



The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena

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INVESTIGATORS' BULLETIN

www.assap.org or write to **ASSAP, 27 Old Gloucester Street,**
London, WC1N 3XX - Please note the new ASSAP address!

Contacts:

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Ms Cherill Penton, Deputy National Investigations Co-ordinator

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Members who have become
AI's since the last
Investigators' Bulletin are:-

Peter Lewis

Lisa Lincoln

Kieron Savill

Claire Lawson

Nigel Bundy

Tom Hagan

Congratulations!
Well done to you all!



New address

Please note that the new ASSAP
letterhead is available for AI's to
download from the AI section of
the website.

ASSAP Equipment

Don't forget that members of
ASSAP can hire any of the
equipment from the ASSAP
equipment pool, (as long as it is
available and not already being
hired), at any time. You can find
out what equipment ASSAP has to
offer by looking on the website in
the members area and following
the equipment link from there.
To take advantage of the scheme
or to find out more details, just
contact Carrie Searley via the
equipment@assap.org e-mail
address.

AI RENEWAL PROCESS

As explained in issue 3 of this bulletin, a system was introduced by the ASSAP Executive in 2004, whereby AI identity cards would from that point onwards only be valid for two years, thus avoiding the problem that previous NICs had with never knowing which members who had been issued with cards were still willing to accept cases to investigate on behalf of ASSAP and which weren't. Thus the first renewal of the new-style cards took place in 2006.

Whilst for the most part this exercise went smoothly, there were one or two teething problems that arose, as is to be expected with the introduction of any new process involving a large number of people. To overcome this, a process has been documented to formalise what should happen at renewal time. This process may be found within the AI section of the website at:-

<http://www.assap.org/aiarea/Docs/AI%20Card%20Renewal%20Process%201.0.pdf>

If you receive this Bulletin in hard copy form, and would like to review the process, please contact the N.I.C via the address above and request the file in writing.

The process has been reviewed and agreed by the Executive but if anyone has any concerns about it, feel free to contact Bill. The method documented will be used for the next card renewal exercise (due in March 2008) onwards.

E-MAIL DISTRIBUTION

We would like to distribute this bulletin to as many AIs as possible via e-mail, as it minimises the cost and effort involved. Although we have an e-mail address for most AIs, there is a small number for whom we don't have one. If you have received this bulletin in hard copy form, it is because ASSAP does not have an e-mail address for you, so if you do actually have one please notify the Membership Secretary (Membership@assap.org) of it.

Similarly, if your e-mail address changes, it is important to notify ASSAP of the change, to facilitate the passing of investigation cases (and the Bulletin) to you.

INSURANCE, DISCLAIMER AND PROTOCOL

ASSAP has a third party liability insurance policy designed to cover the sort of situation whereby, for example, an ASSAP member at a vigil accidentally damages some property belonging to the client of the investigation. AIs are asked to note that this insurance is only valid to cover field investigations (vigils, sky watches, etc.) where the AI organising the event **has notified the NIC in advance of the date and venue of the event**. If you are organising an ASSAP vigil, then in order to cover yourself and ASSAP for any liability, it is strongly recommended that you avail yourself of this insurance.

It should be noted, however, that the insurance does not extend to non-members of ASSAP and so you are recommended to request any investigators attending a field investigation who are not members, to sign a disclaimer. This will make it clear to them that they are personally liable for any damage to property committed by them. The standard ASSAP disclaimer form can be found within the AI section of the website .

<http://www.assap.org/aiarea/Docs/ASSAP%20Legal%20Disclaimer.pdf> .

There is, in fact, no harm in requesting everyone attending a vigil to sign the disclaimer, as it gives a measure of protection to ASSAP against claims made by its own members for such items as damage to their own equipment.

ASSAP has also produced an investigation protocol, which you may find beneficial to send to field investigation participants in advance of the event, e.g. when you send them final details of where and when to meet. This protocol can also be found within the AI section of the website.

<http://www.assap.org/aiarea/Docs/ASSAP%20Investigation%20Protocol.pdf>

Having launched the links in this article, you may find it convenient to save the documents on your PC for future use. Once again, the articles contained in the icons are available by post for non-internet members by contacting the N.I.C.

CURRENT CASES

- Reports have been received from Caroline Pick on the latest vigils to be held at the Talbot Inn, Leicester and at an office block in Nottinghamshire.
- At a vigil organised by Caroline at a hotel in Leicestershire, battery drain and equipment malfunctions were experienced, along with several investigators reporting pressure on the head. Interestingly, ten days before the vigil, Caroline had a dream of the hotel, in which she saw the hotel with a renovation and observed that a picture had been removed from the bar during the renovation. With no other prior knowledge of this situation, she was astonished to find upon her arrival for the vigil that the hotel had in fact been renovated and that that particular picture had indeed been moved during the renovation! This would seem to be a fascinating case of clairvoyance having taken place whilst in the sleep state.
- Regarding the site of the Battle of Bosworth, Caroline has produced a fine piece of documentation of historical research that she has carried out and of the visual, audible and tactile experiences of those taking part in a vigil held there in conjunction with Leicestershire Paranormal Association.
- Cherill Penton's long running investigation into the haunting activity of a hotel in Shropshire is currently being wound up, with some valuable reportage having been produced.
- Cherill experienced an alarming pain (thought to have been caused paranormally) during a vigil at a shop in Staffordshire, while she was in a tunnel beneath the shop.
- Still in Staffordshire, investigations carried out by Cherill in conjunction with Paranormal Awakenings have been continuing with regard to the poltergeist case at an old vicarage and the haunting case at a priory, a vigil is shortly to be held at a World War I prisoner of war camp, Staff at a hall who have been experiencing unexplained incidents have just been interviewed and the experimenter of domestic haunting phenomena is about to be interviewed.
- Cherill has recently organised a vigil at a club in the West Midlands which has been experiencing haunting phenomena.
- Field investigations into strange experiences (including apparitions) at three linked ancient sites in Staffordshire are being carried out by Cherill and Stefan Lobuczek

- Stefan managed to obtain an interesting clip of EVP in the basement of Woodchester Mansion.
- Stefan is looking into a domestic case in Staffordshire involving strange marks on the window, unexplained footsteps, unnatural coldness and objects being moved.
- The client of a poltergeist and apparitional case that Bill and Kevin Parkin looked into last year recently reported an upsurge of activity once again. On this occasion, Bill and Tamsin Ashmore visited the client and basically were minded to think that he and his wife were experiencing a vicious circle whereby their depressive interpretation of the phenomena and some marital disharmony were producing a negative atmosphere, which in turn was producing more phenomena. Tamsin did a marvellous job of putting the chap's mind to rest and recommendations were made on actions that he and his wife could take to try to reduce the phenomena.
- Having interviewed staff about their apparitional experiences at a pub in South Yorkshire, Bill was hoping to organise a vigil there but difficulties in contacting the landlord suggest that, unfortunately, the pub may perhaps have closed.
- Jean Porter, with assistance from husband Terry, has been looking into a case involving a lady who is experiencing chronic severe pain and who thinks that she is the victim of psychic attack, as a result of information given to her by mediums and the lack of a medical diagnosis by her doctors.
- Terry Hewitt has been to interview the owners of a tea-shop in Leicestershire where poltergeist phenomena have been reported.
- Attempts are being made to contact the witness of a UFO sighting in Avon.
- Cara Coles has organised a vigil at a fort in Kent.
- A gentleman in Kent has reported very dramatic poltergeist phenomena at his home, including pools of water appearing, electrical equipment operating itself without being plugged in and flying pictures. This case has been allocated to Dave Thomas and it will be interesting to see his feedback in due course.
- Simon Royce-Dexter has been to interview the landlady of a pub in Derbyshire where unexplained footsteps and apparitions have been reported.

Please remember to inform Bill Eyre, our NIC, of any cases you are going to investigate in order to cover yourselves with ASSAP insurance.

The Old Hag Phenomenon - Supernatural or Scientific?

It's the middle of the night. Suddenly you become aware that you are awake but you cannot move or make a sound. Then you feel a weight begin to press down on your chest and you feel as if you are unable to breathe.

Have you ever had a similar experience? The above incident is a classic example of what has become known as the "Old Hag" phenomenon. Individuals that experience this phenomenon report a similar series of events which include the inability to move or speak, although their ability to hear, feel, smell and have rational thought are not affected. Victims often sense that there is a sinister or evil presence in the room and nearly all report heightened fear at the time of the *attack*.

In fact, the whole experience is often accompanied by strange smells, the sound of approaching footsteps, apparitions, weird shadows or glowing eyes, and as previously mentioned, the oppressive weight on the chest, making breathing difficult if not impossible. All of the body's senses are telling the victims that something real and unusual is happening to them. The spell is broken when the victims recover often on the point of losing consciousness. Fully awake and well they are often completely baffled by what has just happened to them since now the room is entirely normal.

In her article, "Help I can't move" Florence Cardinal (2006), writes: "Sleep paralysis is often accompanied by vivid hallucinations. There may be a sense someone is in the room, or even hovering over you. At other times, there seems to be pressure on the chest, as though someone or something is perched there. There may even be sexual attacks associated with the hallucinations. The sound of footsteps, doors opening and closing, voices, all can be a very frightening part of sleep paralysis. These are known as hypnagogic (drowsiness before sleep) and hypnopompic (the period between sleep and wakefulness) experiences and they are what make people dread an episode of sleep paralysis."

The name of the phenomenon comes from the superstitious belief that a witch - or an old hag - sits astride the chest of the victim, rendering them immobile whilst she inhales the air from their body, leading to the victim's asphyxiation. Although that explanation is not taken seriously nowadays, the perplexing and often frightening nature of the phenomenon leads many people to believe that there are paranormal forces at work, forces such as ghosts or demons. The medical establishment is well aware of this phenomenon, but has a less sensational name than "Old Hag" phenomenon for it. They call it "sleep paralysis" or SP (sometimes ISP for "isolated sleep paralysis"). There are two stages of sleep. The first is called 'slow wave' sleep or 'non-REM' sleep, which is the first stage of sleep you achieve. During this stage of sleep your brain waves slow down. You are groggy, you don't think a lot, and if a noise wakes you up, you wake up confused and not able to have specific thought.

"Sometimes the brain doesn't fully disengage from our dreams or our paralysis when

we wake up suddenly and that would explain the 'frozen' feeling and hallucinations associated with sleep paralysis" (Hirschkowitz, 2005). After about an hour and a half you enter into another stage called REM sleep or Rapid Eye Movement sleep. During REM sleep you have these rapid eye movements, or twitches of the eye. You are completely paralysed, and you are actively dreaming." We sleep in cycles, and approximately every 90 minutes we go from slow wave sleep to REM sleep and back again" (Mignot, 2004). It is only in REM sleep that we dream, when our brains are very active (as opposed to slow wave sleep, when they aren't very active at all). It is also in REM sleep that our bodies are completely paralysed. If you were not paralysed during your REM sleep, you would be in serious trouble. The human body produces an enzyme to paralyse our muscles when we sleep to prevent us from acting out our dreams and injuring ourselves. According to Dr. Hirschkowitz's research, the 'old Hag' experience only lasts for a short period of time, from a few seconds to as much as one minute but in this half-dream half-awake state, it can seem much longer to the victim. As the night progresses, we tend to have more frequent REM sleep and less frequent slow wave sleep, which is why sleep paralysis is most common in the early morning. The debate on whether old hag syndrome is a supernatural phenomenon or simply a by-product of some disturbed sleeping will go on between the believers and the non-believers. But the fear that you experience when you have one of these nocturnal episodes is very real, no matter who you are.



Terri Settington

References

- Cardinal, F (2006) "Help! I Can't Move". About.com's Guide to Sleep Disorders at www.sleepdisorders.about.com/cs/hallucinations/a/cantmove.htm
- Hirshkowitz, M (2005) The 'Old Hag' syndrome. Director of the Sleep Disorders Centre at the Veterans Administration Medical Centre. Houston.
- Mignot, M (2004) History of Narcolepsy, a Hundred years of Research. Stanford University Center for Narcolepsy Research. February 26, 2004, from <http://www.med.stanford.edu/school/Psychiatry/narcolepsy/narcolepsyhistory.html>
- Ng, A. Dr. (2005) Waking Up to the Worst Nightmare. The Centre for Sleep Disorders and Respiratory Failure. St. Georges Hospital, London.

The relevance of Terri's article is that investigators called to cases involving bedroom apparitions should always tease out sufficient detail about the experience from the witness/witnesses, as to determine whether sleep paralysis is the explanation for the reported phenomenon.

Thank you Terri for yet another very informative and interesting article.

UPCOMING AIs NEED YOU!

Calling all AI's with a friendly disposition - I know we are all friendly, but it did get your attention didn't it?

It is most unfortunate that some ASSAP members, who have completed an ASSAP training day, have been unable to complete their training. This is mainly because of two restraining factors.

- 1) They have been unable to find their own investigation to organise and write a report on.
- 2) They have not been able to attend an ASSAP vigil either.

This is where you come in. Would you offer to take a trainee investigator under your wing for a short period of time? Perhaps you could invite one to come with you to when you go to interview witnesses (that would be a very valuable experience for the upcoming investigator) and/or let a would be AI come on one of your investigations and write a report on it for their accreditation. Their report would not stop you from submitting your report as normal as the trainee's report would come to me as usual. To help ensure the future of ASSAP AIs, please consider this request and let Cherill know if you would be willing to help.

Thank you!

ASK ANOTHER AI

This is a plea on behalf of Mr Terry Hewitt of Leicester. Terry is an AI and a member of the ASSAP Specialist panel, but he is having problems with his computer and needs help!

Terry wishes to update his PC to run 'Pinnacle Studio', with the intent of putting his reports and video footage onto DVD's, to save storage and make professional presentations. Unfortunately, the help he has received so far has let him down badly, one person even making off with his laptop computer.

Knowing that time and effort is required in this matter, Terry is quite happy to 'negotiate' costs and expenses for anyone who could help him. He is also aware that he may have to incur further expense to realise his dream.

Can you get Terry up and running? If you could, would you **please** contact me at deputy.nic@assap.org and I will pass Terry your details. He can then explain to you the more intricate details (as I am only skimming the surface here, I think!).