



The Newsletter of the Association  
for the Scientific Study of

Issue 110 January 2006

# Most Cheated?

It really hasn't been a good couple of months for everyone's favourite TV program *Most Haunted*.

On October 28th the Daily Mirror ran an exposé of the popular LivingTV show as told to the paper by the series' resident Parapsychologist, Dr Ciaran O'Keefe. O'Keefe is a lecturer at Liverpool Hope University and has been associated with MH for the last year and a half so he was ideally placed to offer up a devastating commentary on the truth behind the often spectacular events featured each episode and the credibility of the (now departed) Derek Acorah.

O'Keefe revealed that the physical phenomena experienced by the show's presenters were often faked by members of the production crew with the full co-operation of Yvette Fielding and the other presenters. Additionally, on a number of occasions he was able to hoax Acorah into 'revealing' information about various locations which he had concocted to test the Medium's credentials.

O'Keefe said he first started to become suspicious of Acorah at Castle Leslie, Co Monaghan in Ireland where a 17th Century four-poster bed has been claimed to levitate. Acorah touched the bed and psychically 'discovered' some extremely accurate information: unfortunately it transpired that he had actually been touching the wrong bed...

O'Keefe's most famous trick was to create a fictional gaoler by the name of Kreed Kafer, a character later contacted by the hapless Acorah. Kreed Kafer, for those who aren't already in on the joke, is an anagram of *Derek faker*.

A number of ASSAP members have reported that MH has done research before visiting a location (see Juliette Gregson's article on p8 for example) and O'Keefe's conclusion to the Mirror's article was: 'In my opinion, we're not dealing with genuine mediumship'.

Acorah was quick to rebut the accusations. '...it does shock and surprise me. Not only do I believe that I am a genuine medium - I live my work 24 hours a day. If I thought that I wasn't a true medium, I wouldn't work as one.' Yvette Fielding was even more robust in her defence of the program: 'There is no acting that goes on in this programme, none whatsoever. Everything that you see and you hear is real. It's not made up; it's not acted'

A LivingTV spokesman was quoted as saying: 'LivingTV has not seen any [...] filmed evidence, but will fully investigate...'

Following these revelations MH was investigated by TV watchdog, The Office of

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Editorial

Mike White

## Strange but Troo...

A cable TV programme featuring psychics 'reading' old furniture is to be turned into a stage show in the West End by Victoria Wood with a working title of Acorah Antiques.

2-methyl 2-butenic acid is known as Angelic Acid,  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_3\text{F}^+$  is known as Magic Acid and  $\text{CmCl}_3$  rejoices in the name Curious Chloride.

In Norman times superstitious peasants believed that the way to breed pins was to keep them in a specially-constructed Pincote, thus creating both a profession and an illustrious surname.

The Ukrainian word for spoon, when transliterated into English, is Geller. Even more curiously, in Navaho the phrase gel-lar is used to indicate who entertains but does not inform.

David Icke has arranged to be cryogenically frozen after his death; he will therefore become an Ickicle.

Although there are numerous examples of Treacle Wells scattered around the country there is only one extant Custard Field which can be found in Derbyshire.

Derek Acorah took the first part of his stage name after seeing an encyclopaedia on a bookshelf that ran from DUH-REK

Jackie Mallinson, a white witch from Christchurch in Dorset, has started a website to allow anyone who believes that they were a victim of the witchcraft/heresy burnings of the Tudor period to make contact with others with similar beliefs for mutual support. See <http://www.friendsreignited.com> for details.

James Randi is notoriously litigious so you will have to make up your own joke.

Errata: is the little-known Greek Muse of proofreading

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## Write for ASSAP News

Have you recently held an event you would like to share with the membership at large? Does something irritate you beyond belief? Do you have a pet theory you would like to expound? Guess what: ASSAP News would like to hear from you. Any and all contributions gratefully received - [assap-news@assap.org](mailto:assap-news@assap.org) or the usual PO Box address. You can pretty much choose your format because I'm that kind of guy...

# About ASSAP

ASSAP is an educational charity involved in the investigation of anomalous phenomena. We publish *ASSAP News* bimonthly and our journal *Anomaly* twice a year. ASSAP was formed in 1981 to bring together disparate strands of research and encourage a cross-disciplinary approach. We organize experiments and occasional study days through our publications and website. Our President is the well-known cleric and Fortean researcher the Rev. Lionel Fanthorpe.

For general enquiries, contact us at our PO box:

**ASSAP, PO Box 230, PLYMOUTH, PL1 2ZR**

Just prefix the address with the name of the office you want to contact. We will forward all mail to the individual officers. This way your letters won't go astray when one of us moves house or moves on.

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# The Fanthorpe Column

We'd like to start by saying, as we said at the AGM in Margam, that it's a very great pleasure and a very great honour for us to be with you all in ASSAP. In a world that seems to become stranger by the minute, sensible, open-minded investigators like you provide one of the vital life-lines that society needs.

The idea for today's column came when friend, colleague and fellow investigator, Robert Snow, sent us one of the most intriguing optical illusions we've ever seen. [You can take a look at this illusion on page 7 - Ed].

As genuinely *scientific* investigators of anomalous phenomena, we in ASSAP know how important it is to recall the words that Dickens put into the mouth of cynical old Ebenezer Scrooge when Marley's ghost turned up:--

"You don't believe in me," observed the Ghost.

"I don't," said Scrooge.

"What evidence would you have of my reality, beyond that of your senses?"

"I don't know," said Scrooge.

"Why do you doubt your senses?"

"Because," said Scrooge, "a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

Ebenezer may not have had a degree in psychosomatic neurology, but he was undeniably shrewd and he had more than his fair share of selfishly pragmatic common sense.

Exploration of the environment via the five human senses is not necessarily the most reliable way of understanding it – but is biological sensory perception our only access to reality? A century and a half after such science as was available to Victorian Scrooge, we now have the benefit of sophisticated magnetic and electronic measuring instruments, computers, lasers, radar, sonar, DNA analysis, genetic engineering . . . and our range of intricate, investigative techniques continues to grow exponentially. We can now augment and expand the range and sensitivity of our natural senses almost to infinity.

What we need to be constantly suspicious of, however, is the *interpretative* function of the mind. Sight, sound, touch, taste and smell are *brain* functions as well as physical, sensory functions. We might go further and argue that the senses are totally brain dependent: stimulations along the sensory nerves reach the brain where they are analysed, interpreted and



Lionel and Patricia at Margam. What is he holding? See page 4

'understood' – in so far as anything in this intriguingly mysterious universe can ever be understood!

One significant example of this tendency of the brain to jump to understandable -- but entirely erroneous -- conclusions is the account of the two cyclists riding home several yards apart in gloomy, uncertain light. The second rider heard a metallic clatter and 'saw' his companion fall off his bike. He pedalled hard to reach the spot and help his friend. *There was no one there.* A few yards farther along he overtook his companion – who had *not* fallen and was bewildered by his friend's anxiety. They both went back to investigate. There was a flat piece of metal lying on the road. It had clattered harmlessly as the first man had ridden over it. The second cyclist had interpreted the sound as a bicycle falling. The metallic noise had stimulated his brain to supply an appropriate visual image to make sense of what he had heard.

How often do we do similar things?

As well as working on the mysterious, external, objective phenomena that all ASSAP members rightly enjoy investigating, it could prove equally interesting to look scientifically into dream images, hypnagogic experiences, illusions, mirages and hallucinations.

What if the visionaries who believe in the creative and structural power of mind over matter, and the reality of thought-forms such as Alexandra David-Neel's *tulpa* experiment in Tibet, are at least partly right? To find a regularised, systematic, scientific way to direct and control *that* kind of mental power would be progress equal to discovering the wheel and fire.

Lionel and Patricia  
(Pres and Lady One)

(Continued from page 1)

Communications (Ofcom) after formal complaints from viewers alleging fraud and deception.

Interestingly, in its response to Ofcom LivingTV stated that although the programme featured '...many entertainment production conventions...it does indisputably retain an investigative element'.

One can only imagine the attitude of the Ofcom regulators when they were handed this complaint! As their website states: *'It is not Ofcom's role to decide whether paranormal activity exists, nor to promote or dismiss belief in the paranormal.'* However, whatever they thought, they did undertake to investigate whether MH had breached the Broadcasting Code of Conduct.

Their final report considered the format of the program: celebrity presenters; studio audience; phone-in participation; the 'over-dramatic' responses of presenters and the regularity with which usually rare paranormal events manifested themselves and decided that the MH program was: *'beyond what we believe to be a generally accepted understanding of what comprises a legitimate investigation.'*

In short, Ofcom's conclusion was that MH should be seen as a show *'produced for entertainment purposes'* and, as such, no breach of the Broadcasting Code had taken place.

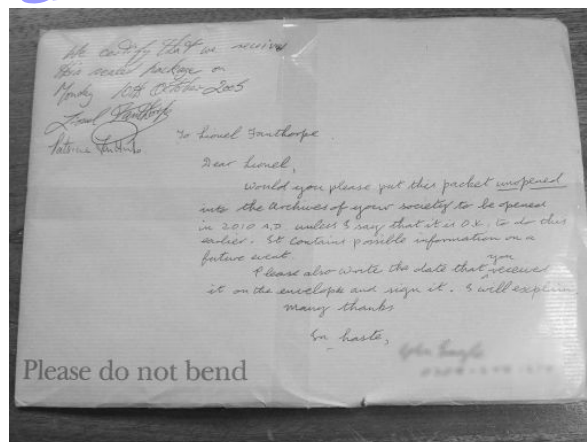
This judgement has subsequently generated much discussion and comment, both for and against MH (and doubtless ASSAP News readers will have their own opinions) but if anything positive can be said to have come from the whole sorry story it is the recognition that it is vital to recognise the difference between entertainment and research...

#### References.

The original Daily Mirror story can be found at:  
[http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/  
tm\\_objectid=16303507&method=full&siteid=94762&headline=  
=spooky-truth--tv-s-most-haunted-con-exposed-tv--  
name\\_page.html](http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/tm_objectid=16303507&method=full&siteid=94762&headline=spooky-truth--tv-s-most-haunted-con-exposed-tv--name_page.html)

The Ofcom decision on the MH complaints is located at:  
[http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/obb/prog\\_cb/pcb46/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/obb/prog_cb/pcb46/)

## Message in a Bottle ?



ASSAP President Lionel Fanthorpe brought along an interesting envelope (see picture above) to Margam which he gave into our safe keeping. The handwritten text reads:

Dear Lionel,

Would you please put this packet unopened into the archives of your society to be opened in 2010 AD unless I say that it is OK to do this earlier. It contains possible information of a future event...

The text concludes (rather worryingly),

In haste, J Eagles.

The envelope is sealed with sellotape and has been signed and dated by both Lionel and Patricia as a guarantee of the integrity of its contents.

Despite all pleas to the contrary the letter remains untouched. Even the (almost convincing) argument that 2010AD referred to ten minutes past eight (After Dinner) failed to sway our resolve and the envelope now resides deep in the ASSAP archives.

So, what could the envelope contain? What secrets can we expect to be revealed at the 2010 AGM? If anyone would like to venture a prediction we are happy to store that away with the envelope, otherwise it is just a question of waiting.

Certainly, I hope to be there at the 2010 AGM when we find out for sure.

## Ghost Writing

The werewolf with the menu from last issue was, of course, from Warren Zevon's Werewolves of London (also covered by Credence Clearwater Revival).

Aaaaah oooooooh!

Since I seem to be onto a musical theme, here is one for next time. Which classical composer wrote a piece entitled *The Doppelganger*?

# Margam Report

Lack of space (due to a welcome surfeit of excellent material this issue) means that this will be a somewhat truncated report...

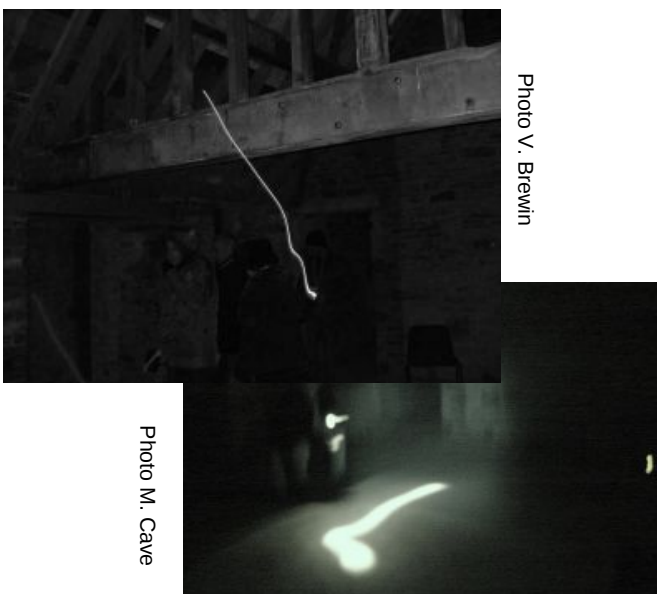
As usual around 40 intrepid trainees (a goodly number of whom were already AIs back for a refresher) spent a memorable day making friends, spending the night in a Hogwarts-style castle and also spending a little time training in the on-site Education Centre (below).



Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe also kindly took time from their busy schedule to drop by and say hello (see opposite page).

Those of us who had been at Woodchester last year were relieved to discover that Castle actually had windows which made the evening training vigil a relatively comfortable affair.

Following the day I was sent two photographs which may or may not be simple photographic anomalies. See what you think...



Larger versions of these pictures should be on the website.

# Awards

## ASSAP Service Award

The ASSAP Service award this year was awarded to National Investigations Co-ordinator **Bill Eyre**. For many years Bill was a stalwart of the investigations area, winning the Michael Bentine Trophy for best submitted report on a number of occasions, and since becoming NIC he has been able to use his extensive experience to reinvigorate the Investigations area, performing the difficult task of making it simultaneously more professional and more approachable.



Because he was unable to attend the AGM at Margam this year Cherill Penton made a surprise visit to the Chesterfield Psychic Study Group's Christmas party to present Bill with the cup.

## Michael Bentine Trophy

Named after former ASSAP President Michael Bentine this is awarded by the NIC to the author of the best investigation report submitted during the year.



This year's cup was presented to **Dylan Jones** for his in-depth report into current and historical phenomena at Llancaiach Fawr Manor near Caerphilly. Running to 35,000 words this is almost certainly a record-breaking report submission as well as being an excellent piece of research.

Warmest congratulations to both winners!

# Cross Correspondences?

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the letter by Parasearch's David Taylor and Carolyn Adey in issue 109 of ASSAP News. The letter struck a chord and I agree with many of its assertions, but there were just a couple of points I'd like to pick up on.

Firstly, the issue of private residence cases involving children. At PSI private residences contact us probably once or twice per month on average. After initial contact, however, it typically becomes clear that what they need is a referral rather than an investigation of any kind. The small number of private residence investigations we have been involved with invariably involve children in some respect, although never as primary witnesses. In all such cases it has been a prerequisite of ours that minors are not present at any time during any investigation.

Parasearch's letter refers to a number of concerns here, but our greatest concern has always been that of the law. It is my understanding that to be involved with such an event with minors necessitates a police check of everyone concerned. As David and Caroline also point out, parents and impartial observers should always be present as a bare minimum requirement.

The other interesting point was the concern raised about the ability of people to claim they are accredited paranormal investigators after having "just joined a national organisation, done a basic training course [etc]". It does seem to me to be more than reasonable for individuals to attend a daylong training course and an assessed investigation and to then be accredited to investigate with ASSAP. Indeed, my group (PSI) runs six training modules and workshops coupled with one or more assessed field investigators before becoming accredited (for want a better term) to investigate with us.

However, our training and selection process does not comprise a standalone accreditation that individuals could cite as a qualification for forming their own investigation group. If anything our training allows individuals to attend our investigations as an 'investigation participant' rather than an independent investigator of any kind.

As well as the concern about any over population of ASSAP-affiliated groups as raised by Parasearch, if I were more involved with ASSAP I would be somewhat concerned about newly trained individuals having the license to use the good 'ASSAP name' whilst independently investigating.

Best wishes,  
Dave Wood  
Co-ordinator, Paranormal Site Investigators (PSI)  
www.p-s-i.org.uk

I passed this letter on to Bill Eyre, National Investigations Co-ordinator, who responded:

As regards domestic cases brought to ASSAP's attention in the part of the country in which I live (North East Midlands), a significant proportion have actually required an investigation and not merely a referral. A minority of such cases has led us to the conclusion that the client is actually suffering from a medical or psychological condition but other cases have led to a conclusion in terms of other normal or paranormal explanations. None of these cases has involved children. Were we to have turned down the opportunity to look into these matters, we would probably have lost about 60% of our cases.

My understanding is that a police check is required for any person supervising a children's activity. However, I am not aware of any law that forbids adults from speaking to children, especially when a parent is present. ASSAP's Code of Conduct recommends the presence of a female investigator in cases involving children.

If I understand Dave's point about accreditation correctly, I would concur that ASSAP's present requirements of attending a training course, gaining some limited experience of investigations and producing a suitable investigation report are indeed appropriate as a minimum. ASSAP does not wish to make an advanced academic qualification a part of this process as one of the very reasons for the formation of ASSAP was to provide an association in which both academically qualified and non academically qualified persons could become practically involved in paranormal research and investigations.

Bill Eyre  
National Investigations Co-ordinator

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## Website Update

The website has taken a whole new lease of life with the user forum suddenly bursting into activity. If you haven't already taken a look please take a few minutes to browse some of the discussion threads, advertise a forthcoming event, take part in (or create) an on-line experiment or join in with one of the (occasionally acrimonious!) arguments.

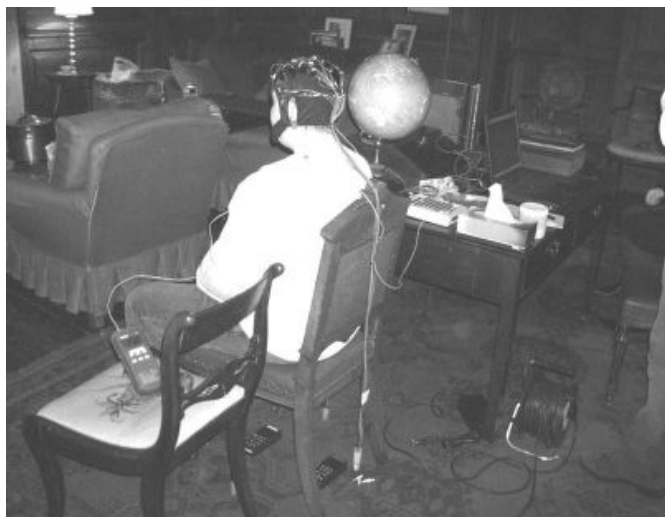
Don't forget that you can log in to the members area to download one of the growing back-catalogue of old ASSAP News and Anomalies or an Investigation Report Sheet template by using the username 'assapmember' and the password 'haunted'.

# Merseyside MADS

## Steve Parsons

Para.Science have been reading with interest the work of Jason Braithwaite and Maurice Townsend on the MADS system. Inspired by the work in progress they felt the time was right to also procure a similar system of their own to carry on with an initial series of experiments began in 2003 during an investigation at a Cheshire farmhouse.

The farmhouse produced some interesting electro-magnetic anomalies and assisted by staff from Bristol University Human Radiation Effects group it became a stepping stone to developing further ideas about the links between reports of paranormal activity and exposure to Electromagnetic fields.



Volunteer wearing the EEG cap awaiting the tests to begin.  
Photo: S Parsons

Our 'MADS' system is very similar to the ASSAP system using a pair of almost identically specified sensors and twin laptops, additionally we also have a 3<sup>rd</sup> linked laptop feeding information from a dedicated AC EMF sensor. We refer to our system as GEMS – Geo & Electromagnetic Monitoring System. We are so far only in the testing stage with GEM although during our recent annual team training week at a remote Scottish Castle we did manage some brief measurement runs.

The same week also allowed us to conduct an initial study using a 42 lead EEG together with a number of EM and other computer linked environment sensors. With the generous assistance of staff from a leading Scots University we carried out a series of EEG trials on volunteers in haunted and control locations within the castle. At the same time we logged and measured Electromagnetic emissions, Ionising radiation, temperature and other environmental variables along with basic physiological data from sensors attached to the volunteers. We believe that this may be a first for UK



Close up of the EEG screen during the trial  
Photo: S Parsons

field investigations. Obviously, this experiment has produced a great deal of data that needs to be worked through before it can be published in full.

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## After-image Illusion

(With thanks to Robert Snow via Lionel)



Instructions:

Stare at the four dots in the centre of the image for around 30 seconds.

Look away - staring at a light-coloured wall will help at this point.

Who do you see?

# Crown Joolz ?

Juliette 'Joolz' Gregson sent me the following piece detailing her experiences while acting as a researcher on the first series of Most Haunted. This issue seems an appropriate time to share her story.

A little about me.

Born and raised in sunny Blackpool, I began in my teens to widen my outlook on life. Helped my Father in a hypnotic show and also learnt the trade myself, joined a UFO group but never really saw anything paranormal. In later years went to college and gaining an A level in psychology and parapsychology which fuelled an interest in ( NLP ) neuro linguistic programming of which I have a foundation diploma. I have also been trained as a mentor which I believe gives me a grounding in being unbiased in matters of the paranormal. My current project is to compile evidence and research on the 'Ghosts of Blackpool'. This in turn is why Most Haunted got in contact with me. I had posted on the Internet forums for any feedback or stories .

Below are my emails received as a researcher on behalf of Most Haunted. I believe that these only highlight the need to check the facts before you go to air.

Dear Joolz

*I work for a Manchester based production company currently attempting to find stories of hauntings in the Blackpool area - and having seen you post was wondering if you have had any luck completing your book? If at all possible could you please call me back? (I would appreciate it if you could keep this communication confidential.)*

*Thanks for your time*

Regards

Patrick O'Boyle  
Antix Productions

Hi Joolz

*I am particularly interested in stories that come from the Winter Gardens & the Tower – have you heard any? We are really pressed for time at the moment, so any help would be greatly accepted. (Out of interest, we are on the lookout for potential contributors - would you be interested?)*

Regards

Patrick

('Pressed for time'... I later found out that they had been to the locations 6 weeks ago to gather information).

Hi Joolz

*When I say contributor, I mean that we are always on the lookout for people to appear on the show to give us a human perspective on the ghost stories featured on the show – rather than as a researcher. For example, we have collected numerous ghost stories from the Blackpool Tower and Winter Gardens and would love to speak to someone locally who has some kind of knowledge/experience of these ghosts. (Unfortunately, I would be unable to offer you a regular opportunity to appear on the show) I hope this is okay?*

Regards

Patrick O'Boyle

(The above only concludes that research is done before they film 'Live')

Hi

*Unfortunately, it will not be possible for us to meet up in Manchester – mainly because our schedule is such that we are never in the office long enough to organise the production in such a – logical – manner. I will give you a call, sometime in the next day or so for a chat – in the meantime if you have the time to forward any ghost story info I would appreciate it... (Currently we are researching into number of locations around the country – my personal favourite is Blackpool but it may get 'gazumped' at any time - so it is impossible for me to say where the Dec Live will be held.)*

*Thanks for your time*

Patrick

(Hmm. Anyone see the post he made on the Ghost Watch UK website asking for information?)

Below is the information that I provided for Most Haunted:

Blackpool Tower Built 1894

Lots of layers to this building and also lots going on.

1 The ship Ocean Monarch had a fire (August 1848) opposite where the tower was later to be built, very high death toll, ghosts of the dead have been sighted roaming through walls of the tower.

\*\*2 The tower ballroom was destroyed by a fire in 1956, one fireman died

3 Fire ( 22/7/1897 at around 11pm ) at the top of the tower

4 Nestori + Aerian performers at the tower have been sighted in the "bowels" and also the dressing rooms

5 Charlie Cairoli ( born 1910 died 1980 , in Blackpool from 1939 onwards ) often his laugh (was very distinctive, I saw him perform as a child ) can be heard

6 Scotman Doodles has also been seen (clown)

7 Neville Cambell Jnr (Died 1994) performing on the 'Wheel of Death'

8 Sir John Bickerstaffe (Died 1930 aged 32 ) very involved when the tower was being built

\*\*9 Anna – female dies in the 60's, greyish, big nose, heavy, odd smell follows her around.

Winter Gardens Officially opened in 1878  
Rooms and dates built ( more layers )

1897 Empress Ballroom

1878 Floral Hall

1889 Opera house ( original ) now on its third build

1897 Pavillian theatre then 1929 into a cinema

1930 Renaissance restaurant

1930 Baronial Hall

1930 Spanish Hall

1930 Olympia

1896 Indian Lounge demolished in 1964 to make way for Planet room

1 The Pavilion stage was removed and raised in 1989, half ghosts can be seen as if walking through the middle of the floor

2 The Olympia building now covers the original Italian Gardens, figures of Well dressed couples have been seen promenading at dusk

3 The Opera house has an upper foyer ( not used ) that is behind the church street façade, a man in a bowler hat has been seen ascending the stairs and then disappearing into thin air

4 People than have been spotted over the years have included past performers, I have tried to include dates when they appeared and/or died, these include 1878 Girl , Elsie being shot from a cannon Wilson Barrett/Charles Wyndham 1880 performers

\*\*George Formby born 1904 died 1961 aged 56, ( real name George Hoy Booth ) loved Blackpool made it his home in his later years, brother still living, George loved to perform and playing of his famous ukulele, both hime and his father also who was in show business (George Formby Senior 1875-1921). Real name James Booth , have both been heard to play in the winter gardens

(anyone spot my red herrings? They are indicated by \*\* )

Hi

*Fortunately, a lot of the information you provided has been uncovered during our discussions with staff at the venues and other local contacts over the past six weeks, so there wasn't a lot of typing up to do that hasn't already been done. Although I must admit that I've not come across the Ocean Monarch story before which is very interesting.*

*We will be able to offer you a credit, though it will be a 'With thanks to credit' rather than as a 'Parapsychologist'; mainly because we already have people on the show who hold that position. I am still very interested in having you on the show, but as I mentioned before we are always on the lookout for eye-witnesses who can talk about personal experiences so they may get priority nearer the time of the filming - simply because it makes better television.*

(The above comments speak for themselves)

I attended the Live show on the Sunday. Got there for 6pm and waited, and waited, and waited...

The organisation was less than desired and no attempt was made to explain what was happening or when we would attend the studio. Eventually at 8-10 we made our way across to the filming area, I was searched and asked to first switch off my mobile and not to take in and food and drink that I had. They then confiscated my chocolate my mother had kindly provided, which I note was not returned. I was not the only one , the people behind me received the same treatment. Whilst watching the 3 hour "event" I noticed quite a lot of things going on.

When Derek was "on one" having a possession the audience and all the presenters could not stop laughing, the same happened when Yvette remarked "what's that noise?"( Sigh . We have a lot of heavy trams in Blackpool )

Richard and Richard seemed to be in a comatose for most of the programme and they seemed more intent on laughing at the events. From where I was sat I could see scripts, they tried to hide them with the use of a Blackpool towel and plate.

Backstage direction could just about be heard, the best when the power went at the Pontins end and the picture was lost with MHL.

All in all what a let down in the studio, I felt quite glad I had not paid for this.

I do believe that one day someone, or a group of people will catch a ghost or spirit on film, but I hope that they will not try and cash in on it as Antix have.

**Joolz Gregson**



You can read more about paranormal Blackpool at [www.justjoolz.proboards44.com](http://www.justjoolz.proboards44.com)

# From the Top of the Hill

## **Asian superstitions are alive and well**

With the rise of the internet and the so called "global village" where we can send letters, pictures, and sound across the world with the press of a button, it has almost become an assumption in the western world that everybody is "like us". It seems hard for many of us to imagine a country without Burger King, shopping malls, fluent English speakers and a newspaper with an astrology column.

One advantage of living in Asia is that I have seen a very different approach to life. Anyone who has been on a fortnight holiday to Bangkok will probably come back home and tell their friends about modern shops, grand hotels, internet cafes and of course, raucous night life. They wouldn't be wrong, but venture outside Bangkok, just a little, spend a little more time to settle in and you will see the fires of tradition and Buddhist culture burn strong.

Nowhere is this more prevalent than Thai views towards superstition and the supernatural. Thais and Buddhists believe that spirits play an important view in any household. Every Thai home and office will have a small "San Phra Phum" or "spirit house", with offerings such as fresh fruit or a drink will be placed under it every day. Thais believe the spirits must have this home to stay in to keep them happy, to deprive them would bring bad luck.

Stores, shops, and restaurants will often look to spirits to bring them good business. I recall one restaurant in Vietnam with a lady burning bright colored papers in an urn outside the shop in broad daylight. A local explained to me the restaurant had been short on business lately, and the lady was performing a traditional custom to ward off any bad spirits that may have entered.

Superstition plays a very important role in many other ways. My Thai - Chinese wife and I had a very difficult job choosing a name for our unborn baby boy. Many names I suggested were rejected simply because they contained letters that would bring bad luck to a boy born in December (our due month). It's serious business for Asian people.

Still not convinced? The national media recently reported that a group of students simultaneously convulsed and then fainted on a day trip to a temple. Several monks, locals and teachers reported that they believed the students had been punished for mocking the spirits and being disrespectful to the temple. The nurse who suggested that the students has passed out due to being dehydrated whilst outside in the mid day heat of a tropical country was given far less attention and credibility than those who ventured the prior

opinion.

Make no mistake, a visit or extended sojourn to South East Asia can be a fascinating example of how culture and superstition live on, even in this high tech world.

(There are disadvantages of course, watching my ASSAP friends swap excited e - mails about vigils can be saddening when I know there is no way for me to be involved.)

## **A true story? Really?**

My sympathies to any who had the misfortune to see the movie "the Amityville Horror" and was duped by the producer's audacious billing of being "based on a true story"

The movie is a decent remake of the 1970's version with a few moments to make you jump from your seat and it serves as a good portrayal of a classic (but utterly false) haunting story.

So a decent movie, but "based on a true story"? Hardly. The lawyer for the Lutz family has publicly confessed the story was invented, and numerous flaws in the Lutz family claims have been unearthed. Those wishing to see an excellent and objective summary of the tale can visit <http://www.prairieghosts.com/amityville.html>

Sadly it seems that "based on a true story" can be used freely by Hollywood producers without any responsibility, as long as it brings in extra ratings.

As ever, any comments or questions for ASSAP's secret agent in Asia can be sent to [greg\\_hill@cliffhanger.com](mailto:greg_hill@cliffhanger.com)

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## EVP Update

The American Association of Electronic Voice Phenomena has expressed an interest in the on-line EVP experiment that ASSAP is running in conjunction with Midlands-based group, Paranormal Awakening. Following a request from the AAEVP we will be extending the deadline for the first phase of the experiment until the end of March so that they can feature it in an article in their quarterly journal.

This means that there is still a chance to visit the site yourself at <http://evp.linc.ox.ac.uk> if you haven't already done so.

For those interested in the EVP phenomenon the AAEVP can be contacted via their website at: <http://www.aaevp.com>

| Date     | Lat    | Long   | Depth | Mag | Locality                |
|----------|--------|--------|-------|-----|-------------------------|
| 14/12/05 | 53.001 | -5.641 | 10.0  | 2.8 | Irish Sea               |
| 12/12/05 | 56.180 | -4.189 | 3.4   | 1.4 | Thornhill,              |
| 11/12/05 | 53.106 | -0.020 | 21.4  | 2.0 | Boston, Lincs           |
| 11/12/05 | 51.770 | -0.430 | 0.0   | 2.4 | Hemel Hempstead         |
| 10/12/05 | 56.839 | -5.224 | 7.5   | 3.0 | Fort William            |
| 06/12/05 | 55.383 | -5.185 | 2.5   | 0.5 | Arran                   |
| 04/12/05 | 55.389 | -6.275 | 5.00  | 1.6 | North Channel           |
| 24/11/05 | 53.167 | -4.652 | 8.1   | 1.3 | Caernarvon Bay          |
| 20/11/05 | 57.226 | -5.487 | 1.80  | 0.5 | Shiel Bridge, Highlands |
| 15/11/05 | 57.062 | -5.528 | 2.60  | 0.4 | Loch Hourn, Highlands   |
| 15/11/05 | 55.208 | -3.152 | 2.4   | 0.8 | Eskdalemuir, D&G        |

This data courtesy of the British Geological Survey - more recent information is available from [http://www.quakes.bgs.ac.uk/recent\\_events/recent\\_events.html](http://www.quakes.bgs.ac.uk/recent_events/recent_events.html)

## Solar Terrestrial Activity Index

### Lunar Phases

#### January 2006:

First Quarter 6th  
Full Moon 14th  
Last Quarter 22nd  
New Moon 29th

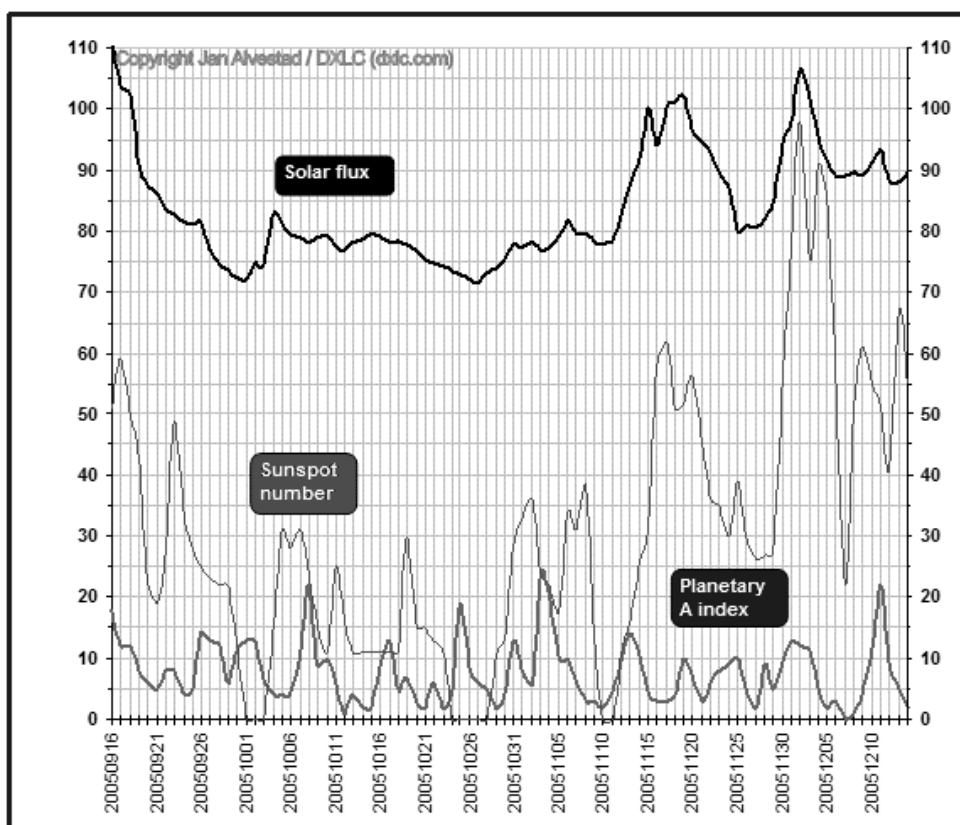
#### February 2006:

First Quarter 5th  
Full Moon 13th  
Last Quarter 21st  
New Moon 28th

### Astronomical Events

The Quadrantid meteor shower (visible around the Plough) will peak on Jan 3rd (but will probably be largely past by the time this post-Christmas mailing arrives).

Saturn will dominate the sky all night in January although don't expect it to be as bright as Mars has been recently.



# What's On and Groups

Have we missed you out? Are your details wrong? Send your groups and events details to

assapnews@assap.org today...

**NB.** It will help event organizers if you enclose an SAE when sending for extra details. ASSAP accepts no responsibility for late changes to venues, speakers, etc.

## Alister Hardy Society (Chesterfield/Northern Group)

The group meets roughly once a month in Chesterfield, Derbyshire for informal discussions on all and any aspects of 'religious' experience. Past topics have included spirit communication via automatic writing and Near-Death Experiences.

If interested please contact Mike Rush on 07790 757955 or at [mike@oddcity.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:mike@oddcity.fsnet.co.uk) for further info and details of the next meeting.

## London Earth Mysteries Circle (LEMC)

LEMC meets in the Meeting Room at the Diorama Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1, beginning at 7.00pm. Wheelchair access. Fees: £2 for members, £3 for non-members, concessions £2.50. Tubes: Great Portland Street, Regent's Park or Warren Street. LEMC address for all communications: Rob Stephenson, PO Box 1035, London, W2 6ZX. Or email at [lemc@ic24.net](mailto:lemc@ic24.net), and visit the website at [www.lemc.ic24.net/](http://www.lemc.ic24.net/)

## CPSG (Chesterfield Psychic Study Group)

February 10th AGM and Open Forum

March 3rd Speaker tba.

Chesterfield Psychic Study Group (CPSG) meets at 7.15pm in the Community Centre, Tontine Road, Chesterfield. For further details, tel (01246) 413217 or visit [www.cpsg.co.uk](http://www.cpsg.co.uk).

## Para.Science

Meetings are held on the first working Monday of each month at Bebington Civic Centre on the Wirral, North-West England. Meeting commences 8.00pm. Further details from [www.parascience.org.uk](http://www.parascience.org.uk)

## BUFORA

All lectures are held in the Salutation at Blunham on the last Thursday of the month. Full details at [www.bufora.org.uk](http://www.bufora.org.uk)

**Ghost Club:** All lectures take place at the Victory Services Club, 63/79 Seymour Street, London W2 2HF. This is at the southern end of Edgware Road and the nearest tube is Marble Arch - just 5-10 minutes' walk. Talks are free to Ghost Club members and £2.50 for non-members. Visit their website at [www.ghostclub.org.uk](http://www.ghostclub.org.uk) for details of future events.

**Parasearch** is a Midlands ASSAP regional group covering Worcestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands. For more details visit: [www.parasearch.org.uk](http://www.parasearch.org.uk), telephone 0121 550 8874 / 0776 1184837 or send an SAE to Parasearch, 15 Brier Mill Road, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 3HA.

## SPI (Strange Phenomena Investigations)

Meetings are held at The Tournament, 344-346 Old Brompton Road, London SW5 9JU at 3.00pm. Admission £7.00 for non-members.

For further details contact: Malcolm Robinson, 8 Hale Gardens, Ealing Common, London, England, W3 9SQ. Tel: 07949 178 835 or email [spi\\_spi@hotmail.com](mailto:spi_spi@hotmail.com) or visit [www.spiuk.net](http://www.spiuk.net).

**MARA** (Merseyside Anomalies Research Association) meets monthly (usually last Friday of month) in the Ship & Mitre Function Room, 7.30pm onwards. The pub is in Liver-

pool city centre, at 133 Dale Street, near the Old Tunnel entrance. Admission charge £2.50. Contact MARA at 18a Parkfield Road, Aigburth, Liverpool, L17 8UJ.

Contact [tonyeccles@yahoo.com](mailto:tonyeccles@yahoo.com) or 0151 727 4057

**TEMS** is an ASSAP-affiliated social and research group for those living in the south-east, generally meeting in Hampton. For details of membership or the current programme call Ann Hopkins on 0208 5449478 or write to TEMS, 115 Hollybush Lane, Hampton, Middlesex, TW12 2QY.

<http://www.temsgroup.org.uk>

Nov 27th Rick Kingsley: 'Past Life Regression'

**Mercia Fortean** is a group conducting investigations into Ghosts, Fortean Phenomena, Big Cats, Folklore, etc, in the Shropshire, Herefordshire & Mid Wales areas. Meetings to take place on the first Monday of the month. Details from Gareth Goodwin on 07947 126055 or [garethgdwn@supanet.com](mailto:garethgdwn@supanet.com).

## SPR (Society for Psychical Research)

Details from SPR at: 49 Marloes Road, Kensington, London W8 6LA. Telephone & Fax: 020 7937 8984. [www.spr.ac.uk](http://www.spr.ac.uk)

## Essex UFO and Paranormal Research Group

For details contact Keith on 01255 426274

## Dorset Earth Mysteries Group

All talks are in the Friends Meeting House, Wharncliffe Road, Boscombe at 7.15pm. Entrance £3.00

## Ghanon

Paranormal group covering Cheshire and North Wales.

Membership is by invitation - contact Kevin Griffiths-Boden ([info@ghanon.co.uk](mailto:info@ghanon.co.uk)) or see [www.ghanon.co.uk](http://www.ghanon.co.uk)

## Anglia Paranormal Investigation Society (APIS)

APIS meetings are held on the last Thursday of the month at The Crown Hotel, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire at 7.30pm. APIS offers both a spiritual and a scientific approach to the investigation of the paranormal. Talk fees are £3.00 for non-members. For further details contact our Secretary: Carol Greenall email: [apismail@ntlworld.com](mailto:apismail@ntlworld.com) or telephone: 01462 490833

## Midlands Ghost Research Society

The MGR is an ASSAP-affiliated group operating in the Coventry area. For details email [info@tmgrs.co.uk](mailto:info@tmgrs.co.uk) or see [www.tmgrs.co.uk](http://www.tmgrs.co.uk).

## Paranormal Awakening

PA is an ASSAP-affiliated group operating in the Midlands area. For details contact Stefan Lobuczek on 0121 353 7622 ([admin@navigatortm.com](mailto:admin@navigatortm.com)) or Cherill Penton 01543 685913 ([susan.penton1@btinternet.com](mailto:susan.penton1@btinternet.com)) or see [www.paranormalawakening.com](http://www.paranormalawakening.com)

## Melton Paranormal Research Society

MPRS is a new ASSAP-affiliated group based in Leicestershire dedicated to all aspects and research of the paranormal. We are genuine people who conduct all night investigations at reported haunted locations throughout the UK, and meet once a month for group discussions. For more information including membership and website access please contact Christine Hankey on 01664 569125

## Leicester Paranormal Association

LPA is also based in Leicestershire. They are a small group of like-minded investigators who are keen to co-operate with other groups in the area. The group can be contacted by email at [leicestershirepa@aol.com](mailto:leicestershirepa@aol.com).

And finally, since I have just a little space left:

# Happy New Year!