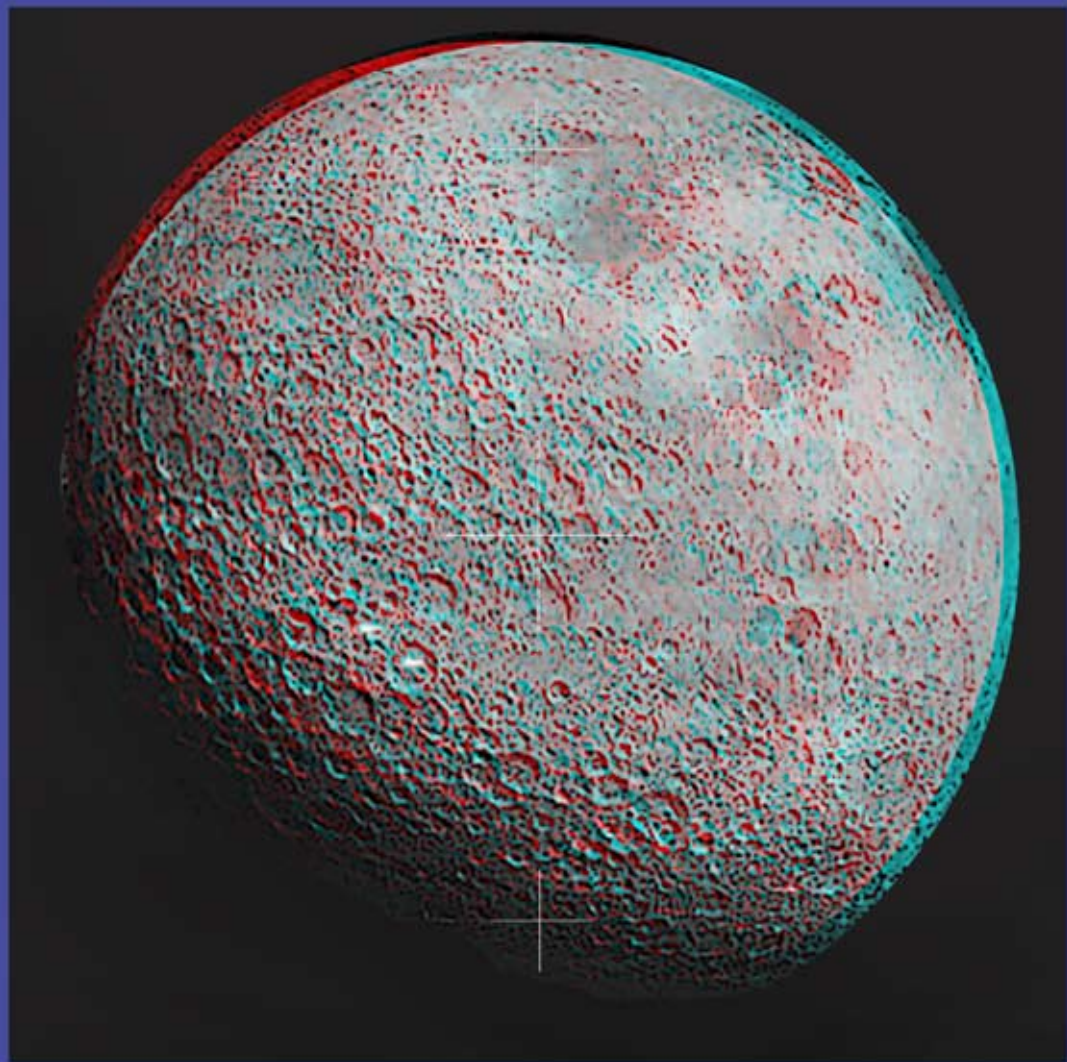


ASAP

# ANOMALY

Journal of Research into the Paranormal



# ANOMALY:

JOURNAL AND CONFERENCE  
PROCEEDINGS

VOLUME 50

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# CONTENTS

Anomaly Information

7

Editorial

6

## **PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES**

Mistaking the Moon for an Alien Spacecraft: the “Saros Operation” *Maillot, E.; Munsch, G.; Danizel, L.; Dumas, I.; Fournel, P.; Robé, R.; Zwygart, C. & Abrassart, J.-M.*

8

Digging for the Deathworm

*Richard Freeman*

20

A ‘Window Area’ in the Midlands?

*Peter A. McCue*

47

## **NOTES**

Testing for Psi with a Fake Ouija Board

*David Sivier*

77

A Visit to the Archives for the Unexplained (AFU), Sweden

*Lionel Beer*

82

The Hyperspatial Maths of Mediumship: Creating Apports through the Mediumistic Visualisation of Space-Time Geometry

*David Sivier*

87

## **EXPERIENCES**

Paranormality  
98

*James Padmore*

The Bothell Poltergeist  
106

*Keith Linder*

## **REVIEWS**

UK Ghost Excursions Map by Paul Lee  
112

*Zoe Bevan*

Anomaly: Guidance Notes & House Style  
114

# ANOMALY: JOURNAL OF RESEARCH INTO THE PARANORMAL

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# Editorial

Welcome to another belated edition of ANOMALY. It seems that year in year out I face new challenges as Editor, as look back on what appeared to be great hurdles had to overcome with past issues with a wistful nostalgia! Whereas in the past it was difficult to get high quality articles for the journal, because so little was produced in our field, the last few years a have seen an explosion of interest in academia. Now I read many papers that I would be delighted to have carried in ANOMALY, but gracing the pages of prestigious, and one might say mainstream journals.

With the explosion of “pay to publish” journals and other ethical breeches (no chance of that here) alongside more hopeful new developments like Open Access journals, there has been a much stronger emphasis on publishing in “journals of repute”. The paranormal is something of a negatively defined topic – as the years pass papers that once graced our journal find their way in to various disciplines, as Science explains the phenomena in question. That and the pressure upon academics to only publish in ‘respectable’ journals has made it harder to find the quality submissions I hope for.

Rather than publish papers of less than first rate interest, I chose to hold back publication for some time, and publish what I think are genuinely interesting papers. The Journal is split in to four sections – peer reviewed papers up front, Notes which are speculative or general interest pieces, experiences where I asked individuals to discuss some of their own experiences in their own words as a resource to researchers, and finally Reviews. The result is I believe one of the most interest ANOMALY issues to date.

CJ

# Mistaking the Moon for an Alien Spacecraft: the “Saros Operation”

Maillot, E.; Munsch, G.; Danizel, L.; Dumas, I.; Fournel, P.; Robé, R.; Zwygart, C. & Abrassart, J.-M.

## Abstract

*The Psychosocial Model posits that lots of UFO sightings are explicable as the mistaking of mundane stimuli for alien spacecraft. Our team wanted to test the hypothesis that at least some people can mistake the Moon for a UFO. We used the Saros cycle to do so: the Saros cycle is an astronomical cycle that puts back the Moon in the same place in the sky every 18 years and 11 days. In 1976, there was a UFO Wave in France. The methodology was that if a case of the 1976 UFO Wave could be a mistaken observation of the Moon based on the position of the object in the sky according to the witness, at least one member of our team would go back to the location in 1994 and check if the Moon could really be the explanation for the observation. Our team could this way verify empirically that 14 cases were indeed, without any doubt, people mistaking the Moon for an alien spacecraft. 15 other cases are also suspected to be mistake with the Moon based on the position of the object in the sky according to the witness, but could not be verified on site either because of a lack of information or the bad weather making the Moon impossible to see in the sky. Our team had in total 134 cases in their database for this UFO wave. Of those 134 our results strongly suggest that 29 cases were mistake observations of the Moon. Specific cases are discussed in the article.*

## Introduction

The Psychosocial Model (Abrassart, 2016) understands the UFO phenomena with the following mechanisms: simple mistakes, elaborate mistakes, hallucinations, false memories and hoaxes. Most UFO sightings are simple mistakes with mundane stimuli (for example

helicopters, skytracers, sky lanterns and so forth). They are the core of the phenomena. In those cases, witnesses can describe reliably what they saw: they only fail to identify what was the mundane stimulus behind what they saw.

Elaborate mistakes include subjective distortion of what was seen, thus the witness doesn't describe what he saw reliably. Based on available cultural narratives (Abrassart, 2014) those distortions can happen during the sighting itself (illusion), when the memory is remembered (confabulation) or during discussions with other people (suggestibility). Illusions happen during the sighting because of top-down processing. When we see things, most of the time what we see is driven by the data (bottom-up processing), but at other times it can be constructed based on expectations (Jimenez, 1994). Expectations play a bigger part in perception if the conditions are not good (like looking at the sky at night) and when we don't know what we are looking at (which is by definition the case during a UFO sighting). Top-down processing is what explains illusions like pareidolia and why hunters often shoot humans thinking they are deer.

In 1990, Eric Maillot (first author) proposed to search the UFO database of the Comité nord-est des groupes ufologiques (CNEGU) for mistaken observations of the Moon. With the help of an astronomical software, he could check if the Moon was exactly where the witness said the UFO was in the sky. If so, those cases could thus be considered to be possibly mistaken observations of the Moon.

Other clues were firstly if the details of the description were similar to what the Moon could possibly look like at the time, for example setting down on the horizon. Secondly, if there were two objects very close to each other (the UFO and the Moon), witnesses should say something along the line of “the UFO was flying close to, or next to, or in front of the Moon in the sky”, but the natural satellite was most often not mentioned in those testimonies. This was also considered as a clue in favour of the Moon hypothesis. That being said, the failure to report the Moon in the sky near the object could be possibly explained by inattentive blindness (Simons, D. J.; & Chabris, C. F, 1999): the idea here is that the attention

of the witness would be so focus on the UFO, the subject would fail to notice the Moon nearby. Further investigation was thus necessary to make sure those were indeed mistaken observations of the Moon.

Based on that first selection, Eric Maillot subsequently submitted to the members of the CNEGU team a list of unidentified French cases that could possibly be explained by this hypothesis. Even though this amateur research and investigation groups is more on the skeptical side of the ufological spectrum, several members expressed incredulity. This specific argument from incredulity took the following shape: “everybody knows what the Moon looks like. How can people possibly mistake the natural satellite for an alien spacecraft?!” It's one thing to not be able to identify something that we are not familiar with (an atmospheric entry for example), but it is another to not recognize the Moon – or is it?

## **Materials and Methods**

In order to further test this Moon hypothesis, Gilles Munsch (second author) proposed to use the Saros cycle on the suspected cases within the geographical area of the team, which is the North-East of France. The Saros cycle is a lunar cycle of 18 years & 11 days (Espenak, 2012). That period of time put our natural satellite back at the same position in the sky. This cycle has been known since Antiquity and has been used for a long time by astronomers to predict Moon and solar eclipses. The name “Saros” comes from the astronomer Edmond Halley in 1691, who took it himself from the Suda, a Byzantine lexicon of the 11th century.

The Saros cycle is not entirely perfect for this research, since it only puts back the natural satellite at the same place in the sky, not at the same time of year. For that reason some features of the environment can be different (trees having leaves and so on). On top of that, after almost two decades new buildings may have been built obstructing the view, and other similar issues may have arisen with the passing of time. Nevertheless, this way our group of researchers only had to wait 18 years & 11 days to test the Moon hypothesis and not a lot more longer.

In 1976, ufologists noticed a massive wave of sightings in the region. Some of them have even been investigated at the time by members of the CNEGU team. 18 years later, in 1994, our group of researchers went back to the very places where witnesses reported they saw an UFO at a time close to the real conditions of those observations. The complete process was as followed: we went through the UFO database of the 1976 UFO Wave. We looked if it could possibly be a mistake with the Moon, using first clues (did the description sounded like it could be the Moon?) and then following up with an astronomical software for confirmation (was the object in the right location in the sky to be possibly the Moon). Based on those results, when a case was suspected to be a mistake with the Moon, our team would try to contact the witness. If possible, we would ask the witness to go back with us at the location. If not, we would go by ourselves. At least one member of the team, sometimes more, would go. The goal would be to verify, on site, if the Moon could really account for the sighting.

## **Results and Discussion**

Our team could this way verify empirically that 14 cases were indeed, without any doubt, people mistaking the Moon for an alien spacecraft. 15 other cases are also suspected to be mistake with the Moon based on the position of the object in the sky according to the witness, but could not be verified on site either because of a lack of information or the bad weather was making the Moon impossible to see in the sky. Our team had in total 134 cases in his database for this UFO wave. Of those 134, our result strongly suggests that 29 cases are mistake with the Moon. When the witness came with us, he usually would not accept that what he saw at the time was the Moon, even confronted with the evidence. This can be explained by cognitive dissonance and the fact that, with almost two decades, the memory of the event may have embellished. Independently of that, being on site, our team members could verify themselves that the Moon was indeed the correct explanation.

Here are some examples of specific cases investigated during the Saros Operation : the case of Laville-aux-Bois (Haute-Marne) on April 19,

1976, the case of Vandoeuvre (Meurthe-et-Moselle) on July 22, 1976, and the case of Tomblaine (Meurthe-et-Moselle) on August 1, 1976.

*The Laville-aux-Bois case.*

This case presents the particularity of witnesses thinking they were pursued by an UFO for several kilometers at night on a small deserted road. On April 19, 1976, between 2 and 2:30 AM, a couple comes back home through the Haute Marne country. As they leave the village of Laville-aux-Bois, as the vehicle climbs the hill, a dazzling big red sphere takes off from behind a bush on the right side of the road. Moving around the witnesses' car, the phenomenon seems to pursue the vehicle. Then, as the road turns to the left, the mysterious pursuer crosses the sky to catch them up. Panic-stricken, the driver speeds up to sometimes 140kph and finally reaches another village, crossing it reassured by no longer seeing the UFO. But when they leave the village, the phenomenon seems to wait its "victims". The chase starts again. The witnesses reach at last their home. They take refuge in it and look through a window. The phenomenon looks like a red-orange bean. The woman (who had hidden under the dashboard during most of the journey) was in a state of shock for a week and had nightmares for two nights.

A team of investigators went on site for the Saros Operation on Saturday April 30th, 1994. They took exactly the same road by car at the right time. The directions of sighting were measured again at key points of the journey: they corresponded perfectly to the position of the Moon. Arriving at the witnesses' home, the team could also verify that the window through which the couple observed the end of the phenomenon was clearly oriented in the direction of the natural satellite. The illusion that the Moon follows us when we are in a moving car played a very important role in this sighting. This case proves that sighting conditions combined with optical illusions due to the landscape and to the observers' movements can fool people into thinking they are seeing an alien spacecraft.

*UFO sighting above the South cemetery of Nancy.*

This sighting happened on July 22nd, 1976, above the South cemetery of Nancy (Lorraine, Great East region of France). At night, the guardian of the petrol station on the boulevard along the cemetery does his usual rounds. There are clouds in the sky, with thin rain. A glimmer catches his eyes. These colored lights come from a flying grey disk that seems to be flying over the cemetery. The witness phones the guard of the FR3 television tower located in front of him. He succeeds in convincing him to go out in spite of the rain to see what he consider a magnificent show. The guardian goes out the building but doesn't see anything strange above the cemetery in front of him. He turns around and sees an orange glimmer then seems to move away far in the clouds. He confirms his sighting to the first witness. The following day, the local press and later on even the gendarmerie learn about the sighting. After publication of several articles in the press, ufologists will come in town to question the witnesses.

After his original investigation in 1976, Raoul Robé (the sixth author) couldn't find an explanation for this case because the description by the first witness had a high strangeness to it: a flying grey disk with colored lights under it. However, after going on site during the Saros Operation in 1994, our team could conclude that it was indeed the Moon. Compared to the Laville-aux-Bois case that was striking because of the panic that it generated, the interesting aspect here is that there were two semi-independent witnesses. Cases with more than one witness are more reliable because they preclude hallucinations. If “collective hallucination” is a concept sometimes used in the psychological literature, there are good reasons to be skeptical that it can actually explain UFO cases (Abrassart, 2015). The first witness added strange details to the sighting (those are called “elaborate mistakes” in the Psychosocial Model paradigm) and then influenced the second one on the phone and that probably helped him in turn not recognize what he saw.

Drawings of the phenomenon from the 2 witnesses.

*3. Observation in Tomblaine (54) by two different families.*

This sighting is characterized by an important number of witnesses in two separate groups situated in the same urban zone. The first sighting happened in Tomblaine on August 1st 1976. The witnesses were a family of seven people living on the seventh floor of a building which faces toward the town of Nancy. A luminous sphere attracted the attention of the mother who called the rest of the family. The phenomenon evolves in its form and change completely to a thin luminous orange crescent in the sky above the city. 9 pictures are taken (with no result) with an Instamatic. The phenomenon becomes again gradually a sphere and moves away for good. Down in the street, a vehicle goes along the road in the same direction that the first sighting, toward Nancy. The couple in the car sees a white glitter low in the sky. The pale light seems to come from a big white rectangle stationed just above the roofs of the sleepy town. A cloud cuts it in the middle and progressively hides the motionless phenomenon. The vehicle moves away and the show is occulted by the surrounding houses.

During the Operation Saros, the CNEGU investigators note that the direction indicated by the 2 groups of witnesses coincides with the position of the crescent Moon.

## **Conclusion**

At the end of the Saros Operation, 14 cases of the 1976 wave could be verified as the Moon. 15 other potential lunar mistakes could not be verified either because of missing information or because of adverse weather conditions. Bringing the 1976 CNEGU database up to date teaches us that 75 of the 134 cases found an explanation (from "certain" to "possible"); of the 75 explanations, 37 were astronomical. Of these 37, 29 corresponded to mistakes with Moon. We can thus conclude that this kind of mistake is not so uncommon as one might think.

The investigators of 1976 in our team, initially reluctant to believe that a natural and ordinary cause could explain the object of their ufological investigation, were at the end of the Saros Operation absolutely convinced by this demonstration which made them able to observe on site what witnesses really saw. The argument of incredulity is often used

against the Psychosocial Model. It is an informal logical fallacy that occurs when someone asserts that because something is so incredible or difficult to imagine, it must be wrong. In the case of the Psychosocial Model, this argument states something along those lines: “I can believe that someone will not recognize this mundane stimuli and mistake it for an alien spacecraft, thus this explanation must be false”. The roots of this informal logical fallacy are here the belief that our perception and memory is mostly reliable, even if research in the human sciences shows that it's not the case.

It is worth noting that even skeptics are not immune to use the argument of incredulity. Several authors (Lecllet, 2001; Nickell, 2006) have suggested the great horned owls hypothesis for the Kelly–Hopkinsville encounter but, confronted to this explanation, even skeptical-minded people (but who are not well-knowledgeable in the Psychosocial Model) tend to react with an argument of incredulity, stating something along the lines of: “a family of farmers could not mistake great horned owls for extraterrestrials”. To counter-argue that fallacy, one can only point out that this hypotheses explains many details of that case and that it should be accepted as long as a better hypothesis (meaning one that explains even more details) is not proposed. Short from a time machine, it's impossible at this stage to test the great horned owls hypothesis for the Kelly–Hopkinsville encounter, but the Saros Operation allows to do it for mistakes with the Moon.

A crucial methodological issue for ufology is that it's impossible to “replicate” UFO sightings. Most of the time, we can only approach witnesses' descriptions with the historical method (Radford, 2010). Nevertheless, over the years, different methodologies have been imagined to go around this issue (Jimenez, 1994) in order to test the Psychosocial Model. One of those is the one presented in this paper: using the Saros cycle to test the Moon hypothesis.

On a side note, French sociologist Pierre Lagrange (2000) points out that we usually know what a mundane stimuli looks like closed by (for example an helicopter or a satellite) because of pictures in books, but not what it looks like in the sky, especially at night. This is of course an interesting point, that may explain some sightings, but mistakes with the

Moon go against this argument, since everybody do see the natural satellite at night in the sky during their lifetime, but still some of them mistakes it for an alien spacecraft.

More recently, based on the knowledge from the Saros Operation, several PAN D (French UFO cases that remained unexplained in the GEIPAN online database) were checked using an astronomical software in order to see if they were not mistakes with the Moon, most notably by Thibaut Alexandre (Alexandre, 2015) but also by other CNEGU members. The GEIPAN, the UFO service of the Centre national d'études spatiales (the French equivalent of NASA), finally reclassified them officially as PAN A (explained cases), reducing significantly the number of still unexplained cases.

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# Digging for the Deathworm

Richard Freeman

*The Mongolian Deathworm has haunted the legends of the Gobi for hundreds of years. It is said to lurk beneath the ancient sands of the Gobi Desert in Mongolia and is known to the desert nomads as Allghoi khorkhoi. This translates as 'intestine worm', due to its resemblance to a length of cow's intestine. The creature is described as 90 to 150cm (three to five feet) long, blood-red in colour, and as thick around as a man's arm. It is apparently very hard to tell the animal's head apart from its tail. In the West, this horror has been given the name "Mongolian death-worm" and with good reason. Mongolians go in great fear of the monster on account of its death-dealing capabilities. The death-worm can spit a corrosive venom that acts like acid, searing through the victim's flesh and into the veins. Those killed by the death-worm's venom, are said to turn yellow - the Allghoi khorkhoi's grotesque calling card. As if this were not enough, the death-worm is believed to generate a deadly electrical charge that can strike down victims from several metres away. In May 2005 the CFZ undertook our most ambitious expedition to date. A four-man team travelled to the Gobi desert in search of the infamous Mongolian deathworm; a vermiform, desert-dwelling creature said to spit a corrosive yellow venom, and held in much fear by the Mongolian nomads who know it by the name of allghoi-khorkoi (pronounced "olra hoy-hoy"). The team consisted of myself, my two old travelling companions Jon Hare and Dr Chris Clark, and a new addition to the CFZ expeditionary force - Dave Churchill. Dave was a long time member of the CFZ, and wanted to join the Mongolian expedition when it was first mooted several years ago.*

The death-worm first came to the attention of the West in the 1926 book *On the Trail of Ancient Man* by the legendary palaeontologist (and real-life inspiration for Indiana Jones), Prof. Roy Chapman Andrews.

Andrews had led the 1922 Central Asiatic Expedition from the American Museum of Natural History. His main aim was to find fossil evidence of ancient man, but instead he found some of the most important dinosaur fossils ever discovered. These included the first dinosaur nest sites - complete with eggs - and some of the earliest fossil birds. Before he embarked on this epic journey, Andrews met the Mongolian cabinet in order to obtain the necessary permits - Mongolia having previously been closed to outsiders. He was amazed to find no less a personage than the Mongolian Premier in attendance. The Premier had an unusual request for Andrews - to capture a death-worm should he come across one. He was even given forceps and dark glasses to protect him, (presumably from it spitting venom). Andrews commented on the death worm: "To the Mongols it seems to be what the dragon is to the Chinese." Perhaps he was closer to the truth than he realised. He seemed, however, to doubt its existence.

*'This is probably an entirely mythical animal, but it may have some little basis in fact, for every northern Mongol firmly believes in it and gives essentially the same description. It is said to be about two feet long, the body shaped like a sausage, and to have no head or legs; it is so poisonous that even to touch it means instant death. It is reported to live in the most arid, sandy regions of the western Gobi. What reptile could have furnished the basis for the description is a mystery!'*

The monster is mentioned in Ivan Antonovich Efremov's 1958 book *The Wind's Path*. (Efremov was a palaeontologist on a Soviet expedition to Mongolia in 1946). Danzang - a geologist fluent in Mongolian - enquired about the death-worm, to an old man called Tsevang. The Mongol told him that its lair was a desolate wasteland called Khald-zan-dzakh - 80 miles to the south east of Dalandzadgad. It lurked beneath the sands, surfacing only in June and July. Upon hearing of the worm's deadly powers, Danzang thought the whole tale was a joke. The old man replied in anger: "You laugh only because you know nothing and understand nothing. The allghoi khorkhoi-it is a terrible thing!" The men were impressed by the real fear displayed by Mongols in relation to the death-worm. Efremov himself, believed the animal to be some kind of living-fossil perpetuating its line from prehistory into historic times.

Czech explorer Jaroslav Mares heard an account of just how lethal the worm can be, in 1967 whilst searching for dinosaur bones in Nemeght.

*“My brother - living in Oboto Chajun aimak - knew a man who encountered an allghoi khorkhoi”, one herdsman told me. His name was Atlan. Once he returned with a friend from a neighbouring camp. They were riding their horses, and it was just after noon, one day in July. The sun was shining... Suddenly Altan's friend's horse fell down. The rider stood up and went to the horse, but suddenly cried out and fell again. Atlan was five metres behind, and saw a big, fat worm slowly crawling away. Atlan stood in horror and then ran to his friend. But he was dead and so too was his horse.’*

The first Westerner to have embarked on organised expeditions to specifically look for the death-worm, was the Czech cryptozoologist Ivan Mackerle whom sadly passed away several years ago. Mackerle made two treks into the hostile sands of the Gobi hunting his deadly quarry. The first took place in June and July of 1990 and concentrated on the desert - south-west of Dlandzadgad. This area is so remote that not even Mongolian explorers have visited it. They used a low-tech method of attempting to attract the worms by driving a wooden log repeatedly into the ground. The worms were not impressed and did not appear. Some interesting anecdotal evidence was turned up however. The expedition's interpreter, Sugi, told them of a dramatic incident from his childhood. A party of geologists had been visiting Sugi's home region. One of them was poking into the sand with an iron rod when he suddenly collapsed as if pole-axed. His colleagues rushed to his aid only to find him dead. As they examined the ground into which he had shoved, they saw the sand begin to churn violently. Out of the dune came a huge bloated death-worm. An even more spectacular demonstration of the electrical potency of the death-worm came from no less an authority than a nature-ranger. The man, Yanzhingin Malhgalzahav (who hailed from Dalanszadgad), told the team that in the 1960s - just north of Noylon - a single death-worm had electrocuted a whole herd of camels, when one of the luckless creatures had stepped on it.

The second outing occurred in 1992 and was based to the west of Dalanszadgad. They interviewed lamas, shamans, and nomads close to the Chinese border. They also tried to force the worms to surface using controlled detonations - a little like fishing with dynamite but less wet. Once more the worms remained elusive. Perhaps the shock-waves just frightened them deeper beneath the sands. The trip was filmed for Czech television as a documentary entitled *The Sand Monster Mystery*. Despite the stars of the show failing to put in an appearance, more information was gathered on the beast. One old woman named Puret, claimed that when on the attack, the worm rears up half its body like a cobra. A bubble of venom is formed at one end as the worm inflates itself. The bubble ultimately squirts forth at its victim. Anything struck by this noxious emission turns yellow and is corroded.

In May 2005 the CFZ undertook our most ambitious expedition to date. A four- man team travelled to the Gobi desert in search of the infamous Mongolian deathworm; a vermiform, desert- dwelling creature said to spit a corrosive yellow venom, and held in much fear by the Mongolian nomads who know it by the name of *allghoi-khorkoi* (pronounced “olra hoy-hoy”). The team consisted of myself, my two old travelling companions Jon Hare and Dr Chris Clark, and a new addition to the CFZ expeditionary force - Dave Churchill. Dave was a long time member of the CFZ, and wanted to join the Mongolian expedition when it was first mooted several years ago.

Reports suggested that the deathworm emerged after rainfall and lives near sources of water. Therefore, we proposed to try and dam some of the streams in the oasis in order to create localized floods, thus forcing the worms to the surface. Chris also proposed the use of bucket traps. These are buckets buried in the sand. with mesh netting strung between them. The idea is that small creatures would bump into the netting then crawl along it until they reached and fell into one of the buckets. We could then examine them in the morning. He also brought some small mammal traps so that we could try to catch potential deathworm prey for examination. We also had some leaflets printed up in Mongolian and distributed throughout the area we were visiting. They explained that a

group of British scientists would be travelling through the area in May and offered a \$50 reward for a *allghoi-khorloi* specimen.

We flew via Moscow (an airport unique in my experience, in not having a bureau-de-change) and on to the capital Ulaan Baatar.

Ulaan Baatar does not look very oriental. It has more in common with Russia and Eastern Bloc architecture. The buildings are grey or dull brown and functional. The skyline is dominated by a massive power plant that burns coal and pumps it through big ugly pipe to heat the city. There were a few scattered *gurs*, the traditional circular, Mongolian tents, in back yards or clustering on the outskirts of the city. It seemed wrong to me that a race of nomads, the people of Genghis Khan, should live in this sedentary manner.

We were met in the airport by Byamba, the director of [e-mongol.com](http://e-mongol.com), the company with whom we were travelling. Once closed to outsiders during the socialist era, Mongolia is now a popular destination with the more adventurous travellers. Byamba told us that a Canadian company owned the mines and power plant and that the boss was called Richard Freeman!

Dave had set up a website, [www.cryptoworld.co.uk](http://www.cryptoworld.co.uk) in order to chart our adventures. He intended to give regular updates via his laptop, but his USB connection was not working. After checking into the Marco Polo Hotel, we headed to the E-mongol offices to see if it could be fixed. We were introduced to our guides Bilgee (pronounced Bilgay) a stocky, genial chap, and Tulgar (pronounced Tograr), a slightly shy-looking man in his early 20s. Dave's connector could not be fixed so he was driven around the city in search of a new one. Whilst he was gone, Byamba tried to contact a man named Boldbaatar who worked as a researcher in the Ministry of Science and Education. Boldbaatar had been researching the deathworm for some time, and Byamba wanted to introduce our team to him. Boldbaatar claimed that he was just leaving his office on a research trip and would be away for over a month. Byamba suspected that he just didn't want to share his information.

That afternoon we visited the Natural History Museum. Their collection of dinosaurs is staggering. They included *Tarbasaurus baatar* the Asian cousin of *Tyrannosaurus rex*, and *Deinocheirus mirificus* a huge ornithomimid dinosaur that until recently, was known only from its vast, 8 foot long forearms. It is believed to have used its scythe like claws to collect plant material to feed on. Most impressive was a velociraptor and protoceratops locked forever in a dance of death. The predator is clutching the prey's bony frill, whilst ripping at its stomach with its curved hind claws. The prey is fighting back by biting down on one of its foes wrists. Both were buried by a sandstorm millions of years ago and preserved in mid fight.

Afterwards we visited a large market area where I was jostled several times. I later found out that some bastard had `liberated` my £300 digital camera. Dave had no luck in getting his USB to work so over breakfast the next day Byamba introduced us to a friend of his called Damdin who was a computer whizz. He worked programming computers for the mining company. He failed to fix the gizmo but took a great interest in our trip. He told us of a man who had claimed to have seen a creature like a yeti only smaller a couple of years ago. However, when the beast was captured it turned out to have been a monkey that had escaped from the circus!

Another story he had was altogether more interesting. His aunt had told him of a dragon that she has seen in a river in the 1940s. This happened in the north of Mongolia just after WW2. The animal was dead and protruding from a frozen river. At first, I thought it must have been a frozen mammoth but Damdin said it was long and scaly like a snake. It had been around 100 feet long but only the back was visible above the ice. It had been a very hard winter, so the villagers fed on the dead dragon's flesh until the spring thaws washed the carcass away. If only they had kept a few scales! In Mongolia dragons are called *luu* (pronounced low). It is believed that they live in heaven and only descend to earth on occasion. They bring rain and when storm clouds form around a mountain peak it is called *luu hang*.

We were introduced to our drivers Togoo and Davaa and the vehicles that would be transporting us for the next month. They were tough little Russian all-terrain vans that had been customized into minibuses. After breakfast we set off towards the wilderness. On a hill overlooking Ulaan Baatar was a large cairn of stones with a branch protruding. About the branch was tied blue cloth. Bilgee explained that it was an *ovoo*. Travellers stopped and walked three times round it and placed a new rock upon the pile. This would ensure a safe return. We all added to the *ovoo* before moving on.

I thought travel in Sumatra took a long time but, it has nothing on Mongolia. The vast distances and total lack of anything approaching roads makes journeys never-ending. We finally reached an area of strange rocks. It looked as if a chocolate ice cream belonging to Godzilla had melted. The brown rocks ran in weird liquid shapes and a sparse wood clustered at their edges. Bird life was all around. Vast black vultures soared overhead and woodpeckers flitted among the trees. A pair of noisy ravens eyed our camp with interest. Wherever we went in Mongolia ravens were present. It became a piece of expedition folklore that they were the same ravens keeping pace with us like the supernatural ravens of Odin in Norse mythology. Close to the camp was a very big *ovoo* with a living tree at its centre. As well as blue cloth there were prayer-flags with the symbol of the air horse (emblem of Mongolia) upon them or representations of the creatures from the Mongolian zodiac that are much the same as the Chinese.

We ate lunch at a tiny conurbation that had the air of a Mexican border town. There happened to be a Mongolian wrestling bout being held in the village, so we went along. Mongolian wrestling seems to be about getting your opponent off balance whilst grappling with locked arms. You are not allowed to kneel or put your hands on the floor. One poor chap was comically outmatched by the Mongolian equivalent of `Big Daddy`

On the third day the terrain became more open and the desert gritty. As we drove Bilgee told me that one of our drivers had been in the area about ten years earlier and had tried to use a well but found it had been covered and locked. Upon enquiring about it, he was told that a dragon had

entered the well. We located the well. It consisted of a car tier, around a hole filled with muddy water. It was only a couple of feet across so the dragon would have to have been very thin to fit into it.

We enquired at a nearby *gur*. The lady who owned the *gur* was most hospitable and we were soon gathered around drinking salty Mongolian tea. She told us that ten years ago an old wise man had seen a dragon entering the well. He had ordered it to be locked and said that no water should be taken from it. The local children became afraid. The story got about, and three government officials came to see him, as this was in the socialist era and the story was deemed to be religious and hence against the socialist thinking of the time. The three men poured oil into the well as a punishment to the superstitious people. Soon after two of the men mysteriously died and the third remains childless to this day. The woman did not see the dragon herself, but she told us that it was supposed to change colour like a rainbow. To an evil person it would appear black.

That night we camped in the shadows of black, twisted mountains that would not have looked out of place in Mordor. We explored them and I can truly say that the feeling of being watched one gets in eerie places, was stronger here than anywhere else I have ever been. As we drove further south the land became flatter. I truly doff my cap to our drivers and the amazing way they navigate without benefit of roads, or landmarks. The terrain was monotonous. The area we travelled through was known as The Mirror due to its flatness.

Chris and I had Davaa as our driver. Dave and Jon had Togoo. Togoo drove like a madman and had very little trouble. Davaa drove like an old lady and was constantly running into consternation. Twice we were stopped by punctures and once we suffered an overheated engine. En route we saw a swarm of black vultures around the carcass of a horse. We also glimpsed some rare black tailed gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) in the distance.

We stopped to dine at an area known as Long Red Mountain. One again the chameleon-like Mongolian countryside had changed. Now it resembled the ruddy surface of Mars. Long Red Mountain is famous for

its dinosaur fossils and fossil eggs. It is one of the places palaeontologist Roy Chapman Andrews visited in the 1920s. He was looking for fossil humans but discovered dozens of dinosaur nest sites. The discoveries continue to this day. Some German tourists had found an ancient egg just last year.

We thought we would try our luck and split off to search for fossils. I was looking along the sides of embankments where small landslides had occurred when my eyes fell on a perfect fossil egg. It was a little larger than a hen's egg and more lozenge shaped. There were tiny cracks running across its dusty grey surface. Excitedly I reached down to grab it with thoughts of presenting it to the natural history museum in Ulaan Baatar. It instantly crumbled to dust in my palm. It was nothing but desiccated camel shit!

I was laughing at this when the sandstorm blew up. It came from nowhere, a screaming red storm that lashed the sand into a frenzy and tore at the skin and eyes. I stumbled back to camp and we drove away. It was like driving through aggressive fog.

We finally drew clear of the storm and passed a well. Around it were gathered nomads with herds of sheep, goats, camels, and horses. Water was being drawn up via a bucket on a rope attached to a wooden, hinged, weighted tilt. The weight counterbalances the water bucket making drawing it up far more easy. It is a tradition in Mongolia that when travellers pass a well in use they stop and help draw water for the livestock, so we all took turns filling the troughs for the animals.

One of the nomads offered me a ride on a camel, a grumpy looking beast that was kneeling in the dust. I accepted and began to mount it when I committed a dreadful faux-pas in camel etiquette. When mounting the ship of the desert one is meant to throw one's leg between the beast's humps then insert your other foot into the stirrup closest to you. I put my foot in the stirrup before throwing my leg over. The indignant camel screamed in fury and turned its head round to face me with a look of pure hatred. Bearing nasty yellow tusks, it reared up and threw me to the floor

and attempted to run off into the wilderness. It took three men to regain control of the beast. It must have got the hump.

We decided not to camp that night and stayed with Davaa's family in Mongolia's second city Dalanzagad. The Mongolian equivalent of Birmingham made Ulaan Baatar seem like Venice or Prague, but it did have an internet café where Dave could update the website. Jon and Dave were accosted by a drunk who told them that they were fools to hunt for the *allghoi-khorkoi* as it had "killed thousands of people".

On the outskirts of Dalanzagad lived one of the witnesses who had seen our posters and contacted Byamba. Luvsandorj was a 90-year-old former policeman. He lived in the Gur district of the city. He invited us in and following the tradition offered us some snuff from a bottle. I had never had snuff before, and thinking it churlish to refuse, I took a hearty pinch and snorted it up one nostril. I almost fell over with a fit of sneezing - much to the amusement of our host.

It had been 1930 when Luvsandorj had seen the death worm. He was 15 back then and had been tending to cows when he came across a two-foot long, reddish-brown creature in the desert. It was about 4 inches thick and he could see no eyes or mouth on it. It was sausage-shaped and moved slightly from side to side. He ran to tell his parents who warned him not to go near it as it was deadly. He drew a picture of what he had seen, a crude sausage shape. He provided us with the names and addresses of other people he knew that had seen the creature.

As we drove into the desert, we saw what looked like a huge, shimmering lake overlooked by mountains. As we got closer, we saw it was a titanic mirage. We camped in the freezing desert beneath weird black rock vistas.

Next day we travelled deeper into the wilderness and tracked down one of the people on Luvsandorj's list. Juuraidor was a 70-year-old camel herder who saw the worm in the 1950s whilst searching for lost camels. His description tallied with that of Luvsandorj's. Brown, two feet long, and with snake-like scales. He had heard that the worm was dangerous, so he

ran away. The encounter was in June. He also told us of a man who had put a death worm on an iron plate. The plate had turned green. Another man that he knew, had wrapped a dead death worm in three layers of felt. The worm shrivelled up like a piece of leather, and the felt turned green. Both incidents had been long ago, and no remains had been saved. Later that day we saw a group of rare Mongolian wild-ass (*Equus hemionus hemionus*), galloping across the dusty horizon.

We had now entered the Gobi proper. We made camp in a rocky valley. Two men drove into the camp the following morning and introduced themselves. One was a grizzled park ranger the other a younger man with prominent golden teeth named Nyama. The latter had seen the death worm on no less than three occasions.

The first was in 1965 when he saw the creature's head (presumably) protruding from a hole in the sand. The following year he saw a specimen in the process of swallowing a mouse. Finally, he actually killed a worm - in 1972 - by throwing a rock at it. Some Russian scientists who had been in the area studying snakes took the body away. It probably resides forgotten to this day in some Russian museum basement.

Nyama said the worm eating the mouse was grey and 10 inches long. The other two were brown. The one he killed was between 18 inches and two feet long. They moved with a caterpillar like motion. The sightings occurred in a place called Dun-dus. He also heard tell of a death worm killing a child by spitting venom but could not confirm this.

The park ranger and his family lived in a nearby gur. His wife had seen the worm just three years ago in an area close to the Chinese border. He invited us into his *gur* whilst we waited for his wife. He had an impressively large collection of goats and some huge, savage-looking guard dogs. Despite an intimidating display of barking, the dogs were actually quite friendly. I found this to be the case right across Mongolia. He offered us a drink of fermented camel's milk whilst we waited. It tasted like fizzy, alcoholic yoghurt. It made a nice change from salty tea and I drank two bowls of it, an action that I would later come to regret.

When Sukhee, his wife, turned up she agreed to take us to the spot where she had seen the creature and remained with us for several day's hunting.

As we were close to the Chinese border we were stopped several times by amiable but Kalashnikov toting guards who checked our passports. One had heard about our expedition on the wireless. Byamba pointed to a nearby range of hills and told us "That marks the border with China" The hills were just 20 miles away.

The ground was now sandy and full of rodent burrows. A low forest of saxaul grew. As we wandered through the stunted woods Sukhee saw something and began to dig. She pulled a light yellow, ugly root from the ground. It was waxy in appearance and was covered with soft spikes. It was the root of the *goyo* plant and much admired by nomads. We shared the root which tasted surprisingly good, rather like a cross between banana and celery. Were they idea *goyo* is poisonous originated I have no idea. It made very good eating.

She led us the spot where she had seen the strange beast. She had been herding cows with her son when she saw an 18- inch, grey, worm-like thing slither out from a hole. Her son threw a rock at it and it slid into some bushes. She ran away. It had been in September and it was very hot, about 40 degrees Celsius.

Sukhee told us there were two worms in the desert. One was the *alghoi-khorkoi* or intestine worm. The other was called the *temrenii suhl* or camel's tail. This was smaller than the deathworm and grey rather than red - brown.

After a search of the area we decided to make camp. Just after lunch a particularly savage sandstorm blew up. It tore down our tents and blew over our tables. We retreated to the safety of the minibuses but my stomach was bubbling loudly on account of the fermented camel's milk. I had to brave the stinging sands and make a run for a bush. Having explosive diarrhoea in the middle of a sandstorm is not something I would like to repeat!

Sukhee told us that the storm would last for the whole night. It was impossible to camp, so she invited us back to her *gur*. The family had two *gurs* and allowed us to sleep in one of them.

Dave's laptop caused much interest as he had moving film with sound on it. The whole extended family crowded into the *gur* to see it. It was like a small, crowded, circular cinema. Many of the Mongolians (including Bilgee) had never seen the sea and were fascinated by Dave's film.

We travelled back the Dalanzagad and as Davaa's family were away we checked into an ugly hotel and spent the night at Dalanzagad's answer to Stringfellows.

Next day we drove deep into the Gobi heading for the frozen gorge, a river that never thaws. We visited the Gobi Museum, surely the remotest museum on Earth (unless there's one in Antarctica ). Among the wide array of stuffed animals was a carving of the death worm. Adam Davies had seen and photographed this a couple of years earlier. It resembled the witness descriptions apart from having clearly visible eyes.

The creature was labelled as a tartar sand boa. Via Bilgee, I enquired as to why this was. The museum guide said that the carving had once been labelled as a *allghoi-khorkoi* but the label got tatty. He was at a loss to know why it had been relabelled a sand boa.

The tartar sand boa (*Eryx taticus* ) does bear a slight resemblance to the death worm descriptions. It is a brownish or greyish, chunky snake that can reach four feet in length. The end of its tail is noticeably thick. However, it has a clearly defined head and visible eyes. It ranges from the Caspian Sea to Western China. It probably occurs in Mongolia as well. The sand boa is a constrictor and does not produce venom let alone spit it.

We camped in a valley full of pikas (*Ochotona pusilla* ), small lagamorphs related to rabbits and hares. The next day we set off for the gorge. Yolyn Am is a frozen river. Protected from the sun's rays on each side by sheer 500 -foot- tall cliffs. At one time the river never thawed even in the height

of summer. But from 1980 onwards it has begun to thaw in summer. Perhaps this is a further indicator of global warming.

When we were at Yolyn Am the river was frozen. The ice was thick enough for us to drive the mini-buses along it until a sheet gave way with a sickening crash and engulfed the back wheel of the one I was riding in. We had to tow it out.

Continuing on foot we found an *ovoo* built on the ice and some amazing ice caves. Where the lower layers of ice had melted, they left blue and silver caverns in the frozen river. We crawled inside for a closer look. Weird fissures and troughs had been carved out of the ice by the wind. In a small cave by the riverside, Chris left a geo-cache, a plastic container with the details of our location via satellite and details of the CFZ website so that whoever found it could get in touch.

Bilgee said that this area, an eastern outcropping of the Altai Mountains, was one of the best places in the world to see snow leopards. On three of his four trips there he had seen one and Togoo has also seen one killing a wild sheep. Sadly, we were not so lucky.

We met a group of men selling stone carvings. One of them, an incredibly talented man called Baiar carved me a dragon in one hour flat.

That evening a massive sandstorm blew up turning the sky a reddish grey. Deciding not to camp we stopped in a small town and slept in a minute hotel with unreliable electricity and a constantly banging door.

Striking on in the morning we reached Noyon Sum. A *sum* is the Mongolian equivalent to a British county. Some *sums* are the size of Scotland. In the Sum Centre, (the largest and most important town in the sum) we had a meeting with the governor of Noyon. He had never heard of the death worm but received the leaflets Bilgee had distributed. The governor did some digging and found out that in 1955, a man herding sheep had come across a two-foot-long, grey creature with no discernible head or tail. The man fled in terror. He now lived in Dalanzagad.

The governor had found more stories. His driver told us that in the 1960s his mother in law had seen a death worm. It was light grey and making holes in the sand. She ran away from it. The governor had found another local man named Damdin who had seen the creature in 1954-55. He gave us his address and we thanked him heartily and went on our way.

After a roundabout drive we found the *gur* belonging to Damdin's sister. She told us that her mother had seen it as well, also in 1955. She had been present at the sighting but was too young to recall it. Her mother said it was 2- feet- long, brown, scaly, and as thick as a *gur* support pole (about 5 inches). She gave us directions to her brother's *gur*.

We found Damdin's domicile and he welcomed us in. He told us he had been out tending camels in May 1955. At about ten in the morning he saw a death worm. It was brown, two- feet long and about two inches thick. It made no movement. He ran to tell his parents and they warned him it was venomous. He returned to the spot he had seen the creature in, and it was gone.

Damdin's family had been so frightened by what their son had seen that they packed up their *gur* and moved. He said that lots of families moved after seeing a death worm. He heard tell of it killing animals by spitting at them.

He took us to the area where he had seen the worm. The marks of his family's old *gur* were still visible in the gravel. The area was much disturbed by camel tracks. We felt it unlikely that the worm still inhabited this part of the desert. Another storm forced us to spend the night in the *gur* of one of Damdin's friends.

We moved on again to stay in another *gur* deeper in the Gobi. The one we were supposed to be staying in was flooded but a second was available. There was rancid surface water all over the area and sulphurous smelling salt caked grasses.

The valley was overlooked by an old telecommunications tower from the socialist era. We explored some crumbling barracks dating from the same period. Behind these was an old Buddhist temple with ornately carved pillars, some of the original colours still visible. The temple had been destroyed in the anti-religious purge of the 1930s. What was left had been incorporated into the barracks. Deep in the bowels of the temple, beneath some old floor boards I found an offering, mouldering money wrapped in a blue cloth. It seemed that even in the height of socialism the faith had not been totally extinguished. I added a little of my own money and reburied the offering.

Further beyond the temple was a weird landscape, an oasis of mossy, green, humped tussocks that looked more Irish than Mongolian.

The next day Bilgee took our passports to be checked at a military base. We were once again drawing close to the Chinese border. He returned with a retired Mongolian Army Colonel called Hurvoo who wore a broad ten-gallon hat. He had once been in charge of a base called Ovootin Otriyad.

In 1973 he had been patrolling an area called Ulann Ovoo on motorbike. It had been in May and at sunrise. He saw what looked like an old tyre in the desert. It was some sort of animal lying coiled up. His description was by now familiar, brown, two feet long, scaly and sausage-shaped. He did say he saw light playing across it like electricity or light reflected from a mirror. This may well have been the rising sun reflecting off its scales. It had been raining and the worm was wet.

Hurvoo watched it for half an hour and it did not move. He drove off to get a camera but on his return it had gone. One year later a soldier reported that he had seen an identical animal. Hurvoo investigated but found nothing. He believed the worm came out after rainfall.

We drove out to the area after checking in at the military camp again. We set bucket traps in the scrub. These consisted of a series of sunken buckets connected by netting supported by struts. The idea is that a creature bumps into the netting and cannot continue forwards. Ergo it

runs along the netting until it comes to a bucket and falls in. Then you have a specimen. We also set baited small mammal traps to see what possible death worm prey might be in the area.

That night we stopped at the military base. A thunder storm occurred during the night with heavy rain. The next day we rose early to check the traps. Both the bucket traps and the small mammal traps were empty.

We moved on to Gurantes Sum and stopped in hotel shaped like a huge concrete gur. We had a meeting with the governor of Gurantes, Deevat Serem who had distributed our leaflets in the area. He had a witness named Khuuhengaa with him. She had seen the worm in the 1980s when she had been a girl. She could not recall the exact year, but it had been in summer. She was staying with her grandfather who called her to see it. The worm was 15 inches long, brown and with no discernible head or tail. Her grandfather told her it was venomous and she was afraid.

Deevat told us of another sighting that occurred just last year. A man had been cutting reeds at an oasis called Zulganai. A man cutting grass lifted up the worm on the end of a stick and threw it away. Another man had seen the worm at the same oasis and claimed he could identify its tracks and burrows. Deevat was sure the worm exists and told us that in these days it is seen less often. This is not because it is getting less common, but people are now travelling by motorbike rather than by horse or camel. Also, people are moving to towns, cities, and areas of sedentary residence rather than moving about as they used to. Hence the deathworm is encountered less often. We identified three oases that we thought might be promising places to look given that the death worm was found close to water. He thought that the dragons seen in wells were just metaphors for poisoned water or ways of keeping people from drinking bad water.

The morning found us back on the trail again. We tried to locate the man who could identify death worm tracks but he was not at home. We found the *gur* of Batdelger, the man who had seen the worm in 2004 at Zulganai. His wife and son also saw the creature. They had been cutting grass to feed livestock at the time. His description differed slightly from the others. The worm he saw was 15 inches long and brown. It had a

squarish head and what looked like large eyes, but these may have been part of a pattern on the skin. He did not think it was a snake as it was too thick. His son lifted the worm on a branch and cast it away. It felt very heavy.

We spent the night in a *gur* belonging to the family of the former local governor. The next day we spoke with his wife who had seen an *allghoi-khorkoi* in 1957 in an area close to the Chinese border close to where Colonel Hurvoo had seen it. Once again our suspect was 15 inches long, brown and had no clear head or tail.

The ex-governor himself spoke to us and said he knew a man who had seen three large snakes some years ago. The biggest was six feet long and had a head shaped like that of a sheep. All three sported horns.

There are horned snakes known to science. They include the rhinoceros viper (*Bitis nasicornis*) and the horned viper (*Cerastes cerastes*). Their horns are in fact modified scales. However, none is known from Mongolia and none reach six feet in length. We were unable to locate the witness.

A long boring drive followed. At last we came to an area of spectacular cliffs and mesas. They looked like gigantic petrified flames. Between these spectacular edifices was Wall Canyon or Zuun-Mad, the first of several oases we intended to visit.

Water had cut low but sheer cliffs in the sandstone. A stream ran through them surrounded by poplar trees, saxaul, tamarisk and other plants. We split up to explore and I followed the path the water had cut into a narrow steep side valley. A short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) exploded out of a bush about five feet away causing me to jump out of my skin.

Later we set up the bucket and small mammal traps again. The physical nature of the oasis with its steep sides made the damming plan impractical. In the twilight the colour of the rocks changed hue as you looked on. It was a spectacular display that looked more like special effects than a natural occurrence.

We decided to explore Wall Canyon after dark and set off with torches. Dave's beam picked out a pair of large, luminous, green eyes. We tried to get a closer look, but their owner had vanished.

At day break we examined the traps. Apart from hordes of ants they were empty. We all saw the owl again. Short-eared owls, unlike most of their kin will often hunt in broad daylight. The riddle of the green eyes was solved that night. They belonged to a Przewalski's skink gecko (*Teratoscincus scincus*). We saw dozens of these attractive little lizards, their outsized eyes glowing green in the night. We caught several. Their luminous eyes give the illusion of a much larger creature.

Next day we moved on. Another epic drive brought us to the largest collection of vegetation we saw in the whole Gobi, the oasis of Zulganai. This was a mile-long march with steep cliffs at one side and a kinder slope at the opposite side. It was filled with reed beds as tall as a man. At one end a narrow strip of woodland erupted and the oasis formed a second smaller pool. The water course ran on to be lost in the desert. Large, savagely horned bulls pranced through the reeds adding a little extra spice to the exploration.

We descended into the reed beds. There was much bird life including demoiselle cranes (*Grus virgo*), spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*), and white storks (*Ciconia ciconia*). We saw the strange flowers of the *goyo* erupting from the earth. These consist of reddish, phallic like buds that bring forth masses of tiny violet and blue flowers. They look a little like lupins.

We made camp and as dinner was being prepared, we watched a whirlwind forming in the distance. It had started as nothing more than a dust devil but rapidly grew in size. We watched it with interest filming it as it slowly drew closer and built in size and power.

It approached the valley that curled up over the lip of the cliff and was upon us in seconds flat. Screaming like an angry djinn it tore through the camp shredding the tents and hurling dinner to the four winds. I was slammed against one of the min-buses and found myself in the eye of the

twister. Togoo was entangled in the remains of a tent and dragged along the desert.

Then just as swiftly as it had come upon us, it was gone, sweeping out over the dusty plains and into the horizon.

The camp had been totally destroyed and night was falling. We had no choice but to drive 75km back to Gurantes and spend the night in the stone *gur*. It was as if the desert was rallying its powers against us jealous of its secrets.

We drove out to the third oasis, Hermen Tsav the next morning. This was a small wood of poplar trees. It was much drier than the others and far more used by humans. An animal corral had been erected at the centre of it. There was little wildlife. Thankfully we had back up tents. Adam Davis had told us of this very tent the year before.

That night Tuglar soundly thrashed Jon and I at Mongolian wrestling and Bilgee told us a strange story about a haunted *gur*. Back in the 1970s a sombre socialist newspaper reported that a Russian geologist had been attacked by a ghost in an empty *gur*. *Gurs* that are not in use are often stocked up with fuel, food, and water for fellow travellers to take advantage of. In a land as inhospitable as Mongolia this is a necessity rather than a kindness.

The geologist and a colleague were staying in such a place one night. They had been playing cards. The geologist looked up to see the inside latch on the door turn and open by itself. His friend did not seem to notice it. Presently a woman in a red *deel* (a long heavy Mongolian coat) entered and tried to strangle him. His companion was oblivious. He finally managed to kick over the card table where upon the ghost vanished and his friend looked up.

In the morning we drove back to the second oasis from which the whirlwind had driven us. Exploring the second smaller pool we discovered the tracks of several wolves going to and from the water source. We followed the tracks and the stream that fed the oasis into the

desert. We tried to find its source but it became lost among the trackless sands and we were pressed for time.

We found another smaller pool that had methane bubbling up from it and releasing foul smells. That afternoon Bilgee discovered that one of the vans had a badly damaged axle and it had to be driven to the nearest (Sevree Sum) town for repairs.

Next day we took the long dull drive to Sevree Sum. We saw a tornado on the way that dwarfed the one that destroyed our camp. We filmed it from a distance this time.

When we arrived in town, we checked into a tiny hotel. The matronly owner cooked us some delicious meat dumplings. The governor had heard of our arrival and invited us into his *gur*. His name was Tserendorj and his hospitality overwhelmed us. He told us that he was delighted that we were visiting him and that he did not think that scientists from abroad would be at all interested in meeting him. He seemed to think we were far more important than we actually were.

Tserendorj was a mine of information and together with his friends and family we consumed much vodka during a fascinating evening. He related a story of an old man who had seen the worm in 1957 in an area of the Gobi now owned by China. It looked like a length of blood-filled intestine. The same old man heard of a fellow prodded it with a horse goad and the end of the goad turned green. Both horse and rider died. This is reminiscent of stories of the basilisk in medieval Europe. Another man had seen it during the 1950s. It slithered out from under a rock and the witness threw a stone at it. The worm retreated back under the rock.

The governor introduced us to a 93-year-old man whose grandfather had seen the worm in the 19th century at the oasis we had just left. He thought use of motorized vehicles and the population moving to towns was the reason that the death worm was now seen less often.

He did not buy the idea that well-dwelling dragons were metaphors for bad water at all. He insisted that they were real creatures (and I am

inclined to agree with him). He told us of a doctor from Ulaan Baatar who had seen such a creature in a well just last year. This had occurred in Bulgan Sum. The doctor described what looked like a green-scaled Chinese dragon coiled at the bottom of a well. Understandably he was shocked. This was no nomad or peasant but an educated man.

The governor had also spoken to a man who had seen a horned snake in his youth. It was over two 6-feet-five inches long and sported two horns. He found it outside of his *gur* as a child. It did not seem aggressive and he played with it. Years later the man's wife died after a five-year illness. A shaman told him that it was because he had touched God's sacred creature as a boy.

The governor invited us back next year to join in the celebrations for the 80th anniversary of his Sum.

On the morrow we were back on the road. We stopped at Bulgan Sum but were, frustratingly, unable to locate the doctor. A beautiful teenage girl was selling unusual stones she had found in the desert. I brought a couple of pieces of petrified wood from her.

That evening we visited the famous flaming cliffs where Professor Roy Chapman Andrews had discovered the first dinosaur nests and eggs in the 1920s. We stopped at a nearby holiday camp consisting of rows of *gurs*.

The expedition was all over bar for the shouting now. The next couple of days was nothing but a dull journey back towards the capital. We had a brief look at a Buddhist monastery that had escaped the anti religious purge of the socialist days by becoming a warehouse. Once Mongolia had thrown off the yolk of communism the temple reopened. There were interesting carvings of daemons. Before the coming of Buddhism, the Mongols were animist. When Buddhism arrived, it absorbed the old animist gods. It turned them into daemons but ones that had converted to Buddhism and were ferocious, zealous guardians of the faith.

We contacted Byamba and asked him if he could try to contact the doctor who had seen the dragon or find out his address in Ulaan Baatar.

We had one day staying in the “melted chocolate” valley. Dave almost got himself killed climbing up a mountain.

Finally, we made it back to Ulaan Baatar and checked into the Marco Polo Hotel again. The next couple of days were spent around shops, museums and temples. We visited the library to see if we could turn up any information on the death worm. They had nothing on the worm but did have a massive block of stone intricately carved into entwined dragons. It formally sat upon another block onto which had been carved untranslated script. It had been found in the desert some years before.

We were unlucky in so much as that nature was against us. May 2005 was colder and more windy than the norm. We intend to return one day in more clement weather.

Byamba is still trying to track down the doctor who saw the dragon. So far, he has had no luck.

The question of the death-worm's identity is thorny. Some of the candidates of the former - true worms (Annelids) - require moist conditions in which to live. They quickly become desiccated in hot dry climates. It is far more probable that the creature is a vertebrate. A huge limbless skink would make an excellent death-worm. Many of the desert dwelling species have much reduced limbs and effectively swim through the sand like fish.

Another group of reptiles that match the worm's description even more closely are the amphisbaenas. Though they somewhat resemble primitive snakes or legless lizards they are in fact neither. Amphisbaenas form a sub-order of *squamata* - the group of reptiles that include snakes and lizards. Their exact relationship to the other sub-orders is far from clear. As the sharp-witted reader will have noticed, these queer creatures derive their name from the amphisbaena of legend - the snake with a head at each end. Indeed, at first glance, it is hard to tell these animal's heads from their tails. They dwell in substrate awaiting prey (mainly

invertebrates), that they detect through vibrations, being virtually blind. The head is blunt and bullet-shaped, for pushing its way through the earth. The tail is almost identical in shape. When threatened, the amphisbaena will wave its tail complete with this "false head" aloft. This diverts the attacker's attention from its true head. In some species the tail can be shed allowing its owner to make an escape. Many are pink or reddish and match the death-worm's description.

In colour and shape, amphisbaenas are dead-ringers for our beast. The raising of the tail to enemies may explain the way the worm is said to rear up when spouting venom. But what of the venom? No known species of amphisbaenas is poisonous, but it is feasible that one could have evolved. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the "venom" is in fact excrement if the creature's tail-end, rather than its head being raised. This sounds odd, but several species of animal defecate upon attackers. These include the grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) that squirts a yellowish white foul-smelling excreta onto those who harass it.

The largest known amphisbaenas grow to a length of around two feet - far short of some of the death worm's reported lengths. The worm's reported size and bulk would mean that if it was an amphisbaena it would be by far the largest worm lizard in the world.

Alternatively, the Gobi's most dangerous resident could be a snake. One group of snakes - known as sand boas (*Eryx spp*) - fit the bill nicely as far as shape is concerned but are totally harmless. Some unknown venomous species would surely make a better model. Some snakes - such as the spitting cobras or rinkhals - can spray their venom over two metres (seven feet). The fangs have smaller apertures than those of non-spitting cobras. The venom is forced through them like water out of a hypodermic needle. Spitting cobras aim at the eyes of their enemies, and the venom can cause blindness. All cobras have the elongated body-plan of an average snake, unlike the squat, sausage shaped death-worm. Perhaps the brute is more closely related to the Australian death adder (*Acanthophis antarcticus*). This snake is not a true adder (*Viperidae*) - as none of these snakes inhabit Australia. Rather, it is a relative of the cobras, coral snakes, and kraits (*Elapidae*). With no true adders or vipers

in the picture a squat viper-like Elaphid snake evolved. This is known as convergent or parallel-evolution, where two unrelated species in different parts of the world evolve to resemble each other because they inhabit similar ecological niches. Perhaps the death worm is a spitting Elaphid that has become short and squat in shape - much like the death adder.

The most problematic aspect of the death-worm is its alleged electrical generating abilities. The only known animals that can generate electricity at voltages high enough to kill humans are fish. Several species employ electricity mainly to find and kill prey. The most infamous of these is the electric eel (*Electrophorus electricus*) of tropical South America. This is not a true eel but a colossal knife fish (*Gymnotidae*). The electric eel can discharge a shock of up to 650 volts - enough to kill a horse! The charge is generated via highly modified cells called electroplaques that are flattened and arranged in columns. There are up to 10,000 of these cells in an electric eel. If the death worm has such a power, it would be truly unique, as this apparatus is known only in aquatic creatures. Water is an excellent conductor of electricity, whereas sand is a poor one. It is possible that the 'worm' generates electricity via friction as it slithers through the sands and can transmit this over short distances like a living spark plug. More likely the electrical powers are nothing more than an example of the mythification process.

I am proud to present this 50th issue of Anomaly, even though it is now well beyond fashionably late. As Editor I am beginning to explore the identity and possibilities of the journal, and have made some decisions that I feel should be addressed here.

The times they are a changing as Dylan said, and in the past authors of papers on parapsychological and paranormal topics have struggled to find mainstream journals that would publish them. The explosion of desk top publishing and open access journals has changed that, and I fear pay to publish as well. One thing is clear: no one will ever be asked to pay to publish in Anomaly! However while ethical breaches, fraud and journals that publish for pay proliferate, academia has responded by tightening up their recognition of what journals matter.

At the moment, partly owing to online databases, I am bombarded with good quality articles on our subject published

# A 'WINDOW AREA' IN THE MIDLANDS?

Peter A. McCue

## ABSTRACT

*Cannock Chase is an area of heath and woodland in the West Midlands of England. Over the years, it has allegedly been the setting for a wide array of anomalous phenomena. As such, it might be classed as a 'window area' (an anomaly hot spot). However, there are problems in deciding whether that's the case. Some of the reports might reflect genuinely paranormal incidents, but it's hard to know whether Cannock Chase has seen more such activity than other parts of the country. Nevertheless, many of the case reports from the area are intriguing.*

## INTRODUCTION

Readers of *Anomaly* will be familiar with the notion of *hauntings* – cases in which seemingly paranormal phenomena occur recurrently in relatively small, circumscribed locations such as houses, and where the manifestations are primarily linked with the places themselves rather than particular witnesses. More problematic is the notion that larger geographical areas are, or have been, hot spots for anomalous phenomena (McCue, 2012). Such localities are often referred to as 'window areas'. The principal difficulty is a lack of reliable comparative data. On the basis of reports, it might appear that certain areas are, or have been, window areas. But without knowing how many anomalous events have occurred elsewhere over a given period, it might be impossible to say whether that's really the case. Of course, this statistical problem doesn't mean that window areas don't exist, or that their possible existence isn't worth considering. But in any case, the reported

phenomena will often be of interest in their own right, even if it's unclear whether the areas concerned have hosted a disproportionate number of them.

Publicity given to local phenomena (UFOs, encounters with strange animals, sightings of human apparitions, etc.) could encourage hitherto silent witnesses to come forward with their own experiences, particularly if they believe that they'll be taken seriously. The total number of experiences (reported plus unreported) could be no higher than elsewhere, but the increased level of reporting might give an impression that the area is a hot spot.

If there are very active investigators in certain areas, they might unearth, and draw attention to, reports that would otherwise have gone largely unnoticed. Take, for example, Paul Sinclair, an anomaly researcher from Bridlington on the North Sea coast of East Yorkshire. His primary focus has been his home area (i.e. within a radius of about 30-miles from his home). His books (Sinclair, 2016, 2017) cite a wide range of strange incidents from the locality (e.g. mysterious human disappearances; sightings of what he calls 'intelligent lightforms'; the discovery of mysterious craters on local land; encounters with an entity that's been dubbed the 'Flixton werewolf'; and intermittent magnetic anomalies affecting ships in the North Sea). Naturally, this leads one to ask whether the locality is a window area. But without reliable comparative data from other areas, it's probably impossible to tell. Nevertheless, the reports that Sinclair cites are interesting in their own right.

In addition to the presence of active, local investigators, other factors could give a false impression that a locality is a window area. For example, if it has hosted a few well-publicized UFO sightings, people thereabouts might then pay more attention to the sky, and possibly mistake meteors, bright planets, helicopters and suchlike for exotic aerial craft. That may have happened in the Warminster area of southern England in the 1960s and 70s.

The precise starting date of the so-called Warminster UFO flap is a moot point, but on Christmas Day, 1964, people heard unusual sounds.

Incidents involving auditory phenomena continued for a while, but UFO sightings soon predominated (at least, in reporting). There were also tales of other odd events, such as cars seemingly colliding with pedestrians who then mysteriously vanished. ‘Colliding apparitions’, as I call them, have also been reported from elsewhere, with certain areas appearing to be hot spots for them (see McCue, 2018, Chapter 3).

The Warminster flap continued until about 1977. *In Alien Heat*, a book by Steve Dewey and the late John Ries, is an interesting sceptical analysis of the case (Dewey & Ries, 2006). The authors, who grew up in Warminster, interpret the alleged events in terms such as misperception, hoaxing, a will to believe, suggestion, and hallucination. They made a good case, but they didn’t undertake any re-interviewing of witnesses. Kevin Goodman’s book *UFO Warminster* describes a number of interesting experiences (quite possibly paranormal) that he and some friends had in the area in the 1970s (Goodman, 2007).

A military presence can be a complicating factor when it comes to deciding whether a locality is a window area. For example, Warminster is adjacent to Salisbury Plain, and both the town and the plain are home to army establishments. Some of the UFOs seen there in the 1960s and 70s may have been military helicopters, parachute flares and suchlike. This article, which is based on Chapter 6 of a forthcoming book of mine (McCue, 2019a), focuses on another locality with claims to being an anomaly hot spot: Cannock Chase, a 26-square-mile area of woodland and heath in Staffordshire in the West Midlands of England. Lying north of the Birmingham conurbation and south-east of Stafford, it’s part of what was once a large hunting ground created by William the Conqueror and known as the King’s Forest of Cannock. The development of settlements in the Middle Ages led to the clearing of woodland, which subsequently gathered pace when trees were destroyed to produce charcoal. Fortunately, there’s still a scattering of oaks, which are most abundant in Brocton Coppice, in the north-western part of the Chase. Sadly, though, much of the woodland is now coniferous rather than broadleaf.



### ***Brocton Coppice, Cannock Chase***

The 1:25,000 (2½in to 1 mile) OS Explorer Map no. 244 (*Cannock Chase & Chasewater*) depicts the locality, which is classed as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, although it's close to towns and is intersected by numerous roads and tracks. A railway line runs through the Chase, roughly parallel to the A460 road between Hednesford and Rugeley.

Castle Ring, the site of an ancient hill fort, lies at the south-eastern end of Cannock Chase and marks its highest point (244m/801ft). It's next to the village of Cannock Wood, and has reportedly been the setting for anomalous phenomena. Some four miles to the north-west of Castle Ring, and within the Chase, are the Commonwealth Cemetery and the German Military Cemetery.<sup>1</sup> The latter, which is also known as the 'German War Cemetery' or simply the 'German Cemetery', was built in 1964 and inaugurated and dedicated in 1967. It contains the graves of nearly 5,000 Germans, Austrians and Ukrainians, many of whom had been servicemen during the two world wars. Under an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany, their bodies were transferred to the cemetery from churchyards scattered about the country. Strange phenomena have reportedly occurred in the vicinity of the cemetery.



***The German Military Cemetery, Cannock Chase***

## **THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE**

Cannock Chase and the surrounding area have generated numerous reports of odd occurrences. Selected instances are cited below. The evidence is often based on the testimony of single witnesses. Information about the informants is generally sketchy. And because there's a tendency for writers to use pseudonyms, sometimes without bothering to explain that to their readers, the true identity of witnesses may be obscured. Therefore, I can't guarantee that the names mentioned below are necessarily real. Nevertheless, the stories from Cannock Chase and the surrounding area are interesting, and it's worth asking whether there's something special about the locality, and whether the different types of phenomena are somehow related.

## SOURCES

Nick Redfern was brought up in Pelsall, not far from Cannock Chase, and is a prolific author of books and articles on UFO, cryptozoological and paranormal themes. He's now based in Texas, in the USA, but he's continued to take an interest in, and to publicize, accounts of strange phenomena from Cannock Chase and the surrounding area. For example, this part of England receives attention in his books *Man-Monkey*, *There's Something in the Woods* and *The Monster Book* (Redfern, 2007, 2008, 2017).

Lee Brickley spent much of his childhood in Heath Hayes, close to Cannock Chase. His short book *UFOs, Werewolves & the Pig-Man*<sup>2</sup> contains various interesting anecdotes about the area (Brickley, 2013). Other writers and researchers, such as Jenny Randles (2002), have also referred to the locality.

## UFO SIGHTINGS

The area has reportedly been the setting for UFO sightings. The following are a few examples, at least some of which may have prosaic explanations.

### **'Flying triangles'**

Numerous witnesses saw a couple of 'flying triangles' in the area on the evening of 16 May 1988, although according to David Clarke (2000, pp. 76-93), a sceptical writer on UFO matters, they were two VC-10 aircraft from 101 Squadron, RAF Brize Norton, lining up for an in-flight refuelling exercise, which was to take place over the North Sea. He contends that flying very high and slowly, they were misinterpreted as low-level, silent objects that even seemed to hover.

Some years ago, Omar Fowler, a Derby-based ufologist, sent me details of a sighting that reportedly occurred near the town of Rugeley one night in July 1997. This would have been close to, if not over, Cannock Chase. But Fowler (now deceased) believed that it may have involved a stealth aircraft rather than something exotic. The witness heard a noise outside

his home, similar to that of a high revving two-stroke engine. He went outside and saw lights hovering approximately 150 yards away and 150 feet above the ground. After going indoors to fetch binoculars, he was able to make out the shape of a black helicopter in the vicinity of the lights. He went back indoors and returned with a night vision scope. He could see the helicopter clearly, since it was illuminated by the flashing strobe and navigation lights. When he turned on the infra-red beam, he saw a blacked-out triangular craft next to the helicopter. It was similar in size to the helicopter, but it reflected no light from the strobe and navigation lights. Looking through his night scope, the witness approached the two hovering craft. Suddenly, the helicopter shot away at an incredibly high speed. The triangular craft remained for a moment, but then moved out of sight. However, Fowler didn't think that all the triangular UFOs seen over our skies were man-made. There are reports of people seeing huge triangular UFOs, often well-lit, which travel slowly and usually silently. Fowler believed that they had an exotic origin.

### **A circular, glowing mass**

Jenny Randles (2002, pp. 203-205) describes an incident that occurred in August 1988. A couple were driving at night on a road skirting the northern end of Cannock Chase when they saw a circular mass glowing with a deep reddish colour that pulsed. There was a surrounding cloud or mist, which touched the top of a hedge. A semi-solid object seemed to emerge from the cloud or mist. After about half a minute, the pulsing mass disappeared, only to reappear further north a few seconds later. Then it disappeared. While it was present, the witnesses felt a strange sense of calm and sudden quietness. Signs of damage to the hedge were subsequently found. Randles concludes that the phenomenon was probably an 'atmospheric plasma' or an earth light. She states that the incident occurred in a geologically faulted area.

### **Missing time and 'alien abduction'**

Lee Brickley (2013, pp. 31-38) cites a case from 2009 that involved a young man (precise age unspecified) named Mark, who lived in Heath Hayes. He and two friends, Paul and Ian, were walking home from a

birthday party in Pye Green in the early hours of a misty morning. (Brickley doesn't specify the month.) They decided to shorten their route by cutting through a small area of woodland. (Unfortunately, Brickley doesn't specify its precise location.) They were reportedly panicked by a flash of light overhead and a thunderous bang, whereupon they fell to the ground and then felt paralysed, as if they'd been pinned down. After less than a minute, Paul and Ian managed to stand up. They discovered that Mark was missing. Despite searching the woods, calling his name, they couldn't find him. Within about an hour, they alerted some friends, who assisted with the search for a while, but to no avail. At 7 a.m., one of them, Elaine, rang Paul and Ian to say that she'd found Mark, in a state of shock. Paul and Ian went to Elaine's home. Mark was standing in her front garden, shaking badly and staring blankly at the sky. Elaine explained that he'd been there since she'd arrived home from the search. Paul and Ian carried him into the house, to warm him up, since he was very cold and stiff. After about another 10 minutes of shaking, he collapsed on to the carpeted floor. Two hours later, he seemed to return to normal, but his mind appeared to be blank for what had happened after he saw the light and heard the loud bang in the woods.

Mark went on to experience flashbacks, which often left him feeling off-balance and disoriented. He informed Brickley that one of the "visions" entailed his being strapped down on a black table in a sort of shadowy operating theatre, with an "evil presence", dressed in black, watching over him, and whispering continuously in a language that he couldn't understand. The figure had bright yellow eyes, and teeth that were shining white and sharp. Its appearance therefore differed from that of the classic alien grey entities that feature in many abduction accounts. However, as in many other reported abductions, the proceedings entailed an uncomfortable medical-type examination. In describing Mark's experiences, Brickley seems to be referring to more than just painful, intrusive recollections (flashbacks). If I've understood him correctly, he's saying that Mark felt that he was undergoing repeat performances of the abduction ordeal. However, Brickley notes that, over time, Mark learned to control the visions more effectively.

Some commentators question whether such reports reflect actual abductions by aliens. For example, Albert Budden (1998) contends that electric and magnetic fields can induce suitably sensitized people to experience hallucinations with a ghostly or UFO theme. One of the cases that he cites is from Australia, and concerns a Maureen Puddy, who had a history of anomalous experiences (pp. 262-268). In February 1973, she undertook a fairly long car journey to meet UFO investigators Judith Magee and Paul Norman. During the journey, she had a brief vision of a “spaceman” in her car. Norman and Magee were waiting for her when she arrived. When Magee touched the bodywork of Puddy’s car, she (Magee) experienced a strong electric shock, presumably meaning that a static electric charge had discharged itself through her. (Budden quotes from an anonymous source that claims that unexpectedly high magnetic fields were detected in Puddy’s car, in the vicinity of the front seats.) The investigators sat with Puddy in her car, to conduct the interview. As she was telling them about seeing the spaceman, she broke off to say that she was seeing him again. However, Magee and Norman couldn’t see him. Puddy said that the figure had walked towards the car and was standing in front of it. Norman got out and went to the front of the vehicle, after which Puddy explained that the spaceman had moved back to let him pass. Then, she apparently saw the figure beckoning to her, after which it appeared to melt away into some bushes. Puddy then screamed that she was being abducted, and she gave details of the interior of a flying saucer in which she found herself. Eventually, she returned to her normal state. Clearly, the Puddy case suggests that at least some abduction experiences are purely subjective events. However, even if they have no objective, physical reality, it’s possible that an external intelligence induces people to have such experiences. Furthermore, since some cases – such as that of Gary Wood and Colin Wright on Scotland’s A70 road in 1992 (see, for example, McCue, 2018, pp. 118-121) – involve more than one person, they aren’t all easily accounted for in terms of fantasy-proneness.

## **BIGFOOT SIGHTINGS**

Over the years, people in forested areas of the USA and Canada, such as the Pacific Northwest, have reported encounters with tall, stocky ape-like creatures with some human features. They’re known, in the singular, as

'bigfoot' or 'sasquatch'. The word 'bigfoot' is often given a capital 'B'. But since it's used as a common noun, and isn't the name given to one particular creature, I prefer to render it with a lower case 'b'. (The plural form of 'bigfoot' is 'bigfoots', not 'bigfeet'!) Similar creatures have reportedly been encountered elsewhere – for example, in the Himalayas (where they've been called 'yetis'), and in Australia (where they've been dubbed 'yowies'). But there's controversy about the status of bigfoots, yetis and yowies, and their existence isn't officially recognized. It's been suggested, for example, that yeti sightings have been generated by bears walking on their hind legs, and that hoaxing lies behind some of the North American bigfoot reports. Coincidentally or not, bigfoot phenomena have been reported in areas associated with other types of strange occurrence, such as UFO sightings; and judging from some reports, there may be paranormal aspects to bigfoot manifestations themselves (see, for example, Gordon, 2010; Powell, 2003).

If flesh-and-blood bigfoots exist, populations of them may have survived, largely undetected, in forests in North America. But it's hard to believe that such creatures reside on England's Cannock Chase or anywhere else in the heavily populated and relatively deforested British Isles. Compared with the forests of the Pacific Northwest, the woodland of Cannock Chase makes up a very small area. And, as already noted, the Chase is close to towns, and is criss-crossed by roads and tracks.

Yet there are reports of people seeing bigfoot-like creatures on, or near, the Chase. Indeed, Nick Redfern (2017, p. 206) claims to have on file some 30 or 40 such reports, spanning more than 130 years. Of course, some of these stories could be mischievous inventions, or it may be that pranksters were prancing around in gorilla suits. Another possibility is that the witnesses succumbed to misperception, such as mistaking deer for stranger creatures. Alternatively, these sightings may have been paranormal experiences, involving apparitions or transient materializations rather than flesh-and-blood animals. At any rate, the following are a few examples, including one from a location a few miles north of Cannock Chase (the significance of which will be commented on in the final section of this article).

## **Crossing the road**

Redfern (2007, pp. 39-40) describes an experience that a motorist, Jackie Houghton, reportedly had around 1 a.m. on 18 February 1995 as she was driving across Cannock Chase on the road linking Cannock and Rugeley (the A460, I presume). However, it's not clear whether Redfern had any direct contact with the witness. She was supposedly approaching the turning for Slitting Mill when a large, shambling creature stepped out on the road, about 200 yards ahead of her. She swerved her car and felt that she was lucky not to have hit the entity. It was man-like, tall, and very hairy, and had self-illuminating red eyes. It immediately vanished into the darkness. According to Redfern, Houghton made her journey after working a shift at a restaurant in Stafford. It's possible, therefore, that she was rather tired at the time, and that fatigue played a role in her experience.

## **A beast on the bonnet**

A man, whom Redfern (2007, pp. 40-41; 2017, pp. 205-206) refers to as Gavin, informed him about an experience that allegedly occurred on a winter's night in 1997. (Unfortunately, that's ambiguous, because it could mean either the beginning or the end of 1997, both of which would have been winter.) Gavin was reportedly parked in his car with his girlfriend, near the Glacial Boulder, a well-known attraction on Cannock Chase.<sup>3</sup> They were engaging in some intimacy when Gavin's girlfriend let out a scream. A large, hairy man was standing on top of the boulder, waving his arms in a crazed fashion at the sky. Gavin quickly got into the driving seat and roared away, but not before the hairy man had jumped on to the bonnet of the car, where he remained for five minutes before being thrown to the ground! In his rear-view mirror, Gavin noticed that the figure quickly got back on its feet and ran off.

Of course, Gavin may have invented this tale. Even if he didn't, it would be speculative to class this as a sighting of a bigfoot-type creature, since the descriptive details are sparse. If the creature had been a fully-grown flesh-and-blood bigfoot of the type reportedly seen in the Pacific Northwest of the USA and Canada, the bonnet of Gavin's car would have presumably been dented by its great weight. But there's no mention of

that in the story relayed by Redfern. And like many of the other accounts cited in this article, this is a report from just one witness, and therefore not highly evidential. Assuming that she existed, it would be interesting to know what Gavin's girlfriend had to say about the matter.

### **'Bigfoot almost made me lose my baby'**

As noted, it's possible that bigfoot reports from Cannock Chase have been generated by pranksters clad in gorilla suits. Dramatically entitled 'Bigfoot almost made me lose my baby', an article in the *Cannock Chase Post* claimed, in March 2006, that, "Police chiefs [had] hit out at the dangers posed by [a] spoof 'Bigfoot' craze after a teenager almost lost her baby when a joker clad in a gorilla suit jumped in front of her car." According to the article, hoaxers had been tempted by the paper's offer of a free meal for anyone who caught "the elusive Chase Bigfoot" on film! But there was no mention in the article of anyone being apprehended for perpetrating the supposed hoax, or of anyone admitting to it. Therefore, the notion that the sighting involved someone in a gorilla suit may have been pure conjecture.

### **Encounter near Chartley Castle**

Nick Redfern (2008, pp. 24-25) mentions a story, told to him in 2001, by a man whom he refers to as Mick Dodds. One night in 1986, Dodds and his wife were driving near Chartley Castle, about five miles north of Cannock Chase, when a huge stag ambled slowly across the road in front of them, causing Dodds to brake hard. Then, a creature looking like a large chimpanzee bounded after the stag, coming on to the road from a field on the couple's right. It stopped suddenly, halfway across the road, looked at the terrified couple, and charged their car. But it backed away at the last moment. Putting the car into reverse gear, Dodds inadvertently stalled the engine. As he tried to re-start it, he flooded it (the carburettor, I presume). The couple were briefly stranded on the road. For about 20 seconds, the creature stared at them. It made two further charges at the car, and then headed off in the direction that the stag had gone. Dodds wondered whether he and his wife had experienced some form of time displacement.

## WOLVES AND WEREWOLVES

An article in the *Birmingham Post* (28 June 2006) stated that, “Motorists on Junction 10A of the M6, near Cannock, [had] jammed Highways Agency helplines on Wednesday morning, with reports of a ‘wolf-like creature’ racing between lanes at rush hour.” The three-foot-long creature was described as being greyish-black. The witnesses apparently thought they’d seen a wolf, but Highways Agency staff stated that it was likely to have been a husky. Nick Redfern (2008, pp. 7-8) notes that the same week that the wolf story emerged, a report surfaced about the mysterious killing of a former feral cat owned by a couple from Norton Canes (some three miles south of Cannock Chase). Its body was found in a field. A vet told the couple that it had experienced a devastating blow on its side, probably from a large dog.

Redfern (2008, p. 8) relates an experience that was supposedly described to him in the summer of 2006 by a man he refers to as Jim Broadhurst.<sup>4</sup> The event had reportedly occurred four days previously. Broadhurst and his wife were walking on Cannock Chase (the precise location isn’t specified) when they saw what looked like a large wolf about 150 feet away. It was striding purposefully through dense woodland. The couple were seized with terror when the creature suddenly stopped and looked intently in their direction. Their terror was then greatly amplified when it reared up on its hind legs and backed away into the trees. (It was no doubt its rearing up on its hind legs that exacerbated the couple’s terror, not its backing away.)

An article in the *Stafford Post* (26 April 2007) mentioned the West Midlands Ghost Club, which had reportedly been contacted by a number of people who claimed to have seen a hairy wolf-type creature walking on its hind legs around the German Cemetery. But, somewhat contradictorily, the article stated that, “Several of [the witnesses] claim the creature sprang up on its hind legs and ran into the nearby bushes when it was spotted.”

## **Werewolf encounter near a golf course**

Lee Brickley (2013, pp. 53-63) cites a dramatic werewolf story. He explains that, in 2012, he was contacted by a Mr Hilton, who described some events that had allegedly occurred several years previously. At the time, Hilton was 37 and working as a French language interpreter with a Birmingham-based company. Along with his wife and daughter, he'd recently moved to Gentleshaw, which is on the south-eastern fringe of Cannock Chase. He wasn't then familiar with the local folklore.

On the evening of Thursday, 12 February 2004, Hilton, along with his wife and daughter, visited a pub in Hazelslade. He got talking to a couple of men, who invited him to join them for a game of golf the next day. Hilton accepted, and went along to the golf course that day, arriving about 10.10 a.m. Brickley doesn't specify its name, but I think he's referring to the golf course of Beau Desert Golf Club, which is north of Hazelslade, and surrounded by woodland.

Hilton and his new friends were close to finishing their game when they heard screaming coming from the woods. They ran in the direction of the sounds. Hilton heard his name being called by someone who sounded like his wife. That proved to be the case. She fell into his arms and said something about a werewolf, which he initially took to be nonsense. She went on to explain that after he'd left the house earlier that day, their daughter had suggested that they make him a packed lunch and take it to the golf course. They tried to phone him, but got no response. When they eventually found the golf course, it was only 11.30 a.m., so Hilton's wife suggested to their daughter that they walk along a path that seemed to go round to the other side of the golf course, where it was likely that they would meet him. As his wife was explaining this, Hilton realized that Emily, their daughter, wasn't present. His wife then explained that when they were on the path, they'd heard rustling noises from the bordering thorn bushes and weeds, and they'd quickened their pace. But whatever was causing the noises kept up. Then, suddenly, they were stopped dead in their tracks by a "monster". It grabbed Emily and ran off into the trees, which was when Mrs Hilton started screaming.

Hilton asked which way the entity had gone. His wife pointed, and the four of them ran that way. They shouted Emily's name, and eventually heard her shout back. Hilton then spotted her. She was on the ground, trying to get to her feet. Standing over her, on its hind legs, was a howling, hairy creature. When it detected Hilton, it darted away at what he estimated was well over 30 miles an hour. He described it as looking like a huge dog from the waist down, but like a toned man from the waist up, albeit with a wolf-like head, with salivating ooze dripping from large, white fangs! However, it was gone by the time that his wife and two friends arrived on the scene.

Emily was semi-conscious, covered in dirt, and had a bleeding gash on her left arm. The Hiltons went to a local hospital, where the wound was cleaned and sealed with glue, obviating the need for stitches. Emily had little recall of the traumatic event: she remembered walking along the path and hearing noises in the bushes, after which everything was fuzzy. Brickley got to meet Emily when he interviewed Mr Hilton, and he saw her scar. She was nearly 20 then. She revealed to Brickley that, three weeks after the incident, she started noticing thick hairs growing on the back of her left hand. Medical advice was sought, and it was eventually deemed that she was suffering from congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH). She was prescribed some steroid tablets. Back home, the hair was shaved off, and never came back.

Some two years after the incident, Mr Hilton obtained copies of Emily's medical records in connection with an unrelated matter. Brickley states that they confirm that Emily had been at a hospital on the relevant date, with a wound that was glued, and that CAH was subsequently diagnosed, although her problem cleared up before a follow-up appointment. It's not clear from Brickley's book whether he actually spoke to Mrs Hilton.

Brickley notes that, according to mythology, if someone is attacked by a werewolf, and the skin is pierced, the person can become one. He remarks that if Emily's hair growth problem wasn't related to her being wounded by the werewolf, it's an extraordinary coincidence.

If the facts of this case are as described, a possible explanation is that the werewolf was a paranormal manifestation (a transient materialization),

and that it was orchestrated in line with folklore belief about werewolves. As for the abnormal hair growth that Emily subsequently experienced, could it be that it was some sort of temporary reaction to the trauma that she'd endured?

## **BIG CATS**

A BBC Internet article, dated 10 February 2003, described Cannock Chase as a “veritable big cat hotspot [where] there have been many supposed sightings over the last few months.”<sup>5</sup> It stated that witnesses had reported seeing a large black cat with a long tail, and that the village of Stretton, a few miles west of Cannock Chase, was also a regular haunt of the creature, which was the suspected killer of two geese.

During a visit to Cannock Chase in April 2008, I spoke to a woman who was walking her dogs. She told me of an occasion, some 10 years previously, when she'd seen what she took to be a big cat while she was driving in the area. It crossed a road and jumped over a hedge. And she indicated that about four years after that, she'd had a UFO sighting in the area (from Castle Ring, if I remember rightly), featuring three triangular objects that were in formation.

Big cat sightings are widespread throughout the UK. Therefore, without confirmation from reliable statistics, it might be wrong to assume that Cannock Chase gets more than its fair share. Indeed, the aforementioned BBC Internet article states (no doubt with a degree of hyperbole) that “20 miles down the road in a village near Tamworth, sightings are so frequent that everyone's got a tale [...] to tell”.

From a sceptical point of view, it could be argued that there's no real mystery about supposed big cat sightings in the UK, and that they're explicable in terms of misperception, misinterpretation, ‘mass hysteria’, and hoaxing. Hoaxing could take the form of invented sighting reports, or the fabrication of physical traces.

For those believing that big cat sightings are generated by essentially normal, flesh-and-blood big cats, there are several (not mutually exclusive) possibilities: (1) they may have been living on our islands,

largely unobserved, for centuries; (2) they may have been deliberately released from captivity by their owners; or (3) they could be large felines that have somehow escaped from captivity (see Harpur, 2006).

Others might favour explanations with a more paranormal flavour. For example, it could be that many out-of-place big cats are 'interdimensional' beings – entities that are able to enter our world from some sort of parallel world or alternative reality.

## **THE 'PIG-MAN'**

It's no secret that Nazi doctors carried out unethical experiments on prisoners during the time of the Third Reich, and it's well recognized that government agencies in more recent times have sanctioned reprehensible experiments on animals and humans. Lee Brickley (2013, pp. 77-88) describes four alleged sightings of pig-like humans on Cannock Chase, and mentions the possibility that they involved hybrids arising from such research. However, if the sightings truly occurred, I think it's most unlikely that they involved flesh-and-blood human-pig hybrids.

### **Incident at Castle Ring**

Around 10 p.m. one evening in October 1993, an unnamed middle-aged couple were walking their dog around Castle Ring when they spotted a strange looking man limping slowly towards them. When he moved from the embankment on to the moonlit path, they noticed that he had

an over-sized, elongated head



### ***Castle Ring, Cannock Chase***

huge pointy ears, and a pink snout-like nose protruding from an evil-looking face.

One might wonder whether this was a prankster wearing a horror mask. At any rate, the couple supposedly fled to their car. As soon as they'd engaged their seatbelts, they heard a squealing noise from behind them, and they sped out of the car park. But it's conceivable, of course, that the squealing noise had been pre-recorded, and was being played by a hoaxer from a tape recorder or similar device.

### **A cyclist's experience**

In the spring of 2005, a female cyclist stopped for a breather after a five-mile ride around the Chase. Brickley doesn't specify the precise location. She heard rustling coming from her left, from just inside the tree line. She saw, kneeling in the dirt, what she described as "the most loathsome,

hideous and unprepossessing monstrosity ever to [have plagued] the woodland of England”. However, from Brickley’s brief mention of her encounter, it’s not clear whether she explicitly stated that the creature had pig-like features.

### **Sightings in 2011**

A 17-year-old student, whom Brickley refers to as John, was sitting alone in his Nissan vehicle in a car park (precise location not specified) on Cannock Chase one night in 2011. His was the only car there. After fiddling with his mobile phone for a few minutes, he turned on the car’s ignition, and his headlights came on. He saw the ‘Pig-Man’ staring at him, about 20 metres away. (Unfortunately, Brickley doesn’t specify what it was about the figure that merited its being described as such.) Its fiendish gaze terrified John, and he quickly departed. He drove to another car park (location not specified), a good three miles away, and switched off his engine. Trembling from his recent fright, he tried to phone some friends, but found that he didn’t have a signal. He was about to get out of his car, to see if that would help him get a signal, when – to his horror – he saw the ‘Pig-Man’ again, just metres away, staring blankly. However, he got away without harm.

As Brickley notes, John’s story suggests that there’s a paranormal aspect to ‘Pig-Man’ sightings, since it would have been impossible for any normal creature to cover, on foot, and during the same time, the distance that John had travelled from the first car park to the second one. However, Brickley explains that John and his friends often used car parks on Cannock Chase as meeting places. Therefore, I don’t think we can rule out the possibility that John was the victim of a prank involving a couple of friends wearing horror masks.

## **OTHER STRANGE CREATURES**

### **Snakes**

A strange snake-like creature was reportedly seen on Cannock Chase in the summer of 1976, not far from the village of Slitting Mill (Redfern,

2008, pp. 41-42). The witness told Nick Redfern about the sighting in 1995. About six or seven feet long, the creature emerged from the surface of a small pool and basked on the bank for at least 20 minutes before sliding back into the water. It appeared to have flippers or small feet near the front. Since the end of the creature didn't come fully out of the water, the witness couldn't tell whether there were also flippers or feet there.

An article in the *Birmingham Post* (20 September 2006) stated that, in March 2006, ramblers had reported seeing a 14-foot snake near Birches Valley on the Chase. An article in the *Cannock Chase Post* (7 May 2009) stated that a Rambler had contacted the newspaper the week before to report having spotted a python-sized creature near the German Cemetery. He described it as brightly coloured, with a powerful head. The article noted that pet pythons can grow to a huge length, and have been known to be dumped by unthinking owners. In December 2008, an article in the *Cannock Chase Post* reported that two dead pythons had been found hanging from a tree in Chasewater Park (a few miles south of Cannock Chase) the previous week.

### **A disturbed campsite**

Redfern (2008, pp. 5-6) refers to an informant called Tom who had camped in the woods near the German Cemetery with two friends in the summer of 2005. After setting up camp, they went away to buy some provisions. When they returned, they found that items of theirs had been flung about, as if by a large and irate animal. Then, around 2 a.m., they were jolted awake by a hideous scream coming from the woods. The "following day" (I wonder whether Redfern actually meant later that same day), they went away for more provisions, only to find their tent gone when they returned. However, their other possessions were as they had left them.

### **Large dogs**

As already noted, some of the sightings of strange creatures on Cannock Chase may have been paranormal experiences. In an article in the August

2007 edition of *Fate* magazine, Nick Redfern related that a man was driving over the Chase late one evening in 1972 when he saw a ball of glowing blue light hit the ground ahead of him amid a torrent of bright sparks. He slowed down. Approaching the approximate area where the light had descended, he saw a very large, menacing-looking dog looming before him. After 20-30 seconds, it headed for some tall trees, but without taking its eyes off him. Some two or three weeks later, a close friend of the witness was killed, in horrific circumstances, in an industrial accident. Although it could be just coincidental, this ties in with the folklore belief that sightings of ghostly black dogs can be portents of death.<sup>6</sup>

In another article, Redfern described an experience that had reportedly befallen a man who was walking around Castle Ring one morning in December 1991. He noticed a small area of dense fog and went towards it. When he got within about 20 feet of it, he felt his hair become “static and electrified”, and he experienced an intense smell of burning metal. A monstrous black dog – about the size of a young horse – loomed out of the fog. The man and the dog slowly backed away from each other, with the latter retreating into the fog. When the man was maybe 150 feet from the fog, he saw a small ball of light zoom in over it and cast down a column of vivid blue light towards it. In an instant, normality was restored – the fog, the ball of light, and the dog were all gone.<sup>7</sup>

### **Troll-like entities**

Redfern (2017, pp. 366-368) relates a strange experience that reportedly occurred in the early hours of the morning in 1975, although it's not entirely clear whether the testimony he cites was obtained first-hand from Barry and Elaine, the married couple that he mentions. They were in their late 20s at the time, and had been at a Christmas party in Penkridge with their two small children. On the way back to their then-home in Slitting Mill, their car broke down, close to the village. Barry carried out some checks, but couldn't discern what was wrong. He proposed leaving Elaine and the children in the car while he ran home to get her vehicle, in which he would return to collect them. However, he didn't get to execute that plan, because Elaine let out a scream, having

seen a small figure running across the road in front of them at high speed. It was followed by a second one, and then a third. In the moonlight, they looked to her like small, naked, hairy, hunchbacked men with large hooked noses. As Barry recalled, the creatures slowly approached them. But it seems that for a period after that, he and his wife were left with no clear recollection of what had happened. The next thing he recalled was that it was about 2 a.m. and that the car started with no problem. It seems that the children had no memory of these strange happenings.

## **HUMAN APPARITIONS**

Over the years, I've come across various reports of people seeing human apparitions on or around Cannock Chase. Since we don't have comparative statistical data, it's hard to know whether the area plays host to a disproportionately high number of cases. But the following are some examples.

### **A shape-shifting, vanishing passenger**

Brickley (2013, pp. 90-96) recounts two incidents that were related to him by a Mr Bird (pseudonym) very soon after they happened, some 10-13 years ago. The first one allegedly occurred when Bird was driving, early one morning, on Stile Cop Road, near Rugeley. He saw a woman at the roadside, staring blankly into the road ahead. He turned his car round at the next junction, drove back to her, and asked whether she needed any assistance. She nodded, and he offered her a lift. Without saying anything, she got into the back of his car and clicked the seatbelt into place. She seemed to be about 25. Bird chatted away, but she said nothing. Then, to his horror, he noticed, in his rear-view mirror, that she'd turned into an old, ugly and evil-looking witch-like figure, dressed in rags. He brought his car to a halt, and turned round, only to discover that she'd vanished.

Subsequently, according to what Bird told Brickley, he saw the woman again on Stile Cop Road, although someone else had stopped to pick her up. But Bird reportedly followed close behind this other vehicle, expecting to see the woman in the back seat vanish. Instead, though, the

vehicle itself, along with its driver and passenger, “faded to dust” (Brickley’s words).

Brickley discovered that, in 1984, Cannock Chase Council had opened a cemetery beside Stile Cop Road, because many local burial grounds were at capacity. Its entrance is very close to where Bird claimed to have had his sightings.

### **Ghostly Roman soldiers**

Brickley (2013, pp. 96-99) mentions sightings of apparitions in the Birches Valley area of Cannock Chase. Towards the end of 2012, he was contacted by a 71-year-old woman, who reported having seen what she took to be an apparition of a Roman soldier in that area. Unfortunately, no date is given for the sighting, which occurred on a Monday afternoon, around 4 p.m. She was out with her dog, which acted strangely, by sitting at her feet, unwilling to move. It started barking at what, to her, was an empty field. Then she saw what appeared to be man, dressed in red and silver uniform, walking towards her. But after about 20 seconds, the figure vanished before her eyes.

Within a matter of weeks of getting the above report, Brickley received another, from Stanley Gregg, a 42-year-old mechanic. Around 4 a.m. on 12 October 2012, he took his dog for a walk in the Birches Valley area. He noticed a strange figure moving between the trees. As he approached it, he observed that it was clad in old military uniform, like that in the film *Gladiator*. Before he was close enough to see the figure’s face, it was gone.

### **A strange vision at Castle Ring**

Nick Redfern (2017, pp. 206-209) describes a strange dream-like or hallucinatory experience that was related to him by a woman whom he refers to as Pauline Charlesworth. On a bright day in July 1986, she went by herself to Castle Ring for a picnic. She laid out a blanket on the ground and, for over an hour, sat reading. Then, all the ambient noises, such as the whistling of birds, completely stopped. She saw a man running directly towards her. He was fairly short, was clad in animal skins and

had a matted beard, filthy long hair and a ‘dumpy’ face. In his right hand, there were deer antlers that had been fashioned into a dagger-like weapon. He looked at her curiously, in what she deemed to be a disturbing and sinister way, and he seemed to speak to her in a language that she didn’t understand. It was as if he were angry and firing questions at her. She heard other voices approaching, and then, through a break in the trees, came some 30 or 40 similarly clad people, mainly men. They were chanting. They sat down around the edge of the Ring.

A man who was much taller than the others, and whom Pauline took to be the leader of the group, marched over to her and said something unintelligible. He waved his arm curtly, which she took to be an order to get out of the circle. She retreated to the tree line and looked on, transfixed with terror, for more than 15 minutes as the strange people continued to chant and sway. Then, out of the sky, a bizarre creature slowly dropped to the ground. It prowled around the Ring for a minute, staring at the assembled people, emitting hideous loud shrieks. As Pauline recalled, it was about four feet tall, human in shape, but with oily, greasy, black skin, thin limbs, red glowing eyes and large leathery wings. Suddenly, it was pounced on and wrestled to the ground by seven or eight of the men, who bound it with ropes. In its struggle, it tore into their flesh with its claws, but they finally subdued it and then dragged it into the forest, with the rest of the party following. At that point, the strange atmosphere started to lift and eventually things returned to normal. For several minutes, Pauline was too afraid to move, but then she gathered her things and ran to her car.

The book that Pauline was reading at Castle Ring was a fantasy novel called *Mythago Wood*, by Robert Holdstock. Redfern concedes that a sceptic might interpret Pauline’s experience as a bizarre dream or nightmare brought on by reading it. But she reportedly believed that she’d experienced a unique glimpse into the distant past of the area.

## **OCCULT RITUALS**

Given that Cannock Chase is a rural oasis adjacent to an urban sprawl, it wouldn’t be surprising if it attracted occultists who wished to practise

rituals, of either 'white' (benign) or 'black' (evil) intent, away from public gaze. Obviously, though, it's hard to know whether such activities have any bearing on the aforementioned anomalous phenomena (UFO sightings, apparitions, etc.).

At any rate, Redfern (2008, pp. 28-30) cites testimony suggesting that occult rituals have been carried out in the area. In 1999, an informant, referred to as Frank, told him that the previous year, while walking his Labrador dog near the village of Brocton, he'd come upon the remains of five fully-grown foxes, which were laid out in a circle on a patch of grassy ground. About six or seven feet from the bodies, there were the remains of a large candle. In the late 1970s, a couple (whom Redfern interviewed in 1999) came across a dead deer on the Chase, somewhere between the German Cemetery and the British Telecom tower at Pye Green. Its major organs had been removed and were laid out on the ground in a clearly delineated pattern; and it appeared that the carcass and organs had remained completely untouched by the other animals inhabiting the area. A member of the Staffordshire Constabulary informed Redfern that he'd investigated the mutilation and killing of several ducks and other water birds at Shugborough Hall, near Milford, on the northern fringe of the Chase. And Redfern states that, in the mid-1960s and in 1981, tales circulated among the staff at Shugborough Hall about wild, hairy men being seen in the nearby woods after the sun had gone down and the moon was full.

## COMMENTS

In discussing an area that's deemed to be a hot spot for strange phenomena, it's tempting to include incidents that have occurred not only within it, but also relatively close. In the foregoing paragraphs, I've done that myself. For example, I've mentioned a strange incident that reportedly occurred near Chartley Castle, a few miles north of Cannock Chase. However, if a significant number of anomalous events have occurred in the area surrounding Cannock Chase, one has to ask whether the Chase itself is in any way unique in respect of strange manifestations. Quite a few wooded locations in Britain have allegedly been the setting for strange phenomena (McCue, 2019a). With regard to the sighting of

mysterious creatures and human apparitions, it's worth noting that such terrain may be particularly conducive to *pareidolia*: the tendency to misinterpret vague stimuli. For example, people walking in woods might mistake patterns formed by leaves and branches as ghostly figures or strange, out-of-place animals, particularly if they're aware that the locality has a reputation for such phenomena.

Most of the stories mentioned above have come from single witnesses, and some of the reports are vague or anonymous (or both), amounting to little more than rumour. The number of stories might seem impressive, but it's conceivable that hoaxers have fabricated tales in line with local folklore, giving the impression that the locality is seething with 'high strangeness'. On the other hand, to the extent that the reports are genuine and reflect truly paranormal events, it could be that whatever's behind the phenomena is tricksterish, and that it deliberately crafts them in such a way as to leave uncertainty and doubt about their occurrence and true nature (McCue, 2019b).

In conclusion, I suspect that some of the reports mentioned above reflect genuinely paranormal experiences, although I'm unsure whether there's been a sufficiently high concentration of anomalous incidents on Cannock Chase as a whole to justify its being classed as a window area. But judging from the accounts, it may be that at least one or two parts of the Chase, such as Castle Ring, are true hot spots and merit further investigation.

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## NOTES

1. ‘Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery’, <https://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/4007266/cannock-chase-german-military-cemetery/>

2. In the published book, the abbreviation ‘UFOs’ is mistakenly rendered as ‘UFOS’, and isn’t followed by a comma. For referencing purposes, I thought it better to correct these slight errors.

3. ‘Glacial Boulder - Cannock Chase’, <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/4030595>

4. This incident is also mentioned on p. 10 of Redfern’s *The Monster Book*. However, the two versions aren’t entirely consistent with each other. For example, according to *There’s Something in the Woods*, Redfern learned of the incident in June 2006, just days after it had happened, although according to *The Monster Book*, he learned of it in 2007.

5. ‘Big cats on the prowl’, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/westmidlands/series2/big\\_cats\\_sightings\\_puma\\_panther\\_west\\_midlands.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/westmidlands/series2/big_cats_sightings_puma_panther_west_midlands.shtml)

6. Nick Redfern, ‘Phantom hounds of the woods’, <http://theunexplainedmysteries.com/phantom.html>

7. The Internet link that I previously used to access this article no longer seems to work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# Notes

# Testing for Psi with a Fake Ouija Board

David Sivier

One of the most unusual devices invented by researchers into the paranormal was the fake Ouija board I friend described to me in an internet conversation several years ago. One of his friends, who he described as one of those lucky people who are able to make anything with their hands, had constructed a fake Ouija board. This allowed the sitters to move the glass surreptitiously around the board while apparently not touching it. My friend couldn't quite remember how it worked, except that it was a box with arms that those playing with the device touched. What was especially fascinating was his statement that after playing with the device and moving the glass by trickery, after a while he and his friends became able to move the glass without touching the device at all. It's a spectacular result, if true. If that did happen, and could be replicated, it would be powerful evidence for the existence of Psi and psychokinesis.

It also seems to confirm the views on psi of Kenneth Batchelder. Batchelder believed that the sitters' or experimenters' attitude towards PK was determined by their belief or disbelief in psi. He believed that belief was crucial in leading to the success of an experiment, but, following another researcher, Colin Brookes-Shield, he distinguished between long-term belief and instant belief. There was a difference between a general belief that psi existed, and the immediate belief that came from personally witnessing it. It was this latter variety of belief that led to successful experiments. Amongst the factors he recommended for a successful experiment was the belief that one or more of the sitters had telekinetic powers.

At the same time, he felt that experiments could be negatively affected by psychological resistance to psi. Sitters could find Macro-PK disturbing, and their resistance to it could run from simply not believing it could work to abandoning the experiment. He divided this resistance into two categories: ownership resistance and witness inhibition. Ownership resistance was reluctance to believe that one personally possessed psychic ability. Witness inhibition was disturbance felt when witnessing psychic phenomena.

Batcheldor was therefore interested in finding ways to reduce the sitters' resistance while encouraging their belief. He therefore attempted to create a light-hearted atmosphere for his experiments, encouraging noise, trivial chatter and conversation as this interrupted analytical thought and calmed any fears. He believed a successful sitting was characterised by 'a state of heightened expectation and belief, which is also slightly tense', which he believed was also slightly-altered state of consciousness. (<https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/kenneth-batcheldor>) He therefore recommended abandoning what he described as the divided state of consciousness between the conscious and subconscious for a blended state where the division between the two was blurred. It was in this state that voluntary control of psi was possible. Batcheldor's sittings typically lasted for two hours with a half-hour break. Unlike the Victorian séances, there were no ceremonies, conversation was permitted and no-one went into a trance. Also, they placed their palms on the table itself rather than holding hands. (<https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/kenneth-batcheldor>)

Batcheldor also believed that resistance to psi could be lessened if the conditions of the sitting were deliberately ambiguous, so that psychological resistance to the emergence of psi phenomena could be reduced by allowing them to be ascribed to trickery. He thus conducted his sittings in darkness, with plenty of opportunities for deceit, rather like the early Victorian séance in which psi phenomena were so plentiful. (Schoch & Yonavjak 2008)

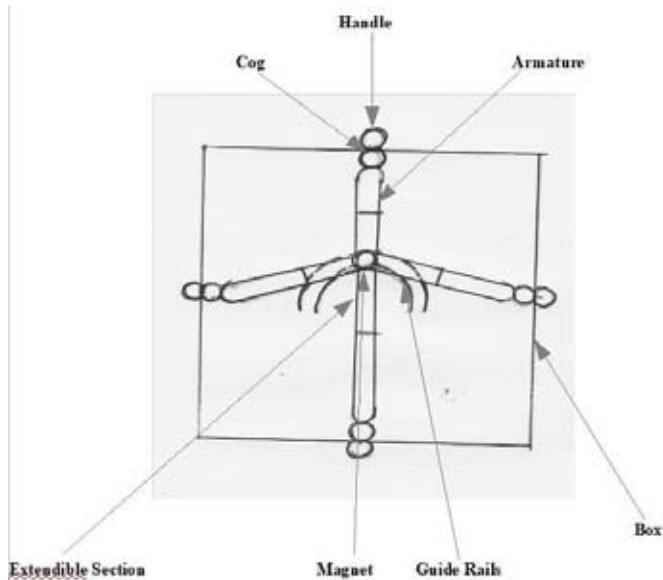
Batcheldor also believed that real psychic phenomena could emerge from initial fraud or a mistaken natural event.

*"This raises the question of how the first PK event in a group ever comes about. If success is required in order to create the necessary quality of belief to give rise to further success, how can success occur in the first place. The answer I came up with was that the first event is probably a false event, but one that is mistaken for a real PK event."*

*"Quite early in the series of sittings, I noticed that ostensible paranormal events "grew" as it were, out of these normal events. For example, creaks that at first seemed to me to be due to thermal expansion or to stresses in the wood of the table gradually became far too loud and frequent to depend on either of these causes. Small movements of the table that were probably due to involuntary muscular action gave way to larger movements, and eventually to movements that could no longer be attributed to accidental muscular action - unless fraudulent of course - namely, levitations of a good height and movements without hand contact." (Batchelder, cited in 'Examining Macro Psychokinetic Experiments' by Michael Williams and Ruby Lang, originally posted as *Strange Nation*, in <http://www.ranprieur.com/readings/psychokinetic.html> ).*

The experiments with the fake Ouija board that nevertheless led to the sitters developing a genuine ability to move the glass through their own PK therefore becomes explicable from Batchelder's own conclusions and methodology. The repeated use of a fraudulent device broke down the sitters' resistance to PK, and allow their own psychic talents to become manifest.

I don't have any description of the construction of the fake Ouija board beyond what I was told above. However, I believe a similar device may be built in the following manner. Instead of moving a glass, the board would use a concealed magnet to move an iron object instead, or a glass with an iron rim. The board would be the decorated surface of a box, which would contain the mechanism for moving a magnet just underneath the board. The board would have four handles, located at each side, to allow a maximum of four sitters to move the glass. These would be connected by cogs to armatures inside the box, which would be used to move the magnet. The armatures would be linked together roughly at the centre of the board, and it is on this central link that the magnet would rest. These armatures would be extendible, allowing them to move the magnet to different positions underneath the alphabet on the board above. The handles would rotate, turning the cogs, which would then turn their armatures, making them swivel, thus moving the central joint with the magnet. At the same time, the handles would also each position as switch, allowing them to be raised out of their cogs. This would allow them to rotate without contacting the armatures and so moving the magnet. This



would allow the experimenters to investigate the possibility of moving

the object through psi by grasping the handles as normal but not actually allowing them to operate the Ouija board's mechanisms. The handles could be locked off prior to the experiment without the sitters' knowledge, thus allowing any psi talents they possess to manifest while they themselves believe that they are in manual control of the board. See

### **Diagram 1**

Batcheldor's own experiments with table-tipping were apparently successful. During sittings, the table would apparently rise on two legs, slide across the floor, rotate around its centre or even levitate for 20 seconds. Other paranormal phenomena experienced during the sessions included breezes, intense cold, lights and touching. The sitters' chairs would be pulled away, or other objects would be moved. The table could also become immovably fixed to the floor, or sometimes move without anyone touching it. There were even some apports, consisting of a small stone and box of matches. (<https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/kenneth-batcheldor> )

These results, if correct, suggest that Batcheldor's methodology is correct. If similar PK results can similarly be obtained using the mechanical Ouija board above, then this would also go some way to corroborate Batcheldor's views on the importance of a positive attitude for successful psi, and how false results can, by breaking down psychological resistance to psychic phenomena, lead to positive results.

## References

Schoch, R.M and Yonavjak, L (2008) *The Parapsychology Revolution: A Concise Anthology of Paranormal and Psychical Research*, J.P.Tarcher, Los Angeles, USA. A Visit to the Archives for the Unexplained (AFU), Sweden (Previously known as The Archives for UFO Research)

# A Visit to the Archives for the Unexplained (AFU), Sweden

Lionel Beer, Life Member, ASSAP This is a huge undertaking managed by some six Swedish men, who are all dedicated volunteers. Clas Svahn (translates as Swan) the chairman has made annual visits to the UK with a colleague or even a family member, to Hoover up UFO files, magazines and books. Anyone of significance in ufology (or their executors) has been visited, for example Gordon Creighton, Hilary Evans, members of BUFORA, members of Contact, John Hanson, Margaret Fry, Norman Oliver, Dennis Plunkett and Jenny Randles, to name but a few.



In August 2019 I was invited to visit the Archives in Norrköping, Sweden. In a quiet suburb, there is a work area and a separate office and

shop at ground floor level. The remainder of the archives are stored in basements below blocks of flats. Although AFU would like to bring the materials together under one roof, there is the advantage, that in the event of fire or flood, only part of the physical material would be lost. However a major part of the work of AFU has been to scan and digitise UFO report files, letters, tapes, magazines and some books. Depending on copyright restrictions, material can be accessed over the internet.

Historically the acronym AFU has been used since 1973, and as a foundation since 1980. The formal registration agreed with the Swedish tax office on 7 June 2018 is in Swedish *Stiftelsen Arkivet för Oförklarade*. There is a small international advisory board which includes Bob Rickard (founder of *Fortean Times*) and Isaac Koi (London). It is interesting that the FT archives have gone to Sweden, as Bob was unable to establish a *Fortean Foundation*, a treasured aim. Think of all the clippings and books that pour into *Fortean Times* every month. Files and books from FSR, Hilary Evans, Peter Rogerson and other well-known names are now at AFU headquarters.



Until recently some of the work of sorting, scanning, and digitising was done by publicly-funded workers on job-training schemes. However such employment schemes can be withdrawn.

What impressed me besides the sheer quantity of material, was its organisation. Leaving aside items newly arrived in assorted bags and boxes, all the archive materials, whether papers, pictures, cuttings, films, videos, tape-recordings, magazines and books, are all neatly stored, labelled and indexed. If you have donated material to AFU, a volunteer will be able to locate it. Some uniformity was achieved by buying shelving from IKEA !

Clas Svahn thinks it important to collect unique material from UFO societies and private researchers before they are lost forever. Many collections have already been lost as relatives or executors did not know what to do or did not care. I helped removed books and magazines from the house of Eileen (Buckle) Lloyd; probably a dozen boxes in total. Dan and Eileen's terraced house was entirely cluttered, and it was a battle finding items that we know would have been dumped. Sadly I could not locate her unique FSR files. These boxes were later collected by Clas and conveyed to Norrköping.



AFU have acquired collections from Europe, the USA and South America and continue to receive stuff from around the world. The question is: will AFU have the capacity and funds to continue expanding beyond its dozen basements? These are rented cheaply but there is a basic cost of £2,000 a year, before looking at overheads and processing

costs. The cost of shipping materials to Sweden including sea containers can be £15,000 in a year. Beside ad hoc donations and legacies, AFU has some four dozen regular donors, mostly in Sweden. A big chunk of funding comes from the sale of duplicated books, and Clas has a good relationship with specialist book shops in Sweden. Legacies from people who see the value of the Archives will ensure their future. Do what I did and visit Stockholm for a week. Take in the Vasa and many museums, trains and scenery. One of my friends described it as her favourite city. Arrange a visit to Norrköping, some miles south-west of Stockholm to see inside the Archives and be impressed.



Lionel has a few copies of Clas Svahns's new book: *FILES OF THE UNEXPLAINED - Hidden History and Forgotten Photographs of the Unknown*. Colour photos of personalities and a wide range of phenomena. Reveals the *Archives for the Unexplained* in Sweden (2019). Special price of £12.50 post paid from Lionel Beer, 115 Holly Bush Lane, HAMPTON TW12 2QY.

# The Hyperspatial Maths of Mediumship: Creating Apports through the Mediumistic Visualisation of Space-Time Geometry

David Sivier

It was, I believe, Charles Fort who first coined the term 'teleportation'. He used it to refer to the sudden appearance of strange, out of place objects, which could be everything from falls of fish or stones from the sky, to objects thrown by poltergeists. He based the term and concept on the word 'apport', which refers to the objects materialised during seances. These could be small, inanimate objects like sweets, feathers, coins, pebbles, rings or perfume vials. Larger apports included flowers, books, serving dishes and live animals, birds and fish.<sup>1</sup> Teleportation is defined as '(t)he movement of bodies over great distances; a form of psychokinesis (PK). Also, the passage of solid objects through matter by dematerialisation and materialisation'.<sup>2</sup> As well as objects, apports can include the transportation and materialisation of humans, such as that of the London medium, Mrs Guppy. At 8.30 pm on the evening of June 3rd, 1871, Guppy was doing the accounts in the breakfast room of her home in Highbury when she suddenly disappeared in front of one of her friends. She reappeared four miles away at a séance in Lamb's Conduit Street, where she ended up with a bump on the table, apparently in a trance and wearing her loose house gown and clutching her account book.<sup>3</sup>

The concept has entered Science Fiction, where it is usually performed through high technology, such as the transporter in *Star Trek* and the

teleporters in BBC's *Blake's Seven*. Other Science Fiction writers have treated it as a paranormal property of the human mind, which may one day be used to transport people to destinations as mundane as their workplace or as exotic of the depths of space.

Alfred Bester's classic novel, *The Stars My Destination*, first published in the magazine *Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1959, is set in just such a future.<sup>4</sup> Teleportation is a natural human faculty, accidentally discovered by the scientist Charles Fort Jaunt, when he unconsciously used it to transport himself away from a fire in his laboratory. Children are taught how to use this ability properly in schools, and there are fixed teleport stages to enable citizens to teleport themselves easily around town similar to contemporary bus stops. There is, however, a limit to the distance humans may teleport. Although the world has been transformed through mass immigration, as people have been able to use it to cross continents, no-one so far has yet succeeded in using it to cross space, not even the comparatively short distance to the Moon. The story is about Gully Foyle, a former spaceship crewman and criminal, who finally develops this ability through his pure rage and desire for revenge after another spaceship leaves him to die after his own is wrecked. Unknown to himself at the time, he escapes by teleporting across the entire solar system. The book ends by looking forward to Foyle's new skill being adopted by others, who will use it to allow humanity to spread outward to the stars.<sup>5</sup>

In David Lynch's 1984 film version of Frank Herbert's epic *Dune*, humanity travels between the stars in spacecraft piloted by the Navigators of the Spacing Guild. Through their constant immersion in a gas formed by the spice melange, they have mutated into bizarre creatures with the ability to fold space, which they use to transport their spacecraft across the Galaxy. The 1979 children's book, the *Usborne Book of the Future*, written by Kenneth Gatland, one of the major figures in the British Interplanetary Society, also considered the possibility that one day humans could reach the stars in spacecraft propelled through ESP. <sup>6</sup> Robert Silverberg's 1967 *To Open the Sky*, similarly looks forward to humans conquering space through psi. In it, human colonists on Venus have been genetically engineered to cope with the planet's harsh

conditions and hostile life forms. Instead of using lungs, they have gills. They have also developed psychokinesis to protect themselves. The hero, an Earthman, who has been surgically altered to live as one of the colonists, finds a method of harnessing their powers as a kind of space drive to open up the universe to humanity after he manages to overthrow the tyrannical terrestrial government.

There have been a number of explanations suggested for the materialisation of apparitions. Mediums suggested that they were gifts from the spirits. It was also proposed that mediums pulled them through other dimensions using their willpower or some kind of psychic magnetism. Another suggestion was that they psychically disassembled the objects moved, transported them and then reassembled them at their destination.<sup>7</sup> This latter explanation clearly anticipates Star Trek's transporters, which are supposed to break the people and objects moved into their subatomic particles and beam them to their destinations, where they are reassembled. The only difference is that mediums were supposed to do this through psi, while the transporter achieves it through high technology. Teleportation is also supposedly attained by spiritual adepts, either in states of ecstasy, or through techniques such as methodical breathing, intense concentration and the manipulation of universal energy. The American parapsychologist Michael G. Roll has also suggested that teleportation is due to a psychological dimension involved in poltergeist phenomena. He believes that they are due to a strong neural discharge linking two distant images, so that mental and physical space become synonymous.<sup>8</sup>

A similar mechanism permitting the mental manipulation of reality appears in the final Tom Baker Dr. Who story, Logopolis. In this tale, the Logopolitans are a race of advanced mathematicians, who have learned how to manipulate space-time, and even alter the structure of material objects, through a branch of highly advanced mathematics, Block Transfer Computation. The equations to do this have to be calculated and intoned by the Logopolitans themselves using the power of their own minds, because they would affect any machine they were run on. It is the sheer power of their maths that is actually sustaining the universe. The universe has long ago passed the point of complete entropy and collapse.

The Logopolitans, however, have used their powers to open gateways to other universes, Charge Vacuum Emboitments, or CVEs. These allow energy to pass from these other universes to our own, and it is through one of these that the TARDIS accidentally passed into the E-space continuum.<sup>9</sup> This idea, of using the mental manipulation of mathematics to affect the external world is ultimately based in Pythagorean and Platonic concepts of mathematics, where mathematical contemplation leads to an awareness of higher realities. The Pythagoreans, for example, opened their ceremonies with a recitation of the prime numbers.

It was Johann Zollner, a professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Leipzig, who suggested that it was through the fourth dimension that mediums were able to achieve their apparently paranormal feats. Zollner was a member of team of scientists from the Society for Psychical Research, including William Crookes, Wilhelm Weber, J.J. Thompson and Lord Rayleigh, to investigate the American medium Henry Slade.<sup>10</sup> Slade had been arrested in London for 'using subtle crafts and devices, by palmistry and otherwise' to deceive his clients.<sup>11</sup> Slade was convicted, but appealed, claiming he could prove his innocence by performing his miracles in front of a body of scientists. Zollner and the others therefore set him a series of tasks, which they believed could only be successfully performed using the fourth dimension.

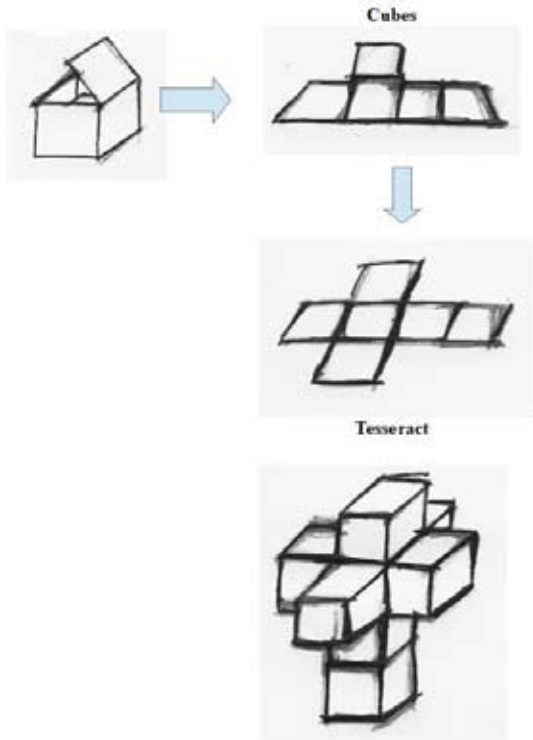
Zollner was given two separate, unbroken rings and asked if he could push one ring through the other so that they were intertwined. He was also given sea shells, which had a distinct bend right and left, and requested to bend them, so that the right-handed shells turned left, and vice versa. He was also given a closed loop of animal gut, and asked to tie a knot in it without breaking it. He was also to remove the contents of a sealed glass bottle without breaking it. In another task, he was given a rope which was tied into a right-handed knot, whose ends were then sealed with Zollner's personal seal. He was to untie the knot without breaking the seal.<sup>12</sup>

These feats would be possible if Slade really was using the higher dimensions, as there is more room for the rings and ropes to move past

each other. Right and left-handed objects can also be converted into their opposites through taking them out of our universe, rotating them through the fourth dimension, and then placing them back in our three-dimensional space.<sup>13</sup> Slade did indeed perform some of the tasks he was set during séances, though failed others under controlled conditions.<sup>14</sup> Zollner, however, was convinced that he was genuine, and published two papers in the *Quarterly Journal of Science and Transcendental Science* describing the scientists' investigation of Slade and their conclusions.<sup>15</sup> This provoked a storm of controversy, with critics arguing that scientists are not as good at detecting fraud as magicians, because scientists are trained to trust their sciences, which magicians are trained to distract, confuse and deceive them.<sup>16</sup>

Among those fascinated by the mystical possibilities offered by the fourth dimension was the English Mathematician, Charles Howard Hinton, an Oxford graduate and teacher at Upping School. Hinton was forced to leave his teaching job and arrested and imprisoned for bigamy after marrying his mistress, Maude Weldon. His wife, Mary Everest Boole, refused to press charges and Hinton was released after three days. He then emigrated to America, where he became an instructor in Maths at Princeton, as well as inventing the baseball machine.<sup>17</sup> Hinton had become fascinated by the problem of how people could visualise the fourth dimension while still at Oxford. He believed that while it was impossible to visualise a fourth dimensional object fully, it would be possible to visualise a cross-section of such an object, or one that had been unravelled. See **Diagram 1**.

Just as someone in a two-dimensional universe, like John Abbot's *Flatland*, would see an unfolded three dimensional cube as a kind of cross, so we can see an unfolded tesseract, a four dimensional hypercube, as a type of three-dimensional cross.



He published several articles explaining his ideas, one, “What Is the Fourth Dimension?” in the *Dublin University Magazine*, and another in the *Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine*. This was later republished as “Ghosts Explained”.

Hinton created a series of cubes, which he believed would allow someone to visualise a fourth dimensional hypercube – the tesseract, a term he coined - if they concentrated on them.<sup>18</sup> The cubes were widely advertised in women's magazines and used at séances. It was believed that if someone meditated on them for long enough, they would develop the power to rearrange and reassemble them in the fourth dimension into a hypercube, and so be able not only to enter into a state of nirvana, but

also catch a glimpse of the fourth dimension itself and the world of the spirits.<sup>19</sup>

One of the objects he created in order to visualise the fourth dimension was a three dimensional cross, formed from the three-dimensional cubes which are the tesseract components in the lower dimensions. This object was used by the surrealist painter, Salvador Dali, in his painting *Christus Hypercubus*.<sup>20</sup> He also invented another method of visualising a hypercube three-dimensionally. This was its shadow. As someone in a two-dimensional universe would see the shadow of cube as a square, so the shadow in our three-dimensional world of a four dimensional hypercube would be a square within a square.<sup>21</sup> See

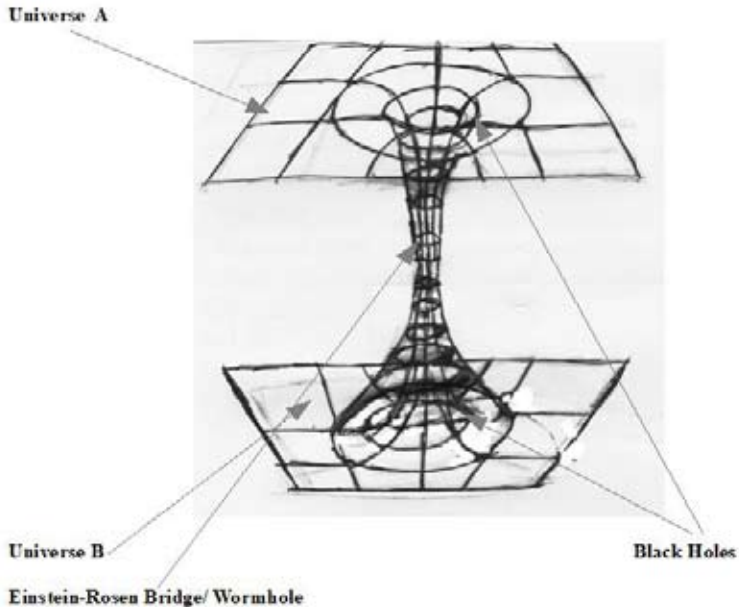
**Tesseract Shadow**



**Diagram 2.**

Since the 19th century cosmologists have developed sophisticated methods of plotting the position and movement of objects within the four dimensional, curved space-time described by Einstein.<sup>22</sup> They have also developed diagrams to show the possible existence of passages connecting different, separated regions of space-time through higher

dimensions, such as wormholes and the Einstein-Rosen Bridge between two Black Holes.<sup>23</sup> **Diagram 3.**



This raises the possibility that such mathematics and diagrams could be used as a meditation aid to generate apports by mental power, assuming that such apports are real, are caused by the representation of space within the mind of the medium or experimenter becoming identical with exterior space and that such objects are transported through the fourth dimension.

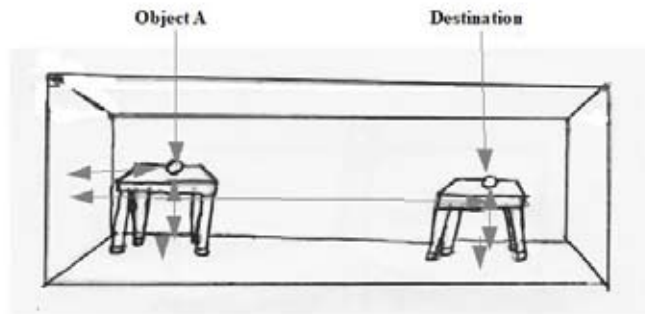
This could be tested in the following way. A medium or group of sitters could be asked to move a particular object from one room or area using the power of their minds. The object to be moved is shown them, before being taken to a different room or placed in a sealed area nearby. This could be something as ordinary as a sealed box. Precautions are taken to prevent fraud. The box or room could be checked independently to make sure the seals are secure, and the object marked in particular manner to make it identifiable from a possible duplicate.

The medium or sitters are then given an equation or diagram to meditate upon, which describes the object's movement through space-time from where it has been placed to some other location, and the medium or sitters are told that this is what the equation or diagram does. This would be roughly similar to the use of Hinton cubes as an aid to visualising the fourth dimension.

Naturally, these equations or diagrams should be made as simple as possible for ordinary people to understand what they are to do. The coordinates for a point four dimensional space as described by Riemann's metric tensor uses ten figures arranged in a grid of sixteen figures.<sup>24</sup> Such mathematics are generally intelligible only to physicists and maths graduates, rather than ordinary people. If coordinate systems of used, they would have to be of a very simple kind. Perhaps this would simply be a set of coordinates covering the two rooms or the area in which the object is located and its intended destination, given simply as the three dimensions of length, breadth and height?

The sitters could be asked to visualise the object and its current coordinates, with the latter turning into, or being replaced by those of its intended destination. For example, suppose the medium or sitters are in a room with two tables, A and B. The object is placed in a sealed box at table A, and the experimenters are told its position in terms of the dimensions of length, height and width, measured from two specific sides of the room, with the object's height its distance from the floor. They are then given the location of the object's intended destination on their own table, according using the same walls and floor as reference points. See **Diagram 4**.

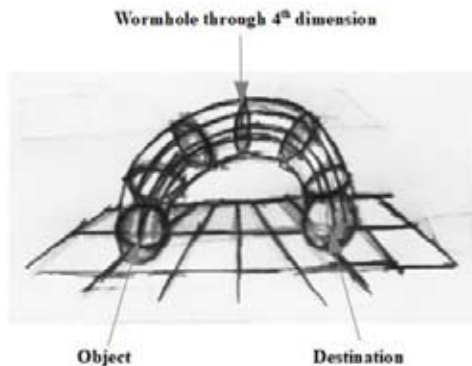
4



The arrows indicate the object's and destinations length, width and height from two walls and the floor.

As an alternative, they could be shown a diagram of the location of the object with a wormhole connecting it to its destination, and told to imagine the object moving up into the wormhole, into the fourth dimension, and then coming back down into normal space, emerging from the fourth dimension at the target location. It may also be necessary or advisable to combine the experiment with a series of talks or exercises on the subject of psychic movement through the fourth dimension in order to get the medium or sitters used to this extreme possibility.

### Diagram 5.



If such an experiment did produce results, even if only on small scale, it would indicate that apports and teleportation are indeed paranormal faculties of the human mind, and can be generated using Pythagorean

and Platonic conceptions of mathematics. And if that is true, perhaps these techniques could one day be used to teleport people and starships across the gulfs of space in reality.

# Experiences

# “PARANORMALITY”

James Padmore

I was born in rural Nottinghamshire in 1972 to Jenny, a housewife and former fashion designer and Geoff, a Police Constable. My hometown of Southwell has ancient origins; it got its name from one of the 3 sacred wells in the vicinity and the local Minster was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century on top of older structures including a Roman road. Oliver Cromwell camped there during the English Civil War and King Charles the First was arrested at one of the local public houses, ‘The King’s Arms’ now known as ‘The Saracen’s Head’ (which is said to be haunted). There are several local ghost stories including the haunted Police station, a Victorian lady who walks through the walls of the old house in the yard of a local logistics company and a Great War soldier who appears to patrons at ‘The Admiral Rodney’ pub, to name but a few.

I have had several experiences of Paranormal phenomena during my life. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about a few of the most memorable ones.



## **Granny’s in the garden**

As a small child I used to spend as much time as possible out in the back garden on the swing, slide or in the paddling pool on warm sunny days which, looking back, there always seemed to be more of than there are now. My sister was at the local Primary School in the town and my father worked the usual shifts; when he wasn’t on day shifts, he was generally asleep and consequently I spent most of the daytime at home with my mother.

In 1976, at four years of age, I was in the garden playing outside as usual when I suddenly noticed an old lady standing at the top of the garden; I can remember her as if it was yesterday. She was slim, wearing a pale green jacket and matching skirt; her hair was light brown, greying and tightly curled. She looked very

much like my maternal grandmother. She did not look in my direction and seemed to be leaning over something which I could not see.

Running indoors I excitedly informed my mother that Granny was in the garden. At this point I must mention that at this time my grandparents lived in Mansfield, approximately 10 miles away from our home; my grandmother could not drive and my grandfather who could drive never made a habit of arriving unannounced and he would certainly never do something as bizarre as to sneak my grandmother into our back garden and then leave. Naturally confused, my mother went out into the garden to see if her mother was indeed there. After looking around she concluded that granny was not in the garden and that I had played a practical joke on her; she returned to the washing up or whatever it was she had been doing before I had interrupted her.

A few weeks later the same thing happened and my mother, who must have been humouring me, checked the garden and reached the same conclusion until it happened again a couple of times over the subsequent weeks. Thinking that there may be something to it, she recounted the incidents to my father; being inquisitive by nature and occupation, he spoke to the neighbours about what I had claimed to see. He received the shock of his life when one of the elderly neighbours informed him that the description matched that of an old lady who had died several years before we moved into the house.

When my father asked about why I had seen her leaning forward over something invisible, the neighbour told him that she used to lean over the fence at the top of our garden in order to feed stray cats who were in the adjacent field (which had since been built on).

We lived in that house until my parents divorced when I was 12 years old and my father continued to live there until I was thirty-one years old. I never saw that old lady ever again.

### **The Farthingate kleptomaniac**

It was 1999 and my fiancée and I moved into a house on Farthingate in Southwell. The property was in a poor state of repair and so we spent every evening after work cleaning, re-decorating and re-carpeting throughout in order to get it up to scratch. After about a year of living there, objects started to go missing, disappear and re-appear in unusual places.

The first and most regular disappearing object was the key to my study. I would always leave it on the ledge above the radiator in the hallway, religiously returning it to that location whenever I had finished using it.



One day I went to retrieve the key from the ledge; it was nowhere to be seen. Looking around the house in every conceivable, logical alternative location it was nowhere to be found. Thankfully we had a spare key and were able to use that to unlock the door. We placed a red ribbon on this key to denote that it was different to the other key which had disappeared. On a day when I had left the study door unlocked, that key also disappeared! Annoyed with the invisible thief in our midst, I shouted that I wanted the key returning; later it re-appeared, standing up on top of a pair of my upturned sunglasses which I had left on the same ledge where I always used to place the key. Because of these shenanigans we decided to leave the study door permanently unlocked.

During “Key Gate” a disposable cigarette lighter, which we used for lighting the gas hob on our oven (due to its usefully long flame), also vanished from its usual place in the kitchen. This wasn’t noticed until one evening when my fiancée went to light the hob for cooking dinner. Fortunately, she had another cigarette lighter but due to it having a much shorter flame it resulted in lightly singed fingers when using it as a replacement for the missing one. She endured this discomfort for about a month until, losing her temper, she shouted that she wanted the missing lighter back. Within what must have only been around 10

seconds after her outburst, the lighter was found to have re-appeared on the edge of a previously empty kitchen worktop behind her.

A few months later the spare study key disappeared again and neither key ever returned. We left Farthingate in 2003. I like to think that, at some point, one or both of those keys will re-appear on the ledge and perplex the current occupants!

## **Poltergeist at the Old Laundry**



In January 2003, my wife and I moved from Nottinghamshire to Warwickshire due to work. After looking for somewhere to live, we found a beautiful old house in the tiny hamlet of Walton. The brick and black beamed fronted property was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and it was remote; it was surrounded by beautiful fields on three sides and had an adjacent orchard.

There was no streetlighting, so the house quickly became shrouded in darkness every night. It had been built as the laundry for Walton Hall about half a mile up the lane but had later been converted into a domestic residence. The remnants of the old laundry works and paraphernalia could still be seen on the walls and ceiling of the unusually large garage which had once been used as a drying area.

It was a large property and one of the rooms downstairs we used as a study. On many occasions when working in that room, the sound of small stones could be heard landing upon the tiled roof and rolling down, ending in a dull thud as they hit the grass on the ground outside. This went on for several months. Upon hearing this, we would often go outside and check the roof as well as the surrounding grounds for evidence of the stones but could never find anything or determine the source for the stones. Although unusual, we did not find it malevolent or annoying in any way.

After we had been living in the house for a few months, it was determined from a survey that the end gable required re-pointing, the lintel in the dining room needed to be reinforced and the floor in the upstairs bathroom needed to be strengthened (due to it being situated above the entrance porch for the large wooden front door). Building work commenced with scaffolding and support props installed; on the outside the house resembled a construction site with the builders arriving regularly to carry out the various stages of maintenance work.

During this time one Saturday night, I was sat alone in the living room reading a magazine. The house was silent. My wife had gone to bed an hour or so earlier and our cat, Charlie, was asleep on the sofa beside me. Suddenly, I heard what sounded like wooden slats being raised and “rippled” somewhere in the house (anyone who has used a bunk bed for any length of time may recognise that noise by this description). This happened twice and the house fell silent again. Charlie heard the sound too as he raised his head and looked towards the open living room door. By the direction and volume of the noise, I guessed that the sound had probably come from the upstairs landing. I checked the time and noted that it was 23:12.

Getting up from the sofa, I walked into the hallway and up the stairs. I looked in on my wife who was sound asleep in our master bedroom. Looking around the three other bedrooms and the bathroom upstairs I couldn't see anything out of place, so I returned downstairs to the living room and continued reading my magazine. I had only returned for a few minutes when the same sound happened again. I went out into the hallway and waited, but nothing happened. A couple of hours passed and, tired, I decided to go to bed. The following morning, I told my wife what had happened; we “filed” it under the “odd” category and got on with our day.

A week later the exact same situation occurred; same noise, me downstairs, wife asleep upstairs, cat accounted for and, curiously, the same time (23:12). I recounted the incident again the following morning and it was then that we

decided that we both would wait up the following week to see if it happened again.

At 23:12 on the appointed night, we were sitting in the living room awaiting a recurrence of the strange noise. By 00:12 nothing unusual had happened and so we decided that we would abandon our vigil and go to bed. 20 minutes or so later, my wife and I were in bed with the lights off and ready to sleep; it was at this moment that the exact same unusual noise was heard by both of us. Due to the proximity of the sound, we concluded that it was indeed coming from our landing, the source being unknown. "Typical!", I exclaimed, "Made us wait up an hour and a half! Thanks very much!". Our amusement turned to surprise when, suddenly, a sound of something extremely heaving hitting the wall shuddered through the house. Concluding that there was intelligence to this aggressive response, we decided not to bother investigating it as we knew we would not find anything out of place. Eventually after some discussion, we both drifted off to sleep peacefully and were not disturbed again all night.

In the morning upon opening the curtains to the window which looked out over the patio from the half-landing, our patio table was found to be up against the back door and the chairs strewn all over the back garden. It had not been a windy night at all, certainly not enough to have moved garden furniture in this way and it was highly unlikely that any vandal or prankster would have opted to have done such a thing given the rural and highly remote location of this property. It was the last time we experienced anything strange whilst living at this house.

## **Ghost girl on film**

In late 2011, due to both of us having experienced unusual things in our lives, my wife and I finally bit the bullet and decided to start investigating Paranormal phenomena in a practical way. Like many people, we began our journey by attending a few public events (often referred to as "Ghost Hunts"). After a year or so we concluded that this approach wasn't to our liking due to the number of people attending and the potential for contamination of any evidence we may have recorded on our, at the time, very limited range of equipment. We formed our own team and recruited a few like-minded friends to join us in our investigations at numerous local properties which were alleged to be haunted. In June 2013, we went to 'The Falstaff Experience' (now also referred to as 'Tudor World') on Sheep Street in Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire. The property is extremely old, some of the structure is 16<sup>th</sup> century in origin and perhaps even older. It is used as a museum and there have been many stories of spontaneous phenomena over the years such as poltergeist incidents,

disembodied voices and the apparition of a little girl who the owners have named “Lucy”.

During our investigation there, I was using a Sony infrared video camera and recording as we made our way in the darkness to what is referred to as the ‘Séance room’ located in the upper storey of the property. In order to get into this room, you need to climb a steep wooden step ladder and as I was carrying the video camera, I handed it to my friend who had already gone up there to allow me to free up both hands for a safe ascent.

Once the entire team were in the room our investigation continued in complete darkness. We worked into the early hours of the morning, packed up and left the property.



Upon reviewing the recorded video footage the following day, I eventually came to the moment where I had passed my video camera to my friend. There on the recording I found that I had inadvertently recorded an anomalous shape which, at the time of the investigation, had not been seen. The shape resembled an apparition of a small female kneeling on the floor, who appeared to become aware of us as we approached; she was seen to arise and move away.

Intriguingly, the apparition appeared in colour despite everything else in the recorded scene, including my teammates, being in the greenish ‘Night Vision’ hue.

I showed the footage to the owner of the property, to the editor of a *Paranormal* magazine and to a well-known parapsychologist, none of whom were able to

explain what I had recorded. It remains a perplexing and exciting mystery to this day and the most compelling footage I have ever recorded thus far. I am still experiencing things which I cannot explain, however the fact that they occur with such spontaneity has led me to regard them as natural and normal instead of supernatural and paranormal; in short, to me, there's a Paranormality to the whole proceedings.

One day I hope to share more of my experiences with you. In the meantime, should anyone wish to contact me about these or any other matters of a Paranormal nature, please don't hesitate to email me at [sanctumsanctorumPR@outlook.com](mailto:sanctumsanctorumPR@outlook.com).

### **About the author:**



James Padmore is an Investigator of spontaneous cases of paranormal phenomena and the founder of Sanctum Sanctorum Paranormal Research. He hosts his own paranormal podcast, 'The Inner Sanctum' (available on iTunes, Podbean and Spreaker) and, at the time of writing, is a member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), ASSAP and The Ghost Club. He is a Legal & Regulatory Compliance Analyst living in rural Warwickshire.

# The Bothell Poltergeist

Keith Linder

*Reports from individuals at the centre of poltergeist cases are comparatively rare, compared with accounts by investigators. Keith Linder here shares two of the many incidents he experienced while living in a property in Bothell, Washington state.*

## The Disappearing Cross

I will always remember the events of this day. It was the weekend that Captain America the Winter Soldier movie came out in the United States – April 2014. A month before this movie came out, my cousin flew down from Dallas TX and stayed with me and my girlfriend up near Seattle, WA a small town called Bothell. My cousin had been aware of our ghost sort of speak – meaning she knew just enough to want still to come. To be safe, she bought a cross with her, a gift for me and my girlfriend. Hopefully, this cross will protect us. Written on it were the Chapters Joshua 1:9, Phil 4:13, Psalm 28:7 and Matthew 19:26; each verse spoke about maintaining one's strength, one's faith during troubling times.



My girlfriend and I had been having strong poltergeist-like activity so reading something was extremely helpful. When my cousin arrived she handed me cross; we prayed over it and placed in our bedroom. That's where my cousin said it would protect us. "Keep it above your bed in your bedroom."

A month later, the cross went missing. Understand missing objects (religious objects especially) is not a new phenomenon in our house. Things get taken all the time. Sometimes they return; sometimes they don't. The items that do return are never found in their original spot. This cross would be no exception. The question my girlfriend and I ask ourselves when an item such as this goes missing is, what the heck is going on? I mean we're talking about a sizable cross her. Six inches long, four inches wide. It's not something you can misplace. How could we? We nailed high above our bed, on the wall. It's gone now. No use looking for it, only two people is living in the house. My girlfriend and I.

Fast forward to the premiere of the Captain America movie. It's Saturday morning. The cross has been missing for over a week now. I began doing my laundry early that day, earlier than usual. I figured its best to get my chores done if I'm to go to the movies later on. I'm excited. I'm going to see a Marvel movie with one of my best friends. Let me get this laundry done ASAP. I began my first load of laundry: coloured clothing. My girlfriend, Tina, is walking around the house doing her own thing. I decided to go to my office and watch TV and wait for my clothes to wash. About an hour later, I noticed something peculiar. My first load of clothing was still washing. Now I know there are long wash cycles, but this was weird – my brain knows how long it takes for my clothes to wash. I'm pretty sure I didn't set the washing machine to the long wash cycle. It's taken exceptionally long this time. That's unusual.

I glance toward the washroom, hoping to hear the beep. You know the noise the washing machine makes when it's done. So I glance at the washroom and look at the clock on my computer. I think to myself what's taking my clothes so long to wash. A few minutes later I hear this knocking sound. You know, the sound the washing machine or dryer makes when something big is inside, like a shoe or something. The noise I'm hearing is coming from the washing machine. Once again, I'm glancing up from my PC and look at the washroom. What could be making that noise I wonder? At this point, the wash cycle had been running for nearly an hour -- far too long for what I put inside. Normally I would get up and see what the commotion was about. I didn't this time. I kept watching TV.

Finally – the washing machine beeps informing me that the load was complete – time to remove the clothing. I'm passive as passive can be, no hurry whatsoever as I was pulling out my clothes and tossing them into the dryer. I immediately grabbed hold of something solid. Not clothing. Not shoes. Not

anything except a metallic-wooden cross. I didn't know what it was until I pulled it out of the washing machine. There in my hand in two pieces is the cross my cousin gave me. Now some might say, "Well maybe the cross was in there, to begin with?" Not so. As I mentioned prior, that would have been heard early on, the thumping noise I mean.

The knocking noises I heard began 15 minutes before the washing was complete. Secondly, the washing machine was empty when I used it. Some might say, "Maybe you accidentally put the cross in the machine when you loaded in the clothes." Wrong again. I sorted my clothing carefully meaning items went into the machine almost one at a time. Across this size was not going to be grabbed by mistake. Even it was, I would have heard the bumping noise way sooner than I did. Maybe your girlfriend put it in by mistake. My girlfriend was nowhere near the washing machine that day, and I never left my office. The washroom sits right outside my office. She wouldn't stop my wash load regardless. I do my laundry. She does her laundry. It's important that I get those particulars out of the way for fear of people gravitating towards the obvious explanation. And that is understandable.

Now allow me to paint the picture near perfect as possible because it even hasn't begun to get weird yet. In my hand is the cross my cousin gave me. It took a sort of a beating in the washing machine; it's broken up now. I then call my girlfriend to the room. We both examined the cross from top to bottom. Here it is again, after being gone for about a week. This cross would disappear and get thrown a few more times before finally being left alone.

## The Poster Fire

Spring 2014 – One of the most horrifying events my girlfriend and I faced while living in the Bothell home was the day the poster caught fire in my office. Tina and I had been witness to a lot of activity the weeks leading up the poster catching fire. I'm talking about bar stools being thrown. Our bedroom light was going off and on in the middle of us sleeping. Loud bangs. Loud footsteps. Door slams and yes one bible catching fire. All of that happened within a week of the story I'm about to tell.

The advice that was given to us by friends and family was to smudge the house. The internet said the same thing. "Smudging lessens the activity." Let me tell you smudging never lessened the activity. It made it worse. This story is proof of that. The night before the poster caught fire, I walked up to Tina and asked her if she'd feel comfortable smudging the house. Tina is an excellent

smudge person. She's very thorough. The next day we woke and got ourselves ready for work. Nothing unusual about that morning except the house was smelling like sage. That's normal. Your house should smell like sage if you smudged the night before. I later found out that smudging before going to bed is dangerous. Very dangerous!

Tina and I got up that morning and did pretty much what we always do. We got ready for work. The feeling of being watched had lessened. Could the smudging have helped? Hell no! Thirty-odd minutes later Tina walks up to me and kisses me goodbye. Now it's just me in the house. The only thing on my mind right now is beating Seattle traffic. A few minutes after I stepped into the shower it happens. Hell happens. Every fire alarm in the house starts going off. I'm standing in the doorway of my bathroom half dried thinking *oh shit; it's happening*. I knew right then, and there something was up. I didn't know specifically, not yet anyway. Somethings up though, and it's not good. I remember running through the bedroom and suddenly reaching our bedroom doorway. And that's when it happened. All of a sudden I feel a large mass run right by me. I can't see what ran pass me. I can only feel it. It was huge. All I could hear in addition to the fire alarms going off was this mass stomping. My eyes and ears turned towards the direction of the stomping noise when all of a sudden the front door of the house opens wide and slams shut. That's it. The door just opens wide on its own and slams shut. That's when my brain says *give chase Keith, give chase*. But my common sense gene says *give chase to what? We still haven't determined if someone was in the house. We haven't seen anything. The door just opened and closed on its own*.

So I do what my brain says. I run down the stairs and reach the front door. I should be able to get a good glimpse of the intruder as he's leaving the house. I throw my hand on the front door knob, and nothing happens. The front door doesn't open. Correction – the front door doesn't budge – not even a centimetre. I must have fought with the doorknob for about two seconds before realizing that I had a fire somewhere. Smoke is billowing from the upstairs. From my office.

I run to my office and there it is ladies and gentlemen. There's the fire. The wall behind my computer desk is on fire - the poster specifically. How many seconds have transpired between the fire alarm going off and where I'm standing now? Hmm, thirty seconds maybe. The first thing I do to kill the fire is toss my damp towel over it. The fire didn't put up a fight – it was gone. I turn and run downstairs again. The house is filled with smoke. I get to the front door and try to open the front door again. Nothing? The door won't budge. This is the same door I saw open less than a minute ago. It feels like

it's been welded shut. The fire alarms are still wailing in the background. I can taste the chemicals from my burnt poster in my mouth and nostrils. And that's when it dawned on me. The house is not the one under attack. I am. *Think carefully about Keith; the next few decisions could be your last. What are you going to do?*



I'm probably was in shock at this stage because I remember the events vaguely at this point. All of a sudden I'm on the phone with the 911 operator. I'm screaming to her that my house is on fire. She's maintaining her level of professionalism by asking me in a calm "what's my address?" Every time I utter my address through the phone large amounts of static breaks out. I'm talking about serious electrical interference. We go through this "I can't hear you, can you repeat your address" dance for about thirty seconds. Finally, she gets my address and in doing so lets me know that the fire department is on the way. I hang up and call Tina. Thank God she answers. Tina can hear the fire alarms screaming through the phone. I blurt out to her come back home, come back home the house is under attack! I hang up.

The front door for reasons I can't explain finally opened. It opened within seconds of the fire department arriving. How ironic. The firemen dart in and at my urging proceed up towards the office. They said I did a good job putting the poster fire out. Tina runs into the house a minute after they arrived and grabs me. I must have been half naked and shaking like a leaf because all I

could remember was Tina throwing blankets over me. I was shivering and shaking like a wet puppy. I'm not afraid to admit that I was crying and quivering like a baby. You would have thought somebody had doused me in a tub of ice water. Cubes and all. That's how shaken up I was.

The fire department never could determine what caused the fire. Tina and I knew. This is the second fire incident we'd experience. There will be two more fire incidents in that house in the coming weeks. When the fire department left all Tina and I had now was each other. The demons who did this are still here — there snickering at us right now. Whatever ran pass me in the upstairs hallway had to have been the ringleader. Neither one of us could think of a solution to our problem. The only thing left to do now is to contact the Catholic Church. That's the only logical thing to do now, right? Tina and I looked at each other and pretty much had reached the same conclusion. We're marching down to the local parish office. We're not leaving till someone sees us.



# REVIEWS

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**UK GHOST EXCURSIONS MAP** by Paul Lee. Android App 2019. £0.69

*Reviewed by Zoe Bevan*

This excellent little app is available for iPhone or Android for under a pound, and is as the name suggests primarily a map that shows sites associated with ghosts & hauntings. You can scroll across a map of Britain, zoom in or out and click on attractive little icons to bring up short but interesting descriptions of the alleged hauntings. It certainly makes a refreshing change from the plethora of largely useless ghosthunting phone apps, and can be used to enliven a long journey or plan your days out.

It is good but not perfect; the hauntings are usually devoid of any sources, that would make further research much easier, especially if the source is a newspaper or long out of print journal. There are some curious omissions – some fairly obscure hauntings from my home town are listed while other very famous cases like the Cheltenham Ghost (the Saint Anne's Ghost, or Morton/Despard Case (investigated by the early SPR) are not listed. There is however a link to email the creator, and he is updating the database and map on a regular basis as new cases come to light. There is a link included to allow corrections, updates and new cases to be submitted too, so hopefully in time the coverage will greatly.

One thing I would like to see would be some photos of locations when you click on the place, to get a feel for the location, and perhaps more use of colour. These are nitpicks though on a highly entertaining and useful little app at a very fair price. It is available from [www.paullee.com/ghosts](http://www.paullee.com/ghosts)



# 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 [publications@assap.ac.uk](mailto:publications@assap.ac.uk) – it is the author's responsibility to ensure that 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.

