

ISSUE 139
SUMMER 2012

seriously
strange
magazine

It's Back!

**Seriously Strange
28-30 June 2013**

ALSO INSIDE:

Professional Body update

ASSAP Training & Events

"Disappearance of Dr. Dick"

Fieldwork Research Techniques

The ASSAP UFO FOI Request

A Media Hoax?

Interview: Manager of a 'Haunted' Stately Home

CONTENTS: Issue 139

- 3 Professional Body update**
- 4 Association News**
- 5 ASSAP Training Weekend**
- 6 Seriously Strange 2013**
- 7 The President's Piece: The Disappearance of Dr Dick**
Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe
- 8 Paranormal 101: Assumption-led vs. Evidence-led Research**
Maurice Townsend
- 10 ASSAP Needs You!**
- 11 The ASSAP UFO FOI Request**
Isaac Koi
- 12 A Media Hoax or Nasty Leaps of Logic?**
Hayley Stevens
- 14 Interview with a Manager of a 'Haunted' Stately Home**
Staff writer

The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena was formed in 1981 to research and education 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).
Address: ASSAP, PO Box 371, Stroud, GL6 1EL
Tel: 0845 652 1648 www.assap.ac.uk

© Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena

Managing Editor: Alison Wills (Contact us at news@assap.ac.uk)
Printed by Mike Horan Printing, Swindon.
Fulfilled by Phoenix Enterprises, Swindon.

New Website Members Password:

Username 'assapmember' password 'phantom'

Are you on Email?

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

ASSAP AFFILIATE GROUPS

ASSAP Affiliate Groups:

Groups provide incidental support for ASSAP's charitable objects by acting as forums for research. Should you wish to affiliate or start a group please contact assap@assap.ac.uk

ANGLIA PARANORMAL INVESTIGATION SOCIETY (APIS)

Operates in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire area. Contact Paul Keech at apismail@ntlworld.com or phone 01234 771 351 or visit www.apisteamspirit.co.uk

GHANON is a group covering Wirral, Cheshire and North Wales. Membership by invitation. Contactingq@ghanon.org.uk or visit www.ghanon.org.uk

LEICESTERSHIRE PARANORMAL ASSOCIATION (LPA)

Contact Ian and Vanessa Walker on info@leicsparanormal.tk or visit www.leicsparanormal.tk

MELTON PARANORMAL RESEARCH SOCIETY (MPRS)

Based in Leicestershire. Contact Christine Hankey on 07745 398 569 or email meltonparacub@aol.com

MIDLAND PARANORMAL INVESTIGATIONS

operates throughout the Midlands. Check out www.midlandparanormal.co.uk or email mark@midlandparanormal.co.uk or phone 0121 603 7356

THE MIDLANDS GHOST RESEARCH SOCIETY (TMGRS)

Operates in the Coventry area. Visit www.tmgrs.co.uk or email Amanda and Martin at info@tmgrs.co.uk

OPEN MIND INVESTIGATIONS (OMI) Operates in the Kent and Hampshire areas. Contact Cara via the website on www.omi-uk.org

PARANORMAL SITE INVESTIGATORS (PSI) Operates in Wiltshire and surrounding area and produces e-newsletters and research journals. Contact Dave or Nicky through www.p-s-i.org.uk HauntedSwindon.com TheOrbZone.com or 0845 6521529.

PARASEARCH operates in Worcestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands. Visit www.parasearch.org.uk or phone: 0121 550 8874 / 07505 323443 or send an SAE to Parasearch, 15 Brier Mill Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3HA.

PLYMOUTH ASSAP Operates in Plymouth, South Devon and South East Cornwall. Contact Lee at eustacetuttle@yahoo.co.uk

SPIRIT TEAM UK Operates in the Midlands, with meetings at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Coventry. Contact Alan at enquiries@spiritteamuk.com or visit www.spiritteamuk.com

STAFFORDSHIRE PARANORMAL STUDY GROUP (SPSG)

Monthly meetings in Stoke on Trent. Contact Terri at thespsg@yahoo.co.uk or visit www.spsg.org.uk

SUPERNATURAL INVESTIGATIONS UK (SI) are based in Devon and Somerset and Cornwall but also operate further afield, mainly focusing on hauntings. Contact Stuart at stuart@supernaturalinvestigations.org.uk

ASSAP Board of Directors

Chairman: Dave Wood (chairman@assap.ac.uk)
Deputy Chairman/Training: Nicky Sewell (training@assap.ac.uk)
Secretary/Media Officer: Carrie Searley (secretary@assap.ac.uk)
Treasurer: Wendy Milner (treasurer@assap.ac.uk)
Membership Secretary: Steve Wills (membership@assap.ac.uk)
Events Officer: Clare Lewis (events@assap.ac.uk)
Heritage Officer: Ian Topham (heritage@assap.ac.uk)
Publications Managing Editor: Alison Wills (news@assap.ac.uk)
Education Officer: Simone Taylor, David Ball (education@assap.ac.uk)

Non-executive members:

President: Lionel Fanthorpe, Vice President: Hugh Pincott
Archives Officer: Terry Porter, Website: Maurice Townsend

Professional Body update



The National Register of Professional Investigators will be launching this autumn. In the meantime every ASSAP member for whom we have an email address will be consulted on the new Code of Ethics.

If you do not receive this email or do not have email please contact chairman@assap.ac.uk or call the phone number on page two.

The consultation will also be public and promoted through the ASSAP website and via social media. The consultation period will last for one month before the code is finalised and the scheme launched.

If you have any questions about the scheme email Dave on chairman@assap.ac.uk

Why should I get involved?

Part of the only government-recognised professional body for investigators

Public liability and professional indemnity insurance

CRB checking service

Professional Code of Ethics and full ethical toolkit

ID card provided

Backup and support

How does it work?

Full details will be released soon, but the process should follow these steps:

1. Sign up online

2. Study the Code of Ethics

We are consulting you on this ahead of time, see left

3. Complete online study and assessment about the Code of Ethics

So you can demonstrate you can follow the code

4. Complete CRB check yourself online

You do not supply your details to ASSAP. We are only notified if the CRB have something to report.

5. Receive confirmation and ID card

We will be announcing how to join soon

4 Association News



Can you help ASSAP be a bit more Social?

ASSAP is putting a small team together to help us to connect with members and others in the community through social media.

We are looking for both ordinary, regular users and specialists to join our team.

If you are interested email news@assap.ac.uk

Follow ASSAP on Facebook and Twitter: @_ASSAP

NEW Password for the Members Area of the ASSAP Website

ASSAP will now be changing the password for the members area four times per year.

On the day each Seriously Strange magazine hits doorsteps the password will be changed.

Check page 2 of each edition of Seriously Strange for the new password.



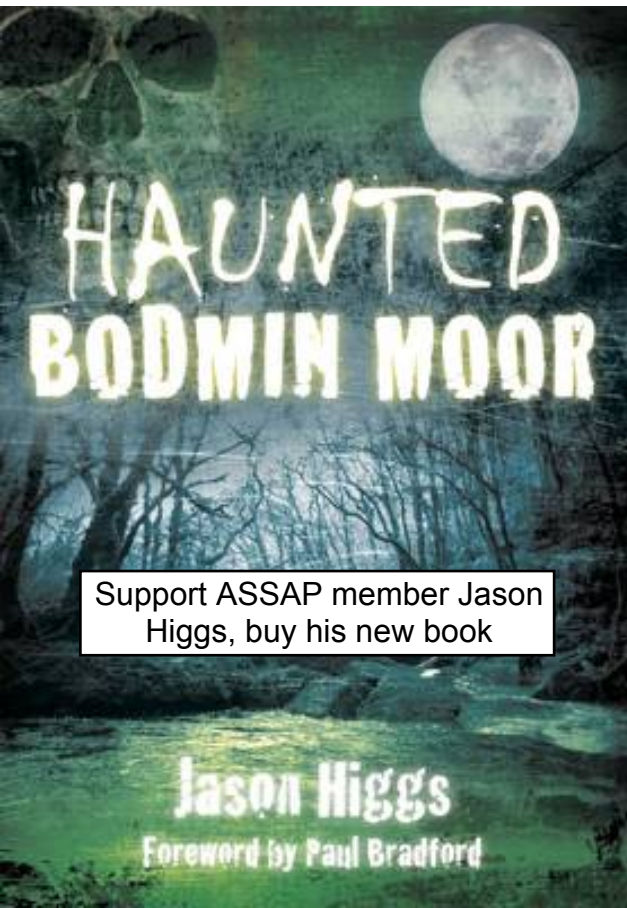
ASSAP Chairman Dave Wood (left) interviewed by Ann Widdecombe for a Radio 4 documentary with Ian Newton (right).

Write for Seriously Strange or Anomaly, the research journal

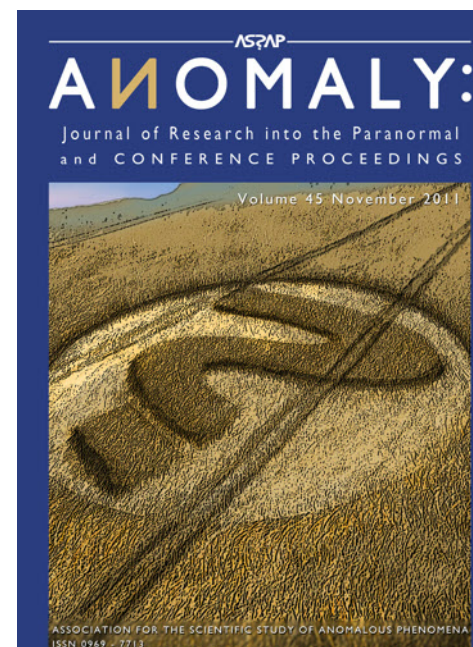
Would you like to write a short interesting piece for ASSAP magazine, Seriously Strange? The magazine tends to focus on anomaly and paranormal research, education, equipment reviews and practical investigation methods but we are interested in any

Or would you like to contribute a research paper to ASSAP's peer-reviewed journal Anomaly?

Contact Publications Managing Editor Alison for more information on publications@assap.ac.uk



Support ASSAP member Jason Higgs, buy his new book





Another Training Weekend? Register your interest before it's too late!

Despite several additional Training Weekends being run in 2012 there is some demand for another ASSAP Training Weekend.

We have provisionally booked another weekend:

10-11 November at Oxenwood, nr J14 M4

Email Clare on events@assap.ac.uk if you are interested in attending.

If enough requests are made by the end of August we will run this Training Weekend.

Introduction to Scientific Investigation

The basic training weekend if you're new to ASSAP. Basic accommodation and non-evening meals provided. This course covers the basic skills and knowledge needed to start investigating. Costs approx £29-£34.

About ASSAP Training

ASSAP Training is fun and inclusive. Many people come by themselves and immediately feel welcome and supported. Because it's residential people have a great time, get to network with like-minded people and learn a few new things. Book quickly before it sells out!

Watch the Video!

Watch a short video of a previous weekend: assap.ac.uk/trainingvideo



What you said about the ASSAP Training Weekend

"A superb, relevant and thought-provoking weekend. Full-on, but well worth it. Thank you to all involved."

- Annette, Kent

"Friendly and helpful, very good value for money."

- Matthew, Midlands

"Really beneficial! Going back to hold a methodology discussion with my group."

- Mark, Bristol

"I have gained a great deal from the weekend. Something which was the completely unexpected though was the number of transferable skills and ideas I have developed as a result of this."

- Andrea

6 Training and Events

It's Back!

Seriously Strange, 28-30 June 2013

The biggest residential
paranormal event in a generation

Put the date in your diary! The biggest residential paranormal event in a generation is back, on 28-30 June 2013 at University of Bath.

For the hundreds who attended *Seriously Strange 2011* it was a memorable experience:

- A massive recession-busting event, bringing hundreds of people together
- 20 of the top speakers and researchers in the field today
- The announcement of ASSAP's Professional Body status
- A 30th anniversary Gala Dinner and Disco
- Live paranormal experimentation to take part in

We have provisionally booked another weekend:

Note down the date for THE Paranormal Event of 2013 and look out for booking details in a future edition of *Seriously Strange* magazine.

SPEAKERS

Do you have any suggestions for speakers, old or new? Email us on events@assap.ac.uk



Can you help?

If you want to be part of the group that organises and promotes *Seriously Strange*, email us on events@assap.ac.uk



The first element in the mystery of Dr Dick, which makes it ideal for an ASSAP investigation, is *where* it actually took place, if, in fact, it ever took place at all. One version of the story says that it happened in Plas Mawr, a magnificent old Tudor house in High Street, Conwy. The other version places it in Conwy Castle itself. To the serious ASSAP investigator this presents an intriguing entanglement. Who first reported the incident, and what caused the controversy over the two competing locations?

Assuming in the first instance that Conwy Castle itself was the scene of the Dr Dick mystery, what allegedly happened, and what psychic phenomena were reported later? One of Robert Wynn's successors lived in Conwy Castle during Tudor times, and was called away to war, leaving his adored wife and young son in the castle. She was heavily pregnant at the time, and had unwisely climbed with her son to the top of one of the castle towers to watch for her husband's return. Tragically, she slipped on the spiral staircase and was fatally injured by her long fall. The baby she was expecting was killed, and so was her young son. The panic-stricken servants carried her to the Lantern Room and did their

best to make her comfortable on the bed, while the doctor was summoned.

Dr Dick duly arrived and examined her. He said sadly that

nothing could be done. Terrified about how their master would react, the servants locked the doctor in the Lantern Room with the dying woman and her son's body.

Her husband eventually arrived and the terrified servants unlocked the door. He was overwhelmed with grief at the sight of his dead wife and son - *but there was no sign of Dr Dick, and no trace of him has ever been found since that fatal day.*

The essential story outline remains the same when the scene moves from the actual castle to Plas Fawr. In both versions the explanation is offered that Dr Dick had attempted to escape up the vast chimney, had failed to climb it, and had consequently suffocated in the smoke from the fire.

Numerous psychical researchers over the years have heard reports of cries and scraping sounds from inside the chimney above the Lantern Room. The heartbroken sobs of the distraught widower have also been reported.

An experienced ASSAP researcher with time to explore all the documentation - as well as both buildings - might well find something very strange indeed at the back of the Conwy tragedy.



The Disappearance of Dr Dick

By President and First Lady, Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES ASSUMPTION-LED VS EVIDENCE-LED

By Maurice Townsend

This is a series of articles examining the basic questions of paranormal research. Though primarily aimed at those new to the subject, some old hands may also find something of interest.

Q: How would you define evidence- and assumption-led techniques?

A: This is most easily demonstrated by an example. Suppose you are investigating a report that someone saw a shadowy figure which was later observed to vanish. We can all agree that the figure was a ghost as ordinary, real physical human figures don't disappear. Using evidence-led techniques you then address the question, what exactly did the witness experience and how did it happen? In contrast, an assumption-led approach might be to assume the ghost was a spirit and try to communicate with it, using an Ouija board for instance. With evidence-led techniques you start with the evidence and come up with a theory to explain what happened, without making any assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon. Assumption-led methods, in contrast, make layer upon layer of assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon witnessed.

Q: What are these layers of assumptions?

A: Suppose you use an Ouija board to try to communicate with the ghost in the example above. In doing so, you are using several layers of implicit assumptions. For a start, you are assuming that what the witness saw was definitely paranormal. The next layer is an assumption what the witness saw was intelligent and capable of communication. Another layer is an assumption that it is possible to communicate with a ghost using an Ouija board. The most basic layer of all here is the assumption that a ghost is a spirit.

Q: But most people assume a ghost is a spirit. What's wrong with that?

A: Until the recent ghost hunting boom, many paranormal researchers were not sure what a ghost was but relatively few thought it was a spirit. That's because the evidence from extensively researched ghost cases simply doesn't support that idea. The idea that a ghost

is a spirit appears to owe more to popular culture than practical paranormal research. What evidence there is in favour of the idea of ghosts as spirits is primarily, if not wholly, derived from assumption-led techniques? If you exclude that, there is no really compelling evidence left for ghosts as spirits.

Q: Give some examples of assumption-led methods and the assumptions underlying them.

A: There is 'calling out', often used on ghost vigils. This assumes that ghosts can hear, understand language and react. Visiting graveyards to look for ghosts assumes they are more commonly reported there than in other locations, even though there is no compelling evidence for this. Using EMF meters to detect ghosts is another example. This assumes that ghosts can produce or disturb magnetic fields. Once again, there is no compelling evidence for this.

Q: Can assumption-led methods ever be useful?

A: Assumption-led paranormal research techniques rely on suppositions about the nature of paranormal phenomena which are not generally supported by convincing evidence. A big problem with such techniques is that they can never question the assumptions on which they are based. For instance, no one using an Ouija board could ever demonstrate, purely by its use, that they cannot be used to communicate with ghosts, even if this is true. So, although assumption-led methods might produce interesting results at times, they are always fatally undermined by the assumptions used. It would be much more useful to get the same results using evidence-led methods.

Q: How do you know if the methods you are using are assumption-led?

A: This is a useful exercise for all paranormal researchers to do before starting work. You should ask yourself if you are making any assumptions about the nature of what has been reported as paranormal. If someone says they've seen a shadowy figure which then disappeared, it is fine to call it a ghost. But to assume that the figure is a spirit goes beyond the evidence you have available from the sighting. The figure could be caused by misperception or hallucination, for instance. You need, as always with paranormal research, to eliminate the normal first. And in many cases, researchers do not do that effectively.

Q: Why's that?

A: You might spend hours on site trying to think of every possible natural cause for a paranormal sighting and decide, eventually, that it is truly unexplainable. But there could still be natural explanations you simply haven't thought of, particularly related to the original witness themselves, who are often not present. One of the major problems with paranormal field research is that we severely lack knowledge about possible natural causes of apparently paranormal experiences. There simply has not been much research into this field of xenormal studies. For instance, until it was revealed by recent neuroscience research, no one realised that people could substitute an image from their own visual memory with an object in their visual field that could not be seen well. If your brain cannot identify a poorly-seen object in your visual field it, effectively, guesses what might be there and puts it in the place of what's really there! So, someone observing a tree on a dark night might see it as a human figure. They literally don't see the tree at all but a human figure instead, from their own visual memory, complete with appropriate details like a face and clothing! And if the witness moves closer to the tree/figure to get a better look, their brain corrects its initial assumption about what is being seen and shows them only the real tree. The result is that the witness 'sees' a human figure which then appears to vanish, just as ghosts are often reported to do. If, as an investigator, you visited the site of such an experience, all you'll see is a tree and no

Using EMF meter in the dark:
assumption-led technique
(Credit LuckyLouie)



obvious reason why anyone would think it was a ghost. However, if you know what clues to look for in witness reports, you can deduce that misperception is the most likely explanation for this particular weird experience.

There are other things you can do while on site to detect likely misperception. For instance, if you go there in the same lighting conditions as the original sighting and ask someone, who does not know what to expect, if they can see anything unusual, they might just see the 'ghost'!

These sorts of techniques are not currently used much, if at all, in field research which is why plausible natural explanations are often missed. Much more research is needed to develop such novel techniques. This sort of research does not even require access to a haunted house!

For instance, if you drape a coat on a chair and let someone, who hasn't been warned, approach the scene in semi-darkness, many people will think there is a real person in the chair, at least at first. This illustrates just one of the factors that have been found to encourage misperception, namely a suitably-shaped object placed in a location, like a chair, where you might expect to see a human figure. There are many other such factors just waiting to be discovered!

Further information:

<http://www.assap.ac.uk/newsite/articles/Scientific%20ghost%20research.html>

<http://www.assap.ac.uk/newsite/articles/Modern%20paranormal%20research.html>

<http://www.assap.ac.uk/newsite/articles/Xenormal%20studies.html>

ASSAP NEEDS YOU

(Well, your friends and family actually)

ASSAP is an Educational Charity that is solely funded by donations and subscriptions. One of our primary goals is to continue to fund research, in the form of grants, which push the paranormal field forward.

Ask yourself this:

Are any of my friends and family interested in the paranormal?

Do people say "wow" when I mention I'm part of a team that investigates anomalous phenomena?

Are any of my friends, colleagues or group members not ASSAP members?

If your answer to any of those questions is "yes" then you can help.

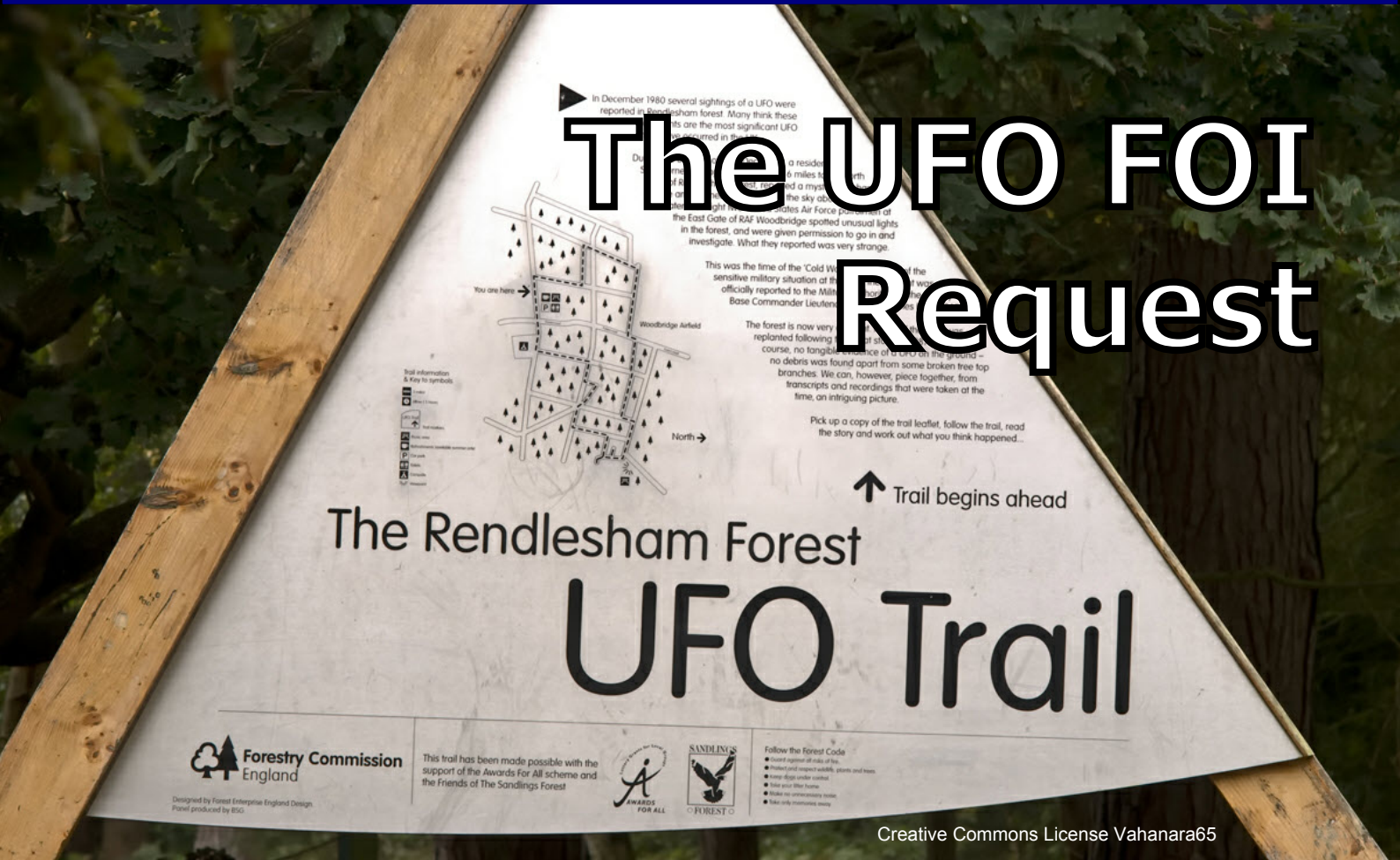
We need your assistance by getting them to board the good ship ASSAP and join us on our journey to scientifically investigate the unknown.

Please ask anyone you know to go to our website www.assap.ac.uk and join the journey.

Steve Wills, our membership Secretary can be contacted via membership@assap.ac.uk



The UFO FOI Request



Creative Commons License Vahanara65

I am a barrister in England with an interest in various issues relating to reports of "UFOs" and have written several items online about such issues. Recently, I've been spending looking in to reports by multiple US Air Force personnel that they saw UFOs in Rendlesham Forest (in Suffolk) in late December 1980. This incident came top in an online poll conducted in 2006 seeking "the UFO case with the 'best evidence' ever". It is probably Britain's most famous UFO case, having been the focus of several UFO books and documentaries.

I've reached the point where I think some Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") requests to the US Air Force may be useful. I've read about various FOIA requests over the years particularly in the period 1983-1985 (by CAUS, Robert Todd, Ray Boeche, Mark Birdsall and others) but there are one or two places that potentially held relevant documents that I have not seen addressed in those FOIA requests. I think it is likely there were (and may still be) quite a few pages of documentation relating to Rendlesham in USAF files. Much - if not all - of that documentation, as with the UK files, will be correspondence seeking information. I know, for example, there was quite a bit of correspondence between the US Air Force and

Chuck de Caro while preparing a CNN documentary on Rendlesham broadcast in 1985. I've seen extracts from some of this documentation in print, but next to none of it is currently online. I feel such requests COULD (rather than feeling they certainly WOULD) uncover new information. There's enough of a chance that I'm happy to spend time drafting a few requests.

Some FOIA requests can result in significant fee requests. It is possible to have fees reduced or waived if certain criteria are satisfied (basically being that the disclosure of the requested information is in the "public interest"). Obtaining a waiver depends in part on (a) the information requested and (b) the ability of the requester to analyse and disseminate the information obtained. I can see considerable advantages (financial and otherwise) for any Rendlesham FOIA requests to come from an organisation that can combine their request with an application for a waiver of fees. Since ASSAP has credentials as a learned society and also a registered charity, requests made on behalf of ASSAP probably have a greater chance of obtaining a fee waiver than a request from a private researcher.

By Isaac Koi

Sample ghost
iPhone app image

A Media Hoax? Or Hasty Leaps of Logic

Hayley Stevens looks at how an iPhone Ghost App caused a storm

The Gloucestershire Echo reported on Friday 15 June that a man named John Gore had photographed a ghostly figure in his house while taking photos of his cat.[1] Mr Gore commented that the animals often scratched at the walls as though terrified, and the television set in that room would sometimes turn itself on and off. When the oddity appeared in the photo he came to the conclusion that this ghost was related to these odd happenings.

Upon mentioning this to a neighbour he was told that a family who'd previously resided in his house had lost a baby to cot death while living there. Mr Gore made another decision based upon this new information – that the ghost causing the problems that had been captured on photo, was the deceased baby of previous occupants.

The Gloucestershire Echo reported this in full detail, even naming the street on which Mr Gore

lives which, when pointed out to me by a friend, deeply concerned me because of the ethical implications. I despaired at the thought of the previous occupants who'd lost a baby reading the paper and putting two and two together and thinking their dead baby was haunting the house it died in.

This is one reason I called the offices of The Gloucestershire Echo on Monday 18 June. I also called because I wanted to explain to them that the photo the story was being based around was a fake. The ghost photo had been created using a free iPhone app called 'Ghost Capture' produced by 'Ghostsdontexist'. The app allows you to take a photo through the iPhone's camera which you open up in the app and add one of the available 'ghosts' to. You can change the ghost's position, transparency and size. I recognised the ghost straight away and set about creating a number of fake photos with the

same ghost so that I could demonstrate this to the newspaper.

The Echo journalist was amazed and promised to write a follow-up piece about the hoax. In the meantime other papers picked up the story and quoted John Gore calling the ghost 'Johnny Junior' which was a nickname he and his girlfriend had given the ghost.

I phoned the Daily Mail offices and spoke to the MailOnline journalist who had written the story to explain it was a hoax. This information was accepted but no change was made to their story which didn't really surprise me.

On Tuesday 19 June, The Echo published their piece about the photo being a hoax created using an iPhone app.[2] John Gore was quoted as saying it was a fake but he didn't know it at the time of contacting the paper. The journalist behind the story told me that he'd been shown the photo by a friend who'd put the fake ghost into it, fooling John Gore into thinking his house was haunted.

Later on the same day somebody commented to the original online article posing as John Gores' son admitting he had made the fake photo not knowing it would end up in the newspaper. "im john gores son i only took the picture to frighten some of my family but if i would of known he was gonna put it on the echo then i would own up so iapologise if it offended anyone seriously but if yourgonna keep going on about it come and meet me and my dad and we sort it out their ok thank you"[sic][3]

There is nothing to suggest this is or isn't John Gores son, but it is certainly demonstrates an interesting trend amongst those who witness or photograph something they don't understand or cannot explain to go to the newspapers with it, and for the papers to simply publish it as is

because the journalist knows no better.

It demonstrates little understanding of critical thinking on the part of the eye-witness, and a lack of research on the part of the so-called journalist. However, it also demonstrates that those who witness something they cannot explain, or those approached by such people in the case of the journalist, don't always know who to contact about it or where to go for the information that would explain such hoaxes to them. This shows why it is so important for rational researchers and research organisations to be vocal and visible.

The John Gore story isn't a rare case of a media ghost hoax, and whether it was or wasn't an intentional hoax on the part of Gore is open to personal interpretation. I personally have no reason to suspect his story about being fooled by a family member is false. I know many people who genuinely believe they've experienced something strange when in reality it was caused by someone trying to trick them.

- 1 <http://bit.ly/Nq1OPr>
- 2 <http://bit.ly/KQyAno>
- 3 <http://bit.ly/MHHnbU>



By Hayley Stevens

A different 'haunted mansion'!



Interview with Manager of a 'Haunted' Stately Home

Many investigation groups complain about the difficulties of accessing allegedly haunted locations, particularly grand historical houses. ASSAP spoke to the manager of one such house to find out her perspective.

Q: I'm sure you've been regularly contacted by investigation groups over the years. The number of groups seems to have declined over the last year or two; do you find fewer groups have approached you lately?

Definitely! Most of the groups that approach us are running paranormal events and looking to sell tickets for ghost hunts. We have very few enquiries from smaller groups wishing to conduct research or vigils.

Q: You must have seen some variability in the methods used by groups. Those more spiritual and those more scientific. Or those more professional in conduct and those less so. Do you have any examples you can share?

We have some groups that keep the lights on and surround themselves with technology. We have had others who turn the lights off and start

table-tipping! As long as the groups are respectful to their surroundings and we manage how the investigations are promoted, I don't mind groups using a range of different methods to investigate the building.

The only problems we have experienced are when groups don't follow directions. One group kept setting off alarms by walking through fire doors.

We've also had a little disappointment from some of the more enthusiastic groups who think visiting a historic building at night guarantees them a ghost sighting!

Q: When groups approach you do you consider their level of seriousness or how scientific their method is in considering whether to grant access?

Our primary concerns are protecting the historic building, ensuring the safety of any visitors and

maintaining our reputation. The more serious groups are often much more respectful of the historic building and more willing to work closely with staff to plan a good event.

Q: Do you prefer to work with non-profit groups or with commercial event companies?

We prefer to work with smaller, non-profit groups. Commercial groups, which sell tickets to their events, may put our security and reputation at risk. We wouldn't have enough control over how the events are marketed and who is able to attend. Also, because of recent TV shows, the public often have expectations of paranormal events that we can't meet. Our experience of public, commercial events was of visitors who expected to walk through pitch black cellars while ghosts leapt out at them!

Q: Do you feel there are any ethical issues with investigation groups 'cold calling' historic houses, for example where staff may not be aware of reports of anomalous phenomena or where they may be offended by the request?

Some staff may be sensitive about discussions of paranormal activity, so you may wish to speak to a more senior member of staff. If you wish to publish staff comments, such as on a website or in a newsletter, let the staff know in case they need authorisation to talk to you.

Q: Do you have any advice for any investigation groups who might wish to approach historic houses?

Be honest, open and respectful. There are often very good reasons why some parts of a building are out of bounds. And be realistic with the length and scale of your event. Historic houses and museums have been hit by the economic downturn and don't have a huge number of staff to support your event. All night vigils would require a lot of staff, so aim for part of the evening.

Finally, share your results and offer support with future events, exhibitions or Halloween activities. If you forge a good relationship with a historic house, who knows what the benefits could be?



Want to know what makes 'haunted' stately home managers tick?

One manager has gone off the record to tell us what they really think about investigation groups.

LIMITED PLACES!

10-11 Nov 2012

The ASSAP Training Weekend



Introduction to Scientific Paranormal Investigation

