

NEWS

ISSUE 131: SUMMER 2010

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The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena was formed in 1981 to research and education about a wide range of paranormal phenomena, as well as preserving heritage. 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.

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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.

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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

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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



9 Ways to Help ASSAP!



1 Come to Introduction to Scientific Paranormal Investigating. It's never too late to start doing things scientifically, or to brush up your skills.

2 Join our Facebook Group
Search for 'ASSAP' on facebook and join our nearly 700 facebook members.

3 Make sure you are on our email list
We can keep you up to date faster on our email list. If you don't get emails tell us on assap@assap.org

4 Go onto Standing Order
For every member on Standing Order we save a lot of money. Talk to us through assap@assap.org

5 Write for Us
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9 Keep Doing what you are Doing!
As a charity ASSAP relies on regular members' subscriptions, you are important to us just as you are!

Introduction to Scientific Paranormal Investigating: the ASSAP Training Weekend



Bookings are now open!

Date: 4-5 December 2010

Place: Oxenwood, Wiltshire

Event: A great refresher for experienced ASSAP AAIs, the perfect introduction for newer investigators and for those moving over to the scientific method.

The Training Weekend 2009 sold out, so do book early to ensure your place email

assapevents@assap.org

A number of keen investigators were unable to attend the 2009 Training Weekend. Because there is a lot of demand in the south ASSAP has decided to run an additional event at this popular location.

Exploring the Extraordinary

2nd Conference, University of York, UK
Friday, 24th September – Saturday 25th September, 2010

Conference papers cover topics such as
making sense of extraordinary experiences
exploring spirituality outside traditional religious institutions
bereavement, spirituality and transformation
the ethics and consumption of mediumship
the experiential – through mediumship, in research and spirit art
making explicit interdisciplinary links e.g. between anthropology and parapsychology

More information from:

Dr Hannah Gilbert, Anomalous Experiences Research Unit, Sociology, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD, heg104@york.ac.uk

Live Event - 25th July at Reading Concert Hall

New ASSAP member Damian Thomas is producing a TV pilot show about psychics and are running a live event on 25th July at Reading Concert Hall. For more information ring Damian on 01235 201483

Catch up with ASSAP at all the 2010 Conferences!

ASSAP will be speaking and/or running stalls at all these events.



**The Community Centre
Woolfardisworthy
North Devon UK**
13th - 15th August 2010
www.cfz.org.uk
Tel: +44(0) 1237 431413



The Weird Weekend is the largest yearly gathering of mystery animal investigators in the English-speaking world. Now in its tenth year, the convention attracts speakers and visitors from all over the world and showcases the findings of investigators into strange phenomena.



THE ANTIDOTE FOR NORMALITY; YOU'VE NEVER HAD IT SO WEIRD



Wiltshire's Premier International UFO & Paranormal Conference.

Held at the Athenaeum Theatre in Warminster on the 21st and 22nd of August 2010 it is something not to be missed

Reserve tickets now from the website at
www.mystical-county.org.uk

Dates for the Diary: More Information Soon

October - November 2010: Swindon Ghost Festival



Conference on 30th October. Public research and investigation events on 30th and 31st October and 6th November. Ghost Walks on 26th and 28th October and 2nd and 4th November 2010. More details to follow.



**October 23-24:
UnConvention,
London more to follow**



The Bell Hotel, Thetford

By Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe

We recently investigated the ghosts of the Bell Hotel in Thetford, Norfolk, staying there overnight on Saturday 8th May, 2010.

The building goes way back to the 16th century – maybe earlier – and was said at one time to have been the property of the monastic order connected with Thetford Priory.

There are allegedly two particular ghosts reported from the Bell. The first is a shadowy monk. The second is the spirit of Betty Radcliff or Radcliffe (spellings vary) who was the landlady there many years ago. According to one version of the story, Betty was murdered by her lover, who was one of the staff. In some accounts of her tragic death, she was strangled and left on the bed in Room 12. In other versions she was thrown from the window. Her ghost is said to be connected with a memorial cross in the cemetery adjacent to the Bell, and certainly the view of the hotel from the cross – and vice versa – is a striking one. We can thoroughly recommend the Bell as being extremely comfortable and welcoming – and their chef is absolutely brilliant. Our Saturday lunch there was the best we have had for many

years. The ghost tour of the building matched up to the high standard of that meal. The staff are always ready to help serious psychic investigators. We were able to study the bedrooms from which phenomena have been reported regularly by reliable witnesses and mediums, and we also investigated the ancient cellars, and the mysterious Priest's hole – which

might, perhaps, have originally been something more sinister.

18th May 2010



Pictures, from top to bottom:

The sinister cross connected with the haunting of the Bell Hotel, viewed from the hotel.

The Bell Hotel viewed from the Cross in the adjacent cemetery.

Picture of Betty Radcliffe, a former landlady who was murdered in the Bell Hotel and is now thought to haunt the historic building she once owned.

Lionel exploring the Priest's hole in the depths of the haunted Bell Hotel in Thetford.



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.

what you would do if you were fully conscious and saw an unknown human figure in your room! This muted reaction is a good indicator of hypnagogia. It is always important to ask

witnesses what they did a directly after they saw the ghost and how they felt about their experience.

Near-Sleep Experiences and the Paranormal

Q: What is a near-sleep experience?

A: Near-sleep experiences are hallucinations that people experience when their brain is partly asleep and partly awake. The best known is hypnagogia but there are several others. Such experiences, which mix the content of dreams with real scenes, are often interpreted as paranormal.

Q: How can someone be partly asleep?

A: Recent scientific research has shown that bits of our brain can be asleep while others are still awake. Only when most bits of our brains are asleep at the same time do we lose consciousness. Going to sleep is a more complex and gradual process than had previously been imagined.

Q: How does this state cause hallucinations?

A: In certain circumstances our brains can be in a REM state, the one associated with dreaming, while still consciously perceiving the real world. When this 'REM intrusion' happens, bits of dreams can get overlaid onto real visible scenes. So, you might be lying in bed, looking at your room, and a human figure appears. You know there can be no one in your room, because the door is locked, so naturally you assume it must be a ghost or alien. In fact, it is part of a dream you are having.

Many reports of ghost sightings occur when people are lying in bed, while either falling asleep or waking up. It is interesting that, in many cases, the witness does not react much to apparently seeing a ghost in their bedroom. They just turn over and go to sleep! It is hardly

Q: Are there any other indicators of hypnagogia?

A: Witnesses will often feel paralysed. This is sleep paralysis which occurs naturally when we are asleep to stop us wandering about. It can make such experiences frightening as not only do witnesses see something weird but they cannot move either.

Q: What other near-sleep experiences are there?

A: There are out of the body experiences (OOBEs) that frequently occur when people are lying in bed, near to sleep. It is now thought that these are closely related to hypnagogia. In OOBEs people feel as though they are outside their physical body, often floating above it and looking down.

Scientific research has shown that OOBEs may be caused by a particular part of the brain, the temporoparietal junction (TPJ), either not functioning normally or receiving conflicting sensory inputs. The TPJ is the bit of the brain that gives us a sense of where we are in space.

It uses inputs from eyes, touch and the inner ear to say where we are. If it gets things wrong we can feel as though we are somewhere else in space other than in our bodies.

It is possible to use tricks, using vision and touch, to induce OOBEs in people who do not normally experience them. When we are falling asleep, the TPJ may not get its usual sensory inputs as bits of our brain become unconscious one by one, allowing us to experience an OOBE.



Q: What about reports of people seeing things in an OOB state that could not be seen from their physical position?

A: It is fascinating that our brains can produce visual images from positions apart from the usual one of 'behind the eyes'. It becomes less of a mystery when you appreciate that direct input from our eyes only makes up a fraction of what we actually 'see' at any one time. What we see with our eyes is stored in memory and used to 'fill in gaps' in our visual field, when we are not looking directly at a particular object. Some objects, such as those seen in poor light or peripheral vision, may come from longer term memory, effectively made up by our brains!

One of the things our brains learn unconsciously, as we grow from a baby, is the physics of everyday life. For instance, our senses cannot react quickly enough to return an oncoming tennis ball but we can still hit it back anyway. What our brains do is predict where the ball will go from seeing its trajectory when first hit. Similarly, our brains can construct a visible scene from a different angle to our usual one, just like a computer animation.

Of course, there will be bits of the scene that the witness's eyes could not possibly see. These can be 'filled in' by our brains from specific memories of earlier views of the location or, failing that, generalised objects held in memory. Such 'generalised objects' do not seem to be restricted to real things but can come from photos, pictures and even movies.

Q: What other near sleep experiences are there?

A: Not all near sleep experiences happen in bed or dozing in a chair. Sometimes people can slip in and out of sleep while hardly noticing it.

When people are sleep-deprived, as many are these days with our busy lives, they can be subject to microsleep. These are periods of a second or two, up to minutes, when someone is

not responsive despite often having their eyes open. It can be difficult to detect, both for the experiencer and anyone watching them. During these periods, the experiencer will miss any sensory input. Someone doing a monotonous task, like driving, can also get microsleep. Microsleep is most frequent at times of day when the experiencer would normally be asleep.

For example, if someone was sleep deprived by attending a ghost vigil, they might microsleep during the latter parts of the night. If something in the room changed during a microsleep, they might not notice it happening and assume it had moved paranormally (apport). An object might appear to 'jump' from one place to another when, in reality, it simply fell normally.

People vary enormously in their ability to cope with sleep deprivation. It is now thought possible that, when sleep deprived, parts of our brains may go 'off line' temporarily while we are apparently awake. In this condition we become forgetful or daydream, both of which could result in reports of apparent paranormal activity.

A few people experience brief dream states during microsleep episodes. This could be related to hypnagogia or it may be indicative of a sleep disorder. Either way, it could produce paranormal reports from REM intrusion, even when apparently fully awake and alert.

Q: Are near sleep experiences a common cause of paranormal reports?

A: There don't seem to be any statistics for natural causes of paranormal reports but I would guess they are second only to misperception. The possibility of a near sleep experience should be high up the list of any paranormal investigator's thoughts when interviewing a witness.

Further information:

<http://www.assap.org/newsite/articles/Near%20sleep%20experiences.html>

<http://www.assap.org/newsite/articles/Mind.ht>

Downes on Cryptozoology

On the Track of Unknown Animals

Cryptozoology is the study of unknown animals. Although there are various minor semantic disputes going on as to who actually coined the word, it is indisputable that the subject was first codified by a Belgian scientist called Bernard Heuvelmans over fifty years ago. In his seminal tome, *Sur La Piste Des Bêtes Ignorees* which was written in 1956 and translated into English as *On the Track of Unknown Animals* a few years later, Heuvelmans set out the modus operandi of his nascent science and suggested that dozens of exciting large creatures still awaited discovery in the remoter regions of the world.

I met him briefly in 1990, and one of my prized possessions is a copy of his remarkable book inscribed "To Jonathan, my brother in cryptozoology". I say remarkable, because it is a remarkable book – it influenced and indeed changed the mindset of several generations of eager young naturalists like myself, and set us on a life path that it is unlikely we would have followed otherwise. However, there is one undeniable and very disturbing truth which cannot be ignored when the subject of cryptozoology, and more importantly Heuvelmans' influence upon it is discussed. In the fifty-four years since Heuvelmans initially published *On the Track* not one of the animals that he described have been caught.

Other animals, including quite sizeable creatures such as the Vu Quang ox and other large mammals discovered in Vietnam about fifteen years ago, the megamouth shark which grows up to five and a half metres and several species of beaked whale have been discovered in the intervening years, but – sadly – none of them (with the possible exception of the

beaked whales) were predicted by Heuvelmans.

Some people have used this information to suggest that the entire basis for cryptozoology as a discipline is unsound. I, however, would suggest exactly the opposite, using a religious analogy. Whilst many people would argue that some of the central tenets of Christianity lie in the realms of superstition rather than physical fact, no-one can deny that the ten commandments are a pretty good framework on which to base one's life. I would say the same about Heuvelmans' methodology for cryptozoological research.

The world has changed immeasurably in the last half century. The European empires have withered and died on the vine, and whole swathes of the globe, which were once accessible, are now only reachable if you wear the blue helmet of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force. We also know a heck of a lot more about the morphology and behaviour of extinct species such as dinosaurs than we did when Heuvelmans was predicting the discovery of a living dinosaur in the Congo forests.

However, I, and my fellow scientists at the Centre for Fortean Zoology – the world's largest cryptozoology organisation – believe that Heuvelmans was right – there are still large and spectacular animals awaiting discovery. For the record, our top ten cryptozoological creatures (cryptids):

- 1 The thylacine or marsupial wolf - believed extinct since 1936, the reports continue not only the island of Tasmania, but on the Australian mainland, and even on Irian Jaya.

- 2 Orang pendek – the short man of the forests. A hitherto unknown species of upright walking ape related to the orangutan.
- 3 The avanc – a giant pike reported from various Welsh lakes.
- 4 Giant anaconda. Whether or not they are a new species or just freakishly large specimens of known species or a *bona fide* unknown species, these giant snakes have been reported across much of South America.
- 5 The almasty. Across central Asia from the Caucasus to Mongolia there are reports of what sound very much like a primitive species of human. Could our closest relatives still be living alongside us?
- 6 Mystery cats. There is so much evidence for the existence of large black and brown cats of unknown species living in Britain, western Europe, and even Australia and New Zealand.
- 7 Giant snapping turtles. According to accepted wisdom, there are two species of snapping turtle in North America, the larger of which the alligator snapping turtle is seriously endangered and lives only in the southern parts of the United States. However, there are burgeoning numbers of reports of freakishly large snapping turtles from the northern USA and even southern Canada. Are alligator snapping turtles found further north than is thought? Or is there a third, and very large, snapping turtle awaiting discovery?
- 8 Sea serpents. Bernard Heuvelmans suggested that there was more than one species of huge unknown animal responsible for the sightings of sea serpents. We broadly agree with him, although some of the categories that he suggested have become obsolete due to knowledge about the morphology of prehistoric creatures that was not available to him.
- 9 The yeti. It is not abominable. It is not a man. And it doesn't live in the snows. But there is an enormous amount of evidence for the existence of a giant hairy bipedal ape living in northern India, Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, and western China. The best money is that it is an evolved descend-

ent of an animal called *Gigantopithecus blacki*.

- 10 The Mongolian deathworm. Once again most of the stories that had reached the west about this creature turned out to be spurious, but there seems little doubt that there is an unknown species of thickset snake, or worm lizard, reddy-brown in colour which reaches a length of between 2 and 4 feet and lives under the sands of the Gobi Desert.

I have the honour to be the Director of the Centre for Fortean Zoology. We have sent expeditions all over the world, made films and published more books on the subject than any one else ever has. Each year we have an annual conference in rural North Devon at which members of the public mingle with some of the leading researchers, explorers and cryptozoologist in the world. If this is a subject that interests you, and you would like know more, or perhaps get involved, why not check out our website or email my wife, the membership secretary on membership@cfz.org.uk

Jonathan Downes is a prolific author and director of the Centre for Fortean Zoology



Focus On... is a series of educational articles covering the wide range of anomalous phenomena ASSAP has researched, mainly written by experts in their field.

If you would like to contribute a piece please contact us first - news@assap.org

Dr Wendy Cousins

interviews

Dr John Walliss



Dr John Walliss is Director of the Centre for Millennialism Studies at Liverpool Hope University. His eclectic research interests have lead to explore areas as diverse as Spiritualism and Mediumship in England, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (a New Religious Movement of south-Asian origin), Role-playing Gamers and the novels of Graham Hancock and Atlantis. He is an Elvis fan and lives in Chester.

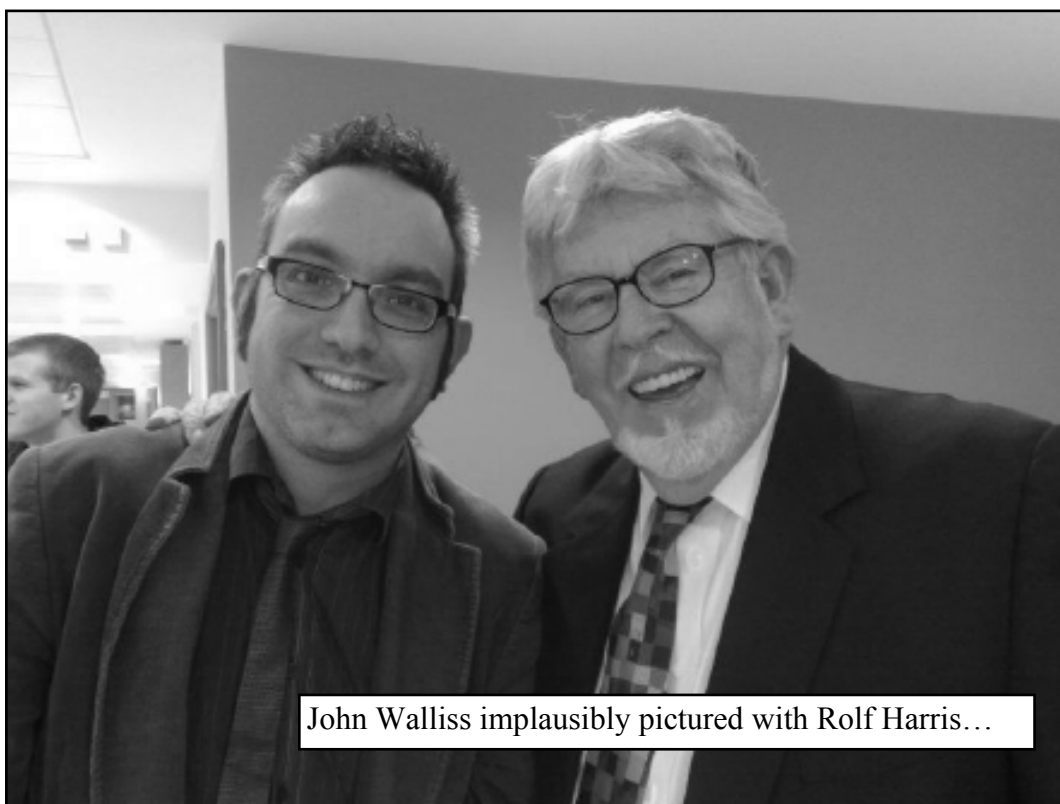
You're currently Director of the Centre for Millennialism Studies so what exactly does that mean?

From my PhD onwards, I've always had an interest in millennialism and issues around violence and what happens when prophecies invariably fail. I wrote a book on millennialism and violence and when I got the job at Hope I found that there was

someone here who was also working in a similar area. We organised some conferences and published some stuff and decided to form a Centre to formalise what we were doing. We got funding from a charity for 3 years to run it (which runs out this year). Over the last 3 years our main project has been to oversee a series of edited collections on the influence of the apocalypse in various areas of popular culture. There are individual volumes coming out over the next couple of years on film, TV, music, internet, graphic novels and the 'Left Behind' novels.

What sort of research have you been working on in recent years?

Aside from overseeing the apocalypse series, I've got more and more interested in aspects of popular culture (or at least geek culture). My interest in the apocalypse over the last 4 years was always in how it was represented in



John Walliss implausibly pictured with Rolf Harris...

popular culture, and more and more my interest has moved in this direction. I've written several articles this year on various aspects of fandom, such as fanfilms, fanfiction and religion and gaming. My main projects at the moment are an article on Role-playing Gamers and an edited collection on the ethical issues around studying fans. I'm also still interested in the apocalypse and film, but not as much as I was in the past.

You've carried out research with all sorts of fringe groups- what's the strangest situation you've been in?



Dr Wendy Cousins

interviews the

Dr John Walliss

I went to see a transsexual medium in a hall in the middle of nowhere. I was speaking to her afterwards and s/he said 'there's a native American stood behind you', and I turned and looked before realising that she was speaking 'psychically'. At the end of our conversation, she said 'come on, give us a hug'. I did and she said 'oh, you're very stiff' and I replied "I'm sorry, I didn't think you would be able to feel it". I then realised that unless I was in a 70s sitcom, that was really a bit of a faux pas, so I backed away and said thanks and bye.

You're a skeptical researcher, but have you ever been tempted to go over to the Other side and become a believer?

Nope, never. I always say that (to use Max Weber's phrase) I am religiously unmusical – I don't have an ear for it. That said, I reserve the right, if I have a midlife crisis, to become convinced that dowsing works and spend the rest of my life dowsing for ley-lines.

If you weren't doing the job you're doing now, what would you be doing?

I don't know. There aren't many jobs outside of academia that reward poor social skills and my pretty limited range of interests. I always joke that I would love to be a mechanic

(especially after I pay one hefty sums of cash to fix my car) but I hate being outside in the cold and have no mechanical aptitude, so I don't think I would be a very good one.

John Walliss may be an untalented mechanic but he has already written several books:

The Brahma Kumaris as a 'Reflexive Tradition': Responding to Late Modernity, Oxon: Ashgate. (2002)

Apocalyptic Trajectories: Millennialism and Violence in the Contemporary World, Oxon: Peter Lang AG. (2004)

(Co-editor with James A. Beckford) Theorising Religion: Classical and Contemporary Debates. Oxon: Ashgate (2006)

(Co-editor with Kenneth G.C. Newport) The End all Around Us: Apocalyptic Texts and Popular Culture. London: Equinox (2009)

(Co-editor with Lee Quinby) Reel Revelations: Apocalypse and Film. (forthcoming with Sheffield Phoenix Press)

Website: <http://www.hope.ac.uk/staff-index/wallisj.html>

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2011: 30 Years of ASSAP

If we have an event, who would be your ideal speaker?

Do you have any ideas about how ASSAP could celebrate?

Email assap@assap.org



Black Dogs and Duchesses

When thinking about doing an Albion project we tend to think about amalgamating together cases within a given geographical area. However, it may be interesting to look at cases linked by historical events rather than geography, such as for instance hauntings related to the English Civil War, the Monmouth Rebellion, the Witch trials or maybe even World War II. Below are two castles, each haunted by a black dog. The link between them is the historical events surrounding the incarceration of Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester.

Leeds Castle

Leeds Castle is named after Led who is supposed to have been the Chief Minister of King Ethelbert IV of Kent. Originally a Saxon manor house called Esledes, built in AD857, it consisted of a wooden palisade and earthwork enclosure. It was granted to the Godwin family by King Edward the

Confessor but did not become a stone castle until Robert Crevecoeur started upgrading it in 1119. The only surviving part of this twelfth century castle is now the cellar.

Leeds became a Royal House and was extensively modified by Edward I of England after he took possession of it in 1278 with his wife Eleanor of Castile. Leeds acquired the reputation of being a ladies castle and has been the Royal residence of six medieval Queens of England and was last besieged in 1321 - when it fell to Edward II after his wife was refused admission. The siege started when Lord Badlesmere, a supporter of Lancaster, refused Queen Isabella access whilst she was traveling



defended by a gatehouse that rose out of the water with fifteen foot high walls. The third island is the smallest and boasts the Gloriette,

to Canterbury. Edward II besieged the castle for a week before it capitulated, which did not give the Marcher Lords (who supported Badlesmere) time to come further than Kingston-upon-Thames before it was all over. Edward then turned on the rebellious Marcher Lords.

Leeds Castle sits over three islands in an artificial lake. The outermost island or Barbican could be reached by three causeways: each defended by a gatehouse, drawbridge and portcullis. The northern causeway was also defended by a fortified Mill. The Barbican was linked to the largest island by a bridge; de-

which is a Keep built by Edward I and named for his wife Eleanor.

Henry VIII spent a large amount of money improving the castle and attributed the work to his wife Catherine of Aragon. Henry's second daughter, and future Queen Elizabeth I, was imprisoned in the castle for a short time before taking the throne.

In 1552 the Lord Deputy of Ireland, Sir Anthony St.Leger was granted Leeds. After this it passed to the Smyth and the Culpeper family. In the Civil War the Culpepers allowed Leeds to be an arsenal for the Parliamentary forces.



Continued... **Black Dogs** and Duchesses

In 1821 the castle was inherited by the Wykeham Martins and then bought by Lady Baille, daughter of Almeric Paget, 1st Baron Queensborough, in 1926. The castle today has been faithfully restored by the Leeds Castle Foundation which was created in Lady Bailles will.

Leeds Castle is not famous for being haunted by any of its many famous owners and guests. Instead it is reputed to be haunted by a large Black Dog whose appearance is seen as an omen of death. This dog has been associated with Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester and wife to the Lord Protector who was tried and convicted of witchcraft and treason circa 1440. She was held at Leeds for a short time prior to her trial.

Peel Castle

Located on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man, the castle is reached over a causeway. The castle buildings are now in ruin but the outer walls are mostly intact. The first fortifications were built by the King Magnus Barelegs of Nor-

way in the 11th Century. The Viking castle was made of wood, though there were earlier Celtic monastic structures on the island. The main round tower was originally part of the Celtic monastery.

The wooden fortifications were eventually replaced with sandstone. After the Vikings the castle was used by the Church but was abandoned in the 18th century. In 1860 the castle was extended with new defensive emplacements.

There is a giant legend attached to the castle's construction. A giantess was carrying the one of the bigger sandstone blocks used to build the castle in her apron with some other stones. The apron strings snapped and the collection of blocks she had fell into the harbour.

The Moddey Dhoo or Black Dog is supposed to haunt Peel Castle. As with Leeds Castle in Kent

which is also haunted by a Black Dog, Peel Castle is where Eleanor Cobham spent her final fourteen years in captivity after being convicted of witchcraft.

One legend of the Moddey Dhoo is based in the reign of King Charles II (1660-1685). The Moddey Dhoo would appear each night and sit by the fire in the guardroom. No one would walk around the castle alone at night for fear of this large black hound and even the patrolling armed soldiers went in pairs. One night a drunken young soldier declared that he would walk the castle passages alone to see if the hound was just a dog or perhaps the devil incarnate. He took the castle key to deliver it to the



Penance of Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester

Captain of the Guard, the Moddey Dhoo got up from the fire and followed him. The soldiers screams shortly rang out around the castle. The young guard man returned alive but terrified and would not speak for the

next three days. Then he died. It is possible he died of fright. From that day on, no guard saw the Moddey Dhoo again.

Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester

Immortalised by Shakespeare, Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester was accused of trying to assassinate King Henry VI using witchcraft; a crime for which she received life imprisonment and perhaps left a ghostly legacy.

Eleanor Cobham was the ambitious second wife (married 1428) of Duke Humphrey Plantagenet of Gloucester (1390-1447). Eleanor had been the lady in waiting for Humphrey's first wife Jacqueline of Holland, and it is suspected they had a relationship together before his first wife passed away. Eleanor bore Humphrey two children: Arthur and Antigone.



Humphrey was Lord Protector of England whilst his nephew Henry VI was still in his minority. When Humphrey's older brother, John Duke of Bedford (who had been regent in France), died in 1435 Humphrey found himself not only ruling the country, but also next in line to the crown should anything befall his nephew before he produced any heirs.

Though Humphrey was popular he had enemies, amongst whom was Henry Beaufort, Cardinal of Winchester, and the great uncle of Henry VI. It is Beaufort who brought the charges of witchcraft against the Duchess of Gloucester, in all probability within the context of political maneuvering and a power struggle.

The Duchess of Gloucester, an astrologer named Roger Bolingbroke, the Witch of Eye (Margery Jourdemayne), a priest named John Hume and Thomas Southwel the Canon of St Stephens, were all accused of meeting in secret to perform the black arts with the aid of a wax image of the King, which they used with sympathetic magic in order to cause the death of their King.

Apparently John Hume lost his nerve and informed on the secret group, some of whom were promptly arrested. On 25 July 1441, Roger Bolingbroke admitted his part in the plot whilst on a scaffold in front of St Paul's before the Arch Bishop of Canterbury and the Cardinal of Winchester amongst other notables.

Eleanor who had been named as an accessory in the plot fled to Westminster seeking sanctuary but evidence provided by Bolingbroke resulted in her arrest. She was confined in Leeds Castle, Kent, until her trial date which was set for October.

The group were found guilty: Margery Jourdemayne was burned to death at Smithfield as a witch and a heretic, Thomas Southwel died whilst serving a prison sentence, Roger Bolingbroke was hanged, drawn and quartered on 18 November 1441 at Tyburn, and Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester did public penance at three places in the city (paraded in a sheet

and carrying a lit taper). She was divorced from her husband and given a life sentence. She spent her remaining fourteen years locked away in the crypt under the chancel of the cathedral at Peel Castle on the Isle of Man under the custody of Sir Thomas Stanley. Eleanor was not a content prisoner (is there such a thing? Ed.), she was kept under constant guard to prevent her escape or suicide.

The duchess is referred to by Shakespeare in his play of Henry VI. part ii act ii. scene 3:

King Henry *Stand forth dame Eleanor Cobham,*

Gloucester's wife.

*In sight of God and us, your guilt is great:
Receive the sentence of the law, for sins
Such as by God's book are adjudged to death.
You, madam, for you are more nobly born,
Despoiled of your honour in your life,
Shall, after three days' open penance done,
Live in your country here, in banishment,
With Sir John Stanley, in the Isle of Man.*

Leeds Castle is haunted by a large Black Dog that has been attributed to the Duchess of Gloucester. Peel Castle is also haunted by a large Black Dog, coincidence? Well, probably.

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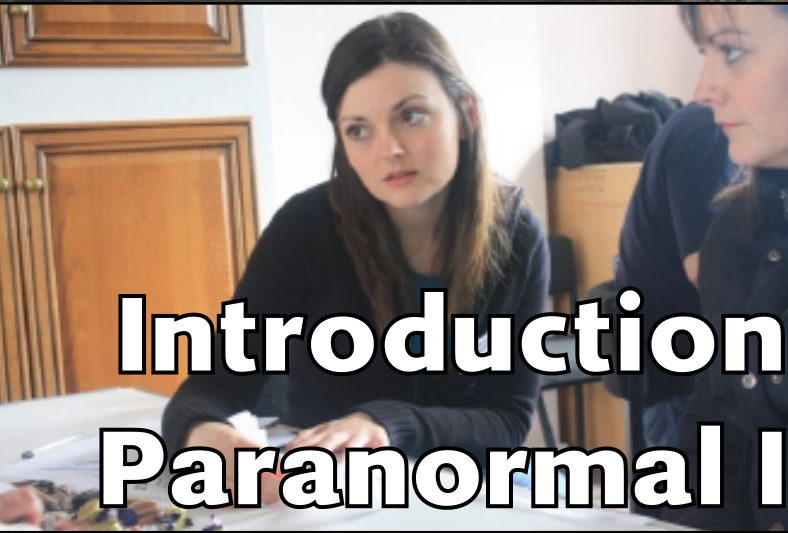
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