



Although every TV news report in May seemed to focus on who has been kicked out of Tony's cabinet, of more importance to us out here in the field is Margaret Beckett's appointment.

Previously Secretary of State at Defra, she has become the first woman Foreign Secretary to represent Britain.

At Defra she had overall responsibility for all Departmental issues on the environment, food (including agriculture, horticulture and fisheries) and rural affairs.

Before entering Parliament, Mrs Beckett completed an engineering apprenticeship, specialising in metallurgy, at AEI Manchester. She went on to work as a Metallurgist at Manchester University. She also worked as a researcher for Granada TV for a time.

She's a lady who has been 'around for a while' and who was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science 20 years ago.



More recently, she was appointed President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Labour Party was elected in 1997. In July 1998 she was appointed President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons.

In the less serious coverage we're treated to the news of the new UK Lottery, find out more at www.playmonday.com. They claim that you have 27 times more chances to win with them than with the Lotto. There's not a lot of publicity though about the fact that the top prize is capped at only £200,000.

Also in the news are the reviews of the new Ant and Dec film Alien Autopsy, which was released in the UK on 7 April and re-ignited the debate over one of the most iconic pieces of film footage of the modern era. Some people claimed the so-called alien autopsy film was proof that an alien spacecraft really had crashed near Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947, while others said the whole thing was a sophisticated hoax.

The original film footage was first shown in public in 1995.

Much more interesting are the photographs of the glamorous Ms. Elizabeth Hurley who has just won another years contract with cosmetic giant Estee Lauder, which means this is a 12th year alliance with the popular model.

Said Liz, "Estee Lauder is part of my life". Any volunteers like to be part of hers? Sadly, local restrictions prevent me from printing the entire photo!



And before you girls accuse me of being a male chauvinist voyeur, Robbie Williams is also in the news; this time because he's apparently backed out of an appearance with Take That in order to perform with the Pet Shop Boys.

The 36-year-old star has reportedly been spending time recording a dance album with the Pet Shop Boys - and is said to be planning to join the chart veterans for a secret concert in London.



Robbie was also reported to be recording a "Kylie style" dance album to please his gay fans.

Meanwhile Take That, who topped the charts throughout the 90s with a string of hits, including 'Pray' and 'Back For Good' - have signed a new £3m recording deal with Polydor.

The other "rock-star" in the news is of course Keith Richards. Richards, 62, has reportedly had emergency surgery this week to drain a blood clot from his brain after falling from a tree two weeks ago. His injury has forced the Stones to cancel their European Tour, which was due to start in May. The accident happened apparently as Keith and his band mate Ronnie Wood were climbing Palm trees to collect coconuts while visiting Fiji.

The Palm Beach Post reports that David Blaine, the magician and two female assistants were robbed at gunpoint in April after a performance in West Palm Beach. The ladies gave the robbers a purse containing 200 euros, \$100, a passport, plane tickets and a cell phone, plus \$400 in pocket money, according to a police report. But Copperfield, his statement says, turned his pockets inside out to show that they were empty - a sleight of hand by the master illusionist, who later showed police that his pockets were filled with cell phones, a wallet and a passport.

In May the magician had another close encounter when he failed to break the world record attempt to hold his breath. According to Fox News, Blaine had been submerged in an 8ft diameter fish bowl for a week before attempting to break the 8 min 58 second record. He managed to go without air for 7mins and 8 seconds before being hauled out by rescuers.

