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Note: Cerdic the Saxon will be concluded in the next issue. The next part of the Borley article (started in number 21) should appear next time.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PARANORMAL

by Chris Huff

The connection between archaeology and the paranormal often seems so obvious to researchers that they never even talk about it. As a result this subject is rarely explored outside the realms of Earth Mysteries. Chris Huff, a freelance archaeologist, describes some of the less well-known facets of this intriguing subject.

Introduction

Being an archaeologist necessarily puts one into situations where apparitions and other supernatural phenomena are often assumed to take place. The quotes heard from the public, as they lean over the fence that separates the outside world from the archaeological excavation, range from the inevitable, 'Have you found anything?' to the ever popular, 'Have you found any skeletons?' The answer to the first is usually disappointing for the public, for archaeologists are rarely confronted by the rich remains of the past; instead the strata of a site's development contain refuse and unwanted artifacts that today would be carted away for disposal at a refuse site at some hygienic distance from habitation. The answer to the second question, if in the positive, will often elicit the common reaction of interest combined with a fear of the 'supernatural'. Sometimes a wit will tell you to watch out for the ghosts, based presumably upon the supposition that if you exhume a body then unquiet spirits will walk. This attitude is most likely based upon reports by the media, especially considering the Tutankhamun excavations and subsequent media hype concerning the curse, and the films of Boris Karloff *et al*, rather than any scientific investigation. This article has been written to explore some facets of the paranormal from an archaeological perspective, using reported incidents of such events where applicable.

Archaeologists Causing Paranormal Manifestations

An interesting tale from Lethbridge's '*Ghost & Ghoul*' concerned occurrences at the excavation of a Romano-British cemetery at Guilden Morden in Cambridgeshire in 1924. The problems occurred with the cars used to transport skeletal material from the site to Cambridge for the attention of the anatomical school. The first car ran into trouble when the rear axle seized up; the problem was blamed on a flaw

in the casting and a replacement car ordered. Using Sir Cyril Fox's car until the replacement arrived, they were soon in trouble again when this went wrong, and the transporting had to stop temporarily. When the new car arrived all seemed well until the front wheel on the near side parted company from the axle. The reason was that a split pin was missing which, coupled with the car's being driven in reverse to the excavations, had caused the wheel nuts to loosen. Lethbridge records that a rule was made at this time that if the anatomy school at Cambridge wanted the skeletons the staff would have to go and get them. As an interesting footnote, Lethbridge recalls that others have had similar problems when transporting skeletons in cars, and one professor, when he heard that they were transporting the human remains, asked Lethbridge whether he had trouble with his car. Lethbridge, a firm believer that ghosts were the product of the viewer's mind, a visualization rather than an entity, nonetheless concludes that [1961:75]: *'and there I think we will leave it; with an uncomfortable feeling that perhaps after all some Romano-Briton may have pulled a split pin out of the axle of my car.'*

A more recent occurrence detailed by Poole [1988:70-3], where archaeologists have been blamed for paranormal phenomena, happened at Magdalen College, Oxford, around 1987. Although the college was no stranger to ghosts, the dean of the college laid the blame for the recent spate of hauntings at the door of the Oxford Archaeological Unit, who were excavating ahead of construction work for the new kitchens. The last recorded haunting occurred on 13 February 1987.

Merrifield includes an interesting letter in the *Times* of 18 July 1985 where the complainant blames the fire at Missenden Abbey on the archaeologists and the way that the remains of monks were *'exposed to public gaze before being carted off for archaeological examination.'*

There does seem to be a certain amount of evidence to support the contention that if a site is disturbed by archaeologists then some paranormal events may be triggered. It is unlikely, however, that excavation will cause a site which has no history of hauntings to suddenly produce a plethora of spontaneous phenomena. Rather it is the sites that do have such a history that may have their ghosts reanimated.

Ghosts in Antiquity

Rituals associated with death serve a variety of functions, such as an opening for grief, an honouring of the dead, the assurance that through a ritual the spirit will

pass into the spirit world and thus the elimination of the fear that the dead will return as a ghost. There are burials in the ancient world that seem to have been performed with the express intent of preventing the deceased's ghost rising from the grave. The most obvious of these is the decapitation burial rite, a tradition which is fairly common in Roman cemeteries and is observed to continue through the Anglo-Saxon and Viking eras. At Guilden Morden, while a number of Romano-British burials were found to be of the decapitated type, one peculiar burial of a woman had been conducted by digging a normal grave and then deeply undercutting the side so that the body lay beneath undisturbed chalk. The excavated chalk was then packed hard against the body and the empty grave filled in, the implication being that the body could not rise through the grave and therefore could not disturb the living. Why such extremes were deemed necessary with this individual is unclear, although the woman may have been perceived as someone likely to cause trouble after death.

Ghosts seem to have been very much in the minds of the Roman, Romano-British and Saxon peoples. This may be demonstrated in some other remarkable burial practices. The most common find in Roman burials, which is associated with the ghost of the deceased, is the placing in the hand or mouth of coins, with which they are to pay the ferryman Charon to cross the river Styx into Hades. With cremation burials these coins are usually placed in the urn after the body has been reduced to ashes. In a similar ritual shoes were placed in the grave, not only as an essential piece of equipment in the next life but also for the purpose of assisting the spirit to pass into the next life. Sometimes the shoes were reduced to a token shoe or only the hobnails were buried. Merrifield conjectures that pieces of unworn jewellery, when found out of context in the grave, were also used as currency to pay for the crossing. While these seem to deal more with the entrance of the spirit into the otherworld, the objects facilitate the transition and thereby ensure that there is no reason why the spirit should remain earthbound.

If all went well with the burial rituals then the spirit departed and did not trouble the living. However, the Romans were well aware of the existence of ghosts who did not pass on, and a festival called the Lemuria was held in May. In this ceremony black beans were offered to the ghosts, who were perceived to be hungry, to persuade them to go away. The Romans also had the feast of the Parentalia, when food and drink were left at the tombs of their ancestors as gifts. By this we may perceive that the grave was a doorway into the spirit world through which communication was possible, and also therefore the route for the ghost to travel to haunt the living.

Some people must have been perceived to have been likely to be troublesome and return as ghosts when they died, and for these there was the ritual of the removal of the head at burial. In Roman contexts the head is usually placed between the legs or at the feet of the body. These decapitation burials, while some are undoubtedly those of criminals and sacrifices, occur in the Lankhills Roman cemetery especially among those who have in their grave furniture a military facet. Merrifield [1987] ascribes these rituals to an untimely end that caused the possibility that the deceased's ghost may refuse to pass on and therefore precautions were taken before this could happen. To explain the decapitation rite Merrifield proposes that [1987:75] '*the simplest explanation of the rite of decapitation was that the soul was believed to reside in the head, so that the removal of the latter ensured the complete and final separation of the soul from the body.*' In other burials in the Lankhills cemetery that were not military, Liversidge [1973] has suggested that the decapitation burial of two old and arthritic women may have occurred because they were clearly arthritic, presumably bad tempered and believed to be witches or more prone to returning.

The decapitation cure for ghosts is included in Viking Age literature. In the saga of Grettir the Strong, the animated corpse in the barrow is laid to rest when he is decapitated and the head positioned between the knees. A second example occurs in the tale of Asvith and Asmund. The tale, from *Egils Saga Ok Asmundar* [Davidson & Fisher, 1979], relates how Aran (Asvith) is buried with his dog, his horse and his hawk. His friend Asmund, having been buried in the barrow with him, escapes following a battle with the reanimated corpse and his animal companions, after he cuts the corpse's head off.

Another form of burial which has potential in this study is the placing of the deceased face down in the grave. This rite does occur in the Roman and Romano-British periods but is found most especially in Anglo-Saxon contexts. There is however a greater possibility of the burial having a sacrificial nature rather than being merely to prevent ghosts. Merrifield tentatively includes the Bronze Age practice of placing cremation pots in an inverted position as a variant of this rite.

Museum Objects Associated with Paranormal

It would appear that some artifacts are linked to the ghost of the individual, and therefore the museums which store artifactual assemblages are just as likely to have ghosts as are the castles and halls that are usually associated with

hauntings. Perhaps linked to the human remains stored there is the case of the poltergeist activity in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge, also detailed by Lethbridge. The museum was, unknown to him at his arrival in the tea room, the site of some unexplained happenings which involved articles appearing, objects being moved within the display cases and a human skull which refused to stay put on a shelf or table. Lethbridge remarks upon an incident that happened while he was there [1961:18]: *'Suddenly at a moment when nobody happened to be talking much, there was a little tinkle and a small brass curtain ring arrived in the middle of the floor. Nobody had thrown it there; they were not the kind of people who would do so. It just arrived. There was no explanation.'* The ring arriving on the floor caused no consternation among the others in the room for they were apparently used to these occurrences. The phenomena witnessed at the museum were, according to Lethbridge, never a hostile presence and did not last for a long time. Whether the events were linked to the human skull is not clear, neither is the date of the skull nor the circumstances of its discovery, but it was one of the objects that moved. Unexplained physical movement involving human skulls is known from various examples including Chilton Cantello in Somerset, where the skull of Theophilus Broome resides, Tunstead farm near Chapel-en-le-frith in Derbyshire where the Skull called 'Dickie' is (or was) housed and Wardley Hall in Manchester.

The British Museum has a sarcophagus, exhibit number 22542, which once housed the body of a singer to the priests of Ancient Egypt. Many authors have commented upon its reputation for 'causing' some thirteen deaths since being acquired in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The mummy is rumoured to have been shipped to America in the early years of this century, where it has been blamed for the sinking of the Empress of Ireland in the St. Lawrence river, or perhaps even of being on board the Titanic. In 1921 the sarcophagus, still said to be exhibiting a malevolence although bereft of its contents, was exorcised and its 'protective entity' supposedly persuaded to leave.

Brooks [1994] tells of an incident in the museum while he was assisting in the photography of an African mask. The photographer had managed to deeply cut his hand while arranging the mask for the photograph, although no sharp edges that could have caused the injury could be found. As Brooks comments [1994:67] *'fortunately the hand healed normally, but the mystery remains one of the most intriguing I have experienced.'* It is wondered how many other artifacts, of which the museum has many thousands, also have a ghost or 'protector' associated with them.

Ghosts as Indicators of Archaeological Features

There exists the potential that apparitions, especially those of antiquity, may be used to predict the presence of archaeological sites. By observing the nature and appearance of the ghost it may be possible to determine a great deal about the locality, the individual or the period.

This reasoning holds true whether the ghost occurs within a building, new or ruinous, or on a tract of open land. A case from Eaglescliffe in Cleveland illustrates the presence of a previous building on the land upon which a new bungalow was built. Woodhouse relates the story from a moderately new estate which is built on the site of a former manor, St. Margaret's House. The ghost is described as a young woman wearing an off-white cloak with hood, and she has been seen at various places in the building. Considering the antiquity of the site and the newness of the bungalow, it is thought that the ghost is of the older building. In one encounter, where the ghost comforted an elderly relation who was ill, it would imply that the apparition was sentient to some extent.

There are numerous accounts of apparitions being apparently held to a place because of a treasure which they hoarded, stole or hid in life, who seem to want to show someone where the treasure is hidden. While not advocating that archaeologists act as treasure hunters, the paranormal may potentially assist in the discovery of hidden facets or artifacts within a building.

One example of this type of ghost occurs at Blenkinsopp Castle in Northumberland. The White Lady of Blenkinsopp is reputed to have been brought to this country by one of the Crusading knights, Brian Blenship. The lady was supposed to have been a rich heiress, but it is alleged that she did not allow her dowry to be easily spent. Quarrelling soon started after their arrival at Blenkinsopp, whereupon Lady Blenship is supposed, in the best traditions of the ghost story, to have buried the treasure. The haunting of the castle is supposed to be by Lady Blenship herself, who appears in the form of a white lady.

The most famous account of the apparition involves the son of a gardener and his wife, who were housed in the castle. In the night the son was heard to be screaming from his room, and when his parents reached him he told of a ghostly white woman who had sat on his bed and promised, if he would go with her, to

show him where a great treasure was hidden. When he did not move for fear, the ghost is alleged to have attempted to carry him off forcibly. Three times more this happened, until he was moved from the room. With the treasure as yet not found, the ghost is supposed to be there still. The present owner of Blenkinsopp, Michael Simpson, has related some tales of the ghosts of the castle. On one occasion he was in his bedroom when he heard the steady but loud sound of approaching footsteps in the corridor outside. The sound appeared to stop outside the door, and by the bright moonlight he saw the knob of the door slowly turn, as if to open, and then turn back to its original position. Assuming it was his brother returning from a late night and in a state of some inebriation, he thought little more about the incident, until he discovered that his brother had not returned that night.

A story exists of a passageway, now bricked up, which existed in the east wall. The passage was discovered in 1880 when restoration was being conducted, and it was traced for some distance by a brave-hearted man with a canary to warn of gas, until the bird was noticed to have succumbed. He made his way back to the outside and described passages and staircases; not surprisingly, the story spread that the secret chambers full of treasure had been found. Because of the danger from the gas in the passageway, the entrance was bricked up again.

Other accounts detail ghosts which are of people who met their end in an abrupt fashion and were then disposed of quietly. It is often assumed that the ghost cannot rest quietly until his or her body is given a decent burial, while the discovery of the skeletal remains and their proper internment may cause the haunting to cease. A tale from antiquity, related by Pliny, concerning the Athenian philosopher Athenodorus, gives an example where the apparition of an old man bound in chains was seen at a house he was renting. Athenodorus followed the figure to a place in the courtyard, where the figure disappeared, and excavated the remains of a skeleton in chains. Upon removing the chains and burying the remains, the philosopher was no longer troubled by the ghost.

Unfortunately the finding of the remains of the body and their burial does not always result in the removal of the ghost. Chillingham Castle in Northumberland, for example, has a Radiant Boy, a child spectre who frequents the Pink Room and fills the room with a radiant glow when it is seen. The boy is reputed to appear to the onlooker at midnight, accompanied by moaning or groaning sounds, and is definitely a blue colour or dressed in blue clothes. When the figure is clearly seen, with the splendour of a bright blue cloud that extends only a slight distance from the form, it vanishes. Sometime in the last century the bones of a child were

discovered in a covered compartment in one of the walls. Once they were properly buried the ghost did not appear for some time. However, he has been seen in recent years to walk through a wall in the North West Tower of the castle.

An apparition which could potentially benefit from archaeological investigation occurs at a barrow on Bottlebrush Down in Dorset. The archaeologist R C Clay was returning from his Pokesdown excavations to Fovant in Dorset via the road which runs between Cranbourne to Handley in 1927-8. Clay noticed a figure on a horse riding in the same direction as himself a little way off the road and [Grinsell 1959:57]: *'Thinking that he was from the training stables at Nine Yews, I took very little notice of him at first. Suddenly he turned his horse's head and galloped as if to reach the road ahead, before my car arrived there. I was so interested that I changed gear to slow my car's speed in order that we should meet, and I should be able to find out why he had taken this sudden action. Before I had drawn level with him, he turned his horse's head again to the north, and galloped along parallel to me about 50 yards from the road. I could now see that he was no ordinary horseman, for he had bare legs, and wore a long loose coat. The horse had a long mane and tail, but I could see no bridle or stirrups. The rider's face was turned towards me, but I could not see his features. He seemed to be threatening me with some implement which he waved in his right hand above his head. I tried hard to identify the weapon, for I suddenly realised that he was a prehistoric man; but I failed. It seemed to be on a two-foot shaft. After travelling parallel to my car for about 100 yards, the rider and horse suddenly vanished. I noted the spot, and the next day found at the spot a low round barrow.'*

The apparition was witnessed again in the 1920's by two female cyclists, who described the figure as above to a policeman in Handley, complaining that they had been followed by a figure on a horse. Grinsell reports that up to 1959 there had been other sightings by shepherds and 'others' of apparitions in the area.

The barrow on Bottlebrush Down near to Wimbourne St. Giles, which was identified by Clay as the spot where the apparition vanished, is described in Grinsell's catalogue of the barrows of Dorset as measuring 15 paces in diameter and being 4 feet high. The reason why the Bronze Age horseman continues to ride in the area is probably linked to the contents of the barrow, which is at present under grass and is therefore assumed not to have been excavated. Other barrows in the Dorset area which have associations with ghosts include a barrow at New Barn Abbotsbury where a Mr Hayne, before 1914, would sit on the gate at midnight and watch the soldiers who he assumed were buried there. In Ashmore

the local barrow was the site of strange noises until the barrow was levelled earlier this century and the bones recovered were re-buried in the churchyard.

Another apparition, used to identify the burial place of a murdered man, occurred at Westgate, near Stanhope in Weardale, County Durham. The ghost was of a merchant, who in the middle of the eighteenth century was out in the wilds of Weardale collecting debts owed to him. Weardale was then a wild area, inhabited by lead miners at small settlements like Dadry Shield and St. Johns Chapel, otherwise it was mostly un-trod. The tale is that this man managed to get past Stanhope, with a considerable amount of money in his possession, and was last seen riding into Park House Pasture as night was beginning to descend, but he was not seen again.

He had stopped for a while at an inn in Stanhope for refreshment, and it is believed that the money he carried had been noted by men drinking there. Consequently the blame for his demise fell upon three disreputable individuals, who were seen in the inn earlier, and who suddenly appeared to become wealthy. The majority of the evidence rested upon the fact that they had been observed disposing of a horse in a quarry. Although a thorough search was made of the area, finding that the Park House gates had been tied together and that there was considerable churning of the ground by a rearing horse, no definite blame for the man's murder could be apportioned to the men, for there was no corpse.

A man's ghost, however, was soon seen in the area. A phantom horseman who had wounds on his body was seen galloping across the fields until it disappeared at a spot in Park House Pasture. The skeleton of a man was found in Park House Pasture some 20 to 30 years after the murder, at the place where the horseman was seen to vanish. The ghost is believed to still haunt the area, although no confirmed sightings have been forthcoming.

While many readers may be aware of the Royal Ship Burial from Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, and may have visited the British Museum to see the treasures, most will be unaware that the reason why the mound was excavated in the 1930s was because of ghosts. The owner of the land, a Mrs Edith May Pretty, often had an artist friend stay with her, who commented frequently as she looked onto the mounds from the house that she could see soldiers walking around them. She thought that the mounds contained something very important. Eventually Mrs. Pretty authorised her gardener Basil Brown to excavate one of the mounds to see if anything was there. Digging in the largest of these mounds he eventually found

the ship burial and the royal treasures of a powerful East Anglian king, believed now to be Raedwald based on the dating evidence of the artifacts and coins.

Had the friend of Mrs. Pretty not seen the ghosts wandering the mounds, and considering that the site was a training area in the first world war, the ship burial may have remained unnoticed to this day. There is clearly potential in using ghosts to predict where a site will be found. An apparition walking through a wall where nowadays no doorway exists is an excellent indicator that the house plans have been changed. One wonders how many priest holes, hidden doors and concealed rooms in our stately houses have been found in this way.

The examples given above clearly show that there is a potential which is at present being largely ignored. However the premise that ghosts may be used to accurately predict where archaeological deposits lie is being tested at present by the author. At Blanchland in County Durham the presence of Roman legionaries has been recorded [*Robson 1993:8*], while there is no evidence (as yet) for the Romans ever having been there. A road of the Roman period is known to run northwards from Egglestone in Teesdale, across a spur of the Pennines to Stanhope in Weardale along the course of the B6278. There it apparently stops, or at least no trace of it has yet been identified leading from Stanhope. Blanchland is to be found roughly 8 miles to the north-west of Stanhope, and having the potential evidence of ghostly Roman legionaries in the location has prompted a search of the area to the north of Stanhope in an attempt to locate the continuation of the road.

Costume from Apparitions

Yet another potential body of evidence to be gained from the study of apparitions is the details of the costume which the apparition is wearing at the time of the sighting. From the colours, designs and the pattern and texture of the cloth it should be possible to date the apparitions within a few decades. This is another reason why it is so important for the witness to observe the phenomena closely and to write down the experience, noting not only the form but the minutiae of details, the colours, the actions and even the smells.

Like much in our early history, the large details survive while the finer points have become lost. Compare the amounts of Anglo-Saxon church architecture and stone sculpture that have survived with those of the costumes that they wore. While the textile may survive in part, the colours of the dyes generally do not, and colour is

deduced from the remains of the plants and substances used in the dying process. Should the apparition be clear and detailed, then the amount of detail which may be gleaned may be of momentous importance. The examples of Romans from Chester, Rudchester and York where the costume was described fully has provided corroboration of the accounts of the apparitions through established archaeological study.

An example of a good apparition for the study of costume occurs at Prudhoe Castle which has its origins in the period immediately following the Norman Conquest of Anglo-Saxon England, when the area was given to Robert de Umfraville for his part in supporting William at Hastings. The ghost of the castle is believed to be Robert Umfraville himself, a man who by his nickname of Robert the Beard is known to have sported a bushy black beard. A bearded Norman has been seen at the castle by visitors; most assume that it is someone dressing up. One witness, a Louise Cuthbert, describes a figure at the castle as a Norman soldier who wore chainmail and a helmet with nasal guard. Two features which are clearly described are the bright green tunic, which lay over the chainmail, and the bushy beard.

Another episode at Prudhoe, reported by Robson [1993:21], occurred to two American tourists. They had spread a map on the ground and were engrossed in looking at it, when they noticed a pair of feet wearing chainmail. Turning to see the figure more clearly, they described the figure of a Norman complete with chainmail, helmet, sword and bushy beard. Their reaction was an understandable state of complete panic. It would be interesting to obtain an account from this site, where the details are meticulously recorded, to prove the identity of the phantom by a comparison of known artifacts of the correct date with those worn by the figure.

Speech from Apparitions

In a most interesting case from Rudchester a phantom Roman is described together with his attempts at conversation with the witness in 1971. With this rare example of both apparent sentience and an ability for speech another potential for ghosts in an archaeological sphere is revealed. Robson relates the story of the Dobson family who had decided to spend a week's holiday exploring Hadrian's Wall using their caravan for sleeping. Having stopped for the night in the immediate area of Rudchester Castle, and the children put to bed, Frances Dobson went for

a short walk to a nearby stone wall (possibly a part of the fort's outline) where she stopped to smoke. Turning, having felt a coldness from behind, she saw a filthy-looking man in a ruddy-coloured robe or cloak who also was believed to be wearing some sort of armour and sandals. The smell was described as obnoxious. When she questioned him, asking what he was playing at frightening her, he replied in a foreign language that she had never heard before.

As Frances walked back to the caravan the figure walked behind her making no sound. However, he had disappeared when she reached the door and turned on a torch. Quite shocked by the incident, and being told at a local tourist board office that the ghosts of Romans have been seen in the area of the fort and along Hadrian's wall, Frances telephoned the Archaeology Department of Newcastle University to ask about the Roman soldiers stationed at the fort. When their uniform was described it tallied with that observed in the moonlight by Frances at Rudchester. The soldiers garrisoned at the fort were Frisiavones from the area which would later become a part of Holland. When the lecturer started to speak a few words of modern Dutch, Frances immediately identified the language as similar to that which the man had spoken to her.

A Gazetteer of Roman Ghosts

To illustrate the potential for archaeology from the study of ghosts I have included below a brief gazetteer of the cases of recorded Roman ghosts, although the study proper at present includes all examples of apparitions from prehistoric to the period following the Norman invasion.

There are some gaps in the context column because the relationship between the apparitions and the known archaeology is as yet unknown or unproven. The numbers of these apparitions constitute a body of observable evidence which is at present a wasted resource.

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Location	Details	Roman Context	Source
Newstead (Trimontium), Roman fort, Borders	The fort on the River Tweed is the site where the sounds of marching legionaries have been heard together with construction noises and buccina (bugle) calls.	Fort	Brooks 1994
Girton College, Cambridge	Roman legionary seen by two female undergraduates while new buildings were being built.		Brooks 1994
Chester (Deva), City Walls, Cheshire	Roman centurion walks Roman walls.	City	Brooks 1994
Chester, George & Dragon Hotel	Built on the site of a Roman cemetery, footsteps in the upstairs corridor believed to be marching Romans.	City	Brooks 1994 Playfair 1985
Chester, Roman Amphitheatre	Roman Decurion of XI Legion (Adiutrix). Very common sighting of remarkable detail.	City	Brooks 1994
Plas Pren, Stone Bridge, Clwyd	Roman legionary seen to stand guard on the bridge.		Brooks 1994
Trelawnyd, Gop Hill (Cairn), Clywd	Roman on Horse (Centurion) seen with a column of legionaries in the area.		Brooks 1994

Location	Details	Roman Context	Source
Blanchland, Churchyard, Co. Durham	Romans seen.		Robson 1993
Bowes Castle (Lavatris), Roman fort, Co. Durham	Roman procession with treasure chest.	Fort	Oxley
Glossop, Bleaklow Hill, Derbyshire	Roman legionaries seen by walkers on the Pennine Way.		Brooks 1994
Lulworth Cove, Bindon Hill, Devon	A detachment of legionaries seen marching over Bindon Hill.		Brooks 1994
Bradwell on Sea, Roman fort, Essex	A Roman on horseback has been seen in the area of the Roman fort of Orthona. Potential of Roman cavalry details.	Fort	Brooks 1994
Mersea Island, shoreline & near West Mersea, Essex	Roman patrols the shoreline opposite the mainland. Other Romans seen on one of the roads by taxi driver who drove through them.	Fort	Brooks 1994
Llyn cwm Bychan, Lake, Gwynedd	The Roman steps at the lake have the ghosts of miners & Roman legionaries.	Mines	Brooks 1994
Valley, Airfield, Gwynedd	Roman legionaries seen at perimeter of airfield. Perhaps associated with the battle in the area in 60 AD.	Battle	Brooks 1994

Location	Details	Roman Context	Source
Southampton, Bitterne Manor, Hampshire	Roman legionaries have been seen near to the new Northam Bridge over the River Itchen.		Brooks 1994
Kenchester Village, Hereford	Roman legionaries reported to march through the village on moonlit nights.		Brooks 1994
Dover Castle, Roman Fort, Kent	Roman soldier seen around the Pharos area of the castle. Believed to be on the site of a watchtower.	Fort	Brooks 1994
Lympne, Lympne Castle, Kent	Sound of footsteps believed to be a Roman legionary who ascends tower but does not return.		Brooks 1994
Reculver (Regulbium), Roman Fort, Kent	Sound of screaming children perhaps associated with the discovery of possible child sacrifices of the Roman period.	Fort	Brooks 1994
Richborough (Ruputiae), Roman Fort, Kent	Legionaries marching out of the fort towards the sea - possibly indicating the location of the Roman harbour.	Fort	Brooks 1994
High Rochester (Bremenium), Roman Fort, Northumberland	A weeping figure of a young woman thought to be Romano-British in origin. Disappears when spoken to.	Fort	Brooks 1994

Location	Details	Roman Context	Source
Rudchester (Vindobala), Roman Fort, Northumberland	Roman legionary seen, smelt and spoken to in 1971. Identified as COHORT I frisiavones by description of clothing.	Fort	Robson 1993
Hungerford, Littlecote House, Wiltshire	Legion marches through the park.		Brooks 1994
North Tidworth, Site of Roman pavement (?), Wiltshire	Roman figure seen. Perhaps associated with the Roman pavement discovered here in 1836.	Villa	Brooks 1994
York (Eboracum), Davygate, Yorkshire	Battle seen between Roman & Briton forces in 1958 early in the morning.	City	Robson 1993
York, Leeman Road Memorial Gardens, Yorkshire	Harry Gregg in November 1972 saw the apparition of a man in scanty clothing lying on a gravestone & bleeding from a severe stomach wound. Used hankie to stop the blood, looked around for help & the figure had vanished.	City	Robson 1993
York, Lendel Bridge, Yorkshire	Ray Giles 1962 witnessed Roman guards on Lendel Bridge, disappeared into grey mist.	City	Robson 1993

Location	Details	Roman Context	Source
York, Shambles, Yorkshire	Legion marches through the cellar, seen by haberdasher called Arkwright - legs appeared to be truncated at the knee.	City	Robson 1993
York, Treasurers House, Yorkshire	Legion marches through the cellar.	City	Brooks 1994 Robson 1993

CERDIC THE SAXON - A LIFE (PART 1)

by Hugh Pincott

Hypnosis is currently a controversial subject. Techniques that claim to recover early life memories are being heavily criticised. In its early days ASSAP conducted a careful investigation into the subject with surprising results.

Introduction

The hypnotist glanced around the darkened room quickly. His gaze then returned to the small table by his side containing notes and writing-pad. The table was illuminated by a dim, shaded reading lamp. All was well.

He leaned towards the dark, indistinct human form huddled on the bed before him. Don Brown was breathing slowly and deeply. He had now entered one of the deepest states of trance. They had already been through the usual process of age regression, and several dramatic incidents from the man's childhood years were recorded on tape.

Now came the big step backwards. The hypnotist licked his lips in apprehension and took a deep breath.

'So far, Don, we have enjoyed these journeys through time, and now we shall walk together along an even more interesting road. Back, back, even further in time. Before and beyond the time you were born into this life ...'

The hypnotist's voice was soft, reassuring and persuasive. 'You will be at one with the enveloping darkness, and enjoy being so. You will always be comfortable; not too hot, not too cold. And at all times you will hear only my voice.'

He spoke more softly, more slowly. 'You are floating easily and effortlessly through the darkness ... back, back through the years ... before you were born ... long, long ago ... drifting through time.' The hypnotist looked quickly at his notes. 'The year is 1033. It is ten thirty three. January the 18th, 1033 ... you can still hear me ...'

He paused. 'Now who are you? ... Tell me your name ...' There was no response. The hypnotist tried again. '18th of January 1033 ... your name ... don't be afraid ... tell me your name...' The figure on the bed stirred. The hypnotist's heart palpitated. 'Your name', he repeated patiently and welcomingly, 'Who are you?'

'Cerdic ...', a voice replied uncertainly. It seemed to be struggling to remember. 'My name is Cerdic. Cerdic of Wrotham.'

Reincarnation

Belief in reincarnation is as old as belief itself. The idea that the essence or soul of a person inhabits a succession of physical bodies was prevalent in most primitive and ancient civilisations; from Australia and China to Alaska, from Persia, Egypt and Greece to the Jews, Incas and Aztecs. It is a philosophy encompassed by most great religions, including Hinduism, Judaism, Taoism and Buddhism. Indeed early Christians were not averse to its philosophy, but after a Council of Constantinople edict in 543 AD it was almost universally rejected by the western Church for the next thousand years. But since the seventeenth century the idea has been embraced and developed by several influential Christian thinkers.

In ancient days it was thought that people reincarnated in various animal forms according to the local mythology, but over the aeons the concept of karma evolved. This suggested that a person needed several lives to gain wide experience as a male or female, rich or poor, good or bad, to compensate and atone for earlier blemishes, and to progress along the path to spiritual perfection.

Certainly the philosophy of reincarnation is an appealing one: lives cut short or tragically unfulfilled can be continued, and this instils a feeling of natural justice and fair-play. There are several excellent books dealing with the history and range of ideas encompassed so we need not discuss them in detail here.

My involvement began not with any especial interest in reincarnation, but with hypnosis and its effects. For nearly 25 years I had studied and practised hypnosis, being considerably involved in the regression phenomenon during the burst of activity and plethora of books that came about in the 1970s.

I worked closely with the regressive hypnotist David Lowe, assisting, correlating, travelling throughout Britain researching and uncovering information on peoples' apparent past lives, evidence for which had previously been provided by one of Mr Lowe's particularly gifted subjects in deep trance. Although a very open-minded person, David Lowe had been persuaded that the enormous weight of repeated evidence - subject after subject, life after life - pointed only to one explanation - the tapping into memories of previous lives. I was less sure: there were other possibilities, all pretty exotic maybe, but they did need to be tested more fully.

Leaving aside the possibility of fraud and fantasy, there is considerable evidence to suggest that much of the information ascribed to previous lives is due to 'hidden memory'. Just about everything we see, hear and experience is stored deep in the

recesses of the unconscious mind, and can be retrieved in a coherent form as and when the mind decides, even though we may have forgotten this material consciously.

The idea of ancestral memories has been put forward to account for 'past life characters', together with the possibility that we might be communicating with the surviving spirits of once-mortal people. Interestingly, another idea prevalent in various Eastern philosophies is that of the Akashic Record. Everything about a person's life is held in store to be learned from, so the tapping into this databank - if it exists - has to be a possibility.

Hypnosis

What is hypnosis? Although libraries have been written on it, still no-one can define the condition with certainty. The word derives from the Greek 'hypnos' meaning 'sleep', since the behaviour of many hypnotised people in the 18th and 19th centuries resembled that of somnambulists. This was however just a passing fad, and hypnotic trance is anything but sleep-like. Many say that the mind appears in fact to be in a 'super-conscious' mode. Hypnosis is certainly the induction in a person of a state of heightened suggestibility, which can lead to certain mental, and possibly physical, effects.

There is, however, a parallel between hypnosis and sleep. What seems to be going on can best be described as follows - and this is just a simple model for illustrative purposes. When someone is on the point of going to sleep, the body is very relaxed, the eyes are closed, the environment is quiet, and in general outside stimuli and influences disappear. The mind then slowly begins to notice the images and ideas that start to drift upwards from the subconscious or unconscious mind (for present purposes the two terms can be equated). These images soon capture the whole of the attention and become dreams.

In hypnosis complete bodily relaxation has been achieved. The eyes are closed, but this is not always necessary. More important is that by suggestion the operator has focussed the subject's mind into a form of concentrated attention, thereby ignoring external sights and sounds. And instead of the random images from the unconscious levels, the mind homes in on those generated or suggested by the operator.

Another fallacy still prevalent is that in hypnosis one's will is surrendered to another. Not at all. We are always at pains to stress that with almost no exceptions, people cannot be made to do or say anything they would not do in appropriate circumstances in the ordinary waking state.

One may point to the apparently incongruous sight of a respected senior businessman woofing on hands and knees in a stage demonstration, but this very same man might regularly be the life and soul of his grandchildren's Christmas parties. The behaviour has not changed, only the surroundings. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the best hypnotic subjects are those who can relax easily and have active imaginations, since they respond best to suggestions made by the operator.

According to the literature most people are capable of being hypnotised to some extent, a small proportion slightly or not at all, and an equally small proportion (around 5%) can enter a deep trance state with the minimum of encouragement. Just as a normal distribution curve in statistics relates to any talent or ability, most of us are somewhere in the middle of the range when it comes to hypnotic susceptibility.

I shall not describe the procedures we used to induce hypnosis as these should not be undertaken by untrained people. There are possibly thousands of different methods but all can be sorted into three broad families, ie. many variants on a few main themes. We used a wide variety, but all of them are based upon the simple concept of the total relaxation of body and mind.

I devised an immensely powerful one we called the 'Velvet Hammer', which could almost guarantee to get most people into deep trance within 15 minutes or so. Highly dramatic though this and its effects were, we found that we had better long-term results by a slower, more pedantic 'bread and butter' approach. Six or seven training sessions were usually sufficient to enable an average subject to obtain deep trance.

Table of Trance Levels	
Level of Trance	Description

Hypnoidal	This is the lightest of the discernable levels, characterised by little more than complete physical relaxation, a general drowsiness, closure of the eyes, and the subject being in a receptive state of mind.
Light trance	Here the eyelids - containing the easiest muscles in the body to relax - can be made to feel glued together, and other muscles become more or less immobile. There is a general heaviness throughout the body, and the subject feels a partial detachment from the surroundings.
Medium trance	The subject now definitely 'feels' an altered state of consciousness, and there is complete muscular inhibition. Illusions of touch, taste and smell can be induced, and there is partial forgetfulness (amnesia). Completely automatic or involuntary limb movements can be suggested.
Deep trance	The subject's eyes may be opened without affecting the state of trance, and the pupils are invariably dilated. Positive and negative visual hallucinations may be induced, as well as auditory ones. People can be completely oblivious to their physical surroundings, may be regressed to a younger age and recall long-forgotten memories. In this state there is a measure of control over the normally involuntary bodily functions such as heart beat, blood pressure and digestion. Amnesia can be total.
Somnambulism	Another misnomer from the earliest days of study, for technical purposes today, it refers to the deepest form of trance known, where all spontaneous activity ceases, and the subject can to all intents and purposes appear lifeless. Also known as catalepsy.

A state of consciousness observably different from the normal waking state, and accompanied by a condition of physical and mental relaxation, is commonly referred to as 'trance'. While this word can imply all sorts of dubious and dramatic ideas, we shall use it here as a convenient shorthand notation to refer to the altered state of consciousness prevalent in the state of hypnosis. Conventionally, the levels

of trance are labelled as follows: hypnoidal, light trance, medium trance, deep trance and somnambulism (see Table of Trance Levels).

There is however no sharp demarcation between these various stages - each merges into the other - so the names employed are broad indications only. Suffice to say that there is little point in trying regression work unless deep trance level is attained, since only here can we guarantee total exclusion of outside influences.

The Protocol

The opportunity for more detailed research came in 1984 when ASSAP was boosting its research programme. After consulting several colleagues - regressive hypnotists I have worked with or alongside, I drafted the project protocol, a thick document which defined the aims of the project and how they would be achieved. In summary the idea was:

- Ž To identify the many factors which may cause the appearance of past lives, enhance their occurrence or influence their content. These could include the belief systems and psychological make-ups of both hypnotists and subjects, together with an assessment of personality variables, past history and experience, cultural elements, and so on.
- Ž To vary each factor in turn during a series of experiments carried out by hypnotists, psychologists and subjects in different groups. Then to check the verbal material obtained for historical accuracy.
- Ž To analyse the results of these experiments and assess them for significance in terms of a range of theories or models. And if the evidence supported none of the ideas on our list, then we would have to formulate something better.

Some of the questions we wanted answers to were these:

- Ž Is there any similarity between the personalities of successful pairs of hypnotists and subjects? Does a subject with a particular type of character perform better?
- Ž Do hypnotists' beliefs influence the production of evidence to fit a particular theory?
- Ž How does performance vary with tiredness, illness, etc.?
- Ž Is there any correlation between the personality elements of past life characters of the same subject, and also with their present existence? If past-life experiences are indeed related to memory, might we expect that recent 'lives' will be fuller or better-remembered than older ones?
- Ž What sort of information would we obtain if we took people forward in time?
- Ž Are there significant differences in the past-life experiences of people from different nationalities or cultural backgrounds?

If during the course of our researches so far, we did not find complete answers to our queries, the work continues, and we live in hope. But much of value has already emerged, and while most is beyond the scope of this article, some factors impinge directly, and I comment on them in context.

Organisation and Method

Experiments commenced late in 1984 and activity was centred on one group (sometimes two) meeting every Thursday evening in south-east London. Each group had a core membership of about half-a-dozen regulars, but this could swell as commitments of others permitted them to attend. All were members of the Association, but outside observers came along from time to time by invitation. People who formed the team were those who had previously expressed an interest in the subject: most were from London, but one very keen person travelled regularly from deepest Kent. It is important to note that none had strong views for or against the existence of past lives.

Organisation was very democratic: members took turns to act as operators (where fully trained and competent), subjects or monitors. Monitors or 'scribes' were essential in our work. All of the sessions were recorded on tape but the brief contents of each were summarised on one page of a standard report form. This enabled us to compile a comprehensive index of past work and also helped plan future meetings more usefully.

Research evenings were conducted with a good-natured, but fairly ruthless discipline. Members started to congregate at 7pm for a prompt start at 7.30. The first session concluded no later than 8.45 and was followed by a short break for tea or coffee. Part Two finished rarely later than 10pm, as the meeting was then adjourned to a nearby pub, where discussion continued in a more convivial environment. This was an essential part of the proceedings which contributed significantly to the cohesiveness of the group. Often there were enough members to have two parallel meetings at the same premises - giving four sessions that night in all.

Communication between the operator and other members of the team was encouraged if new thoughts or ideas emerged during the session, but this was without exception by written note to avoid any sensory clues being passed to the subject.

We generally use the term 'operator' instead of 'hypnotist' so as to demystify the process. Many people still regard hypnosis with Svengalian suspicion. Yet most persons with common sense who have read widely and practised under supervision can become competent. Initially I was the sole (competent) operator, but it helped enormously when Tom Smith, another highly practised hypnotist, took over one group for a couple of months. Over the course of the following two years most of the core team were trained to a high standard of competence.

No small part of the apprenticeship concerned how to deal with the emergencies that can sometimes arise. To know what to do if a deep-trance subject fails to respond to stimuli, or even 'dies', was all part of the basic training.

Subject Selection and Training

Before the project commenced, we wondered how we might obtain good deep-trance subjects. Advertise? This might certainly attract many candidates, but

from experience I felt most of these would attend to have personal convictions of past lives confirmed. Having met so many people who claimed to have been temple priestesses in ancient Egypt, I often wondered where they housed them all! Seriously, we did realise there were drawbacks with unknown participants, not least the probable high level of fantasy likely to emerge. All members of our team had known each other for some years, which had many advantages, so in the end we decided to train our own subjects!

In a typical session the period of hypnosis usually occupied 30 to 50 minutes; anything longer than this tended to tire subjects. With someone new, most if not all of the time would be taken up with induction processes, especially the trance-deepening exercises. Later however, deep-trance could be induced very quickly, and with safeguards, even by merely mentioning a special code-word.

Utterly essential before bringing the subject back to the normal waking state was a process of desensitisation. Previous personal experience as well as cases reported in the literature deemed it essential to suggest - and get the subjects to agree - that they will be able to remember everything they encountered with vivid clarity, but they would bring back to the waking state no unpleasant influences of a mental, physical or emotional nature whatsoever.

Feedback

We always followed the period of hypnosis by an opportunity for feedback of impressions and observations from the subject, together with questions and discussion. First the subject was invited to run through his or her experience, adding to or amplifying what took place. Invariably the comment came: 'What I was really trying to say was'. Then the operator (strictly, always in charge) invited each of the observers in turn to ask questions or make observations and comments. Especially important were subjects' feelings when something particular happened. The discussion also helped subjects to integrate their experiences with everyday reality, and so avoid certain complications that might otherwise arise.

In deep hypnosis the muscles of the body are so completely relaxed that every syllable uttered is a supreme effort. Information given is necessarily brief and clipped, and the later discussion compensates for this, adding depth and colour.

One associated problem is that deep-trance subjects speak so softly that they cannot easily be heard by all observers in the room. We solved this technical difficulty by using a stereo microphone, which as well as being able to pick up voices all around the room with clarity, could in session be suspended close to the subject's mouth. The input was then amplified through hi-fi speakers.

In early stages we experimented with the 'closed book' method. Good deep-trance subjects can be invited to forget all they have experienced in a session, the idea being that if they could not remember, they would be unlikely to go researching facts to corroborate their experiences afterwards. Later we held this idea fallacious: since the hypnotic experience took place at the mind's unconscious level, any desire to check further might be carried out equally unconsciously. In other words if subjects wanted to check anything they would do so, come what may. We felt we gained considerably more on balance from having the opportunity for discussion after each session.

Regression

When a subject was capable of deep trance it was usual to attempt normal age regression, taking them back to ages of 12, 9, 6, or ... sometimes much earlier. Not even with our most imaginative subjects did we record any instances reported by other workers where they recalled their moment of birth. Very dramatic however were the occasions when a person would sit up from the bed, completely oblivious to the observers and the actual surroundings. Rather, they were in some childhood environment, pointing out the various features to the operator.

In such deep-trance conditions it was easy for an operator to make the subject see people or objects that were not there physically, and indeed make them not see ones that were. It was then but a short step to attempt exploring the 'past life' experience.

The usual method was to engage deep-trance subjects in a particular exercise of guided visual imagery. During this they were taken into a special library, and here, as throughout the entire exercise, the subconscious equivalent of their five senses were entirely occupied. Finally, they were invited to take a specific book from a shelf. It had their name on the spine, and after a special descriptive build-up, they were allowed to open it quickly, and read out their first impressions of the

summary of chapters on the first page. They were told that these consisted of a name, a place, a start date and a finish date.

Sometimes a subject would read a list of eight or ten 'chapters' with considerable ease; others might find the printing hazy or indistinct, and provide only partial information - and even then with considerable difficulty. Such points would provide the start position for future exploration.

Then we would consider each of the 'lives' in turn, taking the subject back to a point between the year limits indicated. Usually we started at a teenage date and progressively sampled points onward until the death year. This would give us a brief profile - a skeleton upon which the flesh would grow in future sessions.

Extreme care was needed as we approached the time of impending death. Were we to take a subject through a death scene, the emotional trauma could be horrendous, and even with the most skilful desensitising procedure afterwards, subjects would more than likely bring back nasty mental and physical effects to their present everyday life. The usual procedure therefore was to take the person a safe distance beyond the known death date, and invite them to describe it as a memory, having first convinced them there would be no emotional difficulties.

The work reported in this article took place largely between 1985 and 1988, and what we discuss here has to be regarded as a provisional report.

Don Brown

There were no initial indications that Don Brown (pseudonym) would ultimately be a star subject. Like several other members of the team it took some seven sessions over a period of several months before Don was trained to plumb the depths of deep trance. On the way there were very promising signs. When taken back to the age of 11, he amused us with a graphic and colourful account of selling programmes at a cricket match at Canterbury. Eventually he visited the magic library and took down the red leather-bound book embossed with his name in gold leaf, opened it, and read out some names, dates and places, which after further probing yielded us a list of past lives. These are detailed in the table on the next page.

We decided to look at the most recent lives first, as these could be researched more easily. The nearest was Harold Dickenson, born in Wrexham, who in 1913 became a medical student at University College, Cardiff. He was a most promising character who joined the army before completing his degree course, and became a medical orderly at the Front in the Great War.

Past Lives from Don Brown's Regression	
1893 - 1916	Harold Dickenson: son of a Wrexham lawyer, medical student in Cardiff, officer in medical corps in France. Killed in action.
1812 - 1847	Pietra Uskensi; a Cossack living on the Don.
1799	A baby; not even christened.
c 1700	Arabella Harrison: born in Winchester, married to Thomas Brown of Monkton near Gloucester; beaten and left for dead by her husband who thought her unfaithful.
1510 - 1573	John Witherspoon: son of Stockton apothecary, mercenary near Liège in Wallonia; returned home suffering from malaria.
1013 - 1068	Cerdic of Wrotham: son of Kent landowner, married with four children, fought under Harold's brother at Hastings, later killed in ambush.
Unknown dates	An unnamed British Celt

Harold had given us masses of useful information. Details of his regiment and company; names of superior officers; their uniforms and insignia; medical

minutiae and operations carried out - tremendous stuff. And a little later out he went in a blaze of glory - over the top.

Historical Research

The very next day another of the team (a paramedic, as it happened), took all the information along to the Imperial War Museum, and after initial research very quickly found ... nothing of any evidential value whatsoever. What we had collected was a load of highly dramatic nonsensical fantasy. Nothing fitted whatever: all the military details were fictitious, the medical methods were wrong and none of the officers involved ever enjoyed a real existence.

Almost every week one of our members visited St. Catherine's House in Aldwych, the successor to Somerset House as the repository of British births, marriages and deaths since 1841, checking all the characters our subjects regularly provided us with.

Although we could dismiss Harold and hundreds of other past-life characters like him as being completely fictitious, there are nevertheless some curious points worth noting. As a student, Harold lived at Old Street which does not exist in Cardiff, but the area in which he resided did, and his regular walk to the College - past the Castle and other landmarks I knew were correct - even though Don had never been to Cardiff. In other subjects' characters too, among a lot of dross and chaff, we encountered an occasional unexpected pearl.

The oldest existence encountered was a nameless Celt - and though there was much of interest, absolutely nothing was verifiable.

As often happens, some characters are of the opposite sex. Such was Arabella Harrison around 1700. Observers were very amused when Don was asked the initial question 'Who are you?'

'Arabella ...' came the answer, which was followed quickly by 'Arabella??' as some part of Don's observing self reacted in disbelief!

Cerdic

There was nothing immediately special about Cerdic. Apart from some initial difficulty over the pronunciation of his name (the nearest we could get was 'Cherdik', with 'ch' as in Welsh or the Scottish 'loch'), we proceeded to build a profile by sampling a range of dates from teenage to death ... and beyond. As with all characters, our primary aim was to get them to tell us about their life and times, giving as many names, dates, and placenames as possible, yet without the operator asking leading questions.

Cerdic, and his father before him, were Anglo-Saxon thegns - minor nobility - at what is now Wrotham in Kent. He and his family lived off their land, farm or smallholding, defending it and the nearby coastline against sea raiders of several descriptions. With others he paid homage to the king and local earls by occasionally banding to defend the borders of the kingdom from the Welsh in the west and the Scots and Northumbrians to the north.

Cerdic and his family lived close to the land and learned to bear the vicissitudes of nature. Life could be hard, sometimes violent and bloody, but it had compensations too. In good years it was very good. Cerdic paid lip-service to the Christian faith, but secretly adhered to the 'old ways' inherited from the Norse tradition. The old social order was changing too; influences and pressures upon the English kingdom were from many directions. The Welsh and Northumbrians were a constant threat, and relations with Nordic neighbours were constantly blowing hot and cold. But there were now increasing rumbles from across the 'little sea', as royal relationships became strained with the Normans and Franks.

We first made contact with the Cerdic character in 1033 when he was 19, and proceeded to trace the milestones of his existence from this point onwards. We did so by progressing the character by a fixed number of years - usually 5 or 10 at a time. It was quite by accident that we chanced upon the year 1066, and unthinkingly I asked Cerdic where he was and what he was doing. My heart sank when he replied,

'At a campfire, polishing my axe. Others are sharpening their swords - preparing for the battle.'

The Battle of Hastings

Clutching my head I grimaced painfully at the rest of the team. That was all we wanted! One of our great fears was that we might at some stage encounter Napoleon, Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, or lesser-known but prominent historical persons.

I scribbled a short note and passed it to one of my colleagues who then brought me a book on English history from my library. History has never been my strong point and I recalled nothing of the details surrounding the Battle of Hastings. Having quickly scanned the few pages that summarised this historic event, I addressed Cerdic again, confirming we were at the evening of 13 October 1066 - the night before it happened.

TO BE CONTINUED in the volume 23.