

seriously
strange
magazine

Lights over
the Rowley
Hills

Also inside:

- Robert Moore - Obituary
- ASSAP 2022 Conference
- A Real Ghost Photograph?

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



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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Robert Moore served as Vice Chairman and UFO officer until his sad death in April. This issue is respectfully dedicated to his memory and vast contribution to ASSAP over the years.

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Dear friends of ASSAP



There can be only one subject for this issues editorial: the tragic death of our Vice Chairman Robert Moore. Robert was a well loved part of ASSAP and everything we did: he would contribute every day in the Exec chat, making jokes, pouring oil on troubled waters and keeping us all going in adversity with his wisdom and gentle humour.

Robert was a good man: but he was also a first rate scholar. I believe his success in UFOlogy was partly due to the former - like all these areas there is plenty of ego and infighting in UFOlogy - probably far more than actual research; the same is true in what some term "Paranormal" interest circles. Robert's modesty, good grace and self deprecating humour allowed him to thrive in a contentious field. Perhaps that has been his greatest contribution -- he reminds us all that by avoiding bitterness and the endless politics of the field and making friends from many different perspectives you can promote genuine growth and findings.

Robert also though was dedicated and hard working. If I asked him to do something he did it: some of the things he put together for the new website are in the accompanying Journal, including his useful and detailed guide to US government initiatives on UFOs - and other things like Project FoxFire also in the journal show his immense dedication to research themes. We worked together recently on some material converting ET entities from the sightings into game stats for Call of Cthulhu rpg for a project of mine, and it was abundantly clear to me how encyclopedic his knowledge of the literature was.

Robert had his faults: mainly his infuriating and endless IT issues that made online meetings with him amusingly unpredictable. He was not a wealthy man, and ASSAP is not a wealthy organisation -- yet happily in the last few months of his life we bought him a new laptop and we were finally able to meet him at meetings properly!

Robert was only 57 years old; too young to die so suddenly, and leave so much undone. We have lost one of the best minds in UFOlogy: and one of the best researchers in ASSAP and anomalies research. I'm thinking of his work on the ghostly highwayman of the A38 as well as his UFO cases; and his broad theoretical pieces like the presentation he did on historical ghosts.

Naturally shy and diffident Robert found presenting painful but he was determined to do his duty: he gave many papers for ASSAP. Deeply sensitive he was stung by criticism - and really, deeply hurt. Yet I have never seen anything but praise for his papers we have published - and now you have in your hands more, sadly his most extensive and final paper.

Robert was working on a book, a project that involved him and Jenny Randles over many years. We had come to an agreement to publish his UFO Handbook - and this invaluable investigators guide will be made available as soon as ASSAP can make the arrangements.

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I think of Robert as one of the last of a certain generation of British UFOlogists in some of his attitudes: he had no interest in drones or balloons; and while he seemed committed to psycho-social models I think he was always hoping the ETH might prove true. Fascinated by space, it is fitting that one of his last projects was making a star map of near space: he always enjoyed illustrating and design.

When I returned from Weird Weekend North I found a message in my inbox telling me that Robert had apparently died. I was shocked, and upset as you can imagine - we'd spoken a lot for fifteen years, and I wanted to establish the truth. The facts are simple - Robert had hypertension and heart disease and passed away quietly at home on Saturday, April 1st, 2023.

He slipped quietly and without fuss from our lives, as if in the night he followed a light, and, finally meeting the beings he searched for, chose to board their ship and head off to the final frontier. What adventures he has there we will not know, until it is our time to follow him into the Unknown.

Farewell Robert; a fine man, a great scholar, and a dear friend. You did your duty and you shone a light in to the dark: and we salute you.

CJ x

THE Paranormal Event of the Year is back!

paranormal UFOs vampires psychology
ghosts **seriously** earth mysteries
psychic **strange** hauntings
anthropology EVP
cryptids consciousness mediums

AS?AP

2 - 3 September, University of Bath

Keep an eye out on the website and
Facebook page for details.



The Mysteries and Secrets of Time

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

Einstein came closer than most other great thinkers to understanding the mysteries and secrets of time, and his comments on it combine his innate sense of humour and his superb intellect:--

"I never think of the future – it comes soon enough."

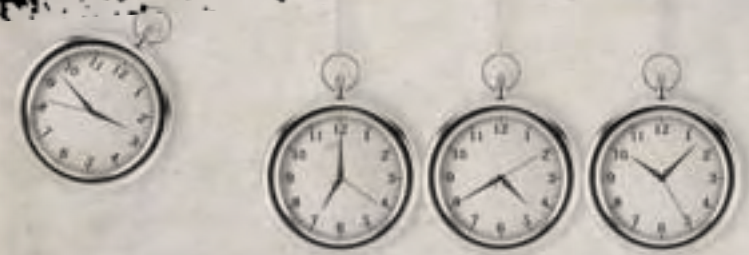
"The distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."

"The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once."

Clocks, watches, sundials and calendars record and measure what we define as 'time' in factual, objective ways. Very few human minds are equally objective about time. Five minutes of anxiety takes five subjective hours in our minds. A day in the company of someone we love and admire seems to last only five minutes.

So is real time what's on clocks and calendars or what's in our awareness: our personal, mental, experiential world?

Some philosophical psychologists might make a case for time being so flexibly interchangeable that it exists in



both: something like a race track that looks very different depending upon whether you are driving around it at 120 mph, or standing motionless beside it as you watch the race.

Our friends who read this article will take only two or three minutes: only a small fraction of the time we took to research and write it.

Just as we stand upon the Earth, and touch the objects beside us, so we exist in time and are aware of the people who share it with us, and the objects familiar to them and to us.

If we are the fish, time is the river: we can swim with it or against it.

We believe that great discoveries remain to be made about the true nature of time, and ways of utilising it, controlling it, and travelling through it – perhaps in either direction.

Could we establish an ASSAP group dedicated to exploring and experimenting with time?



Robert Moore - obituary

It is with very deep sadness I heard about the passing of Robert Moore, a member of ASSAP's board and resident expert on all things ufological. Robert had been involved in ufology for decades, and knew many of the subject's big, household names, such as Jenny Randles and

the folklorist Dr. David Clarke. His knowledge of the subject was deep and encyclopaedic. I went to several of his online talks, and was always astounded by his knowledge of its history and the internal debates as researchers struggled to get a grasp on what was really behind it all.

He was also profoundly interested in folklore and history, commenting on the ghosts of his native Somerset that only someone with a really profound knowledge of the local spook scene could. He was also generous with his praise to other writers and researchers. I well remember the praise he gave me for my book, *Anglo-Saxon and Norman Bristol*, when I met him years ago in Bristol Cathedral. Robert has written a handbook for ASSAP on UFOs, which I understand will be published at a later date.

My sincere sympathies to all his friends and family. ASSAP, the world, and the world of ufology, is poorer for his loss.

Dave Sivier

Lights over the Rowley Hills

by John Tate

“Ufos? You Don't Know The Half of It.”

(Retired British Army Intelligence Officer to Author, September 2019)

On a clear January evening, deep in lockdown, my wife and I were having our evening constitutional, pretty well the only time we ventured outside during those dire times. On returning up our road from the north-west opposite the adjacent Crescent, June stopped dead and gasped “What's that?”

Above the houses at the far end of the Crescent (see Plate 1), in a clear winter sky, were two bright lights, one directly above the other. The light wind was from the south-west and Venus glowed above the opposing horizon. We both stood, a little awestruck. What on earth?

We had no cameras with us, neither owning a smartphone which was a pity (our daughter has now remedied this!). Two lights, probably more bright than Venus, vertically above one another, totally stationary in the night sky, the lower one probably around 20 degrees above the horizon, the other around 35 degrees. They were silent and most certainly not aircraft, satellites, balloons, flares or lanterns. The road was quiet and we were unsurprisingly the only people around. We watched for some time and then suddenly both disappeared – simultaneously. This is presumably what other have referred to as ‘blinking out’ – gone! Clearly both phenomena were intimately (non locally?) connected in some way - part of some wider system?

Not a spectacular sighting, but that is not the end of the story. On arriving home, it suddenly dawned on me that the lights were on a bearing that would have placed them in a direction of our local Rowley Hills. A

daylight visit confirmed this - they would have been pretty well above the communication towers located close to the summit of the higher peak (see Plates 1 and 2). The towers can be seen in daylight above the roofs of the houses at the end of the Crescent. The bearing of the lights were pretty well 10 degrees magnetic. Judging the actual distance along this bearing would have been problematic but I feel it a fair bet that the position along the 10 degree bearing would have placed the phenomenon pretty well as stated – it should be noted that the Hills do anyway cover a fairly extensive area (1).



Plate 1

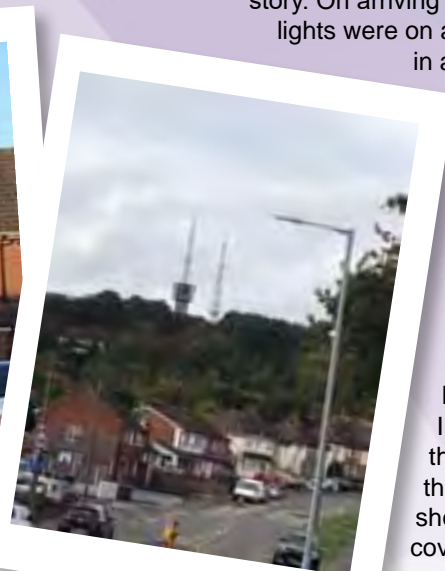


Plate 2

Now the Rowley Hills are a location that may be familiar to ufologists. They comprise a large volcanic extrusion formed some 300 million of years ago, are 883 feet above sea level and form part of the watershed between the Rivers Severn and Trent (2), dominating this south-west corner of the Black Country. The communication masts are visible for many miles and add 200 feet to the height. The Hills were quarried for roadstone (known locally as "Rowley Rag") for many years and quarries such as the "Hailstone Quarry" are quite massive. The Hills now form the southern edge of the Black Country Geo-Park (3). During WW2 they were the location of batteries of heavy anti-aircraft guns, the recoil from which left the ceilings in my parents' relatively new house located around a mile away badly cracked!

Importantly, back in 1979, on January 4th the Hills were the location of a well known UFO event. Details can be found in Albert Budden's pioneering work (4) and I will only provide a brief summary here. Mrs Jean Hingley lived in Bluestone Walk, close to the Hailstone Quarry and on that morning encountered a "huge orange glowing sphere" hovering over the car-port (5). Her dog threw a fit and she found herself floating as three bizarre, winged fairy like beings quickly entered her house. There is an artist's impression by Michael Buhler in Budden (6). "The entities were about three feet tall, with narrow tapering limbs coloured silvery-green and snow white faces surrounded by a close-fitting hood" (7). Add to this goldfish bowl helmets, topped by a 'miners' lamp', black eyes and no hands and feet and the whole situation becomes virtually unbelievable. The Christmas tree was shaken, the fairy falling off and a 'conversation' ensued (how?) involving a range of topics from Jesus to Tommy Steele! Room objects were examined and Jean was subjected to a hot laser-like beam which temporarily blinded her and induced a form of paralysis. At one point she claimed to have provided her visitors with a plate of mince pies and glasses of water! Make of this what you will. The entities recoiled at Jean lighting a cigarette, and following a trumpet like noise for the back garden, withdrew still holding the mince pies despite apparently having no hands. On the lawn was an object looking rather like a Christmas bauble (author's interpretation) "with a glowing stalk and an aerial sticking out of one side that ended in what looked like a rimless bicycle wheel" (8). The object lit up with a blue light, revolves and lifted off to the north. The reader is referred to Figures 14, 15 and 16 in Budden (9).

Jean Hingley collapsed in pain and encounters a tall, white robed figure in the sitting room which soon disappeared. She subsequently suffered a nervous break down and gave up her job. Was all this a fantasy? There was evidence to support the notion that something strange had indeed occurred. The TV, two clocks and cassette tapes were all found to have been affected by a strong magnetic field; there was an impression on the rear lawn thought to have been caused by heat; a five inch circle scratched in the glass of the front door, together with a whitening of the gold in Jean's wedding ring. Jean also developed enhanced psychic abilities and suffered black outs.

In a rather synchronous event, the author found himself, back in 2004, conversing with a young lady who, as a child, has actually been Jean Hingley's next-door neighbour. The location was the ITU in Sandwell General Hospital when

the author was recovering from being in an induced coma for some six weeks. The day nurse allocated to me was non other than this lady. We talked a lot about local history but she inveigled me with her memories of that day in 1979, particularly the kerfuffle with the local press and the attendance of Jean's family doctor. As a medical person (sadly, I cannot remember her name – I was not exactly 100% at the time), she was adamant that the event played a key role in the decline in Jean's health and in her final sad demise.

Budden's interpretation of these events is that Jean Hingley witnessed an 'earthlight' and that the weird experiences were hallucinatory. The events as described certainly have powerful imaginative characteristics. What June and I witnessed would fit into this interpretation. Earthlights have for many years been researched in Norway at Hessdalen but does this get us very far? What is an earthlight? Some powerful force hit Jean which left physical evidence in its wake. What was the cause? While Budden states that the location is "A model geophysical type conducive to the production of earthlights" (10) this begs many questions. The Hills have a range of key features which must be of significance. They are a highly prominent feature in the landscape; they are volcanic in origin; contain buried magnetic rocks, especially magnetite and ironstone; the area is faulted, (the Hailstone Quarry being defined by two fault lines, the Knowle Fault and the Portway fault); and of course they are topped by two large, prominent, radio masts (see Plates 1 and 2). But how far does this explain anything? It may help define the environment in which such events can happen but why a craft? Why entities? Why a sound? Why physical traces? Hallucinations can take an infinite variety of forms, surely? (I had many during my six weeks of unconsciousness, all related to my state of mind prior to my illness.)

This seems to the author to be explaining one mystery by invoking another. Local geography / geomorphology / geology certainly may play a part, one only has to examine the weird events at the Skinwalker Ranch to see the truth of that (11), but are we dealing here with something a good deal more profound than a just bursts of electro-magnetic radiation? Are the Rowley Hills some sort of portal to what could be other dimensions? A crack in the fabric of reality? To quote Karma Wilde: "Can a strong field of currents essentially act as a portal thereby allowing other energies that we do not fully understand and are not normally aware of into our dimension?" (12). The lights June and I observed (seemingly identical, dead vertically above one another and well separated) seemed to be under some form of control in so far as they disappeared at exactly the same moment. Volcanic rocks and magnetic fields have been associated elsewhere with psychic phenomena, strange creatures and UFOs; for example at Mount Shasta in Northern California (13). Are such locations playgrounds for exotic physics where experiences go beyond hallucinations, at least as that term is currently understood? It would be fascinating to know what, if any, other events have been experienced on the Rowley Hills (though an initial web search has drawn a blank – so far. I ignore reports of the "Dudley Dorito" since these are rather unfocused location-wise). I can however report another event, this time still within the Geo-Park but some two



Plate 3

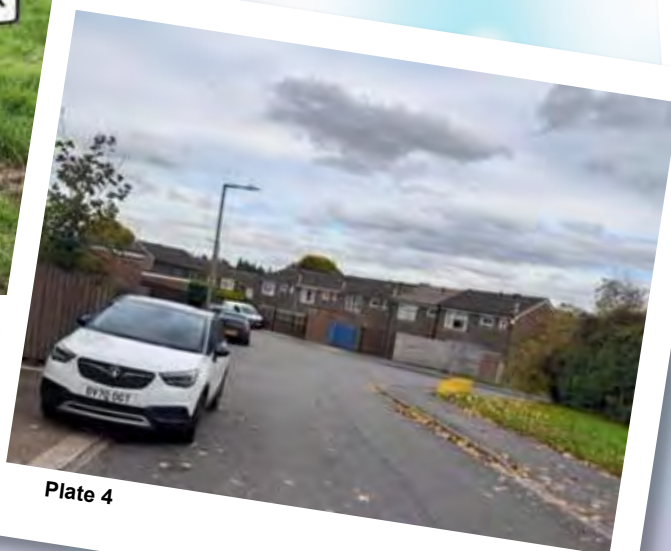


Plate 4

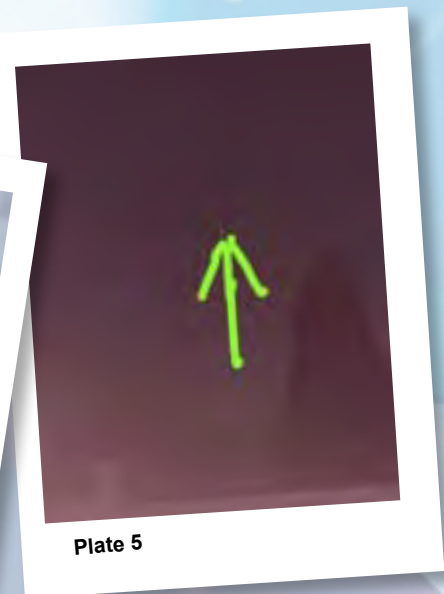


Plate 5

miles to the north-west. The sighting involved daughter Natalie and grandson Owen, aged eleven. It took place over the Wren's Nest limestone outcrop famous in geology for the "Dudley Bug". The stationary object, which through binoculars seemed at times to involve a disc, was visible for some forty minutes and was still there when both turned in for bed. Owen's photograph, not distinct admittedly, is reproduced as Plate Four. Was it a drone? Would someone keep a drone in a given position for such a length of time? Did it look like a drone?

To conclude, let us return to the quote at the the beginning of this piece. The author felt that it was worth including because it does beg the question as to just how much our military knows about the subject? I enjoy discussing military matters with my source but on occasions hit a brick wall (Northern Ireland, nuclear weapons, for example) but the biggest brick wall of all was UFOs. He immediately changed the subject and further attempts to elicit more information have drawn a blank. The author has always been slightly puzzled at the apparent fast response of (already prepared?) military units to events on the ground. A useful initial source may be the work of the late Tony Dodd (14) to which the reader is referred. Dodd highlights the Berwyn Mountain incident of 1974 in a chapter entitled "The Military Response". Other puzzling and relevant incidents could be that of Kecksburg in 1965 (15) and the Pentrych Incident in 2016 (16). Yes, all this is a digression from the Rowley Hills but it may be highly significant should someone be brave (or foolish?) enough to probe further.

Notes and References

1. <https://blackcountrygeopark.gov.uk> is a useful reference.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.*; a recent and long overdue recognition of its importance.
4. Budden, Albert; "Ufos: Psychic Close Encounters"; London: Blandford: 1995.
5. *ibid.*, page 230.
6. *ibid.*, plate between pages 140 and 141.
7. *ibid.*, page 230.
8. *ibid.*, page 234.
9. *ibid.*, pages 232, 233 and 236.
10. *ibid.*, page 235.
11. The Skinwalker Ranch saga has featured on the Sky History TV Channel and on Blaze Television. The standard (if now dated) reference is Kelleher, Colm A, and Knapp George "Hunt for the Skinwalker; Science Confronts the Unexplained at a Remote Ranch in Utah"; New York: Paraview Books: 2005.
12. Wilde, Karma; "Cause and Effect of a Haunted Museum", The Magazine of the Society for Psychical Research: Issue Five, 2022. Page 15.
13. The "Ancient Aliens" series on Blaze Television featured Mount Shasta on 6th October 2022.
14. Dodd, Tony; "Alien Investigator: The Case Files of Britain's Leading UFO Detective"; London: Headline Book Publishing: 1999.
15. Another well trodden case. There is a summary in Good, Timothy: "Need to Know: UFOs., the Military and Intelligence", London: Sidgwick and Jackson: 2006, pages 255-258.
16. Clarke, Caz and Jones, Gari, "The Pentrych Incident: The Greatest UFO Cover-up of Modern Times", Amazon: 2021.

Plates

- Plate One. Witnesses' position at sighting. (Author)
- Plate Two. Summit of the Rowley Hills from Portway Hill. (Author)
- Plates Three and Four. Bluestone Walk in 2022. (Author)
- Plate Four. Object over the Wren's Nest, Black Country Geo-Park. (Owen Tate-Smith)

Footnote: the author's military contact sadly passed away suddenly on the morning of Thursday 24th October 2022, aged seventy-seven. One wonders how much information is now lost to the UFO community.



The Investigation of Muncaster Castle

Still Going Strong after 30 Years.

By Ian Topham

The scientific investigation into the alleged haunting of Muncaster of Castle has reached a milestone - its 30th anniversary. This probably sets a record for the longest running scientific investigation into a reputed haunting ever carried out by a single investigation team.

ASSAP members from the early 1990s will no doubt remember reading articles in ASSAP News / Anomaly about the case when it was in its infancy. Dr Jason Braithwaite (Neuroscientist, Department of Psychology, Lancaster University) and Ian Topham have since spent half their lives working on this fascinating longitudinal approach to investigating a case.

Dr Braithwaite was the first and is the only researcher to have access to Muncaster and be recognised by the Pennington family for whom the castle is their ancestral home. The quality of the research carried out there has led to the publication of numerous peer reviewed journal articles (including in the Journal of Parapsychology, the European Journal of Parapsychology, and the Journal of Psychical Research) and has secured funding from numerous sources including The Society for Psychical Research, ASSAP, and private business donors. It is also the only scientific study of a haunting to have been featured in New Scientist magazine.



Muncaster has proven itself to be the ideal test bed for developing new technologies (the Magnetic Anomaly Detection System: MADS), and developing methods for field-based experiments. The research continues today examining psychophysiological / biophysical components of anomalous experiences and the role of context on mediating them.

Though a few years old, the QR code below links to a rare interview given by Dr Braithwaite for the Mysterious Britain & Ireland website in which he briefly discusses his approach to researching strange experiences.

It is planned that the full case of the haunting of Muncaster Castle will be published at a future date. A great deal of what the team now know has never been published. Don't believe what you read on the internet!



ASSAP 40 ANNIVERSARY

Seriously Strange Conference 2022

Summary by Claire Davy,
Secretary of ASSAP
www.assap.ac.uk

The city of Bath is a beautiful limestone tribute to Roman engineering and later splendid Georgian decor and has a history dating back to around 60AD. It has a wealth of culture and heritage and from that rich tapestry emerges a dark history and spooky stories aplenty.

It was something of a natural choice therefore as a host venue for this year's ASSAP 'Seriously Strange' Conference, a two day celebration of the 40th birthday of this venerable organisation which took place over the weekend of September 3-4 at the University of Bath's Claverton Down campus.

With an attendance over the two days of roughly 130 'souls' the atmosphere was convivial and all of the 22 talks were of an excellent standard.

The enthusiasm of the speakers, some of whom had spoken at previous events and some of whom were entirely new to the event, meant that conference organisers found themselves in the happy position of being inundated with volunteers wanting to take to the stage and share experiences, theories and ideas with an eager and fully invested audience. The sheer amount of speakers meant that time slots for each talk were limited by necessity - each contributor having no more than 30 minutes to communicate their message.

This did nothing to detract from the content and both days saw a very high standard of talks on subjects ranging from ghosts, demons, hauntings, cryptids, UFOs, ghost hunting equipment and techniques and even Nikola Tesla.



Saturday afternoon saw the physical return (after COVID) of the ever popular panel discussion, chaired by perennial contributor, and equipment and gadget supremo, Steve Parsons and featuring such industry heavyweights as David Saunderson of Spooky Isles website, Deborah Hyde of the Sceptic magazine, Dr Rachel Ironside of Robert Gordon University, Psychical phenomenologist Dr Ann Winsper and (now retired) Professor of Goldsmiths University Chris French!

Completing the panel line up was the President of ASSAP, Rev Lionel Fanthorpe, whose easy and familiar way of speaking to the audience about occult topics, showed why he has continued to be a firm favourite at conferences year on year.



Saturday evening saw the event move to the Huntsman Pub where a three course gala dinner and a couple of very special guest speakers awaited the revellers.

In a departure from the usual structure of one speaker talking to the audience, Alan Murdie hosted a very informative and enjoyable Question and Answer session with 'man of the moment' Danny Robins. For those not familiar, Danny is the creator and host of some of the most popular paranormal podcasts of recent times, including The Battersea Poltergeist, Uncanny and Haunted. He is currently enjoying the third run of his smash hit west end show 2:22 A Ghost Story in the Criterion Theatre, London and was a convivial and entertaining guest.

The Sunday session opened with a discussion by ASSAP Chairman, CJ Romer about his own experiment in designing and building a modern day psychomanteum or 'Ghost Machine' - a bold venture, which involved three hardy volunteers, sitting in a specially constructed tent for 30 minutes and being subjected to binaural beats, while staring into a mirror, in an attempt to induce hallucinations and/or psychic phenomena.

The results of the study were mixed, with the participants experiencing reactions from vivid phantasmagoria to 'very little at all'. The original psychomanteum was of course the brainchild of psychical researcher and author Raymond Moody, whose own experiences with grief and suicidal thoughts, have led to a lifelong obsession with the quest for evidence of survival after bodily death, in which he has interviewed over 150 subjects who claim to have had a near death experience.

The conference certainly combined a number of ingredients which made it a successful event, mixing believers with sceptics, real life experiences with theoretical situations and embracing many areas of the Fortean in an interesting and accessible way.

Happy Birthday to ASSAP and we hope to see many of you again next year to share ideas and to forge new and lasting friendships in the paranormal world.

Thank you to all members of the conference committee, ASSAP executive committee, staff, volunteers, speakers and guests for making this special birthday such a memorable event.

You can become a member of ASSAP for as little as £5 a year. Join at ASSAP.ac.uk and join us on Thursday evenings for our fascinating and ever popular webinars.

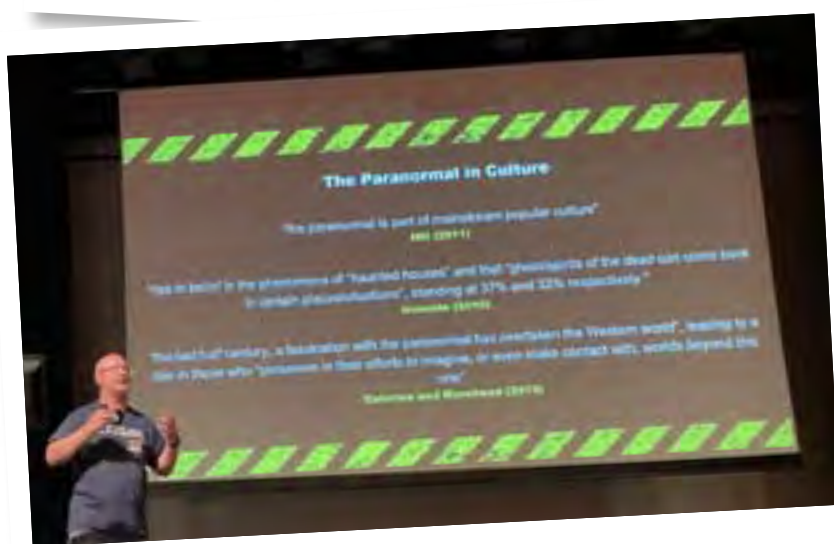
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ASSAP 40

ANNIVERSARY

Seriously Strange Conference 2022





Free (e)Books

by Cameron Stark

With rising prices there are fewer bargains. Books from publishers are costly, and academic books are even more expensive. An academic book I co-edited is coming out in December 2022 and is an eye-watering £120 in hardback. This kind of price is common for special interest books and monographs. Despite these prices there remain legal ways of accessing free eBooks that are likely to be of interest to ASSAP members.

Leaving aside public libraries which will be familiar to all, the main routes to free books are academic libraries, open access books and books that are out of copyright. On academic libraries, many courses bring access to academic libraries, even for students undertaking short courses. University libraries buy access to packages of journals and books. This often includes access to electronic copies of books that do not relate to subjects taught at the University. The details will vary by University, but some titles will be free for electronic download by students and staff.

Open Access books are books that have been licensed for free use. In some cases, the book may also be sold so you can do the author a favour by buying a copy of books you use a lot, if they are also available commercially. Open access does not mean an academic text must be lower quality than a paid-for book. The economics of academic publication mean that few authors make much money from books, and some authors decide to pay a fee to make their book open access; have a University that is willing to pay the fee for them, or in some cases open access publication is linked to the terms of their research grant.

It is possible to download open access books through individual publishers' websites, such as Cambridge Core; Taylor and Francis; Springer and de Gruyter. It is easier to use sites that bring together books from different publishers, like OAPEN or DOAB. I find OAPEN straightforward to use, but both are good. Using OAPEN as an example, a search on the term 'paranormal' brings up over 200 hits. Many are not relevant, but interesting items include books on people with stigmata; what the Norse thought of trolls; the esoteric in Russia; Fijian firewalking; Victorian fringe science; academic approaches to esotericism and a source book on boggarts. Imagination with key words can lead you to some gems: I enjoyed a book on the links between the occult and religious studies, for example.

Out of copyright books are another good source of relevant material. Project Gutenberg is well known and has some great resources. With over 60,000 volumes it is difficult to pick out individual books, but Arthur Machen's *The Angel of Mons*, much other fiction, and numerous books on folklore are examples of what is available.

There has been controversy about the Open Library's lending of current books on the internet, but even if you stick to books where the copyright has expired, it has much to offer. A search on 'ghosts' brings over 27,000 hits. There is overlap with Gutenberg and there are so many items that it can be difficult to find things, but there is much of interest. Pre-existing collections can be a good way of finding associated items, such as this loosely linked collection of paranormal texts.

There are also curated collections of out-of-print books. Many have used OCR that produces errors and makes the text an effort to read. I prefer curated sites. My favourite is Global Grey, where the owner has put effort into making out of print books readable in different formats. The books are free to download, but I bought the entire collection for £50 which also brings the pleasure of e-mails with a link to everything the site has digitised since your last purchase. The site's paranormal collection includes Fort and Conan Doyle, and there are more ghost stories in the collection than you can rattle a chain at. I find it well worth the money to get books in different formats that are easy to use, and which have been proofread.

A final mention goes to EThOS, the British library's collection of PhD theses. This is a fantastic resource. If you can locate a PhD thesis that links to a subject of interest to you, the literature reviews alone can be enormously helpful. EThOS is free to all users. You register to download. Recent relevant thesis topics included Electronic Voice Phenomenon; views on ghosts in the Scottish enlightenment; the collection and display of English magical amulets; Welsh folklore in Machen, Garner and Powys; early psychic research; mediumship (not yet available electronically); emotion management in mediumship, and ghost tourism. Not all theses are available, some because of age and others because a monograph is planned, but the volume of scholarship that can be accessed is impressive.

These strategies will not give access to every book you could want, but those that are freely available provide hours of browsing, reading and study.

The Euphoric UFO

Missing Time and the Case for Hypnotic Regression

by Andy Owens

'I just got this feeling of overwhelming love from it. You'd be happy just to sit there and look at it forever. You wanted it to land and (to) go away with it and leave everything else behind. You felt this feeling of loss when it had gone. You wanted that feeling that it gave you, you wanted it back.'

One Sunday evening in January 2005, Rachael Devereaux, her young sons, Benjamin and Alexander, and her mother Ann, went to a restaurant in Ingleton, before returning to their home at High Bentham, a village in the Yorkshire Dales.

They had made the journey before and knew it only took twenty minutes; but this time, for reasons they can't explain, it took one hour and twenty minutes.

As they were driving home, they saw an extremely bright light approaching the car. The family agreed: 'It was this awesome bright light which hovered directly above the car. Then, all of a sudden, it just shot off.'

In the coming weeks, the family attempted to locate the stretch of road where it happened. They all remembered a wide road with a white line down the middle of it, but there wasn't one in the vicinity where they saw the bright light.

The family's experience was related in the documentary *The Real 4400*, and a follow-up interview appeared in the series *Shaun Ryder on UFOs*.

The first of these programmes featured Rachael Devereaux being regressed by hypnotherapist Steve Burgess, who writes: 'In 2005, I was contacted by a researcher from a TV company who had heard about my experiences as a regression therapist. They were producing a documentary for Sky TV which was to be called *The Real 4400*. This was about several people who claimed that they had 'missing time' experiences as a result of alien contact or abduction. They asked me to regress a lady who felt that, together with her family, she had been abducted, but none of them had any memories of it.'

'Each of them felt strange and they felt that something had happened apart from them just seeing the UFO, but they didn't know what. In the weeks after the event, they all became increasingly troubled and upset by not knowing. It was as if they could sense something tangible, but which was just out of reach of their conscious minds. The boys had started suffering from anxiety attacks and sleep disturbances, including nightmares.'

Hypnotic regression is a contentious area, as it is often questioned whether the lost memory of a missing time experience can be accurately retrieved using regression, and if the hypnotist may influence the memory in any way.

However, in his forthcoming book *The Adventures of a Hypnotherapist*, in a chapter entitled 'The Real X-Files', Burgess explains: 'I should state that when I'm doing regression work, I am always cautious not to lead my client or implant anything that could cause me to be accused of leading them in any way. The information should come from the client spontaneously without any suggestions from the therapist. This is especially true of extra-terrestrial regressions. I do not agree with the client before or during the regression that what they believe they experienced actually happened.'

'It is perfectly possible for a person in trance to make something up and imagine things that are not real, and this is particularly the case whether hypnotist unwittingly (or even knowingly) leads the client or corroborates with them.'

'The therapist should be completely neutral and use what we call 'clean' language'. Only after I have observed them in a regression session and heard what they have to say and how they experience it, do I make a judgement as to the veracity of their memories.'

'In other words, did they really experience the events from the past, or did they just imagine it? There are certain things that I look for during the regression which indicate to me that it was real or imagined memory.'

'One common feature of ET regressions is that the person who has had the contact ... has their conscious memories wiped ... so they can't remember anything clearly afterwards. However, it appears that they can't wipe the sub-conscious which seems to be a deeper store of everything that has ever happened to us. I liken it to a vast computer bank. This means that hypnotic trance is an ideal medium, provided it is done properly and 'cleanly', to unlock or retrieve the consciously forgotten memories.'

'I arrived at a lonely farmhouse in North Yorkshire belonging to Rachael Devereaux and her family. I was not allowed to contact them (beforehand) because the producer of the programme was worried that if I spoke to Rachael in advance that I might in some way implant something into her mind that could contaminate the evidence that might come through during the regression. This was fair enough, I thought, as I didn't want to be involved in anything that could spoil the truthfulness of the session. However, I think he was taking it a bit far when, as soon as I got out of my car, he started filming me and he didn't let Rachael and I have any time together on our own. Talk about having a suspicious mind!'

'Rachael was understandably nervous, but over a cup of tea (every mouthful dutifully filmed by Mr Suspicious the producer) ... she told me the family's story.'

'With the TV lights on us and the camera recording the session in her lounge, I took Rachael into trance and regressed her back to the day in question. She firstly talked through leaving the restaurant and getting into the car to drive home, and then began to remember the incident in more depth.

An edited version of the session appeared in *The Real 4400*, but Steve has included the full session in his forthcoming book, and which is printed below:

(Rachael) said: *'There are bright lights shining all around and into the car and a spaceship is alongside us. We're all shocked but I can feel a blissful feeling; I feel euphoric.'*

She started to cry, but they were tears of happiness. After a few moments, she calmed down and continued:

'They've taken us up in the car to their spacecraft and we're in a dark room above the earth. I feel happy. There are no walls, just black everywhere. Like standing in the middle of space. There's a shield in front with light coming from behind it. I know that there's someone or something on the other side of it, but I can't see what it is. We all stand in a circle facing outwards and holding hands. We're being spoken to telepathically; they're telling me we are safe, and no harm will come to us. There's a big bright light right in front of me, high up. It's watching what the little ones are doing. The small lights are going round and looking at us and talking to each other... as if they're inspecting us or scanning us. They start with me and the two smaller lights are close to my face and my head ... Every time I feel worried the big light comes to my forehead to re-assure me telepathically. The two smaller lights are communicating with each other by beams of light; there are no sounds. Now the two lights have moved behind me to inspect the boys. Both of the boys are laughing; they say it feels like they are being tickled. They think that the boys are funny. The children are laughing; they're really giggling.'

Rachael was smiling and laughing at this point, but then she became anxious as she started to cry.

She said: *'I'm scared for the children, but the lights are there and they're telling me that it's fine and they're not going to hurt them: "They're your children." The main light has come back and it's reassuring me.'*

Once more she relaxed and let go of the tension. She was silent for a while before she continued: *'The room is totally dark now, but I know that one of the beings is in front of me in the darkness and I'm straining my eyes to see it. It*

knows that I'm trying to see it. I sense that it's quite small and about two feet in front of me.'

'Now it's totally light again with bright light all around and we're back in the car; we float back down to the ground. The car has also been up in the air, with a road underneath it that doesn't exist. I think we've been about one hundred feet up. Now I'm driving the car with the lights around us and I feel very sad that they have to go. The lights move off very fast and disappear. I feel sad; I didn't want them to go.'

'Rachael then talked through some of her conscious memories of driving home with all of them excitedly discussing seeing the light alongside the car and then shooting off into the distance. She came out of trance both amazed and relieved. She was surprised at the things she had remembered but with a feeling of relief that she now had confirmation that something out of the ordinary had indeed happened that day.'

Steve Burgess concludes: 'After we finished filming the regression, I was interviewed on camera by the producer who asked me my thoughts about what I had witnessed. I told him that I was 90% convinced that Rachael's memories were true and real. Nowadays, with hindsight, I am 99% convinced. All of the signs I look for in a typical regression session were there. But more than that, I find it very difficult to believe that this thirty-five-year-old woman, her two young sons and her mum, were concocting this whole UFO story for some unknown reason. Why would they do that? They had no benefits to going public that they'd had an alien abduction experience. The whole family was emotionally disturbed by what had happened, and I don't believe that the children (or any of the family) were fabricating things. I believe that they had contact with ETs that day and would stake my reputation on that being a fact.'

Sources

- 1: *The Real 4400*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwkEm9Bz5lY>
If you only want to watch the Devereux family's segment, it appears between the following times on the video: 12:40 – 15:40; 24:03 – 27:36; 33:47 – 36:36.
 - 2: Shaun Ryder on UFOs: (Episode 4: Sightings and Strange Cases).
The interview with the Devereux family can be found in the segment: 03:44 – 13:36
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVpp-cNW45E>
- A big thank you to Steve Burgess and permission to quote from his forthcoming book: *The Adventures of a Hypnotherapist*.
His website is: <https://lionheart-training.com/about-me/>



About the Author

Andy Owens writes the paranormal blog *Spooky Vocation*, articles for *Spooky Isles* and *The Skeptic*, and his latest book is *Ghosts: First-Hand Accounts of the Supernatural*. Signed copies, postage free, from <https://owensandy.com>

Aliens in My Apartment?

by Amythest Gray

Introduction

I've always – for many years – wanted to have a dream to do with aliens. I've had a few concerning strange lights in the sky (bright blue lights etc) before the ground crumbled below my feet back in 2008, and I had a dream in 2018 concerning an alien invasion, but none of these involved meeting or interacting with aliens. I don't know anyone who has been abducted by aliens, but I have long wondered about the stories.

That Night

We went to sleep around 21:30 – Lord of the Rings soundtrack playing softly (and sometimes loudly) in the background. The dream of which I will relate now happened in the early morning hours of Saturday 20th February (waking up from it at 05.26AM).

20th February - The Dream

I found myself on a comfortable enough chair that resembled a computer chair. It may have been dark green, I don't know. There was no music playing, and the room was small and rectangular with minimal things in it and the walls were white. Two grey aliens – short, with short thin arms and legs, which caused me to observe how they do look quite 'ant-like', as in annunaki, the 'ant people' – were with me. Grey, with no eyelashes. They had put two needles into my feet, to draw blood and it was extremely painful. They tried to insert more needles into my left elbow and both my hands. I writhed, screamed, in pain. It was the worst pain I've ever had – and I've previously had sutras removed from my scalp without pain relief - making it difficult for the grey aliens to insert the remaining needles to take samples of blood from me.

They decided to give me a break and went along the small rectangular room and sat themselves on small, round dark green comfortable chairs and "chatted" telepathically – I heard no sound from them. Next to me was a computer – the monitor, keyboard and computer case all wired up – and on the screen was YouTube (I don't recall if I was the one who had got it up), on which during my break, I typed 'Nice music!' as a onto what I had thought to be a music video, but after posting that as a comment, I wasn't sure if it had been a music video I'd put that on, or even the correct one. (The implication here was that during the break I had listened to or recognised a music video on the site which I liked and wanted to acknowledge that fact.)

Then, I tried to message my dad on my phone, messaging 'Help! I've been abducted!', as a last resort, but knowing

(in the "dream") that my dad would not believe me. And besides, I thought during the dream, how would they be able to find me when I was in an unknown location during my abduction?

Back again after the break, the two grey aliens – with a third as extra assistance – tried to insert the needles into my hands and succeeded. I still screamed in sheer pain and agony, and they attempted to reassure me – again, telepathically, as in, their voices were in my mind.

Overall, they seemed 'nice' as grey aliens – patient, empathic, almost considerate – as if they understood my immense pain with the needles going in, willing to give me a break to give me time to calm down. It was like they needed to do the extraction of my blood but were very aware of my suffering in them doing so (I'm sure my screaming helped with this).

I had decided to try and calm down at this point and (in the dream) get some sleep – since the grey aliens had managed to put the needles in – and had a dream within this dream, where some workmen in a town were installing some electronic bits onto a pre-existing free-standing pole, at night.

20th February - That Morning

When I woke up, I clambered off the bed and fetched one of my many notebooks to write the dream down. I still felt the sheer pain for ten minutes after the dream, and it was still vivid, real, traumatic in my mind and occupied my mind for the next two days. I couldn't do anything at all, because the "dream" – if that was what it was – was still so real, close, clear in my mind. I'd checked my hands to see if there were the indescribable 'marks' of the abduction on me but there weren't any that were obvious or unexplainable.

It was hard to breathe deeply, too. I had gone to bed relaxed and ready for bed, and had woken stressed, anxious and traumatised with the pain!

Reflections - My Dreams

I wrote down my thoughts in the said notebook – for it was so unlike my normal dreams. I've recorded a large portion of my dreams from 2008 – 2015 in notebooks, but lost interest and motivation. Throughout my life, death has been the top reoccurring theme in my dreams, closely followed with dreams to do with falling. But they never were as dramatic, vivid, traumatic or painful as the dream I had that Saturday morning, and none have ever involved actual aliens – grey, Nordic or otherwise – and have never

involved psychic abilities, or abductions. (The most paranormal was a house haunted by strange, peculiar people!)

Reflections - Empathic of Abductees' Trauma and Pain

My main take home point from the dream, however, was that I actually appreciated the sheer pain and trauma that abductees claim they go through – regardless of whether it was a dream or not. I was extremely grateful for this, because I can honestly say that I have never ever experienced the sheer pain that I did in that dream. And supposedly that was just a dream and not reality!

Reflections - What the Dream Did Not Seemingly Include

I had no memory of a UFO lifting me up with bright white light, and I did not have weird placements into my body, nor any sleep paralysis. For this last point, I am also very grateful, because it is horrid enough being awake when it is very dark outside and you have limited hours until it is day again. I thought it was interesting how it had not seemingly included the core elements of abductions that have almost become cliché – was it because they were unimportant? Irrelevant? Or perhaps my awareness was not around until the actual blood-taking needles – perhaps it was just my dreaming mind?

I also did not sleep-walk, or sleep-type (so my dad receiving my message was purely in the abduction, not in actuality).

Symbolism

I thought that if it was just a dream that I would have a go at interpreting it – something I have tried to do with my dreams for many years since I was 11. The room being rectangular and small could represent my own apartment which is also claustrophobic and small. It means having limited space to house oneself and one's possessions which is limiting for making one's living space their 'home'. In a similar vein, the abduction room being so small is evidently for practical purposes – it helps to enclose the abductee and minimise the chances of them escaping.

The number 3 (as in, the three grey aliens) means beginning, middle and end. This likely relates to the abduction, with my having gone through the beginning

(getting abducted), the middle (the blood extraction) and the end (being de-abducted or returned to one's normal surroundings, in my case my bedroom). The number also relates to mother, father and child, however the exact relationship between the three grey aliens was unknown – it is possible they were just work colleagues, friends, acquaintances but may have been family.

The fact that I was seated in a computer chair sitting down – rather than lying down, which is a more passive, immobilised state – suggests that I was in a position where I was unable to do anything except remain seated, but in such a way that I did not feel entirely uncomfortable and at the mercy of the abductors.

The grey aliens themselves could represent our future (or past) selves on a planet with no atmosphere and where we are living underground. Most people supporting this idea suggest it is Earth in a more catastrophic state, with grey skin and big, black eyes being due to lack of sunlight. It could also refer to Mars, with no atmosphere. Or they could just symbolise our worst fears as an actual entity that we can 'dump' our irrational and rational fears onto a conceptualised entity that may only exist as a consequence of our beliefs, conceptions and ideologies.

The comfortable dark

Conclusions

To conclude, I have gained a lot of appreciation for abductees. It has created an understanding, deeper interest, and desire to find out more that I didn't really have before. I also know what real pain is like. And if grey aliens are real (as historical and cultural records indicate), there are empathic-minded grey aliens out there.

I have longed for many, many years to have dreams to do with aliens, and finally I had one. And whilst I did not achieve lucid dreaming I got close to achieving it, with a sense of realism – my in-dream thinking that my dad would not actually take me seriously if I ever messaged them claiming I needed help because I had been abducted. I am glad that I did not go sleep-walking, that I had not experienced sleep paralysis, and the dream most certainly holds a special place in my heart – and maybe those grey aliens too. For, real or not – para-dimensional, or actual – it was most certainly the definition of profound. And I guess it makes up for no dreams about Narnia ... yet.



About the author:

Amethyst Gray was born on the Isle of Wight where her proximity to Carisbrooke Castle, Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World and fossils on the beach plus crystals gave her a keen interest in history, hidden history and how everything came about. She was always good at Mathematics so ended up taking a Physics degree at Queen Mary College, University of London. That led to a career in IT before rediscovering her interest in crystals, alternative history and energy healing after moving to the Pewsey Vale of Wiltshire in the early 2010's.

The Pentyrch Incident: The Greatest UFI Cover-up of the Modern Times

By Caz Clarke and Gari Jones

Independently published.
ISBN 9798460236008

Caz Clarke grew up in Glastonbury, Somerset, and later moved to Wales. On 26 February 2016, she and a neighbour experienced some unusual aerial phenomena, and she later learned that there were additional witnesses.¹ As well as being the focus of a book, there's also a website devoted to the case.²

Pentyrch is a village on the north-western outskirts of Cardiff. As the crow flies, it's about 10 miles north-east of MOD St Athan (formerly known as RAF St Athan). Caz Clarke was living in Pentyrch at the time of the February 2016 events, and maybe she's still there. The principal investigator of the case has been Caz's co-author, Gari (or Gary) Jones, who has gone to considerable lengths to glean further information. For example, he has initiated numerous requests under the UK's Freedom of Information Act.

The book could have been better structured. The information in it isn't laid out very clearly, and I noticed a few inconsistencies and quite a bit of repetition. The contents are organized under headings, but there are no chapters as such. There's no table of contents or bibliography, and there's no index. Internet links are given within the text. There are numerous illustrations (photographs, maps, reproduced Twitter messages, etc.), but some of the print is so small that a magnifying glass is needed to read it. All told, the book cries out for competent editing. But the story it tells is interesting. However, on p. 3, we're told that the names of some of the witnesses have been changed, with other names being withheld completely. Of course, such witness anonymity limits the evidential strength of what the book reports.

OUTLINE OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS

Starting on 22 or 23 February 2016 (the book isn't consistent about this detail) and continuing until the morning of 26 February, there was aircraft activity over the Pentyrch area, day and night. Initially, it entailed just one plane at a time, flying at a low altitude (p. 11). But during the early hours of 26 February, Caz Clarke and a neighbour (referred to as Dave or David), who were outdoors, skywatching, reportedly saw multiple aircraft (some American), including two C17s and an E-3 Sentry



plane.³ According to the book, the latter was flying in an oval-shaped pattern (pp. 14-5). But to be identified by people on the ground on a winter's night, it must have been flying relatively low, which is puzzling, because this type of plane isn't designed to operate at a low altitude.

While this aircraft activity was going on, Caz and David saw a bright red light above the fields near her home. As they looked on, more and more lights appeared, giving them the impression that they were seeing a massive pyramid-shaped object. It seemed to be about 200 yards away and was slowly turning anticlockwise. At the same time, it swung down like a pendulum and hovered silently over a tree line between two fields. Suddenly, an extremely bright green object shot out of the top of the pyramid and took up a position over a small clump of trees about 100 feet from Caz and 200 feet above the ground. It was swaying gently from side to side. To Caz, it seemed to be surveying everything around, including her and David (pp. 15-7).

As it continued to rotate anticlockwise, the pyramid-shaped object tilted slightly to the right and slowly receded, maintaining its height relative to Caz. However, because the elevation of the land was rising in the direction that the craft was going, the object's horizontal movement brought it closer to the ground. At a point where it seemed near to touching the ground, it emitted a fire-coloured 'hand of lightning' in a downward direction, and the whole 'ship' lit up very brightly. It continued receding. David noticed red orbs (15-20, in his estimation) coming out of it. Some of them began to turn green, while others remained red. Meanwhile, the large object slowly drifted away to the west, and its lights were no longer visible.

Eventually, two Hercules and two C17 aircraft lined up beside one another and followed the bright green object that Caz had been watching. She speculated that it was trying to draw the planes away from the 'main craft'. Then, two red barrel-shaped objects appeared out of

If aliens were involved in the Pentyrch Incident (PI), how could the military have known, in advance, what they planned to do?

the darkness. They each appeared to have black caps of some sort at their tops and bottoms. One of them took up a position above a hedge. The other one went above Caz. She waved at it, and it changed colour to green, whereupon she felt the tension leaving her body.

Caz found that the battery of her mobile phone was completely flat, and David's phone also failed. Consequently, neither of them was able to film or photograph what was happening. Caz heard a male voice instructing her to tell the world what she was experiencing (p. 22).

The red-looking barrel-shaped object started to move away over the fields. The green one silently went above the rooftops of the houses. Eventually, Caz lost sight of them (p. 22). Before she and David returned to their homes, they saw three Apache helicopters flying very low across the fields (p. 23). After they were out of sight, only the E-3 remained, flying above them.

Later, when she was home and in bed, although not asleep, Caz heard a loud explosion. The sound seemed to come from the direction of Llantrisant, a village a few miles to the west-north-west. That may have been at 4.21 a.m., when vibrations were picked up at a seismological station miles away at Monmouth. Caz 'knew in [her] heart' that the military had shot down one of the smaller UFOs that she'd seen earlier that night (p. 24). She suggests that the military were expecting the visit and had set up an ambush (p. 25). That saddened her, because she was open to the possibility that the visitors weren't hostile (p. 26).

Gari Jones concurs with Caz's view that the military were expecting a UFO visit (p. 208; p. 211; p. 226). However, if aliens were involved in the Pentyrch Incident (PI), how could the military have known, in advance, what they planned to do? A possible answer is that the military didn't know for sure that alien craft would turn up, but they were aware that large-scale military exercises can attract attention from UFOs. For example, multiple UFO sightings were reported during Operation Mainbrace, a NATO exercise conducted in the North Sea in 1952. A brief account of it can be found on pp. 115-6 of Richard Dolan's 2002 book *UFOs and the National Security State: Chronology of a Cover-up 1941-1973* (Hampton Roads Publishing Co., Virginia).

As noted, Caz was in bed when she heard an explosion. Around that time, David was sitting at home, looking out of a window. He reportedly saw Apache helicopters zig-zagging across the field where he and Caz had previously seen the large craft and orbs. Eventually, the Apaches seemed to reach the Llantrisant area, where they appeared to be 'almost dive bombing' (David's words). He heard two loud explosions, four or five seconds apart.⁴ After that,

he heard Chinook helicopters (five or six, he estimated) approaching from the direction of St Athan and heading to where the Apaches had flown. Over the next three hours, 'they' flew back and forth between St Athan and Llantrisant, as if they were transporting something (pp. 171-2). However, David's wording is ambiguous. It's not clear whether he was referring to the Chinooks, the Apaches, or both.

AFTERMATH

Health effects

When she woke up on the morning of 27 February, Caz discovered that her hair had turned completely white (p. 40). However, the book doesn't say whether that's been an enduring change. She notes that during the months following the PI, she had health problems (p. 148). For example, she suddenly became allergic to the coating of a vitamin tablet, although she'd been taking them for years. And on p. 24, she refers to having acquired post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the PI.

Mysterious campers

More or less immediately after the PI, a group of people camped for a period in a field at Pentyrch. The precise duration of this camping doesn't seem to be specified in the book. But the 'campers' acted furtively. It was suggested that they were a fracking survey team, although two of them told Caz that they were doing field research for Vodaphone (p. 65). But it's more likely that they were military personnel. Indeed, just a little earlier that same day, Caz and a friend (referred to as Steve) encountered two soldiers in camouflage attire. They were carrying semi-automatic weapons, but without yellow caps at the ends of the barrels (pp. 62-4). However, a friend of mine who served in the British Army informs me that yellow caps (known as 'blank firing attachments') are only required if soldiers are firing blank ammunition, and that the absence of such caps doesn't necessarily mean that soldiers' guns are loaded with live ammunition.

Harassment and monitoring

On 28 February 2016, Caz attended a talk in Merthyr Tydfil given by Richard D. Hall, who makes documentary films about controversial subjects, such as alleged government cover-ups. Before his presentation, Caz spoke to him briefly about what had happened just days before. He proposed that she should address the audience during the Q&A part of his presentation, to see whether other witnesses would come forward. Just after talking to Hall,

Another possibility worth considering is that the light phenomena witnessed on 26 February 2016 were generated by hi-tech equipment aboard aircraft flying over the Pentyrch area, but without any intention, on the part of the military, to fabricate UFO sightings.

Caz was speaking to her friend Steve, who'd driven her to the event, when she noticed that a man at the bar was staring at her. He continued to do so during at least part of the first half of Richard Hall's presentation, but Caz didn't notice him during the second part. However, on their way back to Pentyrch, she and Steve were tailgated for part of the way by a four-by-four vehicle with its headlights on full-beam.

If these two incidents on 28 February relate to some sort of monitoring and harassment operation, it must have been implemented very soon after the UFO events on 26 February. Alternatively, it may be that Caz and her neighbours were already under surveillance (a possibility I'll return to in the Discussion). On the other hand, the incidents on 28 February may have had nothing to do with the UFO phenomena. For example, it may be that the person who tailgated Steve and Caz was simply a very bad driver.

In April 2018, a man calling himself Tony Smith contacted Caz, expressing an interest in meeting her and David and seeing the site of the 26 February incidents. A meeting was arranged. Caz was accompanied by her friend Steve. David put in a brief appearance with his four-year-old child. Caz doubted whether Tony was a civilian UFO investigator. She suspected that he was from the military. He asked David whether he wasn't worried about what was going to happen to his child! That sounded threatening, but Caz wasn't sure whether she'd heard it correctly. However, Tony subsequently said other things that sounded menacing. In no uncertain terms, Steve then asked him to leave (pp. 156-60).

Caz reports that her phone was hacked, with valuable text messages and audio messages being removed, and that her computer was also hacked, with all her Facebook messages from December 2015 to March 2016 disappearing. David also experienced computer problems: his photographs disappeared, although some of them reappeared about a week later (p. 61).

Gari Jones was present at Richard D. Hall's talk on 28 February. At that point, Gari and Caz weren't acquainted. After hearing her brief address to the audience during the Q&A session, he tried to contact her, but his searches for her on Facebook and Google drew a blank, and 20 months passed before he managed to get in touch with her.

Road closures

Gari Jones learned that many roads in the Llantrisant area had been closed by uniformed police in the early hours of 26 February (p. 221). When Caz Clarke addressed Richard

Hall's audience on 28 February, a woman reported that it had taken her over three hours to get home, and that each time the police turned her back, she was given the same excuse: that a lorry had overturned. Another member of the audience, who worked as a nurse at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital (which is near Smilog Wood), explained that she'd heard and felt an explosion, and that smoke had entered the hospital. See, also, pp. 146-8.

Tree damage and high magnetic field readings

Caz and her associates observed considerable tree damage at Smilog Wood, near Llantrisant. In a straight line leading to a presumed 'crash site', broken off branches lay on the ground, and the canopies of the trees were missing. At the supposed crash site itself, there were snapped tree trunks, suggesting that something had struck them with considerable force. Furthermore, tyre tracks, consistent with those of a military vehicle, were seen in the mud along the roadside (pp. 37-48).

In late 2017, using measuring devices, Gari Jones and fellow investigators obtained high magnetic field readings in the fields next to Pentyrch, where Caz and Dave had observed UFO activity on 26 February 2016. Higher-than-expected readings were also found a few miles away at Smilog Wood, both along the route presumed to have been taken by a crashing UFO and at the presumed impact site itself (pp. 83-8).

Strange snow

During daylight hours on 26 April 2016, David, Donna (another of Caz's neighbours), Steve and Caz visited the field where the large UFO had appeared hours previously. It was snowing in that particular field, but not in the surrounding areas. As Steve described it, the snow resembled small polystyrene balls. They rolled off one's clothes and didn't settle (p. 183). The following morning, during a visit to Smilog Wood, they found that it was snowing at the presumed impact site, although the sky was blue (p. 41).

Responses to freedom of information requests

Gari Jones (p. 211) explains that a 'NOTAM' ('Notice to Airmen' – a notice filed with an aviation authority, alerting pilots to potential hazards) was issued on 17 February 2016 regarding a military exercise (code-named 'Chameleon') in the north of England for the period 19-26 February, although it wasn't until 9 p.m. on 25 February that such a notice (also referring to 'Chameleon') was issued in respect of the Llantrisant area of South Wales.

However, as noted above, unusual aircraft activity had been observed over Pentyrch from as early as 22 or 23 February. Furthermore, Gari (pp. 210-1) reports that he and others had noticed military helicopters in the Treharris area (about 10 miles north of Pentyrch) in the days before 26 February.

Regarding FOI applications, the responses that Gari received from official bodies were generally uninformative. Take, for example, the police. Gari asked who had given the order for roads to be closed in the vicinity of Royal Glamorgan Hospital, why it was necessary to close them, and whose job it was to do so. After a lengthy delay (exceeding the 20-day limit for FOI requests), he was informed that his enquiries were deemed to be 'vexatious' and didn't require a reply. Not satisfied with this, he pursued the matter and was eventually informed that they'd been unable to locate any recorded information about the road closures, that the police officers involved had since left the service, and that other enquiries had been unsuccessful (pp. 124-7).

The following are just some of the questions that Gari put to the Ministry of Defence (p. 134). He asked about a military exercise that took place in fields near Pentyrch between February and April 2016. He eventually received a response from the Joint Forces Command at Northwood, Middlesex. Asked why the residents weren't notified that the military were conducting an exercise there, the response was that the MOD had no records within the scope of Gari's request. Asked why soldiers were carrying weapons without yellow caps on the barrels, he was told that information was being withheld under 's. 26' (a provision granting exemption from disclosure). However, he was also informed that military personnel had been issued with blank ammunition for the exercise. Gari noted that men wearing forensic white paper suits had been seen searching the fields. If the team risked possible contamination, Gari asked, wasn't there also a risk to residents? The response was that the MOD had no record of contamination related to the training exercise. As to why the military were in the fields at the time in question, Gari was told that information was being withheld under s. 26. A question about an aircraft seen flying over the area between 22 and 26 February was met with the same response.

DISCUSSION

I haven't attempted to cover every single aspect of this case. Hopefully, the above summary will provide an insight for readers not already familiar with it.

If the military activity described above was a training exercise, why wasn't it conducted on Ministry of Defence land – for example, at the Sennybridge Training Area, to the west of Brecon? One possibility, although it's a very speculative notion, is that it wasn't a training exercise, but rather a psychological operation aimed at studying people's reaction to a simulated UFO incident. From that perspective, could it be that the large UFO and the smaller objects or lights seen by Caz, David and other witnesses were holographic projections? Were trees at Smilog Wood deliberately damaged to create the impression that a shot-down UFO had crashed there? Were some people (such

as Caz and Dave) put under surveillance even before 26 February 2016, to monitor public reaction to what was being orchestrated? Conducting the aerial activity over a village (e.g. Pentyrch) rather than a town or city would have presumably made it easier, and cheaper, to carry out surveillance. For example, there would be fewer people whose phones would need to be tapped. The intimidating behaviour that Caz experienced (e.g. being stared at during part of Richard Hall's presentation and being tailgated on her way home) may have been intended to reinforce her belief that she'd witnessed a UFO event that officialdom wanted her to keep quiet about. Similarly, the 'campers' (soldiers?) may have been sent to the Pentyrch area to give a false impression that a UFO event was being covered up. If so, the soldiers (except, perhaps, their commanding officer) may have been kept in the dark about the real purpose of their deployment.

If the PI was indeed a psychological operation, one has to ask how its various technical aspects were carried out. For instance, what steps would have been required to produce heightened magnetic field readings and strange snow at the locations mentioned above? Or were these merely coincidental phenomena, and not brought about intentionally? Furthermore, a deception operation of the type hypothesized would be very expensive and would require the co-operation of multiple civilian agencies, such as the police and the forestry authority (National Resources Wales). And, of course, the more people who are involved in distorting or suppressing the truth, the more scope there is for someone to break rank and let the cat out of the bag.

Another possibility worth considering is that the light phenomena witnessed on 26 February 2016 were generated by hi-tech equipment aboard aircraft flying over the Pentyrch area, but without any intention, on the part of the military, to fabricate UFO sightings. Maybe the equipment had ionizing effects, resulting in atmospheric plasmas that were mistaken for alien craft. However, I don't know whether that could account for other aspects of the case, such as the tree damage at Smilog Wood and the explosions heard in the locality.

Sceptics have suggested that the story of the PI is 'too good to be true' and that it didn't involve genuine UFO phenomena.⁵ But I'm not sure that it deserves to be so easily dismissed.

NOTES

1. Regarding additional witnesses, see pp. 105-6, pp. 146-8 and pp. 189-90.
2. The Pentyrch Incident, <http://www.thepentyrchincident.com/>
3. The Boeing C-17 is a military transport plane. The Boeing E-3 Sentry is an 'Airborne Warning and Control System' (AWACS) aircraft.
4. During daylight hours on 26 February 2016, two people local to the Llantrisant area explained to Caz Clarke that, just hours previously, they had heard a huge explosion from the sky, and then a second explosion, from Smilog Wood (pp. 36-7).
5. 1 Dec. 2021, 'Pentyrch: An Honest Assessment' – That UFO Podcast, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=5t0Uqh yYZcU&feature>

Acknowledgement

I'm grateful to David Muir for proofreading this article.

A Real Ghost Photograph?

by Rob Gandy

During one ASSAP webinar in early 2022 Chris Jensen Romer mused that there had never been an ‘authentic’ photograph of a ghost. Obviously there has been a whole catalogue of what claim to be genuine photographs which have been rejected as either misperceptions or hoaxes. Therefore, I contacted CJ and referred him to a photograph that I had included in one of my Fortean Times articles, viz. Brides, Bridges and Spacemen [FT389:42-47]. This showed a photo that had been taken some years before, and I came across it very much by happenstance. The witness called the lady in the photograph ‘Emily’. For readers not familiar with my article I present a (slightly edited) version below.

Emily

I gave a presentation at Weird Weekend North 2019, which included the case of a ghostly ‘bride’ on a bridge that had been witnessed in North Staffordshire by a Merseyside couple returning from a day at Alton Towers. Despite efforts by myself and the local Mysteries group, the location of the bridge had not been identified. Much to my surprise I was approached by people from the audience who said that they knew someone who had also seen a ‘ghost bride’ in Staffordshire, but to the south of Stoke-on-Trent – an area not closely investigated by the Mysteries group. They agreed to put this person in touch with me. I hoped that this might prove a second and confirmatory case of the same phantom, which would help specify the location involved and thereby lead to further enquiries.

I was eventually contacted by Karen (pseudonym) who told me that she was not the one who’d had the experience in question; that had been her friend Steve (pseudonym), who described the incident as follows:

“It was the afternoon of Sunday 29 July 2012 and I had been to the Great Haywood village shop. I was walking through the woods with my dog Tilly; we had passed St Stephen’s church and were heading towards the canal where the narrow boats are moored. As we passed underneath the railway bridge – just before the iron bridge that goes over the Trent and Mersey canal – I caught sight of something out of the corner of my eye. I turned around to see who it was, thinking it was someone else out walking their dog, but no one was there. Indeed, there was no one around at all. Nevertheless, it felt like someone was there in front of me, and that I was being watched. I have had many experiences like this before, where I sensed a presence. So, using my mobile phone, I decided to take a photograph of the area by the wall of the railway bridge where I sensed someone to be. It was only when I returned home and looked at the photo that I was shocked to clearly see the image of a young woman in front of the wall. She was looking directly at me, and I considered that she looked startled, even though the image was quite transparent. She appeared to be wearing a veil around her head and carrying a small posy of flowers. (I checked and where a ‘posy’ is situated on the image there was nothing in the actual wall that could have been mistaken for one). I thought she looked around 23 years old, although she could be younger. I named her ‘Emily’ as that is the name that came to me when I saw her.

I showed the photo to my friend Karen, who lives locally, hoping that she might shed some light on who this woman might be. She speculated there could be a link to a



young woman who was the victim of a fatal road traffic accident that happened in Great Haywood at the Mill Pond in 1905, where a car had come off the road into the pond. Interestingly, Tilly did not react at the time of the incident, as some dogs can do where there is something 'paranormal' going on. By contrast, my older dog Bess, when she was alive, often went 'nuts' whenever we walked by the railway bridge and in the woods close by. Once, she just refused to pass by a particular spot in the woods and barked and growled at something that I couldn't see; I ended up having to climb the embankment and walk across the top to the other side!"

Karen later shared Steve's photo with a local Facebook group. One response was from an elderly gentleman who has lived in the village all his life. He said that he recognised this young woman and had often seen her crossing over the nearby Essex Bridge towards Shugborough Hall in the evenings when he was out walking his dog. She had passed him and then simply vanished.

The reference to the road traffic accident relates to Mrs Challenor, the wife of the Town Clerk of Hanley, and her niece, who were being driven across the bridge at Great Haywood Mill when their car plunged into the mill pond. The chauffeur and Mrs Challenor survived, but Mrs Challenor's niece could not be found. The pond was dragged and divers from the Manchester Ship Canal were brought in, but without success. Eventually the mill pond was pumped dry, but the body was only recovered downstream three weeks later. After the accident the road was straightened and a new bridge was built.

What to make of all this? Well, it is clear that the descriptions of the place, the 'bride' and the experience are quite different to those of the Merseyside couple. Steve sensed someone under a bridge whereas their 'bride' was on top of one; one bridge relates to a railway and the other involves a watercourse; one location is close by a large village while the other is out in the countryside; and Great Haywood, being six miles east of Stafford and 18 miles south of Stoke-on-Trent, would represent a not impossible but highly unlikely route for Merseysiders travelling home from Alton Towers, even if they were a bit lost. Inevitably some will question Steve's photograph. I am no expert in photography and will accept that the image looks a bit like a two-dimensional superimposition of one photograph on to another. But, as most critics will be sceptics who do not believe in ghosts, the question must be asked: what exactly does a photograph of a genuine ghost look like if ghosts don't exist anyway? I adopt the fortaean stance of keeping an open mind and simply present the evidence for others to debate.

However, I must stress that I believe in both Steve's and Karen's sincerity; neither has sought publicity or gain from the photograph, and I only stumbled across it through a chain of events and contacts. The fact that the elderly gentleman recognised the woman from the photograph, and indicated that he had regularly seen her on Essex Bridge simply adds grist to the mill. Of course, even if it is believed that the image is that of a ghost there can be no certainty as to the person involved. Maybe it is Mrs Challenor's niece (given the location is about 650 yards downstream from the mill pond), or a servant from Shugborough Hall, or even a jilted bride. Sadly, we will never know – but 'Emily' is a nice name for her, whoever or whatever she is.

Perhaps we ought not to be too quick to judge that something is fake just because there is a similar image elsewhere - it may just be coincidence and we would ideally need some form of data trail proof.

Two photographic experts who studied it. Both expressed scepticism as to its being a 'real' ghost photo, and CJ shared an image that he had downloaded off the internet from Facebook, which amongst various characters included a female image that was very similar to Emily. CJ wondered if this might be the source of the Emily image, and asked me to make some follow-up enquiries with Karen and Steve which might help establish whether the photo was or wasn't a fake. I contacted Karen and asked her to speak to/challenge Steve about whether he might have been 'pulling her leg' and playing a practical joke on her? (I emphasised that I sincerely hoped that this was not the case, but that I needed to ask her to check). She was understandably upset that she might have been 'played' when she readily saw the similarities between the two photos. Her reply to me, following her meeting with Steve, was that she had asked him if his photo was a fake, he said "absolutely not!". He was just as amazed as she was regarding the Facebook photo! He said he there was no way he was 'playing her' and the photo he took that day by the bridge is genuine. He was quite upset to (possibly) be called a 'liar'. Steve has Asperger's Syndrome and is one of the most honest people Karen knows. He acknowledged a similarity between the two but was adamant that it's just because both ladies must be from the same era. Karen completely agreed with him.

I subsequently asked if, when Steve took the photo with his mobile phone, he might have opened up the photo image on his screen and seen the Emily image there and then? Steve said that he didn't, and after all it was around nine years ago when the photo was taken. Karen doubts he can remember if he looked at it at the time or later, and added that she never checks her photos at the time of taking them; always looking at them later. Steve lives on a boat and doesn't have electricity let alone a desktop or laptop computer - he only has a mobile phone - and therefore he does not have the wherewithal to superimpose images onto other images. Karen stressed that Steve is just an innocent guy with a photo of a ghost that other local people have also seen. They would never have given me the story if they knew they would be interrogated about its authenticity later.

Final Thoughts

I can fully appreciate why ASSAP asked the question it did, and that is why I agreed to make further enquiries. We have to try and 'be sure'. Given Steve's response I am inclined to believe that there has been no skulduggery - after all it was me that approached Karen and Steve rather than the other way around! So, they were not seeking publicity. Karen and I both think that the two images are not absolutely identical, despite their very strong similarities, e.g. the Facebook lady looks older in her face than 'Emily' and is slightly more turned to the left. In the circumstances perhaps we do have a genuine photograph of a 'ghost' (whatever one may or may not be).

Perhaps we ought not to be too quick to judge that something is fake just because there is a similar image elsewhere - it may just be coincidence and we would ideally need some form of data trail proof. Similarly, maybe we need to avoid falling into the trap of automatically assuming that ghosts (Again: whatever one may or may not be!) cannot be photographed and therefore any photographs that purport to be of ghosts must by definition be fakes. Might it be possible for some people to somehow - consciously or unconsciously - project images on to photographs, like Ted Serios allegedly could do 2,3? I suspect that there will be no definitive answers coming soon. As a fortean I prefer to suspend belief and disbelief, and simply keep an open mind. As I say above, I consider both Steve and Karen to be wholly honest and sincere, and I thank them for their help, advice and patience. That they believe the Emily photograph to be genuine represents a tantalising conundrum for ASSAP members.

Maybe we need to avoid falling into the trap of automatically assuming that ghosts cannot be photographed.

About the Author



Dr Rob Gandy is a Visiting Professor at the Liverpool Business School at Liverpool John Moores University, as well as a former NHS manager. But away from his university commitments, Dr Gandy have spent years documenting eye-witness accounts of high strangeness on Britain's highways and byways. And Dr Gandy, a prolific writer for the magazine Fortean Times,

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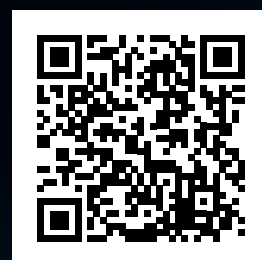
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The Proponent from Galactic Command

by Neil Nixon



Bob Tomalski



Andrew Gardener

The past isn't exactly a foreign country when recordings exist to bring it back but an impactful event on 26 November 1977 occurred in a world different enough to the present day to require some reality checks before we consider what happened and who made it happen. For most of the UK back then television amounted to three channels received via ariels from local broadcast masts. BBC 2 was the outlier and the mass audiences swapped allegiances from BBC 1 to local ITV stations depending on what each offered at a given moment. Years later I briefly worked as a writer for the glove puppet Sooty and his pals, the producers managing the company at the time once joked about the great days of 1970s ITV when physical danger presented itself as you opened a cupboard and risked being injured by an avalanche of cash. A joke, but also an indication of the dominance of local ITV companies.

In 1977 Southern Television held the franchise for ITV broadcasts for the south and south-east of England, a tonnage of territory roughly marked out west to east between Dorchester and Dover and stretching a finger well into the current Wessex AONB north of Swindon. As the Saturday evening news was underway at 5 10pm on 26 November the picture briefly distorted for some viewers, as it returned to normal, newsreader Andrew Gardener remained in shot but the sound got truly surreal. A voice claiming to be an alien representative of 'Ashtar Galactic Command' told humanity (or specifically, those members of the species resident within range of Southern's Hannington transmitter who'd opted for ITN's early evening news that night) to renounce powerful weaponry so they could enjoy the new age benefits of 'future awakening' and 'a higher state of evolution'.



Hannington

The message suggested some insider knowledge of ufology. Ashtar Galactic Command had their own footnote in UFO history, mentioning them suggested familiarity with the claims of George Van Tassel

By mid-evening Southern had apologised to viewers for “a breakthrough in sound” and the main ITN bulletin informed the nation of the event. A day later, the national Sunday press incorporated the IBA’s (then regulator of independent television) statement the event was “a hoax”. Predictably, Southern’s switchboard had been swamped in the immediate aftermath of the broadcast, predictably too there were those in ufology and one letter writer to The Times unimpressed by instant dismissal and prepared to believe the event was genuine. Technically, it was also a criminal act, though the investigation was perfunctory and rapidly dropped. The evidence was entirely circumstantial and when no one came forward to own the act its afterlife existed largely in the literature of ufology where a three-cornered debate briefly raged before reducing itself to a slow simmer largely divided between two varied opinions. The early three-cornered fight included a hardcore prepared to believe the intrusion was the real deal, their argument was undermined both by the subsequent lack of action from Ashtar Galactic Command and the much more popular beliefs amongst the pro-ET crowd that others (notably grey aliens from Zeta Reticuli) already had dibs on Earth and its population to exploit for their own purposes.

Which left two encamped opinions both drawing on the substantial tonnage of circumstantial evidence. Crudely, the intrusion was either the work of UFO obsessives promoting their cause or an act of satirical sabotage from tech-heads with enough insider knowledge to stage a high-profile hit and run raid. Some of the evidence supported both camps of opinion. Recordings of the sound breakthrough existed, though mass copying of cassettes was rare at the time and most people read about the event or heard it discussed wherever ufologists met. Today YouTube offers up the clip tagged with titles like ITN News Hijack in 1977! The recording betrays a level of confidence with sound trickery suggesting access to cutting edge wizardry of the late 70s and a pranksterish sense of humour. The sound quality isn’t great from the broadcast but simply making it audible when breaking into the ITV transmission was a result. Indeed the original sound quality is poor to the point that the alien’s name has variously been reported as Vrillon, Gillon or Asteron. The likely

means of committing the crime was also a clue to the criminal(s) involved. The rogue signal only poured forth from the Hannington transmitter, located on Cottington Hill, Hampshire. Unusually, this transmitter worked by rebroadcasting an off-air signal picked up from the nearby Rowridge transmitter. Very few UK masts worked this way. Ashtar Galactic Command made demands on the whole planet, but their modus operandi likely depended on placing a cassette tape and portable transmitter a few yards from a local TV mast and then overwhelming the incoming signal with their own, all of which was achievable at the distance of a few yards from the mast with the power of a car battery. After 5pm in the Hampshire countryside the gathering darkness and distance from the road were also essential to the undertaking. The success of the operation clearly depended on knowledge of how this transmitter worked and the creative genius to concoct the scheme. This was, most certainly, a criminal act but was carried out on a location lacking any defence, because no such stunt had been attempted before and it clearly hadn’t occurred to the British broadcasting community that such a thing would happen.

The message suggested some insider knowledge of ufology. Ashtar Galactic Command had their own footnote in UFO history, mentioning them suggested familiarity with the claims of George Van Tassel as laid out in his book *I Rode a Flying Saucer* (1952) and in the stories he told whilst addressing crowds at the annual Giant Rock Spacecraft Convention. That event ran from 1952 – 1978, pulling in around 10,000 at its peak in 1959. Van Tassel was the first of several ‘contactees’ to channel Ashtar messages and prominent in the contactee movement, a loose conglomeration of colourful claimants and gleeful eccentrics who collectively dragged some public perceptions of ufology so far into the gutter that it took serious minded sceptics to haul it back into disrepute. If Van Tassel and his ilk were the inspiration for UFO believers to prank Southern Television then those responsible were either a handful of holdouts desperately raging against the dying of the contactee light, or sceptically minded sorts keen to expose their more credulous colleagues.



Bob Tomalski

Another possibility was that technically minded types had pushed their collective skills to create a stunt they could laugh about over beers for years afterwards



Van Tassel

Another possibility was that technically minded types had pushed their collective skills to create a stunt they could laugh about over beers for years afterwards, and in preparing the ground had simply chanced on one of the few UFO books to give the Ashtar claims detailed coverage. The broadcasting authorities, ITV and the police soon lost interest. Officially because there were no leads. Probably, also, because they suspected any time and money devoted to prosecuting pranksters wouldn't match the paltry fines imposed and in creating a criminal record or two, they'd also create cult heroes.

And so it rested until recently, because the broadcast intrusion was a story made for the digital age of podcasters in search of the stories the mainstream news teams have long forgotten. I'll admit to excitement at the news late last year that Tommy Trelawney – founder of YouTube channel Hochelaga – was about to unload an entire podcast series on the case. I'd argued about it during a lifetime of ufological involvement, putting myself firmly in the prankster camp and thinking the perpetrators to have shoved random UFO details into a well-planned stunt. I can't recommend The Interruption (eight-episode podcast series) highly enough. Tommy sets out to solve the case and drags up the flimsiest facts from the blindest of alleys in an entertaining tour of paranormal fringes few ever visit. Top moment (spoiler alert) for me is the encounter in which he accuses Richard Lawrence of Britain's Aetherius Society of being the alien voice. Another spoiler alert, he's wrong!

Much as I'd love to say I was right all along, I was only broadly in that territory. I suspected people from the music industry with access to a recording studio, a love of prog rock and probably a fondness for large cigarettes. I didn't imagine a reveal in which radio pirate, tech gadget expert and general scourge of respectable radio types,

Bob Tomalski turns out to be the mastermind of the whole caper. In truth, that fact had been an open secret amongst a handful of his mates for years. In the pre-internet days none of these initiates appear to have crossed paths with UFO researchers. The situation was slightly complicated by the fact Bob died a few weeks short of his 48th birthday early in 2001. He'd probably have loved an era of unrestricted broadcast freedom online. He might even have been willing to provide his own eyewitness account to Tommy Trelawney.

A website in tribute to Bob remains and I'm taking little away from the enlightening joys of The Interruption series by cutting to the chase here. Having spent a lifetime stumbling into some of the strangest corners of the creative media industry it didn't take me long to find half a dozen of my own contacts who'd had some dealings with Bob Tomalski, oddly nobody wanted to go on record in this article. He was clearly a maverick to the point his love of gadgets and their capabilities kept him at a distance from his more commercially-minded peers who – as one correspondent told me – weren't always in tune with Bob's 'anorak solutions' to problems. The unwritten message being they weren't always in tune with Bob, either. That said, his appearances on The Gadget Show were popular with viewers and those I contacted who counted Bob as a mate saw their silence in commenting on the Southern TV stunt as respectful of a man they admired. Well, either that or they know others who assisted in the operation and want to protect them. But there's no doubt, the voice – whichever alien name you want to attach to it – is Bob himself and the late flowering of interest in the event is a fitting tribute to Bob, who is described in the opening line of his Wikipedia entry as a 'longtime proponent of radio broadcasting freedom'. For six minutes in November 1977, he was much more than a "proponent"!



About the Author

Neil Nixon can't recall a time before he was fascinated by the paranormal, he combined a lengthy academic career with writing, including almost 30 published books, a radio play nominated for a Sony Award and work for clients as diverse as the glove puppet Sooty and The NME before opting to spend the rest of his working life combining corporate PR and writing, researching and talking about popular culture and the paranormal.

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