

'Ill Fares the Land'
Comic Mystery
77,000 words
by Ian Watson.

Set in the Marazion Lakes, Lostwithiel is the Capital of Runcible County. This is a depressed area, once thriving with a resource-based economy, but now a haven for characters living by their wits and dependent on government social programs.

Two men decide that it is time to revitalise the economy and their plans coincide with sightings of unusual phenomena in the swamps and peat bogs. News of the sightings reaches national and international wire services. The press visits accompanied by two palaeontologists, who suggest the sort of Jurassic phenomena most likely to exist in the local environment.

The stage is set for a legend in tourism similar to Loch Ness or the Drumheller Badlands. This stimulus creates jobs and investment, which lead to serious resource exploration.

At the same time, the two local men working to revitalise the economy conspire with a pair of old draft dodgers living in the swamps since 1942, to provide further 'evidence' for the press and palaeontologists. Several perfectly preserved corpses, ancient and modern, emerge from the peat bogs and are taken by the medical examiner for post mortem reports.

The Town police sergeant, soon to be retired, vows to stop the local drug traffickers - local crooks with their fingers in many pies. He uses the corpses and other forensic evidence kept in his 'pending file' to 'fit-up' the drug dealers and jail them with long sentences, 'well into the century.'

The story closes with the legend being explained. The Euphues Lakes and Runcible County become a tourist destination and the disused peat bogs supply the feedstock for a new chemical industry. We are left with a brief opening to the sequel 'The People of the Loon.'