds that it was

more hygienic and could protect them against conditions such as penile and prostate cancer as well as urinary tract infections. Such claims proved to be unfounded, and the number of circumcisions has plunged to between four and six per cent, most of which are said to be done for therapeutic reasons. (Figures are hard to come by, as records are based on medical, not religious, circumcisions.) Recent guidelines issued by Canadian surgeons declare that “circumcision performed on a healthy infant is now considered a non-therapeutic and medically unnecessary intervention”, and UK doctors’ associations agree.

The change is a triumph for evidence-based medicine, but it raises some tricky questions. If circumcision is medically unnecessary, is it right to subject small babies to it? At the moment, parents who want to have their child circumcised on the grounds of personal choice only need to find a doctor who is willing to do it privately. The aim of *Norm-UK* – which takes its name from the American *National Organisation for Restoring Men* – is to make this unacceptable.

A particularly delicate area of this debate is the issue of religious circumcision. Official bodies usually defend it on the grounds of religious freedom and cultural toleration, but some of the more hardline *Norm* members point out that such sensibilities have not prevented governments outlawing so-called female circumcision. “Circumcision is one of the very few non-therapeutic operations that can be done without the consent of the person being operated on”, says David Smith, the manager of *Norm-UK*. “It’s a scandal that young boys are mutilated unnecessarily.”

But if most of the operations are done to cure a medical condition, what is wrong with that? The main reason for a therapeutic circumcision is to treat a condition called phimosis – a tight foreskin that won’t retract. “Parents get worried and want something done even if it is not causing any problem”, says Dr John Warren, a consultant physician at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow, and founder of *Norm-UK*. “But research published as long ago as 1968 found that 90 per cent of tight foreskins resolved themselves by the age of four and 99 per cent were normal by 17.” The charity also claims it is possible to treat most cases non-surgically.

Last month, *Norm-UK* delivered a letter to the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons (BAPS) declaring that “most therapeutic circumcisions performed by the NHS are unnecessary” and backed it up with 109 journal references. BAPS 2001 guidelines say: “...there is rarely a clinical indication for circumcision... Doctors should be aware of this and reassure parents accordingly.”

The official position of the British Medical Association – “It is unethical to circumcise if research shows that less invasive techniques are available” – is equally general. It is dismissed as “meaningless” by Smith. “If you take your child to the GP and say you are worried about his non-retracting foreskin, the only solution you are likely to be offered is circumcision.”

But debates about individual rights and medical judgements miss what is for many the central objection to circumcision – that it is an assault on male sexuality. The operation removes the prepuce that covers and protects the head, or glans, of

the penis, which is made up of an outer skin and an inner mucosa. “Until the mid-Nineties, it was possible to claim that the foreskin was just a flap of skin”, says Smith. “But then research showed that the inner mucosa contains up to 40,000 nerve endings that make a man more sensitive during sex.”

For many circumcised men this is not a problem. Some even claim decreased sensitivity is a bonus because it allows them to ‘keep going’ for longer. But *Norm-UK* claims that men experience a variety of negative feelings as a result of losing their foreskins, including “low self-esteem over body image”, “a sense of betrayal by parents, especially the mother” and “anger and hostility towards doctors”.

The process of restoration can help resolve these problems. Although you can’t re-create those lost nerve endings, you can recover the uncircumcised look and provide a covering for your glans which, ideally, responds by becoming thinner-skinned and more sensitive. All it takes is some straps, tapes and weights, and about three years.

There is no shortage of devices for sale on the internet with names like Pul-Man, TLC Tugger, Foreballs and Tug Ahoy. Foreballs, for instance, is a stainless steel barbell weighing up to 12oz and costing \$130 (£72). You attach it with tape and let it hang. “Some men have got their foreskin back in six months”, says Wayne Griffiths, founder of the American *Norm*. “But usually you have to wear something for two years.”

One happy restorer is the *Norm-UK* member Alan Wood. “After years of dedicated stretching, taping and tugging”, he exults, “I am finally released from the shackles of inhibition.” His glans, he reports, is more moist and much more sensitive, while masturbating has new dimensions.

Sewell is listed as the patron of *Norm-UK*, but he is not the most wholehearted of supporters nor, he says, is he in need of restoration. Where Sewell does show solidarity with the organisation is on the human rights issue. “I do think it is something that people should be allowed to choose”, he agrees. “Doctors are very lazy about such matters and far too likely to take a thoughtless snip.”

Foreskins: The Facts

Doctors began to promote circumcision in the 1850s as a cure for masturbation, then seen as a cause of insanity, epilepsy, hysteria, tuberculosis, short-sightedness and death.

In Finland, where no one is circumcised at birth, only one man in 16,667 has it done subsequently.

Foreskins removed from babies are in great demand by biomedical companies who use them in the manufacture of insulin and for producing artificial skin. A single foreskin is said to be able to grow 250,000 square feet of skin.

Last year, during the ‘circumcision season’ in South Africa, when manhood rituals take place, there were five penis amputations and 12 deaths due to botched ceremonies.

In May this year David Reimer committed suicide aged 38. He first became famous as living proof that gender is decided socially. He was castrated very young after a circumcision went wrong and destroyed his penis. He was given hormone treatment and 'successfully' bought up as a girl, Brenda. Later he rebelled and insisted on recovering his male identity.

There are websites devoted to what is known as 'recreational or fetish circumcision'. These contain erotic fantasies about forcefully circumcising a man and collecting foreskins. Members 'share stories and pictures of circumcision'. A woman who is only sexually aroused by circumcised males is called an 'acuculophile'.

Freelance circumciser Omunnakwe Amechi was charged last year in a London court with wounding two boys aged 14 and 19 months when he operated on them in their front rooms. The boys had to go to hospital and needed transfusions and corrective surgery. Amechi declared that he had been circumcising since 1995. He was acquitted.

New Video Available

A 50 minute long video showing ritual Indonesian Muslim, and Israeli Jewish circumcisions, with two UK Plastibell circumcisions, is now for sale at £15 (inclusive of post and packing to UK addresses) from: The Gilgal Society, PO Box 21675, London SW16 4WY, UK quoting reference RCV-PAL.

Payment can be made by cash or cheque (no credit cards). For orders from outside the UK, payment will only be accepted in **cash** for €27 or US \$27 inclusive of postage and packing.

Please allow 14 days for delivery.

The video is in VHS PAL format only. Note that these cannot be played on most US or Canadian VCR equipment.

Helmets

Many years ago, while living in the USA, I bought a paperback book entitled *Man's Body* in which a small paragraph was devoted to circumcision and a much larger article on the sizes and shapes of helmets. There were three line drawings showing basic helmet shapes i.e. bottle, bulbous and prow (pointed) shaped, together with some statistics on the most common types. I believe that bulbous was followed by bottle and prow.

Is any *Acorn* member aware of any such grading appearing in any other articles? I submitted a letter on this topic to *Acorn* many years ago and I sent the three line drawings with the letter, not keeping a copy. The letter was never published.

The publisher is Bantam Books ISBN 0-553-10928-6, published 1977.

Mark - Worcester

Mission Accomplished

I was fascinated by circumcised penises from my earliest memories. I remember playing with the boy next door at about 3 years old and we played with each other's cocks. He was like all the local boys, neatly cut, although in his case radically circumcised. I seemed to be the only boy who was different and I hated my cock with its knob covered by a sleeve of skin. I kept wondering why I was different. When I was five I went to school and discovered there were a few boys like me. How ugly they looked compared to those with exposed knobs. Then one day one boy had to go to hospital and when he came back I discovered he had a rather sore willy but that he had somehow lost that loose skin. On questioning him, he explained that he hadn't been able to pull the skin back (as I could) and so they had cut it off. He said it was called circumcision. All was now clear to me.

As I grew older and changed schools, I kept a careful survey of the status of boys when we were in the changing rooms. Around half the boys were like me and the others all had bare knobs. Some I noticed had skin bunched against the knob and a couple of boys had skin covering half the knob - a very slack cut. But the majority had a beautifully exposed knob, and a smooth shaft with no wrinkles at all. One particular friend and I often examined each other minutely and I remember him saying he was glad he didn't have all the loose skin that was on my cock. He had been radically cut and inner skin seemed to cover the whole of his shaft with no trace of a scar. I was absolutely green with envy and vowed that one day I would have a cock like his.

When I was eighteen I had my first girlfriend and eventually my first sexual encounter which wasn't a great success.

She had never seen a foreskin before as a previous boyfriend and her brother had been cut but on seeing me she was not over impressed. This made me even more determined to get rid of that horrid foreskin. All through my school days I had tried to keep the skin back using rubber bands, tape, glue - all to no avail. The trouble was the knob was so sensitive that I would get randier and randier until I would have to have a wank, and then I would have to rehood the knob to cool down. The longest I ever went bare was three days.

I went to the doctor and said that I was having trouble with my foreskin but of course he could find nothing wrong and, to my embarrassment, sent me away. In



the 1950's there were no clinics and I could not return to the doctor so I had to cut off the skin myself. I decided as a start only to remove half the skin and to do the job in stages. One day I was feeling exceptionally randy, and got scissors and bandages and savlon cream and pulled on the foreskin and snipped towards the corona. I was so excited by what I was doing that I was oblivious to any pain and I cut almost up to the corona before cutting right and left. I then ended with a huge bunch of skin hanging from the frenum which I did find painful to remove. Inadvertently I had taken off more skin than I had intended and had achieved a slack circumcision. Very little bleeding occurred and I pushed back the remaining inner skin to join the severed outer, then smeared savlon over a gauze bandage and wrapped up my bruised cock, now feeling drained and exhausted. Healing was rapid, and I had a wank four days later and left off the bandage after a fortnight. Those first days of bareness were incredible - I kept thinking the thing had come out of my pants. I just couldn't believe it - I was circumcised. After all those years of longing, I was now one of the others - circumcised.

It was quite amazing what a boost it was to my confidence to be cut like my friends. It had always seemed that the cut boys were the successful ones in class and sport, and in the changing rooms always strutted around proudly showing off their circumcised status for all to see, unlike the uncut ones who tended to be retiring and covered themselves up in the changing rooms.

Girl friends always enjoyed touching me unlike that first occasion and sex was wonderful. However, after a year or two, I started to wish I didn't have the spare skin bunched behind the glans. So one day I decided to have another go to tighten it up. This time it was easy as I decided to leave the ventral side alone and cut away about one inch of inner skin from the top and sides. Again I felt very little pain and there was no bleeding to speak of. The cutting only took about a minute and then I wrapped a thin gauze with savlon on it around the cut area. As before, I didn't attempt to use



stitches (much too painful) so as there was effectively no slackness in the shaft skin now I stuck lengthways along the shaft strips of tape to the glans pulling the shaft skin down to ensure there was no tension on the cut. This again worked very successfully although healing took a bit longer. When it was fully healed, I had achieved my ultimate ambition - I was radically circumcised with virtually no scar. In hindsight I would have preferred to have removed shaft skin instead of inner skin and also there is a bit more tissue on the ventral side around the frenulum than I would ideally like. However, I am delighted with what I have achieved and still get a thrill when I see my beautiful circumcised cock.

Some years later, a friend of long standing commented on my change and asked me where it had been done. I told him it was a DIY job and he was most impressed.

A day or two later he asked me if I could do the same for him as he had long wanted to be circumcised. He told me that he knew about an anaesthetising cream to deaden the pain so we discussed how he wanted it done: maximum inner skin left. We arranged a day and I got to work using the same technique I had used on myself. I am glad to say the result was excellent and I was a trifle jealous that it was better than my own job. Sadly, work took him away and I haven't seen him now for some while.

R.W. – Wiltshire

Penny Drops For Private Insurer

Readers may remember my article in issue 4/2004 *The Economics of Circumcision*, pointing out the false economy of NHS thinking on Routine Infant Circumcision.

Recently, whilst surfing the web on a US parenting site, I found a thread where expectant moms were discussing the merits of circumcision, and who had or was going to circumcise their sons. RIC is a hot topic on many of these maternity message boards these days.

I quote from one enlightened mother:

“While I do agree it is very personal decision. I have circumcised both my boys and I am very happy that I did for numerous reasons. But I did get a very interesting piece of information the other day. When I got my insurance benefits information from my obstetrician’s office, it said they had contacted my insurance and the following was the amounts they would cover: listed in that was circumcision.

I got very curious because it is a ‘cosmetic’ surgery and in this day it seems like you have to fight for coverage. I called my insurance company and they said they started covering circumcision last year because they were finding more people would circumcise if covered and they were having a major increase in circumcisions in older children where they then had to pay for the circumcision, general anaesthesia, and other expenses associated with surgery. They found by covering infant circumcisions it was reducing the medically needed expensive circumcisions later.” (Chelsea)

Now I’ve frequently read of US opponents of circumcision crowing about US insurance companies’ dropping of this cover and thus proving it is ‘unnecessary cosmetic surgery’. When you remember that insurance companies employ people who do nothing else but pore over figures all day, to calculate premiums and cover, so they don’t lose out, this has to be a pretty significant piece of news!

Foreskin problems are not rare at all. Most men will experience some trouble at some stage in their lives. Not all will end in circumcision, but enough obviously do to persuade this insurance company to change its rules.

I’m not sure what view the UK Health Insurers take of elective circumcision, but I know they used to cover it. We had friends who circumcised their son when

father changed jobs and acquired private health insurance as part of his package. The son didn't need circumcising but mother wanted him done to match father who was cut shortly after their wedding. From her side of the conversation it was clear she was very pro circumcision.

Last time I looked, BUPA seemed to be covering circumcision in their maternity package. Perhaps others with PHI can check on their cover and report? Considering how the cost escalates as a child grows older, and reaches £1000+ by adulthood, it seems the actuaries of the insurance companies are canny enough to appreciate what the blinkered bean counters of the NHS can't.

G.D.

Acorn Meeting

[This notice about the next *Acorn* meeting appeared in the last edition. Unfortunately, publication coincided with a time when Douglas was away from home so members may have had difficulty in contacting him. There are still places available for the November meeting.]

A meeting of the *Acorn Society* will take place on the afternoon of Saturday 13th November. We have taken an option on a number of twin bed and single bed rooms for the nights of Friday 12th and Saturday 13th November. The charges are: Shared room £47.00 per person per night, Single room £51 per night.

Further information and booking of accommodation via Douglas 07788 126706. Evenings and weekend are best times to call.

Members may be relieved, or even disappointed, to know that there will be no need to present accounts at this meeting.

Douglas

Marlon Brando RIP

Marlon Brando died on 2nd July this year. In his autobiography *Songs my mother taught me*, he recounts his interest in meditation and how he used it for pain control – even to the point of seeking to be circumcised without anaesthetic.

“The more I have meditated, the more I have been able to control not only stress in my life, but pain. If I have a headache or stub my toe, I'm often able to locate the pain in my mind and will it away. So confident am I of this ability that when I decided a few years ago to be circumcised, I asked the doctor to do it without a pain-killer. I assured him that I could eliminate the pain using mind control during the operation. He was sceptical but said it would be an interesting medical experience and he scheduled the operation. But when I arrived at the hospital, what seemed like its entire medical staff was waiting to witness the event. The prospect of seeing a movie star circumcised without anaesthesia must have been a hot topic of discussion in the doctors' lounge. I didn't welcome the presence of uninvited guests, and since I go by instinct, I went home.

“Later a different doctor agreed to do the operation without pain-killers, but he became frightened and an anaesthetist was waiting for me when I kept my appointment. He said that because of medical ethics he couldn’t circumcise me without using a pain-killer. Disappointed and angry but tired of the delays, I let the anaesthetist give me a shot in the back. To this day, I’m sure that if they hadn’t given me the shot, I would have felt no pain.”

Beckham – The Truth At Last

The *Sunday Mirror* for 10th October contains an interview with Danielle Heath, the beauty therapist who is the latest to claim a liaison with David Beckham. And this is what she has to say about his equipment:

“I played with him a bit but was surprised to find he had no hair on his balls. His willy is big though – a good eight inches. And for the record, he is not circumcised.”

So now we know ... don't we?

Muslim Circumcision

I am a very strong supporter of circumcision and always have been. However, in my opinion, circumcision should only be carried out on religious grounds. The only exception is in cases of paraphimosis where the foreskin is unable to be made loose by pulling and stretching as I described in my article *Save that foreskin* (issue 4/2004). It is a great deal easier to treat cases of phimosis where virtually almost all cases can be cured. This I know to be true after reading a book that mentioned a doctor in France who over several years worked with and treated a large number of boys who had tight foreskins and not once did he send any of the boys to get circumcised. He also encouraged all of the boys to masturbate as masturbation helps to keep the foreskin in its loose, natural state. From an Islamic point of view, masturbation is neither approved or disapproved. It is better than having sexual intercourse outside marriage but it is expected that self control will be put into practice at all times.

I am a convert to Islam but being circumcised had absolutely nothing to do with my conversion. That took place in 1965 at the age of 18 but I was circumcised when I was a year old. This was on medical grounds – I had paraphimosis which caused me a great deal of pain and discomfort especially during urination. This is what my parents told me; personally I can’t remember any of it or being circumcised.

Circumcision is part of Islam. It isn’t mentioned anywhere in the Quran but it is Sunnah (Way of the Prophet P.B.U.H.) Muslims believe that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was born circumcised and that he was the only perfect human being to have lived. After he died he left the Quran and the Sunnah as a guide to follow and also his Haddith (sayings of the Prophet P.B.U.H.), and it is compulsory for all males born in Islam to undergo circumcision. As in Judaism, the glans should be completely uncovered. Most circumcisions on Muslim boys are carried out in

hospitals with the remainder taking place in mosques and elsewhere. The age is normally under one year, but amongst the Turkish community it is older, between the ages of three and seven or eight.

With regard to male converts there are two schools of thought. One says that male converts must be circumcised, the other says that they need not be. The older and more conservative generation describe a male born as a Muslim who remains uncircumcised as being in a state of filth. This description applies only to Muslims who are uncircumcised. I wrote a letter about this to *Acorn* in 1994 or thereabouts after I read a letter about a Muslim member who like myself was a member of *Acorn*. My letter I felt was grossly misunderstood by a number of members who wrote in stating that they weren't in "a state of filth" having a foreskin. My comments weren't a personal attack on any of the uncircumcised non-Muslim members. I was merely encouraging the Muslim brother to get circumcised and also his young sons who were also uncircumcised. I hope this time that there won't be any misunderstanding.

I am part Turkish through my great grandmother who was of Scottish and Turkish descent and like me was born and bred in Scotland. One of my Turkish Muslim brothers who lives in London is a medically qualified circumciser and various Mosques and Muslim families contact him to circumcise their sons and also male converts. We are very close friends as well as being Brothers in Islam. During the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, many of the refugees came to London and some of them were placed in a Turkish Mosque. It was discovered that some of the teenage boys and young men were still uncircumcised. (The Communist regime in the former Yugoslavia tried to ban circumcision completely.) My friend was sent for by the Mosque and he circumcised all the teenage boys and most of the young men in their twenties. Whenever I go to London, I always go to that Mosque. It is in North London near the Turkish area. I was with him in the Mosque and he showed me his circumcision medical instruments and later on he went into one of the rooms to start circumcising. By that time all of the teenage boys had been circumcised thus leaving the young men. I spoke to five or six of the Kosovans and that day they weren't ready to be circumcised, but they were done at a later date again at the Mosque. When I spoke to them a few days afterwards, they were all pleased to be circumcised although a few were still in a state of being tender and a bit uncomfortable.

I very much enjoy being a member of *Acorn* and the newsletters are far better and more interesting with photos of circumcised and uncircumcised penises. I would however like to see more of our uncircumcised brothers-in-Humanity joining and becoming members of *Acorn*.

A number of times I have read letters written by fellow circumcised members describing the uncircumcised penis as boyish. I find that offensive as only a man can father children and not boys. Personally I find the foreskin on an uncircumcised man very manly and adult looking and not boyish at all. In fact, the longer the foreskin, the better it is. I would like to write to any uncircumcised member of *Acorn* who like myself is open minded. I would also like to read more letters about masturbation in future newsletters.

I.N. – Manchester

ACORN

Issue
N^o 6 2004
Editor
Ivan Acorn

Editorial

Christmastide again! There are small (or perhaps not so small) presents for you all on page 10 – but I leave it to each of you to decide how you wish to unwrap the packages!

And now to my list of exhortations:

First: enclosed with this edition is the annual renewal notice. Please make the lives of the Treasurer and myself easier by returning it *now* with your subscription, rather than waiting for a reminder.

Second: details are also enclosed of the next *Acorn* meeting in April. A plea from the organiser, Douglas, that you book by the deadline – otherwise this time he really will cancel if enough people have not registered by the due date.

Third: in that quiet period after Christmas when there is little to do but watch old films or videos, why not get out your pen and write something, however short, for the *Acorn* magazine. As I have said before, the worst an editor can suffer is silence – and there's been a fairly deathly hush from most of you of late.

We shall be back in the New Year with more tales of foreskins and (in some cases) their removal. Happy Hogmanay!

Ivan Acorn

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Letters for forwarding should be marked with the recipient's identifier in pencil. They should be stamped 1st class and enclosed in an envelope addressed as above.

E-Mail may be sent to:
editor@acornsoc.org.uk

The Solitary Vice

Masturbation. Eighty per cent of men admit to the practice. The other twenty per cent lie – or so it is said.

Masturbation had a bad press in Victorian times. Described as the solitary vice, it was seen as laying the foundations for multiple ailments including epilepsy, consumption, paralysis and heart disease. It weakened the memory, or caused a boy to be careless, negligent, listless or even to lose his mind. Victims when grown to adulthood sometimes committed suicide!

If masturbation was the problem, what was the solution? Chastity belts were certainly one possibility – covering the organs with some form of cage to prevent access from wandering hands. Infibulation was also tried – closing the foreskin opening with some form of piercing, to prevent both access and erections. But by far the most popular solution was circumcision. This had a perfect logic. Masturbation was carried out by drawing the foreskin forwards and back over the glans to provide stimulation and eventual orgasm and ejaculation. If the foreskin was removed by circumcising the boy, preferably as tightly as possible to allow no slack in the skin, the means of stimulating the glans was removed and the hateful practice thus prevented.

Dr. E. J. Spratling, who promoted this surgery in the 1890's, advised that “to obtain the best results one must cut away enough skin and mucous membrane to rather put it on the stretch when erections come later. There must be no play in the skin after the wound has thoroughly healed, but it must fit tightly over the penis, for should there be any play the patient will be found to readily resume his practice not begrudging the time and extra energy required to produce the orgasm... We may not be sure that we have done away with the possibility of masturbation, but we may feel confident that we have limited it to within the danger lines.”

There was also a secondary way in which circumcision promoted a cure. Inattention to personal hygiene in the uncircumcised could cause irritation, and the relief of the irritation by rubbing or scratching could lead on to the dreaded masturbation. Remove the prepuce, no irritation, no temptation.

In order that circumcision should be a salutary experience for the boy, it was sometimes performed without anaesthetic. In his 1877 book, *Plain facts for old and young*, Kellogg, the inventor of the cornflake and a campaigner against the evils of masturbation, wrote: “The operation should be performed by a surgeon without administering an anaesthetic, as the brief pain attending the operation will have a salutary effect upon the mind, especially if it be connected with the idea of punishment, as it may well be in some cases.”

The discomfort caused by the operation was also an advantage in Kellogg's eyes: “The soreness which continues for several weeks interrupts the practice, and if it had not previously become too firmly fixed, it may be forgotten.”

Circumcision was not just a cure for masturbation – it had a curative effect in a wide range of illnesses. For instance, to quote Kellogg again: “In another case, in which phimosis also existed, there was paralysis of a few of the muscles of the leg, which produced club-foot. Circumcision was also performed in this case, and the child returned in a few weeks completely cured, without any other application, though it had previously been treated in a great variety of ways without success, all the usual remedies for club-foot proving ineffectual.”

That circumcision was widely practised to counter masturbation can be inferred from the article in this edition: *A poetic cut*. In about 1873, A. E. Housman, the poet, was circumcised at the age of 14 together with his four younger brothers. The reason for this was a mystery to his sister who recorded the event in her diary. But the age of Housman may be a giveaway. Caught in the act of, or confessing to, masturbation brought application of the best remedy known – and at the same time preventative action was taken in respect of the younger brothers who had not yet reached puberty.

But it is a mystery why circumcision as a cure for masturbation survived more than one generation. An uncircumcised father, faced with a masturbating son, might well agree to the cure of circumcision. But when that son himself became a (circumcised) father, surely he would know that the cure had been ineffective. (Can we really believe that circumcision stopped Victorian boys masturbating?) So why did he agree to the circumcision of his sons, and they in turn to the circumcision of their sons down the generations. Perhaps shame or hypocrisy played their parts. For circumcised fathers to state that circumcision was ineffective as a cure for masturbation would be to confess that they were still self polluters. One suspects that the solitary vice in Victorian times was practised covertly and never confessed. Thus the ineffective cure of circumcision could be promoted from generation to generation, with no-one willing to bear witness to its ineffectiveness.

Adult men contemplating circumcision often worry about whether they will still be able to jack off. In fact, research shows that, if anything, circumcised men masturbate more frequently than their uncircumcised counterparts. Why this should be one can only conjecture. The permanent exposure of the glans brought about by circumcision could be one cause. Of course, immediately after circumcision, the newly exposed glans is very sensitive and contact with underclothes etc can be an exquisite form of torture. But even when the glans has settled down (which for RICs is at a few days old!), it is still far more open to stimulation from the movements of everyday life than the glans of the uncut penis, protected as it is by the foreskin. This awareness may well encourage additional stimulation on a more regular basis than where the stimulation is more muted or non existent. It would be ironic indeed if circumcision had the exact contrary effect to that desired by the Victorian moralists.

So how do cut men masturbate? In many and varied ways! The point of course is that masturbation involves stimulation of the glans. For the uncut guy, the foreskin is at hand (literally!) to perform this service. Lack of a foreskin does not prevent stimulation of the glans, it just takes a little more imagination. The mistake

that uncut guys often make in trying to masturbate a circumcised partner is to masturbate him as if he were uncut i.e. to try to stimulate the glans by drawing shaft skin up over the glans as if it were a foreskin. If the guy has a very loose cut, this may work. But where the cut is tight and there is no spare skin on the erect shaft, only soreness is likely to result! The answer of course is to use the hand as a surrogate foreskin to stimulate the glans, and many and varied are the grips employed. For a whole website dedicated to pleasuring yourself, go to www.jackinworld.com

But perhaps an exploration of masturbation techniques is a little too off-topic for the *Acorn* magazine? Why not let me know what you think – and at the same time, let me know about your favourite technique – unless you are one of the 20% who lie!

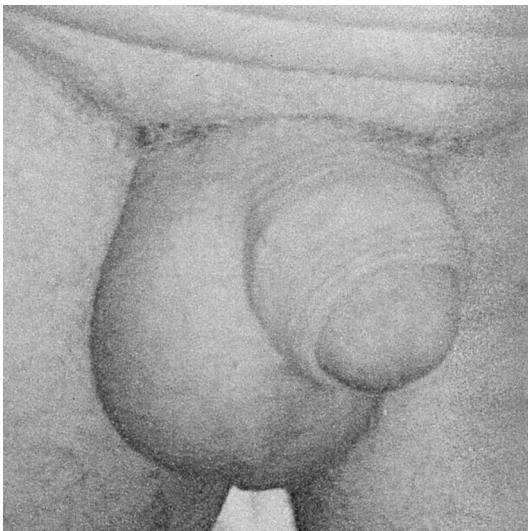
Ivan Acorn

An Irish Odyssey

I am an only son with four sisters, one of them younger than myself. As there was very little difference between our ages and as it was just after the last war, economy was the order of the day. So all five of us slept in the same room in two beds. We were young and innocent.

I first became aware of my foreskin as a five year old, and was curious about what was inside. After many painful attempts, I was able to pull it back. I was really delighted with my new discovery. I decided to show off my little red knob to my four sisters. Three of them really liked the look of the glans of my penis. The other thought my penis with the foreskin pulled back looked 'horrible'.

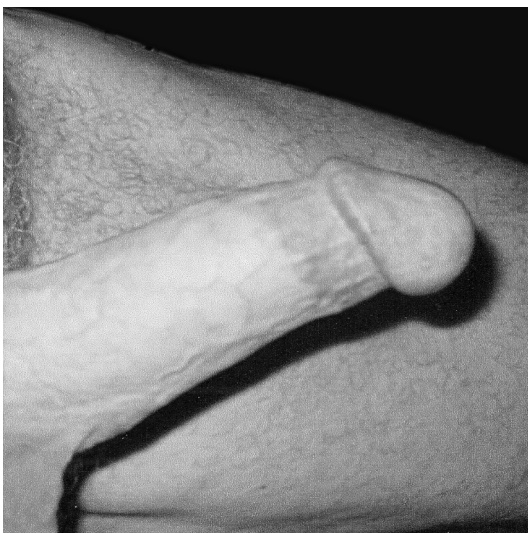
Strangely, the sisters who liked me skinned back have all had their sons circumcised, but the one who thought it looked horrible with the skin back had three sons and they were left intact. I never discussed the subject of circumcision with any of them. I got circumcised about 25 years ago – more about that later. Some years ago, we were all assembled at our parents' house. As always, doors were never locked – our house was like a naturist club! Whilst I was drying myself after a bath, one of my sisters came in and saw me naked – the first time in many years. She just passed



a comment about how much nicer I looked circumcised. She must have told the others as when I entered the room where they were, they all gave me a little smile.

I never knew anything about circumcision one way or the other until I went to London in the 60's. There used to be a Turkish baths just off the Edgware Road. Out of curiosity I ventured in and enjoyed the experience. In my innocence, I knew nothing about the gay community. They all seemed straight to me. Anyway, that is where I discovered that there was a difference between penises, and that the ones that looked different to mine were more attractive looking. I got some sex educational books and learnt about circumcision. So I set off on a mission that was to last for more than a decade, going to doctors up and down the length and breadth of England and Ireland. I tried anything and everything to keep my foreskin back – tapes, glue, super-glue – all to no avail. Finally, I developed an incurable rash on my foreskin – there was no cure!!! So I was booked into the local hospital to be circumcised. It was a very wonderful experience. My wife brought me to the hospital and whilst I was getting ready for bed, my wife and the nurse were discussing the procedure and the nurse told my wife that it was a sensible thing to do and that it would be the end of my problems.

So I got the full treatment, going to the theatre for a general anaesthetic. I was prepared the first night. The nurses wanted to bath me. When I informed them that I had had a bath before I left home, they still insisted as I had to be shaved. And the following morning before I went down, a younger nurse was sent in to prepare me again, and she was armed with a razor. Thinking back, when the senior nurses saw how embarrassed I was, they set out to embarrass both the



younger nurse and myself. As you can imagine, I ended up with a good hard-on, and that, I thought, was the last I was going to see of my foreskin. But that was where I was wrong. After a few days at home, with the swelling gone down and the dressing removed, I discovered that only half of my foreskin had been removed – only a 50% success rate.

After a couple of years, through a lady by the name of Doris Milward (she used to write for a naturist magazine) I was put in touch with a surgeon in Harley Street in London. I was in and out in less than an hour, and it cost less than £50 plus the cost of travel. There were just two injections into my groin, I lay down on his couch, he marked a line around where he was going to cut. There was no pain at all except from the two injections. He also gave me female hormone pills to stop me from getting erections so that there would be no strain on the stitches.

Finally, as I have learnt about the different styles and cuts, I don't quite know what style I have. Sometimes there is a lot of bunching of skin behind the rim and there are times when the skin covers more than half my glans. My penis is shown in the photographs. It varies in length when soft between 3 inches and 4.5 inches and goes to 6.25 inches when erect. I hope that, from the photos, someone can tell me what style of circumcision I have and advise me if I can afford to get any more skin removed to prevent the bunching and the skin covering the glans. If I can get some shaft skin removed, what would the results look like and what should I ask the doctor to do?

E.D. – Ireland

Life Living With My Aunt

My mother departed this earth when I was only 11 years old and I was brought up by my auntie Winnie. Auntie Win was always there for me and always gave me my bath from a very early age. In those days it was the old tin bath in front of the kitchen fire. She would give me my bath and then I had to stand up in the bath for her to pull my foreskin back and give my bare knob a good soaping. She would pull my foreskin right back as far as she could and while holding the skin back with one hand she would soap my knob well with the other hand. Sometimes it would sting a bit if the old Lifebuoy soap got into my pee hole. Also my bare knob was very sensitive at that time and was quite tender to touch. My willie would start to get a bit hard, which she seemed to like seeing and said that it was quite normal to get hard when a lady touched your willie.

She always wanted to make sure that my foreskin was not too tight and this happened every time I had a bath. Auntie Win was a nurse by trade so I thought she knew what she was doing and, looking back, I suppose that she did.

In the evening when it was just her and me, she did not like me wearing pants and trousers – the less clothes the better. She liked me to have a bare bum and willie and she always said that I should keep my foreskin pulled back all of the time when at home. If the skin came forward, she would either come up to me and pull it back herself or just say to me to pull your skin back.

When I asked her what being circumcised meant, she did explain to me and showed me where the skin would be cut off and why some boys had to be circumcised. She also carried on to say that I did not need circumcising because my foreskin was not too tight. But I would like to have been circumcised at an early age while I was with my aunt. She was only about 25 years old and had a very beautiful body. and she loved having me around. She too would get around the house with just a silk negligee on which was always open down the front showing all she had including a nice shaven pubes which showed her lovely crease.

This was all a matter of course – nakedness was the thing in the house and was very enjoyable. Neither of us bothered to hide anything and we had a carefree life together. I could not have wished for a better lady to look after me. This all went on for some years until I was about 15 years old. By this time when she pulled my foreskin right back I would get quite a hard on, but she said it was quite normal for me to get this way.

Later in life I did decide to be circumcised and have never regretted it. I can fully recommend it to anyone of any age – go for it, I had no pain and no problems. I just wish I could have it done all over again. The feeling was great to see that piece of skin being thrown onto the dish on the operating table.

I have had many experiences with many girls in my time and the majority of them liked the fact that I was circumcised, especially those which liked sucking my penis. Also I am fully shaven down there which saves them getting a mouthful of hair. This does make a lot of difference. This is a true record of my life as a youngster. I hope that you like it.

I would love to hear from anybody with their experiences via the *Acorn* mailbox.

C.P. – Wiltshire

Next Meeting of the Acorn Society

At the meeting of the Society in Leicester on 13th November, members proposed that the Society should meet again on **Saturday 2nd April 2005** with an option of accommodation on the night of 1st April for those that want it. Details of costs and methods of booking are on the booking form enclosed with this edition.

Four members present at the last meeting have already told me that they are not free to attend the proposed April meeting. If it is necessary I shall need to cancel the provisional booking with the hotel by 31st December.

Please let me know as soon as possible, and certainly no later than **20th December** if it is your intention to attend the meeting and you require accommodation. Call Douglas on 07788 126706, evening and weekends, send an email to treasurer@acornsoc.org.uk, or complete and return the booking slip.

Douglas

Poetic Cut

The poetry of A E (Alfred) Housman has proved a rich source of inspiration to English composers. Ralph Vaughan Williams, Arthur Somerville, George Butterworth, Ivor Gurney, John Ireland, Ernest John Moeran, all have set his verse to music, *The Shropshire Lad* particularly receiving multiple settings. Housman's poetry, written from the late 19th century onwards, reflects on the transitory nature of youth and mourns the early death of young men, particularly in war, thus pre-echoing the slaughter of the first World War.

East and west on fields forgotten
Bleach the bones of comrades slain
Lovely lads and dead and rotten;
None that go return again.

A biography of Housman records his traumatic teenage experiences with respect to sexual matters. A recently appointed governess disgusted him by her immoral behaviour, behaviour which she had managed to conceal from his father. This unpleasant episode made Arthur think of sex between men and women as something rather repulsive, an impression which was confirmed by the guidance on sexual matters which was given to him at about this time by his father, who appears to have concentrated on warning him about the dangers of giving way to sexual desires.

Not long after this, at a time when Alfred was at least fourteen, Edward (his father) took it into his head to have all the boys in the family circumcised. Alfred's sister Kate later commented:

"I do not think it was to fulfil a scriptural rite that he sought, for there was no Abrahamic tradition in our family; but on sanitary mosaic lines. I think he considered it would contribute to their physical salvation – as perhaps it did. He ought to have thought of it in their babyhood. It was severe treatment, mentally and physically, for well-grown boys, and a great mystery at the time to the younger ones who made open complaint, with a mixture of impotence and resentment, of the ill-treatment which had befallen them while my sister and I were staying in Lyme Regis."

Kate may have been mystified as to the reasons for the circumcisions, although the phrase "their physical salvation" gives a clue. Certainly it is not hard for us to conjecture the purpose. Alfred's father was concerned about him giving way to sexual desires. Such sexual desires must have included masturbation. And the recommended cure for masturbation at that time was... circumcision. And since, once the younger brothers reached puberty, they would be open to the same temptations, it must have seemed sensible to have them circumcised at the same time.

All this took place in 1873 or 1874 in Worcestershire, which shows that the popularity of circumcision had penetrated deep into the rural counties by that time.

Ivan Acorn

She Wants Me Circumcised!

[The following question and answer appeared in a *Daily Mail* advice column in December 2003.]

Question:

I have been dating an American girl for a few months. Everything is excellent apart from her constant request that I have a circumcision. The thought is not a very welcome one and I have refused. This seems to be affecting our sex life now.

Can you advise me as to how I can talk her out of her request/demand?

Response:

Circumcision is more popular in America so it is possible that she believes you need to have it done because it is more 'normal' to her. It is important to ask her why she wants you to do this. My guess is that she will say it is because it is cleaner and more satisfying for sex. Neither of these arguments is true. As long as you wash under the foreskin daily your penis will be as clean as a circumcised one. And sexual satisfaction is no different in an uncircumcised man to a circumcised one.

There are some risks to having a circumcision performed in later life (as with any operation that involves an anaesthetic). You may find the operation causes numbness and soreness for some time. In addition, some men find the whole thing so emotionally traumatising it prevents them from enjoying sex afterwards.

My suggestion is that you explain all this to her and say that if she wants you then she gets a full foreskin as part of the deal! Your relationship is still very new and there is plenty of time to make an informed decision at some point in the future if you really want to. For now, concentrate on building a relationship that is not determined by how your penis looks but by how compatible you are in other ways

A Circumcised World – Courtesy Dubya

Because President Bush and Democratic presidential candidate Senator John Kerry were deemed too divisive for the annual Alfred E. Smith political dinner, the crowd heard from former President Bush and former New York Governor Hugh Carey instead.

But without the presidential candidates, George H.W. Bush had to come up with new material. Bush saved some barbs for his son – and in particular his famed malapropisms.

Bush said, “He wrote a paper when he was in fifth grade in which he said ‘in 1519 Ferdinand Magellan circumcised the world’”.

Four Foreskins For Christmas

Just to show that there is no bias against the cavalier tendency, here are four photos of the uncut variety for your delectation. And for those of you who favour the roundhead look, you can just fantasise about exactly the style cut you would give them if they found themselves on your operating table!



My Six Circumcisions – Part 1

On the subject of circumcision, I can claim to be somewhat of an expert, because, as an experiment instituted voluntarily by myself, I have been circumcised six times, each operation being done two years after the previous one. I had myself circumcised, progressively, one inch at a time of my redundant foreskin.

Before my first circumcision I had ten inches of loose shaft skin between the base of my penis and the rim of my penis head, a distance of four inches, leaving six full inches of redundant skin in a double layer, folded over the glans of my penis. Now I have just four inches of smooth, taut skin covering the same distance of my flaccid penis.

From a very young age, after noticing the very attractive penises of many of my circumcised little friends, I had longed to be circumcised and always felt neglected by my parents in my having to endure a foreskin. I tried my best to train my foreskin to stay retracted, with no luck. The best I could do was to wrap a piece of rubber tube around the shaft, just behind the rim of the glans, so the foreskin had to fold over it, and I would appear at least partly circumcised in group showers and changing rooms.

Before my first circumcision, I masturbated almost every day from the age of thirteen, and I nearly always drew the foreskin fully over my glans with each back and forth slide of it, with my hand. So highly sensitive was my glans that orgasm would occur after only a few seconds of this method. I tried masturbating by sliding the loose foreskin back and forth only over the shaft and not over the glans. Doing this latter method it did take a much longer time to reach orgasm but I always felt I was missing half of the sensations of both the sliding of the foreskin and the eventual orgasm. By this experience I learned that, if I were to go ahead with my long time deep desire and have myself circumcised, there would be some sacrifice of sensation in exchange for a much longer overall experience of great pleasure during sex.

I decided to get circumcised the moment I reached the age of eighteen and I had a consultation with my college doctor, told him that my orgasms came too quickly and that I couldn't bear the thought of going through life with a foreskin. He said he fully understood and agreed to circumcise me the next week at the college infirmary. I was thrilled as never before or since, and was in a state of constant excitement and anticipation for that entire long week. The evening before I was to undergo my first circumcision, I decided to masturbate one last time by sliding the full extra redundant six inches of intact foreskin, back and forth over the whole erect shaft and head of my penis, slowly and purposefully until reaching orgasm. Using one hand to slide the foreskin back and forth, and with a pen in the other hand, I wrote as best I could in the circumstances: "As the skin slides back and forth over my glans, tremendous tickling sensations are overcoming me - I'm coming - ohhh!"

This, my first circumcision, was a very exciting experience, but somewhat disappointing to me when I soon found that the doctor had removed only a one inch wide band of the foreskin around the tip of my penis, leaving just the very end of my pink and tender glans exposed; the rest was still covered by foreskin. No change of a sexual nature occurred at all. Greater cleanliness was partly achieved in that urine could no longer catch under the foreskin, but smegma still formed under the rim of the glans and on the area still covered by the foreskin. The remaining foreskin developed a habit of sliding back by itself quite often and catching pubic hairs under it as it rolled forward again, pulling them painfully. The mobility of the skin became greater and led me to masturbate more often, and I still reached orgasm too quickly. I soon concluded that circumcision which exposes only the tip of the glans is very unsatisfactory for anyone.

By this time I realised that I would never be happy nor satisfied until I had been circumcised so totally that there wouldn't be the slightest bit of loose skin on the shaft of my penis, whatever the permanent outcome. It was then that I thought of the long range experiment of having five more spaced-out circumcisions, each removing another inch wide band of foreskin until I was rid of the entire six inches of hated redundant foreskin. I would record my reactions and would be able to share this knowledge as now I am.

I knew this was possible as the scar of my first operation was an inch and a half behind the rim of the glans, and thus each successive circumcision would leap over the previous, up to the corona. Therefore I was very happy when, two years later, I had my second circumcision, removing another one inch band of the loose fold of the foreskin, which still covered half of my glans. This now meant that a total of two inches of redundant foreskin had been removed from my penis, leaving four inches of the extra, loose, wrinkled skin, folded just over the rim of my glans, leaving the rest of the head permanently exposed. The surface of the glans soon lost much of its sensitivity, as had the tip after its exposure after my first circumcision.

However, the rim of the glans and the depression just behind it, still covered by a fold of skin, kept their extreme sensitivity, all feeling now being concentrated in those areas and in the nerves of the frenum beneath the tip of the glans.

After this second circumcision, I was continually stretching the remaining fold of my foreskin forward over the corona rim as far as possible during masturbation, by rolling it forward beneath a tight grip of my hand, and then loosening my grip and sliding the foreskin back over the corona until it pulled taut away from the rim, towards my body at the base of the penis. These were fast, short, strokes, producing intense feeling in a band right behind the corona's rim, and masturbation was irresistible because of the great ease of it, and the pleasant sensations produced were much longer lasting before reaching orgasm. Probably now, after two circumcisions, almost fully exposing the glans, there was actually less overall feeling than that which was produced by my long, slow strokes, sliding my full foreskin, or when only the tip of the foreskin had been removed, giving only the slightly shortened motion, and the slightly lessened sensitivity.

Anyway, the drive to play with my penis, to pluck at the remaining bit of glans-covering foreskin, and to come to orgasm became much greater than ever before. This was probably because this shorter amount of foreskin was now so mobile that it would move back and forth over the rim of the glans with the ordinary movements of my body, within clothing or against bedding, and set off my desires again and again. For this reason, I had an orgasm in bed every time I chanced or chose to roll onto my penis and set this still four inches of redundant skin into motion. One shouldn't complain of this situation.

But this excessive amount of masturbation, plus nocturnal emissions every night, was a bit wearing and convinced me that this manner of circumcision, which leaves enough foreskin to loosely cover the rim of the glans, is not a complete enough circumcision. And the deciding factor against leaving this much foreskin is one of personal hygiene. Smegma could still collect quickly behind the rim of my glans beneath the end folds of the remaining loose foreskin as if I had never been circumcised at all.

And so, after two years in this state of partial circumcision, I requested my third circumcision.

D.L. - USA

[Part 2 of DL's story will appear in the next edition.]

Death

It is with regret that I have to report the death of I.D.K. of Southampton. Ian was a regular correspondent and contributor to the magazine. His last input was to the Editor's interview in issue 5/2004 where I explored with him his experiences of circumcision in the military. He will be missed.

Ivan Acorn

The Purpose of the Glans

The November 2003 issue of *Unzipped* magazine had an interesting article on just why penises have a glans penis. Seemingly, the larger and more flared the head of the penis, the more effective it is in 'scooping out' rival males' semen from the vagina; all done on the back-stroke. Apparently, flared heads win out on the pointier parts as they remove 90% of other men's ejaculate! An interesting evolutionary fact... Effectively, the longer the penis and the bigger the helmet, the better for the job.

K.G. - London

Suffering In Silence

My mother-in-law has always been a keen advocate of circumcision and just around the time we were married, discreetly enquired of her daughter as to my status. Quite what she proposed to do about it if I hadn't been remains an interesting question! :-)

When our boys were born, she put strong pressure on my wife to have them circumcised – not that we needed any – she should have reserved her energy for haranguing our doctors, who were adamantly against it. In passing, she mentioned that she knew 'someone else' who needed circumcising. I didn't enquire further but assumed she was alluding to father-in-law.

Now father-in-law was an extremely old-fashioned, shy man, who was very reticent about discussing any problem in the underpants department. He was the sort of guy who didn't like going to the lavatory if there was anyone else around. Fortunately he never ailed anything to cause his admission to hospital until a stroke ended his long life. Then we learned that the nurse had to catheterise him when he was in a coma. It is perhaps a blessing he never recovered to find that a mere female had placed that pipe in his plumbing or he would have died of shock! I shouldn't joke like this, but he had a pretty good, happy, life – except for one detail which he disclosed shortly before he passed away.

We often went out for a beer and a chat and one time we were talking about the local hospital and how it had changed from a charitable Victorian institution to a state of the art facility today packed with hi-tec kit. Although pretty fit, I went on to count the times I'd been to hospital. My score was a spell in childhood with scarlet fever (isolation ward then) and pneumonia, plus circumcision at eight and one or two visits to A&E to stitch wounds; from falling off my bike as a boy, to dog bites and a small DIY mishap as an adult.

Father-in-law by contrast had come through life ahead of me, quite unscathed, having never even been a day patient! But, when I mentioned my circumcision, he made a sad disclosure.

It must have been the beer that freed his inhibition, because normally the topic would have been unmentionable. Lowering his voice, loaded with embarrassment, he confessed that he had long ago needed a circumcision because his foreskin was far too tight to retract properly. Although he had fathered four children, sex had been very infrequent and always painful. This problem had not been picked up earlier by his parents who were equally uncommunicative about anything to do with sex organs. As an adult he told me he had never been able to overcome his embarrassment at the prospect of an intimate examination, so never consulted a doctor about his difficulty. He just soldiered on through life – sex being an occasional 'duty of marriage' – much to the frustration of my mother-in-law, it seems.

It was sad to realise he had waited all his life to confide this to someone, and I take it as a compliment that I was the one in the confessional. Even sadder is the fact that he had missed out so much on the free pleasure that life might have

offered. If he had simply been routinely circumcised as a baby, like many in his generation were, then everything would have been fine.

We all know one or two people who have had to undergo circumcision later in life – as a child or an adult. It has often to be done for different reasons, at different ages, right through to the twilight of life. These are the ones who fortunately do receive the fix they need, albeit later when it is more painful and they have inevitably missed out and suffered first.

I venture that those of whom we hear must only be representative of a larger minority who, like father-in-law, suffer in silence. Routine infant circumcision, properly and expertly done, eliminates this actual and potential misfortune. It saves medical resources and money and ensures trouble-free penises for all concerned.

G.D.

The History Boys

[*The History Boys*, a play by Alan Bennett, is currently in repertory at the National Theatre in London. The following is an exchange during a General Studies lesson. Irwin is the teacher; the others are sixth formers.]

Irwin At the time of the Reformation there were fourteen foreskins of Christ preserved, but it was thought that the church of St John Lateran in Rome had the authentic prepuce.

Dakin Don't think that we're shocked by your mention of the word 'foreskin', sir.

Crowther No, sir. Some of us even have them.

Lockwood Not Posner, though, sir. Posner's like, you know, Jewish, sir.

It's one of several things Posner doesn't have.

Posner mouths "Fuck off".

Lockwood That's not racist, though, sir.

Crowther Isn't it?

Lockwood It's race-related but not racist.

Akthar Actually I've not got one either. Muslims don't.

Another pause whilst Irwin regards the class.

Irwin Has anyone been to Rome?

No? Well, you will be competing against boys and girls who have. And they will have been to Rome and Venice, Florence and Perugia, and they will have doubtless done courses on what they have seen there. So they will know that

when they come to do an essay like this on the Church on the eve of the Reformation that some silly nonsense on the foreskins of Christ will come in handy so that their essays, unlike yours, will not be dull.

Think bored examiners.

Think sixty, think a hundred and sixty papers even more competent than the last so that the fourteen foreskins of Christ will come as a real ray of sunshine.

Come the fourteen foreskins of Christ and they'll think they've won the pools.

Analgesia Underused for Management of Circumcision Pain

Results of a retrospective study of neonatal circumcisions performed at a large academic medical centre suggest that most procedures are performed without periprocedural or postprocedural analgesia, according to Praveen Kumar, MD, an associate professor of paediatrics at North Western University Memorial Hospital and Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, Illinois.

Dr. Kumar reported his findings at the American Academy of Paediatrics 2004 National Conference & Exhibition. Dr. Kumar had reviewed medical charts together with pharmacy and nursing records for 191 male infants. Of these 107 (56%) had undergone circumcision and in only about a third of the cases had analgesia been used. This is contrary to the Academy's recommendation that adequate analgesia should be provided if neonatal circumcision is performed.

All circumcisions had been performed by obstetricians and there was no indication that circumcision pain management had been discussed with parents. Dr. Kumar commented that this was an issue of culture and tradition so the results from a single institution were limited. However, his centre was a large tertiary medical centre in a large urban area, which gave some weight to the findings.

To counteract this point, Myles B. Abbott, chair of the AAP scientific program committee and in practice in Berkeley, California, stated that at his hospital they had about 7,500 deliveries a year and he thought that analgesia was used in almost all male infant circumcisions.

Dr. Kumar himself believes that all circumcisions should be done with analgesia and he suggested that both the AAP and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists should issue forceful guidelines. The AAP's position on circumcision itself is equivocal – the AAP's 1999 statement concludes that 'existing scientific evidence demonstrates potential medical benefits of newborn male circumcision; however, these data are not sufficient to recommend routine neonatal circumcision.'

Ivan Acorn