

NEWS

Issue 123 Summer 2008

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Death of the Apparition?

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ABOUT ASSAP

The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena was formed in 1981 to study a wide range of paranormal phenomena. These fall into the broad categories of psychic phenomena, earth mysteries, Ufology and Fortean phenomena. ASSAP holds no corporate views and the views expressed by individual authors are their own.

ASSAP is a registered charity (327422) and a company limited by guarantee (2075226)

**ASSAP, 27 Old Gloucester Street,
London, WC1N 3XX.
0845 652 1648 www.assap.org**

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ASSAP News Team:

Editors: Dave Wood and Wendy Milner.

Regular Contributors: Lionel Fanthorpe, Nicky Sewell,
Maurice Townsend, and Matt Hicks

Contact us at assapnews@assap.org

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Website Members' Area

The members area of the website is a fantastic resource, with forms and information for investigators as well as past copies of ASSAP News and Anomaly. Visit the website at www.assap.org and log into the members site:

Username: [assapmember](#)

Password: [haunted](#)

Are you on Email?

We like to keep in touch with members from time to time by email. If you haven't received an email from us please email your name and email address to chairman@assap.org so you can keep up to date!

Got a Case?

Do you know someone who has had an anomalous experience of any kind that they would like to see investigated by ASSAP? ASSAP has a network of investigators all over the UK who are ready to help.

Contact Bill Eyre on investigations@assap.org for more information.

Group

Are you a member of an investigation group? Does your group have one or more AAIs in a Investigation Leader position? If so, why not become an ASSAP Affiliate Group. Contact Steve Wills on groups@assap.org for more information.

The Executive

Chairman: Dave Wood (chairman@assap.org)

Secretary: Stefan Lobuczek (secretary@assap.org)

Treasurer: Wendy Milner (treasurer@assap.org)

National Investigations Co-ordinator:

William Eyre (investigations@assap.org)

Deputy NIC: Cherill Penton

(deputy.nic@assap.org)

National Research Co-ordinator: Hugh Pincott
(research@assap.org)

Training Officer: Nicky Sewell

(training@assap.org)

Groups Officer: Steve Wills (groups@assap.org)

Equipment Officer: Caroline Searley

(equipment@assap.org)

Media Officer: Caroline Searley (media@assap.org)

Archives Officer: Terry Porter

(archives@assap.org)

Membership Secretary: Kevin Griffiths-Boden

(membership@assap.org)

Specialist Panel: John Gledson, Terry Hewitt,
Justin Cowell, Michael Lewis, Steve Parsons,
Ian Percy and Craig Coomber.

Contributions:

As well as our regular contributors columns ASSAP News accepts one-off or occasional contributions from any member to feature in our 'Focus On' Pages.

If you have an idea you'd like to discuss please email us on assapnews@assap.org

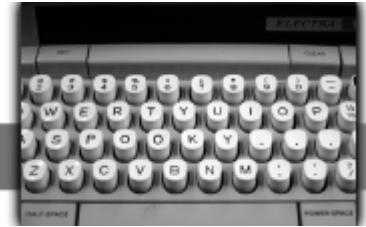
Submission Guidelines: Please email, or use our postal address, 400-600 words and at least one photograph on a relevant subject. If you would like to write a longer article please email us at assapnews@assap.org to discuss.

Submission Deadlines: Submission deadlines are the end of April, July, October and January of each year.

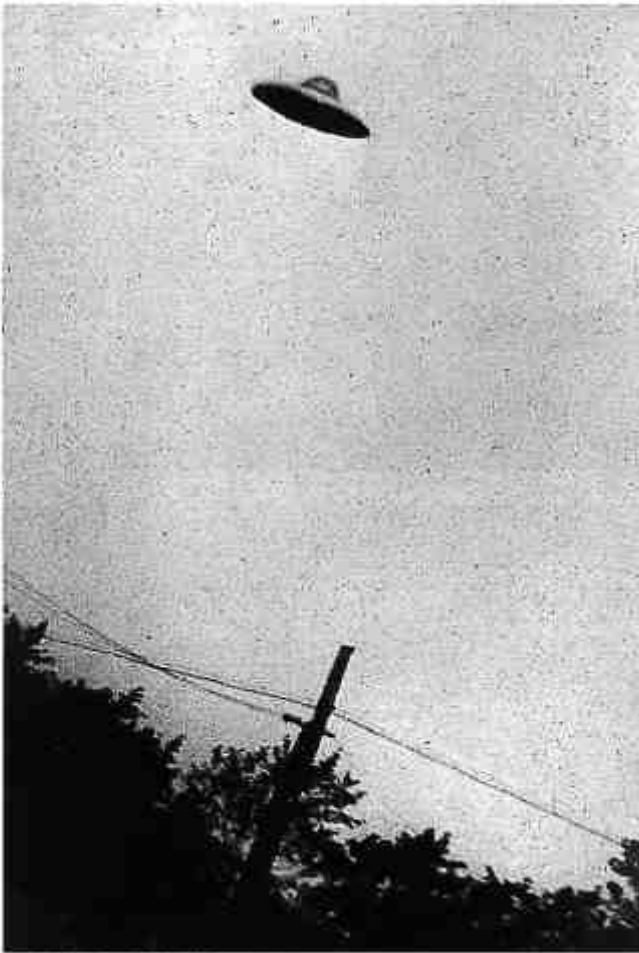
Longer articles and reviews: These are recommended to be submitted to Anomaly - ASSAP's Journal. Anomaly deadlines are the middle of August each year. Contact Anomaly by emailing anomaly@assap.org

THE NEWS

from the paranormal world



Amateur photographs of alleged UFOs



Panama, New Jersey, 31 July 1952

Image©CIA Educational Materials

UK X-Files Released!

As a result of requests made under Freedom of Information, previously top secret files on UFO activity in the UK have been revealed for the first time by the Ministry of Defence.

The first batch of cases made available span the nine year period of 1978 to 1987. Incidents within this time frame include reported sightings in Merseyside, Hampshire and Kent. Over the next four years a further 200 case files are due to be released.

To view these files yourself, visit
<http://ufos.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Have you heard any news from the paranormal world you'd like to share with other members? Email us on assapnews@assap.org

NEWS IN BRIEF

Oscars for Spiritualists

An awards ceremony for those working within spiritualism, healing and the paranormal was held for the first time in Wales in May 2008. Spiritual Connections Awards for Wales aimed to recognise and honour those working within the field as well as raising the image of such work.

Over 200 nominees gathered at the awards ceremony, categories at which included Male and Female Psychic/Medium/Clairvoyant, Psychic Artist, Paranormal Group/Tour and Printed Spiritual Media.

For a full list of winners and nominees, visit
<http://www.spiritualconnections.com/welshawards/>

Own your own Ghost!

Florida entrepreneur, John Deese, is offering people the opportunity to buy a ghost in a bottle for \$20.00. Through working with "professional ghost catchers", Deese claims to capture spectres in a bottle which you can then purchase through his website. Each bottle comes sealed with wax, securing the spirit through a "special technology". A certificate of ownership is also included and proud new owners are advised to open the bottle "at their own risk".

Pets Predict Quakes

In the aftermath of the tragic Chinese earthquake, locals are claiming that lives may have been saved if they had recognised changes in animals' behaviour prior to the devastating tragedy on 12th May. Referring back to the 1976 disaster, residents commented on dogs, mice, snakes, horses and cows all behaving strangely immediately prior to that earthquake, and, more recently, in the days leading up to this year's quake, mass migrations of frogs and toads were observed. An acute awareness of physical and chemical stimuli emanating from the Earth has been proposed as a potential cause for the changes in animal behaviour.

Paranormal Social Networking

With the recent proliferation of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Bebo, it was only going to be a matter of time before such a site was established aimed specifically at those with an interest in all things paranormal. Pioneered by Hollywood producer Steven Spielberg, the site will aim to increase the networking and sharing of information between paranormal enthusiasts. Members will be encouraged to share stories, experiences, research and footage, as well as developing friendships and contacts. The site, rumoured to be called The Rising, is due to be launched this summer.

(If you use the social networking site Facebook, be sure to check out the ASSAP group on there! – Ed.)

THE ASSAP INSIDER

What's going on in your Association?



ASSAP's Public Profile

ASSAP has always been a rather self-effacing association, shying away from the embarrassing excesses of the mass media.

Where other long-standing organisations have seen their profile and caseload diminish over recent years as the number of groups across the UK has exploded, ASSAP has seen a steady flow of cases. However we have not benefited from the recent upturn in interest in the paranormal.

The executive has decided to help raise the association's profile, albeit in a responsible way, so that more people know of ASSAP as a national organisation and a possible investigator of their case.

If anyone has any ideas about how to raise our profile please email chairman@assap.org

Introducing new Groups Officer - Steve Wills



We would like to thank former Groups Officer Lee Norton for his service to ASSAP and, following a change in Lee's personal circumstances,

welcome Steve Wills as ASSAP's new Groups Officer. Steve is an investigator with ASSAP affiliate group PSI. Regular attendees of ASSAP events may also recognise the name.

Why not give Steve some work to do by starting the process of affiliating your own group to ASSAP? Any paranormal group with an AAI in a lead investigation role can apply to become an affiliate. If you don't have an AAI, why not come along to the Training Weekend (see page 5) to start the process of becoming one? And if you don't have a group, or there isn't one in your area then why not start one? The Groups Officer can help, and we have a Good Practice Guide for setting up groups.

Benefits of becoming an affiliate group – apart from helping ASSAP – include:

- Guide to Good Practice - a meaningful guide to establishing and running groups
- Limited Insurance - groups benefit from ASSAP's PLI in some cases
- Grants - groups can apply for ASSAP research grants
- Photo Analysis - groups will have access to ASSAP's photo analyst
- Investigation Cases - ASSAP will occasionally pass groups cases in their local area
- Specialist Panel - groups have access to ASSAP's bank of specialist researchers on a wide range of phenomena
- Web Design– ASSAP can set up a single page website for groups on request
- Networking - groups will be given access to a private groups forum to share information
- Research – the opportunity to participate in national research projects

Contact Steve on groups@assap.org for more information.



Join us on Facebook!

Facebook is what they call a 'social networking website'; tempting as it is to switch off at this stage, please bear us out! Facebook is a quick and easy way to find other members and researchers, and keep up to date with their news.

Whether you want to stay in touch with someone directly, see flagged news items or want to read notes of what others think about the paranormal there is sure to be something to hold your interest.

Better still once you've registered you can run a search for ASSAP and the other 160+ members of the ASSAP Facebook group, and then invite your friends to join. The ASSAP Facebook group keeps you up to date, lets you have board discussions with other members and post links of interest.

TRAINING & EVENTS

Information



Beverley Friary, East Yorkshire

Book Now for Training Weekend 2008!

22nd - 23rd November 2008 will see the ASSAP Training Weekend at Yorkshire's Beverley Friary. Please use the booking form enclosed early to avoid disappointment!

Why should I go to the Training Weekend?

The residential weekend is a great opportunity to get to know fellow investigators of anomalous phenomena. The training should prepare you to investigate ASSAP cases, and is a chance to start the process of becoming an AAI and generally increase your existing skills. Existing AAIs can also use the TW to continue being an AAI, ready for when their card next expires.

Because the weekend is residential much fun is had by all – you won't regret your decision to come along.

What can I expect?

Training takes place on the Saturday and Sunday on site – the rest of the time is for networking and socialising. This year we have even provided accommodation for the Friday night as well as Saturday night, so distance should be no obstacle.

This year the accommodation will be in the beautiful Beverley Friary itself.

If you have any questions about the event email Nicky at training@assap.org

How much does it cost?

£25 tickets get you training, two nights accommodation and breakfast and lunch.

£20 tickets get you training, one nights accommodation and breakfast and lunch.

£15 day tickets get you training and lunch.

Tickets are limited, so don't forget to book straight away to avoid disappointment!

What do others say?

"A very effective means of networking and discussing investigation techniques with fellow investigators that otherwise might not have occurred. The opportunity to consider and develop alternative methods rather than going along with your established 'norm' is invaluable".

- Stuart Andrews, Supernatural Investigations

"ASSAP training attempts to provide a scientific framework for investigating the unknown. It's underlying structure is a proven method in scientific and psychological circles for building methodologies and research techniques. It allows a documented audit trail from how and why the investigation was conducted to the results gathered. The end result may provide answers or further research to be performed, but at least the basis of this framework would be valid and reliable".

- Jason Higgs, Supernatural Investigations

"The training day was a very productive and enjoyable experience. It brought together people and groups with very different areas of interest and successfully put together an educational package with regard to basic scientific investigation in planning, design and implementation. Ten marks out of ten to the organizers for their high level of encouragement and the ongoing training and support that they offer to all. I can't wait for the next time we meet up"...

- Janice Glenn

Come along and see for yourself! A booking form is included with this issue. If it's nowhere to be seen, please contact us at assapnews@assap.org

Read about a new trainee's experience of ASSAP Training on page 6

A First-Timer's Training Investigation by BSPRI's Wendy Isaacs

The photos I had seen of Oak House previous to my visit didn't do the building justice. The beautiful Tudor house looked out of place in this residential area of Birmingham. You couldn't help but wonder how it would have looked a few hundred years ago set against the backdrop of lush green fields and pastures.

It was evident that the rain hadn't dampened spirits (pardon the pun) as the steady stream of ASSAP members started to arrive from all around the country. They had come from far and wide. As far North as Scotland and as far south as Cornwall. The enthusiasm was a testament to them, their eagerness to learn new skills and gain more knowledge and in turn to become better paranormal investigators. We all had come together in unison to try and achieve this and we were not disappointed.

Many of the members had been with ASSAP for a number of years and for some, like me, it was their first time at a Training Investigation. It became evident that regardless of experience in the field of investigating, there were no big egos and everyone was friendly, welcoming and approachable.



Dave Wood's Oak House team at the Training Investigation

The training consisted of a wide range of talks and exercises, culminating in our own design of the investigation that we were going to run that very night. There were so many factors to take into consideration when planning our investigation. Was the witness reliable? Was it a first hand or second hand account? What time of day did the occurrences happen? Under what conditions? Were the lights on or off?

Using the information we had gathered from the eyewitnesses, we were able to come up with our own plan finishing off with a briefing that would be read out to investigators at the start of the investigation. Exercise over; it was time for the facilitators to decide which team's investigation plan would be used to investigate Oak House.



Oak House, West Bromwich, Birmingham

Decision made, we were called back to hear the result. The team leaders did have a difficult job to decide as all four investigation plans were really good but there could only be one winner *drum roll* and the winning team was Team D, lead trainer Nicky Sewell's team. I think by this time, everyone was itching with anticipation. It was time to investigate Oak House.

Over the course of the investigation, my team reported several strange experiences including hearing footsteps and corner-of-eye movement. At the end of the investigation, with everyone assembled back in the portacabin, it was time to finish off the night with a de-brief on the team's experiences.

With new friendships formed and more knowledge gained it was sad that the evening had come to a close. As we all headed back to our cars and said our goodbyes, I decided that this would be just the beginning of my quest to becoming a better paranormal investigator and I would be attending the training weekend in November and even though East Yorkshire is a long way to travel, I am sure it will be well worth the journey.

Wendy Isaacs, May 2008

EVENTS LISTING

Affiliate Group Events this Summer

LONDON EARTH MYSTERIES SUMMER PROGRAMME 2008

Apr 22: THE STRANGE CAREER OF GOOD KING LUD

Adam Stout

May 13: ELEN: GODDESS OF THE LEYS

Caroline Wise

May 27: PSYCHOMETRY: A DEMONSTRATION

(Bring objects to be read) Muriel Renard

June 10: THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Simon Michell

June 24: THE ORIGINS OF FREEMASONRY

David Barrett

July 8: REINCARNATION: LOST WESTERN TEACHING & CONNECTIONS

Robert Slater

July 22: SOCIAL & FORUM

All welcome. Chance to make short presentations & socialise. Please bring food & drink to share.
Slide projector available.

(Next meeting on Sept 23rd)



**Admission £4.00 (Concessions £3.50)
Members £2.50**

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

50 Gloucester Place

London W1U 8EA

No correspondence to this address please

Tube: Baker Street

Buses: 2,13, 30, 74, 82, 113, 139, 189, 274
northbound stop opposite.

(southbound buses stop in Baker Street
which runs parallel to Gloucester Place)

www.lemc.ic24.net

Chesterfield Psychic Study Group ~Summer Events~

All the following events are held at
Chesterfield Community Centre,
South Place, Chesterfield.

New members welcome.

June 13th at 7.15pm

Talk by Hazel Moody (The Aetherius Society)
On " Contact with Alien Beings "

July 11th at 7.15pm

Talk by Diane Oxborough
*On Meditation and Relaxation "Keys to Health
and Well Being"*

August 8th at 7.15pm

*On " The Day I Died " - Near Death
Experiences. Video and Discussion*

**Contact O. Blissett
Tel. 01246 277364**



**Advertise your group's events
here...**

**Contact
assapnews@assap.org**

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The world according to Lionel Fanthorpe



The Mystery of Urim and Thummim

Having been involved with the Rennes-le-Château mystery (and all its later ramifications!) since our first research visit there in 1975, we were recently asked to help 1244 Films with their latest production *Bloodline* and to make a presentation for them at their pre-première press conference in New York on May 5th. One of the questions that interested them was the degree of Templar involvement – and what *exactly* the first Templars might have been digging for under Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Popular theories among Templar historians and investigators include the possibility that it was the Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant – or an ancient treasure map and cipher disclosing their locations. A lesser known theory that interests us is that those nine original Templars were looking for *Urim* and *Thummim*: the sacred stones used by the High Priest “to ascertain the will of God.”

This type of divination comes under the general heading of *cleromancy*; and is also referred to as *sortition* or the casting of lots. Whereas an event like winning a Premium Bond is generally regarded as cleromancy asserts that the way the numbers run, the way the cards come up, or the way the dice roll, is under the control of God, Fate, Destiny – or some other powerful, paranormal entity. One school of thought suggests that Urim comes from a Hebrew word meaning *light* and Thummim is derived from another Hebrew word meaning *perfection*. It has also been argued that Urim signifies *curse* or *guilty*, while Thummim signifies innocence: if that theory is correct, the main use of the stones would have been to decide whether an accused prisoner was guilty or innocent.

Another perspective on the Urim and Thummim mystery links the stones by a circuitous route with Sarah, the sister - wife of the patriarch Abraham. According to this legend, Sarah entered the cave where Hermes Trismegistus – alias Thoth, scribe of the Egyptian gods – lay in suspended animation. There are equally persistent legends that identify Thoth-Trismegistus with the immortal Melchizedek (Genesis ch 14 v 18, and Epistle to the Hebrews ch 7 v 3).

Inside the cave, Sarah saw the famous Emerald Tablets of Hermes gleaming through the darkness, and picked two of them up to examine them more closely. Hermes began to wake from his deep sleep,

and Sarah fled *carrying the mysterious engraved emeralds with her*.

According to this tradition, the emeralds eventually entered the Jewish priestly religious tradition as Urim and Thummim. When danger from their many surrounding enemies threatened the Jewish people, what would be more natural than that the Temple priests would conceal their priceless stones of divination *somewhere below the Temple?*

Another important clue may be found in the enigmatic life – and uncertain death date – of Tesceline Sorrel, Lord of Fontaines and father of the influential Bernard of Clairvaux -

the man who was the power behind the Templars. Tesceline took part in the First Crusade. Did he bring vital information to Bernard about the location of the long lost Urim and Thummim? Was that how the original Templars found them below the ruins of Solomon's Temple?



Image ©Lionel Fanthorpe 2008

Footnote: An interesting book on the subject is *The Precious Stones of the Bible* by Rev. Chas W. Cooper, published by H.R. Allenson of London.

GAZETTEER

Nicky Sewell tours our paranormal places



In this edition, ASSAP's travel correspondent, Nicky Sewell, takes us on a tour of the modern town set in the ancient borough of Swindon. 'Haunted Swindon' was an Albion-style project run by ASSAP affiliate group Paranormal Site Investigators, in partnership with the Borough Council. The project unearthed nearly 150 allegedly haunted spots; these are some of them:

We start with Swindon's closest answer to a stately home: **Lydiard House**. If you take a picnic in the idyllic grounds or take a turn around the museum portion of the house you might even capture of glimpse of seventeenth century owner Sir John St John, who is said to give up his seat to weary visitors.



Lydiard House

Next we take a whistle-stop tour of the tightest cluster of the town's alleged haunted: the High Street of the 13th Century neighbouring town of Highworth. You can rest up at the **King and Queen** pub, reputed for its apparitions of wandering monks. Or if you prefer a more modern tale you can take in the ambience of **Sally's Café**, opposite, to try to catch a glimpse of the regular shadow-like figures, watching out for the allegedly thrown objects on the first floor. Next you can take a stroll down nearby **Pentyland's Lane**. Although you might be a little late to experience the hunchbacked spook seen by no fewer than twenty people in the 1960s.

Buy Haunted Swindon
from
amazon.co.uk!

See page 13 for a Census analysis of Haunted Swindon.



Railway Village

Heading back into the town centre you can enjoy Swindon's only proposed World Heritage Site, the **old railway quarter**: including the quaint Railway Village, and grounds of national headquarters of both English

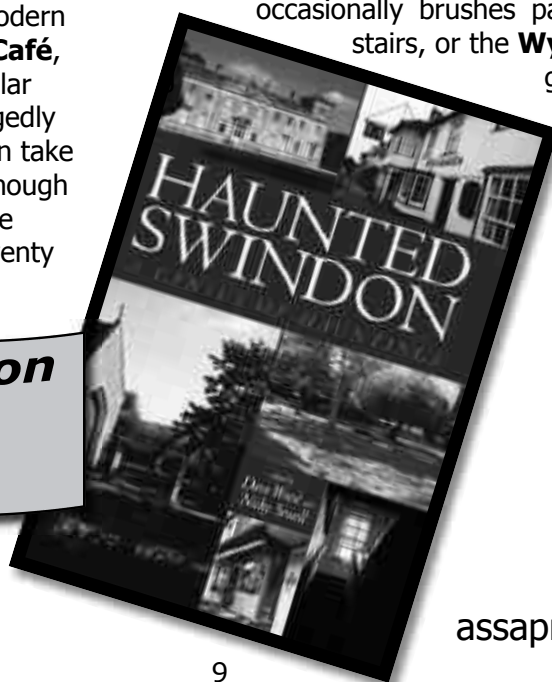
Heritage and the National Trust, where modern-day witnesses report figures disappearing into walls.

For one of the finest suppers around you can stop by the **Jolly Tar** in Hannington, keeping an eye out for the lady walking through the fireplace or the gentleman seen occupying various seats over the decades.

Why not round off your evening by taking in a show at either the **Arts Centre** watching out for Mrs. B, who occasionally brushes past customers on the stairs, or the **Wyvern Theatre** where glasses are apparently thrown off the bar?

©Nicky Sewell May 2008

Got somewhere spooky in mind you'd like to see featured in the next edition? Contact us at assapnews@assap.org



PARANORMAL 101

A Series by Maurice Townsend



No. 5: Seeing is believing? (mostly)!

This is a series of articles examining the basic questions of paranormal research. Though primarily aimed at those new to the subject, some old hands may also find something of interest.

Q: What is misperception?

A: Misperception is probably the most important single natural cause of reports of paranormal experiences. Oddly, however, it is one of the least studied by paranormal researchers. That is probably because it can seem unlikely to an investigator that, for instance, a creaking floorboard could really sound like footsteps. But to a solitary anxious witness who believes they are in a haunted building, it might!

Q: Misperception is just mistaking one thing for another, isn't it?

A: It is much more subtle and powerful than that. For instance, how can a simple random shadow (like in the photo) turn into a ghostly figure, complete with limbs, a face and even clothing, to some witnesses? How does the planet Venus, which looks like a bright star, get regularly reported as a flying saucer, sometimes 'moving' and with 'port holes'? It's as if the original object has been completely replaced by another in the mind of the observer. In fact, that's exactly what happens and, to understand such misperception, you first need to know how normal perception works.

Q: Go on then ...

A: We all have a surround-sound moving picture in our heads, like a TV or film, which we think of as reality. However, it is not an exact representation of the world produced directly by our senses. Despite the way it looks, this image is not continuously updated by our eyes. Instead, most of it comes from memory with only a small area reasonably up to date. The reason for this is that the detailed views required for the 'picture in your head' can only be obtained from a small bit of your eye's retina, called the fovea. Your eye performs constant jerky movements, called saccades, to point the fovea at the most interesting parts of a scene.

Q: So how is the complete, continuous 'picture in your head' maintained?

A: Recent scientific research suggests that it is partly from current fixations, partly from short term memory (what was there at the last fixation) and the rest comes from long term visual memories. This last bit is particularly interesting from the point of view of misperception. If you can't see something well, or don't recognise it, your brain may sometimes substitute the unrecognised object with something similar, from your long term visual memory. This all happens before the object is presented to the 'picture in your head', so you won't notice the substitution and the whole scene will appear perfectly real to you. It will be experienced and remembered as a true event.

Q: So how does a shadow become a ghost? Most people won't have a memory of ever seeing a ghost!

A: No, but we all know that a ghost is supposed to be a human (or sometimes animal) figure. So if your brain decides the shadow is a human figure, your long term memory may then add 'details' to the sighting (that you can't really see), like limbs or clothes, due to expectation. If you move your viewing position, the misperception may stop, so that the 'figure' abruptly vanishes, confirming that it must have been a ghost!

Q: How does this affect investigations?

A: We often try to rule out natural causes on investigations by trying to reproduce what has been reported. Often such recreations seem unconvincing to investigators and so are rejected as a possible cause of a report. However, different people are subject to differing misperceptions because everyone has their own disparate life experiences and memories. The investigator may just see a shadow where the original witness saw a human figure.

For this reason, when attempting to reproduce paranormal effects, you should try them out on as many different people as possible, to see if any get misperceptions. You need to get the conditions as close to those of the original observation as possible. Misperceptions can be tricky to reproduce so you need to put in a fair amount of effort before dismissing them as a possible explanation.



For more information go to:
<http://www.assap.org/newsite/articles/Misperception.html>

Image © Maurice Townsend 2008

F O C U S O N

The Paranormal Conference Season



Forget the autumn party conference season, the paranormal community is going to town this autumn. Dave Wood investigates....



Worlds Apart, Worlds Together

Dave Taylor's ASSAP affiliated group Parasearch have teamed up with the AHS to present this special conference in Worcester on 27th September.

Worlds Apart, Worlds Together: Explorations in Science, Spirituality and Psychical Research will be held on **Saturday 27th September 2008** in the **Guildhall in Worcester from 10am to 4pm.**
Tickets cost £18.50.

Speakers:

Near Death Experience: **Dr. Peter Fenwick**
(Consultant Neuropsychiatrist and
Neurophysiologist)

ESP, Molecular Structure and Quantum Physics: **Prof. Gwyn Hocking**
(Royal School of Mines, Imperial College London)

Sharing the Light?

(Unusual experiences of light in a psychic & mystical context):
Dr. Mark Fox (Lecturer in philosophy and religion)

Seating is limited to 50 and with only four months to go 30 seats have so far been sold! To avoid disappointment book early!

Cheques should be made payable to 'Parasearch' and sent to:
Parasearch, 15 Brier Mill Road,
Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 3HA

Unconvention 2008

Unconvention's organisers – **The Fortean Times** – have confirmed that the event will be going ahead this year.

The expected date is 1-2 November 2008, at the University of Westminster. For more details check out forteantimes.com



Joint SPR/PA Conference in the UK

This event should be a real treat for researchers. For the first time the Society for Psychical Research and the Parapsychological Association are holding a concurrent conference, here in the UK! The programme chair for the PA Convention is none other than ASSAP member Dr Simon Sherwood.

The events will take place on August 13–17, 2008 at West Downs Centre of The University of Winchester, Winchester, UK. Registration begins on Wednesday evening (Aug 13) and the convention proceedings start promptly Thursday morning and continue through Sunday lunchtime. PA and SPR conventions feature papers and symposia on a wide range of experimental, theoretical and historical topics related to parapsychology, psychical research and the study of consciousness. The banquet address (Saturday) will be given by Max Velmans, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Goldsmiths, University of London. PA President Roger Nelson, director of the Global Consciousness Project, will deliver the presidential address.

This convention will be the 51st annual convention of the Parapsychological Association, an international professional organization of scientists and scholars engaged in the study of 'psychic' experiences, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, psychic healing, and precognition and is affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The Society for Psychical research, founded in 1882, is among the world's oldest scholarly societies and was the first established to examine allegedly paranormal phenomena using scientific principles.

PUBLICATIONS

Make Your Mark

Chairman Dave Wood appeals to you to make your mark on both ASSAP and the research community by contributing your research, ideas and investigations to ASSAP publications.

Why should you contribute articles?

The bane of the paranormal research community is its impermanence. In theory with thousands of spare-time researchers out there our field should be advancing like no other. Such sheer numbers of people giving up their time to research and investigation should make us the envy of any other field of research – so why does this not pan out in reality? Why does every other field of research advance every year, whilst paranormal research has hardly moved on in 100 years?

The aim of every other field of research is to contribute to the debate by contributing to journals. Researchers' hard work is documented and kept for posterity. Journals help to ensure people do not 'reinvent the wheel', make the same mistakes that others do, and suggest new lines of enquiry.

Paranormal research does not advance partly because its thousands of researchers do not share ideas, results or lessons learnt. At best 'results' are shared in the form of odd photos and anecdotes; at worst results are never permanently recorded and when researchers move their ideas and research die with them.

So what can you do to work against this trend, and help to build a community that is ready to advance? If you have an idea, have conducted some research or an interesting case, then write it up for ASSAP News or Anomaly. Your article can inspire others, inspire further research, educate your peers and be on permanent record for the researchers of

the future.

Carry on reading this article to make a difference and contribute to ASSAP News and Anomaly.

Contribute to ASSAP News

The deadlines for ASSAP News are the end of July, October, January and April.

ASSAP News is your opportunity to less formally share your ideas with your peers. Articles should be of about 400-600 words (or double-spread articles can be double this) and is your forum to talk about your latest research or great idea.

Contribute to Anomaly

Contributing to Anomaly is a great way to make an impact on our field. Anomaly articles are cited all over the Internet, in books and in academic journals. The deadline for Anomaly is September.

Anomaly articles are in a more formal style but this should not put you off! You can contact our editors at any time for help. Anomaly is truly credible because your peers review articles and make suggestions to ensure they reflect good logic and science.

What can you contribute to Anomaly?

- Research articles: these tend to be of any length between 1000-10,000 words and usually chronicle your in-depth examination of, or experimentation into, any area of paranormal research.
- Investigation reports: if you've had an interesting case where you learnt something, why not share it with your peers and help them benefit from your experience? Report summaries can be of any length and, if based on an ASSAP case, should not mention names or places.
- Correspondence: letters of any length can be based on previously published articles, detailing your reaction or ideas. Alternatively you can write in to talk about good possible research ideas.
- Book reviews: have you read a book that inspired you? Make sure others are inspired too by writing a review.

Don't delay – get in touch today to talk about your idea and really make a difference to paranormal research.

assapnews@assap.org



P a r a n o r m a l

F o r u m

Death of the Apparition?

Dave Wood looks at the claim that whilst hauntings are on the up, apparitions of the dead are on the decrease; and is the media really to blame?



'Oh... do you feel that cold spot?'

Image: *Phantom by the Bed*. © Mary Evans Picture Library.

Where have all the apparitions gone?

My key findings from *Haunted Swindon: A Census of Hauntings*, were presented in 'Where Have All the Apparitions Gone?' in the Society for Psychical Research's *Paranormal Review*. Whilst it would be inappropriate to reprint the article here, I thought it worth sharing a key finding with members.

Haunted Swindon collected accounts of ghost experiences over 150 years, from written sources and from eyewitnesses. Always interested in statistics, I compiled key features of each case: e.g. time of experiences, type of experience, age of the building, etc. Only eyewitnesses provided this level of detail, so the census related to ghost experiences from the last half-century.

Suspensions were confirmed about the timing of ghost sightings. The most common time for a ghost experience was not overnight, but in the afternoon! As if we needed a reason to not investigate at night or with the lights off! On the surface the types of ghost experiences

seemed to tally with seminal studies: around 80% of cases involved a sighting of an apparition.

However lurking underneath the surface was a rather surprising statistic. When only looking at ghost experiences from the last 10 years, the number involving apparitions sharply dropped to less than one third! What could account for this shock decrease, a buck of the trend of the previous hundred years.

Whilst limited data should be treated cautiously, these findings did tally with the observations of commentators. ASSAP's own Maurice Townsend drew similar conclusions on the ASSAP website Blog.

The ghost experience has been replaced

One major theory emerged. For over a century the popular media portrayal of the ghost almost always involved the sighting of an apparition. However in the last decade the media portrayal of the ghost has changed. Popular reality TV paranormal shows have necessarily redefined the ghost experience. In the *Journal of Investigative Psychical Research*, Sewell & Gould found that only 5% of certain TV portrayals of ghost experiences featured an apparition, sharply contrasting with the 80% of studies over the years. The common ghost experience seemed to be replaced with emotional impressions, cold spots and the like.

It takes little imagination to work out why you don't see many apparitions on paranormal reality TV, but is it really possible that ghost experience are life imitating art?

None of us are born with the knowledge of what a ghost is. The theory of cultural tracking (albeit mainly in UFO cases) compellingly suggests that society helps us to build a picture of what a phenomena is. In recent times ghost stories, books, films and TV have helped to shape the popular perception of what a 'ghost' is.

The possible death of the apparition seems to lend evidence to this claim. If most ghost experiences are merely xenonormal events – events that seem strange, but are really explainable as normal – we are

simply using our imagination and knowledge of what a ghost 'should be' to 'fill in the gaps' when expecting and experiencing a ghost experience.

"The most common time for a ghost experience was in the afternoon"

I N T E R V I E W



Dr Ciaran O'Keeffe

ASSAP: *Ciaran, care to tell us about any particular areas of current research interest?*

Ciaran: I'm involved in a number of psychology research projects (academic) from forensic type work to parapsychology. The parapsychology ones include: assessing the role (or absence of) infrasound in understanding haunting experiences; the ethics of investigating haunting experiences; defining 'ghosts'; reanalysing paranormal belief data. In addition I have a number of more 'popular' paranormal projects in the pipeline. One is a book entitled 'The Great Paranormal Clash', co-authored with a medium, Billy Roberts. We basically give our viewpoints on a number of paranormal topics then, in the intervening chapters, interrogate each other. It comes out on the 4th July and is published by Apex Publishing. I also have a second 'investigative' book coming out with Yvette Fielding in the Autumn ('In Search of the Supernatural'). There are numerous other projects of these types (e.g. The State of Parapsychology, Investigative Handbook etc).

ASSAP: *What role can local paranormal groups play within the activities of academic parapsychology?*

C: Be very careful with how you use the word 'science'. Simply waving an EMF meter around does not make a person a scientist. Conducting EMF surveys of haunted locations, preferably with a static tri-axial EMF meter, and ideally a top of the range magnetometer, and then sharing the data with others, is a step in the right direction. A genuine contribution to the advancement of science in such a domain as 'haunting experiences' can occur, however, by collecting data. That data can be eyewitness accounts untainted by poor interviewing techniques or the testing of scientific theories of hauntings (e.g. EMF, infrasound etc.). If the data is shared, collected appropriately, then it may advance our understanding of this fascinating field. So, in a nutshell, with the right approach, the 'professional amateur' as you say, *can* make a contribution.

ASSAP: *Recently, parapsychology has faced some fierce criticism from prominent members of the scientific establishment. How would you defend the subject against the accusations of people like Robert Winston?*

C: Robert Winston's criticisms give science a bad name. He has directed attacks at specific parapsychology studies that he obviously has not read and then tarnished the entire field with the same defamatory brush. If he had responded in the media with valid arguments then I would respect his point. Since, it appeared, he had not read the studies under question, or had a good knowledge base of the field as a whole, then his accusations are worthless, dogmatic and an embarrassing reflection of the principles of science.

If you want to get a quick idea of the debate that's currently raging I recommend Chris Carter's 'Parapsychology and the Skeptics'. As well as summarising the controversial debate about findings it's also a good source to actually find out about the most convincing laboratory evidence to date.

ASSAP: *How do you view the role of ASSAP in relation to this current climate?*

C: Education. Educate the public and its members about the reality of 'ghost investigations' and how far it deviates from television portrayals.

Educate the public and its members about the right approaches to investigations. Educate the public and its members about all the possible natural explanations concerning haunting experiences. Educate the public and its members about why particular equipment is used and how it should be used. Most importantly, educate the concerned public in knowing they are not on their own and when they call, they can trust who they let into their homes.

ASSAP: *What do you see as the greatest challenge facing modern parapsychology?*

C: The greatest challenge is surviving. A scientific discipline survives only if it is respected within science as a whole, only if it can continue to garner funding, only if there is space for it within academic environments, only if it reacts to scientific trends and public trends, only if subject-specific peer-reviewed journals continue to publish, and only if scientists continue to do research on parapsychology topics. These are not future challenges, each one of these 'challenges' is a real barrier to any advancement in parapsychology today.



Ciaran O'Keeffe

SPOTLIGHT ON GROUPS

In the trenches with paranormal research



Paranormal Awakening Scientific Study Association

P.A.S.S.A. was formed three and a half years ago, when the two founder members, Stefan Lobuczek and Cherill Penton met through another midland group. We decided that we needed more than just the odd investigation and so Paranormal Awakening was born.

PASSA was inspired by ASSAP (Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena) and with their guidance we have adopted scientific methodologies alongside our own which are based on practical research experience. Several of our members including both founders are ASSAP accredited and form a part of the ASSAP Executive. We actively support ASSAP in membership and by taking part in their scheduled activities.

Our group adopts an open-minded approach but uses scientific methodology to rationalise all evidence acquired from its investigative studies. Our forum has always allowed for all who wish to discuss or share their own individual research, experiences and beliefs. I must point out that certain areas of our forum are closed to non-members and that our investigations and group membership have always been free to those with a genuine interest in the paranormal.

Behind the scenes of our discussion forum we have various longitudinal studies in progress. One of these is an ASSAP grant funded project investigating the nature of EVP.

PASSA will continue to conduct in depth research and investigating cases of alleged paranormal activity. We will promote discussion pertaining to all aspects of the paranormal within our forum and we will continue to contribute investigation reports to ASSAPs database for cross referencing of similar cases or locations. Most of all we hope to educate others by example and through future research publications so they might obtain some truth behind the paranormal by using credible investigative research methods.

Stefan Lobuczek and Cherill Penton – Founders.

See opposite for contact details.

ASSAP AFFILIATES

ANGLIA PARANORMAL INVESTIGATION SOCIETY (APIS)
Operates in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire area. Contact Paul Keech at apismail@ntlworld.com or phone 01234 771 351 or visit www.apisteamspirit.co.uk

CHESTERFIELD PSYCHIC STUDY GROUP (CPSG)
Offers a programme of talks by invited speakers on the second Friday of each month at 7.15pm at the Community Centre, South Place, Chesterfield. Visit www.cpsg.co.uk or phone 01246 413217.

GHANON is a group covering Wirral, Cheshire and North Wales. Membership by invitation. Contact emailus@ghanon.org or visit www.ghanon.org or phone 0700 341 8495

LEICESTERSHIRE PARANORMAL ASSOCIATION (LPA)
Contact Ian and Vanessa Walker on info@leicsparanormal.tk or visit www.leicsparanormal.tk

LEICESTERSHIRE PARANORMAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (LPRA) Contact Caroline and Margaret Pick on lpramail@aol.co.uk or phone 07904 785 174

MELTON PARANORMAL RESEARCH SOCIETY (MPRS)
Based in Leicestershire. Contact Christine Hankey on 07745 398 569 or email meltonparaclub@aol.com

MIDLAND PARANORMAL INVESTIGATIONS operates throughout the Midlands. Check out www.midlandparanormal.co.uk or email mark@midlandparanormal.co.uk or phone 0121 603 7356

MERSEYSIDE ANOMALIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (MARA) Monthly meetings in Liverpool city centre. Contact tonyeccles@yahoo.com or write to 18a Parkfield Road, Aigburth, Liverpool L17 8UJ or phone 0151 727 4057

THE MIDLANDS GHOST RESEARCH SOCIETY (TMGRS) Operates in the Coventry area. Visit www.tmgrs.co.uk or email Amanda and Martin at info@tmgrs.co.uk

OPEN MIND INVESTIGATIONS (OMI)
Operates in the Kent and Hampshire areas. Contact Cara via the website on www.omi-uk.org

PARA.SCIENCE Meet on the first working Monday of each month at Bebington Civic Centre on the Wirral. (8pm) Visit www.parascience.org.uk

PARANORMAL AWAKENING SCIENTIFIC STUDY ASSOCIATION (PASSA) Operates in the Midlands area. Contact Stefan on 0121 353 7622 (admin@navigatortm.com) or Cherill on 01543 685 913 (susan.penton1@btinternet.com) or visit www.paranormalawakening.com

PARANORMAL SITE INVESTIGATORS (PSI) operates in Wiltshire and surrounding area and produces e-newsletters and research journals. Contact Dave or Nicky through www.p-s-i.org.uk HauntedSwindon.com TheOrbZone.com or 0845 6521529.

PARASEARCH operates in Worcestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands. Visit www.parasearch.org.uk or phone 07761 184 837 or send an SAE to Parasearch, 15 Brier Mill Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3HA.

PLYMOUTH ASSAP Operates in Plymouth, South Devon and South East Cornwall. Contact Lee at eustacetuttle@yahoo.co.uk

SPIRIT TEAM UK Operates in the Midlands, with meetings at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Coventry. Contact Alan at enquiries@spiritteamuk.com or visit www.spiritteamuk.com

STAFFORDSHIRE PARANORMAL STUDY GROUP (SPSG)
Monthly meetings in Stoke on Trent. Contact Terri at thespsg@yahoo.co.uk or visit www.spsg.org.uk

SUPERNATURAL INVESTIGATIONS (UK) are based in Devon and Somerset but aim to investigate nationally. Currently their main interests lie in ghosts. Contact Stuart at stuart@supernaturalinvestigations.org.uk

TEMS Operates in the South East. Visit www.temsgroup.org.uk or email infoenquiry@temsgroup.org.uk or write to TEMS, 10 Effra Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8PP

LIMITED SPACES

NOV 22-23

The ASSAP Training Weekend

Learn, Explore, Network



Reserve your place now to avoid disappointment: see page 5