



The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena

ISSUE  
NO.  
11  
September  
2008

## Investigators' e-Bulletin

[www.assap.org](http://www.assap.org) or write to:

ASSAP, 27 Old Gloucester Street, London, WC1N 3XX

**Contacts:**

National Investigation Coordinators

[investigations@assap.org](mailto:investigations@assap.org)

or telephone William Eyre on 01246 413217

or Cherill Penton on 07984 519275

### ROLES

Thus far, Bill Eyre has been undertaking the NIC role, with Cherill Penton acting as Deputy NIC. The ASSAP Executive has decided that from now on, Bill and Cherill will act as Joint NICs. This will give Cherill the full rights of other Executive members and will facilitate the handling of enquiries when one or other of them is unavailable. All e-mail communications should now be addressed to [Investigations@assap.org](mailto:Investigations@assap.org) and will be dealt with by the appropriate NIC.

In the last issue of the Investigators' e-Bulletin Kieron Saville wrote an article about the Most Haunted team. This article prompted quite a few comments, as you may well imagine! One comment (from a member who wishes to remain anonymous) was:

Quote: *"Concerning MH - yes, the people that make it may be perfectly reasonable in person (I've heard similar from others). However, the programme has created a ridiculous impression of paranormal research to the public. We then have to educate people into proper research."* I say, "thank goodness for ASSAP!"

What do you think? Please e-mail or telephone Cherill with your views on any article that appears in the bulletins. Alternatively, why not write an article yourself?

## CURRENT CASES

- Michael Lewis is currently dealing with a bigger caseload than usual. This includes continuing activity with regard to the investigation of apparitional activity at a pub in Greater London.
- Michael's investigation of a haunted flat in Greater London is now concluded and a report is expected shortly.
- A gentleman and his girlfriend have reported instances of electrical equipment switching itself on, together with apparitions being seen, at a flat in Greater London where there is a story of the site being cursed as a result of the pub previously occupying the site having been pulled down. Michael is making contact with the clients.
- As usual, Cherill Penton is keeping herself busy on the investigative front and is organising a vigil at an allegedly haunted community centre in Staffordshire.
- Cherill's investigation of a haunted house in Staffordshire has resulted in some EVP being obtained and a report has been produced on this case.
- Bill Eyre and Pam Hoddy, assisted by other ASSAP members, spent a night at the house in Derbyshire where the client had a suspicion that spirits were causing problems for her and her daughter. Little in the way of scientific evidence for the paranormal was obtained. However, the client continued to be troubled. As it is not within ASSAP's remit to carry out spirit rescues, Pam put the client in touch with a medium who was able to help in that direction.
- A lady in Derbyshire has reported apparitions, unexplained smoke and furniture being thrown around at an office previously used by her daughter. Although Bill was hoping to progress an investigation into this, he is currently having difficulty in contacting the daughter, whose involvement would be essential to any investigation.
- Stefan Lobuczek recorded some examples of EVP at the Training Investigation at Oak House in the West Midlands.
- At a pub in Lancashire, some anomalous CCTV footage had been reported by the client. Ian Dale-Ball has held a vigil there but we think that ASSAP has managed to find a rational explanation for the photographic anomaly.
- A lady in Lincolnshire reported seeing a red beam coming into her bedroom at night, with a large swirling orb at the end of it. The case was passed to Ian Walker, who has discussed matters with the client.
- David Taylor has been looking into the matter of car crashes and near misses occurring as a result of drivers seeing an apparition of a girl in Victorian dress standing in the road in the Cradley area of the West Midlands and has interviewed local residents, drivers and workers in the area. This case has been featured in the *Daily Express*.

- Dramatic poltergeist activity has been reported at a house in Cheshire. Claire Lawton has taken up this case and she and Julian Perkins have been to interview the client. It will be interesting to see whether the investigators involved actually manage to witness any PK activity themselves as this investigation progresses.
- As in most parts of the country, one of ASSAP's main problems is a shortage of cases, we would rarely turn down the opportunity to progress a case. However, coincidentally, two possible cases came to ASSAP's attention recently within a few days of each other (one in Greater London and one in Leicestershire) in which it was clear from phone conversations between AAI's, the NICs and the clients that the symptoms reported by the individuals were almost certainly due to serious mental health problems, with suggestions of violence occurring. In these most exceptional cases, ASSAP declined to progress the matter and tactfully advised the clients to consult the psychiatric profession. It was not felt to be wise to expose AAI's to possible violence.

### Ask Another AAI - Response from The Chair:

Following the question in the last AAI Bulletin my experience is oddly different: I've never worked with an investigation that doesn't mount their camera on a tripod. So what are the advantages?

Resources are the bane of most paranormal investigators, few of us having the luxury of having enough camcorders or CCTV to cover every angle of a given room. The temptation to take your camcorder 'in hand' to cover a greater area of the room - or to respond to 'incidents' - is great. But is that really likely? The best position for a tripod-mounted camcorder is clearly right into a corner, covering the maximum pan of the room. The chances are that a mobile investigator carrying a tripod will be further from the wall, and thus will capture less of the room at any one time. True, they will capture different aspects of the room, but surely it is more efficient to train the camera on the area of the room with previous reported experiences rather than risk missing them? The idea of a camcorder-carrying investigator 'reacting' to incidents as they happen is interesting, but ultimately less useful. Where most apparent visual paranormal events seem to be split-second in nature it seems unlikely the camcorder would be redirected in time. The result would more likely be a Most Haunted-style off-screen call of 'what was that?', followed by queasy-making fast-pan to the source of the event, and 'reaction-cam' type feel. I think I'll stick with my tripod!

Dave Wood

## HISTORIC AND FOREIGN CASES

ASSAP's Investigations Dept normally only concerns itself with practical investigations of cases involving spontaneous anomalous phenomena within the UK, where there is currently still activity or where the activity has occurred within the last couple of years. Methods such as vigils which are normally employed in an investigation clearly do not lend themselves to historic incidents and it would clearly be impractical to investigate, using the usual methods, geographically remote cases, owing to the Investigations Dept having a UK base.

However, increasingly we are receiving reports from the public of incidents of spontaneous phenomena occurring abroad or which have occurred in the past. Whilst the lack of opportunity for a full investigation necessarily reduces the veridical value of reports of incidents which for historic or geographic reasons could not be subject to a full investigation, nevertheless the NICs and NRC feel that over time a great deal of potentially valuable information could be lost by simply ignoring such reports and that there would be some merit in collating information on them. Typically, such cases are reported by e-mail. There is some scope to obtain further information via e-mail correspondence with the reporter of the phenomenon and to compile an archive of such cases. Over time, this could then be used to identify possible trends and to answer queries coming from Researchers.

We are therefore looking for a volunteer to take on the responsibility of looking after these 'historic and foreign' cases. An AAI, with his / her knowledge of the relevant subject matter, should be well placed to handle this duty. Anyone interested is requested to e-mail or telephone Bill.

### Hints and Tips - Taking Photographs

Recently we have heard from Dave Wood about mounting camcorders on tripods for the best results, but the same can also apply for your still camera as well. It is much better to go for quality of pictures rather than the quantity.

Mounting your camera on a tripod also eliminates camera shake and light trails without any effort from you. This can only be to your advantage as you will have less 'iffy photographs' to try and evaluate.

Another good point of using a tri-pod is that you can easily set the self-timer on your camera and if necessary evacuate the room before the shot is taken.

The downside of course is that you need to carry the tripod from room to room, but that isn't too bad - is it?

Cherill Penton

## Emotional Investigating - A Talking Point by Cherill Penton

Some time ago I was told by a prominent paranormal researcher that a person cannot investigate the paranormal in a scientific manner if they investigate it in an emotional manner. At that time this statement was stored in the deep, dark depths of my memory, probably as 'trash' (due to the fact that I thought the statement to be rather odd), but recently, for some strange reason, the memory decided to rear its head. (Isn't it strange how we cannot always control what we think about?). So, I thought that maybe that statement wasn't so odd after all and that I ought to take a little look in the psychology books to better understand the statement. Yes, I know, I should have looked it up at the time - but I didn't! (Slap wrist).

What I found posed a question that I cannot find the answer to, although to be quite honest, the books I have on psychology are rather limited! So I hope that someone out there among you AAIs can answer it for me. The question is this: ["How can anyone investigate the paranormal in a truly scientific manner when everything we see, hear, feel \(touch\) and sense induces an emotional response?"](#)

*The following is taken from Companion Encyclopaedia of Psychology, volume 1, edited by Andrew M. Colman*

*Emotions - Brian Parkinson, University of Leicester, (not actual quotes):*

*Psychological research has focused on four variables associated with emotional experiences. They are:-*

- *Situational evaluations*
- *Bodily changes*
- *Expressive behaviours*
- *Motivated actions*

*Arnold (1960) emphasised the importance of the evaluative aspect of emotion with her concept of appraisal which refers to the process whereby personal relevance of the emotional object is apprehended. This means that to arouse an emotion about something, it must mean something to you.*

*Lazarus (1968) suggested that emotional appraisal has two facets. The first being the primary appraisal and the next being the secondary appraisal. In the primary appraisal, the person evaluates the current situation to their personal well being, weighing up if the situation is good or bad for them. In the secondary appraisal the person weighs up how to deal with the situation.*

Emotions affect our bodies on both a physical and a psychological level, including how we react to any given situation. So how does this affect the way we investigate the paranormal?

We use the four facets of emotional response in everything we do as investigators, and indeed in everyday life. Firstly we evaluate any given situation - the first facet. How we respond to that evaluation emotionally will prepare us for any responses we have to give. For instance, if the place we are visiting feels 'spooky', our bodies would probably prepare us to flee or fight if any possible dangers present themselves (including ghosts we hope)! This is the second facet. The third facet could well be shown by inexperienced investigators when encountering something that they interpret to be 'paranormal' when they automatically jump, gasp or (in MH's case) ask out "did you hear that?" in a shaken manner. The way in which we respond to whatever has taken place governs what we do next. Do we run, scream, grab the nearest person's hand or hopefully get up and look at what's causing the phenomenon? These are actions of the fourth facet.

From the minute we walk into a building, we evaluate that building. One of the first impressions we get is whether we actually like the building or not. This affects us personally, so is it an emotional response whichever way we feel about it? That emotion can bias the way in which we investigate and indeed the way in which we review any evidence after the investigation. The memory of how we felt at the time of any 'incidents' can cloud our judgement when we review the audio/video at a later time.

Forget about the building itself now. You are conducting an overnight investigation (vigil) and you are in a dark room with two other people. The three of you are sitting quietly, perhaps recording audio and video or simply sitting observing. Suddenly, there is a heavy 'thud' noise from one corner of the room behind you. Your first instinct is to shoot round to look at where the noise was coming. Hopefully one or two of you will get up, go over to that area and try to find where the noise originated from and what caused it! Emotionally and physically, you are ready for whatever may develop. Your fight or flight instinct will have kicked in. You may feel edgy or wary, perhaps even nervous. But you cannot find the cause of the noise so you settle down to sit in vigil once again. Now, in the back of your mind, you are waiting, maybe hoping, for yet another noise to occur so that you can go and investigate that one. The anticipation could well be building within you and your senses will probably seem far more acute because of it. This is investigating using your emotions. We cannot help it, it is what humans do! Unfortunately I believe that no-one can help but be emotional in some way when participating in a paranormal investigation. Even the hardest of investigators will jump when an unexpected noise (such as a loud bang) goes off behind them!



How would you react if you were sitting in a cold dark cellar and you heard a loud groaning noise behind you? You turned around and you were faced with something along the lines of this cheery fellow! Be totally honest now - would you jump and then laugh, jump and scream or simply sit there in complete silence too stunned to react? Whatever way you reacted is a natural response because of your instincts and your emotions!

The problem is that emotions do cloud our judgement. An example of this could be after the vigil has taken place. You are reviewing your video footage and you come across a 'shadow walking along a wall'. You remember the atmosphere of the building, maybe the cold perhaps. You look in your notes to see who was in the room with you and where you were all positioned, then you look to see where windows etc, were in relation to the shadow. All this time, you are thinking, 'No-one moved. We were all sat still, so how could we have caused the shadow'. Most of us would be feeling quite full of anticipation by now, but it is easy to get carried away with emotions and expectation in such a situation as this. Of course, being an ASSAP AAI, you will soon gather your senses and reasoning and will no doubt think of the cause for the shadow! However, for just a few minutes, your emotions would have clouded your judgement.

I believe it to be almost impossible not to be emotional (even if only topical) when we go out investigating. Even if we are set in ourselves to be as scientifically straight as we possibly can be, our own personal judgements will raise emotions.

Maybe the only way to investigate the paranormal in a truly scientific manner would be to go to the venue, set up the recording equipment and then leave it running, un-manned for a few hours. Then of course you have the possibility of the equipment malfunctioning and you are not there to correct it or maybe a power cut would cut off your devices. In fact there could be any number of things go wrong! The biggest drawback of this method would be that we wouldn't get to be onsite in the 'thick of things' should anything happen. We would miss out on spontaneous recordings and of course on the experience of actually being on a vigil!

So, what exactly is the answer? Does anyone know? Do you have any bright ideas? Can we really investigate the paranormal unemotionally? If it is possible to investigate the paranormal like this, how do we do it? Please write in with your thoughts or views on this topic.

## DISTRIBUTION OF REPORTS

All AAI's are already aware of the importance of documenting the findings of their investigations by way of an investigation report. At least one report every two years using the ASSAP report template is required to retain AAI status (although attendance at the Training Weekend once every two years is an alternative). What is a little less clear is the matter of distributing the report.

Each report should preferably be distributed to the other investigators involved in the case, inviting their constructive comments and their signature in Section 13. The first part of the report (i.e. Sections 1 to 8, together with Section 13) should then be sent to the client. Section 9 should NEVER be sent to the client. Discretion should be used in determining whether to send the remaining sections to the client. Normally there is no problem in submitting the whole report, minus Section 9. However, if your findings are particularly sensitive and you think they may upset the client, you may decide to tactfully explain your conclusions over the phone instead. The client should be asked to check that the information he has provided has been correctly transcribed within the report and should be invited to sign Section 13. Finally, a copy of the entire report should be sent to the appropriate NIC (currently Bill Eyre), who will study the report and pass back constructive comment in due course. If the author of the report makes it clear in a covering letter that the report has been produced by an ASSAP affiliated group, then the NIC will inform the Groups Coordinator, so that he knows that the group has fulfilled its obligation to submit a report once every two years (for this purpose, a report in any suitable format is acceptable). Eventually, all reports are passed by the NIC to the Archivist for filing in perpetuity in ASSAP's archives.

The main point to emphasize is that letting the client have a copy of the report is the author's responsibility and not the NIC's.

Should you ever be involved in investigating a location where you know that another investigator has looked into it in the past or should you be carrying out research for which you think examining a certain report would be useful input, then you may request to borrow a report from the Archives by e-mailing [Archives@assap.org](mailto:Archives@assap.org).

### Hints and Tips

If you do wish to send a full report to your client, you could do what I do and write two section 9's. One for the 'real report' to go to ASSAP and one 'tamer' section 9 for the client so that they do not realise there is a piece of the report missing. However, be **VERY** careful to send the correct report to the proper place! Be warned!

Cherill Penton