

# ANOMALY: 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in June 2011. Welcome to this 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of Anomaly which, fittingly, might just be the biggest and most diverse edition ever.

ASSAP was founded as an organisation that would research and investigate the full range of anomalous phenomena. This edition epitomises that approach with articles varying from EVP and ITC to mediumship, sleep paralysis to out of body experiences, orbs to audio contextual biasing and the role of light and memory in haunting investigation cases. There is also a statistical analysis of UFO and haunting cases and book reviews covering everything from earth mysteries to Street Light Interference. This mind-boggling range excludes the two nearly-were articles about vampires and a practical guide to cryptozoological fieldwork, the latter of which is due to be serialised in ASSAP News instead.

To support the ever-increasing size of Anomaly the editorial team has grown from two or three people to a team of fourteen working hard to bring you the best publication possible. As Anomaly's size has grown we have been able to boost production values, with journals that more resemble a small book and this edition being printed in a more durable, longer-lasting way.

We are also proud of our blend of showcasing up and coming talent in tandem with stalwart researchers with a blend of academic and non-academic contributors.

Whilst other long-standing paranormal journals have folded and many mass-membership organisations are struggling for funds due to the recession affecting membership, ASSAP is striding into its 30<sup>th</sup> year with its head held high, bigger and more active than ever.

# **ANOMALY:**

## **JOURNAL OF RESEARCH INTO THE PARANORMAL**

The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena was formed in 1981 to study a wide range of paranormal phenomena. These fall into the broad categories of psychic phenomena, earth mysteries, Ufology and Fortean phenomena. ASSAP holds no corporate views and the views expressed by individual authors are their own.

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# PHONE CALLS FROM THE DEAD

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A review and revisit to the phenomenon of 'phone calls from the dead' originally researched by Rogo and Bayless (1979), is given in this paper. The topic has been left dormant with regard to new research or theories for the past thirty years since the work was originally published. A brief outline of Rogo and Bayless's work and three fascinating new examples of phone calls from the dead with which the author has recently been presented while collecting cases of the calls are outlined. The phenomenon is not easily explained and there are a number of possibilities to critically consider in each individual case in terms of fraud, psychology, parapsychology, physics and paraphysics. A few possible explanations are put forward in an attempt to understand the phenomenon further and to demonstrate how complex each case can be in terms of technology and possible paranormal phenomena.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

Communication with the dead via electrical devices has been given more consideration by great thinkers and inventors than some people might believe. The most famous of these is the inventor Thomas Edison who was very intrigued by the idea of the mind's survival of death throughout his life due to his parents' involvement in spiritualism and who supposedly began to pursue experiments to test the theory. Edison believed it could be possible to develop a telephone of sorts that could enable the living to contact the dead. He made it public that he had already begun work on this project in 1920 during an interview with *Scientific American* (Lescarbourea, 1920). He claimed that the apparatus would be extremely delicate. It would not guarantee communication with human personality after death, but if it does survive after the body dies then it would at least give anyone who has survived on another plane of existence a better chance of communicating with the living. Edison's idea began because of the work of British scientist Sir William Crooke who had developed equipment that could supposedly photograph spirits (this being an early example of ITC also known as Instrumental Transcommunication, which is supposedly a way of contacting the dead through any instrumental means) (Butler and Butler, 2008)). The images of supposed spirits photographed by Sir William had apparently inspired and encouraged Edison to believe that if ghosts could be photographed, demonstrating and apparently supporting their visual presence, then Edison's

own device could prove successful. Unfortunately Edison died before he could complete his machine (passing away in 1931). It is said that an attempt was made to find the blue prints for the machine after his death but none could be found. A few years later it was reported that the incomplete machine and the blue prints were found, but it is still debated as to whether this was a publicity stunt and was actually fraudulent (Taylor, 1998). The Thomas Edison museum in Texas still receives a lot of enquiries from the public on the matter of Edison's telephone that could contact the dead. However they have had to turn away many people who ask for further information on the matter. The only true evidence of such an invention is Edison's own words in the interview with *Scientific American*. Even then, it appears that we shall never know if he had any 'true intentions' of attempting to create such a machine.

## INTRODUCTION

Claims of phone calls from the dead are rare; however they have been thoroughly documented with detailed transcripts of the phone conversations (Rogo and Bayless, 1979). These phone calls involve a person answering a telephone call from someone who is purportedly dead at the time the phone call was made. However, the person receiving the call is not always aware that the caller is in fact dead at the time they spoke to them (usually this is discovered later); these types of calls seem to last the longest. The caller is normally a close friend or family member and typically these calls are received just a few minutes or hours after the death of the caller. The conversations can involve a general talk about day to day things but more commonly comprise a farewell or warning of some form of danger of which the recipient should be made aware. This topic has been well documented by Rogo and Bayless (1979) and theories have been provided in order to shed light on how or why this type of phenomenon could occur. Electronic Voice Phenomenon, commonly known as EVP (MacRae, 2004) has been theorised as a process in which voices that are unheard by the human ear can actually be heard over or on electrical sound equipment. Paranormal voices have been reported on various devices such as: dictaphones, camcorders, mp3 recorders and even landline telephones or mobile phones. However, in cases of a phone call from the dead it would seem just as plausible, rather than being due to EVP, to result from a combination of psychokinesis (also referred to as 'PK') (Radin, 1997)) and auditory hallucinations and/or phantom voices (Rogo, 1976; Bayless, 1976; Hamilton, 1983) as documented in haunting cases, thus creating the effect of a phone call from the dead (simply a theoretical possibility). This combination will be further discussed later in this paper. However, in these cases PK may be exerted by the living recipient or the dead caller to make the phone ring. If PK in some cases comes from the caller, then this shows an example of what I'd label a '*crisis poltergeist*'. In psychical research the term crisis is normally used to refer to '*crisis apparitions*' (Tyrrell, 1953, pp.33-34), which are said to be a telepathic image of someone who is

undergoing a crisis, such as dying, or has just died. These cases of crisis apparitions are very rare today. They demonstrate possible brief survival of personality after death in order to get a last message to a friend or loved one, and a last message of goodbye often features in phone calls from the dead. In most cases of crisis apparitions it seems this message is of the death of the person visualised as an apparition. What could effectively be a crisis poltergeist seems to be perfectly demonstrated in some cases of phone calls from the dead. The poltergeist gives a message of a last goodbye with a combination of auditory hallucinations and a physical effect on the environment (i.e. ringing the telephone) with no apparitions presented, yet still showing possible support for survival.

Apart from the work of Rogo and Bayless (1979), very little academic research on phone calls from the dead can be found either in journals or parapsychology text books. The occurrence of EVP itself was not reported until 1959 when Swedish film maker Friedrich Jurgenson (Bender, 1972, p.65) claimed he had successfully recorded voices of the dead (Rogo and Bayless, 1979). The fact that EVP was not noticed in parapsychology until this time could have a number of explanations; the subject matter itself can be approached from many angles such as psychology, physics or as a genuine paranormal phenomenon. However, the events themselves do fall into the parapsychological category of 'survival of human personality' after death, which was classically discussed by Myers (1903). Therefore we should consider phone calls from the dead as an aspect of parapsychology even though the phenomenon itself is exceedingly rare compared to everything else that is covered in the field.

The work by Rogo and Bayless (1979) on phone calls from the dead found that these fell into different categories according to conversation length and detail within it. The four main call types in Rogo and Bayless's (1979) research implied the involvement of a supposedly dead caller and the fifth (unusual) type involved the living. These are described as follows:

- 1) Type 1 '*Simple Calls*' – These are the most common reported phone calls from the dead. The dead caller says only a few words and is unresponsive to any questions asked. At this point the caller may say nothing at all and the line will go dead without any sound of the caller hanging up the phone or being cut off.
- 2) Type 2 '*Prolonged Calls*' – These calls are rarer than type 1. They last for some time and involve a conversation like any other telephone call. The recipient does not realise, until after the call, that the caller was in fact dead at the time. Due to the recipient of the call not knowing the caller is dead, this somehow seems to allow the conversation to last longer. Type 1 cases of simple

calls show that the shock of knowing the caller is dead somehow leaves the conversation short or the dead caller unresponsive.

3) Type 3 ‘*Answer Calls*’ – These are cases where a living person makes a call to someone they do not realise is dead and yet they get an answer. These calls are usually prolonged.

4) Type 4 ‘*Apparent Calls*’ – Most cases of phone calls from the dead involve a dead person calling a living person. The receiver of the call may or may not know that the caller is dead. Thus it may create a prolonged phone call or simple call. This is simply a possible mixture of type 1 and 2 calls.

5) Type 5 ‘*Intention Calls*’– These are calls in which we intend to call someone with a specific conversation in mind. However, for some reason we choose to postpone the call until a later time. You then receive a call from the person you intended to call. They refer to you calling earlier and discussing with them the topic you were going to discuss, or they call you answering your message to call them about that topic. Essentially they received the message from someone with your voice, who carried out your intended conversation which you never made, although you had the intention to do so. These are very much like apparitions of living people, but in this case involving phone conversations. This type of call was even experienced by D. Scott Rogo:

*“It was 4 o’clock on a bright Thursday afternoon, and I was lying on my living room couch thinking about making a phone-call to a psychologist I knew at the U.C.L.A. Neuropsychiatric Institute. Although I intended to make the call, I never did. About six that evening, though, I got the shock of my life when a call came in from the Institute and from the office of the very psychologist I had thought about calling. The call was from her research assistant saying that he was ‘answering my message’. When I asked what in blazes he was talking about, he told me at 4pm a call had come in to them from me. The caller had left my name, and had asked the call be returned!”*

D. Scott Rogo’s example (1986, pp.116-117)

## **RECENT CASES OF PHONE CALLS FROM THE DEAD**

### **Case 1)**

This following case is not a perfect example of a phone call from the dead; however I will outline it in this paper as it is the first case to inspire me to begin collecting more cases to add to the work of Rogo and Bayless. Many rational

explanations can be offered, though the case is an interesting one, which made news headlines in the US.

Very few cases of phone calls from the dead are generally documented. Incredibly, I found that many newspapers and other media reported on a case of a dead victim of a train crash repeatedly ringing his family for hours after he had actually died (Altman, 2008). The event occurred on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2008, and involved a Metrolink and Union Pacific freight train collision in the Chatsworth district of Los Angeles, California that killed many people; among them was 49 year old Charles Peck. At the time of the crash Peck's son received a call from his father, but his father did not speak and he simply asked his father if he was OK and asked where he was, but no reply was heard. Peck's family began to receive more mobile phone calls from his phone during the time that rescuers were recovering as many survivors as they could from the train crash. When Peck's family answered his calls all they could hear every time was static. When the family tried to call Peck back their calls went straight to voicemail as though the battery was empty or Peck's phone was turned off. Five hours after the train had crashed and Peck had died in the collision (still without the family being aware of this) Peck's wife received another call from his phone. Aware of the train crash but believing because of the number of phone calls they had received from his phone that he was still alive the family yelled down the phone words of encouragement that rescuers were going to get him out and that it wouldn't be much longer until he would be out of the wreck and safe. Further calls were made to Peck's family from his phone, which prompted rescue teams to work faster to find this potential survivor of the train wreck. On tracing these calls the rescue team found that they were coming from the first carriage. The calls stopped at 3:28 am; half an hour later teams found Peck's body; he had died on first impact and been dead for hours. A total of 35 calls were made from Peck's phone to his family from the time of the train crash to the time his body was recovered. Peck's mobile phone itself was never recovered from the train wreck. Unlike a typical phone call from the dead no conversation took place and the dead caller's voice was never heard, only the sound of static. However, static is commonly heard in cases of EVP (MacRae, 2004).

I include this case in this paper simply because it is the first in recent times which triggered my interest as to whether phone calls from the dead are still being experienced, and this case was made very public. However, many questions can be raised from the case of Charles Peck's phone calls supposedly being made from another world beyond death. On the one hand maybe this is a genuine case of a loved one who had died and was trying desperately to get a final message of goodbye to their family. However, on the other hand, there are many very obvious and rational explanations we can put forward to shed light on this event. We must consider the interesting fact that Peck's mobile phone

itself was never recovered; due to the scale of the crash, the phone could have been destroyed or thrown by the impact and simply lost. Due to this the phone may have been so damaged or crushed against wreckage that it repeatedly called numbers in the stored memory until the battery died.

One thing is certain; the calls received were definitely from Peck's phone as the recipients' had his name displayed on their phone each time he called them. *If*, the call was a genuine attempt of communication from the dead, we should consider the times when we answer a landline telephone (that does not display the caller's name) but only scrambled voices or simply nothing is heard. Then we hang up as there was no one there. Or was there? What percentage of these calls could potentially be an attempted phone call from the dead? The recipient may simply forget that they received a call with what seemed to be no caller on the line and the next day they discover that someone close to them died the night before at the time the call came through. Could the two events of a mysterious phone call attempt and the death of someone close to us occurring practically at the same time be linked? I am not suggesting that blank calls are paranormal in any way, but in relation to research on phone calls from the dead and the death of someone close, the coincidence of events is at least worth consideration. At the very least they create a fascinating philosophical debate for anyone familiar with survival research and research on phone calls from the dead. However, once again many rational explanations could be put forward in these cases, especially with regards to calls that are completely silent (automatic call companies for example).

## **Case 2)**

This second case is possibly one of the most fascinating and long lasting cases of a phone call from the dead, if indeed the account is not just a prank that was played over a period of three years (that in itself would be impressive, but cruel). The idea of this being a prank seemed less likely the more the evidence with which I was presented recently amounted. In this case all the information available was provided from diary extracts and a ten page eyewitness account of living with this frequent unusual phenomena.

Dr. Jones (pseudonym) remembers a bizarre succession of phone calls his mother received from a very close friend on a regular basis. The friend was in hospital and became increasingly ill until sadly he passed away. Dr. Jones's mother was distraught when she found out and the death was confirmed. However, in the winter of 1958 something remarkable occurred:

*"I don't remember the exact time, although it was certainly in the middle to late evening, when the phone rang and my Mother went off to answer*

*it. She was gone about ten minutes, and when she came back she had clearly been crying and there was an odd look on her face.*

*“Who was it,” I asked.*

*For a moment she said nothing. And then she said “it was him!”*

*For a moment I didn’t understand, and then she told me that it had been ‘Richard’ (pseudonym) on the phone. Apparently he had come back to tell her how much he loved her.*

*Needless to say I was shocked and amazed, and even at the age of 11 I knew this was not something that normally happened. It seemed such an amazing thing, and yet life went on as normal. I talked with my brother about it, but not my father. There seemed to be nothing to be done, except to simply accept that such a thing had happened.”*

This was the first of many repeated calls from 'Richard', the deceased caller. Dr. Jones's mother received more and more calls on a regular basis just as she had when 'Richard' was alive and simply took it as the norm.

*“Several months after that first call ‘Richard’ rang again and then again, and very slowly the number of calls began to increase ... until the situation after his death became a mirror image of the situation before his death. The phone would ring three or four times a week, again about 4pm. Mother would answer the phone, take it into the bathroom and talk for some 20 minutes. This continued through 1959, 1960 and 1961, until I had come to accept ‘Richard’ calling exactly as I had come to accept it when he was alive. As incredible as it seems the fact my Mother was having almost daily telephone conversations with a dead man became ‘normal’ to me and after two or three years of this it ceased to appear strange or unusual. I grew up blindly accepting the apparent reality of these events as part of my life.”*

These are extracts from a very long account of the whole matter. The calls themselves slowly began to decrease after 1961 and finally ceased. Admittedly at first many would question the accounts of an 11 year old boy. However, these accounts are remarkably backed up by five year's worth of daily diary accounts (from Dr. Jones's now late mother) of nearly every phone call conversation with the dead caller during the 3 year period. Though the contents of the conversations have been recorded they don't shed light on the matter of survival; they simply raise further questions for anyone sceptical of the matter. I was also kindly sent photocopies of some of the diary accounts and they are highly emotional, yet romantic. This case is of special significance because of the length and detail of content recorded not only in a diary by the recipient, but

also a witness's account (Dr. Jones) of living with the supposed calls from the dead. The calls fit into the Type 4 category of *Apparent Calls*. They involve knowledge of the caller being dead, but are still prolonged calls. Dr. Jones even recalls answering the phone himself once when his mother was out:

*“She told me that he ‘came on the wind’, meaning that she heard the sound of winds down the phone before he spoke. I once answered the phone myself when she was out. I heard a noise like a great wind [or someone blowing down the phone line]. I was so scared I just shouted ‘she’s not here’ and hung up [how I regret that now]. I have wondered if the fact that he didn’t know she was out is significant ... but on the other hand he could have been trying to ‘prove’ himself to me. It only happened once in four years, and that call was on a Saturday; a very rare occurrence.”*

This account of ‘great winds’ being heard down the phone line relates to the findings of other cases of calls from the dead:

*“Again Peggy’s voice called to me through a rushing as of great winds. The winds rose to a roar and then died into sudden silence.”* (Rogo and Bayless, 1979, p.56)

What can we conclude from this case? Dr. Jones is a very rational gentleman and a scientifically minded academic in sociology and psychology. For many years this case has left him puzzled. Was this a long-standing cruel hoax by someone ringing his mother to pretend to be a deceased close friend for three years? Or was this genuinely one of the most important cases of phone calls from the dead to date? If so, it would be a remarkable case to add to the collections of cases suggestive of survival of personality beyond bodily death; yet another small but significant stepping stone forward for psychology and parapsychology's understanding of anomalous human experiences. Nevertheless, discussing this case in great length and detail with Dr. Jones has led to no definite conclusions. However, we must always keep in mind the possibility of fraud, though the deeper we dug into the supporting diary evidence the more this case related to the ones reported by Rogo and Bayless (1979) in its characteristics. This full case in now on file in my records of phone calls from the dead and for Dr. Jones and myself it will remain a great mystery that is now lost in the past with the calls having ended in 1961. However, it is incredible to think that it could be the most substantial case of a phone call from the dead on record to date, if indeed it is not a very long-standing and highly thought-out complex, yet cruel prank.

MARCH 13

1957 How can I live on without my darling if I see him so busy - where I look I see not - I see only an empty shell.

1960 Sunday morning my darling thought to say he'd love me, and would always be at my side. He said he had come back with me, and now I must be happy. I had been good and soon he would come again to talk with me; I ask him to help me sleep, and he said now you will sleep. My darling darling I'll be back soon to talk with you. Please God help me to

1958

DECEMBER 20

19 My darling thought, he wants me with him, I may say is better sweet, I love him but must stay to him 19 ask my job.

(196) I was not in the road surprised when he thought love is so strong it overcomes death even before we know how or why, now I know the body is only clay & the soul is freed by this death. 19 He keptly a more beautiful than this word can ever imagine, if only we understood how simple our lives could be. I know much less our earthly suffering, but no one will believe the truth

***Photocopy of Dr. Jones's Mother's diary displaying conversation accounts with the supposed dead caller.***

**Case 3)**

The following account was recently sent to me (December 2009) by a keen EVP researcher called Catherine who claimed to have experienced recorded phone calls from the dead on her mobile phone voicemail. This has happened to Catherine on several occasions. The following account is the one I found most intriguing. This call was recorded on Catherine's mobile voicemail on 22 October 2006 at 00:42am. When she picked up her voicemail message she could not believe her ears. There was apparently a message from her late mother and also one from her husband's late father (joint voices):

*"Catherine, I'll always be there.  
I love you, I'll be there for you, I love you.  
It's your mum, stay happy.  
Colin, I will always be there for you always.  
Speak to me.  
Steven and Cathy, be happy."*

Several other interesting accounts were very kindly sent to me by Catherine. But the latter account I've outlined, I found most unusual.

*"My mum had been dead 24yrs so you can imagine how I must have felt on hearing her voice in 2006"- Catherine*

In this case I think we can safely assume that grief did not really play any role in this case even though the call was very personal to Catherine. The time between the death of the caller and the call itself was 24 years as stated. It was also spontaneous and recorded at the time in her mobile phone voicemail. Catherine still has this mobile phone message and has shown it to many other EVP researchers since it occurred. There could be many natural explanations for this particular event, as is the case with many reports of EVP. However, this particular message is very specific and relevant to the receiver of the call and her husband. The following section may shed light on possible explanations for this case with regard to psychology and reports of EVP.

## HOW CAN WE EXPLAIN SUCH CASES?

As Rogo and Bayless (1979) pointed out, when asked 'how is it possible for the dead to phone the living?' (or indeed text as recent cases may suggest (Cooper, 2010)) this is not an easy question to answer. The first issue they raised in attempting to explain the phenomenon was whether these voices were direct speech from the dead or whether the dead were manipulating electrical currents somehow to produce speech through the telephone. It seems that some of the calls produced are natural ones for a number of reasons. For example, all the phones in the house of the recipient would ring implying it was an outside line rather than being produced from within the house and also, at the end of the phone conversation, a click was heard as the line was cut off as the dead caller ended the call. However, Rogo and Bayless (1979) found that an equal number of reported calls seemed to be produced parapsychically, with only one phone in the house ringing and no audible signal of the line being cut off at the end of the phone conversation. This suggested that many of these calls were electromagnetically produced as was theorised in the work of a psychical researcher called Hunt (1931). Hunt believed that voices of the dead heard on the telephone were caused by some paranormal electrical effect. Attempting to explain this further, he hypothesised that when a call is made to someone a wavelength is produced to carry the sounds of voices electrically down the line to both phones. Thus, in some cases this may create a super-imposer of sound (additional sounds that are simply electronically produced due to natural technological causes and disruptions), which may be heard or interrupt the conversation. However, this applies more so to cases of two living people having a phone conversation and then hearing a third ghostly voice. Nevertheless this showed early ideas of a psychical researcher trying to shed light on how the dead could call us or what natural causes may be involved.

This original research suggests that if personality briefly survives death and a deceased person wants to contact the living via a telephone, somehow they manipulate the electrical current in the telephone or drive electrons down the line via an electro-motive force to make the telephone ring and turn the electrical signals into a recognisable voice for the recipient of the call to hear and understand. Or the action of the phone ringing is created due to a form of long-distance PK which would explain examples of phone calls from the dead in cases where the call was received on a mobile phone. This is because in these cases there is no physical telephone line, in contrast to a landline telephone, as all the early examples of phone calls from the dead involved an old landline phone. This is, however, just a theory and not a definite explanation of the paranormal phone calls. A more logical explanation is the possibility of radio

transmissions spontaneously intercepting certain phone calls, especially with mobile phones. This may occur in the same way a walkie-talkie works by having the same channel or wavelength to communicate with each device, thus disruptions maybe heard from other devices in range with an equal channel or wavelength (the chances of this happening today with mobile phones is unlikely due to each one being digitally encoded, rather than analogue). Though if the conversation is only one way I think that we could safely say that in today's world one person would realise that the conversation is totally random in content and the voice being heard cannot be recognised. The recipient would realise that something is wrong with the line and subsequently hang up. Radio interference with telephone calls does not seem to be a huge concern with regard to the original research of Rogo and Bayless (1979) with many cases involving basic telephone technology, unlike today. However, it is something we must consider with regards to rational explanations of unexpected ghostly voices appearing on the telephone line.

Let us now return to the idea of PK and auditory hallucinations as a possible explanation for these phone calls (to both landline and mobile telephones). If we take for example a person who has recently lost a close relative, the loss of their loved one may play on their mind for some time; they wish they could see them again or talk to them again (similarly with the loss of an enemy who they fear is still onto them even after death). As a result of this, very much like in poltergeist cases (Bender, 1982), the recipient unconsciously exerts PK ability to make the telephone ring. They then go to answer the phone; in some cases there may be no one there and they simply hang up straight away or, on picking up the phone, they do hear the voice of the deceased person due to auditory hallucinations created through grief constantly playing on the mind (this has been found to be responsible for a wide variety of reported anomalous experiences (Sidgwick et al, 1894)). Though it may seem farfetched to some that both of these processes would happen at the same time, it does show that the phenomenon of phone calls from the dead is not easily explained away. This possible explanation only covers a few cases and does not explain those in which the recipient of the call was not aware that the caller was dead. But again in the grief cases (type 1), if the receiver of the call is alone and no one else is in the room to witness them take the call, an hallucination of the ringing and the voice of the dead caller could be explained in one and would not need to involve a PK element. Alternatively we could consider the idea of a crisis poltergeist again and suggest that the phone call was a spontaneous anomalous event of a dying or dead loved one successfully managing to say farewell to the living. We simply have to be critical of the evidence that these events present and consider that fraud may be the answer in many cases. Also electrical faults may produce scrambled voices that the recipient may assume to be messages from a loved one who has recently died. This will be explained further with EVP cases, in

which we hear the sound of static. Upon many people listening to these EVP recordings, certain words and phrases seem to be picked out as they appear to sound like particular words or phrases we can relate to. However, this may mean nothing at all and involve not voices of the dead, but just static and distorted sounds we presume are something more. Just because we believe that we are hearing a particular word or phrase in the static does not mean that there is someone trying to talk to us. It may just sound like a human voice and psychologically we try to make sense of what in the rational world are just meaningless sounds. If the suggestion is given to us that EVP recordings will contain messages from the dead, we are more likely to unconsciously try to make sense of meaningless static sounds. However, this is just an opinion and one way of looking for rational explanations for phone calls from the dead.

The mechanics of an old phone work via a process known as 'pulse dialling' (Brain, 2000). This would be more relevant to the majority of phone calls from the dead reported in the work of Rogo and Bayless (1979) and also **Case 2**, as rotary dial telephones used the method of pulse dialling and were most common at the time of the research. Basically, for every number that is dialled a direct current pulse is sent out to signal the corresponding phone and its unique number being dialled. The audible clicks or beeps heard while dialling are side effects of making and breaking the telephone connection for each individual number dialled, much like turning a light on and off. More modern landline phones use a method called 'dual tone multi frequency' to dial another phone rather than pulse dialling. However, most new telephones retain the support of the pulse dialling so that they can connect to old-style phones. It seems that Hunt (1931) created the basis for an explanation of how the electrical current in the telephone line may become manipulated to create what seem to be ghostly voices on the line. This would occur once a correct wavelength between two phones has been established and after pulse dialling has successfully been completed. However, two main points can be raised from this. First of all, if personality does survive death and the dead manage to call the living, somehow they manage to intercept this correct pulse dialling pattern to dial the person they wish to talk to and manipulate the electric current down the line to produce a voice or the voice they had when alive. Secondly, the more rational explanation may be that the call was a prank and someone impersonated the dead. However, it must be noted that there are many possible explanations we can consider for each individual case; I am simply suggesting a few possibilities of both normal and paranormal directions we can take on the subject depending on the type of call.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Thomas Edison's attempt to make a machine that could enable the living to contact the dead may not have been necessary. It seems that with nearly all forms of modern communication devices, such as the telephone, mobile phones and text messages (Cooper, 2010), there have been reports of the dead supposedly using them to try to contact the living. There have even been a few reports of 'emails from the dead' (Fenton, 1999) again producing messages supposedly from deceased love ones or even enemies. Nevertheless there are still some researchers who attempt to capture voices and images of the dead by using EVP and ITC. Butler and Butler (2008) outlined their own attempts at capturing voices and images of the dead and other similar research. One of the most fascinating forms of ITC methods is the use of white noise through television static to attempt to capture images of the dead that may appear on the television screen. However, in other ITC experiments both radios and telephones have been used in an attempt to allow the living to contact the dead and record an audible message electronically. However, some criticisms and rational explanations have been put forward by psychologists to attempt to explain EVP in rational terms and demonstrate failure to replicate this paranormal phenomenon. Thus explanations are produced in terms of psychology and how we perceive the distorted sounds in the static as supposed voices of the dead (Barušs, 2001). For example, some people believe that EVP is just a mixture of meaningless sound processed in the mind into what we perceive as speech or is actually interference from shortwave radios. This could indeed be the case unless the listener is certain that they recognise the voice and anything said in the EVP recording is so specific that it could only relate to the listener.

In one particular case of radio ITC, voices and messages that were heard over the radio (supposedly from the dead) were documented by Festa (2002). These showed similar characteristics to the phone calls from the dead; sometimes it was possible to ask questions and get an instant response and on other occasions it was not (more so with Type 1 calls). Marcello Bacci of Grosseto, Italy, demonstrated these radio transmissions to Festa (2002); the radio was first tuned to an area of white noise between stations. After waiting a few moments a voice would start to come through very clearly, so clearly in some cases that a room full of people listening could make out easily what was being said. One interesting thing about these voices was that once they were found within the radio frequency of white noise, changing the frequency while the voices were talking would not alter or disrupt them even though there was an absence of signal. They remained very clear and were unaffected by the change of radio frequency. Festa pointed out "The rule of standard physics had been turned upside down, the 'entities' continued to talk as if nothing had happened" (Butler and Butler, 2008, p.149). Experts also checked the radios and found no

significant variation in the electromagnetic field from the point when the voices started. We can only assume that the listeners agreed on what was being said by the voices on the radio as it is stated that the voices were very clear, unlike EVP. In many EVP cases people are told by others present what is being said in the distorted sounds they hear and tend to accept it without question.

Another case of ICT involving telephones also demonstrated supposed contact with the dead. In 2001 Sonia Rinaldi of Brazil (findings outlined by Butler and Butler, 2008) began working with parents of deceased children and arranged for each of them a day they could visit her home to make a phone call to the dead to ask them any questions they wished. When asked, Sonia claimed she had no idea how this process worked. All Sonia did in each phone call session was arrange for the parents to visit her house to use her phone and the relevant deceased spirit caller would be on the telephone at the time the living relative used the phone to talk to them. Each phone call was recorded through Sonia's computer at the time of the event. As of July 2002 Sonia had arranged over one hundred and sixty documented phone calls to the dead. The Noetics Institute Incorporated (NII) in America apparently now supports Sonia's research into these mysterious calls. Interestingly, it is pointed out that the only people who could make contact with the dead via Sonia's phone had to be Brazilian born; also these calls had to be made in Brazil and from Sonia's house. Why this was, is still apparently unknown to Sonia. She has admittedly tried to achieve contact with the dead in other places but it did not seem to work. After reviewing the procedure of arranging a paranormal phone call at Sonia's home, it does at first seem that it could be fraudulent and easy to fake to an extent. For example, the first thing we notice in these cases is that the calls were only made from Sonia's house. Therefore it raises scepticism and suspicion as to whether Sonia set up some form of device through her telephone and computer to produce fraudulent pre-recorded messages from the supposed dead. However, the parents of the deceased child, after having had a paranormal phone call session were given a copy of the conversation on tape to take away and come to their own conclusions about the phone call. Typically, they wrote a report back to Sonia saying that the voice was distinctly that of their deceased child and was very true to life. Also, details and information given out by the deceased caller were (like other cases I have outlined) very specific and personal, so much so that only the parent of the dead caller would have understood the details mentioned within the phone conversation. However, it seems that only the parents of the deceased children were invited to pass judgement on the recorded voices heard and no attempt was made to seek the professional opinion of an electrical expert, physicist or parapsychologist. In the end, the authenticity of the recorded voices was down to the judgement of the parents, who due to such a tragic loss may take the voices to be that of their child's as a way of easing their pain and grief, believing that somehow their child

is still living but on another level of existence (we can see example of this in cold readings).

From researching the topic of phone calls from the dead, it seems that whatever communication devices we currently possess or will later invent, at some point someone will report an attempted or supposedly successful case of communication with the dead through the technology we have created. One thing seems certain, and this was also the belief and the findings of Rogo and Bayless (1979). Electricity within the phone or any communication device is largely responsible in some way for these messages we seem to be receiving from some form of life beyond death. However the vast majority of cases appear to be parapsychically produced.

## **CONCLUSION**

The events that I have outlined are fascinating and show that not only are phone calls from the dead still occasionally being reported, but text messages from the dead are also a phenomenon on the rise and therefore require consideration. However, in these cases it is important to consider the possibility of fraud as these calls could be replicated by anyone and may fool unsuspecting recipients who have recently lost a friend or loved one (this may also apply to some ITC cases). At the same time, some of the original and classical examples of phone calls from the dead by Rogo and Bayless (1979) show that some of the information discussed in the dead callers' conversation is so specific that the recipient of the call is adamant that they have spoken to their deceased friend or loved one. This then helps to rule out the possibility of fraud to an extent due to such specific information being discussed. Also, with fraudulent cases, the prank caller would have to replicate the caller's voice to fool the recipient which seems like a lot of trouble to go to just to prank someone and would also seem a difficult task to perform (also a long standing one if Case 2 were fraudulent). Therefore this brings us back to our original assumption of PK and auditory hallucinations or a crisis poltergeist as possible explanations.

By no means are phone calls from the dead easily explained away by psychology or physics and it seems that within parapsychology a large question mark hangs over the explanation of these calls and messages, once fraud has been considered and ruled out. Therefore, these events are potentially supportive of brief survival of personality after death (Myers, 1903) if indeed they are genuine. If I am correct in my judgement, calls and messages from the dead are not about to stop being reported. The more we advance with technology and electrical equipment for human communication over distance, the more people will at some point report messages from the dead occurring through these devices (this was also hypothesized by Bayless, 1980). Though the cases are

heavily anecdotal, this is what we have come to expect of spontaneous cases. To witness an active case of a phone call from the dead would be as magnificent (if indeed real) as being able to observe an apparition of the dead and study its behaviour. Therefore, whether a reported phone call from the dead has a rational explanation or not, they create for us a larger collection of cases to review and attempted to understand. This would allow us to review fraud and electrical faults that may occur, the psychology of the receiver of the call and cases that appear genuine and fit into Rogo and Bayless's categories of calls from the dead. Just like any spontaneous cases there is no universal explanation, each situation and set of circumstances would be different in some way, and this is what we would expect of human behaviour and experiences. This paper was not designed to explain how phone calls from the dead happen, but to simply demonstrate their complexity and the possible explanations that we could explore to answer how they *might* have occurred.

*“The field of telephonic communication is extremely complex and becomes more so as research continues”*

(Bayless, 1980, pp.40)

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# WEIRD FRINGE REPORT

By Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe

Statistical analysis is one of the most important approaches to research in any academic field – and it can be applied very advantageously to research into the anomalous phenomena – those weird things on the fringe –in which so many of us are interested.

In order to make the statistics as accurate and useful as possible, it was felt that the best idea would be to compile them from official reports, concentrating on those involving the police whenever these could be found. My father served for many years as a Special Constable, and during my eleven years as Headmaster of Glyn Derw Comprehensive High School in Cardiff I served on the Police Liaison Committee. In consequence, we have many current and retired police officer friends.

The data have been taken from the past twenty-five years of reports covering a wide range of sources: our own extensive archives, the outstandingly good PRUFOS website created and maintained meticulously by Detective Constable Gary Heseltine and many other valuable sources of data dealing with UFOs and the anomalous weird fringe in general.

We have analysed the data we found into locations and categories in order to provide useful pointers for other researchers who are interested in examining particular phenomena or in exploring specific locations. The analysis below excludes UFO data, which are listed separately below it.

<u>Locations</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Types / Categories / Sub-totals</u>
<b>Kent</b>	14	Road phantoms 7 General phantoms 4 Poltergeists 3
<b>London</b>	12	Airport 1 Road phantoms 3 General phantoms 6

		Strange sounds / steps 2
<b>Notts</b>	10	Strange sounds 3 Trail of wet ghostly prints 1 General phantoms 4 Poltergeists 1 Cold spots 1
<b>Suffolk</b>	10	Strange sounds 3 Trail of steps from one-legged ghost of priest 1 Cats 2 General phantoms 3 Phantom spheres 1
<b>Yorks</b>	9	Strange sounds 2 Moving lights 1 Stocksbridge phenomena 1 Ghostly toilet flushing 1 General phantoms 1 Apports 1 Strange sense of psychic presence 1 Haunted Police Museum 1
<b>Dorset</b>	8	General phantoms 4 Train phantom on track 1

		Phantom voice 1
		Strange sounds 1
		Earth giant phenomena 1
<b>Sussex</b>	7	General phantoms 4
		Road phantoms 1
		Haunted Police Stations 1
		Strange sensation of psychic touch 1
<b>Lancs</b>	6	General phantoms 4
		Time slips 1
		Road phantoms 1
<b>Somerset</b>	5	Road phantoms 2
		General phantoms 3
<b>Norfolk</b>	4	Cats 1
		Dogs 1
		Misty lights in forest 1
		Unaccountable scratches that appeared on wall 1
<b>Surrey</b>	3	General phantoms 1
		Road phantoms 1
		Corpse in car mystery 1
<b>Beds</b>	3	Road phantoms 1
		General phantoms 2

<b>Berks</b>	3	General phantoms 3
Scotland	3	Ghosts of children 1 General phantoms 1 Greyfriars Bobby, Edinburgh Cemetery 1
Wales	3	General phantoms 2 Psychic odours / perfumes 1
Birmingham <sup>2</sup>		General phantoms 1 Road phantoms 1
Derby	2	General phantoms 2
Essex	2	General phantoms 2
Hants	2	General phantoms 1 Haunted Police College 1
Leicester	2	Cats 1 General phantoms 1
Manchester	2	Strange sounds 1 General phantoms 1
Bristol, Avon	2	Sea phenomena 1 Exorcism phenomena 1
Devon	2	Medieval battle re-enactment 1 Cryptozoological phenomena 1

**Special additions to include the categories of crop circles and werewolves**

Cannock Chase	20	Werewolf sightings	20
Southend in Essex	1	Werewolf sightings	1
Wiltshire	5	Crop circles	5

**Grand Total Excluding UFO Data      142**

**Police Reports of UFOs based on DC Gary Heseltine's excellent PRUFOS Data Analysed by Locations**

NL = Nocturnal Light

DD = Daylight Disc

CE1 = Close encounters of the first kind

CE2 = Close encounters of the second kind

<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>NL</u></b>	<b><u>DD</u></b>	<b><u>CE1</u></b>	<b><u>CE2</u></b>
Yorks	14	12	1	1	
London	9	7	2		
Somerset	7	6		1	
Cheshire	6	3	1	2	
Kent	6	6			
Scotland	6	5		1	
Staffs	5	5			
Lancs	5	3		2	
Essex	5	4	1		
Wales	4	3			1
Northumberland	4	4			

Hampshire	4	4			
Wilts	3	3			
Sussex	3	1	1	1	
Norfolk	3	3			
Dorset	3	2	1		
Derby	3	3			
Birmingham	3	3			
Manchester	2	2			
Gloucester	2	2			
Berks	2	2			
Durham	2	0	2		
Warwicks	1			1	
Shropshire	1	1			
Northern Ireland	1		1		
Notts	1	1			
Lincs	1	1			
Hunts	1	1			
Devon	1	1			
Cumbria	1	1			
<b>Totals</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>

**Grand Total of UFOs and Weird Fringe Phenomena together 25**

End of Report

## A BRIEF MACABRE TALE ON SLEEP PARALYSIS

By Michael John Gage

Sleep paralysis (sometimes referred to as Old Hag Syndrome) is a common sleep disorder and is something I personally have suffered with for the best part of my life. It occurs, at least with me, once every few months and though I know perfectly well the rational reasons behind the condition it can still be a very vivid and frightening experience. Many who discuss sleep paralysis within long winded articles tend to veer towards why we experience the occurrence, namely as a result of the paralysis that occurs as a natural part of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. They also discuss its rational and medical reasoning against the paranormal and perhaps even how to alleviate the condition. I on the other hand, being oddly fascinated with the dark and macabre side of any given situation, wish to delve into the history of sleep paralysis and its shadowy corners. Like any good sceptical researcher, the realisation that many occurrences of this nature are explainable and perfectly normal is ever present. But conversely, like any good sceptical researcher, the grim fascination in the macabre side is frankly too intriguing to simply ignore.

Let us begin this article linguistically. The original definition of sleep paralysis was codified by Dr. Samuel Johnson in his book *A Dictionary of the English Language* as 'nightmare' – a term that evolved into our modern definition. Even more interestingly, the word "mare" taken from the latter half of "nightmare" literally translates from Old English into "demon" – a spirit or goblin which rides on people's chests while they sleep, allegedly bringing on bad dreams or "nightmares". The "mare" element of the English "nightmare" derives from the same root as the Germanic "mahr" and Old Norse "mara", a feared supernatural being, who lay on people's chests at night, thereby suffocating them. The mare in more recent times has largely been left to rot in forgotten myth and legend but even if the creature that inspired the word "mare" has been largely left in the past in modern times and replaced by more immediate cultural influences, the "mare" has most certainly left its dark mark in many European languages.

For example, in Norway to experience the "mare" is to have a mareritt, and we can locate nachtmahr in German, nachtmerrie in Dutch and cauchemar in French. The original "mare" influence also forms the foundations of central and eastern European terms for nightmare: "zmora" in Polish, "morica" in Croatian, "more" in Serbian, "muera" in Czech and "kikimora" in Russian. The presence of

the mare in so many languages has understandably led linguistic experts to assume that it is of Indo-European origin, a language that set in motion the basis for most European languages, although there seems no agreement as to its Indo-European meaning. Moros meaning "death", mer meaning to "drive out" and mar to "pound, bruise, crush" have all been suggested.

The sense of pressure or weight upon the chest or other parts of the body seems exceptionally important when encountering the "mare" and is usually the most common defining point within the experience of sleep paralysis. It is not surprising to learn then that it is the prominent feature in the language used to describe the ordeal throughout Europe. However, the idea of pressure is also present in other terms for the nightmare experience that do not share the "mare" element. In Germanic languages we find the word *alldrucken* translating into "elf-pressing" and also the word "*hexendrucken*" meaning "witch-pressing". The term for the nightmare in medieval French, "*appesart*", Italian "*pesuarole*", Spanish "*pesadilla*," and finally in Portuguese "*pesadela*" all derive from the verb "*peser*", meaning "to press down upon". Even in the ancient language of Latin we find the word "*incubus*" (a somewhat well placed creature for this discussion) which conveniently arrives from the word "*incubare*" meaning literally to "to lie down upon".

My apologies for the sheer amount of quotation marks; it surely does boggle the mind, but I assure you to understand the language is to understand the connotations and perception regarding the entire subject. In almost every language in this article, and beyond actually, there is a term relating to the "mare" or similar creatures and / or the feeling of being pressed down upon. As such it can be understood that this experience (sleep paralysis and its visions) have been transmitted and experienced throughout every culture in very similar circumstances and termed as such. It is interesting to note at this point that with every experience felt and reported by sufferers, wherever in the world they are, a repetitiveness has been encountered. Surely then we can surmise that it is seemingly random, occurs by chance and is a bodily symptom rather than being caused by a bad moral lifestyle, a paranormal experience, or lack of religious conviction. Either that or we can assume our punishers, namely the evil "mare", practice a very boring fashion in which to teach us a lesson.

Let us continue. Besides the language, what is very interesting is that the connotations, despite the very similar experiences, change from culture to culture and are perceived and explained very differently. Surely then, the perception of sleep paralysis and its visions are subjective and derive from our backgrounds, fears and experiences throughout our lives?

From the aforementioned literary terminologies we can assume that for hundreds or even thousands of years sleep paralysis and nightmares have been

associated with the paranormal. This of course is understandable due to its frighteningly complex, hyper-real visions and experiences that come along for the ride. Some anecdotal evidence portrays sleep paralysis as horrific, with reported visitations which are anything from old hags whispering unknown, seemingly evil languages in their victim's ear, to ghouls sitting upon their chests paralyzing them and even to, bizarrely, the image of a white horse which, if you know your demonic lore, is said to be the visage of Satan himself. Legends in every culture around the world have dreamt up a means to explain these sensations of sleep paralysis accompanied by visions of all manner of devilish beings, most famously the Old Hag, from which the term Old Hag syndrome derives. Most of the explanations given by these cultures usually result in a sinister connotation and are usually associated with myth, legends and religious teachings of the time.

Let us start with a short example that arrives from ancient Hebrew legends. These interesting legends equate the Old Hag visitations with Adam's first wife Lilith which, according to Jewish lore, was indeed the first woman God created, rather than Eve, who was the second. Lilith, according to the story, abandoned Adam after she refused to become subservient to him. She then refused to return to the Garden of Eden after she mated with Archangel Samael (later to fall from Heaven's grace and become Satan) with whom she bore his demonic children. Thus God, after destroying all of Lilith's offspring, made Eve to replace her. She now allegedly wanders alone as a succubus causing havoc in the night and taking her revenge on the men of this world, the descendants of Adam.

Various accounts deriving from as early as the middle ages and beyond generally follow the same suit, normally involving adversarial religious characters or iconic satanic creatures and blame it on a multitude of negative reasons and enemies. People who experienced sleep paralysis sought explanations for such a terrifying event believing it to be belligerent and as such witchcraft, for instance, in a more gullible time, was a prime explanation created not many moons ago for why humans face sleep paralysis. Witch trial records and other early-modern writings on witchcraft reveal that in various European societies people complained of being physically oppressed at night by witches and other supernatural beings, the victims of these nocturnal assaults (sleep paralysis) describing a similar set of symptoms.

During the unlawful trial of the supposed witch Olive Barthram in Suffolk, England, in 1599, one of her alleged victims, Joan Jorden, testified before court that a shape-changing apparition spirited on by Barthram tormented and harassed her at night. This nocturnal entity entered the room down the chimney and Jorden described it as being "a thick dark substance about a foot high, like to a sugar loaf, white on top". On the following occasion, however, the spirit appeared in the well-defined shape of a cat and was posed as being Barthram's

“familiar“. Even if this had been the case and the experiences genuinely of a paranormal nature, which of course it wasn't, how on earth she knew this entity was sent by Barthram, and not by some other 'witch', is anyone's guess and clearly depicts the gullibility and lack of knowledge of the times.

Several similar testimonies were made during the Salem witch trials of 1692. Robert Downer's experience occurred after the accused witch, Susan Martin, had allegedly called out: "Some She-Devil would shortly fetch you away." That evening, "as he lay in his bed, there came in at the window, the likeness of a cat, which flew upon him, took fast hold of his throat, lay on him a considerable while, and almost killed him."

Bernard Peach also testified that, one night, "he heard a scrabbling at the window, whereat he then saw Susanna Martin come in, and jump down upon the floor. She took hold of this deponent's feet, and drawing his body up into an heap, she lay upon him near two hours; in all which time he could neither speak nor stir." When the paralysis finally began to wear off he bit Martin's fingers and she "went from the chamber, down the stairs, out at the door."

Bridget Bishop of the Salem witch trials was similarly accused. Richard Coman testified that eight years before, while he was in his bedroom trying to sleep, she had "oppressed him so, that he could neither stir himself, nor wake any one else, and that he was the night after, molested again in the like manner." John Louder also testified that, one night, after having argued with Bishop, "he did awake in the night by moonlight, and did see clearly the likeness of this woman grievously oppressing him; in which miserable condition she held him, unable to help himself, till near day".

Of course, these accusations could just as well have been fabrication, bouts of suggestion or pressure from their peers to accuse these poor people and be rid of them. However, these claims, by all these recorded trials, do sound remarkably like experiences brought on by sleep paralysis or similar sleep disorders, don't they? Especially now we have prior knowledge of the different languages, terminologies and wider experiences reported throughout the world (I told you the linguistics would be significant). Also, as these examples indicate, it is interesting to see that those who suffered from sleep paralysis saw their experiences not only as true confirmation of their bewitchment but also, through their hallucinatory experiences, as conclusive proof of the identity of the witch. Legal officials and members of more knowledgeable society, however, often responded to such paranormal testimonies with more caution than the average believer, who seemed to be obsessed and fearful of witches, magic and paganism, probably through religious, anti-pagan, anti-magic propaganda. Even demonologists and witch-hunters who accepted much of what witches were alleged to be able to do through Satan's powers were often unconvinced.

John Stearne, partner of the infamous witch-hunter general Matthew Hopkins, expressed caution saying: "Because apparitions may proceed from the fantasy of such as the party use to fear, or at least suspect, I forbear, because I would not that any should be accused, but where there are just grounds of suspicion".

Nevertheless, despite such prudent words, as the examples of trials above truly show, the widespread acceptance of natural causes, such as bodily symptoms and other hallucinogenic reasons, did not prevent paranormal testimony of bewitchment being taken very seriously by courts right up until the eighteenth century – and beyond in some regions of Europe. The last witch trial in Britain was convicting Helen Duncan as recently as 1944: it almost seems unbelievable, though completely unrelated with sleep paralysis.

Modern explanations, shirking religious reasons, attempt to associate modern sleep paralysis with alien abductions and extra terrestrial encounters. This enforces, I believe, the connection between culture and our experiences with acquiring subjective explanations. Religion is nowhere near as prominent as it once was in the past and as a result people that suffer and believe in the paranormal explanations behind the attacks they experience in the night look for modern reasonings just as our ancestors looked for theirs. Demons, witches and old hags with black cats all seem too far fetched, too taboo, maybe even a little silly nowadays, though reports of them are still experienced. No, the new theory on the block involves those pesky critters from the heavens. It's all changed from the hatred of Pagans to the fear of being attacked from the skies.

Since the first reported alien abduction in 1957 by Antonio Villas Boas there has been a number of others that have also claimed to have been abducted – bandwagon jumping or something else? Their stories are remarkably similar. They wake up and find themselves paralysed, unable to move or cry out for help. They witness hallucinations such as flashing lights, the images of grey aliens with large black eyes and the feeling of static electricity accompanying the sound of buzzing. Sound familiar? I know it does. There is of course no tangible evidence to connect the past belief of witches holding the sleeper down in a paralysed state and the alien abduction theory but there is a logical connection, a cultural change connection, a change from a god fearing culture, to a culture obsessed with space and what is out there. We seem to be influenced primarily by the media nowadays – a media bent on showing and illustrating the World's destruction and fantastical plots, much like the religion of yesteryear, and even in a certain minority nowadays.

The epic oil painting 'The Nightmare' by Henry Fuseli is the archetypal image of sleep paralysis within the media. In 'The Nightmare' a woman writhes helplessly upon her bed, coiled in her sheets as an uncharacteristically thoughtful demon

sits upon her chest pinning her down – our “mare”. In the background grins a mad eyed white horse – the aforementioned Beelzebub. It is this image that will forever be THE image of sleep paralysis however much beings from another world wish to muscle in on the “mar’s” show, and it will be forever this image that will help influence the belief in sleep paralysis away from the conventional, true medical explanations behind sleep paralysis. It is inevitable that sleep paralysis and the belief in the fantastical will continue for centuries to come, however much our culture progresses. The belief in something that is unnatural, oddly, is natural to the human being. People want to believe and thus however much we inform and educate, sleep paralysis and its dark little corners will be forever there. It will take on new guises. A few centuries ago it was witches and old hags; this century it has been associated with aliens. Who knows what guise it will take in the centuries to come? Who knows what the media will portray in the future for the world to fear?

The duality of nightmare interpretation (the natural and the magical) is not really surprising, as it conforms to the wider understanding and aetiology of bodily ill health and misfortune in cultures that accept supernatural causation. Even something as obvious as a broken leg could, in certain circumstances, be attributed to the machinations of a witch or an alien who orchestrated the fall that caused the break. Yet in most such instances the break would be seen as a natural misfortune and we can assume that, likewise, in many instances, the nightmare experience would be put down to natural causes. Even hallucinations of a presence of some sort, whether humanoid or animal, were probably popularly interpreted as a figment of the imagination on many occasions. It was when the nightmare experience tied in with other misfortunes, or occurred repeatedly, that witchcraft came to be suspected or confirmed.

# **TALKING WITH THE SPIRITS: ANTHROPOLOGY AND INTERPRETING SPIRIT COMMUNICATIONS**

By Jack Hunter

Anthropological approaches to the study of spirit mediumship groups, and related practices, have usually tended to focus on social-functional interpretations; arguing that spirit mediumship groups function as a means to enable female practitioners to protest against their traditional roles as “mothers, wives and sexual partners” in oppressive male-oriented societies (Skultans, 1974; Lewis, 1971). Such approaches, however, have failed to address the experiential core of these groups: members believe that they are able to make direct contact with the world of spirits, whether through communicating with spiritual entities channelled via entranced mediums, witnessing ostensibly paranormal phenomena in the context of séances, or through falling into trance themselves and experiencing direct communion with the “numinous”. The experiential element cannot be removed from an analysis of mediumship, as it represents the primary motive for séance attendance as the members themselves perceive it, to ignore it would be to detrimentally reduce the complexity of the phenomenon.

In addition to providing an overview of a variety of anthropological approaches to the issue of spirit possession and mediumship, this paper will detail the experiences of an anthropologist exploring this experiential component while conducting fieldwork for his undergraduate dissertation (Hunter, 2009a). The fieldwork itself was conducted at the Bristol Spirit Lodge, a centre established specifically with the aim to promote and develop trance and physical mediumship. The fieldwork methodology was one of immersive participant observation informed by the work of Edith Turner (1993; 1998; 2006), who has advocated the necessity of complete immersion in ritual if its functions and effects are to be adequately understood. In an attempt to understand the role of experience for the members of the group, participant observation was carried out in séances and mediumship development sessions as a means to gain an appreciation of the types of experience encountered by both sitters and mediums. This paper will present the research findings and describe the experiences of the researcher while engaged in the field.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As a discipline concerned specifically with the study of humanity, anthropology has long had to tackle the issue of spirits: entities that seem to follow us, in one form or another, wherever we go. Anthropology, then, has a wealth of theoretical standpoints from which we can interpret the phenomena of spirit mediumship, possession and other forms of communication with the spirit

world. Paul Stoller (1994) has suggested that commentators on spirit possession have traditionally tended towards five dominant explanatory frameworks: “functionalist, psychoanalytic, physiological, symbolic (interpretive/textual), and theatrical” (p.637). These perspectives, amongst others, will be discussed in the following pages.

My own research into mediumship practices in Bristol (Hunter, 2009a) led me to some interesting questions concerning the way in which anthropologists interpret spirits, both methodologically and ontologically. I was puzzled when I found that the spirits communicated with at the Bristol Spirit Lodge were much more than the abstractions I had anticipated them to be: when communicating through the physical body of the medium the spirits were essentially the same as any other human being. I realised that to those who participated regularly in séances the spirits were clearly thought of in terms of actual, objective, personhood (Hunter, 2010). Before I begin a discussion of this, however, it would be best to give a brief exposition of the various alternative perspectives that have grown out of anthropology’s dealings with the world of spirits.

### **SPIRIT MEDIUMSHIP AND SPIRIT POSSESSION**

This article will explore both spirit possession and spirit mediumship as related phenomena. It should be noted from the outset, however, that there are distinct differences between these two manifestations of spirit incorporation. Primary amongst these differences is the fact that while possession is usually, although not always, a spontaneous and undesired occurrence often requiring exorcism, mediumship is usually a voluntary practice. It will become clear when reading this article that although this distinction has been made the actual ethnographic facts do not fit so neatly into solid categories. The problems associated with labelling these, and related phenomena, have been widely debated in the anthropological literature (Lewis, 1971; Winkelman, 1986).

### **SPIRIT MEDIUMSHIP AND SHAMANISM**

Many writers have sought to explore the link between spirit possession, mediumship and shamanism (Emmons, 2000). Shamanism, as it is used in contemporary discourse, is an exceedingly broad term referring to a wide array of beliefs and practices throughout the world. The historian of religion Mircea Eliade (1989) was keen to stress the need for a strict definition of shamanism so as to distinguish it from a variety of other “individuals possessing magico-religious powers”, such as sorcerers, magicians, medicine men, witch-doctors, priests and so on. In order to do this he highlighted several key characteristics of Siberian and Central Asian forms of shamanism (indeed from where the Tungus term “*šaman*” originates), as examples by which we can judge whether a certain magico-religious practitioner is, strictly speaking, a shaman, or not. Eliade identified these characteristics as specific techniques by which a shaman

achieves his/her desired result: for instance special techniques for healing, ecstasy and so on (1989, pp.1-5). Although there are clearly similarities between the shaman, the possessed, and the medium, in that all three are concerned with spirits of one form or another, Eliade is quick to make this significant distinction:

“It will be easily seen wherein a shaman differs from a “possessed” person, for example; the shaman controls his “spirits”, in the sense that he, a human being, is able to communicate with the dead, “demons”, and “nature spirits”, without thereby becoming their instrument” (1989, p.6)

According to Eliade’s strict definition, a shaman does not necessarily have to become possessed to initiate communication with the world of spirits (though he/she often does), while mediums and the possessed must give their bodies over to the spirits: essentially surrendering themselves to spirit control. Jokic (2008) made some very interesting observations regarding the differences between spirit mediumship and shamanism while studying the state of modern Siberian Buriyat neo-shamanism. He noted that the Buriyat shamanic performances involved the possession of the shamans by spirits, and recognised that after the event the shamans claimed to have no memory of the séance proceedings – a trait particularly common in spirit possession and mediumship. When he asked the shamans about this they, after an initial defence of their shamanism, replied that at one time their shamans had been able to recall their trance journeys but that this skill had by now been forgotten. Jokic suggests that:

“...the lack of memory (post-trance amnesia) in contemporary shamanic séances is the result of particular historical circumstances, in this instance discontinuity or decrease of practices during the repressive Soviet era. As a result the shamans could not progress to higher degrees that would enable them to have more lucid out-of-body experiences during their possession trances and consequently to have more continuity of memory” (2008, p.43)

Such an example goes a long way towards highlighting the similarities and differences between shamanism, spirit possession and mediumship.

## **PIONEERING EXPLORATIONS**

No account of the development of anthropological approaches to the study of spirits would be complete without acknowledging the work of the early pioneers. Sir E.B. Tylor’s contribution has been hugely influential in the history of anthropology’s dealings with the spirit world. Tylor proposed that “the belief in

spiritual beings” was the minimum definition of religion itself. From this perspective, therefore, spirit beliefs must be considered amongst the oldest of humanity. To refer to this “primitive” ancestor of religion Tylor devised the term “animism”, from the Latin *anima* meaning soul. He then attempted to delve deeper into the notion of an animated universe by trying to develop a theory to explain the origin of the belief itself. His theory suggests that belief in the existence of spirits arises from human observations of the world:

“When the sleeper awakens from a dream, he believes he has really somehow been away, or that other people have come to him. As it is well known by experience that men’s bodies do not go on these excursions, the natural explanation is that every man’s living self or soul is his phantom or image, which can go out of his body and see and be seen itself in dreams” (1930, p.88)

Tylor then suggests that this idea is expanded upon to apply to other living creatures and features of the environment (plants, animals, rocks), and also to explain the facts of death, which in all outward appearances is much like a long sleep during which the *anima* fails to return to its body. The assumption in this argument, however, is that the conclusions that have been widely drawn from such experiences are based on a complete misinterpretation of the data, Tylor is essentially suggesting that so-called “primitive” humans are somehow less developed in their rationality and so lead themselves into misconceptions about the world. The notion that belief in spirits is a result of faulty logic and misperception has been exceedingly influential and widespread within anthropology.

The theorising of Emile Durkheim, the founding-father of modern sociology, has also been particularly influential. Indeed reiterations of his perspective, although appearing superficially different, are still commonly utilised today. Durkheim developed the notion of “social facts”, that is ideas that while not necessarily existing as facts of physical nature continue to have a tangible influence on human social life. In his view, therefore, spirits are conceived of as social facts performing a specific social function, in particular the maintenance of social cohesion: “Religious force is the feeling the collectivity inspires in its members, but projected outside and objectified in the minds that feel it” (Durkheim, 2008 [1912], p.174).

## **SPIRITS AND THE EMBODIMENT OF HISTORY**

Paul Stoller (1994) has emphasized the importance of the concept of embodiment in understanding spirit possession: “There can be little doubt that the body is the focus of possession phenomena” (p.636). Stoller writes that spirit possession is a “commemorative ritual” utilising “gestures, sounds, postures and movements” (p.640). Amongst the Songhay, with whom Stoller

conducted his fieldwork, possession involves the bodily incorporation of spirits from six different spirit families, each one representing a particular period of Songhay history.

Similarly, Michael Lambek (1998) has noted the use of spirit possession among the Sakalava of Madagascar as a means to retain their history. Spirits representing different epochs of Sakalava history possess the bodies of mediums to give advice on the decision making activities of the present. There are many benefits to discussing such issues with the ancestors: for instance it is possible to produce “historically informed” responses to modern situations in a way that is “pragmatic” while acknowledging the “concerns of earlier generations” (1998, p.109).

Interestingly a similar theme appeared in my own dealings with the Bristol Spirit Lodge. On many occasions, during conversation with the circle leader, the idea of using spirit mediumship as an educational tool arose. It was suggested that mediumship provided the ideal means to teach history in that it allows direct communication with spirits who had lived on the earth in bygone times. Even in modern European spirit mediumship it seems that there is a yearning to reconnect with the ancestors: to bring the past back to life and use the wisdom of those who came before us to better inform the decisions we make.

### **SPIRIT MEDIUMSHIP AS THEATRE**

In our modern western culture when we see a theatre performance we do not suppose that the actor has *become* the character he/she portrays, rather we understand that they are *pretending* to be someone else (Foley, 1985, p.27). In other societies, however, certain performances are understood in an entirely different way. Foley (1985), for example, explains how during Javanese trance dance performances the personalities of the dancers are believed to have been entirely “displaced... by some other being” (ibid). Our interpretations of spirit mediumship performances, being based on our own ethnocentric understanding of what a performance entails metaphysically (i.e. a form of deception and nothing more), are therefore greatly distanced from the interpretations of those practicing and observing such performance in their own culture. Beattie (1977) has pointed out certain assumptions often held by anthropologists considering spirit mediumship as theatre, and has suggested that they lead to a false interpretation of the way in which spirit mediumship is understood in non-western societies. He writes:

“The first of these [assumptions] was that a medium had to be *either* in a state of possession, a genuine trance, *or* in a condition of normal everyday awareness. This too sharp disjunction allowed for no intermediate conditions; that there might perhaps be *degrees* of dissociation. And the second false assumption... was that if ‘possession’ was in some sense and in some degree an ‘act’ consciously performed, it followed that the whole

thing was therefore fraudulent, a mere trick and not to be taken seriously. It did not take me very long to realise that this view was naïve and superficial” (Beattie, 1977, p.2)

Similarly, I have noted elsewhere the difficulties associated with trying to distinguish between what might be termed “reality”, performance and fraud in the context of contemporary physical mediumship practice (Hunter, 2009b). Spirit mediumship may very well be a form of performance, but this does not necessarily detract from the possibility that something more profound is actually taking place. Firth (1967) has suggested that such performances can have a significant therapeutic effect, and McClennon (1993) has argued that shamanic performances operate in a similar fashion utilising sub-conscious cues and wondrous events to provide “proofs” of the efficacy of their abilities.

### **SPIRIT POSSESSION AS SOCIAL PROTEST**

I.M. Lewis’ (1971) theory of peripheral spirit possession has been particularly popular in anthropological explorations of possession and mediumship practices around the world (Giles, 1987, p.235). The theory suggests that individuals inhabiting “peripheral situations”, for example women in particularly male dominated societies, are at risk of possession from spirits that “play no direct part in upholding the moral code of the societies in which they receive so much attention”. Possession cults from this perspective are seen as nothing more than “thinly disguised protest movements directed against the dominant sex”. Lewis argues that when in the possessed state the protester is “totally blameless” for her actions; “responsibility lies not with them, but with the spirits” (Lewis, 1971, pp.31-32). Analyses of spirit possession from this social protest perspective have been conducted worldwide: in the Zar possession cult of Northern Sudan (Boddy, 1988), amongst the Digo in Southern Kenya (Gomm, 1975), in the case of spontaneous epidemics of spirit possession in Malaysian factories (Ong, 1988), amongst Spiritualists in Wales (Skultans, 1974) and even in Japanese literature (Bargen, 1988), the list could go on.

Mediumship can undoubtedly provide women with significant social benefits. Kilson (1971) has written of the transformation in status that spirit mediumship brings about in Ga society. The Ga consider women to be innately inferior to men, which combined with illiteracy, un-married life and, potentially, an inability to conceive children leads to a particularly low social standing. Through becoming a spirit medium a woman is able to achieve a degree of status that she could not have attained under her normal circumstances. Peter Wilson (1967), however, disagrees with Lewis’ hypothesis on the grounds that within so-called “male dominated societies”, in which males and females operate in different spheres, it is not clear that women even necessarily feel downtrodden and neglected: “Deprivation surely implies withholding that which is due, but in what traditionally male dominated society is it ever regarded as a

woman's due that she be granted access to the man's domain?" (1967, p.367) Wilson implies, therefore, that to suggest spirit possession acts as a form of female protest in traditionally male dominated societies leads to a contradiction in terms: what are they protesting against if everything they have is all their society allows? Donovan (2000) has argued that Lewis' hypothesis, although being generally applicable to peripheral possession cults, might not be a complete theory, but rather can be supplemented by other perspectives.

### **SPIRITS AS AGENTS AND INFORMANTS**

Bubandt (2009) has pointed to the huge benefits concomitant with treating spirits as informants during ethnographic research. While conducting fieldwork on the island of Ternate in Indonesia, Bubandt treated the spirits he encountered via entranced mediums as "methodologically real" through using them as informants to further his understanding of the political state of the society he was investigating. Through treating the spirits as methodologically real Bubandt was able to get "on with the business of studying the social and political reality of spirits" and recognized "that the invocation of spirits does make a difference in the field (to both the anthropologist and to the people we study) without opening oneself to accusations of political naivety or cultural solipsism" (2009, p.298). Like the spirits in Madagascar (Lambek, 1998) and amongst the Songhay (Stoller, 1994), the spirits Bubandt encountered were figures from history brought forward to give advice on issues of modern politics, and as such they were key political agents – having a direct effect on the political decision making of the present day.

### **IS SPIRIT POSSESSION PATHOLOGICAL?**

One of the great debates with regard to both spirit possession and spirit mediumship is concerned with whether or not these phenomena are symptoms of a pathological condition (Emmons, 2008, p.72). Possession behaviours are often compared to psychological states such as dissociative identity disorder (DID), which in terms of outward appearances bares certain behavioural similarities to both possession and mediumship (Crabtree, 1988). Crabtree defines DID as "a condition in which two or more personalities manifest themselves in one human being" (1988, p. 60). In the early days of inquiry into these practices anthropologists were particularly keen to draw the conclusion that they were symptoms of mental illness. Psychoanalytic anthropology has also commented on spirit possession, arguing that the phenomenon is a result of traumatic experiences in the personal life-history of the possessed.

Another medical interpretation of spirit possession that was, until relatively recently, popular in the anthropological literature is the "nutrient deficiency hypothesis", which essentially suggests that instances of spirit possession, particularly in women, occur as a result of mal-nourishment (Kehoe & Giletti,

1981; Bourguignon, Bellisari & McCabe, 1983, p.414). Kehoe & Giletti (1981) write:

“There is a strong correlation between populations subsiding on diets poor in calcium, magnesium, niacin, tryptophan, thiamine, and vitamin D, and those practicing spirit possession; conversely, populations reported as having probably adequate intakes of these nutrients generally lack culturally sanctioned spirit possession” (1981, p.550)

Kehoe & Giletti suggest that spirit possession cults represent “institutionalised recognition of class endemic symptoms of nutrient deficiency” (p. 551). Naturally, however, the idea has been subject to much criticism as it is easy to see instances where the hypothesis fails to stand up to scrutiny. Bourguignon et al (1983), for instance, have provided several counter arguments against the nutrient deficiency hypothesis. Many other anthropologists have directly questioned the idea that spirit possession is a pathological condition (Budden, 2003; Klass, 2003). Budden (2003) argues that the prevalence of dissociative possession and possession-trance states across the world, and the extent to which such states are “embedded within historical and cultural contexts” (p.31), indicates that the phenomenon is far from abnormal, indeed in many societies it may be a desirable state, with those able to incorporate spiritual entities at will being granted higher social status.

Spirit possession is, however, undoubtedly conceived of as related to illness in many societies, whether in terms of the illness being caused by an intruding spirit or being healed by a medium in trance (Freed & Freed, 1964; Lewis, 1971). Such societies may be thought of as “externalizing” pathology rather than “internalizing” it, as is the norm in the western scientific view (McClennon, 1993). It would seem reasonable to suggest, then, that spirit possession, depending upon the context within which it occurs, can be seen as both a cause and cure for illness.

### **SPIRITS AS ONTOLOGICALLY REAL**

Traditionally if an anthropologist comes back from her/his fieldwork experience having adopted some of the conceptual perspectives of the people they were studying they were said to have “gone native”. To “go native” has for a long time been a great taboo in academic anthropology, being considered an indicator that an ethnographer had lost their objectivity. Edith Turner (1993) is an anthropologist who has been brave enough to breach this taboo in writing about the possibility that the spirit beliefs, and related practices, of so many disparate societies around the world might have some basis in reality. Her radical shift in perspective resulted from her own direct personal experience of an Ndembu healing ceremony in Zambia (Turner, 1998). At the culmination of the *ihamba* ritual, a long and emotional ceremony involving many participants, Turner

perceived what she describes as a “spirit-form” being extracted from the back of the afflicted patient:

“...the traditional doctor bent down amid the singing and drumming to extract the harmful spirit... I saw with my own eyes a large gray blob of something like plasma emerge from the sick woman’s back. Then I knew the Africans were right, there is spirit stuff, there is spirit affliction, it isn’t a matter of metaphor and symbol, or even psychology” (Turner, 1993, p.9)

Turner’s personal realisation that there is much more to spirits, and indeed the paranormal in general, than the reductive theories of anthropology have hitherto managed to explain has essentially opened up a whole new arena of anthropological inquiry and understanding.

### **THE BRISTOL SPIRIT LODGE**

Basing my approach on that advocated by Edith Turner, namely an immersive form of participant observation, I endeavoured to explore contemporary mediumship in Bristol at the Bristol Spirit Lodge, a non-denominational home-circle devoted specifically to the development of trance and physical mediumship. The Lodge itself was founded in 2005 by Christine Di Nucci after she was introduced to the world of physical mediumship séances by a friend. After attending a number of séances her new found interest blossomed into a full-blown fascination. In order to further her interest she had a 12’x10’ wooden shed constructed at the bottom of her garden in which to conduct séances on her own terms. The séances were initially carried out in a small circle of close friends with new members attending occasionally. At the time of my fieldwork early in 2009 the Lodge had a total of nine regular members, of whom two were developing mediums; Jon and Sandy.

The development process revolved primarily around séances conducted on a twice weekly basis: Tuesday evening sittings were set aside for the development of Jon’s mediumship, and Thursday mornings’ were for Sandy’s. Both Jon and Sandy were working towards the development of so-called face transfiguration phenomena, whereby energy around the face of the medium is apparently manipulated by discarnate entities in order to physically manifest facial features other than the medium’s to the sitters. In addition to this, both mediums also went into trance in order to allow communications to be received from their respective spirit teams. Neither medium was usually able to recall the events of the séance while entranced. The séances themselves followed a fairly strict and ritualised format. The proceedings began with the door to the Lodge being locked so as to avoid any unnecessary distractions. Once the sitters were all comfortably seated around the edges of the séance room, and the medium was positioned inside the cabinet, an opening prayer was read primarily as a

means to set the proposed intention for the session. For example the opening prayer might have featured any of the following invitations:

We invite physical healing for those that spirit feels able to heal  
We invite materialisation phenomena  
We invite spirit's support for our developing mediums  
We invite transfiguration phenomena to be displayed

The opening prayer itself reads as follows:

Heavenly father and Spirit friends  
We ask that you draw close to us tonight  
We are sitting together in love and light  
And are working only for the highest good  
We invite communication with the spirit world  
That is evidential of continuing life and consciousness  
We invite physical phenomena that may be witnessed by us all  
And be spoken about to others so that they too  
May become open towards belief  
We thank Spirit for their love and protection and  
Ask for a circular canopy to be placed over us all  
Thank you. Amen.

Following the opening prayer a CD was played while the medium relaxes into his/her trance state. The music served to provide a relaxing and positive atmosphere for the séance proceeding. The séances were generally conducted in red light conditions. The mediums at the Bristol Spirit Lodge were keen to demonstrate that there was no trickery involved in what they did. Full blackout conditions were only every occasionally used for special events or when spirit communication suggested that it should be so. The length of the séances was usually between one and two hours. During this time the first hour was generally spent in silence with the music playing while the medium's spirit team attempted to manifest physical séance phenomena: small lights, hazy mists, and face transfiguration. After an hour or so of this, members of the spirit team would come forward to communicate with the sitters. Questions were asked to the communicating entities on a wide range of topics: from metaphysical issues to politics. The communications were generally characterised by lucidity and intelligence (see Di Nucci & Hunter, 2009 for transcripts of séances at the Lodge).

When the ostensible spirits indicated that the session was coming to an end, the "closing music" was played. This music was always the same, providing a reassuring and grounding focus of attention for both the medium and the sitters. When the medium "returned" to normal waking consciousness the closing prayer was read:

We thank Spirit for their love and protection  
We thank Spirit for all that they have achieved  
We ask for Spirit to close us down now, and to  
Use any excess energy within this room for the purpose of healing  
May love and protection remain with us all  
Until we meet again  
Thank you. Amen.

All séances were recorded using a digital voice recorder, the aim being to upload the recordings to the Lodge's website in order to disseminate the spirit wisdom that had been received. When asked whether the séance proceedings were religious in nature, all members responded in the negative. Spirit communications were understood to be a natural fact, regardless of any religious interpretation: séances were treated as experiments. Nevertheless there was evidently a sense of differentiation between the sacred space of the Lodge and the profane world outside. The Lodge space was treated with great respect; a respect that in many ways resembled religious awe. Even if the Lodge's practices were not considered religious, they certainly partook of at least a semi-religious character (reverential awe, prayers and so on).

## **EXPERIENCING THE SÉANCE**

In an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the experiential component of séance practice at the Bristol Spirit Lodge, I participated fully in séances and mediumship development circles. This mode of inquiry was greatly influenced by the work of the anthropologist Edith Turner, who has written extensively on the necessity for total immersion in the study of spirit beliefs and rituals (Turner, 1993; 1998; 2007). It was important to my investigation that I expose myself to elements of experience that would simply go unnoticed from a purely observational perspective. I wanted to "feel" what it was like to sit in séance.

I participated in numerous séances as a sitter at the Bristol Spirit Lodge, and in this capacity experienced some very interesting visual phenomena: apparent transfiguration of the medium's face and torso, small shining lights, hazes, mists and so on. I found it very difficult to classify these experiences as either objective or subjective. For the most part they seemed so subtle as to be a product of my own mind, and yet, interestingly, the experiences were often validated by other sitters. One example I recall vividly was when I noticed that the medium's head was now bald and rather stern looking. When discussing the events of the séance afterwards several of the other sitters independently commented, as I had not mentioned what I had seen, that they had witnessed the transfiguration of the medium's head into that of a bald Chinese man.

Moments like this really make you wonder. How can an apparently subjective phenomenon be witnessed by more than one individual?

In addition to sitting as a witness I also engaged in mediumship development and, to my great surprise, underwent some very peculiar sensations. I will now describe in detail the most peculiar, and profoundly affecting, experience I had while developing my own trance mediumship. Because Jon was unable to attend a séance on the evening of 10/3/09 it was decided that the time would best be spent with the intention of development: this involved sitting in red light conditions and relaxing into guided meditating. Michelle, a regular sitter who had had previous mediumistic experience, was placed in the cabinet, but the intention of opening prayer was for spirit intelligence to make itself known through *any* of the vessels present in the room.

After the prayer was read, the music was put on and we were told to relax “and just see what happens”. As I sat there I decided I would meditate and enjoy the relaxing atmosphere. I closed my eyes and focussed my attention onto my breathing. Eventually I felt my hands tingling as they rested on the chairs of the arm and my heart rate began to quicken. I started to feel as though I was going to lose control, as though I was verging on fainting. I wasn’t afraid of losing consciousness, it didn’t feel as though that would occur, but I did feel that I was becoming distanced from my physical body; as though I was somehow sitting just back from my body. It was a very peculiar sensation. At the point when I felt most distanced from my body I heard Christine say that she sensed a presence standing by me. This made me panic, because I too was feeling a distinct presence at the time, and her confirmation was shocking. In response to all of this I panicked and opened my eyes. My heart rate was still racing and I felt light headed. I had to regain control of myself; to calm down and reassure myself that everything was ok.

When I had regained composure I decided to begin my meditation again. This time the physical sensations I felt in the first meditation came on again much faster; my heart rate increased and the tingling in my hands returned. I began to feel myself distancing from my body again, and at the point of greatest distance I felt as though there was a space in my body which could easily be filled, it was as though I had made room in my physical body by moving myself out of it. I then felt an energy move into my left hand, and my index finger began to rise of its own accord. It felt as though it were being lifted by a cushion of air. My second finger began to move upwards also, and soon my hand was quivering on the arm of the chair. I was aware of the movement, but also of the fact that I was not consciously willing it to happen. I was observing the movement, but not with my eyes. This motion began to become more vigorous and soon my whole arm was vibrating and shaking from side to side. All the while my head felt heavy and was drooped down onto my chest. It wasn’t long before my hand began to lower itself; it felt as though the energy was becoming less intense, and as it did so my hand’s movement also became less intense.

Soon it was only my two forefingers that remained up, and then these too had returned to normal. When it had all subsided I had "returned" and was fully in control of my body. I was quite shocked by this experience, and it took quite a while before I was fully calm afterwards.

The second occasion on which this occurred was 19/3/09. Similarly this was a development sitting due to Jon's absence. I was sitting in the cabinet this time with the intention of conducting a guided meditation. As the meditation progressed it came to a point where the guiding was no longer having any effect. Christine noticed this and decided that she would stop guiding me. Soon after Christine had stopped I once again felt the vibration in my left hand, particularly concentrated on my two forefingers. The sensation was much less intense than on the first occasion but was nevertheless similar in many ways.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the phenomena of spirit possession and mediumship are complex and multi-faceted (a fact that is testified by the great many theoretical and methodological interpretations devised for them), and as such require multiple perspectives if they are to be understood. It seems evident that all of the interpretations described in this paper succeed in shedding light on these mysterious phenomena, though no single theory successfully accounts for all of their aspects. And yet, if we begin to bring these perspectives together a much more coherent picture starts to take shape: If we consider dancing, deception and trickery as methods by which mediums can induce altered states of consciousness, both in themselves and in observers, we begin to see the significant role of performance as a tool for spirit contact. We also begin to understand the role of participation in ritual performance, as Edith Turner discovered, in the manifestation of the supernatural world. Through this we start to fathom the significance of the social component in developing social realities, which in themselves may facilitate the mediation and experience of genuine spiritual entities.

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## OUT OF BODY, OUT OF MIND?

By Sophie Homer

The term “near-death experience” (NDE) was coined by Raymond Moody MD, PhD, in his book *Life After Life* (1975) following years of extensive research into the field. Often happening to critically ill patients after deterioration of their condition, or to victims of a serious accident, the NDE is described in *An Introduction to Parapsychology* (Irwin and Watt, 2007: 157) as “a transcendental experience precipitated by a confrontation with death.” Experiences vary from those who have been in a near-fatal or potentially fatal situation to those who have actually been pronounced clinically dead for some length of time before responding to the resuscitative efforts of medics. Moody (1975) established several common but not necessary phenomenological elements of NDEs.

The second element of an NDE recognised by Moody - “the impression of being located outside of one’s physical body” (Irwin and Watt, 2007: 159) is the most commonly reported aspect of the phenomenon; 99% of NDE experiencers (Sabom, 1982) claim to have been separate and distinct from their physical bodies during the incident. Rather than just a characteristic of NDEs, this experience is a recognised phenomenon in its own right and is termed the “out-of-body experience” or OBE. OBEs can occur to anyone at any time and are not restricted to critical circumstances. Importantly, rather than the continued impression that their earthly life has ended or that their physical body is in grave danger, OBE experiencers are instead bestowed with feelings of surprise, panic or wonder and the trigger of the experience is often unknown. Experiences quintessentially describe floating through space and being detached from their bodies before their normal mode of consciousness is restored.

“The out of body experience may be defined as one in which the centre of awareness appears to the experiencer to occupy temporarily a position which is spatially remote from his or her body.”

(Irwin and Watt, 2007: 173)

What is it about near-death and out-of-body experiences that makes them so fascinating yet so mysterious?

My recent research on out-of-body and near-death experiences, in conjunction with previously published accounts, have important implications for our understanding of human consciousness. Here, Carolyn provides an account of the near-death experience her mother had as a child:

*In about May 1936, my mother was nine years old and had just suffered the death of her mother from cancer. Her father, grief stricken and unable to cope, sent the youngest of his seven children away permanently to live with various family members. My mother went to live with her older sister and her husband, who were not the kindest or warmest of people, and failed to notice my mother's worsening earache, even when she cried out in the night.*

*Eventually my mother's condition deteriorated to critical, and she was quickly admitted to the then Queen's Hospital in Birmingham. She underwent a major operation to open the side of the head and manually remove a severe infection from the mastoid area of the inner ear under general anaesthetic. This was in the days before penicillin had been discovered to treat such infections.*

*After the operation, her head shaved and swathed in bandages, she remained in a coma for several days. It was felt that she was probably not going to survive the procedure, and her father and family were contacted and gathered around the bed, fearing the worst.*

*My mother only remembers being wheeled down a long corridor to the operating theatre, and on the way she told a cleaning lady "I want to go home". "You are going home very soon my love" replied the lady kindly. The trolley was then placed under the operating theatre lights and the little 9 year old girl knew no more as the anaesthetic mask placed over her mouth took effect.*

*She opened her eyes and found herself floating upwards and then slowly backwards, head first, out of a tall, narrow Victorian-style window. She was aware that she was leaving the hospital via a window, and could see the ward below. She had been unconscious since entering the operating theatre several days earlier, so had never consciously seen the ward she was in. No sooner had she looked down and became aware of the disappearing ward below her, than she went into "reverse" and began floating back in through the window again, feet first. She opened her eyes to find herself lying in bed in the ward, surrounded by her family. Behind her bed was a tall, narrow, Victorian-style sash window. She eventually recovered but remained partially deaf all her life.*

Carolyn describes the common floating sensation her mother experienced, along with the ability to look down on her surroundings. It is particularly interesting that she saw during her NDE what she had not yet seen in reality, and

remarkable that the two corresponded perfectly. It is also notable that as soon as she experienced the realisation of what was happening and gained awareness of her surroundings, Carolyn's mother "went into reverse" and returned to her body. It seems to be a common theme throughout accounts of out-of-body or near-death experiences that as soon as the person involved gains awareness, realises what is happening or begins to panic, the experience in one way or another reaches its end.

Carolyn's mother clearly experienced an NDE due to the critical circumstances under which the event took place. The first example of an OBE, the consciousness becoming separate from the body not necessarily in critical circumstances, comes from another experient, Annette:

*I once had an "out-of-body experience" where I was flying.*

*I was in bed at the time, and in that state where I was neither asleep nor awake. All at once I seemed to soar up into the inky black sky, surrounded by twinkly stars. It was a wonderful experience flying around past all the bright lights. I felt very happy and was most reluctant to return to my normal state. It all seemed very natural at the time, as though I had done it many times before and there was no fear whatsoever.*

*The experience remained in my mind for several days and try as I might, I have never been quite able to repeat it.*

*I do not know what triggered this or why it happened at that particular point in time.*

Annette also describes the common feeling of flying or floating, as she describes how she seemed to, "soar up" and then "fly around". As publicised by Moody (1975) the happiness she felt is a common feature of NDE and OBE reports, and the fact that she was unable to determine the trigger and describes the experience as sudden is also archetypal. This aspect of unexpectedness is echoed by college student Onshell, who describes an incident during his holiday abroad:

*I was walking back to my hotel in Sorrento, Italy when suddenly every muscle in my body relaxed and I found myself about 20 metres straight up in the air with the ability to see in all directions simultaneously. The whole experience lasted about one second and then I returned to my body where I was able to catch myself before I hit the floor. As I was in the air I could see my body below falling in slow motion.*

Onshell's experience is interesting as not only does he relate the common features of an out-of-body experience such as the feeling of being separated from and higher than the body, but he also suggests a shift in the normal progression of time. From noticing that every muscle in his body had relaxed, Onshell immediately found himself "20 metres straight up in the air", watching his body below "falling in slow motion". He asserts that the experience lasted only about a second, which corresponds to how long it would take his body below to fall to the floor before he was able to catch himself. Even more interesting is his sudden ability to "see in all directions simultaneously," which is difficult to imagine to the majority of us, who have never experienced anything of this sort.

Christine tells us that her OBE experience, like most of the others I had collected, was sudden, arbitrary and completely unexpected:

*It felt like I had only just put my head on the pillow when I experienced travelling at a great speed through a swirling black hole with flashing lights and stars rushing past me. Suddenly it stopped, everything went quiet and I became aware that I was watching myself rise from my bed and float towards the door. I could hear religious chanting and became really scared. I frantically began to pray and pulled myself out of it.*

*I was later told that the experience was called astral projection and if I had continued with it, I would have gone on a journey.*

She appears to be describing an OBE as she describes "watching [herself] rise from [her] bed and float towards the door", though it is unusual for experiencers to describe watching their bodies do something as unusual as levitate. The religious chanting is an intriguing aspect of Christine's experience, especially as she does not (and did not, prior to the experience) consider herself to be a particularly religious person. The panic and fear Christine describes as she "became really scared" and "frantically began to pray," are in direct contrast to the feelings of love, peace and security felt by many experiencers of OBEs (Moody 1975) including Annette as related above.

Finally, Teresa provided me with perhaps the rarest and most inspiring account of a near-death experience I have heard first hand. She describes not her own experience, but watching her mother have a near-death or out-of-body experience in the early nineties:

*My mum had got cancer and it happened about three weeks before she died. We'd brought her bed down into the other room, facing the wall. She was on medication and things obviously, a very low dose of*

*morphine. On this one particular day my sister was here and it was about half past six. My sister was getting ready to go and my brother was on his way up to come and visit mum. She was disabled anyway so she was in bed, and the nurses had been up but they hadn't touched her medication because there was plenty enough to last until the morning, and she'd had something to eat. All of a sudden, she said, "I feel ever so strange... I feel really funny." At that, she closed her eyes and we were saying, "Are you alright mum?" and she just said "I feel strange," and she seemed to go off into a trance. Her eyes were open, and she was just lay back looking above the door. I said, "Mum, mum, are you alright?" and she didn't answer. My sister said, "Oh my God I hope she's okay, I hope this isn't it," because you don't know what to expect with somebody who's dying. Anyway, I instantly phoned the hospital and spoke to a doctor there, and said I'm really concerned because my mum's got cancer and we don't know whether this is the end, and the nurses had been and gone but we'd got no way of contacting them. He said that when he finished his shift, which was in about twenty minutes, he'd call up. He said there was probably nothing he could do but he'd try and reassure us and see how things are. Anyway, this had been going on for about ten minutes when the doorbell went and Mark came in. We were saying "mum?" but she was just trance-like. Although she was looking up with her eyes open, she'd got this fantastic smile on her face, as though she was seeing something absolutely wonderful. Normally my mum was quite a heavy breather, but you couldn't even see her chest going up and down. Mark checked her pulse and she'd hardly got one. Rosemary and I were still stood cowering because we thought she was going, and all of a sudden from an upright position at the end of her feet I actually saw a shadow, a greyish shadow, and it fell back into my mum. It was a total shape, and as it went back into my mum and touched her chest she took a deep breath and started breathing again. Neither my sister nor Mark saw it. After that, Mark said that her pulse was picking up and she was breathing like she normally did, and she said, "Oh, I've had the most wonderful dream." When the doctor arrived I said it's okay she's fine now, and I said I can't believe what I saw. He said, "Believe you me, I've seen many things similar to that," so obviously, it does happen. That must have been an out-of- body experience for her, but I actually saw it, and I don't think I've ever met anybody else that's ever seen that.*

I then asked Teresa whether her mother had described the 'dream' she had, to which she replied:

*No, she just said, "I've had this beautiful dream." She said it was absolutely beautiful, and she did actually say that she was with her mother.*

Teresa's account of watching a form return to her mother's body after she had been in a "trance-like state" and observing her breathing and pulse rate return to normal at the same moment is undoubtedly remarkable. From her mother's brief description of the "dream" she had, it is plausible to conclude that she did indeed have a near-death experience as she fulfils two of Moody's (1975) phenomenological elements of an NDE: feelings of overwhelming beauty and interaction with her deceased mother. Furthermore, her illness was, at that point, life threatening and though the amount of drugs and medicines she was on at the time could potentially invalidate her account, it is to be remembered that the account is not her own, but that of 'Teresa's', making this an objective account of an NDE.

Mind-brain identity theory, the accepted model of mind and consciousness, entails an ontological reduction of the mental to the physical. Mind-brain identity theorists claim that the 'mind' we perceive ourselves to have is nothing more than our brain, and our thoughts and emotions can be equated to brain states, electrical impulses and chemical processes. Whilst this theory is preferred amongst scientists, psychologists and philosophers alike, even taken for a given, it is not without its problems. Aside from being, one may say, an overly simplistic view of something highly complex and perplexing – a "mystery" according to Daniel C. Dennett, Professor of Cognitive Studies at Tufts University (Goodreads Inc, 2010) – mind-brain identity theory is also incompatible with evidence of near-death and out-of-body experiences.

If the mind is ontologically equivalent to the brain, then the two must surely occupy the same physical space; however, it is difficult to assign thoughts and consciousness to any particular space as workings of the mind do not seem to have a special location. Moreover, evidence of out-of-body and near-death experiences show that the mind or consciousness can be away from the physical brain, sometimes even looking at the body from a substantial height or distance; if the mind is merely the brain, surely the mind should always be exactly where the brain is. Mind-brain identity theory holds that where there is a mind there is a brain and a working mind can only exist in the form of a working brain. However, evidence of OBEs and NDEs strongly refutes both of these claims: out-of-body experiences demonstrate that minds can be located away from and independently of brains, and near-death experiences attest that working minds are neither dependent on, nor the same as, working brains as the mind continues to move, perceive and even interact after the physical cessation of the brain: after the person in question has been pronounced clinically dead. This said, to take accounts of OBEs and NDEs at face value would therefore be to

reject the largely accepted mind-brain identity theory as an adequate, or even possible, model of consciousness.

The refuting evidence OBEs and NDEs provide is somewhat comparable to a criticism of mind-brain identity theory based on the ontological principle of the identity of indiscernibles. Also known as Leibniz's Law, this philosophical tenet holds that two objects or entities are truly identical only if they share each of their properties; to illustrate, A is identical to B if, and only if, A possesses no more and no less than each predicate possessed by B. Taking the brain as article A and the mind as article B, it is clear that by Leibniz's Law the two cannot be ontologically identical as their properties differ considerably. For example, the brain possesses the property of physical extension whilst the mind is non-extended; brain states are public (as they can be observed via PET and MRI scans) whereas the mind is private; and to mental states we can ascribe such attributes as intentionality and qualia, whilst it would be nonsensical to ascribe brain states with such. A thought must logically be intentional as one does not merely 'just think' or 'just want' or 'just doubt', rather one 'thinks *about*', 'wants *to*' and 'doubts *that*'. There is, unquestionably, a subject of each of our thoughts. However, intentionality such as 'she thought *about* the future' cannot be associated with physiological brain states as it would make no sense to assert that, for example, 'the synapse fired *about* the future.'

Mind-brain identity theorists, however, are likely to reject the application of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles on the basis that it is based around determining the similarity of two distinct entities, whereas the mind and the brain are in fact just one. If it is assumed that the mind and brain together form one whole then application of Leibniz's Law is irrelevant as, to illustrate, the mind and brain would both form article 'A' and there would be no 'B' with which to compare it. However, evidence from OBEs and NDEs shows that the mind and brain are not just ontologically dissimilar, but ontologically distinct as they suggest that the mind can move away from the brain. If this is accepted, then mind and brain cannot be seen to form 'one whole' together nor be the 'same thing,' as OBE reports clearly describe the separation of the two. As a consequence, Leibniz's Law is validly reinstated as another fundamental criticism of mind-brain identity theory.

A crucial further criticism of mind-brain identity theory is known as the 'hard problem' in studies of consciousness and has yet to be answered adequately. The quandary was eloquently put by Colin McGinn as how "the water of the physical brain is turned into the wine of consciousness" (McGinn, 1999) – we are unable to explain, and in fact unable to even begin to discuss how brain processes and electrochemical impulses could turn into thoughts and consciousness. This issue with mind-brain identity theory is notably similar to, and just as challenging as the problem of interaction associated with substance dualism and the notorious

pseudo-solution of “one day we will discover how the brain produces the consciousness” is ridiculously inaccurate (as at the present time we are not even remotely close to even knowing where to start) and could arguably be countered by equally tenuous claims such as “one day we will invent a machine that makes the soul visible.”

The evidence I have researched and collected discards mind-brain identity theory as a valid theory of mind on the basis of incompatibility. Mind-brain identity theory aims to classify mind and brain as one and the same, whereas NDEs and OBEs show that the two are not only distinct but can also, under certain circumstances, exist independently of one another. Due to this apparent ontological distinction, an alternative theory of mind known as substance dualism suggests itself to the investigation.

The position dates back to Plato but was pioneered by seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes, and for this reason is also known as Cartesian dualism. The theory rests on the assumption that mind and body are ontologically distinct substances, and throughout his works Descartes uses the words *mind* and *soul* interchangeably. It is important to note that ‘substance’ in this context means something existing independently and not relying on anything else for its continuation, rather than the traditional materialistic sense of the word, as thought and consciousness do not occupy physical space. (Descartes & Clarke, 1998)

Descartes’ position, in short, is that the essence of mind is non-extended, non-physical, indivisible, immaterial and immortal, whereas the body, by contrast, is physical, divisible, material and mortal. Part of the mortality of the body lies with its divisible nature as the matter from which it is formed can and does decay or become destroyed. As the mind is not made of matter there is, essentially, nothing (or at least nothing of the same substance) to decay or be destroyed and so the mind or soul must be immortal.

The idea that the mind, or soul, and body are two ontologically distinct, independent substances is neatly compatible with accounts of NDEs and OBEs, as all phenomena can be comprehensively explained by the notion that the soul is moving away from the body during the experience. The “flying” and “floating” sensations described by Annette, Carolyn and Onshell could be an impression of the feeling of the soul moving independently of the body, and the dissociative, unconstrained nature of most OBE accounts could be accounted for if it was accepted that the soul was temporarily independent of and separate from the body.

However, the major issue with substance dualism is known as the problem of interaction, and concerns how two ontologically distinct substances - an

immaterial, non-extended soul and a material, extended body - could interact. Gilbert Ryle flippantly described the Cartesian soul as, “the ghost in the machine”, (Ryle and Dennett, 2002) and for many philosophers, it is this issue that eradicates substance dualism entirely. Descartes proposed several unsubstantiated solutions to the problem, including the suggestion that the soul is connected to the body through the pineal gland and ‘intermingling theory’ – the idea that the soul is intermingled throughout the body and connected at every part. Of course, neither of these suggestions fully solves the problem as the issue of how two ontologically distinct substances could interact is still there, and his revised suggestion that the interaction is “a mystery known only to God” (Descartes & Clarke, 1998) is hardly satisfactory. Whilst this does throw substance dualism, as an account of mind, into serious philosophical trouble, it is no more problematical than mind-brain identity theory’s issue of how the physical brain could produce the non-physical phenomena of consciousness. Substance dualism is, in fact, a better account of mind than mind-brain identity theory based on the evidence I have collected, as substance dualism is at least compatible with and could make an attempt at explaining NDEs and OBEs, where mind-brain identity theory falls short. As previously explored, evidence of NDEs and OBEs eliminates the possibility that one is the other, so whether one is producing the other, causing the other, or intermingling with the other, the issue of some sort of interaction between the non-extended and the extended remains. It would seem, therefore, that the key to adequately accounting for out-of-body and near-death experiences with a theory of mind lies in the plausibility of an account of interaction.

The Cambridge philosopher C. D. Broad (Colborn, 2001) maintained that the only theory of mind compatible with survivalism (the belief that the soul continues to exist after physical death) is substance dualism, and to reject it would be to accept that the mind is a product of brain states and therefore not independent or separable in any way. However, Albert Einstein’s notable formula:  $E=MC^2$  tells us that matter is reducible to energy and that *everything* is, ultimately, energy (Bodanis, 2001); so why should this hypothesis fail to include thoughts and consciousness? Could it not be that our thoughts, personalities, desires, intentions, ideas, volitions et cetera all comprise the collective energies that make us *us* and instigate our consciousness? If this is the case, any evidence of out-of-body or near-death experiences would adduce to the idea that this energy is somehow amalgamated or fused into one whole, indissoluble entity, able to move, independently from the brain, about the physical realm once seceded from its relative body. OBEs and NDEs could, indeed, be neatly accounted for by the assertion that during these phenomena, the energy that is consciousness moves as a whole through space, unconstrained by the body in which it usually resides.

As the first law of thermo-dynamics states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed (Sheldon, 2010), the implications of this hypothesis would stretch so far as to avow that the consciousness must be, in a sense, immortal: impossible to disintegrate or destroy.

**Conservation of energy:** A scientific theory that the total energy of any material system is a quantity which cannot be increased or decreased by any action among the parts, and that when energy seems to disappear it is merely transformed into an equivalent quantity of another mode of energy.

(Global Oneness, 2010)

Upon death, the energy that comprises the physical body is gradually released back into the earth through the processes of decomposition, or as thermal energy during the practice of cremation, but the body has, of course, ceased to be conscious by this point, meaning the energy comprising the consciousness, being impossible to annihilate, must have already left its material host. This notion, if accepted, could account for the phenomena of near-death experiences.

This energy based theory of mind does not entail the problem caused by mind-brain identity theory - that of incompatibility with evidence of out-of-body and near-death experiences - as accepting that the consciousness is a formation of energy would allow for that energy to become independent of the physical brain and thus the consciousness of a person to exist outside of their body. The problem of interaction entailed by substance dualism (similar to the 'hard problem' of mind-brain identity theory) is also avoided as there is no issue of something non-extended interacting with something extended – the theory is, fundamentally, not a form of dualism as there is only one substance involved – both mind and body consist of energy but it exist in differing forms: matter and mind. The interaction of mind and body is, therefore, merely energy interacting with energy. The theory is compatible with both modern science (that maintains that everything is reducible to energy) and evidence of OBEs and NDEs as the energy of the mind exists in a different form from that of the body, thus allowing it to become separate from and move away from the physical form.

To draw my findings to a close, my first-hand evidence of near-death and out-of-body experiences, other research into the phenomena and analyses of what I have investigated demonstrate that NDEs and OBEs are a lot more commonplace than one would expect, and cannot merely be explained away by attributing the events to dreams or drugs, or via the accusation that each of the thousands of experients of the phenomena are lying, mistaken, insane or somehow in possession of a fabricated or highly distorted memory. My position holds that scientists, philosophers and psychologists alike should no longer ignore evidence such as that which I have collected, and discontinue the practice

of taking mind-brain identity theory as the incontrovertible theory of mind. Substance dualism is an outdated view of the self, though this does not detract from the assertion that based on evidence of OBEs and NDEs, (and the fact that the 'hard problem' for mind-brain identity theorists is equally as challenging as the problem of interaction) it better accounts for our minds and bodies than mind-brain identity theory does. However, the energy based theory I have suggested appears to surpass them both as the hard problem and the problem of interaction are eliminated. Whilst I may not be so bold as to suggest that evidence of OBEs and NDEs is hard evidence for either substance dualism or the alternative forms of energy theory of the self, or that either of these theories can be seen as the ultimate defining factor of the self, I would certainly suggest that the phenomena present something far beyond the explanatory power of the mind-brain identity theory: something incompatible with the view of mind we take for granted.

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# **IMPACT OF LIGHTING LEVEL ON REPORTING RATES**

## **A RESEARCH INVESTIGATION**

By Sarah Bakewell, Rose Haskins, Louise Hasson, Malcolm Gould, Nicky Sewell,  
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Many paranormal investigations take place overnight and in the dark, despite the evidence that most ghost sightings are during the light and that dark conditions can create false experiences. This research investigation examined whether lighting levels impacted on reporting levels and whether a location was 'haunted' had any impact on reporting rates. A considerably higher rate of experiences was reported in the 'dark' condition compared to the light, even when considering against paranormal belief scale levels. Whether the room was 'haunted' or 'non-haunted' had no association with higher levels of phenomena being reported.

### **ABOUT RESEARCH INVESTIGATIONS**

Most of PSI's investigation work is 'phenomena oriented', that is investigating a location known for recent experiences of 'hauntings' and focussing on finding explanations for those experiences.

'Research investigations' are a different category of investigation. These will typically take place where there is not a distressed client and where there is not a client in need of closure. This typically includes public buildings with a reputation for hauntings.

The purpose of such research is not to focus on the causes of experienced phenomena but to conduct completely independent research. This research will seek to answer a very specific question that helps us to understand the general nature of an individual's experience of paranormal events. An example might include breaking a team into two groups based on level of paranormal belief and examining the different rates at which they report apparent paranormal phenomena.

### **INTRODUCTION**

A common feature of most 'paranormal investigations' is the procedure being conducted overnight and often in very low lighting or in complete darkness. This often appears to be an instinctive reaction of investigators, perhaps

modelling the actions of paranormal reality TV shows. Some investigators assert that night-time in-the-dark investigations are desirable as they lead to greater levels of phenomena reporting.

Evidence suggests that original eyewitness accounts of 'ghosts' are more likely to take place during daylight hours rather than in the dark (Wood, 2008) and a good methodology should involve matching investigations to these original circumstances to establish the truth behind them, rather than automatically turning off the lights (Townsend, 2009).

Anecdotally it would appear to be true that investigating in the dark leads to a greater number of odd experiences. The rational argument tends to be that xenormal (unexplained but entirely normal) experiences should be greater in the dark because of the increase in ambiguous sense stimuli and the propensity for imagination to play a part, particularly where our visual senses are blinded to the causes of experiences.

This research investigation sought to split a team of participants into 'light' and 'dark' conditions both in 'haunted' and 'non-haunted' areas to attempt to establish if a) more experiences are reported in the dark and b) whether this would be influenced by whether the room was 'haunted' or not.

It was predicted that ( $H_1$ ) percipients would report more ambiguous stimuli in low light than in full light.

## **METHOD:**

### *Participants:*

A double-blind procedure was adopted whereby neither the experimenter (briefing the assistants and recording readings) nor the assistants themselves had any knowledge of the aims of the procedure.

Participants also completed a paranormal belief scale as this has been known, with this group of participants, to have a reliable impact on reporting rates.

**Table 1 – Participants’ Paranormal Belief Scale (Anonymised)**

Team	Name	Score	Paranormal Belief
Y	MH	82	4.6
X	SI	44	2.4
Y	TC	39	2.1
X	DP	38	2.1
Y	NH	26	1.4
X	TX	18	1.0
X	Group Mean	100	1.8
Y	Group Mean	148	2.7
A+B	Total Mean	248	2.3

*Procedure:*

To test this hypothesis the procedure for the research investigation consisted of the following elements:

- Percipients were randomly assigned to two teams.
- No percipients had any prior knowledge about the apparent paranormal reports at the site.
- Percipients were not briefed about whether or not they should turn off the lights. The experimenter accompanied the groups to their locations, separately, and adjusted the lighting herself.
- Percipients were deceived by not knowing the nature of the research but were fully debriefed and follow-up support was offered; no distress was caused. Venue site staff were briefed as to the nature of the research but had no interaction with the percipients about the research.
- Participants were assigned to four areas over four 30-minute segments. Breaks were taken between segments, where no discussion was permitted.
- Two ‘active’ areas were selected along with two ‘control’; the control locations were matched in pairs with the active locations based on physical characteristics. These were not disclosed to participants or to the experimenter.
- During the 30-minute segments participants were briefed to sit quietly and fully record any anomalous sense experiences into a digital voice recorder.
- Anomalous sense experiences are defined as any sensory information where the participant is not 100% certain of the cause.

### *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.
- 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 C: Responsible for ensuring the changing of tapes in each camcorder prior to each session commencing.
- Percipients should not use stills cameras.

### *Areas Under Study*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Condition</b>
A	North (Front) Corridor	Percipient
B	South (Back) Corridor	Percipient
C	Ground Floor (Reception)	Percipient
D	First Floor (Above Reception)	Percipient

Areas were selected according to the following criteria:

- 'Active' and 'control'. To allow comparison between them, two pairs of rooms were matched as 'active' and 'control'. 'Active' rooms had reported some unexplained phenomena in the past whilst 'control' rooms had not.
- Matching. To allow a meaningful comparison each 'active' room was matched with a 'control' room as physically similar as the location allowed.
- Operations. Rooms were further defined by those accessible to researchers and which were operationally practical for equipment and other purposes.

## **RESULTS**

**Table 2 – Summary of Experiences**

Code	Area	Time	Classification	Description
AX-1	North Corridor	18.5 8	Auditory	Tapping noise heard that may or may not have been coming from outside.
CY-1	Ground Floor	18.5 8	Visual	Change of light noted in doorway.

CY-2	Ground Floor	19.00	Auditory	Distant voices heard like large group of people in an enclosed space very far away.
CY-3	Ground Floor	19.04	Unusual feelings & sensations	Feeling like someone placed hand on top of right side of head.
CY-4	Ground Floor	19.19	Auditory	Soft creak followed by a loud one heard from right hand corner as you face it.
CY-5	Ground Floor	19.20	Unusual feelings & sensations	Strange sensation like someone touching top of head, this happening on several occasions.
CY-6	Ground Floor	19.22	Hot / cold sensation	Starting to feel cold down left hand side of body, leg, shoulder, arm - only on the left & not the right.
CY-7	Ground Floor	19.22	Visual	Changes of lights & shadows on walls, coming from behind through window. <i>Trees outside but no wind to make them move.</i>
CY-8	Ground Floor	19.22	Visual	Fluctuation in light as you go into Area C on right hand wall, near door to offices next to clock.
CX-1	Ground Floor	20.06	Auditory	Tapping noise from side of building towards waiting room area.
CX-2	Ground Floor	20.09	Auditory	Voice heard from up corridor towards base room.
AY-1	North Corridor	19.45	Unusual Feelings & Sensations	Strong sense of being watched like people looking through windows on the doors,

				which can not happen as shutters outside.
AY-2	North Corridor	19.50	Extrasensory impression	Mental image of little boy dressed in around 1940 style clothing, baggy shorts.
AY-3	North Corridor	19.50	Hot / cold sensation	Draft felt at same time as previous report.
AY-4	North Corridor	19.53	Auditory	Small soft tap heard from glass area of doors to the left of the big doors which lead outside. With back to the wall there are 2 outside doors on the left & 1 inside door to the right.
AY-5	North Corridor	19.55	Auditory	Small soft tap heard. All 3 members felt this was from varying locations.
AY-6	North Corridor	19.56	Visual	Light fluctuating as if there are shadows whilst sat with inside door to their right.
AY-7	North Corridor	20.10	Auditory	Faint noise like foot hitting the floor on soft carpet.
AY-8	North Corridor	20.10	Auditory	Tut sound coming from up the stairs.
BX-1	South Corridor	20.24	Auditory	Periodic tapping sound heard from outer door.
BX-2	South Corridor	20.27	Auditory	A lot of water flushing like a toilet flushed upstairs.
BX-3	South Corridor	20.33	Auditory	Another 2 toilet flushes heard.
BX-4	South Corridor	20.39	Auditory	Another toilet flush heard with a knock afterwards. <i>Toilets checked &amp; there is an automatic urinal.</i>
DY-1	First	20.3	Auditory	Tap & thump heard

	Floor	0		from varying locations by group. <i>Group member radioed to say they were coming to first floor.</i>
DY-2	First Floor	20.3 2	Auditory	Tapping sound heard. <i>Kitchen behind group with boilers &amp; taps etc.</i>
DY-3	First Floor	20.3 2	Extrasensory impression	A team member wonders whether floating images are seen within the room.
DY-4	First Floor	20.3 2	Auditory	Door heard to close when previous report noted.
DY-5	First Floor	20.3 3	Auditory	Tapping sound heard from right side by doorway to enter room.
DY-6	First Floor	20.3 5	Auditory	All heard muffled bang / thump. <i>Boiler is behind group. EFA contacted to check this out. EFA confirmed an urn was dripping.</i>
DY-7	First Floor	20.4 2	Auditory	Load creak heard again from varying locations by group.
DY-8	First Floor	20.4 7	Extrasensory impression	Mental image of about 5 or 6 women in a circle looking down at something on the floor.
DY-9	First Floor	20.4 8	Visual	2 flashing blue lights seen after last report.
DY-10	First Floor	20.4 9	Unusual feelings / sensations	Pressure headache reported along with pain in back of head, sinuses & forehead.
DY-11	First Floor	20.5 2	Visual	Orange flash seen on other side of building followed by 3 or 4 white lights moving across windows & down floor

				in middle of room.
DX-1	First Floor	21.08	Auditory	Tapping noise coming from either window itself or from car park outside.
DX-2	First Floor	21.10	Auditory	Quite a lot of creaking coming from kitchenette side of room.
DX-3	First Floor	21.16	Auditory	2 faint bells heard.
BY-1	South Corridor	21.08	Auditory	2 clicks coming from door leading to the outside.
BY-2	South Corridor	21.08	Auditory	Another click heard.
BY-3	South Corridor	21.11	Auditory	Clicks continuing to be heard from door on the left.
BY-4	South Corridor	21.13	Unusual feelings / sensations	Overwhelming feeling of being sad & starting to cry.
BY-5	South Corridor	21.28	Unusual feelings / sensations	Impression of someone being chased into this part of building & not being able to get out of the door. They are crouching down in right hand corner as you look at door.

**Table 3: Summary of Key Findings**

	Team X	Team Y
Condition	Light	No Light
Mean Belief Rate	1.8	2.7
Mean Independent Context Rate	1.23	2.1
Area A Reports	1	8
Area B Reports	4	5
Area C Reports	2	8
Area D Reports	3	11
Overall Reports	10	32

## DISCUSSION

H<sub>1</sub> stated that percipients would report more ambiguous stimuli in low light than in full light. Superficially the findings appear to support this hypothesis. Table 3 demonstrates that the team without light reported thirty-two experiences — over three times that of the team with light. Whether the room was ‘haunted’ or ‘non-haunted’ was not a positive indicator of higher levels of reported activity.

## LIMITATIONS

It is worth bearing in mind the necessary limitations of this study:

- Low numbers are involved; so caution should be used when generalising or accepting the findings.
- Teams did not perceive the same rooms at exactly the same times. Therefore the actual environment was slightly different for each team, although this factor was minimised by both teams experiencing on the same night and alternating between rooms for equal lengths of time.
- Belief level has been demonstrated to impact on reporting levels and upon perception of ‘spooky’ context, which further impacts on reporting levels. In this case Team X (with light) was considerably lower in belief ratings than Team Y; so lower reporting levels should be expected. However these percipients’ belief levels and reporting rates have been tracked over months and, in most cases, several years. In ordinary circumstances a higher rate of reporting would be expected but not such a dramatically higher rate of reporting. Therefore despite individual differences, the hypothesis can still be considered to be supported.

## IMPLICATIONS

It has long been anecdotally reported that lighting levels have an impact on reporting rates but this has rarely been tested systematically.

Low lighting levels are known to cause visual disturbances such as perceptions of shadows, lights and a greater level of subjective sensations. It is likely to be these factors that accounted for the greater level of reporting. Alternative theories exist that state that paranormal ‘forces’ are more likely to be prevalent during darkness. However there is no evidence to support this theory and, indeed, surveys of hauntings have demonstrated that original eyewitness accounts of haunting activity are more likely to be perceived with the lights on. Additionally, the original perceptions by eyewitnesses at the location took place whilst the lights were on.

In terms of implications it could be argued that low lighting is useful in focussing the minds of percipients on possible xenonormal phenomena but this is outweighed by the false evidence that is created. These findings support the current practice of matching lighting to the original circumstances of the eyewitness reports, rather than automatically turning the lights on or off during investigations.

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# **THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN INVESTIGATION NOTE TAKING A RESEARCH INVESTIGATION**

By Sarah Bakewell, Rose Haskins, Louise Hasson, Malcolm Gould, Nicky Sewell,  
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There is a debate in paranormal investigation about whether physical note taking, instant recall or recall following the event is more valid or desirable. It has been hypothesised that memory problems can impact on the valid recording of an investigation where paper notes or post-event recall are relied upon. This double-blind research investigation procedure varied the use of paper notes, instant recall and recall immediately after an investigation, as well as recall seven days after an investigation. Overall the results supported the hypothesis that relying on paper notes or post-event recall is associated with memory problems and supported the idea that instant recall is the most valid method of recording investigation experiences.

## **ABOUT RESEARCH INVESTIGATIONS**

Most of PSI's investigation work is 'phenomena oriented', that is investigating a location known for recent experiences of 'hauntings' and focussing on finding explanations for those experiences.

'Research investigations' are a different category of investigation. These will typically take place where there is not a distressed client and where there is not a client in need of closure. This typically includes public buildings with a reputation for hauntings.

The purpose of such research is not to focus on the causes of experienced phenomena, but to conduct completely independent research. This research will seek to answer a very specific question that helps us to understand the general nature of an individual's experience of paranormal events. An example might include breaking a team into two groups based on level of paranormal belief and examining the different rates at which they report apparent paranormal phenomena.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The problems with accurate recall of anomalous experiences by eyewitnesses are well known but are hard to test directly. There are also issues with recall during investigations which are less widely discussed.

Good practice in investigation settings may be to free recall and record perceptions immediately to avoid issues with accurate recall. However a more common practice would be to a) rely on memory and noting perceptions after the event or b) make paper notes to transcribe later.

It has been theorised that these latter, more common, methods may lead to inaccurate recall. Specifically individuals may not remember all perceptions and recall of events may modify after the event. To the authors' knowledge, such assertions have not been tested before in this context.

Individuals may have the tendency to remember 'interesting' perceptions and forget mundane perceptions. There is a common idea that this is not problematic where the 'evidence' sought is anecdotal in nature. However an argument can be made that to consider perceptions as an inter-linked whole, accurate recall of all perceptions is needed.

H<sub>1</sub>: Fewer of their own perceptions\* will be recalled by participants where memory is relied upon, compared to immediate recording of notes.

H<sub>2</sub>: Perception\* details will vary when recall later is relied upon, compared to immediate recording of notes.

(\*Where perception is defined as anomalous sense experiences, where the participant experiences anything that cannot be immediately explained).

## **METHOD:**

### *Personnel:*

Up to eight participants are used, drawn exclusively from PSI's trained and insured fieldwork team. A double blind procedure is used where the experiment designer is not involved and where the experimenter is not briefed as to the nature of the research.

### *Procedure:*

Standard research investigation procedures:

- Participants are briefed, without disclosing the nature of the research.
- Participants are randomly assigned (prior to the day) to two groups.
- Participants are assigned to four areas over four 30-minute segments. Breaks are taken between segments, where no discussion is permitted.
- Two 'active' areas are selected along with two 'control'; the control locations are matched in pairs with the active based on physical characteristics. These are not disclosed to participants or to the experimenter.
- During the 30-minute segments participants are briefed to sit quietly and fully record any anomalous sense experiences into a digital voice recorder.

- Anomalous sense experiences are defined as any sensory information where the participant is not 100% certain of the cause.

#### Modified procedures:

- Past research with this participant group has demonstrated that a larger number of reports are demonstrated in dark conditions, so dark conditions will be used in an attempt to stimulate larger numbers.
- Participants will be informed that they will be required to recall experiences after, as well as during, the event. This should encourage ecological validity with minimal risk of disclosing the nature of the research.
- Both groups will continue to report perceptions into the voice recorder immediately.
- One group should also make paper notes (by each participant) whilst the other group should not take paper notes. Neither group will know what condition the other is in, and the conditions will be varied between groups to attempt to counter order effects.
- After the event the 'paper notes group' will be asked to record experiences into a voice recorder, using the notes as a guide. The paperless group will be asked to report all their perceptions (including perceptions where they are one of several percipients) into the voice recorder.
- Participants will be separated during the recall process.
- Participants will be asked to spend time recalling the events seven days following the procedure.

#### Within subjects design modification:

- Following recommendations from the Ethics and Research Panel a Within Subjects Design will be used. This should alleviate the problem of different participants having better or worse memories.
- Participants will be split into two groups so that the order of conditions can be varied, so as to control for order effects. One group will be in notes condition for the first two sessions and the second in the latter two sessions.
- If the no notes condition comes last participants should be instructed not to try to use other methods to try to improve their memory, as not asking them to take notes would give obvious clues as to the hypotheses under investigation.

#### Percipient Observation Procedure:

- 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 experiences (including possible natural causes) in precise terms; this should be recorded.

- Person C: Responsible for ensuring the changing of tapes in each camcorder prior to each session commencing.

*Location:*

An anonymous location is used, where there have been prior reports of anomalous experiences. The location is owned by the Borough Council. Participants are not briefed about any previous reports of anomalous experience. Site staff present are briefed not to discuss these with participants.

Code	Area	Condition
A	North (Front) Corridor	Percipient
B	South (Back) Corridor	Percipient
C	Ground Floor (Reception)	Percipient
D	First Floor (Above Reception)	Percipient

Areas were selected according to the following criteria:

- ‘Active’ and ‘control’. To allow comparison between them, two pairs of rooms were matched as ‘active’ and ‘control’. ‘Active’ rooms had reported some unexplained phenomena in the past whilst ‘control’ rooms had not.
- Matching. To allow a meaningful comparison each ‘active’ room was matched with a ‘control’ room as physically similar as the location allowed.
- Operations. Rooms were further defined by those accessible to researchers and which were operationally practical for equipment and other purposes.

## RESULTS

**Table 1 – Summary of Experiences Recorded Instantly**

Code	Area	Initials	Time	Classification	Description
YC-1	Reception	SI	21.17	Auditory	Just the basics of the clock ticking and an electrical hum.
YC-2	Reception	SI	21.21	Auditory	Can hear the occasional vehicle on the road outside but apparently I’m the only one who can.
YC-3	Reception	SI	21.27	Auditory	We heard a noise that was probably to do with the plumbing – a bit like a tank refilling perhaps.
YC	Reception	SI	21.2	Auditory	Hearing a couple of

-4			9		settling noises from boxes on the table and some of the furnishings.
YC -5	Reception	SI	21.3 0	Visual	As the lighting levels fade we are getting some interesting light effects due to the 2 layers of windows I think, and the trees outside.
YC -6	Reception	TC	21.3 4	Unusual feelings & sensations	I'm starting to get a headache at the base of my head and the top of my neck and the light has taken on a sort of grainy feel.
YC -7	Reception	SI	21.3 8	Auditory	We are getting a few more clicks from things settling up on the walls.
YC -8	Reception	SI	21.4 0	Auditory	We heard a vibrating noise with an overtone of whirring which continued for a couple of seconds after the vibrating ceased. The vibration was not felt; it was possibly something to do with the plumbing.
YA -1	Front Corridor	SI	22.0 0	Auditory	We are getting lots of car noises and general street noises through the door, including sirens.
YA -2	Front Corridor	SI	22.0 4	Auditory	Echoed sound of shouting – we assume from outside.
YA -3	Front Corridor	TC	22.0 5	Hot / cold sensation	I'm actually starting to feel quite, not cold, but a lot cooler than before. I'm sat by a door so that's probably the cause of it.
YA	Front	TC	22.0	Unusual	It feels like I've got

-4	Corridor		7	feelings & sensations	something on the top of my head, like hand or something towards the back of it on my crown.
YA-5	Front Corridor	SI	22.13	Auditory	Jovial noises of passers by making merry on a Saturday night.
YA-6	Front Corridor	TC	22.16	Unusual feelings & sensations	The hand is no longer on my head but I feel quite tickly down my right hand side and on the top part of my arm but underneath and down by my ribs. It's quite weird. It's not NH!
YD-1	First Floor Above Reception	SI	22.41	Visual	There is some very interesting lighting from streetlights giving a nice blue and orange; we have sweeping lights from headlights, lots of flashing lights from computers and mechanical whirring noises.
YD-2	First Floor Above Reception	SI	22.47	Auditory	In the kitchenette area we can hear a dripping tap.
YD-3	First Floor Above Reception	SI	22.53	Auditory	We can hear some charming individuals in the street making merry and communicating.
YD-4	First Floor Above Reception	SI	22.56	Auditory	We just heard a car moving off, squeaking its tyres, and now we've got church bells.
YD-5	First Floor Above Reception	SI	22.59	Auditory	A couple of seconds ago, I heard a tinny rustling noise and then both me and TC heard a tinny dragging noise, again

					probably something to do with the cars outside, but who knows?
YD-6	First Floor Above Reception	TC	23.04	Auditory	Every now and again I can hear a high pitched pulsing noise outside; I think it might be the crossing that's nearby.
YB-1	Back Corridor	SI	23.25	Visual	The light on the wall is flickering and it's the main source of light around this corner. We can hear the automated cistern flushing away upstairs.
YB-2	Back Corridor	TC & SI	23.37	Auditory	Both just heard a really high pitched humming noise, possibly from the door's security system.
YB-3	Back Corridor	SI	23.47	Auditory	I am getting some traffic noises from fastly driven cars around the edges of the building.
XA-1	Front Corridor	MH	21.23	Auditory	We just heard somebody shouting outside, but it was just a passing teenager.
XA-2	Front Corridor	UT	21.25	Visual	Noticed some lights coming in through the wooden doors. It's on my blind side so I didn't notice it.
XA-3	Front Corridor	MH	21.39	Visual	Whilst talking and just as I change my field of vision from forward to right I can see changes of light, almost like shadows flitting backwards and forwards. I am in the

					front corridor; I am sat nearest to the outside doors with my back towards the wall. UT is to my right between me and the door to the offices.
XA-4	Front Corridor	MH	21.40	Auditory	We can both hear a plane going overhead.
XC-1	Reception	MH	21.59	Auditory	Rumbling stomachs heard.
XC-2	Reception	MH	22.07	Auditory	Just heard a click in the right hand corner of the office, which is facing the door as you walk in.
XC-3	Reception	MH	22.09	Visual	Flashing LED on the security radio just behind me. I'm sat facing the reception desk and it's behind me on the left hand side and it's just casting a slight illumination / shadow on the wall.
XC-4	Reception	MH	22.11	Visual	Just to note, our observers tell us the LED light does not normally flash.
XC-5	Reception	UT	22.11	Auditory	Become aware of the electrical hum in the background.
XC-6	Reception	MH	22.13	Auditory	I heard distant voices but they sound internal, rather than external, because they had a slight echo effect.
XC-7	Reception	MH	22.16	Visual	Just saw flash of lights in the right hand corner of the room, against the back wall, accompanied by a very distant possible rumble of a car

					engine –so possibly just car headlights, car turning a corner or something.
XC-8	Reception	MH & UT	22.19	Auditory	All heard a click, possibly the kettle.
XC-9	Reception	MH	22.23	Visual	Lights in right hand corner of the room, possibly car headlights.
XC-10	Reception	MH & UT	22.23	Auditory	Wooden click, like a retraction click, I thought it came from UT's chair, but UT thought it came from the right hand corner of the room, where I heard a click earlier on.
XC-11	Reception	MH & UT	22.27	Auditory	All heard a rumbling in the distance; possibly a very whiny motorbike.
XB-1	Back Corridor	MH	22.39	Auditory	We are out of session; we have just settled in the back passage. We haven't started the session yet but we both just heard an owl!
XB-2	Back Corridor	MH	22.40	Auditory	Out of session again, but we both can hear the traffic and a strange screeching sound; don't know if it was the owl.
XB-3	Back Corridor	MH	22.40	Auditory	Noise coming from outside the building in the distance.
XB-4	Back Corridor	MH & UT	22.44	Auditory	Both heard the watery flushing sound; obviously we know there is a situation with the automatic urinal, so it must be that.

XB-5	Back Corridor	MH & UT	22.4 7	Auditory	Both heard an internal noise, like a door shutting somewhere.
XB-6	Back Corridor	MH & UT	22.4 9	Auditory	Both heard distant voices: I thought they were inside the building, UT thought they were outside the building.
XB-7	Back Corridor	MH & UT	22.5 0	Auditory	Both heard the flushing noise again ?urinal.
XB-8	Back Corridor	MH & UT	22.5 6	Auditory	Both heard a squeak again; I thought it came from inside the building, UT though it came from outside, possibly a tyre squeak.
XB-9	Back Corridor	MH	22.5 6	Auditory	Urinal flushing.
XB-10	Back Corridor	MH & UT	23.0 7	Auditory	Both heard a male voice, quite a young male voice; UT can't determine where it came from, I feel it came from outside the building and just to add I'm starting to feel really cold and shivery now but is it getting late, so hardly surprising.
XB-11	Back Corridor	MH & UT	23.0 7	Auditory	We both feel that the voices are definitely outside the building because they have been talking now for quite a few more seconds.
XB-12	Back Corridor	MH	23.1 2	Auditory	Just to note the traffic noises seem particularly loud over the last 30 seconds; could be boy racing.

XD-1	First floor Above Reception	MH	23.26	Auditory	Dripping water heard coming from the kitchen area.
XD-2	First floor Above Reception	MH	23.26	Auditory	Loud traffic noises outside.
XD-3	First floor Above Reception	MH & UT	23.38	Auditory	Both heard electrical hum kick in. MH: Just to note I feel quite a cold spot on my left shoulder.
XD-4	First floor Above Reception	MH & UT	23.46	Auditory	Both have heard a click in the rafters.
XD-5	First floor Above Reception	MH & UT	23.52	Auditory	We have heard a couple of clunks behind us, possibly just the observers settling in their chairs; also heard a much louder click to the left of us. UT feels it was over by the doorway that's the other exit, leads down towards the other set of stairs.
XD-6	First floor Above Reception	MH	23.54	Auditory	I just heard a phone ringing behind us, outside the building.

**Table 2: Summary of Experiences Immediately After Event**

<b>Initials</b>	<b>Recollection</b>
SI	In the first session which was in reception, we had the light dulling which was creating some interesting lighting effects through the 2 layers of windows.
	We had bits of ceiling and furnishings and boxes settling making bits of noise.
	We had reports of dark areas around me unfortunately, which had photos taken by NH.

	Also I think TC may have reported a headache and we were all having quite dreamy vision and focusing ability due to the poor light quality.
	We had street noises and people talking and also a bit colder.
	During the third session in the upstairs office, we had the rhythmic sound of a dripping tap, lots of street noises, people from outside and the driving was getting progressively worse.
	There was also a strange, tinny, rustling noise kind of like a helter-skelter thing.
	We all heard that, but later after a couple of seconds it was followed by a dragging sound, kind of like a tinnier version of dragging across a rough carpet.
	That was heard by both me and TC
	TC was hearing a lot of alarms that were probably the pedestrian crossing on the street, which I also heard once.
	In the fourth session, which was in the back passage, there was a flickering, quite wide reflection of a light that was either a source from some security equipment that just kept flickering at us.
	We had the automated flush system that was quite irregular but still present.
	More noises from the street.
	Also a high-pitched buzzing squeal which I think was from the security system.
TC	From the first session, initially there was a lot of light fluctuations kind of going up and down.
	There was sounds of a ticking clock & there was a continuous humming.
	We could hear lots of sounds of traffic and things going past outside.
	I remember reporting that the light was like a grainy picture, like if you have the TV on, the picture goes off, it goes a bit fuzzy, that kind of thing. So mainly light perceptions and things in there.
	Nothing else really to report, a couple of settling noises which sounded entirely natural, so nothing there really.
	Our next session was in the front corridor, and it was quite dark in there and I started to feel a little bit cold.
	There was noises of people going past outside, a lot of shouting and whooping.
	I had a sensation of a hand on my head that lasted for quite a while, on the back of my head around my crown and then after a little while that kind of went and there was a kind of tickly feeling on the right side of my arm, but underneath, so near the armpit area, and around the ribs, that sort of area.
	In the third session we were up in the first floor office and there were just general sounds and things, a bit of humming from the computer.

	The sound of a dripping tap in the kitchen, which we heard on our previous visit and when [EFA] investigated it was dripping there, quite regular drips.
	Voices from outside, a lot of laughter, and then there was the sound of 2 squeaks or hums quite high pitched, followed by a car pulling away, and
	it sounded like the clock tower was going off, so it sounded like church bells but it was probably bell chimes.
	I heard a really strange rustling noise that lasted for a few seconds: it sounded like something being dragged across a carpet, so that kind of whooshy noise, cant really describe it.
	Kept hearing the pedestrian crossing going off outside, so a high pitched noise, but quite pulsing.
	Our last session in the back passage, there is a small green light that the shadow of it, where it falls onto the fire exit, it sort of flickers or pulses and that's quite regular.
	There was also in that room, but from outside, a lot of moving light from cars going round the one way system, headlights and stuff,
	There was also a regular sound of a toilet flushing that was inspected on the last time we were here and was found to be a urinal system or something.
	There was quite a high pitched buzz or hum that lasted for about 5 seconds, you know that sort of noise you sometimes hear from your TV, it just kind of gets into your consciousness and then goes again.
	General traffic noise from outside – so that was my session!
UT	The perceptions I had in the 2 sessions in which I took no notes – it's late, I'm tired, I'm really struggling actually.
	Also the sound of, it sounded like the upstairs door during the final session, a sound in the rafters as well, a retraction type click.
	The penultimate session, I'm so tired I'm struggling to remember where it was – the rear corridor, I remember hearing voices possibly coming from outside, the constant flushing of the urinal; apart from that I'm struggling.
	The perception that we both recorded into the Dictaphone during the first 2 sessions: in the front corridor which was the first session there was the sound of a young man passing outside; it sounded like he was having a conversation with somebody else, although I didn't hear another person's voice.
	Secondly there seemed to be car headlights shining full beam straight into the door window. As the car moved away, it came towards the site and then moved away, to what would have been the driver's left.
	There was also the sound of a plane passing overhead, or what I perceived to be the sound of a plane.

	The LED light on what they said was a security light, but what looked to me like a walkie-talkie hand set on the base unit, that started to flash at one point; the observers claimed that it didn't normally do it, although I didn't question further, because I didn't consider anything to be unnatural with it or supernatural.
	I could also hear as my ears became accustomed to the quiet in there an electrical hum in the background.
	I also heard a click that sounded quite mechanical. Staff members said it was the kettle. They didn't elaborate – why would a kettle make a noise if it wasn't turned on?
	There was also the sound of a click, possibly the retraction of fittings as they match similar sounds we've heard in other locations.
	At one stage there was also a whirring sound that I could hear, quite distant, but to me it sounded like a motorbike.
MH	Perceptions I can remember from the 1 <sup>st</sup> floor office include dripping water from the tap in the kitchen.
	Youths shouting outside.
	A load of crack sounds from our left hand side in front of us –there was nobody present there,
	The sound of rafters creaking at one point.
	I think there may have been a couple of other noises. I think there may have been a cold spot on my shoulder at one point.
	Things I can remember from the back passage: I think there were traffic noises, the urinal flushing, I can't remember anything else from the back passage.
	In the front corridor I heard a teenager passing by, I saw a change in light, like a flickering shadow to my right by the internal door, that leads in to the main building.
	We both heard a plane going overhead.
	In reception there was the sound of rumbling stomachs. I heard a click in the right hand corner of the office opposite the entrance door.
	All of us saw a flashing LED light from the security radio; observers commented this doesn't normally flash.
	Only me heard distant voices, that sounded internal & echoey.
	Only me saw lights in the top corner of the room, possible distant rumble of engine, ?car headlights.
	All heard a click, possibly a kettle.
	Only me saw lights in the top right hand corner of the room, possibly headlights, both me and UT heard a click ?retraction.
	I thought it was from UT's chair; UT thought it was from the right hand corner of the office.
	We all heard a motorbike in the distance ?a whiny sound.

**Table 3: Summary of Experiences 7 Days After Event**

<b>Initials</b>	<b>Recollection</b>
SI	Session 1, reception. Settling noises from furnishings, and the boxes on the side.
	Session 1, reception. A click from behind the wall toward the back of the building.
	Session 1, reception. Perceived darkness around my chair.
	Session 1, reception. Interesting shadows cast by two layers of windows.
	Session 1, reception. Grainy vision as light faded.
	Session 1, reception. Usual clocks, and a little street noise.
	Session 1, reception. Plumbing related (?) noises.
	Session 2, front passageway. Coldness - blamed on the ill-fitted door.
	Session 2, front passageway. TC felt a hand on her head, which later moved to her right hand side, giving her a tickling sensation under the arm.
	Session 2, front passageway. A lot more street noise, shouting and cars.
	Session 3, upstairs office. Clocks, dripping taps, settling noises.
	Session 3, upstairs office. Interesting light effects from reflected street lights, and passing cars.
	Session 3, upstairs office. Tinnynoise, followed by dragging noise.
	Session 3, upstairs office. Street noises, including some really bad driving.
	Session 3, upstairs office. Lots of lights and hum from all the electronics in the room.
	Session 4, back passageway. Colder again.
	Session 4, back passageway. Flickering light on wall due to security system light.
	Session 4, back passageway. Loud click - also prob. from the security system.
	Session 4, back passageway. The automatic plumbing system.
TC	Session 1 - reception

	Fluctuating light leaving a 'grainy' appearance to the light as the daylight faded.
	Session 1 - reception Kind of 'rushing noise' heard which may have been the plumbing.
	Session 1 - reception General office noises - ticking of clock, wood settling down.
	Session 1 - reception Traffic noises from outside.
	Session 2 - in the corridor near the base room Feeling of a hand on the top of my head and feeling cold down the right hand side of my body, which lasted quite a while.
	Session 2 - in the corridor near the base room Tickling sensation by my ribs and the underneath of the top part of my right arm.
	Session 3 - upstairs office Dripping tap.
	Session 3 - upstairs office Light changes from traffic outside.
	Session 3 - upstairs office Noises from outside - people having fun on a Saturday night - heard a couple of times.
	Session 3 - upstairs office General traffic noises.
	Session 3 - upstairs office Strange sound like something being dragged along the carpet - lasted for a few seconds.
	Session 4 - corridor furthest from the base room Green light on the wall flashing / pulsating - reflection from security light.
	Session 4 - corridor furthest from the base room Noises from people walking past.
	Session 4 - corridor furthest from the base room Traffic noises.
	Session 4 - corridor furthest from the base room Flushing noise from automatic toilet flushing system heard occasionally.
UT	I recall the kettle clicking in reception.
	Car light and shouting from outside in the first location.
	Urinals in the other corridor.
MH	1st corridor: Changes in light like flitting shadows.
	1st corridor: Traffic noise & people noise.
	Reception: 'Crack' sounds from right hand corner of room.
	Reception: ?car headlights on the wall.

	Reception: Kettle clicking?
	Reception: LED lights on security radio flashing.
	Reception: Electric hum.
	Reception: Sound of peoples' voices internally (echo effect).
	Back passage: Owl.
	Back passage: People talking outside of building, passing traffic.
	Back passage: Drop in temperature towards end of session.
	Upstairs office: Loud click in area to my left.
	Upstairs office: Cold spot on my shoulder.
	Upstairs office: Observers moving.
	Upstairs office: Dripping tap.
	Upstairs office: Noise in rafters and wooden creak.
	Upstairs office: Lots of electrical lights.
	Upstairs office: Mobile phone outside.
	Upstairs office: UT's chair.

**Table 4 – Overall Summary of Experiences**

Participant	Instant Record	Immediate After Event	7 Days After
NH	0	-	-
SI	17	14	19
TC	6	19	15
UT	15	11	3
MH	31	16	19
Total	69	60	56

## DISCUSSION

The overall picture presented in Table 4 seems to suggest a decrease in the number of experiences recalled over time –specifically an overall nine fewer experiences were recalled right after the event compared to immediate recall; four fewer experiences still were recorded seven days later. However, these top-line figures, which in themselves support the hypothesis, appear to be masking some interesting figures.

Whilst most participants reported fewer experiences after several hours, one appeared to more than double their recall (see below). In another case a predictable pattern was followed of lessening recall after several hours but then an increase to above the original level of reporting seven days later (see below). These and other observations will be discussed below.

Qualitative and contextual observations:

- In some cases participants had trouble recalling the location of experiences, even when recording right after the event. This is a predictable effect of lessening recall, especially where the participant is tired.
- In some cases participants reported, following the event, experiences that they initially did not record. These appear to be reports made by other people that individuals then seemed to recall as their own.
- Experiences that appeared less meaningful seemed to be recalled in less depth after the event. This is predictable where events are, in effect, less memorable.
- Experiences that appeared more meaningful seemed to be recalled in greater depth following the event. This is predictable where events are, in effect, more memorable. However, presenting detail following the event that was not present initially presents a risk of incorrect embellishment (confabulation), although the possibility of accurate detail emerging after the event, having been missed at the time, is possible.
- Overall the free recall immediately after the event seemed to be just as detailed as the instant recall, whilst the recall seven days later was in much less detail. This would appear to be a function of embellishment of more memorable events and less recall of less memorable events when recall was immediately after the event. Seven days later the majority of recollections appear to have faded in a predictable way; however the function of rationalising over time, possibly in discussion with other people, may have had an effect.

Overall the findings of this case appeared to support the hypothesis but the limitations below should be noted.

## **LIMITATIONS**

It is worth bearing in mind the necessary limitations of this study:

- Low numbers are involved – so caution should be used when generalising or accepting the findings.
- The numbers presented in Table 4 should not be viewed as anything but a general trend, as several different effects (i.e. lessening as memory, recalling events that were not initially recalled, etc.) seemed to be at play in a way that was not initially hypothesised. These different effects cannot be quantifying in their inter-relationship with one another.
- Individual differences led to qualitative and contextual observations, which by nature have the capacity to be affected by biased interpretation.

## IMPLICATIONS

There are several implications for note taking and reporting in the investigation process:

- Individual experiences are less likely to be recalled several hours after the event and to a much lesser extent seven days after the event. This suggests that instant recall into a voice recorder is the most accurate method of note taking. However, the experiment would have been strengthened by deliberate, manufactured incidents being used to allow a check for accuracy. It should be noted that immediate recall does risk influence of one percipient by another; however this can be monitored and therefore still allows greater accuracy.
- Where participants are recalling either after the event or seven days later results may have been influenced by the time they were willing to give to the task at the late hour or on a day off, respectively. Whilst this has the capacity to influence the results, it also incorporates a degree of ecological validity. Where the real-life problem is whether or not recall is diminished after the event this would be a valid concern anyway.
- Even in conditions where notes were recorded on paper some events were described in greater depth following the event whilst others were described in lesser depth. This suggests that relying on taking paper notes (or recalling after the event) can lead to a) the lessening in emphasis of some events and b) the possible embellishment of other events. Using voice recorders instantly seems to be a more reliable method.
- There does seem to be evidence that participants can misremember specific details and locations of some experiences. This suggests an instant recall method is more desirable.
- Recall several days after the event suffered from fewer experiences being recalled and the level of detail being lower. This points to the advantages of instant voice recording.
- Dramatically, in a number of cases participants seemed to recall events that they did not initially experience. This appeared mostly to relate to experiences recalled by other participants. Where the validity of investigation experiences often rests on whether the experience was reported by single or multiple individuals (multiple reports being seen as more credible) the confounds introduced by not instantly recalling into a voice recorder are clear.

In conclusion it would appear that the confounds associated with recall after the event – even when aided by notes – means that this approach is methodologically unjustifiable when compared with instant recall into a voice recorder.

# **ORBS! ... SOME DEFINITIVE EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE NOT PARANORMAL**

By Steve Parsons  
*Para.Science*

Recent developments in digital camera technology has finally permitted an experiment to be undertaken that demonstrates conclusively that airborne material located close to the camera and reflecting the camera flash is responsible for creating Orbs.

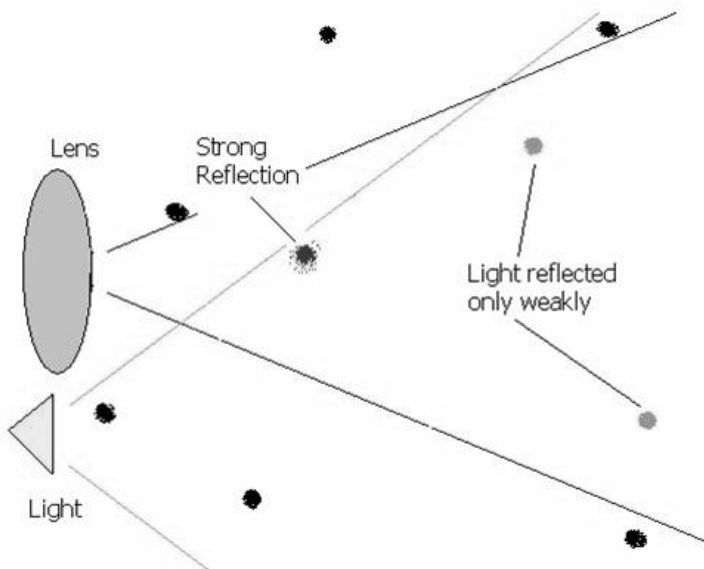
The evolution of digital imaging which began in the late 1990's resulted in a revolution within paranormal research. Investigators began to report a phenomena previously unseen on images taken using conventional film based cameras. By common consent this apparently paranormal phenomenon was dubbed the 'Orb'. Orbs are generally bright circular anomalies within an image, although other shapes such as angular and elongated forms are known. They may appear as single or multiple anomalies and may vary both in colour and intensity.

To date, many thousands of orb pictures have been offered forward by amateur paranormal investigators and lay members of the public as evidence and proof of something truly paranormal being captured by the camera. The orb debate has blighted paranormal research for (too) many years now with both the believers and the non believers each putting their respective arguments and presenting their evidence.

Proffered explanations as to what orbs actually represent vary widely e.g. many investigators believe they are evidence of, and for, ghost and spirit manifestations. Others consider orbs to be the energetic emissions of angelic and otherworldly beings. The internet is filled with pictures containing orbs presented by paranormal investigators as evidence of some type of ghostly manifestation. Newspapers and magazines regularly publish pictures of orbs, repeating the claims for paranormality occasionally adding a celebrity endorsement just for good measure as in the case of TV star Noel Edmonds. In September 2008, he claimed that his deceased parents "Are melon sized orbs" which he described as "Little bundles of positive energy" and "Conventional photography can't pick them up but digital cameras can" (1). There have also been a number of books written describing the supernatural nature of orbs and how by interacting with orbs one can gain spiritual enlightenment i.e. 'Ascension Through Orbs' (Cooper & Crosswell, 2010)

Many paranormal investigators now prefer to try and steer a middle ground through the orb problem – accepting that dust, flying insects, aerosol water droplets and other airborne particles are the likely cause of most orbs they find on their digital pictures and acknowledging the likelihood that the majority of orbs can be explained. All too often, they then go on to claim state that there remains a number of orbs, a figure of around 1% or 2% is usually favoured, that cannot be explained and so must therefore be paranormal. This small percentage is usually to be found on pictures they have taken! I also wonder how they achieve their statistical probability.

From 2001 – 2003, Para.Science undertook a series of studies to determine the nature of orbs and also why they appear on digital cameras, as reported on the Para.Science website (2). The result of that study demonstrated the strong probability that orbs were simply the result of airborne dust, moisture and other particulates reflecting the light from the camera flash back toward the imaging chip, resulting in the characteristic bright anomaly. The earlier study also suggested that in order to produce an orb anomaly within a picture a number of conditions need to be met; i.e. the camera flash must have been used at the time of picture taking. The airborne material must be located within a few centimetres of the camera lens and the material must also be within a narrow range of angles relative to the lens centre axis for the material to be able to reflect the light from the flash into the lens.



**Fig 1. To produce an orb the object must be close to the camera and at a suitable angle for the light from the flash to be reflected back toward the lens**

An ASSAP-funded project by Paranormal Site Investigators also carried out similar extensive studies and experiments examining the orb phenomenon, reaching the same conclusion that orbs were simply the result of dust and other airborne matter reflecting the light from the on-camera source back toward the imaging chip. (3)

These studies did result in many people questioning the true nature of orbs and lead some to carry out their own experiments with the result that the probability that orbs are the result of airborne dust and other material has now been widely acknowledged. The mechanism of the Orb Zone theory along with the Para.Science research assumed that airborne material must be present and then went on to show how *if* it was the orb would be produced. However the inability of the previous study by Para.Science and others to conclusively demonstrate that airborne matter and moisture is responsible for orb production has allowed the debate between the orb believers and non believers to continue, to the obvious detriment to paranormal research and the continued confusion of all concerned.

An experiment considered some time ago by Para.Science was the use of stereo (left & right) photography to explore the orb phenomena. Using this technique it should be possible to test the hypothesis that orbs are airborne matter physically close to the taking camera. Thus, if an orb was found to be present on one picture of a stereo pair of pictures taken simultaneously and not present on the other; then the original source of that anomaly must be located within the angle of view formed between the flash and the lens in order that the flash illumination is reflected from the source to cause the bright anomaly to appear on the final picture. Also, such an object appearing on only one of the stereo pictures must be physically close to the camera. It would appear on both of the stereo pictures if it was located more than a short distance from the camera (normally less than 2-3cm), as determined by the separation of the two lens axes. Although stereo photography is a well understood technique that has been used with film photography for many decades, the technical difficulties applying it to digital photography and ensuring that the resultant images were identical proved technically and practically insurmountable at that time. These difficulties included; finding a means of ensuring that both pictures were taken simultaneously, that both pictures had identical photographic settings i.e. focus & exposure and that both pictures had identical post image processing applied i.e. scene pre-sets, colour balance, file compression etc. The use of a stereo lens fitted to a digital camera was also looked at but discounted as firstly it partially blocked the light from the camera's built in flash and secondly the use of a single lens / CCD meant that it would not be possible to fully exclude any artefacts and errors caused by the lens / CCD which is another known possible cause of some orb like photographic anomalies.

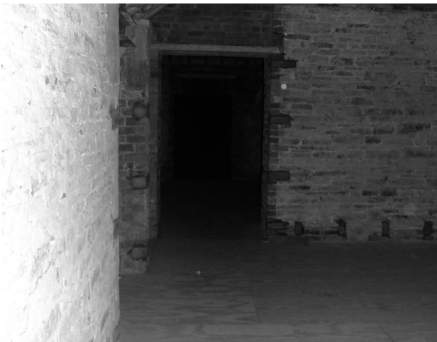
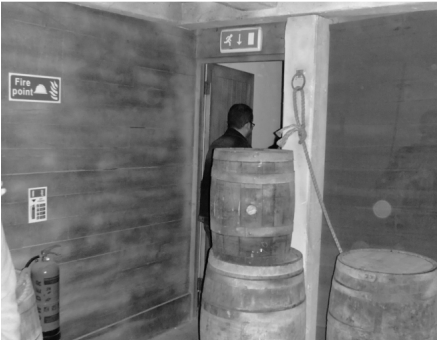
The Fujifilm W1 3D digital camera is currently a unique digital camera comprising a pair of lens and high resolution image chips forming a matched pair of image taking systems integrated within the same camera body. The two image taking systems share a single common flash positioned equidistant between the two lenses. Crucially, both matched image taking systems are activated by the same shutter button and use the same focus, exposure and flash settings, thereby ensuring that the two resulting images produced for each press of the shutter are identical in every respect except for the parallax separation between the left and right pictures. This camera has permitted the hypothesis that orbs are the result of nearby airborne matter reflecting the flash light back toward the camera to finally be properly tested. The author was fortunate in being able to secure one of the first examples of this new type of camera shortly after its launch in the autumn of 2009 in order to begin a renewed investigation of the orb phenomenon.

The camera has been used in a series of experiments undertaken at more than twenty locations widely spread throughout the UK and Eire during 2009 and 2010. Locations were selected to encompass a broad representation of allegedly haunted venues e.g. castles, industrial sites, modern retail premises and also included indoor and outdoor locations. Photographs were taken at some well known locations too, such as Mary King's Close, Edinburgh; Margam Castle, West Wales; and Wicklow Gaol in Eire to name just a few. In most instances the photography was undertaken whilst paranormal investigators & members of the public, unaware of the particular nature of the camera or the experiment being undertaken, conducted some form of paranormal investigation.

This led on one occasion to an amusing incident when a Psychic Medium at one location noticed an 'orb' on the LCD screen of the camera and promptly declared the photograph to be "*Proof of the spirit of a young girl who haunted that location.*" Needless to say, upon examination, the orb was found to present on only one of the stereo pictures and thus another paranormal orb bit the 'dust' – obvious pun intended!

In order to replicate the 'point and shoot' technique of most digital photography undertaken during amateur paranormal investigation, the camera was only used in the fully automatic exposure and focus mode. The use of the fully automated mode also ensured that the resultant stereo pair of images were identical in terms of any software processing of the images that is applied in-camera i.e. those affecting colour balance, scene pre-sets, file compression etc. The stereo paired images were subsequently downloaded from the camera to a laptop computer. No enhancement or manipulation of the resulting images was undertaken. Each simultaneously taken stereo pair of images was then viewed side by side and simply compared visually for the presence of orb anomalies on either one of the pair.

To date 1,870 stereo pairs of images have been taken and examined. Orb anomalies have been found on 630 pairs. In 491 pairs, an orb or orbs was seen to be present only in the left or right image and not in the corresponding second image of the pair. In 139 stereo pairs, orbs were seen to be present in both of the images (left & right) but not in a position that corresponded to the individual orb being the same object.





***Images: Placed side by side the identical stereo images show no corresponding orb anomalies on both images***

This comprehensive survey strongly supports the hypothesis that orbs are simply the result of dust and other airborne material drifting close to the camera and reflecting the flash illumination back toward the image sensor and provides long overdue definitive evidence that their origin lies firmly within the mundane and explainable, not the paranormal or supernatural.

Interestingly, a further four stereo pairs of images show other anomalies that are frequently offered up as evidence of the paranormal. Two are images of the camera strap; whilst two more show breath condensation as the author exhaled. As with the orb photographs these four anomalies appear on only one side of the stereo pair, again showing that they were quite normal in origin. Before concluding it is also worth bearing in mind those original statistical claims that 1% or 2% of all orb pictures represent paranormal orbs. The survey to date has captured over 600 orbs so it might be expected that we should have expected to have found between 6 and 12 that were paranormal. We didn't – all 630 that we obtained in the survey were readily explained using the stereo photography technique. That is 0% paranormal but 100% explainable.

So at last, it is hoped that this extensive series of pictures will finally remove much of the confusion and nonsense that has surrounded the orb and similar classes of photographic anomaly and permit psychical research to move forward from this long standing debate.

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# **RUN!**

## **AUDITORY CONTEXTUAL BIASES IN PARANORMAL INVESTIGATION**

By Dave Wood and Maurice Townsend

### **NO EXPERTS**

Anomaly has, in the past, questioned whether such a thing as scientific paranormal research and investigation can, by its very definition, exist. How can a researcher be scientific in researching the paranormal? By its very nature the paranormal, as such, defies scientific understanding. No researcher can be confident about the nature of paranormal phenomena by its definition. The old adage says that in the paranormal, for these reasons, there are no experts. That anyone claiming to be an expert in the paranormal is deluded or subscribes to a world-view that is incompatible with science.

This line of argument is technically correct, but misses the full picture. Worse, the no-experts thesis is typically used as a pretext for researchers to ‘make it up as they go along’ without troubling themselves with the boring bit of researching the accumulated wisdom of the decades.

Most scientific study of anomalous phenomena does not concern the ‘paranormal’ but the normal – or the xenonormal. It is not possible to be an expert on ‘paranormal orbs’, for example, nor is it possible to scientifically study paranormal processes allegedly associated with orbs. It is, however, possible to be an expert in the normal photographic processes that explain orbs as normal phenomena. It is also possible to scientifically research and demonstrate that normal processes lead to orb capture and that this explanation is the most likely one.

The research of anomalous phenomena draws from many existing disciplines in its attempt to understand the xenonormal, learning from its many experts. Our understanding of what is mistaken as paranormal is enhanced and in this way. We can see past the false evidence and focus on that which is genuinely unexplained at the present time.

### **CONTEXTUAL BIASES IN THE LAW**

I [Dave Wood] was reminded recently of how advances in mainstream psychology can, in this way, enhance our understanding of the paranormal and provide the bases for future research. Recently a colleague sent me a paper from the journal *Law and Human Behavior* [sic]. The paper concerned

contextual biases in the interpretation of auditory experience (Lange, Thomas & Dana, 2010). The research demonstrated that in a legal context people were likely to misperceive audio evidence based on the context in which they were hearing it.

So a participant may hear the statement “the gum was on the floor in front of me” and where they thought they were hearing a suspect saying this in a legal context they were highly likely to hear the word ‘gum’ as ‘gun’. In the control setting of a job interview participants were much less likely to make this mistake. In short our brain will place its own interpretation on what we hear in order to fit in with what we expect of the situation.

### **TOP-DOWN PROCESSING**

This evidence is part of a wider accepted understanding of how we perceive and remember events. In effect our schematic understanding of the world can change what we think we hear in order to conform to our world view. We are liable to make crucial errors of perception in order to support our expectations of a situation.

A great deal of research has been conducted into how a ‘spooky’ context impacts on our perception and memory of anomalous events. We already know that simply by expecting a house to be haunted that we are more likely to attribute odd noises and feelings to the ‘ghost’, where in a neutral environment these noises and feelings would either have been ignored or interpreted in a more prosaic way.

Experiencers of anomalous experiences sometimes feel affronted when the suggestion is made that their account is the result of misperception. They are very clear on what they saw/heard and remember it well. The suggestion that they misperceived, or unwittingly reordered their memory, may make them feel foolish or mistrusted.

However where conventional research tells us we are highly likely to misperceive and misremember ambiguous experience in a range of context, not just paranormal, researchers are duty-bound to make these considerations.

### **RUN!**

The legal paper was passed to me at around the same time I had cause to analyse anecdotal evidence from a paranormal investigation. Whilst I would not typically write on the subject of anecdotes, this particular investigation tied in neatly with contextual bias research.

I had cause to view a video clip from a paranormal investigation containing an experience held to be meaningful by those experiencing it, and also had access to the individuals to ask them about their experience.

The percipients in question were investigating a ruined building with a strong reputation of ghost phenomena experiences. The building was large, on a controlled site and was gutted from the inside so the entire building was visible. The percipients heard what sounded like voices very close to them, apparently shouting at them. They then heard banging, crashing and noises like objects being thrown at them. Several of the percipients exited the building at great speed.

On hearing about this, I requested to view the video footage of the experience. On the surface of it one would assume the percipients thought they were experiencing a ghost and, in fear, ran for it. In the case of one percipient it would seem that this was the case; they thought they were experiencing a ghost and on hearing 'RUN', ran. In questioning the others their interpretation was different. Each of the other percipients heard noises that sounded like the disused 'building falling in'. On hearing the word 'RUN' they feared for their physical safety in the building (and ran for it). This anecdote demonstrates different contexts (fear of the ghost vs. fear of a building collapsing) and how they may appear indistinguishable if the experience was taken at face value. As investigators we must always dig beneath the surface.

However this perception of context was not the one that chimed with the findings of the *Law and Human Behavior* paper. Each of the percipients immediately reported hearing the word 'RUN' and all remember leaving the building in response to this request. However none of the percipients actually remember using the term 'RUN'. All heard 'RUN', but none of them said it? A more assumption-led investigator may conclude 'it was the ghost what said it', however these percipients benefitted from very well-placed video cameras.

On reviewing the footage it was clear that one of the percipients had shouted an expletive that was somewhat phonologically similar to the word 'RUN!' Each of the percipients had perceived the expletive as the word 'RUN' and had obeyed the command. The expletive and 'RUN' are not as phonologically similar as some of the examples used in Lange et al's research (e.g. 'gum' and 'gun') but each percipient was sufficiently fearful (of the building, or of the ghost) that they all interpreted and remembered a completely different word.

Anecdotes rarely provide sound evidence but they can provide food for thought. Always seek objective backup – record everything effectively – and never rely on perception and memory.

## **ELECTRONIC VOICE PHENOMENA (EVP)**

Good paranormal research should be inspired by advances in mainstream disciplines and can even be inspired by anecdote and field observation.

Practical paranormal research that could result from the idea of auditory contextual biases relates to EVP.

EVP stands for electronic voice phenomenon. It appears on sound recordings, even though it was not heard at the time of recording. The sound consists of an apparent human voice or voices. Only in relatively few cases will everyone who hears an EVP agree that it is definitely a voice, many people hearing only a noise. Even among those who agree they hear a voice there can be disagreement about what it says.

Generally EVPs consist of short snatches of sound, only seconds long, apparently just a single word or phrase.

Many people think that EVPs are communications from spirits. On that assumption, much early EVP research was done anywhere that was convenient for the researcher. It was assumed that spirits could appear anywhere.

Nowadays, most EVP recordings are made on ghost investigations. This introduces a serious problem of control. It can be difficult, especially after the event, to identify likely or definite sources of intrusive background noise during an investigation. Many such noises are simply not noticed at the time, so that when they are heard on the recording playback they appear extraordinary or paranormal. Such noises can sometimes, by chance, contain multiple frequencies that happen to be in a harmonic ratio. This automatically switches our brains into 'speech mode', so that we then tend to interpret the sounds as human speech, even if they are just noise.

EVP 'voices' are often ambiguous and low in sound quality (as were the sounds used in the original research). One of the major flaws of EVP theory is in the analysis of this most ambiguous of phenomena. Typically recordings are presented as 'evidence of ghosts', and whoever is giving the evidence will usually give the transcript of what the ghost is 'meant to say' to see if they 'can hear it too'. Clearly the problem here is that the person listening is already expectant of a paranormal context. They have also been further led in their perceptions by being presented with one preferred interpretation on paper. Interesting Lange et al, in their article, bemoaned similar practices in certain parts of the judicial process.

Knowing the impact of this context EVP should be analysed by disinterested people who have no expectation of context, at least in the first instance. This is not a new idea, and there is no excuse for poor analytical methodology when it comes to EVP.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH**

The colleague who passed me the *Law and Human Behavior* article is spear-heading some research into how people interpret apparent EVP records based on the context in which they hear them. However one research idea should inspire others. No single study can really demonstrate an effect or alleged phenomenon – paranormal or otherwise – without independent studies finding similar evidence. Anyone interested in designing experiments can contact ASSAP to discuss ideas.

### **REFERENCES**

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**BOOK REVIEW: HAUNTED SKIES Volume One**, Hanson, J & Holloway, D. CFZ Press. £14.99 (pbk), 303pp. ISBN: 978-1-905723-46-1.

By David Taylor.

I first met John Hanson about 15 years ago when he had plans to write a book. Since those early days John has gone far, becoming a well known and respected UFOlogist.

This is an impressive and mammoth task to undertake - a four volume set of books that deals with the history of British UFO sightings. This first volume deals with the years 1940-1959. In these pages John and Dawn give a broad selection of UFO reports from the various years. Many of them will not be known to readers as they come from the author's own investigations. The book is better for this approach I feel, as it saves going over the same old ground of well known cases. There is also a broad geographical spread for all the cases, although I found myself being drawn to those from the Midlands. There are some classic cases here - an alien contact case from Kidderminster in the 1940s, not to mention the famous Cynthia Appleton case from Birmingham in the 1950s. My only minor quibble with this first volume was the inclusion of a case from (again) Kidderminster that involved 'burn' marks in a field. There were no accompanying reports of UFOs or other anomalies. So why the mention in the book?

As this is a history of British UFO reports, I would have liked to have seen more historical sociological context for reports, which are very much 'of their time'. However, that aside, this is a great book that deserves to be read by all serious researchers. Bring on Volume Two!

**BOOK REVIEW: UFO DOWN: THE BERWYN MOUNTAIN UFO CRASH**, Roberts, A. CFZ Press. £8.99 (pbk), 101pp. ISBN: 978-1-905723-60-7.

By David Taylor.

I have fond memories of spending holidays in a remote cottage at the foot of the Berwyn mountains in the 1990s. It is a harsh and beautiful landscape - one that lends itself well to stories of the 'otherworld'. The Berwyn mountains run south west to north east across central North Wales, separating Shropshire

from the Snowdonia National Park. They have a long history of human habitation. Prehistoric man lived and worshipped on the mountains, leaving behind a dramatic ritual landscape.

It is against this backdrop that an incident took place on 23rd January 1974 which has set the UFOlogical world alight. Residents in towns and villages in the area described a loud 'explosion' and lights were seen over the mountain. Stories began to circulate that an aircraft had crashed. Concerned locals and police went to investigate. It wasn't long before UFO researchers got hold of the case and this mysterious incident became Britain's answer to Roswell. Books and magazines have since briefly mentioned the case, along with reports of villagers being turned off the mountain by the military, strange objects being seen and, of course, alien bodies! Added to this evocative mix are also the mysterious MIB!

What a mystery! Even more of a mystery is that it has taken so long for someone to write a full length book about the case. All the elements of a good thriller are here. There have of course been books that mention the case (Randles and Redfern spring to mind) but nothing exclusively about the case.

Step forward Andy Roberts. Andy is a veteran UFOlogist who has written several books on UFO and fortran topics and countless articles. Who better to unravel the mystery of the Berwyn mountains? Well, having read many of Andy's books and articles and attended some of his lectures, the answer is that he is the best man for the job.

After chronicling the events of that fateful evening in 1974, he goes on to interview witnesses and to recheck primary sources. It soon becomes clear that things aren't what they appear and that 'facts' have become garbled over the years. What I found particularly interesting was mention of a previous UFO incident on the mountain! In 1958 author Gavin Gibbons wrote *By Space Ship to the Moon*, a sci-fi book which featured a UFO landing on the Berwyn mountains in Wales. Sixteen years later, in 1974, those same mountains would again be the focus for a story involving a downed UFO. But this time, some said, the story was for real.

Andy writes with a lively and engaging style. He won't make many friends from writing this book, as he is focused on giving us real facts, not wild speculation about aliens. Once you pick this book up, you won't be able to put it down. For the definitive account of this fascinating mystery, this is a 'must read' book.

**BOOK REVIEW: JOHN MICHELL: FROM ATLANTIS TO AVALON,** Screeton, P. Heart of Albion Press. £12.95pp, 126pp. ISBN 978-1-905646-16-6.

By David Taylor.

John Michell was a giant of a man in the world of geomancy, earth mysteries, alternative technology, lost knowledge and fortune. In many respects he was a true renaissance man, writing on subjects as diverse as flying saucers, ley-lines, corn circles, traditional measures, British eccentrics, Shakespeare's authorship and sacred geometry. Without John Michell Glastonbury might still be just another Somerset town (with no festival!), many aspects of alternative archaeology might never have arisen and the New Age would lack many of its key ideals and ideas.

John was a man ahead of his time. His first book, *Flying Saucer Vision* (1967), can be regarded as one of the unsung classics of 'New UFOlogy' with its mix of Jungian psychology and historical research. But it was two years later, in 1969, that John became famous, with his book *The View over Atlantis*. This became a classic of the hippie counter-culture overnight, linking ley-lines, UFOs, geomancy, neoplatonic philosophy and much more.

His wide knowledge and intellect was enhanced by a kind and inquiring nature, which brought him the status of a Merlin-like magus among his many followers and friends. These included the Rolling Stones, whom he took to Stonehenge on a UFO hunting expedition. Mick Jagger's former wife Jerry Hall was a guest at his 70th birthday party. John wrote about Atlantis and Avalon and to many he seemed to be a reincarnation of Merlin – or even a Time Lord. In fact, Paul Screeton points out that there was something of the Jon Pertwee Dr. Who about him!

One of my favourite quotes from John also sums up, for me anyway, the essence of John that you found in his highly readable books and magazine articles: "There are an infinite number of ways in which you can see the world and an infinite range of data to support, or discredit, any of them. You can believe in black holes if you like, or you can believe in angels. I am not a believer, but if I had to choose I would take the latter, because unlike the holes, angels have often been sighted and their influence has generally been for the good."

John sadly passed into the realm of Paradise on 24th April 2009 aged 76. Paul Screeton first met John back in 1970 after Paul had refounded *The Ley Hunter* journal. They remained firm friends after that. It would have been easy for Paul to have fallen into the trap of writing a biography of John. However,

although there are biographical elements in this book, it is much more than that: it is a celebration of one man who has made (and continues even in death to make) a huge impact upon many diverse subjects, not least that mercurial subject that is 'earth mysteries'.

If I didn't know better, I would say that either Paul or the publisher had enchanted this book - for once I picked it up, I was barely able to put it down! In all seriousness, this is down to Paul's engaging writing style. Apart from securing his place in 'earth mysteries' history by refounding *The Ley Hunter* journal, Paul is also author of the seminal *Quicksilver Heritage* (again about leys, geomancy and earth mysteries) as well as books on folklore and cryptozoology.

If you like books that you can lose yourself in, that make you smile but also make you think, then this is the book for you. Yet another classic from the pen of Paul Screeton.

**BOOK REVIEW: SLIders**, Evans, P. Anomalist Books, 2010. £10.95. 192pp. ISBN 1933665475. ([www.anomalistbooks.com](http://www.anomalistbooks.com))

By David Taylor.

Next time you are walking down the street, walking back from the pub perhaps, and one of the street lights in front of you goes out, it may not be a faulty bulb, but a SLI effect!

SLI stands for 'Street Light Interference', and describes the apparent ability that some people have to make street lights go out. Why you may ask. Well, this is a very good question. This is exactly what Hilary Evans, veteran investigator of anomalous experiences and author sets out to investigate.

For several years now Hilary has been co-ordinating SLIDE - Street Light Interference Data Exchange. Back in 1993 ASSAP published a booklet by Hilary on the early stages of his research. As bizarre as this ability may sound, Hilary has an impressive collection of these reports from around the world. There are various theories to explain this phenomenon, from the unlikely faulty street light to psychokinesis.

I should, at this point, probably express an interest in this book, as I have experienced something similar to this myself (only a few times, 25 years ago) and indeed these are detailed in Hilary's book.

As strange as this all sounds - people being able to turn street lights off at a distance - this excellent new book by Hilary Evans shows that it is a very real phenomenon. As this is the first full length book on the subject, this is destined to become a classic.

**BOOK REVIEW: HAUNTED GARDENS**, Underwood, P. Published by Amberley Publishers. 2009. £14.99. 191pp ISBN 978 1 84868 2610.

By David Taylor.

With a plethora of books now being published on ghosts and hauntings, there are few ways for the discerning reader to ensure that they are buying a book of quality. One of these ways is to make sure that Peter Underwood is the author.

Peter will need no introduction to readers of this review, as they will, like me, have grown up reading his books. With over forty books on hauntings and apparitions to his credit, Peter is one of the best authorities on the subject and his books are always a pleasure to read.

In this current volume, Peter tackles a new concept - the haunted garden. What Peter is doing here is acknowledging that anomalous experience is not confined to the four walls of a building but that such experiences can extend out into the landscape.

As befitting his long involvement with the subject, Peter takes a truly international approach to the subject. So along with gardens in England and Wales, we are also treated to reports from places such as Fort Monroe (USA), Raffles Hotel (Singapore) and my favourite, the Palace of Versailles (France). It is this last garden that I found particularly interesting, as I had recently acquired a copy of 'An Adventure' by Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain, which detailed their 'time slip' experiences at Versailles. This is an extremely well known case but Peter manages to add interesting twists to it. Dr. Joan Evans, the respected historian who now holds the copyright to 'An Adventure', believed that the two women had walked into a rehearsal for a tableau vivant by Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac. Of great interest are Peter's own memories of talking to the philosopher Dr. C.E.M. Joad and Harry Price about the case. The former believed that a 'time slip' was the most obvious explanation for the case.

This book will appeal to people who, like me, have visited some of the properties in this book, for it gives new cases and interesting additions on old stories. My favourite cases from England are places I have actually visited, like Borley Rectory (site of), Bretforton Manor and Baddesley Clinton. I have been fortunate in being invited by the National Trust to give two lectures on the history of

ghosts at Baddesley Clinton, so the new details given by Paul were informative and most interesting.

I would highly recommend this book as an interesting addition to any serious researcher's bookshelf.

**BOOK REVIEW: TWO HAUNTED COUNTIES: A GHOST HUNTER'S COMPANION TO BEDFORDSHIRE & HERTFORDSHIRE**, Broughal, T. & Adams, P. Foreword by Peter Underwood. The Limbury Press, 2010 156 pp £8.99 ISBN 978-0-9565228-0-1

By Damien O'Dell

I first came across Tony Broughall's name in connection with Bedfordshire's most haunted location, Chicksands Priory, near Shefford. Tony investigated with the Society for Psychical Research. It was also investigated by David Wilson of The Ghost Club and much later (2005) by my own group, Anglia Paranormal Investigation Society. I have been researching this ancient site for many years and am in no doubt as to the veracity of the multitude of anomalous phenomena reported there. I was most envious when reading about Tony's extraordinary experiences at Chicksands back in 1976 which he describes so vividly in this book. Back then the atmosphere in this 12<sup>th</sup> century building was far more conducive to encounters with the unexplained. There was no electric lighting, no central heating and little in the way of carpeting, furniture or fittings but plenty in the way of evidence of ghostly manifestations. Tony was also most fortunate to work with the late, great medium Rose Gladden, who was one of the most gifted clairvoyants of her era. (I learnt a lot about Rose through working with her daughter Margaret, who seems to have inherited many of her mother's unusual abilities).

*Two Haunted Counties* (originally entitled *Ghosts of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire*) was written by Tony Broughall over the course of five years (1973 – 1978). Although accurately researched and well written the book did not attract the interest of publishers at the time and so the manuscript lay, surprisingly, awaiting discovery for some 30 years. Thanks to the attention and determination of co-author Paul Adams, who added some new material of his own, we now have a lucid picture of paranormal investigation as it was conducted in the 'sensational seventies'. It deserves to see the light of day if only because it fills in some of the gaps for researchers and writers about the paranormal history of these two counties. It was a delight to discover new aspects of old cases that have received considerable publicity in the past. Tony was personally involved in some memorable investigations; one such was the haunting of The Fox and Duck Public House in Therfield, Hertfordshire. This is

the first time that the full details surrounding the case have been revealed. Then there are the incidents that are less well known but none the less interesting, because they are new, even for readers who are familiar with Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire's ghost lore and legend. I had never heard about, for instance, the strange events witnessed at Luton Town Football Club.

The layout of *Two Haunted Counties* has been carefully considered. It is easy for the reader to return to his or her favourite stories because they are in the form of two gazetteers. It is lavishly illustrated, with over 50 black and white photographs that capture the era and some of the personality of Tony himself. There is also a useful Main Index as well as a Phenomena Index and a comprehensive Select Bibliography that will please the serious student of local history and hauntings.

This gem of a book was devoured in a single sitting and I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. It is long, long overdue, representing, as it does, a lifetime devoted to the serious investigation of the unexplained. Paranormal investigator Tony Broughall was a contemporary of such leading lights in the field of paranormal research as Peter Underwood (who is also a close friend and who wrote the lively Introduction), Andrew Green and Hans Holzer. Now it is Tony's much deserved turn to reach a wider audience.

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**BOOK REVIEW: *A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO PARANORMAL INVESTIGATION***, Rosney, M., Bethel, R. and Robinson, J. Published by Amberley Publishing plc. £14-99 ISBN 978 1 84868 234 4

By Lionel Fanthorpe

*A Beginner's Guide to Paranormal Investigation* is one of the most helpful and informative books on the subject that I have read during the past 40 years. It's essential reading for anyone interested in taking up serious research in this fascinating field of investigation.

The authors are deservedly well known in the field of paranormal research and have some 30 years of valuable and relevant experience between them. What makes their book particularly useful and informative is the way that they go over the historical background of each paranormal and anomalous

phenomenon, and then present the theories associated with it. They also explain the equipment that investigators can use – and how best to use it. As a long-established investigator myself, and one who has looked into strange cases all over the world for many years, I can only say that I wish this exceptionally good book had been there when I started. It would have been a tremendous help.

**BOOK REVIEW: THE PARANORMAL CAUGHT ON FILM: AMAZING PHOTOGRAPHS OF GHOSTS, POLTERGEISTS AND STRANGE PHENOMENA**

by Dr Melvyn Willin. Foreword by Guy Lyon Playfair.

David & Charles Cincinnati, 2008.140 pp \$16.99 (£12.99) ISBN 978 0 7153 2980

This collection of ‘unexplained’ photographs is a continuation from Melvyn’s original book, *Ghosts Caught on Film*. It is for the reader to decide if there are, indeed, any mysteries to be solved in these strange photographs. As with so many other supposedly authentic ‘paranormal’ photographs the explanations often turn out to be rather mundane. The answers may be found in double exposure (in older cameras), lens flare and outright fraud, in many cases. My own take on this fascinating set of examples is that half of them may be easily explained but the other half are worthy of further investigation, such as one found on page 131. The faces of Mrs Webster’s deceased parents appear to be captured on film behind the living subject of Mrs Webster herself. Readers will also decide for themselves whether or not they agree with my opinions.

Much as I would like to have recorded evidence of the supernatural, a part of me instinctively feels that we are not meant to have absolute, undeniable proof of an afterlife, if, indeed, such a thing exists. At my own investigations, conducted over many years in haunted properties across the U.K. and overseas, the ghosts have always refused to co-operate in the matter of providing evidence. On one occasion I was setting up a video camera when my assistant clearly saw an apparition at the end of the corridor. By the time the camera was ready it was, of course, all over. At another time I carefully set up a series of video cameras to ‘trap’ the manifestations that had been regularly seen in certain ‘ghost walk’ areas of Chicksands Priory. Over the course of a two night Christmas vigil three sightings were made by different witnesses. They were all on the first floor, where I had anticipated that they would be. They were, however, witnessed just out of the range of each and every one of our cameras.

Other researchers, like John Spencer, have told me about leaving video cameras running and then, either when the film ran out or the batteries drained down, poltergeist activity has broken out! My good friend and fellow APIS investigator,

Michael Lewis, recounted an experience at the Talbot Inn in Leicester. The landlord had locked Michael into the pub, together with another investigator, who stationed himself upstairs. A stranger sauntered into the bar downstairs and went into a room near where Michael was situated. Michael called out to his colleague, who came downstairs and together they searched the room that the 'stranger' had entered. There was only one way in and out and the 'man' had completely vanished. Michael had seen the ghost of the Talbot Inn. On the bar lay Michael's fully loaded camera, everything had happened so quickly that he hadn't had time to get a photograph of the manifestation. These and many more incidents have supported my feeling that somehow, some unwritten law decrees that we are just not meant to get incontrovertible photographic ghostly evidence.

The 60+ photographs in Melvyn's new book cover a wide range of anomalous phenomena, which are neatly and conveniently arranged under five separate subject matter headings. These are 'ghostly figures', 'strange lights and apparitions', 'simulacra', 'poltergeists and other phenomena' as well as 'back from the dead'. Some famous cases are represented here, such as the highly documented Enfield poltergeist of 1977, the allegedly spontaneous human combustion of Mrs E.M. of London in 1958 and the so-called 'Angel in the Vatican' that appeared in the Daily Express in 2007. We have examples from every decade from 1929 through to 2007 and the majority of these are from the U.K. and North America with others from Europe, Australia and South America. The story behind each illustration is given and sometimes helpful notes guide the enquirer to sources of further information. This is a well produced book that should be shared with like-minded friends. It may well provide a source of speculation which may prompt some interesting discussions.

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## **ANOMALY: GUIDANCE NOTES & HOUSE STYLE**

### **SUBMISSION CONTENT:**

Papers should be submitted in the English language and should directly relate to some area of psychical research.

Authors take responsibility for any views aired, and published articles do not reflect the views of ASSAP.

### **TYPES OF SUBMISSION:**

Please note that word limits are flexible.

- Letters may relate to previous articles published and can be written in a personal style. Letters should not be more than 1500 words.
- Book reviews should not be greater than 1500 words.
- Articles and research notes should not be greater than 8,000 words. We encourage authors to write such articles in an impersonal style, but this is not mandatory.
- Diagrams and photos should be submitted in grayscale if possible with a dpi of 300, but do seek guidance if you are unsure.

### **FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES:**

We prefer that footnotes are not used, however notes may be made at the end of articles with an appropriate numbering system in the text.

We encourage all authors to provide references. This means that if you make an assertion of fact, especially about previous research conducted, you cite the source article, book or web address.

We prefer the Harvard system of referencing. Sentences containing references should include the author and year in parentheses, e.g. “theories suggest that orbs are not paranormal in nature” (Townsend, 2006).

Where such references are included in the text an alphabetical list should be included at the end of the document, in the following style:

Henry, J. (Ed.) (2005). *Parapsychology: Research on Exceptional Experiences*. East Sussex: Routledge

Parapsychological Association (2006a) *What is the PA?*

URL [http://www.parapsych.org/mission\\_statement.html](http://www.parapsych.org/mission_statement.html) Date accessed: 04 September 2006.

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

If you are uncertain please always seek guidance.

### **SUBMISSION:**

We prefer that submissions are emailed to [assapanomaly@assap.org](mailto:assapanomaly@assap.org) – it is the author’s responsibility to ensure submissions are received.

Alternatively the standard ASSAP postal address can be used if email is not available.

### **ACCESSIBILITY:**

Should you need to receive Anomaly in a different format please contact us. We will make reasonable adjustments if possible.