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EDITORIAL

Anomaly 42 is a celebration of ASSAP's diverse remit. This edition opens with Dr Simon Sherwood and Dr Wendy Cousins' ASSAP-funded exploration into Black Dogs. Our reviews deal with topics as diverse as 'imaginary friends', a history of Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, ASSAP's Presidents own study into the mysteries and secrets of time and the South Shields poltergeist case your editor was fortunate enough to witness.

However, the exciting backbone of this volume was the invitation of a new method of research and investigation; a primary focus on studying xenonormal phenomena. This includes an explanation of the ASSAP Research Department's new research framework, and the new investigation methodology of the editor's own investigation group.

Anomaly relies on your help to keep reporting the best research. Why not consider running a research experiment, reviewing a book or joining our editorial team? Contact Dave and Matt on anomaly@assap.org.

THE BLACK DOG OF WHITBY AND KETTLENESS

Simon J. Sherwood and Wendy E. Cousins

Simon Sherwood is a university lecturer in psychology who has been interested in black dog apparitions ever since his own childhood encounter (Sherwood, 2000a, 2000b) and has been collecting cases, mostly via his website (http://www.blackshuck.info), for over 10 years now.

Wendy Cousins is a university lecturer in life and health sciences. She has a personal interest in the supernatural experiences and experiments of the writers and artists of the Irish literary revival of the 19th and early 20th century.

Whitby is an historic harbour town on the edge of the North Yorkshire part of England's Jurassic coastline; it is known for its fossil ammonites as well as jet, the "black amber" so beloved of Victorians for their mourning jewellery. Entire pterodactyl skeletons have also been found in the area. The old town is a huddle of winding streets dominated by the gothic ruins of Whitby Abbey which stands high on the cliff above the town.

The first Whitby monastery was founded in or around 657AD by a Christian king of Northumbria to settle a bargain he'd made with God with regard to his victory over the pagan king of Mercia. The king's young daughter Ælflæda was part of the deal too; consecrated to the service of Christianity she was later to become an abbess. However, the first abbess in Whitby was the redoubtable Saint Hilda. Under her influence Whitby became a centre of learning and Hilda was notable for encouraging the work of Cædmon, the first officially famous English poet. The Venerable Bede could be considered a fan of this former Whitby resident and wrote that, "By his verse the minds of many were often excited to despise the world, and to aspire to heaven." However, the light of Celtic Christianity flickered briefly. In 664 AD the controversial synod of Whitby established Roman religious practice as the norm in preference over the Celtic Christian rites. In the same year, Bede records that there was an eclipse of the sun and plague spread throughout England up to Northumbria leading to the death of the newly appointed bishop. Hilda too was afflicted by a fever in the last seven years of her life and died one early November morning in 680 AD. It is reported that a nun in a nearby abbey saw in a dream a vision of Hilda's soul being carried to heaven by angels. When messengers arrived with the sad message from Whitby, they were surprised to find the Prioress and all the sisters already at prayer, having been informed of the news by rather speedier supernatural means. Darker days were to come and, in 867 AD, Vikings landed two miles west

of Whitby at Raven's Hill and moved on to attack the town and destroy the monastery which was left in ruin. It was several centuries before the monastery was refounded by the Normans in 1078 and dedicated to Peter and St. Hilda (Colgrave, 1991; Green, 2006).

These days Whitby is a busy tourist town and, while Victorian jet and the alum mines may no longer be the attraction they once were, fossil hunters still come to dig up ancient monsters and the town is host to a biannual festival for 'Goths'.

Figure 1: A view of Whitby harbour looking out towards Whitby Abbey and the sea

In the summer of 1890 the Irish writer Bram Stoker came to Whitby to see for himself if it would be a suitable place for a family holiday. His friend, the actor and theatrical manager Gerald du Maurier (father of novelist Daphne du Maurier), had recommended it and, as Bram was to discover, his friend had excellent taste. He took apartments at 6 Royal Crescent on the West Cliff and was in whole-hearted agreement that Whitby was 'a lovely' place. He wrote approvingly of the red roofed town and the noble ruins of the abbey, which by

now was apparently haunted by a white lady who was sometimes seen at one of the windows. However, it was not only Whitby's beauty which was to fire the writer's inspiration; he had a fascination for the gloomier aspects of the town and had a particular fondness for the graveyard of St Mary's church which lies between the abbey and town and can be reached by 199 stone steps.

...there is another church, the parish one, round which is a big graveyard, all full of tombstones. This is to my mind the nicest spot in Whitby, for it lies right over the town and has a full view of the harbour and all up the bay to where the headland called Kettleness stretches out into the sea...I shall come here and sit very often myself and work. Indeed I am writing now with my book on my knee.[1]

In 1787 and 1871 this location above the town was the scene of devastating landslides which led to the destruction of houses below in Henrietta Street (also called Haggerlythe) with coffins from the cemetery falling down the cliffside in a grisly spectacle which must have been worthy of the most gothic of imaginations. Given the history, it is perhaps not surprising that this place was also supposed to be haunted by the "thost dog", a variant of the famous Yorkshire Barguest, one of the spectral black dogs of England also known to haunt this coastline. As a coastal town, the residents of Whitby were no strangers to maritime tragedy either. When a schooner, the Dimitre, ran aground during one of the storms that often ravaged the North East coast, Bram Stoker was to use this as the inspiration, in his book Dracula, for the ghost ship "the Demeter", which sailed into fog-wreathed Whitby in the teeth of a tempest with a dead man lashed to the wheel and a mysterious cargo of mould-filled coffins.

But, strangest of all, the very instant the shore was touched, an immense dog sprang up on deck from below, as if shot up by the concussion, and running forward, jumped from the bow on the sand. Making straight for the steep cliff, where the churchyard hangs over the laneway to the East Pier so steeply that some of the flat tombstones – 'thruff-steans' or 'through-stones', as they call them in the Whitby vernacular - actually project over where the sustaining cliff has fallen away, it disappeared in the darkness, which seemed intensified just beyond the focus of the searchlight. (Dracula, Chapter 7).

Count Dracula had arrived in England in the guise of a black dog. Bram Stoker was doubtless inspired by the legends of the locality, and although black dog apparitions have been reported widely in Great Britain, especially in England, they have also been reported in various forms elsewhere in Europe and North America (Bord & Bord, 1985; Miller, 1984; Sherwood, 2000a, 2000b, 2005;

1 Cited in Stamp (1981) Dracula Discovered: the writing of the book in Whitby p.8

Trubshaw, 2005). Such black dogs are usually seen at night (Bord & Bord, 1985), although sightings in the daylight have been made (Brown, 1978); they are usually experienced outside, often in lonely rural settings (although a few indoor encounters have been reported) and are often associated with a particular place or area (Miller, 1984; Rudkin, 1938).
Black dog apparitions differ from normal dogs in terms of their size, their eyes and their behaviour (Bord & Bord, 1985). They are often described as being bigger than an ordinary dog, often about the size of a calf (Bord & Bord, 1985; Miller, 1984). Their eyes are often reported as being fiery or glowing and as being rather large and 'as big as saucers' (Bord & Bord, 1985; Brown, 1958; Miller, 1984). Sometimes these apparitions are reported to have changed in size or to have changed into a different animal or a human form (Bord & Bord, 1985; Brown, 1958). Most black dogs either vanish or gradually fade from sight. Sometimes the apparition may vanish if the witness's attention wanders or if attempts are made to touch it (Bord & Bord, 1985). Appearances and disappearances have also been accompanied by flashes of light and explosions (McEwan, 1986).

However, although the story of the black dog of Haggerlythe seems to have been local knowledge in Whitby even before Bram Stoker incorporated him into the pages of Dracula back in the 19th century, further along the coast at Kettleness there was a rather more recent encounter with a ghostly back dog. In the 1950s, Church of England clergyman and notable exorcist, the Reverend Dr Donald Omand, received a letter from a schoolmaster outlining his experience with such an apparition:

On visiting Kettleness they [the schoolmaster and two friends] all experienced a wave of terror when, looking over the shore to the misty sea, they had seen a huge hound—so large it could not be mortal—appear out of thin air. Silent with shock they watched it move towards them before disappearing as silently and mysteriously as it had come. All three were left with such a strong sense of evil that the schoolmaster believed it was a case desperately in need of exorcism. (Alexander, 1978, p. 48)

The school master concluded his letter by asking if Dr Omand would accompany him to that place again to conduct this exorcism and the churchman was most willing to oblige.

Figure 2. Looking out towards Kettleness Point

The desolate Kettleness Point (see Figure 2) and stories of encounters with a black dog were not new to Donald Omand as he had visited there as a small boy and later, whilst working as a newspaper reporter on the Northern Echo at Darlington, he had interviewed a local fisherman who had seen a huge black dog appear and disappear there on more than one occasion. As a teenager Omand had been profoundly affected by Bram Stoker's Dracula and it is reported in Marc Alexander's biography of Dr Omand that he believed that Stoker must have visited Kettleness and seen the phantom hound himself and that this later inspired part of the book.

Dr Omand sent a telegram arranging to meet the schoolmaster at Scarborough station and set off immediately. It was nightfall as the two of them walked the shore at Kettleness[2].

[2] It is not absolutely clear from the account whether they were walking along the beach or the cliffs above but a photograph of Reverend Omand in Alexander's book (opposite p. 97) shows him apparently pointing to the beach below Kettleness Point.

'All we need now is for Dracula to come bounding ashore in the form of a great black dog,' muttered Donald with a smile. But the smile froze as his companion suddenly gripped him by the arm….

'What we saw looked like a huge black hound, but bigger than any member of the canine species, known to man. It was moving straight in our direction and the schoolmaster's nerve gave way completely. He rushed back to the car.

'Uncorking the bottle [of Holy Water] which I was carrying, I commanded the spectre as follows: "Be gone in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be gone to the place appointed for you, there to remain for ever. Be gone in the Name of Christ."

'As I spoke the last words, I splashed Holy Water in the direction of the apparition, and the latter disappeared as suddenly as it had materialised. Then I exorcised all the ground which the spectre had covered and a great heaviness went out of the atmosphere. The menace of Kettleness was ended. (pp. 49-50).

Sadly, Omand reported that the schoolmaster never got over his experiences at Kettleness and soon after had a breakdown and ended up in hospital suffering from mental illness. Unfortunately, there is no mention of whether the schoolmaster already had a history of mental illness, which could have had some bearing on his experience, and there was apparently no attempt to corroborate the original experience with the schoolmaster's two friends. However, the schoolmaster's second encounter with the dog was witnessed simultaneously by Dr Omand though, given his knowledge and beliefs, there might have been a certain degree of expectation on his part.

In order to investigate the matter further, we visited Kettleness to see the area for ourselves and to see if we could throw any further light on Omand's report. We had previously contacted the Northern Echo, a number of local libraries and the Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society for help with our investigation. The first thing that struck us as we approached Kettleness (approximately six miles north-west of Whitby)[3] is how isolated and small a place it is; there are only a few houses, the old railway station, and a few farms. We later discovered that the cliffs in this area are quite unstable and that in 1829 a large part of the cliffs collapsed taking with it a number of houses. Landslides are clearly a hazard in this part of the world.

This part of the coast is also populated by a number of alum mines. It is quite difficult to reach Kettleness Point itself and requires a bit of scrambling and

[3] For a map of the coastline see http://www.multimap.com/map/browse.cgi?lat=54.5276&lon=-0.7153&scale=100000&icon=x

careful navigation along makeshift paths. Although it is possible to access the beach to the west of Kettleness Point by attaching a rope to the top and descending the cliffs[4], a technique used only by serious and experienced fossil hunters, this is considered highly dangerous. It is better to walk along the beach from Runswick Bay when the tide is out - one must check the tides carefully to avoid getting into trouble though. Even so, this would still require a walk of 2-3 miles around the coastline. What this illustrates is the difficulty involved with reaching the beach near Kettleness Point and also the Point itself. Unfortunately, on this occasion we were unable to get down onto the beach ourselves at the time we visited but our suspicion is that it would be extremely difficult and somewhat perilous.

The black dog of Whitby and Kettleness remains an elusive and shadowy entity, scarcely more substantial than the sea-mists which roll in from the north and herald its arrival. Nevertheless this spectral dog, like all of its kind, has the power to grip the imagination. In the case of Bram Stoker this imagination inspired genius, in the case of the unfortunate schoolmaster the tale ended more tragically; in both cases we are left with their stories and, to theirs, we add ours.

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[4] For details on accessing the beach see
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THE RETURN OF THE MERLIN MATRIX

Maurice Townsend

The Merlin Matrix is a revival of a research programme ASSAP ran in the 1980s and 1990s. The principle remains the same as then – many, often disparate, research modules for individuals and groups within ASSAP, that contribute to a single goal – a better understanding of the paranormal.

INTRODUCTION

The original Merlin Matrix was born from a traditional view of paranormal research. Somebody claimed to have witnessed something that appeared to defy current science, so we tried to record, reproduce and study it. This approach, however, has not proved fruitful over time. In particular, reproducibility and testability remain crucial problems. Another major problem is defining something as paranormal simply because there is no obvious natural explanation. There might be an explanation that the investigators simply don't know about or one that is yet to be discovered.

There are still few, if any, paranormal phenomena generally accepted by science and opinion remains polarised between 'believers' and 'skeptics', who tend not to work together. Clearly, in the face of this ongoing failure, it is time to try a new approach to paranormal study. The new Merlin Matrix is built around such a new methodology.

XENONORMAL

Most paranormal researchers spend much of their time actually studying the xenonormal, though they may not realise it. The xenonormal is the 'unfamiliar normal'. It is those phenomena that appear paranormal but, after careful investigation, have natural causes. And that's most paranormal cases!

The concept of the 'xenonormal' comes from asking the question 'why do people report certain events as paranormal?' The answer, derived from examining many cases down the years, is that witnesses, when faced with something unfamiliar, sometimes interpret it as paranormal.

It is important to distinguish between the 'unfamiliar' and the 'unknown'. Just because you have weird noises behind the walls of your house that you can't explain, it doesn't mean that a plumber or a builder or even a naturalist couldn't explain them. Similarly, you may see a strange light in the sky. To you it is an

unidentified flying object. It may not be unidentifiable, however, to an astronomer, meteorologist or aviation expert. The xenonormal is about the unfamiliar but normal, not the unknown or the unexplained.

So why do people report strange events as paranormal? The best theory for this is our culture. We are bombarded by images, TV programmes, films, video games, newspaper reports and books about the paranormal. Even people who are sceptical about such matters, or not interested in them, can hardly avoid all this coverage. How many people are completely unfamiliar with the image of a flying saucer piloted by extra terrestrials? Hardly anyone!

PARANORMAL

If most of what we, as paranormal researchers, deal with is really xenonormal, where is the real, genuine paranormal? When we remove all the xenonormal incidents from the cases we investigate, there remains a small residue of unexplained events. Unfortunately, unexplained does not necessarily equate to paranormal. Some of this residue may simply be xenonormal phenomena that are yet to be identified. But there could still be genuine paranormal phenomena somewhere in that residue.

The trouble is, it is difficult to see the genuine paranormal when there is so much xenonormal stuff around confusing everything. Unless we can clear the xenonormal out of the way first, we will never see the paranormal. Unfortunately, many people seem happily convinced that some xenonormal phenomena are really paranormal. For instance, despite the overwhelming evidence that orbs have a mundane explanation, some people still seem either unaware of this or choose to ignore it.

A NEW APPROACH

All of this suggests a new approach to paranormal research – to study the xenonormal itself! If we thoroughly understood all the unfamiliar phenomena masquerading as the paranormal, we could quickly eliminate them from our research. No single researcher can ever be an expert on all the, often obscure, phenomena that can be taken for paranormal. But by compiling a database of such xenonormal phenomena, we can make investigations quicker and easier. It would leave more time to study the exciting 'residue' that may contain genuine paranormal phenomena.

A big advantage of studying the xenonormal would be that, since we would be dealing with the unfamiliar but natural, rather than the unknown, we would get reproducible and testable results. Unlike the paranormal, it is certain that

definite progress can be made in characterising the xenonormal. Once you understand what causes a particular type of photographic anomaly, the explanation remains valid for all such examples.

Compare that with conventional paranormal study, which has barely progressed in over a century. Paranormal theories and explanations have come and gone, none really convincing even most paranormal researchers, far less the public at large. In addition, it is perfectly possible that, in the course of our xenonormal studies, we will come across some genuinely paranormal phenomena that defy natural explanation. In some ways, xenonormal study is very similar to paranormal research except that definite progress is guaranteed.

Some people will argue that they are only interested in the 'genuine paranormal', not the xenonormal. For them, the new Merlin Matrix, which consists of many different experimental procedures, or modules, also contains some purely paranormal projects as well.

XENONORMAL RESEARCH METHODS

One of the key concepts of xenonormal research is the ability to reproduce apparently paranormal phenomena experimentally, using only simple methods. Such effects should ideally be reproduced in circumstances similar to those of the original report, to ensure authenticity. Circumstances need not be identical, since some paranormal reports rely on unlikely coincidences that could not be expected to occur frequently. For instance, a shadow may only look like a ghostly figure at a particular time of day and from a specific angle. So, if a reasonably convincing 'ghost' can be reproduced with similar circumstances, that will generally suffice.

Preliminary research has shown that is possible to reproduce just about any photographic anomaly that has ever been recorded, without any need for photo editing software. Indeed, the reproductions usually look much better (and more convincing!) than 'real anomalies', because they are usually clearer, better lit, in focus and have a higher resolution.

MAINSTREAM SCIENCE THAT AFFECTS PARANORMAL STUDY

Much xenonormal research uses and builds on conventional science from many fields. Results from areas like neuroscience, for instance, are highly relevant to witness testimony through areas like perception and memory. The results of parapsychological lab research, by contrast, rarely seem so relevant as they usually show such a tiny effect that it seems unlikely that they could explain field reports of obvious and dramatic experiences.

In many paranormal reports, all we have is a report by witnesses. There are usually no physical remains or instrumental recordings to check. Further, a lot of reports involve just a single witness. It is therefore vital that we understand the factors affecting such witness reports, particularly perception, memory and reporting. All of these processes can, even when operating perfectly normally, produce xenonormal reports.

Until recently, perception and memory were little understood, being more the province of philosophical speculation than hard science. With the rapid development of neuroscience, and new imaging tools, it is finally becoming possible to start to understand how the brain really works. In particular, our understanding of perception and memory is expanding rapidly. Therefore, it is vital for all paranormal researchers to understand these developments if they want to avoid wasting their time on xenonormal phenomena.

PERCEPTION

The 'common sense' view of perception is that your sense organs produce nerve impulses that go to your brain for 'viewing' or 'hearing'. In fact, research has shown that it isn't that simple at all. Perception actually takes place entirely in your brain, with direct sensory input just one of several contributors. In particular, it appears that when your brain cannot 'see' an object well (e.g. in poor viewing conditions or when something is only glimpsed briefly) it can 'substitute' something else, from your visual memory, for the thing it can't see properly! Something similar happens when listening to human speech, allowing us to 'hear' words that were actually drowned out by noise. Our brains 'fill in' the missing words, using the context of the sentence (sometimes wrongly). It could explain why voice-like sounds are often interpreted as words in EVP (see Anomaly 41, p 12). Visual substitutions could explain how poorly seen vague human shapes can sometimes be reported as apparitions, with fully detailed human features and specific clothes.

None of this means that we all go round seeing and hearing things that aren't really there all the time. However, there ARE certain occasions when such visual or aural 'substitutions' happen, when sensory input is poor and if something is unfamiliar. Once you become aware of this possibility, you start to notice the effect yourself! Objects seen in the 'corner of your eye' (where resolution is low) will either change or 'vanish' altogether when you turn to look at them properly. This is because your peripheral vision is nothing like as good as your central vision and it makes more mistakes. Once you can see the area properly, the 'substitute' object you 'saw' before vanishes and you observe what's really there! Similarly, if you only glance at something for a fraction of a second, you may find that if you look again for longer, it is not what you first thought.

Some people, naturally, interpret these experiences as seeing a ghost! Though you can call such 'substitutions' misperceptions, they are actually part of the normal way that human perception works.

MEMORY

We all know that memories fade with time (or more accurately, with neglect). However, in addition, sometimes memories may be wrong right from the start! As well as misperception (see above), people will sometimes 'confabulate'. This means they will alter their memory to fit in with what they expect to experience, rather than what they actually experienced. Our brains like to 'make sense' of our experiences and details may altered, added or forgotten when certain experiences are recalled. The role of psychological suggestion or expectation can be strong in such cases, e.g. expecting to witness ghostly activity in spooky settings.

Witnesses questioned, even just after seeing an incident, frequently make significant mistakes in their accounts! Confabulation takes place unconsciously so people are not aware of any inaccuracies. Each time a memory is actively recalled it may be subject to further confabulation. Thus witness accounts may drift further and further from the original experience with time.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Even when paranormal reports are recorded by researchers, they will inevitably already contain some inaccuracies due to confabulation. Whenever such accounts are used as sources for other accounts, more inaccuracies will tend to creep in, unless they are copied verbatim. This distorting process of 'Chinese whispers' explains why ghost stories from previous centuries are often so much more dramatic than contemporary cases. Many such old ghost reports are more like legends, with the narrative structure of a fictional story. By contrast, contemporary cases tend to appear essentially meaningless, just a collection of strange occurrences.

In old haunting reports, ghosts are often more like characters in a story. They are frequently named, have apparent motives (usually 'unfinished business'), can sometimes talk and interact freely with witnesses. In contrast, most modern hauntings don't even involve sightings of ghosts. When they ARE seen, apparitions don't interact with witnesses and are generally not readily identifiable. If you disregard old cases as probably largely legend, not only does evidence for spirits diminish significantly but even the 'stone tape theory' looks less likely.

WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE PARANORMAL RESEARCH?

All of the above brings both witness testimony and, in particular, second-hand reports into question. While it is safe to dismiss most second-hand reports as generally not good enough for serious research, first-hand witness testimony forms our most important source of access to paranormal experiences. Instead of dismissing witness testimony, it is suggested it should be weighted when used in research. Specifically, the following should be more highly weighted (in no special order):

- interviews made soon after the event (over late reports)
- multiple witness events (over single witness episodes)
- independent witness reports (including single witnesses) that agree with others
- events supported by relevant contemporary instrumental recordings
- observers familiar with objects that could be misperceived (eg. An astronomer seeing a UFO) over others
- reports with good viewing conditions

The 'witness' here is not simply someone who reports a spontaneous paranormal event but also people participating in ghost vigils and similar research. Note, in particular, that good viewing conditions are highly preferred. Many paranormal reports relate to poor viewing conditions, implying that misperception is highly likely. There is a similar trend in anomalous photos with many being taken in poor lighting conditions with the 'anomaly' often poorly defined, at or even beyond the limit of resolution.

Of course, many of the points above about weighting are already well-known to paranormal researchers. However, it is surprisingly rare for evidence to be sifted and the 'wrong kind' removed from consideration. The theory is probably that there will be enough 'good' evidence available to counteract any effect of the 'wrong' stuff. However, given the poor record so far in producing useful testable theories based on such evidence, this argument does not seem to hold water.

UNDERSTANDING THE XENONORMAL

There may also be other xenonormal causes of paranormal reports apart from misperception, like psychological and medical conditions and induced hallucinations. It is clear that, in order to recognise the paranormal, we must first recognise and eliminate the xenonormal. And to do that we must first understand it!

Currently, much field paranormal research is failing because it does not successfully eliminate the xenonormal. By the time this is pointed out for a particular case, it is generally too late to go back and redo the research. If field researchers were aware of xenonormal phenomena at the time of their investigation, much wasted time and effort could be saved. That is the main goal of the revived Merlin Matrix.

A NEW METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

By Dave Wood

This article presents the new methodology of ASSAP affiliate group Paranormal Site Investigators (PSI). The new method used by this group follows several years of highly standardised investigations using stock 'ghost hunting techniques', allowing for meaningful comparison. The method very much mirrors the ASSAP Research Department's fresh focus on xenonormal studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

'Ghosts' or 'spirits' as manifestations of the survival of human consciousness has been a near ubiquitous feature of human civilization across culture and time. In times before mass rationality, 'ghosts' were considered to be undeniable, paranormal entities driven by belief in either religion or folklore. The age of rationality has discounted reported paranormal events as the consequence of hoax or over-active imagination.

As reports of ghosts and hauntings continue to be common in the 21st century large numbers of people have made various attempts to explain or investigate the nature of hauntings. People have attempted to devise classification systems for 'ghosts', for example as 'sentient spirits', 'replay ghosts' and 'poltergeist'. These categories tend to stem from folklore and have no scientific basis, merely the human mind attempting to make sense of unexplained data. Former categories, such as 'crisis apparitions' and 'veridical apparitions' have waned in recent times. The religion of 'spiritualism' grew in the nineteenth century; believing in the existence of God, an afterlife and ability of mediums to communicate with the spirits of the deceased.

Using objective methods to assess haunting claims has been popular since at least the late Victorian period. The last ten years has seen the TV-inspired proliferation of 'paranormal investigators', falling into several often indistinguishable methods:

- Religious experience. Mediums and psychics operate outside the scientific method, investigating under the assumption that God and the afterlife exists, and that they are equipped to contact them. As is the nature of religious experience, such methods cannot provide objective evidence, just personal proof for those who believe.
- Hobbyism and thrill seeking. Various hobbyist 'investigator groups' and commercial companies have formed in recent years so cater for groups

wishing to 'experience ghosts'. Such groups pre-suppose the existence of ghosts and enjoy the experience of misattribution to contribute to a 'night out'. Again, such pursuits offer personal experience and personal 'proof', but make no contribution to scientific understanding of the subject.

- Pseudo-science investigators. Portions of 'paranormal investigators' attempt to investigate ghosts in a 'scientific way'. This usually follows the 'fishing' approach of assuming a building is 'haunted' and using 'ghost detectors' to attempt to prove this. The typical approach is attempting to capture EMF readings, ghost photographs, EVP recordings and the like. This assumption-led approach has no grounding in science, and in fact such methods have been proven to severely flawed. Over time some pseudo-science investigators have progressed to attempting to 'disprove' ghosts, but based on the unscientific false duality of assuming an experience is paranormal unless proven to be normal. Pseudo-science investigators often consider themselves to be scientific, but fail to adhere to basic scientific principles and have been shown to have contributed little to scientific knowledge of the hauntings.

THE PURPOSE OF RATIONAL INVESTIGATION

If most enquiries fall into the categories of person and religious experience for personal proof or assumption-led pseudo-science, what is left?

What is clear is that people have experiences they attribute to possible paranormal phenomena. Such 'hauntings' often arise as a result of misattribution of xenonormal phenomena. Rather than assuming these events constitute a haunting and using unproven tools to unscientifically draw conclusions, rationality dictates we should begin with what is normal, rather than what is paranormal.

There are a range of proven tools and techniques that can be used to determine what is normal but which seems paranormal – i.e. the xenonormal. Forgetting EVP, mediumship, ghost photography, trigger objects, ITC, spiritual tools, inappropriate EMF meters and any other unscientific assumptions, rather than being distracted by this fools gold it is possible to really learn what is 'normal' in a case. By proving what is normal, it is then possible to focus in heavily on those experiences that cannot yet be proven as normal.

This method seeks to rigorously identify all normal and xenonormal experiences in a haunting case, and flag up those experiences that cannot be proven as normal. When these rare events present themselves it would be pseudo-scientific to adopt the false duality that anything unexplained automatically becomes

paranormal. The next stage is to design rigorous research around these unexplained events, focussing on getting to the bottom of their cause.

Rather than adopting the traditional approach of drowning in the false evidence of traditional approaches – which have proven to fail, over the years – it is hoped that focussing rigorously on anything unexplained can allow us to discover something more meaningful about the nature of ghost experiences.

· **EQUIPMENT**

Below is a full list of equipment used by PSI during investigations. Procedures for use of equipment and methodological justifications are found elsewhere in this document:

Visual Equipment

- CCTV:
  - Digital Video Recorder
  - 20 inch Dell LCD screen
  - 4 x Swann CCTV cameras
  - 2 x dictaphones, IR sender/receivers and speakers.
  - 4 x 5 metre cabling
  - 2 x 36 metre cabling
- 6 x Video cameras with infrared boosters

Monitoring Equipment:

- 2 x Data Logging Spectrum Analysers (Spectran NF-5010)
- 2 x Testo 405-1 Velocity Stick (hotwire anemometer)
- 2 x Lascar Carbon Monoxide Data Logger (EL-USB-CO)
- 6 x Lascar Temperature Data Logger (EL-USB-TC)
- 14 x Digital Voice Recorders (Olympus VN-3100PC)
- 2 x Infrasound Measuring Units (pending)

Operational Equipment:

- 4 x UHF Two-way radios
- Floodlight with built in tripod
- 20 x Tripods and Microphone stands
- 3 x Laptop Computers
- Power Generator

- Enclosed gazebo (outdoor Monitoring Centre and Base Room)
- Ultrasonic Distance Measure
- 4 x power extension reels

2. PARTICIPANTS

The majority of PSI investigations take place within an environment where ethical sensitivity and conduct are paramount. As such all investigators are:

- Covered by Public Liability Insurance to a limit of £5,000,000.
- Checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).
- Selected by process of application form and interview.
- Fully trained in operations, ethics, conduct and equipment use by qualified trainers.

Where investigators take the role of 'percipient' they are considered to be participants of the study. Individual differences between percipients are tracked and monitored using:

- Thalbourne's Paranormal Belief Scale
- Perception of Context Questionnaire

Investigators will be organised into three operational roles: percipients, CCTV Monitors and EF (Extraenous Factor) Auditors. All investigators will be trained to execute all roles. Whilst fluidity between roles will be encouraged, some stability of experienced operatives will be ensured. Further, investigator roles will be held constant across the three events of any given investigation.
Where investigators are familiar with the background of a case, where possible, they will not be assigned a percipient role.

3. PROCEDURE

This document mainly concerns Phenomena Investigations, but the procedures for other investigations are also included here.

4.1 EXPLORATORY FIELDWORK

Exploratory fieldwork takes place where:

- The location is not suitably controlled, for example an outdoors location.

- The location is not available to PSI for sufficient time to conduct a Phenomena Investigation, for example a business premises with prohibitive opening hours.
- The location is not available to PSI on a sufficient number of occasions to conduct a Research Investigation.

The functions of exploratory fieldwork are to:

- Observe the process of perceiving an environment to generate research theories for testing.
- Test the functionality of new equipment and methods.

3.2 SPECIFIC RESEARCH INVESTIGATIONS

Research investigations take place where:

- There are no vulnerable clients or clients seeking an explanation, for example a Local Authority building.
- Where the location is suitable for particular research purposes.

The functions of research investigations are to:

- Provide a location where meaningful research can be conducted and results shared with the research community. Such research should be well designed and seek to test a particular hypothesis.

3.3 LONGITUDINAL PHENOMENA INVESTIGATIONS

The hypotheses and rationale for Phenomena Investigations are contained in the rest of this document. For methodological reasons discussed elsewhere, Phenomena Investigations take place over at least three occasions; these occasions should be sufficiently far apart to allow meaningful analysis:

1. Baseline Investigation; where functions are:
   - To build the Monitoring Baseline.
   - To build the Physical Baseline.
   - To build the Extraenous Factors Baseline.
   - To build the Perception Baseline.
2. Percipient Investigation; where functions are:
   - To allow percipients to observe, in matched circumstances, compared to original reports, and monitor similarities between the two.
   - To continue to build the Monitoring, Physical and Extraenous Factors Baselines
3. Analysis Investigation; where functions are:

- To allow percipients to observe, in matched circumstances, with knowledge of previous reports to attempt to find explanations for original reports.
- To continue to build the Monitoring, Physical and Extraenous Factors Baselines.
- To allow group analysis of reports to attempt to find xenonormal origins for original and subsequent reports.

3.3.1 PRE-INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

The following steps should be taken prior to the first event:

- Agree terms of access with the venue and conduct a Risk Assessment.
- Ensure the venue is aware of the full procedure, in line with the Statement of Ethics.
- Fully interview all available witnesses and compile any accounts of previous activity (interviewers should not act as a Percipient during the Baseline Investigation).
- Produce a briefing of eyewitness and other findings.
- Select Areas of Study, produce a map including hotspots. Criteria for selection of Areas of Study are:
  - 2 x Percipient Areas. This should include one room with previous accounts of hauntings ('Active') and one similar room with no accounts of hauntings ('Control'). These areas should be used for Percipient Observation, percipients should not be informed which area is which.
  - 2 x Non-Percipient Areas. This should include one room with previous accounts of hauntings and one similar room with no accounts of hauntings. These areas should be subjected to CCTV and sound monitoring.
  - Where there are more than two rooms with previous haunt experiences a decision should be made based on the following paper-based criteria:
    - Recency of experiences.
    - Any experiences less explicable by non-investigative means.
    - Multiple, independent accounts.
  - The circumstances of experiences should be recorded and matched during subsequent investigations.

3.3.2 PREPARATION

The set-up for any of these investigation events shall consist of:

1. Location of:
   - A Base Room for rest and storage.
   - A Monitoring Centre for CCTV, sound and data logger monitoring. A set of criteria shall be applied to include: distance from Areas of Study, including measurement of sound pollution and power sources or distances from generator (including sound measurement from generator).
   - Viable areas of travel for Extraneous Factors Auditors.
   - Sound monitoring equipment around Areas of Study, locations for cameras.
2. Equipment and Participant Preparation, to include:
   - Participant paperwork, to include: Code of Conduct and Disclaimer signing, percipient scales questionnaires and procedural paperwork.
   - Time synchronisation against the talking clock between watches, laptops, voice recorders, DVR unit, camcorders and stills cameras.
   - Laptop activation of data logging equipment.
   - Allocation of roles and any equipment to individuals, including allocation of marked Data Loggers to percipients.
   - All duplicate equipment should be allocated a unique number.

3.3.3 PLACING OF EQUIPMENT

Equipment should be placed as follows:

- Monitoring Centre: CCTV screen, DVR unit, IR units x 2, speakers x 2, mixing unit and data logging laptop.
- Non-Percipient areas, 1 x active, 1 x control: CCTV camera on tripod/stand in the corner of the room with best coverage of the room and any entrances/exits, microphone also on tripod/stand.
- Percipient areas 1 x active, 1 x control:
  - One tripod with temperature data logger for each percipient, placed within the area allocated as a 'hotspot'. These should not be moved for the whole event.
  - One EM field meter within a 'hotspot' connected to a laptop.
  - CCTV camera on tripod/stand in the corner of the room with best coverage of the percipients and all equipment.
  - At least two camcorders with IR boosters on tripods/stands covering the lines of sight of the percipients. Operatives should test all cameras to

ensure crossover of IR beams does not cause unintended effects. These camcorder should only be operated during Percipient Observation sessions.

- One voice recorder constantly recording throughout the event.

- Other areas: voice recorders should be left continuously recording for the whole event. Six recorders will be left in locations around the experimental rooms where sounds could be heard (for example in rooms on other floors, outside the room).
- A diagram must be generated of the positions of all units of equipment and of all percipients.
- All equipment should be left in its original position for the entire event.
- At the end of the event equipment should be given to analysts or return to the laptop for data logging to be completed.

3.3.4 PROCEDURE FOR BASELINE INVESTIGATIONS

Time	Activity	Detail
90 mins	Preparation	As above, without prior knowledge of reports
	Placing of Equipment	As above
90 mins	Extraenous Factors Baseline	Using check sheets to monitor all EFAs possible within the timeframe
	Physical Baseline	Fully record the physical environment using stills cameras
120 mins*	Perception Baseline	Percipients should remain next to a data logger within the hotspot
	CCTV Monitoring	By two nominated individuals
	Continuous EFA	Two nominated individuals to continually assess EFs and respond to others
45 mins	Disassembly	Disassembly of all equipment
	Debriefing	Debriefing as per Statement of Ethics

Event length including breaks: 6.5 Hours

3.3.5 PROCEDURE FOR PERCIPIENT INVESTIGATIONS

Time	Activity	Detail
60 mins	Preparation	As above, with prior knowledge of reports
	Placing of Equipment	As above

60 mins	Extraenous Factors Baseline	Using check sheets to monitor all EFAs possible within the timeframe
	Physical Baseline	Fully record the physical environment using stills cameras
120 mins*	Percipient Observation	Percipients should remain next to a data logger within the hotspot
	CCTV Monitoring	By two nominated individuals
	Continuous EFA	Two nominated individuals to continually assess EFs and respond to others
45 mins	Disassembly	Disassembly of all equipment
	Debriefing	Debriefing as per Statement of Ethics

Event length including breaks: 5.5 Hours

3.3.6 PROCEDURE FOR ANALYSIS INVESTIGATIONS

Time	Activity	Detail
45 mins	Preparation	As above, with prior knowledge of reports
	Placing of Equipment	As above
45 mins	Extraenous Factors Baseline	Using check sheets to monitor all EFAs possible within the timeframe
	Physical Baseline	Fully record the physical environment using stills cameras
120 mins	Group Analysis	On site analysis of all original and Categories C & D subsequent reports, with supporting documentation
120 mins*	Percipient Observation	Percipients should remain next to a data logger within the hotspot
	CCTV Monitoring	By two nominated individuals
	Continuous EFA	Two nominated individuals to continually assess EFs and respond to others
45 mins	Disassembly	Disassembly of all equipment
	Debriefing	Debriefing as per Statement of Ethics

Event length including breaks: 7 Hours

* In all three procedures this condition should take place at exactly the same time for consistency of matched circumstances. This will lead to the start and end times of each event being different to one another, in order to keep this Percipient Observation time consistent.

3.3.7 PERCIPIENT OBSERVATION PROCEDURE

- The circumstances in each Area of Study should match circumstances of original accounts. The general time of day/night and the level of lighting in the room should match these as closely as possible.
- No equipment should be moved during the course of the event.
- Percipients should remain in a seat next to their marked Data Logger.
- Everyone set of investigations should focus on two control and two experimental areas.
- Percipients should be randomly assigned to two groups that should spend one session in each of the two experimental areas, in a randomly generated order.
- Each session should be rotated in two, 30 minute blocks:
  - 10 minutes: Silent observation.
  - 10 minutes: Observation in conversation.
  - 10 minutes: Engaging in a self-distracting activity.
- In each group there will be the following roles:
  - Person A: Group spokesperson to the other units, using the radio.
  - Person B: Group spokesperson using the voice recorder. Every percipient should state unusual experience (including possible natural causes) in precise terms; this should be recorded. Person B should also co-ordinate use of stills cameras (as below).
  - Person C: Holder of the anemometer, to measure any draughts where percipients experience temperature fluctuations. Person C will cease to be a percipient for the time it takes to take anemometer measurements.
  - Person D: Responsible for ensuring the changing of tapes in each camcorder prior to each session commencing.
- Percipients should only use stills cameras after an experience has been reported, and only where the experience has some sort of visual reference point. Two cameras should be used to capture the exact location of the experience, to provide objective visual evidence of the location of the experience.

3.3.8 CCTV MONITORING PROCEDURE

- CCTV Monitors should observe the four CCTV cameras throughout percipient sessions. Monitors should also listen to audio streams in control rooms.
- There should be the following roles:

- Person A: Spokesperson on the voice recorder. All visual or auditory events in any of the four locations should be recorded onto a voice recorder, in specific detail.
- Person B: Holder of the radio to communicate with the percipient groups and inform the EF Auditors of any potential EFAs. Also to monitor all time keeping for all groups.

3.3.9 EXTRAENOUS FACTOR (EF) AUDITOR PROCEDURE

- EF Auditors should use agreed routes to traverse a location highlighting any EFAs throughout the course of percipient sessions, independent of the Percipient Observation.
- There should be the following roles:
  - Person A: Spokesperson on the voice recorder. Any emerging EFAs in any area should be recorded in detail.
  - Person B: Holder of the radio to communicate with the percipient groups and CCTV monitors to advise or be advised of any potential EFAs.

4. METHODOLOGICAL DETAIL

Much modern 'paranormal investigation' is based on a TV-inspired, assumption-led approach. The cornerstone of a rational, scientific approach is a defined, justified methodology. So often methods are implied and unquestioned. The assumption-led approach analogises the investigation of hauntings to 'UFO spotting'. The assumption goes that ghosts exist, so that all one has to do is sit and wait for one to appear. A rational approach to the field recognises that haunting experience is often a psychological phenomena, calling for matched circumstances, control conditions and assiduous recording of the natural environment rather than sitting and waiting for an ambiguous experience
A rational approach also dictates that we place an emphasis on understanding what is normal, before trying to understand what is unexplained. This compares to the assumption-led, often unjustified approach of using unproven (and often disproven) tools such as EMF meters, stills cameras and EVP. Such methods typically go unjustified and when questioned all that is forthcoming is pseudo-scientific guesswork. This section seeks to justify everything an investigation involves, from a rational standpoint.

THE XENONORMAL APPROACH

'Xenonormal' defines as something that is normal but unexplained at the time (literally, foreign). Most paranormal investigators – with the possible exception of the purely religious-spiritualist approach – are somewhat concerned with the xenonormal. The vast majority of ghost experiences – be they by experiences during investigations or original eyewitnesses – are xenonormal events that are attributed as 'paranormal' where either the belief or expectation exists to place that label on an unexplained event.

Rationally it is necessary to fully focus on explaining what is normal before considering what remains. In some circles a 'false duality' exists that suggests that anything that cannot be explained as normal must be, by default, paranormal. False duality is a hallmark of pseudo-science. Lack of evidence for the normal does not provide evidence for the paranormal and such events are merely left as 'unexplained at that particular time'. Often the 'normal' itself is lost because of the employment of myriad pseudo-scientific methods. A focus on EVP, spiritualism, photography, experiencing, etc, means that there is little time for the tireless search for the 'normal'.

Concentration of financial and human resources on pseudo-scientific methods also means that these resources cannot be fully invested in explaining normal events. The result of this full focus on the 'xenonormal' means that this methodology may, rarely, leave a truly significant event unexplained. Further methods can then be used to focus on these interesting events, rather than such events being 'lost' in the mountains of fools gold of pseudo-scientific evidence.
The most obvious result of the xenonormal approach is that all instruments used are focussed on this goal and human resources are employed to explain the normal and in control conditions, to allow comparison.

THE NATURE OF GHOST EXPERIENCE

One of the first methodological questions to address is what we actually know about the nature of 'ghost experience'. Evidence from three years of standardised PSI investigations suggests that such experiences are often 'subjective' rather than 'objective'. This means that where one person has an experience but the people in the immediate vicinity do not, the source is more likely to be an internal psychological construct rather than an objective event.
Clearly an experience becomes more compelling where several individuals multiply experience and where objective recording tools can be used to assess its subject or objective evidential status.

It is generally recognised that human beings are poor recorders of unusual events. Events with an objective cause can often be psychologically misinterpreted; and studies of human memory show its fallibility in anything but

the very short term. This has an impact on the analysis of evidence – an uncorroborated experience is likely to be psychological – in short, seeing is not believing. An impact is also had on the recording of experiences in that our fallible memories should never be relied on for anything.

RECORDING OF DATA

Individual experiences should be objectively recorded immediately rather than relying on fallible memory. As such pen and paper recording is inappropriate, as the method relies on notes as an *aide memoir* to fill in the details later. Consequently the only objective way to record is full explanations being immediately recorded on dictaphone and fully transcribed and permanently recorded. In analysis the unfortunate side effect of priming of others should be given due weight.

USE OF CONTROL CONDITIONS

The use of 'control' is a cornerstone of the scientific method. However it may seem like madness from the assumption-led approach in place equal emphasis on 'haunted' and 'non-haunted' areas (defined by eyewitness accounts).
Hauntings being often psychological events require a level of comparison, necessitating control. If an experience is derived from expectation coupled with ambiguous stimuli and a 'spooky' environment, it is important to control these factors. The logical result is the 'pairing' of rooms within a location. Matching two areas – one 'active' and one 'control', and not telling experiencers which is which – ensuring they are as similar as possible, allows the analyst to conclude whether it was the circumstances and environment caused experiences, as opposed to the 'active' status of the room.
The question remains of whether 'ghost experiences' are purely resultant of the perception of individuals. One question is whether there is something objectively and physically 'different' about 'active' locations, or whether any experiences are purely on a psychological level. This logically leads to the practice of having a further 'matched pair' of rooms that are objectively monitored remotely and recorded by CCTV. Again one is 'active' and one 'control' to allow for comparison, and experiencers do not enter these rooms at all. This allows the building of a full picture of an untouched area, to assess whether there are any physical differences between 'active' and 'control' areas, helping us to better understand whether 'ghost experiences' are subjective or objective. This involves continuos, remote monitoring and post-event assessment of physical changes in the environment by running the footage through a motion sensor programme.

UNSCIENTIFIC AND PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC TOOLS AND METHODS

As previously noted this method seeks to use proven methods for finding xenonormal phenomena. As such using unproven or disproven tools and methods are deemed inappropriate. Attempts to use such unscientific methods typically form part of an assumption-led approach that assumes that prior paranormal experience leads to a location being haunted. Such tools and methods are then used to either 'gather evidence' or to try to build evidence that such tools are appropriate for 'gathering evidence'. In the former case, such tools are either unproven, or have been disproven, as being associated with paranormal phenomena; therefore using them is undoubtedly irrational and unscientific. In the latter case, attempting to draw associations with paranormal events is fraught with methodological difficulty. Gathering 'anecdotal' evidence with such tools and methods – without assiduous recording of non-events, and hence suffering from poor probabilistic reasoning – does not contribute to scientific evidence. PSI conducted a standardised, three-year test of the below equipment and methods. Results were used to assess such tools and methods for usefulness and validity:

EMF Meters. Various paranormal theories abound relating to presence of electromagnetic fields (EMF) and how it may either be 'caused' by a ghost or, conversely may 'cause' a ghost. Needless to say no theoretical justification or model has ever been presented to back this up. The likely route of these theories is a misreading of peer-reviewed studies that demonstrated that weak, complex magnetic fields can cause hallucinations that can be misinterpreted by a primed individual. Once such misinterpreted understandings have taken hold, they are subsequently reinforced by poor probabilistic reasoning – for example any anecdotal coinciding of explainable EMF fluctuations with paranormal experience is not assessed for the rule of chance. In PSI's three year study we found that the role of chance more than accounted for any such coincidences.

Ultrasonic, Humidity, Air Pressure and Ion Detectors. Similar fringe theories have developed about the role of ultrasound, air ions and other possible fluctuations. Again there has been no theoretical justification for such theories. Again, use over PSI's three-year study showed that coincidences were accounted for by chance.

Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP). EVP – or allegedly the voices of the departed – have held interest for a number of decades. Needless to say many investigations use such methods, often with the result that methodological error or misattribution causes 'evidence'. It was known that factors such as: uncontrolled environments (movement in a building, sound recorders left

unattended, speaking or whispering), radio frequency interference (RFI – where the use of white noise, a detuned radio, can pick up stray radio broadcasts) and technical factors (like lack of account of the Auto Gain Circuit and use of recorders with internal moving parts) all provide compelling natural causes. PSI conducted three hundred experimental EVP conditions, over three years, where these factors were accounted for. Specifically, 'pure' generated white noise was used, digital voice recorders were used and experiments were silently and continuously monitored. No clear 'EVP' voices – at all – were established. This suggests that EVP – as well as not having a theoretical justification – produced at best no evidence, and at worst misattributed evidence. Past EVP studies may justify the need for studying the phenomena in independent and dedicated settings, but the lack of methodological justification and ethical problems attached does not justify its use during investigations.

Trigger Objects/kinetic experiments. Historical 'evidence' of 'ghosts' moving objects – for example in so-called 'Poltergeist' cases – has lead to the placing of objects during paranormal investigations, in expectation that a 'ghost' might move them. Again, problems of fraud, accidental movement and objective recording have provided problems for any 'evidence' gathered in this way – not to mention the myriad alternative causes for low-level movement. PSI's three-year study set up over one hundred and fifty such experiments over three years. Factors involving fraud, accidental movements were accounted for by continuos use of video cameras; which also served to provide an indication of possible vibration. In none of these experiments did a trigger object move. The lack of any compelling video evidence for trigger object movement leads to the conclusion that this – as well as being an assumption-led approach – has no practical merit as a dedicated activity.

Photography. Attempting to take photographs of 'ghosts' is a popular, assumption-led activity. In PSI's three-year study over three thousand photographs were taken and analysed. The presentation of 'ghost photos' seem to rely on the twin problems of low-light creating technical artefacts and users with little knowledge of the workings of cameras and the sorts of errors they can produce in certain circumstances. As none of the thousands of photographs were inexplicable – and no compelling 'ghost photo' has ever been captured – this assumption-led approach can be viewed as a waste of scarce resources.

Every 'new' paranormal investigation tool seems to rely on the presentation of ambiguous stimuli. For example audio units converting EM fields into sounds, which basically present scrambled sound which is ripe for the biased mind to endogenously interpret. Another category is the presentation of seriously flawed tools – like the KII meter – which are so prone to user error that they greatly increase false readings, allowing the biased mind to observe coincidences between false readings and other events.

FURTHER AVOIDING THE ASSUMPTION-LED APPROACH

The assumption-led approach pre-supposes the existence of ghosts and haunted houses, it assumes that these phenomena are caused by discarnate entities or dead people and assumes that by being in such a location ample evidence can be gathered to prove the existence of the paranormal. Whether these ideas are inaccurate or accurate has not been proven, but the assumption of them involves biases, which preclude rational enquiry.

The assumption that any ambiguous experiences may be paranormal leads to the adoption of techniques that reinforce such experiences. One example is conducting investigations at night, and automatically turning the lights off. There is little doubt that such an approach generates more ambiguous experiences – for example shifting shadows as eyes adjust to the talk and moving lights caused by unconscious eyeball movement – but these experiences are known to be xenonormal (and hence naturally explicable).

The assumption-led approach treats the original reported experience at a location as the baseline for gathering evidence. This method treats the original experience as central to the enquiry; if original experiences were explicable then any given case could be the result of misattribution. Therefore under this method – as far as it practically possible – circumstances are matched to the original reports so as to understand and analyse them more effectively. This includes the time of day or night and the level of lighting matching the original reports.

Another hallmark of the assumption-led approach is the assumption that the cause of any experiences is some form of historical figure. Therefore historical research is often under-taken and an attempt to match such data to experiences. Poor interpretation and poor probabilistic reasoning are rife in such practices. In this method historical research is held to be an unnecessary distraction of resources, simply allowing for poor assumptions to be made which are likely to be the result of chance.

INVESTIGATING THE XENONORMAL: BASIC APPROACH

To understand what cannot be explained at a site an investigation must primarily consider what can be explained. The principle of 'baseline' is widely applied by paranormal investigators, but not in a rational way.
To truly understand what is normal it is necessary to visit and record a site over an extended period of time, over multiple visits.

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

Common practice would be 'baseline check' equipment periodically over one night. This leads to three major problems:

- Most equipment measures highly localised variables. The common practice of using portable equipment and periodically taking readings means that the reading is only relevant to particular position. As such walking around a location (even only a few inches) and reporting variation is meaningless.
- The natural variations an investigation is trying to establish in a location may be gradual – taking place over minutes – or may be more time sensitive. Taking readings on the basis of a few minutes leads to a high likelihood of missing variations. This is especially important where a reading is taken at the time of a possible paranormal event.
- A baseline is only being established for a particular room on a particular day. Any given baseline reading may be, for example, the highest or lowest point on any given day, week or area.

All these problems must be addressed to achieve meaningful baseline readings. Firstly equipment should be absolutely stationary throughout an entire investigation – not even just during sessions – and must assume the same position in subsequent visits. Readings should be logged in a timeframe suitable to the measure. For temperature, variation once a second might be sufficient, whereas for measuring Experience Inducing Fields (see below) readings should be taken one hundred and twenty times per second. Finally it would be desirable for equipment to build up a picture of a location, continuously, over months. As this tends not to be practical in most locations, both visiting on multiple occasions and establishing a positional baseline (two identical pieces of equipment running simultaneously in similar locations) is an absolute minimum alternative.

Establishing a baseline is not only necessary for equipment readings. Establishing a physical baseline is also useful. Specifically every aspect and angle of an area under study should be recorded, and then continue to be physically monitored (by CCTV and/or video camera) throughout the entire event. This not only useful during subsequent analysis – tracking visual clues for anomalous experiences – but can be useful in the event of claims of kinetic events.

ESTABLISHING PARITY BETWEEN EQUIPMENT

Paired models of equipment used to establish a positional baseline, or those which would be used across locations in tandem with others suffer from the need to establish parity between the two, or measure the deviation. This method calls for equipment use on a non-comparative basis – they are assigned to areas and are compared to individual experience, rather than to one another. As such, testing for parity is not important in this method.

PERCIPIENTS AND BASELINES

An experience baseline can be usefully employed. There is little doubt that knowledge of previous reported events can guide the perception of individual percipients. Knowledge of previous events is important to allow percipients to seek natural, xenonormal causes for previous reports. However this necessary knowledge itself may impact on the perceptory abilities of percipients. As such an experience baseline can be established during the first investigation event, where percipients do not have knowledge of previous accounts. This allows a picture to be built of what ambiguous stimuli and anomalous events are likely to be perceived, without the confounding variable of this knowledge. This leads to practical necessities such as those with knowledge of previous events not being allocated to – or even leading, to avoid experimenter effects – percipient teams. Similarly, once this baseline has been established the composition of percipient teams should remain the same.

The exact time of percipient sessions should also remain constant. Whilst other events during the investigation may vary these should stay the same, operationally leading to subtle shifts the exact starting and ending time of investigations in the same location.

Whilst in percipient sessions, percipients are instructed to report any ambiguous stimuli, anomalous experiences and any potential causes for anomalous experiences. States of attentiveness are systematically varied across percipient sessions – in silence, conversation and in engaging activity. This is primarily to recognise that anomalous events are experienced in different states of attentiveness (and this might have an impact on the perception of ambiguous stimuli) but also to counter fatigue in percipients.

EXTRANEOUS FACTORS AUDITING

Another aspect of building a picture of what is normal about a location is a full audit of any sensory input in or around the location that – in the right circumstances – could be misinterpreted as a paranormal event. Similarly to the concept of baselining, building a picture of the EF of a location cannot be

completed prior to one investigation, or even across one investigations. As such this method incorporates a group assessment of EF but supplemented by two dedicated personnel whose role it is the continuous audit EFs, in communication with percipients and CCTV monitoring personnel.

XENONORMAL EVENTS

Standardised procedures over a three-year period have informed the categories of xenonormal events that may be perceived during an investigation. As mentioned previously, investigations focus on uncovering the xenonormal. As such, techniques and tools are specifically used to monitor possible xenonormal events.

These include:

Xenonormal/Anomalous Event	Monitoring Method
Visual events	All participants, their line of sight, and all areas of study will be monitored by CCTV and video cameras
Tactile events	
Kinetic events	
Auditory events	All areas will be monitored by CCTV and audio recorders will be placed across the location
Unusual feelings and sensations	Impossible to objectively monitor* (however locations will be monitored for EIFs, CO and Infrasound)
Hot/cold sensation	Static temperature data loggers and hotwire anemometers
Extra-sensory impressions	Impossible to objectively monitor*

* Individual difference scales may also inform such attributions.

XENONORMAL MONITORING TOOLS AND METHODS

All tools and methods have been stripped back to those useful for objectively identifying the cause of potential anomalous events. This section will consider the rationale of the use of such tools and methods.

VIDEO AND CCTV: OBJECTIVE PHYSICAL RECORDING

Objectively recording a physical environment typically justifies the use of camcorders and stills cameras. One theory of physical monitoring is to assess whether 'ghosts' can be physically recorded, as opposed to being subjectively experienced. The result of this assumption-led approach is the time-costly analysis of video footage and stills photographs to observe anything 'unusual'.

A rational perspective suggests that these methods are inappropriate. Three years of many hours of recording – assiduously analysed after the event – and many thousands of photographs taken have resulted in almost no footage or photographs that cannot be accounted for as natural.

Where 'unusual' evidence emerges it typically takes analysts with an in-depth knowledge of photography and videography to uncover the natural or technical causes presented in the more unusual cases. Where hundreds of hours of footage and many thousands of photographs have resulted in nothing that cannot be explained – coupled with the practice itself being pseudo-scientific and assumption-led – it is clear these methods cannot be justified. Further, the time used to employ these methods can be much more effectively spent pursuing the xenonormal.

Often investigators will try to cover as much ground as possible by allocating one video camera per room, this is based on the idea of wanting to effectively use scarce resources to maximise the chance of 'catching a ghost'. This is another example of an assumption-led method that sacrifices the chances of being able to find xenonormal explanations. Specifically, where one video camera records a room of four or more experiences experience shows that there is a very slim chance of the video camera being in the correct position to 'show' the area where an experience is taking place; more commonly the investigators reaction is recorded.

The xenonormal method of trying to objectively verify experiences – to assess them for objective or subjective cause – leads to the necessity of a minimum or three or four video cameras (one being CCTV) in each room where experiences are positioned. The 'baseline' of the physical environment can be important for some 'experiences', particularly where they require knowledge of the original positioning of items (which may be claimed to move) and the location of anything physical that might explain an unusual experience after the event. This creates the only justifiable use for stills photographs – painstaking physical baselining, rather than 'attempting to photograph ghosts'.

AUDIO RECORDING

Audio recording is often confined to EVP and the audio function of video cameras. The primary flaw in recording sound to subsequently review is the likelihood of ambiguous noises occurring. Ambiguous noises may be caused, for example, by people moving through a building, internal physical functions of the recorder (be it audio or video/audio) or even by the Audio Gain Circuit of the

audio or video/audio unit. A common operational flaw of tracking auditory phenomena is insufficient recording devices.
This method calls for a quantity of numbered audio recorders in different areas throughout the location, so auditory phenomena can be tracked to source and analysed as a closer event.

MEASURING EXPERIENCE INDUCING FIELDS (EIFS)

The work of Townsend and Braithwaite's Magnetic Anomaly Detection System (MADS) project has seen evidence of the role of EIFs enter peer-reviewed publications. The developers postulate that such EIFs may be a major factor in a small number of haunting cases. There are myriad potential causes for such fields. Though natural geomagnetics can conceivably produce natural EIFs, but in practice it is more likely to be caused by the movement or vibration of materials with high magnetic permeability.

The research has demonstrated that weak, low frequency, complex magnetic fields can effect the brain in such a way as to cause hallucinations that may contribute to hauntings, in the right context. The specific fields may affect up to 30% of the population and occur where subjects are exposed for upwards of twenty minutes with extremely low frequency magnetic fields. The magnetic field frequency may be of 0.1 to 30 Hz and the amplitude of 100 to 5000 nT. Sampling is needed at the rate of one hundred and twenty per second, being more than twice mains frequency (Nyquist criterion), so that it can be eliminated, being a common ambient field in buildings.

Most electromagnetic field meters are calibrated to measure AC fields whilst even meters specifically designed to exclude AC fields are insufficiently sensitively collaborated to measure EIFs. Crucially, they do not tell you the relative contributions of different frequencies. The Spectran NF Professional series is the only known 'off the shelf' meter than performs spectrum analysis. Whilst EIFs can occur at 0.1 to 30 Hz, the Spectran NF5010 can only measure the majority of EIFs, at 1 to 30 Hz.

Paired Spectran NF5010 units data log to laptops, as the thirty six thousand data points logged on the average investigation cannot be internally stored. One unit is positioned in the Experiencer 'Active' Area and one in the Experiencer 'Control' Area to allow comparison. As EIFs are likely to be a factor in a small number of locations the units are used to provide a cursory indication of this factor. Where this factor is identified a specific investigation would utilise a hired MADS unit to measure with greater accuracy.

MEASURING INFRASOUND

Infrasound is sound (typically) inaudible to the human ear due to its low frequency (specifically, lower than 20 Hz). Tandy and subsequent experimenters hypothesised that a certain frequency – typically cited at 18.9 Hz – that could be responsible for misattributed haunting phenomena. It has long been known that infrasound can cause unusual sensations (such as nausea and a sense of unease); and we already know that in the right context, witnesses will interpret ambiguous stimuli as anomalous events.

The infrasound theory further purports that visual disturbances and even hallucination can be caused by oscillations of the eyeball at this frequency. Whilst current evidence does not seem to support this latter assertion it should be noted that research into infrasound is ongoing. Also, the less controversial ambiguous sensations caused by infrasound are worthy as measuring as potential factors in themselves; although infrasound is estimated to be a factor in a small number of cases. However it should be noted that the cause of particular instances of infrasound could also be the cause of EIFs so, as such, neither should be measure in isolation in case of this confounding variable.
This method hopes soon to incorporate the use of Infrasound Measuring Equipment, currently being developed by academics at the forefront of infrasound research.

MEASURING CARBON MONOXIDE LEVELS

CO poisoning is another possible cause of misattributed haunting experience, although possibly less likely in any individual case than EIFs or Infrasound. At lower levels CO can cause unusual sensations (such as nausea, confusion, impaired hearing and vision) and at more dangerous levels can cause hallucinations.
CO data loggers are used in both Percipient 'Active' Areas and Percipient 'Control' Areas to rule out this theoretically possible but practically unlike cause of ambiguous sensations that can be attributed to paranormal events.

MEASURING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

PSI's three-year standardised investigations tracked individual 'paranormal belief' and 'perception of context'. Results suggested that these played a role in reporting possible paranormal events. Feelings at the moment were also tracked but were not demonstrated to impact on reporting rates. A correlation emerged between reporting of subjective experiences and level of paranormal belief. Whilst the nature of correlations is to be open to interpretation either way, the

most likely explanation would seem to be those of a higher belief are more likely to attend to ambiguous events and attribute them as anomalous. Similarly, there was a less clear correlation between initial perception of 'spooky' context and rates of experience reporting. Again a more likely explanation is that if an environment is perceived to be conducive to experiences, ambiguous events are more likely to be attended to and attributed as anomalous. It should be noted that individual difference data should be treated with great caution, but in individual cases may shed light on the nature of a subjective experience.

MEASURING PERCEIVED TEMPERATURE FLUCTUATION

The perception of increase or decrease in temperature was found by PSI's three year study to be a common anomalous report, and is anecdotally held to be a common 'symptom' of haunting experience. Perception of change in temperature can be an endogenous or exogenous experience – this is, it can be an internal physiological event or an objective variation in temperature or draught. This method calls for the distinction between such subjective and objective events, and attempting to find natural causes for objective events.

This method uses temperature data loggers to track variation in temperature and hotwire anemometers to track draughts. For all the simplicity of measuring temperature, these are tools so often used inappropriately by paranormal investigators. Various theories exist suggesting that temperature fluctuations are linked to paranormal experience. This assumption-led theory has no theoretical or evidential (beyond anecdotal) basis. However most of the theories (and indeed the xenonormal causes for experiences this method is concerned with) call for the highly localised measurement of temperature fluctuation. As noted previously, establishing a baseline is crucial here. As such, moving temperature gauges instantly compromises your baseline; by moving a temperature gauge to a different area (where an experience is being had) any data as to the previous temperature is lost. As temperature fluctuations linked to experiences are highly time sensitive this rules out the use of non-data logging gauges. If temperature is only measured occasionally, a continuos baseline (from which to measure deviations) cannot be established. Non-contact (infrared, thermogun-style) measures are also inappropriate, as these do not measure ambient temperature, only surface temperature of a target; additionally because of this functionality, a baseline cannot be reliably established.

The traditional limitations of data loggers were their insensitivity: being slightly shielded and only suitable for logging every ten seconds (clearly inappropriate for time sensitive experiences). This method uses a new brand of thermocouple data logger than logs every second, which is clearly the least worst option.

However measurements are still localised and the data loggers should not be moved, so as to preserve their baseline. The imperfect solution is to allocate a data logger to every experiencer, and ensure the experiencer does not move away from the data logger during percipient sessions.

The 'wind chill' effect of draughts do not objectively vary temperature, but merely provide a cooling effect to the skin. The unfortunate result is that temperature gauges are useless for measuring draughts. Inexpensive 'vein' style anemometers are inappropriate for the sensitive measurement of draughts, due to the minimum speed needed to rotate the vein and the dependence on the correct angle of the vein. Hotwire anemometers of a higher sensitivity largely overcome these flaws. However a meaningful baseline cannot be accurately established with handheld meters. As such a handheld anemometer which attempts to record readings and establish a baseline after the event is the least worst option.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Data gathered should be analysed in line with the principles of scientific enquiry and in line with stated hypotheses.

Data Type	Treatment
Individual differences	Questionnaires to be aggregated. *Added to the reports to draw conclusions based on individual differences.*
Control condition CCTV footage and sound	1) At the time observation and inclusion in Timed Phenomena Reports. 2) Subsequent monitoring of variations in sound and movement *In both cases reports should be timed to (a) provide evidence during Timed Report Analysis and (b) provide a Control Condition Report.*
Temperature fluctuation	Tracking reported changes in Timed Phenomena Reports. Comparing data logger and anemometer outputs to drawn conclusions on cause. *See Timed Reports (below)*
EM field Carbon Monoxide Infrasound	Comparison of results over the three investigations. Results should be used to provide a Monitoring *Report of the location, drawing conclusions as to whether factors could lead to general reports.*
Sound recordings	Tracking recorded sounds and noises compared to

CCTV experimental recordings	Timed Phenomena Reports. *Visual and auditory findings will be used as a track-back from Times Phenomena Reports to provide evidence to analyse experiences.*
Camcorder experimental recordings	
Stills camera images	

ASSUMPTIONS IN DATA ANALYSIS

Special consideration shall be given to hypothesis that original and subsequent haunting experience shall be caused by xenonormal factors. Scientific principles dictate that special consideration is given to the most likely explanation.

CONTROL REPORTS

A report of any visual and sound fluctuations in the Control Areas will be provided. This will comprise:

- Timed reports made by CCTV Monitors, along with appropriate footage.
- An automated report, with appropriate footage, of any visual or sound fluctuations throughout the course of all investigations.

These reports will act as evidence to support any experiences reported in Experimental Areas, for example where a noise is heard coming from the Control Area and can be thus be identified. These reports will also make conclusions as to any events that might have been interpreted as usual had percipients been there to perceive. As such a comparison shall be made between the Control (both with and without previous reports) and Active areas, and an assessment made of any differences. This report will focus on the differences between different types of areas, and whether haunting triggers exist independently of peoples' experience.

MONITORING REPORT

An examination of the graphed output of the following data logged instruments shall be made:

- Experience Inducing Fields
- Infrasound
- Carbon Monoxide

Assessments will be made based on the graphs and individual data points as to whether any fluctuations would be sufficient to cause 'haunt experiences'. A more dedicated use of this technology would be needed to compare fluctuations with individual accounts, so general conclusions on the possibility of the link

with haunt experiences will be made. Should a location find a strong propensity for such factors to cause haunt experiences, a further investigation will be planned and dedicated to the study of the factor in question.

EXTRAENOUS FACTORS REPORT

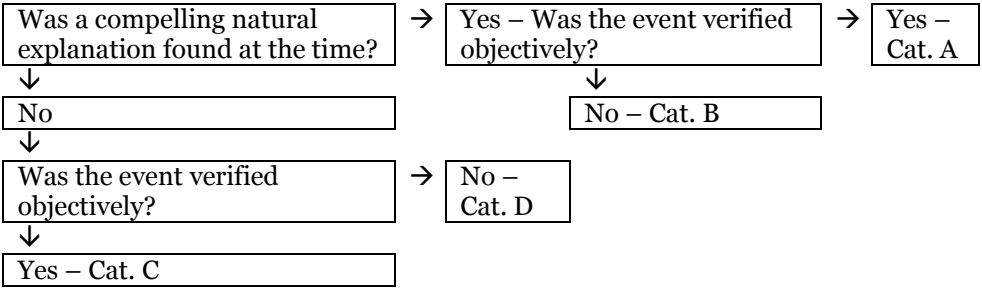
A detailed report will be produced after each investigation about generally identified EFs, along with specific timed EFs identified by auditors, monitors or percipients. This report will input into the analysis of the Timed Phenomena Reports.

TIMED PHENOMENA REPORTS

Following each investigation event all notes from percipient groups are transcribed and collected in a tabular format. Reports will be analysed by the CCTV analyst, photo analyst, Camcorder analysts and Sound analyst who will attempt to find objective evidence for each report. Each report will also be considered against the EF and Control reports.

Reports will then be subdivided into Objective and Subjective reports.

EVIDENTIAL CATEGORIES



TREATMENT OF EVIDENTIAL CATEGORIES:

- Category A – Objective Xenonormal – strong evidence for a normal explanation. Cause should be noted in analysis.
- Category B – Compelling Xenonormal – fairly strong evidence for a normal explanation. Cause should be noted in analysis, with suggestions for how evidence could better be captured.

- Category C – Unexplained Xenonormal – probably good evidence for a normal explanation. Attempt to recreate events during Analysis Investigation and note findings in report.
- Category D – Insufficient Information. Attempt to recreate events during Analysis Investigation and note findings in report. If a compelling explanation cannot be found, flag up in the report as an area needing further research.

Where Category D events take place and further need for research is identified, the current method will be discarded and a Category D Investigation be designed specifically against the phenomena in question.

6. STATEMENT OF ETHICS

Ethical conduct is of great importance when conducting research, especially as human participants are involved and individual's properties are often the setting. Below are the basic ethical tenets applied to each aspect of investigating.

Doing no harm. This relates to not putting participants at risk of undue physical, emotional or psychological harm during an investigation, and being insured against public liability. Participants are chosen via a rigorous selection and training procedure that ensures they are, amongst other things, of a suitable mindset to participate. PSI carries out risk assessments in conjunction with venues, and all relevant equipment is PAT tested. PSI has an obligation to assess all experimental methods for harmful impact upon participants, and to provide post-investigation and post-experiment support to participants. The ethical principle of doing no harm also extends to potential harm to the living- or working- environment of venue owners and workers. So-called 'spirit communication tools' are not used, being both scientifically unproven and generating the serious risk of an exacerbated perception of 'haunting' by clients. Further, the use of unproven tools and methods to 'gather paranormal evidence' is potentially harmful and are thus not utilised. Similarly, 'paranormal conclusions' are not drawn under this method; such an approach would be equally unscientific and risks the exacerbated perception of 'haunting' by clients. Post investigation support is always made available to venue owners or managers.

Consent. No person who is deemed unfit to give informed consent may participate. All individuals participate with informed consent and no individuals under the age of 18 are permitted to participate in PSI investigations. Similarly, investigations always operate with the informed consent of venue owners or managers, including outdoors locations investigated.

Deception. All participants are fully briefed, trained and are aware of all research objectives. For methodological reasons, during Baseline Investigations the nature of previous accounts of experiences, including which rooms under investigation have or do not have previous accounts, are withheld from percipients. Venue owners or managers are made fully aware of all methods used during the investigation. Similarly the purpose of PSI investigations are made clear to venue owners or managers.

Freedom to withdraw. All participants are free to withdraw at any time. Further, venue owners have the right to halt any investigations at any time. Venue owners are made aware of this right prior to the investigation.

Confidentiality. All evidence and information gathered on investigations is held in confidence within the organisation where requested or more commonly where agreed by experimenters. It is frequently deemed unsuitable for the sum total of evidence gathered to be made publicly available. Confidentiality applies to working with the mass media. Whilst the experience of individual participants is not kept confidential, except where otherwise requested, all participants names are removed. For these purposes the organisation is defined as constrained to trained team members, and consultants associated with PSI to whom confidentiality is occasionally extended.

Debriefing. All participants are fully debriefed and offload experiences at the end of investigations, to ensure they leave the in the same psychological state in which they arrived. PSI has follow up procedures should participants need to discuss any issues after an investigation.

Reporting research. PSI has a duty to take due care in any reporting of results, especially to the media. PSI takes the responsibility as being seen as 'representing' the field very seriously. PSI never sensationalises evidence or vies for attention. PSI never makes unscientific claims, including asserting that a property is 'haunted', or 'not haunted'.

Treatment of venues and owners. All venues and owners are treated with respect at all times. PSI always shares results with venues, abides by their wishes and continues contact for as long as venues and owners need. As mentioned previously, ethical responsibility extends to not conducting investigations in any way which might cause a venue to feel any 'presence' they feel has been exacerbated. PSI never performs 'clearances', but can refer venue owners to suitable individuals or groups should they request that information. PSI has special and separate ethical procedures for dealing with private homes and families.

BOOK REVIEW: EXPLORATION INTO SPIRIT: A POWER GREATER THAN... A HISTORY OF THE ALISTER HARDY RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE RESEARCH CENTRE AND SOCIETY ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT AND VISION, Franklin, J. 2006: The Alister Hardy Society, £8.50 (+£1.00 postage & packing), ISBN 0906165 61X

By David Taylor

This book is a history of a remarkable man and an equally remarkable organisation. The Alister Hardy Society and the Religious Experience Research Centre occupy a unique position in the academic investigation of religious experience.

Alister Hardy was an eminent marine biologist and was knighted for his services to oceanography in 1957. Hardy was the first Professor of Zoology at the University of Hull from 1928 - 1942, from there he was appointed Professor of Natural History at the University of Aberdeen where he remained until 1946 when he became Linacre Professor of Zoology in Oxford from 1946 to 1961. Hardy was made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1940.

Dating from his boyhood at Oundle School, Hardy had a lifelong interest in spiritual phenomena, but aware that his interests were likely to be considered unorthodox in the scientific community, apart from occasional lectures he kept his opinions to himself until his retirement from his Oxford Chair. The Gifford Lectures in Aberdeen signalled his wholehearted return to his religious interests and in 1969 he founded the Religious Experience Research Unit in Manchester College, Oxford. The Unit began its work by compiling a database of religious experiences and continues to investigate the nature and function of spiritual and religious experience at the University of Wales, Lampeter.

The Unit was housed firstly in Harris Manchester College and later in Westminster College. During recent changes at Oxford Brookes University, Lampeter was successful in bringing the Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC) to Wales.

Since 2002 the RERC has been housed in the Department of Theology, Religious and Islamic Studies. There is a small specialist library of 2,500 books and a unique collection of 6,000 accounts of people's spiritual or paranormal experiences. The question that inspires these stories is: 'Have you ever had an awareness of a power or presence different from every day life?'

As well as being an invaluable resource for students on the Religious Experience Masters Degree, the Library and Archive are used by members of the Alister

Hardy Society and by researchers who travel from all over the world.

The Alister Hardy Trust and its more public Society aim to support the important work of the RERC. To this end membership of the Alister Hardy Society is open to anyone with a serious interest in the subject. For a modest fee members receive a regular newsletter, notification of events, can join local groups and can borrow books from the RERC library.

This excellent book by John Franklin charts the history of the Society and the Research Unit (later Centre). It is a fascinating document of social history, and it documents in great detail the trials and tribulations of an organisation struggling for academic acknowledgement. One of the greatest dilemmas seems to have been over the use of the term 'religious experience', something which seems to have put a few people off getting involved or taking the organisation seriously at the start. This is a great shame, and in many ways highlights the shortcomings of those with these reservations. What the RERC has amassed over the years is a formidable database of religious, spiritual, mystical, paranormal and transpersonal experiences. Thanks to the great vision of Sir Alister and the tremendous hardwork of all concerned, the Alister Hardy Trust, Society and the Religious Experience Research Centre has achieved its well earned place in academic respectability.

Copies of this book, along with details of the Alister Hardy Society and RERC can be obtained from:

David M.Greenwood, Administrator, Religious Experience Research Centre: Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter, Ceredigion SA48 7ED.

BOOK REVIEW: INVIZIKIDS: THE CURIOUS ENIGMA OF IMAGINARY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS, Hallowell, M.J. 2007: Heart of Albion Press: Loughborough. £12.95 (pbk), 155pp. ISBN: 1905646046

By Trystan Swale

Imaginary friends have occupied a place in the mind of Michael Hallowell since childhood. As a toddler he was prone to playing games with an invisible girl, Maureen, until his family moved to a new property. Here, he met a new invisible playmate in the guise of Elizabeth and the pair were companions until a further house move at the age of eight. Although this was Hallowell's final experience of the phenomenon it has never entirely escaped his mind. Invizikids represents

the culmination of seven years of research and theorising into the types and causes of imaginary friends.

Hallowell recognises four types of imaginary companion, or Quasi-corporeal Companion (QCC) as he prefers to label them. The first is the 'Invizikid' who appears to the experient as a conventional peer. He or she wears clothing of the correct period and bears a name which seems relevant to the child's own cultural background. Type two, 'Elementals', reflect the nature spirits of British folklore. They may appear in groups and fit the classic descriptions of pixies, goblins and other such 'little people'. Each tends to have at least one name which is unconventional or childlike, such as Gokk, Mol-Mol or Wumpy. The 'Animals', type three, are similar to other non-human creatures with the considerable difference that they can communicate in the language of the experient, often offering urging them to curb misbehaviour. The final type of QCC are the 'Wackies', outrageous beings split into two subcategories. Advice dispensing 'Sages' are exclusively adult and speak in a measured, wise tone. They may be invisible below the waist and wear the stereotypical garb of another culture; for example, the feathered plumes of the indigenous American. More bizarre are the 'Animates', otherwise mundane household objects which suddenly develop limbs and deliver words of comfort to an upset experient child. They possess the habit of imparting useless gifts such as dried leaves upon the experient.

Each category is supported by a number of case studies, all of which are reliant upon first hand anecdotal testimony. Most come from readers of the periodicals in which Hallowell appealed for experients to step forward, although a small minority are more well known. For example, the author revisits the case of a talking mongoose investigated by psychical researcher Harry Price, and speculates whether Nirvana singer-songwriter Kurt Cobain had encounters with a QCC throughout his life. Although many of the anecdotal tales served by Hallowell are amusing and reflect the memories of their contributors, the author's theorising is more contentious. He suggests QCCs may be paranormal in their origins, possibly as creatures from another dimension. To illustrate this he expresses unhappiness with the two of the main theories put forwards by psychologists. These are the images of the lonely, socially disenfranchised child seeking companionship, and the child with siblings and other friends who would like a companion to keep to his or her self. Hallowell states that researchers cannot have it both ways, yet this assumes that a phenomenon cannot have more than one cause. This also gives short shrift to developmental psychologists such as Lev Vygotsky who have considered imaginary play to be a major developmental tool within the lives of children.

It is perhaps because of a failure to explore rational alternatives that Hallowell concludes the QCC conundrum to be one that may never be solved. He suggests

it is a phenomenon prone to the 'butterfingers rule', essentially meaning that the more one digs, the more complicated a phenomenon appears and the more elusive the answers become. Yet, to quote Maurice Townsend on the ASSAP website, 'It is clear that any paranormal researcher must have a good knowledge of the xenonormal, otherwise they will waste a lot of time chasing the normal.' Perhaps this is one such instance.

Without genuine exploration of the xenonormal (something that appears paranormal but has natural causation) and developmental theory, Invizikids provides an amusing and often endearing assortment of curious which disappointingly sink under speculative reasoning and a lack of genuine insight.

BOOK REVIEW: MYSTERIES AND SECRETS OF TIME, Fanthorpe, L. and Fanthorpe, P. 2007: Dundurn Group: Toronto, Canada. £12.99 (pbk), 264pp. ISBN: 9781550026771

By Trystan Swale

Beyond its most simplistic use in daily life, time is a concept that can be both puzzling and confusing for the layman. With the paperback Mysteries and Secrets of Time, Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe attempt to bring some clarity to the subject. The introduction makes it clear that the couple have been motivated by the importance of time within numerous anomalous phenomena, including time slips, premonition, reincarnation, déjà vu and apparent human longevity.

Chapter one, 'The Science of Time' outlines the basics of time as a means of enabling the sequencing of events. The development of time measurement and the clock are outlined, introducing the speed of light as the absolute velocity limit of matter in the known universe.

As suggested by the title of chapter two, 'Newton's, Einstein's and Hawking's Theories of Time', the authors offer short biographies of these three time theorists, as well as briefly exploring their work, from Newton's 'absolute time' to relativity, quantum theory and Hawking's three time models.

Chapter three, 'Cyclic or Linear Time – Finite or Infinite?' considers whether the shape and size of time can truly be grasped. Time theorist JW Dunne considered the past, present and future to exist serially whilst Frank Tipler believes time is circular and can be warped, theoretically enabling time travel. The authors believe common sense is enough to support the idea that time is linear, with a beginning and end, but conclude that perception alone is not always an accurate indicator of factual truth.

'Time Versus Matter and Energy' considers two theories of time travel: the science of Tipler and the speculative notion of 'astral travel', the human 'soul' being independent of the body and able to travel both time and space at will. If the latter theory does hold water, the authors postulate, could it be that some of history's most brilliant time theorists held the mind or souls of time travellers? The evidence is lacking, but if taken at face value it is sobering as purported time rider John Titor has painted a bleak future of nuclear apocalypse in 2015.

Chapter five addresses 'The Philosophy of Time', notably whether time is eternal, finite or circular and the effects these have upon the thought processes of their respective adherents. For example, spiritual, earth-centred mystics are more likely to view time as cyclical due to their observation that days, nights, weeks, months, seasons and years roll into one another. This philosophical theme rolls into chapter six, 'The Theology of Time and Eternity', as the Fanthorpes tackle whether time is in the hands of a higher power and the implications this presents for the individual making personal choices.

Chapter seven, 'Mysteries of Reincarnation and Déjà Vu' focuses exclusively upon these two most Fortean of subjects. The authors ponder whether both are indicators for astral travel, drawing heavily upon the controversial methods of hypnotic regression as a means of providing additional evidence.

'More Mysteries of Reincarnation, Time Slips and Déjà Vu', presents the reader with a range of Fortean case studies in which individuals claim to have travelled through time, or have had their bodies possibly come under the control of time travellers. The well known tales of Woolpit's green children and the allegedly instantaneous disappearance of diplomat Benjamin Bathurst feature alongside lesser known curios gathered by the author, including that of Toni Keys who suddenly took on the handwriting style of an unknown person.

'More Case Studies of the Tricks Time Plays' is just that, including Lionel Fanthorpe's own encounter with an apparition in the catacombs of Rome. Was this a ghost in the conventional sense, or perhaps a brief meeting with a time traveller?

Chapter ten, 'Did They See the Future?' concerns the prophecies of Nostradamus, Mother Shipton and the Brahan Seer. The authors retrospectively examine the failures and successes, puzzling whether the future is predetermined or changeable. Surprisingly, given ASSAP's work (of which Lionel Fanthorpe is president), they draw a link to photographic 'orbs', tenuously suggesting they may be visitors from other dimensions or the physical form of astral travellers.

'Conquerors of Time' studies the stories of the mysterious Count St Germain and the biblical Wandering Jew. Both are purported by various historical sources to have lived for centuries, the former as a result of his own talents, the latter as the choice of the Christian God.

Chapter twelve is devoted exclusively to 'The Versailles Time Slip Adventure of Anne Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain' where two English schoolteachers claimed to have encountered Queen consort Marie Antoinette. This would entail a possible time slip from 1901 to approximately 1789. The detached, hazy nature of the encounter leads the authors to propose this timeslip may have occurred where 'the edges of time had been roughly torn'.

Chapter thirteen jumps to 'Anachronistic Anomalies and Artefacts', objects seemingly out of place or too advanced for the time in which they were produced. Featured examples include the Babylonian 'battery cells' and a two thousand year old piece of jewellery resembling an aircraft. Their living counterparts are also discussed; the pterodactyl said to have emerged from a cave in 1856 and frogs emerging from coal seams. Although these claims have rightly been subject to scepticism, proof of these anomalies' origins would, in the eyes of the authors, potentially open the door to claims of time travel and advanced ancient civilisations.

The Fanthorpes conclude by attempting to explain the anomalies they have covered through a 'unified field theory of time'. They speculate these anomalies are the result of time being able to double back upon itself, bringing past, present and future so close together that all can be observed in one fell swoop. Time slips become possible, souls can pass from one body to another, seers can view the future, animals can become buried in ancient rock strata and supposedly extinct animals suddenly reappear. It is an interesting theory, but reliant upon the authenticity of the Fortean phenomena investigated by the authors.

Where the authors have truly succeeded with Mysteries and Secrets of Time is not in their debateable conclusion, or by reciting a wealth of engaging case studies, but by opening the door of time theory to the average, curious reader. That alone makes this book an enjoyable, challenging and lively primer for those who would wish to know more about a complicated subject.

BOOK REVIEW: THE SOUTH SHIELDS POLTERGEIST, Michael J. Hallowell and Darren W.Ritson 2008 £16.99 (hbk) 352 pp Order through publisher: History Press, website or Amazon website ISBN 978-0-7509-4874-6

By Damien O'Dell

Inevitably comparisons will be drawn between *The South Shields Poltergeist*, by Mike Hallowell and Darren Ritson and This *House Is Haunted*, by Guy Lyon Playfair and Maurice Gross (aka the Enfield Poltergeist case). This new book bears favourable comparison with its illustrious predecessor. The brief but enthusiastic foreword by Guy Lyon Playfair sets the tone and adds weight and interest, whetting the reader's appetite for what is to follow. The authors' diligent research methods and the chronic and extreme phenomena recorded by the duo help to make this one of the most unusual and best recorded poltergeist infestations that I have ever studied. The presence of a number of independent witnesses to various paranormal events underlines the seriousness of this case. Enfield apart, the only other investigation that comes to mind to compare with South Shields is the Columbus, Ohio, case written up as Unleashed by William Roll and Valerie Storey. (A pattern seems to be emerging here – all good 'polt' cases are written by two-author teams!)

I was fortunate to meet Mike Hallowell and to discuss the investigation at some length prior to reading his book. His knowledge of the paranormal, down to earth approach and sincerity shine through. He is a paranormal investigator 'to his fingertips'. I have yet to enjoy the pleasure of meeting Darren Ritson but his CV speaks for itself. As founder of the North East Ghost Research Team he has conducted hundreds of investigations into haunted locations over many years. He is well known to many senior luminaries in the field of paranormal investigation. Mike and Darren make a formidable team as their individual skills combine well. They were ideally placed to provide the emotional support and practical help sought by the family in their fight against an invisible intruder. Little could Darren imagine what an amazing journey and what a protracted struggle he would become embroiled in. It all began with a request from a colleague for Darren to contact a couple who were 'at their wits' end due to 'ghostly goings on'.

Marianne, Marc, her partner, and Marianne's 3-year old son Robert, were an ordinary family, living in an ordinary two bedroomed terraced home in an ordinary coastal town in north east England. Things became extraordinary in December 2005, with typical low-level poltergeist phenomena being manifested. An unseen presence would move objects and unexplained noises and bumps were heard. By June 2006 things had escalated to such an extent that Marianne was scared to sleep alone in the house when her partner was working. Robert had a ghostly friend, Sam, who played with him in his room. Objects were thrown through Robert's bedroom window – despite the blinds being down and the window closed. The boy's rocking horse was regularly moved and turned upside down. In July Mike and Darren were called in after an exorcism had

failed to stop the various anomalous phenomena. On their very first visit a pencil, an eraser and a small plastic nut were thrown at them by some unseen force.

During the course of the next few months the investigators were eye witnesses to the campaign of terror being waged against the unfortunate family. The investigators watched their charges very closely, but having seen things for themselves, they gradually eliminated any possibility of an elaborate hoax taking place. This particular poltergeist was not camera-shy and over time the investigators collected an impressive catalogue of videotapes and stills. For sheer nastiness this poltergeist was in a class of its own. Threats were used against Mike and Darren via messages written on the child's doodle board, warning the investigators to back off. Most disturbingly the poltergeist had the power to inflict physical injury. Marc's torso showed big red wheals and blood was drawn as if by invisible claws, all in front of startled witnesses. The entity spoke to them via the baby monitor. The toilet flushed blood. Mike and Marianne even came face to face with the thing, just once. They described it as 'large, midnight black, a three-dimensional silhouette that radiated evil'.

As a recent article in the Daily Express noted, this was 'a very 21st century haunting' as the poltergeist had the ability to send alarming text messages to Marianne such as 'get you bitch', You're Dead' and Die Bitch'. Even the couple's young son was not immune to the intruder's attention. Robert was found on the floor in his bedroom, tightly wrapped in his bed quilt with a plastic table on top of him. On another occasion his mother was driven frantic by her child's complete disappearance – eventually he was found in a closet, tightly cocooned in a blanket. As the poltergeist gained in strength it was able to exert its power at a distance. Mike witnessed a book weighing four pounds being inexplicably hurled off a shelf at his home, while he was discussing the case with Darren. On another occasion the poltergeist used the mobile phone of one of Mike's friends mobile phone to call Mike. The friend was driving past the haunted house at the time and his phone was switched off!

According to figures released by the Society for Psychical Research there are some 260 poltergeist cases reported annually in the UK. One wonders how many more go unreported. Cases such as the one at South Shields are, thankfully, rare, occurring perhaps once every decade. Unlike most poltergeist infestations, which are generally short lived, this one continued, unabated, for almost a year, causing unimaginable fear and emotional stress for its victims

This particular poltergeist is no more, Mike and Darren found methods to deprive it of its energy source, which I won't go into here, but this account makes fascinating reading. Undoubtedly some readers will be shocked by the

extraordinary story enacted in this age of rationalism. The South Shields Poltergeist deserves to achieve the success of its famous Enfield Poltergeist forerunner and it probably will. I have no doubt that it will achieve classic status in the genre of paranormal literature and would urge you to read it and to decide for yourself.

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Thalbourne, M. A. (2005) 'The Pros and Cons of Being a Parapsychologist'. *Society for Psychical Research: Paranormal Review*, 36, 21-22
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