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seriously
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magazine



The Ghost
Tunnels

of the High Angle Battery

Also Inside:

Seriously Spooked 2014

Giants & Ogres

Science and the Paranormal

Reader Stories

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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).

Tel: 0845 652 1648 www.assap.ac.uk

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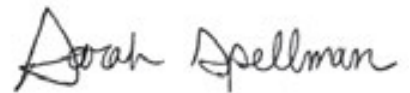
Updates

Message from the Chair

Welcome to another edition of Seriously Strange magazine. It's been a busy year for ASSAP so far – a vampire symposium, the launch of a new lecture series plus a new membership type (e-membership) and even a change of chairperson. As you may have read in your Anomaly cover letter, previous ASSAP chair Dave Wood stepped back in order to focus on his health, retaining responsibility for training, conferences and events. I was approved by the executive board

as acting chair and I hope to use the time to help re-energise ASSAP's research programme and ensure that ASSAP continues to give good value to its members. I hope you enjoy the magazine and I also hope to see you at an upcoming event.

Anomalously yours,



Sarah Spellman



Seriously Strange: London, our lecture series in the capital, has been going for some months now and so far we've welcomed Rupert Sheldrake, Kathryn Harkup, Will Storr and Diana Fleischman as speakers. We're planning to launch Seriously Strange: Birmingham this autumn, bringing fascinating speakers to a licensed setting in the Midlands, with free entry to ASSAP members. Be sure to sign up to our e-mail list for further announcements.

Is your inbox missing something?

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

£5 E-membership

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

Publications Changes

ASSAP has not raised its membership fee for 10 years, although the fee no longer covers the cost of printing and posting publications. In order to offer you the same membership rate, we've reduced the number of annual mailings from four to three. You'll receive one edition of the journal Anomaly and two editions of Seriously Strange magazine every 12 months. We hope that the addition of our monthly e-newsletter will help to fill the gap. If you have any feedback on this change, please send it to chairman@assap.ac.uk.

More speakers being announced soon...

Dr Hannah Gilbert

The experience of malevolent ghosts and their social function



Ann Winsper

Paranormal investigation: Does it help us understand ghosts?



CJ Romer

Where ghosts come from and what is next



Jack Hunter

Animism and ghosts across different cultures in the world



Cal Cooper

Bereavement, mental health and ghost experiences



Paul Hobday

Do Paranormal TV and events help or hinder ghost research?



Ghosts have fascinated mankind for centuries. Answering those age old questions of what happens after death - and why do people have unusual experiences - have preoccupied academics since Victorian times and a generation of paranormal investigators today.

Seriously Spooked: Ghost Convention

brings together 10 of the most respected ghost researchers today to answer the questions: what are ghosts? And how do we study them?

The fascinating questions under study on the day include:

- How have the types of ghosts people see changed over time?
- How do bereavement and mental health impact on ghost sightings?
- How are ghosts seen by other cultures?
- Are ghost experiences paranormal in origin or are they something else?
- What role does the media and ghost hunting events have in understanding ghosts?
- What can academics and paranormal investigators do to study ghosts?
- Seriously Spooked promises to be a fascinating, must-attend event for anyone interested in what ghost experiences are and how we investigate them.

Seriously Spooked is a one-day event run by learned society and education charity ASSAP (Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena) and follows in the footsteps of similar events Seriously Staked (on vampires), Seriously Unidentified (on UFOs) and Seriously Strange.



seriously
Spooked

Ghost Convention

Aston University • 27 Sept 14

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seriously staked

VAMPIRE SYMPOSIUM

ASSAP's most successful one-day event

by Dave Wood, ASSAP Conference & Events Chair

Over 200 people signed up to ASSAP's biggest one-day event - Seriously Spooked: Vampire Symposium - on 7th March 2014 at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

The announcement of ASSAP running a conference completely dedicated to vampires was greeted with some scepticism: can such a subject be studied seriously? Would the event be a media scrum packed with Twilight-Con teenagers?

Seriously Staked turned out to be, perhaps, ASSAP's most academic conference ever as ten biologists, psychologists, media lecturers and folklorists spoke to a 200-strong crowd. This was ASSAP's biggest ever draw for a single-day event.

University students and staff were over-represented as Twilight fans and the media stayed away. Staked was also boosted by official partnership with Professor Chris French's Goldsmiths College Anomalistic Psychology Research Unit.

Speakers on the day included:
Professor Chris French: Opening Remarks
Deborah Hyde
Myths and Monsters: Vampires in History
Jessica Monteith-Chachuat
The Modern Vampire: Suave and Debonair as We've Never Seen Him Before
Scott Wood The Undead of England & Elsewhere
Dr Maria Mellins Vampire Diary: Tracking Media Influence on the London Vampire Community
John Fraser The Men Who Invented Vampires
Dr Stacey Abbott
Cancer with a Purpose: Putting the Cinematic Vampire under the Microscope
Jonathan Ferguson Tools of the Vampire Hunter
Dr Kathryn Harkup The Science of Vampires
Dr Hannah Gilbert Flexible Fangs: The Vampire in Folklore, Fiction and Contemporary Culture
John Michaelson, Looking for Real Vampires and
Brent Myers, Sexually Insatiable

Seriously Staked recieved glowing feedback on the day and a positive 2-page write-up in Fortean Times. The enthusiasm of the London public has also led to the launch of Seriously Strange: London, and Seriously Possessed in 2015.

Giants & Ogres

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

There's an interesting research theory suggesting a possible nexus between reported sightings of the Yeti and Sasquatch in comparatively recent times and the many colourful legends of giants and ogres dating all the way back to prehistory.

Statistically, an argument can be put forward to the effect that if enough myths and legends about a particular type of entity are extant, then there is a possibility – however slim – that something which at least resembled that entity once existed. In a very good-humoured early Hollywood version of the David and Goliath story, a small boy approaches the mature King David and asks in an awed whisper whether Goliath was really as big as people say he was, and David responds with a smile: "He grows a little every year!" That principle may well apply to the originals of most giant and ogre legends.

Consider some of the classic Celtic versions such as the heroic Beowulf and the downfall of the monstrous Grendel at his hands, following the carnivorous giant's nocturnal onslaught on King Hrothgar's banqueting hall.

Geological features – particularly large, isolated boulders – attract legends of their origin that frequently involve giants having thrown them. Unusual geological fissures and deep crevices are also often attributed to giants having dug them, or smashed into the rock with huge axes. Clwyd in Wales holds an ideal example at Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant. The legend concerns a giant, his wife and their equally large servant girl who were attempting to raise a small hill of stones, but got tired of the work, and let their stones tumble in the heaps that are visible there today.

A fascinating 14th century brass associated with Bishop Godfrey shows a giant or ogre – perhaps a Woodwose – abducting a girl while a fearless knight rides in pursuit to rescue her.

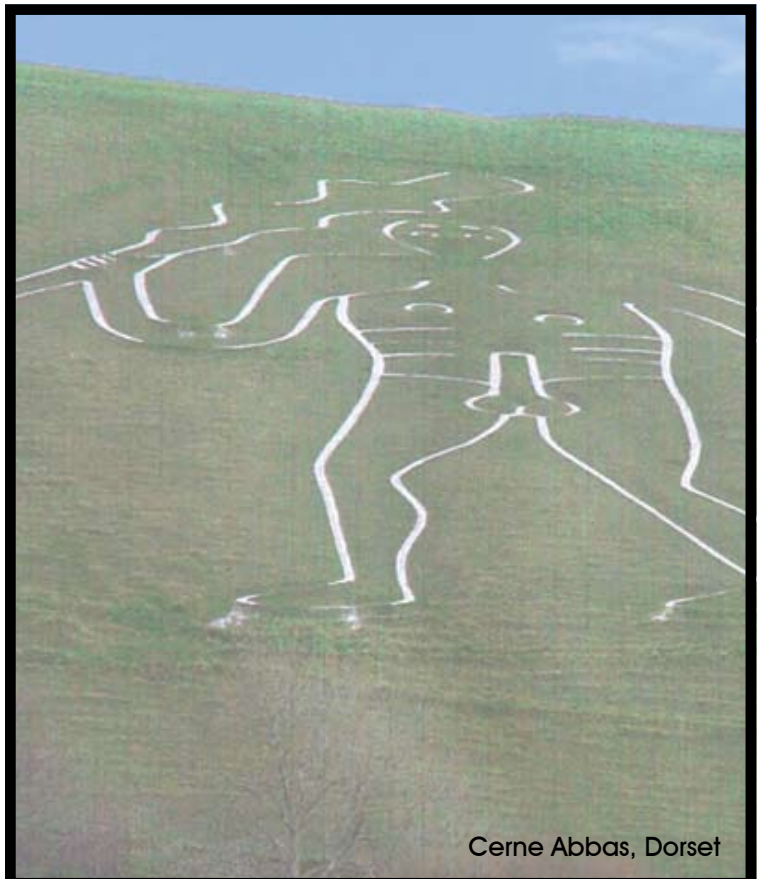
The famous Cerne Abbas giant, which we photographed recently, is a particularly aggressive and hostile looking entity. But were the creative and artistic medieval inhabitants of Cerne Abbas inspired by some real giant or ogre pillaging their village?

It's worth looking in more detail at several more accounts of giants and ogres in locations that would make excellent research sites for ASSAP explorers.

At Sproughton in Suffolk, for example, the Wild Man Inn was so named after a giant disrupted the builders there in the sixteenth century. A 19th century witness, Charlotte Burne, described her encounter with a strange, dark giant guarding

a bridge over the Birmingham and Liverpool Canal near Woodseaves in Staffordshire. Cheselbourne in Dorset has a round barrow which allegedly houses the remains of a giant who fell dead from the exertion after trying to throw a boulder that was too heavy for him. Cressage in Shropshire has a large mound which is attributed to a giant who had intended to use that material to dam the River Severn. The most southerly point in Ireland, the Fastnet Rock, was said to have been thrown there by a giant from Mount Gabriel. The Avon Gorge in Bristol was attributed to a pair of giants, Goram and Vincent, who were competing for the love of the lady Avona.

Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe



Cerne Abbas, Dorset



The Ghost Tunnels of the High Angle Battery - Portland Bill, Dorset

by Dave Holdich

I decided to take a walk one warm sunny afternoon in May 2014. I wasn't in my local area, though; I was on the island of Portland in Dorset. I've been here many times before and also used to live here, and decided to check out an old haunt of mine. I took my cameras and headed off to the High Angle Battery overlooking Underhill and Portland Harbour.

This establishment is known locally as the Ghost Tunnels, and I'd wondered how it had got its nickname for some time.

The High Angle Battery was built during the Victorian times to watch over the harbour. As warships became increasingly hulled with iron, it became apparent that the decks were the weakest points, and so shells should be dropped from above to inflict maximum damage on the upper decks. This meant that the guns had to be elevated to a higher angle - hence "high angle batteries."

The 12-tonne guns would fire from an elevation to inflict maximum damage on any attacking vessel, but they'd need to be well-hidden to defend against retaliatory strikes. For this reason the high angle battery was built into a quarry pit high up on the island.

The battery was manned by troops based at the nearby Verne Citadel, which was built by convicts. It was later home to the Royal Engineers and encompassed 56 acres of land, but is also built underground into the heights of the Portland cliffs.

The "Ghost Tunnels" refer to the underground munition magazines which served the guns at the High Angle Battery, and also the housing for the soldiers manning the position, which was abandoned soon after World War Two.

In 1990 a group of teenagers spotted someone standing in the opening of one of the tunnels. They decided it'd be a funny idea to run around to the opposite opening, creep in and make ghostly noises to spook the man they'd seen. They immediately went into the process of executing their prank, but upon doing so, found no reaction from the stranger, who they hoped would have been startled. One of the party moved around to see what the stranger was doing, but found the mouth of the tunnel empty, and when accosting their mates, found no one had passed them either. Apparently, the stranger had vanished. The group also later reported that at this time, an eerie silence had befallen the place, with no birdsong or insects buzzing. A definite feeling of being watched also affected them and stones were thrown at them by an unseen adversary.

This had spooked them enough to take their leave, and as they ran away, one

of the party chanced a glance back and saw a figure seemingly laughing at them. He mentioned it to his friend, who looked back only to see thin air.

Others have experienced similar feelings of being watched, and someone exploring the main tunnel experienced



The side rooms off the main tunnel

problems with her torch flickering. She also felt a touch on her shoulder and a brush down her arm, at which point she decided it was best to leave.

I approached the High Angle Battery with no real plan. I thought that I'd look around and see where I went from there, so I first entered a small tunnel which was barred at the far end, the tunnel was straight and had few rooms off its main passage, so I felt relatively confident during my exploration of this area.

I exited this tunnel and moved around to the main battery area, which I

walked through noticing many barred tunnel exits as I went, as I approached the main tunnel entrance, I looked around and noted other tourists and walkers, and kept this in my mind as I approached the daunting tunnel opening.

I stopped momentarily and regarded the path before me, it was set with a narrow gauge railway used for transporting the shells to the guns, and disappeared around a bend merely ten feet in front of me, so I proceeded in to explore beyond.

There were several side rooms off the main tunnel, and the light from the bright sunny afternoon seemed to take leave of this area, as did the May heat. It felt unusually cold and damp, but I naturally put this down to the dark subterranean environment, shook off my shakes and moved into the first side room. It was pitch black and vision was impossible, so I took out my iPhone, and using the built-in camera facility with the flash turned on, proceeded to take photos to guide my way in. At this point my main fear was anyone who may have been sheltering within, and could become dangerous if disturbed. The side rooms all proved to be empty, so this left me with the added feeling of

seclusion. I became aware of the auto-suggestion of the situation playing on my mind as I exited the side room back to the main tunnel. I checked both ways for other people before moving on, moving further into the tunnels before I decided that my isolation and the damp coldness had gotten the better of me. I turned and walked briskly back toward the tunnel entrance, passing the rooms I'd previously explored. Knowing they were empty, I still had the overwhelming feeling someone or something may loom out of one of the doorways, another manifestation of auto-suggestion replacing the rational.

Only once I had re-entered the heat of the May afternoon to see the sunlight and other walkers in the vicinity did I feel relaxed, but still quite apprehensive of the tunnel entrances.

I mustered the guts to explore one more short but wide tunnel before I moved out of the area and explored the rest of the island.

Despite the fact I knew there was no one in the side rooms of those tunnels, my mind still managed to play tricks on me. I am usually a very well and strong minded individual with a keen

interest in physics and other sciences. I have investigated the paranormal for many years and have experienced



Inside the main tunnel

phenomena on many occasions, but being alone in those tunnels made me feel vulnerable, kept me looking over my shoulder, and at one point when exiting the main tunnel, I was almost certain I saw someone moving back around the corner I'd just passed. I immediately investigated this to find the rest of the tunnel empty, and even recalling it to write this brings tears to my eyes and goose bumps on my arms.

The only thing I know for sure is: next time I'm down on Portland, I'll be going back to the Ghost Tunnels...but not on my own.

Volunteer spotlight: Sarah Spellman

At a recent ASSAP executive meeting, officers were seated around the meeting table (Skype connection) when a new magazine feature was proposed, introducing those who live the glamorous lifestyle of the ASSAP volunteer. Chairwoman Sarah Spellman nominated "any of you guys," but in the end that's not how it went. So, meet your newish Chair. She will be answering the questions that we'll be putting to a different volunteer in each edition from now on, space permitting.

What provoked your interest in anomalous phenomena?

I can't remember a specific incident that set things off. It wasn't a personal experience of something I couldn't explain, so it must have been curiosity at first. I was into ghost stories, science fiction and UFO books as a youngish child, as well as anything to do with animals, nature and science. I do remember one book in particular from that time - Strange World by Frank Edwards, courtesy of the Vigo County Public Library and my dad's library card (he was present when the card was used - I don't want readers to think the transaction was anything other than entirely free of municipal-level fraud). I found that book and others like it to be very flashlight/torch-worthy. There were some significant post-bedtime reading violations going on. Things escalated from there and I started adding more and more paranormal books to the regular VCPL haul. I'd say curiosity is still the most important factor for me in all this. I want to understand reality and our experience of it (I'll write a 1,500-word summary for ASSAP when I reach that goal) and querying apparent exceptions to the rule is a way of trying to do that, one that I'm particularly drawn to.

A) What made you decide to get involved with ASSAP and B) what have you enjoyed most about volunteering?

A) Unreasoned acceptance and unreasoned rejection are two sides of the same coin and don't get us very far. When I found out about ASSAP I was immediately attracted by its promotion of critical, scientific thinking and evidence-led evaluation. The Fortean approach to the unexplained is the one I favour - that is, no data is

struck off without cause, whether our respective individual worldviews like that data or not. I also liked that ASSAP gave (and gives) researchers, investigators and others a platform to discuss their ideas before allowing members to come to their own conclusions.

B) I've enjoyed working on the publications side of things and it's been great meeting ASSAP members and speakers at our events.

What's your favourite area/category of weirdness?

Difficult! I find most of them interesting. The topic I currently read most about is probably cryptozoology, but I also have a long-standing interest in experiences in which the transpersonal or other non-mundane states of consciousness (see: transpersonal psychology) and the anomalous seem to intersect.

What's your favourite sandwich?

BLT with free-range bacon and low-fat mayo.

In the Midwest looking for Bigfoot equipped only with a bum bag. Intrepid.



Science and the paranormal: Some Activities of CSAPP

As a PhD researcher based at the University of Northampton's Centre for the Study of Anomalous Psychological Processes (CSAPP) I spend much of my time engaged in researching alleged so-called psychic experiences, altered states of consciousness and other anomalous phenomena.

I was disappointed to be unable to attend ASSAP's successful 'Seriously Strange' conference last year however I read Andrew Hodrien's review in the autumn 2013 edition of this magazine with interest and interrogated my colleagues who were lucky enough to attend/contribute in a sufficient enough way to feel that I had at least some grasp of the conference.

One panel discussion "Has Parapsychology Achieved Anything?" highlighted a greater demand for communication between parapsychologists and paranormal researchers. Despite an understanding of the work we do in parapsychology being clear for many paranormal researchers as we share a common interest for the scientific investigation of many of the same phenomena, even for the keen reader it can prove challenging to remain on top of the most recent research. Furthermore, many individuals interested in paranormal research have asked me what it's like to work in my current position, particularly those considering pursuing a career in the field. In light of this I believed it may be of interest to briefly describe the motivations behind my own choice to pursue a career in this area. I also aim to discuss a little about my experiences as a PhD student and provide some information about CSAPP, including some of our ongoing research. It is my hope that readers will find this information, however brief, to be of interest either for their own personal career considerations, their own research interests or just to better acquaint people with a flavour of the research currently ongoing at our institution.

"Exploration of the unknown reflects everything that is good about science."

So why Parapsychology?

Deciding to pursue a career in parapsychology is a huge decision for an aspiring academic and one which should not be taken lightly. Many established researchers operating within the field have first developed their careers within mainstream areas of academia - psychology, physics, biology, etc. - before gradually incorporating their interest of parapsychology into their research. Indeed many current parapsychologists would wholeheartedly recommend this strategy to any inquiring student weighting up their options prior to entering into postgraduate study. This is due in part to the range of dangerous political obstacles that can lie along the path of an aspiring parapsychologist, ones that if not navigated carefully, can leave an individual in a state of professional limbo due to the contentious nature of the discipline, unable to secure tenure at an

academic institution. The potential issues (and benefits) facing those wishing to pursue a career in parapsychology are masterfully outlined in detail by Professor Harvey Irwin in his recent monograph *Education in Parapsychology: Student and Instructor Perspectives*, a highly recommended read for any contemplating treading this path.

With the associated risks, why would anyone pursue a career in parapsychology at all? I believe

many internal monologues are already stating my answer to this question; for me exploration of the unknown reflects everything that is good about science. To take phenomena that are not well understood but widely and frequently reported by many individuals, to subject these phenomena to well-designed, structured empirical scrutiny in order to rule out potential competing explanations, resulting in findings from which meaningful conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions may pose substantial implications for our current understanding of the human condition, nature and the universe, whatever final explanations we come to. Could a scientist ask for anything more?

The survival hypothesis, the psi hypothesis, the 'hard problem' of consciousness, the potential psychophysiological benefits of altered states - these are all questions that are deeply interesting, but more

By David Saunders

importantly drawn from evidence collated from hundreds of reported experiences, reports that span centuries, highlighting the importance of understanding these experiences to science. If ignored, or dismissed out of hand as mere nonsense, science as a discipline would cease to function in the pursuit of knowledge but succumb completely to the widespread materialist dogma that is slowly strangling authentic, open-minded scientific inquiry. In this way the endeavours of every reasoned parapsychologist, anomalistic psychologist and paranormal investigator contribute in small ways towards maintaining the original spirit of scientific inquiry and in doing so take us one step closer to understanding the human condition and the nature of the universe. This is a call I believe many readers have also already been unable to resist and therefore I have chosen to develop my career in this field as I believe the benefits greatly outweigh the potential risks.

I consider myself very fortunate to have gained a post-graduate research position at CSAPP. As one of the world's leading institutes of paranormal and transpersonal research it provides me an environment that is intellectually invigorating and academically refreshing, with a range of studies continually ongoing. The guidance of members highly experienced in the field is always readily available to ensure all research completed by the centre is of the highest possible quality. Furthermore, psychology students at any level of their study can undertake a parapsychology-themed dissertation at BSc or MSc level and elect for taught modules in the subject, as well as pursuing a PhD. In this way it is an environment in which a grounded education in parapsychology is open to all students who take an interest in such topics, adding to the dynamic of the psychology department as a whole. So how did the centre come into existence?

Origins

CSAPP was founded by Professors Deborah Delanoy and Chris Roe along with Dr Simon Sherwood in 2000 as a research unit with the mission of seeking scientific understanding of phenomena such as extrasensory

perception, psychokinesis and so-called psychic experiences as well as exceptional states of mind (spiritual, mystical, and peak experiences). Over the years the centre has grown into one of the most active research institutions for parapsychology and transpersonal psychology on the planet. A brief appraisal of its members demonstrates its academic pedigree: centre director Professor Chris Roe is a council member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), the editor of SPR's Journal, international affiliate for England of the Parapsychology Foundation and is the recent recipient of the Parapsychology Association's outstanding contribution award for his work in the field; the first from the UK to receive this honour. Along with the founders, members of the Centre have included current President of the SPR Dr

Richard Broughton and Drs Christine Simmonds-Moore, Nicola Holt, David Luke, Siobhan Lynch, Elizabeth Roxburgh, Alasdair Gordon-Finlayson, and Glenn Hitchman.

There are currently 8 PhD students alongside myself at CSAPP, sadly I do not have the space available to provide more than a snapshot of some of the PhD projects currently underway but a visit to the CSAPP webpage will provide more information to those readers who are interested.

In his PhD research Mr Callum E. Cooper, author of such books as *Telephone Calls from the Dead* and *Conversations with Ghosts* (with Dr Alex Tanous), is examining

paranormal experiences surrounding bereavement and their impact on health and recovery for his PhD. Miss Charmaine Sonnex is currently reviewing extant evidence into psychic healing to determine if studies to date support a tenable claim that directed intention can have a measurable effect on another living system. And Kimberley Sheffield, from the transpersonal psychology arm of CSAPP is investigating the psychological impact of long-term loving kindness meditative practice.

My own research focuses on the altered state of consciousness of lucid dreaming, a special kind of dream experience which is broadly defined as dreaming while knowing one is dreaming. I am interested in the practical applications of these dreams, particularly

"Psychology students at any level of their study can undertake a parapsychology-themed dissertation at BSc or MSc level and elect for taught modules in the subject, as well as pursuing a PhD."



Above: Members of CSAPP lecturing at Stansted Hall's "Science, Spirituality and Religion" open day. From left to right: Professor Chris Roe, Callum E. Cooper, Dr Elizabeth Roxburgh, Rachel Evenden and David T. Saunders.

for motor-learning and their potential for being a psi-receptive state. I am also interested in paranormal dream experiences, such as dreams involving communication with the dead or precognitively acquired information that is later found to be veracious.

Skill Development in Dreams

Lucid Dreams are not experienced regularly by people, however surveys indicate that as many as 1/8 of the population experience them once a month or more. These people can consider them a personal virtual reality simulator in which they can exert control over the dream narrative and their behaviour within the dream. Lucid dreams therefore offer the promise of thrilling nocturnal adventures for anyone that can successfully induce them. Moreover, physiological evidence suggests that lucid dreams could be used as a vehicle for an individual to train their motor-skills. With control over the environment, manipulations not possible in waking life can be applied when practising in the dream scenario. Not quite getting the execution right on that cross? Slow time down as you swing your foot at the ball. Struggling to control your returns from hard serves? Need to practise manoeuvring on your slalom skiing? Want to improve our golf swing? All these may potentially be possible in your dreams. When combined with waking practise early indications imply greater increases to performance than just practising alone. My research aims to provide additional evidence to that which already supports these assertions.

Psi-receptive (Lucid) Dreams?

Extra sensory perception (ESP) and dreams (particularly lucid) is also a research interest of mine. Many reports of spontaneous cases of alleged psychic experiences are reported to occur while the experient is engaged in some form of altered state of consciousness, particularly when dreaming. About 65% of reports of ESP such as seeing the future, occur during dreams. As dreams are frequently experiences altered states of consciousness they provide excellent tools for researching the psi-hypothesis. One issue with normal dreams is how people are generally are quite passive or 'single-minded' within them and due to sleep-amnesia, forget the majority of the dream content 5 minutes after waking up. These are issues overcome in a lucid dream experience; due to activation of additional areas of the brain while lucid, interaction with the dream environment and subsequent recall is much clearer and thus they provide the perfect tool for

investigating the potential for psi-transmitted information in dreams more directly. My research in this area is currently in development and planning to be started in the near future.

Ultimately, this is a very brief overview of my motivations behind deciding to pursue a career in parapsychology and my experience of what it's like working within CSAPP. The background of our research centre and some of our ongoing research has all been covered in a somewhat whirlwind tour. I hope I have communicated how it is important to give strong considerations to and read around the issues of working in this area professionally, however I hope it is also clear how much of a rewarding experience I find it; one that undoubtedly many readers, as researchers themselves, are not unfamiliar with. I can only end by saying I hope you have found this article an interesting read and best of luck to all in your future research endeavours in this fascinating field. If we all keep asking the questions we will continue to find better answers.

David T. Saunders



Reader Stories

New feature! - Not only are our members and readers avid students of anomalous phenomena - some of you have your very own strange experiences to share. Hence, we're trying a new

feature: Reader Stories (yes, our writer of catchy headlines is currently on holiday). You can write in to publications@assap.ac.uk if you'd like to share a personal account of your own.

Back in the mid-1990s, when I was about to start my GCSEs, a school friend and I (as I remember it) attended extra math tuition at my teacher's home in Rushden, Northants. One evening, about eight o'clock, my friend and I were waiting for a lift home with my mother. At first I thought I saw a very slowly moving silent large aircraft, only about ten feet above the roof of the house across the road. Considering the absurdity of what I thought I had just seen, I looked again, and now it was a large long black cloud-like object with several yellow light portholes running across its centre.

That is all I remember, although I later found out that several days earlier a car had been chased by a ball of light down the same road. As I said, I remember my school friend being present, only he does not remember the strange object, as he said he was not there on that particular evening. I had apparently attended the extra tuition alone that night; but someone was there that evening, standing next to me when I witnessed the strange object in the sky.

Gavin

Survival pact - July, 2014

From 1984 until September 1989, I lived and worked in Cardiff. For much of that time I shared a house with a man (JD) who was a psychic and healer. Towards the end of my period there, he moved back to the Welsh village where he was born and I spent many weekends with him there. Shortly before I returned to London (my job having come to an end) I got JD to sign a 'Survival Pact' with me. This was a document designed by David Christie-Murray representing an agreement between two people that whoever was the first to die would attempt to communicate this fact to the other. At that time, I was 38 and JD was 74. He was active and generally well, though he had suffered two minor heart attacks since I had known him and had an arthritic hip.

On the evening of 6 October 1989 (six weeks after the signing of the pact document) I was at my mother's house in London. JD was due to ring me around 9.00. Mum and I had decided to watch *Murder She Wrote* on television at 8.00 so sat down to eat our evening meal at 7.25 and agreed not to do a crossword (as we usually did) to ensure that we would have time to eat and wash up before the programme began.

We ate our first course and as we gathered the dishes to take them into the kitchen, my mother glanced at the clock and said in amazement "My God! It's twenty-five past eight! Where on earth did the time go?" I was as confused as she was and we agreed that time had "done something very strange". At 9.00, having had our pudding and washed up, we began watching *Le Chambre Vert* by François Truffaut on television. JD had not rung but rather than try to call him, I just assumed that he had fallen asleep in front of the television and made a mental note to ring him in the morning.

The Truffaut film is about a man completely obsessed with his dead loved ones. He meets a beautiful young woman with whom he shares a particular experience - both 'saw' a person they loved at the exact time of their death. Right through the film, I was noticing strong parallels with the life of JD (too many and complex to document here) and kept saying "My God! That's JD!"

The following morning, I received a telephone call from the Rhondda police. Noticing JD's newspaper still in the door and his curtains still closed, a neighbour had knocked and - on getting no response - had let himself in. He had found JD slumped in an armchair with the telephone on the arm of the chair. He was dead and there was (to quote the neighbour) "one hell of a mess". A post-mortem revealed that JD had died from a perforated gastric ulcer and that the time of death had been between 6.00 and 8.00 pm. He had suffered intermittent pain from the ulcer but had steadfastly refused to seek medical help.

At the time I received the news of his death, I commented to my mother that it was sad that JD had not been able to communicate his death to me. In fact, I wasn't even sure he had grasped the implications of the document we had signed. With hindsight, I feel that he did communicate with me. Had he appeared in front of me as a hazy figure, smiling and waving and saying "I'm off now, love", I'd probably have been completely spooked. As it was, I was left with a very strong feeling that something meaningful had happened on the night of his death. Notable points include:

My reaction to his failure to telephone me: Normally, I would have been concerned and would have tried to call him. Did I know, at some level, that there would be no response?

The inexplicable time-loss: My mother is very hard-headed about psychic matters and has always taken the attitude that she'll believe in a ghost if she ever sees one. However, she was completely unable to explain the loss of time. A few months later we ate a similar meal, taking our time and doing a crossword while we ate. We were able to eat and wash up comfortably within half an hour. I was fortunate to have an independent witness, and a sceptical one at that!

The parallels with the Truffaut film: There were many parallels between JD's life and that of the main character in the film. The film's primary focus is death and the attempt to keep alive the memory of the dead. At the end, the main character becomes ill. He refuses medical help and falls dead at the feet of the young woman. The synchronicity of our time-loss and the time of JD's death: It was not until some time later that we learnt that JD had died around the time we were experiencing our time-loss.

Expectation: I had no expectation that JD would die - in fact he had several times assured me jokingly that he would outlive me! I had read about the Survival Pact idea and had sent for the form because it seemed an interesting piece of research.

I still have no idea what happened that evening. Had JD's intention of telephoning me activated a telepathic link? Had part of me travelled to his side to be with him at the time of his death (and, if so, where was my mother in all this)? I think David Christie-Murray was as surprised to receive my report so soon after I had sent him the signed 'Survival Pact' as I was to have the occasion to send it! There is no clear evidence of communication here, but it's certainly thought-provoking!

Ann Hopkins

During the night of 25-26 December 2004, I dreamt that I was looking at a beach and surrounding area with people milling about on it. A huge wall of water appeared in the sea, heading toward the beach. Many of the people were engulfed. My vantage point seemed to be high up and far enough away for me to see a good chunk of the beach at once. The next day, the UK got news of the tragic Asian tsunami that had happened overnight, UK time. I do have some repeating nightmares, but they've never been wave-related, so this was not a repeat of a (remembered, anyway) dream for me. Despite the nature of the events it depicted, during the dream there was no emotional content associated with seeing the people swept away – it was just a series of images, and easier to recall visually than dreams in which I'm "involved" tend to be.

I am certainly not presenting this as proof of paranormal information-receiving processes happening during dreams. However, it was a bit odd at the time.

Separated from the father of my son, I dream one night I am in a waiting room. People are coming and going quickly, messages are being tannoyed urgently. I wake feeling I've looked through a window to another world. My ex-husband calls. His father died in the night.

Anonymous

Rosie Seymour

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