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Media blues over house prices

Cumbrian media and PR adviser **Alan Air** takes a quizzical look at what the papers have to say in his new column for Business Gazette



If you only ever read the *Daily Mail* – and I understand there are millions of people who do just that – then you probably feel like *Dad's Army's* Private Fraser always felt: "Doomed, all doomed!"

Yes, the great house price collapse of the noughties is our apocalypse now, eclipsing the traditional horsemen riding war, famine, pestilence and death in this end of days.

But hang on. Rewind a year or so and this highly influential organ of middle England was highlighting the plight of silver-haired parents, forced to dig into hard-earned life savings to help their own children clamber breathlessly onto the escalating property ladder.

Indisputable proof that it is possible to hold two conflicting thoughts in one's head at the same time without going crazy. In this case, orgiastic joy at the spiralling values of bricks and mortar whilst simultaneously spitting rage at outrageously high mortgage repayments for overpriced houses forced on young people already saddled with university debt. So much for cognitive dissonance. Bloody

Gordon Brown! Bloody New Labour!

The *Daily Mail* reminds me of the irresistible snake Kaa from *The Jungle Book*. Able to hypnotise large sections of the population at will, this brilliantly-constructed newspaper is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand why so many people hold the opinions that they do.

Even though it slavishly adheres to the absolutism of market forces it splutters and coughs when they put the boot into vested editorial interests. What the banks, building societies and government have refused to do over the last decade – temper the ridiculous house price inflation in the UK – market forces are now doing the job with a vengeance, much to the disgust of the newspaper.

However, I look forward to yet another blatant editorial U-turn when the *Mail* celebrates the day (probably in David Cameron's honeymoon period as PM) when nurses, fireman, police officers, teachers and paramedics can once again afford to buy a grim bedsit in Greater London in the wake of the first

great house price crash of the 21st century.

MATERIAL GIRL

Still on the *Mail*, its hate campaign against pop superstar Madonna – one of the shrewdest business-woman around – is one of the longest-running and funniest sagas in British journalism.

Ever since she jogged through a London Park in the 1980s, effing and jeffing at reporters, the material girl has got on the newspaper's nerves.

Outraged by her *Sex* book, shocked by her stage shows and more recently perturbed by her 49-year-old, sinewy gym-distorted arms, the newspaper's mid-1990s prophecy that Madonna would soon be a 'goner' surely ranks as one of the worst predictions of all time, alongside the celebrated non-predictions by British newspaper astrologers of the death of Diana.

IN GOD'S NAME

If the University of Cumbria thought it was in for a quiet life by appointing the Archbishop of York, the Most Rev John Senta-

mu as chancellor, it must be rueing the day.

His latest PR stunt – skydiving to raise money and awareness for soldiers and their families wounded or killed whilst serving in Afghanistan – had the press crawling all over him.

Last year, his disgust at Robert Mugabe prompted him to rip off his clerical collar and cut it up during a live BBC TV broadcast with Andrew Marr.

When it comes to manipulating the news agenda, this passionate, articulate man of the cloth makes Iago look like Kiki the frog.

MIRROR, MIRROR...

Claims that a computer worker accused of killing his wife and baby daughter intended to sell his story to the highest bidder in the British media, clearly shocked *The Independent* who made it their front page story.

Who in their right mind would think of such a wheeze? As if any newspaper would write a cheque for the exclusive rights to such a horrible tale of human depravity.

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EDITOR: Tim Fetherstonhaugh

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Published by Cumbrian Newspapers Ltd, Newspaper House, Dalston Road, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 5UA

Tel: 01228 612600 Fax: 01228 612601



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