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INVESTIGATORS' BULLETIN

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Hello everyone!

I am Cherill Penton and I am your new Deputy National Investigations Co-ordinator (at least until November!). Dylan has had to step down from this post due to an extremely heavy workload.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at any time. Bill and I will always try to help and assist you in any way we can.

Dylan made this role his own and he also compiled and produced these bulletins which now falls on my shoulders. Therefore, I would be more than happy to include any articles you may like to write for the benefit of all A.I.s. This is your bulletin so please feel free to contribute.

HINTS AND TIPS

Here is a new feature where you, the AIs can send in your hints and tips for the benefit of other AIs.

Camcorder usage.

When holding a night-time investigation in low light or dark conditions consider keeping the LCD window of your camcorder closed. If you have it open you are creating light pollution for yourself and those who are with you, not to mention the weird and wonderful shadows you cast of yourself upon the walls or surfaces behind you.

You and the people you are with may realise that those shadows are from you but someone else who may be looking through a doorway or window, for example, may interpret your shadow as something far more interesting!

Besides which, you will have more fun reviewing your footage at home if you do not see everything you have caught on camera as you capture it. You never know - you may be pleasantly surprised!

ASK ANOTHER AI

This is another new feature column where any AI can ask any other AI for help, information or advice on any topic relating to research, investigations, locations or whatever!

The idea is for you to submit your query to me to include it in the next bulletin. AI's will then (hopefully) send their replies to me and I will forward them onto you immediately. Alternatively, you can request your own contact e-mail address or phone number be added for direct contact. Simple!

To start us off, I have an inquiry about S.L.I. (Street Light Interference): -

Has anyone ever had a case concerning SLI or has anyone done any previous research on the subject? If you have and you may be able to help me with some research into this subject, please contact me on deputy.nic@assap.org

Caroline Pick, our Member Events Officer would like to know if any AI's have any suggestions for future ASSAP events. Please contact her on events@assap.org

Working with Psychics

Some thoughts from Michael Lewis

Often in the past opportunities to work with psychics on investigations have been rare, and given that it is impossible to verify what they say, there seemed little to be gained. However, the past year has seen an influx of what are termed "natural psychics" into the ranks of accredited investigators. In the main these are persons outside of the world of professional psychics and Spiritualists, who want to understand and harness their natural abilities. They have joined ASSAP because they are in sympathy with our approach of scientific discipline and methodology. This presents us with a golden opportunity to work with our own psychics who understand our methodology and are not lacking in critical faculties. Of course there will be those who insist that psychics are by definition unscientific, but I have always been of the opinion that if something can be studied and verified, then equally, by definition, it must come within the realms of science in its purest form. The real problem here lies more with the scientists, who have tried to impose their own strict parameters which restrict what it is permissible to study in the name of science.

Recent vigils with a regional group, conducted in accordance with ASSAP's protocols, have revealed fascinating correlations between the impressions of different psychics, who often only disagree over the exact name of the entity. Names, it seems, are the most difficult to transmit, apart from rare occasions when they are shouted into the investigator's ear. One major benefit of all this is that it is usually fairly obvious at an early stage in an investigation which areas are most active, and resources can be concentrated where they are most likely to produce results. Another benefit is that natural explanations are more readily identifiable, since no true psychic is going to get an impression from a bricked up water cistern! Only at the 'debrief' does the picture become clear, and plans can then be made for a more targeted investigation.

Overall the investigator begins to see a much wider picture of what lies beyond the phenomenon witnessed, for example, some spirits appear to remain earthbound because they fear Hell and punishment with which they were inculcated by the Roman Catholic Church. I suspect that some investigators will shy away from this kind of revelation because it makes them uncomfortable, but we should all remember that our subject comes with a serious health warning, of which the Church constantly reminds us.

I must say that I am astonished at the quality of the psychics within our ranks, and their numbers are growing. As an old hand who has become inured to the ramblings of psychics in the past, I feel that the present generation of psychics represents a significant advance. I believe that we should make full use of this new talent without abandoning our protocols. Investigators of long standing will, I am sure, agree that this represents real progress from the days when it was commonplace for investigations to end fruitlessly!

Following on from Dylan's excellent drug article in the last bulletin Terri Settingington AI has kindly produced the following information about Sleeping Tablets. Knowing and understanding about the most common drugs in use may help us make a better, informed opinion! Roll Terri.....

COMMON SLEEPING TABLETS - by TERRI SETTINGINGTON 2006

Commonly used sleeping preparations belong to one of two groups; Benzodiazepine Anxiolytics and Benzodiazepine Hypnotics. Most benzodiazepine anxiolytics (sedatives) will induce sleep when given as a one off dose at night in much the same way as the more commonly used hypnotics. Prescribing of these drug groups is widespread and unless extreme care is taken it is common for dependence and tolerance to develop. When interviewing witnesses it is pertinent to consider any use of night sedation, as the side effects of these preparations could influence an individual's mental reasoning and perception.

General overview - The main problem with benzodiazepines (anxiolytics or hypnotics) is that a course taken for more than a few weeks can cause physical and psychological dependence. This means that you may need to take more of the drug for it to have the same effect (known as tolerance) and also that you may find it difficult to stop taking the drug (become addicted). This is known as the 'benzodiazepine withdrawal syndrome'. Symptoms of this syndrome can occur in people who stop taking the drug after a period of as little as 2-4 weeks. They include confusion, insomnia, anxiety, loss of appetite and so weight, shaking, sweating, and ringing in the ears. Because of this, the Government's advisory group (the Committee on Safety of Medicines) advises doctors that benzodiazepines should not be routinely taken for more than 2-4 weeks for anxiety, and even then should only be used to treat severe, distressing and disabling anxiety or insomnia.

In the past, before the disadvantages were known, doctors prescribed benzodiazepines more widely - to treat, for example, relatively mild forms of anxiety or to help people after bereavement.

Benzodiazepines can also cause a range of side effects, the most common being confusion, stumbling, memory loss, drowsiness, light-headedness, a hangover effect (feeling the effects of the drug the next day), and an increase in aggression. Because of the side effects benzodiazepines can cause, they can impair your ability to drive or operate machinery, even the day after the last dose taken. They can also enhance the effects of alcohol.

Some benzodiazepines used to help with sleep are 'short acting' (e.g. temazepam) and when used to treat insomnia are less likely to cause a hangover effect the next day than the long-acting ones (e.g. nitrazepam). However, the short-acting benzodiazepines are more likely to lead to dependence and withdrawal syndrome. The long-acting anxiolytics, such as diazepam, can be given at night to treat insomnia and anxiety in someone with both, because their effects last into the next day.

BENZODIAZEPINE

ANXIOLYTICS



Individual preparations

Diazepam (Valium) - Used as a short term treatment for insomnia. People receiving this drug are asked to avoid alcohol as Diazepam will enhance its effects. Side effects likely to influence cognitive ability are; drowsiness and light-headedness the following day, forgetfulness, confusion, amnesia, and visual disturbance. Also used as a mild muscle relaxant to help people with chronic musculoskeletal pain to get some sleep, therefore should be considered as a possible cause when investigating reports of phenomena such as sleep paralysis (old hag syndrome).

Lorazepam - Used as a short term treatment for insomnia. Side effects are the same as for Diazepam.



BENZODIAZEPINE

HYPNOTICS



Individual preparations

Nitrazepam - Used for insomnia. Possibility of hangover effects such as drowsiness and dizziness the following day, confusion (especially in the older person) and amnesia. It is worth remembering that the effects of alcohol are also enhanced with this drug.

Flurazepam (Dalmane) - Used for the short term treatment of insomnia. Have much of the same side effects as Nitrazepam such as drowsiness, dizziness, confusion and amnesia. The effects of alcohol are also enhanced by this drug.

Loprazolam - As with Nitrazepam.

Lormetazepam - As with Nitrazepam.

Temazepam - As with Nitrazepam, but the effects are not as long acting.

NON- BENZODIAZEPINE

HYPNOTICS



General overview

In recent years, a newer class of medications has been developed often termed the "non-benzodiazepine, benzodiazepine receptor agonists". These newer medications appear to have better safety profiles and are associated with a lower risk of abuse and dependence than the benzodiazepines.

These medications are known to reduce the time it takes to fall asleep and, thus, their effects are quite similar to those in the benzodiazepine class. These medicines appear to have different characteristics and may be used in different ways. Again, although these medications are safer than the benzodiazepines, it is not recommended that they be used on a long term basis.

Individual preparations

Zaleplon (Sonata) - For the short term treatment of insomnia. (Only usually administered over a two week period) This preparation can cause

disorientation and confusion. It may affect an individual's ability to coordinate and impairs concentration. This drug is often reported to cause hallucinations and more worryingly it can disturb hearing, smell, speech and vision.

Zolpidem Tartrate (Stilnoct) - Used in the treatment of insomnia for a period of up to four weeks. Should not be given to anyone with a history of depression due to its paradoxical effects. Side effects include dizziness, drowsiness, amnesia and memory disturbances. It has been directly linked to sleep disturbance as it can cause nightmares. This preparation has also been reported to produce perceptual disturbances.

Zopiclone (Zimovane) - Used for insomnia but capable of causing depression, aggression, irritability, confusion, dizziness, drowsiness, amnesia, nightmares and hallucinations.

Chloral Hydrate (Somwell; Welldorm) - Commonly used sleeping preparation in elderly care, but its side effects can include, dizziness,

delirium, nightmares and vertigo.



OVER THE COUNTER SLEEPING TABLETS



General overview

A number of medicines and herbal remedies for sleeping problems can be bought without a prescription.

But over-the-counter medicines to aid sleep (for example, Nytol and other antihistamines) can cause similar problems as prescribed sleeping tablets and are not recommended. For example, they often cause drowsiness the next day. Also, insomnia can become worse when these medicines are taken for a while and then stopped.

Individual Preparations (Common Brands)

Nytol - Common side effects include dizziness, drowsiness, grogginess, nervousness, nausea or a dry mouth and the effects of alcohol are enhanced.

Valerian - Generally, valerian causes no side effects when taken at recommended doses. Some people do experience drowsiness or a certain lack of alertness if they take the herb during the day, however. Extremely large doses may cause dizziness, restlessness, blurry vision, nausea, excitability, and/or grogginess upon awakening.

Kalms - Despite the packaging saying 'side effects are very rare' it is not uncommon to hear reports which include muscle tension, headache, dry mouth, sweating, dizziness, insomnia, rapid and irregular heartbeat, an increased need to urinate, diarrhoea, irritability, sexual problems, lack of concentration and difficulty in swallowing, among others.



Current Cases

- Susan Vousden has been looking into anomalous photographs and film accompanied by haunting activity at a house in Essex, with a vigil being held there, and, as part of her probe into the well-known case of the Bluebell Hill haunting in Kent, has spoken to a relative of the deceased bride thought to be the apparition that appears.
- Terri Settington has taken over from Caroline Pick the case of the young boy allegedly having OOBES. In the case of any older person reporting the spontaneous occurrence of this type of phenomenon, an obvious line of enquiry is to ascertain whether the subject has been taking an hallucinogenic drug. Clearly this would not be taken by a young child but the effect on such a child of secondary inhalation of such a substance if used by someone else in the household will need to be taken into account.
- Stefan Lobuczek will be organising a further vigil at the Castle Ring ancient monument in Staffordshire in July.
- The householder involved in Terry Hewitt's Norfolk case has become increasingly worried about alleged paranormal activity, despite the negative results of a vigil, and pushed for the involvement of a medium and dowser. A dowser was brought in by the householder himself and (try and keep a straight face) picked up 70 spirits! This is what can happen when diverting from a scientific approach. However, there may be scope in certain cases, after exhausting the more obvious scientific lines of enquiry, to involve a medium, providing any information forthcoming is not given scientific value without corroborative evidence, and so Terry is about to take a (reliable) medium round there. (See separate article in this Bulletin for further thoughts on this subject).
- Simon Royce-Dexter and his brother Philip have completed their reports on their respective domestic cases in Derbyshire (as described in issue 3).
- Hugh Pincott has visited a couple in Devon who reported a domestic haunting and submitted a report on the case.
- Dylan Jones has offered to look into some curious happenings on the PC of ASSAP's President, Lionel Fanthorpe, as described in issue 107 of 'ASSAP News'.
- A lady living in a flat above some shops in Derbyshire has informed us of phenomena that occur when a particular picture in the attic is moved and so Bill and Kevin Parkin are awaiting a date from the lady when she can see them.
- A case has just been assigned to Rob Brooksbank concerning a man in Lincolnshire who is trying to puzzle out why water appears on his chest when he's in bed.
- Caroline Pick has been investigating hauntings at a care home in Nottinghamshire, at a large house in Leicestershire and at a large house in Nottinghamshire, with vigils being held as appropriate. In addition, Caroline has investigated goings-on at the Talbot Inn in Leicestershire and, as announced in 'ASSAP News', will be running further vigils there from June onwards.
- Kevin Griffiths-Boden was recently asked to investigate a private residence on the Wirral. The owners of the property claimed to have seen figures, heard footsteps and witnessed poltergeist-type activity. Although Kevin and colleagues in his organisation 'Ghanon' haven't found anything significant so far, the case continues.
- Our attention has been drawn to activity in shops in a town centre in Worcestershire and so Russell Beard is carrying out some preliminary research.
- The investigation into a haunted hotel in Shropshire reported in previous issues is continuing, with Cherill Penton, in association with Paranormal Awakenings, holding a further vigil there at the end of April.
- In Staffordshire, Cherill has conducted a further vigil at a nightclub, will be holding a vigil at the Stone Steps on Cannock Chase in July, has examined a couple of houses next door to each other whose householders both reported phenomena, is about to interview a shopkeeper about a haunting and will be arranging for Paranormal Awakenings to carry out a hunt for the mysterious 'Owlman' in July.
- Still in Staffordshire, Featherstone seems to be featuring highly in respect of strange phenomena at the moment, giving Cherill the opportunity to continue to delve into goings-on at the Windmill monument, to carry out an investigation at the air raid shelters in May and to organise a vigil at the Devil's Elbow in June.
- Cherill has also completed reports relating to investigations into two haunted pubs in the West Midlands.

Don't forget – if you have any cases to investigate, let Bill know, so that your fellow investigators can find out in this column what you're up to!

Paranormal in the Media: Cliché and Frivolity

By Dave Wood, ASSAP Deputy Media Officer

This is the first in a series of articles to be published to ASSAP AIs on the subject of dealing with the media, to be complemented by a booklet on the subject and training at the Advanced Training Day.

Different paranormalists view the media in different ways. Some shun the media as inappropriate for our field, others enjoy the limelight and a few take the middle route of controlled usage where it is needed. Wherever you lie the watchwords for all of us should be 'positive', 'rational' and 'constructive'.

You will be lucky to find a media outlet not comprised of over-worked, inexperienced journalists who will not resort to cliché and frivolity when dealing with the subject. The paranormal goes down well in all media, but the natural instinct of the journalist is not to take the subject seriously.

So whilst your local paper is painting pictures of 'ghostbusters staking out a local pub looking for spirits of a different kind!' you are trying to do some serious work. It can be to the benefit of individual investigators and the field to work against these trends.

We all learn from our media experiences, and I've learnt to follow a few golden rules:

Ask journalists to avoid cliched terms such as 'ghostbusters', avoid 'punning' and avoid images such as the 'Stay Puft Marshmallow Man'!

If you are giving a verbal piece, prepare in advance - try to counterbalance the reporter's frivolity. Never feel that you have to go along with the tongue-in-cheek approach. When your rationality is pitted against their frivolity they will look foolish; they may not make that same mistake twice!

For a printed article provide plentiful concise, rational quotes for them to work with. If they have little written material they will fill the space with cliché and frivolity.

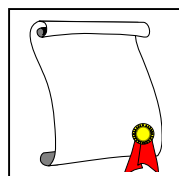
Try to avoid answering personal questions. You want them to write about your work, but they will likely want to write about how scared you are going to feel. If you hold firm they will quickly run out of time and adopt your approach.

Never forget that you are in the driver's seat. Journalists need to fill their airtime and their columns far, far more than you need press coverage. If you dictate your terms pleasantly but firmly from the start, nine times out of ten you will be rewarded with more positive, rational and constructive coverage.

CONGRATULATIONS!

We would just like to say, "Well done" and "Welcome to the ASSAP circle of Accredited Investigators" to:

SEAN MEADON



THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBMITTING REPORTS

I would simply like to remind all AI's of how important it is to keep submitting your investigation reports to Bill Eyre for ASSAP and for yourselves.

When you submit a report, Bill will read it and send any comments he has about the case to you for your benefit. He will then categorise the case for future reference and the file will then be archived so as to allow cross-reference, if necessary, by other AI's.

This system works for you as well, as you are the ones the files are held for!

Reports can be submitted on paper, by e-mail (depending on the size) or by CD (Microsoft Word or PDF format is preferred, but not essential).