

NEWS

Issue 125 Winter 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)

**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 Wendy Cousins

Contact us at news@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 using the username 'assapmember' and the 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

assapchairman@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 assapinvestigations@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 assapgroups@assap.org for more information.

The Executive

Chairman: Dave Wood (assapchairman@assap.org)

Deputy Chairman: Nicky Sewell

Secretary: Trystan Swale

(assapsecretary@assap.org)

Treasurer: Wendy Milner (assaptreasurer@assap.org)

National Investigations Co-ordinators:

William Eyre (assapinvestigations@assap.org)

National Research Co-ordinator: Hugh Pincott

(assapresearch@assap.org)

Training Officer: Nicky Sewell

(assaptraining@assap.org)

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

Equipment Officer: Caroline Searley

(assapequipment@assap.org)

Media Officer: Caroline Searley

(assapmedia@assap.org)

Archives Officer: Terry Porter

(assaparchives@assap.org)

Membership Secretary: Kevin Griffiths-Boden

(assapmembership@assap.org)

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 news@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.

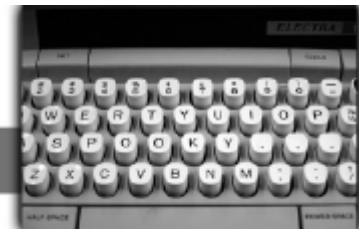
Submission Deadlines: Submission deadlines are the end of April, July, October and January of each year.

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 assapjournal@assap.org

THE NEWS

from the paranormal world

Brought to you by Nicky Sewell



NEWS IN BRIEF

Hall reclaimed as family flee in fear

Clifton Hall, Nottinghamshire, has been reclaimed by the Yorkshire Bank after its millionaire owners fled in fear of the "ghosts" which they claim haunt the 52 room mansion. Ethereal voices, ghostly figures, unexplained noises and "blood" on bedclothes lead the family to call in "paranormal experts", who were unable to explain the experiences reported. The owner, Anwar Rashid, lived in the hall with his family for eight months before opting to halt mortgage repayments, resulting in the bank reclaiming the property, believed to be worth around £3.6m.

ASA crackdown on clairvoyant claims

The Advertising Standards Authority has told clairvoyants to tone down claims of their alleged ability, after a complaint was received in relation to "Sister Charlotte" of Chorlton, Manchester, UK. Sister Charlotte's advert promoted her "100% success rate" in her ability to solve people's problems in relation to immigration, love and business, amongst other things. When the ASA challenged Sister Charlotte to prove her claims, she was unable to do so and advised to alter the content of her advertisements. In the past two years, the ASA have received 174 complaints about 171 adverts placed by self-proclaimed psychics. An ASA spokesperson commented that the crackdown was important to ensure the public were not being misled.

Beam me up Bristol

A care worker from Bristol has reported seeing a beam of red light coming down to earth, as well as clusters of lights forming a circle. Armed with her trusty camera phone, she captured the incident and supplied it to the Sun newspaper. A neighbour reported that he had been seeing the lights occasionally over the previous fortnight. The origin of the lights were located in daylight as being close to Dundry Hill radio mast. The police and air traffic control confirmed that they had not received any reports of unusual incidents and the police helicopter was not in operation at the time of the alleged sighting.



Robbie Williams with one of the 'youth mentors' [Source: stoke.gov.uk]

Robbie Williams' Teen Ghost Hunt

A new release from City of Stoke on Trent Council reported that Robbie Williams, girlfriend and mother in tow, joined a 'ghost walk' with a group of 15 teenagers at the Leopard Hotel in Burslem. The event was organised by the Stoke Council funded Reach4It youth project.

The Sun picked up on the story, describing it as a 'ghost hunt'. Staffordshire's own news service went on to note Robbie's attendance at a 'séance'.

The vague release brushed over the details of the 'walk' and the ages of those concerned. If media reports of 'ghost hunts' and 'séances' are to be believed – or even the 'poltergeist activity experienced' by some of the children – then Stoke Council has some serious questions to answer. Perhaps the real story should be the questionable application of Stoke Council's child protection policy?

But does it matter if the TV crazed teens want to copy what happens on TV? Perhaps more disturbingly are the reports coming from the North East of England that 'paranormal investigators' are teaching pupils – from a school that educates from age eleven upwards – how to use EMF meters and the usual plethora of equipment, presumably to 'detect ghosts'.

The source is confidential at this stage, but we will bring you more news as we can.

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

THE ASSAP INSIDER

What's going on in your Association?



How UnConventional!

ASSAP continued the tradition of being out in force at this year's Fortean Times UnConvention at University of Westminster on 1-2 November. Each time UnConvention is held, Fortean Times kindly invite ASSAP to conduct 'live parapsychological experiments'.

This year most delegates expressed appreciation that Wendy Milner's suite of experiments were more interactive than the stock methods of sitting in front of laptops. The 'Parapsychological Challenge' was just for fun, of course, but allowed around 70 delegates to try to prove if these could perform better than chance on a range of experiments from psychometry to dowsing. Unsurprisingly, the 70 delegates did not score above chance!

Dave, Nicky and Wendy succeeded in raising nearly £450 for ASSAP research, including the 'Irony Raffle' which included a 'Most Haunted Crew T-Shirt'. Traditionally ASSAP has not recruited many new members at UnConvention, but the team signed up an unprecedented 21 new members! We extend a warm welcome to all the new members receiving their first edition of ASSAP News.

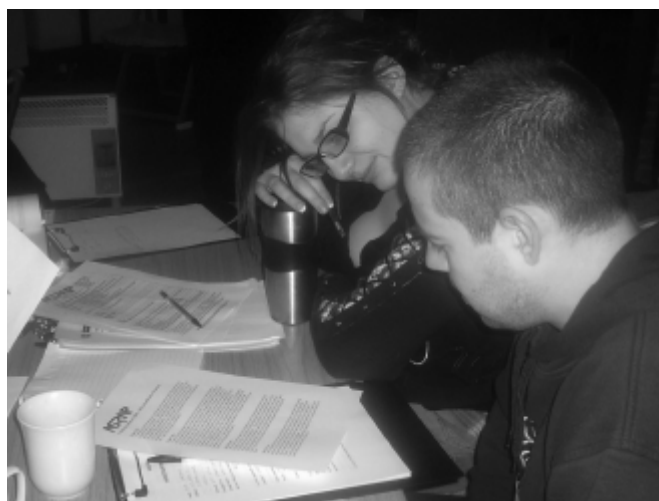


ASSAP member Dean Biddiscombe has a go at psychometry

AGM Report Back

At the AGM on 23 November ASSAP's objects were successfully changed. The Michael Bentine Shield was awarded to Cherill Penton for her investigation of a private home in Staffordshire. Special commendation was awarded to Trystan Swale, Steve Wills, Dr Simon Sherwood, Nicky Sewell and Dave Wood for a substantive non-ASSAP report into a Farmhouse in Stanton Fitzwarren.

The following were elected to the Executive, in order of votes cast: Trystan Swale, Steve Wills, Nicky Sewell, Dave Wood, Terry Porter and Bill Eyre.



Studying the evidence at Training Weekend

Training Weekend Report Back

The 2008 ASSAP Training Weekend was held at Beverley Friary on 22-23 November. The weekend was a great success with several new topics being covered, including Critical Thinking, Avoiding Pseudo-Science and Non-Haunting Phenomena.

Learners ranged from brand-new members to some of long-standing (over 15 years) and everything in between. There was a broad mix including independent researchers, ASSAP group members and several first degree and PhD candidates. On the final day, Beverley was covered with a fantastic blanket of snow, and fortunately everyone made it home safely!

The next ASSAP training event is the Training Investigation. For more information, turn to page 5.

TRAINING & EVENTS

Information

Training Investigation 2009



year, attending the Training Investigation will qualify you for renewal.

TI09 is also a great opportunity for anyone wishing to refresh their skills, or even kick start their investigating career.

What can you expect?

The training will focus on the practical skills you need to design a scientific and ethical investigation, picking up from where the Training Weekends leave off. This includes practical opportunities to interview witnesses and actually design the investigation you will be conducting that evening!

There is a lot of excitement about this event – even the trainees at the Training Weekend were having experiences during training – so do book early to avoid disappointment!

Where? Beverley Friary, East Yorkshire

When? Saturday 14th March, 2009: 12 noon to 12 midnight

How much? £25

What is included?

Several training sessions, an investigation at the Friary and a place to sleep on the Saturday night!

By when?

Bookings do not close until 28th February. However these events are very popular and the number of places has been limited to 20 so we strongly recommend you book before the end of December.

Who should come to TI09?

The Training Investigation is open to all ASSAP members. It is particularly recommended for those who have attended a Training Weekend.

Why should you go to TI09?

The Training Weekend is ideal for anyone wishing to complete their application to become an Approved ASSAP Investigator (AAI). For anyone wishing to renew their AAI status the following



Delegates at Beverley Friary

Do you have a group event you would like to publicise in ASSAP News?
Please email news@assap.org with your details

ORBS: Three Years On

It has been three years since ASSAP members, at the 2005 AGM at Margam Castle, asked ASSAP to focus on gathering scientific evidence on the 'orb' phenomenon. We have come quite a way in just three years...

What are orbs?

Orbs are circular anomalies that typically appear on digital cameras. Paranormal reality TV popularised the baseless idea of their being related to ghosts.

Why was research needed?

By 2005 most rational researchers accepted the 'airborne particle' theory of orbs. Anecdotal evidence for this was widespread, but no systematic studies had been completed to provide scientific evidence. A review of literature in academic journals confirmed this.

What happened?

In 2006 ASSAP awarded a research grant to ASSAP group PSI who were designing experiments following 12 months of preliminary research.

What was the result?

The results concluded orbs had no association with haunted places or megapixel ratings. Association with flash, compact design, digital medium and, crucially, depth of field were established.

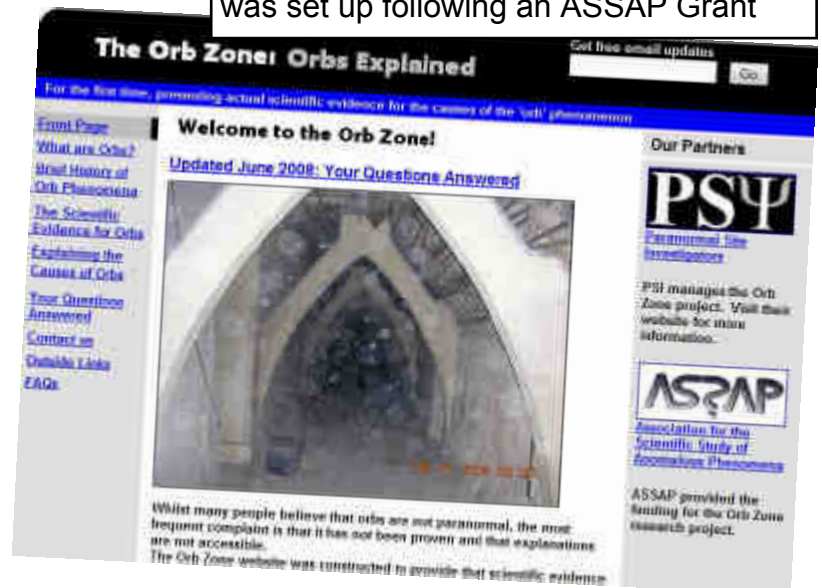
What impact did it have?

TheOrbZone.com was established and has attracted 350,000+ hits per year, and some attention. An article is due to be published in the peer-reviewed SPR Journal in 2009.

In the last couple of years the 'orb zone theory' has taken a greater hold and is much more widely accepted. The wind was blowing in the right direction, but no doubt ASSAP's researched helped.



The project attracted some media coverage (above) and a dedicated website was set up following an ASSAP Grant



Find out more about the research:

www.TheOrbZone.com
www.assap.org/newsite/htmlfiles/Orb%20FAQ.html

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The world according to Lionel Fanthorpe



We've recently been involved with months of intensive and extensive research for our forthcoming book *The Mysteries and Secrets of Undiscovered Treasure* scheduled to be published by Dundurn's of Toronto in spring 2009.

One of the most interesting things we came across during that

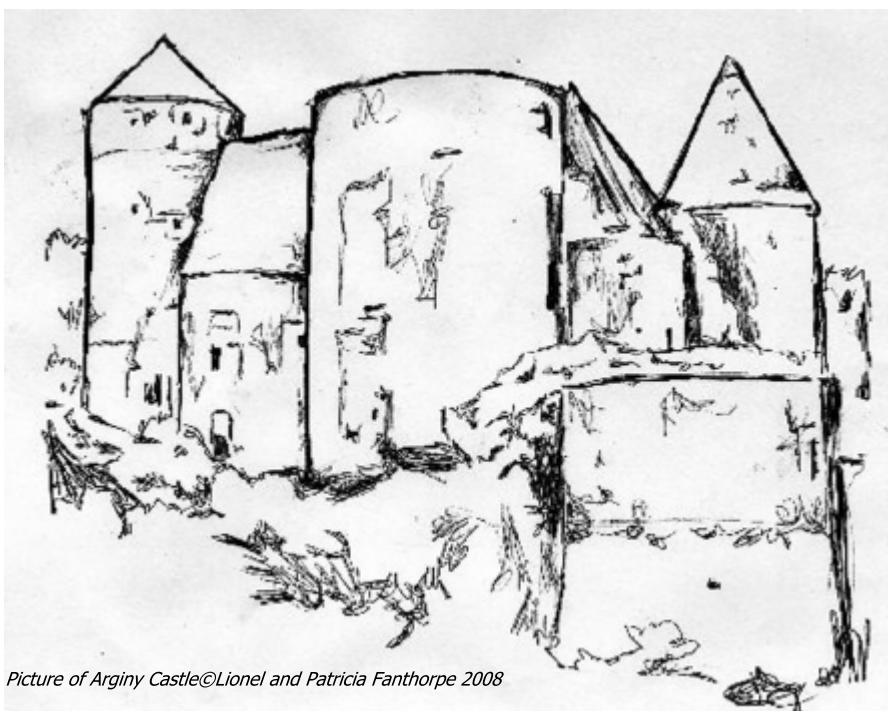
research was the Templar treasure mystery associated with Arginy Castle in France. In outline, the tradition is that a Templar named de Beaujeu of Arginy escaped there and concealed a vast treasure in the labyrinth below his ancient castle in 1307, when the avaricious and treacherous King Philip IV launched his

underhanded attack on the noble order. Anne de Beaujeu – also known as Anne of France (1461 – 1522) -- was the daughter of King Louis XI (1423 – 1483) (known as the Spider King because of the webs of intrigue that he wove). She either inherited or acquired part of her father's subtlety and intelligence, which inspired her to explore the subterranean labyrinths where the treasure was said to be buried. She maintained that nothing significant came to light – but that may simply have been part of her prudence! In any event, she blocked off the entrance to the labyrinths, and nothing further was done until 1914.

Duke Pierre de Rosemont had acquired Arginy by then. He demolished the wall that Anne had erected centuries before and ordered his men to search the labyrinth. Like the settings for the fictional Lara Croft and Indiana Jones adventures, the real labyrinth below Arginy had been booby-

trapped, and one of Rosemont's men almost lost his legs when heavy stone spheres rolled on him from their hiding place in the wall. It says much for Rosemont's courage and altruism that he forbade any further exploration by his men *unless he himself led the way past any other potential hazards*. He discovered the way down into a sinister tomb that he had been informed was very

close to the missing Treasure of Arginy. What happened next slips out of history and into legend: it was reported that the dauntless Rosemont saw globes of coloured light, heard bloodcurdling screams from below, and felt himself being attacked by something invisible. Water then began rising towards him and he was reluctantly forced to retreat.



Picture of Arginy Castle © Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe 2008

He reached the surface again, thought things through and decided that whatever was down there was too great a hazard to risk a second encounter – either for him, or for anyone else: he closed the aperture that had given him access to the strange labyrinth below Arginy castle.

One of the oldest and most mysterious parts of the Arginy fortifications is a tower, known as the *Tower of Alchemy*. Could alchemy have the remotest possible connection with the weird goings on in the labyrinth?

Arginy Castle seems to present a classic unsolved mystery of the type that appeals to all of us in ASSAP.

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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.

Number 7: The New House Effect

Q: What is the New House Effect?

A: Do you remember the last time you moved home? Do you recall a moment when you woke up in the middle of the night in your new house, perhaps not quite sure where you were? Did you hear a distant knock or a loud creak that caught you by surprise, perhaps made you anxious? Was there a shadow or light on the wall of your room that looked unfamiliar, even faintly sinister? This is the new house effect.

Until you get used to the peculiar sounds and sights (and even smells) of your new house, they can seem a little disturbing, particularly in the middle of the night when the relative quiet outside can appear to magnify them. If the creaks and knocks are particularly loud and frequent it might even sound as though there is 'someone else' in the house with you.

Q: What are these noises?

A: Buildings all produce a variety of perfectly natural noises due to expanding, contracting or settling pipes, joists and so on. These changes are caused by temperature changes through the day (particularly from central heating) and even by the inhabitants moving around. For instance, a floorboard may 'spring back' if no one walks on it for a while. The sound of the wind in the chimneys can sometimes sound spooky. The way passing traffic casts lights and shadows on walls at night can sometimes suggest moving figures.

We tend not to notice these peculiar sights and sounds of a building most of the time in our busy lives. However, when it is quiet and dark, these things can become prominent and even appear paranormal. And it is particularly noticeable when you are unfamiliar with a building.

Q: Are you saying that the natural noises and sights of a house might appear like ghostly activity?

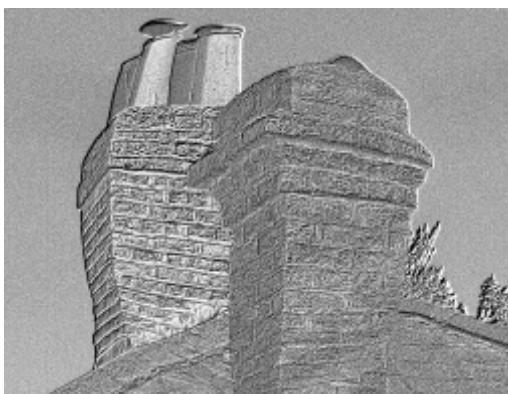
A: Many hauntings are reported by people who have just moved into a new house (not necessarily new in the sense of just built but new to the occupants, and not only houses but flats and other buildings). The previous inhabitants often reported no such problems. Similarly, major building work frequently produces new reports of hauntings. If big changes are made to a

building, it is likely to introduce new peculiar sounds. It can produce a mini New House Effect. The frequent connection between building work and hauntings was been noted long ago and traditionally explained as a ghost not liking changes to their traditional haunts!

Q: What about people going on a vigil at a haunted location for the first time?

A: Yes, the New House Effect (NHE) can certainly be problem on such vigils. In many ASSAP investigations, the first vigil at a particular location often seems to be much more 'exciting' than subsequent ones. This initial 'excitement' may have been caused by lots of spurious reports produced by misinterpreted natural building sounds and sights. It is just one important argument in favour of longitudinal studies, where sites are investigated on many occasions allowing researchers to become familiar with the natural noises of a building.

Q: How can researchers take the New House Effect into account?



A: Obviously, the fact that someone has just moved into a home or had recent building work will naturally come up during an investigation. It would be worth seeing if there was any record of haunting phenomena prior to the witnesses moving in. We can never discount a haunting as simply the New House Effect – it must always be properly investigated. However, if you suspect that the NHE might be involved, it would be worth taking a witness on one vigil (not the first).

This is not something normally done but if the haunting really is being caused by the NHE, there's a good chance that witnesses will report apparent phenomena on a vigil. Obviously, the causes of these can then be investigated on site at the time.

Q: Is it possible to prove NHE effects?

A: It depends. Some effects, like demonstrating how a floorboard creaks when people stand on it will be easy. Others, such as thermal expansion due to central heating, can be demonstrated by switching the heating on and off to see if the effect is reproduced. However, noises from inside walls will be beyond the scope of an investigation.

Further information:

www.assap.org/newsite/htmlfiles/New%20house.html



Worlds Apart, Worlds Together: Explorations in Science, Spirituality and Psychical Research

A Report on the joint Parasearch & Alister Hardy Society Conference

By Marianne Rankin and David Taylor

A one day conference hosted by Parasearch and the Alister Hardy Society was held in the historic Guildhall in Worcester on Saturday 27th September 2008.

Such was the draw of the three speakers, Dr Mark Fox, Professor Gwyn Hocking and Dr Peter Fenwick, that the event was in fact sold out over a week before and there were queues at the door.

David Taylor, Chair of Parasearch and organiser of the conference introduced Parasearch, an organisation he founded in 1986 to investigate anomalous experiences in the Midlands, making it one of the oldest regional groups in the country. Marianne Rankin, Chair of the Alister Hardy Society explained that the AHS supports the work of the

Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC) at the University of Wales, Lampeter, where the archive of over 6,000 accounts of spiritual experiences is held and used for research purposes.

The first speaker was Dr Mark Fox, lecturer in and Religious Studies and a Parasearch consultant. His talk was entitled *Sharing the Light: Unusual Light Experiences in a Mystical and Psychic Context*.

Mark began by giving a brief introduction to the life and work of Sir Alister Hardy and the work of the Religious Experience Research Centre.

Mark mentioned examples of light experiences in religious traditions. He then moved on to his work on experiences of light in the RERC archive. Most of these were solitary but a few were shared, making them particularly interesting from an

evidential point of view. A pattern emerged, which he found repeatedly: crisis, light, turning point, resolution. In many cases the experiences were life-changing.

Professor Gwyn Hocking, Professor in Material Chemistry at Imperial College, London introduced *ESP, Molecular Structure and Quantum Physics*. He began by explaining that there are now two groups

of physicists: 'traditional physicists' who will only accept three space dimensions and one time dimension, which leads to problems in reconciling relativity with quantum theory and 'elementary particle physicists', who have calculated that 10 space dimensions and one time dimension are essential to explain particle phenomena.



Speakers on the conference panel L-R: Prof.M.G.Hocking; Dr. Mark Fox; Dr.Peter Fenwick

Contd on page 10

F O C U S O N

Parasearch & Alister Hardy Society Conference



Following lunch in the sumptuous surroundings of the Guildhall restaurant Dr Peter Fenwick, one of the countries leading neuropsychiatrists with a special interest in consciousness and the nature of mind spoke on *End of Life – A Journey to Elsewhere*. He is at present researching the mental state of the dying as reported by hospices and palliative care teams and leading a multi-disciplinary project, researching End-of-Life Experiences and their importance for the dying and the bereaved in both this country and Japan.



Worcester Guildhall

Peter noted that in the Middle Ages death was accepted as part of living, and the *Ars Moriendi* (*The Art of Dying*) offered a guide to dying. Things have changed over the years and these days we cope less well with dying. Peter suggested that we need an *Ars Moriendi* for today – and that he and Elizabeth have written it - *The Art of Dying, A Journey to Elsewhere*. The book later sold briskly - an indication that he is right.

In a talk illustrated with many examples of End of Life Experiences, Peter took us through harbingers of death, such as black butterflies in the Philippines and the reactions of animals to the dying as well as transpersonal End of Life Experiences such as visions, deathbed coincidences and other strange phenomena around death. He has found that the last weeks of life are a spiritual time, a time of reconciliation and preparation for departure. Frequently the language of journey is used by the dying, who are often aware as long as two years before that their time has come. They may have visions or vivid dreams of deceased relatives, in many cases of their mother, who seems to have come to fetch them. Peter brought us all face to face with our own mortality but gave us grounds for hope of continuation of consciousness.

The ensuing discussion session with all three speakers inevitably began with more on death and dying, then moved on to NDEs, survival and other dimensions, leaving us all with much to reflect upon during the journey home. It was a rich and stimulating day as well as a wonderful opportunity for members of both organisations to get to know each other.

A big thank you must go to Carolyn Taylor and Kelly Knight of Parasearch for sorting out the huge queue of people coming into the conference, and to Parasearch consultant and former ASSAP Chair Mike White for single handedly sorting out the IT requirements of the speakers.

Text and pictures© Parasearch and AHS 2008

**Have you got a report
for ASSAP News?**

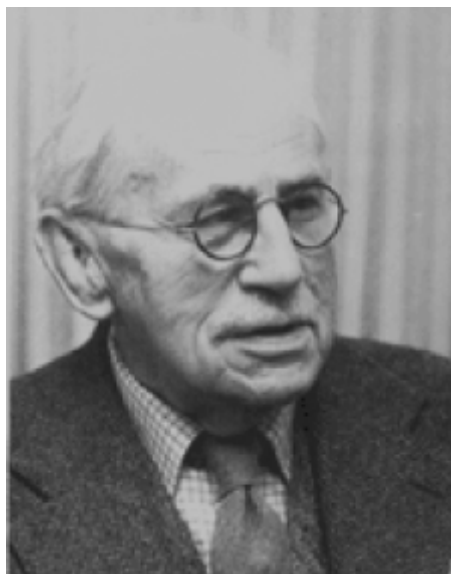
**Email the editor on
news@assap.org**



A Sense of Presence...

An Introduction to the Alister Hardy Society

By Marianne Rankin, Chair.



Alister Hardy

The society supports the work of the Religious Experience Research Centre, which is based at the University of Wales, Lampeter.

Our aim is to assist in developing and promoting wider and deeper understanding of the contribution and importance of spiritual or religious experience in the search for

meaning, and in achieving the well-being of individuals, society and the environment.

We are a focal point for people interested in the study of these experiences, organising study days, discussion groups and experiential events. These may involve the society as a whole, such as the annual conference or Open Day, or be organised by local groups, which are to be found in London, Oxford, Lampeter and Chesterfield. Groups may be large or small, but all are lively and run by committed members.

Twice a year we publish a newsletter *De Numine* which features a wide range of articles, book reviews, experiences and comment.

In Lampeter, we have an archive of religious experiences, now amounting to over 6,000 accounts of events sent to us by people who found them meaningful and often life-transforming.

The archive and original Research Unit was established by **Sir Alister Hardy** in Manchester College, Oxford, in 1969. A naturalist all his life, Alister Hardy had early experiences of profound mystical significance, leading him to the view that humans were spiritual animals – this at the turn of the 20th century when Darwin's *Origin of Species* had taken the world by storm, seemingly setting science and religion on a collision course. Not for Hardy, however. For him spirituality and evolution could happily co-exist. When called up for service in WWI he made a vow, that if he survived the war,

he would devote his life to the reconciliation of these two views of the world.

After the war, he studied zoology, and carved a successful career as a marine biologist specialising in plankton. He served as Chief Zoologist on the 1925-7 Discovery Oceanographic Expedition. He later held professorships in Hull and Aberdeen, ending up as a professor of Zoology at Oxford.

But he had not forgotten his vow. On retirement from Oxford he gave the Gifford Lectures on the subject of natural theology for 1963 to 1965, publishing the series in *The Living Stream* and *The Divine Flame*. *Psypher* readers will be particularly interested in Lecture 8 on *The Importance of Psychical Research*.

In 1969 Hardy founded the Religious Experience Research Unit, with accounts of religious experience he had obtained by a request in the press:

Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?

He had first posed the question in the religious press, thinking that more likely to elicit data for his research – but he was disappointed by the meagre results. He subsequently published the question in the secular press, and was immediately inundated with letters from people from all walks of life, describing in detail experiences which had transformed their lives and beliefs. Many admitted that this was the first time they had dared to share the experience.

Here was Hardy's raw material, which formed the basis of today's archive, and from the early days until today, research continues into this data bank.

Our aims are:

- To continue the collection of, and exploration into the meaning of religious experience and its relevance to life today
- To liaise with other academic disciplines for continuing research
- To contribute to the current exploration into consciousness studies
- To explore the possibility of a Common Core to religious experience by widening research into different cultures, including the Han Chinese and studies in India, Turkey, Japan, Russia and the USA.

Hardy suggested an experiential faith, based on a scientific outlook, where one suspends rational doubts and with a sense of devotion one communes with a power beyond the conscious self. In this day and age, when so many people feel alienated from formal religion, religious experience reflects humanity's continuing awareness of the spiritual, and Sir Alister Hardy's vision of a natural theology has never been more relevant.

Paranormal

Forum

Getting Rid of Pen and Paper

Paranormal Forum encourages debate about investigation methods. In this edition ASSAP Chairman Dave Wood presents the case against using pen and paper during investigations.

The ASSAP Training Weekend 2008 presented much controversial current thinking. This included dispensing with the assumption-led, the fishing approach, as well as dispensing with thermometers, EMF meters and paranormal experimentation. Ironically, there was nothing quite so controversial as the recommendation to dispense with the traditional 'pen and paper' approach to investigations.

The simple pen and paper is much loved tool of paranormal investigators. Its traditional presence has been ubiquitous amongst all investigators, probably ever since the concept of paranormal investigations existed.

It is unsurprising that many are resistant to change. The pen and paper has been the one constant across time, and provides some reassurance. It is also largely democratic and labour-light, as everyone tends to take responsibility for their own. But habit and tradition should never be a reason to retain a practice, so here follows the argument for recycling your pad and snapping your pen.

No one would doubt that any occurrences during an investigation need to be as accurately recorded as possible. Unfortunately human beings are the worst recorders imaginable of the ambiguous xenonormal

phenomena that is the subject of most cases. Some of the problems with humans as recorders include selective bias, retrospective bias and memory. Psychology tells us that if someone is asked to recall an event even 15 minutes after it has taken place they will misremember much of it, their brain will have been working hard to put their interpretation on it, and depending on their feelings about the experience the brain will try to embellish or play-up the experience.

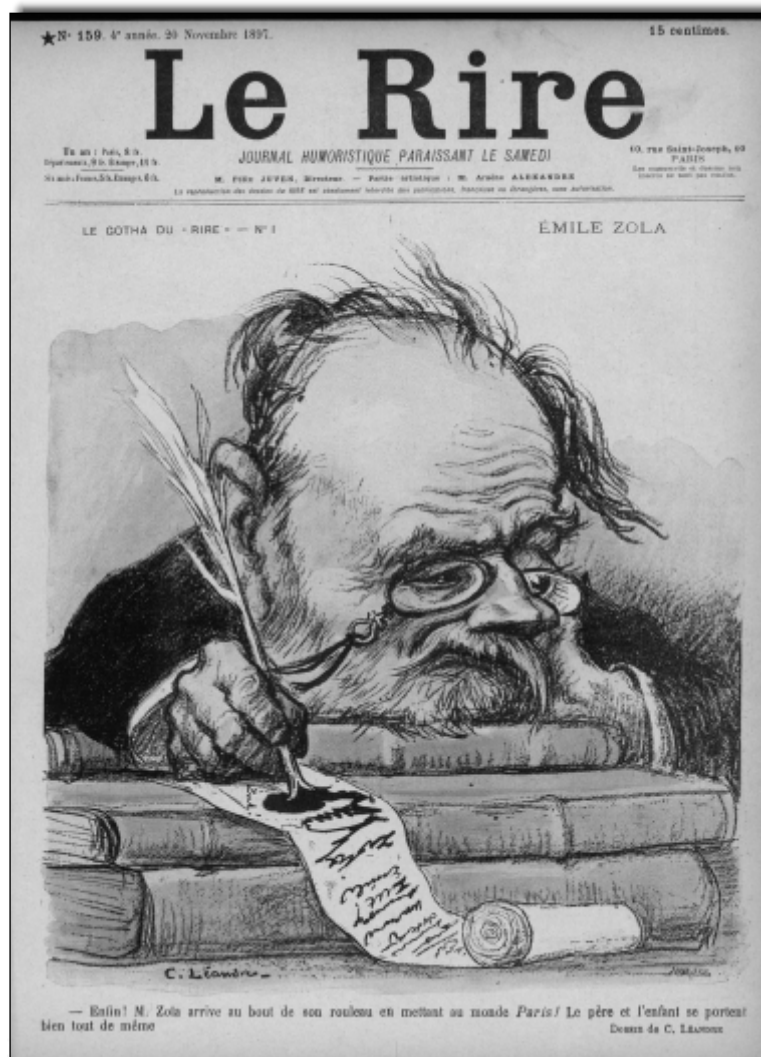
As such, taking cursory notes to 'fill in the gaps' later leaves us with data that is selective and biased – not very useful, especially where it can be avoided. Attempting to fully record the experience in writing will also involve much interpretation before putting pen to paper, and is quite distracting.

So what is the solution? Using a voice recorder to instantly record any notes overcomes most of these problems. It allows full description in a quick space of time; these can be made instantly to avoid the problems of memory and recall. Talking does involve some interpretation, but not as much as writing. Above all it allows us to record all events not based on bias and selection, and leaves us with highly useful raw data. The

icing on the cake of digital voice recorders is that they automatically generate a time and date stamp on the audio file, allowing a highly accurate measure of time.

In recent months high capacity, high quality voice recorders have plummeted in price so no one has a reason not to adopt this good practice technique in collecting raw data that is less biased and more useful.

©Dave Wood 2008



Even Emile Zola eventually opted for a digital voice recorder!
Image©Mary Evans Picture Library

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Non-Standing Order Memberships Cost ASSAP £1000 in the Last 12 Months!

**What
that
£1000
could
have
paid for...**

2 Years of our Library being stored at the National Science Museum

3 More ASSAP News annually

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**30
SECOND**

Interview with ASSAP Chairman Dave Wood on why we should move to Standing Order...

Dave says, "At ASSAP we are proud of low-cost membership, low-cost Training Events but high quality publications and research output. We're really accessible for young people, students, retired people, and those on low wages. Everyone can benefit from ASSAP.

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INTERVIEW

Professor Etzel Cardeña

President of the Parapsychological Association

By Wendy E Cousins



Etzel Cardeña is Professor of Psychology (including Parapsychology and Hypnosis) at Lund University in Sweden, one of Scandinavia's most prestigious academic institutions where he is head of the Centre for Research on Consciousness and Anomalous Psychology (CERCAP).

Educated in Mexico, Canada and the United States, he has conducted extensive research on altered states of consciousness including voodoo possession in Haiti, shamanism, and cross-cultural studies of mediumship. Unlike most academic parapsychologists he has also published widely in mainstream psychology and medical journals on the subjects of trauma, dissociation and hypnosis. His book *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence* is the first scholarly book on anomalous experiences to be published by a mainstream publisher (The American Psychological Association) and is a classic text in the field. Prof Cardeña is the current President of the Parapsychological Association (2008-2009).



Prof. Etzel Cardeña source: W Cousins

Could you tell us about your current areas of research in parapsychology?

Because my remit and long-time interests involve both parapsychology and hypnosis, I am starting a long-term research programme looking at the possible relationship between hypnotic propensities and performance in controlled psi experiments. I am also very interested in improving the classification of altered states of consciousness and the language used to describe these experiences, which have been often related to psi phenomena.

Do you think there's a role for local paranormal groups to play in the activities of academic parapsychology?

I've not thought much about this issue, but two items jump to mind. The first is that they could themselves help educate the public about serious past and ongoing research in parapsychology. The second is that they could collaborate with academics in research when there seems to be some exceptional phenomena involved, (but local

groups should please bear in mind that academics are usually involved in many tasks simultaneously and tend to be busy).

How would you defend parapsychology from the criticism it gets from mainstream academia and prominent members of the scientific establishment?

Defending parapsychology could be someone's full time position, given the various attacks against it! However, one easy answer for the vast majority of attacks is whether they show ANY awareness of the serious literature on the matter. If not, this should be pointed out. The same way that an uneducated person in organic chemistry should not think that he or she can speak authoritatively on that subject, an uneducated person in psi research has no claims to any authority, just to bias. There are other arguments to be made against more informed attacks, but I would recommend reading a recent paper by U.S. parapsychologist Nancy Zingrone pointing out the various double-standards and inaccuracies of parapsychology critics. It's called *Failing to Go the Distance* and it's available online.

What do you see the greatest challenge facing academic parapsychology today?

Academic parapsychology obviously faces the bias of some academics, especially psychologists, and almost non-existent funding for the field. On the other hand, academics have the enormous advantage of job security after a certain level is achieved, and the privilege of being paid for reading, thinking and researching various topics. I actually think that parapsychology should be thought of as a general field of inquiry, rather than a discipline like psychology or physics, and that would calm down some of the anxieties of people inside and outside the field. As in most areas where we are seeing important developments, parapsychology needs to become a much more interdisciplinary activity, with psychologists, physicists, biologists, etc. collaborating with each other. With this aim in mind, I recently spearheaded a grant application to a major funding organization to develop a five-year plan for psi research that would include planning and developing interdisciplinary research.

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Further Information

Etzel Cardeña & the Research on Consciousness & Anomalous Psychology: <http://www1.psychology.lu.se/Personal/e%5Fcardena/>
The Parapsychological Association: <http://www.parapsych.org/>
Failing to go the Distance: On Critics and Parapsychology by Nancy Zingrone
http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/New/Examskeptics/Zingrone_critics.html

SPOTLIGHT ON GROUPS

In the trenches with paranormal research

With Steve Wills



Paranormal Site Investigators (PSI)

PSI is an ASSAP Affiliate group based in Wiltshire and run by ASSAP Chairman Dave Wood, Trainer Nicky Sewell, Secretary Trystan Swale, Groups Officer Steve Wills and Research Panel Member Dr Simon Sherwood, amongst others.

PSI is the only one of ASSAP's groups to be an education and research charity in its own right. Its objects and activities include: education through training, courses at Further Education Colleges, lectures, events for schools and colleges and assistance to University students; and research provided for free through the PSI Journal which reports on PSI's major research programmes and on the research of any reports of sufficient quality.

PSI also investigates cases on a monthly basis. Their investigation methodology has recently been changed to a neutral, xenonormal-focussed approach; this included ruling out all standard paranormal investigation equipment and methods. PSI is proud of its recruitment process, delivering high-quality and hard-working applicants through application forms, interviews, CRB checks, training weekends and field training and assessment.

PSI has funded by ASSAP to research the orb phenomena, the results of which culminated in TheOrbZone.com, received a £1300 grant to support the HauntedSwindon.com project, which included a book and DVD, and has just received £2133 from the National Lottery to run an education programme for A-Level students across the South West.

PSI has over 1300 members and its website can be found at www.p-s-i.org.uk

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 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 meltonparacub@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 tonyccles@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: 0121 550 8874 / 07505 323443 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 (SI) are based in Devon and Somerset and Cornwall but also operate further afield, mainly focusing on hauntings. 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

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MARCH 14

ASSAP Training Investigation

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