

NEWS

Issue 124 Autumn 2008

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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)

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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:

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 or Cherill Penton 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

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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.

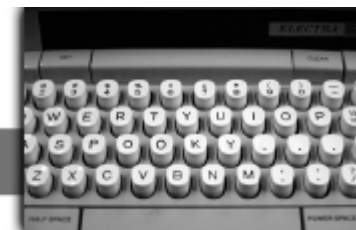
Submission Deadlines: Submission deadlines are the end of April, July, October and January of each year.

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

Brought to you by Nicky Sewell



Bigfoot Image courtesy of Mary Evans Picture Library

Bigfoot Boo-boo!

Fanatics of the legendary "Bigfoot" were thrown into a frenzy recently after the Searching for Bigfoot group were offered – and paid for – the body of a "Bigfoot" after it was allegedly located in woodland in northern Georgia, US. When their purchase was delivered, however, the group were devastated to discover that their "Bigfoot" was a rubber ape costume defrosting in a block of ice. Legal action is now being planned. Meanwhile, in other "Bigfoot" news, a tourist in Lake Tahoe, US, claims to have captured a photo of a "leprechaun-alien" which been described by some as a "baby Bigfoot". The 3ft figure was caught wandering in woodland in the Sierra Nevada mountains. In the UK, scientists at Oxford Brookes University have embarked on the task of identifying several strands of hair which have been found in India and are believed to belong to "Bigfoot". Microscope and DNA tests are being conducted on the samples to assist the identification process.

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

UFO reports at all-time high

In excess of 150 reports of UFOs being seen in the UK have been made in just 8 months. The previous 12 months saw a mere 135 and just 97 for 2006. This phenomena is not isolated to the UK, however, with record numbers being reported across the Americas and Europe. The latest X-Files movie – "I Want to Believe" – has also just been released...

UFO University

Melbourne University, Australia, has awarded a doctorate of philosophy in ufology to student Martin Plowman. Dr Plowman travelled far and wide to conduct the research which will feature in a book which is due out later this year. From the Andes in Chile to Roswell, New Mexico, Plowman even popped by Wiltshire, UK to further his findings. Initially a physics student, it was Plowman's recognition of ufology's "rules" and "history" which inspired him to undertake the doctorate.

Naseby "ghost" hits national news

Northampton Paranormal Group hit the national news in July after allegedly capturing the image of a ghost of a soldier during their visit to the site of the Battle of Naseby on the anniversary of the conflict. Armed with EMF meters, Dictaphones and cameras, group member Suzanne Stafford told BBC News that she felt that she "needed to take a photo". Upon inspection of said photo, the group were astounded to see it contained what they identified as being a ghostly soldier. Some people have interpreted the image of being a soldier on horseback, others that of a soldier walking, whilst the sceptics amongst us have suggested it as being a combination of moisture in the air and pareidolia. Group founder, Emma Whiteman, is, however, "definitely convinced".

THE ASSAP INSIDER



What's going on in your Association?



Get Well Soon Mr President

ASSAP President, the Reverend Lionel Fanthorpe was recently taken to hospital as an in-patient. The

Executive, on behalf of ASSAP, would like to wish Lionel a speedy recovery. With the help of First Lady Patricia, Lionel penned his President's Piece for this ASSAP News from his hospital bed – see page 7. Now that's what you call dedicated service.

Relaunch of the Merlin Matrix

Dr Hugh Pincott and Maurice Townsend of the ASSAP Research Department are shortly launching the new Merlin Matrix.

The Merlin Matrix is a framework of inter-linking research projects that any ASSAP members and groups are encouraged to take up. The purpose of the project is for the research of many to contribute to a single goal – better understanding of the paranormal. See page 6 for more.

Ghost Club Lecture

Recently ASSAP Executive members Dave Wood and Nicky Sewell were invited by the Ghost Club to deliver a lecture on their Conclusions of a Census of Hauntings.

Their talk concluded that many modern ghost sightings are xenonormal experiences shaped by media portrayals of hauntings. This was shown in the shift of emphasis from apparitions sightings to the more vague symptoms of the typical paranormal reality TV experience.

Contribute to Anomaly

The end of September is your last chance to contribute to the 2008 edition of Anomaly. Please contact anomaly@assap.org if you are interested.

Award for ASSAP Website

Earlier this year ASSAP's incomparable website received the Paranexus Platinum Award of Excellence.

The ASSAP website is ever-expanding and evolving, and is now one of the greatest online resources for the serious paranormal investigator.

Paranormal Magazine

ASSAP Chairman Dave Wood has been invited by the newly re-launched Paranormal Magazine to contribute a monthly education column for the benefit of its public readership. PM have been inspired by the perception of ASSAP's training in the research community, and would like us to share some best practice with would-be paranormal investigators.

Paranormal Magazine was re-launched in July 2008 by Jazz Publishing Group. The old brand – nothing to do with the current publishers, was not renowned for its quality. However the high quality new magazine has attracted pieces from the likes of Lionel Fanthorpe and Paul Devereux.

Official Notices:

Annual General Meeting

The ASSAP Annual General Meeting will be held at Beverley Friary, Friar's Lane, Beverley, East Yorkshire, HU17 0DF on Saturday 22nd November. Please let us know if you would like to come, so we can keep you up-dated about arrangements.

AGM Motions

Responding to requests from members after the 2007 AGM, the Executive has resolved to let the members have a postal vote on all AGM motions. Therefore any business for discussion at the AGM should be submitted to Dave Wood (chairman@assap.org, or through the address on page two) by 1st October.

Nominations

Would you like to be part of the ASSAP Executive? Any member wishing to join the Executive and take on a working portfolio should contact Dave Wood (chairman@assap.org, or through the address on page two) by 1st October. Members of the Executive elected in 2006 and those co-opted in 2008 will also join the ballot. Executive Members not wishing to re-stand should also contact Dave Wood by the given date.

TRAINING & EVENTS

Information

Book Now for Training Weekend 2008!

22-23rd November 2008 will see the ASSAP Training Weekend at Yorkshire's Beverley Friary. We have fewer than 10 places left – despite this being nearly three months away – so make sure you book now 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 inside the beautiful Beverley Friary itself.

Booking and Finding Out More

Email training@assap.org to get a booking form or find out more. Alternatively you can ring the phone number on page two.



Beverley Friary, East Yorkshire

WORLDS APART, WORLDS TOGETHER

Explorations in Science, Spirituality and Psychical Research will be held on **Saturday 27th September 2008 at 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 -To avoid disappointment book now!

Cheques should be made payable to 'Parasearch' and sent to:

Parasearch, 15 Brier Mill Road,
Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 3HA

Unitarian Society for Psychical Studies Annual Conference

Sat. 6th September 2008

The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow,
Derbyshire
9.30am - 7.30pm

Speakers:

Margaret Webb: Dowsing and
Psychic Phenomena

John Pickering & Katie Hall: Orbs and Beyond:
Encounters with another reality.

David Taylor: Seeing the Invisible: New
Approaches to Apparitional Experiences.

Prices:

£25 (with lunch)

£19 (no lunch)

£116 (residential - includes all meals)

Details from:

Hazel Reynolds Tel: 0121 554 1638

The Merlin Matrix

Research Project

Saying "No" Can Win You £100!

by AN Reporter

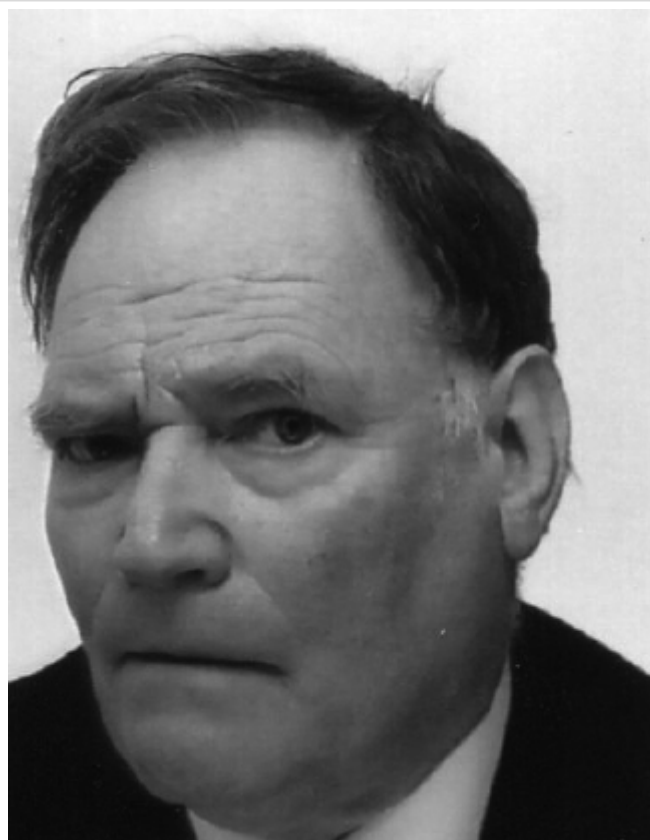
An unusual membership competition to win valuable cash prizes has boosted participation in ASSAP's revamped research programme - the Merlin Matrix. By knowing accurately how many members want to help, how much time they have available, and what topics interest them most, ASSAP can avoid years of wasted effort and get on with the job quickly and more efficiently. Six prizes of up to £100 are available, and even saying "no" could win you one.

After many years of painstaking effort, largely by former Chairman Maurice Townsend, ASSAP has revitalised its long-established Merlin Matrix which afforded us many excellent results in the 1980s and 1990s. It includes old favourites and also many new topics relevant to the 21st century. The term "matrix" is used because many individual modules or topics are designed to overlap, so the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. For example hypnosis research can throw light on mediumship and studying the xenonormal may help explain hauntings.

The details can be accessed at the Members' Area of ASSAP's website using the link

<http://www.assap.org/memberarea/newsite/Docs/Merlin.pdf>. This is still a framework, with many experimental details yet to be added, but it does give an excellent perspective of what will be available.

Dr Hugh Pincott, National Research Co-ordinator (and Research Officer) explained why he is giving research money away in a competition. "We can spend many years perfecting experimental procedures for the 30 or so Merlin modules and still not meet members' requirements in terms of the possibly limited time and interest they have



Dr Hugh Pincott- he's serious!

for probing the paranormal. So this competition is actually valuable research in itself, enabling us to match popular opportunities with time and talent offered."

"The most important question for us at present is simply whether members wish and are able in principle to participate in our research" Hugh added. "We urge all members to respond. Saying "no" is an equally valuable answer, and we shall not think any the less of someone who reports this. In one sense, the more of these the better, as they enable us to conserve time and resources."

The top cash prize is £100, with three other awards of £50 each, and a couple of free annual memberships thrown in as well. Thanks to all who have responded so far, and a reminder to others that the competition closes on Tuesday 30th September. If you require another form please contact research@assap.org, or write to: **ASSAP Research, FREEPOST BS9133, PLYMOUTH, PL1 2BF** (no stamp needed when posted in Britain).

Remember: "No, no, no!" could turn into "Win, win, win!"

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The world according to Lionel Fanthorpe



Reporting from Hospital...

First and foremost, many thanks to David and all ASSAP members and friends for the most welcome "Get Well" card and the superb sunflowers: greatly appreciated.

Being in hospital gives you time to think and to remember things from way back in the past. One of my earliest encounters with anomalous phenomena occurred in 1938 or 9 when I was still below school age and living with my parents at Norwich Road, Dereham, Norfolk. The phenomena recurred more or less regularly and consistently until Patricia and I were married in 1957 and set up our own home. As far as I can recall, however, as long as they occupied the house in Norwich Road, my parents and my younger brother and sister continued to witness the phenomena for several years.

In order to appreciate what occurred, a rough outline idea of the layout of the house and garden may be helpful. The house, which is a four-bedroomed semi, stands on the north side of Norwich Road, where Norwich Road joins Crown Road. This corner situation means that the garage and large wooden back gate are in Crown Road, while the small, metal front gate is in Norwich Road. The room where we ordinarily ate our family meals together looked east across the front lawn. When family, friends or other visitors came to see us, we would hear the characteristic clank of the front gate, and then, glancing up expectantly through the dining-room window, we would catch a peripheral glimpse of whoever was calling, as he – or she – passed that window. The fence separating the back and front gardens had a wooden gate with a metal catch, which clicked in a distinctive way as the visitor opened and closed it before reaching the back door.

The anomalous phenomena were simply that we heard the front gate; half-glimpsed a form passing the dining room window -- *and then failed to hear the middle gate click. On these occasions, no-one ever reached the back door.*

Whenever we caught this peripheral glimpse of a figure gliding past that dining-room window, and no genuine flesh-and-blood visitor reached the back door, *there was a death of someone we knew who had been a frequent visitor to the house.* It was never a close friend or family member, but a welcome acquaintance such as Richard Dodman, our chimney sweep, who called regularly in those days of coal fires. On another occasion it was James Rawlings, a neighbour, who had enjoyed doing odd jobs to help my father. How do we as ASSAP researchers explore and analyse persistent phenomena of this kind? There is, of course, the true nature of so-called peripheral vision to consider. The human mind abhors a vacuum. The slightest

shadow, or change in the light, can send the mind searching for explanations of what it *might* be. The subconscious may provide a convenient glimpse of a human figure to 'explain' the subtle changes of light and shade.

There is also the theory of psychic energy leaving tracks: like magnetic recordings on disc or tape. If such tracks were made by frequent visitors to our house in Norwich Road, might

those recordings be readable by people sitting in the dining room and looking out through that significant window?

It's also necessary to consider the psychological "seek and ye shall find" syndrome. Once a mental pattern had been established in the family, and having seen what we *thought* was a presentiment, we all went searching diligently for the death announcements of neighbours and acquaintances such as the dustman, postman, baker, milkman or grocery delivery man, who had once been regular visitors to the house.

It would be interesting to find out whether parallel phenomena to those which we saw at the house in Norwich Road, Dereham, exist elsewhere, and, if they do, what explanations have been put forward for them by ASSAP researchers and investigators.

St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, July 14th, 2008.



PARANORMAL 101

A Series by Maurice Townsend



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.

No. 6: Using Equipment

Q: *Why use equipment on vigils?*

A: That's a question everyone should ask themselves before they do it! The point of a vigil is, usually, to try to

witness and record phenomena reported by earlier witnesses. It's great to see a ghost (and incredibly lucky) but it would be far better if you can record it too.

So, you should firstly choose equipment relevant to what the witness claims to have experienced. For instance, if there were weird sounds then clearly a good sound recorder is needed.

Secondly, environmental monitoring equipment is always useful to see if any changes in readings occur that correspond with events witnessed during the vigil. Thirdly, you should try to have video cameras covering all areas where people are stationed, and other relevant places too, if possible.

The reason for covering vigil participants is so that, if they do report experiencing anything, hopefully it might be caught on camera. Even if the phenomena itself isn't recorded, something related to it, or a natural cause for it, may be visible. Equipment should be left stationary through each vigil session, not carried or moved around.

Q: *Why do you leave equipment stationary?*

A: If you leave equipment stationary then you know that any changes in readings genuinely reflect changes happening in a particular place. If you move equipment about during a session, any changes noted may simply reflect normal variation between different places. With a thermometer, for instance, if you move it nearer to a radiator during the session, any apparent temperature increase may simply be due to its new position. In addition, some instruments are sensitive to being moved

and may need several minutes to settle down before they can give valid readings. Single axis EMF meters are sensitive to their orientation and change reading with even the slightest movement.



Image ©Maurice Townsend 2008

Q: *What about baselines?*

A: Some paranormal researchers believe that, if you take some readings for a few minutes before a vigil, that will be a 'normal', average or 'baseline' reading. However, there is no reason to think that the time when a vigil happens to start is typical. To establish a proper baseline, you need to take readings for at least 24 hours to get variations throughout a day. Even then, how do you know it is a typical day?

Taking 24 hour baselines is generally not practical. An alternative is the 'positional baseline'. The idea is to compare readings between two places rather than between two times. You need two instruments that measure the same quantity. Ideally they should be the same model but, provided they

have similar specifications, different models can also be used. One instrument is set up in a 'hot spot', where paranormal activity has been reported. The partner instrument is set up nearby, in as similar a location as possible, but where NO activity has been reported. Ideally, you connect both instruments to a data logger so that you know readings were taken at exactly the same time and can compare readings in parallel. If this is not possible, you will need to devise some way to synchronise the readings.

Clearly, the idea is to compare the two sets of readings, taken at the same time, to see what the differences are. If the readings from the hot spot show greater variation than those from the control location, it may be significant, for instance.

Continued on page 11

F O C U S O N

Timeslips



By Dr Wendy Cousins

Time-slips are an allegedly paranormal phenomenon in which people can accidentally travel in time for a brief period. The most famous such occurrence involved Miss C. Anne Elizabeth Moberly (1846-1937) and a curious incident in the gardens at Versailles in which she

apparently travelled back in time to have an encounter with the court of the doomed French queen Marie Antoinette. Miss Moberly's subsequent book, *An Adventure*, (written with her co-experiencer Miss Jourdain) is well-known to paranormal enthusiasts but Miss Moberly's other strange adventures are less often reported.

The first of these events occurred when little Annie was about five or six and walking with her nurse outside Winchester. Looking up in wonder at the towers and spires of the cathedral city she heard a voice, from the blue say two words she had never heard before, "PINNACLED REALITY". She told no-one, but she never forgot. She was also susceptible to visions, one of these occurring a week before her father, a bishop, died. She was going to tea with some friends when she saw two men with a coffin passing them. At the time it did not seem unnatural but she did wonder about the incident as no one in the neighbourhood had died. She and her friends wrote down the story and when a week later her father died, they showed their accounts. After her father's death her prospects appeared bleak, but while worrying she felt a hand touch her head, and a voice say the words, "BETTER THAN YOU THINK". Shortly afterwards a letter arrived asking her to come and take charge of Saint Hugh's College, Oxford and her future was secure.

In 1913 while in Paris, visiting the Louvre, she reported seeing an unusually tall man, wearing a small golden crown on his head- and a toga! This must have been a bizarre sight in pre-first world war Paris, yet when she made inquiries no one else had noticed him. At first she was inclined to believe the man was Charlemagne but

after some historical research she decided that he must actually have been the Emperor Constantine. More investigation revealed the Louvre had been built on the site of a Roman road, on which Constantine had marched twice and so the emperor's apparitional presence in the Paris art gallery was explained to her satisfaction.

Also in 1913, this time in Cambridge, she records that, "between sleeping and waking in the early morning, I saw a vivid picture of an open space with some buildings, which I called Kings College..." In this visionary landscape an ecclesiastical funeral unfolded with robed churchmen and a highly ornate coffin inscribed with the name ARNOLPHUS M. She could read no more, but heard someone say that the second word on the coffin was 'Magister'. Later she discovered that Carmelite Friars had

actually founded a settlement near what became Kings College. Further research at the British Museum revealed that certain heads of this Order were called 'Magister' and in medieval days, there was particularly holy man of this rank called Radulphus. Almost, but not *quite*, like the name in her dream.

Miss Moberly made careful records of her extraordinary experiences in the hope that her accounts would some day be of value to scientists investigating the nature of time. Many explanations of her reported Versailles time-slip have been proposed, including electrical storms, geo-magnetism and the inadvertent gate-crashing of a party given by decadent drag-queens! However it should also be borne in mind, that this was far from being Miss Moberly's only paranormal adventure and so perhaps when investigating such unusual cases, researchers should not forget to take into account the psychology of individual differences.

©Dr Wendy Cousins 2008



Miss C. Anne Elizabeth Moberly
Image courtesy Wikipedia Commons

Additional Reading

"Time-slips" <http://time-slips.blogspot.com/2008/03/another-garden-another-time.html>

"The Ghosts of Versailles"
www.museumofhoaxes.com/versailles.html

"Time Slip Phenomena"
<http://members.aol.com/timeslip8888/>

Paranormal

Forum

Bill Eyre's Response to 'Paranormal Fishing' by Dave Wood. (AN issue 122 Spring 2008)

In issue 122 Dave Wood puts forward the case for applying a narrow approach to the investigation of spontaneous phenomena, in which one concentrates on utilising only equipment and observations designed to identify normal causes for the specific incidents reported by the witnesses. Such an approach certainly has validity if the sole purpose of an investigation is to identify an explanation in terms of the present day laws of Physics of the phenomenon reported.

To go beyond this remit is what Dave would call 'fishing'. But is it? At the end of the day, it all depends on what the investigators are trying to achieve. Certainly all ASSAP Investigators should give first priority to identifying normal causes for the incidents; so, for example, the use of cameras or camcorders to record the particular location at the particular time of day at which the witness experienced the incident may throw light on whether the experience was merely an optical illusion.

However, experience tells us that a number of reported phenomena are very difficult, or impossible, to pin down in terms of normal explanations. The plain truth is that we don't know what the cause of many of these spontaneous phenomena is. So if there is a long-term aim for ASSAP to throw some light on the causation of those currently inexplicable phenomena, then we surely need, over a number of investigations, to identify a

correlation between unusual states of environmental conditions and the incidence of specific types of phenomena. There is a case for arguing that we should use equipment for measuring as many of these environmental factors as possible. For example, there is currently no suggestion that radioactivity gives rise to any of these phenomena but if we don't use a Geiger counter on a number of investigations, we could, for all we know, be missing out on the very environmental factor that is the causation of the phenomena.

Similarly, whilst EVP is unlikely to be reported by a witness as a spontaneous phenomenon, as there is no reason why a member of the public should record

'nothingness' on cassette, nevertheless, it has to be said that the 64,000 dollar question in relation to some spontaneous phenomena is "Was it an environmental factor or an intelligence that caused this phenomenon?" and testing for EVP at the site of a reported incident to see whether a meaningful communication is received could start to answer this question, depending on the relevance of the words spoken to the situation in which the recording is made and allowing, of course, for all the

normal and misperceptual explanations of EVP, as explained in issue 41 of *Anomaly*.

Dave suggests that using such techniques as mediumship and EVP could lead to findings that would distress clients. However, my experience with clients tends to be the opposite, i.e. that if investigators are not able to pin the witnesses' observations down to normal causes, then the clients usually seem to be annoyed or at least disappointed that no attempt has been made to identify a possible paranormal cause. A mere conclusion by us that "something paranormal must be happening" tends to illicit a response of "Yes – we know: that's why we called you in in the first place!". Although we have this admirable aim to be scientific, we are not like Chemists in a laboratory who only have test tubes to contend with – we have human clients to satisfy. Having said that, obviously these additional types of technique, if used at all, should only be used, with caution, in appropriate cases and only for a purpose compatible with the objective of the investigation.



Image courtesy of Mary Evans Picture Library/Michael Buhler

Paranormal

Forum

Dave Wood responds...

Bill is absolutely correct in saying the number one priority for an ASSAP investigation is to find the 'normal' explanation for what is going on.

To focus on testing unscientific 'paranormal theories' whilst in the home or workplace of a vulnerable client is ethically suspect to say the least. How many horror stories have all of us heard about this? I've had distressed people get in touch with me saying that 'investigators' have been to investigate their 'strange feelings' in their kitchen. By the time the investigators leave 'angry EVP' has been caught in their bedroom and after EMF spikes in the nursery they are told these 'might be caused by ghosts'. What started as an interest in what was going on in their kitchen suddenly turns to fear to sleep in their own home! The only reason being an assumption-led, pseudo-scientific approach.

The issue Bill raises of 'client expectation' is an important one. Plenty of people talk about the pressure of giving some form of resolution to clients, or proving they are 'real investigators' by tramping around the client's home with 'all those gadgets from the telly.' Adopting poor methods just to 'give the client something' is pretty ethically suspect, too. The most ethical thing to do, surely, is to outline to the client exactly what is going to happen, and to stress strongly that we are looking for rational explanations rather than dabbling in nonsensical methods.

On the one hand we speak of 'not being able to get to the bottom of events' whilst on the other talk about padding out investigations with every 'gadget' under the sun. It occurs to me that the reason why we are not getting to the bottom of things is *because* we are being constantly distracted by EMF meters, EVP, photographs and worse.



A 'back to basics' approach to investigating of trying to assess normal reasons for anomalous accounts would allow us to answer these questions. Even better, once all the fools gold of nonsense methods have been swept away we might actually be able to focus in on those experiences we genuinely cannot explain.

That said, if we want to study something specific let's do it in specific research projects. If we think something might impact on paranormal experience, then we can take the time to study that specifically. For example the ASSAP Research Panel recently awarded a grant for an EVP

Study. I don't advocate worrying clients with EVP during investigations, but studying EVP independently to assess its worth is a worthy pursuit.

For at least 10 years paranormal researchers have been tramping around with gadgets, and no progress has been made. Let's give a scientifically grounded method a go! (Ed – the ASSAP Research Department also argues for more 'xenonormal studies' in the next issue of Anomaly, watch out for that in November!)

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...Continued from page 8

Q: What do you mean by significant?

A: This is a matter of interpretation. A larger variation in readings at a 'hot spot' might indicate some environmental factor, such as a magnetic field, is actually causing apparent paranormal activity. Or it might be some effect produced by paranormal activity itself. Or it could even just be a coincidence, though this could be ruled out by taking longer term readings.

Obviously, if someone near to an instrument reports a strange experience at a time when the readings spike, it would be significant. Having a video camera on hand would help to see if there were any possible natural causes for the abnormal readings.

Q: How do you know if a reading is abnormal?

A: That requires knowledge of the parameter being measured, the instrument and any possible causes of natural variation. Unless you happen to be an expert in, say, magnetic fields, it might be a good idea to show your readings to someone who is.

Q: Are data loggers useful?

A: Very much so, if you afford them. Automated data collection has huge advantages over someone reporting readings periodically. The biggest advantage is the ability to take so many more readings in a set time allowing rapid variations to be picked up. This makes data analysis so much easier, allowing the use of statistical methods, too.

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Further information:

<http://www.assap.org/newsite/htmlfiles/Instrumentation.html>

<http://www.assap.org/newsite/htmlfiles/Baselines.html>

<http://www.assap.org/newsite/htmlfiles/Data%20loggers.html>

PROJECT

Albion



JAMES CLARK

James Clark is currently researching 'Haunted Lambeth', a new Albion project looking at strange stories from the London Borough of Lambeth. This will be his fourth Albion project: he has previously written 'Strange Mitcham' (and its sequel 'Mysterious Mitcham'), looking at his hometown Mitcham in Surrey/south London and 'Haunted Wandsworth', looking at the London Borough of Wandsworth.

Lambeth is the next borough along from Wandsworth and encompasses a sliver of south London from Waterloo in the north, down through Vauxhall, Stockwell, Clapham, Brixton, Streatham and West Norwood - a real mixed bag as far as neighbourhoods are concerned!

If anyone has any information about ghosts, anomalies, legends, etc from this part of London, James would be delighted to hear from you.

You can contact him by email at writer@clarkweb.co.uk, via his website at www.james-clark.co.uk or by writing to him c/o 102 St James Road, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 2DB

TRYSTAN SWALE

'Strange Stroud and District' is Trystan Swale's first Project Albion research, examining anomalous phenomena from a rural area of southern Gloucestershire which also includes the towns of Nailsworth, Dursley and Wotton-under-Edge.

The folklore books and websites have almost been exhausted and so Trystan is interested in hearing from anyone who may be able to offer any information and anecdotes on the Stroud area's anomalous past.

He can be contacted through www.scfr.co.uk, by email at scfr@scfr.co.uk, or by post c/o 'Woodcote', Dark Lane, Nailsworth, Stroud, Glos, GL6 0DR.

GAZETTEER

Nicky Sewell tours our paranormal places



LIVERPOOL

This edition's gazetteer is inspired by recently published "800 Years of Haunted Liverpool" by John Reppion. This glossy, excellently presented publication is illustrated throughout, with comprehensive references for those who may wish to further their reading. It contains accounts of hauntings from within every nook and cranny of the "Capital of Culture" and is published by The History Press.



Speke Hall

Speke Hall, a beautiful timber-framed building, is believed to date from the late 15th century although evidence from the Domesday book and other sources suggest that a residence had been at the site for several hundred years before. The most frequently sighted spectre is thought to be that of Mary Norreys who has been seen throughout the building but most often in the Tapestry Room. The rocking of a baby's cradle has also been reported – could this be caused by Mary rocking her babe, tormented after she threw the child into the moat outside whilst in a state of insanity? The sound of a child crying has also been heard. Speke Hall is open to the public as a National Trust site.

Croxteth Hall

Built in the 16th century, Croxteth Hall has



gained much attention as a result of its paranormal reputation, including a visit by the Most Haunted team. There have been countless reports of spectral figures being seen throughout the estate with many different

identities being attributed. "Active" areas of the site include the billiard room, dining room, sitting room, tearoom, main bedroom, attic and corridors! Strange smells, kinetic activity and electrical interference have all also been reported. The site is managed by Liverpool City Council and is open to the public between March and September.

Everyman Theatre

Liverpool's Everyman Theatre was converted from a chapel and adaptations commenced in 1853 when it first became a concert hall. The sound of footsteps, the stench of urine and the movement of shadowy figures are all frequently recounted reports of unusual activity. Lights have been seen to flash on and off, the hand-



driers activated of their own accord and disembodied voices heard. Next time you catch a play there, you may well experience more than what you paid for ...

Ye Hole in Ye Wall

This enchanting hostelry purports to be the oldest pub in Liverpool, dating back to 1726. Women were barred from entering the pub until 1975 – the ban only being lifted due to the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act. In times gone by, the site had a darker history attached – one of "impressment" or "press ganging". It is the victim of a press-gang attack that is thought to still haunt the pub. A Spaniard was reportedly stabbed to death after resisting the press-gang and it is his shadow that is rumoured to still linger within the walls, although, with so many young men befalling similar fates, it is impossible to conclude who fleeting figure you may meet.

Nicky Sewell Summer 2008

I N T E R V I E W

Jon Donni



Matt Hicks interviews Jon Donni of *BadPsychics...*

Matt: You've been a vocal critic of *Most Haunted* and helped to expose some of the show's apparent indiscretions. Can we ever have a truthful portrayal of paranormal investigation on TV?

Jon: I would have to say no, mainly because science is not a ratings grabber. TV stations are only interested in ratings and how much they can sell advertisement space for. Which is why we will only ever see badly acted spoof type shows like *Most Haunted* or *Ghost Hunters*.

But you have to ask yourself why do we need a truthful portrayal of paranormal investigation on TV anyway? In over 70 years of very real scientific study of psychics/mediums there has not been a single case where the psychic/medium was able to prove any kind of paranormal or supernatural ability, so what makes you or anyone think that a TV show would do any better?

If we are talking about hauntings, again in many many years of real life study not a single haunting case exists that cannot be explained by rational and critical thinking. Scientists like Richard Wiseman have investigated the psychology behind the belief in hauntings and it is this kind of research which is interesting instead of the bored housewife type of investigating we see from hundreds of paranormal groups around the country.

Ask yourself why do these groups use EMF meters? Where in history has it ever been shown that such equipment can detect ghosts? And any time a non-scientist uses such equipment it makes a mockery of the whole field. You might as well wave a banana around in the dark for the use it would have on proving the paranormal.

Matt: *Badpsychics* is one of the most prominent skeptical websites here in the UK. Do you think there is such a thing as genuine psychic ability, or can it all be put down to fraud and self-delusion?

Jon: *BadPsychics* IS the single most prominent skeptical site in the UK, we are the biggest and most respected in my own humble opinion!

As for if I think there is any kind of genuine psychic ability, the answer to that is I don't know. As of this moment in time there is simply no evidence of any such ability actually existing.

Matt: Thousands upon thousands of psychics have been tested and re-tested yet all without exception have failed when the chance to cheat is removed. Do you think it is interesting that psychics have a 100% failure rate when the chance to cheat is eliminated?

Jon: It doesn't matter if someone is an out and out fraud, or self deluded the end result is always the same. Ask yourself why no one has ever passed the JREF million dollar challenge, or why there is no successful scientific papers written on psychics.

The only tests psychics seem to pass are ones that have been made by other psychics. People like Gordon Smith will only allow themselves to be tested by other psychics, so you have to take any such success claims with a large pinch of salt.

Science is about repeatable peer reviewed tests in double blind conditions, not one off demonstrations run by someone as deluded as the person taking the test.

Matt: Some accuse skeptics such as James Randi of having a somewhat biased agenda. What are your thoughts on this brand of "militant skepticism" as it's been called.

Jon: Of course James Randi is biased, he can watch a psychic and know how the trick is done, however his million dollar challenge had nothing to do with his own bias, he actually would take himself out of the process so that his own bias (known as operator bias) could never be used against him.

This is why we have double blind tests so that neither the bias of the tester or any potential cheating by the challenger can take place.

As for this idea of Militant Skepticism, I have never heard of this before, but I would say it does go on, but these people are not sceptics they are cynics, and they are the total opposite of sceptics.

Matt Hicks 2008

**Find *BadPsychics* on the web:
www.badpsychics.co.uk**



SPOTLIGHT ON GROUPS

In the trenches with paranormal research



A S S A P A F F I L I A T E S

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 lpmail@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@navigator-tm.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 lies 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

FEW PLACES LEFT!

NOV 22-23

The ASSAP Training Weekend

Learn, Explore, Network



Reserve your place now to avoid disappointment: see page 5