

seriously strange magazine



Spotlight
on
ASSAP

A summary of the ASSAP
Membership survey!

Also inside:

- Whitchurch Airport
and the Ghosts of Whitchurch
- Isle of Man - more than a Mongoose
- The Station Hotel, Dudley



OFFICIAL NOTICES

In accordance with the governance arrangements that were passed by members in 2010.

Annual Meeting Notice

The annual meeting of associate members shall take place at **7pm on 30 October, 2021** at a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89672056599>
Meeting ID: 896 7205 6599

All members will be emailed a link to this meeting, and you can obtain one directly from secretary@assap.ac.uk if yours goes astray.

Annual Reports and Election Ballots

Following the 2010 amendment, ballots will be sent electronically where an email address is held, except where you request a postal copy of the ballot before 14th October 2021.

If you do not currently receive emails from us this means we do not have your email address. Help us save money by emailing secretary@assap.ac.uk

Director Nominations

Existing directors, elected and co-opted, will automatically reappear on the ballot paper where consent is given.

Any associate member can appear as a candidate on the ballot by sending a single signed statement on consent of nomination. It must include a signed statement by ten members or associate members who have held continuous membership for at least twelve months. Ballot nominations are required no later than 15th October 2021.

Nominators must have not nominated any other candidate.

If any associate member is generally interested in joining the team, without the bureaucracy, email CJ on chairman@assap.ac.uk to discuss any roles available at the present time.

If the number of candidates exceeds the number of Exec positions available an election of all members will be held to decide which nominees hold office.

It's time to volunteer for ASSAP

ASSAP is an extraordinary organisation and I'm proud to continue on its committee.

ASSAP is growing with membership increasing steadily but co-ordinating such a wide-ranging organisation is a big job. We have no paid staff and instead rely on dozens of talented and dedicated volunteers. ASSAP's strength comes from its continual renewal of volunteers over the decades: we have several volunteers with decades of continuous service.

Although people volunteer we still need a lot more help to keep improving and keep growing.

Do you have any of the following skills? General organisation, customer service, web design, social media professionals, volunteer management, teaching, assessing and a great deal more.

We all work remotely – so you can be based anywhere - but we do stay in touch and meet at events where possible. If you can help us on a regular basis we'd like to hear from you. Do send an email about yourself to chairman@assap.ac.uk

Dave Wood, Vice-Chair



Welcome to the latest issue!

Hello & welcome to the winter edition of Seriously Strange!

It does not feel much like winter yet does it? It's only just September as I write these words, but that means we are preparing for the annual ASSAP conference which this year, like last, will be held online (September 25th and 26th). We have some great ideas to make it a more social experience, and hope you will be able to join us.

If you are reading this magazine you must be a member of ASSAP, and you therefore should receive the invites by email each week to the Thursday night webinars. (if you don't please check your junk filters – it is also possible that we don't have an email address for you, so contact us on treasurer@assap.ac.uk if there is a problem. If for some reason your email address is rejecting our emails then we have a phone number as well - 020 8798 3981

After the last issue a lady contacted us via email to make us aware that we hadn't responded to any of her messages; so myself, Becky the Treasurer and Loz the Secretary all contacted her from our ASSAP emails and personal ones, but were unable to make contact. If you find yourself in a situation like this don't suffer in silence, call and leave us a message and a number to get back to you on.

We are pretty fast at responding to emails and calls, but please note that we are all unpaid volunteers and this summer has seen us plagued by illness and other commitments like weddings, funerals and the odd weekend off. As you can see from the results of the membership survey included in this issue most members think we provide good value for money and a good service, and we try to work as hard as we can to deal with any issues that arise, but sometimes delays do creep in.

So what is new in the world of paranormal research? Some of our North American colleagues are looking at putting together a sister group across the Atlantic; drop me a line if interested and I will put you in touch. We made a decision to suspend physical events this year; I hope our online presence has helped fill the gap. In the last year we have produced over 120 hours of webinars with a really impressive list of speakers, and many are now available on YouTube for those who missed them.

While I might not be Chair after November 1st, the Exec decided to allow me to book speakers for webinars until the end of the year; I personally would like to see the webinars continue in 2022 but that will be down to the new Exec to decide.

Also I have an apology to make: The Summer Magazine was the last one put together by long serving editor Norie Miles, who took over the role from me some years before; her name was removed when we updated the Exec Committee as Norie stepped down, as is the practice. However we owe a clear credit to Norie who edited the last issue. Alison, who has always done the layout, has taken over as Editor of this issue. Norie continues to be involved with ASSAP Events and the new ASSAP website that we will see soon!

Well that's about it from me and the Treasurer, as we swelter in thirty degree heat the idea of a Winter issue seems a little out of place; but this is ASSAP, and the anomalous and odd is what we do.

See you all at the conference! CJ x

Please note that ASSAP does not express corporate opinion, and publication does not equate to endorsement

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ASSAP Committee

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Heritage & Facebook - Ian Topham

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Vice President: Hugh Pincott

Archives Officer: Terry Porter;

Webmaster: Maurice Townsend.

eNews Editor: Gary Fellman;

Media Representative: Sarah Spellman

Membership and Groups

Welcome to new members, you'll find details below for access to the members area on www.assap.ac.uk

Username: `assapmember`
 Password: `ectoplasm`



The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena was formed in 1981 to research and educate about a wide range of anomalous phenomena.

These fall into the broad categories of psychic phenomena, earth mysteries, ufology and Fortean phenomena. ASSAP holds no corporate views and the views expressed by individual authors are their own. ASSAP is a registered charity (327422) and a company limited by guarantee (2075226).

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 (Please note: Address not for general correspondence)

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 Contact us at secretary@assap.ac.uk

Dear Madam/Sir,

I joined ASSAP last year. I am researching a book about people's experiences of ghosts and/or poltergeists but am only interested in first-hand accounts from the witnesses themselves. Please could you publish my appeal for info from fellow ASSAP members?

Anyone can get in touch with me by letter or email at:

Andy Owens, 65 Woodlands Avenue, Hatfield, West Yorkshire HX3 6HJ

andyowens333@gmail.com

Incidentally, I've started writing a blog about ghost-hunting at my website: <https://owensandy.com>

Thanks very much, Andy Owens

£5 E-membership

Our most affordable option! In addition to standard membership, ASSAP now offers an e-membership choice at only £5 annually. Through e-membership you will receive the same publications, but in PDF instead of paper form. All other benefits remain the same, such as access to training and free entry to our lecture series. If you would like to switch, please email membership@assap.ac.uk.

Are you on Email?

We like to keep in touch with members from time to time by email. If you haven't received an email from us please send your name and email address to chairman@assap.ac.uk so you can keep up to date!

Don't miss our monthly e-newsletter

The best way to get ASSAP updates throughout the year is to sign up to our e-newsletter if you're not already receiving it. Email publications@assap.ac.uk to subscribe.

Affiliate Groups

Groups provide incidental support for ASSAP's charitable objects by acting as forums for research.

Should you wish to affiliate or start a group please contact assap@assap.ac.uk

GROUP NAME	Group Contact
Bristol Society for Paranormal Research and Investigation (BSPRI) w: www.bsprri.org.uk e: bsprri@live.com	Mark Davey
Cymru Paranormal w: www.cymruparanormal.com e: enquiries@cymruparanormal.com	Sarah Liney
Ghanon w: www.ghanon.org.uk e: enq@ghanon.org.uk	Kevin A Griffiths-Boden Julian Perkins
Gwynedd Paranormal Society w: www.gwynedd-paranormal-society.co.uk e: gwyneddparanormalsociety@yahoo.co.uk	John and Carol Budge
Midland Paranormal Investigations w: www.midlandparanormal.org.uk	Mark Cave
Pembrokeshire Ghost Club w: pembrokeshireghostclub@gmail.com	Greg Hardman
Plymouth ASSAP w: assap.ac.uk/Plymouth e: eustacetuttle@yahoo.co.uk	Lee Norton
PRI UK w: www.paranormalresearchinvestigators.co.uk	Nick Howe Andy Wilson
Spirit Team UK w: http://www.spiritteamuk.com/	Alan Clifford

The Search for Reality

President and First Lady's Piece by
Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe



Looking back to children's parties of many years ago, one of the many games that loving parents prepared consisted of wrapping a toy in several layers of cloth and paper. It was then passed around all the children in turn while the music played: when the music stopped, whoever was holding the mysterious parcel had to try to guess what it was while removing some of the wrapping. The player who finished uncovering it won the toy. The search for reality has certain parallels with that old party game.

Different objects and events in our environment come to us wrapped in images, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations which can provide clues to those objects and events without revealing their true reality. The more mysterious and anomalous an object or an event is, the more effectively it conceals its true reality under camouflaging layers of images, sounds and tactile sensations.

Professional conjurors and illusionists entertain their audiences by deliberately and very skilfully disguising reality.



What we in ASSAP are concerned about is the indefatigable pursuit of reality by rigorous, objective scientific study. We are not content with what something looks like, or what it sounds like: we want to know what it really is. Some of the world's greatest unsolved mysteries, which we all enjoy investigating, illustrate this quest for objective, scientific reality.

On December 4th, 1872, the Mary Celeste was found empty and adrift near the Azores. She was completely seaworthy and intact: only the lifeboat was missing. What really happened to her captain, his family and the crew?

Three of the keepers from the Flannan Isles Lighthouse off the West coast of Scotland vanished in December 1900. When relief keeper Joseph Moore went to see what was wrong there was no trace of Thomas Marshall, James Ducat and Donald MacArthur. What really became of them?

The profound question of the nature of Dark Matter, first hypothesised by the Dutch astronomer Jacobus Kapteyn, is a profound example of this vitally important quest for reality. What is the real nature of Dark Matter?

And what might really be behind the 240 mysterious pages of the Voynich Manuscript with its odd illustrations and unidentified symbols? Was it part of the fifteenth century Italian Renaissance?

As a final example, we can think about the mysterious Phaistos Disc. Who cut those weird hieroglyphics into it some four or five millennia ago? What do they really mean?

Lionel & Patricia Fanthorpe



ASSAP

WEBINARS

Join in every Thursday evening at 7.00pm via Zoom

Member's of ASSAP should receive an email inviting you to take part. Do check your email and any spam folders for your weekly invites.

If you can't find it but would like to come then please email the secretary at secretary@assap.ac.uk

Email or physical address changed? Don't worry, drop an email to treasurer@assap.ac.uk and Becky will update.

For those who wish to join, membership starts at £5.00 per annum via our website www.assap.ac.uk

Speakers past and present:

Steve Parsons

Alan Murdie – *'Powers of evil? Negative aspects of psi revisited*

Dr Ciaran O'Keeffe

Dr Ann Winsper – *Time Slips*

Whilst time slips seem to occur anywhere at random, there is a particular street in Liverpool where there have been multiple reports of time slips over the years

Dr Jack Hunter – *Greening the Paranormal*

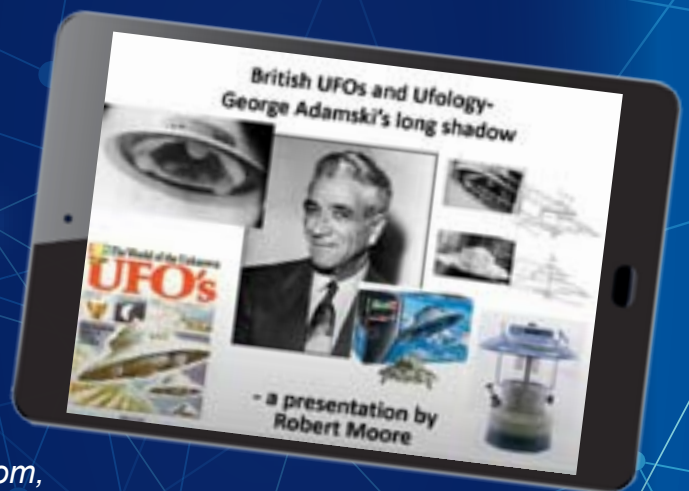
Jack will explore parallels between anomalistics (the study of the paranormal in all its guises), and ecology (the study of interconnected living systems).

Dr Peter McCue – *Communication with the dead: Fact or comforting delusion?*

Peter will address this issue, along with others related to supposed evidence of communication between the living and the dead.

Jackie Tonks – *Seeking and finding Bigfoot in the Pacific-Northwest.*

Exploration of possible scientific explanations behind some of the stranger phenomena associated with Bigfoot and planned future research.



Richard Freeman – On The Track of Unknown Animals

Here Richard will talk about some of his research and expeditions in search of creatures such as the yeti, the Tasmanian wolf, the giant anaconda, the orang-pondok, The Mongolian deathworm, the almasty and the Caspian tiger.

Robert Moore – Adamski and the British UFO movement

This webinar discusses the backdrop, brief case studies as well as the possible solutions to this paradox.

Dylan Jones – Paranormal Media and the Modern Ghost Hunter

Kristian Lander

CJ Romer – Theory of Ghosts

Dr Hannah Gilbert

Beth Darlington – Demonology vs Exorcism - what's the difference?

Keith Linder – Bothell Hell House

Amethyst Gray – The Real Cloudbuster - Wilhelm Reich

Prof Chris French

John G Sabol

William Eyre





WHITCHURCH AIRPORT

Where history and the Paranormal Meet

By Karin Beasant

Growing up in South Bristol, in a council estate called Hartcliffe, you were never aware of the history on your doorstep.

Though I loved history at school, it wasn't until, as a fledgling investigator, who thought Most Haunted TV shows were real and wanted to go looking for ghosts, that history came back into my life.

Like many in the field, I was lucky to become friends with those who knew that the paranormal field was not about hunting ghosts but documenting, being rational, and having a clear objective of what I wanted to achieve, such as Kev Kerr.

So, a few years ago, Whitchurch Sports centre came into my life. This was a building made of two hangers from the pre-war and during the dramatic time of the Second World War.

I was fortunate that my father was a nearby child who could fill in the gaps that may not be recorded in writing. This taught me how valuable oral history is to document before those who lived at that time have passed, and that valuable information is lost.

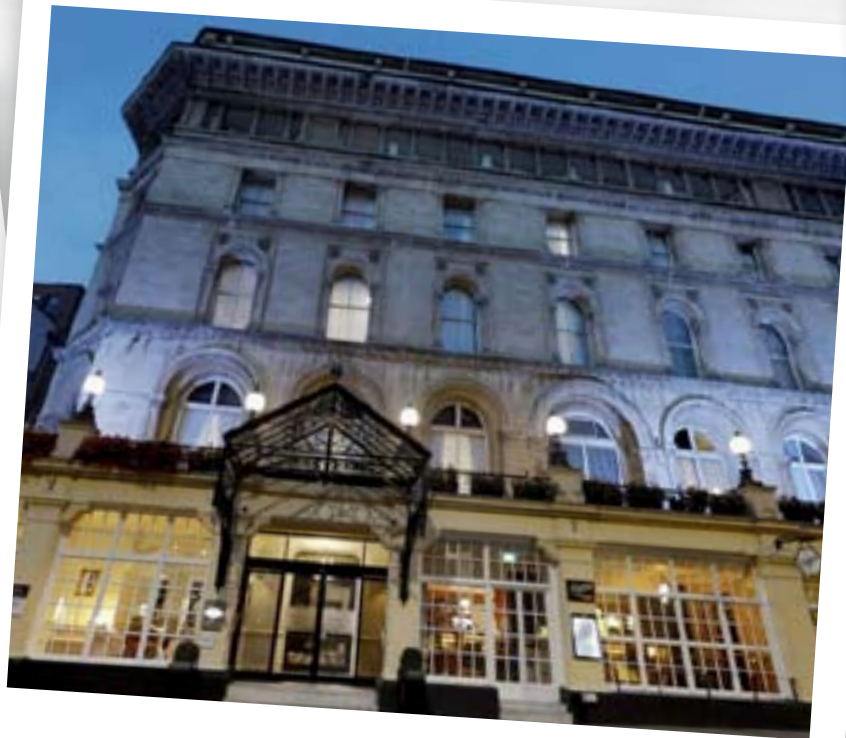
Brief History

Bristol (Whitchurch) Airport was a municipal airport from 1930 to 1957. Its importance is due to being one of just two municipal airports in England during the Second World War.

One of the most famous flights was the Whitchurch to Lisbon flight, as Portugal was a neutral country. There had been an unwritten rule that the Germans would leave this flight alone. Still, unfortunately on the 1st of June in 1943, having just left Lisbon, a German fighter plane shot down this civilian aircraft, killing all those on board, including the famous actor Leslie Howard, as it was on its way back to England.

There was talk that the actor was on a secret mission, or Winston Churchill was on board. However, the bodies were never found.





The Grand Hotel

Famous passengers included Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Eleanor Roosevelt. A few years ago, while I was working in a trophy shop, a former Bell Boy from the Grand Hotel in the centre of Bristol came in to order a brass plaque. He was full of this oral history and spoke of secret meetings between Churchill and Eisenhower in a room at the hotel. This would make sense, as to board a flight at Whitchurch Airport, you would check-in at the Grand, and a blacked-out coach would take you to the airport.

My father spoke of the big encampment of US troops nearby, where he would go and get chewing gum off the soldiers.

Also, all the locals knew that the US secretly flew in their dead comrades, put them in the hanger overnight, and then boarded on a plane the following morning.

I did ring the US military in America and was given a number to ring, but they still deny this happened.

The airport was closed by 1957, and the area became known as Hengrove Park. Part of the runway was left, which is now protected. The double hangers, two cottages next to it, are reminders of its former heyday, which became Whitchurch Sports Centre.

Paranormal Reports

As a regular user of the sports centre, I became aware chatting to the staff, of some strange reports, which intrigued me and prompted me to speak to the management about the possibility of hiring the centre after it closed to the public.

The most common sighting was of a man in full RAF uniform, walking through the football pitches and disappearing.

The original hanger, which housed the changing rooms, beauty parlour etc., always gave me the shudders when I walked along its corridor. But, I found out later that I was not the only one.

Over the next two years, we were lucky to have fellow investigators and friends investigate this fascinating building. One team caught a supposed full shadow figure going past its camera in the play area. There were such exciting EVPs as well, as the area where the boxing ring was situated, a few punch bags were hanging, and one particular night, we observed a punchbag move on its own, despite it being a windless night outside.

Of course, being a metal frame building, lots of noise of the metal itself making taps etc., could be explained.

Unfortunately, one team who had visited the venue then went to the local newspaper, which caused the location to shut us down, as it was specified to keep it just within the paranormal community. This was utterly devastating for me, as it would have been the perfect study case.

Apart from the sports centre, paranormal reports have circulated throughout the whole site of the former airport.



Cineworld Hengrove

The local Cineworld had also been the site of reported phenomena, and due to my Goddaughter working there, we were allowed secretly to investigate this site.

A man with blonde hair and a dirty face could be seen on the top L shaped floor of the projector room, peering around the corner, smiling at the surprised member of staff who happened to be the unfortunate victim of his presence.

There has always been a report of a crashed German plane in the airfield and the pilot who has been seen there. I could never find any documented proof of this, but we locals always knew of it strangely.

Though quiet on the investigation, we did have a seat in one of the cinema rooms go down on its own as if someone was sat there, waiting for the film to start.

Also, the pub in this complex was reported to have poltergeist activity of glass smashing and other such phenomena.

Also on the site you will find the Harveys factory, its offices had reports from the cleaners of a man sat at a desk early in the morning, when they entered the rooms, there was no one there.

It is such a shame that the former sports building has closed, and housing is slowly creeping in on the site, which now boasts of a hospital, college and more facilities are to follow.

To me, history and research of the paranormal should go like a hand in a glove. You cannot do one without the other on investigations. We might have different beliefs and approaches to what we consider paranormal, but without knowing our history and especially during more turbulent times of the past, can we ever get to the stage of proving life after death?



Credits:

- Whitchurch Airport – Gerald S Hart
- Somewhere in the west country – Ken Wakefield
- Tony Hayes files



About the Author

Like many in the paranormal field, Karin Beasant was fascinated by the thought of ghosts and would read ghost stories under the bedclothes with a torch! Discovering first-hand what it is like to live in a haunted building when she became a tenant of the 18th-century pub in the centre of Bristol in the 1990s.

Around fourteen years ago, Karin went on a public ghost hunt at the famous Jamaica Inn, in Cornwall, where she saw her first apparition, if that was truly a ghost! Little did she know that a few years later, after forming her team, South Bristol Paranormal, Karin would have the opportunity to be part of the Jamaica Inn's own official paranormal team.

The Ghosts of Whitchurch

By Dave Sivier

Whitchurch is a suburb of Bristol right out on its southern edge, where it borders Dundry Hill and Bath and North East Somerset. These two accounts of haunted activity come from my local barber. Although he has been resident in the area for decades, he comes from Taunton in Somerset. While going for my regular trim, I mentioned to him the recent ASSAP talk about the spectral highwayman from Somerset, as I thought he'd be interested. He was, and in return told me about what he himself had seen in Whitchurch itself.

He lives, he told me, opposite what used to be the village workhouse, which has now been turned into flats. He was talking to a neighbour, who lived in one of these, and the man told him that every Friday evening at eight O'clock the latch of the door lifted up on its own and the door opened. The neighbour invited him round one evening to see it. They waited, and sure enough, at eight O'clock, the latch lifted and the door opened all by itself, though no-one came in from outside. This left the barber rather shaken.

But he himself also had a tale of his own. When he and his family had first moved into their cottage, they found a boarded up room, which they unblocked and used as a bedroom for their daughter. The child began complaining that there was a man in her room at night. And when they

went in to the girl in the morning, they found that all the drawers had been pulled open, even though they had shut them firmly closed the evening before. The situation became even more bizarre and threatening when all the taps in the cottage began to run on their own. According to the barber, the previous occupant of the cottage had been a Mr. Houlihan, an old man, who had died in the bath. It seems that his spirit was still active, and acting out the events of his final moments in some fashion.

“The situation became even more bizarre and threatening when all the taps in the cottage began to run on their own.”

Both of these hauntings have ended well. In the case of the former workhouse, the householder solved it by changing the lock and latch. This obviously raises the sceptical objection that the phenomenon may have been due to a fault with it in the first place. The obvious difficulty with that explanation is that it also raises the question why the latch should act like it at the particular time of day and not others. As for the barber's cottage, I think he had the place exorcised and whatever ghost or other phenomenon caused the haunting seems to have been laid to rest.

The barber also told me that one of the roads running through Somerset is also supposed to be haunted. Once a year at a particular time and date, a headless figure can be seen running across it. He told me that another of his customers, whom he named, had actually seen the figure. I haven't spoken to this gentleman, so I can't confirm whether its true or not.

About the Author

Dr. David Sivier is an archaeologist from Bristol who specialises in the history of Mediaeval Somerset. He is the author of several books and many articles and his interests include UFOlogy, space exploration and rocketry, the slave trade and history.



Spotlight on ASSAP

Hello! Early this summer the Exec committee decided we needed more feedback on what ASSAP members thought about the organisation, and how things are going.

Ian Topham our Heritage officer set about designing a survey, and soon after Becky the Treasurer sent it out by email to every member we have an email address for.

The results came in, and while we did not look at individual responses by name (so I still don't know who said what in most cases) we looked at every comment and all the data in aggregate. It seems a good idea to share this feedback here, and maybe encourage some further correspondence on where ASSAP is good and where we can improve?

I will go through question by question. The first question asked for an email address, which we can ignore. Then we hit question 2...

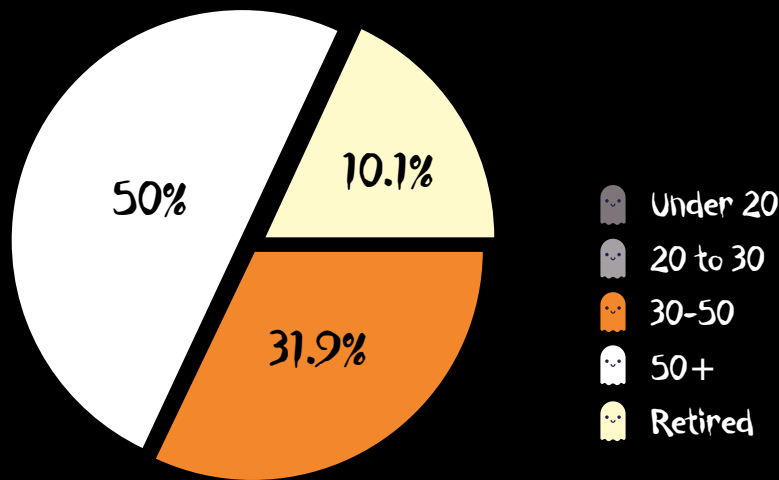
2. About the members

Everyone responded to the question, and as you can see ASSAP is mainly people in their 50s, and the retired. Almost a third of members are in their thirties to fifties. Now some members have been with ASSAP since the beginning, and it could be we are rather staid and boring compared with other groups, but we are clearly not reaching the TikTok generation, or students, or even people in their twenties. Should we be concerned?

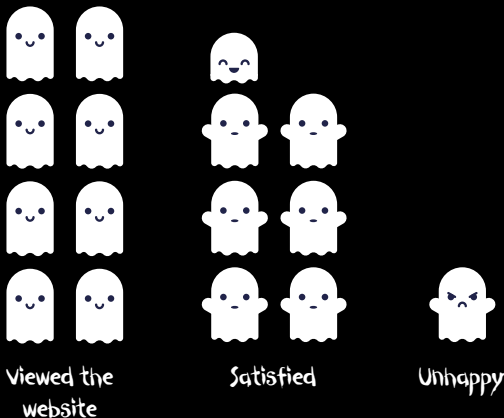
My general feeling is now: very few Learned Societies or academic organisations have a young membership, because of cost, gatekeeping by the established 'names' and because younger people might have more pressing concerns. However it is clearly worth watching: in ten years will our entire membership just be a decade older, or will the demographic be the same? ASSAP is very keen to avoid 'gatekeeping' while retaining reasonable standards, and our cost structure has always been designed to exclude no one. We often give free tickets out to events to the unwaged and students, and keeping the price point low is a key way in which we try to stay accessible to all. Anyone struggling to meet membership costs can always write to me or the Treasurer; and I hope we are welcoming and warm.

What age group do you belong to? (optional)

72 responses

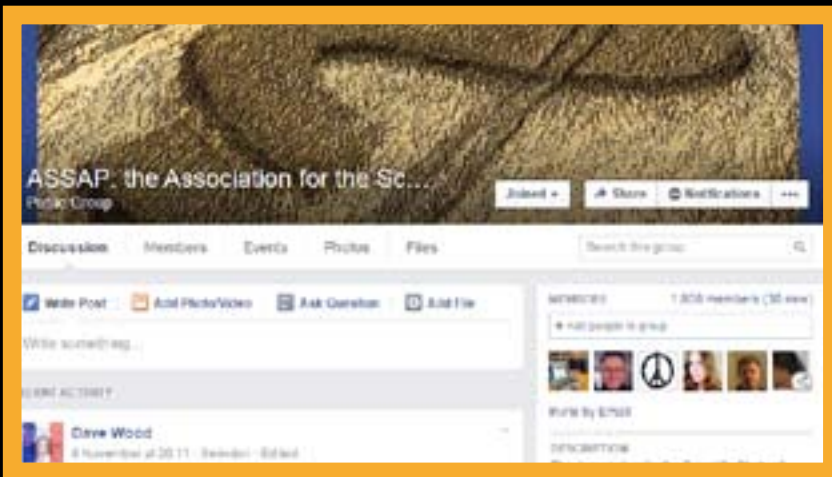


Most of our members are from the UK, with only 8% of respondents international. We had a roughly equal split in responses between postal and electronic members, and at the current time the actual figures are around two thirds postal and one third electronic. The average length of membership for a respondent was 9 years, with several founder members.



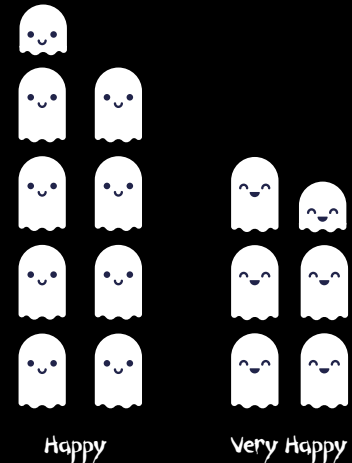
3. The Website

80% of respondents had seen the website, and 65% were satisfied with it, with only 12% unhappy. This surprised the Exec who have been keen to modernise the website; A new website build is in progress with Jonathan, Norie and Alison working alongside webmaster Maurice to bring over our existing material onto a new content management system. I am hoping the new website will be launched soon – it has been a long road...



4. our Facebook Presence

ASSAP maintain a Facebook page where Maurice regularly updates his blog, and a Facebook group moderated by Ian Topham where I post all manner of intriguing and bizarre news stories. 85% of respondents were happy with the Facebook presence of ASSAP, with 56% very happy. We are doing a good job!

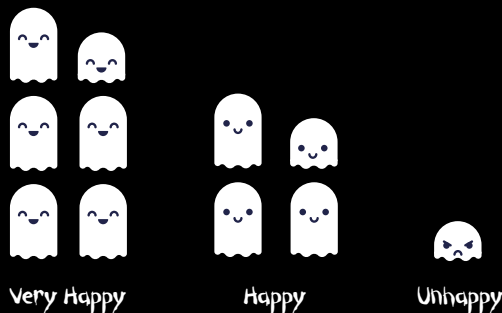


5. The Webinars



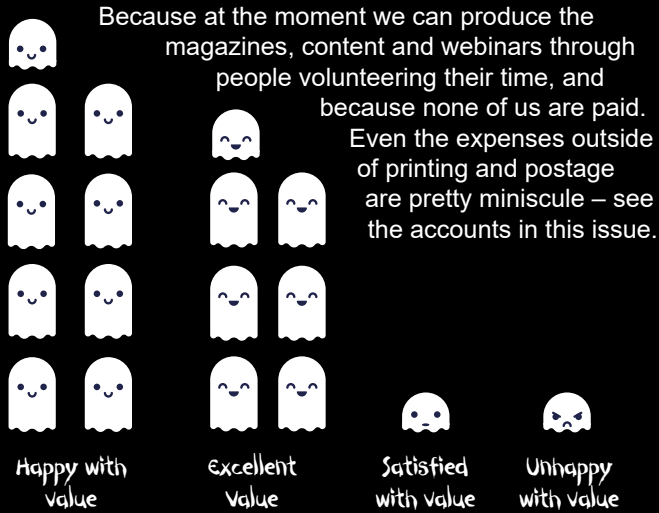
We are now well in to our second year of free weekly webinars and numbers are steadily building, with 40 to 50 members logging in on a Thursday night; some regulars, some who just come if the subject interests them that week. I have been sharing hosting duties more and more which has to help, and I think we have had some really enjoyable sessions. 57% of respondents were very happy, 36% were happy, and only one person was not positive about them. My cat Marmalade was pleased to get several mentions as a disruptive but amusing element. It would be lovely to be more professional about the presentation, but sadly we are volunteers and chosen for our purported expertise not out broadcasting skills.

One possibility to help more people watch is changing the night or the time slot. A future email survey will cover this possibility, but if we do it won't be until December. If you can't make the sessions live you can see them on YouTube. Scan the QR code (right) on your mobile phone to go straight there, or type "ASSAP Webinars" in to the search engine and a link will appear.



6. Value for Money

66% of respondents think ASSAP represents excellent value, with a common theme in the comments being “it should cost more.” 87% were happy with the value of their membership, one person just satisfied and one person not impressed. So given people keep asking us why we don't charge more, why do we not put the prices up?



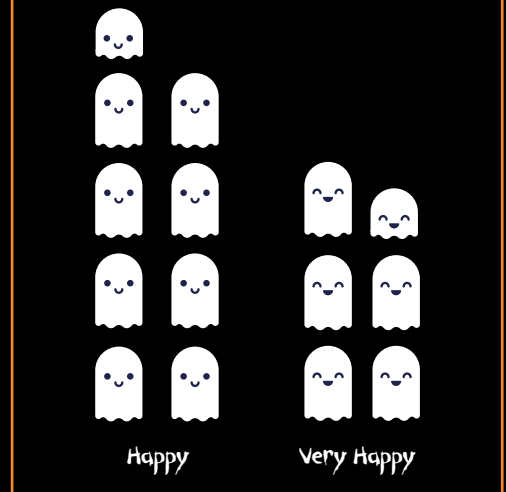
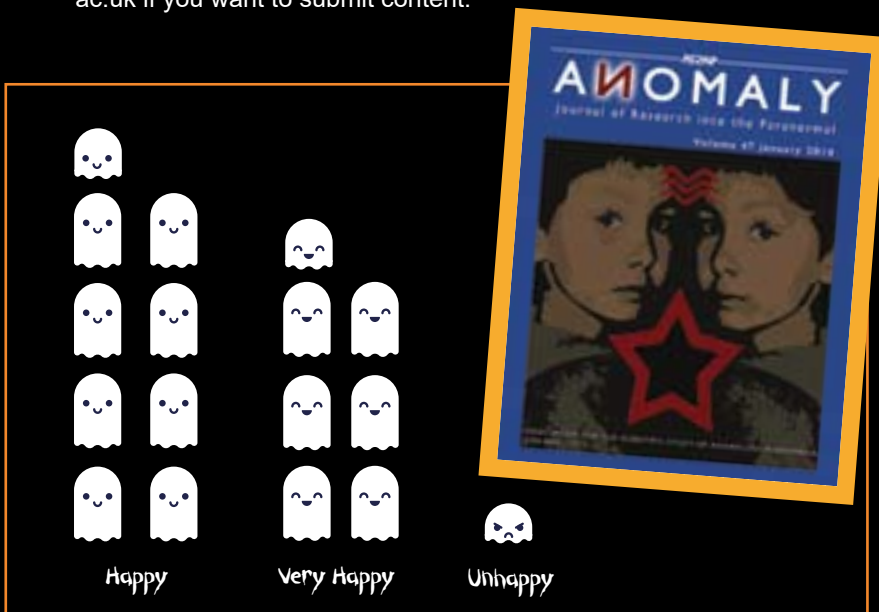
We could charge for webinars or raise the subs but given our finances are healthy, why would we? We have been able to make two small donations to allied groups for research projects (the Centre for Fortean Zoology, Forbidden Histories) and to reduce overheads in the face of rising printing and postage costs by Becky and I taking on the distribution and working a couple of extra days for free to get the mags and journals out. If you have spare monies you would like to donate that would be amazing – write to treasurer@assap.ac.uk, or if you wish to leave us a small legacy in your will please do – but there are many more deserving causes and small local charities who might find your money helpful, or you can buy books for yourself instead. When the situation changes and we run low on funds we will ask for help, but for now just stay a member and enjoy the benefits of all the volunteers and our unpaid but satisfying work. I must say this is a nice problem to have!

7. Publications

88% of respondents are happy with the journal ANOMALY, and 66% were very happy; much high praise for the latest few issues, so well done everyone. Three people were unhappy, but reasons varied, and two of them said they had not read the journal. The latest journal was the first time I actually got to use modern DTP software for the layout, so I was generally pleased with how it went as I taught myself as I went!

Likewise Serious Strange magazine is liked by 85% of respondents, with 57% very happy. This issue is the first with Alison Topham as editor but Norie did a great job after taking over from me.

We always need new articles so do write to publications@assap.ac.uk if you want to submit content.



8. Conferences

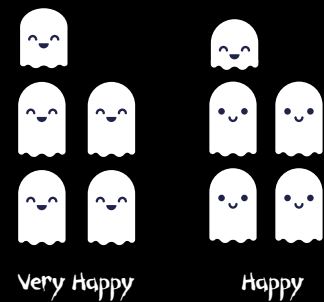
With this year's conference almost upon us it is interesting to look at the questions we asked about past events. Last year the conference was forced online – 80% were very happy, 10% happy and the rest satisfied. Of previous physical conferences 48% were very happy and 43% happy, with no one at all unhappy!



We looked closely at the comments on this section, and yes the problems we see highlighted are ones we are all aware of – mainly trying to schedule conferences in different parts of the country so we can reach the majority of members while still being represented in each region. In the past this has taken us to Manchester, Birmingham, London and the South West (where most active members seem to cluster) but we will continue to explore new venues and I am committed to the idea of an East Anglian event as soon as physical events can resume. For the moment looking forward to seeing you all on the 25th September for our second online conference!



In-Person Conference



9. Training Days

ASSAP training has developed considerably over the decades and so it was difficult to see how we are doing here by survey; but 83% were very satisfied with the training, and the same with the trainers. I did a quick analysis against dates trained and it is a definite upward curve, so well done to Mark, Norie, Andy and Nick and everyone else involved in the training provision.



10. NRPI

35% of NRPI were happy about their membership of the Register, and 58% satisfied. It has been a difficult time for investigations and last year we set up a new committee the NIC (National Investigations Committee) to triage cases and refer them to NRPI members. With lockdown over hopefully now we will start to see regular referrals of investigations to our NRPI members, and more involvement going forward.



11. Affiliated Groups

The work of the affiliated groups goes forward and this year our big news is that we have a North American sister organisation being set up. This will be supported by us, but completely independent. We will have more details in the next magazine.



12. ASSAP Exec

We asked what roles should be represented on the Exec Committee in addition to the obligatory Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

The results were interesting – in order of votes, the most popular to less were:



Affiliation & Education Officer



National Investigations Coordinator



Research officer



Vice Chairman



Media & PR officer and Publications.

Those will all be Exec officers after the 2021 election.



overall

The last question asked “Overall how satisfied are you with your ASSAP experience? 93% were happy, 4% satisfied and two respondents were very unhappy. Obviously we can't please everyone, but with 97% at least satisfied I think we will offer a refund to the unsatisfied pair if they wish to write in, and just carry on getting better. You can't please everybody and ASSAP is clearly not going to cater for everyone's tastes, but my hope is for those who enjoy what we do and are proud of our legacy that we will go on to build upon the work of the last forty years and get even better.

CJ , September 2021



Happy

Satisfied

Very unhappy



Isle of Man

- more than a talking Mongoose

By Ian Topham



Isle of Man



folklore
fairies
ghosts

Recently while updating the Mysterious Britain & Ireland website, I found myself going through some old newspapers and books concerning the Isle of Man. Mention the Isle of Man to a paranormal researcher and they will probably think immediately about talking a certain talking mongoose, but the island's rich tradition of folk and ghost lore does not end there and I am sure that a survey of the island would make a great Albion project. Project Albion being ASSAP's longest running research endeavour, likened to a Domesday book of the paranormal.

Situated in the Irish Sea, south of Scotland and nestled between England and Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man is a Crown Dependency and not part of the United Kingdom. The Island covers an area of 221 square miles and is about 31 miles long and as much as 14 miles wide. For the purpose of this article I am just concentrating on stories I have found based in the bottom portion of the island's length.

Starting off in the bottom south east corner, near Castletown, in the parish of Malew, is St. Michael's Island or Fort Island. Measuring roughly 12 acres in size St Michael's or Fort Island is connected to the mainland at the Langness Peninsula by a causeway. There are two ruined structures present, the 12th century St Michael's Chapel and Derby Fort which dates back to 1645 and the English Civil War. C Roeder, contributing to Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society magazine, gave the following two accounts of apparitions associated with the Island.

"At the ruined chapel in St. Michael's Island, Derbyhaven, many vessels have been wrecked. A man says, who lives at Castletown, he had seen a sailor, in ribbon and shoes, coming up from the shore about sunset, and seen him, times, go up the land."

"A ship was struck at St. Michael Island, and a company of men engaged to hack it up, and the night, about 12 o'clock, they saw a white thing, like a human being standing at the chapel door, and he was groaning, so the men refused to carry any more timber up. The ship was 'James Crossfield,' of Liverpool, and 40 hands drowned."

The Name of the ship allows to date the experience to a terrible storm on January 6 1867.



Originally dating from the 10th century the imposing Castle Rushen at Castletown has a reputation of being haunted by a female figure. The 'Isle of Man Examiner' ran the following piece entitled 'Castle Ghost Walks Again!' on Thursday, August 18, 1960. The article also describes a sighting in 1937.

FOUR white-faced, frightened boys ran into Victoria Road P school, Castletown, on Sunday night. They looked as if they had seen a ghost — and they really thought they had! The boys, who were staying on holiday in the school at Castletown, reported that they had seen a strange figure on the Eagle Tower — the highest point of Castle Rushen. It was the figure of a woman, dressed in black with a dead white face, black hands, long flowing robes and something hanging down the back from the head-dress.

Did they see the spectre of the Castle's famous "Black Lady"? The time was 11-30 at night. The Castle was locked and the Custodian is certain that no unauthorised person was inside. And the boys are quite certain they saw this strange figure on the high tower.. 86ft. above the ground. The boys — 17-year-olds — said they watched the figure for about ten minutes. They saw it from the Quay and moved to another position to get a clearer view. The next morning they wrote a statement describing what they had seen and handed it over to the Custodian of the Castle. The Custodian, Mr Norman Gale, said the boys came to him to ask if there was any history of a ghost of a woman haunting the Castle. Then they told him what they had seen. At first he thought they were joking, but they insisted that they were telling the truth and he became impressed with their sincerity.

Other youths in the party said the four were as white as sheets when they returned to the school that night and said

what they had seen. "The Black Lady" is reputed to be the ghost of a woman who was executed in Castle Rushen for the murder of her child. She is reported to have been seen on a number of occasions, the last being in 1937 when an assistant custodian, Mr Louis Vanwell, related an incident in the Castle. He said he saw a woman in a long dark dress, with her features half hidden, leading a child from the drawbridge down towards the dungeons. He thought they were both rather peculiarly dressed but he did not pay much attention for the moment.

Then a visitor came into the Castle and asked if he had seen his wife. He said. "Yes, a lady has just gone down to the dungeons." The visitor went to the dungeons and returned in a few seconds and said there was no one there

Mr Vanwell was very surprised because from where he was standing he would have been bound to have seen the lady and the child come back. He immediately went down to the dungeons but there was no one there. He told the visitor that he had seen the lady go down the dungeon steps with the child and she had certainly not come up again. The visitor said his wife did not have a child with her and Mr John Mylchreest, the Custodian, who had come along, said he had been standing in the gateway of the Castle for some time and he was certain no woman with a child had come in.

They searched the Castle and found the visitor's wife at the top of the West Tower where she had been for some time waiting for her husband to come up. She had not been anywhere near the drawbridge or the dungeons and there was no one else in the Castle.

Mr Vanwell swore he saw the two figures go into the dungeons and that they did not come out again.



Continuing slightly north west we have the Malew Parish Church of St Lupus at Ballasalla and its association with a Fairy Cup. A W Moore in his Folk-Lore of the Isle of Man (1891) recounted a tale of a Manxman and his encounter with the local faeries.

'One man had been led by invisible musicians for several miles together, and not being able to resist the harmony, followed, till it conducted him into a large common, where were a great number of little people sitting round a table, and eating and drinking in a very jovial manner.

Among them were some faces whom he thought he had formerly seen, but forbore taking any notice, or they of him, till the little people offered him drink; one of them, whose features seemed not unknown to him, plucked him by the coat, and forbade him, whatever he did, to taste anything he saw before him; "for if you do," added he, "you will be as I am, and return no more to your family." The poor man was much affrighted, but resolved to obey the injunction.

Accordingly a large silver cup filled with some sort of liquor, being put into his hand, he found an opportunity to throw what it contained on the ground. Soon after, the music ceasing, all the company disappeared, leaving the cup in his hand; and he returned home, though much wearied and fatigued. He went the next day and communicated to the minister of the parish all that had happened, and asked his advice how he should dispose of the cup; to which the parson replied, he could not do better than to devote it to the service of the Church; and this very cup, they tell me, is that which is now used for the consecrated wine in Kirk Malew.'

Whether the cup is still used is something to be investigated...

Back in the 19th century Malew Parish Church gained a local reputation of being haunted. A piece entitled 'The Laying of a Ghost', appearing in the Peel City Guardian, dated 28 December 1901 describes the experience that was often interpreted as a ghost and the explanation behind it.

"Ghosts are common here," writes an Isle of Man correspondent, "but perhaps the most persistent, and, till now, inexplicable, has been that of Malew Parish Church. The ghost itself was, needless to say, never seen, but people passing at night along the main road were frequently startled by seeing a light move along inside the church from the door to the chancel. It was popularly supposed that this was a light carried by a spectre, for it was known that no living person was inside the building. The mystery has at last been solved by the Vicar. He carefully watched the light and found out that it emanated from a distant lighthouse fitted with a revolving light. Its rays touched the church windows one by one as the light revolved, producing a very realistic impression of a person walking up the aisle inside carrying a light." - "St. James's' Gazette." [Peel City Guardian, 28 December 1901]

Along the coast in Port St Mary we find the following short account.

"A blacksmith in Croit-y-Kaaby, Port St. Mary, was asked to put a cross of iron on the grave to prevent the spirit from coming out, but it happened the ghos' was out, and could not get in, and he was corree (angry) at that, and shouted : 'Trog shoh' (lift that), and the man has never done any good afterwards."

[Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, C Roeder, (Yn Lioar Manninagh Vol 3)]

About the Author



Ian has been actively investigating the paranormal for over 30 years, most of which has been in association with ASSAP, in particular what emerged and became known as the Northern Group of which he was a founding member. Ian's key areas of research, interest and experience are within the scientific investigation of haunting phenomena (e.g. apparitions / poltergeists). He is also a fully accredited ASSAP researcher and has previously served on their executive committee as Chairman, Vice Chair, Membership Officer and is the current Heritage Officer. He has an avid interest in folklore and the occult and how these areas can influence the nature of strange experiences for people involved in these areas.

For more folklore, myths, legends and paranormal accounts from the Isle of Man scan the QR code below on your phone.



The Station Hotel, Dudley

by Dr. Becky Smith



Around 2006 I went to stay at the Station Hotel in Dudley, which is just across the road from the zoo in the grounds of the ruined Dudley Castle. If you're a fan of TV show *Most Haunted* you may recognise the name from one of their early episodes where they investigated the hotel.



The history of the Station Hotel

A railway station was opened in Dudley in 1850 and in 1896 the Station Hotel was built to support the station. In 1899 the Opera House was built opposite the hotel and this brought the upper classes to Dudley. In 1933 the Opera House burnt down and this was later replaced by the Dudley Hippodrome in 1936. In the same year the Station Hotel was modernised and extended and many stars who performed at the Hippodrome stayed at the hotel, including George Formby, Bob Hope and Laurel and Hardy. The Station Hotel was again modernised in the 1960's and a cocktail bar and function room bar were both added.

The hotel now consists of rooms across the whole second floor and rooms across three quarters of the first floor, with a staff area occupying the other quarter. The ground floor has a restaurant and bar, ballroom and reception area. The hotel is located on a corner where two roads join and is almost C shaped, which makes the building a very unusual shape.

The hotel has been modernised several times since it was built, but it was looking very dated. The décor and style of the hotel does make me think of the film *The Shining*. I can imagine a little boy on a trike riding through the wide corridors, turning a corner and coming face to face with some ghostly twins.

In 2021 it was announced that the hotel was to be closed and sold, and there was a possibility it might be demolished. At the time of writing this article I believe the hotel has been taken over and refurbished.

The first published indication that the hotel may be haunted appears to come from an article in the *Dudley News* on 9th September 1994. The article briefly mentions a woman waiting in the hotel for her cue on a ghost walk when she saw a hazy figure of a man in grey trousers and a black jacket, walk towards the cellar. Kitchen staff from the hotel confirmed that this matched the description of a figure they'd also seen.

The *Most Haunted* episode filmed at the hotel aired on 22nd April 2003. During the episode three scratch marks were discovered on the face of one crew member and video footage was caught of a chair and bed moving in

room 214, when the room was empty. The show's alleged medium, Derek Acorah, claimed to pick up psychic impressions regarding events that had supposedly occurred at the hotel. In the cellar Derek described the murder of a chambermaid, who he named as Elizabeth Hitchin, which apparently took place in the cellar. Derek claimed that Elizabeth was having an affair with the hotel's proprietor, named as George Williams. Elizabeth had threatened to tell George's loved ones about the affair so he murdered her and dragged her by the legs up the barrel chute before burying her outside. Derek also mentioned a George Lawley, who apparently visited the hotel and knew about the murder. The episode identified the most paranormally active areas of the hotel as rooms 214 and 217, the cellar and the restaurant.

My research

When I first stayed at the hotel the person I was staying with chatted to the receptionist about whether they thought the hotel was haunted and was surprised to be handed what the staff had called the Spook Book. Staff at the hotel started the book just after the *Most Haunted* episode was aired and experiences in the book dated back to 24th April 2003. Any time a guest mentioned to reception they'd experienced something within the hotel they were asked to write about it in the Spook Book. A book such as this is extremely rare, so this stuck in my mind.

In 2006-2008 I completed my Masters degree at Coventry University and when it came to deciding what I wanted to do for my dissertation I knew I wanted to look into what might be happening at the Station Hotel, and at the experiences recorded in the Spook Book. I looked at experiences recorded as occurring over the period of just over three years, from when the book was started on 24th April 2003 until 5th May 2006. This was 172 separate experiences. I decided to conduct a Grounded theory on the experiences, which in hindsight wasn't quite the right method to use, but did help me do what I wanted to do. I should have used Thematic analysis, which involves looking for 'themes' in the experiences, which is very similar to Grounded theory, but doesn't require you to try and develop a theory to explain what is happening across all experiences.



Activity at the hotel

The Grounded theory revealed seven categories in the Spook Book. These were Sightings, Movement, Feelings/sensations & injuries, Sounds, Technical problems, Temperature and Smells. Each category contained between two and seven sub-categories. There was also one final category that I called Other which contained experiences that did not fit into any of the other categories. This was mostly experiences where information was provided by a 'medium' or where it was not clear if the percipient actually saw what they described or whether they saw this 'psychically'. I won't be touching on these entries in this article.

The sub-categories under Sightings included orbs, lights, shapes/objects, shadows/mist, apparitions and miscellaneous sightings. By far the most common type of activity in this category was orbs, which I'm sure you'll be aware are spherical or circular shapes that are most often white and usually appear on photos or video footage, but can also be seen with the naked eye. Orbs are often associated with places that are supposed to be haunted, but can be found just about anywhere. Although some people believe that orbs may be related to ghosts, as far as the academic community are concerned these are the result of moisture in the air, dust or small insects.

Lights that remained stationary, travelled or appeared to flash were also common but these can easily be created by the headlights of passing cars or can even be a trick of the eyes if sat in the dark waiting to see something.

The most interesting type of activity within this category was the appearance of some kind of apparition, of which there were 20 occurrences, mostly occurring in rooms 214 and 217, the cellar and the restaurant. Several of these were seen shortly after the percipient woke from sleep and so could have been hypnopompic imagery (a

hallucination). A couple of these experiences involved a face reported as appearing in the cellar. The only people who go down into the cellar are 'ghost hunters' who are accompanied by a staff member, who will usually turn off the light to see if the 'ghost' appears. In the dark the human brain will translate patterns of darkness into something that is recognisably human, such as a face, which is known as Pareidolia.

Feelings/sensations and injuries contained seven sub-categories which were bodily feelings/sensations, emotions/feelings, touches, pain/injuries, illness, restraint and being pulled. These included things such as people feeling like they'd been touched, feeling like they were being held down, aches, pains and feeling upset. One of the most interesting things in this category though is people discovering scratches on various parts of their body. As mentioned above, scratches appeared on the face of one of the crew members in the Most Haunted episode at the hotel. In the Spook Book there were 11 occurrences, with the scratch(es) usually appearing on the arm or face. On one visit to the hotel I also experienced this. Strangely the scratch that I found was covered by several layers of clothing and was quite long and deep; deep enough to have actually bled to the surface that had scabbed. I can't personally explain my scratch; I may have done it myself by accident, although I don't remember feeling it happen. With the occurrences in the book there is always the chance that the person may have accidentally scratched themselves, but this is still quite interesting.

On seven occasions somebody experienced a feeling as if they were being held down, usually when they had just woken up. This may obviously be a very frightening experience and the first thought that might occur to the person having the experience is that somebody is holding them down, but it's likely that this may just have been



sleep paralysis. This is where the brain wakes up before the body does and the person is temporarily unable to move. During REM sleep (when we dream) the body is paralysed to stop people acting out their dreams, but if for some reason they wake during REM sleep this state of paralysis can persist briefly. This can also be accompanied by hallucinations, so the person may even believe that they have seen somebody holding them down.

The rest of the experiences in this category are all very subjective; there's no way of knowing for sure whether somebody has actually been touched; this could be something such as a muscle spasm or accidentally brushing against something.

Temperature contained three sub-categories of room temperature, body temperature and other temperature. The most common experience involved room temperature rather than body temperature, although it was sometimes difficult to work out which they were referring to. Unsurprisingly, as it appears to feature in the majority of Most Haunted episodes, the most common temperature experience was a 'cold spot'. Some people believe that cold spots can indicate the presence of a ghost but to be honest the Station Hotel is a very old building with some old and badly fitting windows, so it's likely that these could cause drafts.

There were several entries that described areas of the hotel as either very hot or cold. Four entries describe the room the person was staying in as very hot, despite the window being open or having been open. I've stayed in the hotel several times and it's often very hot in there. On one occasion in December I stayed in room 217 and despite it being close to freezing outside the window had to be left open overnight and the room was still extremely hot. When I inspected the room I discovered a large pipe running under the head of the bed that was very warm. Therefore the temperature in the hotel appears to be due

to overheating and draughty windows rather than anything paranormal.

Other experiences in this category involved body temperature, but as with feelings of being touched this is very subjective and even if you can see or feel that somebody is particularly hot or cold this could just be something physiological.

The category of Movement contained five sub-categories which were furniture, miscellaneous object moved, opened/shut, other movement and object fell. The most common activity in this category involved the movement of furniture, such as beds, chairs and wardrobes. As I mentioned above Most Haunted apparently caught some footage on camera of a chair and bed moving in room 214. After doing some research on Dudley I discovered that the UK experienced one of the largest earthquakes for 10 years on 22nd September 2002. I remember feeling this earthquake in Derby (around 50 miles away) and the epicentre was found to be just four miles from the Station Hotel. The earthquake occurred just a few weeks before the Most Haunted episode at the hotel was recorded in October 2002. Although the actual earthquake obviously couldn't be the cause of furniture moving in the hotel a few weeks later there is the possibility of aftershocks, although I'm no earthquake expert. I also discovered that Dudley lies close to a fault line called the Malvern Lineament and that Dudley also lies over several disused mines which have caused subsidence on Brick Kiln lane (three miles from the hotel) where the pub on the end of the road, Crooked House, is slanted after subsiding 50 years ago. So it appears that the Station Hotel is built on possibly very unstable ground and that underground earth movement could possibly cause some small movement of furniture or other objects, especially things like beds shaking. In 2002 I felt the earthquake when it vibrated up through the metal chair I was sitting on at work.

Another common experience in the book was that doors, drawers and windows would appear to open or close on their own. Although it wouldn't be able to explain windows opening or draws closing, other movement, such as doors opening and closing, could be caused by underground vibrations. The stability of the ground under the hotel is unable to explain things like bed covers being pulled or feeling the bed go down as if somebody had sat on it, but it can possibly explain some other reported movement.

The category of Smells contained just two sub-categories of smoke and other smells. Out of 23 entries featuring a smell, 17 involved smoke, normally cigarette or cigar smoke. Prior to the smoking ban in July 2007 smoking was permitted in the hotel and was even allowed in any of the rooms on the second floor. Many years of people smoking in the hotel is likely to have resorted in the smell of smoke lingering within the furnishings of the building, so this could account for any reports of smelling smoke. Other smells included eggs, flowers, a musty smell and a few smells just referred to as strange or funny. None of these smells were reported as occurring close to the appearance of an apparition or any other unusual activity, so these could be the result of anything, including air fresheners, perfume, cooking or old furnishings.

Sounds contained three sub-categories of general sounds, specific noises and voices. The majority of sounds in this category included hearing taps, bangs, clicking, knocking and creaking. As already mentioned the Station Hotel is an old building and will make a lot of different noises, such as floor boards creaking and water travelling through pipes. A common experience was hearing a kettle click, but kettles often click, especially if recently boiled, and to be honest if the person reporting this hadn't been staying in a 'haunted hotel' at the time they'd have probably thought nothing of this. Five separate entries included the sound of plastic bags rustling. If screwed up a bag will naturally rustle as it starts to unfold, but there were two entries that stated that this continued for 15 minutes, which does seem a little more unusual. Five entries mention hearing footsteps, but none of them mention anybody actually checking to see if there was anybody around to have created the sound of footsteps, which would have probably been a good idea.

There were five sub-categories under Technical problems which included cameras, phones, lights, miscellaneous electrical and none electrical. The majority of experiences in this category involved problems with phones, cameras, lights and televisions. Problems included electrical equipment turning itself on or off, pictures or footage being deleted and batteries being drained. Locations that are supposed to be haunted are thought by some to drain batteries on electrical equipment and a theory for this is that ghosts may draw energy from batteries. Batteries dying was reported on eight occasions,

however there is always the possibility that the batteries may have been faulty and may not have been holding charge well; also batteries are affected by temperature. Lowering the temperature of a battery will reduce the current it can produce and it may not be able to provide the current required by the equipment.

The most common experience in this category was a camera or camcorder turning itself off, which is reported on 18 occasions. However, I believe many cameras have a function that turns them off after a period of inactivity. This wouldn't happen while a camcorder was recording, but only one entry appears to indicate that it was recording at the time. Several experiences also involved phones and one mentions how the phone in the cellar didn't stop ringing when picked up by a staff member who had to pull out the plug to stop it ringing. This appears very interesting, however this also happened while I was in the cellar and the member of staff explained that the button under the receiver gets stuck, so when you lift the receiver it doesn't 'answer' the phone. Other technical problems are hard to comment on because there may have just been a problem with the item or it could have been a misinterpretation of something the item is supposed to do.

Some conclusions

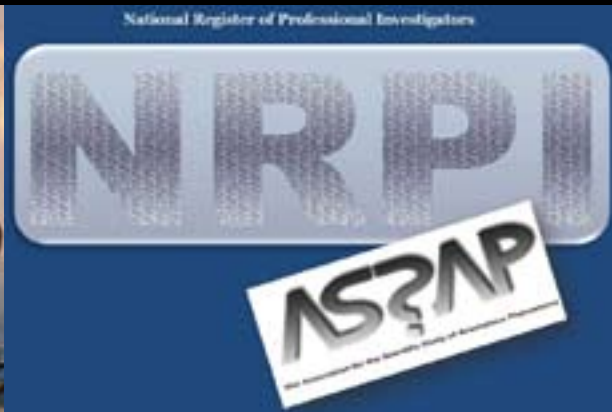
One of the most notable things about the majority of the entries in the Spook Book is that these aren't actually experiences; most are a just a list of things that happened while the person was staying there. It's also worth noting that the majority of things recorded in the Spook Book probably wouldn't have been considered possibly paranormal if the person didn't know that the hotel is apparently haunted. Many of the entries in the book appear to have been made by people who knew the hotel was haunted and stayed at the hotel with the intention of conducting their own investigation. With most entries there was so little information provided it was impossible to try and say for sure what might have been the cause of what was reported. I think the Spook Book shows that you can't assume somewhere is haunted because a lot of activity is reported there. If you look closely at the activity reported a lot may be easily explained, or is just not very good evidence for supporting the suggestion that the area might be haunted. It's worth noting that the areas where most activity is reported in the Spook Book are the same as those identified as most active in the Most Haunted episode; whether this is influenced by the Most Haunted episode or because these areas are genuinely haunted, I can't say.

When I stayed at the hotel in 2014 I discovered that although a new Spook Book did exist, the original book that this research was conducted on, had been stolen.



About the author:

Dr Rebecca Smith completed her PhD on "A century of Apparitions" in 2013. Nowadays she is Treasurer of ASSAP and works for Pelgrane Press a games company.



NRPI and Affiliated Groups

By Mark Davey, Education and Affiliations officer and
Co-ordinator National Investigations Committee (NIC)

The National Register of Professional Investigators is an assurance to the outside world that members of the register are ethical in what they do. It is a voluntary scheme designed to help raise the investigation community to a minimum level of ethical practice. This was created to help protect clients and investigators alike. It was created and is administered by ASSAP (Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena). ASSAP is a national body: a professional body, learned society, registered charity and limited company established in 1981.

The NRPI is one of ASSAP's professional body schemes. ASSAP's professional body status was examined closely by UK government lawyers who ensured that ASSAP constituted a professional body. The UK government formally registered ASSAP as a professional body for investigators of anomalous phenomena as a result of this.

ASSAP's professional Code of Ethics was drawn from an initial public consultation in 2011 in which hundreds of people gave their opinion on what should form a code. The code was compiled by the ASSAP National Investigations Committee and approved by the Board of Directors and was informed by a) the consultation responses, b) peer-reviewed articles of investigation ethics, c) the codes of bodies like the Parapsychological Association and British Psychological Society and d) learning materials from ASSAP as a recognised learned society. The code was then subject to a further public consultation, to government consultation and was subject to academic peer-review before being published in ASSAP's journal *Anomaly* in December 2012. The code will be subject to further consultation six months and twelve months after implementation.

Investigators of anomalous phenomena cover a wide range of subjects and working practices. Some investigators are full-time professionals, others are related professionals (such as academics) who investigate as part of their job or pro bono, others are volunteers. Volunteers are capable of being 'professional' if they have the attitude and training. Volunteers can join the NRPI and will be considered 'professional' if they have signed up to the code, completed the learning and passed the examination. NRPI insurance applies to qualified investigators only and does not cover spiritual practitioners (acting in that capacity) or profit-making events organisers (acting in that capacity).

Membership of the NRPI sends a message to the outside world that an investigator's ethical procedures are of a professional standard. However this should not be mistaken for representation of ASSAP. NRPI members are not assigned ASSAP cases unless they have also successfully completed ASSAP Investigation Training. This is because ASSAP cases must be dealt with to the higher scientific standard as well as the minimum ethical standard. The purpose of the NRPI is to build this minimum ethical standard for the benefit of the wider public.

ASSAP affiliated groups are investigation teams in the UK which contain NRPI members who have completed ASSAP's investigation training. They adhere to the Code of Ethics and the high standards of investigation expected by ASSAP. You will see details of the affiliated groups in our magazine and on our website. ASSAP would like to create a network of Groups and Investigators throughout the UK, who are able to receive investigations from the NIC. Affiliated group status is also open to international teams who complete NRPI training and show that they follow the ethical and scientific approach advocated by ASSAP.

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Unsolved Aviation Mysteries: Five Strange Tales of Air and Sea

By Keith McCloskey

The History Press, Cheltenham, 2020

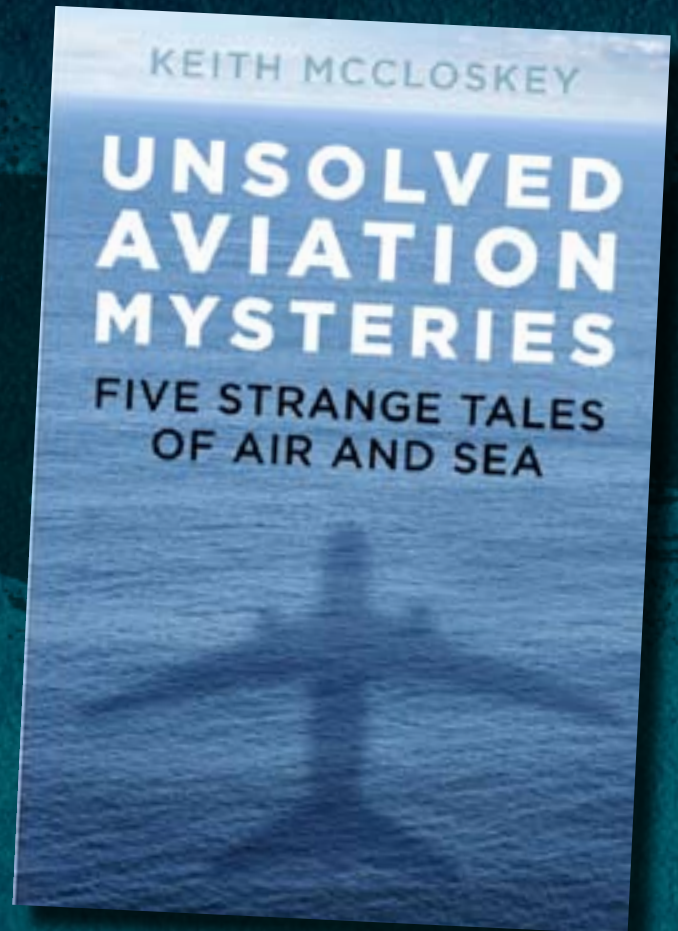
ISBN 978 0 7509 9258 9

As its subtitle indicates, this book focuses on five cases (outlined below) that might be classed as aviation mysteries. They're interesting in their own right, but there are certainly even stranger aviation cases, some of which aren't well-known. I'm thinking, for example, of the disappearance of a private aircraft (an Ercoupe 415-D) on a flight from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico in June 1980. There were two people on board, a pilot and a student pilot. The pilot started sending 'Mayday' calls, which weren't received by the control facility at San Juan International Airport in Puerto Rico. But a Spanish airliner, on a flight to Madrid, acted as a link with San Juan via a mast in Puerto Rico. The transmissions from the Ercoupe indicated that its occupants were lost and that a strange object was making them lose course. After about three minutes, no further communications were received from the stricken plane, and attempts to locate it were unsuccessful.

In brief, the cases examined by Keith McCloskey are as follows:

Case 1 (pp. 11-63)

On the evening of 24th December 1975, while staying with a female friend at the Glenforsa Hotel on the Isle of Mull in Scotland, Norman Peter Gibbs (who used 'Peter' as his first name) took off, alone, in a hired Cessna aircraft from the hotel's grass airstrip, which wasn't suitable for night flying. Indeed, Gibbs, who was nearly 54, shouldn't have been flying the plane at all, since his private pilot's licence had expired. He wasn't wearing spectacles, which he was supposed to do when flying. Furthermore, his night flying experience was limited.



Prior to the flight, Gibbs told his female friend, Dr Felicity Grainger, that he wanted to make a quick circuit. Perhaps realizing that he was about to do something hazardous, he explained that if he ran into trouble, he would bring the plane's wheels down in the water, to slow it down, and he'd then escape from it and head for the shore! The last that Grainger saw of the plane was its disappearing behind some trees beyond the airstrip. Four months later, Peter Gibbs' body was found. It was lying on a tree trunk, some 400 feet above sea level, and more than a mile from the hotel. He'd apparently died of hypothermia. In September 1986, divers in the Sound of Mull found wreckage that bore registration details matching those of the missing aircraft. Therefore, it seems that Gibbs did indeed ditch the plane in the sea and then manage to get back to land.

Case 2 (pp. 64-96)

This case concerns John F. Kennedy Jr (1960-1999), a son of the late President John F. Kennedy. On the evening of 16th July 1999, piloting a light aircraft, he took off from an airport in New Jersey for Martha's Vineyard, an island in Massachusetts. He was accompanied by his wife, Carolyn, and his sister-in-law, Lauren. It seems that the plane crashed in the sea close to Martha's Vineyard.

Case 3 (pp. 97-135)

On 23rd November 1953, a United States Air Force radar operator noticed an unidentified blip on his screen. Something appeared to be making its way over Lake Superior, which straddles the border between Canada and the USA. It was on a south-easterly course at 7,000 feet, heading in the direction of restricted air space. A Northrop F-89C Scorpion fighter from Kinross Air Force Base was sent to intercept it. It had a two-man crew. Shortly after it took off, radar control was passed to another radar station. The radar returns from the Scorpion and the 'bogey' approached each other and then merged into one, with the unidentified craft continuing on its course without deviation and with nothing more being heard of from the Scorpion. The unidentified craft may have been a Royal Canadian Air Force plane that was flying at 7,000 feet from Winnipeg to Sudbury. However, its commander, Captain Gerald Fosberg, reported that he hadn't seen the Scorpion, and that he'd been on a line that was 30 miles north of the mysterious radar blip. He was adamant that he hadn't been off course.

Case 4 (pp. 136-168)

This case concerns the disappearance of a private Learjet aircraft in February 1983 while on a flight from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Colombo in Sri Lanka. Several people were on board, including a wealthy, 44-year-old Sri Lankan businessman, Philip Upali Wijewardene. It seems that the plane came down in the Strait of Malacca, near the coast of North Sumatra, Indonesia.



Case 5 (pp. 169-211)

This is another case concerning a wealthy businessman. Alfred Loewenstein was born in Belgium in 1877. In July 1928, he fell to his death from a Fokker aircraft that he owned. It was on a business flight from Croydon (England) to Brussels (Belgium), and was over the English Channel when Loewenstein fell out, jumped out, or was pushed out. (McCloskey considers all these possibilities.) Loewenstein hadn't been piloting the plane – along with some employees, he'd been a passenger.

Comments

McCloskey goes into these cases in considerable detail and must be commended for the depth of his research. Unfortunately, though, I don't find his treatment of the cases very clear. Take, for example, Case 1. On p. 14, he gives the impression that Peter Gibbs took off in an easterly direction, whereas, on p. 32, there's mention of its being a westerly direction!

The book could have been better structured, with headings within each chapter to help present the material in a more accessible way. In four of the chapters, there are outline maps, but they're quite small, and they don't all follow a consistent style. Each one appears near the end of the relevant chapter, which is too late. Near the end of the chapter on Case 5, there's a drawing, showing the layout of the aircraft concerned. But it would have been better if it had appeared earlier in the chapter.

I noticed some grammatical errors in the book. Although there's an index, there are significant gaps in it. For example, in respect of Case 1, there's no entry for the ill-fated Peter Gibbs, although his friend, Felicity Grainger, is indexed!



ASSAP financial summary 2019 - 2020

Total monthly subscriptions and donations received		£6,241.50	
Publications			
Seriously Strange mag Aug 19 edition	Printing	£439.29	
	P&P	£512.36	
		£951.65	
Seriously Strange mag Jan 20 edition	Printing	£445.29	
	P&P		Posted w Anomaly
		£445.29	
Anomaly Jan 20 edition	Printing	664.78	
	P&P	£525.65	Including SS mag
		£1,190.43	
Publications total		£2,587.37	
Conferences			
Seriously Strange Bath	Ticket sales & event takings	£4,103.13	
	Location	£3,444.50	
	Conference expenses	£164.30	
	Speaker/volunteer expenses	£147.00	
		£347.33	
	Ticket sales & event takings		
	Location		
	Conference Expenses		
	Speaker/volunteer expenses		
		£0.00	
	Ticket sales & event takings		
	Location		
	Conference Expenses		
	Speaker/volunteer expenses		
		£0.00	
Training weekends			
Mar-20	Ticket sales	£666.57	
	Location	£820.00	
	Training expenses	£27.70	
	Volunteer expenses	£68.35	
		-£249.48	
	Ticket sales	£0.00	
	Location	£0.00	
	Training expenses	£0.00	
	Volunteer expenses	£0.00	
		£0.00	
Advertising costs		£0.00	
Income this year		£11,122.19	
Expenditure this year		£11,558.46	
Profit		-£436.27	

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Seriously Strange 2022

**Sat, 3 - Sun, 4 September
University of Bath**

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