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www.assap.org

The Newsletter of the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena

Celebrating 25 Years!

Unbelievable as it may seem, ASSAP celebrates its first quarter-century this year. Since the Midlands-based Parasearch were also 20 this year both groups pooled their not-inconsequential resources and held a joint Anniversary Conference at the University of Worcester on Saturday September 30th.



John Spencer at work... Photo: D Taylor

Right from the start we knew it was going to be a great day and even a quick review of the list of speakers (more on that later) had many of those attending in their seats well in advance of the start of proceedings.

One of the stranger phenomena reported on paranormal investigations is the mysterious failure of equipment at the worst possible time and clearly conferences of this type are not exempt. Consequently, we should probably not have

been surprised that literally two minutes before Lionel Fanthorpe was due to open proceedings there was a flash and a bang as the bulb in the ceiling projector joyously exploded. (Of course, being experienced researchers and aware of such things in advance we had a replacement portable projector on hand!)



So much choice... Photo: D Taylor

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Editorial

Mike White

This issue features an article by Hugh Pincott on bodily survival research and, in desperate need of an editorial for this issue, I started to wonder how the concept of bodily survival fitted into the concept of reincarnation and whether, should such a thing exist at all, the modern political trend for choice in all things had made any inroads into the spiritual realms.

If current social and economic trends continue we can expect to be offered an endless degree of choice in our education, healthcare, pension arrangements and pretty much anything else you can imagine. So why not start planning for your next life now?

With a little clever programming I have managed to hack into the Akashic record, brought the Tibetan Book of the Dead on-line as an educational resource and launched a new Amazon-style internet one-stop shop for those willing and able to afford to pre-book their next life. Welcome to e-incarnation...

In accordance with modern trends there are now many more choices available to the discerning customer. Whereas old-style rebirth offered two simple choices (reincarnation in a later life or pre-incarnation in a previous one) we are able to provide a far wider range for your delight and delectation. For those interested I have listed a few selections from the catalogue below:

Ecological option. Come back as part of the Brazilian rainforest through the magic of Tree-incarnation. (Those of lesser financial means might like to try Pea-incarnation instead...)

Charity work: If this is your thing you can get a special discount for choosing Rotary-incarnation.

Interest in martial arts? You need our Bruce Lee-incarnation service.

End of Line Essex Special. Fancy something different next time around? Try our Chav option with Burberry-incarnation.

Conversely, if using the public reincarnation system is a little too down-market why not avoid the queues and try one of our unique proprietary-incarnation programmes? These special offers allow you to shortcut all the tedious karmic rules and come back as a lesser life-form (though it's a step up from editor of course...). Most popular so far has been the option of being a parasitic organism (we call that Flea-incarnation) though many people (probably those with a grudge) have opted to return as germs. (Interested? See under Beri-beri-incarnation)

If you have any special requests then please do get in touch though there may be an added charge: after all there is no such thing as free incarnation...

Don't forget that you can access the Members' Area of the website using:-
Username: *assapmember*
Password: *haunted*.

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Ghost Writing

The spell-caster from last time was eponymous hero Wandering Aengus from the poem by W B Yeates.

This time the quote is supplied by Hugh Pincott. See if you can work out who said:

"The masses have never thirsted after truth. Whoever can supply them with illusions is easily their master; whoever attempts to destroy their illusions is always their victim."

Usual rules apply...

Errata (who, you may remember, is the Greek goddess of editorial mistakes...)

Last issue I claimed that Jim Clark, author of the new *Haunted Wandsworth* (available from <http://www.tempus-publishing.com/bookdetails.php?isbn=0752440705>) had also written *Strange Croydon*. I had in fact meant to say *Strange Mitcham*. Anyone visiting the excellent *Strange Croydon* website (<http://www.apaw71.dsl.pipex.com>) will be well aware that it was produced by Val Hope.

Apologies to Jim and Val (and a free plug to both by way of compensation!)

Training Day

Final reminder... It isn't too late to book.

Training Day 2006 will be held on **Saturday November 25th** at the **EPA Science Centre in Oxford**, Lincoln College's dedicated lecture and conference centre just a few minutes walk from the town centre.

For new members Training Day is a must-do event; an opportunity to not only learn about how ASSAP conducts investigations but also a chance to meet other members, swap ideas and generally have a great day out. Not forgetting that attending Training Day is the first step to attaining Accredited Investigator status. For more established members, AI or not, it offers a great chance to catch up with old friends and maybe pick up a few new ideas at the same time. And, hopefully anyway, the case scenario will be one you haven't seen before!

Seasoned observers may notice a few changes this year, not to the basic format of the training itself but to the way the day is structured. Since we have been having increasing problems identifying suitable locations with lecture/conference facilities as well as a suitable venue for the overnight vigil (well, at a price that isn't totally uneconomic anyway) we are experimenting with having just the day's training in Oxford this year. With the advent of our regular members' investigations spear-headed by Caroline Pick the need to tack on an overnight training vigil has become less important - not to mention the fact that it relieves the strain on the various organisers who no longer have to struggle through a continuous 24 hours of activity!

This change has a number of consequences. In terms of accreditation it means that potential AIs will need to either come along to one of our regular investigations or attend another 'approved' ASSAP training investigation as part of the accreditation process. With respect to Training Day itself it means that the evening is free for attendees to decamp to the pub for an evening of networking, chat and general socialising and making friends: certainly the perfect way to end the day. And, for those interested, the Lamb and Flag serves an excellent range of beers and is literally two minutes walk away...

Of course we have traditionally held the ASSAP AGM in the evening after Training Day, both for convenience and as a way of filling time before the night's vigil. Since we will only be in Oxford for the day the AGM will be held during the lunchtime break to the TD schedule. As an encouragement to come along we will be providing a free finger buffet lunch to anyone who attends. See, you don't even need to worry about food if you come along!

As usual, you can download a booking from the Members Area of the website (username: assapmember, password: haunted). And remember: Training Day is exclusively for ASSAP members so if you think a friend may be interested encourage them to join!

Library News

Just as we thought it was all sorted...

Those of you who have been following the saga of our library move will be aware that we had to shift our entire collection of over 1500 books from Senate House in London to Pleasey Vale Mills in Derbyshire earlier this year. We have just heard that Rupert Mole, the company which kindly offered us storage space, are now moving premises themselves and so we are, once again, looking for a new home.

Librarian Terry Porter is currently wrestling with the problem and trying to find another home, preferably of course fairly close to the present location to minimise the fuss of moving again, but so far the prospect looks bleak.

So, another plea. We have an emergency fallback plan (which consists of storing the library in a basement!) but this is hardly ideal. If you think you may be able to suggest a better location (or, in the worst case could offer a home to a box of books) please let us know at library@assap.org.

Obituary

It is with deep regret that we have to announce that Julie Hunt passed away from cancer last month in a hospice in Ashford, Kent. Julie had been ill for some time, but finally fell peacefully asleep surrounded by her family.



Julie Hunt - 1950 - 2006

Julie, along with husband Mark, joined ASSAP back in the late 1990s and went on many investigations around that time. Julie took that now-famous photo of 'The Figure on The Staircase' at The Ancient Ram Inn back in 1999 (you can find a copy of the photo at http://cotswoldedge.org.uk/w-u-e/the_ram_inn.htm).

For many years Julie was also a member of Parasearch and undertook investigations in the Midlands and other locations.

Julie always gave 100% on every investigation she undertook and ever vigil she attended. She was a loving wife and a good mother to her children as well as a good friend to a many of ASSAP members. We would like to pass on our deepest condolences to Mark and family.

(Continued from page 1)

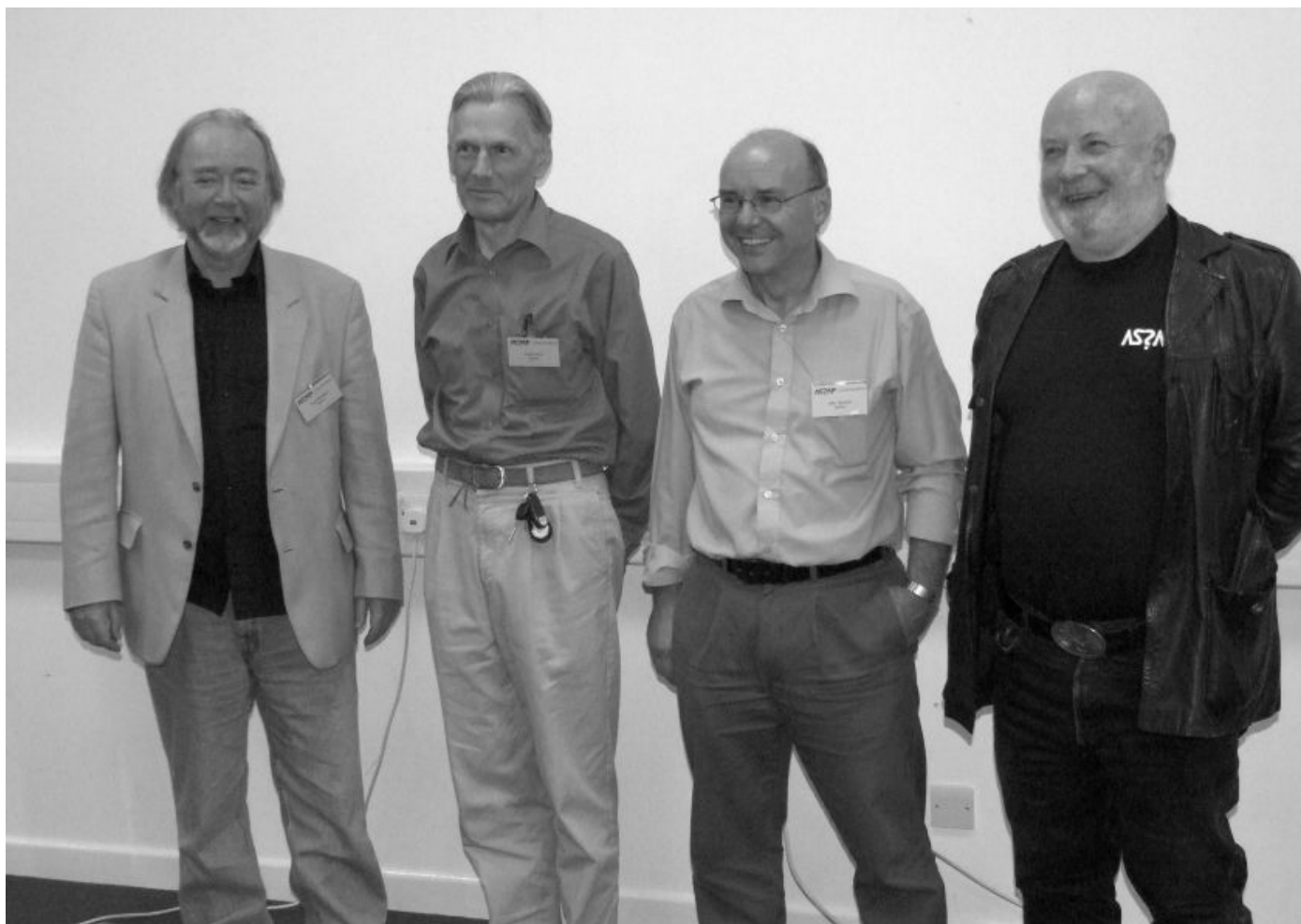
The Talks*

John Spencer opened the day with a talk detailing his long involvement with poltergeist investigation. As the author of 'the Poltergeist Experience', as well as having many years of practical investigative experience behind him, John is clearly an expert in this particular field and his talk clearly demonstrated this. Ranging widely from how to tell a poltergeist from any other type of haunting to details of actual cases, both historical and more recent, John gradually outlined some of the problems involved in this area of research.

some of the theories which have been proposed to explain why such events occur concluding that the overriding cause of RSPK (Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinetic) activity is almost certainly an overwhelming and unrelievable sense of frustration. As for his proposal for a possible cure? Well, let's just say that I think I'd rather have the poltergeist myself...

Thanks to the problems preceding John's talk causing the day to run late the next title of the next agenda item, ASSAP President Lionel Fanthorpe's talk on the Mysteries of Time, was entirely appropriate.

Anyone who has ever heard Lionel speak knows what to expect and indeed he was on fine form as he discussed some of the current scientific



'It was the man on the right officer...' Photo: V Hope
Paul Devereux, Lionel Beer, John Spencer and Lionel Fanthorpe

Remember the exploding projector bulb? John had a far sadder tale to tell involving a video tape that ran out *just before* being able to record a possible poltergeist incident!

As well as an analysis of the phenomena associated with the poltergeist John also discussed

thinking on how time works before moving into more paranormal territory with tales precognition and prophecy.

Lionel mentioned that some people seem to be able to be able to minimise the effects of time

* Unfortunately Dr Hilary Evans had to withdraw from the conference for health reasons. We wish him all the best in his recovery.

itself. Some individuals throughout history seem to have displayed extreme longevity; could this perhaps be a form of temporal manipulation?



John Spencer and Lionel Fanthorpe: Photo V Hope

Of course no discussion of time and its mysteries would be complete without a few stories of past-life regression, something ASSAP has done research on itself of course. My only comment is 'All hail, Sir Vernon de Grey of Thetford!'

Interestingly, for those who have seen mention in these pages of the possible effects of water on paranormal phenomena, a number of Lionel's stories featured sites near lakes and rivers. There was considerable discussion after his talk on this fascinating topic too!

Finally, I will just offer this second-hand warning: if you are ever in Norwich and fancy a look around the Cathedral don't use the car park toilets! Or, if you do, make sure you tell us about it afterwards...

Following a break for lunch the day resumed with another Lionel, in this case Lionel Beer, who spoke about his research into the origins and actual location of the Arthurian Camelot.

Well, with all due apologies to the local Tourist Board at Tintagel, we can all forget any Cornish associations for a start since one of Lionel's early revelations was that Dozmary Pool, one of the favourite candidates to be the home of the Lady in the Lake, often completely dries out in the summer. Somehow the image of the Lady in the Mud doesn't have quite the same mythical glamour about it!

Tracing the history of the Arthurian Cycle stories Lionel pointed to a number of possible locations from Winchester (as identified by Mallory and still home to a mediaeval Round Table) to

Camelon, near Falkirk in Scotland. Bit of a blow to English pride if that one is correct. Alternatively he suggested Camlet Moat in London which, in a neat piece of synchronicity is hard upon Enfield which I'm sure John Spencer mentioned at some point...

Lionel's final points were based on the etymology of the name Camelot. Given that historically a *camalot* was an itinerant tinker and that a *camelotte* is effectively a midden-heap then perhaps rather than being a particular site Camelot actually referred to a sort of travelling court or military camp. Given the turbulent times in which the legends are set this is certainly an intriguing possibility.

The final speaker of the day was Earth Mysteries researcher, archaeologist and renaissance man, Paul Devereux who dealt with differing approaches to the paranormal in Western and 'non-scientific' cultures (my terminology!) under the general heading of *Cultures in Collision*.

Paul began by describing the currently contradictory attitudes to paranormal phenomena displayed by our present society. On the one hand we have a widespread (and uncritical) acceptance of the reality of, for example, ghosts, as exemplified by the Most Haunted phenomenon;



Lionel Beer: Photo D Taylor

on the other we have an academic establishment which is determinedly hostile to the subject. (See p7 for more on this - Ed)

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I was certainly surprised to hear that the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research unit at Harvard was being closed despite many years of research giving small but positive indications



Paul Devereux in action - Photo: D Taylor

of unexpected phenomena being present in human-computer interactions. Similarly Paul revealed that everyone's favourite researcher, Michael Persinger, was having trouble obtaining funding to continue his ground-breaking work. Paul's contention was that any positive results from 'anomalous' research could start to open up cracks in current scientific thinking; something no established hierarchy would wish to see.

Moving on to discussing the other side of the coin Paul revealed that, according to latest estimates, tribal cultures were disappearing at a rate of one per month. While anthropologists were able to capture some of the folklore and belief systems of these peoples in many cases such cultural recording tended to be done to a



Dave Taylor and Lionel discuss...lunch? Photo V. Hope

strictly academic script. While some scientists were prepared to try to delve deeper into the lives of the people they were studying this course was fraught with academic peril. For example the Society of Transpersonal Anthropologists were forced to dramatically rewrite their objectives to remove any reference to the paranormal before they could be accepted into the establishment.

Paul's view is that tribal peoples have an entirely different mental outlook on life, an entirely non-western consciousness if you like. He gave a number of examples of colonial officials who had encounters with what they considered to be local superstitions with widely differing results. His overall conclusion was that in order to actually *experience* the kinds of phenomena reported by many of these witnesses it is actually necessary to embrace the whole world-view of those who entertain such beliefs. Those who look through the window of a haunted house are far less likely to be haunted than those who actually live there.



ASSAP President with Founder Members Maurice Townsend, John Merrin and Hugh Pincott. Photo: D Taylor

In a final flourish ASSAP Librarian and chartered Town Crier, Terry Porter, thanked Lionel and the organisers of the day and the audience retired for Bucks Fizz and birthday cake.

All in all a fantastically successful day and all credit to David Taylor who did most of the organisation. Thanks too to Carolyn Adey who, as far as I could tell, ended up doing most of the catering and, of course, to everyone else involved in the day.

Sorry you missed it? Well, ASSAP is 30 in just five years so who knows, maybe we'll do something similar again...

Arrivals and Departures

Hats off to those who noticed some changes to the Executive listing this month.

It is with a great deal of regret that I have to announce that ASSAP founder Maurice Townsend has decided that 25 years at the helm of ASSAP is enough for anyone and has consequently retired from the Executive. As well as being among ASSAP's founder members Maurice was also Chairman for an amazing 17 years as well as having been Treasurer and General Secretary and Editor of Anomaly. Thankfully, Maurice has said he will remain on the Research Panel and will continue as ASSAP Webmaster.

As if that wasn't bad news enough, another long-time member, Val Hope, has also decided to retire to pursue other projects. Val's contributions to ASSAP have also been substantial; she was the driving force behind PASS, our original clippings collection, Deputy Chairman, wrote the extensive glossary to be found on the website as well as our official history... Oh, and did I mention that she was Editor of ASSAP News for 11 years?

Additionally... Dave Taylor, Groups Supremo and organiser of our Worcester Anniversary Conference (as well as somehow finding time to be Chairman of Midlands group Parasearch) has also stepped down from the Executive to allow more time for other paranormal projects. There may be some other reason at work here of course, since Dave did email me to quote Groucho Marx: 'I don't want to belong to any club that will have me as a member'!

And, in the manner of such things, ex-Librarian and Research Officer James Clark, ex-Deputy Chair and Groups Officer Wendy Milner and Ombudsman Mel Warren have also decided, for a variety of reasons, to call it a day.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those leaving for all the time and effort that they have given freely to ASSAP over the years and wish them all the best in their new endeavours. Their contributions and experience will be sorely missed.

Of course this does leave ASSAP with a number of vacancies! Thankfully our Media Rep. Dave Wood, who also runs Swindon-based P-S-I, has manfully agreed to step into the Deputy Chair and will, other things being equal, become Chairman next year. Stepping ...er... womanfully, into the General Secretary role is Nicky Sewell. You will also notice some new names on the ballot paper this year. Welcome to them all.

You may have noticed that this still leaves a few members down and so I would like to make a serious plea to everyone to consider whether they would like to contribute something to ASSAP. The Association can only function effectively and serve your interests if enough members are willing to help with the day-to-day management of the organisation. As the numbers of those willing to help declines our ability to carry out the ongoing management of ASSAP declines accordingly. If you think you would like to be involved in running ASSAP, at whatever level you feel appropriate, please drop us a line at assap@assap.org (or any of the other email addresses) for more information. Generally we are a friendly bunch and we would be very grateful to hear from you!

BA Fracas

Study of the paranormal made the national press in September following disagreements at the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BA) Festival of Science in Norwich.

The BA, which according to its website is a 'charity which exists to advance the public understanding, accessibility and accountability of the sciences and engineering' stepped dangerously close to the fringes of acceptable science by allowing sessions and debates from a number of paranormal researchers, all of whom it has to be said are scientists of some academic standing.

Top of the list was Dr Rupert Sheldrake who is funded by Trinity College Cambridge and who has been investigating telepathic experiences and is currently looking at the possibility of a mobile phone user knowing who a call or text message is from. Also appearing were 'sympathetic' sceptic Prof Chris French of Goldsmiths College, London and Prof Deborah Delaney of Northampton, but most controversial of all I suspect was Dr Peter Fenwick, the well-known NDE researcher.

These controversial items were organised by the Scientific and Medical network, an organisation whose aims include 'exploring the interface of science, medicine and spirituality' (hardly hardcore science in itself then...) and which the BA describes as being 'far from the scientific mainstream'.

Helen Haste, Chairwoman of the programme committee, stated that all three speakers had 'proper academic credentials' and that though their work is controversial it is 'conducted in a rigorous, scholarly fashion'.

Certain members of the BA however were outraged at the mere mention of the paranormal at a 'respectable' scientific event. Prof. Peter Atkins of (ahem) Lincoln College, Oxford said 'Work in this field is a total waste of time...telepathy is [nothing] more than a charlatans fantasy'. Sir Walter Bodmer of Hertford College, also Oxford, commented, 'it is quite inappropriate to have a session like that without putting forward a more convincing view'. Even Sir Robert Winston, the Government's favourite scientist, was quoted as saying 'It's something the BA should consider, whether a session like this should go unchallenged by *regular scientists*'. (My italics - ed). Dr Sheldrake responded to criticisms by pointing out that his results had been 'published in peer-reviewed journals' but then spoilt it all by adding 'and replicated by the Nolan Sisters'!

Sources include:

The Times September 8th 2006
Telegraph September 6th 2006
<http://www.the-ba.net/the-ba/Events/FestivalofScience/FestivalNews/Telepathy+thru+txt.htm>
<http://www.scimednet.org>

Research matters

- By Dr Hugh Pincott

Scientific research is a fundamental reason for ASSAP's existence. In this first of a new series of articles, National Research Coordinator Dr Hugh Pincott examines the vexed question of survival of bodily death and suggests some directions for active research. The purpose is to give a wide perspective of as many aspects as possible, and many are capable of being developed into a workable module for research by individual ASSAP members or groups.

Concepts

Several concepts of possible survival of bodily death have been summarised elsewhere (Spedding 1975; Thouless 1979), and many seem inextricably entwined with the holy books of various cultures and religions. The simplest hypothesis is that of non-survival: that consciousness finally comes to an end at the moment of death. One theory which asserts that the stream of consciousness continues indefinitely through the time after death is called continuous survival. This is often rationalised by supposing a continuing self or soul which is united with the body during life, but which continues to exist and experience after the body has died. Some people postulate a quasi-material organism that survives death of the physical body and remains the vehicle of consciousness. The term "astral body" is commonly used for this.

Buddhists for example accept such survival, as shown by their accounts of heavens and hells, but they deny the existence of any continuing self as such. The process is like a flame being passed from candle to candle rather than the reincarnation of an enduring self. Reincarnation allows the stream of consciousness to become re-embodied at some time after the last one has died, and this may be called the theory of intermittent revival.

Closer to Western cultural traditions is the religious idea of "resurrection". Here the stream of consciousness is revived in the body at some future date (the resurrection day), and this may be called the theory of terminal revival. Interpretations of this have varied at different times. Of course, many Christians believe souls ascend to heaven at the very moment of death, yet another complexity.

Finally, we must cater for the possibility that consciousness may continue after death in circumstances where time does not exist. Or in another dimension of time, which intersects with our own only at the moment of death.

Obviously many of these models are not amenable to systematic research. Reports of reincarnation, for example, have to be treated as investigations of spontaneous cases, and the possibility of "terminal survival" is inherently untestable. For most practical research purposes, we shall have to take "continuous survival" as a working hypothesis, though this will not rule out any other variety of course.

In addition we must always remember that mind as we know it could merely be a product of brain mechanics leading to a daunting prospect that when we are dead, we are very dead. And that is not the only problem.

The Super-ESP theory

During our researches we must be ever-mindful of the possibility that any viridical or meaningful information purporting to originate from deceased persons may in fact come from the minds

of the "sitter" (the person in contact with the medium or sensitive) as a result of extra-sensory perception by the latter. This hypothesis claims such minds have to ability to trawl through future time as well, to explain some information presented. The Super-ESP Theory claims to understand everything - and consequently nothing.

Our present task however is to collect as many facts, data and pieces of information as possible. Trying to explain them is a luxury awaiting us later.

General mediumship

The simplest and easiest experiments involve collecting and assessing information delivered in sittings with mediums. A sitting need not necessarily be one-to-one, and services at Spiritualist Churches can provide very valuable material. It is very useful for a colleague present to write down (or tape record with permission at a private sitting) so as to allow full rapport between sitter and medium.

Mediums and sensitives appear to have a special talent, but as in other areas of human endeavour, the latter are never demon-



Ouija board and planchette. Image courtesy: Stockxpert.com

strated evenly or uniformly. Mediums can have off-days too, and as many explain, it is not always easy to capture and/or interpret the information they receive. Consequently we should not accept any particular statement as "gospel truth". Some details are very striking, such as unusual names relayed, occasionally with addresses and even telephone numbers!

But more usually we have to work with quite mundane utterances, which are often likely to be as applicable to much of the general population as to the sitter. Nevertheless if we can garner a large number of statements, these can be assessed statistically for their overall relevance to the sitter as opposed to a panel of control people.

Even a simple 5-point marking scale can be highly useful. Break the accumulated information from a particular sitter (with may have been obtained from one or more mediums) into discrete statements. Then get the sitter and members of the control panel to assess each (as if it were directed to them) as follows:

- ++ Highly relevant
- + Quite or fairly relevant
- 0 Too general or widely applicable
- Not really relevant
- No way relevant

Following this the sitter and control panel should invite each other to justify the number of "++" statements (at least), making any agreed adjustment to scores if necessary. If this procedure yields a bias in favour of the sitter, more sophisticated statistical



Ouija session at Bisham Abbey, Berkshire in 2006

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techniques may then be employed to evaluate it further.

Evidence may be strengthened if:

- * The information is not in the public domain
- * It should be verifiable independently
- * We need to be sure we can rule out chance

Group work

This approach is very versatile and can yield useful results in a variety of applications. Methodology will differ in detail and can be developed if sufficient interest allows, but some workable examples follow.

The essential pre-requisite is for harmony and cohesiveness to develop within the group, so that members may feel confident to express any words or ideas freely as they arise, without fear of ridicule, criticism or even pity. Sitting around a table, or facing each other in easy chairs is a preferred configuration. A different member of the group should act as observer /recorder of events at each meeting, usually sitting outside the "circle".

The general intent here is to see whether "ordinary" researchers can provide veridical information after a while. This process has much in common with Spiritualist development circles. Indeed, you may be lucky enough to persuade an accomplished sensitive to join your group, and compare results obtained with or without him/her.

One theory to consider besides the survival hypothesis is that of a "group mind", where certain mental attributes among members may be enhanced or combined to appear like an independent entity. Some decades ago, researchers in Toronto, Canada (Owen 1976), invented an historical character they dubbed "Philip". During their sittings he appeared in all his colourful fictional detail.

Cipher tests

Assuming that some part of human personality does survive bodily death, why not try to seek help from distinguished researchers who have passed on? Especially those who during their lifetime set unusually hard tests or puzzles, and carried the key with them. "Key" is an appropriate word, as several people have programmed special combination locks, for which they, and only they, knew the opening code. The Survival Joint Research Committee Trust (SJRCT) - with whom ASSAP enjoys close ties - has three of these locks, which await communication

of the vital ciphers.

Another variation is to attempt contact with deceased researchers who achieved excellence in experimental work during their lifetimes, inviting help with the hope of gleaning tips and hints for our own endeavours.

Mechanical devices

Many have been employed over the years, and have been commonly referred to as "planchettes" or "ouija boards". The archetypal version is that of a wineglass upturned on a table inside a circle of letters and sometimes numbers. Sitters (usually 4) each place a finger on the glass which after a while appears to move of its own accord, occasionally after some time spelling out meaningful words and phrases.

Other versions include a slider like a billiard-board scorer. For an interesting account of a series of such experiments, see Eyre (2005).

Should we use a ouija board? ASSAP's Val Hope advises: "Not unless you are prepared to risk scaring yourself witless. People experienced in its use will sing its praises and explain that it is a tool for helping a spirit communicate, or for helping non-mediums develop some sort of psychic ability. Many others have found that the mind likes to play tricks on the participants and come up with frightening messages, dredged from parts of the mind where they ought to stay hidden." (Hope 1999).

Wherever the message originates, the usual explanation for the glass movement is unconscious muscular action of behalf of one (or more) of the sitters. I have attempted to obviate this influence by inventing an electronic device which usually spells out random letters in the proportion they are encountered in normal English language. Group sitters try to influence the machine by starting a sequence simultaneously.

Physical phenomena

These constitute the Holy Grail for researchers nowadays, for very few traditional instances indeed have been reported since the 1930s (but see Fontana 2004). The relevance to survival is that knocks and spontaneous table movements were attributed to deceased entities who allegedly communicated messages by coded raps. More than this a "semi-material" substance called ectoplasm seemed to exude from the body of entranced "physical" mediums and reportedly took on the appearance of once-living people. Of course the reality of such phenomena was hotly debated then and now.

Perhaps the paucity of current events means our technological age does not take kindly to such apparent nonsense, but the 1970s saw an eruption of alleged paranormal metal-bending, some experiments carried out under extremely controlled conditions. No relevance to survival has been claimed here, though.

Several ASSAP members have researched physical phenomena and confirm that inordinately long training and effort is needed to get anything at all. NIC Bill Eyre describes his own experiences:

"I spent a total of five years sitting regularly in physical circles. Each circle had about six sitters plus a developing physical medium. In the first one, regular communications were received via the medium's trance abilities, frequently allegedly from famous deceased persons. In this sort of situation, it is difficult to tell



whether the communicators really are who they say they are. Incidents of a physical nature were disappointingly infrequent but on occasion psychic breezes, EVP and coloured lights in the air were experienced.

"The second of the circles attended was much more productive of physical phenomena, with the emanation of ectoplasm from the medium, and transfiguration being witnessed regularly. On one occasion a sample of ectoplasm was collected and sent to ASSAP for analysis, but unfortunately the process for having this done was insufficiently slick at the time and the substance had deteriorated too much for any finding to be obtained, other than that it was an organic substance.

"The transfigurations were seen by all sitters, sometimes affecting the medium's hands and sometimes her face. Being unaware at the time that ASSAP had an infrared camcorder, the séances were not filmed, but for current researchers within ASSAP who are prepared to devote the time with a suitable like-minded group, filming and analysis of ectoplasm present real opportunities."

Hypnosis

Here is an extremely powerful tool that under certain conditions can allow even "ordinary" individuals to achieve an altered state of consciousness akin to mediumistic trance. It should be employed only by trained practitioners who understand its limitations and dangers, and know how to deal with problems that can arise.

Hypnotic techniques were used extensively during the 1970s and 1980s to research the fascinating subject of regression to apparent previous lives - indicating another form of survival, of course. Much intriguing material was recorded in an ASSAP research project of the time (Pincott 1998) which concluded the subject was even more complex than any of the half-dozen starting models postulated.

Other theories

To round this brief overview of post-mortem survival, we must

bear in mind that ostensible communications may arise from any of the following, separately or in combination:

Message coming through... Photo: W Eyre

- * Survival of human personality
- * Memories of past lives stimulated by hypnosis or reincarnation
- * Extraction of memories from a cosmic data bank or Akashic Record
- * Time travel to earlier periods
- * Probing the contents of parallel universes
- * Unconscious creative fantasy or out-and-out fraud

Exciting

Exciting challenges and opportunities by any standard! Some of the projects described, such as evaluating material from mediums, can be undertaken immediately with no special apparatus or training. Other more complex ones need considerable preparation, significant training and infinite patience. ASSAP's Research Department will be happy to develop experimental protocols for the latter if there is sufficient interest and enthusiasm.

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Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to Val Hope, Dennis Bury and Jim Clark for helpful discussions and contributions.

Recent UK Seismic Activity

This data courtesy of the British Geological Survey -
more recent information is available from
<http://www.quakes.bgs.ac.uk/>

Date	Lat	Long	Depth(Mi)	Mag	Location
2006/10/17	60.276	0.385	10.0	2.3	Offshore, Shetland
2006/10/15	56.684	-5.655	5.3	1.3	Loch Sunart, Highland
2006/10/15	52.858	-3.597	14.9	0.9	Bala, Gwynedd
2006/10/13	56.705	-5.251	6.8	1.4	Ballachulish, Highland
2006/10/11	56.942	-5.849	4.8	1.2	Arisaig, Highland
2006/10/06	54.688	-5.212	5.6	1.2	North Channel
2006/09/26	52.064	-2.645	9.7	1.3	Hereford
2006/09/26	52.041	-3.14	19.2	2.1	Hay-on-Wye
2006/09/24	54.554	-3.705	5.0	1.1	Irish Sea

Lunar Phases

November 2006:

Full Moon 5th
Last Quarter 12th
New Moon 20th
First Quarter 28th

December 2006:

Full Moon 5th
Last Quarter 12th
New Moon 20th
First Quarter 27th

Astronomical Events

Meteor Showers.

This issue the showers to watch out for are the Leonids (November 13th to 20th) and the Geminids (December 6th to 19th).

Significant close encounters this month are:

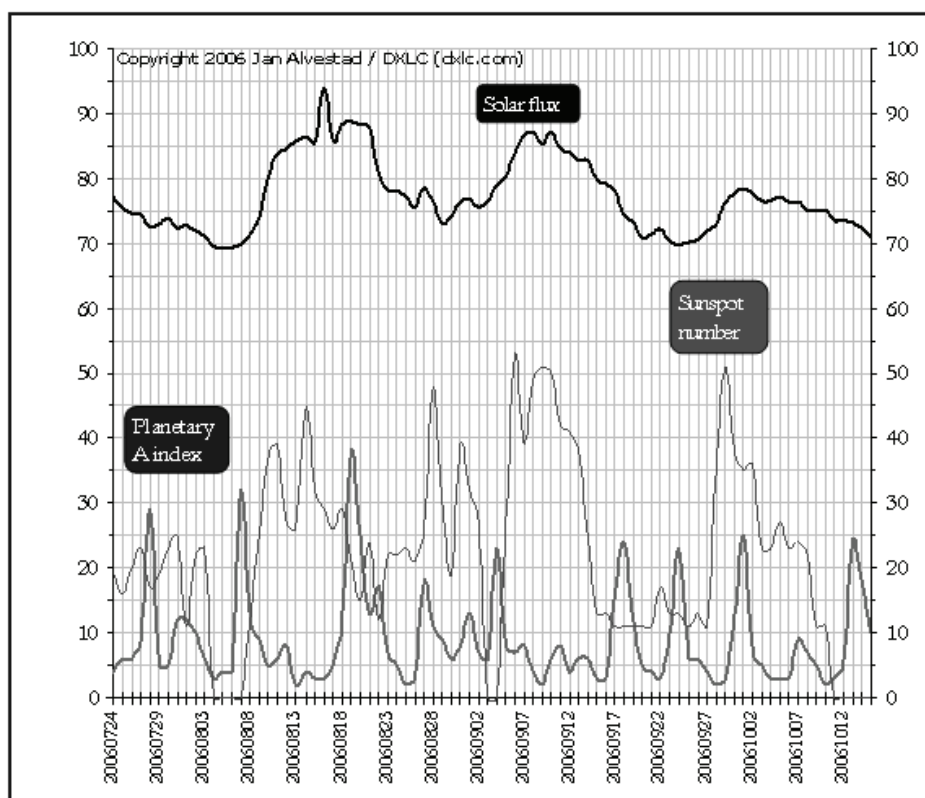
November 15th. Venus is 0.5° degrees south of Jupiter.

November 21st. The moon passes 1° south of both Jupiter and Venus.

December 11th. Mars passes 0.8° south of Jupiter.

The Winter Solstice this year occurs on December 22nd at Midnight...

Solar Terrestrial Activity Index



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.

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

Anglia Paranormal Investigation Society (APIS)

APIS meetings are held on the last Thursday of the month at The Tempsford Room, The Anchor pub, Tempsford, 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 or telephone: 01462 490833

BUFORA (British UFO Research Organisation)

See www.bufora.org.uk for full details.

CPSG (Chesterfield Psychic Study Group)

holds lecture meetings on the paranormal on the second Friday of each month, given by invited speakers. 7.15 p.m. Community Centre, South Place, Chesterfield. Subscription £1.50. For further details, tel. (01246) 413217 or visit www.cpsg.co.uk.

Essex UFO and Paranormal Research Group

For details contact Keith on 01255 426274

Ghanon

Paranormal group covering Wirral, Cheshire and North Wales. Membership by invitation. For further info contact emailus@ghanon.org, visit www.ghanon.org or call 0700 341 8495 - please note the new number.

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 for details of future events.

Leicestershire Paranormal Association

Leicestershire Paranormal Association (LPA) is a new ASSAP Affiliated group based in Leicestershire. As a group we are interested in all the different aspects of paranormal research and hold regular meetings for group discussions. Our investigative programme aims to cover reported haunted locations throughout the UK. For more information including membership and website access please contact leicestershirepa@aol.com We would be pleased to hear from you.

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, and visit the website at www.lemc.ic24.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 Liverpool 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 or 0151 727 4057

Melton Paranormal Research Society

MPRS is an 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 or email meltonparaclub@aol.com

Mercia Forteana

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.

Midlands Ghost Research Society

The MGR is an ASSAP-affiliated group operating in the Coventry area. For details email info@tmgrs.co.uk or see www.tmgrs.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

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) or Cherill Penton 01543 685913 (susan.penton1@btinternet.com) or see www.paranormalawakening.com

Parasearch is a Midlands ASSAP regional group covering Worcestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands. For more details visit: 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.

Plymouth ASSAP

Plymouth ASSAP is an investigation group covering South East Cornwall, South and West Devon and Plymouth. It was formed earlier this year to study, investigate and research Psychic phenomena, Earth Mysteries, Ufology and Fortean Phenomena. We hold meetings at the Fisherman's Arms in the Barbican area of Plymouth on the second tuesday of each month. For details of how you can get involved, please contact Lee at eustacetuttle@yahoo.co.uk

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 or visit www.spiuk.net.

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

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>

And just a final reminder for:

Training Day – November 25th